

The theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses: A narrative literature and documentary review

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ABSTRACT

According to James 2:17,18, "faith without works is dead"; that is, biblical theory without practice consistent with it is useless to God. For this reason, a religious organization that calls itself Christian, but does not practice its own teachings in full, is not truly Christian. This does not mean being perfect, 100% correct in everything, because all Christians are imperfect and sinners, which is why we all make mistakes, we sin, whether in word or in deed. But the continual effort to maintain an unblemished conduct inside and outside religion, honest, ethical, morally, and spiritually approved by God, is a fundamental Christian duty. That said, the general purpose of this work is to present the theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. To this end, a bibliographic and narrative documentary review is carried out, under the Giftedean neoperspectivist paradigm, reasoning according to the hypothetical-deductive method. It concludes that in order for Christian religious teachings and practices to become an acceptable way of life, approved by the Creator God Jehovah, and healthy psychically, spiritually and socially speaking, it is necessary to learn to live at the intersection between biblical knowledge and scientific knowledge. For to fail to follow the former for the sake of the latter leads to laicism or atheism, and to fail to follow the latter for the sake of the former leads to religious fanaticism, such as is present in Jehovah's Witnesses today.

Keywords: Religious knowledge, Scientific knowledge, Religious fanaticism, Laicism, Atheism.

INTRODUCTION

The current religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, known to theologians and scientists of religion as a neo-Christian religious movement, had its advent around 1870, with the biblical publications of Charles Taze Russell, in the USA (BARRA, 2010). Originally called Zion's Watchtower Tract Society (*Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society*), founded in 1881 and legally registered in the State of Pennsylvania (U.S.A.) on December 15, 1884, had its name changed in 1896 to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (*Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society*). In 1955 it was renamed to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (*Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania*), as it has been known so far (BOTV, 2024).

The Witnesses of Jehovah are exclusive, proselytizing, non-creationist, non-trinitarian, Protestant, millenarian, and have teachings, practices, theocratic procedures, preaching and teaching ministry, totally

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their own, different from all other denominations considered Christian, because they believe that their biblical interpretation is totally consistent with that of the first Christians, and, therefore, "the truth" (BARRA, 2010; BOTV, 2024).

When researching Jehovah's Witnesses in worldwide databases such as Google Scholar, one finds many scientific works produced and published, but none by someone who is or has been a Jehovah's Witness (BARRA, 2010; BRITO *et al*, 2019). This will be the first scientific work produced by a faithful Witness baptized on 11/1/2008. Among the works published on them, those produced by academics in the areas of Education and Special Education are centered on their evangelization to the deaf, blind and mute; those produced by academics in the areas of Theology and Religious Sciences are centered on their dogmas (BARRA, 2010; BRITO *et al*, 2019).

Starting from the omniscience and omnipotence of a Creator being, it is concluded deductively that there is an absolute truth, but as the Christian Scriptures themselves say, in the words of the apostle Paul to the congregation of Rome, in Romans 3:23, 'all have sinned and do not reach the glory of God', showing that we humans are very limited, sinful, imperfect, and, as such, we can never fully comprehend "the truth," or the absolute truths, which only Almighty God and His Heavenly Court are able to comprehend because they are perfect.

That said, the following research problem questions arise: Are the theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses in line with Scriptural guidelines? Do they reveal that their members are different from Christians in Christendom and adherents of other religions? Are they more honest, pure, sincere, humble, responsible, ethical, and humane than other human beings? Do their theocratic practices and procedures reveal the holiness, purity, justice, and transparency of Jehovah's organizational arrangement? Do their leaders faithfully follow the guidelines for shepherding God's flock well? Are its members encouraged to apply them in their daily conduct and to question any inconsistencies observed? Are all its members treated with dignity, humanity, respect, fairness, without any kind of prejudice or discrimination?

The purpose of this article is to present and explain the theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses, refining them based on scientific understanding. Its specific objectives are: a) To discuss the extent to which its theocratic practices and procedures are biblically acceptable; b) Discuss the corporate governance, integrity and compliance policies of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses; c) To expose the coherences and inconsistencies of the theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses in the light of the Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Christian Scriptures (the so-called Bible) and the scientific knowledge of some areas, such as Theology, Religious Sciences, and Psychology.

This article is structured in 5 chapters. In this chapter, intended for the introduction of the work, the theme, the contextualization, the problem-questions, the objectives, and the structure of the work were



presented. In the second chapter, the methodological basis of the same is briefly exposed. In the third chapter, the five main practices of Jehovah's Witnesses are presented. In the fourth, the nine main theocratic procedures of them pointed out in KS (2019), the book intended only for congregation elders. In the fifth, the conclusions and final considerations are presented. And then the references.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Using the giftedean neo-perspectivist paradigm (Breviary, 2021; 2023), which preaches an absolute, concrete, finished, ready-made, real, objective truth that exists but can never be fully achieved, understood, and applied by humans, due to their limitations, because they are sinners, imperfect, mere mortals, the following problem-questions were raised for this research: a) The theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses are in accordance with the biblical guidelines?; b) Do they reveal that their members are different from Christians in Christendom and adherents of other religions? c) Are they more honest, pure, sincere, humble, responsible, ethical and humane than other human beings?; d) Do their theocratic practices and procedures reveal the holiness, purity, justice, and transparency of Jehovah's organizational arrangement? e) Do their leaders faithfully follow the guidelines for shepherding God's flock well? f) Are its members encouraged to apply them in their daily conduct and to question any inconsistencies observed?; g) Are all its members treated with dignity, humanity, respect, justice, without any kind of prejudice or discrimination? All of them, according to Breviário (2022) already have answers, even before they are investigated by us humans, since Jehovah and his heavenly court already know them fully. We humans don't know them, so we rely on scientific research to discover them.

This work is based on the following hypotheses: a) Divine omniscience and omnipotence are the creators and disseminators of absolute truth; b) The theocratic practices and procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses, no matter how good, are not perfect, holy in the full sense as only the heavenly court is, which is why any of its members, even the Governing Body, are capable of committing serious sins; c) There is a lack of fairness and transparency in the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. The hypothetical-deductive method was, therefore, selected as the structure of scientific thought in this investigation (Breviário, 2022).

As a technical pillar, a qualitative approach was used, operationalizing the technical procedures of a narrative bibliographic and documentary survey, which is the one that uses secondary sources (i.e., already manipulated by other researchers), such as books, scientific articles, the applicable legislation, biblical publications of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Bible, and official websites of this religious organization. This general technique of data collection and processing is a gateway to any theme or area of knowledge, is simple to conduct, less costly and laborious than participatory observational research (on-site and ex-site case studies, field research, participant ethnography, action research, etc.), and, when well conducted,



produces up-to-date results. coherent and consistent with both the literature and the observed reality, and with powerful contributions (Rodrigues, 2007; Severino, 2007; Gil, 2010; Breviary, 2021).

KEY PRACTICES

SEXUAL PRACTICES

The Governing Body is responsible for making adjustments to the biblical understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses, even without the academic and professional training that is compatible with it, but acceptable to its members. That said, we present here the adjustments made by this class in the understanding of what the practice of "*porneia*", or sexual immorality, as spoken by Jesus (Matthew 5:32; Acts 15:29; Galatians 5:19; Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:3), in chronological order:

- 1957: Artificial insemination is *porneía* (adultery) (BOTV, 2024; w57 1/7 pp. 143-156);
- 1957: Homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality are neither *porneia* nor adultery (BOTV, 2024; w57 1/7 pp. 143-156);
- 1972: Homosexuality and bestiality reaffirmed again as *porneia* (BOTV, 2024; w72 5/15 p. 319);
- 1975: Oral and anal intercourse within the marital arrangement are *porneía* (BOTV, 2024; w75 1/5 pp. 287-288);
- 1978: "*porneía* dentro do casamento" does not have "clear biblical instructions" (BOTV, 2024; w78 1/8 pp. 29-32);
- 1978: The Governing Body blames congregation elders for "policing" the sex lives of married couples (BOTV, 2024; w78 1/8 pp. 29-32);
- 1978: It is up to the spouse to define the meaning of *porneia* based on the lascivious and debauched practices of his or her husband or wife (BOTV, 2024; w78 1/8 pp. 29-32);
- 1983: Anal and oral sex are again sins of disfellowshipping, but are now "loose conduct" (*aselgeia*) within marriage (BOTV, 2024; w83 9/15 pp. 27-31);
- 1983: Sex between a human and an animal are *porneía* (BOTV, 2024; w83 15/9 pp. 27-31);
- 1999: Deliberate fondling of another's sexual organs is *porneia* (BOTV, 2024; w99 1/9 pp. 8-13);
- 2018: *Lap dancing*, or sensual dance, is *porneía* (BOVT, 2024; w18 November pp. 23-27);
- 2021: "*porneia* can happen even if there is no skin contact, penetration, or orgasm" - Book Shepherd the Flock of God, chapter 12.3.
- 2023: New adjustments on 11/1/23, revealed to Elders only.

In the face of so many adjustments in the Governing Body's understanding of what *porneia* is, there is an incessant and exaggerated effort to try to decide what is right or wrong about sexual



immorality, even though it is known that there are no clear Scriptural instructions as to what is and is not acceptable for sexual practices within marriage. That is, the members of the Governing Body think they are godly, holy, righteous, 100% trustworthy to such an extent.

That's why they haven't been able to coherently define what sexting is. In the book *Young People Ask* (first version), on page 24, it is stated that sexting refers to "the practice of sending sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos on a cell phone." But there are many cases not biblically condemned in which it is necessary to talk explicitly about sex, such as in gynecological, psychological, or psychiatric consultations; in legal (resolved in the judiciary) or judicial (resolved through a judicial committee in Jehovah's Organization) cases; with a boyfriend or spouse; on grazing visits; sexual orientation conducted by a therapist, sexologist, psychologist, etc., even if they are brothers or sisters; in short, there are many cases that are biblically accepted, but that Jehovah's Organization vehemently refrains from, oppressing the sexuality of its members, especially the unmarried (BOTV, 2024).

Cases aside, children of elders usually have perks even in this moral/sexual matter: I myself have met sisters who conduct Bible studies for men, simply because they are the daughter of an elder, while Jehovah's Organization forbids males to preach and teach women and vice versa, except when it is a leader (ministerial servant, or equivalent, upwards) (BOTV, 2024).

And that's just theory (SOARES, 2022). And now in practice, what is the sex life of the Governing Body and the rest of Jehovah's Witnesses like? Do they respect their own teachings on sexual immorality in their daily lives? I have met brothers and sisters in this religious organization, from various geographical locations around the world, who engage in sexting, pornography, carnal intercourse, and lewd acts with several other members at the same time, with the permission of elders, and are not punished for it. While the simplest are penalized, and, in the vast majority of cases, do not even know about these practices of the most "smart".

Sexual abuse

In order for it to be considered sexual abuse, according to the criminal legislation then in force in the Brazilian nation, there must be carnal conjunction or libidinous act, without the consent of the victim (MOREIRA, 2022). This crime can occur between adults, even in a marriage, between adolescents, or even between adults and children, or between adults and adolescents (MOREIRA, 2022).

In my case, going straight to the point here, I at the age of 17 tried to stay, without consummation, with my cousin under 14 years old, but without carnal conjunction or any libidinous act, nor nudity, nor pornography involving sex, nor was it even configured as an infraction with less offensive potential, as I once thought. There was no crime or legal infraction (MOREIRA, 2022). There was nothing.



For it to be an infraction with less offensive potential, there would have to have been at least one kiss on the mouth, something that also did not occur; If there had been a vaginal touch without clothes, or sexting, or pornography involving sex, then it would be equated to the rape of a vulnerable person, it would be an infraction of medium offensive potential, something that also never occurred between me and my cousin; If there was carnal intercourse and pregnancy resulted in it, then it would be an infraction with serious offensive potential, something that did not occur under any circumstances. Moreira (2022, p. 2) explains the crime of rape of a vulnerable person:

The crime of rape of a vulnerable person was specifically defined by Law No. 12,015/09, which, among other significant modifications, included art. Article 217-A of the Brazilian Penal Code. It is, therefore, the conduct of those who practice carnal intercourse or libidinous acts with a minor under fourteen years of age, or with whom they have an illness or intellectual disability. Increased legislative attention has been given in response to the need to protect those who lack the discernment necessary to understand the conduct that is being infringed upon them, in violation of their dignity and sexual freedom. Vulnerability, therefore, is the condition in which those who do not possess acuity for libidinous acts or are unable to resist coercion find themselves, being subjects unable to understand the illicit nature of the act that is practiced with them.

Even if there is consent, one can have sex even with minors under 14 years of age, close to completing that age; that's what the legislation says, and it's permitted by Jehovah's Organization. Corroborating this assertion, the Legal Consultant (2021, n.p.) points out:

"An adolescent who has sex with a minor under the age of 14 does not commit an infraction equivalent to rape of a vulnerable person, as long as the relationship was consensual, with no record of violence and without causing psychological trauma. In this case, due to the difference of less than five years between those involved, the application of the "Romeo and Juliet exception" is appropriate, which relativizes the presumption of vulnerability." Source: legal advisor².

In fact, there is no consensus between the exact age at which the minor's consent becomes valid. According to the Penal Code, this age is from 14 years old, but according to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent it is 12 years old, according to what is defended by many criminal jurists. Jurists approach these aspects, Gomes, Donati and Fernandes (2009, n.p.) as follows:

If there has been valid consent, there is nothing abnormal in carnal conjunction. There can be no talk of the crime of rape. What may be questioned is whether that consent would only be valid from the age of fourteen or from the age of twelve, under the ECA. As is well known, up to twelve years of age we have a child (his consent is not valid). From the age of twelve, we have an adolescent (for us his consent applies). There is a mismatch between the CP and the ECA. (14 years) (12 years)³.

² Source: <https://www.conjur.com.br/2021-jan-18/menor-absolvido-base-lei-romeu-julieta/>.

³ Source: <https://www.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/conjuncao-carnal-sem-violencia-com-adolescente-de-catorze-anos-de-idade-atipicidade/1497579>.



In this case, if the minor is 12 or 13 years old, close to 14 years of age, it is allowed to have sex with them, especially if she has had sexual relations with other people, if there is no violence and if it does not cause psychological trauma, in light of the Penal Code; similarly, having sex with a child under 11 years of age, close to 12 years of age, is also allowed, under the same conditions, when the case is analyzed in the light of the ECA. In this case, with my cousin, who was under 14 years old, I don't remember if she was 11, 12 or 13 years old, there was no carnal conjunction or libidinous act, but even if there was, with her consent, without violence or psychological trauma, there was no problem, no crime configured, not even an infraction with less offensive potential, just like I thought there was. It is inferred, therefore, that even in criminal legislation, there are different standards of morality; These different standards of morality can be seen in the criminal legislation of all countries, in which each one has defined, in each of its standards, a minimum age at which consent is valid, and exceptional cases to the rules, which always exist. Furquim (2020, n.p.), a judge, clarifies this issue:

In fact, the Law is silent on the term permissible sexual intercourse. It is understood that sexual intercourse between an adolescent over the age of 14 and an adult is not prohibited, as long as it is consented. Especially because it is a matter of an intimate nature, as long as it does not expose the image and honor of the adolescent, nor does the adult practice acts inappropriate to the age of the adolescent, such as taking to bars and offering alcoholic beverages, motels and the like. Moreover, with due care that the law for the protection of minors imposes, nothing is prohibited. They should only take precautions to avoid illness and early pregnancy."⁴ (FURQUIM, 2020, judge).

The practical implications of these facts are as follows: a) any person may have sexual relations with minors if this is consented to or approved or at least tolerated by the parents of these minors; b) The basic exceptions are those two situations already explained somewhere - prostitution and pornography involving sex, which are crimes of public order, and which cannot be committed even if there is the agreement of the parents; c) if there is not even the knowledge of the parents about this sexual relationship in the courtship or in the "hookup", this person in practice can only date (or stay with) the underage girl (or boy), if he trusts her (him) a lot and can count on her complicity.⁵ (FURQUIM, 2020, judge).

In other words, if even with minors the criminal legislation allows sexual relations at will, within the limits and conditions specified by it, imagine with adults, right? Biblically, the guidelines are not to engage in sexual immorality, such as: fornication, which refers to sex outside of marriage (Exodus 22:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3); adultery, which refers to extramarital sexual relations (Leviticus 18:20; Proverbs 6:32; Romans 2:22); incest, done with close family members (Leviticus 18:6-17; Leviticus 20:19); bestiality, done to animals (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:23; Leviticus 20:16; Deuteronomy 27:21). But sexual practices in the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses often neglect biblical theory: there are many reported and many covert cases of pedophilia and sexual abuse (MADALENO, 2019), and with greater cases everything is allowed, even involving *sexting*, pornography involving sex, fornication at will,

⁴ Source: <https://correiosudoeste.com.br/noticia/1847/A-POL%C3%8AMICA-QUEST%C3%83O-DA-RELA%C3%87%C3%83O-SEXUAL-ENVOLVENDO-MENORES-DE-IDADE>

⁵ Source: <https://correiosudoeste.com.br/noticia/1847/A-POL%C3%8AMICA-QUEST%C3%83O-DA-RELA%C3%87%C3%83O-SEXUAL-ENVOLVENDO-MENORES-DE-IDADE>.



among interested ones, as I have seen among brothers and sisters in many congregations and circuits around the world.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a crime typified by Law 13,718/18 and is characterized by the conduct of a libidinous act in the presence of someone and without their consent. The inclusion of the act as a crime came into force in September 2018. The crime of sexual harassment carries a penalty of one to five years in prison. If there is no Specialized Police Station for Women's Assistance (Deam) in the municipality, complaints should be made at any police station or by calling 197 (harassment), 190 (emergency) or 123 (violation of rights). Libidinous acts are: groping, licking, touching, undressing, masturbating or ejaculating in public, among others.

Sexual harassment

As for the practice of sexual harassment, often confused with sexual harassment or moral harassment by laypeople on the subject, a reliable legal article published in the newspaper Estado de Minas (2022, n.p.) explains what it is as follows:

The term harassment is not from criminal law, it comes from other areas, such as labor (law). Sexual harassment is a crime committed in work/power relations. Sexual harassment, which is when a libidinous act is practiced with a third party, but without constituting rape. Cases such as 'touching the bus', leaning over, unwanted touching, this is sexual harassment, which people popularly call harassment. Now, if the boss 'hits on' an employee, we have sexual harassment.⁶ It is doubtful for many why the justice puts as a child under 14 years old for rape of a vulnerable person, and over 14 years old for rape, since in both cases, we have minors. The expert explains that "the criminal legislation does not follow what the ECA - Statute of the Child and Adolescent - up to 14 years old is a child, up to 18 is an adolescent. The penal code has 14 years as the legal framework for someone to have sexual relations⁷.

We must not confuse the forms of harassment. Moral harassment is broader, occurring in the workplace, has a bullying character and comprises any conduct that is capable of affecting a person's physical, psychological and moral health. Sexual harassment is the embarrassment, through words, gestures or acts, with the intention of obtaining sexual advantage or favor. Sexual harassment, in some cases, manifests itself as an aggravated type of psychological harassment, but it is not limited to the employment relationship. In sexual harassment there is a sexual purpose for the acts of harassment and

⁶ Source: https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2022/06/09/interna_nacional,1372312/stj-define-que-qualquer-ato-libidinoso-com-menor-de-14-anos-sera-estupro.shtml.

⁷ Source: https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2022/06/09/interna_nacional,1372312/stj-define-que-qualquer-ato-libidinoso-com-menor-de-14-anos-sera-estupro.shtml



stalking. In addition to being consummated even if it has occurred only once and the sexual favors are not granted/performed by the harassed (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

Bullying

Isabella Assad de Matos Zerlottini, lawyer and legal consultant registered with the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB/MG), graduated from Centro Universitário Estácio and working in the area of Public Law, provides services aimed at actions for the protection, preservation and maintenance of historical and cultural heritage, performing, together with a partner company, specialized consulting for Brazilian municipalities. She states (ZERLOTTINI, 2023)⁸ that the characterization of psychological harassment is made according to some criteria, such as the repetition of behavior, the intensity, the duration, the moment of incidence, the group of victims, and the objective.

To be characterized as moral harassment, gestures, words, and behaviors must be repeated, and may occur continuously or sporadically and openly or not (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

In addition, gestures, words, and behaviors must be of a psychological nature, capable of causing offense to the personality, dignity, psychic or physical integrity of the server, employee, or intern, as well as capable of affecting their health (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

The purpose of psychological harassment is to cause harm to the server, the employee or the intern, intensify stress and anxiety, create an unhealthy work environment and cause health problems, such as changes in sleep rhythm, eating disorders, reduced self-esteem, anxiety, depression, panic, stress, suspicions, low productivity and social isolation (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

In practice, moral harassment can be characterized by some behaviors, such as overvaluing the role of the server, employee, or intern, charging irrational results, assigning functions that are not in accordance with the professional's profile, late payment of salary, suspension of benefits, among others (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

There are several types of moral harassment, such as patrimonial, professional, institutional and gender harassment. Assets are those related to the restriction of access to material goods belonging to the server, employee or intern, such as the payment of benefits, the possession of work tools or the acquisition of office material. The professional is the one that is related to the decrease in the professional prestige of the server, the employee or the trainee. The victim of professional bullying may have his or her role in the organization changed, his or her prestige in the eyes of his or her co-workers decreased, his or her workload changed, or his or her job may be completely interrupted. The institutional is what happens when the server, the employee or the intern suffers moral harassment by his boss or other hierarchical

⁸ Source: <https://www.politize.com.br/diferencas-entre-assedio-moral-e-assedio-sexual/>



superiors. Gender morality is one that can manifest itself through symbolic violence, psychological violence, abuse of power, physical violence, and sexual violence (ZERLOTTINI, 2023).

POLITICAL PRACTICES

The word politics derives from the Greek term "politeia", which can mean "polis", the city-state of ancient Greece, thus referring, *stricto sensu*, to the political acts emanating from the government, or it can mean "society", thus referring, *lato sensu*, to the political acts of citizens in general. All government decisions are political acts in the strict sense: elaboration and sanction of legal provisions, economic interventions, elaboration and implementation of projects or social policies. In the same way, all citizens' decisions are political acts in the broad sense: to get up in the morning and come back in the evening, to buy something, to do an activity in the classroom, to perform a work activity, to vote, to date, to marry, to take a civil service exam, to do military service, to join a religion or political party, to defend a scientific work at a scientific event or in front of an examination board at a university, to claim our rights, in short, from the moment we position ourselves for or against some ideology, person, line of research, social group, organization, we are exercising a political act (FARINA, 2022).

Jehovah's Witnesses around the world are known for their political neutrality. While they subject to the superior authorities, as the apostle Paul exhorts Christians at Romans 13:1-7 and Titus 3:1,2, respecting the law, for example by paying their taxes, issuing and declaring whatever the government requests, giving due honor to the secular authorities, on the other hand, the neutrality they speak of is alluded to their not singing the national anthem, not to salute the national flag, not to pay homage to any politician or political entity on commemorative dates, not to perform compulsory military service to all citizens of legal age, not to participate in work activities, even indirectly, provided to political entities, not to run for political parties, not to participate in strikes, armed conflicts, wars, or any events involving politics, and not defend any legal provision or project of any politician (BOTV, 2024: uw chap. 21 pp. 161-168).

But some relevant points to make here: no Jehovah's Witness is perfect; Thus, many of them evade taxes, fail to register brothers or sisters who are employees of them (i.e., who have employment ties), circumvent the documentation required in entrance exams and public examinations, cheat at school or university, plagiarize, smear, no one is perfect, no matter how good the religion they belong to, and they are not always penalized internally by the congregational elders, of whose facts I am a witness, having been baptized more than 15 years ago (BOVT, 2024). Another issue is that Jesus Christ said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21), he made it explicit that he understood the tax legislation of his time, what its political system was like, the collection of its taxes, the importance of the treasury for the functioning of society in its various



sectors; By comparing the rulers of his day, stating that they were arrogant, enjoyed the first seats, and boasted in public, with Christian conduct, which must be totally different from this in order to be approved by God, he makes explicit again that he knew very well the political system of his time, certainly its rulers and the history of each of them. his projects, his ambitions, so that he could teach his followers about politics with propriety (Matthew 20:25-28; BOTV, 2024: cf chap. 3 pp. 25-34). That said, from a biblical standpoint, it is not inappropriate for a Christian to study political science, law, the system of government, defend or contradict legislation; Failure to study these matters thoroughly is ignorance, not neutrality; even I, as a Christian accountant, tax expert, know exactly what to defend or oppose in political or legislative terms, and as a scientist I need to position myself for or against, because it is not possible to build Science while being neutral (BREVIÁRIO, 2021; 2023); Other than that, being neutral in the areas mentioned in the previous paragraph is consistent with Scriptural instructions.

EDITORIAL PRACTICES

In 1881 the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses was founded by Charles Taze Russell, and in 1884 it was legally registered in Pennsylvania (USA). Its publishing practices have been carried on since its founding, although it did not immediately become a printer and distributor of Bibles. Since then, its publishing practices have gradually become more sophisticated: before 1896, the Watch Tower Society was already a Bible distributor; in 1890 a special edition, bearing the name of the Society, of the Second Edition of *The New Testament Newly Translated and Critically Emphasised*; in 1902 a special printing of the Linear Parallel Edition of the Bible was made; in 1907 the Bible Students' Edition of the *King James Version*; in 1926 the Society began producing Bibles for the first time on its own printing presses; in 1946 the New World Translation (NWT) of the Holy Scriptures was devised by Nathan H. Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society, and its complete version was published in 1961; in 1961, this complete version of the NWT was translated from English into German, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, and Portuguese; In 1922, its translation reached 12 languages; in 1977 the Watch Tower Society's operations were computerized, producing its Bibles and other publications on huge printing presses *Off-set* the coil; in 1992, Watchtower world headquarters used three huge, high-speed off-roll presses, which together were capable of producing the equivalent of 7,900 Bibles per hour and sometimes operated extra shifts (BOTV, 2024: jv chap. 27 pp. 603-615).

In 1972 the presses used in the Watch Tower Society's factories around the world consumed 20,000 tons of paper, the equivalent of 800 freight cars of 25 tons each; each rotary consumed a coil of about 635 Kg, 8 km long, in just 40 minutes; more than 200 rolls of paper of varying sizes were made into Bible literature almost every day; and the 20 smallest sheet-fed presses consumed hundreds of tons of paper per year (BOTV, 2024: g74 22/3 pp. 10-17).



Since February 1, 1976, each branch of the Watch Tower Society has been supervised by 3 or more members, under the direction of the Governing Body, to care for the Kingdom work in its area, which includes producing and distributing Bibles and Bible literature to all congregations within its geographical jurisdiction. As they modernized, the branch offices and world headquarters began to produce videos in various languages on Bible themes, audios, DVDs, CD-ROMs, applications, used in Bethel homes, in congregations around the world, at regional assemblies and conventions, and in the preaching work and formal and informal teaching. In 2013, the JW Library Sign Language app was launched, which, along with the JW Library, Hourglass, KHS, The Secrety, TSWIN, the Watchtower Online Library, and the jw.org website make a significant contribution to the promotion of the good news of the Kingdom throughout the planet on a scale unprecedented in any religious organization; in 2020, the first complete Bible in sign language and the NWT in American sign language were released (BOTV, 2024: hdu article 22).

The Bethel homes of Jehovah's Witnesses have faster, more powerful, and more sophisticated printers for editing, binding, translating, layout, proofreading, cataloging, storing, and distributing Bible and Bible literature in the world: the Society is the world's largest printing plant, a publishing paradise (BOTV, 2024: jv chap. 15 pp. 204-235). In two visits I made to Brazil Bethel, in Cesário Lange (SP), in 2010 and 2018, I was able to corroborate such editorial practices of the Society; It has an area of 0.80 hectares, which is larger than that of Japan. Bethel visits are open to the general public by scheduling a day and time through the jw.org website.

PROSELYTIZING PRACTICES

Religious freedom is a fundamental right guaranteed to all citizens, in all Federal Constitutions around the world, and also in international conventions and treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Religious proselytism is, according to Alves (2024, p. 493), "the manifestation of freedom of expression and the right to free expression of thought" and interferes "in public spaces, whether or not it affects the rights of third parties". Through proselytizing practices, religion is relevant to construct the concept of human dignity in history and in the Federal Constitution (ALVES, 2024).

That said, Jehovah's Witnesses are proselytizers. They freely manifest their biblical-theological thoughts throughout the world, through their worldwide work of preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom, in various social spaces, at the command of Jesus Christ at Matthew 28:19,20, by fulfillment of prophecies, as recorded at Matthew 24:14, by direction of their Governing Body (BOTV, 2024). Discerning the need to preach and teach such good news, in 1891 Russell encouraged in the Watch Tower magazine the voluntary work of a colporteur (now known as pioneer service) to all publishers, which are all of Jehovah's Witnesses, students or baptized, who formally carry out the preaching and



teaching work (informal preaching and teaching can be done by all, even by non-publishers, by disfellowshipped and by dissociated), as can be read in w68 15/5 pp. 295-318 (BOTV, 2024).

Their proselytizing practices have already been judicially denounced, in several countries, as sedition, but always annulled, favoring the understanding that preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom is a mere manifestation of freedom of expression, religious freedom, which contributes to the construction of the dignity of the human person (ALVES, 2024; BOTV, 2024).

Through their proselytizing practices, Jehovah's Witnesses achieved the following general, worldwide results in 2022: a) Branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses: 86; b) Reporting countries: 239; c) Total congregations: 117,960; d) Persons present at the Memorial: 19,721,672; e) Memorial participants: 21,150; f) Peak number of publishers: 8,699,048; g) Average monthly number of publishers: 8,514,983; h) Percentage increase over 2021: 0.4; i) Total number of baptized: 145,552; j) Average of pioneers per month: 1,489,252; k) Average of auxiliary pioneers each month: 381,310; l) Total hours in preaching: 1,501,797,703; m) Average monthly number of Bible studies: 5,666,996; n) Jehovah's Witnesses have spent \$242 million to care for special pioneers, missionaries, and circuit overseers in their assignments; o) A total of 21,629 ordained ministers serve at headquarters worldwide (BOTV, 2024: syr22 p. 2).

HUMANITARIAN PRACTICES

According to the Pauline letters, Christians have been commissioned to carry out a twofold ministry throughout the earth: a "ministry of reconciliation," which alludes to the worldwide work of preaching and teaching (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:3-6), and a "ministry to the saints," which alludes to the relief ministry we carry out on behalf of our brothers and sisters around the world (2 Corinthians 8:4). Exegetically speaking, the Greek word *di-a-ko-ni'a*, translated "ministry" in both cases, makes it evident that humanitarian service is a Christian ministerial practice, just like the preaching and teaching work. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,11) we read, "There are varieties of ministries, yet there are varieties of ministries. *Same* Sir; And there are varieties of operations. But [they] are carried out by the *Very same* spirit." In Romans 12:1,6-8, Paul lists the various congregational ministries as "sacred service." For these Scriptural reasons, Jehovah's Witnesses around the world are dedicated to preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom as well as to providing humanitarian aid to their brothers and sisters in the event of natural disasters such as floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc., with food, clothing, footwear, home reconstruction, financial support, etc. psychological and spiritual (BOTV, 2024: kr chap. 20 pp. 209-219).

To this end, the Watchtower Society created Regional Building Committees, in all its branches and branches, to provide relief to brothers and sisters afflicted by natural disasters (BOTV, 2024). Some of this



humanitarian aid can be read in full in G03 8/8 10-12,30, YB01 212-215, W11 1/12 7, UDI Article 20 (referring to 2021), G 8/08 pp. 16-19, UDU Article 29 (referring to 2023).

THEOCRATIC PROCEDURES

DOCUMENTATION AND ARCHIVING

Among the documents recorded by the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses concerning its members, we may mention: the Congregation Publisher Record (S-21), the Congregation Meeting Attendance Record (S-88), the Meeting Attendance Report (S-3), Forms S-2 and S-52 for the appointment and removal of elders and ministerial servants, the Report on the Circuit Overseer's visit to the Congregation (S-303), the Disfellowshipping or Disassociation Notice Form (S-77), the Congregation Territory Assignment Form (S-54), the Public Witnessing Equipment (S-80), the Public Witnessing Guidelines (S-148), the Field Service Report (S-4), the Suggestions for Publishers Learning a New Language (S-394), the outline "Honorable Marriage in God's Sight" (S-41), the Prison Information Form (S-68), How Parents Can Protect Their Children from Blood Transfusions (S-55), How to Rent Congregation Event Venues (TO-19), the Cover or Recommendation Letters, the Pioneer Welcome Letter (S-236), the Pioneer Assignment Letter (S-202), the Kingdom Hall Service Risk Analysis Form (DC-85), the Advance Directives Card (dpa), the Instructions for Completing the Risk Analysis Form for Kingdom Hall Services (DC-85i), the Instructions for Completing the Incident Report Form (TO-5i), the Kingdom Hall Information Form (S-5), the Request for Accommodation for Special Medical Needs Form (HLC-20), the Petition for Regular Pioneer Service (S-205), the Recommendations Form for the Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants (S-62), the Incident Report (TO-5), the Form Working Together Safely: Standards for Building and Maintaining Places of Worship (DC-82), among many others reported in the KS (2019), also known as the book Shepherd the Flock of God, or also as the "secret book" of the elders, but which is available for download on many web sites.

According to KS (2019), the congregation archive must be kept confidential and secure by the congregation elders, who are directly responsible for issuing and storing the documents mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as for their communication with the Bethel Services Department and Legal Department. On these aspects, KS (2019, p. 203) explains:

The congregation archive should be kept locked away in a secure location, preferably at the Kingdom Hall. If there is a ministerial servant serving as a substitute on the congregation service committee, he or she should not have access to confidential files, such as correspondence relating to the appointment and removal of elders and ministerial servants and judicial matters. (Compare 2:2.) Each elder who wishes to do so must be given a key to the archive. If for some reason it is unsafe to keep the records at the Kingdom Hall, they may be kept in a locked cabinet in an elder's home to prevent unauthorized persons from gaining access to them. The service committee should plan what will be done to protect the congregation's records, including confidential files, when disaster is possible. —Compare 26:4.



Elders are instructed in KS (2019) to categorize the congregation file with the following items: a) Elders and ministerial servants; b) Confidential files (sealed envelopes); c) Cover letters; d) Advance Directive Cards; e) Accounts, Petitions; f) Report of the Circuit Overseer's visit; g) Kingdom Hall; (h) Territory. All documents mentioned may be stored in electronic or printed form, at the option of the congregational body of elders. As a rule, all documents must remain in the congregational archives for at least five years, at the end of which they may be destroyed; An exception is in the case of adulterous marriage, in which the records, after the aforementioned five years, must be kept in the archive as long as the innocent spouse does not die, marry, or commit sexual immorality (porneia). Records containing sensitive or confidential information, such as court case records, cannot be stored in the cloud, online (KS, 2019).

However, Jehovah's Witness members themselves have great difficulty in accessing their own records, since congregation elders are instructed to keep them confidential even from members, which is absurd. Every Jehovah's Witness has the right to access any documents that refer to him, whether it is a record of his ministerial activities, or membership of a religious organization, or communications made, in writing, by telephone call, or otherwise, with the office about his organizational history. I remember the many times I requested my records from the elders, and that right of mine was always denied.

RECOMMENDING AND REMOVING MEMBERS FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL FRONT

Being a spiritual, exemplary Christian involves more than preaching, teaching, giving talks, giving good counsel, speaking well, operating congregational software and hardware, being well acquainted with the documents, books, and history of Jehovah's organization; it is necessary to manifest the "mind of Christ" in one's day-to-day decisions, being pure morally and spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 4:13). According to KS (2019, p. 38-40), it is spirituality, not abilities, that are evaluated for the purpose of appointing or removing ministerial servants and elders, as stated in full:

1. Before meeting with the body of elders to consider the recommendation of ministerial servants or elders, each elder should review the Scriptural qualifications found at 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:17, 18 and 1 Peter 5:2, 3. Comments in chapters 5 and 6 of the book Organized to Do Jehovah's Will may be helpful.
2. At the meeting, which should begin with prayer, the elders should read the Scriptural qualifications directly from the Bible. True, no one is able to fulfill all the Scriptural requirements perfectly. But the evaluated sibling must reasonably satisfy these requirements, i.e., he cannot have a significant failure in any of them. It is very important to the circuit overseer that elders use good judgment and discernment when evaluating a person's Scriptural qualifications.
3. What qualifies a brother to be appointed is his spirituality, not his abilities. It should be evident that he has Jehovah's holy spirit and that he is zealous for good works. Consider the following questions: Is he regular in attending meetings and setting a good example by participating in them? Are you zealous in the ministry, taking into account your age, health, and family and theocratic responsibilities? (Compare 23:24-25.) Do you have the habit of studying the Bible? Does he make an effort to help the family spiritually? Do you study regularly with your wife and children who live in your home? He demonstrates the aspects of the fruitage of the spirit in his



life? — G al. 5:22, 23.

4. The brother being evaluated is the one who needs to meet the Scriptural requirements, but it is also necessary to think about the spirituality of his family. If his wife is baptized, she gives a Good example? If she is spiritually weak, is he doing what he can to help her? Does he make family worship a priority? If he has underage children, are they well-behaved and "believing," that is, are they progressing toward dedicating themselves to Jehovah, or are they even baptized Witnesses? Does your family participate in the meetings as much as possible? If he has adult children who live with him, how do they behave? —Titus 1:6; Compare 8:22.

5. Elders should help brothers who are in their late teens to progress and qualify to serve as ministerial servants. As you consider the qualifications of a brother in this situation, consider the following questions: Is he respected by the brothers in the congregation as a spiritual man? (1 Cor. 2:15, 16)

Does it display "the fruitage of the spirit"? Does he have a good share in the ministry? Does the way he uses his time show that he puts the Kingdom first? Do his conversations and comments show that he has good personal study habits? What spiritual goals does he have? — G al. 5:22, 23; Salt. 1:1, 2; Mat. 6:33; Ephesians 4:29.

Congregation elders are instructed to be careful when recommending certain brothers for privileges as ministerial servant or elder. For example, in the case of brothers who have been reprimanded in the last 3 years, reinstated in the last 5 years, have taken notes, have judicial restrictions, or have committed adultery in the past, or have separated or divorced without biblical basis, have been an elder or ministerial servant, or have been baptized for many years, but have only now been recommended. In all these cases, the confidence that the congregational lead has in the brother desirous of the privilege of being a ministerial servant or elder is small because the brother's spiritual record is bad, questionable, and his appointment may bring reproach upon Jehovah's holy name and his Organization. Then, the elders are directed by the Governing Body, represented by the Bethel office, to evaluate the brother's life as a whole, his family, work, academic, civic relationships, as well as an analysis of previous life to hold high public office, before recommending a brother in these situations to the congregational leadership (KS, 2019).

So far so good. It turns out that the process of appointing and removing members to the congregational leadership in the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses is not meritocratic. For example, there are a number of brothers in a particular congregation – and I have seen this happen in a number of congregations – who meet all the Scripturally required spiritual qualifications in a reasonable way that are not recommended, while others who do not meet them in a reasonable way are recommended because they have more affinity with some elders, because they are relatives, partners, etc.; or they are discriminated against because of their age, economic condition, physical or mental illness, or even because of their academic, professional, intellectual and/or cognitive profile, which is often a reason for envy and fear by the body of elders, who come to see the brother as a threat to their own privileges and to the entire congregation – this has happened to me, Because I am a scientist and I have a report proving my academic giftedness, which for the elders is completely useless, irrelevant, and they even depreciate the qualifications of brother in my case, as has already happened to me too and I had to sue in court.



PROCESS OF APPOINTING ITS LEADERS

The recommendation of brethren for the privilege of ministerial servant or elder should be made at the regular visit of the Circuit Superintendent (the so-called circuit traveler), or between his regular visits to the congregation (KS, 2019). KS reports that it is the congregation Service Committee, consisting of the secretary, the service overseer, and the coordinator of the body of elders, that is responsible for evaluating and recommending the Circuit Overseer. To do so, elders should inform the recommended brother of the full name, date of birth, and date of baptism at least one month prior to the visit using the Appointment of Elders and Ministerial Servants Form (S-62).

It is the Circuit Overseer who is responsible for the appointment of ministerial servants and elders: one or two days before his regular visit to the congregation, he requests and receives from his Service Committee all the documents pertaining to the brother's spiritual-organizational trajectory; during the visit, he talks with both the elders who recommended him and the recommended brother himself, considering whether he meets the biblical qualifications (KS, 2019).

If the Circuit Overseer assigns him a member of the congregation lead, this is reported to the elders first, who in turn inform the brother that he has been appointed. The announcement of his appointment is made at the next midweek meeting. Otherwise, when the circuit traveler understands that the brother does not reasonably meet the biblical requirements, he informs the elders of this decision and tells them what they can do to help the brother qualify in the future (KS, 2019). In the event of a reassignment brought about by a change of congregation, the brother ministerial servant or elder may be reassigned to the new congregation, the destination one, even if the regular visit of the Circuit Overseer is not near; the procedural procedure in this case is the same: the elders fill out and send Form S-62, with a letter of recommendation, to the circuit traveler, who may, even from a distance, reassign the brother in the new congregation; this avoids bureaucracy (KS, 2019).

COMMITTEES AND JUDICIAL HEARINGS

Judicial committees are groups of at least three elders who are appointed by the Bethel office when one or more brothers or sisters commit a serious sin or there is strong evidence that one or more serious sins have been committed. The KS (2019) presents 29 cases, considered by the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, based on the Christian Biblical Scriptures, to be serious sins. They are: 1) Sexual immorality (porneía); 2) Strong evidence of sexual immorality (porneía); 3) Adulterous marriage; 4) Child abuse; 5) Caresses on the breasts or momentary touching on private parts of the body; 6) Immoral conversations over the phone or internet (including sexting); 7) Repulsive forms of pornography; 8) Drug abuse and use of tobacco, marijuana, and illegal or addictive drugs; 9) Extreme lack of cleanliness; 10) Unnecessary contact with disfellowshipped or disassociated persons; 11) Dating without being biblically



free to remarry; 12) Binge drinking; 13) Overeating, gluttony; 14) Robbery, larceny; 15) Lying maliciously and on purpose; testify falsely; 16) Fraud, slander; 17) Injury; 18) Obscene language; 19) Greed, gambling for money, extortion; 20) Refusal to support the family; 21) Outbursts of anger, violence, domestic violence; 22) Homicide; 23) Celebrate religious holidays; 24) Participate in religious activities with other religious organizations; 25) Intentionally spreading teachings contrary to Bible truth; 26) To cause divisions, to promote sects; 27) Have a job that promotes false religion; 28) Occultism; 29) Idolatry (KS, 2019).

Judicial hearings are interviews conducted by a Judicial Committee called Bethel. In them, all the details of the grave sin committed are considered with the brother or sister doing the act, whom we may call judged, while the brothers on the committee may be called judges. It is necessary to ascertain the seriousness of each case to be sure if the brother or sister has committed serious disrespect for Jehovah's laws and, therefore, needs to be satiated, or if a rebuke is enough, or just loving advice (KS, 2019).

The elders do not allow judicial hearings or shepherding visits to be recorded (but if they do, no one prevents them), when, in fact, it is right that all conversations between them and the brothers and sisters on such occasions should be recorded, copies of the recordings made available to each brother or sister as well as to the Bethel office, and witnessed by other members not belonging to the front, to serve as evidence in any lawsuits. This would indicate humility, modesty, and spiritual maturity of the Governing Body, recognizing that all its leaders are capable of committing serious sins and crimes just like any other members; as well as making the arrangement fair for everyone.

TREATMENT IN CASES OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

To cite a few examples: in the case of the practice of sexual immorality, or suspicions of it, it is necessary to ascertain whether the fact was really porneia or not. A doctor may need to touch a patient's sexual organs when performing an examination, but with no intention of sexual gratification; a veterinarian or a farmer may have to do something like an animal; momentarily touching the sexual organs of another, even with intent, is generally not considered porneia; masturbation is not porneia, and there are several brothers and sisters who freely practice the so-called clinical masturbation, under medical advice, which is also not porneia and helps to avoid sexual immorality itself (I myself have known veteran brothers, Jehovah's Witnesses for decades, who practice clinical masturbation, with the approval of the elders); rape victims are not guilty of porneia; A sister who lives in the home of an elderly brother to help him is not a case of a judicial committee; A brother who loses his mobility to return home and therefore ends up having to sleep in a sister's house, in separate rooms, is not a reason for a judicial commission; a single brother staying at the home of a couple of brothers, the husband leaving for work one night for urgency, and the single brother spending the whole night alone with his wife in separate rooms is also not



a reason for a judicial commission; a student of Medicine, Psychology, or other areas of health who watches films containing nudity (e.g., childbirth, surgeries involving the genitals in general), as a simulation of his professional performance, is not guilty of watching pornography; Talking explicitly about sex with your girlfriend, in judicial committees, in court hearings, in therapies, in medical consultations, in scientific work, or even providing services as a sex counselor, is also not sexting practices (KS, 2019).

In cases of sexual abuse of minors, the right thing to do is to obtain documentary and/or testimonial evidence, without which it is incorrect, unbiblical, unethical, illegal, to penalize a brother or sister. If a brother or sister confesses to having committed sexual abuse, it is necessary to ascertain what was actually done, with what intention, for how long, in what place, how many times, if he/she has contact with the victim, if he/she has relapsed into sin. If it has been confessed that there was an attempt at sexual abuse, it is up to the elders to assess whether there was an intention to abuse, or whether it was a mere curiosity of a virgin adolescent, whether carnal intercourse or some libidinous act was consummated, the degree of understanding of the judged brother or sister about what is or is not sexual abuse, so that no injustice may be done to him by the congregational front and Bethel office. With me, for example, that 16 years ago, I confessed to having tried, at the age of 17, to be with my cousin under the age of 14, but without carnal intercourse or libidinous act, and without me even knowing what sexual abuse was (today I know and explained previously here in this work), it was unjustly considered sexual abuse and I suffered severe congregational restrictions; my reputation within Jehovah's Organization was destroyed, the elders accused me of being a child abuser for several congregations, which prevented me from having mechanical and special privileges in the congregation, also from making friends, dating and marrying in religion, something very unfair, inhumane. Today, it has been more than 15 years since I was baptized, and I remain restricted in this religion. When I went to court to sue the elders for prejudiced libel, defamation, and slander, I was considered an apostate, and I am not and never have been against Jehovah, His heavenly and earthly Organization, nor against His laws contained in the Bible.

TREATMENT IN CASES OF DISABILITY OR ADVANCED AGE

Brothers or sisters who are visually, hearing, mentally impaired, or multiple, the infirm, and the elderly, are not rejected by Jehovah, who loves them dearly, who considers them valuable in his eyes, and uses them in his earthly organization for mechanical and special privileges like any other, within, of course, one's circumstances, taking into consideration their physical limitations. psychic and spiritual (Hebrews 6:10; Daniel 7; 9; Proverbs 16:31; w08 8/15 pp. 17-21).

The Governing Body directs elders in KS (2019) that sick brothers and sisters may continue to serve as regular or special auxiliary pin bearers, as long as they are veterans, exemplary, even if they are



unable to meet the hours requirement because of some pathology, but wish to continue in this special ministry modality. There are two requirements established in the KS (2019) that sick brothers and sisters can be included in the list of sick regular pioneers: if he/she is over 50 years old and if, concurrently, he/she has served as a pioneer for a total of at least 15 years, consecutive or not. However, this decision can only be made by the congregation's Service Committee after consultation with the Circuit Overseer (KS, 2019).

Disabled brothers who reasonably meet the Scriptural qualifications to be ministerial servants or elders may be recommended. Blind, mute, deaf, paraplegic, any brother who suffers from a mental disorder that is not serious to the point of compromising their intellectual, cognitive, and spiritual capacity to adequately perform the functions/attribution of a member of the congregational leadership (KS, 2019). I particularly met a number of defective but very zealous, loving, well-trained ministerial servants and elders to shepherd the congregation. However, when I mentioned my Theory of Predestination, the subject of which I conduct as a scientific investigation, throughout my extensive academic and professional career, I was considered mentally ill and apostate by the congregation elders, who prevented me from being a member of the congregational leadership.

TREATMENT IN CASES OF APOSTASY

In KS (2019), apostasy is defined as a deviation from true worship, desertion, rebellion, abandonment, and 7 cases of evident apostasy are explained. They are: 1) Celebrating religious holidays; 2) Participate in religious activities with other religious organizations; 3) Intentionally spreading teachings contrary to Bible truth; 4) Cause divisions, promote sects; 5) Have a job that promotes false religion; 6) Occultism; and 7) Idolatry. The following is a full explanation for these seven categories of apostasy mentioned in KS (2019):

- (1) Celebrating religious holidays: (Ex. 32:4-6; Jer. 7:16-19) Not all holidays are directly linked to false religion. Therefore, it is not always necessary to take legal action.
- (2) Sharing in religious activities with other religious organizations: (2 Cor. 6:14, 15, 17, 18) This involves, among other things, bowing down to altars and images and participating in prayers and songs of false religion. These are apostate acts. — Rev. 18:2, 4.
- (3) Intentionally spreading teachings contrary to Bible truth: (2 John 7, 9, 10; lvs p. 245; it-1 pp. 158-159) If a person has sincere doubts about Bible truth taught by Jehovah's Witnesses, he should receive loving help. (2 Tim. 2:16-19, 23-26; Jude 22, 23) But when a person insists on speaking of false teachings or spreading such teachings on purpose, it may indicate that he has become or is becoming an apostate. The person must be firmly counseled. If she does not respond, the elders should try to counsel her again in a firm way. If it still does not change, a judicial committee should be formed. —Titus 3:10, 11; w86 4/1 pp. 30-31.
- (4) Cause divisions, promote sects: (Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 3:10, 11) It involves purposely acting to break the unity of the congregation or to weaken the brothers' confidence in Jehovah's organization. This can be apostasy or lead to it. —IT-3, pp. 556-557.
- (5) Having a job that promotes false religion: A person may be disfellowshipped if he continues in a job that causes him to promote or support false religion. But this would only happen after the



elders had given the person six months to make the necessary adjustments. —W99, 4/15, pp. 28-30; LVS pp. 204-206.

(6) Occultism: (Deut. 18:9-13; 1 Cor. 10:21, 22; Gal. 5:20; LVS pp. 216-217)

(7) Idolatry: (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 10:14) Idolatry includes the use of idols, images, or any picture in false worship.

Elders are directed to call the Bethel Legal Department immediately when, at a court hearing, the judge—a brother or sister who has committed or has been accused of having committed some serious sin—threatens to sue the elders. The judicial hearing should be adjourned immediately until Bethel instructs the elders on how to act. However, questioning or prosecuting congregation elders is considered rebellion, an affront to Bible laws, and therefore a type of apostasy. It so happens that, in practice, elders also practice injury, defamation and/or slander, as in my particular case, facts that are sins and crimes against honor, subject to imprisonment and pecuniary compensation to the victim(s); In this case, it is right to prosecute the elders so that they pay both judicially and congregationally; as libel, defamation, and slander are grounds for the formation of a judicial commission (KS, 2019), such elders may be disfellowshipped depending on the seriousness of the acts committed. For a religion that claims to be Christian, and bases all its theocratic teachings, practices, and procedures on the Bible, must be fair, transparent, realizing that questioning or prosecuting members of the congregational leadership is not always an act of apostasy. Another act considered apostasy is that of simply obtaining, accessing, reading, understanding, studying, and/or sharing the contents of the KS (2019), as it is considered the "secret book" of the elders. But then I ask: Why secret? Where is the transparency of this religious organization? Why does its leadership need to hide theocratic procedures from its members and the general public? Is this action not evidence that they are doing dishonest acts according to their own convenience? Why is there no Bible publication that tells the story of the many cases of pedophilia and sexual abuse committed by Jehovah's Witnesses? Is not the Governing Body interested in concealing their grievous sins in order to convey to their members and the general public that they are holy, perfect, "the voice of God on earth," authorities charged with deciding what is right or wrong?

TREATMENT IN CASES OF HIGH ABILITIES/GIFTEDNESS

Individuals with high abilities/giftedness are those who have an intellectual, cognitive, spiritual-existential, and learning capacity in a given area of knowledge that is significantly higher than the general population. According to Marques (2017), there are about 3 to 5% of the world's population in this condition, as pointed out by the World Health Organization.

However, Marques, who has a PhD in Special Education from UFSCar, an expert in identifying and intervening in the case of individuals with high abilities/giftedness and double conditions, which I identified with academic giftedness, makes it clear that although this theme is not recent, most gifted



people are neglected in their educational rights, and social rights in general encompassing academic contexts. professional, family, personal, which hinders their growth and development of their potential, delays their progress as well as any and all benefits resulting from them for the benefit of society (MARQUES, 2017).

That said, I can affirm that over the more than 15 years that I have been a Jehovah's Witness, I have proven by witnesses a humiliating trajectory in the Jehovah's Organization, completely incompatible with my giftedness, which can bring many benefits to it, to Theology, Religious Sciences, Psychology, and other areas of scientific knowledge. As a gifted person, I need to use my potentialities to the fullest, giving myself in everything I do; even though I am a perfectionist, I know that I am not perfect, nor a superman, nor a god, but I am far more capable than the congregational elders to shepherd the flock of God, I am more capable than many veteran pioneers, to preach and teach, even to themselves; I have extraordinary projects to carry out inside and outside Jehovah's Organization, for the benefit of all, without prejudice, without discrimination. I was hospitalized 4 times as if I were mentally ill, which I am not and never have been. I just want to carve out my space, be respected as a scientist and gifted, which I really am, and use everything I know to help those who need it most and those who are interested.

Many veterinary brothers and sisters, regular and special pioneers, missionaries, circuit travelers, have the privilege of giving longer and more elaborate comments at congregation meetings, of making more creative and out-of-the-box presentations in formal and informal witnessing, of giving the most relevant talks and with more complex themes, of considering the most delicate judicial cases to resolve, to lead groups of brothers, in person or virtually, for specific purposes, to conduct Bible studies for the opposite sex, to go out in the field with the opposite sex even if they are not the boyfriend or spouse, to participate in constructions, major renovations, in all kinds of preaching and teaching, to lecture and/or organize large regional assemblies and congresses, to serve at Bethel in person or at a distance, in short, I have never experienced any of the kind that I always wanted and was entitled to, because I was mistaken for mentally ill, apostate and child abuser.

The religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses does not have policies for identification or specialized religious care for giftedness; Its leaders do not have an academic, professional or spiritual background in this subject, which is why I have always been invisible there.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN OFFICES AND ELDERS

All 117,960 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world have a congregational e-mail generated on the jw.org website. Each congregational elder also has his or her own e-mail address for congregational purposes, which is also generated on the jw.org website. The organizational use of these emails is subject to the guidelines found on the "Terms of Use" page of the jw.org website, where it is also



specified which publications and where they can be shared with the public in the ministry of preaching and teaching (KS, 2019).

As mentioned in the subtopic Hearings and Judicial Committees, communication between congregation elders and office elders is carried out by email, telephone, mailed letters, videoconference or face-to-face conversations. Correspondence sent by mail is avoided because of the financial burden and delay in communication; It was replaced by electronic mail (e-mail) due to the speed of communication. Phone calls are made between elders and the office in case of urgency or emergency involving congregational matters (K.S., 2019).

All forms issued by the elders are sent electronically, scanned, to Bethel. The person responsible in each congregation for such activity is its Secretary, one of the members of the congregation's Service Committee. He is the one who receives and transmits all congregation information to the office and communicates it to the other elders. He is the one who invites qualified brothers and sisters to pioneer service, authorizes publishers to access the Hourglass app (KS, 2019), which I have never had the opportunity to access and use, even though I have been a baptized publisher for many years, and have served for 7 years as a regular pioneer, a ministry activity that has not been considered or documented by the office due to the accusations that have been leveled against my honor.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If one analyzes the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses only in the light of what is said in the Hebrew-Aramaic and Christian Greek Scriptures (the Bible), one finds that they are more refined, coherent, and consistent with it than all the other doctrines of other Christian religious denominations. However, in the light of scientific knowledge, law, theology, religious sciences, and other areas, it can be seen that the biblical understanding is incomplete, shallow, superficial, generic, relatively specific, tries to be comprehensive and deep, but its writers, for the most part, with a low level of education such as the leaders of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, they did not know how to detail simple things such as the political, commercial and legal system of their respective times, the creative and biological process, the nature of natural laws – which obviously only the Natural Sciences know how to explain with clarity, objectivity, comprehensiveness and depth, among other aspects.

The Bible writers were not as honest as one might think: for example, they only cite one case of gross sexual immorality in the early Christian congregations, when, in fact, immoral sexual practices have been present in every Christian denomination since Jesus Christ lived here on earth. They left in writing in the Bible only the practices that were convenient for them, because if they reported all their carnal practices in the Holy Scriptures, there would be no one today who would want to learn and live according to the Bible. With this, I do not seek to disparage the qualifications of the biblical writers and other



Christians, but only to make explicit that there is no perfect religion, with perfect teachings, that are owners of the truth, that save any human being, whose members are holy in the absolute sense, or 100% honest, just or right in everything, this does not exist – and will not exist – in any religious denomination or social group in sinful humanity, imperfect, limited, in which we live.

Scientific knowledge, both theoretical and applied, is millions of light years ahead of traditional religious knowledge, whose basis is a faith that is said by Christians to be well-founded, but is very shallow, superficial, when disconnected from scientific knowledge, which is based on reality observed, lived and proven through methods and techniques rigorously tested and validated.

It can be seen, then, that the religious teachings and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses do not always go together. There are businessmen among them who evade taxes, do not discharge their labor obligations related to the work performed by brothers and sisters, and do not provide working conditions in accordance with labor, social security and occupational safety legislation. Among them there are married brothers and sisters who "jump the fence", relating romantically and sexually with other people, in parallel with their respective spouses, not to mention the single ones who, in the sexual matter, enjoy even more within the religion. And in the vast majority of cases they have the endorsement of congregation elders for such practices; In only a few cases are some disciplined, disfellowshipped, so that religion may maintain its *status* in the eyes of society.

In conclusion, in order for Christian religious teachings and practices to become an acceptable way of life, approved by the Creator God Jehovah, and healthy psychically, spiritually, and socially speaking, it is necessary to learn to live at the intersection of biblical knowledge and scientific knowledge. Leaving biblical knowledge to follow only scientific knowledge becomes an incomplete path, and causes distancing from the true faith (these become secular or atheist); on the other hand, neglecting scientific knowledge, or subordinating it in relation to biblical knowledge, as Jehovah's Witnesses do, provokes religious fanaticism, and its effects which are prejudices, discriminations, lofty greatness by its members, because they think they are the owners of the truth, the only ones who will be saved,

and more knowledgeable than scientists; such fanaticism leads Jehovah's Witnesses to disrespect science as a whole, and the entire scientific community.



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