

MILLIONS NOW LIVING
WILL NEVER DIE



A study of Jehovah's Witnesses

by Alan Rogerson



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Introduction

Who are Jehovah's Witnesses? My impression is that most people outside the movement and many in it are unable to answer this question satisfactorily. For most people the only contact with the Witnesses seems to have been a brief encounter on the doorstep where they may have politely or impolitely closed their door, engaged in some furious and fruitless argument or perhaps bought two Witness magazines (never to read them). I have questioned many outside the movement about their impression of the Witnesses and it seems to be one of a 'cranky' but sincere people who persist in calling from house to house at the most awkward times; their history is shrouded in mystery and their beliefs appear to be very peculiar. Whether the Witnesses like it or not (and they do not!) this seems to be their public image in Britain. National newspaper coverage of their movement is small and only concerns the sensational aspects - conscientious objection, mass baptisms and, of course, their refusal to have blood transfusions. While it is true that the Witnesses capture a limited amount of good publicity with their massive conventions, the newspapers on the whole confirm the image of a 'weird religious sect'.

The situation is different in the United States where the movement began. America does not have anything akin to our national church and the religious atmosphere there is more personal and less institutional. America has been the melting-pot for all the religions of the West and it has given birth to many sects of its own - in particular Jehovah's Witnesses who are a part (albeit a small one) of the American way of life. In that land of unusual sects the Witnesses have made their mark by their highly organised methods of preaching and their 'fringe' beliefs such as baptism of adults by total immersion. The Witnesses have points in common with the Christadelphians, the Mormons, Unitarians, Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostals: they are a non-conformist group who have not yet achieved the respectability of the Methodists or Congregationalists. Despite resemblances with

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other sects, the Witnesses do not believe in interfaith but regard themselves as the sole possessors of the truth. They are fond of referring to the 'jangling' creeds of the rest of Christendom but as far as outsiders are concerned Jehovah's Witnesses are just one more jangle that adds to the din.

In addition to the prevalent ignorance outside the Witness movement – there is much ignorance within it. It will soon become obvious to the reader that the Witnesses are an indoctrinated people whose beliefs and thoughts are shaped by the Watchtower Society whose headquarters are in New York. This is not meant to be a melodramatic statement: most modern sects do not thrive on a diet of reason and logic, and the Witnesses are not unique in being told what to believe by those in charge of their organisation.

The result of this mutual ignorance is a huge mental impasse between Jehovah's Witnesses and the rest of the public. In this book I have tried to remedy both of these states of ignorance. For the non-Witness I have presented the facts of the Witnesses' history from its beginnings in 1874 through the periods of office of the three presidents of their Society: Charles Taze Russell, Joseph Franklin Rutherford and Nathan Homer Knorr. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses and finally (and perhaps most important) I have devoted four chapters to the organisational and personal framework of the Witness movement today. For the Witnesses themselves I have quoted numerous facts concerning their history of which most of them are unaware. Many Witnesses, although they do not know it, are in a real state of ignorance about the origins of their organisation and are also in a state of mistaken knowledge about their place in the world and what exactly the world thinks of them. This book is an attempt (as far as I have read the only attempt) to dispel this mutual ignorance and to present to the world and to the Witnesses a complete answer to the question: who are Jehovah's Witnesses?

In order to do this I have consulted all the original records available – especially the books and *Watchtowers* printed from 1874 onwards. The testimony of these sources is often contradicted by the Witnesses (as well as their opponents) and where possible I have cited and quoted my source of information. I have tried to make my viewpoint unbiased as I have no strong personal feelings for or against the Witness movement. My aim throughout

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has been to present a full and complete account of the Witnesses incorporating all the significant incidents and facts; where I have discussed certain events or ideas the factual basis for the discussion is also presented so that readers are free to draw their own conclusions. At least one inevitable bias is present in the text – certain writers have distorted the facts either for or against the movement and it has been necessary to *emphasise* points that have been deliberately misused in the past.

Consultation of primary sources has revealed that most of the full-length books previously written about the Witnesses are unreliable or at best inadequate. There is a need for an authoritative work in this field and this gap has encouraged me to try to fill it. Of the books written about the Witnesses special mention must be made of four (see the Bibliography for brief details of the others): *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* is the Witnesses' own account of their history and although it suffers from the strong bias present in all the Witnesses' literature, it contains a lot of useful factual information. *The Jehovah's Witnesses* by H. H. Stroup is an interesting and impressive book from which I have occasionally quoted – unfortunately the book is now quite out-of-date. *Jehovah's Witnesses: The New World Society* at first sight appears to be a valuable source of information but the author, Marley Cole, highly favours the Witnesses and gives a very misleading account of the movement in which journalistic jargon abounds. The fourth book is the notorious *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave* by W. J. Schnell which gives a unique (!) picture of the events during the presidency of Rutherford. I have quoted some interesting parts from this work but I believe Schnell is wrong both in his conception of the Society as it is and in his peculiar theories about its past. More could be said on this subject but I hope that readers of Schnell will take many things he says with a pinch of salt.

The above has, I hope, illustrated the sort of literature the Witness movement attracts: objective but sometimes badly informed works, highly favourable accounts written by Witnesses and virulent attacks written by ex-members of the movement! For myself, I was brought up as a member of this sect but found it impossible to accept the Witnesses' beliefs and left the movement. I believe former membership, however, is a vital prerequisite for adequately describing the Witness movement.

1. The Founder - Charles Taze Russell

JHOVAH'S WITNESSES have their origin in the life and beliefs of one man - Charles Taze Russell. In his lifetime Russell was well known as an author, as a preacher and as the 'Pastor' to a group of people known as 'Bible Students'. Many of his followers virtually worshipped him and at his death there was no one who could adequately replace him. Several rival organisations grew up - each claimed to be his successor. One of these groups retained control of his magazine and legal corporation and became the Witness movement of today.

Russell was born of Scottish-Irish parents in Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 16th February 1852. Little is known about his childhood. He was educated first in the state schools and then by private tutors. He did not attend college. His mother died when he was nine and this may have deepened Russell's already keen religious sense. The story is often quoted of his chalking up Bible texts in the street to warn men of the seriousness of Hell - this at the age of fourteen. He was brought up a Presbyterian but changed to the more liberal Congregational Church; he was active there and in the Y.M.C.A. At the age of fifteen he went into partnership with his father, a draper, and together they expanded their business and formed a chain of stores later valued at a quarter of a million dollars. But Russell became dissatisfied with the Congregational Church. He recognised the four attributes of God to be love, justice, wisdom and power and he sought a creed that would harmonise with such a God. He left the Congregational Church and examined in turn the creeds of Christendom and the Oriental faiths. None satisfied him.

Thus during the years 1868 and 1869 Russell was in a state of doubt and perplexity. In his own words:

Brought up a Presbyterian, indoctrinated from the Catechism, and being naturally of an enquiring mind, I fell a ready prey to the logic

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of infidelity, as soon as I began to think for myself. But that which at first threatened to be the utter shipwreck of faith in God and the Bible was, under God's providence, over-ruled for good, and merely wrecked my confidence in human creeds and systems of Bible misinterpretations.^{1*}

Then in 1870 came a turning point. One dark night in Allegheny as Russell walked along the streets he heard singing from a nearby hall. It was a small group of Second Adventists gathered to hear Jonas Wendell speak.² 'Is it possible,' thought Russell, 'that the handful of people who meet here have something more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches?' Russell listened with them and his faith was revived. According to the Witnesses Russell now 'returned to the Bible' and searched for what it really taught. He gathered together social and business friends of like mind and they formed a Bible Study Group. Russell was eighteen and for the next ten years he was to expand his father's business on the one hand and continue his Bible Study Group on the other. Both flourished, but it was the latter that was to occupy his life. In October 1876 he was elected Pastor of his 'congregation' of Bible searchers.³ During these years of Bible study and contact with Adventist theology Russell came to believe that several primary doctrines of the established Church were not substantiated by Scripture – in particular he believed the Scriptures did not teach a fiery hell. It would, however, be quite wrong to say that these views alienated him from the established Church. He lived in a time of feverish investigation and doctrinal change. Faiths and creeds were bandied about and many new ideas were promulgated *within* the Church. Russell was simply a Bible Student at this time – he represented no creed or sect but was willing to discuss Biblical ideas with anyone.

There was one thing, however, that Russell was certain about at this time – the imminent Second Advent of Jesus Christ. Speculation on this subject was rife and the latter half of the nineteenth century saw a continual succession of people prophesying a date for Jesus' return and the end of the world. The popular idea was that the few faithful expectant ones would be 'caught up in the clouds' at Jesus' return (1 *Thess.* 4 : 17). Russell was interested in Second Adventism and he believed that even the unsuccessful prophets had a place in God's plan. The most

*Notes and references begin on p. 193.

prominent of these was William Miller who had taught that Jesus would return in 1843 or 1844. Despite the incorrect prophecy Miller and his followers (Millerites) sparked off a whole chain of new guesses. Russell maintained that while Miller was obviously wrong his movement served a useful purpose, and he wrote in 1890:

While, as the reader will have observed, we disagree with Mr. Miller's interpretations and deductions, on almost every point – viewing the *object*, as well as the *manner* and the *time*, of our Lord's coming, in a very different light – yet we recognise that movement as being in God's order, and as doing a very important work in the separating, purifying, refining, and thus making ready, of a waiting people prepared for the Lord.⁴

Russell even went as far as to interpret the parable of the ten virgins (*Matthew 25 : 1, 2*) as referring to the Miller movement and later developments: 'The movement noted by our Lord in this parable corresponds exactly to one which began with the "Miller movement" and which is still in progress.' This parable and its interpretations were to figure often in Russell's writings. He believed he lived in the crucial age for the return of Christ but he disagreed with Miller and the Second Adventists concerning the *manner* and *object* of Christ's return. Russell explained his views in a booklet published at his own expense in 1873: *The Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return*. These differences will be discussed below.

In the Witnesses' 'official' history *Jehoval's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* and also in *Faith on the March* the authors evidently wish to emphasise the *differences* between Russell and the Adventists – how they were wrong and he was right. In fact nearly all of Russell's beliefs, and certainly all the important ones, were thought up by other people – most of them Adventists. This will become plain as we study Russell's religious development.⁵

Russell was still carrying on his father's trade and it was on a business trip to Philadelphia in the close of 1875 that he read a copy of the magazine *Herald of the Morning* in which the editor, N. H. Barbour, claimed that Christ had returned invisibly in 1874. Russell's interest was aroused; he wrote to Barbour, who was in Rochester, New York, and suggested that they meet. Barbour came to Philadelphia (expenses paid by Russell) and con-

vinced him that Jesus had returned invisibly in 1874. Barbour's strange opinion was based on the translation of the Greek word *parousia* in *Matthew 24 : 3* where the disciples asked Jesus: 'What shall be the sign of thy coming [= *parousia*].' Barbour had been convinced that Jesus' return was due in 1874 and when this apparently did not happen another Adventist, B. W. Keith, pointed out that *parousia* might be translated *presence* and not *coming*. Barbour seized on this idea and inferred that Jesus' *invisible* presence had started in 1874. Russell accepted this explanation and both he and Barbour expected that Jesus would shortly collect together the faithful few and take them up to heaven. Russell was keen to publish these findings and inform as many people as possible, telling them of the second *presence*. Barbour pointed out that his own printing press in New York was worn out and he had little money. Also he said: 'The subscribers to the *Herald of the Morning* are discouraged because 1874 has passed and the Lord didn't come. Some of them lived in 1844 with Miller and the Lord didn't come then, and now they've become discouraged.'⁶

Russell was at an important turning point. Up to then his religious beliefs had been a 'spiritual hobby' but now he decided to use his substantial fortune to finance the advertising of the Second Advent. He gave Barbour money to print a book *The Three Worlds or Plan of Redemption* which set out their beliefs – this was published in 1877. Russell paid for new printing equipment and threw himself wholeheartedly into the printing and publishing of *Herald of the Morning* as associate editor to Barbour. As Russell said:

I at once saw the special times in which we live have an important bearing upon our duty and work as Christ's disciples; that since we are living in the time of the Harvest the Harvest work should be done.⁷

By 'the Harvest work' Russell meant spreading the message that Jesus' second presence had begun in 1874. Those who accepted this belief were the 'saints' who would be carried off to heaven in glory. It is interesting to note that the pattern of the Second Advent was the same for all the Adventists. Russell and Barbour differed only in the date and the significant matter of an *invisible presence* instead of a *visible coming*. The other matters – the 'harvest

work' preceding the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the glorification of the saints – were derived from Miller. Russell and Barbour felt certain that the 'glorification' would occur on a particular date (this was also Miller's belief) and they searched the Bible to find a clue to this date. They believed that at Jesus' first Advent he had preached for three and a half years after baptism and then he had returned to heaven (after the crucifixion). It therefore seemed 'logical' that Jesus' second Advent, or presence, should last exactly three and a half years, at the end of which time the Kingdom of God would be set up and the faithful ones changed to heavenly glory in the twinkling of an eye (1 *Corinthians* 15 : 51, 52). As Jesus had returned in the autumn of 1874 (according to Barbour's calculations) they felt sure that the glorification must occur three and a half years later, in 1878.⁸

The critical year, 1878, came and went despite the suspense suffered by Russell, Barbour and their followers. The disappointment took the two leaders in different ways. According to A. H. Macmillan, Russell 'did not for a moment feel cast down' and he 'realised that what God had so plainly declared must some time have a fulfilment'. Some gathered in white robes on the crucial night expecting to be taken to heaven, but Russell was not amongst them.⁹ What A. H. Macmillan fails to say is that Russell *did* believe the kingdom had been set up – but invisibly. Instead of the saints being changed immediately, Russell concluded that they would be changed on their natural death *after* 1878. Those saints who were already dead before 1878 were 'spiritually resurrected' and invisibly transferred to heaven in that year! Russell wrote:

The year 1878 being thus indicated as the date when the Lord began to take unto himself his great power, it is reasonable to conclude that there the setting up of his Kingdom began, the first step of which would be the deliverance of his body, the Church, among whom the sleeping members are to take precedence.... Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present, since October 1874, and the formal inauguration of his kingly office dates from April 1878 A.D.: and the first work of the Kingdom, as shown by our Lord, in his parables and prophecy (the gathering of 'his elect'), is now in progress.¹⁰

Russell held to this interpretation of 1878 to his death but Barbour was disappointed and discouraged when 1878 passed

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with no visible heavenly sign. A rift grew between the two men and in that same year Barbour wrote an article for the *Herald* in which he denied the doctrine of the ransom sacrifice, as Russell knew it. This was a great shock to Russell, for this doctrine was central to his faith. He promptly wrote an article in reply in a later issue of the *Herald* and the readers were confused by a series of contradictory articles for and against the ransom. The situation became intolerable and Russell withdrew his support for the *Herald of the Morning*. He did not in fact make any claim for the printing equipment which he had paid for; instead he purchased new printing presses in 1879 and decided that henceforth he would devote all his time and money to explaining his doctrines and the return of Christ without the aid of Barbour. In July 1879 Russell printed 6,000 copies of the first edition of *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*¹¹ – his new mouthpiece, with himself and five others as contributors. In the same year, at one of his Bible Study Groups, Russell met Maria Frances Ackley and three months later they were married. Charles Taze Russell now began a new life.

WATCHTOWER YEARS, 1879-1900

In 1879 Russell was at the beginning of a long and turbulent career. What exactly did he think? He believed that there was no trinity and no immortal soul, that hell was no more than the grave – a completely insensible state. More important he believed that the Bible pointed to the age he was living in – and *ipso facto* was pointing to *him* as the chief advertiser of these truths. Russell believed that he and his Bible Student followers were being led by God to the rediscovery of Biblical truths. This caused many people to accuse Russell of 'appalling egotism',¹² but was he really conceited? In appearance, behaviour and attitude he was anything but a braggart. Despite the hero-worship that was lavished on him he did not vaunt himself, even through his own magazine. This much is obvious from reading through the *Watch Towers*; in *Zion's Watch Tower*, 1st September 1900, Russell wrote:

We have frequently been urged to publish the Editor's picture either in the Dawns¹³ or in these columns: but have as persistently refused. It is the truth rather than its servant that should be honoured and proclaimed.

A hint as to why so many people have accused Russell of conceit and egotism is contained in the above quotation. Russell assumes he is the 'servant of the Truth' and hence in a privileged and important position. Even though Russell 'claimed nothing of himself' he claimed a great deal for the message he preached; not unnaturally his opponents called him conceited when he claimed divine authority!

This apparent paradox has led to much controversy. In *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* the Witnesses say: 'He made no claim of a special revelation from God but held that it was God's due time for the Bible to be understood.'¹⁴

Not only is this rash statement contradicted by Russell himself on several occasions but the apologia seems extreme even by modern Witness standards. Presumably their intention in that book is to paint the best possible picture *for newcomers* – certainly their other books (for mature Witnesses) claim a little more for Russell. I quote below a key passage that Russell's enemies seized on to 'prove' his egotism. Russell wrote:

Not only do we find that people cannot see the divine in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the 'Scripture Studies' [his own works!] aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years – if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the 'Scripture Studies' with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.¹⁵

Russell also compared himself to a 'Combination Timelock' which opens up the divine secrets – only in his time and by himself; and he referred to his writings as 'the Divinely provided light upon God's word'.¹⁶ We are therefore forced to conclude that Russell was not personally conceited but the sincere claims he made for his beliefs were anything but modest.

In 1879, however, he had but a small following in a country full of 'Pastors', sects and cults, in addition to the major Churches. At this time Pastor Russell and his Bible Students were still searching for the complete truth. They were not an established organisation, their magazine was founded to *discuss* Biblical views.

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The other five regular contributors were A. D. Jones (an employee in Russell's store), J. H. Paton, W. I. Mann, B. W. Keith, and H. B. Rice. In addition, Mrs. Russell frequently contributed articles. At first the magazine was published monthly, but in 1892 it changed to twice-monthly as it is today.

In the early 1880's *Zion's Watch Tower* was just one of many similar magazines being printed and distributed in America. There was rivalry and often controversy between their editors — many attempted to increase their own circulation at the expense of the others. Before joining Russell, H. B. Rice had been editor of a magazine called *The Last Trump* which lack of money closed down. Russell shrewdly took on Rice and at the same time sent the new *Zion's Watch Tower* to the former subscribers of *The Last Trump*. Of the original contributors, several eventually 'defected'. For instance, J. H. Paton was at first a prolific writer to *Zion's Watch Tower* but finally he wrote a book contradicting Russell and the latter was forced to warn his readers not to have anything more to do with Paton.¹⁷ 'Brother' A. D. Jones moved to New York in 1881 and there started his own paper *Zion's Day Star*. Russell magnanimously recommended this magazine at first but was hastily obliged to reverse his opinion when Jones denied the ransom doctrine and actually set up in opposition to Russell.

In fact Pastor Russell had the unpleasant task of holding his own in a series of running fights with neighbouring periodicals. In 1883 there began a long dispute with *The World's Hope* and in the following year *The Millenarian* began a controversy with Russell. This was particularly regrettable as Pastor Russell's object was not petty strife but to inform as many people as possible of the Second Advent. In this he was not unsuccessful, during 1879-1880 thirty congregations (or ecclesias as they were called) were set up in the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Delaware, Ohio and Michigan. These ecclesias were not *founded* by Russell. They grew out of groups of people who had read *Zion's Watch Tower*, agreed with it, and decided to meet together for further Bible study and mutual benefit. They were in touch with Pastor Russell, of course, and there was a strong bond between him and them. He was their 'honorary Pastor' although each ecclesia elected its own 'elders' who were the spiritual and administrative heads. This system was

modelled on the Congregational Church and was in operation up to the time of Russell's death.

Members of these ecclesias addressed one another as 'brother' and 'sister', a practice still followed by Jehovah's Witnesses today. They held regular meetings, read and discussed *Zion's Watch Tower* and distributed tracts. Those who travelled abroad often took the *Towers* and tracts with them to give to interested people - from this grew early centres of interest outside the United States. From 1880 to 1884, for instance, one million copies of the tract *Food For Thinking Christians* were distributed in America and London.

In 1884 Russell formed a legal corporation to handle the increased amount of work that stemmed from his new following. The corporation was called Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society and it was granted its charter on 13th December 1884.¹⁸ Pastor Russell was the President (a post he held until his death), his wife was Secretary/Treasurer. Altogether seven directors and three officers were elected. Gradually Russell and his followers were becoming more rigid in their beliefs and organisation. In *Zion's Watch Tower* of October 1883, Russell admitted that his movement could be called a sect, unlike the modern-day Witnesses who deny that they can be described as a sect, cult or religion.¹⁹ Most of Pastor Russell's supporters were keen students of the Bible, but they had no criterion of *activity*. They believed in disseminating their message but they thought their primary duty was *individual character development*. Each Bible Student, as one of the saints, was concerned with preparation for the heavenly calling by Bible study, prayer, meditation and the improvement of his character in everyday life.

While Russell approved of this spiritual procedure his business sense led him to examine the most efficient ways of spreading his message. He had advanced as an *ideal* that all should help in distributing his literature, but in the April 1881 edition of *Zion's Watch Tower* he took more practical steps with an article entitled 'WANTED - 1,000 Preachers'. Those responding to the article were the first of the *colporteurs* (now called *pioneers*) who worked almost full time preaching and distributing *Zion's Watch Tower*. By the late 1880's Russell himself was devoting all of his time to the study of the Bible and the administration of his fast-growing movement. In 1889 a new building was finished in Pittsburgh to

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house the printing works and to be the office centre for Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society.

Russell was an astute businessman. By the time he was thirty he had expanded his father's one store into a chain of five which he then sold for a quarter of a million dollars (present equivalent, about a million dollars). This business acumen was useful to Russell not only in business; read his instructions for selling his Bible literature in 1887:

These circulars can be sent out by the hand of trusty boys or girls, whom you can employ. And if you cannot visit all your neighbors yourself to show the book and take their orders, these same boys or girls could do it (Girls would generally succeed best). You could pay them a commission out of each day's sales – so much on each copy disposed of. . . . Do not spend more than 2 or 3 minutes at each house, and if they do not readily subscribe say to them: I do not accept the money now, but merely take your orders, but be sure to have the money ready by —? day – fixing a time when your canvass of the town will be complete. . . . You can safely say too, 'When this book is in the hands of all your neighbors and they are talking about its contents, you will have more than 25 cents worth of curiosity to know as well as they, of its teachings and explanations. Then I will be gone and you will feel ashamed *to borrow* when you can now purchase for the paltry sum of 25 cents. You can sell the book for waste paper after reading it and surely not lose much.²⁰

Practically every major device of modern advertising is hinted at in the above paragraph! Russell was not slow to utilise every means to disseminate his message. In 1891 he set off on the first of many overseas tours to this end. He travelled through Ireland, Scotland, Russia, Turkey and so on, giving lectures and talks in each country. In 1893 he organised the first large National Convention for his followers at Chicago from August 20–24th. There were 360 colporteurs present at this Convention – a far cry from Russell's '1,000 wanted'. Their numbers were not always on the increase (in 1896 Russell commented on a decrease in the colporteur ranks).

As well as colporteurs Russell conceived the idea of 'Pilgrims' – paid representatives of the Watch Tower Society who visited the local ecclesias to help and encourage the brethren (these are now called *circuit servants*). Three Pilgrims were sent out in 1897, twenty-five in 1905 and by 1917 there was a total of ninety-three

Pilgrims travelling from congregation to congregation.²¹ In these ways Pastor Russell laid the organisational foundation on which Jehovah's Witnesses have built their modern 'New World Society'.

Up to the close of the nineteenth century Russell's personality and beliefs had attracted a small band of adherents, most of them in the United States. Incomplete figures for the *Memorial* gathering to commemorate Christ's death suggest that Russell's following in 1899 was about 2,500. What was it that attracted these people? Certainly Pastor Russell himself inspired confidence:

His natural charm, his seeming broad-mindedness, his devotion to the Bible, his extreme claims, all won him devotees in the early years. Russell was always willing to meet people and to talk with them. On his lengthy speaking tours about the country he willingly posed for photographers, and thus left behind him a group of photographs which date the various stages of his life and career. He was a smallish man,²² thin and saintly in appearance. His demeanor, according to all available reports, was ascetic. In later life, his long white hair gave him the appearance of a modern patriarch. In speech, both public and private, his professionalized style marked him as a 'spell-binder'.²³

Russell attracted admiration and worship from many of his supporters. One of them, P. S. L. Johnson, said:

He certainly was a SCHOLAR in the true sense of that term. . . . He was deeply versed in history. . . . His writings show that he was at home in the perplexing questions of industry, economics, sociology, capital and labour. The realms of philosophy were deeply explored by him, and he was an expert in theoretical and practical psychology and phrenology. . . and when other theologians will have been discarded, he will be recognised as a standing authority in this the greatest of all sciences [theology].²⁴

While in *Zion's Watch Tower* 1st May 1917 it was said that 'Not since the Apostle Paul has there lived in the world a greater and better man than Pastor Russell'.

Most of Russell's followers, however, would claim that it was his message that attracted them. Many described their feelings of joy and satisfaction on first reading Russell's works, akin to the immediate and complete conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus. Although Russell's writings hardly seem to be ad-

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mirable today, it is quite credible that his direct prose style, his forthright beliefs and his detailed discussions of Politics and Economics impressed his contemporaries. Russell's chief mouth-piece was *Zion's Watch Tower*, but he also wrote an important series of six books – starting in 1886 with *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. Previous to this Russell had written several tracts, and two books: *Three Worlds or Plan of Redemption* (1887) and *Tabernacle Shadows of the 'Better Sacrifices'*. The latter was written in 1881 as a reply to Barbour's interpretations of the Hebrew Tabernacle, which Russell regarded as misleading.

'THE MILLENNIUM DAWNS' OR 'STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES'

In order to clarify his position, and set out his beliefs in full, Pastor Russell published *The Divine Plan of the Ages* in 1886. Six million copies of this book were sold during the next forty years. Russell proceeded to write a series of books of which this was just the first. Originally called *The Millennium Dawns*, the name of the series was changed in 1904 to *Studies in the Scriptures*. The complete series was:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <i>The Divine Plan of the Ages</i> (1886) | 358 pages |
| 2. <i>The Time is at Hand</i> (1889) | 371 pages |
| 3. <i>Thy Kingdom Come</i> (1891) | 384 pages |
| 4. <i>The Battle of Armageddon</i> (1897) | 660 pages |
| 5. <i>The Atonement between God and Man</i> (1899) | 498 pages |
| 6. <i>The New Creation</i> (1904) | 738 pages |

The name of Volume 4 was later changed to *The Day of Vengeance* (the reason was that people thought the original title was that of a novel!). Russell intended to write a seventh volume (seven was a Biblical number for completeness). This would uncover the mysteries of *Revelation*. Later in life he came to the conclusion that he had not got 'the key to unlock the secrets of *Revelation*' and it was left to his successors to publish the seventh volume.

What were the books like? On the whole their tone is one of reason and restraint although there is no hiding Russell's conviction that he and his followers were the chosen of God. There are few attempts at grandiloquence and the style is factual and down to earth if not a little tedious. This cannot be said of Russell's conclusions, for the greater part of all his books is

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taken up with two things: extensive and elaborate Bible chronology applied to Russell's time, and the interpretation of Biblical events also to apply to his time. Russell was much concerned with times and dates and charts – his books are full of them. In addition to all this, he discussed at length social and political issues (tying them in with Bible prophecy) and he was fond of debating the exact meaning of the original Greek and Hebrew words in the Bible. It was later publicly revealed that he had no expert knowledge in this field.

The most surprising thing about the six volumes was their lack of discussion of basic doctrines – less than sixty of the 3,000 pages were devoted to discussing the trinity, immortality of the soul and hell-fire. The second volume contained no doctrinal material at all; typical chapter headings in this book were: 'The Seventy Weeks of Daniel's Prophecy – Events Foretold to Transpire Within that Time – The Time of Messiah's Advent Indicated – What are Gentile Times? – "The Times of Restitution of All Things" Foretold by Moses – The Date of Their Beginning Indicated' – and so on. (One last example: in the first volume Russell devoted only two paragraphs in the whole book to showing that the idea of eternal torment was unscriptural.) I wish to discuss in detail the two main themes in Russell's life and literature, these were the real core of his beliefs and were the dominating topics of conversation for Russell and all his followers. Knowing these two aspects of Russell's world-view we are better equipped to understand the development of the movement after his death, and indeed much of present-day Witness theology.

Pastor Russell and Bible Chronology

Most Jehovah's Witnesses today know little or nothing of the 'prophecies' of Pastor Russell but all of them are convinced of one thing: they believe that Pastor Russell correctly predicted the heavenly establishment of the Kingdom of God in 1914. In their own account *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*²⁵ they say this about Russell's opinion of 1914: 'Although this was still decades before the First World War, it is surprising how accurately the events that finally took place were actually foreseen.' This is nonsense. Below are details of Russell's opinions on 1914 and other dates. I have quoted at length from the original sources as

they are not easy to obtain, and this lack allows statements such as the above to go unchallenged.

As we have already seen, Russell believed that Jesus' second coming, or presence, had occurred invisibly in 1874 and that the Kingdom of God had been set up, also invisibly, in 1878. Russell used two lines of argument to substantiate the date 1874.

(1) Russell believed that the Jewish nation would be restored to God's favour in 'the last days'. This view was based on certain texts such as *Matthew* 5 : 18: 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' (See also *Hebrews* 10 : 1; 8 : 5, *Colossians* 2 : 17 and especially *Acts* 3 : 19-21.) The Israelites had been enjoined to celebrate every fiftieth year as a Jubilee Year (*Leviticus* 25 : 10, 15). Russell was captivated by the idea of a *greater fulfilment* which involved a period of waiting, leading up to the greater Jubilee Year, which Russell thought must be the Millennium.²⁶ The Israelites worked out their Jubilee Year so that it occurred after $7 \times 7 = 49$ years, giving a cycle of fifty years. In the higher fulfilment Russell multiplied *cycles* together to obtain the waiting interval. Thus the time between Jubilee Years in the higher (antitypical) fulfilment is $50 \times 50 = 2,500$ years. Russell now had to determine when this period of 2,500 years started – the date when it finished would then give the beginning of the antitypical Jubilee Year, the Millennium! Here, in Russell's own words, is the argument:

Fifty times fifty years gives the long period of twenty-five hundred years (50×50 equals 2,500), as the length of that great *cycle*, which began to count when Israel's last typical Jubilee ended, and which must culminate in the great antitypical Jubilee. We know that such a cycle must have *begun to count* where the type ceased; because, if not one jot or tittle of the Law could pass away without a fulfilment at least commencing, then the Jubilee type, which was far more than a jot or tittle, indeed a large and important feature of the Law, would not have been permitted to pass away until the right time for its antitype to begin . . . the last of the typical Jubilees, occurred just nineteen years before the beginning of the seventy years of desolation of the land while they [the Jews] were in captivity in Babylon, and nine hundred and fifty years after entering Canaan.²⁷

There, then, just nineteen years before the 'seventy years of desolation' of their land, at the close of their last Jubilee – the nineteenth – the great cycle of 2,500 years *began to count*; and it becomes

a very simple matter to reckon where those 2,500 years terminated, and consequently where the twenty-five hundredth year, the beginning of the great antitypical Jubilee, began. . . . Thus, the year which began October 1874 was the 2,500th year, but since the antitype is larger than the type - 1,000 years instead of one year - 1875 (beginning Oct. 1874), instead of being a Jubilee year was the first of the 1,000 years of Jubilee.²⁸

The whole of Chapter 6 in Volume 2 is taken up with an involved and prolix 'proof' that 1874 has this Biblical significance. Russell goes on to infer what should happen in 1874:

But what are the reasonable conclusions from these Bible teachings? Let us consider what must follow, from the standpoint of reason, and then see if any other scriptures either warrant or contradict those conclusions. First we infer that when the "Times of Restitution" are due to begin, the presence of the *Great Restorer* is also due. This would be a very reasonable inference, but it amounts to much more than inference when it is endorsed by the Apostle's positive inspired statement, that *When the [appointed] times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord [Jehovah] . . . he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. - Acts 3 : 19-21.*²⁹

Russell is saying, at great length, that Jesus must return in 1874. This is the first major justification for the date; the second arrives at 1874 by an even more roundabout method.

(2) It was, of course, Barbour and not Russell who first expounded the above justification for 1874. Similarly the second line of reasoning was not originated by Russell but by a Mr. Bowen in England.³⁰ He noticed that using the exact chronology of the Bible it was possible to calculate how many years had passed since the creation of Adam. Bowen took the Bible figures literally and arrived at 4,129 B.C.³¹ for this event. He believed that each of the creation 'days' were not literal twenty-four-hour periods but lasted 7,000 years. The significance of this is that the last 'day' (on which God rested) actually lasts for 7,000 years starting from the creation of Adam. The last 1,000 years of this 'day' Bowen thought must be the Millennium. This is, of course, almost pure conjecture (although Bowen and Russell offered tenuous Biblical support). It sounds as though it was worked out

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by hindsight – as 6,000 years from Adam's creation brings us to the date 1872! Russell believed that the Millennium therefore started in the year 1873 – in his own words:

In this chapter we present the Bible evidence that indicates that six thousand years from the creation of Adam were complete with A.D. 1872 and hence that, since A.D. 1872, we are chronologically entered upon the seventh thousand or the Millennium – the forepart of which, the 'Day of the Lord', the 'day of trouble', is to witness the breaking into pieces of the kingdoms of this world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens.³²

The apparent discrepancy between 1872, the end of the 6,000 years, and 1874, the date of Christ's second presence, is conveniently explained by Russell:

How is it that the exact Bible Chronology points to October 1872 as the beginning of the seventh thousand year, or Millennium, while the Jubilee Cycles show October 1874 to be the date of our Lord's return and the beginning of restitution times? . . . It will be remembered that the reckoning of chronology began with the creation of Adam, and that some time was spent by Adam and Eve before sin entered. Just how long we are not informed, but two years would not be an improbable estimate. . . . The six thousand years in which God has permitted evil to dominate the world, prior to the beginning of the great seventh or sabbatic thousand, or Times of Restitution, dates from the entrance of sin into the world. And since the Times of Restitution began with October 1874, that must be the end of the six thousand years' reign of Sin; and the difference between that and the date shown in the chronology from Adam's creation represents the period of sinlessness in Eden, which really belongs to the reign of righteousness.³³

Russell never changed his opinion that Jesus had returned in 1874 and this remained the major time-prophecy as far as he was concerned. I quote in Appendix A his beliefs concerning five other dates in the late nineteenth century.

Pastor Russell and the Year 1914

As early as the 1880's Pastor Russell came to the conclusion that the year 1914 marked the end of the 'Gentile Times' – his reasoning was almost identical with that used by Witnesses today (see the doctrinal section). Despite what the Witnesses say, however, Russell *did not* believe that 1914 marked the establishment of the

Kingdom of God in heaven (for that had happened in 1878) and he certainly did not believe that 1914 would be followed by another generation of conflict without any intervention by God. What then did Russell think *would* happen in 1914? He expected that, at last, the saints would be glorified, they would be carried up to heaven to rule with Jesus. At the same time God would cause the break-up of all earthly kingdoms and would *substitute* theocratic rule during the rest of the Millennium. Russell believed that God would *restore* mankind on earth to perfection – he would not destroy them in a ‘Battle of Armageddon’:

. . . but when God’s Word and plan are viewed as a whole, these will all be found to favour the view . . . that Christ comes before the conversion of the world, and reigns for the purpose of converting the world. . . . They believe that God will do no more than choose this Church, while we find the Scriptures teaching a further step in the divine plan – a *restitution* for the world, to be accomplished through the elect Church.³⁴

In 1916 Russell wrote a series of Forewords for the ‘Studies’ in which he admitted that his prophecies concerning 1914 had not been fulfilled, for example:

The author acknowledges that in this book he presents the thought that the Lord’s saints might expect to be with Him in glory at the ending of the Gentile Times. This was a natural mistake to fall into, but the Lord overruled it for the blessing of His people.³⁵

Russell’s thoughts concerning 1914 are clearly set out in *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. The Elect would be glorified to heaven, other faithful ones would occupy subsidiary heavenly positions, while the remainder of mankind on earth with the resurrected millions would revert to Edenic perfection. It is quite clear from the quotation below that Russell thought in 1889 that the Battle of Armageddon (*Revelation 16*) had already begun and that it would *end* in 1915:

In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished near the end of A.D. 1915. . . . True, it is expecting great things to claim, as we do, that within the coming twenty-six years all present governments will be overthrown and dissolved. . . . Be not surprised, then, when in subsequent chapters

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we present proofs that the setting up of the Kingdom of God is already begun, that it is pointed out in prophecy as due to begin the exercise of power in A.D. 1878, and that the 'battle of the great day of God almighty' (*Revelation 16:14*), which will end in A.D. 1915, with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced. . . . The beginning of the early phase of the Kingdom in the end of A.D. 1914 will, we understand, consist wholly of the resurrected holy ones of olden time, — from John the Baptizer back to Abel.⁸⁶

There are many similar quotations from Russell's works. See Appendix B for a time chart summarising his 'prophetic' dates. The main conclusion one can draw from all this is that Russell (obviously) was obsessed by time prophecies, most of which were wrong. Modern opinion amongst Jehovah's Witnesses is that he was right about 1914, but this is based on ignorance of his writings.

Pastor Russell and Biblical Interpretation

Jehovah's Witnesses have inherited Russell's predilection for elaborate interpretations of all the Bible stories. Russell and many of his contemporaries assumed that most of the Bible had a 'higher fulfilment' and they spent much of their time looking for this and debating who or what was represented by a Bible character or incident. Russell's conclusions were reasonably consistent and often very complicated. They were, nevertheless, arbitrary, and many of the present-day Witness interpretations differ from Russell's. Here are five examples:

BIBLICAL STORY	RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION	REFERENCE
(2 Kings 9) Jezebel	= The Roman Catholic Church	Vol. 2, p. 256.
(Matthew 25) The Five Foolish Virgins	= The Miller movement	Vol. 3, p. 91.
(Daniel 8) The Little Horn	= The Roman Empire	Vol. 3, p. 27.
(Revelation 20) False Prophet	= The Protestant Church Federation	Vol. 4, p. viii.
(Luke 16) Rich Man	= The Jewish Nation	Vol. 5, p. 376.

These, and many more stories, are interpreted differently by the Witnesses today. For instance, both Jezebel and the rich man

now picture the clergy class. It has been said of Russell that he took a drop of doctrine and diluted it to a sea of verbosity - not only was he long-winded in his books, but he was proved wrong on many issues. The Witnesses, who have adopted a new set of dates and Bible interpretations, claim that the 'light was shining but dimly' in these early years. They would also like us to believe, however, that Russell was amazingly right about predicting World War I in 1914! As Russell's works are difficult to obtain outside the movement, and discouraged inside, this incorrect assertion is not easy to disprove.³⁷

THE WAITING YEARS, 1900-1914

At the turn of the century Russell and his Bible Students were patiently awaiting their glorification in 1914.³⁸ Pastor Russell was now emerging from relative obscurity, as the leader of a small and radical religious sect, to quite a prominent place in American religious affairs. Russell's sermons had nationwide newspaper publicity as the ideas in them were alien to the other Christian denominations. He had always been opposed to the Catholic church but at the start of the new century he found himself in opposition to all the Protestant churches too. His own failure to find satisfaction amongst the established churches led him to believe that they were actually instruments of the devil. Russell was never a vindictive man but he believed the churches were wrong and it was his duty to say so. Nearly all the 660 pages of Volume 4 of *Studies in the Scriptures* are used by Russell to fulfil this duty. First he defines the area of his attack:

As we proceed to set forth our understanding of the symbols of the Revelation, we wish to state most emphatically that we are saying nothing whatever against godly Christians anywhere, at any time, whether in any church or out of any church. We have nothing to say respecting people. We discuss PRINCIPLES, DOCTRINES, ALWAYS; individuals, NEVER! God has not commissioned us to discuss *people*; it is ours to discuss *His Word*.³⁹

and then he gets down to details, for example, discussing *Revelation 16:13*:

The Dragon, then, symbolises the Roman power, represented by the civil power in the world. The Beast is the Papal system of government. . . . The False Prophet, or Image of the Beast, we understand to mean the Protestant Federation of Churches, etc.⁴⁰

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While this verbal battle was getting under way, Russell continued to put his money into the Watch Tower Society to help expand its influence. In 1900 the first 'foreign' branch office was opened in London. Branches in Germany (1903) and Australia (1904) followed. Pamphlets were now being printed in seven languages and this widespread publicity inevitably had its effect. More and more people left the churches to join up with Russell:

To assist them in their resignation and to provide a further testimony to those in the Church systems responsible for removing their names from the Church rolls, specially printed 'Withdrawal letters' were provided.⁴¹

Three successive conventions were held in the U.S.A. in 1903 and Russell set off on his second tour of Europe in the summer. On his return he engaged in a debate with Dr. E. L. Eaton – the champion of the Protestant Evangelical Alliance. The debate started on 18th October in Carnegie Hall, Pittsburgh, and according to the Witnesses 'on the whole Pastor Russell came off best'. Russell was a reasonable and convincing speaker with a great depth of Biblical knowledge. He thought of himself as waging a war against the rising forces of Evolution, Spiritualism and Higher Criticism, in addition to his battle with the clergy. His opponents, however, believed he was 'being used of the evil one to subvert the Truth of God'. It was said that 'no infidel writer, such as Hume, Voltaire or Ingersoll ever suffers such ruthless attacks as have been made against Pastor Russell'. Certainly Russell was a celebrated, or notorious, figure of his day. 'Undoubtedly he was photographed more times than any American, save perhaps Mr. Coolidge' (the President of the United States).

RUSSELL'S TRIBULATIONS

It is misleading to give the impression that at this time Russell was striding forward from success to success. There *was* an overall increase in his following but this itself brought difficulties. The people who associated with him were often ambitious, and many lacked his saintly demeanour. There was always a certain amount of quarrelling and dissension within the organisation and sometimes this was even directed against Pastor Russell. From 1892 to 1894 four prominent members of the movement, Von Zech,

Bryan, Rogers and Adamson, tried to infiltrate ideas that Russell disagreed with. Eventually they conspired against him and tried to undermine his influence amongst the Bible Students. Russell was forced to rebuke them in a specially printed ninety-page booklet appropriately called *A Conspiracy Exposed*. This was published in 1894. Another 'revolt' exposed in 1911 involved a group of very influential Bible Students including the Vice-President of the Society - J. H. Giesey, Branch Leader E. C. Hennings and Russell's private secretary A. E. Williamson. The last named left the movement with his supporters after having charged Russell with 'caressing sisters'¹⁴³

Apart from this internal opposition, Russell's enemies outside the movement were only too glad to attack him on personal grounds. They usually accused Russell of using the Bible Students to sell his literature so that he could make a big profit. In 1906, however, Russell suffered an embarrassing and humiliating experience that was seized upon by his enemies to discredit him in the eyes of his followers and the rest of the world. His wife was the cause of the scandal. In the early years of marriage Maria Frances Russell had been an able and loyal supporter of her husband. She had often written articles for the *Watch Tower*. Russell claimed that she desired more control in the running of the magazine and this, and her interest in women's suffrage, led to an estrangement.

In *Zion's Watch Tower* for 15th July 1906 Russell explained to his readers his side of the story - he had heard so many malicious rumours and received so many enquiring letters that he felt obliged to do this. He said that his wife had tried to take over the running of the magazine and had insisted that her articles be printed in it. Russell refused and he discontinued her as Associate Editor in 1896. In 1897 Mrs. Russell (influenced, so Russell thought, by her female relatives) took active steps to try to usurp him; at first she tried to win over two local brothers to her side by attacking Pastor Russell, and when this failed she began organising separate meetings for the sisters in the ecclesias. She stirred up opposition against her husband at these meetings. On 5th September 1897 a meeting of Elders was convened to investigate the sisters' complaints - and Mrs. Russell was publicly reproved. She finally separated from her husband in 1897 and six years later she filed an application in the Court of Common Pleas

at Pittsburgh for legal separation (a divorce). Then followed, in April 1906, a much publicised and sensationalised court case.

Mrs. Russell's plea was based on the charge of mental cruelty and ultimately this was the reason the jury decided in her favour. Unfortunately, however, she tried to suggest that Pastor Russell's behaviour towards the opposite sex was compromising. She quoted numerous trivial instances which were open to a far more reasonable interpretation – cases where the Pastor had comforted female members of the household and so on. No account was taken of these in the open court. Worse than this, however, were her allegations concerning the Pastor and their adopted daughter, Rose Ball. She alleged that 'the Pastor had remarked to the girl slyly: "I am like a jellyfish; I float around here and there. I touch this one and that one, and if she responds I take her to me, and if not I float on to others."' ⁴³ Pastor Russell denied having said such a thing and Mrs. Russell admitted to her own lawyer that she did not mean that her husband committed adultery! H. H. Stroup summed up the case as follows:

Mrs. Russell brought suit for divorce on four grounds: 'That his conceit, egotism, and domination were such as to make life intolerable to any sensitive woman; that his conduct in relation to other women was improper; that on one occasion he was silent to his wife for four weeks and only communicated with her by letters of a reproachful character; and that he sought by most despicable means to isolate his wife from society, and designed to get her pronounced insane in order to put her away.' In reviewing the case today, an observer may perceive that the evidence of the prosecution was not as conclusive as the jury considered it to be. . . . Most of the testimony was highly suggestive but never conclusive. Additional evidence indicates that Mrs. Russell was generally suspicious of her husband's relations with other women and that at some point in their relationship she failed to understand completely the religiously inspired person's disregard for appearances.⁴⁴

The jury were out for about two hours and returned with a verdict granting the divorce on the grounds that: 'His course of conduct towards his wife evidences such insistent egotism and extravagant self-praise that it would be manifest to the jury that his conduct towards her was one of continual domination that would necessarily render the life of any sensitive Christian woman a burden and make her condition intolerable.'

Objectively the divorce was perhaps the best solution. Both husband and wife were strong-willed, and there had evidently been a clash of personalities resulting in incompatibility. Russell's preoccupation with religious matters made him anything but a perfect husband. The divorce was disastrous for him, however. Many of his followers became disillusioned or hostile, believing that a divorced man could never be the inspired servant of God. 'Thousands of his disciples left the movement' according to Stroup. Russell tried to counter the bad publicity by offering 1,000 dollars to anyone who could prove he had been guilty of immoral conduct. 'He made public a "vow" in which he declared his intention never to enter any room in which one member of the opposite sex was alone, excepting a relative of the family. Until his death he required all of his followers to sign similar statements.'⁴⁵ Several newspapers, including the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Mission Friend*, libelled Russell in citing the 'jellyfish' story. He sued these two and forced them to pay the costs of the case and settle out of court. It is said that Russell appealed against his divorce five times, each time without success.⁴⁶

There were other attacks on Russell based on his ignorance of Latin and Greek. He was fond of quoting and discussing Greek and Hebrew words and explaining exactly what they meant. His fine judgements were culled from Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and polyglot Bibles - Russell was not familiar with the original tongues. The Rev. J. J. Ross published a pamphlet entitled *Some Facts about the Self-Styled 'Pastor' Charles T. Russell* in which he ridiculed Russell. The latter sued for libel and not only lost the case but perjured himself during the trial. He was asked if he knew the Greek alphabet and he replied 'Yes', but when shown a Greek Testament and asked to read the letters at the top of a page he failed to do so and was forced to admit that he did not know the language.⁴⁷ Finally Russell was involved in a controversy concerning 'Miracle Wheat' - a new strain that appeared in the garden of a Virginian farmer in 1904. It bore 142 heads and thus yielded more than three times that of normal wheat per acre. Russell mentioned this wheat in *Zion's Watch Tower*, March 1908, and suggested that it was one of the signs of the Millennium restoration. In 1911 two Bible Students made a gift of thirty bushels of Miracle Wheat to be sold in aid of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Russell obtained 1,800 dollars for the

sale of the wheat and the Brooklyn New York *Daily Eagle* printed articles and cartoons concerning this sale. One cartoon caption was: 'If Pastor Russell can get a dollar a pound for Miracle Wheat what could he have got for Miracle stocks and bonds as a director in the old Union Bank?' Russell sued for libel and lost his case after another sensational trial.

Despite the divorce and the lawsuits there was a slight overall increase in Russell's following from 1900 to 1910. In 1908, for instance, the Bible Students numbered about 8,000. In 1909 the headquarters of the Society was moved from Allegheny to Brooklyn, New York, where a former 'Plymouth Bethel' at 13-16 Hicks Street was converted to office premises and a meeting hall. It was renamed 'The Brooklyn Tabernacle'. Living quarters for the Tabernacle staff were provided at a large building called 'Bethel' at 122-124 Columbia Heights. In 1909 Russell formed a new company called the People's Pulpit Association and he started issuing a series of monthly tracts called *People's Pulpit*, each 'issue appeared with a powerful new salvo released against Protestantism, false religion and apostasy'.⁴⁸

Russell was now travelling yearly to Europe and increasing his North American tours. From December 1911 to March 1912 he went on a world tour, starting in Hawaii. The year 1914 was drawing near and a keen air of expectancy prevailed. As part of a new venture Russell commissioned the production of an eight-hour colour film called *The Photo Drama of Creation*. It was made in four parts of two hours each and was 'the story of the World as told from the Bible'. It consisted of stereoscopic stills and motion pictures with synchronised gramophone records to explain the film as it was being shown. Russell intended that this mammoth venture be ready in 1912 but it was not finished until 1914, when it was shown to audiences in homes, schools and halls all over the world, free of charge.

At last 1914 was nigh. What would happen? Most of Russell's followers were still convinced that 1914 would end the Gentile Times, see the glorification of the saints, and so on. Russell, however, had grown more and more cautious as the year drew nearer. Hints of his doubt appear as early as Volume 3 of *Studies in the Scriptures*:

That the deliverance of the saints must take place very soon after 1914 is manifest. . . . Just how long after 1914 the last living members of the body of Christ will be glorified, we are not directly informed.⁴⁹

In 1907 Russell contradicted his early certainty about 1914 by playing down the time-prophecy:

We have never claimed that they [the time calculations] were *knowledge*, nor based upon indisputable evidence, facts, knowledge, our claim has always been that they are based on *faith*. . . . But let us suppose a case far from our expectations: suppose that A.D. 1915 should pass with the world's affairs all serene and with evidence that the 'very elect' had not all been 'changed' and without the restoration of natural Israel to favour under the New Covenant. What then? Would not that prove our chronology wrong? Yes, surely! . . . What a blow that would be! One of the strings of our 'harp' would be quite broken! However, dear friends, our harp would still have all the other strings in tune and that is what no other aggregation of God's people on earth could boast.⁵⁰

When the year 1914 arrived Russell capitulated: 'If later it should be demonstrated that the Church is not glorified by October, 1914, we shall try to feel content with whatever the Lord's will may be. . . .' It was too late to convince most of his followers that 1914 might be a disappointment. They had accepted his prophecies when he himself was sure of them and they were not going to be deterred now. A. H. Macmillan was with Pastor Russell at this time and he relates how Russell remained ominously calm amidst the excitement and speculation:

That was a highly interesting time because a few of us seriously thought we were going to heaven during the first week of that October. . . . Quite a number of the conventioners stayed at Bethel, the home of the headquarters staff members. Friday morning (October 2) we were all seated at the breakfast table when Russell came down. . . . But this morning, instead of proceeding to his seat as usual, he briskly clapped his hands and happily announced: 'The Gentile Times have ended; the kings have had their day.' We all applauded.⁵¹

But Macmillan gives a false impression of what was happening. More than 'a few' of the Bible Students thought they were going to heaven and for the very good reason that Russell had been preaching this for many years - with later reservations it is true. Some of the Bible Students left him because nothing happened in 1914, and those who remained were confused and uncertain as to what was going to happen. All sorts of new and strange ideas arose - most of the Bible Students felt that *something* ought to

happen, if not in 1914 then soon afterwards. A. H. Macmillan blandly passes off this confusion when he says 'some partially inaccurate public expressions were made'. The Witnesses today claim that in some way Russell predicted World War I, but as far as Russell was concerned the beginning of a war in far-off Europe was little consolation for heavenly glory. Pastor Russell, and his successor Rutherford, saw no great significance in World War I at the time and it was some years later that Jehovah's Witnesses attributed this 'prophecy' to Russell.

Russell was still convinced, however, that the things that did not occur in 1914 were therefore due to happen soon after that date. In 1916 he wrote with a sense of expectancy that soon 'all would be fulfilled':

We could not, of course, know in 1889, whether the date 1914, so clearly marked in the Bible as the end of the Gentile lease of power or permission to rule the world, would mean that they were fully out of power at that time or whether, their lease expiring, their eviction would begin. The latter we perceive to be the Lord's program; and promptly in August, 1914, the Gentile Kingdoms referred to in the prophecy began the present great struggle, which, according to the Bible, will culminate in the complete overthrow of all human government, opening the way for the full establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear son . . . we anticipate that before a very long time – perhaps a year or two or three – the full number of the Elect will be completed, and all will have gone beyond the Veil and the door will be shut.⁵²

Amidst the turmoil, both mental and physical, Russell's health deteriorated. His organisation had received a severe shock from which it might have recovered had Russell been fit and well. As it was much of the work fell to one of Russell's key men – Joseph Franklin Rutherford – since 1907 the Society's legal representative. Rutherford was a qualified lawyer (of whom there were few amongst the Bible Students) and had represented Russell on trips to Europe. Rutherford became prominent during the war years as the man who fought for the legal rights of Bible Students who would not take up arms, and for those who were attacked and mistreated as 'pacifists' by mobs of Americans. In the autumn of 1916 Pastor Russell was very ill; in the previous year Rutherford had had to deputise for him at an important debate with J. H. Troy. On 16th October 1916 Pastor Russell set out on one of his

long speaking tours with his personal secretary, Menta Sturgeon. They travelled via Canada to Detroit and then on to Chicago in Russell's personal Pullman car. On the evening of 24th October at San Antonio, Texas, he delivered his last public talk. At their next stop Russell was too weak to speak for any length of time and on 29th October he decided to cancel the rest of the tour and return to New York. He died en route from Los Angeles at Pampa, Texas, on Tuesday, 31st October.

Menta Sturgeon, his companion, described the last hours:

I called in the Pullman porter and the conductor and said, 'We want you to see how a great man can die.' The sight deeply impressed them, especially the porter. . . . At one o'clock all were dismissed from the room, the door was locked, and we quietly watched over him until he breathed his last. . . . His quiet breathing became less frequent, his drooping eyelids opened like the petals of a flower and disclosed those eyes – those wonderful eyes, in all their magnificence – that we will never forget. Presently he breathed no more; we pressed our lips upon his noble brow, and knew that he had gone to be forever with and like the Lord, whom he loved so well.⁵³

The cause of Russell's death was cystitis. A. H. Macmillan describes the reaction of the New York Bethel to the news:

At seven o'clock the next morning (November 1) I entered Bethel dining room with a telegram just delivered. Members of the family were all seated in their customary manner and did not know anything about Russell's serious illness or death. I read them the telegram and a moan went up all over that dining room. Some wept audibly. None ate breakfast that morning. All were greatly upset. At the end of the meal period they met in little groups to talk and whisper, 'What is going to happen now?'⁵⁴

What indeed was going to happen?

2. The Second President – Judge Rutherford

THE TRANSITION PERIOD, 1916-1919

MACMILLAN'S STATEMENT that those in the Bethel headquarters met in little groups to talk and whisper is perhaps more revealing than he intended. There were numerous rival factions within the organisation. During Russell's lifetime he had been able to hold them together, but once he was dead there was a fierce struggle for power. A full account of what happened during the three years after the death of Russell would fill more than one book – at least three have been written solely about this period.¹ My intention, therefore, is to discuss only the important changes that occurred and only when they directly concern Jehovah's Witnesses (as opposed to the many other movements that formed after Russell's death). I have consulted as many different sources as possible in order to get a clearer view of what happened in this confused time – it soon becomes apparent that the 'official' Witness accounts are strongly biased and omit much useful information. Their desire seems to be to draw a veil over what actually happened and to replace the facts with a few generalisations that favour themselves. The real story of what happened is very interesting, however.

Russell had been the unchallenged spiritual leader up to 1916 and he had appointed other Bible Students to positions of responsibility under him. After his death the Society affairs were handled by the board of directors of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, while *The Watch Tower* was run by a three-man editorial committee consisting of J. F. Rutherford, R. H. Hirsch and W. E. Van Amburgh. The seven directors were: A. I. Ritchie (vice-president), W. E. Van Amburgh, J. F. Rutherford, A. N. Pierson, J. D. Wright, I. F. Hoskins, H. C. Rockwell (later replaced by R. H. Hirsch). Also prominent in the movement were A. H. Macmillan (who had been associated with Russell for

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several years and had sometimes been placed in charge in Russell's absence), Menta Sturgeon (Russell's private secretary) and P. S. L. Johnson. The last named was a former Lutheran Pastor, a Greek and Hebrew scholar, who had joined the Bible Students in 1903. Johnson believed he was a figure of prophetic significance.

Rutherford and Johnson were away from the Bethel when news came of Russell's death. They both hurried back to join in the controversy about who would take Russell's place. Johnson claims he was asked to become President but refused at that time. Several of the prominent Bethel members were, however, hoping for this prize. A. H. Macmillan says:

As the day for election of the Society's officers approached tension began to mount. A few ambitious ones at headquarters were holding caucuses here and there doing a little electioneering to get their men in. However, Van Amburgh and I held a large number of votes. Many shareholders, knowing of our long association with Russell, sent their proxies to us to be cast for the one whom we thought best fitted for office. . . . We were still faced with the question, Who would be put up for office? Van Amburgh came to me one day and said, 'Brother, who do you think we should put up for president?' I answered, 'There is only one man who is competent and qualified to take charge of this work now, and that is Brother Rutherford.' He took me by the hand and said, 'I'm with you.' That was all that was said about it.

Rutherford did not know what was going on. He certainly didn't do any electioneering or canvassing for votes². . .

Macmillan manages to skirt by the truth and miss out several important facts. While there is little doubt that Rutherford was legally elected, he *did* know all about his chances before the election, and with Macmillan and Van Amburgh he contrived to prearrange motions that would enhance his power as president when elected; Johnson has this to say about the situation:

After my return from Europe I learned that J.F.R. [Rutherford], W. E. Van Amburgh and A. H. Macmillan conspired to gain for the first Bro. Russell's full power and authority in the work and business of the Society. They began this conspiracy before the election. They pre-arranged every detail of the voting shareholders' meeting Jan. 6. At Brooklyn J.F.R. prepared and W. E. Van Amburgh approved the resolutions that, among other things, were to

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secure for the President executive and managerial authority. These W. E. Van Amburgh gave I. L. Margeson (this I state on the latter's authority), the chairman of the Resolutions Committee, for which they also arranged. A week before the election J.F.R. furnished a brother with an account of the proceedings of the voting shareholders' meeting for publication in the press of the country, telling of his election by the Secretary casting the ballot of the convention and of the unanimity of his election, and giving some of his speech of acceptance. The Editor of the New York Herald commented on the prophetic gifts of 'those Bethel people' in being able to foretell just what would happen at the election! In this account J.F.R. failed to state that by his prearrangement the nominations were so closed, that there could be no other Presidential candidates for whom thousands of voting shares were instructed, and that he prepared the resolution recommending that he be made Executive and Manager. . . . Certainly the remark that he made to me in July, when he explained how he arranged for the election of R. H. Hirsch to the Board applies to the proceedings of the Jan. 6 meetings. 'Of course, Bro. Johnson, you know all things of that character are arranged beforehand, just like matters connected with a political convention!'³

It is doubtful whether Pastor Russell himself would have endorsed the support of Macmillan and Van Amburgh for Rutherford. In the event of his death, Russell had nominated five people who were to form an editorial committee, naming also six reserves - Rutherford was one of the reserves.⁴ On 15th January 1917, however, at the Pittsburgh convention, Joseph Franklin Rutherford was elected President of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. A. N. Pierson was Vice-President and Van Amburgh Secretary/Treasurer (A. I. Ritchie, the Vice-President under Russell was therefore not re-elected to office). Rutherford was forty-seven years old when elected to office. He was born on 8th November 1869, on a farm in Booneville, Missouri. He was one of five children and his parents were Baptists and strict disciplinarians. Rutherford decided, at sixteen, to become a lawyer but his father was opposed to the idea and insisted that he pay for a man to take his place on the farm while he attend college. Rutherford was fortunate to obtain a loan to do this, which he repaid when he qualified as a lawyer. At twenty-two he was admitted to the Bar and he later served as a Special Judge in the Fourteenth Judicial District of Missouri.⁵ In 1894

Rutherford bought some of Russell's books from two lady Bible Students; he became interested in the Pastor's ideas and twelve years later he was baptised into the faith.

Jehovah's Witnesses today wish to give the impression that Rutherford was more sinned against than sinning. It is impossible, however, to escape the conclusion that he was directly responsible for many of the later troubles. He was a dogmatic and insensitive person, obsessed with his own importance. Had he the desire to *serve* rather than *command* the Bible Students there would have been a good prospect for the future, despite the doctrinal and administrative difficulties. From the very beginning, however, Rutherford was dissatisfied with the Board of Directors and wished to be in absolute control. Unfortunately for him the legal authority of the Society resided in the Board of seven directors but Rutherford set about scheming and conniving to alter the laws and accumulate more power.⁶ At first the other directors were unaware of his ambitions but the matter came to a head over the 'rebellion' of P. S. L. Johnson.

Before his death, Russell had instructed A. H. Macmillan to send Johnson to Britain. Despite what Macmillan says in his book *Faith on the March* the purpose of Johnson's visit was not just 'to preach to the troops' but to check on the Society's branches in Europe. In order to clear Johnson through war-time immigration authorities Rutherford granted him plenipotentiary powers on behalf of the Society. On arrival in Britain Johnson discovered that some of the Bible Students there were plotting to break away from American control and set up the International Bible Students Association (founded by Russell in 1914, to handle foreign branch affairs) as an independent corporation in Britain. Johnson dismissed two of the London managers, H. J. Shearn and William Crawford, and used his plenipotentiary powers to reorganise the British branch. Rutherford had already erred in giving Johnson more power than was intended, he now made another mistake; alarmed by the changes Johnson was making he cabled him to stop and suspended him from further action. Johnson obeyed at first but then came to the conclusion that only the Board of Directors (and not Rutherford alone) could suspend him. He therefore resumed control of the British affairs - to the consternation of Rutherford. The situation now got out of hand. Johnson tied up the Society's bank account in London but was harassed

by British Bible Students loyal to Rutherford. At one stage Johnson was barricaded in his room but managed to escape out of the window! Rutherford sent numerous cables trying to recall Johnson, who he thought was insane and trying to lead a rebellion in Britain. Eventually Johnson returned to the U.S.A. where a Bible Student board of enquiry decided that he had been justified in his actions. Rutherford brusquely ignored these findings and continued a hate campaign against Johnson. Under these circumstances the latter obtained the sympathy of four Directors: Wright, Hoskins, Hirsch and Ritchie, and all five began to oppose Rutherford in his attempts to dominate the Society.⁷

Both sides were evidently at fault in this affair. Johnson later admitted that he had grandiose illusions about his position in the Society. He had believed that he was Russell's spiritual successor and was the 'steward' of *Matthew 20:1-16*. Rutherford, of course, made two mistakes but refused to admit them and threw all the blame on Johnson. (The Witnesses today still accept only Rutherford's side of the story, which is far from the truth.) The British disaster over, a new bone of contention arose at the New York Bethel. Rutherford and the four directors were opposed as to who should run the Watch Tower Society. Both sides tried to remove the other from Bethel and then gain control, but these attempts failed. Rutherford realised that the only way to win was to dispose of the four directors legally, and he obtained the written opinion of a Philadelphia corporation lawyer that the four were not in fact legal members of the Board! Russell had elected them life members but a later law had been passed (which Johnson claimed was not retroactive) requiring an annual re-election. The four directors had not been annually re-elected - therefore, said Rutherford, their directorships had lapsed. Rutherford claimed that he, Van Amburgh and Pierson were the only legal members of the Board because they had been elected to an *office* in January 1917. There are all sorts of objections to this opinion; as Johnson remarked, if Rutherford, Van Amburgh and Pierson were not 'legally' directors before the election how could they be elected as officers? Only *directors* could be elected to office.

A tremendous controversy followed on from Rutherford's bombshell announcement, but before the four directors had time to prepare any defence he had physically forced them out of the Bethel and appointed in their place: A. H. Macmillan, W. E. Spill,

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J. A. Bohnet and G. H. Fisher (all yes-men as far as Rutherford was concerned). Rutherford cruelly disposed of Johnson (described by the latter):

he [Rutherford] ordered me to leave Bethel that day, and the four Board members to leave the following Monday. I was denied a respectful and repeated request for the privilege to make a statement to the family. . . . Bro. Hirsch asked to read a letter that Bro. Pierson wrote, to the effect that he disapproved of J.R.F.'s ousting the four brothers from the Board, and that he would firmly stand for and by the old Board. J.F.R. fairly shouted that he was induced by Bro. Johnson's 'falsehoods' to write that letter. . . . Still more wrathful, he ordered me to leave Bethel on pain of legal proceedings. I replied that I had appealed to the Board from that decision; and that since I recognised the Board as in control, and, in the case of an appeal, as having the right to decide the question, I awaited its decision; that if it ordered me to leave, I would do so at once. At this he completely lost self-control. To enforce his order he rushed at me crying out 'You leave this house.' Grabbing me by the arm, he almost jerked me off my feet⁸. . . .

Both A. H. Macmillan and R. J. Martin were involved in this unpleasant scene, and the former in particular comes out very badly from the whole business. Johnson was forced to leave the Bethel that evening.

Rutherford now began a two-fold aggression campaign. He staged a purge in Bethel of all those who were not *wholeheartedly* on his side (twenty-five left). He required everyone who stayed to sign an oath of allegiance. Secondly Rutherford used *The Watch Tower* as a propaganda medium to attack the four ousted directors and discredit them in the eyes of the Bible Students. Rutherford knew that a split in the movement was inevitable and he used every means to win over the majority of the Bible Students, and particularly those who had voting shares in the Society. This was necessary to ensure his re-election at the shareholders' meeting in January 1918. As far as Rutherford was concerned there was little choice in his actions now. It had become a battle for survival and as long as he controlled the legal organisation he could win through in the end. In 1918 the Vice-President, Pierson, wrote:

When a rearrangement of the Board of Directors was announced on July 17th I deeply regretted that such a proceeding was deemed

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necessary. . . . In the early part of August, the final endeavor to establish peace proved of no avail.⁹

Pierson had wanted a reconciliation but the rift was too wide for that. Rutherford had gained control, but could he maintain it?

His four opponents made a last important effort to unseat him at the 1918 shareholders' meeting but Rutherford had astutely outmanœuvred them before the meeting was even convened! They had claimed that he had the most powerful shareholders behind him, but not the brothers in general, and that the office of President should be decided by a democratic vote amongst all the Bible Students. Rutherford put this claim to the test by calling for such a vote and in December 1917 more than 800 congregations in the United States supplied the following figures:¹⁰

VOTES	DIRECTOR	PRESIDENT	VICE- PRESIDENT	SECRETARY/ TREASURER
J. F. Rutherford	10,990	10,869	14	3
W. E. Van Amburgh	10,909	14	418	10,700
G. H. Fisher	10,333	4	395	30
J. A. Bohnet	10,323	1	126	4
A. H. Macmillan	10,204	2	1,856	102
W. E. Spill	9,880	—	183	1
A. N. Pierson	8,888	49	5,722	13
C. J. Woodworth	1,776	28	328	2
M. Sturgeon	680	376	73	36
A. I. Ritchie	543	10	223	21
R. H. Hirsch	469	1	2	25
I. F. Hoskins	459	—	—	3
J. D. Wright	444	2	4	5
H. C. Rockwell	342	1	13	209
R. J. Martin	293	17	73	7
W. F. Hudgings	181	—	30	14
A. E. Burgess	143	—	9	11
P. S. L. Johnson	126	20	25	19
E. W. Brenneisen	100	1	4	3
89 more with less than 100 votes	1,036	26	182	94
TOTAL	78,119	11,421	9,680	11,302

According to the vote the first seven were those chosen by Rutherford. His opposers were 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th with Johnson even lower. This was in no way a legally binding vote but it was a good omen for the shareholders' meeting. On

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5th January at the Pittsburgh convention Rutherford was safely returned to office. The voting for directors was as follows:¹¹

*J. F. Rutherford	194,106	M. Sturgeon	27,261
*A. H. Macmillan	161,871	R. H. Hirsch	23,198
*W. E. Van Amburgh	160,215	I. F. Hoskins	22,660
*W. E. Spill	118,259	A. I. Ritchie	22,631
*J. A. Bohnet	113,422	J. D. Wright	22,623
*C. H. Anderson	107,175	H. C. Rockwell	18,178
*G. H. Fisher	83,260	P. S. L. Johnson	6,469
A. N. Pierson	57,721	W. J. Hollister	3,931

The first seven were directors; surprisingly, Pierson failed to make the Board, although this may have been due to Rutherford's trying to squeeze him out. After the election of the seven directors Rutherford was unanimously re-elected President, C. H. Anderson was Vice-President and W. E. Van Amburgh was Secretary/Treasurer. Rutherford admitted at the convention that he 'was aware he had made many mistakes' but there is a rather ironic note in *The Watch Tower*, 15th January 1918:

Just preceding the *love feast* a motion was made and duly seconded requesting Bro. R. H. Hirsch to resign as a member of the Editorial Committee of the Watch Tower. This motion was unanimously carried by the convention. [My italics.]

Rutherford was now legally secure, but he had to sit out the aftermath. A considerable number of Bible Students left him and formed their own organisations: The Standfast Movement, Paul Johnson Movement (later called the Layman's Home Missionary Movement), Elijah Voice Movement, Eagle Society, Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, Dawn Bible Students Association, etc.

Thus modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses are not necessarily the direct successors of Pastor Russell. It is true that they have control of the legal corporations he founded – but the pattern of Russell's control has been completely altered by Rutherford. Several other groups claim to be Russell's true followers – possibly the one with the strongest claim is the Dawn Bible Students Association. For better or worse they still stick to Russell's doctrines and they still print and advertise his *Studies in the Scriptures* (two things the Witnesses do not do). The Dawn

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Bible Students hold conventions, call each other 'brother' and 'sister', and their ecclesias are independently governed by elected 'elders' – as at the time of Russell. Their central publishing body exists as a *servant* to the ecclesias, unlike the strong central control that Rutherford inaugurated.¹²

Throughout 1918 and for many years afterwards Rutherford was plagued by these rival groups. The *Watch Towers* of the time must have been very confusing to outsiders – many articles were written expressly to combat internal dissensions and warn the ecclesias of the 'bad sheep'. For example:

We take this occasion to call attention to the brethren everywhere to the fact that P. S. L. Johnson and R. G. Jolly do not represent the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in any manner whatsoever, and are wholly unauthorised to represent it or the International Bible Students Association or the People's Pulpit Association.¹³

and in the 1st May 1918 edition J. A. Bohnet wrote: 'Instances are brought to my attention where members of the opposing faction are endeavouring to confuse and mislead the Lord's saints into believing that there is a split in many of the classes.'

It was at this time that Rutherford had published the seventh volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, calling it *The Finished Mystery*. The book was written by two Bible Students, C. J. Woodworth and G. H. Fisher, who had incorporated some of the material left behind by Russell. Rutherford tried to reassure the Bible Students that although Russell had not actually written Volume 7 – it was nevertheless all about him! 'Brother Russell himself is the key, and his modesty and humility prevented him from seeing it. He is the prominent figure foreshadowed both in Revelation and Ezekiel.'¹⁴

The seventh volume caused a sensation in and out of the Society. The four directors opposed to Rutherford refused to accept it, while the civil authorities suspected that it contained seditious statements. The book was an immediate best-seller, was being translated into half a dozen languages and was serialised in *The Watch Tower*. Rutherford still thought that the earthly kingdoms were due to be stopped by God. The war in Europe confirmed his opinion that soon theocratic rule would be established on earth and the saints would be glorified. In October 1917 he wrote: 'If this be true, and the evidence is very conclusive that

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it is true, then we have only a few months in which to labour before the great night settles down when no man can work,' and in January 1918: 'The Christian looks for the year to bring the full consummation of the church's hopes.'¹⁵

Believing that the end was nigh, Rutherford set out on a vast advertising campaign which featured 'a work of exposing to all the world the unrighteousness of the ecclesiastical systems, their acts and their unholy alliances with the beastly governments of the present evil order of things'.¹⁶ Not surprisingly the 'beastly' governments did not take kindly to this, nor to the fact that Rutherford had refused to advise Bible Students to be conscripted if they conscientiously objected to war.¹⁷ There was enough evidence available to indicate that the religious and civil authorities 'had it in for Judge Rutherford'. On 12th February 1918 *The Finished Mystery* and other publications were banned in Canada. The *Winnipeg Tribune* said: 'Excerpts from one of the recent issues of the *Bible Students Monthly* were denounced from the pulpit a few weeks by Rev. Charles G. Patterson. . . . Afterward Attorney General Johnson sent to Rev. Patterson for a copy of the publication. The censor's order is believed to be the direct result.'

In February 1918 the government twice interfered with the Bible Students in America, first investigating the Society's offices at Brooklyn and then taking over the Los Angeles headquarters and confiscating literature. A. H. Macmillan thinks it significant that between these dates Rutherford made one of his many public attacks on the clergy. He spoke in Los Angeles on 24th February on the subject: 'The World Has Ended - Millions Now Living Will Never Die'. Rutherford pointed out that the 'old world' had ended and God would soon intervene on the earth; he also claimed: 'As a class, according to the Scriptures, the clergymen are the most reprehensible men on earth for the great war that is now afflicting mankind.'¹⁸ The fat was now in the fire. On 7th May 1918, warrants were obtained for the arrest of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society officials including J. F. Rutherford, Van Amburgh, F. H. Robison, R. J. Martin, C. J. Woodworth, G. H. Fisher, Giovanni De Cecca and A. H. Macmillan. They were arrested on 8th May and bail granted at 2,500 dollars surety each. Rutherford accused P. S. L. Johnson and the four ex-directors of 'betraying' them to the authorities and, according

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to Johnson, Rutherford tried to get R. H. Hirsch incarcerated with them.

At this time the United States was at war and unpopular minorities at home were amongst the first to suffer from war hysteria. The trial of Rutherford and his 'henchmen' began on 3rd June; they were charged with:

The offence of unlawfully, feloniously and wilfully causing and attempting to cause insubordination, disloyalty and refusal of duty in the military and naval forces of the United States of America, in, through and by personal solicitations, letters, public speeches, distribution and public circulation throughout the United States of America of a certain book called 'Volume Seven - SCRIPTURE STUDIES - The Finished Mystery', and distributing and publically circulating throughout the United States certain articles presented in pamphlets called 'BIBLE STUDENTS MONTHLY', 'THE WATCH TOWER,' 'KINGDOM NEWS' and other pamphlets not named, et cetera:

The Offence of unlawfully, feloniously and wilfully obstructing the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States when the United States was at war.

Unknown to the defendants, the Judge who tried the case was strongly against 'religious pacifism' and his conduct during the trial revealed this. The case lasted fifteen days and, say the Witnesses, contained at least 125 errors of procedure by the Judge or prosecution. On 22nd July they were all sentenced to eighty years imprisonment except De Cecca, who got forty years. Judge Howe said, in passing sentence:

The religious propaganda in which these people are engaged is more harmful than a division of German soldiers [1,200 men]. They have not only called in question the law officers of the government and the army intelligence bureau but have denounced all the ministers of all the churches. The punishment should be severe.¹⁹

Far from being dismayed by this sentence, Rutherford said: 'This is the happiest day of my life. . . . To serve earthly punishment for the sake of one's religious belief is one of the greatest privileges a man could have.' His attitude is hardly surprising when we know that he and his followers expected the Kingdom of God to be set up on earth at any moment. In *Zion's Watch Tower*, 1st July 1918, we read:

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Bro. Russell stated that the work of the harvest would end in the summer of 1918, that the door would close and the dark night would settle down. . . . Take courage, beloved in the Lord, the kingdom is here; and soon by his grace we shall be forever with him and with each other. . . . We all hope in a little while to be in the presence of our king.

After sentence the defendants were kept for a week in Brooklyn's Raymond Street Jail. 'It was the dirtiest hole I ever got into,' said Macmillan. Finally they were transferred to Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Before going there Rutherford made arrangements for *The Watch Tower* to be printed and he advised that the Bethel and Brooklyn Tabernacle be sold if pressure was brought to bear by the government (only the latter was sold). The Bible Students found in the prison yet another place to preach – many of their fellow inmates and the guards heard about their beliefs and hopes. Early in 1919 the elections for officers of the Watch Tower Society were due and Rutherford, in prison, was worried that the opposition group might gain control in his absence. A. H. Macmillan describes an interesting conversation that occurred at this time between himself and Rutherford:

Rutherford said, 'Mac, I want to talk to you.'

'What do you want to talk to me about?'

'I want to talk to you about what's going on at Pittsburgh. . . . Aren't you interested in what's going on? Don't you know it's the election of officers today? You might be ignored and dropped and we'll stay here forever.'

'Brother Rutherford,' I said, 'let me tell you something perhaps you haven't thought of. This is the first time since the Society was incorporated that it can become clearly evident whom Jehovah God would like to have as president.' . . .

Next morning he rapped on the cell walls and said, 'Poke your hand out.' He handed me a telegram saying that he had been elected president and C. A. Wise vice-president. He was very happy to see this display of assurance that Jehovah was running the Society.²⁰

This was, of course, a peculiar (and egotistical) inference to draw from a perfectly straightforward election result. Later that day Rutherford made a more revealing comment to Macmillan:

We got down to the corner and he said, 'I want to tell you something. You made a remark yesterday that is working in my mind; about us being put in Brother Russell's place. It might have influenced the

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election and then the Lord would not have had a chance to demonstrate whom he wanted in. Why, brother, if I ever get out of here. by God's grace I'll crush all this business of creature worship if I have to get kicked out for doing it.'²¹

Rutherford was certainly to stamp his own personality on the organisation in a way that was contrary to Pastor Russell's wishes and, many thought, also to Christian love. His attitude to the 'brothers' sometimes approached terrorism and to his avowed enemies, the clergy, he showed pure unadulterated hatred. Russell had also attacked the clergy, but 'always principles - never personalities', he had recognised that many clergymen were sincere people. Rutherford had no such tolerant feelings for he had had a hard apprenticeship, and had seen corruption within the Society and outside it. The difference between him and Russell was that while the latter fought evil without tainting himself, Rutherford waded in and tried to show his enemies he could beat them at their own game. In addition to this, however, Rutherford's character and way of life were far from saintly.²²

Once the war was over and feelings had died down it became obvious that the charges and sentence of Rutherford and the others were exaggerated. They were released on bail in March 1919, after an appeals court had decided they had been wrongly convicted. In May 1920 the government admitted that all charges against them had been dropped.²³ During the imprisonment of the Society leaders the situation amongst the brethren outside had deteriorated. Many left in disgust or disappointment and many more became inactive through fear of the civil authorities. The Witnesses were later to refer to this situation as a 'death-like condition of the faithful'. Rutherford's following had fallen to about 4,000, a lot of the Society's equipment had been lost and all that remained was in store on the top floor of a building in Pittsburgh.

This was the situation facing Rutherford on his release. He still felt that they might be taken to heaven at any moment, but until then they had to do something with their time. A. H. Macmillan says:

In the meantime Rutherford, in California, decided to try a test to see if the work could be revived, or if it might be indicated that our work was already done. Some of us were still ready to go to heaven right away. We thought our characters should be developed

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just about right after we had, in a way, spent ‘eighty years’ in the penitentiary. We thought we would surely be ready then, if we had not been in 1914.

However, Rutherford was anxious about the work. He was just in his prime, and he could not figure out why the Lord would make such extensive preparations in starting a great work of this kind and then letting it stop without accomplishing any more than had been done up to this time. If matters had come to a climax after World War 1, and Armageddon had really been due to begin then, we would have been satisfied. We would have said, This is the end. But the war was over. The nations had patched up an armistice and it looked as if they were going to have peace. Now what were we going to do about it?²⁴

As something of a test, Rutherford advertised that on Sunday, 4th May 1919 he would deliver a talk in Los Angeles. About 3,500 people came to hear him and Rutherford interpreted this as a good omen. The next day, however, he fell ill and contracted pneumonia. Although the illness was short it nearly cost him his life and permanently weakened his constitution. In the summer of 1919 Rutherford held a seven-day convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, where more than 7,000 people attended the concluding public talk. This was the first post-war convention and became a landmark in the modern history of Jehovah’s Witnesses. At this convention Rutherford announced the release of a companion magazine to *The Watch Tower*. It was called *The Golden Age* and was to serve as a forerunner of the imminent ‘Golden Age’ upon the earth. In 1937 the name of this magazine was changed to *Consolation* and in 1946 to *Awake!*, its present title. Although the number of loyal Bible Students dropped alarmingly during 1918 there was a revival the following year. Figures given in the *Watch Towers* for the Memorial attendance in 1917 and 1919 respectively were 21,274 and 17,961.

1919–1932, THE CONVERSION TO ‘THEOCRATIC’ ORGANISATION

The period from 1919 to 1932 can be viewed on three levels. First, there are the actual events and incidents marking the gradual expansion of the Watch Tower Society, secondly the doctrinal changes that occurred and thirdly the important administrative battle that was fought – the structure of the move-

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ment was changed from independent ecclesias to Society-ruled congregations. These three aspects are discussed below.

Doctrinal Changes

According to Jehovah's Witnesses today Rutherford had a clearer light on the Scriptures than Russell and as time went by he evolved better interpretations and more exact doctrines than Russell had achieved. The Witnesses do not like to admit that Rutherford directly contradicted Russell on many points (as in fact he did) but they believe the light of truth was getting progressively stronger and therefore Rutherford was 'making changes for the better'. An examination of the changes that Rutherford did make, however, suggest that if anything his view was less consistent than Russell's. Russell was an ardent student of the Bible and however bizarre his theories, they were inevitably 'supported' by a host of Bible citations. Rutherford's knowledge of the Bible was nowhere near so deep and it soon becomes obvious that his own interpretations are little more than personal whims with very little Biblical support. As P. S. L. Johnson points out, Rutherford's Biblical education was sadly lacking.²⁶ Inevitably Rutherford lost followers with each major doctrinal change. I list below the important changes that occurred during his presidency:

(a) Russell encouraged the keeping of the Sabbath, which was not enforced under Rutherford and the idea was eventually discredited.²⁸

(b) *Gathering of the Jews*: this formed a basic part of Russell's system. He thought the restoration of the Jews to Palestine would be one of the signs of the Millennium and he devoted chapters of his books to proving the re-gathering was due. When world affairs did not fit this prophecy Rutherford abandoned it in 1932.²⁷

(c) Russell fell prey to the 'Great Pyramid' excitement following the discovery of a huge and remarkable pyramid at Gizeh. The reader is referred to *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, chapter 10, where Russell spends sixty-eight pages proving that the Pyramid was put there by God to corroborate the Bible. The exact lengths of the Pyramid's internal passages were supposed to signify the prophetic years 1874, 1881 and 1910. The whole elaborate theory was dropped by Rutherford who condemned attempts to look for the truth outside the Bible. In 1929 he openly attacked and re-

pudiated Russell's Pyramid theory with the result that some adherents left the movement.²⁸

(d) Possibly the most important doctrinal change was that concerning prophetic dates. At first, as we have seen, Rutherford held to Russell's eschatology. Towards the end of his life, however, Rutherford began to think 1914 was a more important date than 1874. Also Rutherford fixed on the date 1925 to see 'the completion of all things', but when this year passed he refused to be specific and regarded the end as due at any time – known only to God.

With regard to 1925 there is the usual confusion as to who believed what about this year. Schnell points out that the Watch Tower Society was inconsistent in preaching that 1925 would see the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth and at the same time making plans to expand the printing works (in Germany) after 1925.²⁹ In the Witnesses' own history they admit: 'The view had been somewhat general among the anointed that the remaining members of the body of Christ would be changed to heavenly glory that year.'³⁰ Certainly the anointed got that belief from the *Watch Towers* and Judge Rutherford.³¹

(e) Rutherford conceived the modern Witness view of the Battle of Armageddon:

... it was not till the *Watch Tower* magazine's issue of July 15, 1925, that Jehovah's modern Christian witnesses got better understanding, that this final war would be, not a mere anarchistic human struggle for domination here on earth, but a universal war.³²

Russell had not believed that there would be a wholesale slaughter of all but the faithful, he was a more tolerant man and he held out hope for everyone. Unlike Russell, Rutherford thought there would be only one class of heavenly glory and that many of the 'faithful' on earth would have to be content with eternal life there after God had destroyed the wicked and the ignorant at the Battle of Armageddon. This change in interpretation arose in the following way: when Rutherford's following became appreciable it was felt that many of these newly recruited Bible Students were too ignorant of the Bible and spiritual matters to expect to be glorified as saints in heaven. What then would happen to these people – variously designated as 'the great multitude', 'the other sheep' and 'the Jonadabs'? Rutherford solved the problem by

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suggesting that their reward must be eternal life on earth – this would not be a reward if (as Russell had said) this was the fate of most of mankind, so Rutherford was led to the conclusion that those outside his organisation would be destroyed at the Battle of Armageddon. Until Rutherford arrived at this explanation in the nineteen-thirties there was some confusion in the movement as to the status and fate of ‘the great multitude’ and the ‘Jonadabs’.³³

(f) Rutherford expanded Russell’s ideas concerning the ‘ancient worthies’. These were the faithful men of the Old Testament who had died before Jesus’ time: Abel, Abraham, Isaac, etc. Russell believed that these men were the ‘princes in all the earth’ (*Psalm 45 : 16*) and that they would be resurrected to earth as one of the early signs of the Millennium.³⁴ Rutherford accepted this belief so literally that he provided a mansion in California called Beth Sarim where the ancient worthies could live when they returned.³⁵ In the meantime, Rutherford explained, he would live in the house as its ‘caretaker’! Outsiders naturally laughed at this and thought that Rutherford was either mad or a trickster – some of the Witnesses themselves were doubtful about it:

Beth Sarim displeases many Witnesses who consider it an extravagant waste of money which should have gone into more productive work and who are not yet convinced by a debatable biblical interpretation that the expense is justified. Some have told me that they wondered why Mr. Rutherford had not simply built himself a West-coast headquarters ‘and let it go at that’.³⁶

While they still believed this theory the Witnesses tried to bluster the matter out: ‘The most recent facts show that the religionists of this doomed world are gnashing their teeth because of the testimony which that “House of the Princes” bears to the new world.’³⁷ It is doubtful whether the Witnesses had any evidence for this statement and it proved to be rather hollow as the mansion was disposed of in 1948 and the doctrine of the return of the ancient worthies was quietly dropped in 1950. When the mansion was sold the local paper, the *San Diego Union*, tartly remarked that ‘Daniel and the rest when they arrive will have to arrange their own domicile’.

(g) After the splitting of the Bible Students in 1916–1917, Rutherford deduced that a series of prophecies in the Bible fore-

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told this break-up. In fact, he plotted out the whole history of the movement in Bible prophecies. In particular it was important to show from the Scriptures that he and his followers, and not 'the other lot', had the truth. For example, Rutherford applied the parable of the good and bad servants (*Matthew 24*) to the events after 1916. Naturally the 'good servant' pictured the Watch Tower Society while the 'evil servant' pictured the dissenters. Up to 1927 all the Bible Students accepted that the 'good servant' of *Matthew 24* referred to Pastor Russell. Thus Rutherford took a bold step in re-interpreting the parable to rub out Russell. Many Bible Students resented and protested about this change and it was several years before it was fully accepted.

Rutherford also abandoned Russell's chronology by claiming that Jesus had set up his heavenly kingdom invisibly in 1914. The World War then brought his Witnesses on earth to a deathlike condition, but three and a half years after 1914 Jesus symbolically 'returned to cleanse the Temple' and stopped the World War in 1918 to prevent his Witnesses being wiped out! (Compare Russell's ideas about 1874 and 1878.) Just as Jesus' first earthly ministry had lasted three and a half years before Jesus came to the literal temple at Jerusalem to cleanse it, so his heavenly second presence started in 1914, three and a half years before the anti-typical 'cleansing of the Temple' occurred in 1918.

Administrative Changes

Russell had built up his movement along the lines of the Congregational Church – as far as administration was concerned. The ecclesias were independently governed by elected elders while the Watch Tower Society simply published and printed their literature. This system did not suit Rutherford's desire for absolute control and he set about changing it. It was an extremely long and painful process but he was adamant about its necessity. Today the Witnesses (with hindsight) look on the doctrinal and administrative changes made by Rutherford as *further light* bringing them nearer the complete truth:

Now from the year 1919 a glorious new outlook presented itself. These dedicated servants began to recognise their mistakes and make a public confession of their wrongdoings in their effort to seek Jehovah's forgiveness and be restored to his favour. . . . There was some resistance from those who were not progressive and who

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did not have a vision of the work that lay ahead. Some insisted on living in the past, in the time of Pastor Russell, when the brothers in general had viewed him as the sole channel of Scriptural enlightenment.³⁸

The above quotation could describe many a communist purge! The resemblance in outlook to that of totalitarian states, in particular China today, is quite marked. The above view is, of course, an attempt to veil the *real* nature of the changes made by Rutherford at this time. Hardly anyone thought of his administrative battle as 'a glorious new outlook', nearly all the Bible Students were puzzled by the changes at first, many of them opposed Rutherford on this issue alone. He was attempting to change every congregation from the old self-governing pattern to the new method where the congregation leaders and activities were all directed from headquarters. He believed God was using the Watch Tower Society as His one and only channel of communication and therefore if anyone remained independent of God's organisation it could only mean that they were not faithful Christians. These and other lines of argument were used by Rutherford to start the long campaign somehow or other to dominate the ecclesias. It is a moot point how far Rutherford believed his own reasons for this change-over - there was certainly more of an element of power-grasping behind the change than he was willing to admit. There was also the vow he made to Macmillan while in prison which revealed a deep-rooted antagonism towards the elective elder system. This last reason was perhaps more primary, suggesting that Rutherford decided to make the changes *before* finding Biblical reasons for doing so. Much of his published rhetoric in support of central control may therefore be seen as rationalisation of a selfish motive.

In many ways the era 1919-1945 was marked by tension, suspicion and hostility within the movement. The rate of growth of the organisation under Rutherford was small partly because he was determined to alter its whole administrative structure. The change-over to central control began in Germany (according to Schnell).³⁹ Some of the German ecclesias were willing to be centrally controlled; they agreed that the Society was better suited to decide their leaders. Those ecclesias who wished to remain independent, however, were ruthlessly treated by Rutherford and his supporters in their efforts to make the administrative

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set-up 'theocratic' (that is, governed by Jehovah through the Watch Tower Society). Representatives of the Society often presented the ecclesias with an ultimatum: be centrally controlled or damned! Sometimes the Bible Students who agreed with Rutherford left the original ecclesia and set up a new congregation (boosted by Society representatives from outside) in competition with the old one: 'In many places we had to line up the brothers literally on two sides, for and against the Society.'⁴⁰

Schnell describes in detail the techniques used in Germany:

In similar fashion this purge was carried out ruthlessly throughout the land and finally a new concept of congregation emerged. The Service Director, who represented the Society, gradually attained first place in the congregation as the Society's instructions multiplied, with the Elders being relegated more and more to the back seat to take care of spiritual matters only. Gradually the Elders lost that responsibility too, as the Society through their mouthpiece, the *Watchtower* magazine, became the teacher for the classes. Finally the Society in one stroke, through a *Watchtower* article, eliminated the position of Elder in the congregations. That was done, so they said, because election of Elders was unscriptural. Actually it was done to end control of congregations from the local level, and to usher in a top down Theocratic arrangement from the control tower in Brooklyn.

However, in some congregations, especially in the larger ones, it was not so easy to make the Elders toe the line or to push them into a back seat. But the Society could handle them. In such cases they were surrounded with unwanted assistants (who invariably were Society boys), and then, gradually they would be superseded in the carrying out of many details contrary to their wishes and under special instructions from Magdeburg. Since the Society gave these assistants prerogatives and placed its stamp of approval on putting Headquarter's dictated policies and practices publicly into effect, the assistants were brought favourably to the attention of the congregation.

But Schnell later admits 'the Society had reason for complaint. Those of the Mordecai-Naomi class were almost all delinquent. . . .'⁴¹

In conjunction with the organisational change Rutherford began to stress personal preaching or advertising of the message rather than prayer, meditation and Bible Study. The latter were important, said Rutherford, but no Bible Student was entirely

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sincere unless he felt it was his duty to disseminate the truth. In practice this meant walking from door to door trying to sell *Watchtower* magazines and other Society literature. Rutherford introduced this as a criterion for membership; it was not enough for a person to claim he was a Bible Student, he had to go out and prove it by telling other people of his beliefs. Only then was he 'registered' as a 'publisher' of the Society's message. In order to put this idea across Rutherford appealed to the urgency of the times and the necessity for as many people as possible to hear of the truth. This fitted in with his belief that the wicked and ignorant would all perish at the Battle of Armageddon. Russell had not thought that ignorant mankind would perish and he and his followers had been content with more 'respectable' ways of preaching. There is some evidence, however, that Pastor Russell had not been entirely satisfied with the status quo. In 1881 he had returned the view that, 'We believe that none will be of the little flock except preachers.' And throughout his life he advocated the preaching work and distribution of literature. He had not been completely satisfied with the Elective Elder system either. In *Zion's Watch Tower*, 15th March 1906, he wrote:

We do not deny growing in knowledge, and that we now see in a slightly different light the will of the Lord respecting elders or leaders in the various little groups of his people. Our error in judgement was in expecting too much of the dear brethren.⁴²

Even within his own administrative hierarchy Rutherford was faced with opposition and human weaknesses. In distant Branch Offices there were brothers only too ready to appropriate funds to their own use or to preach some doctrine not sanctioned by the Society. Sweden, Germany, Canada and other countries had their branch offices 'cleansed' by the Society's representatives, and by 1932 Rutherford had brought all the congregations to his viewpoint – those who disagreed had left the movement.⁴³ It is not entirely clear exactly how many did this. Schnell claims that three-quarters of the Bible Students associating in 1921 had left by 1931. Rutherford appeared to agree with this; he regarded the losses as further proof that God was 'sifting' the faithful. In the book *Jehovah* he wrote: 'Of the great multitude that left the world to follow Jesus Christ only a few are now in God's organisation.'⁴⁴ The figures available suggest that Rutherford's active following

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increased from about 18,000 in 1919 to 25,000 in 1932. Certainly Rutherford's main task during these thirteen years was 'cleansing' rather than 'expanding'.

EVENTS FROM 1919-1932

In 1919 Rutherford revived the colporteur work; 507 were active in this work by the end of the year. In 1920 he took the first important step in organising the preaching activity of the Bible Students. Weekly reports of each person's activity were introduced in which each Bible Student was asked to report the number of hours spent preaching and the amounts of literature 'placed' with the public. By 1922, 980 of the 1,200 American congregations were 'converted' to this method of weekly reporting.⁴⁵ Those handing in weekly reports were called 'class workers'. Rutherford did not neglect the overseas field, and began an extensive tour of Europe on 12th August 1920. During this tour he 'reorganised' the branch offices - this required changes in personnel and some purging. Rutherford was admirably suited for this task and not only was he capable of throwing people out but he had the personal power to retain those he wanted. In a different way he possessed Russell's ability to win people over to his side. This ability was particularly evident in his public speeches:

To those who lived with him, Rutherford appeared 'more like a senator than most senators'. He stood and walked with a measured dignity not without impressiveness. He wore winged collars and bow ties, and held his glasses which he used for reading and for effective gesturing, on a long black ribbon. His voice was an excellent one for public speaking, occasionally reaching a low-pitched fortissimo that deeply thrilled his audience.⁴⁶

Rutherford's publicity-like conception of the organisation led to his expansion of the 'conventions'. Originally they had simply been opportunities for brothers to 'get together' and strengthen each other in the faith. Rutherford began to stage them as publicity campaigns to attract attention. The number and size of the conventions were increased despite what Russell had said in *Zion's Watch Tower* 15th August 1916: 'After all, it is not numbers, but soul fellowship which makes a convention a success.' Rutherford knew that it was numbers *and* soul fellowship that counted, but

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most of all – just numbers. Starting in 1922, seven barn-storming international conventions were held beginning with an eight-day Assembly in Cedar Point, Ohio. Significantly, the title was ‘Advertise the King and Kingdom’ – and it was at this Assembly that Rutherford began to hammer out his new chronology. This is how the Witnesses themselves think of Cedar Point:

Truly a feast of stimulating new truths was spread before Jehovah’s people on this occasion. . . . Brother Rutherford delivered a historic lecture on the subject ‘The Kingdom’. He said: ‘The physical facts, then, clearly show that the day of preparation was from 1874 forward; . . . that the day of preparation ended in 1914; and that in 1918, or thereabouts, the Lord came to his temple.’⁴⁷

Notice the playing down of the date 1874 which is eventually dropped. The second of the international Assemblies was held at Los Angeles in August 1923 and the third at Columbus, Ohio, in July 1924. At the latter, 20,000 were present for the week and they heard Rutherford hit out again at the clergy: ‘We present and charge that the clergy have yielded to the temptations presented to them by Satan and, contrary to God’s Word, have joined in said conspiracy.’

A further shock was in store for both Rutherford and his supporters. Basing their views on a dubious rehash of Russell’s Greater Jubilee dates they were literally expecting the ‘end of all things’ in 1925. When the year passed with no heavenly or earthly sign, some of Rutherford’s supporters left him. According to the Witnesses there had been a steady increase in their numbers up to 1925 when (they claimed) there were 90,434 in attendance at the Memorial service.⁴⁸ Early in 1926 the attendance had dropped to 89,278: ‘The year 1925 especially proved to be a year of great trial to many of Jehovah’s people.’⁴⁹ From then on Rutherford refused to be specific about the date of God’s take-over and he continued to preach his doctrines with the accent on clergy reprehensibility.

Rutherford had by now expanded the Society’s printing facilities in order to manufacture millions of books and magazines that were distributed by his ‘class-workers’ as part of the advertising campaign. The Society had been printing its own literature since 1920 and in 1927 the printing equipment was moved to its present site at 118 Adams Street, New York. Ruther-

ford's first book, *The Harp of God*, was published in 1921 and he proved to be a more prolific writer of books than Russell.⁵⁰ Altogether twenty were published, all but the first with one-word titles such as *Creation* (1927), *Jehovah* (1934) and *Children* (1941). Although Rutherford was an effective speaker he had no merits as a writer. His books were a strange hegemony of invective, Biblical exegesis and dogmatic prose. He had a tendency to use too much legal terminology and to state, rather than attempt to reason, any conclusions that he wished to make. Consider for instance Rutherford's definitions of the word 'religion'. A typical dictionary definition is 'belief in supernatural power that governs the universe; recognition of God or gods as objects of worship; any system of faith or worship'. Rutherford thought differently; his definition illustrates some of the faults in his writing; his verbosity, dogmatism and lack of even elementary reasoning or logic:

'Religion' is therefore properly defined as a belief in and indulging in a form of worship of some higher power, and which belief is based on the teachings of men handed down by tradition from one generation to another, and which system of belief or teaching is induced and put forward by God's adversary the Devil in order to turn men away from God. For this reason religion is a snare of the devil.⁵¹

Rutherford later dispensed with all preliminaries and simply said: "Religion" is doing anything contrary to the will of Almighty God.⁵²

On the whole Rutherford's works were inferior to those of Pastor Russell but they were 'pushed' by a much bigger and better-organised advertising force which resulted in millions of copies being sold to members of the public. To assist the advertising by printed page Rutherford bought land on Stratten Island in 1922 and set up a radio station there in 1924. This was well known by its code WBBR and eventually it was one of six stations owned and used by Rutherford for broadcasting locally. A network of independently owned stations was gradually linked with these to broadcast fifteen-minute talks by Rutherford. Four hundred and eight stations were in use at the height of this work and they ensured that Rutherford was well known to the public and notorious in the eyes of the clergy.⁵³ The latter were further scandalised by Rutherford's efforts to disrupt the Sabbath. He

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realised that one of the best times to call at people's homes was on Sundays. Unfortunately for the Bible Students, however, the Sabbath was still held rather strictly as a day of rest, and any attempt to 'sell' literature from house to house was viewed as a commercial, if not sacrilegious, enterprise. Rutherford countered this objection by claiming that the Bible Students were calling at houses for a religious purpose. The Bible Students began the Sunday work in 1927 and they immediately ran into trouble with the civil authorities. The first arrests were made in New Jersey in 1928 and for the next ten years a war of words and legal battles was fought throughout the United States.

It was not enough for Rutherford to win *one* case over the 'house to house work on Sunday' issue. Every state and township in America had its own ordinances and by-laws governing the observance of the Sabbath, Rutherford had to contest hundreds of cases in New Jersey alone. He based his defence on the claim that the Bible Students were not actually 'selling' anything - they were distributing Bible literature on receipt of a fixed money contribution to their Society's funds. Of course this was, in effect, *selling* - but the legal arguments were based more on the causes than the effects. If the cause of this distribution could be proved to be religious, beneficial and non-profit making, then it was legally justified. The outcome of these legal battles will be mentioned later.

In 1931 came an important milestone in the history of the organisation. For many years Rutherford's followers had been called a variety of names: 'International Bible Students', 'Russellites', or 'Millennial Dawners'. In order to distinguish clearly his followers from the other groups who had separated in 1918 Rutherford proposed that they adopt an entirely new name - *Jehovah's witnesses*. In 1931, at an Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, the 15,000 in attendance were the first to be presented with their new name. It is significant, however, that Rutherford and the Witnesses today insist on spelling their name with a small 'w' - Jehovah's witnesses. They believe they are not just a new cult or sect (*Jehovah's Witnesses*) but they are simply God's servants, God's present-day *witnesses* to His name and glory. Thus Abel, Abraham, Paul and all the other faithful men had been Jehovah's witnesses. This terminology is very convenient as far as the Witnesses are concerned, constant reference to Biblical characters

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as 'Jehovah's witnesses' can only impress themselves and outsiders. Not unnaturally they are sometimes guilty of slipshod argument in ascribing actions to 'Jehovah's witnesses' that are certainly true of the Biblical 'witnesses of God' but not true of 'Jehovah's Witnesses', the modern sect. This ambiguous use of their name is apparent throughout the literature of the Society from 1931 onwards.

By this time Rutherford had by and large succeeded in changing the organisational pattern at congregation level. Most of the congregations had changed to Society control, and the personal witnessing of the Bible Students was now controlled by, and reported to, the Brooklyn Headquarters. To complete the formal statement of his *ideal organisation* Rutherford published a two-part article in the *Watchtowers* of 15th August and 1st September 1932. In the words of the Witnesses:

This exposed the system of 'elective elders' as being an unclean practice of this world and not according to the principles of the great Theocrat, who rules his sanctuary from the top down.⁵⁴

It took Rutherford several more years to completely eradicate the support for the 'elective elders' but it was an inevitable process and by the year 1938 the organisation was considered 'clean'.

During the 'thirties Rutherford continued the drive for expansion by using every means available. The output of literature was increased every year and, in addition, Rutherford advocated the use of *sound cars* and portable phonographs. The latter became the trade-mark of the Witnesses in the 'thirties. They deposited a phonograph on people's doorsteps and invited them to hear a five-minute recorded talk spoken by Rutherford. After this the Witness produced some literature and offered it for a fixed 'contribution' to the Society's funds. Rutherford extended this work to calling back on people who were interested (back-calls), and if these were a success then an hour-long weekly *book study* was started in the home of the interested person. The statistics of personal witnessing - number of back-calls and book studies, amount of literature placed, etc. - were recorded and sent to the Society's headquarters where a complete record was kept. In spite of these administrative 'improvements', the Witnesses in general were woefully ignorant of the Bible - it was left to Rutherford's successor to remedy this situation.

3. The Modern Organisation, 1932-1968

THE WORLD had moved on from the phrenetic 'twenties to the anxiety-ridden 'thirties. America was hit by the depression and Europe by Fascism. In one respect the unsettled conditions favoured the Witnesses. Many distressed people turned to them – and their membership increased dramatically. But another characteristic of a fearful nation that was not so favourable was its sublimation of fear into persecution of unpopular minorities, who were treated as scapegoats. This happened to the Witnesses in the United States, in Germany and in many other countries. There were two main reasons for the unpopularity of Rutherford and his organisation. The first was his antagonism towards the civil and religious authorities. Not only did this brand him as an outsider but it directly aroused the opposition of the clergy and police who encouraged persecution of the Witnesses. The abuse that Rutherford heaped on the clergy is illustrated by the following quotations:

The greatest racket ever invented and practised is that of religion. . . . During the World War many young men were compelled to join the army and fight. They saw daily the religious clergymen swaggering about, sometimes sober and sometimes not . . . who always mingled with the soldiers at the rear.¹

In his book *Deliverance* Rutherford devoted nearly every one of its 379 pages to attacking those in authority, including the clergy:

That unfaithful preachers . . . have yielded to temptations presented them by Satan and used their spiritual powers to gratify their own selfish desires . . . clothed themselves in gaudy apparel, assumed a form of godliness while denying God's Word . . . failed to preach the kingdom. The clergy as a class have constituted themselves the fountain of doctrines which . . . they have set forth to the people claiming such doctrines to be the teachings of God's Word, well knowing the same to be untrue.²

The second point, that involved the Witnesses all over the world, was their insistence on political neutrality. Although usually good citizens, they refused to join any army or render allegiance to the state. Rutherford argued that Christians were God's representatives on earth, part of Jesus' army, and hence dedicated and responsible only to him. The Witnesses thought of themselves as spiritual aliens. Not surprisingly the chauvinistic nations of the 'thirties failed to understand such an attitude. In Germany the Witnesses were interned in concentration camps while in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain they were imprisoned as conscientious objectors.

The cycle of events from 1930 onwards was ominous. Throughout the United States, for instance, arrests, trials and persecutions continued on a scale greater than that of 1918. Undoubtedly the Witnesses themselves contributed to these attacks by persistent provocation. One of their characteristic actions when a township threw out some of their 'publishers'³ was to gather hundreds of Witnesses from the neighbouring territories and stage a mass 'witness' in the town in question. They regarded the persecution as further proof that they were the true servants of God in a hostile world. Rutherford's books of this period describe his opponents as 'the enemy' - he seems to imagine that he and his 'army' of followers were arrayed in spiritual warfare against the rest of the world. In the booklet *Freedom of Worship*, Witnesses are advised how to conduct themselves in the face of legal and other opposition. The closing remarks of the booklet illustrate the feeling at the time:

This booklet is an abbreviated statement of suggestions to enable all publishers of the Theocratic Government to pursue the proper course in the witness work. It is confidential and should not be carried from house to house or shown to the enemy.

In 1933 the Catholics in the United States launched a campaign to drive Rutherford off the air. According to the Witnesses this failed - but by a strange coincidence Rutherford ceased broadcasting soon afterwards! In 1937 he gave up broadcasting on commercial channels altogether and concentrated on the phonograph work and sound cars instead; in April 1938 the first arrest was made of a Witness using a phonograph - he was charged and convicted for 'disturbing the peace'. The Witnesses showed

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courage and foolhardiness in persisting with their beliefs in the face of threats, mobbings and violence. They were literally prepared to die for their beliefs:

I am confident that the Witnesses demonstrate one of the most sacrificial ways of living which has been seen in many decades. . . . They are willing to give up friends and family, to work indefatigably in their spare hours, to give unstintingly of their money, to withstand bitter persecution, and even in certain European countries, to remain loyal to their convictions unto death – all for 'the cause'.⁴

In June 1935 Rutherford took issue over the flag salute that was compulsory in schools throughout the United States. As a sign of their spiritual neutrality the Witnesses refused to salute the flag; but this was an affront to the sensitive and aggressive patriotism of many Americans. Numerous court cases and an increase in persecution followed this controversy.

The same pattern of events was evident in other countries. On the one hand the Witnesses were converting to the new centrally controlled organisation and personal ministry while on the other external opposition was mounting. As early as 1932 the Italian branch office was closed by the government. In Germany the situation was chaotic; the Witness movement had drawn in literally thousands of new members from the many affected by unemployment and the breakdown of social order. Their number was certainly increasing at a phenomenal rate until stopped by Hitler's complete ban in 1936. At that time there were almost 20,000 Witnesses active in Germany. Meanwhile progress in Britain was slow. In 1931 there were about 4,000 publishers and 196 pioneers, eight years later there were only 5,000 publishers but the pioneer figure had increased to 1,500. In 1938 a large assembly was held in London and the talks were relayed by radio to fifty other assemblies world-wide. At these gatherings about 12,000,000 copies of the booklet *Face the Facts* were released – it exposed the many persecutions suffered by the Witnesses throughout the world.

Rutherford's 'ideal' organisation was completely established in the year 1938: 'It was not until 1938, however, that the final change to strictly Theocratic order took place.'⁵ All congregations were asked to surrender their authority to the central office and thus Rutherford achieved the goal he had set out for in 1918.

From 1938 onwards *the Society* became the supreme judge of what was right and wrong as far as every Jehovah's Witness was concerned. This unity was incidentally helpful in weathering the storm of the Second World War.

This was a violent time. In June 1939 Rutherford was scheduled to deliver a talk entitled 'Government and Peace' at Madison Square Garden, New York. It was widely advertised and was to be radio relayed to numerous Assemblies in the United States and abroad. A. H. Macmillan recounts what happened:

Soon we discovered a concerted effort was being planned to prevent this talk's being given, both in New York and elsewhere. The police were notified days in advance of threats that had been made that the meeting would be broken up, so when the day for the talk arrived they were present in force. In the course of the actual delivery of the lecture in New York a mob of Coughlin's 'Christian Front' men and women, who had planted themselves in the Garden at the last minute, began to boo and shout [Coughlin was a Roman Catholic priest]. Their object was to start a riot and thus break up the meeting. When the interruption actually began, the police made no effort to stop it or assist the staff of Jehovah's witnesses assigned as ushers who attempted to quell the disturbance. Eventually our own ushers had forcibly to eject the troublemakers.⁶

Macmillan does not mention that at that time the ushers were in the habit of carrying stout canes to meet any violent emergency:

The fervour of the Witnesses was doubtless increased by the various 'props' employed during the meetings. The defensive canes which Mr. Rutherford, his assistants, and the ushers have generally carried, caused a certain tenseness.⁷

Jehovah's Witnesses were one (they say the only one) religious group to be persecuted by all combatant, and some non-combatant, nations during the Second World War. While the Witnesses feel that this persecution was because they were God's chosen people and was simply one method of attack by Satan, the evidence indicates that it was due to their neutrality stand and incitement of the authorities. Some of the Witnesses thought of themselves as martyrs - others cracked under the strain and left the movement. For most of them, however, the persecution was a test of their faith. Whether right or wrong, the Witnesses proved beyond all doubt that they were not hypocrites. In Canada a total

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ban was placed on their activities while Witnesses in Japan suffered imprisonment and torture. In Germany the Jehovah's Witnesses were sacked from their jobs and reviled and attacked by the state and the public for refusing to support conscription and the war effort. Eventually about half the German Witnesses were imprisoned in concentration camps where they were so numerous they had their own insignia and barracks. Witnesses were imprisoned in camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg, Ravensbruck, Lichtenburg, Auschwitz etc. I quote below from two sources of information dealing with conditions in these camps.

In his book *The Informed Heart* Bruno Bettelheim describes the Witnesses in Buchenwald. It is interesting that the passage below was quoted in *The Watchtower*, 1st August 1963, *but with the italicised parts omitted*:

As conscientious objectors, all Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to the camps. They were even less affected by imprisonment and kept their integrity, thanks to rigid religious beliefs. Since their only crime in the eyes of the S.S. was a refusal to bear arms, they were frequently offered freedom in return for military service. They steadfastly refused.

Members of this group were generally *narrow in outlook and experience, wanting to make converts, but on the other hand exemplary comrades, helpful, correct and dependable*. They were argumentative, *even quarrelsome*, only when someone questioned their religious beliefs. Because of their conscientious work habits, they were often selected as foremen. But once a foreman, and having accepted an order from the S.S., they insisted that prisoners do the work well and in the time allotted. Even though they were the only group of prisoners who never abused or mistreated other prisoners (on the contrary, they were usually quite courteous to other prisoners), S.S. officers preferred them as orderlies because of their work habits, skills and unassuming attitudes. Quite in contrast to the continuous internecine warfare among the other prisoner groups, the Jehovah's Witnesses never misused their closeness to S.S. officers to gain positions of privilege in the camp. [My italics.]

The picture painted by a woman prisoner in Ravensbruck is similar but not as straightforward. Margaret Buber in *Under Two Dictators* had this to say about the women Witnesses:

All of them were model prisoners . . . I soon found that without exception they were women of little or no education. Each of the

women was not only highly conscientious personally, but held herself responsible for the well being of the group as a whole. During the two years I was with them as their Block Senior nothing ever happened to mar the relation of absolute confidence which existed between us. . . . They fled from the burden of responsibility this life placed on them and sought refuge in the role of martyrs.

Meanwhile in America the Witnesses were being vilified as 'fascists'!

In Britain there was little official interference with Jehovah's Witnesses, Assemblies were held regularly and a great deal of the Society's printing was now being done in London. Witnesses liable for the call-up were allowed to register as conscientious objectors and were brought before tribunals where they were usually imprisoned for six months. Altogether 1,593 convictions of British Witnesses were made, 334 of them were women.

In the United States there were two major problems for the Witnesses: the conscription and the flag-salute laws. The latter issue culminated in the *Gobitis* case in 1940 when the Supreme Court decided 8-1 that the Witnesses' children must salute the flag:

The results of the *Gobitis* case were disastrous for the Witnesses. Shortly after the Supreme Court's decision was handed down, local school boards passed resolutions requiring the saluting of the flag as a condition for receiving public education. The Witnesses experienced in many parts of the country, mainly in small towns and rural areas, a form of persecution which only made most of them even more determined never to cooperate with government in any matter.⁸

There is some confusion as to how many of the Witnesses were exempted from military service in the United States under the '4D classification'. In *Qualified to be Ministers* published by the Witnesses it says 'most male Witnesses', but in their recent history *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* they say: 'only a few Jehovah's Witnesses were given ministerial exemption'. Perhaps Marley Cole was right when he disagreed with both these verdicts and said 'about half' were exempted!

From 1940 to 1944 about 2,500 mob attacks were made on the Witnesses. They were beaten, tarred and feathered, mutilated, castrated and some even killed.

At this time Rutherford became ill and spent the last two years

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of his life out of the centre of things, in California. His deputies kept the organisation functioning although in 1940 the phonograph work was discontinued and 'street work' introduced. The latter involved publishers standing on street corners displaying copies of *The Watchtower* and *Consolation* for those who wished to purchase them. In 1940 another series of Assemblies were held; the biggest was at Detroit, Michigan, where 35,000 were present at the release of Rutherford's latest book *Religion*. The following year another large assembly was held at St. Louis where Rutherford's book *Children* was released. This contained a lengthy elaboration of his doctrines communicated through a 'conversation' between two young people, John and Eunice.⁹ Rutherford had arranged for 15,000 children to be present in the centre of the crowd to help advertise the book. The opposition to his movement reached a climax in this year and the Society recalled all travelling representatives and refused to involve itself in cases of individual Witnesses who wished to remain politically neutral during the war.

RUTHERFORD'S DEATH

Rutherford died on 8th January 1942 at the age of seventy-two. The cause of his death is not revealed, but apparently he was aware of the malignant condition some eighteen months before he died. He wanted to 'die fighting with his boots on' according to the Witnesses. During his lifetime Rutherford had effected a tremendous change in the organisation. A loose conglomeration of ecclesias worshipping one man had been altered into a centrally controlled and unified system of congregations. Rutherford had introduced most of the methods and devices used by Jehovah's Witnesses today – house-to-house work, back-calls, big Assemblies, etc. Rutherford thought big, he liked the grand gesture to advertise his message and show the world that the organisation it despised and ignored was not so unimportant.¹⁰

What sort of person was Rutherford? Mention has already been made of his dogmatism and powerful personality, but Rutherford was unusual in other ways. Although he made his life's work the elimination of 'personality development' he himself displayed more personal egotism than Russell and demanded more obedience from his followers than his predecessor had done. Rutherford installed a microphone by his seat at mealtimes so that any

words he might utter could be heard through loudspeakers for the spiritual edification of all those present. As far as personal traits were concerned Rutherford appeared to be a more rational man than Russell; unlike him he had no fancy for herb cures or the like. Certain details about the life of Rutherford appear to have been suppressed by the Witnesses. Former members of the Brooklyn Bethel home have sworn that Rutherford lived in luxurious quarters compared with the other brothers and that he maintained, and used, various homes throughout the country.¹¹ He was also ruthless with anyone who contradicted him:

The Judge sends a note stating whom he wants elected, or rejected, or what he wants done, and that is immediately done unanimously. Woe be unto that one who opposes. Anyone who opposes slightly gets a tongue lashing at the dinner table, and if the opposition is serious, or such one has too much independence of mind he is liquidated from the organisation.¹²

It is said that Rutherford encouraged drinking and dirty jokes in the Bethel home and actually ejected one of the brothers who protested at this. Rutherford's opinion of women was very unenlightened:

The women make monkees or dupes of men. . . . The men remove their hats upon entering an elevator, if a woman is present; and these things are said to be acts of respect and to show man is a gentleman. But it is subtle, and the real meaning is much different from that. It is a scheme of Satan to turn men away from God and from his announced rule of the proper position of man and woman. The Lord has declared that no effeminate man shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.¹³

Perhaps the most reprehensible of Rutherford's ideas was his approval of the segregation of Negroes. The Bible Student ecclesias were sometimes segregated, even in New York.¹⁴ Stroup mentions that segregation existed in the later years of Rutherford's presidency:

Once in the history of the movement the Society's leader specifically asked colored Witnesses not to apply for positions as Pioneers: "The reason is that as far as we are able to judge, colored people have less education than whites - many of them quite insufficient to permit them to profit by reading our literature. Our conclusion, therefore, is based upon the supposition that reading matter distributed to a

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colored congregation would be more than half wasted, and a very small percentage indeed likely to yield good results.' *The Watchtower* August 1928.¹⁵

One cannot help but feel that many of those near Rutherford were somewhat relieved when he passed on. They had endured his 'tongue-lashings', and while they respected – if not feared – him, they did not love him in the way Pastor Russell was loved. This was perhaps one reason why his death caused so little consternation within the organisation. A new president, Nathan Homer Knorr, was elected and he immediately got down to continuing the work of the movement. Unlike Russell and Rutherford, Knorr had no great personality appeal. He had become prominent as an able administrator and a business-minded man. The days of great leaders and orators were evidently past, for whereas Russell and Rutherford had combined the tasks of doctrinal and administrative leadership, Knorr was only fully responsible for the latter. The doctrinal lead often came from his vice-president, F. W. Franz, who is believed to be responsible for much of the Society's present doctrinal exegesis.

Nathan H. Knorr was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on 23rd April 1905. He became associated with the Witnesses at the age of sixteen and started as a member of the New York Bethel staff in 1923. He was trained in the business and management side of the Society's affairs under the manager, C. J. Martin, and when Martin died he was appointed general manager of the publishing office and printing plant in 1932. Two years later Knorr was elected a director of the New York corporation of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. He was then thirty-four years old and second in command to Rutherford. Calm and reflective in appearance Knorr could easily be mistaken for an American businessman. He is a capable and powerful speaker, although perhaps somewhat uninspiring (particularly compared with Franz). When Knorr took over in 1942 the Witnesses were enduring the worst time of the war. He nevertheless pressed ahead with his plans, confident that times would get better.

The opposition did begin to abate from 1943 onwards, although the Witnesses were involved in legal battles in the United States up until 1955. In May 1943 twelve out of thirteen pending court cases to do with house-to-house work were decided in their favour and this began a trend of favourable

decisions. The Gobitis Case ruling was finally reversed from which time on the children of Jehovah's Witnesses were exempt from saluting the flag. The overall effect of the Witnesses' legal struggles was so impressive that the *American Bar Association's Bill of Rights Review* had this to say:

Seldom, if ever, in the past, has one individual or group been able to shape the course, over a period of time, of any phase of our vast body of constitutional law. But it *can* happen, and it *has* happened, here. The group is Jehovah's Witnesses. Through almost constant litigation this organisation had made possible an ever-increasing list of precedents concerning the application of the 14th amendment to freedom of speech and religion.¹⁶

In 1943 the ban on the Witnesses was lifted in Australia and Canada and at the end of the war the heat of persecution had cooled. The organisation had survived this trial and they were now ready for the greatest chapter in their history to begin.

THE SUCCESSFUL YEARS, 1945-1968

In most respects the organisation envisaged by Rutherford came into being in 1938 and it was only after this date that the increase in their numbers became significant. They have been (unjustifiably) called the fastest growing religion in the Western world. This increase was evidence to the Witnesses that they possessed the truth (*Matthew 7 : 19, 20*), and they counteracted the claims of other religions with a larger *membership* by suggesting that the criterion was not membership but *increase* in membership. One may ask, if their movement had the Truth, why there was no comparable increase in the years 1874-1945? The Witnesses' reply to this is that the truth was seen but dimly up until 1918 and that only after the 'sifting' had occurred was the Society free to develop as God wished. Those who prefer a more mundane explanation, however, can see that Rutherford's establishment of a unified body of followers, all disseminating literature produced by a central authority, obviously contributed to the increase that occurred after the Second World War.

During the last twenty years the Witness movement has been untroubled by serious internal strife. Despite occasional defections the influence of the Society has been strengthened to the

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point where it now directly controls the life of every Jehovah's Witness. In post-war years there have been few major doctrinal changes, no disturbing events and no radical personalities in power. The story of these years is essentially statistical and it has, of course, been a success story. Since 1945 the Witnesses have become entrenched in the belief that 1914 marked the invisible setting-up of Christ's Kingdom and that the final Battle of Armageddon is due within a generation of that year. With this urgent message to tell to the world Jehovah's Witnesses, under their new president, set out on their last publicity campaign.

After his inauguration Knorr set about 'improving' the administrative structure by appointing the 'overseers' of the congregations directly from headquarters. Travelling representatives, called 'Circuit Servants', were sent out to visit and check the congregations in a 'Circuit'. Similar 'Servants' were put in charge of larger areas called 'Districts' and part of their task was to check on the Circuit Servants! Also it seemed regrettable to Knorr that many of the Witnesses were unable to explain their beliefs to outsiders so he began an educational drive to remedy this situation. At that time the congregations met at least twice a week for Bible study and discussion of the 'service work', but in 1942 Knorr introduced an additional two-hour meeting. The first hour was called the *Service Meeting* and was wholly concerned with improving the Witnesses' techniques of advertising their beliefs; the second hour was the *Theocratic Ministry School*, a speech-training course open to all brothers in the congregation. The overall effect of these meetings was that all the (male) Witnesses became reasonably capable of giving talks in public and arguing for their beliefs on people's doorsteps. Every Jehovah's Witness began to think of himself as a 'minister' - a line of thought initiated by the Society.

In 1943 Knorr opened a new 'school' to train missionaries. It was called *Gilead* and was built by the Society on their 800-acre farm at South Lansing, New York State. The students at Gilead were expected to help on the farm, which in turn helped to feed them. Classes of about 100 students 'graduated' every six months; about half of these Witnesses were from the United States. Although extremely small, Gilead was a pleasant school situated in beautiful surroundings. On 1st February 1943 Knorr said this to the first student class: 'This is a school dedicated to the highest

learning, theocratic learning concerning the Most High God, Jehovah. The Watchtower Bible School of Gilthead is established solely for the purpose of training men and women to be more efficient ministers.¹⁷

During that year Knorr released the first of a series of 'text-books' to educate the congregation publishers in their role as effective ministers. The book was entitled *Course in Theocratic Ministry* and was used in the Ministry School until replaced by *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945) and *Equipped for Every Good Work* (1946).

Now that the war was over, a relief campaign was begun by the Witnesses in aid of the war victims; more than a million pounds' weight of clothing, three-quarters of a million pounds' weight of food and a million dollars were collected. The first large post-war assembly was held in 1946 at Cleveland, Ohio. About 20,000 Witnesses lived in a nearby 'trailer-city' for the duration of the assembly while thousands more lodged in the city itself. On the final day there was an attendance of 80,000 to hear the main talk 'The Prince of Peace'. In 1947 Knorr emulated Rutherford by holding a world-wide series of assemblies that stretched from Hawaii and New Zealand to Milan, Zurich and London. In conjunction with these Knorr made a trip around the world as a follow-up to his tour of South and Central America. In this way the new president saw the work at first hand and in some places he reorganised the branch office activity, which had lapsed during the war.¹⁸

The Witnesses' novel way of preaching brought an avalanche of legal actions against them all over the world. The most spectacular legal battle was in Canada, in particular amongst the French Canadians in Quebec. Catholic violence in Quebec took the form of mobs, imprisonment and various other ways of silencing the Witnesses. Canada is the only country where Jehovah's Witnesses achieved the national recognition they have always claimed for themselves - their movement was well known throughout the country and their fight with the Catholics was a national issue. At one time 1,300 cases against the Witnesses were pending in Quebec courts. The authorities indicted Witnesses on two counts: they were seditious, and they disseminated 'licentious propaganda without a pedlar's licence'. The Witnesses hit back by publishing a tract that exposed the persecution they were

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enduring. It was called *Quebec's Burning Hate for God and Christ and Freedom is the Shame of all Canada*; 1,000,000 English copies, 500,000 French and 75,000 Ukrainian were printed and distributed in Canada. Throughout 1947 pitched battles were fought in Quebec which were to 'free the streets of Jehovah's Witnesses' according to the Quebec City Chief of Police. In 1948 the Witnesses in Canada obtained more than half a million signatures to a petition for a *written* Bill of Rights which would enable them to seek protection in the written letter of the law instead of being at the mercy of local courts and police officers. Eventually the tide turned in their favour and in the Canadian Supreme Court they won freedom from persecution for sedition (*Boucher v. King* 1950) and freedom to disseminate their literature (*Samur v. City of Quebec and Attorney General of Quebec* 1953). On 6th October 1953 the radio and newspapers headlined this latter decision and at last the whole of Canada knew that the long bitter fight was almost over. Since the War the Witnesses have established their legal rights in most Western countries with the exception of Spain, Portugal and Greece. In Britain the only difference of opinion was over military conscription and the test case (*Walsh v. The Lord Advocate* 1955) was taken to the House of Lords where the Witnesses lost their case. It was established that they were members of a religion, but one with no *regular ministers* according to the conscription exemption requirements.

Additions to the printing plant in New York were made in 1950 and 1956 and in 1950 the Society organised a mammoth Assembly in New York. It was staged in Yankee Stadium and lasted eight days; 75,000 delegates were housed in New York and 15,000 lived in a nearby trailer city. On the final day 123,707 attended Knorr's address 'Can You Live Forever in Happiness on Earth?' (Compare Rutherford's strident 'Millions Now Living Will Never Die!'). Several important literature releases were made at this Assembly, notably the *New World Translation of the Greek Scriptures*. This was the Witnesses' own translation of the New Testament, its language was American English and its merit - accuracy. This Assembly was followed in 1951 by a chain of overseas assemblies in London, Paris, Brussels, Frankfurt, etc. These were a considerable success. The Witnesses also made several films about themselves. The first was an impressive colour film produced in 1954 and called 'The New World Society in

Action'. It dealt in part with a large New York Assembly that had been held in 1953, and was shown to congregations of Witnesses all over the world. In 1956 another hour-long colour film was produced called 'The Happiness of the New World Society'. These films are interesting and enjoyable; even a non-believer cannot fail to be impressed by their restrained but powerful message. In 1953 Knorr announced a new aid in the house-to-house work - the three- to eight-minute 'sermon' consisting of a short Biblical talk quoting three or four texts from the Bible. In addition there were ten- to fifteen-minute sermons for use in calling back on interested people. These sermons were memorised and used by Witnesses all over the world in calling at people's houses and, in a modified form, they are still used today.

In Eastern Europe the Witness movement has been banned since 1950. In East Germany more than a thousand Witnesses were sentenced to imprisonments averaging seven years. Despite this very active hostility the Witnesses function as best they can, meeting secretly in homes and even doing the door-to-door work as unobtrusively as possible. News of their progress filters out to the West while *Watchtowers* and other literature is smuggled in. The Witnesses have not been unsuccessful in their progress behind the Iron Curtain; in 1958 Knorr announced that the third largest national group of Witnesses (after the United States and West Germany) was communist Poland. There are more than 100,000 Witnesses in Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, etc. The situation in Russia is described by Walter Kolarz:

Russia is a fertile ground for Jehovah's Witnesses, not only because they fit so well into the whole historical pattern of Russian sectarianism but also because they thrive in the grim circumstances created by the Soviet régime. . . . The mass arrest of all members followed in March and April 1951 throughout the six Western Soviet Republics where the Witnesses had supporters. . . . In short, the Russian branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses may be regarded as one of the strongest in the world and there is certainly no branch anywhere which receives so much adverse publicity from the secular power. . . . Indeed, no other group in Soviet Russia, whether of religious or political inspiration, has ever thought of embarking on such extensive illegal propaganda and publishing work.¹⁹

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The African continent is another part of the world where the Witnesses' numbers have rapidly increased. They have become so well known that they have caused some Africans to start a hybrid native cult, Kitawala, 'an offshoot of the American Watch Tower Movement'. Apart from this undesirable effect the Witnesses have had great success with the somewhat oppressed African peoples:

To the Africans this version of Christianity appeared to be far more acceptable and understandable than the doctrines preached and practised by the missionaries. . . . Among the movements which have expanded far and wide in Africa is the Watch Tower which had its start in Nyasaland in 1906 or 1907. It was introduced by Joseph Booth, a former Baptist missionary who abandoned his church to preach native religious autonomy throughout British Central Africa.²⁰

The Society sold the radio station WBBR in 1957 and the following year they installed two new printing presses at Brooklyn, bringing the total there to thirteen rotary presses. A new thirteen-storey factory addition had been built in 1956 to cope with the continually rising circulation of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* In 1958 Knorr started a new educational project that concerned the 'servants' of the Society appointed to positions of responsibility within the organisation. A *Kingdom Ministry School* was organised in the United States to give the Circuit and District Servants an intensive month's 'refresher course'. At first the school was situated with Gilead at South Lansing until the missionary school was moved to the Brooklyn Bethel in 1960. The Kingdom Ministry School remained at South Lansing providing month-long courses for batches of Congregation Servants. Similar schools have now been set up in Great Britain, Germany and other countries. Ultimately the Society hopes that all the Witnesses in responsible positions – in the congregations and upwards – will have had a thorough direct training at the Society schools. The servants who have attended these courses almost invariably claim to have had a marvellous time, and encourage others to attend – despite the fact that the course is physically and mentally exacting. Servants have to rise early every day and are kept fully occupied with 'lessons' and manual labour on the Society's farm or in the printing works.

The major events of the 'sixties have followed the same pattern as before: world-wide and bigger assemblies, more printing and distributing of their books and magazines, and so on. The dynamic message introduced by Rutherford is still being preached, using Rutherford's methods. The Witnesses have become shrewd in the printing and administrative fields – every avenue of literature propagation has been explored and exploited. Were it not for the Biblical emphasis the Watchtower Society would be big-business – slick, sound and successful. It is worth while examining in detail the statistics of success as far as the Witnesses are concerned and the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a closer look at the rate of growth of the movement.

THE FIGURES AND FACTS ABOUT THE INCREASE
OF THE WITNESSES

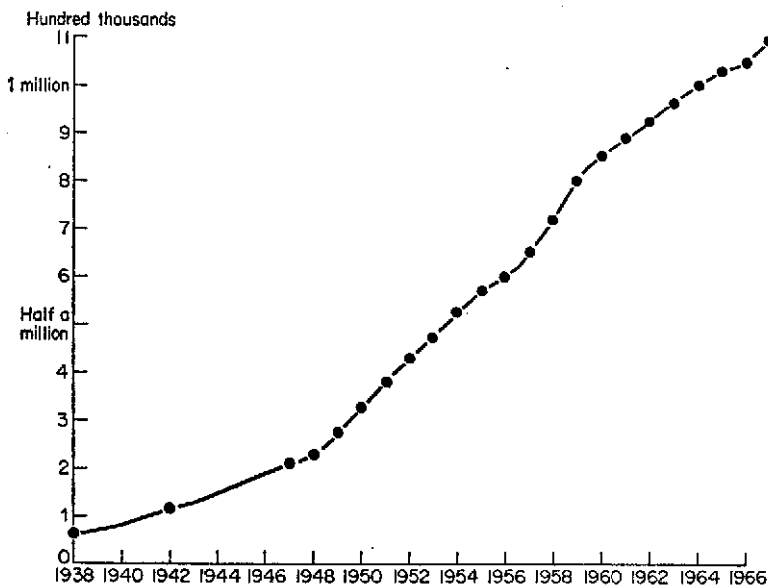
During Russell's Presidency no roll-call was kept of faithful believers – in fact the ecclesias were independent and hence not obliged to submit their membership figures to Russell. Usually, however, the ecclesias reported the attendance at the Memorial service held each year at about Easter time. This figure gives, I think, a fairly accurate estimate of the number of Russell's fellow-believers. The only other figure available to Russell was the number of subscribers to *Zion's Watch Tower* which vastly exceeded the Memorial attendance figure and is perhaps a better indication of the number of people *interested* in his beliefs.

The Memorial attendance figures indicate a slow steady increase in the movement up to 1918. When Rutherford enforced his criterion of *activity* rather than just *belief* on the Bible Students it became possible to estimate his following from the returns made of 'class workers' in the congregations. This procedure has been fully in force since 1938 and the Society *Yearbook* quotes the average number of *publishers* for the year.

There does not seem to be logical reason for questioning the *Yearbook* statistics after 1945 and they provide a record of the number of active Jehovah's Witnesses – the hard core of the movement. There are probably an equal number again of people half way in (or out) of the movement as exemplified in the Memorial attendance figure which is roughly double the number of publishers. The chart and graph below illustrate the growth in the publisher figure since 1938:

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YEAR	NUMBER OF ACTIVE WITNESSES
1938	59,047
1944	128,976
1949	317,877
1954	580,498
1959	803,482
1964	1,001,870
1966	1,058,675
1967	1,094,280



Graph illustrating annual increase of active Witnesses.

The Modern Organisation, 1932-1968

Up to 1918 the number of Bible Students was small and the movement largely based in the United States. There was a steady but unspectacular increase during the period 1918-1939 and despite the fact that Rutherford claimed to have some two million followers this was at least twenty times exaggerated. The Witnesses themselves have issued contradictory figures for the period prior to the Second World War but it is only after 1945 that their numbers began to expand rapidly until today they have more than a million active followers. It is interesting to note that every branch of their activity expanded in the same way. The annual *Yearbook* is crammed with statistics of how many books, booklets, magazines, tracts, etc., they have printed, how many hours the Witnesses have spent in the preaching work, how many public meetings held, how many new subscriptions to *The Watchtower*, how many Bible Studies, etc., etc. The *Yearbook* also contains reports from each country prefaced by the number of Witnesses in the country and the ratio of Witnesses to non-believers. For example, in the U.S.A. the ratio is 1 to 587, in Britain 1 to 1,007 (these are the 1967 figures). The chart below, quoted from the 1968 *Yearbook*, illustrates the overall expansion of the movement in every respect:

YEAR	PUBLISHERS	HOURS OF PREACHING	BOOKS AND BOOKLETS PLACED	MAGAZINES PLACED	COUNTRIES
1918	3,868	19,116	359,384	13,140	14
1928	23,988	2,866,164	20,412,192	1,381,107	32
1938	47,143	10,572,086	26,772,882	6,933,307	52
1948	230,532	49,832,205	17,031,901	11,380,767	96
1958	717,088	110,390,944	16,038,445	86,498,251	175
1967	1,094,280	183,995,180	16,967,770	143,557,479	197

Much more emphasis is placed on magazines now and this explains the relative decline of the books and booklets figure. This apart, the above figures are most impressive; there is no sign yet of a levelling off in their increase. The Witnesses are acutely aware of their membership figures and make every effort to keep them on the increase.

The tag of 'the fastest growing religion in the world' seems to have attached itself to the Witness movement. It is, however, probably no more than a journalistic device to enhance the

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reputation of the Witnesses. Of the four major cults listed by Hoekema the Witnesses appear to come third as far as growth of membership is concerned. The Mormons, for example, were only 3,000 strong in 1860 but in 1962 there were nearly two million of them. Also the Seventh-Day Adventists seem to have out-Witnessed the Witnesses – they started about 1860 and their membership in 1961 was 1,194,070. In addition they have more missionaries than any other Christian denomination except the Baptists and they run forty-four publishing houses which print 309 publications in 218 different languages. Thus although the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses *is* impressive considered in isolation, it is more than matched by the expansion of other sects and therefore cannot be used, as the Witnesses use it, as proof that they have the Truth.

4. The Witnesses' View of History

THE PREVIOUS chapters give the relevant facts necessary for an understanding of the historical development of the Witness movement. These facts are unknown to many Jehovah's Witnesses because during the last twenty years the Watchtower Society has developed and taught its own interpretation of history. The Society believes that the most important reason for the existence of mankind, as revealed in the Bible, is the vindication of Jehovah God over Satan. They say that originally Adam and Eve were led astray by Satan, who set himself up as an opposer to Jehovah; in effect Satan challenged Jehovah that he could prove himself more powerful than God by corrupting all of mankind. Instead of destroying Satan, Jehovah decided to accept the challenge to prove to the rest of creation that Satan was a liar (*John 8:44*). The Society believes that Jehovah set a time limit of 6,000 years for this challenge.¹ He allowed Satan every opportunity to turn mankind from true worship and if at any time Satan succeeded in corrupting every human being then he would have won. According to the Society there has always been at least one faithful human being on earth since the time of Abel and the continuous presence of these 'faithful witnesses of Jehovah' has proved Satan a liar and vindicated Jehovah. The Bible says that Abel was the first 'true worshipper' (*Genesis 4:4*) and he was followed by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and many more, forming an unbroken chain until the time of Christ.

The Society claims that its interpretation of history as a global drama between Jehovah and Satan is supported by the Bible. For example, the 'great crowd of witnesses' mentioned in *Hebrews* (chapters 11 and 12) is none other than the unbroken chain of faithful men who preserved true worship before the time of Christ. These are the people referred to when we read in *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*: 'Jehovah's witnesses are the most ancient religious group of worshippers of the true God, the

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people whose history runs back further than any religious denomination of Christendom, or even of Jewry' (p. 8). Although the Bible traces a succession of faithful men on earth from Abel down to the restoration of Jerusalem there are still about 300 years to be accounted for until the coming of Jesus. The Society, however, assumes that there must have been some faithful men living during that time – otherwise Satan would have won the challenge, which is clearly unacceptable to the Witnesses.

This far their theory can be corroborated by the Bible but the Society's view of what happened after the time of Christ is diametrically opposed to the opinions of secular historians. The orthodox view is that after the time of Christ the new Christian religion expanded and grew powerful despite persecution. Then the Christian religion became embodied in the Roman Catholic Church which has continued to the present day with offshoots such as the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Protestant faiths; today Christianity is represented by all these churches, collectively called Christendom. Contrary to all this the Watchtower Society believes that after 100 A.D. the Christian beliefs became controversial and were subsequently amalgamated with pagan ideas. Gnostics, Syncretists and numerous other sects were causing dissension even at the time of Paul but after his death, says the Society, the truth was lost and pagan philosophy and ritual took its place. Since the first century Christendom has advanced false teachings – and only here and there, claim the Witnesses, has a glimmer of truth shone forth. They believe that movements such as Arianism, Waldenses, Lollards, etc., were attempts to reach the original truth and all were eventually squashed by the established Church. Such movements were sufficient, however, to maintain the unbroken thread of faithful men who continued to vindicate Jehovah God.

When the 6,000 years end in 1975 God can justifiably arrange the destruction of Satan, having answered his challenge. The Witnesses believe that they are the last in the long chain of faithful men: they are God's present representatives on earth and hence they are helping to vindicate God's name and proving Satan a liar. They describe themselves as follows:

Consequently it became necessary for Jehovah, in fulfilment of his own prophecy, to raise up his witnesses in these modern times, not as a new religion, but as a climax to the long succession of witnesses

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that he has had down through the past milleniums all the way back to Abel.³

The Witnesses point out with pride their place in the divine plan. In Marley Cole's book we are presented with a flow of eloquence which raises the Witnesses to the heights of historical importance:

Jehovah's Witnesses feel that when their immediate predecessors, the Bible Students, plunged into an 'objective examination' of the doctrines of Christianity they were taking the biggest single step since the days of Jesus towards restoring 'doctrinal teachings originating in the Bible'. . . . Here was a movement that would collide dramatically with the whole body and soul of Christendom.³

Marley Cole expresses admirably the Witnesses' view of themselves, but this view is not in accord with the facts. We have already seen that the Bible Students had little to do with 'objective examination' of anything and we should also look a little more closely at the Witnesses' claims to be connected with reformers such as Wycliffe, Waldo, Luther, etc.

The Witnesses are, of course, at liberty to express their admiration of religious figures of the past; both Russell and Rutherford admired the 'heretical' movements that had opposed the Catholic Church. In *Zion's Watch Tower* 1st April 1919 the seven messengers of *Revelation* are said to be (1) Paul, (2) St. John, (3) Arius, (4) Waldo, (5) Wycliffe, (6) Luther, (7) Charles Taze Russell, 'But the greatest of these are Paul and Charles Taze Russell'.⁴ The Witnesses may well feel that there is a connection between these seven, but there is very little evidence to link Russell with the others. Marley Cole claims that the Witnesses have preserved 'numerous Lollard practices' and 'retained a number of features of Waldensian Christianity', but this is both exaggerated and misleading. Of the 'numerous' Lollard practices, the only one peculiar to Jehovah's Witnesses appears to be 'a personal and individual ministry'—the others are common to most other Protestant religions. Doctrinally the Witnesses are no nearer the Lollards than modern-day Church of England. The Lollards disagreed with Roman Catholic practices (such as indulgences) and with a few 'Roman' doctrines (such as transubstantiation) but they believed in Hell-Fire, the Trinity and Immortality of the Soul—which means they have more in common with other Protestant faiths than Jehovah's Witnesses. A similar comparison

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with Waldo, Wycliffe, Luther and so on, indicates that the established Protestant churches are their successors and not The Watchtower Society.

It might be argued that the Witnesses want to be connected with these people not just to fit in with the global drama in which they are helping to vindicate God. In the past their radical doctrines have often caused them to be despised and while the Witnesses are proud of persecution they do not like contempt; to avoid this they try to enhance their reputation with grandiose historical theories which they hope will impress both their own members and outsiders. This theme of inflated self-importance is evident in what the Witnesses think of their own history since the time of Pastor Russell. There are many ways of looking at the facts, but the Witnesses adopt an attitude that can only mislead outsiders.

They believe that Pastor Russell 'rediscovered' the basic Biblical truths and during his lifetime came to a 'clearer understanding' of many scriptural prophecies. The Witnesses say this happened because God had chosen him to accomplish the task of warning the whole world of the imminent second coming of Jesus. God had not intended that the complete truth should be revealed immediately, but that as time went on the 'light of truth would get stronger'. Nevertheless Pastor Russell clearly recognised the importance of the year 1914 and for forty years he preached that 'this date would usher in the greatest trouble the world had ever seen'. In 1914 Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in *Revelation 12* by casting Satan out of heaven to the 'spiritual vicinity' of the earth. This precipitated the First World War which Jesus stopped in 1918 in order to save the lives of the very few faithful ones who remained (Rutherford and the others were imprisoned and the rest of the movement was virtually inactive). A separation of the Bible Students had also occurred at this time in fulfilment of *Matthew 25*. In 1918 then, say the Witnesses, Jesus 'cut short the days of tribulation' (*Matthew 24:22*) and from this time on the organisation was blessed with a brighter 'light of truth'. Particularly since 1932 it has been free of 'unclean practices and beliefs' and has informed the whole world of the coming Battle of Armageddon.

I should like to stress that the above is the *Witnesses'* view of their history; as we have seen, it is far from the truth in many

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respects. For example, the Society uses the collapse of the movement in 1918 as further evidence for its being the true religion! This is evidently the result of years of indoctrination under Rutherford when the above interpretations were thought up to account for inconvenient facts – it is certainly an after-the-event *ad hoc* argument. It is possible for the Society to teach these misleading historical generalisations because the Witnesses accept without question what is taught by the Society; in any case the Society discourages independent investigation of the historical facts. Most Witnesses would accept the Society dogmas even in the face of contradictory documentary evidence – they simply think up some ‘explanation’ for the ‘apparent discrepancy’.⁵

Until recently the Society did not admit that any mistakes were made by Russell or Rutherford – just that the light of truth was getting stronger. It is possible that the Society is now changing its attitude slightly: admitting that some mistakes were made in the past while remaining certain that they are God’s chosen organisation. This is succinctly summed up in a statement by A. H. Macmillan: ‘With the passing of the years I have had many trials and have had to make a number of adjustments in my understanding of God’s Word, but I saw no reason to permit such things to disturb my faith.’⁶ This attitude is typical of the Witnesses; somewhere in the back of their minds is the certainty that the Society is right – whatever doctrinal contradictions (Macmillan calls them ‘adjustments’) or unfulfilled prophecies or inconvenient facts, the Witnesses remain certain that the Society is right, and they are proud of this unshakable faith! I quote extensively from the 1st June 1967 *Watchtower* to illustrate the current Society line:

Today on earth there is a people numbering more than one million who are in complete unity. . . . All the more amazing is it that these people are located in 199 lands, are of all colors and nationalities and speak different tongues. . . . We see changes taking place in the organisation to make it at all times more clean. . . . For instance, what father would sit his baby down before a big steak and tell him to eat it? The baby would not even understand what the father said. . . . However as the baby grew up he could eat heavy food. He could take training and learn to do difficult tasks. . . . Sometimes he would come across things he had never handled before, and might try to go ahead on unfamiliar ground and make a mistake.

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But, if obedient, when corrected in a loving manner, he would change and from there on proceed to do the job in the right way. It is this way with Jehovah's people, his organisation. Some have called Jehovah's witnesses 'false prophets' because, in times past, they have viewed things a certain way and, later, have made a change through the official publications. Or, there may have been practices by some members in the organisation that have been permitted to continue for a time for lack of knowledge as to how to handle these things, but later they have learned from God's Word what his will is and have gone ahead and made the necessary corrections. False prophets do not correct themselves. God's people do. And it is noticeable even to the people on whom they call that Jehovah's witnesses as an organisation are growing to maturity, becoming ever kinder, more loving and tactful and more effective in their preaching work. . . . A glimpse at the history of Jehovah's witnesses will illustrate its progressive advancement. In 1918 they had gone into a state of inactivity due to an unclear understanding of their Christian position. . . . Since 1938 there have been further refinements as the theocratic organisation continues to grow toward perfection. . . . Before 1938 Jehovah was not bringing great increases of new members into his organisation, for it was not ready to care for them in the proper way.

This massive apologia concludes with a glowing description of the New World Society today.

The above explanations are clearly preferable to the previous Society line that they had always been right. Nevertheless the Society is still not telling the whole truth. They do not say that up to now they have not admitted their mistakes, no wonder they were called 'false prophets'. They are also very coy about how much they confess; my impression is that they only admit to errors that are blatant and liable to cause individual Witnesses to fall away; if possible they sweep most of their past errors under the carpet of soothing historical generalisations. It is typical of the Society to use even their errors as evidence that they are right: 'False prophets do not correct themselves'. They are making a virtue out of their repentance, forgetting about the fact that they were *wrong*! Of course it is better to repent of error than not to repent, but I should have thought it was more typical of God's organisation not to make errors at all. The Witnesses' reply to this is that human beings are fallible and even those in God's organisation are not immune from error. It seems to me, however,

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that this makes it difficult to decide *which is* God's organisation if that too is prone to error, and the New World Society has made so many errors in the past that they do not appear to be the likely candidates.

The above quotation from *The Watchtower* is the 'official' Society line but the Witnesses in fact spend very little time dwelling on errors in the past, they prefer to emphasise the *continuity of belief* since Russell rather than any changes that have occurred. The following quotations from the 1968 *Yearbook* are typical of the Society's desire to do this:

We would like to review with you a bit of history to see how great a witness to all the nations about God's Kingdom has been given, and who is giving such witness. As far back as December of 1888 the *Watch Tower* magazine stated: 'Notwithstanding that fact that sectarianism has blinded the hearts of the vast majority of those who own Christ's name, so that they cannot appreciate the real good tidings of the coming Kingdom of God and the blessed work it is to accomplish, yet God has so arranged that the gospel itself is being preached (declared), as a "witness", for use in the coming age.' Even then in 1888, the Watch Tower Society saw the need for declaring the good news of God's kingdom.⁷

The next twenty-two pages of the *Yearbook* emphasise in detail that Rutherford recognised the same 'need for declaring the good news of God's kingdom', the conclusion being: 'So you see, Jehovah's witnesses had not changed their message about God's kingdom after so many years.'⁸

Not only do the Witnesses believe that they have consistently taught the same true doctrines since the time of Russell, they also believe their role in world history is of vital importance. Throughout their literature the words 'historic', 'epoch-making', 'momentous', etc., are used to describe their history. This is consistent with their theory that God and Satan are the heavenly protagonists for the minds of men and that the only thing of importance in the world today is the presence of witnesses to Jehovah who continue to vindicate His name. Thus the Society sees *all* world history in terms of this idea (for example, their explanation of the First World War) and in *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* they often exaggerate their role in world affairs:

the evidence had been mounting to identify this body of Christians [themselves] as having a singular place in the divine purpose . . . nor

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could anyone realise how the comparatively small voice emanating from the modest quarters of the Society could one day fill the earth with such power and strength that the very foundations on which the massive structures of Satan's entire world rested would be shaken. . . . Had it not been for the mercy and loyal love of Jehovah, the next few months would have been fatal for the Watch Tower Society.⁹

They go as far as to claim that Satan's demons guided German bombers to attack the London Bethel (the Witnesses' headquarters in England) during the last war:

To show how the demons made the London Bethel a target, in three months 29 high explosive bombs have fallen within a few hundred yards of the Society's office, the nearest being across the street 30 yards away.¹⁰

While this attitude might be justified by the Witnesses' overall conception of history, they sometimes assume that people in the outside world see life in the same way: they evidently wish people to regard them as important emissaries of God rather than an obscure sect. Rutherford introduced the idea of passing resolutions at international assemblies indicting the clergy, businessmen or some other powerful group; recently the Witnesses went as far as distributing millions of copies of a public address specifically to clergymen and businessmen throughout the world.¹¹ While it is easy for unbelievers to laugh at the Witnesses' aspirations, their attitude is consistent with their sincere belief that there are only two important groups of people in the world today – those *for* Jehovah and those *against* Him. We have seen that logically the Witnesses should not expect their history to substantiate this idea (although of course they believe it does) so the crux of this discussion lies in the credibility of their doctrines. If the Witnesses can build a convincing case from the Bible then they may well be justified in overlooking the discrepancies and contradictions inherent in their historical development.

5. The Basic Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses

THE MOVEMENT started by Pastor Russell was not characterised by its doctrines. The primary concern of Russell was Biblical chronology and the salvation of himself and his followers. Jehovah's Witnesses today claim that Russell effected a 'doctrinal revolution' but as we have seen this is not really true. He borrowed most of his beliefs from the Adventists and devoted a comparatively small part of his books to doctrines. Even the schism of 1918 essentially concerned personalities; all the differing parties accepted the beliefs of Russell concerning God, Jesus, Man and so on. The present-day doctrines of the Witnesses consist of these 'time-independent' beliefs and also the eschatological and interpretive ideas introduced by Rutherford, Knorr and Franz.

How can we effectively discuss these beliefs? The subject of theology is a vexed one and suffers from an unpopularity and irrelevance to the rest of the world, academic or otherwise. It might be as well to mention, however, that as far as most theologians are concerned the Witnesses (and most other modern sects) are talking doctrinal rubbish. There is, nevertheless, one very good reason for not discussing the Witnesses from a rigorous theological viewpoint: both sides start off from entirely different assumptions and have little or no common ground for a meaningful comparison. Thus I feel it would give an incorrect view of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses to judge them on the beliefs of the established Church. They have developed outside conventional Christianity and their doctrines stem from radical nonconformist ideas prevalent in the nineteenth century. I have therefore taken the doctrinal development of this modern sect *along its own lines*, by which it must stand or fall. The Witnesses have created their own criterion for belief, it involves the one basic assumption or premiss: *the Bible, from first to last, is the*

inspired word of God. It follows that their doctrines are, of necessity, nonsensical judged on other premisses (for example, those of conventional theologians). To understand what the Witnesses have to say (right or wrong) we must judge their ideas on the basis of the above assumption.

It will later become evident that in practice the ultimate criterion for them is the opinion of the governing body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society -- more commonly referred to as 'the Society'. In his book *The Four Major Cults* Hoekema devotes eleven pages to establishing that the Society and not the Bible is their source of authority, nevertheless the Witnesses will deny this. They believe their message can be supported directly from the scriptures, and their beliefs consist simply of a list of Bible references and the logical conclusions to be drawn from these.

To the general public Jehovah's Witnesses are a doctrinal enigma. They could be described as a fundamentalist nonconformist group having something in common with the Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Unitarians, etc. Despite these similarities it is misleading to associate them with any other modern belief. In a sense they are fundamentalists: they regard all sixty-six books of the Protestant canon as divinely inspired but they do not take all the Bible literally. The exceptions are the recorded visions (in *Daniel*, *Revelation*, etc.); the rest of the narrative they regard as historically accurate. Hence they believe the creation story (with a slight modification!), that the Flood actually occurred and that Jonah really was swallowed by a whale. In what follows it should be borne in mind that each of their doctrines is examined in the light of their own criterion. The justification for that criterion is examined later.

THE DOCTRINES IN DETAIL

Jehovah God

Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings about God are essentially simple, some would say naïve. Their God is the God of the Old Testament (or Hebrew Scriptures as they prefer to call it)¹ -- an anthropomorphic spirit, all-powerful, all-knowing and from everlasting to everlasting. Many scriptures substantiate this.² The Witnesses are at pains to point out to the rest of Christendom

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that God has a personal name – Jehovah, which should now be made prominent. This apparently small matter is very important to the Witnesses. They quote *Exodus 9 : 16* to justify the advertising of this name: 'And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.'

God's name is given as *Jehovah* four times in the King James version of the Bible. In the original Old Testament manuscripts, however, it occurs 6,823 times as the Hebrew tetragrammaton YHWH but it was generally replaced with 'the Lord' or 'God' by superstitious scribes. The Witnesses have reinstated the word *Jehovah* all 6,823 times in their *New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures*.⁸ They view the actual word *Jehovah* with almost superstitious awe themselves, and they generally ignore other English versions of the tetragrammaton such as Yahweh, Jahwah, etc. The Witnesses go so far as to say that God's enemies are trying to detract from His glory by repressing His personal name. They say: "The religious leaders have kept them [the people] in ignorance of this holiest and greatest name in all the realm of the living."⁴ The Witnesses have come to the conclusion that the *vindication* of God's name is the most important theme in the Bible (this will be fully discussed in the next chapter).

The Trinity Doctrine

At this point the Witnesses part company with most other Christian religions in declaring the Trinity doctrine unscriptural. The Bible, they say, presents us with a God in whose image man is made – there is no mystery about him. He is a single personality, as is his son Jesus, and they bear a relation to each other analogous to that of father and son. For their individual view of God, Jehovah's Witnesses rely on the scriptures that directly emphasise that God is unique and that Jesus is His son or first begotten spirit (*1 Corinthians 11 : 3*). Jesus himself pointed out his inferior position when he said: 'My father is greater than I' (*John 14 : 28*) and further confirmed: 'Not my will, but thine be done' (*Luke 22 : 28*). In *Let God be True* the Witnesses argue cogently:

The truth of the matter is that the Word [*John 1 : 1*] is God's Son who became Jesus Christ and who did have a beginning. At Reve-

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lation 3 : 14, he distinctly says he was the beginning of the creation by God. That is why he is spoken of as the 'only begotten' of the Father, at *John* 1 : 14, 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth'. The apostle Paul sustains this truth when he speaks of Jesus as 'the firstborn of every creature' (*Colossians* 1 : 15). So again the trinity teachers must defend themselves by stating, 'It's a mystery!'⁵

To Jehovah's Witnesses the scriptural evidence is clear, logical and indisputable. This view is unfortunately encouraged by those who claim allegiance to the Trinity doctrine and yet know nothing about it. Even clergymen are sometimes routed or silenced by Witnesses who have the essential scriptures at their fingertips. Nevertheless, Jehovah's Witnesses are not really justified in assuming that this proves they are right and that the Bible does unequivocally teach a non-Trinity doctrine. Here, and later, it becomes obvious that the scriptural evidence is at best ambiguous, at worst hopelessly contradictory. In *Make Sure of All Things* the Witnesses list twenty-two texts that they claim are 'misapplied' to prove the Trinity doctrine. One of these they show to be spurious (*1 John* 5 : 7) and several others to be wrongly translated, but if they examined the remaining ones carefully they would find substantial evidence for the Trinity doctrine. They might ask themselves why the Bible has so many texts that can be 'misinterpreted'!

The problem of the divinity of Christ is a great deal older than the superficial explanations of the Witnesses – the Bible apparently tells us Christ is God and the early church fathers resolved this paradox in the Trinity doctrine, quoting *John* 14 : 9: 'he that hath seen me hath seen the father . . .' which they did not interpret figuratively as the Jehovah's Witnesses do today.⁶ In his book *Into the Light of Christianity* William Schnell provides a detailed and very forceful argument in support of the Trinity. He points out that the Watchtower Society gives the impression that only a few scriptures actually support the Trinity and that even these are explained away by careful study. In fact Schnell produces more than 150 pro-Trinity texts to prove that this is not so.⁷

What becomes apparent is that a case can be made for both sides based solely on scripture texts. The King James Version was translated with a bias favouring the Trinity and the New

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World Translation of the Bible is equally biased against the doctrine. It appears that the Bible does support the Trinity, in certain texts, but also denies the Trinity, in certain other texts. Pouring scorn on trinitarians, as the Witnesses do, is both unfair and unjust. Jehovah's Witnesses attack the doctrine on another front by tracing it back to Babylonian, Hindu and Egyptian myths. The Hindus, for instance, have a 'trinity' consisting of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer.⁸ The Witnesses claim the Christian doctrine of the Trinity springs from these pagan sources and *ipso facto* is not of God. This deep distrust of all things paganly derived is characteristic of them. They do not mention, however, that monotheism, the doctrine they advocate, also has a celebrated pagan history dating from *Akbnaten* 'the first monotheist'. Secular historians believe monotheism to be a relatively recent belief, but nevertheless from 'pagan' origins.

Jesus Christ

Jehovah's Witnesses firmly believe that only Jehovah God is eternal and hence at some point in time Jesus was created. The Bible certainly teaches that Jesus was not just an ordinary man — he was in fact the Son of God and 'the firstborn of all creation'.⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses accept the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, including the miracles. In common with most Christians they believe that Jesus was the Messiah.¹⁰ While on earth, they argue, Jesus was a perfect human being (*Hebrews* 7 : 26), and with respect to his birth they have this to say:

God's principal Son in heaven, God's 'only-begotten Son', emptied himself of his heavenly form and glory, that God, his heavenly Father, might miraculously transfer his life to the womb of Mary the Jewish virgin, and have a human birth and come to be 'in the likeness of men'. Thus God's Son came down from heaven.¹¹

The Witnesses do not accept the Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception and believe Jesus to have had no superhuman physical form while he lived as a man on earth. In discussing the nature of Jesus they say: 'The virgin Mary, being human and able only to produce a body of flesh and blood from her womb, could never bring forth Jesus as a spirit creature.'¹² This sounds plausible, but the whole point is that being human Mary shouldn't

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have been able to conceive Jesus in the first place! If God could cause a virgin birth then we might logically expect any amalgam of flesh and spirit to result from it. The scriptures tell us what happened – it's not necessary to spoil the case by shady argument.¹³

The Holy Spirit

What of the mysterious third member of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit? The Witnesses say it is simply the active force of God, and refer to the many texts that attest to the 'spirit' or 'holy spirit' from God activating or inspiring men.¹⁴ This is akin to the *paraclete* or helper promised by Jesus at *John* 14: 16, 17, 26. This view is not accepted by the orthodox churches who ascribe a more complex nature to the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Satan the Devil

Together Jehovah God and Jesus brought into existence a great number of perfect spiritual beings all of whom were in possession of free-will. The Witnesses believe Satan was originally one of these loyal spirits:

The one now the Devil was not always such. Time was when he enjoyed a high position in God's family. He was a spirit son of God. . . . In keeping with his being a son of God, he was given a position of great trust and responsibility: that of overseer of humankind. The designated term for this office was, as stated in the Bible at *Ezekiel* 28: 14, 'the anointed cherub that covereth'. . . . For a time all went well in the universe and there was perfect peace throughout that righteous world. But it did not last. Greed and avariciousness entered in. The covering cherub had great visions. He rebelled against the theocratic arrangement. . . . His self-admiring, self-seeking heart condition was first manifested by his cunningly and stealthily introducing sin into the world. God had told the perfect human pair not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that they might not die. The covering cherub, however, induced Eve to disobey. Through his visible mouthpiece, the serpent, he said to her: 'Ye shall not surely die'. That was the first lie. It branded the cherub as the 'father of the lie' – *John* 8: 44 NW.¹⁶

Since the deception in the Garden of Eden, Satan has continued to mislead the world (1 *John* 3: 8). Many scriptures describe him as the ruler or *god* of this system of things and significantly he is

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the source of all pain and sorrow.¹⁷ Thus the Witnesses believe in a personal devil and not an eternal force of evil. In this context the story of Job is significant. In *Job*, chapter 1, Satan is described as a 'Son of God' who comes into His presence 'from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it' (*Job* 1 : 7). Satan challenges God to allow His faithful servant Job to be tested. Jehovah's Witnesses see this as a picture of the global drama, in which God has allowed sinful man to live on earth to be tested, ultimately to vindicate God's name and prove Satan a liar. This is why God did not immediately destroy Adam in the Garden of Eden.¹⁸

To obtain a detailed picture of Satan the devil the Witnesses refer to *Ezekiel* chapter 28, where the prophecy against the king of Tyre is thought to apply to Satan also:

Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God . . .¹⁹

From this the Witnesses deduce that Satan was the angel appointed by God to oversee the earth. He was thus in a unique position to know exactly what happened there and to interfere as he did. The Bible also refers to a great host of angels, demons and forces whom Satan has led astray and who form his spiritual organisation (*Ephesians* 6 : 11, 12) – some of these materialised in human form before the flood (*Genesis* 6). The Witnesses believe that spiritualistic phenomena are caused by evil spirits impersonating dead human beings. The Bible, they say, supports this conclusion as it identifies mediums and spiritualism with demon activity.²⁰

Man

Jehovah's Witnesses accept the account of the Fall as recorded in *Genesis*. They believe man was originally perfect but lost that perfection when he sinned and became subject to death.²¹ Since then, say the Witnesses, man has been mortal and the doctrine of the immortal soul is not supported by the Bible. Their arguments are thorough and convincing:

. . . we find that in the King James Version of the Bible the English word 'soul' is used to translate the Hebrew word *nepheš* and the Greek word *psuche*. The word *nepheš* occurs 750 times in the

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Hebrew Scriptures and the word *psuche* occurs 102 times in the Greek Scriptures (Westcott and Hort Greek Text). By using an analytical concordance, such as Young's, a person can trace each occurrence of these two original words. The result of such a thorough search will be that you cannot find a single text in which either of these original words for 'soul' is connected or associated with such words as 'immortal, everlasting, eternal or deathless'. There is not one Bible text that states the human soul is immortal. Let us abide by the facts of God's Word, and not by the philosophies of men.²²

They point out further that there are fifty-four texts where the soul (either *nephesh* or *psuche*) dies, as for example at *Ezekiel* 18 : 4, 20. In fact the Bible appears to support the conclusion that the word 'soul' simply means 'living human being' when applied to man. It may surprise some to know that the Bible refers to animals having (or more precisely *being*) souls.²³

How do the Witnesses account for the origin of the doctrine of the immortal soul? Their simple solution is in *Let God be True*:

The only text in the Bible that states that disobedient man would not surely die is found at *Genesis* 3 : 4: 'And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.' Thus it is seen that the serpent (the Devil) is the one that originated the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the soul. This doctrine is the main one that the Devil has used down through the ages to deceive the people and hold them in bondage to religion.²⁴

The same problem unfortunately arises here as with the Trinity doctrine. Having presented their scriptural evidence the Witnesses now have to interpret (or explain away) the texts that do not fit in – texts that are used by their opponents to establish the contrary case. Consider for instance *Ecclesiastes* 12 : 7: 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it', and *Matthew* 10 : 28: 'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' These and other scriptures are discussed at length by J. E. Forrest in *Errors of Russellism* while W. J. Schnell in *Into the Light of Christianity* devotes three chapters to proving the soul is immortal. His arguments are sometimes convincing, mostly not. As one might expect, proving the soul immortal by picking out a few dozen texts is a lot easier than disproving the Witnesses by reinterpreting the texts they quote!

Hell - Is It Hot?

One of the first definitive beliefs of Charles Taze Russell was the denial of a fiery hell. Russell came to the conclusion that the Bible did not support a hell of everlasting torment and that the indiscriminate translation of the Hebrew *sheol* and Greek *hades* as 'hell-fire' was simply begging the question. An examination of the sixty-five references to hell (=Sheol) in the Old Testament establishes that it simply means the common grave of mankind where 'there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom. . . .' (*Ecclesiastes* 9 : 10). In moments of depression both Jacob and Job wanted to enter Sheol. This suggests that it was nothing more than a completely insensible state.²⁵ The New Testament picture, however, is not so clear. There are three Greek words that are rendered 'hell' or 'hell-fire'. The most common is *hades* which is the Greek equivalent of *sheol*. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that *hades* cannot mean a place of fiery torment. As evidence they quote *Acts* 2 : 24-7, 31 and *Romans* 10 : 6, 7 which mention that Jesus himself was in *hades*. This, they argue, no Christian could accept if hell were a place of eternal torment.

Jehovah's Witnesses have this to say about the second Greek word *gehenna* (translated 'hell' or 'hell-fire'):

'Gehenna' is translated 'hell' but literally means 'valley of Hinnom', as named at *Jeremiah* 7 : 31 and 19 : 3, 6 It was originally a valley outside Jerusalem's southwest wall and where the Israelites, falling into the snare of religion, set up an image of the demon-god Molech and sacrificed their children alive in the fire to the Devil. Therefore faithful King Josiah destroyed that religious system of torment and defiled the valley of Hinnom, 'that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through fire to Molech' (2 *Kings* 23 : 10). Thereafter the valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, became Jerusalem's dump or incinerator, where the city's refuse was dumped and destroyed by burning. To increase the destructive power of the flames of the fire the Jews added brimstone or sulphur. Occasionally the dead bodies of criminals, who were considered too vile to have any hope of resurrection, were not buried in a grave but were cast into the fire of Gehenna to be burned to ashes. If any carcasses failed to reach the fire and were left to corrupt, then the worms which spread rapidly in the heat consumed the body and did not die until they had thus disposed of it. Hence the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna, became a symbol, not of eternal torment, but of the place or con-

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dition of everlasting condemnation ('damnation'), and the flames of Gehenna symbolised the everlasting destruction, from which there can be no recovery or resurrection.²⁶

The third word *tartaros* is mentioned only once in the New Testament, and the Witnesses say it applies to 'a condition of condemned ignorance for disobedient spirits (see 2 *Peter* 2 : 4). So far so good. Now the Witnesses have to explain those scriptures that apparently contradict their conclusions – *Revelation* 20 : 10; *Mark* 9 : 47, 48; *Matthew* 23 : 33; *Luke* 16 : 19–31, etc.

Consider for instance the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man at *Luke* 16 : 19–31:

. . . And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. . . .

This would appear to uphold unequivocally the idea of a fiery hell but the Witnesses try to escape this conclusion by saying that the parable is wholly allegorical – that it applies in a symbolic way to a later time. Their view of exactly what it applies to has not always been the same. Pastor Russell believed the Rich Man was symbolic of the Jewish Nation.²⁷ Rutherford thought the Rich Man, as a figure of evil, pictured the clergy of Christendom while Lazarus 'represented' modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses. There is at least one serious objection to this interpretation: if the story is symbolic, is it possible that Jesus used symbols that Jehovah's Witnesses believe to be completely untrue? A characteristic of the other parables is that the literal story embodies an elementary truth. Yet in this parable Jesus appears to give credence to the idea of a 'heaven' and a 'hell'!

These and other objections are discussed by W. J. Schnell who spends forty-six pages of his book *Into the Light of Christianity* trying to disprove Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrines on hell. Schnell's arguments are partly based on a variable meaning for the word *sheol*: 'In many places in the Hebrew Bible we see the context limit the meaning of this remarkable word Sheol just to the grave. But in far more places the context gives its full meaning

much broader play as the place of the unseen dead.²⁸ Schnell goes on to argue that the scriptures quoted by the Witnesses to suggest complete unconsciousness in the grave, for example *Ecclesiastes* 9 : 5, 10, merely refer to bodily sense perceptions and not to the soul. Both these points seem more debatable than decisive. There is some justification, however, for his objection that the scriptures quoted by Witnesses are torn out of context. For example, in *Make Sure of All Things* they quote only the latter half of *Luke* 12 : 5 in support of themselves when verse 4 of that chapter would seem to contradict them. The whole passage reads:

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I shall forewarn you whom ye shall fear: *Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell* [Gehenna]; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. (*Luke* 12 : 4, 5.)

(I have italicised the part that appears in *Make Sure of All Things*.)²⁹

It is perhaps apparent to everyone but the combatants that the Bible's testimony is ambiguous. To try to categorically force one's opinion on all the relevant texts seems rather absurd. The Witnesses should recognise that there are grounds in the Bible for believing in hell-fire – this was one good reason why the doctrine was advanced by the established Church, not just because they were importing Greek and other pagan ideas into Christianity; some of these 'pagan' ideas are already in the Bible! Pastor Russell had a personal abhorrence of the doctrine of a fiery hell. He said: 'If the Bible does teach that eternal torture is the fate of all except the saints, it should be preached, yea thundered from the housetops weekly, daily, hourly; if it does not so teach, the fact should be made known, and the foul stain dishonouring God's holy name removed.' Russell also found it necessary to advance *four* reasons why there was no fiery hell. Apparently it was not enough that the doctrine was (1) unscriptural, it was also (2) unreasonable, (3) contrary to God's love, and (4) repugnant to justice.³⁰ In view of the somewhat inconclusive nature of the Biblical evidence it may be just as well that the Witnesses have other reasons for not believing in hell-fire.

The Ransom

We now come to one of the thorniest doctrinal problems of the Christian Church – that of Jesus' Ransom Sacrifice. Certainly at

the time of Pastor Russell this belief was fundamental to him and his followers, many of whom joined him, stayed with him or left him solely because of this one doctrine. Since the time of Russell the official Society view has changed considerably. Russell held that even the lawless dead would be resurrected to earth under Jesus' ransom sacrifice but his successor Judge Rutherford disagreed:

It has been contended by some that this text of psalm [*Psalms* 9 : 17] means that the lawless shall be brought forth from the grave, during the 1,000 years. (See *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5, p. 361.) But the context does not support that conclusion, neither does the text mean anything of the kind. . . .³¹

The wheel has now come full circle and present Witness theology agrees with Russell and not Rutherford.

The Witnesses now believe that Adam's disobedience led to sin and death inherited by his offspring. *Romans* 5 : 12 and *Genesis* 2 : 17 tell us that sin entered the world because a perfect human life (Adam's) was forfeited. The Witnesses believe there is no redemption from that inherited sin unless the balance is redressed. If a perfect human life can be offered to God it will redress the balance and expiate man from his sinful inheritance. This primitive idea is the basis of the Hebrew sacrifices – an offering is made to God which bears the sins of the people.³²

The Bible, say the Witnesses, uses the Hebrew sacrifices (and the near sacrifice of Isaac at *Genesis* chapter 22) as foreshadowments of that of Jesus, a sacrifice that ransomed mankind. As *Matthew* 20 : 28 says: 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' This ransom frees mankind from the penalties of inherited sin and provides the opportunity of eternal life (*Romans* 6 : 23). The Hebrew sacrifices were temporary, and only applied to the wilful (as opposed to inherited) sins of the people. Jesus' sacrifice, however, is permanent and applies to inherited sin. As *Hebrews* 9 : 24-6 explains:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others: For then must he often have suffered since the

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foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Jesus' death once was sufficient for all men and this is confirmed at *Hebrews 2 : 9*, *John 1 : 29* and *Romans 5 : 19*. The Hebrew sacrifices were effective only for Hebrews but Jesus ransoms all mankind, Jews and Gentiles (*Galatians 3 : 13*). *John 3 : 36* warns us that Jesus' ransom may be offered to all but it does not automatically redeem us all – we must have faith in it, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.' This idea is repugnant to some conventional theologians. It is true that Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine of salvation is completely alien to that of the Church; it is not, however, inherently irrational.³³

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus, being conceived in a virgin, was not subject to inherited sin (see *Psalms 51 : 5*). He remained free from sin during his time on earth so that at his death he could offer up a perfect human life to God (*Hebrews 5 : 8, 9*). The Witnesses hold that there is a parallel between the sacrifice of Jesus and the sacrifices under the Mosaic or Law covenant. They quote *Jeremiah 31 : 31, 32*:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.

There are also New Testament references confirming that this promised New Covenant was brought in to supersede the Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant has for mediator Christ Jesus whose own blood validates it.³⁴ The atonement sacrifice described in *Leviticus* chapter 16 is believed to typify Christ's sacrifice under the New Covenant.³⁵ For those who object that the Mosaic Covenant is described as 'perpetual' in *Exodus 31 : 16, 17* the Witnesses point out in their New World Translation that the Hebrew word here is 'ohlahm'. They believe it means 'time indefinite' and not 'perpetual'.

The Church or Congregation of God

Certain texts in the New Testament mention with approval a body of people known as the Church or Congregation of God.

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Who make up this Congregation? Until now we have been looking at theological ideas that do not directly concern the believer as a *participant*. The idea of a Congregation of God makes the *individual believer* important in a way that previous doctrinal issues did not and this emphasis on the believer is characteristic of much Witness theology. The role of participant in Biblical prophecy is attractive to Jehovah's Witnesses – for naturally their view of the Congregation of God concerns none other than themselves. The Witnesses first dispose of rival claims, in particular that of the Roman Catholic Church. They maintain firstly that Catholic doctrines are in error and secondly that the Roman Catholic Church was not founded by the apostle Peter.

The main scripture used by the Catholics to support their claim is *Matthew 16 : 18*, 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The Witnesses use the fact that Peter (= *petros* in Greek) is masculine and rock (= *petra*) is feminine. This suggests, they say, that Jesus did not mean Peter was the rock. An examination of the context, however, lends support to the Catholic view. On the subject of the apostolic succession the Witnesses continue:

Peter wrote the first of his two epistles from Babylon, but there is no evidence that Peter even so much as visited Rome, although the Holy Scriptures definitely say Paul did (1 *Peter 5 : 13*) – nor did the 12 apostles have any successors, for Jesus revealed at *Apocalypse (or Revelation) 21 : 14* that there are only 'twelve apostles of the Lamb' (Dy). Hence the claim that the Pope as successor to Peter is the head of the Church is without any foundation in Scripture or in fact.³⁶

Some Catholics believe Peter's mention of Babylon is symbolic of Rome – one presumes they are equally free to believe it is symbolic of Timbuctoo.³⁷ Having disposed of their chief rival the Witnesses substantiate their own claim. They believe Christ to be the chief cornerstone of the Church or Congregation of God and the head of the Congregation.³⁸ They refer to *Revelation 14 : 1, 3*:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and

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no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

This indicates that the final heavenly Congregation of God consists of Jesus, 'the Lamb of God', and 144,000 'redeemed from the earth'. Hence this is the true Congregation – the few who have perceived the truth and have obeyed God's will since the time of Jesus. The Witnesses do *not* say that only 144,000 will be saved, but they do say that only 144,000 will gain *heaven* and there form the Congregation of God. Other faithful humans will live for ever on earth. The number 144,000 assumes a special significance for the Witnesses and is mentioned often in their literature and conversation. The Witnesses believe the 144,000 have been chosen by Jesus since his death and resurrection and that there are still such chosen ones – 'the remnant of the 144,000' (abbreviated to 'remnant' in Witness parlance) – living on the earth.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Jehovah's Witnesses identify the Congregation of God with the Kingdom of Heaven mentioned many times by Jesus. They say this kingdom will be victorious in destroying Satan and in vindicating God's universal sovereignty.³⁹ They believe the Kingdom of Heaven has a concrete existence and is not a state of mind.⁴⁰ Their opinions can, however, become vague and amorphous as in *Make Sure of All Things* under the heading 'Kingdom: Definition':

At times the term 'kingdom' is applied to the one (in the Scriptures, Christ) who has the rank, quality, attributes and authority of the king. The term also is used to refer to the realm over which the Kingdom government exercises control.⁴¹

This conveniently widens the interpretive significance of the Kingdom. On this somewhat dubious point they interpret *Matthew* 3 : 2; 4 : 17 as follows:

If the kingdom is to be heavenly, why did both John the Baptist and Christ Jesus proclaim: 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near'? It was because the anointed King was personally in their midst proclaiming the thrilling Kingdom message.⁴²

There is really no justification for their saying this – how many people would accept this alternative interpretation of a perfectly

straightforward text? They are faced with the usual problem: having assumed the Bible non-contradictory, the 'awkward' texts have now to be interpreted. For when Jesus says 'The Kingdom is at hand' he *does not* say 'the anointed King is personally in your midst proclaiming the thrilling Kingdom message', he does not even say 'The King is at hand'; surely if he meant those things he would have said them. Similar aberrations occur with other quotations and I emphasise this point because the Witnesses themselves are the first to denounce others for straying away from the strict letter of the text. For instance, *Luke 17: 21* reads, 'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [*margin: in your midst*].' The Witnesses again say *the kingdom means the king*. This is even more arbitrary when we know that Pastor Russell had a completely different idea, he said: 'In a word, he [Jesus] showed that when his kingdom should come, it would be everywhere present and everywhere powerful, yet nowhere visible.'⁴³ A second example is their interpretation of *Matthew 8: 11*, 'And I say unto you, That many shall come from east and west,* and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.' The Witnesses claim that this does not mean *in* the kingdom of heaven, but *under* the kingdom of heaven!

It is almost true to say that the doctrines we have examined so far have been bequeathed to the Witnesses by Pastor Russell and have remained basically the same since he founded the movement in 1881. In the next chapter we will examine in more detail the eschatological ideas introduced by Rutherford which characterise present-day Witness theology, and finally we will discuss in a much broader context the basis for their doctrines.

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SO FAR the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses we have examined were ostensibly based on the Bible and were capable of being derived at any time since the compilation of the New Testament. The beliefs that really differentiate the Witnesses are not timeless, however, but are based partly on the Bible and partly on the evidences of the age we are living in. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the incidents and events of the twentieth century have a scriptural significance, and that certain Biblical prophecies find their fulfilment in our time.

The Return of Christ

In particular the Witnesses have much to say concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. During his lifetime on earth Jesus promised he would come again; Paul and other New Testament writers often referred to their expectation of this. It seems impossible in reading Paul's words not to believe that both he and his readers expected Jesus to return *in their time*.¹ This is accepted by most Christians today but not Jehovah's Witnesses, who say that the above passages were written under inspiration for a later time when Jesus *would* return. The Witnesses start from the assumption that the Bible is one hundred per cent accurate and hence the fact that Jesus did not return in Paul's time implies that Paul could not have expected such a return. The Witnesses will not accept that Paul made a mistake in this respect: he was a faithful Christian whose writings were inspired and hence true. This is obviously a 'being wise after the event' argument.

Before mentioning *when* exactly Jesus was expected the Witnesses make clear the *nature* of that return. The Greek word *parousia* translated 'coming' or 'return' actually means 'presence' according to them. The significance of this is that Jesus need not visibly *appear* but he will simply be present, even invisible, to mankind. The Witnesses quote *John* 14: 19 where Jesus says: 'Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me:

because I live, ye shall live also.' Thus they believe Christ will return invisibly and not with the power and destruction that many feel will herald his second coming. Serious objections can be raised here on the basis of certain scriptures that categorically state that Jesus' second coming will not be invisible.

Firstly *Acts* 1 : 11: '... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven'. The Witnesses explain this text by saying that only the *manner* of Christ's return will be similar:

The manner of his going away was quiet, thieflike, without sound of trumpet or public display, yet with the message, 'You will be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth,' ringing in the disciples' ears (*Acts* 1 : 8, 11 NW). His witnesses alone saw him leave. Logically, only his faithful witnesses would promptly recognise his return.²

Notice the illogical replacement of 'saw him leave' with 'recognise his return', this is rather a glib interpretation of a difficult text. More serious objections stem from the passages at *Revelation* 1 : 7, and *Matthew* 24 : 30 which reads: 'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'

It is rather illuminating(!) to see how the Witnesses casually pass off this text as symbolic, when it appears to scream out the opposite of what they believe. In *The Truth shall make You Free* amidst a long proof that Jesus' return is invisible they explain the above text, quoting *Revelation* 1 : 7 in support!

All facts considered, then, the only way in which men on the earth will see him at his glorious coming is with the eyes of understanding or powers of discernment. This is further supported by the words at *Revelation* 1 : 7 in a vision to the apostle John: 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.' As at his ascension, when he disappeared from his disciples' eyes behind the cloud, so here the clouds render him invisible, but at the same time they stand as a symbol of his invisible presence.³

We may well ask if Jesus is not visible what purpose is served by his presence – in fact what change occurs, since Christ remains

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on the spiritual plane. Jehovah's Witnesses say that *Revelation 12 : 7-12* describes what happens in heaven at Jesus' second coming:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. . . . Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Satan has had a 'spiritual jurisdiction' over this world since the time of Eden. Christ's second coming will displace Satan from this position to be 'cast out into the earth', i.e., his sphere of influence will be confined to the earth. Christ will now be the spiritual ruler - 'now is come the kingdom of our God'. So far so good, but when will this happen?

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that on the basis of two prophecies in the Bible they identify the time of Christ's second coming, and the casting down of Satan, to be October 1914. The first prophecy occurs at *Matthew 24* when the disciples asked Jesus: 'What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' He answered:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. . . . And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.⁴

The Witnesses say this scripture describes the world since 1914, testifying to the fact that Satan is now causing more pain, suffering and death as foretold in *Revelation 12 : 12*. In particular, there is a class of people preaching 'this gospel of the kingdom' throughout the earth: Jehovah's Witnesses have been doing this since 1914 and their 'world' now encompasses 197 lands! The Witnesses

frequently use these 'signs of the last days' in their conversation and literature; they are entirely convinced that world events since 1914 are a complete fulfilment of Biblical prophecies. They say:

The 'last days' are the last days of Satan's rule over the earth and mankind. The sign is composed of happenings foretold as visible evidence that the consummation of Satan's system of things has begun. . . . It is visible evidence that Christ Jesus has been enthroned in heaven as King. . . . Occurrence of one or even several happenings together is not sufficient to constitute evidence; all must occur concurrently upon one generation. . . . At least 39 happenings comprise the sign: 1. Many False Christian Religions. 2. World Wars. 3. Widespread Famines. 4. Unusual Numbers of Earthquakes etc.⁵

Of course it is easy to argue that most of the happenings mentioned by the Witnesses are not peculiar to our time; even though World Wars I and II were much greater in every respect than previous wars this did not stop people before 1914 interpreting *Matthew 24* to apply to some war of *their* time, particularly as wars started getting uniformly bigger from about the fifteenth century. Should a yet bigger world war overwhelm us then Jehovah's Witnesses would not have any grounds at all for their interpretation. In addition to these objections we might note that Pastor Russell believed that *Matthew 24* applied to the whole of secular history from the time of Jesus up to the nineteenth century:

Thus briefly did our lord summarize secular history, and teach the disciples not to expect very soon his second coming and glorious Kingdom. And how aptly: surely the world's history is just this on an account of wars, intrigues, famines and pestilences on little else.⁶

Although it may appear extremely convincing to some that the prophecy at *Matthew 24* now applies to 1914 it is interesting to note that as late as 1927 in the Watchtower Society book *Creation* (p. 321) verses of *Matthew 24* were applied, not to 1914, but to the period 1874-1914. One of the first full statements of the change in interpretation was made in the following year in the book *Government*.⁷

The second prophecy quoted by the Witnesses to substantiate 1914 is again Jesus' references to events at the time of his second coming, in *Luke 21:24*: 'And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusa-

lem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.'

What were the 'times of the Gentiles'? Russell believed that this referred to a time when the Jewish nation was in disfavour with God. He reckoned it began with the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians which terminated God's special favour for the Jews: secular historians put this date as 586 or 587 B.C. but the Witnesses, following Russell, place it at 607 B.C.⁸ Having fixed the starting point Russell turned to *Daniel* 4: 10-17 for a clue as to the length of the period. There Daniel prophesies that 'seven times' shall pass over Nebuchadnezzar during which time he will become insane - only when the 'seven times' are fulfilled will he return to normal. According to Daniel this literally happened. But what was the period of time? *Revelation* 12: 6, 14 implies that 'three and a half times' are equal to 1,260 days (three and a half years of 360 days each). Therefore 'seven times' was 2,520 days. These seven times were fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar in the form of seven years of madness. Russell believed there was a *higher fulfilment* to this story applying to the 'times of the Gentiles'. The next clue was *Ezekiel* 4: 6: 'I have appointed thee each day for a year.' So the 'times of the Gentiles' lasts 2,520 *years* starting at 607 B.C. and hence ends in 1914! This date was consistently advanced by Russell since 1887, although he misunderstood its significance.⁹

Despite the extremely tenuous nature of the above 'proof' the Witnesses today are convinced that 1914 saw the beginning of the 'time of the end'. Referring again to the prophecy at *Matthew* 24 they find many convincing signposts to this generation: 'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation . . . stand in the holy place, Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.'¹⁰ The Witnesses believe the 'abomination' to be 'the League of Nations revived as the United Nations'¹¹. The 'sign of the Son of man' being 'the evidence appearing from God's word and from its fulfilment that the Kingdom of God has been born'.¹² Assuming therefore that we *are* living in the time of the end, what is in store for us? *Matthew* 24: 34 reads: '. . . this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled' and 'all these things' include the 'end of the world' (verse 3). This means the end of the present world organisation (with Satan as overlord) and the

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setting up of a righteous government by God on earth. Taking the Biblical generation to be 'three score years and ten' the Witnesses deduce that the year 1914 ushers in at most seventy years of trial before the final intervention by God.

Armageddon

Jehovah's Witnesses do not expect the literal destruction of the planet earth at this final showdown which the Bible refers to as the Battle of Armageddon.¹³ They also stress that no one on earth will know exactly when it will happen: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my father only' (*Matthew 24: 36*). In 1966 through the books and magazines the Society delivered a *new truth*: according to their calculations, 6,000 years from the creation of Adam ended in the year 1975. We have already seen that the Witnesses think each creation day was 7,000 years long and that we are still living in the 'seventh day' when God rested; also the Witnesses believe the last 1,000 years of this seventh day must be the promised Millennium when God will restore perfect conditions to the earth.¹⁴ The implication is that the Millennium starts in 1975 and hence the Battle of Armageddon must occur before then!¹⁵

The Bible does not say a great deal about what will happen at Armageddon but the Witnesses have published a detailed and highly interesting account of what they believe will happen just prior to the battle. In the book *Your Will be done on Earth* (published in 1958), amidst a long and complicated interpretation of *Daniel* the Witnesses say that *Daniel 11: 40-45* is symbolic of future events in which the 'king of the north' represents Russia and the 'king of the south' America (*Daniel 12: 1-4* certainly sounds like the Battle of Armageddon and its aftermath!). Briefly the Witnesses think that just before Armageddon America will 'push' at Russia who will retaliate (possibly with limited nuclear war) and gain control of much of the world. Then, according to the Witnesses, Russia will be terrified by reports issuing from the Watchtower Society! Russia (backed by Satan) will initiate an attack against the *Witnesses* but now Jesus and his spirit forces will step in and battle against Satan and his angels *and* all the armies of the earth. Jesus' spiritual opponents will be defeated and imprisoned (*Revelation 20: 1-3*) while the billions of human beings on earth who are not Jehovah's Witnesses will be des-

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troyed in the holocaust. Many of the Witnesses' publications give full and often gory details of this horrible battle;¹⁶ the Society seems to take a grim satisfaction in the thought of justice meted out to the unrighteous in this way, although they say 'of course we are only telling you what the Bible, and hence God, has decreed, it is up to you to join us in order to survive'. At the eight-day international Assembly held in Yankee Stadium, New York, in July 1953, the president of the Watchtower Society said this to the 91,562 in attendance:

Armageddon will be the worst thing ever to hit the earth within the history of man. . . . Contrary to the usage of the name by politicians, military men and clergymen, Armageddon is no mere stormy conflict between two political parties within a nation; it is no mere atomic war between blocs of nations for the domination of the earth — the much feared World War III. . . . Armageddon is what the sacred scriptures of divine prophecy call it, 'the war of the great day of God the Almighty', the war in which the creator of heaven and earth will face all his foes and will fight as he did in the days of old. God the Almighty foresaw the necessity for that war in due time and he foretold its coming. That war is therefore unavoidable. The facts of modern history prove we are in the 'day of God the Almighty' and his war is near.¹⁷

Naturally the Witnesses regard it as their duty to warn as many as possible of the impending battle. Up to a few years ago they believed that every individual would have the opportunity to know of 'the Truth' and be able to choose whether or not to join the Witnesses. This now seems an impossibility (for instance, in China) and the Witnesses say the governments of the countries concerned are held responsible if they will not allow their people to hear of Armageddon (by banning the Society's missionaries).¹⁸

The Millennium and the New World

Many illustrations in the Society's literature picture the Armageddon survivors (of all nationalities) joyfully marching forward into the New World governed by Jesus and Jehovah God. Their first task will be the gathering of the bleached bones of the billions slain and burying them (*Ezekiel* 39: 12-16). Perfect conditions will be restored to the earth and the idyllic promises in *Isaiah* 11 and *Revelation* 21 will be fulfilled: there will be no more pain, sickness or old age, everyone will be young and healthy.

Death from natural causes will not occur after Armageddon but God may destroy humans who are disobedient. Not only the survivors of Armageddon will be present on earth; just after the battle there will be a resurrection. First to come forth will be those 'who have done good' – those who died before Armageddon but were not chosen to be of the 144,000 in heaven.¹⁹ Then a general resurrection will take place of all those who died, from Abel onwards, in ignorance of God's plan for mankind; these are brought forth 'for judgement' and they are judged solely on their conduct in the New World. *Revelation* (chapter 20) is thought by the Witnesses to imply that Satan will be imprisoned for exactly 1,000 years (the anticipated Millennium beginning in 1975) at the end of which time he and his angels will be released as a final test for those who have lived through the Millennium. There is no guarantee of eternal life for Armageddon survivors until the 1,000 years and the final testing are over – only then, say the Witnesses, will there be peace and everlasting life for mankind on earth (*Micah* 4: 1-4).

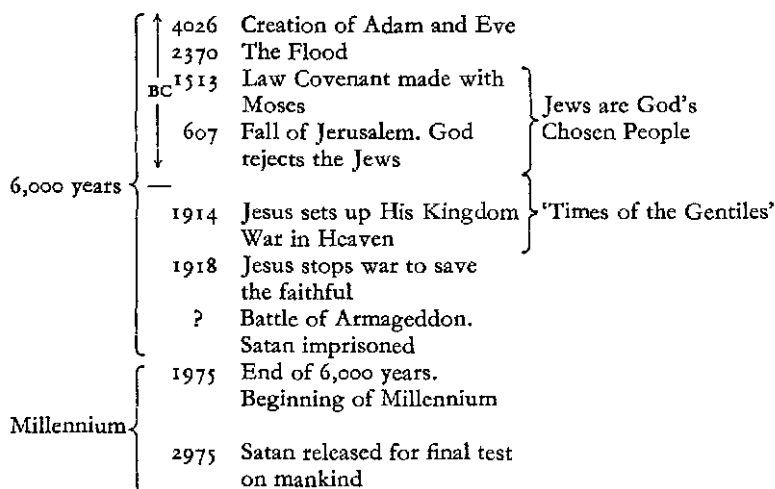
Although the Society disapproves of conjecture as to how eternity will be spent in this perfect world they have come to a definite conclusion about the future of marriage. They say that under perfect conditions the sexual urge will be entirely subject to our control and that after reproduction has populated the earth to its optimum capacity 'the perfect married couples would exercise perfect self-control and refrain from producing further children. According to God's will and arrangement, their power to reproduce would also reach its limit and would cease functioning.'²⁰ Also a recent *Watchtower* confirmed that those resurrected after Armageddon will not be reunited with their former marriage partners, or with anyone else:

It is understandable that Christians might be concerned about marriage prospects in the resurrection. . . . While not being callous to their sincere feelings, we must admit that apparently Jesus' words [at *Luke* 20: 34-36] apply to the earthly resurrection, and they indicate that those resurrected will not marry or be reunited in a marriage relationship with former mates.²¹

Many people may therefore feel a little disappointed about their prospects in the New World. The alternative, however, is everlasting oblivion and the Witnesses are in no doubt as to *their*

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destination – they have named themselves *The New World Society* in anticipation of their survival of Armageddon. I summarise below the present-day beliefs of the Witnesses concerning prophetic dates.²²



Relationship with the World

The Witnesses' doctrines have the effect of separating them from the rest of the world – which they refer to as 'the old world' (i.e. it is soon to pass away). They adopt the attitude of the early Christians who were actually in a hostile world and believed they were God's ambassadors carrying the 'good news of the Kingdom' to the rest of the world.²³ The Witnesses apply to themselves Jesus' words at *John* 15: 17–19; 17: 16, 17: 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . .' They believe that the primary obligation of a Christian is to God and not to his country. They render to the government only those things due to it – taxes, good social behaviour, etc. They claim exemption from military service, quoting *John* 18: 36, 'Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.'

The Witnesses do not believe that modern-day Christians are

required to keep the Sabbath. God gave an elaborate covenant to the Hebrews which included the Ten Commandments. This covenant law, the Witnesses argue, was solely for the Israelites and has since been replaced by the New Covenant.²⁴ Jesus and Paul set out the guiding principles for the New Covenant and the latter definitely states that there is no necessity for the Sabbath to be kept in the Jewish or any other way. *Colossians* 2 : 16 reads: 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days';²⁵ (Pastor Russell, however, did believe in keeping the Sabbath).²⁶ Since December 1928 the text quoted above has also been used by the Witnesses to justify not celebrating Christmas or Easter in the conventional sense. In addition the Witnesses remind us that these customary festivities are derived from pagan feasts – and that the evidence indicates that Jesus was born in October and not December. (Secular sources agree with the Witnesses about this.) They are not so adamant in condemning birthday parties but, nevertheless, they disapprove.

In common with the early Christians and with certain other modern sects, Jehovah's Witnesses believe in *total immersion* as a baptism symbolising a dedication of one's life to God. Many people are not aware that infant baptism was only introduced into the Christian Church in the second century A.D. The baptism of Jesus and his disciples was most probably by total immersion and signified a solemn endeavour on their part to serve God (*Mark* 1 : 9–11). The Witnesses have reverted to this early pattern which they believe is the only genuine form of baptism.²⁷ Witness mass baptisms are usually held in conjunction with their conventions.²⁸

Jehovah's Witnesses share the nonconformist rejection of formality in worship. There are, however, two aspects of their worship that are formal: the first is baptism by total immersion and the second is the commemoration of the 'last supper' in memory of Jesus' sacrifice of his life. Their justification for the latter is *Luke* 22 : 19, 'And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.' The actual *Memorial* – as it is called – is an extremely simple ceremony in which a glass of wine and a tray of unleavened bread is passed amongst those attending. The Witnesses who have an inner con-

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viction that they are members of the 'remnant' may sip the wine and taste the bread. Those present who do not believe they will be taken to heaven do not partake. An explanatory talk precedes this ceremony and the meeting is opened and closed, as usual, with a song and prayer.

Type and Antitype

Jehovah's Witnesses hold many beliefs based on the principle of *type and antitype*, that is, they believe that certain people, nations or incidents in the Bible are *foreshadowments* or *types* of things at a later time – these are the antitypes. This is not a new or uncommon view of the Bible, and it has been carried to the extreme of complete allegory by some Christians (notably Origen). From the very beginning the Witnesses have felt that God has portrayed many significant truths and prophecies by means of types and that much of the Bible has a greater fulfilment at a later time; they believe that God has provided these foreshadowments specifically for this time of the end (*Daniel* 12: 8, 9). Needless to say, there is no direct scriptural *proof* for these interpretations. The Witnesses are assured, however, that the leading members of the Society who conceive these antitypes are guided by God. Although there are one or two vague 'rules' that are sometimes used in the interpreting, it seems on the whole as if 'anything goes'.

An example of one of their 'rules' is the treatment of the 'symbolic' numbers 7, 10 and 12 (and multiples of these) as representing *completeness* or *perfection* in either an earthly or heavenly sense. For instance, in *Babylon the Great has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules!* they say:

the Revelation abounds with fifty-two occurrences of the number seven, using it as a symbol of perfection. The Number six comes short of seven by one. . . . Since a 'man's number' is here concerned, six stands for fallen man's imperfections and shortcomings. . . . As the number ten is used in the Bible to stand for earthly completeness or perfection, the expression 'ten horns' would symbolise, not ten literally, but all or the complete number of kings or national rulers on earth.²⁹

To prove that the Witnesses are not consistent even with these rules we read on p. 507 of the same book that the seven heads (of the same beast with ten horns) are symbolic of *seven* empires,

seven being taken literally and not to mean perfection. How the Witnesses harmonise this with the above 'rule' is a mystery. Another 'rule' that they claim to use is quoted in *The Watchtower* 15th March 1963, p. 175: 'Did you notice that Paul linked those two women with two cities? This is important. When a woman is linked with a city in prophecy, it indicates that what is symbolised thereby is something far greater than a creature. . . . It indicates an *organisation*.'

Despite these so-called 'rules' there seems no rational connection the Witnesses will not break in their search for antitypes. They claim that individuals in the Bible foreshadow nations (and vice versa), then that two individuals signify the same group, then that one individual signifies two different groups, and so on. An example, in *You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, p. 326: 'Joseph typifies primarily Jesus Christ. But in the latter part of the drama he is represented in a subordinate way by the original remnant of his body members who faithfully endured the tests from 1914 to his coming to the temple in 1918.'

Almost all the Bible has been treated in this fashion. For example, in *You May Survive Armageddon into God's New World* one of the main themes is to establish that two classes of people will survive Armageddon: the 'remnant of the 144,000' will go to heaven, while members of the 'other sheep' class (*John 10: 16*) consisting of Armageddon survivors and resurrected ones will live on earth. A total of forty-two types of the 'other sheep' are discussed, ranging from the Queen of Sheba, Jonathan, King Hiram's woodcutters and, most bizarre of all, 'the very great multitude of fish that come to life in the healed waters of the Salt Sea'.³⁰ Similarly in *The New World* the complete book of *Job* is discussed and shown to typify events in this the twentieth century.³¹

The Witnesses mislead themselves when they believe these 'foreshadowments' verify their doctrines. Firstly, many of their type-antitypes bear no detailed relation or connection with each other. Secondly, of the few types that *do* bear some resemblance to their antitypes it appears as if the Society have simply chosen them to fit modern events and any details that do not appear to have a modern counterpart are dubbed 'symbolic' and defined to have a meaning that *does* fit in. Rutherford's books provide many examples of type and antitype that in wealth of detail and aston-

ishing connections beggar description. In the book *Jehovah* he devoted more than thirty pages to expounding the modern-day fulfilment of the ten plagues on Egypt. Each plague was made to represent apparently arbitrary events or attitudes of the Witnesses from 1924 onwards: the third plague of lice represents the 'result of the preaching that "nips" the clergy', the seventh plague of hail signifies the 'hail of truth' from August 1928 on, the ninth plague of darkness refers to the darkness of clergy ignorance,³² etc.

The modern tendency is the large-scale interpretation of Biblical books in relation to the history of Jehovah's Witnesses. In *Your Will be done on Earth* chapters 8, 10, 11 and 12 are concerned with a verse-by-verse analysis of the visions given to Daniel.³³ The Witnesses' antitypes cover a period of more than 2,500 years and include historical anachronisms, omissions and a constant change of identity. Daniel describes a person called 'the king of the north' and the Witnesses set about finding later antitypes for this prophetic figure. They say that he is first prophetic of *Syria*, but this is only in *Daniel* 11:6-19, for suddenly in verse 20 this same 'king of the north' no longer represents *Syria*: 'Hence after *Daniel* 11:19 a change in person and nationality of the king of the north must occur. Historical facts establish that the change began in the next verse, *Daniel* 11:20. The King now becomes Roman.'³⁴ On p. 290, after a hectic charade, this same king of the north appears 'both in nazi and communist guise'.

The book explains that this method is prompted by Jesus - but just where and when the identity changes are made is left to the Witnesses. Even with this amount of freedom, however, they run into difficulties and we read the rather lame comment on p. 225: 'So the angel *condensed history* by passing over the succeeding reigns of the seven remaining Persian kings. . . .' (My italics.) Another naïveté appears at the beginning of the book in relation to the text at *Revelation* 4:4, 'And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.' On p. 14 they comment on this:

Who are these 'elders', these twenty-four persons of advanced age, enthroned around God's own throne? . . . those crowned and enthroned 'elders' whom John saw sitting around God's throne could not picture the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, for they were twenty-four in number, or twice the number of the twelve apostles.

Very logical, twenty-four is not equal to twelve! But two pages later they forget about this and say: 'What these twenty-four "elders" say and do in this vision to John further proves that they symbolise the 144,000 who make up the final congregation.' Hence the twenty-four symbolise 144,000 – but the reader now objects that twenty-four is not equal to 144,000! Pastor Russell had perhaps a more logical view when he claimed that the twenty-four elders represented the 'personified testimonies of the twenty-four prophets'.³⁵

In *The Four Major Cults* Hoekema dubs this 'absurd typology' which more or less sums up the Church's attitude to it. In an otherwise impartial book Hoekema's comments here seem to be very much from the standpoint of 'historical Christianity':

To see Noah as a type of Christ, and Noah's family as a type of the church is, of course, quite in harmony with Biblical typology. But by what stretch of the imagination are we justified in segregating Noah's wife from Noah's children, as standing for two different groups within the church?³⁶

He is surely exaggerating his case here. One would think that if it is acceptable to separate Noah and his wife it is a relatively small step to separate his wife and children in prophecy. Presumably by 'Biblical typology' Hoekema means 'our Biblical typology' and that he approves of types only up to *his* standard. Anything else he calls absurd, which is unjust to the Witnesses and seems to mean nothing more than the fact that their types are not those of conventional Christianity. This is hardly the right criterion to apply in this already uncertain field. Rather, the types and antitypes should be judged in the light of reason and Biblical compatibility. Are they appropriate? Are they inconsistent, confusing or irrational? Only on this basis should we judge them absurd or not.

This particular use of the Bible accounts for a large proportion of the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses. It has a strong effect on the Witnesses themselves – it impresses and reaffirms the beliefs which they already hold on the basis of more direct scriptural evidence, and their own position in the world is confirmed and enhanced. As more and more types from the Bible are shown to refer to the Witnesses, to the 'remnant', to the 'other sheep', etc., the effect is psychologically reassuring. The point at issue is not

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that the Witnesses are wrong in using this method, or that they do not firmly believe their doctrines. Rather, by constant repetition, and by the use of arguments that are not arguments and proofs that are not proofs, they become entrenched and convinced that they are right. The means of conviction appears to be dubious and the state of mind reached undesirable.

The Witnesses' Clash with Science

The twentieth century has been described as a technological age or a scientific era in which the centre or apex of human endeavour is thought to be the scientific or empirical method – in contrast with medieval times when theology occupied this position. Needless to say, Jehovah's Witnesses do not regard scientific research as the apex of human effort and their attitude, as revealed in their publications, is both interesting and significant. They have a curious old-fashioned view reminiscent of the church at the time of Darwin and the humanistic/socialist upheavals.

The Witnesses admit that in many ways science is a good and useful thing – in medicine, civil engineering, etc. – this part they call 'true science'. They believe, however, that most scientists are materialistic atheists and that the so-called scientific revolution is merely part of Satan's world. Discussing science was beneath Pastor Russell while Rutherford used to dismiss it with casual side-swipes.³⁷ Jehovah's Witnesses today take this matter more seriously; they share the popular misconception of scientists as powerful, 'cold and calculating' automata. (See the book *What has Religion done for Mankind?* where the Society displays incredible scientific ignorance in berating science and scientists.) In their attempts to 'explain' science the Witnesses commit numerous errors of fact and logic. For instance: "The more the scientists study the universe the more they can see that there is an intelligence behind it, and that the master mind behind it is a great mathematician."³⁸ Some scientists may well think this (but there are many who do not) and there is no reason to suppose that their *scientific* observations warrant such a non-scientific conclusion (in the sense that it does not belong to science). The book goes on to quote Einstein and Millikan who both believed in a 'divine intelligence', but the Witnesses are not justified in arguing a general case from particular instances, as they try to do. Quoting Einstein and Millikan proves nothing. One of Britain's most prominent

scientists, Fred Hoyle, who is more of an astronomer than either of these two, does not come to this conclusion in his book *The Nature of the Universe*.

The Witnesses reassure themselves that scientists are 'forced' to conclude that the universe presages a God. The next step is for them to say:

However, wise persons do not need these modern scientists to prove to them that there is a living intelligence behind visible and invisible creation and that He is all-powerful, all-wise, supreme and just, and harmonises all things.³⁹

This is, of course, just not so! Yet in the book *This Means Everlasting Life* they say, without preamble: 'All the investigations by modern science into the heavens, the earth and the atom prove that the entire universe was created by a great scientist of depthless wisdom.'⁴⁰

There is no doubt that the Witnesses are in some ways afraid of science on their fear is that of ignorant men who see in science a powerful rival. This is exemplified in *The Watchtower* of 1st December 1966:

Feeling their power, the scientists try to subject others to a slavery to the scientific group, subjecting even the political governments to a dependence upon secular science. The scientists would make themselves a priesthood of this new idolatry. . . . So the question arises, Does Democracy face a takeover by the scientific technologists of today?⁴¹

A long acquaintance with the literature of the Witnesses leads one to the conclusion that they live in the intellectual 'twilight zone'. That is, most of their members, even their leaders, are not well educated and not very intelligent. Whenever their literature strays on to the fields of philosophy, academic theology, science, or any severe mental discipline their ideas at best mirror popular misconceptions, at worst they are completely nonsensical. One possible exception is their opposition to the theory of evolution which has been well thought out and is backed by a host of facts (not all of them relevant).

The theory of Evolution is probably the Witnesses' biggest scientific bogey; they are, after all, fundamentalists who accept literally the story of direct creation in the Garden of Eden. In their minds the Bible's testimony establishes that the theory of

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Evolution is wrong but this reason is not sufficient for most other people – including Evolutionists. The Witnesses have therefore done some research on this subject and incorporated their findings in a recent book called *Did Man get here by Evolution or by Creation?*⁴² It is clear that the Witnesses are worried by the fact that their children are taught the theory in schools, and this book presents an extremely strong case against evolution. The book begins a little dubiously in quoting a variety of sources to illustrate the chaotic nature of the theory of Evolution; ‘selective quotation’ of ‘prominent evolutionists’ can be used to ‘prove’ many things. In the later chapters of the book, however, evolutionary theories are examined in detail and shown to be inadequate. Unlike most of the Society’s publications, the tone of this book is reasonable and there are few errors of logic and reasoning. Personally, I found this book presented the most convincing case ever for the Witnesses’ beliefs and I sincerely hope it heralds a new trend in the Society’s literature.

THEIR BASIS FOR BELIEF

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ beliefs are based on the primary assumption that the Bible is directly inspired by God. They are also firmly convinced that the presence of order and harmony in the heavens, in nature and in the microcosm of atoms indisputably points to the existence of a God, a creator. They believe this God inspired men to write and compile the Bible which has survived for thousands of years and whose internal harmony bears witness to divine authorship. Any reasonable person, they feel, when faced with this evidence cannot avoid the conclusion *they* have come to. On this foundation they establish their doctrines and through the Bible derive all their important beliefs.

How justified are they in doing this? Firstly, as to the existence of God, the rational attempts to justify His existence were not new at the time of Socrates but they were expressed in more modern terminology by Catholic scholars and apologists – notably Thomas Aquinas. Such rational arguments have never been wholly acceptable, however, and the decision has inevitably rested with faith and personal conviction rather than reason. This is not to say that the proofs of God’s existence are not reasonable – it is just that they are not proofs.⁴³ Nevertheless the Witnesses persist in the strong view that the existence of God is a

rational necessity, they are fond of quoting *Psalms* 14:1 in this context: 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' Most of their literature does not even discuss this point but assumes that the reader cannot deny God's existence. When they do attempt to 'prove' atheists wrong it is usually a matter of a few sentences pointing to all the harmony and order around us, finishing with a 'therefore no *reasonable* person can deny that God exists', etc. They obviously do not take atheism seriously and in this they copy exactly the attitude of Pastor Russell.⁴⁴

The most important question is how much reliance can be placed on the Bible. The Witnesses believe that both external and internal evidence prove it is authentic and divinely inspired. They quote the archaeological advances that have confirmed Biblical history (for example, see *The Bible as History* for explanations of the Flood, crossing of the Red Sea, etc., also the booklet *Basis for Belief in a New World*). This is only evidence for the accuracy and usefulness of the book – what of the divine authorship? Firstly, there is the external evidence of fulfilled prophecy. In both the Old and New Testaments there are examples of prophets who foretold incidents in the future. For example, Daniel foretold that Nebuchadnezzar would become insane and live as the beasts of the field, Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be encompassed and destroyed. Unfortunately, however, none of the original manuscripts exist and there is no way of telling whether or not the prophecy was written *before* the event, or that the text was altered by copying scribes. Thus the Witnesses cannot offer these prophecies as evidence when there is no *proof* that they are genuine. This applies equally well to the 'prophecies' fulfilled by Jesus during his life on earth. Some suggest that he deliberately 'acted out' the prophecies to prove he was the Messiah, but we still have no complete evidence that Jesus did these things at all.

There is therefore not one Biblical prophecy which may be used as external evidence. In fact some Bible scholars tend to assume that if a prophet 'foretold' an event that occurred, he must have lived *after* the event. This is not to say that the Bible is a fake – the issue is that there is no independent check on Biblical prophecy and therefore it cannot be used as factual evidence. It is all very well for the Witnesses to criticise the 'higher critics' for denying the authenticity of the prophecies but until they can provide concrete evidence they cannot themselves prove divine

authorship. The Witnesses also advance as an argument the fulfilment of prophecies in our day. Unfortunately most of these are couched in symbolic terms that the Witnesses themselves interpret. Often when they try to find the modern counterpart of a symbol they are looking at *what has already happened*. It appears as though they look around for a modern peg on which to hang the prophecy. Hoekema calls this 'rear view exegesis'.⁴⁵

The second argument advanced for their case is the 'internal harmony' of the Bible. They say:

The only way to explain its existence and what it teaches and how and why it has survived till this perplexing day is that it is the divine revelation. There must be some providential reason why it has been translated into more than 1,125 languages and is the most widely published, circulated and read book on earth today.⁴⁶

and this is followed (on p. 28 of the same book) by an incredible statement that even the Witnesses have contradicted on other occasions: 'Notwithstanding this, their writings are all in agreement from first to last.'⁴⁷ Although the Bible may in general give a clear picture, there are discrepancies and contradictions. In some of their publications the Witnesses have been forced to admit this: in *Equipped for Every Good Work* (p. 166), talking about the Biblical records: 'Many of these genealogies had become confused following the fall of the kingdom of Judah. . . . Parts of the genealogies may appear contradictory to what appears elsewhere.' The fact is that the records *do* contradict each other. The Witnesses published a chronological table in *The Truth shall make You Free* based on *2 Chronicles* but were then forced to publish a corrected table in *The Kingdom is at Hand* where they said: 'Measured by *2 Chronicles*, the period of kings from Saul to Zedekiah was 513 years. Measured by the more precise and detailed books of *Kings*, the period was actually 511 years, or two years less.'⁴⁸ In itself this is a minor error but combined with others it makes nonsense of the claim that 'their writings are all in agreement from first to last'. It is difficult to convince a Witness that any two texts contradict each other, he will simply interpret the texts until they harmonise. The Witnesses argue in a circle: they assume the Bible is non-contradictory and thus 'harmonise' the texts by interpretation, they then use this 'harmony' to 'prove' that the Bible is non-contradictory! Probably Rutherford, in his

own straightforward, no-nonsense way, was more honest when he said 'It [the Bible] is consistent with itself. It is not contradictory *when understood*.'⁴⁹

It is inevitable that the Witnesses should come into conflict with the conclusions of the higher critics.⁵⁰ This started in the 1890's when these critics were expounding new and 'ungodly' views of the Bible – sometimes treating it purely as a literary work. Most people might feel that the higher critics do useful work but the Witnesses feel nothing but scorn; discussing the book of *Isaiab* they say:

Of course, the Bible's higher critics who delight in straining at gnats that do not even exist conjure up questions concerning this book over which to vainly babble . . . vying for attention [they] spout forth an unending torrent of theories,⁵¹

The Witnesses seem to have a latent fear of the higher critics, again the fear of ignorant men towards those who have influence. If only the Witnesses would look into books of Biblical commentary or higher criticism (as few of them do) I am sure their view would soften somewhat.

Where *do* they differ from the higher critics? One controversy concerns the book of *Isaiab*. Hebrew scholars have noticed that sections of the book are written in different literary styles. This has led them to conjecture that the one book consists of three parts, each written by a different author. Similarly the style of the New Testament book of *Hebrews* differs so much from that of the Pauline epistles that higher critics believe Paul did not write it (it is attributed to Paul in the Bible). The Witnesses do not accept either of these conclusions – they say that the authorship throughout the Bible is as stated in the text. Thus only one person, the prophet *Isaiab*, wrote the book of *Isaiab*, and so on. Here the Witnesses disclose a regrettable ignorance of the history of the compilation of the New Testament and, to a lesser extent, that of the Old Testament. They feel they can ignore all this, however, by saying that God is directly responsible for the Bible as we have it and therefore everything in it must be correct.

In a sense these are not crucial points. Only in the compilation of the New Testament was *Hebrews* ascribed to Paul and to deny his authorship does not contradict what *Hebrews* contains. To be fair it must be said that in the Witnesses' books on the text of the

Bible Equipped for Every Good Work and *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* they adopt a dogmatic but often reasonable and informative attitude. They can, however, rival the higher critics in the realm of conjecture. In the former book they say:

How did Moses come to know the history of man back to Adam, doubtless by word of mouth, five human links connect Adam and Moses. As a potent memory-helper the infallible spirit of Jehovah God would cause those men to remember correctly.⁵²

This is a plausible explanation and the Witnesses at the time believed it implicitly. Yet several years later they changed their minds (or rather the Society changed their minds for them). The present Society belief is that Moses received the facts by *writings* made by Adam and others: 'Moses, Under Inspiration, Compiled Genesis Largely from 11 Previously Written Documents of Clay or Stone'.⁵³ What has happened to the 'infallible spirit of Jehovah God'? Of course it is not wrong to change one's mind, but the Witnesses persist in being *certain* of everything they believe, even on the slenderest evidence (the Society is always right). When the Society changes its mind, as above, the Witnesses then stay just as certain, *but now of the opposite thing*.

In the final analysis Jehovah's Witnesses will not admit defeat. Despite their claim to hold the Bible as their criterion they will believe almost anything the Society wishes them to believe. This is understandable because the Witnesses believe they are now God's sole channel of communication and – having accepted this – how can one then criticise the word of God? In effect they believe the Bible is not enough, it is necessary to obey the edicts of God's organisation on earth – the Society. As we have seen above, the Society can create plausible Biblical reasons for believing most things, and when they decide to change their minds they can look up another set of reasons to justify their new position. Russell held that the Bible had to be supplemented by his own writings, describing them as 'the Divinely appointed light upon God's Word'.⁵⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses still feel that they have this 'Divinely appointed light' and any interpretation or belief contrary to theirs must be inspired by Satan and hence not supported by the Bible; faithful Witnesses believe this *before* consulting their Bible. Their attitude to the Scriptures is therefore quite rigid and any claim they make to examine the Bible without bias is merely

for the benefit of outsiders. The ultimate source of authority for Jehovah's Witnesses is not the Bible but the Society.

The Witnesses have evoked much criticism for apparently using the Bible as a compendium of texts, all of equal merit without regard to the part of the Bible they come from. In other words it is said that the Witnesses ignore the special problems of authorship, time of writing and circumstances of writing that conventional theologians feel are important. Here we are face to face with the criterion that the Witnesses apply to the Bible in order to deduce their beliefs. The point I wish to make is that pouring scorn on the Witnesses' apparent indiscriminate use of texts (as Stevenson does in *Year of Doom 1975*) does not help us to understand *why* they do it. First let it be said that the Witnesses are not unaware of the authors, dates, and circumstances of writing of the sixty-six books in the Bible and on occasion they take these factors into account. (It is, however, doubtful if Rutherford, and to a lesser extent Russell, had this enlightened view.) The Witnesses claim that the Bible is no ordinary book, each part of it was written under direct inspiration from God and hence the idiosyncrasies of the various authors are irrelevant; God made sure that the finished product was correct in every respect. This, then, is the assumption made by the Witnesses and it clearly follows that the Bible has a serious purpose transcending any aesthetic, lyrical or literary merit. One of the Witnesses' favourite texts (in fact it is used as the title of one of their books) is that in 2 *Timothy* 3 : 16: 'All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness' (New World Translation). With this attitude it is not surprising that the Witnesses are quite happy to quote texts from all parts of the Bible and accept them at their face value.

Granted that this assumption underlies the whole theology of the Witnesses, how justified are they in making it? We have seen that the internal and external evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is somewhat lacking and it is indeed difficult to read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that most of the authors wrote from their own viewpoint. The homogeneous effect of God's inspiration is conspicuously lacking. Conventional theologians start from this fact and object strongly to the Witnesses' treatment of the Bible as a vast crossword puzzle to be solved by

picking out the right scriptures. Kurt Hutten, for instance, calls this selection procedure 'knight-jump exegesis', likening it to the knight's move in chess – it is unstraightforward and ignores obstacles by leaping over them.

The Witnesses have produced their own translation of the Bible which sacrifices brevity, beauty and style for the sake of accuracy. The intention of the translators was to reproduce the clear sense at all costs – a noble enterprise that inevitably results in ugly and cumbersome passages. Of course some orthodox scholars believe the Society has not succeeded even in being accurate, in which case their translation has nothing to recommend it. These criticisms of the New World Translation can only effectively be discussed in relation to the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts. Suffice it to say that the Witnesses have definitely incorporated some of their beliefs in certain texts and in many other cases their choice of words is obviously biased to favour their interpretations and present-day nomenclature. The Witnesses in general are not aware of these criticisms and, now that the Society has decreed that they should use the New World Translation of the Bible in preference to other versions, they are convinced their translation is the best. (Some years ago the Witnesses used to justify their use of the *Authorised Version* by saying that it was the one most commonly used – it still is, but the Witnesses have forgotten this reason.)

7. Life as a Jehovah's Witness

THE WITNESSES believe that God has chosen them out of the world to vindicate His name and they therefore refer to their movement as 'the Truth' or 'the organisation'. These two expressions are generally used amongst Witnesses while to outsiders they usually call themselves 'the New World Society'. A sharp distinction exists in Witness conversation between the movement as a whole (described by the above titles) and the governing body of the movement – called 'the Society'. The term 'the Society' is used to designate those unnamed Witnesses who are directing the doctrinal affairs of the organisation through their mouthpiece, *The Watchtower* – the term is not used of a group of *particular* individuals but rather of the directing force that is transmitted by God himself through men. To all intents and purposes the Society is represented by the code of doctrines and decisions laid down in *The Watchtower* but should this magazine cease to exist then the Society would be the combined testimony of the several hundred Witnesses scattered throughout the world who make up the governing body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

The Society directs the ministry of every Jehovah's Witness – it has printed a 224-page book called *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*¹ which is issued to every baptised Witness. This book outlines the 'theocratic' pattern that every individual and congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses must follow (similar instruction booklets are issued to Witnesses in more responsible positions). A person becomes a Jehovah's Witness by spending some time every month in propagating the Society's beliefs – such an active member is called a *publisher* or a minister.² Apart from the physically isolated, every Witness belongs to a local congregation which may number up to 200:

A congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses is one composed of a group of ministers. All these ministers, by Jehovah's undeserved kindness, are determined to preach the good news of the Kingdom in all the

world for a witness. . . . When a congregation is organised and enrolled by the Society it is given a definite territory to work in.³

The congregation meets regularly at the 'Kingdom Hall' which is usually a hired schoolroom, parish hall or the like, in the back streets of a town or city. The Society encourages congregations to build their own halls if possible as these provide permanent and more presentable meeting places. In common with other non-conformist religions the Witnesses meet in a strictly functional room - there are no stained-glass windows, pews or altars, simply rows of chairs faced by a table and reading stand for a speaker. No collections are taken but a box is provided for voluntary contributions. The walls of the hall are usually unadorned except for the *Year Text* and charts noting and explaining the monthly progress of the congregation in its preaching work.⁴

The Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is the center of pure worship in the community. It is the principal location where meetings of the congregation are held, and it provides a central place from which the field ministry can be conducted.⁵

The Kingdom Hall (unless built by the Witnesses) can hardly fail to make a bad impression on strangers and to counteract this the Society suggests the following: 'At every meeting in the Kingdom Hall there should be a brother who serves as an attendant, and he ought to be a person who has a friendly personality. . . . Then, if you are assigned, keep in mind that it is your job to greet newcomers and to make them feel welcome.'⁶

Each congregation is under the overall supervision of the *congregation servant* or *overseer* who is a local Jehovah's Witness appointed to this post by the Society but his position entitles him to no special benefits and there is no salary.⁷ The congregation servant is usually the most mature Witness in the congregation and his appointment lasts as long as he is able and willing to discharge his duties:

The congregation servant is the presiding minister, and he has general oversight of the congregation. . . . His duties include making provision for all the meetings of the congregation and seeing to it that they are conducted properly. He arranges for capable brothers to deliver the public talks that you enjoy. . . . All correspondence from the Society having to do with congregation matters is sent to him. . . . As you become well acquainted with your

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congregation servant, we believe you will find that, in many respects, he is like that early Christian overseer the apostle Paul.⁸

The congregation servant has an extremely busy time if he is to do his job properly: the Society recommends that in addition to the preaching work (in which he should take the lead) he should continually check and participate in all the various activities in the congregation – we shall see how numerous these are!

The Society also appoints five administrative *servants* in the congregation to assist the congregation servant – each is responsible for some aspect of the congregation's work. Firstly, there is the *assistant congregation servant* who stands in for the overseer when necessary; in addition he collects and collates the records of the preaching activity of all members of the congregation:

As to his specific duties, he will tabulate field service reports weekly, post the totals on the progressive report sheet, keep the congregation servant advised of weekly progress, keep a check on all publishers to aid them in the field service, and in general be an assistant to the congregation servant.⁹

The next most mature servant in the congregation is the *Bible study servant* whose special function is to supervise, record and encourage the follow-up preaching work of the Witnesses in the congregation. The publishers record the number of back-calls and Bible studies they hold each week and these records are collected and analysed by the Bible study servant. A *magazine-territory servant* is appointed to distribute copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* to publishers and also to keep maps of all the territory allotted to the congregation. This territory is divided into smaller areas suitable for coverage by one publisher, the *magazine-territory servant* will give the publisher the map of the small territory and the publisher will do his preaching work regularly in that area, systematically calling at every house. In this highly organised way each congregation ensures that all members of the public in the locality have been visited by Jehovah's Witnesses. The *literature servant* is responsible for all literature (other than magazines) that is used in the congregation and door-to-door work and finally the *accounts servant* 'keeps the books' for the congregation (that is, is the treasurer for the congregation). The *accounts servant* uses a system furnished by the Society and the accounts are audited every three months. Other servants are appointed to be in charge

of the meetings held in the Kingdom Hall but the above five, with the congregation servant, run the affairs of the congregation.

The three most mature servants in the congregation, the overseer, assistant congregation servant and Bible study servant form what is called the *congregation committee*. This committee will meet when necessary to discuss internal matters such as a dispute between two brothers, recommending new servants, choosing public speakers, a brother accused of misconduct and so on:

Other matters may be discussed by the committee and then submitted, not to the Society, but to the local congregation. Changing meeting times to make them convenient to the majority of the publishers is one of these. . . . At times the committee is called on to act in a judicial capacity in handling difficulties that arise and in keeping the congregation clean and acceptable to Jehovah.¹⁰

The committee has the power, subject to the Society's approval, of disfellowshipping any member of the congregation or putting him on probation. Disfellowshipping involves a complete cutting off from the other Witnesses and it occurs when a member of the movement has seriously violated Christian principles:

Being disfellowshipped is a serious matter. It means that one is expelled from the congregation. . . . The faithful members of the congregation therefore 'quit mixing in company' with such a person. . . . Disfellowshipped persons will not be recognised by anyone in the congregation and the right hand of friendship will not be extended to them.¹¹

Disfellowshipment lasts for at least a year and usually longer, but if sincere repentance is shown by the offender then it is possible for him to be reinstated into the congregation. Similarly a Witness may be placed 'on probation' by the congregation committee for a lesser offence during which time the Witness is unable to hold any servant position.

Although the most important activity of the Witnesses is preaching to other people, a great deal of their time is taken up with meeting together in the Kingdom Hall. All together five one-hour meetings are held each week and every Jehovah's Witness in the congregation is expected to attend them all:

A word might be said concerning the importance of the congregation meetings. If anyone claims to be one of the Jehovah's witnesses

and of the New World Society, the only way he would be able to prove it would be by associating with Jehovah's witnesses and the New World Society.¹²

Meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses have no ritual — each meeting is opened and closed with a song and an extemporaneous prayer (the latter is usually given by one of the servants). Singing at meetings was encouraged by Russell but discontinued under Rutherford apparently because it took up 'too much time in these crucial times'. Singing is now in favour again and the congregation use their own songbook *Singing and Accompanying Yourselves with Music in Your Hearts*.¹³ The main reason for meeting together is intensive indoctrination or, as the Witnesses put it: 'To help to protect His people today from the false course of mingling with the nations and learning their works, Jehovah has made arrangements through His organisation for His people to spend five hours each week at congregation meetings.'¹⁴ Of the five weekly meetings, four are held in the Kingdom Hall: these are *The Watchtower Study*, the *Service Meeting*, *Ministry School* and *Public Talk*.

The *Watchtower Study* is held on Sunday afternoon or evening and consists of a question-and-answer discussion of part of the current *Watchtower* magazine. Each semi-monthly edition has one or two main articles with numbered paragraphs and footnote questions for each paragraph. The Society allocates half the *Watchtower* material for each week. The tone of this meeting is restrained and unemotional; a mature brother is appointed *Watchtower study servant* to be in charge of this important meeting. He supervises the meeting by asking the written questions and calling for comments from the audience, who are expected to have read and assimilated the *Watchtower* articles. When the presiding brother feels that the question has been adequately answered from the audience he calls upon another brother sitting by him to read out the paragraph. At the end of this he asks the question for the next paragraph and so on through the article; the questions are invariably very simple and with a little preparation most of the Witnesses can answer them. The questions are so phrased that the answer involves only the reading out of a sentence or two from the paragraph. Of course many Witnesses put the answer in their own words, but nevertheless the whole process involves no active thought on their part — they simply repeat what *The Watchtower* says. Thus the obvious purpose of the *Watchtower study* is to

thoroughly acquaint the congregation with the Society doctrines and impress them on their minds.

Throughout the *Watchtower* study the accent is on participation: 'We should each endeavor to make at least one comment during the study. Making comments will help us to improve our ministry and to show love and consideration for others by building them up spiritually through hearing the truth.'¹⁵ Even young children are encouraged to answer or read out the key sentences from the paragraph. The *Watchtower* study is the most important meeting held each week, but it can tend to be boring or monotonous particularly if (as often seems to happen) it overruns the allotted hour. Fortunately the meeting is not held in an atmosphere of funereal seriousness – the occasional humorous comment is made.

The congregation often holds publicly advertised talks in conjunction with the *Watchtower* study: this hour-long discourse is usually given before the *Watchtower* study and is advertised locally by handbills. These talks may be given by visiting representatives of the Society but more often they are given by local brothers or brothers from nearby congregations. All talks are scheduled by the Society who send out speech outlines from which the speakers build up their talks. There is little room left for individual preferences but here, as always, the directive of the Society is obeyed willingly and completely. The *Watchtower* study and Public Talk are ideal meetings for newly interested people to attend – people of 'good-will' as the Witnesses call them.

The other two meetings held in the Kingdom Hall are the Service Meeting and the Theocratic Ministry School. Personally I believe the former to be the most vital meeting held by the Witnesses; I certainly enjoyed it far more than the others. The function of this meeting is as follows: 'Service meetings provide the opportunity for Jehovah's Witnesses to learn the most practical and efficient way of carrying on their preaching work.'¹⁶ At one time the Service Meeting was planned by the congregation servant who nevertheless stuck to material provided by the Society. Now the Society sets out in detail the schedule for each meeting and these are printed in the four-page pamphlet *Kingdom Ministry* (previously called *Informant*) which is distributed internally to every active Witness every month. The Service Meeting consists of a miscellany of talks, demonstrations, dis-

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cussions and so on, all having a bearing on the preaching work. For instance, in the *Kingdom Ministry* July 1965 the schedule for the first meeting in August was as follows:

- 5 MIN: Introduction, text and comments.
 - 10 MIN: 'Maintaining Unity in Faith and Work'. Discussion between two publishers who emphasise how this service theme fits their activity for the month.
 - 15 MIN: 'Contemplate Their Conduct, Imitate Their Faith'. Questions and answers. Key paragraphs can be read if time permits.
 - 20 MIN: 'Give Encouragement To One Another.' It would be appropriate for this talk to be given by the overseer based on *The Watchtower* of March 1 1965, pages 131 and 132, and *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1963. In conclusion he should take a few minutes to give warm commendation to all in the congregation for the good work being done. . . .
 - 10 MIN: Concluding comments. Song 67.
- (Titles in inverted commas refer to articles in the *Kingdom Ministry*)

The Service Meeting is primarily for the Witnesses who have unequivocally accepted the Society's judgement. Hence all admonition, encouragement and criticism is made in the name of the Society. If the congregation is failing in some aspect of its preaching work then the congregation overseer may discuss this with them, pointing out the faults and suggesting improvements 'as advised by the Society'. I believe most Witnesses enjoy the Service Meeting because of its variety and the fact that different members of the congregation participate each week. Even young Witnesses are encouraged to deliver short talks and take part in demonstrations. For those zealous in the faith the admonition in the Service Meeting is a real incentive to progress.

The Theocratic Ministry School was founded in 1942 as a meeting to train the Witnesses to speak to the public and to educate them with respect to the Bible. This two-fold purpose was effected with the help of the 'textbooks' *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (published 1945) and *Equipped for every Good Work* (1946). The former set out a detailed speech training course while the latter was a book-by-book explanation of the Bible. These were later replaced by *Qualified to be Ministers* (1955 and revised 1967) and *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (1963). Although the Ministry School has changed in several ways during

the last decade the basic pattern is that individual brothers and sisters prepare and deliver a short talk based on some Society literature and an appointed brother then counsels them on their talk. He commends the good features and comments on things that the speaker should improve – gestures, sense stress, use of Scriptures, modulation, etc.

The Ministry School servant will mark the speaker's Ministry School Counsel sheet (see overleaf) to the effect that certain of these things are Good (G), some are improved (I) from some that were weak (W). In this way, week by week, a steady improvement is maintained and eventually even the most inarticulate Witness becomes capable of speaking in public. Since 1958 sisters in the congregation have also been allowed to give talks and the present structure of the meeting is as follows: First there is a five-minute oral review of the previous week's main talk followed by the fifteen-minute main talk on a Biblical topic. After this four other talks are given by students in the Ministry School – usually two brothers and two sisters. Each talk lasts about six minutes and the Ministry School servant counsels the speakers after their talks. This schedule is modified every four weeks when half an hour of the meeting is given over to the *written review* which is a question paper on the material discussed in the Ministry School in the previous four weeks. Students mark their own papers when the answers are read out and discussed. At the beginning of each year the Society sends out an Instruction Sheet to each congregation listing the talks for the coming year. The Service Meeting and the Ministry School are almost invariably held consecutively on the same evening.

The fifth weekly meeting called the Congregation Book Study in fact is not attended by all the congregation at one time. The Witnesses in the congregation are divided into a number of groups which meet separately during the week for an hour-long study of one of the Society's books. There are about ten Witnesses to each study group which meets usually in the home of one of the Witnesses – such a home is called a *service centre* because the group often tends to meet there before and after door-to-door work at other times during the week. The concept of the *service centre* is a relatively recent development but it is clearly important in the congregation. Each Witness is attached to a service centre which provides closer and more personal contact with other

SPEECH COUNSEL

Speaker _____
(Full name)

Marks: W - Weak
I - Improved
G - Good

PREPARATION	Date	Talk No.							
1. Informative material									
2. Clear, understandable									
3. Main points made to stand out									
4. Subject theme emphasized									
5. Illustrations fit material									
6. Illustrations fit audience									
7. Convincing argument									
8. Use of outline									
9. Coherence through connectives									
10. Logical, coherent development									
11. Material adapted for field ministry									
12. Introduction roused interest									
13. Introduction appropriate to theme									
14. Introduction of proper length									
15. Conclusion appropriate, effective									
16. Conclusion of proper length									
17. Timing									
18. Personal appearance									

NOTE: Each talk the counselor will check the student on a total of two or three points, taking them in the order in which they appear under each main heading on the slip. If further attention is needed, he will mark one or two "W's" and show student how to correct the weaknesses. When mastered, the student will be encouraged to work on one or two more points, still taking them in the order in which they appear under each main heading on the slip. Some point difficult to master (after several "W's") may be entered in space "Main points on which to work" so the student can go on to other points. Use blank spaces at bottom for counseling advanced students on points not listed, e.g.: accuracy of statement, articulation, bearing, choice of words, grammar, mannerisms, relevancy, voice quality.

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Witnesses and this gives a greater incentive to go out on the door-to-door work. If a Witness is failing in meeting attendance or in his field ministry then he is usually admonished or encouraged through the service centre. A responsible and mature brother is appointed as Congregation Book Study servant in *each* study group and he conducts the weekly meeting which consists of a discussion of one of the Society's books by question-and-answer similar to the *Watchtower* study method. This meeting is obviously more informal than the other four and proceeds at a more leisurely pace – in fact any current Society literature may be studied at this meeting as long as it has questions on each paragraph at the foot of the page. The Congregation Book Study is a good meeting for 'good-will' people to attend.

We have seen that a person is not considered a sincere Jehovah's Witness unless he attends the five weekly congregation meetings. The Society also recommends that all the members of the family attend the meetings – this includes babies and young children. Hence most meetings of the Witnesses are characterised by the presence of young children and several babes in arms, the former are very often bored and fidgety while the latter disturb the meeting with fits of crying. The Society believes in early indoctrination of the young, but it is debatable whether long, late and unintelligible meetings are good for them. Some parents have evidently thought this too because the Society has reacted by issuing statements to the effect that children must attend meetings and must pay attention while there: 'Just having our children with us at the meetings however is not adequate. Here they will be expected to pay attention and not play, draw pictures or have side attractions.'¹⁷ Although the Kingdom Hall is intended to be (and very often is) a warm social centre for the Witnesses where they can meet each other and strengthen their faith, a growing number of Witnesses find attending five meetings a week a somewhat irksome duty. According to the Society non-attendance is equivalent to repudiation of God's channel of communication and they periodically issue reprimands of this nature: 'And still what happens to meeting attendance when the weather suddenly turns bad? And that even in large cities with adequate transportation. Think of our brothers behind the Iron Curtain. . . . And yet some stay away because of snow and rain. Truly brothers, these things ought not to be.'¹⁸

WHAT THE WITNESSES DO

Each congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses is a highly organised mechanism geared to door-to-door preaching. Calling at houses is a familiar if not characteristic aspect of their work but there is much more involved. The ultimate aim of their work is to inform as many people as possible of their message and get them to believe and act on it. The Witnesses do not expect to convert the world but to *inform* it of the coming Battle of Armageddon. This other-worldly object is achieved by very down-to-earth methods. The number of hours spent by every Witness in spreading the message is carefully tabulated – but the Witnesses do not stop at leaving literature in people's homes; this is just the first stage in developing interest. Those who think they can 'get rid of' the Witnesses by buying literature are really encouraging them to call again!

The Witnesses' activity is called, amongst themselves, 'the work'. The territory allocated to each congregation is subdivided and the sections are given to the care of individuals or groups of Witnesses. It is intended that during each year the territory should be systematically 'covered' at least once (i.e. all the homes marked on it should be visited). The initial call at any house is usually one of two kinds. On *Magazine Work* the Witness will deliver a short speech introducing current issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines which he hopes the householder will accept on donation of a 'contribution' of 5d. per copy. No price is marked on any of the Society's literature so that legally they do not 'sell' anything. The publisher makes a record of all magazines 'placed' and the houses where they were sold. Magazine work is more often done on Saturday, although service centres often organise an hour's magazine work before or after the book study in the evening.

The most common method of door-to-door preaching is called *sermon work* and it is usually done on Sundays (and any convenient weekdays – but this is less likely). The Witness delivers a five-minute *sermon*, which is a talk on a Biblical topic quoting three or four texts from the Bible in the process. The Society has recently printed a thirty-two-page booklet listing 244 sermons under sixty subject headings which can be used by the Witnesses. What usually happens is that the Witness memorises the texts (or

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writes notes in his Bible to remind him) and then at the door he fills in the gaps with his own words, linking up one scripture to another in terms of the theme of the sermon. Suppose for instance the Witness knocks at a door and after introducing himself as 'a minister of the Gospel' or 'a Bible student' proceeds to speak for five minutes on the very important subject of the Bible itself. Below is a typical sermon outline on this theme which I used to use myself and found particularly appropriate for leading up to an offer of literature (which is the inevitable climax of every sermon):

The Bible is important – it offers everlasting life:

John 17 : 3

How can we get everlasting life? The Bible tells us that the words of God are life-giving:

Matthew 4 : 2-4

Evidently the way to everlasting life is contained in God's Word, the Bible, but we need help to understand it:

Acts 8 : 28-31

Such help is provided now in this book . . . published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society etc.

The above is, of course, the bare outline of a sermon which when expanded by the publisher's own words becomes a very effective means of convincing a householder that at the very least there is something in the literature offered. The training received in the Ministry School is invaluable for sermon work as the Witness is then prepared to depart from the set sermon at any stage, if the householder raises an objection or asks a question. Witnesses will discuss any Biblical point with the householder as long as they feel they are able to prove their point by quoting texts and as long as they can bring the conversation round to the literature they wish to sell – usually a subscription to *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* (costing 8s. 6d.) or three of their books. If this is refused the publisher will try to settle for less – a half-yearly subscription or perhaps just one book. In any event he will try to leave some literature in every home.

The sermon work is the most important type of initial call and each month the sermons and literature to be used are announced in the *Kingdom Ministry*. Of course the Witnesses do not always handle the sermons perfectly: many of them are still stereotyped

Life as a Jehovah's Witness

(PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION)

LANGUAGE

Name

Street and Number

Town Postal No. County

Enter the above name as a subscriber for
The WATCHTOWER (check)
Published semimonthly

}	<input type="checkbox"/> NEW	}	1 YEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/> RENEWAL		6 MONTHS	<input type="checkbox"/>

Obtained by

Check which: Congregation publisher Pioneer

Name of Congregation
(If sent in by congregation)

Send original *only* to this office. Subscriber should KEEP duplicate as receipt.
Subscriber's own initials, verifying this slip as correct ()

WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
THE RIDGEWAY, LONDON N.W.7

M-1 12/58

7/- per year
3/6 six months
Printed in Britain

Subscription Slip

in their approach and a well-informed person can often put them out of their stride. For the great majority of people, however, who do not think about religion very much, the Witnesses are more than able to dominate the conversation and put over their message. At one time the door-to-door work was supplemented by *sound-cars* but the loudspeaker approach was found to be too impersonal, and now the Society concentrates on what it feels is the best method for propagating its beliefs: 'There are many methods of doing service work, but the most effective way of preaching the good news is for each dedicated person to go from house to house and talk to the people living in their own homes. . . . Jesus Christ and his apostles set the example for us in this.'¹⁹

Whatever form the initial call takes the Witness notes down the result on a specially printed form called the *House to House Record*. This enables him to proceed with stage two of the Witnessing work which he hopes will eventually lead to a new convert. The Witness calls back at homes where interest was shown or literature placed - if possible within a fortnight of the initial call. This 'back-call' may take the form of a discussion of the literature left although the Witness usually memorises an appropriate *back-call sermon* quoting about eight scripture texts and lasting ten to fifteen minutes. The purpose of the back-call is

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE RECORD

STREET Terr. No.

PUBLISHER'S NAME

Symbols

CA — Call Again
NH — Not Home

B — Busy
C — Child

M — Man
W — Woman

House or Apt. No.	Date	Sym- bol	Name, Placement and Remarks

S-8 10/53

Field service form

obviously to develop the person's interest to the point where he will agree to hold a *Bible Study* in his own home. Here the publisher calls each week and studies one of the Society's publications for an hour (or less) with the interested person. The thing that characterises a Bible Study is that it is held regularly and the householder studies *with* the publisher. Any Society literature

PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY FIELD SERVICE REPORT FOR _____

(Month)

Name _____ **Monday** _____ **to Sunday** _____

(Date)

(Date)

	Books	Booklets	Hours of Field Service	New Subs	Individual Magazines	Each-Calls	Bible Studies
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Total							

S-4 6/55

Field service form

that has numbered paragraphs with footnote questions may be studied, and this includes several booklets, *The Watchtower*, and most of the books printed by the Society. The publisher asks the questions and encourages the householder (and his family too if possible) to work out the answers from the paragraphs. By now the householder is genuinely interested and is being brought to a knowledge of 'the truth' in his own home. In fact, most new members are brought into the faith through Bible Studies:

If you are diligent in the field service, showing keen interest in those to whom you preach, in time you will probably have the joy of conducting a home Bible study. This is the foremost means by which persons are aided to come to an accurate knowledge of the truth. . . . Make it your goal to conduct at least one home Bible study each week.²⁰

The title 'Bible study' is something of a misnomer as the Society's literature (which is the thing studied) never features an objective look at the Bible itself but tries to indoctrinate the reader in the Society's beliefs. Thus a Bible study, while it continues for several months, is intended to bring the person of

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'good-will' into a frame of mind where he accepts all of the Society's doctrines. When this stage is reached the Witness holding the Bible study will encourage him to attend meetings and suggest that they go out on the service work together – initially the person of good-will will be an observer on the door-to-door work but eventually he will deliver his own sermons and begin to attend all the meetings regularly. The long process of initial call – back-call – Bible study has been justified and a new convert will have appeared in the Witness movement. Finally this new member will dedicate his life to Jehovah and symbolise this by water baptism – from then on he will be a Jehovah's Witness *in toto*.

It is quite clear from all this that Jehovah's Witnesses have a great deal to do to maintain themselves as faithful members of their organisation. In addition to the five weekly meetings they usually spend Sunday morning, Saturday afternoon and at least one evening a week on the service work. Any other time left over from their secular work is usually taken up with reading *The Watchtower* and preparing for the congregation meetings. Of course not all Witnesses measure up to the Society's expectations, but I would say that most of them do, and all the servants in the congregation usually do. The servants have a very busy time of it for they have their duties to fulfil in addition to the above schedule and, of course, they are expected to take the lead and set an example in the congregation activities.

To ensure that the servants (and all the Witnesses) have something tangible to aim for the Society has worked out quotas for congregation publishers in every branch of the preaching work. The Society is acutely conscious of figures, averages and increases and they suggest that every publisher spend at least ten hours every month in field service, and that he should reach the quotas of six back-calls, twelve magazines and one Bible study every month. (The national and world averages are invariably below these quotas.) The Society also suggests that the Witnesses aim for a ten per cent increase in their numbers each year – reflected in the average number of publishers over the year in each congregation. Publishers are not obliged to meet the quotas, but if they are noticeably lagging in their field service then they are usually admonished by one of the servants. Much of the Witnesses' conversation is permeated with this statistical outlook

PUBLISHER'S RECORD

Publisher Identification card (Date Issued)
 Address Languages spoken
 Date of birth Active in service since Car owner
 Date immersed Anointed or Other Sheep Serves in }
 Single or Married Telephone congregation as }

196	BOOKS	BKLTs	HOURS	SUBS	MAGS	B-CALLS	BIBLE STUDIES	REMARKS
SEPT.								
OCT.								
NOV.								
DEC.								
JAN. '6								
FEB.								
MAR.								
APR.								
MAY								
JUNE								
JULY								
AUG.								
YEAR								

S-21 5/59

Printed in Britain

Individual's record card kept
by assistant congregation servant

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on their religion and they are constantly aware of their personal monthly averages, the congregation average and the national figure: they are expected to hand in weekly reports of how many hours' preaching they have done, how many books and magazines sold and so on. In this respect I think the Witness movement is unique in the emphasis it places on numerical totals and we shall see in the next chapter some of the difficulties that follow from this attitude.

8. Beyond the Congregation

IN THIS chapter we will look more closely at the *people* in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses and also see how the congregation is linked to the rest of the Witness movement. Firstly we might note that most Witnesses are members of the 'other sheep' class who hope to live eternally on earth after Armageddon. Those claiming to be members of the 'remnant' or 'anointed' decrease in number year by year; they are nearly all elderly brothers and sisters. Their status in the congregation is something of a problem for the Society: the 'remnant' belong to the privileged class who will live for ever in heaven and the Society naturally feels that they should be respected by the others in the congregation. On the other hand the members of the 'remnant', being old, tend to be the least active in the congregation - and the Society has trained the Witnesses not to respect inactivity! The *Kingdom Ministry* (July 1965) mentioned this problem:

How often in recent months have you stopped for a moment to observe the mature, older brothers and sisters and spend a little time with them? . . . The share they have in the ministry may be a large one or it may be a small one due to physical infirmities. . . . It may be also that you are in a position to help one of the older publishers to get to the meetings or out into the service regularly.

Recent articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* have established the rationale for respecting the older, more mature Witnesses on the grounds of their large past service and that they are doing their best now although objectively it may not be a lot.

Most publishers in the congregation are part-time preachers - either housewives or men with a full-time job - and many of the servants in the congregation fall into one of two categories: mature middle-aged family men and zealous young brothers. Members of the latter group tend to be *Society-men*: they have enthusiastically absorbed the Society's view on all aspects of life

and they ardently repeat this at every opportunity. They appear to have lost their power of free-will and nearly all their remarks begin with the words: 'The Society says . . .'. I feel, however, that the real strength of the congregation lies with the former class of servants. The family men may lack the zeal of the younger Witnesses, but their regular and stable employment is often of more use to the congregation in the long run – they can, for instance, contribute money and skilled labour for building the Kingdom Hall. In addition the older servants are usually the more respected members of the community at large.

There are more women than men in the movement but they are not allowed to play an important part in the congregation and are virtually excluded from all higher positions of responsibility within the organisation. The Society usually quotes 1 *Timothy* 2 : 12 and other scriptures as justification for not permitting sisters to be servants in the congregation or to occupy any position above a capable male Witness: 'But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.' The only occasion when sisters are allowed authority in the congregation is when there is an actual shortage of male Witnesses to occupy the servant positions. Although sisters are now allowed to give talks in the Ministry School these are not directed towards the audience (this would be too much like teaching) but to another sister who sits with the speaker at the front of the meeting hall. Sisters are allowed to attend the missionary school, Gilead, and they qualify as missionaries, but this is as far as it goes, and they still have no authority over any male Witness.

Jehovah's Witnesses are mainly young people. In Britain, for example, more than 10,000 of the 50,000 Witnesses are under fifteen years of age! Thus children are important in the New World Society and young Witnesses are encouraged to progress as fast as they can and are soon going out on the work and giving talks in the Ministry School. While it is true that many children never really accept their parents' beliefs and soon slide into inactivity, some exceed the adults in their enthusiasm – sometimes sincerely and sometimes for the praise it elicits. Many of these children graduate to servant positions and become young pioneers.

Those who wish to devote the majority of their time to the preaching work may enrol in the pioneer service:

Beyond the Congregation

This privilege of service is open to all regular publishers who have been preaching the good news of the Kingdom since the date of their immersion, and they should have a favourable recommendation from the local congregation. Pioneers are required to meet a minimum quota of 100 hours a month.¹

Usually it is the young independent people who take up the pioneer work and they get a part-time job to support themselves while they devote the rest of their time to the preaching work. The Society does not pay a salary but can assign pioneers to a certain part of the country or even abroad where 'the need is great'. Pioneers have been described as the 'shock troops' of the organisation and in the early days they travelled thousands of miles opening up new territories for the Watchtower Society. Then as now they are zealous and hard-working with an implicit faith and trust in God and the New World Society. Life as a pioneer is usually arduous: time and money having to be carefully budgeted. It is certainly not the life for the unenthusiastic or weak-willed and nowadays many who join are forced to leave as the life and quotas prove too difficult for them to maintain. Nevertheless they speak wistfully and proudly of their time in the pioneer ranks and the sacrifices they had to make. Rutherford was particularly fond of the pioneers: 'For example, he would occasionally send each of them a whole carton of books free of charge so that, as he put it, "they could buy a pair of shoes and walk well-shod on the earth".'²

An analysis of pioneer membership figures and their average preaching hours per month confirms the conclusion that it can be a precarious existence. The number of pioneers in Britain and in the world has increased overall during the period 1952-1964 but there was a decrease in the world figures in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1962. In Britain the figures dropped in 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1962. With regard to the average hours of field service per month it is interesting to note that during the period January 1964 to December 1964, for instance, the highest monthly average was 98.2 hours and the average for the year was only 92.2 hours (these are the British figures). The conclusion is that many pioneers must find it difficult or impossible to spend 100 hours every month in the field service (the Society withdraws pioneers whose averages are too low). As far as the membership numbers are concerned, the Society has attempted to increase the number

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of pioneers by an intensive publicity campaign within the organisation. Frequent letters to the congregations and large articles in the *Kingdom Ministry* are used to stress the importance of pioneering – families as well as young people are encouraged to take up this work.

From the ranks of the pioneers the Society chooses suitable Witnesses to be Special Pioneers. These are full-time workers who receive a living allowance from the Society. Their work may be starting a new congregation, straightening out one that has gone wrong or simply Witnessing in a previously untouched part of the world. Special Pioneers can be used by the Society to maintain order within the movement, they are usually more mature and more dedicated than the pioneers and they are certainly more at the disposal of the Society. Their allowance is paid subject to their fulfilling the requirements of 140 hours in the field service every month, making at least fifty back-calls. Further bonuses are given for every month the Special Pioneer exceeds 150 hours and fifty back-calls. Special Pioneers posted abroad are called the 'missionaries' of the Watchtower Society, although this usually implies they have completed a course at the Society's missionary school, Gilead.

To help the Society administration, each country is divided into Districts which are subdivided into Circuits – these contain about fifteen congregations. A full-time servant is appointed by the Society for each District and Circuit. At present each congregation in a circuit is visited at least once every four months by the Circuit Servant who stays a week at each place. He and his wife, if he is married, are usually accommodated in the home of a local brother. The purpose of his stay with the congregation is to observe, check and help the preaching activity of the brothers. A detailed programme of field service is drawn up giving as many publishers as possible the chance to go from door to door with the Circuit Servant. The latter is then able to help them in improving their sermon work and he also sets an example of how things ought to be done:

The circuit servant's work is twofold. First and most important he is to teach others how to carry on house-to-house witnessing in an effective manner. Second, he will check on the congregation organisation. In order to accomplish his first work he should devote at least 100 hours every month to preaching from house to

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house, making back-calls and visiting and conducting home Bible studies.³

Every week the Circuit Servant has a new congregation to examine, people to meet and a host of new problems to solve. As part of the Society's policy, Circuit Servants are switched around at intervals. Few spend more than two years in one circuit before they are transferred to another part of the country. They tend to develop a sharp, businesslike approach to the preaching work. Publishers often wryly joke about the Circuit Servant's visit as 'shaking people up' or 'putting people on their toes' and so on. Circuit Servants are usually zealous but not unfriendly men, yet they can be almost ruthless in demanding better results from backward congregations. Circuit Servants have few personal commitments and none of the local distractions that prevent the ordinary publisher preaching. They are therefore in an ideal position to encourage other Witnesses. They live their whole life, week by week, amongst Jehovah's Witnesses and they represent (to the publisher at least) the completely zealous and dedicated servant of the Society and of God.

The District Servant has much the same job with respect to the Circuit Servant as the latter has to the publisher: 'Every six months the district servant will spend two weeks in each circuit. During the first week he will generally work with the circuit servant as he goes through his routine of serving a congregation, including house-to-house service, and will give him counsel on improving his work.'⁴ The District Servant organises a *Circuit Assembly* to be held during the second week of his visit and as many Witnesses as possible from the congregations in the circuit are expected to attend. Notice is given several months in advance so that the forms requesting accommodation and those volunteering help can be dealt with in time. The money needed for the Assembly is partly contributed by the Witnesses attending.

Circuit Assemblies are held at week-ends - usually in a fairly large hall and ante-rooms which are hired for the occasion. On the Friday afternoon various volunteer workers move in and set up the sound equipment, kitchens and cafeteria, buffets and a host of posters, signs and slogans. The Witnesses have their own equipment which is moved around from Assembly to Assembly. Later the main body of Witnesses arrives to attend the first session on Friday evening. Sessions consist of a series of talks and

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demonstrations: rather like a Service Meeting except there is no audience participation. Most of the Witnesses live some distance away and they are accommodated in local homes for the duration of the Assembly. They are expected to do some field service when sessions are not being held but it is possible to stay in the hall from early morning to late at night as meals and snacks are provided. Even when no talks are being given there is still a lot of activity in and around the hall and this is part of the interest and enjoyment of the Assembly. A special programme is printed giving the times of the talks and other details (see pp. 150-1). Apart from the Circuit and District Servants the speakers are local brothers, usually servants in the congregations. On Friday evening a model Ministry School and Service Meeting is staged while on Sunday morning a baptism ceremony is carried out in a nearby swimming pool where those wishing to dedicate their lives to God are baptised by total immersion. The climax of the weekend is the one-and-a-half-hour Public Meeting on Sunday afternoon to which the public are invited. The District Servant delivers this talk and sessions continue up to six o'clock.

In discussing the Circuit Assembly the question arises as to how necessary are such gatherings. It is true that the Assembly is useful in giving the Society publicity: it impresses the 'locals' with large numbers of Witnesses - 'I never realised before how many of you there are!' one lady remarked. In this way it gives a shot in the arm to the local congregation and also recharges the spiritual batteries of the Witnesses attending. On the debit side, however, they cost money to run and take up a lot of time. The Society claims to hold Assemblies in order to follow a Biblical precedent and to provide valuable 'spiritual food' presented in the talks. But I suspect they hold them for the reasons quoted above as this 'food' serves equally well delivered through the pages of *The Watchtower* and few Witnesses expect, or indeed receive, anything very new or important from the discourses.

For those attending, a Circuit Assembly is both an enjoyable and encouraging experience. There is the comforting presence of 400 fellow-believers, most of whom are kind, helpful and polite, and there is hardly any quarrelling or violence, just a genuine feeling of comradeship and love. No attempt is made to heighten the emotional power of the Assembly: the talks are delivered in a reasonable and restrained way; yet the experience is very

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moving. The Witnesses are aware that congregation meetings can become boring and insipid – but few feel this way about Circuit Assemblies. There may well be an element of escapism about these gatherings but who wouldn't want to escape to a temporary (but real) gathering where everyone lives in harmony? The Circuit Assembly provides an opportunity of renewing contact with the other brothers and sisters in the Circuit and they are successful as social occasions – especially for the young Witnesses. The Society constantly issues reprimands (albeit mild ones) to those who do not pay enough attention to the talks, and too much to the opposite sex. In *The Watchtower* of 1st June 1964 under the heading 'Showing Christian Love at Assemblies' the Society said: 'In this connection young persons especially should exercise care that they do not become more interested in associating with one another than in what is being said and done on the platform.' In the eyes of the outside world the behaviour of young Witnesses is remarkably restrained, and natural, but judged by the strict moral code of the Society it needs correcting. This is just one of several problems that the Society is concerned about at congregational level. Periodical articles in the *Kingdom Ministry* and *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* indicate that these problems are as yet unsolved.

Meeting attendance is a typical case; as the Witnesses increase in number and the attitude of Western society grows more permissive the New World Society finds complacency and apathy in its ranks. In the November 1964 *Kingdom Ministry* the Witnesses are advised:

To enjoy the meetings fully we should be on time for them. Are you there to sing the song and to join in the prayer or do you find yourself coming in late, causing heads to turn and minds to wander from instruction as you move about finding a seat? . . . If you are a servant, do you try to be on hand at least twenty minutes before each meeting to care for your duties and to assist the publishers? Not only is this an evidence of maturity, but think of the good example it sets for all in the congregation.⁵

More direct advice was given in the July 1965 *Kingdom Ministry*:

'But what can you do about low meeting attendance?' one of the group asked. An overseer spoke up and said: 'This was a problem in our congregation a few months ago; so we asked our study

SUNDAY, May 18, 1958

- 9: 00 a.m. Dedication and Baptism E. J. Courtney
- 9: 30 a.m. To Immersion
- 9: 35 a.m. Fulfilling Our Comis-
sion to Preach A. Westfield
- 10: 00 a.m. To the Field
-
- 3: 00 p.m. PUBLIC MEETING Chairman
N. Yenn
- Discourse,
Facing the Future
Without Fear E. J. Courtney
-
- 4: 30 p.m. Summary of
The Watchtower W. Owens
-
- 5: 00 p.m. Safeguard the Heart
with Wisdom K. Sindrey
-
- 5: 30 p.m. Keep Watching the Ministry
That You Fulfil It E. J. Courtney
-
- 6: 00 p.m. Concluding Announcements
and Song

Programme

CIRCUIT ASSEMBLY
of
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



Memorial Hall
Aberayron

May 16, 17, 18, 1958



"As for me, in my integrity I shall walk."
—Psalm 26: 11

FRIDAY, May 16, 1958

6: 45 p.m.	Songs and Experiences	K. Robertson
7: 00 p.m.	Fulfilling Our Ministry	E. J. Courtney
7: 15 p.m.	Ministry School	E. J. Courtney
	Review	L. Merrick
	Instruction Talk	
	Geography of the Promised Land	L. B. Rees
	Student Talks	
	The Holy City Revived and Cast Off (to par. 9)	H. Robinson
	The Holy City Revived and Cast Off (from par. 10)	A. Rogerson
	2 Chron. 3: 1 to 4: 18	T. Harries
	Interpretative Points	
8: 15 p.m.	Service Meeting	K. Sindrey
	<i>"Preaching Together in Unity"</i>	
	Preaching With an Aim	W. Badcliffe
	Attending Meetings	T. Rogerson
	Preaching with Magazines	W. Burbon
9: 15 p.m.	Concluding Announcements and Song	

SATURDAY, May 17, 1958

9: 00 a.m.	Faithful Ministers	J. Roach
9: 30 a.m.	To the Field	
1: 45 p.m.	Willing Ministers	J. Müller
2: 00 p.m.	To the Field	
2: 10 p.m.	District and Circuit Servants' Meeting with Congregation Servants	
6: 45 p.m.	Songs and Experiences	P. Routledge
7: 00 p.m.	Examining Our Ministry	E. J. Courtney
	FULFILLING OUR MINISTRY (Col. 4: 17)	
7: 20 p.m.	Why Make Back-Calls?	K. Sindrey
7: 35 p.m.	More Can Make Back-Calls	J. Williams
7: 47 p.m.	Need of a Record	N. Yenn
8: 02 p.m.	Song	
8: 05 p.m.	Preparing for a Back-Call	W. Hopkins
8: 17 p.m.	Meeting and Overcoming Objections	B. F. Houghton
8: 37 p.m.	An Effective Back-Call	K. Sindrey
8: 52 p.m.	Make More Back-Calls	E. J. Courtney
9: 02 p.m.	Concluding Announcements and Song	

A typical circuit assembly programme

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conductors to bring up questions on Tuesday evening that would be answered at the *Watchtower* study on Sunday. Then we asked them to make calls on those who were not attending meetings and tell them a little bit about the coming meeting and invite them to come. The brothers did well in picking up these individuals or walking with them to the Kingdom Hall and sitting with them during the meetings; and our attendance at the *Watchtower* study increased from 61 percent to 84 percent in six months.'

The Witnesses can be painfully direct and unsubtle in their efforts to help erring publishers!

A more serious problem is the number of disfellowshipped Witnesses, which appears to be increasing year by year. In 1958 the Society vice-president, Franz, commented on this increase:

Pointing up the need of constant prayerful vigilance, Franz told his hearers that for each of the five years from March, 1952, to April, 1957, there had been an average of 500 persons disfellowshipped from congregations in the United States. 'However', he said, 'during the past year, from April 1957, to April 1958, the number rose sharply above the yearly average to 1,334 delinquent members, or more than two and a half times as many.'

Whether by disfellowshipment or falling away, the Society is faced with thousands of members leaving the organisation. In a letter to all congregations in Great Britain in September 1963 they wrote: 'Earlier this year every overseer in Britain aided the Society in making an analysis of the reasons why many publishers fell away from the faith during the last year.'

In the *Kingdom Ministry*, July 1965 (p. 4), mention is made of a campaign to reclaim those who have left:

HELP THEM TO RETURN

There are tens of thousands of persons who at one time associated with Jehovah's organization, attending meetings and sharing in the field service . . . in the August 1 and August 15 issues of *The Watchtower* are heart-searching and encouraging articles concerning the parable of the prodigal son, entitled 'Recovery Still Possible,' 'A Young Man Goes Astray,' . . . If those who were once associated with Jehovah's people could be encouraged to read these articles, it might stir in them a longing to be back in the house of our Father.

An article in the 1967 *Watchtower* entitled 'Were you once a Kingdom Publisher?' admitted that about 100,000 Witnesses had

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left the movement during the last five years despite the many ways in which the Society has tried to remedy this loss.⁶ It is difficult to see what will happen now; if the Society is willing to compromise (in their nomenclature – ‘get a clearer light on things’) on certain issues then this may help to keep people in the movement. If the present trend continues then they may soon be faced with a unique and unpleasant experience – an actual decrease in their membership figures.

9. The International Organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses

THERE WERE 1,094,280 Jehovah's Witnesses scattered throughout 197 countries in 1967. Unlike the Quakers and other non-conformist sects, the organisation of the Witnesses is directed from a central headquarters from which the literature, doctrines and decisions proceed through direct channels to the individual members. The result is that Jehovah's Witnesses are at all times kept aware not only of their local activity but of the work of their brothers throughout the world. Effective administration is one of the most striking features of the New World Society. The Witnesses make use of three legal corporations – the Watchtower Bible and Tract Societies of Pennsylvania and New York, and the International Bible Students Association. The first two are responsible for organisation in the United States and the last named for Canada and the United Kingdom. Of the three corporations the Pennsylvanian one is most important; in 1967 it had 407 voting members who live in all parts of the world and are usually Witnesses of long standing. The voting members meet each year and elect or re-elect the seven directors of the corporation who in turn elect the officers. Thus the President of the corporation is not elected by popular vote but by the directors who choose one of their members for the post. In 1968 the officers of the Pennsylvania corporation were: N. H. Knorr (President), F. W. Franz (Vice-President) and G. Suiter (Secretary/Treasurer).

The original Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society was founded in 1884, its name was changed in 1896 and the headquarters moved from Pennsylvania to New York in 1909. A further corporation, the People's Pulpit Association, was founded in 1909 but its name was changed to The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society Inc. of New York in 1939. This corporation owns some of the property used by the Pennsylvania Society and is generally

The International Organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses

responsible for the Witnesses' activities throughout the United States. The third corporation, the International Bible Students Association, was set up in London in 1914. It owns property in Britain and is responsible for British affairs.

Although the three corporations are legally distinct their officers tend to be the same people – the President of the Pennsylvania corporation is automatically President of the other two. At the time of Rutherford ambitious and astute legal manoeuvring attended the election of the President, but there is no evidence of such today. Much of the superb organisation of the Witness movement is due to this concentration of responsibility and administrative power in the hands of one man. The President's job is certainly no sinecure: in addition to his door-to-door Witnessing work he travels extensively to check on the progress of the organisation throughout the world. The President is not, however, wholly responsible for the doctrinal edicts of the Society. The control comes from a larger body of Witnesses, all of whom are members of the 'remnant class' – this 'spiritual committee' certainly includes Knorr but the exact details of membership are not disclosed, even to the rest of the Witnesses. Nevertheless there is no doubt that Knorr and his board of directors are in complete administrative charge of the Witnesses: their decisions govern the lives of all Jehovah's Witnesses on a world-wide scale. For instance, in Britain the congregations receive many of their instructions from the branch office at Mill Hill, but the ultimate responsibility for these lies with the New York Head Office. It is there that the American affairs, the Gilead Bible School, International and National Assemblies, Presidential tours, literature releases, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* editorial policy, etc., are decided.

The Watchtower Society has an extensive printing factory at Adams Street, Columbia Heights, New York, which consists of four large interconnected buildings where millions of copies of the Society's literature are printed. Every few years some addition is made to the factory to cater for the continually rising circulation of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. For example, in 1965 two new rotary presses were installed, while in October 1967 a new ten-storey building was completed to house more presses and printing equipment. The Witnesses' literature appears in more than eighty languages (and in Braille) and most of this

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is printed in New York. The workers in the factory are all Jehovah's Witnesses (selected for their various skills) and they live with the Society officials at the Bethel Home: two twelve-storey buildings on Columbia Heights. 'Bethel' means 'house of God' and is the name the Witnesses give to their 'homes for officials' throughout the world. The Bethel in New York at present houses about 800 Witnesses although it could accommodate 1,100:

All of these witnesses of Jehovah have come from different parts of the United States, Canada and Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean. They have decided to make Bethel their home. They are all volunteers and they have filed applications requesting the privilege of working at the headquarters of the Society. We still have many applications on hand, but those between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five who are in good health, dedicated and baptized for at least a year and anxious to serve willingly in Jehovah's organization may file an application.¹

Bethel residents live in comfortable single or shared rooms and have the use of dining rooms, a laundry, barber's shop, library and so on, inside the building. In fact the Bethel is made as self-contained as possible – even shoe repairs and tailoring are done by trained Witnesses inside the home. Each Bethel member receives full board and a rather meagre personal allowance of fourteen dollars a month. The Witnesses are fond of claiming that the President of the Society (and the other officials) receive the same monthly allowance and are treated in the same way as other Bethel members. While this is not exactly true, it is a fact that the Witnesses place little emphasis on distinctions of rank – they claim there is merely a difference in delegation of responsibility. The Witnesses' publications inevitably describe life at the Bethel as joyous and rewarding, but in *Faith on the March* the depressing photographs of brothers in the New York Bethel do not give this impression!²

Much of the food eaten by the Witnesses at Bethel is obtained from three farms owned and run by the Society:

The Society has obtained a number of farms, which are also operated by ordained ministers. There are usually forty-five persons working at Kingdom Farm, nineteen at our Watchtower Farm and about five at Mountain Farm. All of these farms provide the Bethel family with many necessary food products. Usually Mountain

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Farm provides us with fruit and some vegetables. Kingdom Farm provides us with a great amount of vegetables and large crops of potatoes, wheat, peas and corn. They also make our butter and cheese and supply us with quite a bit of beef, pork, chicken, turkey, etc.³

Mountain Farm is situated about fifty miles from New York City, in the state of New Jersey. The other two farms are in New York State, Kingdom Farm being the largest and comprising 800 acres.

Mention has already been made of the Watchtower Society's missionary training school, *Gilead*. Until 1959 the school was situated on Kingdom Farm in South Lansing, but it was then moved to the New York Bethel. Gilead courses now last five months, at the end of which time 100 or so new 'missionaries' graduate to be sent to all parts of the world (including the United States and Britain). The curriculum at Gilead is based on the Bible with lecture courses on Bible prophecy, Bible law, Bible chronology, etc. Students are also given basic instruction in a foreign language. Gilead is registered in the United States as an institute of further education, but the amount of knowledge that can be imparted in five months is obviously very small (despite the exaggerated claims made by the Society). Gilead is important in the Witness movement because from it emerge those Witnesses who will later occupy positions of responsibility in the organisation – in fact the only other way of 'getting on' is by serving in the Bethel. In addition to Gilead, the Society since 1959 has been running a *Kingdom Ministry School* in the United States and in other countries such as Canada, England and Germany. This school provides a fortnight's refresher course for the various grades of 'servants' throughout the Witness movement – District, Circuit and Congregation Servants from all over the United States have attended the school in turn. The Society attaches great importance to the Kingdom Ministry School as it makes it possible for them to instruct and mould *all* the Jehovah's Witnesses who hold responsible positions in every congregation. The U.S.A. Kingdom Ministry School was originally sited at South Lansing but has recently been moved to New York.

The Society has about 200 missionary homes throughout the world which serve as living quarters, and nuclei for Witness activity. In countries outside the United States the administrative control comes from New York via the *Branch Offices*, of which there are ninety in places as far apart as Alaska, Burma, Korea,

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Nicaragua, Thailand and Zambia. Each Branch Office is built on the pattern of the New York Headquarters: there is a Bethel home to house officials and workers and the larger Branch Offices have printing equipment.

In Britain a new Branch Office at Mill Hill, London, has been in use since 1958. It incorporates a Kingdom Hall seating 200 people, a printing factory which produces a million magazines a month and extensive living quarters for the sixty-odd residents and those attending the British Kingdom Ministry School. The Bethel, as it is called, has its own bakery, carpenter's shop, kitchen and laundry, while food is grown on the adjacent farm to help feed the Witnesses. For those living and working in Bethel the working day usually starts at 6.30 a.m. when they rise; breakfast is at 7 a.m. and the Witnesses work through from 8 a.m. to 5.40 p.m. with a break for lunch. Witnesses who live at the Bethel usually agree to stay for four years, after which a new agreement is reached. The Bethel home at Mill Hill is an extremely pleasant place in beautiful surroundings, in contrast with its predecessor at Craven Terrace by Paddington Station. The Branch Office in Britain is in charge of the Witness movement here and in Aden and Malta, but it in turn is directly controlled by the New York headquarters. Although magazines are printed in Britain from printing plates cast in Mill Hill, the matrix impression is sent over from Brooklyn. For administrative convenience the country under the Branch Office is divided into *districts* (five in Britain) which are further subdivided into *circuits* (sixty in Britain).⁴ In these ways the New York headquarters is able to shape and control the Witnesses in all parts of the world. Naturally the administrative structure is only the framework for carrying out the Society's instructions - the most important factor is their careful choice as to who should occupy the positions of power and responsibility within this framework.

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY'S SERVANTS

Jehovah's Witnesses have no ordained clergy, they refer to all their dedicated members as 'ministers'. As we have seen, however, there is a hierarchy of responsibility: mature and zealous workers in the congregations are chosen for special work and they may be picked to attend the Watchtower missionary school. In fact, Gilead is responsible not only for training missionaries

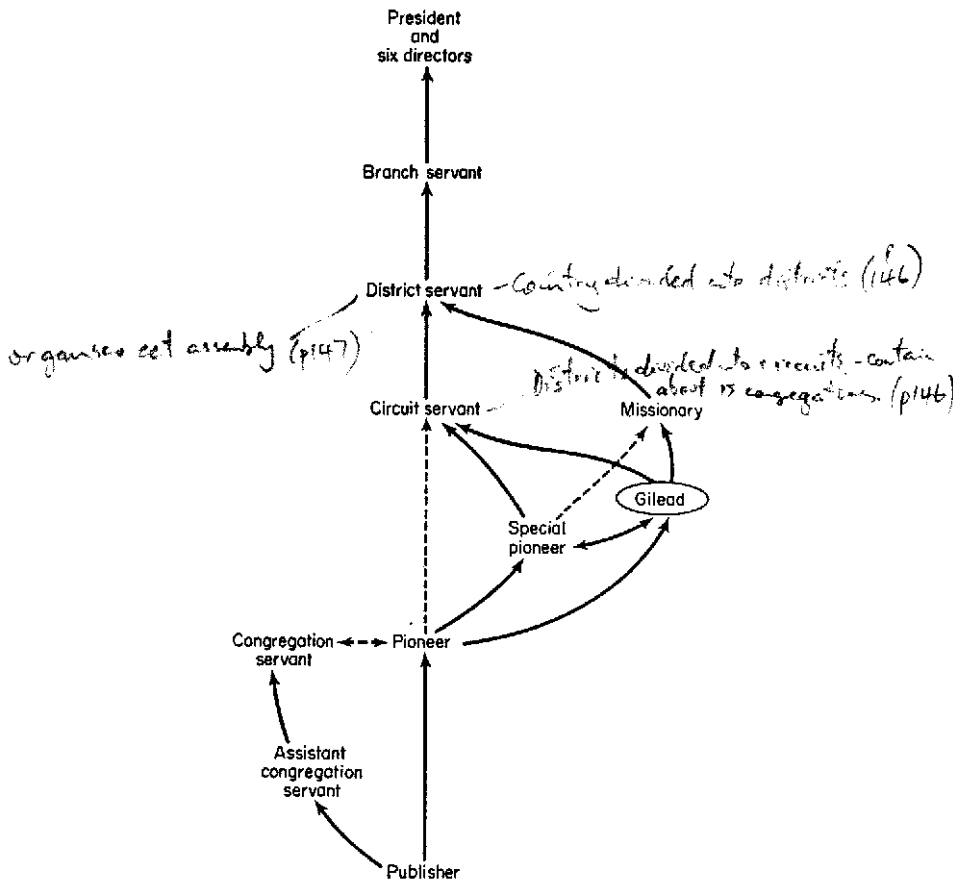
but also those whom the Society wishes to promote to District or Branch Servants (these are the Witnesses directly in charge of Districts and Branches respectively). The Society naturally picks out the more intelligent, experienced and mature Witnesses for these posts and there is a graduation of responsibility upwards from Pioneer – Special Pioneer – Circuit Servant – District Servant – Branch official, etc. There are about 8,000 missionaries and special pioneers throughout the world, and also about 1,500 Bethel workers and 2,000 Circuit and District Servants. The complicated chain of command and promotion is illustrated in the chart on page 160.

One unusual aspect of all positions of responsibility within the organisation is that they are usually viewed as positions of *service* to other Witnesses: there is no exalting of individuals within the movement. Personal popularity is inhibited by the Society, personal details and photographs of officials (even the President) rarely appear in the literature. The only way that many Witnesses discover such details is by reading newspaper reports about their own movement!⁵ One obvious advantage of this policy from the point of view of the Society is that no individual Witness can amass a following and rebel against the movement. The development of the organisation in this way is almost a fulfilment of communist ideology. The purpose of a totalitarian system is often to eliminate 'real personalities' from the organisation so that the death or defection of any individual does not adversely affect the progress of 'the Party'. For the Witnesses 'the Society' replaces 'the Party' as an anonymous but omnipotent object of worship. No individual Witness is in a position to know (or want to know) the personal thoughts of other Witnesses throughout the world except in so far as they praise the Society. The Society is his only source of information on this subject and hence the Society's pronouncements are never questioned.

At every level of the organisation those in authority make out detailed personal reports on those in the rank below them. Thus Circuit Servants report to the Society on each congregation while District Servants complete a dossier on each Circuit Servant:

The system by which the Society decides whether to promote an individual from one grade to another is an interesting one. When a district servant visits a circuit, or a circuit servant visits a congregation or a group of special pioneers, he is required to fill in a

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Hierarchy of responsibility in the Witness movement

Arrows indicate ways of progressing in the movement. (Dotted lines less usual paths of progress.)

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'Personal Qualifications Report' on the person or persons he has visited. . . . This 'Personal Qualifications Report' is a printed form. On it each person is rated or graded by scoring so many points out of a maximum of one hundred. There are fifty questions on the individual which his superior must answer. . . . The fifty questions are in five groups each of ten. The first group relates as might be expected to his house-to-house work (Is he meeting all his quotas? How much literature is he selling?) There follow ten questions on his organising ability, ten on his relationships with others (Is he a good mixer? Is he respected by others?) ten on his knowledge of scripture and mental attitude, and ten on his disposition, physical characteristics (Is he truthful? Is he neat and clean in appearance?).⁶

The situation does not seem to have greatly changed from the time when Rutherford maintained a highly efficient 'spy system' throughout the organisation! Since the last war the Society have in many ways increased their grip on the individual. The programme for every congregation meeting is decided in New York; the Kingdom Ministry School ensures that every servant in the congregation has been directly instructed by the Society, and finally every official in the movement is under surveillance. Although the Society would probably justify this tight control on the grounds that they are God's mouthpiece and that such control makes the movement stronger, they are nevertheless not eager to tell the Witnesses this – most publishers are unaware of the extent of Society control. The irony is that most of them would calmly and faithfully support the Society over this if they *did* discover it.

THE WITNESSES' LITERATURE

The most important Witness literature is undoubtedly the semi-monthly magazines – *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* The former is printed in a total of seventy-four languages and each issue averages about five million copies (these are the 1968 figures). Both these magazines are distributed by the Witnesses – as far as I know the magazines are never sold through newsagents or other commercial channels. Neither magazine contains any advertising other than that for Watchtower Society publications and it is questionable whether the magazines would sell in the normal way. In this sense the large circulation figures are not a true guide to the popularity of the literature. At least a million copies of each

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issue are bought by the Witnesses themselves, while the remainder are distributed by a colossal volunteer force to people who would otherwise probably not buy them.

The Watchtower is recognised to be the primary doctrinal mouthpiece of the Society – Biblical interpretations, changes in doctrine and Society pronouncements initially appear in *The Watchtower* and for this reason the Witnesses spend an hour each week carefully discussing the main article of the current edition. The thirty-two pages of *The Watchtower* are taken up with articles that directly concern the Bible, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or both. It is presentable in appearance although the illustrations inside are usually inferior; the magazine is written in American English, serious in tone while relatively easy to read but somewhat dogmatic and unimaginative. The two main articles in *The Watchtower* usually discuss some important doctrine or they comment on the code of conduct for 'Christians' (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses) today. Typical article titles are the following: 'Why do men die?', 'Beware of toying with sexual immorality', 'Will sincerity alone please God?', etc. *The Watchtower* has several regular features including 'Questions from Readers' and a series of autobiographical articles written by Witnesses who have been members for many years. Apart from these autobiographies, articles are never signed and no editor or editorial staff are named. As the main articles are almost invariably concerned with the Witnesses and their internal affairs they are irrelevant to the general public – the major part of some issues is unintelligible to outsiders.

This is certainly not true of *The Watchtower's* companion magazine, *Awake!* which was originally founded to 'point to the physical evidences of the Millennium' but now:

presents vital topics on which you should be informed. It features penetrating articles on social conditions and offers sound counsel for meeting the problems of everyday life. Current news from every continent passes in quick review. Attention is focussed on activities in the fields of government and commerce about which you should know. Straightforward discussions of religious issues alert you to matters of vital concern. Customs and people in many lands, the marvels of creation, practical sciences and points of human interest are all embraced in its coverage. *Awake!* provides wholesome, instructive reading for every member of the family. [See any *Awake!* p. 2.]

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Awake! conforms to present 'popular' journalistic practice – in some ways it resembles *The Reader's Digest*. The articles in the magazine are usually interesting and informative and, like *The Watchtower*, they are unsigned. Two regular features are 'Watching the World', a miscellany of short news reports from many countries (almost invariably they are about disasters or other depressing items of news), and 'Your Word is Truth', a common-sense discussion of various Bible beliefs. *Awake!* is printed in twenty-six languages with 5,000,000 copies per issue.

Next to the magazines the most important literature output is in bound books; the early success of the movement was closely linked to book sales and both Pastor Russell and Rutherford disseminated millions of copies of their books. This inevitably and effectively increased their following and the Watchtower Society today also periodically 'releases' millions of copies of a new book for distribution amongst the Witnesses and the general public. Since Rutherford's death the books have borne no author's name, and although the style of all the Society's literature is similar certain differences suggest the obvious conclusion that different individuals are responsible for the compilation of each book. In fact the Society has disclosed that each book is the work of more than one Witness and that no book is published until it has passed through the hands of several brothers on the governing body of the Watchtower Society.

On the whole the Society's books lack any literary merit and they are only concerned with bare statements of 'facts' and scripture quotations – the gaps between these being filled with pages of rhetoric and quasi-logical arguments. The main outlet for the books is again the Witnesses themselves, most of whom buy a copy of each book on publication. Pastor Russell's works are no longer printed by the Society and in any case are not recommended – few Witnesses ever read them. Copies of Rutherford's books are usually available for reference in Kingdom Halls but they are not printed or distributed at present – again few are read by Witnesses today. Since Rutherford's death twenty-eight books have been published by the Watchtower Society but only the more recent of these are used and recommended by the Witnesses.

As to the contents of the books – many of them are written to a set pattern which recurs in book after book with different

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wording under a new title. The pattern consists of tracing the events of the Bible, as the Witnesses see them, from the Garden of Eden to the time of Jesus. This is supplemented by their doctrines and the story concludes with their present-day prophecies and the imminence of the Battle of Armageddon. Rutherford wrote *Creation and Deliverance* to this pattern and since 1942 three other examples are *The Truth shall make You Free* (1943), *The Kingdom is at Hand* (1944) and *Let Your Name be Sanctified* (1961). Other books recently published by the Society include doctrine primers (*Let God be True and Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie*), instruction books used by the Witnesses in the Ministry School (*Qualified to be Ministers*), a survey of world religions (*What has Religion done for Mankind?*) and so on.

At the New York International Assembly of 1958 a new book was released: 'New Large Size! Bold Type! Many Illustrations!' was the convention-guide description. Entitled *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* it was designed to tell the Bible story to young people and those new in the movement: "This book wastes no time and space discussing false doctrines of worldly religions, but simply explains the God-honouring truths of the sacred Bible." This trend continued with the publication of three other large-size books: *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (1963), a book-by-book Bible commentary, *Watch Tower Publications Index* listing references to all the Society's publications since 1930 - addenda are published each year. The third and most important book was *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*; written in the form of a conversation between a Jehovah's Witness and an interested couple it explained the history of the Watchtower Society.

The standard of writing in these books has improved since Rutherford's time - his books were written as shapeless and meandering essays. The present Society books are still crippled by bad writing but they are better organised and written in unpretentious if unimaginative prose. As far as the Witnesses are concerned the books contain the words of truth - hence their literary merit (or rather demerit) is irrelevant. Unfortunately, however, the books contain many errors of fact and reasoning, although the Witnesses seem unable to recognise this. For instance, in *You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World* we read this concerning 'the coming of Jesus to the temple' in 1918:

'Being a Spirit whom no man could see, Adonay's coming was necessarily with the invisibility of a Spirit Person.'⁸ This kind of reasoning precludes the possibility of *any* angels ever being visible – which flatly contradicts the many materialisations described in the Bible. Other examples of slipshod argument were given in Chapter 4 and there is an unending source of them. The ones I have given are not just petty faults culled from their vast output of literature; an analysis of most of their books will reveal many examples of begging the question, prejudicial and emotive arguments, illogical-reasoning and so on.

The Witnesses, as I have said, are generally unaware of the mistakes in their literature. Many of them are incapable of seeing such mistakes, but even if they could then the fact that they believe (or want to believe) the conclusion to be established means that any line of argument is justified in their eyes. This is why there is no howl of dismay over a book as bad as *What has Religion done for Mankind?* – on the contrary the Witnesses lavishly praised this and all their other books. In fairness it must be said that those books which directly describe the Bible or give a speech training course (particularly *Qualified to be Ministers*) are relatively free from error and are extremely useful and informative.

In addition to the many books, the Society publishes a large number of booklets which usually contain the text of main talks at large assemblies; otherwise they discuss one specific doctrine such as Evolution (*Evolution versus the New World*) or Jesus' nature (*The Word*) or they may be brief doctrinal summaries (such as *This Good News of the Kingdom*). There are about ninety booklets in circulation and they are often given as supplementary literature with magazine subscriptions or books. The Society prints and publishes a number of Bible translations, including the King James Version. Some Witness beliefs hinge on the exact translation of certain Greek and Hebrew words and for this reason the Society has for many years used the *Emphatic Diaglott*, an inter-linear Greek version by the Christadelphian, Benjamin Wilson.⁹ The Society places the greatest emphasis on its own New World Translation of the Bible. Their translation of the New Testament, or Greek Scriptures, was released in the grand fashion at the New York International Assembly of 1950. This was followed by five more volumes covering the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scrip-

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tures, in 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958 and 1960. The whole version was then revised and reprinted in one book in 1961. Although the translation is up-to-date it reads like a legal document; in striving to be exact the translators have made the text sound clumsy and sometimes ludicrous. Jehovah's Witnesses now use their own translation in preference to the King James Version – they believe it is the most accurate and therefore the best. The Witnesses are fond of quoting experts who have praised the New World Translation, but many have found fault with it. Despite this opposition the New World Translation remains the Gospel by which the Witnesses swear.

Finally the Watchtower Society publishes one very important book every year. This is the hard-back 400-page *Yearbook* which contains an introductory report by the President of the Society followed by a detailed analysis chart of the number of active Witnesses, congregations, Bible Studies, literature sales, etc., throughout the world. This is followed by about 250 pages of reports and experiences from each country in turn. The book concludes with about a hundred pages containing 365 Bible texts, one for each day of the year (a short comment follows each text). This book is used in the Service Meeting: the text for the day is always read and discussed at the beginning of the meeting and other talks often include experiences from the *Yearbook*. The intention of the Society is that the day-text be read and discussed at breakfast every morning – most Witnesses try to do this.

From the very beginning the Watchtower Society has been dogged by the charge that they make vast fortunes out of selling their literature. Russell fought several court cases over this issue and Rutherford, of course, was continually accused of using the Bible Students to sell his literature to make money (this led to Rutherford's countercharge that 'religion was a snare and a racket'). Nowadays the Society coyly claims that it is supported by voluntary contributions, but while it is true that they receive large sums of money from this source there is no reason to believe that their printing business is unprofitable. The Society's books and magazines are economically produced (very few overheads, very poorly paid workers) and there is, as we have seen, a guaranteed market. The attractive and well-bound books usually sell at 4s. 3d. to the public, but publishers are supplied copies at 3s. 10d. each while pioneers pay only 10d. per book. The latter figure the

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Society claims is below cost price (whatever that is) but not by much, I would say. Evidently the Society makes a clear profit on every book supplied to the publishers and this applies also to magazine subscriptions (8s. 6d. to the public and to publishers, 4s. 3d. to pioneers). There is quite obviously a lot of money in the organisation at the higher levels: the large assemblies are expensive to run, new branch offices are spacious, impressive and costly (the Canadian branch office cost about a million dollars) and executives of the Society travel the world, sometimes on month-long tours. This is in contrast with the situation at congregation level; there is no aura of financial prosperity about most Kingdom Halls and it is difficult to avoid the impression that the congregations work hard and send up their money to be liberally used on Watchtower Society projects. But I think it is quite wrong, however, to imply that officials in the movement benefit financially from this situation – the money is ploughed back into the organisation at the higher levels and the Watchtower leaders appear to lead busy lives devoted to the movement.

PUBLICITY AND ASSEMBLIES

The Society has always had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards publicity. The organisation under Rutherford took on the appearance of a secret society but nowadays the reverse seems to be true – not only do the Witnesses welcome publicity but they take steps to get as much as possible. In their booklet *Preaching Together in Unity* the Society defines the position of the 'Public Relations Servant' in every circuit:

The Society appoints a capable brother to serve as public relations servant in each circuit. He will co-operate closely with the circuit servant in carrying on public relations work in the circuit. Primarily, his work will involve public relations work at the circuit assembly. Local congregations will co-operate with him at the assembly time, but in connection with other publicity work the local servants will arrange for their own publicity.¹⁰

The Society recommends that congregations attempt to publicise their faith in the local newspapers. In 1963 the Society sent out a series of letters to all congregations in Britain in connection with the Twickenham Assembly that was held in the summer. One letter consisted of a questionnaire designed to obtain newsworthy items for the Press. Later letters enclosed

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specimen 'statements' or 'Press releases' to be completed by certain members of the congregation, retyped, and then sent to the local papers. When the right names have been filled in the statements are sent to newspapers although the person's words were dictated by the Society. In a further letter the Society mentioned how to avoid the danger of two congregations sending the same release to the same newspaper – thus betraying the artificiality of the 'local' news story! The Witnesses also run a News Service Department which is responsible for promoting publicity for the movement. For example, the internal instruction sheet *Kingdom Ministry* contained the following advice for Witnesses attending large assemblies in 1965: 'All overseers are requested to call at the News Service Department immediately after the final session on Sunday to collect their congregation's final news release. These will be typed out complete and ready in every respect for placing with the editor concerned.'¹¹

A rather paradoxical situation now arises as the Witnesses would like people to believe that all the publicity they receive is not of their own doing but stems from the merits of their organisation which *itself* attracts the publicity. In other words, the Witnesses feel that their best public image is that of a movement unconcerned about its public image! For instance, J. W. Felix writes in his introduction to the British edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses – The New World Society*: '... publicity is something they evidently do not seek. . . . They do not seek the limelight, but if they get it they accept it almost without appraisal, with indifference.' This is nonsense, of course: not only do the Witnesses initiate the publicity, but they vicariously enjoy the results – by buying the newspaper editions featuring themselves and storing up the Press cuttings to impress outsiders. For some time it has been the custom in Britain for some local newspapers to print special editions containing several pages of photographs and coverage of local assemblies. This special edition is then sold at the assembly grounds to the Witnesses. Thus the paper makes more money but the Witnesses get something out of it too. The Society knows that assemblies are their main source of favourable publicity and they are therefore 'plugged' quite hard.

The Society has printed a useful and comprehensive booklet entitled *Manual of Theocratic News Service Information* for use within the organisation. On page 2 it explains the Society line on pub-

licity: 'Good or bad, welcome or unwelcome, as long as the present system of things lasts, there will always be publicity. Since that is so the sensible attitude is not to allow it to be haphazard but to do everything possible to guide it.' Many publicity aids are printed by the Society in the form of 'reports' of large international assemblies – the report of the New York 1958 Assembly contained 120 copiously illustrated pages. In fact I believe the larger assemblies are held primarily for their publicity effect on both the Witnesses and non-believers. It is difficult to justify the expense of these gatherings on any other basis – especially when the Society has to appeal to every congregation for money to finance them.¹²

ASSEMBLIES, ASSEMBLIES AND MORE ASSEMBLIES

The assembly trend was started by Pastor Russell and now forms an integral part of the Witnesses' activity. As well as the smaller circuit and district assemblies there are the major international assemblies which are usually held in large football or baseball stadiums hired exclusively for this purpose. The 1958 New York Assembly described below is typical of all the big assemblies, be they in Twickenham, Chicago, Frankfurt, Tokyo or Rome. Called the 'Divine Will International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses' it was held in New York City from 27th July to 3rd August – jointly at Yankee Stadium and the nearby Polo Grounds. Both are huge open-air stadiums and both were needed as this was to be the largest gathering ever held there by anyone.

Quotations below are from the printed 'Report' of the Assembly:

Preparing for this immense assembly required months of hard work by thousands of our brothers. The biggest task was finding accommodations for the more than 125,000 persons who requested them. . . . On Saturday, April 26, 1958, a meeting of New York publishers was held in Yankee Stadium. This was the kick-off meeting for the big task of finding accommodations in private homes. The thousands who gathered there received detailed instructions on how to do rooming work.

The many signs and the speakers' platforms to be used during the Assembly had to be made in advance. In addition the vast amount of equipment needed for the loudspeaker system, the kitchens and the cafeteria had to be installed. By the opening day of the Assembly the Witnesses had cleaned the stadiums, posted

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up hundreds of direction and information notices and set up a large number of departments under the stands and these handled everything from first-aid and language difficulties to the supply of literature in more than a hundred languages. Six thousand volunteer Witnesses acted as attendants to direct and help the conventioners. Adjacent to the stadiums were cafeterias, staffed by Witness volunteers, capable of feeding up to 70,000 persons per hour. Many foreign delegates attended the Assembly - 4,822 from Europe, 106 from Asia and 263 from Africa. They arrived by plane and ocean liner and special buses were hired in New York and a voluntary taxi service set up to transport the Witnesses to their accommodation. The Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds across the river were used simultaneously - important talks given at one were either relayed directly across or given later at the other stadium. Two orchestras, each of more than a hundred musicians, were present to accompany the hymn-singing.

There were 180,291 in attendance on the opening day, 27th July, which was named 'Faithfulness Day'. Sessions were held in the morning, afternoon and evening of the first seven days and in the morning and afternoon of the last day. On the second, third, fifth and sixth days foreign language talks were given at both stadiums in the morning. There were breaks between talks for meals and door-to-door work in New York. Most of the talks were given by members of the governing body of the Watchtower Society. At every large international Assembly it is usual for some minor doctrinal change to be announced, often incorporated in a new book which is then released at the Assembly. This occurred on the fourth day of the 1958 Assembly when Volume IV of the *New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures* was released by the President, Nathan Homer Knorr, who then delivered the 'new truth':

Following the close of this remarkable lecture, Knorr made the announcement of the release of Volume IV of the *New World Translation*. He said this volume includes the books *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations*. . . . Who is it today that has been commissioned like faithful Jeremiah of old? Let recorded history answer, said Knorr. It was Jehovah who appointed Jeremiah to do the preaching work when a most heart-rending thing was about to happen, the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem. For forty years Jeremiah prophesied. Part by part his predictions came to pass. Today the

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clergy have no forty-year record of preaching God's judgements, nor have they drawn fire of opposition as did Jeremiah. None other than the anointed group of Jehovah's witnesses has a forty-year record of preaching Jehovah's Judgements since 1919. No individual today is the modern Jeremiah. Rather, the anointed remnant as a group make up the modern 'wonder' prophet pictured by Jeremiah.¹³

Also on this day, 30th July, the customary baptism ceremony was held in the morning. The amazing total of 7,136 were baptised at nearby Orchard Beach:

It was 10:30 when the immersion began at Orchard Beach. . . . The instant they stepped off the buses, candidates were funneled into separate queues according to sex, and channelled through the public dressing rooms. City policemen, assisted by the convention's attendant staff, staggered the crossflow of public traffic so as to keep the streams of candidates flowing across 200 yards of sand to a reserved bay 416 feet wide. Thousands of people watched.

There were thirty immersion lines marked off by human links, leading the candidates two abreast some seventy-five feet into the water. At the end of each line waited three immersers. . . . At 12:45 the last one of the group was dipped under water and raised again.¹⁴

The most surprising item of the New York Assembly came on Friday evening when Knorr announced that women, as well as men, would in future be admitted to give talks in the Ministry School. The Assembly Report says: 'Brother Knorr surprised the vast audience Friday evening when he announced thrilling new changes in the theocratic ministry school.'¹⁵ On the last day of the New York Assembly Knorr delivered the main talk - 'God's Kingdom Rules - Is the World's End Near?' - to an audience of 253,922. After the talk half a million booklets of the printed text of his discourse were distributed to those at the stadiums. The Assembly, inevitably, was a success. There were many members of the public who were not pleased by a saturation 'witness' in New York but as generally happens the civility and good behaviour of Jehovah's Witnesses won people over. The New York Assembly of 1958 won for itself a special mention in the United States Congressional Record which had this to say:

WITNESSES STYLED CITY'S BEST GUESTS - 180,000 AT WORLD ASSEMBLY WIN PRAISE FOR COURTESY, QUIETUDE, AND NEATNESS. . . .

New Yorkers are unanimous in agreeing that the Witnesses' conduct has been exemplary. . . . Their cleanliness is now almost legendary. . . .

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Courtesy has been their watchword. . . . Executive vice president of the New York Convention and Visitors' Bureau called the Witnesses 'an asset to the community'. He described their behaviour as 'out of this world'.¹⁶

In my experience the large Assemblies are clean, friendly and a good example of 'New World living' to the rest of the world. The experience is a marvellous one for the Witnesses and an impressive one for outsiders, but unfortunately the Witnesses are not shy about pointing out these facts. Their convention reports always give an exaggerated picture of what happened; it is always stated that the Witnesses are 'thrilled', 'pleased' or 'interested' by the proceedings, no word of adverse criticism is ever heard. These Assemblies have become showpieces and the Society appears to be determined that even if the delegates do not all behave perfectly the convention report shall say they did. The following quotation from the July 1965 *Kingdom Ministry* is typical:

Dear Publishers:

Our thrilling 'Word of Truth' assemblies at Dublin and Edinburgh are now just a memory; but what a wonderful memory! From young and old alike, from new and mature publishers all over the British Isles, we have been receiving letters of heartfelt appreciation. . . . Yes, all of us are overflowing with deep gratitude to our Heavenly Father. . . . This was a grand attendance. . . . And what a peaceable assembly it was. Our brothers got a fine reception from the people of Dublin and were able to give a wonderful witness. Our larger assembly in Edinburgh also made a tremendous impact on this capital city of Scotland. . . . What a thrill it was. . . . How uplifting it was. . . . How strengthening to hear. . . . And how stimulating to see. . . . How thrilling it was to be told. . . . With this wonderful uplift from the assemblies we shall all want to get busy right away distributing the new book. . . . How marvellous if each publisher could start one brand new study in the new book.¹⁷

The Witnesses are strongly encouraged by the Society to attend assemblies, which are regarded as obligatory for zealous members of the faith, and while at the Assembly delegates are expected to attend all the sessions. In his address of welcome to the 1958 New York Assembly the chairman said: 'During sessions concentrate your mind on taking in what the speakers say, as from Jehovah through his organisation.' The Society also advises that 'Where a publisher is living in a private home he should take

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advantage of the opportunity to present the literature to his host. Give him a witness and try and start a Bible Study. Above all, be certain to invite him to the meetings during the week and especially the Sunday public meeting.' Since 1958 major Assemblies have been held at roughly two-year intervals in countries all over the world. They are getting progressively bigger, or longer, or more international. The Society is pouring thousands of pounds into the staging of these immense gatherings to prove something to itself, to its members and to the outside world; perhaps they wish to prove that the Witnesses can congregate in huge numbers peaceably and happily, or perhaps more simply that they are a numerous people, a fast-growing religion, the happiest religion and, dare they say it, the best religion?

10. The People Who Believe

IN THIS concluding chapter we set out to discover more about the men and women who are Jehovah's Witnesses — their social background, reasons for conversion and their outlook on social and moral issues. The social background of modern sects has been the subject of a certain amount of research but information concerning the Witnesses is scanty.¹ Early researches into the social origins of the Witnesses met with little success, particularly during the Presidency of Rutherford who withheld details of the movement and its members from enquirers. This was apparently in line with his 'separatist' policy towards the rest of the world.

Despite these difficulties Milton R. Czatt (in the early 'thirties) and H. H. Stroup (in the 'forties) tried to determine the social background of individual Witnesses. Czatt's conclusions were embodied in his work: *The International Bible Students: Jehovah's Witnesses* as quoted by Stroup:

Mr. Czatt writes in his dissertation that he discovered few Witnesses with college degrees. Although some are professional men, most have 'very limited education'. He unearthed little worthy of mention about the economic level of the Witnesses, but got the 'impression' that they are 'predominantly laborers, mechanics, factory-workers, and farmers, with an occasional mention of semi-skilled or skilled workers.' He came upon a few 'retired farmers' or 'older retired people' in the movement.

Stroup's opinion was somewhat lower:

Although Stanley High states that the 'Jehovah's Witnesses look like average Americans,—as, in fact, they are,' my own observations lead me to think that the preponderant majority of them are not even 'average', but noticeably under average in terms of social and economic privilege. . . . I have found that the greater number of Witnesses whom I have studied fall into. . . 'relief cases, poverty' and 'working-men'. Naturally I have found some witnesses who

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rank above 'average' on such a scale, but these, often Company leaders,² are few in number. My findings, however, were not of such a nature that they can be accepted as statistical evidence.³

These personal impressions are not wholly reliable as the 'sample' of Witnesses was not large and Stroup does not appear to understand what 'average' means; we should also bear in mind that both surveys were taken in times of overall economic depression. A strictly statistical survey has been made, however, by the United States Department of Justice during World War II. At that time about 8,000 Witnesses applied for exemption from military service and this number was sufficient to give an overall picture of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States. It seems they were 'pretty average' in most respects: that is the Witnesses reflected the percentage norms for the whole population (for example, about one per cent had had college education, which was about the national percentage at that time). This appears to be the situation in Britain - there are some professional men amongst the Witnesses and some who have been to University but no more than the overall percentage for the population of the country. It seems generally true, however, that while poor people are still common there are few, if any, layabouts left in the movement. Poverty is not looked down upon by Jehovah's Witnesses, but laziness is (*Proverbs 6 : 6*). There are few rich men in the organisation, just as Jesus predicted, say the Witnesses! 'Jehovah's Witnesses are not the moneyed men of the earth, not the commercial men, nor politicians, and certainly not the religionists, but they come mainly from the common walks of life.'⁴ Occasionally, however, well-known people create a stir by joining the Witnesses or, in the case of Mickey Spillane, flirting with them. In Britain the list of converts includes former flying squad detective 'Tug' Wilson, British and Empire Wrestling champion Ken Richmond, and some members of the 'Shadows' pop-group.

What sort of people choose to become Jehovah's Witnesses? One answer to this is that the chief field for converts appears to be amongst disillusioned church members - people with a 'religious' outlook searching for the answers to the questions: Why is there evil? Why are we here?, etc. The relatively sophisticated orthodox churches feel there is no definite answer to these queries, but the Witnesses provide an answer to all such questions - their remedy is no less than a universal panacea! Hoekema

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recalls the expression: 'the cults are the Unpaid Bills of the Church'; and it often seems as though the Witnesses have set out to accomplish what the established churches have failed to do. They are certainly fond of saying that the churches have 'failed the people' and 'led them astray'. Thus many Witnesses are, in fact, ex-church members who found in the Witness movement qualities which were lacking in their own church:

Boerwinkel suggests what some of these qualities may be: (1) People find in the cult a warm and brotherly fellowship which they have failed to find in a church. (2) People find in the cult a centre of integration, a place where each member plays an important role and fills a necessary function, a place where each one is known and needed. (3) People find in the cult a certain sense of security, since the cult provides not only what is thought to be an immediate contact with God and God's will, but also an organisation which will never forsake them and will stand by them in time of trouble. (4) The cult provides an outlet for the drive toward greater intensity and radicalness [*sic*] in one's religious life. Whereas the churches are inclined to look askance at these radical tendencies, the cult welcomes them and satisfies them. . . (5) The cult answers a need for specific instruction in the techniques of various religious practices and for specific advice on various types of moral problems.⁵

We can see these qualities evident in the Witness movement. For example (2) is particularly applicable to the Witnesses, many of whom may feel insignificant in their social and secular environment, but in the Witness movement they are automatically *ministers* of the Gospel, they are members of God's chosen organisation and, as we have seen, there is a strong likelihood they occupy some position of responsibility in the congregation such as Accounts Servant, Group Study Conductor or perhaps Assistant to one of the Servants.

The Witnesses themselves offer a variety of reasons for their conversion, the most common being that they were convinced that the doctrines were correct. How much of this is true and how much rationalisation is difficult to say, but obviously there must be some rational co-operation on the part of the convert before he can embrace the doctrines of the Witnesses.⁶ Here is a typical personal account of conversion:

Last August while homeward bound on the train I sat beside a lady who quietly handed me a folded magazine asking me that I read

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it and pass it on to others. Simply because her quiet manner attracted me, I said, 'Yes'. I did not think of the paper for several days and then felt too busy to take the time. This occurred several times until finally I remembered my promise to the woman and read the article, 'Where are the dead?' aloud to my companion.

From the beginning our hearts and minds accepted all from cover to cover because the Bible was clearly proving them. O, the years of heart hunger and never to have heard of these writings nor the truth.⁷

The movement offers genuine comfort and a new hope to the bereaved and suffering. It is possible to attribute the increase in the Witnesses' numbers just after the Second World War to their promise that those who had died in the war would shortly be reunited with their loved ones and that 'millions now living will never die'. Below is a typical experience of this kind:

Were it not for one of the Jehovah's Witnesses I would today be in the depths of despair. I buried my dear little three year old daughter one year ago; and after three months of grieving, with no minister able to give me real comfort, one of these Witnesses stopped at my door and with a beautiful smile told me of God's wonderful purpose. And to think that I had been searching for the truth for twenty years in the churches.⁸

Other people, too, make a direct emotional plea and almost 'wish' themselves into an organisation that can give them peace of mind. In the *Report* of the 1958 New York Assembly there is the following account:

Brother Gordon Salisbury of Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, was in a taxicab when the cabdriver commented that he was raised a Catholic but as he became more mature, he could not accept the beliefs of his church. Now, he said, he is very mixed up. He asked about the New World Society, wanting to know the hope of Jehovah's witnesses. The brother told him the new world hope and asked if he would like one of Jehovah's witnesses to call on him. The cabdriver replied that Jehovah's witnesses had never contacted him before. He added: 'I wish someone would give me peace of mind in this troubled, wicked world.'⁹

Whatever the reason that prompts a person to become a Jehovah's Witness, once in the movement a certain conformity occurs. New converts are recognisable by their enthusiasm which often exceeds that of the older, established Witnesses. This is easy

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to understand in view of the dynamic and apocalyptic nature of the Witnesses' theology. New members are struck by the proximity of the Battle of Armageddon and the consequent uselessness of 'the old world'; they feel a keen desire to talk to everyone they meet about the new world (after several months, or perhaps years, this zeal diminishes and the believer settles into a mood of calm acceptance). In addition to this a new convert's conversation conspicuously lacks the 'stock phrases' used and sanctioned by the Society:

A newly converted Witness can be distinguished by the infrequency of these clichés in his speech; he may have trouble in expressing his ideas, but the older Witness knows by rote most of the special vocabulary of the dogmas of his faith.¹⁰

The Witnesses themselves approve of such a 'special vocabulary' which they feel helps to ensure their loyalty to the Society — a situation similar to that in George Orwell's novel *1984* where the creation of *Newspeak* eliminated the possibility of *thoughtcrime*! A Witness speaking at the 1958 New York Assembly said this about a new publication: 'What I like about this new aid is that it gives Bible education along with its instruction. The brothers and good-will persons will not only be learning to read and write but they will be learning theocratic terminology at the same time.' 'Good-will persons' is a typical Witness stock phrase, indicating members of the public who have shown some interest in the movement. Similarly the words 'theocratic', 'the organisation', 'out on the work', 'examine our heart-condition' (i.e. our innermost desires), 'the Society', etc., have a special significance to the Witnesses, who use them frequently. The New World Translation of the Bible has provided numerous new stock phrases which I am sure must sound very odd to outsiders (one example is 'heart-condition' above).

In addition to mastering the terminology the newly converted Witness must conform immediately to the doctrines of the Watchtower Society, thus whatever individuality of mind he possessed before conversion is liable to be eradicated if he stays in the movement:

Immediately upon conversion, the neophyte declares himself in harmony with all the beliefs of the organisation whether he understands them or not—and often he has not even heard of some of them.

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If a Witness is unable to 'see' a particular belief which the organisation cherishes, he is taken aside by other Witnesses and persuaded that he has not made a complete surrender to the will of Jehovah, or that Satan has managed to creep into his life.¹¹

The effect of this dogmatism can be most distressing when a Witness decides to leave the organisation – he or she is thought to have been led astray by Satan. This situation is particularly unpleasant if it concerns members of the same family – if children fail to accept the Society's beliefs they may be emotionally and mentally rejected by their Witness parents: love of the Society comes before love of one's family. This to me seems to be one of the truly regretful and distressing aspects of the Witness movement at the personal level; there are so many families split in this way.¹² An insurmountable barrier is set up which can only be removed by one party or the other changing sides. At one time the Society favoured the idea of married couples separating if only one was in the faith, but now they believe that husband and wife should stay together and maintain the marriage. Nevertheless this should not prevent the faithful partner from rendering due service to God and if there is any clash of interests then God must come before their marriage partner.

In contrast to this the Witnesses display kindness and friendliness to newcomers typical of many modern sects. If anything, their approach is too friendly; their warm offers of help, and enquiries as to the newcomers' name and address, can be off-putting. My own feeling is that there is still an air of furtiveness about the Witnesses which does not fit in with their 'happy image' but is probably a hangover from Rutherford's time. As long as the Witnesses feel a stranger is 'good-will' or actually a Witness, however, then he is warmly welcomed and made to feel at home. This kindness has been abused by criminals and the *Kingdom Ministry* occasionally contains warnings of the following kind:

Brothers are advised to be on their guard against a young man, about six feet tall, slim, dark, in the early twenties, who claims to be a brother and calls on brothers whose address he often obtains from local tradesmen. His usual story is that his new car, belonging to his father, has broken down and after paying for repairs he has no money left for petrol to get home. He steals money from handbags and makes a plausible excuse to leave, or obtains money on the false pretence that he will later return it, but he never does so.¹³

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The Witnesses do, in fact, have a strong community spirit; during the last war they were welded into a resistant and almost fanatical body of believers by the heat of persecution. The Witness congregations were re-named 'companies' by analogy with war-time troop units. The terminology of that time has not altogether died out, for instance in *Let God be True*¹⁴ they claim that 'Everywhere Jehovah's witnesses are spoken against' while in 1958 they referred to those opposing them in the following way: 'The enemy has no love for us and would like nothing better than to silence us.' Although this cuts across the Witnesses' desire for good publicity they expect an increase in persecution just prior to the Battle of Armageddon. Thus they tend to use any support they obtain from outsiders as proof that Jehovah's Witnesses are superior and recognised as such, while any persecution is a sign to them of the devil's influence and the possible proximity of Armageddon. Taking an objective view, it appears that at present most governments are treating the Witnesses leniently, but there are notable exceptions, including the communist bloc.

The *esprit de corps* so characteristic of the Witnesses and so reassuring to new converts is a source of strength to those Witnesses undergoing persecution in various parts of the world; the Society attempts to alleviate their suffering by widely publicising the 'injustices' in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* In 1966, for example, the 15th October *Watchtower* began with the article: 'Greece Threatens Legalised Murder' which discussed the treatment of Witness conscientious objectors in Greece. Even more coverage was given to the government opposition in Portugal in 1966 and Malawi in 1967 through *Watchtower* articles: 'Mock Trial of Christians - The Shame of Portugal!' and 'Shocking Religious Persecution in Malawi'.¹⁵ In both cases the Society appealed to Witnesses to write letters of protest to high-ranking ministers in the governments concerned. In the former case the *Watchtower* article was followed by another headed 'Christians Must Expect Persecution', from which I quote:

So persecution should not always be regarded as a bad thing. It often has good results when we faithfully endure it. First, it strengthens us individually, provided we understand it and why Jehovah permits it. One who has undergone persecution because of his faith and has come out victorious with the backing of Jehovah's holy spirit feels a sense of joy beyond description. He is grateful

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to Jehovah for allowing him to demonstrate his faithfulness and for giving him the strength to endure. He is drawn much closer to Jehovah. Secondly, our faithfulness under opposition is often a source of strength to our fellow believers. . . . A third fine result of faithful endurance under persecution is that Jehovah's name is honored.

The Witnesses' Social and Moral Attitude

Much of the Witnesses' social behaviour is shaped by their conviction that they are 'set apart' from the rest of the world as God's chosen people. We have seen that the Witnesses believe the rest of the world is directly controlled by Satan and this includes every conceivable social and secular organisation, including institutes of higher education and the law courts. The Witnesses do not go as far as some Plymouth Brethren in isolating themselves from unbelievers; they do, however, keep such contacts to a minimum. Witnesses happily attend work at their place of employment (in order to earn a living and hence continue to praise Jehovah's name) and they will also use whatever means necessary in the furtherance of their beliefs (basic education at the schools for their children, use of the law courts and police if necessary and payment of taxes which is to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's'). The Witnesses pride themselves on being good citizens but this is as far as they will go; any further contact with the rest of the world is to risk being 'tainted by Satan'. Thus in general Witnesses will not vote or involve themselves in politics, they do not join social clubs or organisations of that sort, they conscientiously object to both military service and jury service, they do not attend institutes of higher education and they do not support charities with either time or money. There are a few Witnesses at University and probably some who have joined social clubs, but these are very much in the minority.

The above code of behaviour has been drawn up by the Society and every faithful Witness is expected to live by it. Witnesses are also expected not to smoke, as smoking is regarded as a habit which interferes with complete dedication to God, and in the opinion of most Witnesses is also unnecessary and unclean.¹⁸ Their attitude to drinking alcohol is permissive, however, because 'Jesus did not frown on wine'. The subject of drink caused a certain stir in Russell's time and a controversy arose as to whether wine or non-alcoholic raisin juice should be used at the

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Memorial service! Nowadays the Witnesses believe that alcoholic drinks in moderation can be beneficial and as such they are allowed; regular social drinking is frowned upon, however.

It is important at this stage to distinguish between the 'official' Society line laid down in their magazines and books – how the Witnesses ought to behave – and how in fact the majority of Witnesses do behave. For example, the Society recommends that Jehovah's Witnesses spend all their time and energy, directly or indirectly, on 'kingdom interests'. This is considered the ideal situation. As stated in the January 1965 *Kingdom Ministry* in an article entitled 'Giving More Attention to Kingdom Interests': 'When Jesus said that we should keep "seeking first the kingdom" what did he mean? He meant that our chief concern in life should be expanding the earthly interests of God's heavenly kingdom.' Obviously for many Witnesses this remains just an ideal: their secular work, family ties and outside interests prevent them giving their 'all'. Nevertheless the Society expects (or hopes) that they will devote as much time as possible to 'kingdom interests' and discourages any kind of entertainment that has no bearing on the kingdom message (the Society condones a limited amount of television watching if this is done to relax or educate the viewer). In general the Society disapproves of dances, all sporting activities, most social events, cinemas and theatres and all gambling activities. At the same time it is true that some (possibly many) Jehovah's Witnesses participate occasionally in those entertainments.

Although the Society justifies these restrictions as necessary in this 'time of the end' there is also a strong feeling in the organisation against frivolity and even pleasure; this Victorian attitude can be traced back to Russell, whose opinion was very similar to that of the Society today; for instance, Russell wrote:

Proper Amusements: Mirth and humor are elements of our human nature, too often educated out of all proportion to the more serious and useful qualities. . . . Desire to be amused thus cultivated, in due time craves the theater and the nonsense of the clown. Members of the New Creation should from first to last train their offspring along different lines.¹⁷

This attitude is revealed in the Society's instructions as to how Witnesses should run their social lives *amongst themselves*. It seems

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as though the Society is actually against social contact amongst the Witnesses where it does not directly concern the service work; of late, however, they have been forced to acquiesce in approving of limited social contact (the occasional evening meal, etc.) but they still suggest that 'Bible games and quizzes' are the best means of passing the time at such gatherings. In 1960 the Society voiced its disapproval of more elaborate socialising:

Occasionally the Society is asked for its opinion of regular social events held in a rented hall. The motive for holding such parties is set forth as being to enable particularly the young folk of the congregations to get better acquainted with one another. The Society is not in favour of such a trend. The Day is drawing near. . . .¹⁸

Other limitations imposed by the Society concern 'abusive speech and obscene jesting' (which the Society is commendably against) and 'desires incidental to youth' which include practical jokes. In *The Watchtower* of 15th June 1963 in an article entitled 'Flee from desires incidental to youth' the Society wrote: 'Another harmful desire that must be avoided is over-indulgence in sports . . . if this is allowed to happen, then on evenings when God's Word should be studied or meetings attended the time will be spent at some sporting event.'

Many of these restrictions are made specifically to keep Witnesses in the faith and prevent their being distracted and led astray by 'non-theocratic' activities. Many non-Witnesses might agree with this 'old-fashioned' morality which condemns frivolity and lack of seriousness in our approach to life. But hand in hand with this 'high seriousness' goes a prudish attitude to sex, revealed for instance in the Society's dictates concerning dancing. In *Watchtower* articles on this subject *sex* and *dancing* are never far apart in the writer's mind: 'But would Jesus do these things? Would he indulge in sexy dancing such as the "Twist", or practice fornication?'¹⁹ In the 1st March 1964 edition of the magazine the same point is made in an article 'Youth Get Saved From This Crooked Generation':

Let us face it. This world has nothing good to offer you. . . . [The youth of the old world] will spend hour after hour on the dance floor going through all sorts of contortions to the beat of the modern tom-toms. . . . Actually, there is no justification for a Christian to dance in close contact with another's marriage mate.

In fact the Society's whole attitude to sex is interesting. They regard sexual passion and desire (lust) as a characteristic of man's fallen condition and hence they disapprove of it at all levels, even between married couples. Much of this is derived from the Pauline epistles in the Bible: Paul's attitude to sex and marriage is essentially the same as the Society's: 'I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.'²⁰

The Society believes sexual intercourse is only permissible within marriage and that divorce is only justified on the grounds of adultery (*Matthew* 5 : 31, 32). Naturally the Society regards pre-marital sexual relations as sinful and also any kind of sex act that might be termed *unnatural*: this includes bestiality, anal intercourse, homosexuality and masturbation. Here is a typical and embarrassingly frank injunction from *The Watchtower*: 'The male sex organs and the female sex organs were to co-operate in fulfilling this God-given command [to reproduce]. Thus the sex organs are not playthings to have a lot of fun with, for such fun does not serve the divine purpose. . . . The sex organs, rather than being toys, serve a most serious purpose.'²¹ Two years earlier the Society had grudgingly admitted: 'That [sexual intercourse] should be not only the means of procreation but also a means of allaying passion and a source of satisfaction and delight is not out of harmony with God's Word.' Although in the same article they curtailed this 'satisfaction and delight' as follows: 'Departures from the proper and natural use of these [sex] organs in order to satisfy the craving for unnatural intimacy with sex organs, or in order to excite animal passions is unclean. It is degrading . . . a perversion and is unhealthy.'²² This repressive attitude to sex naturally leads the Society to condemn behaviour which stimulates sexual desire:

Do not excite the sexual passions by improper dress or self-display. The wearing of extremely tight-fitting and revealing clothing should be avoided. . . . Single persons in dancing with those of the opposite sex should certainly not dance so close as to develop some type of sensual pleasure. . . . Flee 'necking' and 'petting' as you would the plague. . . . About dating, the parents and young people assembled were reminded that dating is not a form of recreation. It is a course that naturally leads to marriage.²³

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One good aspect of the Society's views on sex is that they believe in wholesome sex-education for children. Sexual matters are discussed frankly in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and the Society recommends that Witnesses be equally frank with their children in explaining the facts of life. It is clear that many Witnesses exceed the Society in their desire for high moral standards. Hence the following from the 1st December 1966 *Watchtower*:

But, as we know, many of the styles worn by women in the world today are not modest; they are designed for showy display and to make a woman look sexually attractive. They both embarrass and disgust clean-minded observers. . . . nearly every week the Watch Tower Society receives letters from individuals who are shocked by the tight-fitting, excessively revealing or suggestive clothing that some who attend congregation meetings wear. Usually those who take offense are rather new in the truth, though not always.

There are also Witnesses who are not so keen to follow the moral code of the Society but find some attraction in 'sensual pleasure'; these are usually younger Witnesses towards whom much of the present Society propagand is aimed. If a Witness is known to have committed fornication, adultery or a roughly equivalent sexual offence then he or she is disfellowshipped. For lesser offences the Witness is put on probation or denied privileges in the congregation. This is particularly sad in the cases of Witnesses who marry outside the faith:

If a dedicated person plans to marry an undedicated person and wants to use the hall, the committee should counsel him concerning marrying 'only in the Lord'. If he still decides to go through with the marriage, he bears the responsibility for this. He certainly is immature and will be disqualified from servant privileges until mature devotion to Jehovah's righteous ways is clearly demonstrated.²⁴

The following personal experience was printed in *The Watchtower* probably as an indication of what the Society would like other Witnesses to do in the same circumstances:

Now I found myself deeply in love. Unfortunately the young man did not accept the faith. . . . I knew I could never be wholly for Jehovah's side of the issue if I nourished this affection and I made a

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olemn vow to Jehovah that I would never marry out of the faith. This was my great protection. I began to stamp this thing out of my heart. It can be done if one puts Kingdom interests first.²⁵

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Society is strongly aware of the distracting power of sex and consequently tries to minimise it: sex is a rival to their organisation. It is obvious that their instructions are not always followed by young Witnesses; there are tales of Witnesses having to get married – some of which I know to be true. In fact the majority of younger Witnesses do not seem to share exactly the same attitude to life as the Society: while they are usually exemplary in their manners, appearance and non-aggressive habits they tend not to meet the Society line on matters of socialising, cinema-going and dating. Personally I believe the present preponderance of *young* members in the movement has caused the change in the Society's attitude – their moral and social code has become slightly more liberal in the last few years.

Since the war the Society have felt obliged to state their opinion on abortion, euthanasia, artificial insemination, birth control and so on. They usually scour the Bible for any remotely relevant texts and then use these to bolster up their dogmatic pronouncements. For instance, the Society is against abortion, euthanasia and artificial insemination: the first two they say are equivalent to murder and the last to adultery. Surprisingly enough the Society does not disapprove of birth control – this is one of the few things left to the conscience of the individual Witness.²⁶ These issues are not vital at present, but if necessary the Witnesses would give up their lives rather than disobey the Society. For instance, the Witnesses have achieved widespread publicity for their refusal to have blood transfusions (and of course to donate blood). The Society have maintained that blood transfusions are wrong since 1945 when the 1st July edition of *The Watchtower* discussed *Psalms* 16 and interpreted it to mean that Christians should not take blood into their bodies in any way.²⁷ The Society retains the Old Testament belief that blood is sacred and is the physical symbol of life itself (*Leviticus* 17 : 11, 12; *Deuteronomy* 12 : 27). The Bible, they say, condemns the use of blood even for the purpose of saving life, and they quote *1 Chronicles* 11 : 17–19 in support.

Having established in their own minds that the Scriptures

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condemn blood transfusions the Witnesses stick to this in practice. They regard it as a sin to accept or approve of transfusions, but if a Witness is forced to take blood then no blame attaches to him (for example, when a doctor gives blood to an unconscious patient). Strictly speaking it is enough for the Witnesses to know that God disapproves of blood transfusions, but in their booklet *Blood, Medicine, and the Law of God* and frequent articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* they try to show that blood transfusions are not necessarily medically beneficial. As with most other surgical techniques, there are risks involved and Jehovah's Witnesses are quick to point out the cases where blood transfusions have caused a relapse or actually killed the patient. Witnesses remind us of many cases where patients have lived without a blood transfusion when the doctors said they would die, but this is rather a hollow claim when other Witnesses do die without blood transfusions. This point was made by the *Toronto Telegram, Weekend Magazine* of 7th July 1956:

Donna Jones, 17, of Hamilton, has refused five times in the last fifteen years to have transfusions, even though her decision would cost her her life. She is still alive and explains it by saying: 'Jehovah takes care of his people'. But Mrs. Grant, 29 year old mother of five little girls, of Englehart, Ontario, was not so fortunate. She refused to accept a transfusion last February—and died.

Recently the legal position in America has been in dispute. Previous to this the person's signature had to be obtained before a blood transfusion could be given (the next of kin signed if the patient was incapable). But now doctors are trying to enforce their right to give patients blood transfusions if they think it necessary. In 1964 two legal cases based on these lines were presented to the Supreme Court in America but the Court refused to hear them. As long as a Jehovah's Witness is sincere then refusing a blood transfusion is probably not the greatest test of his faith. The Witnesses believe the end of the world is due soon and their dying now will merely ensure their entry to the New World by resurrection; prolonging their life by accepting a blood transfusion is a direct sin against God and jeopardises their prospects of eternal life.

Postscript

MUCH OF what has been written about the movement in this book is unknown and hence irrelevant to many Jehovah's Witnesses. I feel that they should be aware of the facts about their organisation but at present many are not and whatever I have written that may contradict the Society is obviously wrong in their eyes. They are totally committed to the movement: it is not just that they believe they are right – they *know* they are right. Long and intensive argument is, I believe, the only possible way to shake a Witness's belief and even this is unlikely to succeed. For the most part the Witness remains in a state of certainty that only inward doubts can remove. Such dogmatism is not restricted to Jehovah's Witnesses – it is typical of other systems. It is characterised by complete absence of tolerance and the presence of a rigid opinion that the possessor refuses to alter even in the face of contrary facts – it is the facts that are altered or ignored where they do not fit in.

The Witnesses believe that all worldly organisations will shortly be destroyed by God. It is this fact and not the long and involved descriptions of Witnesses that I hope will remain in people's minds. Jehovah's Witnesses are *not* ordinary people who happen to share the beliefs of the Watchtower Society – they are totally different people whose mental make-up differs considerably from the rest of the public. Thus a Witness sees this world in a different way and this attitude must be taken into account when we consider his beliefs and behaviour. Of course this mental orientation is stronger in some Witnesses than in others. Some Witnesses drift away from the movement without a noticeable change – but for those who have experienced the full certainty of belief the act of leaving the movement is a painful one. William Schnell has remarked on the fact that many Witnesses (himself included) spent many months and sometimes years wrestling with their consciences before they could break away. Even when the break is made they are left with a peculiar sense of loss and a

Postscript

complete lack of purpose in life. It is necessary that they patiently re-educate themselves in the ways of the world.

This then is the Jehovah's Witness. What of his future? Assuming that the Society is incorrect about 1975, will the movement survive the disappointment? W. C. Stevenson thinks not, but the reasons he offers have counter-arguments and the position is really unclear. It should be mentioned that the Society has never really stated *in print* definite pronouncements about 1975, this despite the fact that such pronouncements are commonly accepted amongst the Witnesses. It may be possible for the Witness movement to survive on the continuous prospect of the *imminent* Battle of Armageddon without ever specifying a date! The Society has more or less said this in *The Watchtower* of 1st May 1968: 'Does this mean that the year 1975 will bring the Battle of Armageddon? No one can say with certainty what any particular year will bring. . . . Sufficient is it for God's servants to know for a certainty that, for this system under Satan, time is running out rapidly.'

It is, I believe, a superficial judgement to claim that 1975 will be the making or breaking of the Witnesses; they are already prepared to survive that date and it is more likely that changing social conditions will take the greatest toll of their members. A close examination of the problems and causes of falling away in the last decade seems to indicate that the Society has most to fear from the increasing permissiveness of Western society. Until 1975, however, we can be sure that the Witnesses will be sticking to their strange beliefs and their efficient organisation and will be knocking on our doors to tell us of the impending battle that will finally prove them right.

Appendix A

Further Details of Pastor Russell's Chronological Beliefs

(a) *Daniel* 7:25 mentions the interval of 'three and one half times' which according to *Revelation* 12:6, 14 means 1,260 days. Russell took these as symbolic of 1,260 years and he applied the text from *Daniel* to the period of 'Papacy Rule' from 539 A.D. (conveniently 'the fall of the Ostrogothic empire') to 1799 A.D. This apparently arbitrary date, 1799, Russell said was the 'beginning of the time of the end' and the 'time of the end' was the period 1799-1914. (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, Chapter 2).

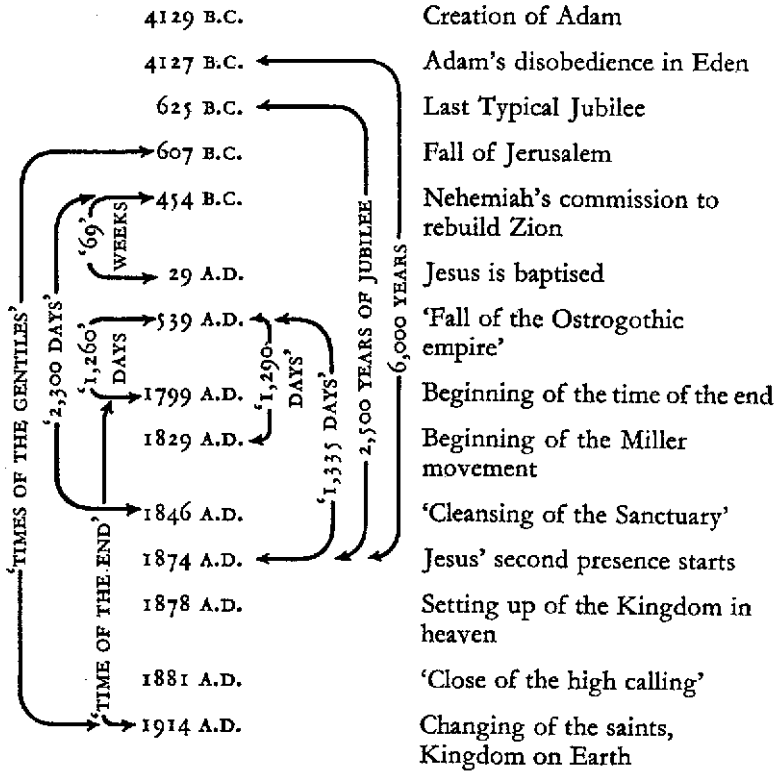
(b) The '69 weeks' mentioned in *Daniel* 9:23-27 is, by another involved argument, shown to represent the 483 years from 454 B.C. to 29 A.D., which according to Russell was the date Jesus started his earthly ministry.

(c) *Daniel* 8:14 tells of the '2,300 days' which Russell again takes to mean 2,300 years from 454 B.C. to 1846 when, according to him, 'the sanctuary was cleansed'. (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, p. 305.)

(d) *Daniel* 12:11, 12 mentions two periods of 1,290 and 1,335 days. Taking as his starting point the fall of the Ostrogothic empire in 539 A.D. Russell arrived at 1829 and 1874 respectively. The former was the time of the 'separating work of the "Miller Movement"' and the latter was, of course, Jesus' second presence. It seems rather obvious here and elsewhere that Russell is working backwards (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, pp. 61-91).

Appendix B

Russell's Time Chart



Notes

CHAPTER 1: The Founder – Charles Taze Russell

1. *The Watch Tower*, 1916, pp. 170–172.
2. ‘Second Adventism’ was Russell’s collective name for a number of sects all prophesying the imminent Second Advent of Jesus. Seventh Day Adventism, for instance, was one of these sects.
3. *Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence* No. 1. The title ‘Pastor’ was purely honorary as far as Russell was concerned, he never graduated from any theological school. In later life, rightly or wrongly, he became universally known as ‘Pastor Russell’.
4. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, p. 86.
5. In view of the later distortion of the facts by the Witnesses I think it worth emphasising that Pastor Russell was not a solitary visionary inspired by God to search out the truth from the Scriptures. Most of his ideas were borrowed directly from his contemporaries such as Paton, G. Storrs, B. W. Keith, Barbour, etc. See *Zion’s Watch Tower*, 15th July 1906, 15th July 1916 and *The Four Major Cults*, p. 224: ‘From the Adventists Russell obviously borrowed such doctrines as the extinction of the soul at death, the annihilation of the wicked, the denial of hell, and a modified form of the investigative judgement.’
6. *Faith on the March*, p. 25.
7. *Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 18.
8. See *Zion’s Watch Tower* 15th July 1906.
9. A similar gathering took place in 1914.
10. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, p. 234; Vol. 4, p. 621. See also Vol. 2, p. 101.
11. In 1909 this was changed to *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence* and in 1931 to *The Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom* and finally in 1939 to *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah’s Kingdom* – its present title.
12. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 227.
13. The ‘Dawns’ were a series of six books written by Russell.
14. *Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 17.
15. *The Watch Tower*, 15th September 1910, p. 298.
16. See *The Jehovah’s Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 8, and *Zion’s Watch Tower*, 1909, p. 371.

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17. *Zion's Watch Tower*, 15th July 1906.
18. The Society was first mooted in 1881. In 1896 its name was changed to The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Altogether 35,000 dollars were contributed to start the Society (most of it by Russell).
19. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 6, p. 83.
20. *Zion's Watch Tower*, March and May 1887.
21. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 33.
22. This is probably not accurate, Paul Johnson gives Russell's exact height as 5 ft. 11 in.
23. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 7.
24. *Epiphany Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 9, pp. 319-320.
25. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 31.
26. This is the 1,000 years during which God would rule the earth and restore perfect conditions (*Revelation 20*).
27. All that Russell is saying here is that the date of commencement of the 2,500 years was 625 B.C.
28. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pp. 180, 181 and 185.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
30. See *Zion's Watch Tower*, October 1881, p. 2.
31. It is interesting to compare the present-day beliefs of the Witnesses. In *Babylon the Great has Fallen!* (pp. 634, 682) the date for the creation of Adam is given as 4,026 B.C. Pastor Russell's calculations are discredited, the Witnesses today believe that the 6,000 years end in 1974—a prophetically significant date.
32. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pp. 33, 42. This is typical of the many vague 'prophecies' Russell made, some of which have been seized upon by the Witnesses and 'shown' to have a fulfilment. By a careful selection of Russell's statements (avoiding, of course, the dates—which would give the game away) it is possible to imply that he actually predicted World War I.
33. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, pp. 127, 128
34. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 91, 95.
35. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. x.
36. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pp. 98, 99, 101; Vol. 4, p. 625.
37. See the Bibliography for details on how to obtain Russell's books. Even in the face of this evidence the current Society attitude is still that there must have been some great significance in Russell's choice of the year 1914 which saw the beginning of the First World War. The Witnesses like to quote historians who claim that 1913 was the last 'normal' year in human history.
38. For an up-to-date Witness version of what happened see *The Watchtower*, 1963, p. 217.

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39. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 4, p.v.
40. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
41. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 40.
42. It is, of course, possible to see this in a different light: that Pastor Russell was, as the conspirators claimed, dictatorial and dogmatic. My sympathies in this dispute are with Russell who was a better man than his detractors – and they knew it.
43. *A Great Battle in the Ecclesiastical Heavens*, p. 16.
44. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, pp. 9, 10.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
46. One distressing aspect of the divorce is the way it has been exploited by Russell's opponents. In a tract written by the late J. M. Swift he claims: 'He [Russell] had a weakness for the other sex and his wife divorced him'. In another tract, K. N. Ross says 'he was divorced by his wife for adultery'. Both of these statements are wrong. On the other hand the Witnesses are excessively coy in refusing to speak of Russell's *divorce* – they call it a 'separation'.
47. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 227. In *Jehovah's Witnesses – The New World Society*, Marley Cole misinterprets the facts by quoting only part of the court record and manages to conclude that Russell came well out of the trial.
48. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 49.
49. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, p. 228.
50. *Zion's Watch Tower*, 1st October 1907.
51. *Faith on the March*, pp. 47, 48.
52. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. ix; Vol. 3, p. ii. It is true to say that Russell saw the outbreak of war as a *preliminary* sign of the greater changes he was expecting but he did not regard the World War as otherwise important.
53. *Zion's Watch Tower*, December 1916. There are several references in the literature of the time suggesting that Russell, according to his wish, died wrapped in a Roman togal
54. *Faith on the March*, p. 61.

CHAPTER 2: The Second President—Judge Rutherford

1. *Epiphany Studies in the Scriptures*, Volumes 6, 7 and 10.
2. *Faith on the March*, pp. 68, 71.
3. *Merariism*, P. S. L. Johnson, pp. 83, 84.
4. *The Watch Tower*, 1st December 1916.
5. This accounts for the title 'Judge' Rutherford, which his followers used, but not apparently Rutherford himself. Stroup is of the opinion

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that both 'Pastor' and 'Judge' were titles used to impress non-believers and exaggerate the importance of the leaders. Certainly Rutherford was never a permanent Judge but he was widely known by that title.

6. It had been the case that Pastor Russell, not the seven directors of his time, ran the Society but this was partly due to the Pastor's personal influence and to the fact that he held a large proportion of the voting shares. Rutherford wished to emulate Russell's power, without his means.

7. For the Witnesses' version see *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pp. 69, 70. The facts do not appear to support their conclusions.

8. *Merariism*, pp. 81, 82.

9. *The Watch Tower*, 1st January 1918.

10. *Ibid.*, 15th December 1917.

11. *Ibid.*, 15th January 1918.

12. The 'Frank and Ernest' programmes broadcast on Radio Luxembourg were sponsored by the Dawn Bible Students.

13. *The Watch Tower*, 1st March 1918, in an article entitled 'A Warning to the Church', p. 79.

14. *Ibid.*, 1st October 1917.

15. *Ibid.*, 1st October 1917 and 1st January 1918.

16. *Ibid.*, 1st October 1917.

17. Rutherford's attitude toward conscription was not definite enough for many Bible Students and a large number dissociated themselves from him and formed the 'Standfast' movement. They claimed to be carrying out Pastor Russell's wishes. See *The Watch Tower*, 1915, pp. 259-261.

18. *Faith on the March*, p. 85.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

22. Much more can be said in the way of analysis of Rutherford's character. I have the impression that fundamentally Rutherford despised the other Bible Students and was particularly piqued at having to depend on the shareholders for his election to office. Thus I would say that the tag of 'colossal egotism' is far more appropriately applied to Rutherford than Russell.

23. It would therefore be quite wrong to describe Rutherford and the others as 'ex-convicts' as some have done. They were wrongfully convicted and Rutherford did not lose his licence to practise as a lawyer, as an ex-convict would have done.

24. *Faith on the March*, p. 11. Notice the fact that Rutherford and Macmillan are not satisfied with, or even aware of, the so-called 'fulfilment' of Russell's 'prophecy' of World War I. An examination

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of the literature of that time deepens the impression that the attributing of this 'prophecy' to Pastor Russell is anti-historical.

25. *The Epiphany Messenger*, p. 401.
26. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 6, p. 388.
27. See *Zion's Watch Tower*, July and August 1881; *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 241, 294, 300; Vol. 3, p. 258; *The Harp of God*, p. 240; *Life*, p. 141; and *The Watchtower*, 1963, p. 178.
28. *The Kingdom*, p. 14. For a full discussion of the Pyramid in prophecy see *Great Pyramid Passages*, Vols. 1, 2 and 3, by John and Morton Edgar.
29. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, p. 33.
30. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 107.
31. As early as 15th October 1917 *The Watch Tower* said: 'Accordingly Abraham should enter upon the actual possession of his promised inheritance in the year 1925 A.D.' and just before 1925 an issue read: 'We might expect the harvest to end fifty years after 1874 or with the end of 1924'. See also *The Watch Tower*, 1st January 1924; *Vindication*, Vol. 1, p. 146.
32. *The Watchtower*, 1st December 1966, p. 730.
33. It was first thought that in addition to the 'heaven-bound' anointed there were three separate classes of people on earth designated by 'the great multitude', 'the other sheep' and 'the Jonadabs'. There was much discussion as to the respective fate of each group but the Witnesses finally concluded that there was no such division and that all three names applied to the same group who would survive Armageddon to live for ever on earth. See *Angels*, pp. 24, 61; *Salvation*, p. 66; *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 60; *You May Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, p. 264; and *The Watchtower*, 1st April 1968, p. 221.
34. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 4, p. 627.
35. Beth Sarim was given to the Society and Rutherford decided to use it in this way.
36. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 42.
37. *The New World*, p. 104.
38. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pp. 91, 95.
39. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, p. 40.
40. *The Watchtower*, 1st February 1965, p. 93.
41. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, pp. 56, 57, 59.
42. See also *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 6, pp. 78, 234.
43. For details: Sweden, *The Watchtower*, 1st February 1965; Canada, *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 125; Germany, *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, pp. 75, 76.
44. *Jehovah*, p. 277.

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45. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 96.
46. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 16.
47. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 101.
48. The 'Memorial' is the annual commemoration of the Last Supper – all the faithful are expected to attend.
49. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 110. See *Epiphany Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3, p. 45; Vol. 5, p. 457.
50. Rutherford had published an earlier work, variously described as a long booklet or short book, called *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. This was the 128-page text of Rutherford's public talk (of the same title) and was published in 1920.
51. *Salvation*, p. 35.
52. *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 1941, p. 14. By 'religion' Rutherford meant 'organised religion' – all the orthodox faiths. For these he had a virulent hatred, one of his most well-known slogans was 'Religion is a snare and a racket'!
53. 'Rutherford's was the best known and most frequently heard voice in America'. *The Watchtower*, 1955, p. 392.
54. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 127.

CHAPTER 3: The Modern Organisation, 1932–1968

1. *Enemies*, p. 144; *Salvation*, p. 81.
2. Illustrations in Rutherford's books and booklets often showed various devils, Hitler and the Pope leading the 'goats' to perdition. Although Jehovah's Witnesses today are less forthright their criticisms of the clergy are the same.
3. A 'publisher' is any Witness who actively advertises his beliefs usually by calling from house to house.
4. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 63.
5. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 148.
6. *Faith on the March*, p. 170.
7. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 29.
8. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 164.
9. Stroup carried out a literary analysis of *Children* and came to the conclusion that Rutherford could not have written the book. From my own recollection of reading *Children* I would tend to agree with him. The style of the book as well as its form differs radically from the other nineteen books.
10. Rutherford himself was a big man, more than six foot tall.
11. See for instance *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 26.
12. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 22.

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13. *Vindication*, Vol. 1, p. 156. Rutherford was not a life-long bachelor, however. He and his wife Mary had one son Malcolm G. Rutherford, of whom little was heard in connection with the Witness movement. Rutherford kept his family life very much in the background and many Witnesses were never aware that he was married. Personal details of Society officials from the President down were never printed in the Society's literature.

14. See *The Watch Tower*, 15th May 1917.

15. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 155.

16. *American Bar Association's Bill of Rights Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Summer 1942, p. 262.

17. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 204.

18. See the *Yearbook*, 1948, p. 62.

19. *Religion in the Soviet Union*, Kolarz.

20. *The Religions of the Oppressed*, V. Lanternari. The situation in Africa is now very confused – Jehovah's Witnesses in Zambia and Malawi have incurred the wrath of the government for refusing to 'sing the national anthem' and render other acts of obedience to the state. Late in 1967 the Witnesses were banned in Malawi and 18,000 of them were exposed to attacks, terrorism and rape (*The Watchtower*, 1st February 1968).

CHAPTER 4: The Witnesses' View of History

1. Jehovah has granted Satan 6,000 years since the creation of Adam and this period ends in 1975.

2. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 10.

3. *Jehovah's Witnesses – The New World Society*, pp. 62, 63.

4. *The Watch Tower*, 1st November 1917. See also *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 13.

5. I attended a talk at a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1967 in which the speaker warned the audience that 'others' would try to brainwash them by presenting apparently effective arguments against the Witnesses. The speaker exhorted us to 'look for the answer to these objections, whatever they are, there is always an answer!' The audience agreed with his conclusion.

6. *The Watchtower*, 1966, p. 510.

7. 1968 *Yearbook*, pp. 9, 10.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

9. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pp. 53, 73, 127.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 103.

CHAPTER 5: The Basic Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses

1. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 258.
2. For example *Matthew* 19:26, *Hebrews* 4:13 and *Psalms* 90:2.
3. On rather less evidence they have substituted *Jehovah* 237 times in the New Testament to replace *theos* and *kyrios*. They offer as evidence the fact that an early copy of the Septuagint uses the tetragrammaton instead of the Greek words (Papyrus Fouad 266). To infer from this that the original Septuagint was of this form is conjecture and hardly justifies interfering 237 times with the accepted text. See *The Four Major Cults*, p. 257, note 146, and *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (1950 edition, pp. 10-25).
4. *Let Your Name be Sanctified*, p. 10. *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, p. 18.
5. *Let God be True*, p. 107.
6. See also *John* 8:58 where Jesus uses the divine signature 'I am', and *Acts* 20:28, *Colossians* 2:9, *Titus* 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6 etc.
7. See also *The Four Major Cults*, p. 243.
8. For a more detailed discussion see *What has Religion done for Mankind?*, p. 193.
9. *John* 1:1-3, *Luke* 1:30, 32, 33, *Colossians* 1:15.
10. *Luke* 3:21-23, *Acts* 10:38.
11. *Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 81.
12. *What has Religion done for Mankind?*, p. 260.
13. See *The Four Major Cults*, p. 273.
14. For example: *Judges* 6:34, 14:6, 19, *Acts* 2:4.
15. In *The Four Major Cults* Hoekema criticises the New World Translation as biased and quotes as evidence the Greek passages at *John* 14:26, *Romans* 8:16, *Acts* 5:3, 4, *1 Corinthians* 12:3, *Acts* 8:29 and *Ephesians* 4:30.
16. *Let God be True*, p. 57.
17. *2 Corinthians* 4:4, *John* 14:30, *1 John* 5:19, *James* 1:13-15.
18. The Witnesses make the somewhat illogical claim that because Adam lived for less than a thousand years (930 in fact) he 'died in the day that he ate of the tree' - taking a day to be a thousand years on the evidence of *Psalms* 90:4. On other occasions a day is taken to represent 1, or 7,000 years. The Witnesses believe that each of the creation days was 7,000 years long (See *Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 178).
19. *Ezekiel* 28:13, 14.
20. *Isaiah* 8:19, 20, *1 Timothy* 4:1, *Deuteronomy* 13:1-5.
21. *Genesis* 2:8, 16, 17.

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22. *Let God be True*, p. 69.
23. For example: *Genesis* 1: 20, 30; *Numbers* 31: 28.
24. *Let God be True*, p. 66.
25. *Genesis* 37: 35, *Job* 14: 13.
26. *Hope for the Dead, for the Survivors in a Religious World*, p. 20.
27. See *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5, p. 376, and the criticism in *Errors of Russellism*, p. 42.
28. *Into the Light of Christianity*, p. 78.
29. In a revised version *Make Sure of All Things; Hold Fast to what is Fine* (1965) this text is not quoted.
30. In *Let God be True*, p. 99, this argument is still advanced.
31. *Salvation*, pp. 224, 351 and *Jehovah*, p. 142.
32. *Leviticus* 9: 3 and chapter 16.
33. In *The Four Major Cults*, pp. 279-290, Hoekema tries to show the superiority of salvation by grace and not works.
34. *Hebrews* 12: 24, *Luke* 22: 20.
35. See *What has Religion done for Mankind?*, p. 139, for a detailed comparison of the two sacrifices.
36. *Let God be True*, p. 124.
37. *Babylon the Great has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules!*, p. 448.
38. *Acts* 4: 11, 1 *Peter* 2: 3-10, *Ephesians* 5: 23.
39. *Revelation* 19: 19, 20, 1 *Corinthians* 15: 24-28.
40. As some interpret *Luke* 17: 20, 21, *Matthew* 21: 43, 44, *Revelation* 5: 10.
41. *Make Sure of All Things*, p. 226.
42. *Let God be True*, p. 124.
43. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 11, p. 276.

CHAPTER 6: Doctrines for the End of the World

1. See 2 *Timothy* 3, 1 *Thessalonians* 5, *Revelation* 22: 20.
2. *Let God be True*, p. 197.
3. *The Truth shall make You Free*, p. 296.
4. *Matthew* 24: 6-8, 14. See also *Luke* 21 and *Mark* 10.
5. *Make Sure of All Things*, p. 337.
6. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 4, p. 566.
7. *Government*, p. 171. See *The Watchtower*, 1966, p. 730.
8. Secular chronology is based on Ptolemy's canon; that of the Witnesses on the known date for the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.) and a dubious prophecy at 2 *Chronicles* 36: 21. It is misleading of Macmillan to say 'This date is reckoned from secular and biblical history as the fall of 607 B.C.' (*Faith on the March*, p. 150). Secular history supports

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the date 539 B.C. for the fall of Babylon, but not 607 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem.

9. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 77.

10. *Matthew* 24 : 15, 16, 30.

11. The Witnesses have inherited from Rutherford a deep hatred of the United Nations (formerly the League of Nations) probably because the latter was described in 1919 as 'the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth' – the Witnesses see it as a rival to their own organisation.

12. *The Truth shall make You Free*, p. 298.

13. *Isaiah* 45 : 18, *Revelation* 16 : 14–16.

14. Russell used this argument to substantiate the date 1872 – taking the date of the creation of Adam to be 4128 B.C. This has been discredited by the Witnesses but in their literature of the last ten years they have quoted several different dates for the creation of Adam: in 1943 it was 4028 B.C., in 1944 4026 B.C., in 1953 4025 B.C. and since 1966 it has been 4026 again!

15. The current Witness interpretation is that the 'generation' of *Matthew* 24 refers to those old enough to understand the changes taking place in 1914 – those about ten years old. Thus their seventy years conveniently ends around 1975.

16. In particular the book *You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World*.

17. *After Armageddon – God's New World*, pp. 3, 6, 7.

18. See *Awake!*, 11th August 1963.

19. *Isaiah* 32 : 1, *Psalms* 45 : 16.

20. *The Watchtower*, 1960, p. 654.

21. *The Watchtower*, 1967, p. 638.

22. Based on the chart in *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* and *The Watchtower*, 1st May 1968. Compare Russell's chart in Appendix B.

23. *2 Corinthians* 5 : 20, *Ephesians* 6 : 20.

24. *Psalms* 147 : 19, 20.

25. See *Matthew* 12 : 11, 12, *Galatians* 4 : 9–11, *Mark* 2 : 27, 28.

26. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 6, p. 388.

27. *Matthew* 28 : 19, Greek *baptizein* = dip or immerse.

28. *Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 402.

29. *Babylon the Great has Fallen!*, pp. 507, 594.

30. *You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, pp. 367–368.

31. A more recent example is the explanation of parts of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah* and *Revelation* in *Babylon the Great has Fallen!* (1963). 'This book is an extraordinary phantasmagoria of wild beasts with seven heads and ten horns going scarlet-coloured harlots. It consists of

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700 pages filled with such fantastic scriptural interpretation that one begins to wonder about the mental stability of those who have written it' (*Year of Doom 1975*, p. 127). Of course the Witnesses do not feel this way about it; to them it contains important new truths.

32. *Jehovah*, p. 62. See *The Watchtower*, 1st July 1965, for the present-day Witness view of the ten plagues.

33. This is based on similar analyses by Pastor Russell (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 3) and Rutherford (*Creation and The Harp of God*).

34. *Your Will be done on Earth*, p. 247.

35. *Zion's Watch Tower*, September 1883, p. 5.

36. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 251, footnote 115.

37. For example *Deliverance*, p. 125, where he says that wise men are devil inspired.

38. *What has Religion done for Mankind?*, p. 22.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

40. *This Means Everlasting Life*, p. 26.

41. *The Watchtower*, 1st December 1966, p. 713.

42. This replaced a lengthy booklet called *Evolution versus the New World*. In addition there are frequent articles in their magazines attacking the theory.

43. It is not my intention to pass lightly over this vital point. What I have written is generally accepted in academic circles but a detailed discussion of this problem would occupy many hundreds of pages and is impossible here.

44. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, chapter 2.

45. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 254.

46. *What has Religion done for Mankind?*, p. 27.

47. *Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 24: 'The Holy Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, all these being in harmony with themselves from first to last'.

48. *The Kingdom is at Hand*, p. 171.

49. *Creation*, p. 12, my italics.

50. The Witnesses appear to share the popular misconception of this title; 'higher' does not mean exalted or superior but simply differentiates from 'lower criticism' which is a study of the text, 'higher criticism' being the study of the sense or meaning. Also the word 'critic' did not originally imply an unfavourable judgement as it does now.

51. *Equipped for Every Good Work*.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

53. *Make Sure of All Things*, p. 40.

54. *The Watch Tower*, 15th September 1910.

CHAPTER 7: Life as a Jehovah's Witness

1. This replaced the booklet *Preaching Together in Unity*, previously called *Counsel on Theocratic Organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses*.
2. *Mark* 13 : 10.
3. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 21.
4. In particular each congregation has a monthly progress chart which has the monthly totals of Pubs. (publishers!), Hours, Back-calls, etc., obtained by the congregation.
5. *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*, p. 63.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
7. The titles 'servant' and 'overseer' are both taken from the Bible, the latter from the New World Translation of *Acts* 20 : 28 and other texts. The former title was possibly inspired by *Matthew* 23 : 11 (King James Version) or similar scriptures.
8. *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*, pp. 124-126.
9. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 29.
10. *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*, pp. 133-34.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 180 and *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 38.
12. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 43.
13. See *The Watchtower*, 15th May 1966.
14. *Ibid.*, 15th January 1966.
15. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 43.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
17. *The Watchtower*, 15th May 1956.
18. *Ibid.*, 1963, p. 107.
19. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 9, *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*, p. 85.
20. *Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot*, pp. 92-93.

CHAPTER 8: Beyond the Congregation

1. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 18.
2. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, p. 79.
3. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 54.
4. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 55.
5. *Kingdom Ministry*, November 1964, p. 3.
6. *The Watchtower*, 1st March 1967.

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CHAPTER 9: The International Organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses

1. *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1968*, p. 65.
2. See *The Watchtower*, 15th April 1968, p. 248.
3. *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1968*, pp. 65, 66.
4. In 1964 there were 1,979 circuits and 233 districts throughout the world.
5. There are signs that this situation is changing. The Society appears to be more tolerant in its attitude to publicity now.
6. *Year of Doom 1975*, pp. 105, 106.
7. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 291.
8. *You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, p. 103.
9. According to Hoekema, Wilson was 'a self-educated newspaper editor'. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 243.
10. *Preaching Together in Unity*, p. 59.
11. *Kingdom Ministry*, June 1965, p. 4.
12. Ten thousand pounds was donated by British Witnesses alone to help finance the *Around the World Assemblies* held in 1963 (*Kingdom Ministry*, June 1963).
13. *Assembly Report*, p. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
15. I was present at a District Assembly at Manchester when this change was announced. 'Thrilled' would not be my description of the Witnesses there when they heard the news.
16. See the booklet *Look! I am making all things New*, p. 28.
17. In case objections are raised, I should like to point out that I have missed out very little of the original article here and I think the quotation definitely captures the mood of the article as a whole.

CHAPTER 10: The People Who Believe

1. See for instance *Sects and Society* which unfortunately does not deal with the Witnesses.
2. The congregations were called 'companies' at that time.
3. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 77.
4. *Yearbook, 1945. Mark 10: 25*. The rich of this world are often satisfied with life as it is and are not attracted to a religion that advocates that they forgo earthly pleasures and preach the Gospel.
5. *The Four Major Cults*, p. 408.
6. There are also those Stroup calls 'spiritual vagabonds' - disturbed people who wander from religion to religion without remaining long

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in any one. There do not appear to be many of these in the Witness movement.

7. *The Watch Tower*, November 1912.

8. *The Watch Tower*, April 1934.

9. *Assembly Report*, p. 78.

10. *The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Stroup, p. 102.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

12. Witnesses calling from house to house meet far more women than men and the result of this was often that the wife (and not the husband of the family) became a Jehovah's Witness. In order to try to convert the whole family the Society advises publishers to contact the husband in any home as soon as possible.

13. *Kingdom Ministry*, November 1964.

14. *Let God be True*, p. 210.

15. See *The Watchtower*, 1st October 1966, 1st February 1968 and 1st June 1968.

16. Any Witness who smokes is denied 'the privileges of servant positions in the congregation' and he is constantly admonished to stop smoking.

17. See *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 6, p. 556 and *Zion's Watch Tower*, 1st April 1909, where Russell declares theatre-going, card-playing and novel-reading to be un-Christian.

18. *Kingdom Ministry*, August 1960. See *Awake!*, 8th February 1966, p. 20. There are signs of a softening in this attitude.

19. *The Watchtower*, 1963, p. 196.

20. 1 *Corinthians* 7:9. Russell and Rutherford shared this opinion, see *Vindication*, Vol. 1, p. 156.

21. *The Watchtower*, 15th November 1964.

22. *Ibid.*, 15th November 1962.

23. *The Watchtower*, 1959, p. 453; 1963, p. 364; 1965, p. 31; 1966, p. 630.

24. *Kingdom Ministry*, February 1965.

25. *The Watchtower*, 1963, p. 58.

26. *The Watchtower*, 15th August and 1st March 1964. In the November 15th edition, 1967, organ transplantation is said to be 'cannibalism'.

27. See *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, p. 33, and *Babylon the Great has Fallen!*, p. 544. *Genesis* 9:3-5. *Acts* 15:28, 29.

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WITNESS SOURCES

A complete list of the books of Charles Taze Russell appears on page 16. These are no longer printed by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society but they can be obtained from the following addresses:

- (1) Dawn Bible Students Association, East Rutherford, New Jersey, U.S.A.
- (2) Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, 2101-13 South 11th Street, Philadelphia 48, Pa., U.S.A.

In addition to the books listed below, Rutherford wrote many booklets and pamphlets on a variety of topics. A complete list of his publications from 1930 on is available in the *Watchtower Publications Index*.

The Harp of God (1921) Sub-titled 'Proof Conclusive That Millions Now Living Will Never Die'. An interesting, well-written book containing a doctrinal summary that is more or less in agreement with Pastor Russell.

Deliverance (1926) Badly-written, consists largely of an attack on the clergy.

Creation (1927) Covers a great deal of ground from Adam to Armageddon. It discusses in detail the creation theory of Professor Isaac N. Vail which the Witnesses still accept though modern science does not.

It is illustrated by hand-drawings and several unusual colour plates.

Reconciliation (1928) A book about doctrines, dealing in the main with the Biblical covenants.

Government (1928) Largely directed against the 'dissenting elders' and schismatics in the movement itself. Not an unreasonable book.

Life (1929) A scrappy book. Contains interesting illustrations and in part deals with Biblical chronology and the significance of the date 1975.

Prophecy (1929) An interesting book containing one of the early explanations of the Battle of Armageddon as the Witnesses see it today.

Light (2 volumes, 1930) Very strange illustrations to match the abstruse

Bibliography

- and esoteric text. Rutherford attempts a long and involved interpretation of *Revelation*.
- Preservation* (1932) Another large-scale interpretation, this time of the Biblical books of *Ruth* and *Esther*.
- Vindication* (Volume 1, 1931) An interpretation of the first 24 chapters of *Ezekiel* in which Rutherford hits out at those who left the organisation in 1918 and afterwards.
- Vindication* (Volume 2, 1932) This 'discloses the many enemies of Jehovah in and about the realms of "Christendom"' and in the process it interprets *Ezekiel* 25-39.
- Vindication* (Volume 3, 1932) Completes the book of *Ezekiel* and also discusses parts of *Haggai* and *Zechariah*.
- Preparation* (1933) A discussion of the book of *Zechariah*.
- Jehovah* (1934) A strange book, part of which is used to castigate the 'elders'. It contradicts Russell on several issues.
- Riches* (1936) Contains some doctrinal discussion and includes another attack on the clergy.
- Enemies* (1937) Largely directed against the clergy whom it hints are 'religious racketeers'. This is Rutherford at his most virulent.
- Salvation* (1939) Called a 'text-book for the Jonadabs' it is written in an emphatic style in which reasoning is at a minimum. Rutherford introduces the idea of the 'great crowd' as companions to the 'remnant'.
- Religion* (1940) A book of Biblical exegesis attacking the Roman Catholic Church and the clergy in general.
- Children* (1941) Written in a peculiar pretentious style. It attempts to give Rutherford's doctrines using an imaginary conversation between two young people.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society's books printed and published since 1941 contain no author's name. Some of the early ones are out of print but most of them can be obtained through a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

- The New World* (1942) This is a complete analysis of the book of *Job*.
- The Truth shall make You Free* (1943) This follows the familiar pattern of doctrinal explanation, starting at the Garden of Eden.
- The Kingdom is at Hand* (1944) Much the same as the above, with interpretations of parts of *Daniel* and *Revelation*.
- Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945) A text book for use in the Theocratic Ministry Schools.
- Let God be True* (1946, revised in 1952) The well-known 'doctrine per chapter' statement of the Witnesses' beliefs. The second edition differed over the doctrines that had changed since 1946.

Bibliography

- Equipped for Every Good Work* (1946) Another text book reviewing the sixty-six books of the Bible.
- This Means Everlasting Life* (1950) Most of the book is devoted to instructing husbands, wives and children in the New World Society. Essentially it sets a code of morals and social conduct that Witnesses are expected to obey.
- What has Religion done for Mankind?* (1951) A very badly written attack on the major world religions.
- New Heavens and A New Earth* (1953) Another doctrinal summary.
- Make Sure of All Things* (1953, revised in 1957, revised and re-titled in 1965). A compilation of texts under subject headings with few comments.
- Qualified to be Ministers* (1955) A text book, containing instructions on how to hold meetings and how to run the Ministry School.
- You may Survive Armageddon into God's New World* (1955) A fascinating book concerned with the imminent battle of Armageddon.
- From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* (1958) Written for young people and those new in the movement, it explains the doctrines of the Society.
- Your Will be done on Earth* (1958) An interesting book which brims over with interpretation of secular history; it revives many of the ideas of Russell and Rutherford.
- Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (1959) A biased history of their movement written in the form of a conversation between Witnesses and interested people.
- Let Your Name be Sanctified* (1961) Follows a standard pattern except that the latter part of the book is a detailed modern history of the movement.
- Watchtower Publications Index of Subjects Discussed and Scriptures Explained* (1961 and 1966 with addenda published in booklet form each subsequent year). Reference is made to all the Society's publications since 1930 under subject headings.
- All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (1963) Intended as a replacement for *Equipped for Every Good Work*, it serves the same purpose.
- Babylon the Great has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules!* (1963) This contains 704 pages of detailed Biblical analysis covering parts of *Isaiab*, *Daniel*, *Jeremiah* and *Revelation*. A remarkable book.
- Make Sure of All Things; Hold Fast to what is Fine* (1965) A revised and expanded version of *Make Sure of all Things*.
- Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie* (1965) A doctrinal summary intended as a replacement for *Let God be True*. Attractive illustrations.
- Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* (1966) In some ways a

Bibliography

- replacement for *This Means Everlasting Life*. The book contains some modern Witness history and (important) emphasises the date 1975.
- Qualified to be Ministers* (1967) A revised and expanded version.
- Did Man get here by Evolution or by Creation?* (1967) Well written 'refutation' of the Evolution theory.
- Your Word is a Lamp to my Foot* (1967) Explains the administrative structure of the Witness movement.
- The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life* (1968). A 190-page doctrine summary for use in Bible studies with persons of 'good-will'.

PUBLICATIONS OUTSIDE THE MOVEMENT

Works on modern religions that contain a chapter on the Witnesses very rarely, if ever, do them justice. Most of these books cover exactly the same ground and repeat the well-worn and usually erroneous ideas of what the Witnesses are like. There are many such books of which the list below is just a selection.

- Atkins, G. C. *Modern Religious Cults and Movements* New York: Revell 1923.
- Braden, Charles S. *These Also Believe* New York and London: Macmillan 1951.
- Davies, Horton *The Challenge of the Sects* a revised and enlarged version of *Christian Deviations* published in Britain by S.C.M. Press.
- Ferguson, Charles W. *The Confusion of Tongues* London: Heinemann 1928.
- Van Baalen, J. K. *The Chaos of the Cults* London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd.

Books that deal entirely with Jehovah's Witnesses:

- Axup, Edward J. *The Jehovah's Witnesses Unmasked* New York: Greenwich 1959.
- Cole, Marley *Jehovah's Witnesses: The New World Society* New York: Vantage Press, 1955. London: Allen and Unwin 1956. More or less written as the Witnesses would like outsiders to see them. Naturally the book is popular with the Witnesses but it is not true to fact and much of it is misleading.
- Czatt, Milton *The International Bible Students: Jehovah's Witnesses* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933. A short account of the Witness movement which suffers from the crippling limitations of the times and the fact that the author was an outsider and tried to get his information the hard way - by asking the Witnesses for it.

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- Dencher, Ted *The Watchtower Heresy Versus the Bible* Chicago: Moody Press 1961. Essentially a doctrinal discussion by a former Witness.
- Forrest, J. E. *Errors of Russellism* Indiana: 1915. A criticism of the doctrines of Pastor Russell.
- Macmillan, A. H. *Faith on the March* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1957. Sub-titled 'My Life of Joyous Service with Jehovah's Witnesses', one of the recently deceased Society leaders tells the story of the organisation. More frank than some other Society accounts but still very prejudiced.
- Martin, Walter R. and Klann, Norman H. *Jehovah of the Watchtower* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963. A complete survey of the Witnesses including a 'refutation' of their doctrines.
- Pike, Royston *Jehovah's Witnesses* New York: Philosophical Library, 1954. A somewhat brief but objective account, now rather out of date.
- Schnell, William J. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave* Grand Rapids: Baker 1956, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott 1957. Schnell gives the view of the dissentors at the time of Rutherford. Interesting in the facts quoted but otherwise not too reliable.
- Schnell, William J. *Into the Light of Christianity* London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott 1960. Examines the main doctrines of the Witnesses.
- Stevenson, W. C. *Year of Doom, 1975* London: Hutchinson 1967. An interesting personal account but with little history or theology of the movement. The author tries to be objective but does not seem to get the movement into perspective.
- Stroup, Herbert H. *The Jehovah's Witnesses* New York: Columbia University Press 1945. A scholarly study, well written and mainly concerned with the social aspect of the Witness movement. An admirable but out-dated book.

William J. Schnell has published a bi-monthly journal called *The Converted Jehovah's Witness Expositor* (address: 794, Terrace Road, Dunedin, Florida). Other movements connected with the Witnesses that have published relevant works are listed below.

- (a) The Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, 2101-13 South 11th Street, Philadelphia 48, Pa., U.S.A. prints a monthly magazine called *The Bible Standard and Herald of Christ's Kingdom*. In addition to Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures* the movement has published the following books that are entirely concerned with the schism of 1918 (they are all written by Paul S. L. Johnson). *Epiphany Studies in the Scriptures*: Volumes 1-17, particularly
Volume 3: *Elijah and Elisha*
Volume 6: *Merariism*

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Volume 7: *Gershonism*

Volume 10: *The Epiphany Messenger*.

(b) Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc., P.O. Box 15031 - Chouteau Station, St. Louis, Missouri 63110.

These also print a bi-monthly magazine called *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* and the following strictly doctrinal books:

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