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The Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*

The Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics* is coming. It is currently in production and I am working on adding to and revising the content and the format of the Second Edition. Based on my present expectations, the Third Edition could be ready as early as the summer of 2008. But that date could change depending on how the project unfolds and to what extent I decide to rewrite or merely revise sections or whole chapters of the book.

Jehovah's Witnesses are worth defending. They have a racial unity that is truly beautiful to behold. They do not, as a people, promote any political agenda. They, by and large, promote a wholesome Christian morality. Of course, you could point to other religious groups who similarly, to varying degrees, display these marks. But I must admit that I have been forcefully reminded by my recent attendance at some Witness meetings of the wonderful racial unity Jehovah's Witnesses possess. It is an outstanding feature, one increasingly hard to find on the earth today.

In my view the most outstanding distinction between Jehovah's Witnesses and other world religions is that they are called by God's name, in English, "Jehovah." By this I do not mean that being called by or calling yourself by Jehovah's name means that Jah himself is in fact the one responsible for it. On the other hand, Jehovah does have a history of 'putting his name' where he wants it (Deuteronomy 12:21; 1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chronicles 12:13). But then it is also true that those to whom he gave his name in the past caused it to be blasphemed by their teachings and by their conduct (Ezekiel 36:16-21). So it is not so much a question of where the name is or who use it, but how it is treated.

My point in saying the above is not to prove anything about *why* Jehovah's Witnesses are called *Jehovah's* Witnesses. Rather, my point is *they are* called *Jehovah's* Witnesses. This is not merely representative of a token use in some hymnbook, either. Jehovah's Witnesses use Jehovah's name all over the world. It is a big part not only of who they are but it also says a great deal about what they do: They bear witness to the truth that Jehovah is God (Isaiah 43:10). But being called by God's name does not put any group or person out of harm's way. In fact, identifying yourself closely with Jah or with Jesus will

most assuredly bring trial, temptation, even spiritual “war” your way.—Revelation 1:9; 6:9; 12:11, 17.

Let us go further on this last distinguishing mark, that is, the use of God’s name. I challenge anyone to point to a religious group today that proclaims the divine name from the Hebrew Bible in more ways and with more zeal than do Jehovah’s Witnesses. I know of none. They are far and away to be distinguished from every other world religion of similar notoriety in this respect. This surely is an outstanding feature that cannot be denied them. However, it is also the sharpest of any two-edged sword.

If you use Jehovah’s name for as long and as proudly as Jehovah’s Witnesses have done, you will get Jehovah’s attention. If after you get Jehovah’s attention you are found by him to be earnestly seeking him, desirous of serving him “not by way of eye-service as men pleasers, but as Christ’s slaves, doing the will of God whole-souled” (Ephesians 6:6), then you will get Jehovah’s blessing even if you make some mistakes along the way. But if after you get Jehovah’s attention by using his name you then use Jehovah’s name for your own gain or for inappropriate leverage for power, control, or to support your own traditions, then you will get Jehovah’s wrath (Isaiah 29:13–14). In either case, there is no escaping this fact: Seek Jehovah, use his name, and you will get his attention:

Psalm 14:2 (NWT)

As for Jehovah, he has looked down from heaven itself upon the sons of men, to see whether there exists anyone having insight, anyone seeking Jehovah. [See also Psalm 53:2.]

If for no other reasons than that they have sought Jehovah and that he has allowed his name to reside among them for an extended period of time, I will defend Jehovah’s Witnesses. I will defend them where they have, in my view, earnestly sought Jehovah and have succeeded in doing his will. I will not defend them where they have, in my view, *refused* to do Jehovah’s will or even done or taught things falsely in his name. In doing the former things, their witness to Jah is true. But in doing the latter, their witness is false and they cannot be said to have God’s blessing. You are only a Jehovah’s Witness if you speak truthfully in God’s name, repent where you speak falsely, and then “repent and do the former deeds.”—Deuteronomy 18:19–22; Ephesians 4:25; Revelation 2:5.

I say “refuse” because I am not talking about occasions where they may have simply *failed* to do Jehovah’s will. The nation of Israel failed Jah more times than I care to recount (see, for example, the book of Lamentations). Prominent persons and even entire congregations of Christians have also failed Jah and his Son. Indeed, if you were brought in to look upon the first-century Christians you might have had the misfortune of seeing racism and class distinctions (Galatians 2) and even outright heresy (1 Timothy 1:2). We have all failed Jehovah at one time or another:

(NWT) Job 14:1–4

Man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation. Like a blossom he has come forth and is cut off, and he runs away like the shadow and does not keep existing. Yes, upon this one you have opened your eye, and me you bring into judgment with you. Who can produce someone clean out of someone unclean? There is not one.

But some never stop failing him, and even continue in a course that keeps them from being accountable to the congregations in accordance with Jesus' model for Christians (Matthew 18:15–17). We must be ever aware of this possibility in order to keep from elevating ourselves above others. We must remain subject to correction by the lowliest of our brothers for that is, in fact, what we should strive to become.—Matthew 18:4; 23:11–12; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8.

In my third edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended* I will not defend Jehovah's Witnesses' time-reporting requirements for being considered an "active" Witness of God and of Christ. I will not defend them for requiring others to accept most of their interpretations of prophecy and of chronology. I will not defend their view that transfusing blood is the same thing as eating blood, when transfusing blood is putting blood back into the circulatory system for the very purposes for which it was intended, namely:

Blood [AS. *Blod*]. The cell-containing fluid that circulates through the heart, arteries, veins, and capillaries carrying nourishment, electrolytes, hormones, vitamins, antibodies, heat, and oxygen to the tissues and taking away waste matter and carbon dioxide. [*Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, Clayton L. Thomas, ed., 16th edition (Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis Company, 1989), page 223 (underline added).]

I underlined word "carrying" because that's what transfused blood does: It carries the products of the food we eat. It is not a food eaten after being transfused. So I cannot defend Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to use blood as blood. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses who are loyal to the teachings that for good reasons can be attributed to Jah and to Jesus of Nazareth in the Bible would never force someone to make a decision about the use of blood as blood based on the Bible prohibition of using blood as a food that is eaten or drank, which is then digested like other foods consumed in this way. This is completely different from how blood is preserved and then reused as blood in modern transfusion therapies.

Here is a listing of the chapters and the appendixes that will be in my third edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*:

Chapter 1 – "Jehovah" and Jehovah's Witnesses

Chapter 2 – "One God, the Father"

Chapter 3 – Jesus of Nazareth: The Christ from Heaven

Chapter 4 – Jesus as “God” and as “a god”

Chapter 5 – God’s “Firstborn”

Chapter 6 – “*The Temple of His Body*”

Chapter 7 – The Freedom of Jah and the Free Will of Mankind

Chapter 8 – Salvation

Chapter 9 – Abortion, Sex, Sexual Orientation, and the Use of Blood

Chapter 10 – Jehovah’s Witnesses: The “Christian Witnesses of Jah”

Appendix A – “Me” in John 14:14 and Stephen’s “Appeal” to Jesus

Appendix B – NWT Footnotes to John 8:58

Appendix C – “Today” in Luke 23:43

Appendix D – The “Glory” of Jesus in John 12:41

Appendix E – Granville Sharp’s Rule and the NWT

Appendix F – “The Alpha and the Omega”

Appendix G – The Meaning of *Theotetos* in Colossians 2:9

There is also a new introduction, a complete bibliography, along with author, scripture, and other ancient source citation indexes.

I am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and I will defend our beliefs based on the good reasons I have come to learn and accept as representing truth from God and Christ. These reasons come from the Bible, from literature produced during and after the biblical periods, and from a consideration of other relevant historical, textual, and linguistic information available to us all, or at least to those willing to look for it.—Acts 17:26–27.

Greg Stafford

(REVISED June 1, 2008)*

***This article was re-written in large part on the date indicated, but the substance of the first article remains except for the changes to the chapters listed in the third edition of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*. This article represents my attitude and feelings as of August, 2006, only now they are presented with further reflection on my part and with adjustments to the style and presentation of what I wrote at that time.**