

In the Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Greg Stafford takes up the familiar defense of subjects having to do with the use and pronunciation of the divine name, the identity of the biblical God Jah and of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as issues and questions having to do with salvation, God's sovereignty and mankind's "free will." This edition also contains discussions of several controversial issues, including questions related to abortion, a person's sexual orientation, and regarding uses of blood.

Most significantly, this book puts forth not only a defense of some the biblical teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but it also further introduces the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah's Witnesses who reject human traditions when these can be shown to contradict what is based on the best available reasons. Thus, a call is made to all Jehovah's Witnesses, to all Christians, indeed, to "every breathing thing" to bear witness to and to praise the biblical God Jah, and to acknowledge what can be shown to be true for good reasons about Jesus of Nazareth.—Psalm 150:6; Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12; Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 1:10; Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

GREG STAFFORD is also the author of *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* and of various articles and debates on biblical Christianity and the history and the beliefs of the Watchtower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses. He is a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects traditions and beliefs that are not based on the best available evidence.



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TO SCHOLARS  
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Murrieta, California

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## Jehovah's Witnesses Christian Witnesses of Jah

Those who speak and who act with the intent to deceive or to take advantage of others do so in ways which are not always easy to notice. That is why it is called “deception,” that is, where someone or something is knowingly not who or what he, she, or it claims to be. Rather, the deceiver puts on a front or cover to hide behind. So you never know with a deceiver, and there is not even a good reason to consider for what a deceiver says or does, which is proven by the fact that *no one who deceives wants to be deceived*. Thus, there is an evident inconsistency which can be isolated and criticized each time a true deception is involved.

Christianity avoids this criticism by *using our own treatment and judgment of others to determine how we are then also to be treated and judged* (Matthew 7:1, 12). Here, too, are the ways of Jah and Jesus set clearly against the ways of those who deceive. The primary difference is while one side believes the treatment and the judgment should be fair (which fairness can be checked by what we would accept or receive ourselves), the other side believes it is acceptable to take advantage of others for selfish gain though, again, members of this side would not accept such treatment for themselves.

In spite of the danger which deception and lies pose to each of us, there is also the human tendency to come together and to associate, and to work with others in groups (compare Genesis 11:1, 4). This can be for good, so long as the goals of the group are clearly defined and, for Christianity, based solely on the best available reasons. Yet, large groups and associations of people often become breeding grounds for humans to take advantage of others. Indeed, the larger the group the easier it is for “the wicked

one” to hide and to ‘sow’ his deception (Matthew 13:38-39). But according to the Bible whether we are with *one* other person or with millions of others, we will be judged by what we do *individually* (see Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10; Revelation 2:23; 20:13). Thus, it is written the Messiah from Jah “will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears,” but “with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth.”—Isaiah 11:3-5.

When we group individuals together to a point where our evaluation becomes less individualistic and more group-identity-oriented, if such groupings wrongly represent the interests and intentions of even a single person then that descriptive grouping is in need of further differentiation within the defined group. Or the grouping needs to be avoided or rejected completely, because it is “misleading” (compare 2 Timothy 3:13; Revelation 12:9). This happens often in discussions about race or color today, for example, where some use fallacious and misleading descriptions and groupings such as “*white* people” or “*black* people.” Instead, what people who speak on issues of race or color should say (if they wanted to be accurate, respectful, and constructive) is ‘*some* persons who are white’ or ‘*some* persons who are black’ do or say certain things. But your or my color or race does not speak for our actions or for who we are as persons in God’s sight.

Thus, the color given to our skin should not define who we are as individuals, since “God does not go by a man’s outward appearance” (Galatians 2:6). Indeed, “God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:6-11). This further highlights the significance of what I consider the best reason for how we should live and for how we should treat others, that is, by ‘treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves,’ though without letting anyone take advantage of us.—Matthew 7:6; compare Matthew 25:1-12.

As one of Jehovah’s Witnesses I try to identify the beliefs and practices supported by the best available evidence, rather than promote beliefs I have learned to be mere tradition kept in place for no good reasons. I also want to do as much good as possible, since there is good reason to believe that what we do

comes back to us in a meaningfully corresponding way. This is true not only where it concerns our judgment by God “individually” (as noted earlier), but also now, today, for if we “practice giving” then “people will give” to us. Indeed, “they will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing” (Luke 6:38). This Christian principle of sending forth what you want to come back upon you is also driven home by Jesus in the following illustration:

**Matthew 18:23-35 NAB**

[T]he kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”

We can be this way, the way that is evidently good and right in the above illustration, that is, when seen as it is here against what is clearly wrong. We can tell this difference and validate it by considering ourselves in each role, and *then* we know how we would want to be treated ourselves. *That* is a good reason for why we should then “be doing the same” (Luke 10:37). We should

help the poor because if we were poor we would want help, also. We can comfort others when they are in need or depressed, as we would want comfort. We should give when we are able, and maybe even perhaps when we are not. But if we were the one in need, we would likely want someone to give to us according to what is theirs to give, and according to what is our genuine need (Ephesians 4:28; 1 John 3:17-18; compare 1 Corinthians 12:19-27). We can do all these and so many other *good* things, because *we were made to do them* and to *enjoy* doing them!—Psalm 139:14.

Jah can be seen in each one of us, and in the world and in all things, for Jah “made the world and all the things in it, being, as this One is, Lord of heaven and earth ... because he himself gives to all [persons] life and breath and all things.” Jah “made out of one [man] every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth, and he decreed the appointed times and the set limits [for our] dwelling ... For by him we have life and move and exist” (Acts 17:24-26, 28; compare Revelation 4:11). I believe what is said in these texts from the NT, not simply because the Bible says it and because I assume the Bible is true. There are several lines of credible evidence and reasoning which direct me to the Bible and to what it teaches about Jah and about Jesus, and thus also explain why I am a Christian Witness of Jah. These reasons include:

1. The best available evidence demonstrates that life can only come from existing life, or as a result of something or someone already alive.
2. Since life does exist all around us, life must also be eternal, that is, for life to have existed at all and for it to then give life to other life.
3. The best available evidence indicates that this eternal life who gave life to life is also intelligent rather than a random, unintelligent Life Giver.
4. This eternal, intelligent Life Giver actively develops existing life, as well as countless different forms of life over vast periods of time, but whose bones in the earth give witness to their prehistoric

life, life which must also have come from the eternal, intelligent Life Giver.—Compare 1 Corinthians 8:6; 11:12.

5. In association with the best available reasons, including reasons informing my beliefs for 1. through 4. above, I believe part of this intelligent Life Giver's history with humankind is credibly represented in the pages of the books of the Bible. I also believe this is true concerning the history and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.
6. As shown in Chapter 1, the least disputable form of the Life Giver's name according to the Bible is "Jah," and it is *this* name whom all living creatures will praise!—Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6.
7. The Bible also teaches us about Jah's will for mankind, why Jah sent forth Jesus of Nazareth, and why those who follow him are called "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 1 John 4:14; Revelation 21:1-5). Further, because this one lived only according to Jah's will, even to his death, Jah's Son's name will also be lifted up and honored "to the glory of God the Father."—John 8:28; Philippians 2:5-11.

Therefore, in association with the above and for other good reasons presented in this book, I consider myself a Christian Witness of Jah or one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects what is not based on the best available evidence. I do not want anything more to do with those who try to 'govern,' control, or influence the thoughts of others,<sup>1</sup> or who reject biblical beliefs based on

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in addition to what is written in *The Watchtower* about 'not harboring private ideas when it comes to Bible understanding,' and in addition to demanding "complete confidence in the truth as it is revealed by Jehovah God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and the faithful and discreet slave" (see "Make Your Advancement Manifest," August 1, 2001, page 14, par. 8), the Watchtower Society has recently discouraged and expressed disapproval of independent study groups and group study activities, that is, those which the Society does not 'direct.' After presenting the question, "Does the faithful and discreet slave approve of Jehovah's Witnesses independently getting together to examine and debate Biblical topics?" in its internal magazine *Our Kingdom Ministry* (September, 2007), the Watchtower Society gave this response (page 3, underlining added):

No. Nevertheless, some who are associated with our organization have taken it upon themselves to arrange meetings in order to independently examine Bible topics. Some are occupied with the Biblical Hebrew and Greek, in order to examine the accuracy of the New World Translation. Others investigate scientific topics which have to do with the Bible. Websites and classrooms have been furnished so that opinions can be

good reasons in favor of what can reasonably be shown to be nothing but human-inspired tradition. I believe the best available reasons point to the Bible and to the intelligence in our design as sources of information about the eternal Life Giver and God, Jah. If he is real, and the best available reasons motivate me to believe Jah is real, then we can talk about him in ways others will understand. If our reasons are good, then others will see this, and then in Jah's image they will believe and become happy!—Acts 18:28; 20:20-21; 9:22; Romans 1:11-12; 10:9-10; James 1:12.

Jehovah's Witnesses are those who bear witness to the God of the Bible, but apart from the traditions of men (Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12). Being Jah's or Jesus' Witness does not depend on becoming a member in a group of *many*, for whether there are "two or three" (Matthew 18:20) or many more *that* is how many are our spiritual family and "congregation." After sufficiently addressing the needs of those who depend most directly upon us (1 Timothy 3:5), if Jah wills it we can reach out to our neighbors (Galatians 5:14-15), and then elsewhere to as many as are willing to learn about Jah and about Jesus, and about what it means to live and to act according to good reasons.

In the Bible we learn that at some point each one of us obtains "the knowledge of good and bad" (Genesis 2:17; 3:6), as well as the knowledge of "how to reject the bad and *choose the good*" (Isaiah 7:15, emphasis added). But there are some today who, as in times past, "are saying that good is bad and bad is good, those

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exchanged and debated. Also public conferences were held and books were made in order to supplement our meetings and study materials. God's people receive plentiful Bible training and encouragement through congregation meetings as well as publications from Jehovah's Organization. Jehovah ensures that all of his servants under this arrangement are given his word of truth, so that they "may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought" and "built up in him and being stabilized in the faith." (1 Cor 1:10; Col 2:6,7) We are certainly grateful for all of the spiritual food Jehovah has given in these last days. Therefore the "faithful and discreet slave" does not approve of any literature, websites, or meetings not under its direction. (Matt 24:45-47)

Yet, 'taking it upon themselves' to check the accuracy of what Paul taught them about the Christ is precisely what constituted the ancient Bereans as "more noble-minded" than others. Indeed, they were "carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so" (Acts 17:10-11; compare Rev 2:2). They examined the evidence together and as a result "many of them became believers, and so did not a few of the reputable Greek women and of the men" (Acts 17:12). But the Watchtower Society discourages any such examination of the scriptures, apart from "any literature, websites, or meetings not under its direction."

who are putting darkness for light and light for darkness, those who are putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20). Since doing what is good is fundamental to being a Christian, if *what is good* is unclear or distorted then Christians must rise up and *define* what is good, and *defend* what is good, or how will we “keep doing good”?—Romans 13:3.

As noted earlier, one of the most important reasons Christians have for how we treat others is “the kingly law according to the scripture,” namely, “You must love your neighbor as yourself” (James 2:8). If you want what is good, then *ask* for what is good. For as Jesus taught, “[W]hich father is there” who “if his son asks for a fish, will perhaps hand him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he also asks for an egg, will hand him a scorpion?” Indeed, if we though “wicked” can “give good gifts to [our] children, how much more so will” Jah give good things and “holy spirit to those asking him!”—Luke 11:11-13; compare Luke 18:1-8.

“*Learn to do good*; search for justice; set right the oppressor; render judgment for the fatherless boy; plead the cause of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17, emphasis added). Then Jah will let us start or continue in the works for which we were made, namely, “*good works*” (Ephesians 2:10, emphasis added). “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. ... let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts ... And show yourselves thankful. ... Keep on teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, praises to God, spiritual songs with graciousness, singing” to Jah God and in praise of his Son (Colossians 3:13-16; James 5:13; Revelation 5:9-14). But “*whatever it is that you do* in word or in work, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him.”—Colossians 3:17, emphasis added.

While this book has helped me to continue my defense of the good reasons for many of the beliefs held by those who consider themselves Jehovah's Witnesses, I hope it has also helped those who may have left off from bearing witness to Jah or to Jesus because of their experiences with the Watchtower Society. If you are like me in these ways, then such an experience could not be more profound in its awakening. Unfortunately, such growth can also include a period of darkness, but one in which you can find

yourself, or where Jah and Jesus will find you, and then they will make you “strong.”—1 Peter 5:10; Revelation 3:2, 11, 20-22.