DICTIONARY of JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

(2026)

Introduction

The religious movement now known as "Jehovah's Witnesses" (JWs) has grown rapidly.

In the 1880s about 300 members publicly distributed tracts or sold books. In the 1930s more than 30,000 went house to house; in 1960 about 1,000,000; in 2000 about 6,000,000; and since 2014 over 8,000,000. The meeting attendance increased even faster and the sect became a major social phenomenon.

The *Dictionary of Jehovah's Witnesses* is for people, including JWs themselves, who want to know about this religion, because:

> All of them should be well informed about the history of the organization with which they are associated.
> (The Watchtower 1994 May 1, page16)

The *Dictionary* covers history, people, terminology, doctrines, prophecies, publications, achievements, statistics, real-estate, and more. The aim is to consider everything likely to be inquired about.

For example to find out whether the Jehovah's Witnesses leaders want their doctrines or themselves to be accepted as infallible, go to the entry *INFALLIBLE*. There you'll discover that the leaders claim God interprets the Bible for them and gives them the interpretation. You'll get quotes such as:

> *The Watchtower* is not the instrument of any man or set of men, nor is it published according to the whims of men. No man's opinion is expressed in *The Watchtower*.
> (The Watchtower 1931 2/1 237)

> Jehovah God is therefore the only Supreme Court of interpretation of His inspired word... He merely uses the "servant" class to publish the interpretation after the Supreme Court by Christ Jesus reveals it.
> (The Watchtower 1943 7/1 202-203)

> Consider, too, the fact that Jehovah's organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God's holy spirit or active force. (Zech. 4:6) Only this organization functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone God's Sacred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book...
> (The Watchtower 1973 7/1 402)

Although the leaders do not label themselves or their doctrines "infallible" and sometimes deny it, quotes like these suggest the opposite — that JWs have to regard and respond to their Governing Body as infallible.

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (the legal and publishing channel of the religion) has published hundreds of books and booklets, thousands of issues of their magazines, and hundreds of tracts and pamphlets. Books, booklets and magazine articles about Jehovah's Witnesses written by non-members number tens of thousands.

The sheer amount of information, much of it colored by polemics, makes an accurate overall overview difficult to achieve.

The leaders invite people to "review the record" (The Watchtower 1972 4/1 197) but supply superficial summaries that omit important details and important themes.

If, however, the "record" is split into many topics and arranged alphabetically, then everything can be reviewed in small chunks.

This *Dictionary* will help people to do more carefully what the leaders want everyone to do, which is to "review the record".

ABBREVIATIONS USED

g	*The Golden Age*; *Consolation*; *Awake!*
Divine Purpose	*Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (1959)
Insight	*Insight On The Scriptures* (1988)
Millions	*Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920)
Proclaimers	*Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (1993)
Studies	*Studies in the Scriptures*
w	*The Watchtower*
wr	*Reprints of the Original Watchtower* (1879-1916)
Yearbook	*Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*
JW/JWs	Jehovah's Witness(es)
WBTS	Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania
WTS	Watchtower Society
WWI / WWII	World War 1 / World War II

The abbreviation "WBTS" is used of the specific corporation considered the most important corporation. "WTS" is a collective term for multiple corporations or all of them. The term "Organization" includes all the corporations plus "bethel homes", branch offices, printeries, farms, assembly halls, kingdom halls and congregations , and the rules and personnel that keep it all functioning.

WTS books and booklets quoted in this *Dictionary* are indicated by their name (or abbreviation) and date of publication followed by the page.
For example: (Government 1928, 271)

References to *The Watchtower* are indicated by "w", and to *Awake!*, *Consolation* and *The Golden Age* by "g", followed by the year, month, day of month, and page(s).
For example: w1943 7/1 202 is *The Watchtower* 1943 July 1 page 202.

References to *Reprints of The Original Watchtower* (1879 to 1916) are indicated by "wr" which stands for "Watchtower Reprints".

Non-WTS references are either given in the text, or indicated by the author's name and date of publication, for example (Beckford 1974), and given in full under "References".

References to websites are usually given in the dictionary entry that refers to them and repeated in the Index.

Dictionary entries starting with the definite or indefinite article, "The" or "A", are entered alphabetically according to the next word in the name.
For example the book *The Finished Mystery* (1917) is discussed in the "F" entries as "Finished Mystery, The (1917)".

Words that refer to major features of the JWs Organization have the first letter capitalized — e.g. "Organization", "Society", "Bethel". But "congregation" and "branch office" are lower-case except when a specific congregation is named. Hierarchical positions, "president", "officer", "director", "elder", "servant", "pioneer", "committee", etc, are lower case except "Governing Body".

THE MEANING OF "RATIO"

The *Dictionary* includes approximately 200 statistical tables of the number of JWs in individual countries such as the following:

SPAIN
Publishers and memorial attendance in Spain and their ratio to Spain's population:

	Peak	Ratio 1 to	Memorial	Ratio 1 to
1975	30,800	1109		
1980	43,300	831	97,800	368
1985	61,100	632	134,600	289
1990	84,600	465	164,600	239
1995	100,900	388	167,900	233
2000	101,200	394	159,300	250
2005	104,200	422	176,700	249
2010	112,800	416	196,200	239
2015	111,400	417	190,200	244
2018	114,500	405	189,400	245
	Ave.			
2019	115,100	406	192,300	243
2020	116,600	401	206,400	226
2021	119,900	393	217,480	215
2022	120,000	389	198,200	236
2023	121,400	397	201,800	239
2024	124,400	391	208,800	233

2025	127,000	388	211,900	233

"Ratio" compares the number of JWs in each country with that country's total population. In 2023 there was one JW publisher in Spain for every 397 people, and one Memorial attendant for every 239 people.

Numbers in these tables bigger than 30,000 are usually rounded out to the nearest 100; and numbers bigger than 500,000 to the nearest 1000. But ratio calculations are based on the exact numbers.

Until 2018 the WBTS supplied publishers-to-population ratios calculated from each year's peak number of publishers; but from 2019 the publisher ratios are based on the average number of publishers.

The WTS's statistical tables include each country's population, which this Dictionary omits. To calculate approximately the population figure for each country, multiply the number of publishers by the ratio, or the Memorial attendance by the ratio.

ORIGIN

This dictionary began in 1983 when the author took a year off before completing his B.Sc. at university and started the dictionary as a spare time interest. After university studies were finished he continued the dictionary and regularly returned to it whenever enough spare time recurred.

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