

A Man-Made Religion

Why the Pattern Across Watchtower Teaching Points to a Man-Made Religion

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I. A Question of Pattern

The pages of this series have taken up the teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society one at a time — the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the cross, the blood doctrine, the “last days,” the 144,000, the New World Translation, the question of authority. Each was examined on its own merits, and on its own merits each was found wanting. But there is a further question that no single page can answer, and it is the most important of all. Step back from the particular doctrines and look at them together: *is there a pattern?* And if there is, what does it tell us about the kind of thing the Watchtower is?¹

This essay argues that there is a pattern, that it is unmistakable, and that it points to a single conclusion: the Watchtower is not what it claims to be — God’s sole channel of truth on earth, his “faithful and discreet slave” — but a human institution, bearing throughout its teaching the fingerprints of a human hand. I do not mean by this that its members are dishonest; they are, in the main, sincere and good people. I mean that the *institution’s handling of Scripture and evidence* displays, again and again, the marks of a system working backward from its conclusions — and that this is exactly what we should expect of a religion made by men and exactly what we should not expect of one taught by God.²

II. What Would and Would Not Count as Evidence

Fairness requires beginning with what does *not* prove the point, lest the argument prove too much. That a religion has a hierarchy does not make it man-made; so does the Catholic Church. That a religion disciplines its members does not make it man-made. That a religion *changes its mind* over time does not, by itself, make it man-made; understanding can deepen, and a living tradition develops. If the case against the Watchtower rested on any of these alone, it would fail, and it would condemn historic Christianity along with it.

So the argument must be more precise. What betrays a human origin is not change, but a particular *kind* of change and a particular *way of handling the evidence*. Four marks, in particular, are telling. The first is *special pleading*: adopting a rule of interpretation and then applying it only where it yields the desired answer. The second is *unfalsifiable prediction*: making a concrete forecast and, when it fails, redefining it rather than retracting it. The third is *self-conferred authority*: grounding one’s right to be believed in a credential one has simply awarded oneself. The fourth is the curated record: writing and rewriting one’s own history so that failures disappear, or surface only in pieces. Each of these is a thing a human institution does when it is protecting a position rather than following the evidence. And each appears, not once, but repeatedly, across the Watchtower’s teaching. It is the repetition that makes the case.

III. The Text Bent to Fit the Doctrine

Begin with the Watchtower's Bible, the New World Translation, because a religion's handling of the text it claims to obey is the clearest window into its method. At John 1:1, where the Greek says the Word was *theos* — God — the NWT reads “the Word was a god,” and defends the rendering by a rule: a noun without the definite article should be taken indefinitely. The rule is doubtful in itself. But the decisive point is that the Watchtower *does not follow its own rule*. Across the New Testament the word for God stands without the article 282 times; the NWT renders it indefinitely in about six percent of them, and “God” in the rest — including four times in the very prologue of John, where only the one verse that touches the deity of Christ is singled out for “a god.” A rule applied six percent of the time, precisely where doctrine needs it, is not a rule. It is a pretext.³

It is not an isolated lapse; it is the house style. The same translation inserts the name “Jehovah” into the New Testament 237 times, though it appears in no Greek manuscript of the New Testament, because the system requires a sharp separation between “Jehovah” and Jesus that the apostles' own *Kyrios* would blur.⁴ And at Luke 23:43 it moves a comma — “Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise” — not because the Greek demands it, but because the doctrine that the dead are unconscious forbids the plain reading. In each case the procedure is the same: the conclusion is fixed in advance, and the text is adjusted until it complies.⁵

IV. The Predictions That Failed and Were Quietly Moved

A religion that claims to read the times should be willing to be tested by them. The Watchtower has made that test, and failed it, and then declined to record the failure. Its chronology fixed the invisible “presence” of Christ first at 1874; when that yielded nothing visible, the date was moved to 1914. The “end” was expected, at various times, in 1914, in 1925, and — most damagingly, within living memory — in 1975. None of it came to pass.⁶

What is revealing is not that the predictions failed (men misjudge) but *what was done with the failures*. They were not withdrawn; they were relocated. The event that did not visibly occur was redefined as having occurred invisibly. The “generation” that would not pass away before the end (Matthew 24:34), as the generation of 1914 aged and died, was redefined, and redefined again, until it meant two overlapping lifetimes of indeterminate length. This is the signature of an unfalsifiable system: a claim engineered so that no possible outcome can ever count against it. A prophet who is wrong repents; a human institution that has staked its authority on a date it cannot deliver does what the Watchtower did — it moves the date and hopes the flock will not remember.

V. The Law of God That Keeps Changing

Consider next the blood doctrine, because here the pattern has had the gravest consequences. The refusal of blood transfusions is presented to Witnesses as the unchanging command of God, grave enough to die for, grave enough to let a child die for. Yet the record of the doctrine is a record of change. Blood was permitted as food until 1927. Transfusion did not become an expelling offense until 1961. Vaccination was forbidden, then allowed; organ transplants were “wonderful,” then “cannibalism,” then permitted once more. The rules on blood “fractions” were loosened by stages, so that the very products a Witness might have died refusing in 1990 became, after 2000, a matter of personal conscience.⁷

Set aside, for the moment, the exegetical case against the doctrine, which is made elsewhere. The point here is structural. A teaching cannot be, at every moment, the fixed and unchanging law of God if it keeps changing — and changing not in the direction of deeper understanding, but back and forth, as a committee revises a policy. When the stakes are life and death, the revisions are not academic: people obeyed each version as the word of God, and some died obeying a version since rescinded. That is not how the unchanging God deals with his people. It is exactly how a human organization manages a rule it is reluctant to admit it got wrong.

VI. The Authority That Commissions Itself

Behind every particular doctrine stands the question of authority — by what right does the Watchtower teach these things as the word of God? Its answer is that the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is the “faithful and discreet slave” whom Christ appointed to feed his household (Matthew 24:45–47), and that this appointment took place in 1919. Here the human fingerprint is at its plainest, for the claim is *self-conferred*. It is the Governing Body that identifies the Governing Body as the slave; the credential is awarded by its own holder.⁸

The claim collapses further on inspection, because the body said to have been appointed did not exist when the appointment is said to have occurred. The Watch Tower Society first applied the phrase “governing body” to itself in 1943; the Governing Body as an entity distinct from the corporation’s board dates from December 1971; and effective authority passed from the Society’s president to that body’s committees only on January 1, 1976. In 1919 the organization was governed by one man, Joseph F. Rutherford. And the appointment seems to have escaped the appointed: in April 1920 *The Watch Tower* itself declared, “We would not refuse to treat one as a brother because he did not believe the Society is the Lord’s channel... There should be full liberty of conscience.” One year after

Christ allegedly made the Society his sole channel, the Society did not require anyone to believe it.⁹

There is a stronger step still, because the Watchtower's own theology makes the claim testable—and former elder Don Cameron ran the test. By the Society's own explanation, Christ's decision in 1919 turned on the quality of the spiritual "food" the organization had been serving down till 1919, not on anything it teaches today. That food was an invisible presence of Christ dated to 1874, a chronology confirmed by the Great Pyramid, and an end expected in 1925—every item of it since discarded by the Society as error. Judged by its own standard, the inspection could only have failed. The credential is not merely self-conferred; by the criterion its own theology supplies, it is refuted.¹⁰

As a credential, then, the claim points to nothing outside itself—no succession, no sign, no witness beyond the claimant. It is to be contrasted with a claim of authority that rests on something outside the claimant — a historically traceable succession, open to public examination. And the authority, once asserted, is protected by a discipline shaped to the same end: to question the Governing Body's teaching is an offense, and the offender may be "disfellowshipped" and shunned, cut off even by his own family. A system that makes departure socially catastrophic and doubt a punishable act has arranged its incentives the way an institution anxious to preserve itself would arrange them — not the way a body that simply *had the truth* would ever need to.¹¹

The discipline is not left to inference; it is in print. In January 1983, under the heading "Avoid Independent Thinking," *The Watchtower* condemned "questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization"; in 2001 it defined spiritual maturity as harboring no "private ideas" about Scripture; in 2013 it required obedience to instructions "whether these appear sound from a strategic or human standpoint or not." I have the same counsel in my own file: in 1979 I wrote to the Society asking why a parable should be read as a prophecy of a governing class, and the reply—"at present, we have nothing to add beyond what has already been printed"—came with a rebuke for not keeping my viewpoint to myself. The full record, with the correspondence in facsimile, is set out in the companion essay *By What Authority?*¹²

VII. The Verse Read Both Ways

Return, finally, to the handling of Scripture, where the pattern can be seen in its purest form — in a single inconsistency of method repeated across many doctrines. Ask of any given passage: does the Watchtower read it literally or figuratively? The answer, it turns out, cannot be predicted from any rule of interpretation. It can be predicted only from the doctrine the passage is needed to support.

The 144,000 of Revelation are counted with rigid literalism, because the system needs a limited class destined for heaven — yet the same chapter, read with the same literalism, would admit only Jewish male virgins, a result avoided by reading *those* details as symbolic.¹³ Meanwhile the rich man and Lazarus, whose conscious life immediately after death is fatal to the doctrine of soul-sleep, is dismissed as “merely a parable.”¹⁴ Literal where literalism helps, figurative where it hurts: this is not a hermeneutic but its opposite — a method with no fixed principle except the protection of the conclusion. A reader genuinely submitting to the text does not get to choose, verse by verse, which key will open the lock he wants opened.

There is a third way to read a verse both ways: read it differently over time. Until 2013 the Society taught that the slave of Matthew 24:45–47 had been appointed over the domestics at Pentecost of 33 C.E. and “over all his belongings” in 1919. The July 15, 2013 *Watchtower* re-dated both clauses at once—the domestics appointment moved forward to 1919, the belongings appointment out of the past altogether, to await the great tribulation. The same sentence of Scripture has thus carried different dates for each of its clauses as need required. A text managed this freely is not governing the institution; the institution is governing the text.¹⁵

VIII. The History Rewritten

There is a further mark, and it may be the most human of all: the institution curates its own past. The Watchtower’s official history, *Jehovah’s Witnesses—Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom* (1993), was billed on release as “objective and candid.” What its own researchers found was something else. Barbara Anderson, assigned by the Writing Department to identify the faithful Christians who had carried the truth from the apostles down to Russell—the chain the Society’s history requires—spent months applying the Society’s own four criteria and reported that no such chain exists: not one generation of true Christians linking to a succeeding generation. Her overseer accepted the finding, and the book fell back on the vaguest formula available: there have always been “truth lovers.”¹⁶

The pattern runs through the book. Embarrassing episodes arrive obliquely, in pieces, pages apart, so that only a reader who already knows the history can reassemble them: the 1874 date for Christ’s presence is acknowledged, but that the magazine’s own masthead proclaimed it for decades, and that the date was not abandoned until 1943, must be assembled from a footnote here and an aside there. A scholarly study of the movement’s historiography calls the method “historical idealism”—the past continuously rewritten to match the present’s needs. And Cameron documents the operating rule from inside: a teaching abandoned by a Witness is “apostasy”; the same teaching abandoned by the Society is “new light.”¹⁷

A body of truth given from above does not need its history managed. What happened, happened; the record can afford to say so. An institution that writes its own past the way it translates its own texts—shaping the material until it supports the story—is doing in historiography what it does in exegesis. The hand is the same.

IX. The Shape of the Pattern

Lay the instances side by side, and their sameness is the whole argument. The translation that follows its own rule only when convenient. The prophecy redefined every time it fails. The unchanging law that changes by the decade. The authority that appoints itself and then forbids the question. The verse read literally or figuratively according to need. The history rewritten until the failures vanish. These are not six unrelated faults; they are six faces of one thing — a system that does not *follow* the evidence but *manages* it, that begins with the conclusion it must reach and works backward to the premises that will reach it.

And that backward motion is the very definition of a doctrine made by men. When the truth is given from above, one's task is to conform the mind to it, wherever it leads, however inconvenient. When the "truth" is generated from below — by an institution that must, at all costs, be right, and be seen to have always been right — the evidence becomes raw material to be shaped, the text a thing to be managed, the failed prediction a thing to be rewritten after the fact. The Watchtower's method is not the method of a servant receiving a deposit and guarding it unchanged. It is the method of an author, revising his manuscript to keep the story consistent as it goes. The hand at work is a human hand.

X. The Objection from Development

One serious objection must be faced, for honesty requires it. Does not the Catholic Church also change? It develops doctrine, defines new dogmas, holds councils, claims a teaching authority of its own. If change and authority condemn the Watchtower, do they not condemn Rome with it? The objection is fair, and the answer is precise: the distinction is between *development* and *reversal*, and between authority that is *received* and authority that is *seized*.¹⁸

Development is the unfolding of what was always implicitly held — the acorn becoming the oak, never the acorn becoming a horse. Nor is development a later apology invented to cover later doctrine: the apostles themselves developed the Church's order in their own lifetimes, under the Spirit whom Christ promised would guide them "into all the truth" (John 16:13), filling the office Judas vacated and creating an order of ministers that had not existed before (Acts 1:20; 6:1–6). St. John Henry Newman set out those tests in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*: a true development keeps the type of the original and the continuity of its principles, and adds without contradicting, while a

corruption reverses what it claims to continue. The Trinity defined at Nicaea, the canon recognized over centuries, the Marian dogmas: each is tested by continuity with Scripture and the witness of the Fathers reaching back to the apostles, and each makes explicit what the Church believed in substance from the first. That is not the same act as declaring transplants “cannibalism” and then permitting them, or fixing the end of the world at 1914, 1925, and 1975 in turn. Development deepens a teaching without contradicting it; the Watchtower’s changes contradict what went before. And the Catholic claim to authority, whatever one makes of it, at least points outside itself — to a succession open to the inspection of history — rather than resting, as the Governing Body’s does, on its own say-so. One may reject the Catholic claim; but it is not the same *kind* of claim, and it does not bear the same fingerprints.

XI. Conclusion: Whose Handiwork?

Gamaliel, in the Acts of the Apostles, proposed a test for movements claiming to be from God: “If this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them” (Acts 5:38–39). Endurance alone is a rough test — many human things endure — but the deeper principle is sound: the works of God and the works of men bear different marks, and patient attention can tell them apart. The works of God do not need to falsify their own predictions, bend their own translations, reverse their own commandments, or forbid the questions that would expose them. They can afford the truth, because they are the truth.

The Watchtower cannot afford it. Across every doctrine this series has examined, the same hand is visible — adjusting the text, moving the date, revising the law, guarding the authority it gave itself. No one of these, taken alone, would be decisive; men make honest mistakes, and a single error proves nothing. But they are not alone, and they are not honest mistakes in the ordinary sense. They are one consistent method, applied across the whole body of teaching, and the method is the method of a human institution protecting a human construction. That is the conclusion the pattern forces — not bigotry, not contempt, but the sober inference any careful observer must draw. The Watchtower bears, from first to last, the fingerprints of a human hand. And a religion made by men, however earnest its members, cannot give what only God can give.

This is said not to wound, but because the truth matters, and because the millions within that system were made for something truer than a manuscript perpetually revised to save its author’s reputation. “You will know the truth,” Jesus promised, “and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). The truth that frees is not generated by a committee and amended when it fails. It is a Person, received as a gift, who does not change — “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Endnotes

1. The argument of this essay is cumulative and concerns *method*, not any single doctrine. Each claim below is developed at length, with its sources, on the corresponding topic page of this series (on the Trinity, the New World Translation, the blood doctrine, the “last days,” the 144,000 and the “other sheep,” the question of authority, and the rest). The reader who wishes to verify a particular point should consult the relevant page; here the aim is to step back and ask what the *pattern* across all of them implies.
2. Nothing here impugns the sincerity or goodness of individual Jehovah’s Witnesses, who are in the main devout, moral, and courageous in their convictions. The argument concerns the institution’s *handling of evidence*, not the character of its members; one may hold that a system is mistaken, even man-made, while holding its adherents in genuine respect. “Speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) requires both halves.
3. See the page “The New World Translation.” On the rule the Watchtower invokes at John 1:1 (that a Greek noun without the definite article should be rendered indefinitely, hence “a god”): across the New Testament the word *theos* occurs without the article 282 times, and the NWT renders it indefinitely (“a god,” “god,” “gods,” “godly”) in only about sixteen of them — roughly six percent — translating the rest “God.” In the prologue of John itself, *theos* stands without the article in verses 6, 12, 13, and 18, all rendered “God,” and only at 1:1c, where doctrine requires it, “a god.” A rule honored six percent of the time, exactly where it is convenient, is not a rule but a pretext (cf. R. Countess; D. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*).
4. See “The New World Translation” and “Jehovah or Yahweh?” The NWT inserts “Jehovah” into the New Testament 237 times, although the divine name in that form appears in *no* Greek manuscript of the New Testament; where the apostles quote Old Testament passages containing the Tetragrammaton, the surviving texts read *Kyrios* (“Lord”). The form “Jehovah” is itself a late hybrid, the consonants of the Hebrew name with the vowels of *Adonai*; the Watchtower’s own *Insight on the Scriptures* concedes that “Yahweh” is the more likely pronunciation.
5. See “The New World Translation.” At Luke 23:43 the NWT moves the comma — “Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise” — so that Jesus promises nothing about *today*, only speaks today. The relocation is required not by the grammar but by the prior doctrine that the dead are unconscious and no one could be in Paradise that day. The text is bent to fit the system.
6. See “When Are The Last Days?” The movement’s chronology located the invisible “presence” (*parousia*) of Christ first at 1874, then, when that failed, at 1914; the “end” was

variously expected in 1914, 1925, and 1975. As each date passed, the prediction was not withdrawn but *relocated* — the event redefined as invisible, or the meaning of “this generation” (Matt. 24:34) repeatedly redefined (most recently as two overlapping lifetimes) to keep the timetable alive. A genuinely prophetic record does not require this perpetual rescue.

7. See “Blood and the Sanctity of Life.” The blood doctrine, presented as God’s unchanging law, has in fact changed repeatedly: blood was permissible to eat until 1927; transfusion did not become a disfellowshipping offense until 1961; vaccination was condemned (1921) then allowed (1952); organ transplants were called “wonderful” (1949), then “cannibalism” (1967), then permitted again (1980); and the rule on blood “fractions” was progressively loosened, so that believers who died before 2000 refusing fractions died for a rule the Society has since reversed. A standard that changes this often cannot have been, at every stage, the fixed command of God.

8. See “By What Authority?” The Watchtower’s Governing Body identifies *itself* as the “faithful and discreet slave” of Matthew 24:45 and dates its own commissioning to 1919 — a claim that, by its nature, authorizes the very body that makes it. This is to be distinguished from a claim of authority that rests on historically traceable succession; here the credential and the claimant are one.

9. On “governing body” first applied to the Society (*The Watchtower*, July 15, 1943), the Governing Body as an entity distinct from the board (*The Watchtower*, December 15, 1971), and the transfer of authority to its committees effective January 1, 1976 (1977 *Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*), see “By What Authority?”, section X. *The Watch Tower*, April 1, 1920, “Let Us Dwell in Peace,” pp. 100–101. Free online at <https://archive.org/details/magazines-the-watchtower-and-herald-christ-presence-1920>.

10. *God’s Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1973), pp. 349–355, quoted in Don Cameron, *Captives of a Concept* (2nd ed., 2004), pp. 19–20; the argument is developed in his chapters 2–3 and taken up in “By What Authority?”, section X.

11. The structural point is not that a religion has authority or discipline — so does the Catholic Church — but that here the authority is self-conferred and its exercise (disfellowshipping, with the shunning even of close family) is directed in such a way as to insulate the institution’s teaching from challenge. A system that makes leaving it socially catastrophic, and questioning it an offense, has arranged its incentives the way a human institution protective of itself would, not the way a body confident in the truth need do.

12. *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, pp. 22, 27; August 1, 2001, p. 14; November 15, 2013, p. 20. All are quoted in full, with the author's 1979 correspondence reproduced in facsimile, in "By What Authority?", section XI, and in the References panel of that page.

13. See "One Flock or Two?" The 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 is read as a literal cap on the number admitted to heaven — yet the same passage, read with equal literalism, would admit only Jewish male virgins (Rev. 7:4–8; 14:4), excluding the Apostle Peter (married), the Virgin Mary (not male), and Charles Taze Russell (not a Jew). The number is taken literally where doctrine needs a limited heavenly class, while the surrounding details that would embarrass the reading are quietly treated as symbolic.

14. See "What Is the Soul?" and "What Is Hell?" Conversely, where a literal reading is *inconvenient* — as with the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), in which the dead are conscious immediately after death — the passage is set aside as "merely a parable." The governing principle is not a consistent hermeneutic (literal or figurative) but the prior doctrine: texts are read literally or figuratively according to which reading yields the required result.

15. "Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?", *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013: the former teaching is summarized in par. 3 ("In the past, our publications have said the following: At Pentecost 33 C.E., Jesus appointed the faithful slave over his domestics ... In 1919, Jesus appointed the faithful slave 'over all his belongings'"); the revised view is in pars. 16 and 18.

16. *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1993); the foreword promises an "objective and candid" history, and the retreat to "truth lovers" is at p. 44. Barbara Anderson's account of the research assignment under Karl Adams—the four criteria, the months of study, and the conclusion that no generational chain exists—is held in the site's reference library and summarized on the page "Was There a Great Apostasy?"

17. On "historical idealism" in the Society's presentation of its past, see the study "Historical Idealism and Jehovah's Witnesses" (in the site's reference library), which documents the handling of the 1874 and 1878 chronology. Cameron, *Captives of a Concept*, pp. 78–80, documents the operating rule: a teaching abandoned by a Witness is "apostasy"; the same teaching abandoned by the Society is "new light from God."

18. A fair objection: does not the Catholic Church also change — developing doctrine, holding councils, exercising a magisterium? It does. The distinction is between *development* and *reversal*. Development is the organic unfolding of what was implicitly held from the beginning (as an acorn becomes an oak), tested by continuity with Scripture and the consensus of the Fathers across centuries; the doctrine of the Trinity, made explicit at Nicaea, was confessed in substance from the apostolic age. Reversal is the

contradiction of a prior teaching (transplants “cannibalism,” then permitted), or the repeated failure and quiet revision of a datable prediction. The first is what a living tradition does; the second is what a human committee does when reality refuses to cooperate. On the Catholic understanding of authority as guided rather than newly inspired, see “By What Authority?”

For Further Reading

Correspondence with the Watch Tower Society, February–March 1979, by the author—his three-page letter and the Society’s two-page reply, in facsimile. Free online in the References panel at richwhiting.com/warp/authority.

Proving the Catholic Faith Is Biblical, by Dave Armstrong.

The Catholic Controversy, by St. Francis de Sales.

The Protestant’s Dilemma, by Devin Rose.

The Shape of Catholic Theology, by Aidan Nichols, O.P.

Early Christian Doctrines, by J. N. D. Kelly.

Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church, by Stephen K. Ray.

The Faith of the Early Fathers—Volumes 1, 2, and 3, by William A. Jurgens.

The Teaching Authority of the Church, by Msgr. Ronald A. Knox. Free online at <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-teaching-authority-of-the-church>.

Crisis of Conscience, by Raymond Franz.

Captives of a Concept, by Don Cameron—the 1919 appointment claim, tested against the Society’s own history.

An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, by St. John Henry Newman (1845)—how doctrine develops without reversing, read free at the Newman Reader. Free online at <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/development/>.

By What Authority?—An Evangelical Discovers Catholic Tradition, by Mark Shea—the same question, asked from the Protestant side.

* * *

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:32

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

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A Note on Charity and Purpose

This essay is a critique of an institution and its method, not an attack on the people within it. Jehovah's Witnesses are, in the author's experience, sincere, disciplined, and devoted; many serve God as well as they know how, at real personal cost. To argue that the system that teaches them is man-made is not to despise them but to wish them better than it can give. It is offered as a personal articulation of the Catholic faith, in the conviction that "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) honors both the truth and the persons addressed. Where it serves that end, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it; where it falls short, the fault is the author's own.

A Note on Authority

This essay represents the author's articulation of the Catholic assessment of the Watchtower's claim to divine origin, drawing on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Church Fathers, and the major theological tradition. It is offered as a personal defense, not as an official statement of the Church's teaching. Where this defense is fortunate enough to align with the magisterial teaching of the Church, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it. Where it falls short, the responsibility is the author's alone.