

defame those who raise the issues and impugn their motives for demanding an answer of them.

"Some opposers claim that Jehovah's Witnesses are false prophets. These opponents say that dates have been set, but nothing has happened. Again we ask, What is the motive of these critics? Are they encouraging wakefulness on the part of God's people, or are they, rather, trying to justify themselves for falling back into sleepy inactivity?" -*The Watchtower*, March 15, 1986, (page 19, par. 14) Notice how casually they imply wrong motives to their critics and

turn attention away from the valid arguments raised by these critics. Self-justification always comes first with them. I believe this corporate failure to openly and frankly admit to the seriousness of their many prophetic failures only adds to the weight of guilt they have accumulated before God. No doubt the material presented in the current magazine will deepen and widen the crevice of fear and animosity of Jehovah's Witnesses against their former brothers now called apostates. I think it also deepens and widens the crevice of reprehensibility excavated by the Society's own testimony .□

Forced Unity Through Disfellowshipping

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In Jesus' parable of the Ten Minas each servant was given a single mina and instructed to put this money to work until their master returned. Later, when the master returned after having secured kingly power he examined each servant to see what he had done to increase the value of his investment in them. (Luke 19: 11-27) All of the servants, with but one exception, increased the value of their investment and were commended and rewarded by their kingly master. The one servant who failed to make a profitable investment was only able to present his master with the original coin. For this the servant was reprimanded and judged "wicked" by his master who took his mina from him and gave it to another. In his effort to justify his failure to increase the master's investment the wicked servant actually offered self-incriminating testimony: "You see, I was in fear of you, because you are a harsh man; you take up what you did not deposit and you reap what you did not sow. He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I judge you, wicked slave. You knew, did you, that I am a harsh man, taking up what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Hence why is it you did not put my silver money in a bank? Then on my arrival I would have collected it with interest.'""-Luke 19:21-23 *NW*.

We note in the above parable that the wicked slave was judged out of his own mouth because he failed to act in a manner consistent with his own evaluation of matters. There is, I believe, a parallel to be found in the official statements of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. On the one hand they champion the virtue of the truth presented in the Bible but, in practice, they often act in a manner that contradicts their public declarations. A current example of this is to be found in *The Watchtower*, April 1, 1986. In the *Questions From Readers* portion of this journal they address

themselves to answering the query: "Why have Jehovah's Witnesses disfellowshipped (excommunicated) for apostasy some who still profess belief in God, The Bible, and Jesus Christ?" In supplying their answer they inadvertently offer self incriminating evidence. While acknowledging that many religious organizations allow dissident views within their respective fellowships they counter with the following: "However, such examples provide no grounds for our doing the same. Why not? Many of such denominations allow widely divergent views among the clergy and the laity because they feel they cannot be certain as to just what is Bible truth. They are like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day who were unable to speak as persons having authority, which is how Jesus taught." -page 30.

Without directly saying so, the publishers are suggesting that they are merely following Jesus' example in their doctrinal intransigence. But is this a valid comparison? They cite Matthew 7:29 which, according to the *NW Translation* reads: "For he was teaching them as a person having authority, and not as their scribes." Matthew's observation comes at the conclusion of Jesus' lengthy sermon on the mount wherein he set forth God's mind on a host of moral and ethical issues which cut through traditional interpretations. Unlike the scribes who had to appeal to scripture or tradition the Lord simply spoke on his own authority. Repeatedly, throughout this sermon he would draw attention to a prevailing view and then would say: "However, I say to you," and then go on to set forth his teaching on the matter. (see Matt. 5:20,22,28,32,34,39 & 44) His teachings were validated by his saying them. No one before or since could rightly do what the Son of God did in this respect. Every Christian teacher feels an obligation to

substantiate what he says with scripture and rightly so.

In this respect even the Watchtower Society must acknowledge that they cannot speak on their own authority as did Jesus. In one of their latest books titled: *Reasoning From The Scriptures*, (1985) they acknowledge this fact in the following statement:

"Keep in mind that this book is only an aid. The Bible is the authority. That is God's Word." (page 8, par.2) It follows then that they cannot speak with authority as did Jesus because they are bound by what is written but he was not. In this way they resemble the scribes who appealed to tradition as well as scripture. While they reject many of the traditions in Christendom they have developed their own sectarian traditions which they appeal to for support. So their application of Matthew 7:29 in connection with their disfellowshipping policy is unfounded.

They then draw attention to the seriousness of deviating from revealed truth and quote the apostle Paul's words: "Even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond what we declared to you as good news, let him be accursed. As we have said above, I also now say again, Whoever it is that is declaring to you as good news something beyond what you accepted, let him be accursed. ", -Galatians 1 :8,9 NW. The apostle Paul was most emphatic about the seriousness of teaching *something beyond* what was declared to the Galatians Christians as good news.

The use of this text to buttress their argument is self-incriminating because *they teach a good news that goes beyond what the Galatians and other believers received as good news in the first century!* Concerning that good news the apostle Paul wrote: "One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." -Ephesians 4:4-6 NW. The good news brought to the Galatians offered but one hope. But despite this clear statement of truth the Watchtower Society presumptuously preaches two hopes! They combine their time feature prophesies and interpretation of Revelation to limit the one hope of which Paul spoke to only 144,000. Of this number they teach that there are now only a remnant of about 9,000 in the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses. It is this number who partake of the emblematic bread and wine at their annual observance of the Lord's Evening Meal. (Luke 22: 19) These are said to share in a heavenly

inheritance. The vast majority of Witnesses (about 3 million) are said to have a different hope-an earthly one. These latter ones are not viewed as Sons of God nor does Jesus Christ act as their mediator according to Watchtower teaching. (1 Timothy 2:5)

This *new hope* can be traced back no further than A.D. 1935 when it was first received as a revelation of truth: "Manifestly it was now the time for gathering in the 'other sheep' rather than for a general in-gathering of the remnant of the Kingdom heirs. To indicate this, *there occurred on May 31, 1935, a revelation of truth concerning these 'other sheep.'*" It was that the 'great crowd,' seen in vision by the apostle John nineteen centuries ago and described in Revelation 7:9-17, was to be made up of the 'other sheep' whose calling is to everlasting life in a global paradise here on our earth." -*Life Everlasting-In Freedom of the Sons of God*, (1966) page 149, par. 57 (Italics added) This so-called "revelation of truth, "was a clear departure from the good news with its one hope preached by Paul and the other apostles of Jesus Christ. If such ones are *accursed* as the apostle says they are then what must be concluded about the Watchtower Society? Do they not stand self condemned by their own statements?

The magazine goes on to say that "teaching dissident or divergent views is not compatible with true Christianity." (page 31, par .1) A dissident is one who stands apart, not agreeing, different. In this regard who could be more of a dissident than the Watchtower Society itself? Does it not refuse any communion with other believers outside its ranks? Does it not condemn all other religious groups as apostate? Does it not editorially 'beat' these fellow servants of God? (Matt.24:49) Does it not boast that it has nothing to do with interfaith? In all of this it chooses to stand apart and exclude any degree of fellowship in the Christian community. Have they not presumptuously created a new hope-a different good news-that cancels out the historical good news by telling people that that hope is no longer available to general believers? What could be more dissident than that? They quote the apostle's words at 1 Corinthians 1:10: "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." NW.

The context in which we find the apostle's words indicates that there were parties within the Corinthian congregation. It is known that there were both Jewish and Gentile believers in this assembly of God's people.

While it is a matter of conjecture as to the exact nature of the divisions it does appear that they were influenced by what they perceived as significantly different points of view and that they were allowing these differences to divide them. Paul sums the matter up as follows: "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?"-I Corinthians 1:11-13 *New International Version*. Whatever the problem it was resulting in serious disagreements according to 1 Corinthians 1: 11. The *New world Translation* uses the word dissensions to translate the Greek noun *eris* in verse 11. According to *Strong's Concordance* this word carries the thought of "wrangling, contention, debate, strife." The same noun form is also found at Titus 3:9 where we are told: "But shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strife (Gr. *eris*) and fights over the Law, for they are unprofitable. " -Titus 3:9, *NW*.

Paul was interested in the maintaining of unity within the congregation. If these brothers allowed their differences to result in fights and divide them into factions then they would be missing the point of being in union with Jesus Christ. To be in unity did not require that they all view matters exactly alike. In his letter to the Roman brothers the apostle makes it clear that different perceptions involving matters of conscience must be honored and respected even though these differences produced significantly different religious practices on an individual basis. (see Romans 14) The intent of the Holy Spirit was to unify believers by not letting these differences *divide* them. (Eph. 4:3) For example, a Christian of Hebrew ancestry might feel strongly that his male heirs be circumcised according to the practice received from Abraham. There 'Would be nothing wrong with that because, in itself, circumcision was not a sin. Paul had his companion Timothy circumcised as a concession to Jewish sensitivity because it was common knowledge that his mother was a Jewess but his father was Greek. (Acts 16: 1-3)

Trouble over circumcision arose when some argued that *to be saved* one had to be circumcised and that was a dangerous heresy. There were those saying; "it is necessary to circumcise." (Acts 15 :5) Despite these differences unity could and would be maintained by not letting these differences create parties, factions or sects among them. If they allowed this to happen they

would break up the unity of the Body of Christ. There was to be a loving forbearance exercised- "a putting up with one another in love." -Ephesians 4:2 *NW*. A Careful reading of scriptures such as the 14th chapter of Romans clearly shows that religious differences did not break up the overall unity of the Christians in Rome.

The idea of unity advanced by the Watchtower Society would disallow individual religious differences. Regarding the unity of early Christians they say: ""Was this unity to be achieved and maintained by each one's independently searching the Scriptures, coming to his own conclusions, and then teaching these? Not at all! Through Jesus Christ, Jehovah God provided for this purpose 'some as apostles, ... some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers ... until we all attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, to a full grown man.' Yes, with the help of such ministers, congregational unity-oneness in teaching and activity-could be and would be possible.-Ephesians 4: 11-13"- *HIT 4/1/86*, Page 31, par. 2.

The unity of which the Watchtower Society speaks above is a total one-a conformity unique only to groups like themselves. In this kind of unity there is no room for even the slightest difference of opinion on anything the organization officially says. This is a

. forced unity and those who have any difficulty with it find themselves the target of harassment, threats and even excommunication. In the paragraph quoted above they are saying that this kind of unity (total) "could be and would be possible." Even the most casual reading of the New Testament reveals that such was not the case even during the lifetime of the apostles themselves. A reading of what Christ had to say to the seven churches in the district of Asia, written by the apostle John near the close of the 1st century shows that the congregations were not totally unified in belief and practice. (Rev. Chapters 1-3) There were those who did not have the spirit of Christ and these were a constant threat to the unity of the body of believers. While acknowledging that there was an apostasy in the first and second centuries the Watchtower Society insists that there has always been a body of believers that have avoided this apostasy and continued on century after century undivided.

Concerning this doctrine they say the following:

"Jehovah's Witnesses believe that this parable

(Matt.24:45-47) pertains to the one true congregation of Jesus Christ's anointed followers. Beginning with Pentecost, 33 C.E., and *continuing through the 19 centuries since then, this slave-like congregation has been feeding its members spiritually, doing so faithfully and discreetly.* "-The Watchtower, March 1, 1981, page 24, par.5 (Italics added) Another issue of *The Watchtower* addressing the same matter added this:

"Jesus Christ is the Head of the congregation, his slave, and his words show that he would strengthen them to feed his 'domestics' *right down through the centuries.* Apparently one generation of the 'slave' class fed the succeeding generation thereof, as well as feeding themselves." -*The Watchtower*, January 15, 1975, page 46, par.5 (Italics added)

Yet another *Watchtower* comments on the quality of the food being served during these many centuries:

"Down through the years the slave-like congregation has been feeding its true members faithfully and discreetly. From Pentecost, A.D. 33, up to this present hour this has been lovingly and carefully performed. Yes, and these 'domestics' have been *fed on progressive spiritual food that keeps them abreast of the 'bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.* ,,, - *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1960, page 435, par. 14 (emphasis added)

If, as the Watchtower Society insists, the unity of the Christian congregation (the faithful and Discreet slave) of Matthew 24:45-47) was never broken up and they continued to be fed "progressive spiritual food, " with ""one generation of the slave" feeding "the succeeding generation," beginning with Pentecost, A.D. 33 "and continuing through the 19 centuries since then, " then there would have been no need for a man like Charles Taze Russell to be "independently searching the Scriptures, coming to his own conclusions," which is exactly what he did! So again, we find the Society offering self-incriminating evidence against themselves. When the Watchtower Society lays claim to representing this 19 hundred year-old slave it is leaning on a broken reed. Their own recorded history demonstrates that they did not find this "slave" nor did it find them. Rather, they moved out, religiously, on their own independent of any such "slave."

Continuing their discussion of why Jehovah's Witness disfellowship people who profess faith in God, Christ and the Bible they say: "Approved association

with Jehovah's Witnesses requires accepting the entire range of the true teachings of the Bible, including those Scriptural beliefs that are unique to Jehovah's Witnesses. What do such beliefs include?" - *WT* 4/1/86 page 31, par. 4. In the paragraph that follows they make mention of some beliefs they say are unique to Jehovah's Witnesses. These include: (1) The rightfulness of Jehovah's sovereignty which they say "explains why he has permitted wickedness so long;" (2) That Jesus "had a prehuman existence and is subordinate" to his Father; (3) That the slave of Matthew 24:45-47 is now "entrusted with all of Jesus' earthly interests" and "is associated with the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses;" (4) That 1914 marked the end of the "Gentile Times," "the establishment of the Kingdom of God" and "Christ's foretold presence;" (5) "That only 144,000 Christians will receive the heavenly reward;" (6) That the battle of Armageddon "is near" (they say it must come within the generation of 1914); (7) That Armageddon "will be followed by Christ's Millennial Reign, which will restore an earth-wide paradise;" and (8) That the present "great crowd" (Jehovah's Witnesses in approved association) will survive, without having to die, into this earthly paradise and be "the first to enjoy it. "

For the record, a number of the above are not unique to Jehovah's Witnesses. There are other religious groups who espouse some of these views. Moreover, some of the above have been subject to radical changes over the years and are still subject to change. They can hardly be viewed as *basic* to the Bible. The present calendar of events is far different from that first calculated by Charles T. Russell. These changes being forced upon them because of failed predictions. While they say the Bible "is the real authority," often times it is only what the Watchtower publications say about these matters that establishes truth. To say, for example, that the "Gentile times" ended in October, 1914 is to deny the evidence of one's senses. The number of Gentile nations have actually increased since 1914, and their power is still exercised. Obviously, their "time" continues. And where in the Bible does it say that there are only 144,000 Christians who will receive a heavenly reward? Does the Bible really say that or is that conclusion read *into* the Bible by the Watchtower Society?

It would be safe to say that most of the disfellowshipping of so-called "apostates" by the Society and its representatives is over challenges to questionable doctrines created by Russell, his successors, and the Watchtower Society's claimed

authority which is exercised in a dictatorial manner over the Witnesses: When one is brought before a committee of elders the critical question to be answered is not "do you accept the Bible as the Word of God?" but, rather, "Do you accept the Watchtower Society as the present-day spiritual authority?" Primarily, "approved association" rests on accepting them.

In a further effort to validate their strict practice of disfellowshipping they quote 2 Timothy 2: 17,18 which records an errant view of the resurrection doctrine being preached by Hymenaeus and Philetus: "Their word will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of that number. These very men have deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred; and they are subverting the faith of some." Commenting on this portion of Scripture Albert Barnes wrote: "It is not known in what form they held this opinion. It may have been, as Augustine supposes, that they taught that there was no resurrection but that which occurs in the soul when it is recovered from the death of sin, and made to live anew. Or it may be that they held that those who had died had experienced all the resurrection which they ever would, by passing into another state, and receiving at death, a spiritual body fitted to their mode of being in the heavenly world. Whatever was the form of the opinion, the apostle regarded it as a most dangerous error, for just views of the resurrection undoubtedly lie at the foundation of correct apprehensions of the Christian system."

The current Watchtower comments on these verses as follows: "There is nothing to indicate that these men did not believe in God, the Bible, in Jesus' sacrifice. *Yet on this one point*, what they were teaching as to *the time* of the resurrection, Paul rightly branded them as apostates, with whom faithful Christians would not fellowship." - Page 31, par. 6 (Italics added) The Watchtower agrees that to err on just "this one point," regarding the "time of the resurrection," would brand one an "apostate." In view of this what is to be said about their teaching that the Christian resurrection occurred in the spring of 1918? Note what they say about this in the following excerpt:

"The Scriptures link this 'first resurrection' with Christ's 'presence [Greek *parousia*].' (1 Cor. 15:23) The apostle Paul writes: 'The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ [starting from the

first century and up to Christ's coming to the spiritual temple in 1918] will rise first.' Paul goes on to say that the anointed Christians 'who survive to the presence [*parousia*] of the Lord,' and who therefore die during the *parousia*, will be immediately resurrected and 'caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.' (1 Thess. 4: 14-17) They do not have to 'sleep' in the grave, awaiting the resurrection. At death they are 'changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.'" -:- *The Watchtower*, April 1, 1982, page 22, par. 8

There could hardly be a better example of Scriptural interpolation than the above quotation. By weaving their time calculations and their interpretation of matters based on those calculations they completely pervert what the apostle says. Unfortunately, when Jehovah's Witnesses study such material they are unable to separate what the Bible says from what *The Watchtower* is saying. It follows that if their time calculations are in error then their teaching is in error and, according to their standard, that would make them an *apostate organization!* Their belief that their Governing Body represents and speaks for the "slave" of Matthew 24 is premised on the very same set of time calculations. It is on this shaky foundation that much of their theology is built. It takes considerable presumptuousness to insert one's heretical views right into the scripture being discussed but that is what they do in the above quotation.

Reading these verses from the New World Translation considered the best translation by Jehovah's Witnesses-it becomes clear that they are perverting Paul's words and are subverting the faith:

"For this is what we tell you by Jehovah's word, that we the living who survive to the presence of the Lord shall in no way precede those who have fallen asleep [in death]; because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward we the living who are surviving will, together with them, (*NW Interlinear*: at the same time) be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord. "-1 Thess. 4: 15 -17. It is the *living*, according to Paul, who are *caught away* not the dead to be *gathered together* with those resurrected. It is clear that they are *surviving* and not dead even momentarily as the Society teaches. One might wonder why they read into the scripture this obvious contradiction? The reason is that Paul taught that the dead and the living would be joined together

at the same time. In order to explain-away why living Christians were not caught away in 1918 (when they say the dead in Christ were resurrected) they had to argue that it was necessary for the living believers to first die a *natural death* and then be immediately resurrected. So the second heresy was created to preserve the first one.

In the Scriptures dying is metaphorically described as "falling asleep." When Stephen was stoned to death we are told that he "fell asleep." (Acts 7:60) So it follows that those who survive to the presence of the Lord do not die (fall asleep) but are "caught away" along with those resurrected ones who had previously fallen asleep in death. This agrees with what the apostle Paul said about the matter at 1 Corinthians 15:51,52: "We shall not all fall asleep [in death], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, during the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised up incorruptible, and we shall be changed."-NW *Translation*. That the New World Translation inserts "in death" in brackets in this verse shows that they understand what is being said by the apostle. The Society knows the seriousness of deviating from Scriptural truth and they condemn it. In so doing, however, they judge themselves because as the record shows they are often guilty of the very thing they condemn. Again, they are judged out of their own mouth. Incidentally, Russell wrongly taught that the resurrection of Jesus' disciples began in 1878, three and a half years after 1874 when Christ was said to have returned invisibly. The failure of the Bible Students to be caught away at that time led to the radical reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. According to their own measure this would make Russell an apostate also. (see *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, 1959, pages 19,20)

They point next to what the apostle John wrote at 2 John 7,10,11 regarding the "antichrist" who were denying that Jesus came in the flesh. This scripture is added to their arsenal for justifying a total cutting off of all those whom they disfellowship regardless of what the issue may be. They will take a scripture like this and broaden out its application to include everything they teach. The Society simply does not tolerate a questioning or doubting of them on anything. There is no forum in which such doubts or questions can be aired apart from meetings with the elders and this can easily result in disfellowshipping if one is reluctant to accept the Watchtower Society's pronouncements on a given subject. It is not uncommon for one to be invited to a meeting with the elders "just to talk," only to find

that the meeting is actually judicial and that their standing as an "approved associate" is at stake. Understandably, many are reluctant to make their doubts and questions known for fear of losing family and friends. This forces many to remain silent even though within themselves they may have serious reservations about a number of things. This kind of environment creates a contrived unity-a forced unity. It is not a oneness that springs from within but rather the product of ,organizational tyranny backed up with the sword of excommunication.

The Society's response in "Questions From Readers," from the April 1, 1986 issue of *The Watchtower* just critiqued encapsulates much that is wrong with this religious organization. In Jesus' parable of the Ten Minas each servant was given a silver coin and told: "put this money to work ... until I come back." (Luke 19: 13 *MV*) In the parable each servant or slave was judged individually. Each one had to give an accounting to his master as to how he invested his mina. Every Christian has a spiritual "'mina" given to him by the Lord for doing business with until he returns. When the Lord returns we will be individually evaluated by our kingly master. We must never lose sight of our responsibility to him and realize that we must answer to him. In writing *The Christian Respondent* I take issue with certain teachings and practices of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society that I think are wrong or injurious to spiritual well-being. At the same time I try to present something positive-something redeeming-of a healing nature to encourage those spiritually injured by the Watchtower Society. There seems to be a need for this kind of ministry. But I realize that the Watchtower Society is not the only religious organization guilty of serious heresy. My focus is on the Society because that happens to be my background and I have personally experienced what many of the readers of *The Christian Respondent* have experienced. My pointing out their errors does not vindicate me as a Christian. I must yet stand before the judgment seat of Christ and explain what I did or failed to do with my spiritual "'mina."

The body of Christ, the true Christian congregation, stands in a divided condition that must sadden the head of that body. It is the spirit of sectarianism that has resulted in this fragmentation. Any organized effort to correct matters only ends up in the creation of yet another sect or cult. It seems to me that our focus as Christians ought to be on the mystical body of believers and not a corporate body. It seems to me that the best we can do is to display, wherever we are,

the spirit of Christ in all that we do. We know that God wants us to worship him "in spirit and truth. " (John 4:23) We need the courage and love necessary to follow that quest no matter where it leads. In doing so we need to keep matters in balance. Worshipping God in spirit and truth, does not mean that we must have an the answers to every religious question. Part of the truth lies in knowing that we only have "partial knowledge" and therefore only "see in hazy outline" spiritual concepts. (1 Cor. 13:9, 12) There is no reason for us to be upset about this because our partial or

imperfect knowledge is sufficient for salvation. We will make mistakes and even stumble from time to time but that need not make us anxious. God and Christ understand our circumstances and our limitations better than we do. Their Spirit can and will be at work in us. The action of God's Spirit on us does not leave us inactive but helps us marshal our God-given abilities to respond to that Spirit. All of this can be done calmly and in the spirit of love using whatever gifts and opportunities we have to strengthen and encourage individual members of the body of Christ. □