

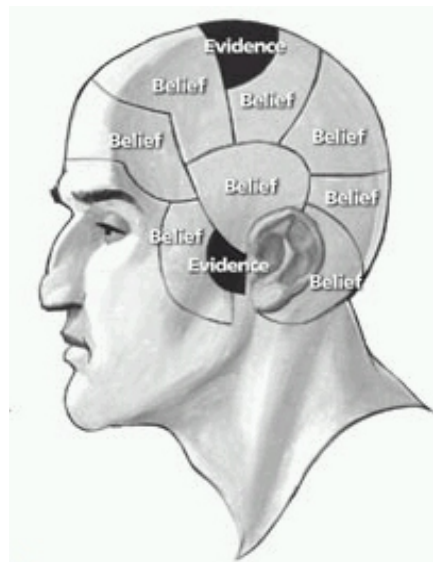
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Belief vs Facts

In the last few years, there have been numerous “adjustments” in the Organization, both doctrinally and procedurally. While many find these changes enlightening, there are still many brothers and sisters who are concerned about all these changes and what it means for Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Change is never easy, especially when it comes to doctrinal changes. You can be told that something is “truth” for years, even decades, only to have it change in one simple article. Why is it so difficult to perhaps accept that a doctrine we had long believed to be based on the scriptures, turns out not to be? The fundamental reason is the way our brain is hard-wired. Beliefs (whether religious or otherwise) are designed to enhance our ability to survive, they are biologically designed to be strongly resistant to change.



"Belief" is the name of the survival tool of the brain that is designed to enhance the danger-identification function of our senses. Beliefs extend the range of our senses so that we can better detect danger and thus improve our chances of survival as we move into and out of unfamiliar territory. Beliefs, in essence, serve as our brain's "long-range danger detectors."

Because our senses and beliefs are *both* tools for survival, our brain considers them to be separate but equally important. In other words beliefs operate independent of our sensory data (evidence). Beliefs are not *supposed* to change easily or simply in response to evidence. If they did, they would be virtually useless as tools for survival. A police officer unable to believe in the possibility of a killer lurking behind a harmless appearance could easily get hurt or killed.

As far as our brain is concerned, there is no need for data and belief to agree. They each augment and supplement one another. They are designed to be able to disagree. So when data (or evidence) and belief come into conflict, the brain does not automatically give preference to the data. This is why beliefs—even erroneous beliefs, do not die in the face of contradictory evidence. The brain doesn't care whether or not the belief matches the data. It cares whether the belief is helpful for survival. Period. To have your beliefs challenged is, quite literally, a threat to your brain's sense of survival. It is entirely normal for people to be defensive in such situations. The brain

feels it is fighting for its life.¹

For example, a woman might be married to a man for 30 years. Let's say she has never worked outside the home, married young, had children and has always been a stay at home mom. She loves her husband and is completely dependent on him emotionally, financially, socially and physically. Her belief is that she is secure in the knowledge that hers is a good marriage and it is the foundation for the security in her life.

Lets say the telltale signs that her husband is having an extra-marital affair begin to surface: late nights, unexplained absences, smelling of another woman's perfume, taking extra care with his appearance. Her friends even try to warn her that they've seen him with another woman. What will the wife normally do? More often than not, she will continue to believe in her husband and she will ignore all the evidence that he is having an extra-marital affair. As described above, the "belief" part of her brain interprets the "facts" as a threat to it's survival and it refuses to accept the overwhelming evidence that something's not right. And since she is dependent on her husband for virtually everything, her brain refuses to accept the "data/evidence" that clearly tells her he is seeing someone else.

Religion can be the same way. If someone has been trained to believe that a polygamous marriage at the age of 13 or 14 is normal and approved by God (as is common amongst offshoots of the Mormon Church), then naturally they are going to become defensive and angry when it is shown to them that it is *not* normal or approved by God. That is their belief system kicking into high gear and once again, it ignores the data that is contrary to their beliefs, because the brain will interpret it as a threat.

Although it might seem absurd to some that the brain cannot recognize "truth" when it sees it, let us put this theory to test. When you read the following pages, beliefs and facts will come in direct contact with each other. What you decide to do with this information, is entirely up to you.

¹Gregory W. Lester, Ph.D. is a psychologist on the graduate faculty of the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas,

Smoking

Everyone knows that smoking is bad for you. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body; causing many diseases and reducing the health of smokers in general. The adverse health effects from cigarette smoking account for an estimated 438,000 deaths, or nearly 1 of every 5 deaths, each year in the United States alone.¹

Most Witnesses are well aware that in 1973, everyone who worked in the tobacco-growing industry (whether selling cigarettes, manufacture, tobacco machinery, or farmers producing tobacco), were given 6 months to sever all business relations with the tobacco industry. This included those who smoked, those who owned tobacco farms, and those who worked in the tobacco fields. This was because of the scripture at 2 Cor.7: 1 that says “Beloved ones let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit.”²

Failure to comply with the instructions set out meant you would be disfellowshipped from the congregation as described in the June 1, 1973 Watchtower:

“What, then, of those who in the past were baptized while still using such addictive products as tobacco, other drugs, or who are on some treatment such as the “methadone program” and who continue in such practice? They may now be given a reasonable period of time, such as six months, in which to free themselves of the addiction. So doing, they will show their sincere desire to remain within Jehovah God’s clean congregation of dedicated servants.....If persons already baptized are not willing to abandon their addiction to damaging and enslaving products, what then? Then they show that, like Esau, they do not ‘appreciate sacred things,’ preferring such habits to the privilege of being part of Jehovah’s clean people. They should therefore be removed from the congregation due to such conduct unbecoming a Christian.—1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 12:15, 16.

The February 1974 **Kingdom Ministry** on page 3 left no doubt that any affiliation with tobacco products would be grounds for removal from the congregation:

“...*The Watchtower* of June 1, 1973, presented the Scriptural reasons why it is

¹ *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Annual Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses----* United States, 1997–2001. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* [serial online]. 2002;51(14):300–303 [cited 2006 Dec 5]. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5114a2.htm>.

² While there is no doubt that smoking is extremely harmful to the body, and can cause heart problems, liver problems, stroke, lung cancer, emphysema, and even death, it begs the question as to why other ‘sins’, such as gluttony, are not disfellowshipping offenses as well. It is a well known fact that over-eating contributes to obesity, heart problems, diabetes, cancer, and death, yet there has never been one single Jehovah’s Witness disfellowshipped for gluttony, even though it contributes to health problems just as much, if not more, than smoking does.

wrong to use tobacco personally and showed that baptized Christians who are tobacco users would be removed from the Christian congregation. Baptized persons who were using tobacco were allowed a reasonable period of time in which to free themselves from the addiction.

The Watchtower of July 1, 1973, gave examples of dedicated Christians who, in recognition of the detrimental effects of tobacco on the human family, exercised their conscience in refusing to grow tobacco any longer. It pointed out too how some had quit working for companies that manufacture and distribute cigars, cigarettes and tobacco products.

The *Kingdom Ministry* of November 1973 also contained an article on how tobacco users should be viewed by the Christian congregation..... a person who owns a tobacco store, or one who has accepted employment in a factory devoted to producing tobacco products, or a salesman whose business is selling tobacco, or a farmer who controls the raising of crops on his farm and who chooses to raise tobacco should recognize that he has a responsibility for what he is doing. How can his Christian conscience allow him to bring harm to his neighbor when he is in a position to exercise control over what is being done? There should be no doubt as to the gross wrong on the part of those who gain their principal source of income from promoting the use of tobacco at the expense of the well-being of their fellow man. Such a course is an open contradiction of the basic command to love one's neighbor as oneself."—Matt. 22:39. [emphasis added]

With the above quotes in mind, it might come as a shock to know that the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* knowingly accepted dividends in monies invested in *Phillip Morris*, one of the largest tobacco companies in the world as shown by the charts on the following pages (which is public information).

This was done through the ***Henrietta M. Riley Trust*** which was set up in 1997 with the Watchtower Society as the sole beneficiary. Basically, it's main goal (as is written on the tax forms) is to make income for the Watchtower, using assets left by Henrietta Riley. The income generated by the trust is transferred to the Watchtower by means of a "donation". The monies from the trust is invested in various companies and on the third page, one of the companies listed is: Phillip Morris, one of the largest cigarette companies in the world:

Form **990**

Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax

OMB No. 1545-0047

2001

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Under section 501(c), 527, or 4947(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code (except black lung benefit trust or private foundation)

The organization may have to use a copy of this return to satisfy state reporting requirements

Open to Public Inspection

A For the 2001 calendar year, or tax year period beginning **MAY 1, 2001** and ending **APR 30, 2002**

- B Check if applicable:
- Address change
- Name change
- Initial return
- Final return
- Amended return
- Application pending

C Name of organization
H.M. RILEY TR FOR WATCH TOWER BIBLE

Please use IRS label or print on type. See Specific Instructions

02 03 312 0155277

Number and street (or P O box if mail is not delivered to street address) Room/suite
C/O COMERICA BANK, P.O. BOX 75000 MC3302

City or town, state or country, and ZIP + 4
DETROIT, MI 48275

D Employer identification number

38-6043103

E Telephone number

(616)966-6344

F Accounting method

Cash Accrual
 Other (specify) _____

* Section 501(c)(3) organizations and 4947(a)(1) nonexempt charitable trusts must attach a completed Schedule A (Form 990 or 990-EZ)

H and I are not applicable to section 527 organizations

H(a) Is this a group return for affiliates? Yes No

H(b) If "Yes," enter number of affiliates: _____

H(c) Are all affiliates included? **N/A** Yes No (If "No," attach a list)

H(d) Is this a separate return filed by an organization covered by a group ruling? Yes No

I Enter 4-digit GEN: _____

M Check if the organization is not required to attach Sch. B (Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-PF)

Web site: **NONE**

Organization type (check only one) 501(c) (3) (insert no.) 4947(a)(1) or 527

Check here if the organization's gross receipts are normally not more than \$25,000. The organization need not file a return with the IRS, but if the organization received a Form 990 Package in the mail, it should file a return without financial data. Some states require a complete return

L Gross receipts Add lines 6b, 8b, 9b, and 10b to line 12: **3,143,064.00**

Part I Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets or Fund Balances

1	Contributions, gifts, grants, and similar amounts received				
a	Direct public support	1a			
b	Indirect public support	1b			
c	Government contributions (grants)	1c			
d	Total (add lines 1a through 1c) (cash \$ _____ noncash \$ _____)			1d	0.00
2	Program service revenue including government fees and contracts (from Part VII, line 93)			2	
3	Membership dues and assessments			3	
4	Interest on savings and temporary cash investments			4	
5	Dividends and interest from securities			5	63,023.00
6a	Gross rents See Statement 1	6a	2,143,910.00		
6b	Less: rental expenses See Statement 2	6b	423,286.00		
6c	Net rental income or (loss) (subtract line 6b from line 6a)	6c			1,720,624.00
7	Other investment income (describe _____)			7	
8a	Gross amount from sale of assets other than inventory	(A) Securities		(B) Other	
		8a	936,131.00		
b	Less: cost or other basis and sales expenses	8b	979,651.00		
c	Gain or (loss) (attach schedule)	8c	<43,520.00>		
d	Net gain or (loss) (combine line 8c, column (B) and line 8c, column (A))	8d			<43,520.00>
9	Special events and activities (attach schedule)				
a	Gross revenue (not including _____ of contributions reported on line 1a)	9a			
b	Less: direct expenses other than fundraising expenses	9b			
c	Net income or (loss) from special events (subtract line 9b from line 9a)	9c			
10a	Gross sales of inventory, less returns and allowances	10a			
b	Less: cost of goods sold	10b			
c	Gross profit or (loss) from sales of inventory (attach schedule) (subtract line 10b from line 10a)	10c			
11	Other revenue (from Part VII, line 103)			11	
12	Total revenue (add lines 1d, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6c, 7, 8c, 9c, 10c, and 11)			12	1,740,127.00
13	Program services (from line 44, column (B))			13	1,945,645.00
14	Management and general (from line 44, column (C))			14	1,433.00
15	Fundraising (from line 44, column (D))			15	
16	Payments to affiliates (attach schedule)			16	
17	Total expenses (add lines 16 and 44, column (A))			17	1,947,078.00
18	Excess or (deficit) for the year (subtract line 17 from line 12)			18	<206,951.00>
19	Net assets or fund balances at beginning of year (from line 73, column (A))			19	1,701,618.00
20	Other changes in net assets or fund balances (attach explanation)		See Statement 4	20	309,562.00
21	Net assets or fund balances at end of year (combine lines 18, 19, and 20)			21	1,804,229.00

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ENVELOPE POSTMARK DATE AUG 27 2002

SCANNED SEP 09 2002

15260626 756897 38-6043103 2001.05050 H.M. RILEY TR FOR WATCH TOW 38-60441

Form 990 (2001)

Part II Statement of Functional Expenses

All organizations must complete column (A). Columns (B), (C), and (D) are required for section 501(c)(3) and (4) organizations and section 4947(a)(1) nonexempt charitable trusts but optional for others.

Do not include amounts reported on line 6a, 6b, 6c, 10b, or 16 of Part I		(A) Total	(B) Program services	(C) Management and general	(D) Fundraising
22	Grants and allocations (attach schedule) cash \$ 1945645 noncash \$	1,945,645.00	1,945,645.00	Statement 5	
23	Specific assistance to individuals (attach schedule)				
24	Benefits paid to or for members (attach schedule)				
25	Compensation of officers, directors, etc	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
26	Other salaries and wages				
27	Pension plan contributions				
28	Other employee benefits				
29	Payroll taxes				
30	Professional fundraising fees				
31	Accounting fees				
32	Legal fees	704.00		704.00	
33	Supplies				
34	Telephone				
35	Postage and shipping				
36	Occupancy				
37	Equipment rental and maintenance				
38	Printing and publications				
39	Travel				
40	Conferences, conventions, and meetings				
41	Interest				
42	Depreciation, depletion, etc (attach schedule)				
43	Other expenses not covered above (itemize)				
a	TAX PREPARATION FEE	300.00		300.00	
b	TRUSTEE FEE	429.00		429.00	
c					
d					
e					
44	Total functional expenses (add lines 22 through 43). Organizations completing columns (B)-(D) carry these totals to lines 12-15.	1,947,078.00	1,945,645.00	1,433.00	0.00

Joint Costs Check if you are following SOP 98-2

Are any joint costs from a combined educational campaign and fundraising solicitation reported in (B) Program services? Yes No

If "Yes," enter (i) the aggregate amount of these joint costs \$ _____, (ii) the amount allocated to Program services \$ _____,

(iii) the amount allocated to Management and general \$ _____, and (iv) the amount allocated to Fundraising \$ _____.

Part III Statement of Program Service Accomplishments

What is the organization's primary exempt purpose?

SUPPORT WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY

All organizations must describe their exempt purpose achievements in a clear and concise manner. State the number of clients served, publications issued, etc. Discuss achievements that are not measurable. (Section 501(c)(3) and (4) organizations and 4947(a)(1) nonexempt charitable trusts must also enter the amount of grants and allocations to others.)

Program Service Expenses
(Required for 501(c)(3) and (4) orgs and 4947(a)(1) trusts, but optional for others.)

a	SUPPORT OF WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY				
		(Grants and allocations \$			1,945,645.00
b					
		(Grants and allocations \$			
c					
		(Grants and allocations \$			
d					
		(Grants and allocations \$			
e	Other program services (attach schedule)				
		(Grants and allocations \$			
f	Total of Program Service Expenses (should equal line 44, column (B), Program services)				1,945,645.00

AS OF 04/30/02

PAGE

ACCOUNT

02-03-312-0155277

RILEY, HENRIETTA, TRUSTEE U/W

SHARES OR PAR VALUE	ASSET DESCRIPTION	TAX COST	PRICE	MARKET VALUE	ESTI- MATED
	TOTAL BASIC INDUSTRY (MATERIALS)	5,617 50		5,164.50	99
	CAPITAL GOODS/CONSTRUCTION				
500	GENERAL ELEC CO	24,872 00	31 550	15,775 00	360.00
375	ROMER INDS INC NEW	18,175 25	45 990	17,244 25	123 75
400	TYCO INTERNATIONAL LTD	19,330 00	18 450	7,380 00	20 00
	TOTAL CAPITAL GOODS/CONSTRUCTION	62,375 25		40,401 25	503 75
	CONSUMER CYCLICAL				
700	BRIDGER INTL INC	17,409 00	34 440	24,108 00	0 00
350	CARDINAL HEALTH INC	16,555 00	69 300	24,255 00	35 00
400	HOME DEPOT INC	21,055 00	44 370	18,540 00	80 00
600	JONES APPAREL GROUP INC	16,560 50	38 950	23,370 00	0 00
	TOTAL CONSUMER CYCLICAL	71,579 50		90,281 00	115 00
	CONSUMER STAPLE				
450	ECOLAB INC	18,294 00	43 910	19,759 50	243 00
350	PHILIP MORRIS COMPANIES INC	16,607 50	59 430	19,050 50	812 00
425	SAFEMAY INC	18,712 25	41 990	17,828 75	0 00
625	SYSCO	16,405 00	29 010	18,131 25	225 00

The Society is anything but 'unaware' of donations, investments and its own holdings. They have specific instructions (both in their literature as well as on their website), on how to contribute to the Organization through insurance policies, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, etc., which would all be examined and evaluated by both the Legal Department as well as their Accounting Department:

www.jw-media.org/region/europe/russia/english/moscow/wtpubs/e_w961101.htm

PLANNED GIVING

In addition to outright gifts of money and conditional donations of money, there are other methods of giving to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These include:

Insurance: The Watch Tower Society may be named as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in a retirement/pension plan. The Society should be informed of any such arrangement.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts may be placed in trust for or made payable on death to the Watch Tower Society, in accord with local bank requirements. The Society should be informed of any such arrangements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either as an outright gift or under an arrangement whereby the income continues to be paid to the donor.

It would be impossible for the Watchtower Society to NOT know about owning this stock. For one, when the trust was inherited, Watchtower lawyers and accountants would have analyzed the inheritance to determine it's worth. In addition, given their stand on this issue (at least through their literature), it would be their moral obligation to inform the investors that they do not support the use of tobacco and did not want the trust to include any shares in companies in the tobacco industry. The company managing the trust would have to respect those wishes. As well, Philip Morris does pay quarterly dividends so the Watchtower Society would receive them and their accountants would be all too aware of what the money was being invested in.

This is no oversight because if a third party can get hold of this information, do you really think that the Watchtower Society doesn't have a copy of these very same documents? And while the objection could be made that it is not actually the Watchtower Society itself *making* the investment, but just receiving the cash, is this a valid defense? Especially in light of their own words on investing in the stock market:

“...How a Christian puts his money to work is for him to decide personally, just as how he works for a living is for him to decide. There is nothing contrary to Scriptural principles for him to let his money help him earn a

livelihood. If he invests in stocks, no one should criticize him. He should, of course, be discreet about what stocks or bonds he buys. **When he knows that a corporation is devoted entirely to manufacturing merchandise that is used for a morally wrong purpose, it would be improper for him to violate his conscience by investing money in the stock of that company.**" ³ [emphasis added]

Is It Wise to Invest in the Stock Market?

Many investors consult with financial planners before purchasing stock. **By considering the background of a company, an investor can also ensure that his money will not be used to support an unethical enterprise.**" ⁴ [emphasis added].

The initial quotes showed clearly that the Watchtower has long regarded smoking as an unchristian activity and is indeed a disfellowshipping offence for a Jehovah's Witness. A Witness is not permitted to be employed in the tobacco industry. There can be no doubt that if an individual Witness invested in the cigarette industry, the Watchtower would consider this an 'unchristian' investment and that individual would most likely be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

Yet at the same time, a trust which exists for the primary reason of generating income for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, invests in a cigarette company! While the amount of the investment is small, it is not the *amount* that is the issue, but the principle: the Organization has knowingly benefitted from an investment made in the tobacco industry. The stock was apparently sold in June of 2002, perhaps in response to this information exposing the hypocrisy of the Organization via the internet.

The October 22, 1981 *Awake!* quotes *Medical World News* editor Reginald Rhein, Jr., as saying:

"Smoking is a clear, present, and proven danger that kills 320,000 Americans every year through heart disease, cancer, and emphysema." He noted, however, that both the federal government and the American Medical Association **loudly proclaim the dangers of smoking while at the same time "quietly supporting the production of cigarettes."** Rhein said that at its annual meeting in Chicago, AMA delegates did come out "against federal subsidies for tobacco growers," **but then they "turned around and refused to order the Board of Trustees to divest the association's pension fund of \$1.4 million in tobacco-company stock."** The editor then asked: "Who is going to take the association—or even individual doctors—seriously now?" [emphasis added]

³*Awake!*, February 8, 1962, p. 23

⁴*Awake!* October 8, 2000, p. 27.

Indeed the same question could be asked about the Watchtower Society. Especially as they knowingly accepting monies invested in a tobacco company nearly 30 after their policy of disfellowshipping anyone who did not follow the June 1, 1973 *Watchtower*, even at a great financial loss. To illustrate the financial devastation the '6 months to a year' policy had on some, what follows is the testimony of one brother who lived through that time:

The entire testimony can be viewed at: www.freeminds.org/doctrine/tobaccobombshell.htm

"...As a family, we became associated with Watchtower during the mid 30's and at that time we were farming tobacco and continued until the [ban where you were obligated to sever all ties with the tobacco industry, in 1973].....Attending that meeting and hearing that discourse proved to be an electrifying experience to say the least. There was no advance warning of what was about to happen and, out of the blue, came the following organization directive: If you are presently involved with tobacco and wish to remain in good standing, you have a window of time to adjust to the new reality, **6 to 12 months, to find other employment and, if farming, desist from producing tobacco.** The implication was clear. **Failure to conform would be viewed as rebellion, which would indicate one had disqualified oneself as a Jehovah's Witness.** Just as in the case of accepting a blood transfusion, one had now automatically disassociated oneself from the Organization, with the same consequences as being disfellowshipped.

We left the Kingdom Hall in total shock and disbelief, stunned and devastated. What an incredible nightmare we faced! There was no dialogue involved, no fielding of questions but a unilateral decision imposed. They dropped the bombshell and left.

A phone call to the District Overseer quartered nearby requesting a brief audience for farmers to express their concerns to headquarters about the financial obligations they faced was turned down as his time schedule would not allow for it. It became obvious there was no interest in discussing the matter. The message had been delivered; the problems were ours to solve, a rude awakening for us, indeed.

Now the specter of falling into a disfellowshipped state was alarming, being shunned and rejected by family and friends, dying with no hope of a resurrection. Clearly, we faced a troubling decision. Employees with nothing invested could simply quit their jobs and seek other employment. Farmers were faced with a dilemma of a different sort: what to do with a farm totally geared to tobacco production, a highly specialized industry, a heavy capital investment in buildings and equipment, farmland with light sandy-low fertility soils uniquely suited to production of cigarette leaf. The choice of alternative crops on light soil is limited and the capital cost of a switchover to new equipment and the disproportionate return versus cost per acre were serious. Some who experimented with alternative crops failed and lost most of their resources. I had brought my tape recorder to that meeting, but was requested to remove it and

take it back to the car. No taping was allowed. I had found that puzzling but complied. It was months later when it occurred to me the reason might be to leave no evidence of what was said as it might have legal implications, or be considered controversial material.

The year the directive was issued was the last year we grew tobacco. My wife and I had purchased the family farm a number of years previous to this turn of events from parents who, now in their senior years, had built a retirement bungalow on the farm property, as they wished to spend their remaining years in familiar surroundings. Their small pension and mortgage income could sustain them. These new developments immediately scuttled any long-term plans. Besides bank, and mortgage payments, my wife and I were faced with imminent financial insolvency. With little or no options, we agonized for months over what course lay open to us.

After exhaustive considerations we were faced with no alternative but to liquidate, which led to other complications for the parents. An attempt to secure a farm severance for the land on which their home was located was denied by the municipality. They were left with a choice of selling their home with the farm or move it away. Despite a very depressed real estate market during that period, we were compelled to liquidate and sell all. It took over ten months before a neighboring farmer manifested interest in the farm. Short of the value and of our asking price for the farm, we were compelled to accept a "firesale" offer. **The imminent threat of being disfellowshipped and the compelling urge from family to avoid this scenario led to the final capitulation to sell**, conditional by the buyer that the bungalow be removed, as he had no practical use for it. That meant uprooting the parents, now both in their upper seventies, from their surroundings and home for some 36 years. It all became extremely stressful.

The decision was made to buy a new lot in a nearby village some 10 miles away, hire a reliable building-mover who would install the dwelling on a new basement foundation. The final cost to the parents was approx. \$18,000 for moving the house, the lot, services installed, earth moving and landscape, all due to this new WT directive. To look after aging parents, we settled nearby in the same village at considerable cost for a permanent dwelling.

Our compliance with the directive was a heartfelt feeling that we were following Jehovah's will in the matter. We did not object to leaving an industry, which by now, was suspect of injury to human health. What became an uncomfortable realization though, was the overwhelming feeling that we were being subjected to serious injustice and abuse. **It appears that no thought or planning went into this policy to help soften the impact for those faced with extracting themselves from the tobacco industry by allowing for an adequate time frame to dispose of property and recover capital investments.** Instead an arbitrary period of six months to a year was the grace period given by Watchtower representatives. What was painful to us was the calloused, uncaring spirit manifested: no dialogue, no consultation with anyone to ascertain how the policy would affect people. The rank and file was totally ignored. It was a unilateral decision by men at the top and demonstrated no concern for anyone. A hard line authoritarian directive was imposed, accompanied by

intimidation and threat. While couched in diplomatic language, the bottom line was to take it or leave it and suffer the consequences. Where was Christian love and concern demonstrated? Where is Jesus' counsel reflected to treat the flock with tenderness and understanding?

We became disturbed by many unanswered questions such as: what was the all-fired-up rush to close out the tobacco industry and why no level playing field? Why single out tobacco? To this day it appears WT totally ignored brothers who work unmolested in industries who are serious polluters of the environment and health. While we don't single out the transportation industry, it is definitely among one of the worst.

The use of fossil fuels in the nation's industries has become recognized as a serious factor in environmental and air pollution, so much so that governments issue warnings on days when smog poses a serious threat to the lives of seniors and very young children, many of whom have developed breathing problems, about one in five according to reports. Why did this WT policy directive avoid imposing this same strict rule for JW's working in these polluting industries, which directly involves them? According to the rule, they would have to quit their jobs or seek other employment – or be subject to disfellowshipping. In all fairness, would one reason these are exempt from Bible principles? Does God discriminate and exempt these?

Consider Developments That Followed Shortly After We Liquidated

The government license board controlling jurisdiction and sale of tobacco leaf introduced a new policy factor, allowing greater flexibility for young, aggressive farmers to expand the size of their farm operations, while allowing aging farmers to withdraw from tobacco production.

Originally "production quotas" were affixed to a farmer's land, to which they were originally issued (inseparable). Henceforth "quota" would float free of any attachment to land and become a saleable commodity like stock or shares sold to the highest bidder leaving the retiring farmer to keep his or her land and farm dwelling. Had we been in possession of the farm shortly after we sold out, the outcome for our two families would have been enormously different. 1. The aging parents could have lived out their remaining years without cost or hassle. 2. We would not have sacrificed the farm to relocate at a burdensome cost of buying another home and remained on the farm at no cost versus a combined outlay of \$100,000 for both families. We could have sold our production quota, which by itself, sold for more money than we received for the combined assets of the farm--consisting of land, farm buildings, home, and quota. Quota values rose by demand to a high of \$3.00 a pound, with a saleable quota on our farm of 57,200 pounds, a potential, ranging up to \$168 000. In reality we realized approx. half this amount (for the combined assets of land, farm buildings, home, and quota).

The new owner capitalized on this rising market and realized approximately \$138,000 for the quota alone, and retaining the land, farm buildings, and home.

Our property was sold under duress, as the problem for us was that our farm debt had to be met with income from tobacco production, which other crops could not generate. With no saleable assets at our disposal, [such as the tobacco quota which only became saleable two years after we sold our property], the time frame imposed by WT left no choice but liquidation. If we had any involvement with tobacco beyond the set limits by WT, we would indeed suffer the consequences. In spite of a depressed real estate market in 1973, we felt forced to accept a below-market value to enable us to sell within that time frame and only received:

- for the farm, which included land of a unique-type tobacco soil, buildings, and 56,200 pounds of tobacco-growing quota (under Government license) \$72,000.00
- for the equipment that originally did not sell with the farm, an approximate value of 12,000.00
- Total \$ 84,000.00

As a condition of this sole purchase offer, we were also required to remove my parents house off the property, at our expense, as the purchaser did not want to invest money in this second house. We were left with no other option but to do so to successfully finalize this sale within the WT's time-frame, as our attempt to sever the property was denied by the Municipality at that time, due to Municipal bylaws.

The first man who bought our farm in 1973, shortly thereafter became ill with a severe heart condition and in less than 5 years was compelled to dispose of the farm property. The free trading of quota now resulted in premium prices:

- First, he sold off the freed-up growing quota alone, realizing a larger return of approximately \$ 138,000.00
- After renting out the land for several years, the farm land and buildings were sold for 95,000.00
- Additionally, original chattels were sold for approximately 7,000.00
- This end total represents the growth value in just five years after our liquidation Total \$ 240,000.00

The next owner succeeded in securing a property severance from the farm for the old farm-house and lot as by then, the Municipality had changed its rules on property severances.

- The later sale of this severed lot and house alone yielded him almost his original investment \$ 82,000.00
- The Grand Total that was generated by this property over time .. \$322,000.00

The Total we had received from being forced into selling within WTS time limit \$84,000.00

The resulting Total Loss to us due to WTS Policy, necessitating liquidation:

..... \$ 238,000.00

Granted, these figures represent a growth factor for a period of years when inflation rose steeply due to a world crisis in oil. Had we not been made to feel the urgency of selling within WT's time-frame, we could have remained living there, taking advantage of waiting for the right time to sell off our producer quota and leasing out the use of the land. This would have given us time to salvage a lifetime investment, and we could have avoided the hassle and expense my parents went through having to move the retirement bungalow they had built on our farm property, for which no severance could be obtained. This denial of severance necessitated resettlement of both our families at considerable expense. If we had not felt the WT's pressure to comply with their time limit, we could have sold the balance of property later, at a more opportune time.

What happened, of course, is now hindsight, but shows what can happen when a policy is recklessly enforced without due consideration for people's personal circumstances. We were robbed of the potential appreciated value of a lifetime investment, which in the end is a farmer's only retirement nest egg. This demonstrates a calloused attitude by the men in authority.

It was not leaving the tobacco industry that left our faith shaken. Rather our faith was shaken, not in God, but in an organization claiming to represent Him. The harsh, unilateral, discriminating way the policy was imposed with no consideration for the individual circumstances it forced on people and with no consultation as to how to soften the blow, opened our eyes. It is apparent that there is an inconsistent way this policy was applied to only the tobacco industry. JWs work in many industries, some of which are serious polluters of the environment, and the air we all must breath. Why were [Witnesses] who were working in other polluting industries excused or exempt from this policy?.....Can we say WT is to blame for our loss, in view of the fact that we acted of our own volition in response to WT's directives? How would you answer that question?"

This is just one of many 'financial ruination' stories that resulted after the 1973 policy that clearly did not take into consideration the devastating effect it had on a lot of brothers at the time. And with the realization that the Organization accepted monies invested in one of the largest tobacco companies on earth, it makes what happened to these brothers even more tragic.

“...A new view of truth never can contradict a former truth. "New light" never extinguishes older "light," but adds to it....” ----Zion's Watch Tower, Feb, 1881, p.3

New Light

Even the most dedicated Witness is aware that the ‘Slave Class’ has changed many doctrines over the last hundred years. Some of these changes may have little or no significant impact on Jehovah’s Witnesses either as a congregation or individually, but other doctrines which have changed over the years, have had life altering repercussions for the average Witness.

Whenever these changes are put to print (usually through either a study article in the Watchtower or an official letter from Brooklyn Bethel), they inevitably use ‘new light from Jehovah’ as their reason for not getting it right the first time (and henceforth the change in their interpretation). To defend themselves against questions as to why the change is needed at all, they point to two scriptures:

Proverbs 4:17-18: “But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.”

Psalms 97:11: “Light itself has flashed up for the righteous one, And rejoicing even for the ones upright in heart.”⁵

The December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* pp. 16-17 pars. 2-3 ‘Light Has Flashed Up for the Righteous’ explains it this way:

“...Note that the shining of light on the path of the righteous is progressive. It keeps “shining ever brighter.” We might illustrate this by a man who gets up before daybreak and who sets out on foot to travel through the countryside. He might see an outline of a building in the distance, but at first cannot tell whether it is a barn or a house. Gradually as day dawns and he gets closer he can see that it is a house. After a while he is able to tell that it is a wooden, not a brick, house. Then, later, he can make out the color of the house, and so forth.”

There are many other similar statements throughout the Society’s publications over the years that basically say the same thing. While on the surface it looks like a reasonable explanation, when you examine it closely, this theory falls flat.

First, let’s read the scripture at Proverbs 4:14-19 so we can see what the *context* is around this scripture. It says:

⁵*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*

“...Into the path of the wicked ones do not enter, and do not walk straight on into the way of the bad ones. Shun it, do not pass along by it; turn aside from it, and pass along. For they do not sleep unless they do badness, and their sleep has been snatched away unless they cause someone to stumble. For they have fed themselves with the bread of wickedness, and the wine of acts of violence is what they drink. But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established. The way of the wicked ones is like the gloom; they have not known at what they keep stumbling...”

It is fairly plain to see what this scripture is talking about. It is simply referring to the two paths in life that a person can take: either the path of a righteous man, or that of a wicked man. If someone persists in “doing badness” with the “bread of wickedness” and “acts of violence”, then the path they follow in life will indeed be “like the gloom”, full of darkness and with no joy. But the person who is “righteous” and leads a good life, who’s generous with their dealing with others, who is honest, trustworthy and has a good relationship with God, will (obviously) fair much better. Their path in life will be completely different from the wicked person and it will indeed be “like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.”

There is absolutely *nothing* in these verses that even *hints* that it is referring to Jehovah ‘shedding light’ on their (erroneous) interpretations of the scriptures-----*it-just-isn’t-there*. Yet the Society uses this scripture on a regular basis whenever one of their doctrines or prophecies fails to materialize in the way they had predicted. Without these scriptures (*which have been twisted to mean something they were never intended to mean*), they would have absolutely no viable explanation for why God’s “sole channel of communication” have repeatedly gotten bible prophecy wrong.

If you read the example from the December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* which attempts to explain why the ‘Faithful and Discreet Slave’ can get so many interpretations wrong, it actually raises more questions than what it answers. Consider when it says:

“...a man who gets up before daybreak and who sets out on foot to travel through the countryside. He might see an outline of a building in the distance, but at first cannot tell whether it is a barn or a house. Gradually as day dawns and he gets closer he can see that it is a house. After a while he is able to tell that it is a wooden, not a brick, house. Then, later, he can make out the color of the house, and so forth...”

While the above scenario can be true of someone who “sets out on foot to travel”, and who had no guide, no compass, no map and no instructions on how to reach his destination, the same should not be true of the man who claims he was given explicit instructions, along with a detailed map and a compass from his father who know the journey well. Furthermore, if he were a tour guide whose job it was to get a group from Point A to Point B, how many wrong turns or misidentifying landmarks (which can easily cause undue harm to many in the group), would the group endure before they started

thinking “*this guy doesn’t have a clue what he’s doing or where he’s going.*” Even more so, what would they think when the tour guide began insisting that he and *only* he, had the correct map given to him by his father and that if anyone wanted to get out of their alive, they had to follow him no matter how many years of having to backtrack down another road (possibly one that someone in the group had recommended they take years previously).

The Governing Body members, who shape all doctrine in the religion, fit the description above to a T. They claim that they and they alone, are the “channel of communication” through which Jehovah deals with mankind.⁶ They claim that they are the only ones who have this special position and only by listening to *them* can anyone have any hope of everlasting life.⁷ Most notably, they claim that the Holy Spirit works only through them, providing ‘new light’ as they have claimed through their literature:

“...Jehovah God has made known to his anointed ones in advance what these scriptures mean....”⁸

“...His remnant of faithful followers catch the glory light from the unfolding of the Holy Scriptures, which were written for our day and which Jehovah’s appointed interpreter Christ Jesus explains to us...”⁹

“...Jehovah’s people confess no powers of inspiration today. However, they do pray continually for more of God’s holy spirit to understand the many prophecies already uttered and preserved for the final preaching work which Jehovah’s witnesses are now undertaking. They know that the inspired infallible Scriptures of prophecy will be fulfilled toward them correctly....”¹⁰ [emphasis added]

Yet we know from past experience that their interpretation of ‘prophecy’, has actually never been fulfilled the way they predicted.¹¹ If the Holy Spirit is not revealing to these men the *correct* interpretation of the scriptures, then how are they any different from any other religion? If the Holy Spirit is not guiding them what to *correctly* write down in the literature, then of what benefit is the Holy Spirit? Why would Jehovah let a wrong interpretation of the scriptures, go out to millions of people and presented as “truth”,

⁶ March 15, 2003 *Watchtower* p. 27: “...How foolish to reject good advice and insist on our own way! We “must be swift about hearing” when Jehovah, “the One teaching men knowledge,” counsels us through his channel of communication..”

⁷ December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* p. 27 par. 4: “..Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do.”

⁸ *Watchtower* 1931 June 1 p.160

⁹ *Watchtower* 1944 May 1 p.138

¹⁰ *Watchtower* 1952, April 15 p. 253 par. 20

¹¹ See the section on “False Prophecy”

when in fact it is not? Especially in light of the fact that the Society is always emphasizing that Jehovah is judging people on how they react to the “preaching work” done by 6 million Witnesses. If they are preaching something that is considered “truth” today, but that could be considered “old light” a year down the road, are they not in fact preaching something that simply was never true in the first place?

The scriptures tell us that Jehovah “does not change.”¹² If the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is in fact, the means by which he communicates His truths to mankind, then there should be no “changes” in the way the scriptures are interpreted. The December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* (mentioned above) then goes on to say:

“The experience of God’s servants has been just like that. Viewing certain matters from a distance in time and with only a little light on the subject often we have had an incomplete, and even an inaccurate, view of things. In such situations we may well have been influenced by previously held views. But as the light gets brighter and we draw much closer to events, then our understanding of the outworking of God’s purposes becomes clearer. Prophecies open up to us as Jehovah’s holy spirit sheds light upon them, and as they are fulfilled in world events or in the experiences of God’s people. Has this not been just the way that Jehovah God has dealt with his servants from early times? Indeed it has been!...”

One of the most obvious problems with this explanation is: What good are prophecies if you interpret them wrong or don’t understand the meaning of them until they are already fulfilled? The average person can do that. The very meaning of the word “prophecy” nullifies any such excuse because it is described as:

- An inspired utterance of a prophet, viewed as a revelation of divine will.
- A prediction of the future, made under divine inspiration. *[emphasis added]*
- The vocation or condition of a prophet. A prediction.¹³

So if someone claims to be the sole channel of communication for God here on earth, and if they are being guided by the Holy Spirit in communicating these vitally important messages to all of mankind, then how can they possibly get so many interpretations wrong? If a doctrine is not interpreted correctly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then there’s something seriously wrong. The *Watchtower* tries to justify this by claiming that:

“Prophecies open up to us as Jehovah’s holy spirit sheds light upon them, and as they are fulfilled in world events or in the experiences of God’s people. Has this not been just the way that Jehovah God has dealt with his servants from early times? Indeed it has been!”¹⁴ *[emphasis added]*

¹² Malachi 3:6: “..For I am Jehovah; I have not changed....”

¹³ *American Heritage Dictionary*

¹⁴ December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* pp. 16-17 pars. 2-3 ‘Light Has Flashed Up for the Righteous’

In reality, this is *not* the way Jehovah has dealt with his servants from early times. The article gives the examples of Abraham, Daniel, Peter, John the Baptist, Paul, the early Christian congregation and says how none of them understood *all* matters of prophecies related to future events. While that may be true, there is absolutely no indication that *any* of these men made an erroneous *interpretation* of a prophecy and enforced their mistaken interpretations onto anyone else. And there is certainly nothing in the bible that said either the Israelites or the early Christians had to accept their interpretation (even if they were false interpretations), on the threat of being “cut off” by being disfellowshipped and branded as an “apostate”----a term that was familiar to both the ancient Israelites and the early Christian congregation.¹⁵

Yet this is exactly what happens today amongst Jehovah’s Witnesses. When the Governing Body members give their interpretation of the scriptures, every Witness must accept without question, their interpretation, even if it is completely wrong and goes against all common sense.¹⁶ If and when their interpretation is proven to be wrong (*and the only ones who are allowed to bring such errors out are the very people who wrote them in the first place*), there is never an open apology. The only explanation given is: “light has flashed up”.¹⁷

In the December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* article, it again tries to justify the continual changing of doctrines by comparing the Organization to “tacking”:

“...it may have seemed to some as though that path has not always gone straight forward. At times explanations given by Jehovah’s visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case.”

Actually, the is *exactly* the case and this is yet another example of the Society attempting to twist the wording in order to downplay the significance of the change. If a doctrine has “shown adjustments” then it is extremely dishonest to claim that “this has not actually been the case.” If something changes, *it changes*. Either the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will be resurrected or they won’t be. Either the generation of 1914 was the “generation” that Jesus said would see The End, or it’s not. Something is either true or it’s untrue. There is no phrase called “present truths” mentioned anywhere in the scriptures. It is a term that the Society came up with to try and justify what amounts to ‘false prophecies’. The article then goes on:

“...This might be compared to what is known in navigational circles as “tacking.” By maneuvering the sails the sailors can cause a ship to go from right to left, back and forth, but all the time making progress toward their destination in spite

¹⁵ See Job 8:13 and Acts 21: 21.

¹⁶ See the section on *False Prophecy*

¹⁷ December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* p. 16 ‘Light Has Flashed Up for the Righteous’

of contrary winds....”—2 Pet. 3:13.¹⁸

In this article, it shows a picture of a sailboat with a zigzag line representing the “tacking into the wind” (see next page). Yet again, while this might seem reasonable to the average Witness, it simply does not hold up under scrutiny. More often than not, the Society’s “new light” is nothing more than resurrected “old light” instead of “zigzagging” in a progressive manner, their interpretations quite often simply come full circle and revert to “old light”.

Far from resembling a sailing boat that makes progress going forward (by tacking) to reach it’s destination, the Organization’s flip flopping on numerous doctrines more closely resembles being on a rowboat, unable to interpret either the map or the compass and simply rowing in circles and ending up exactly where they started.

Charles Russell gave his opinion on “new light” over 120 years ago:

“...If we were following a man undoubtedly it would be different with us; **undoubtedly one human idea would contradict another and that which was light one or two or six years ago would be regarded as darkness now;** But with God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, and so it is with truth; any knowledge or light coming from God must be like its author. **A new view of truth never can contradict a former truth.** "New light" never extinguishes older "light," but adds to it..."¹⁹

There have been doctrines which have been changed as many as *eight times* over the years. Whenever a doctrine is changed, it obviously “contradicts a former truth”—otherwise there would be no need to change it. There is absolutely no scriptural support for the idea of the scriptures being erroneously interpreted by whomever God is using to preach. In fact, the scriptures tell us to watch out for this very thing:

*“...in order that we should no longer be babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error...”*²⁰

“forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different, or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth.”²¹

If there is no scriptural support for the idea that “new light” is referring to interpretation of the scriptures, then there is no plausible explanation for all the flip flopping of doctrines, including false predictions the Organization has made over the years.

¹⁸December 1, 1981 Watchtower pp. 26-27 pars. 1-3

¹⁹ February, 1881 *Zion’s Watchtower* p. 3

²⁰ Reference Bible Ephesians 4:14

²¹The Living Bible Ephesians 4:14

Blood

Few doctrines are as controversial as the Blood doctrine. It is well known that Jehovah's Witnesses will not accept a blood transfusion either for themselves or their children, even if it means their death. Of course, their position on blood is not because anyone wants to die, and they surely do not want to watch their children die, but because Witnesses are trained to believe that the Bible condemns blood transfusions and equates it to eating blood. This doctrine is taken so seriously that any Witness who accepts a blood transfusion faces expulsion from the congregation:

"Questions from Readers:

"In view of the seriousness of taking blood into the human system by a transfusion, would violation of the Holy Scriptures in this regard subject the dedicated, baptized receiver of blood transfusion to being disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation?" "The inspired Holy Scriptures answer yes." ²²

Not only are Jehovah's Witnesses taught that accepting a blood transfusion for your child now is utterly wrong, but you are endangering their eternal salvation. In the booklet **BLOOD, MEDICINE AND THE LAW OF GOD** it says:

"They know that if they violate God's law on blood and the child dies in the process, they have endangered that child's opportunity for everlasting life in God's new world.....it may result in the immediate and very temporary prolongation of life, but that at the cost of eternal life for a dedicated Christian." ₂₃

Does the bible forbid followers from taking a blood transfusion? Let us examine the evidence. The first scripture used to explain why Witnesses are, since (date) not allowed to accept a blood transfusion is found in Genesis 9:1-4 that says:

".....And God went on to bless Noah and his sons.....Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for YOU. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to YOU. Only flesh with its soul—its blood—YOU must not eat."

One may ask if this law was binding only on the Israelites or on all of mankind. According to the Society, the law against eating blood is binding on *all* mankind:

"....After the Flood, mankind started anew with just eight souls. In a declaration applying to all humans, God revealed more about his evaluation of life and blood. He said that humans could eat animal flesh, but he set this restriction: "Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for you. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to you. Only flesh with its soul—its blood—you must not eat." (Genesis 9:3, 4).....You can see from this declaration to the whole human family that God views a man's blood as standing for his life...."

²² *Watchtower*, January 15, 1961, p. 63

²³ *Blood, Medicine, and the Law of God*, p.54

“...In one early reference, the Creator declared: "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. . . . But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it." He added: "For your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting," and he then condemned murder. (Genesis 9:3-6, New International Version) He said that to Noah, a common ancestor highly esteemed by Jews, Muslims, and Christians. All humanity was thus notified that in the Creator's view, blood stands for life. This was more than a dietary regulation. Clearly a moral principle was involved Human blood has great significance and should not be misused.---
----*How Can Blood Save Your Life?* p. 3

“...In the Law covenant made by Jehovah with the nation of Israel.... the blood of an animal to be used for food was to be poured out on the ground and covered with dust. (Le 17:13, 14) Anyone who ate blood of *any sort* of flesh was to be 'cut off from among his people.' Deliberate violation of this law regarding the sacredness of blood meant being "cut off" in death....”—Le 17:10; 7:26, 27; Nu 15:30, 31.-----*Insight on the Scriptures*, p. 345

”...Jehovah’s Witnesses have long refused blood transfusions, not primarily because of the health dangers, but because of obedience to God’s law on blood.” ----*Watchtower*, June 15, 1991 p. 12 par.19

While this might seem a straightforward doctrine, it is not. While the quotes above leave no doubt that the Society believes the command given to Noah is binding on all of mankind, the *Insight on the Scriptures* goes on to show that it was actually acceptable for the Israelites to sell meat that had not been bled properly to foreigners:

“...At Deuteronomy 14:21²⁵ allowance was made for selling to an alien resident or a foreigner an animal that had died of itself or that had been torn by a beast. Thus a distinction was made between the blood of such animals and that of animals that a person slaughtered for food. (Compare Le 17:14-16.) The Israelites, as well as alien residents who took up true worship and came under the Law covenant, were obligated to live up to the lofty requirements of that Law. People of all nations were bound by the requirement at Genesis 9:3, 4, but those under the Law were held by God to a higher standard in adhering to that requirement than were foreigners and alien residents who had not become worshipers of Jehovah....”-----*Insight on the Scriptures*, p. 345

If Jehovah permitted the Israelites to sell an *unbled* carcass to non-Jews for consumption, then He was giving explicit permission for non-Jews to eat unbled meat. Therefore, His words in Genesis 9 about not eating "*flesh with its soul -- its blood*" cannot apply to animals found already dead-----the prohibition in Genesis 9, can only apply to animals specifically killed *for food*, and the reason is simply to respect the

²⁴ *Watchtower*, June 15, 2004 pp. 14-15

²⁵ “...YOU must not eat any body [already] dead. To the alien resident who is inside your gates you may give it, and he must eat it; or there may be a selling of it to a foreigner, because you are a holy people to Jehovah your God...”

Giver of Life when one takes an animal's life for food. That's really all there is to it.

In addition, if *'people of all nations'* were bound by the requirement at Genesis 9:3,4 not to eat blood, then why would Jehovah make an 'allowance' for these people to do just that? The assertion above that the Israelites were 'held to a higher standard than non-Israelites' is ridiculous because the Society has already clearly stated that the command not to eat blood was binding on *everyone*, not just the Israelites. You cannot have it both ways. Either this law was binding on all humanity or it was not. From what both the bible states and what the *Insight* has stated, it is clear that in bible times, there was no death penalty for non-Israelites who ate unbled meat and logically then, it was not binding on all of mankind.

What most Witnesses today do not realize is that the Society did not always view blood transfusions as costing someone their 'eternal life'—it was at one time a 'conscience matter' as seen in their literature from years past:

QUESTIONS FROM READERS:

"...Are we to conclude that Jehovah's witnesses oppose the people's use of transfusions?"

That would be a wrong conclusion. **Jehovah's witnesses do not oppose the people's use of transfusions, but allow each one the right to decide for himself what he can conscientiously do.** The Israelites felt bound to abide by God's law forbidding the eating of meat with the blood congealed in it, but still they had no objection whatever to those outside God's organization doing it, and even supplied unbled carcasses to outsiders who regularly ate such things anyway. (Deut. 14:21) Each one decides for himself, and bears the responsibility for his course. Jehovah's witnesses consecrate their lives to God and feel bound by his Word, and with these things in view they individually decide their personal course and bear their personal responsibility therefor before God. So, as Joshua once said to the Israelites, "If it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." - Josh. 24:15, AS.²⁶

"...The Mending of a heart In New York city a house wife in moving a boarder's things accidentally shot herself through the heart with his revolver. She was rushed to a hospital, her left breast was cut around, four ribs were cut away, the heart was lifted out, three stitches were taken, *one of the attending physicians in the great emergency gave a quart of his blood for transfusion, and today the woman lives and smiles gaily over what happened to her in the busiest 23 minutes of her life.*"²⁷

The Letter of the Law

What about in urgent or exceptional circumstances? In the booklet ***Blood—Vital for***

²⁶ July 1, 1951 *Watchtower* p. 416 "Questions From Readers"

²⁷ *Consolation*, December 25th 1940 p.19

Life²⁸ it says:

“...Contrary to how some today reason, God’s law on blood was not to be ignored just because an emergency arose.....”

Yet any student remotely familiar with the Hebrew scriptures is aware that the Mosaic Law allowed for mercy in extenuating circumstances. When King David and his hungry followers, (when they were fleeing King Saul's armies), were given the shewbread that was normally to be eaten only by priests, there is no record that Jehovah thought they should be punished for breaking this law and in fact, Jesus used it as an example that Jehovah shows mercy in extenuating circumstances (Mark 2:25, 26). He also pointed out that even the priests serving in the temple of God labored on the Sabbath by conducting worship services and performing sacrifices, all without fear of being ‘punished’ (Matthew 12:5). It is also confirmed in the *Watchtower* that acts of mercy outweighed The Law:

” In these verses and in the ones following Jesus was calling attention to acts of mercy on the Sabbath day, that it was perfectly legitimate to render a show of mercy to one who is in need even though it was the Sabbath, and that there is, in effect, no violation of the Sabbath by such course of action. He had no rebuke for David’s course.”²⁹

If Jehovah allowed the ‘bending of the rules’ because men were ravenously hungry, are we really being asked to believe that He would not do the same thing when a *human life* is in jeopardy? Are we really being asked to believe that Jehovah would rather see someone die when an ‘act of mercy’(such as a blood transfusion) would save their life? What would Jesus do? The scripture at Mark 3:1-6 answers this question:

“ . . .Once again he entered into a synagogue, and a man was there with a dried-up hand. So they were watching him closely to see whether he would cure the man on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand: “Get up [and come] to the center.” **Next he said to them: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do a good deed or to do a bad deed, to save or to kill a soul?”** But they kept silent. And after looking around upon them with indignation, being thoroughly grieved at the insensibility of their hearts, he said to the man: “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.”

In both examples, the spirit and intent of the law were not broken, and both instances were specifically allowed by God for the greater good (*the value of human life*). Jesus emphasized that God's law allowed for *mercy*, and the Pharisees were wrong in putting their harsh interpretation of the Law above everything else, including mercy. Clearly,

²⁸ Published by the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*, 1990, p. 4

²⁹ *Watchtower* 1952, p. 575 *Questions From Readers*

Jesus valued human life above the Law³⁰ as he demonstrated over and over again. Amazingly, the *Watchtower* admits that in life and death situations *even the Pharisees* would 'bend the rules' and help someone if they needed it on the Sabbath:

"....The Pharisees might come to the aid of a stranded or injured domestic animal (a financial investment) on the Sabbath but never to a man or a woman—not unless it was a matter of life and death."³¹

Yet today, the Governing Body members are not willing to allow a brother or sister to take a blood transfusion *even if it means their death*. The fact that even the Pharisees made allowances if it would save a life and the Governing Body members will not, shows that they are not following either Jehovah's or Jesus' example of mercy.

Why was blood viewed as 'sacred'? The answer is quite simple. In bible times, the animals' blood was to be offered in sacrifice by pouring it to the ground, to atone for taking the life of the animal:

"Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood -- I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. **For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.** Therefore I say to the Israelites, 'None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood' " ³²

That is why blood was not to be eaten, as it was reserved for atonement. ***It is completely irrelevant to transfusions.*** Blood donors are not slaughtered in order to obtain their blood. There is no life to atone for. Every form of meat that is eaten, even meat obtained from animals that are not killed intentionally, is the result of death. *Blood transfusions do not result from the deaths of blood donors.* Ironically, the Watchtower uses this same argument when they decided to change their policy on organ transplants:

"...Regarding the transplantation of human tissue or bone from one human to another, this is a matter for conscientious decision by each one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Some Christians might feel that taking into their bodies any tissue or body part from another human is cannibalistic. . . . Other sincere Christians today may feel that the Bible does not definitely rule out medical transplants of human organs. . . . It may be argued, too, that organ transplants are different

³⁰ Also see Matthew 12:10-12 "....So they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath?" that they might get an accusation against him. He said to them: "Who will be the man among you that has one sheep and, if this falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not get hold of it and lift it out? All considered, of how much more worth is a man than a sheep!..."

³¹ *Watchtower*, October 15, 1997 page 30

³² Leviticus 17:10-12.

from cannibalism since the "donor" is not killed to supply food..." [emphasis added]³³

Why does the Governing Body members not use the same logic when it comes to blood transfusions? The donor is "not killed to supply food", but rather, in both the case of donating an organ or blood, the donor is giving something that will save a person's life. Nothing could be clearer, yet the vast majority of Witnesses have been trained to view accepting a blood transfusion the same as 'eating blood'.

As well, blood *represented* the life that had been taken—it was *not* more valuable than the life itself. The Organization says that God prohibits eating blood because it *symbolizes* life. It is true that the bible links blood with symbolizing life, but it is utterly absurd to suggest that a symbol could be of greater value than the reality it symbolizes. What does a man (or woman) value more: their wedding ring or the marriage that it symbolizes? While the bible says that "Jehovah hates a divorcing", would a person be considered "divorced" if they sold their wedding ring? Of course not as the ring merely represents the marriage---it is not the marriage itself. And so it is with blood. While there is no doubt that blood transfusions carry risks, there are times when it is the only thing that can save a person. To teach that Jehovah would rather see someone dead than to accept a medical procedure (for which there is no biblical support to prohibit), is indeed "going beyond what is written".³⁴

Another point to consider is found in Leviticus 7:22-25 which says:

"... And Jehovah continued to speak to Moses, saying: "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'YOU must not eat any fat of a bull or a young ram or a goat. Now the fat of a body [already] dead and the fat of an animal torn to pieces may be used for anything else conceivable, but YOU must not eat it at all. For anyone eating fat from the beast from which he presents it as an offering made by fire to Jehovah, the soul that eats must be cut off from his people...."³⁵

So we can see here that animal fat was forbidden as consumption, the same as animal blood was forbidden as consumption. Yet, both fat and blood could and were used in other areas, such as sacrifice. There was no blanket law stating that the Israelites could not use fat or blood in any other way, shape and form on pain of death---in fact, the scripture above clearly shows that fat, while forbidden as food, could be "used for

³³ *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 4:6

³⁵ It is interesting to note that while the Society goes beyond 'the letter of the Law' when it comes to blood transfusions, that they do not apply the same dogmatic reasoning when it comes to eating meat as described in the same scriptures. Why aren't Jehovah's Witnesses told to buy kosher meat? Why are they allowed to eat animal fat? Why are they allowed to consume dairy and meat products at the same meal? If you are going to claim that Christians today are under this Law then you cannot pick and choose which part of it to follow.

anything else conceivable.” Yet this is exactly what the Governing Body has decreed. They take scriptures that were sacrificial/dietary laws applicable ONLY to the Israelites and claim that Christians today cannot use blood in any way, shape or form, even if it means your life.

The Bible's principle Jesus made clear in Mark 7:14 when He said, "Nothing that goes into a man from the outside can make him unclean." Therefore, no one becomes "unclean" by receiving a blood transfusion. Not only does the Watchtower consider someone who accepts a blood transfusion as “unclean”, but they are considered ‘spiritually dead’ and ‘vessels fit for destruction’. They punish sincere followers who want to do what is right (such as save their child’s life) by disfellowshipping them for not abiding by their manmade traditions-----something that goes completely against Christian ethics.

The real question of course is: Is accepting a blood transfusion in order to save a human life the same as eating meat that has not been properly bled? Does Jehovah view blood transfusions which are administered through the veins, the same as eating a dead animal’s blood? According to the Watchtower, the answer is ‘Yes.’

But the facts say, NO. For the simple reason that there is *no nutritional benefit from a blood transfusion*. You can give a starving man blood transfusions until the cows come home----it will not save his life. Or, you could feed someone who is hemorrhaging internally, blood through the mouth----it will not save them. No doctor would ever prescribe blood transfusions to treat malnutrition. When you eat something, it is taken into the stomach where it is digested and broken down into nutrients, which are then passed through the intestines into the blood vessels, where the blood carries them to the body for nourishment. This is accomplished by the digestive system.

During a transfusion, the blood that is transfused travels through the blood stream, then goes to the intestines where it picks up the digested food passed through the intestines and carrying that food throughout the rest of the body. This is the circulatory system. The transfused blood is not food itself but the carrier of food. The food is broken down into its component parts whereas the blood remains whole. This is the medical definition proving that eating blood (such as blood pudding or blood sausage) through the mouth is a completely different procedure than a blood transfusion. A clear difference, that even those who are not familiar with medical terminology can understand.

It is worth noting that Orthodox Jews (*who are the irrefutable experts on Jewish law and who still rigidly adhere to eating kosher meat, and then soaking it in water and salt to draw out the remaining blood*), recognized long ago that blood transfusions as is

practiced by modern medicine, have nothing to do with the dietary laws laid out in the scriptures. Quite simply, if there were any chance that it were forbidden under God's Law, they would never do it.

And as the Society's literature already said, even the Pharisees realized that 'bending the rules' was necessary if a human life was at stake. So even if the prohibition about eating blood *did* apply to transfusions, so much more would The Law be loosed to save a persons' life.

Major Components and Minor Fractions

As of June 15, 2000, Jehovah's Witnesses are now allowed to take "fractions of any of the primary components"³⁶----something that was considered a disfellowshipping offense at one time.³⁷

The Organization has categorized the elements in blood as either "major" (not acceptable) or "minor" (acceptable) components as seen in the chart below.

Unacceptable (Disfellowshipping Offenses)	Acceptable (Conscience Matter)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole blood • Plasma • White blood cells (Leukocytes) • Red blood cells • Platelets • Storing your own blood for possible transfusion during an operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albumin • Immunoglobulins • Hemophiliac preparations (Factor VIII and IX) • Diversion of patient's blood through certain machines where the "extra corporeal circulation is uninterrupted." • Fractionated hemoglobin (ie, HemoPure)

The reason given as to why the Society has suddenly decided to allow members to

³⁶ Watchtower June 15, 2000 p. 31 Questions From Readers

³⁷ "...Is it wrong to sustain life by administering a transfusion of blood or plasma or red cells or others of the component parts of the blood? Yes!...The prohibition includes "any blood at all." (Leviticus 3:17) - ***Blood, Medicine and the Law of God***, 1961, pp. 13, 14

accept blood fractions, is because they say that these are used in very "small quantities" and therefore, they've reclassified it as a "conscience matter". While this is most likely a welcome change for many Witnesses, the inconsistency of this new policy demonstrates the confusion and irrationality when examined.

According to the *Awake! magazine*, (as well as medical books) plasma composes about 55 percent of the volume of blood³⁸ and while it has never been explained in the literature, it is probably due to this percentage that it's on the Watchtower Society's "unacceptable" list." However, as is commonly known in the medical field, plasma itself is made up of 93% water and solids (7%) consisting of protein and lipids..."³⁹ The '7% solids include albumin, globulins fibrinogen and coagulation factors which are all components the Organization now allows the average Witness to accept!

In other words, a Jehovah's Witness cannot accept plasma, but they can accept the 'solids' that make up the plasma, as long as they're taken individually and not all together. If you added 93% water to the solids, guess what you'd have? That's right: plasma. There is simply no logic to the Society's ban on plasma. This would be like a preacher telling someone that they cannot drink a Pina Colada, but they can drink rum, coconut cream and pineapple juice separately. One has to wonder what Jehovah thinks of 'reasoning' like this.

Another banned item is Leukocytes, or "white *blood* cells." There are normally between 4×10^9 and 11×10^9 white blood cells in a liter of blood, making up approximately 1% of blood in a healthy adult.⁴⁰ What is interesting, is that as of 1980, Witnesses are now allowed to accept organ transplants, which of course, involves blood.⁴¹ What most Witnesses don't realize, is that by accepting an organ transplant, they actually are receiving more leukocytes into their body (from the donor), than what they would if they took a blood transfusion. It is also worth noting that during pregnancy, the female breasts produces a special milk called colostrum which is very important in keeping the baby healthy. Colostrum "*contains high concentrations of leukocytes, protective white cells which can destroy disease-causing bacteria and viruses.*"⁴² So by breast feeding your child (something that is highly endorsed by the Watchtower Society), leukocytes are being passed from mother to child.

Another example of the inconsistency of the Watchtower's policy on blood, involves

³⁸ *Awake!* October 22, 1990 p. 4

³⁹ Burnett RW, Covington AK, Fogh-Andersen N, et al. International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Med (IFCC). IFCC Scientific Division Working Group on Selective Electrodes. Recommendations for measurement of and conventions for reporting sodium and potassium by ion-selective electrodes in undiluted serum, plasma or whole blood. *Clin Chem Lab Med* 2000;38:1065-71

⁴⁰ Alberts, Bruce (2005). Leukocyte functions and percentage breakdown. *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. NCBI Bookshelf. Retrieved on 2007-04-14

⁴¹ "...Regarding the transplantation of human tissue or bone from one human to another, this is a matter for conscientious decision by each one of Jehovah's Witnesses...."---*The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31

⁴² <http://www.lli.org//FAQ/colostrum.html>

albumin. Albumin is now “allowed” and most Witnesses would be under the assumption that it is only a ‘fraction’ and not ‘whole blood’. Albumin is used for severe bleeding and for burn victims. There are about 50 grams of albumin in one liter of blood.

To get 600 grams of albumin, you would need *12 liters of blood*. Hardly a small amount, yet the Watchtower Society sees no problem with forbidding plasma to ‘Brother A’ who’s bleeding internally, while at the same time, allowing ‘Brother B’ to accept albumin if they were suffering from third degree burns on 50% of his body, even though accepting the albumin would involve a much larger volume of blood than what Brother A needed.

One of the most troublesome issues of the Watchtower’s policies on blood, is their ban on autologous blood donation (storing your own blood for an upcoming operation). They forbid this procedure by pointing to the scripture where Jehovah told the Israelites to ‘pour out’ the blood from the slain animal.⁴³ But as we have already seen, pouring out the blood from a dead animal was for atonement for the life that had just been taken---it has nothing to do with accepting the blood of a live human and it certainly has nothing to do with storing *your own blood*. Forbidding someone to use their own blood that is temporarily stored, is astounding in light of the fact that they now allow you to accept blood ‘fractions’ taken from another person’s blood that had (obviously) been stored in a medical facility.

Not only is this hypocritical to the extreme, but it’s self-defeating. Autologous Blood donation is recommended by the *American Medical Association’s Council on Scientific Affairs*, and described as the safest blood product by Blood banks themselves.⁴⁴ In essence, they are saying that it’s a “conscience matter” to accept blood fractions from a donor, but it is a disfellowshipping offense to use your own blood. To any thinking person, this simply makes no sense. What is incredible, is that the Society admits that blood fractions come from donated blood:

“... many fractions are derived from blood that has been donated for medical purposes. Each Christian should make a conscientious decision as to whether he or she will accept or will reject the medical use of these substances...”⁴⁵
[emphasis added]

While it does not use the words “stored blood”, that is exactly where the fractions come from. Yet in the same article, it re-emphasizes the doctrine that Witnesses “...*do not donate or store their own blood for transfusion...*” It is difficult to believe that those who wrote this article cannot see the blatant hypocrisy and sheer insanity of telling members they can accept blood fractions from another donor (including Bovine, which is derived from cow’s blood), but that they cannot store their own blood.

⁴³ Deuteronomy 12:23-24 “...Simply be firmly resolved not to eat the blood, because the blood is the soul and you must not eat the soul with the flesh. You must not eat it. You should pour it out upon the ground as water...”

⁴⁴ www.bloodnj.org/autologous.htm

⁴⁵ Kingdom Ministry, November 2006 p. 3

To use the scriptures referring to the “*pouring out*” of blood from a dead animal, as the sole basis for not allowing a Witness to store their own blood is nothing short of a manipulation of words, putting a spin on them that was never stated or even hinted at. Especially as the bible nowhere specifically condemns blood transfusions, even though the practice was known at the time:

"Blood transfusion makes its entrée - The idea of using blood from a health person to transfer youth and vitality to an old or sick one is very ancient. It existed in Egyptian medicine as early as two thousand years before Christ. Similar speculations are found in classical antiquity, as with Ovid: Draw only the swords and quick, the changed blood drains from his body - I fill his veins with the younger..."⁴⁶

Another point to consider is that the Watch Tower Society has at times acknowledged, a blood transfusion is *not* intravenous feeding; it is actually a *transplantation* (of a fluid *tissue*), not an infusion of a nutrient:

"...Dr. Ciril Godec, chairman of urology at Long Island College Hospital, in Brooklyn, New York. He wrote: "Today blood would probably not be approved as a medication, since it would not fulfill safety criteria of the Food and Drug Administration. Blood is an organ of the body, and blood transfusion is nothing less than an organ transplant..."⁴⁷

"When doctors transplant a heart, a liver, or another organ, the recipient's immune system may sense the foreign tissue and reject it. *Yet, a transfusion is a tissue transplant.* Even blood that has been 'properly' cross matched can suppress the immune system."⁴⁸ [emphasis added]

In a kidney or heart transplant, the transplanted organ is not eaten as food by the new body. It remains the same organ with the same form and function. The same is true of blood. It is not eaten and digested as food during a transfusion, but rather it remains the same fluid tissue, with the same form and function. The body simply cannot utilize transplanted blood as food. In order to be considered “food”, the blood would first have to *pass through the digestive system*, (via the mouth) and broken down so that the body cells could absorb it. Therefore it would have to be literally *eaten* to be considered “food”. When doctors want to administer a blood transfusion, it is not because the patient is in need of nourishment but rather *oxygen*, which is required to keep the person alive.

In the September 15, 1958 *Watchtower* on page 575, it says:

"Each time the prohibition of blood is mentioned in the Scriptures it is in connection with taking it as food, and so it is as a nutrient that we are concerned with in its being forbidden."

Since it has been shown above that a blood transfusion is *not* administered as a nutrient, but rather as a carrier of oxygen to vital organs, this is just one more piece of

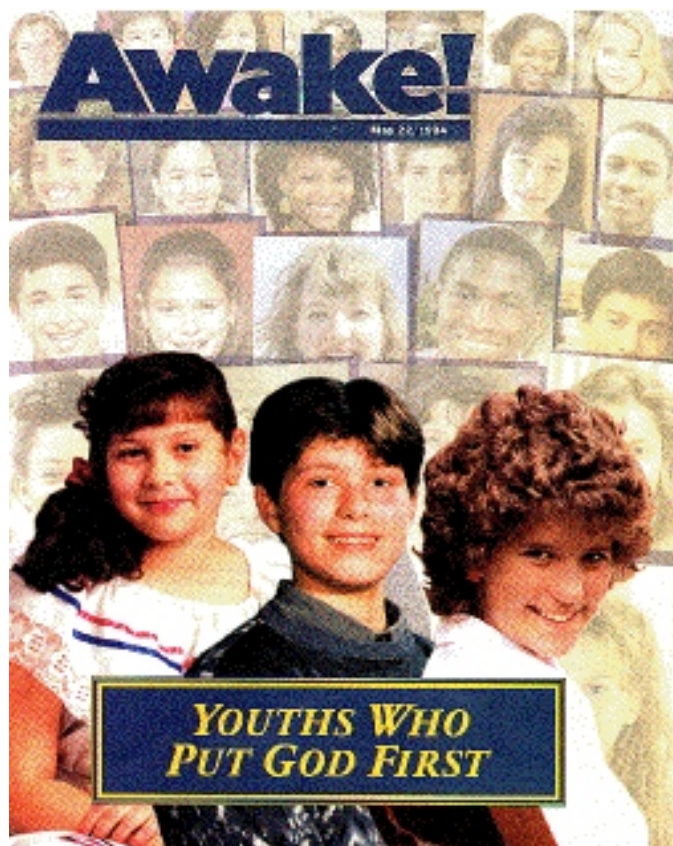
⁴⁶*The Illustrated History of Surgery*, by Knut Haeger, 1988, 1990ed., p. 135

⁴⁷*Awake!* August 22, 1999 p. 31 *Are Blood Transfusions Really Necessary?*

⁴⁸*How Can Blood Save Your Life?*, 1999, p. 8

evidence that shows how utterly wrong their ban on blood transfusions is.

There are certainly risks to accepting blood transfusions—no one is denying that. And there are times when alternative therapies can be applied. The point of the matter is though, is that Christians should be allowed to make their own decisions, without fear of facing a Judicial Committee, or of being cut off from family members and life long friends for simply following their own conscience—especially in light of the fact that there is no scriptural basis that forbids blood transfusions.



Does it truly show appreciation for the 'sanctity of life' when we let someone die rather than accept a medical procedure that could save their life, due to arbitrary policies that have no basis in scripture when scrutinized? Matthew 12:7 quotes Jesus as telling the Pharisees: *"if you had understood what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless ones."*

Jehovah's Witnesses are trained early on that in order to be pleasing to God, they must chose death either for themselves, or, even more painfully, for their children, rather than accept a blood transfusion.

Yet this ultimate form of sacrifice, (particularly when it came to the lives of children), is something utterly displeasing to Jehovah, no matter how

much a person is convinced that they are doing the right thing. A scripture that all Witnesses are familiar with that shows God's view of sacrificing children is well demonstrated:

"...And they have built the high places of To'pheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hin'nom, in order to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, a thing that I had not commanded and that had not come up into my heart."⁴⁹

The above is the front cover of the May 22, 1994 *Awake!* magazine who all died for refusing a blood transfusion. Unfortunately, these young ones were putting the Organization first----not Jehovah God and they paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Perhaps those who are responsible for keeping this manmade doctrine in place and

⁴⁹ Jeremiah 7:31

who continually condemn those who point out the inconsistencies, would do well to re-think their stand on a policy that has absolutely no basis in the scriptures.

"There's no better way to dismantle a personality than to isolate it."—Brian Keenan, hostage survivor

Disfellowshipping and Shunning

Jehovah's Witnesses are among the few religious groups (such as the Amish, Mormons, Scientology and Islam) that practice extreme shunning of former members----a practice that has turned husband against wife, children against their parents or even grandparents, or vice-versa. Of all the Society's doctrines, this one is perhaps the most responsible for uprising among former members against the Organization that has resulted in exhaustive examination and exposés of their flawed teachings and history. It was not until 1952 that the Watchtower introduced disfellowshipping as now practiced and the following review of the scriptural principles involved shows that there is no Biblical justification for this unchristian form of manipulation.

One of the characteristics of any high control group is an enforced policy that requires the members to shun anyone who leaves or gets expelled from the religion, including their own flesh and blood. It is, unfortunately, a common trait among 'exclusive' groups that claim to be "the Truth." The consequences of this harsh doctrinal policy are extreme, tearing families apart and leaving the victims emotionally and spiritually devastated. Suicides or attempted suicides are not uncommon, although you will never see this horrific side-effect mentioned in any of the Society's literature.

There are various reasons as to why a Witness might be disfellowshipped. Reasons such as smoking, celebrating Christmas, Easter or other secular holidays, fornication, adultery, and of course, openly questioning any of the religions' doctrines. For this last offense, anyone who does not 'cease and desist' immediately, will be branded as an "apostate", even if they have unquestionable proof that the Organization's teaching on a certain matter, is without scriptural basis. You are tried for being 'disloyal to the Organization', not 'disloyal to Jehovah' (*although in the Judicial Committee's minds, there is no difference between the two*).

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that they must hate 'apostates', who are often accused of being under the control of Satan himself. An article titled "Search Through Me, O God"⁵⁰, says of apostates:

“...Regarding them, the psalmist said: "Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies." (Psalm 139:21, 22) It was because they intensely hated Jehovah that David looked on them with abhorrence. Apostates are included among those who show their hatred of Jehovah by revolting against him. Apostasy is, in

⁵⁰ October 1, 1993 *Watchtower* pg 19 par 15

reality, a rebellion against Jehovah. Some apostates profess to know and serve God, but they reject teachings or requirements set out in his Word. Others claim to believe the Bible, but they reject Jehovah's organization and actively try to hinder its work. When they deliberately choose such badness after knowing what is right, when the bad becomes so ingrained that it is an inseparable part of their makeup, then a Christian must hate (in the Biblical sense of the word) those who have inseparably attached themselves to the badness. True Christians share Jehovah's feelings toward such apostates; they are not curious about apostate ideas. On the contrary, they "feel a loathing" toward those who have made themselves God's enemies, but they leave it to Jehovah to execute vengeance.--Job 13:16; Romans 12:19; 2 John 9, 10.

Another article in under the heading "disfellowshipped RELATIVES NOT LIVING AT HOME" ⁵¹ also has this to say (beginning at paragraph 18):

"The second situation that we need to consider is that involving a disfellowshipped or disassociated relative who is not in the immediate family circle or living at one's home. Such a person is still related by blood or marriage, and so there may be some limited need to care for necessary family matters. Nonetheless, it is not as if he were living in the same home where contact and conversation could not be avoided. We should keep clearly in mind the Bible's inspired direction: "Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person . . . , not even eating with such a man."--1 Cor.5:11.

"...Of course, if the children are of age, then there can be a departing and breaking of family ties in a physical way, because the spiritual ties have already snapped.....If children are of age and continue to associate with a disfellowshipped parent because of receiving material support from him or her, then they must consider how far their spiritual interests are being endangered by continuing under this unequal arrangement, and whether they can arrange to support themselves, living apart from the fallen-away parent. Their continuing to receive material support should not make them compromise so as to ignore the disfellowshipped state of the parent. **If, because of acting according to the disfellowship order of the company of God's people, they become threatened with a withdrawal of the parental support, then they must be willing to take such consequences...**" ⁵²

"...the primary question under consideration has to do with a relative *outside* the immediate family, one who does not live in the same household. Would any contact be possible? Again, the disfellowshipping does not dissolve the flesh-and-blood ties, but, in this situation, contact, if it were necessary at all, would be much more rare than between persons living in the same home. Yet, there might be some *absolutely* necessary family matters requiring communication, such as legalities over a will or property. But the disfellowshipped relative should be made to appreciate that his status has changed, that he is no longer welcome in the home nor is he a preferred companion. This course is both Scriptural and

⁵¹*The Watchtower*, September 15, 1981, pg 29

⁵²*The Watchtower*, November 15, 1952 p. 703 Questions From Readers

reasonable....”⁵³

“...The situation is different if the disfellowshipped or disassociated one is a relative living outside the immediate family circle and home. It might be possible to have almost no contact at all with the relative. Even if there were some family matters requiring contact, this certainly would be kept to a minimum, in line with the divine principle: “Quit mixing in company with *anyone* called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person [or guilty of another gross sin], . . . not even eating with such a man.” Understandably, this may be difficult because of emotions and family ties, such as grandparents’ love for their grandchildren. Yet, this is a test of loyalty to God, as stated by the sister quoted on page 26. Anyone who is feeling the sadness and pain that the disfellowshipped relative has thus caused may find comfort and be encouraged by the example set by some of Korah’s relatives.”⁵⁴

While the practice of disfellowshipping members and not speaking to them might appear to have support from the scriptures, one needs to take a look at both the culture and religious practices in Judaism and in the early Christian congregation to fully understand what the scriptures are saying.

The primary scripture the Society uses for justification in this doctrine is found in 1 Corinthians 5:11 which says:

“But now I am writing you to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man.”⁵⁵

The scripture cited above in 1 Corinthians is clear that a person with whom the congregation should not mix company is one who is:

- 1) "called a brother" (that is, one who professes to be a member of the congregation); and those who:
- 2) practicing fornication, greed, idolatry, reviling (insulting), habitual drunkenness, and/or extortion (theft).

Here we need to know what the customs of fellowship and worship were practiced by first-century Jews and Christians (*keeping in mind that Jesus and his apostles were Jews.*) They lived according to the Jewish lifestyle and customs of their day. Jesus taught in the synagogues, kept the Jewish holidays and lived the life of a Jew; He was also called "Rabbi." Matt.26:25; 26:49; Mark 9:5; 11:21; 14:25; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8

There were two kinds of association for religious worship amongst first century Jews:

- 1) The public meetings, such as those at the temple and in the synagogues which *anyone* was allowed to attend.

⁵³*The Watchtower*, June 1, 1970 p. 351 Questions From Readers

⁵⁴*The Watchtower*, April 15, 1988 p. 28 pars. 14-15

⁵⁵*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*

2) The intimate private gatherings of the different sects (*in Judaism for example, there were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots and Essenes*). Christians and Jews participated in both. Since the Christians at that time did not have a public meeting place that they could call their own, they used both the Synagogues and also met in private homes, usually over a special meal with prayer.

Christians were instructed to "greet" one another with a kiss. (Rom.16:16; 1.Cor.16:20; 2Cor.13:12; Ti.3:15; 1Pet.5:14) When Paul sent his "greetings" in a letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, he asked that the brothers be greeted with a "holy kiss" on his behalf. (1Thess.5:26) This was a custom both amongst the Jews and Christians of the first century, it had a special significance of close companionship amongst those who were related either by blood or by their faith.

Clearly, Paul did instruct Christians to expel from the congregation fellowship those who was purposely practicing willful sin. The expulsion would naturally exclude them from being greeted by the identifying "holy kiss," as well as not being allowed to share in meetings and the meals for Christian worship and prayer.

However, Paul's instruction did not prohibit *normal conversation* or witnessing to former members. Nor were the guilty party barred from attending worship in the temple or the synagogues. Jesus, the apostles and Paul, along with the rest of the Jews, worshiped God both publicly in the temple and synagogues, and privately with small groups in various homes. (Acts 5:42) *It was from the private Christian fellowship for worship that sinners were excluded.*

What of the scripture that says: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, never receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him. For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works."⁵⁶

The above scripture is not talking about those who had been expelled from the Christian congregation. If you read verse 10 it is clear that it is talking about someone who does not "*acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*"

This included Jews that rejected Jesus and people of the nations worshipping other Gods. Yet the Watchtower stance is to apply this only to Jehovah's Witnesses. The meaning of the phrase "never receive him into YOUR homes" should be understood in the context of the hospitality of first century Jerusalem. Since Christians held congregation meetings in their homes John possibly felt that inviting a denier of Christ into a home could be viewed as sharing worship with non-Christians. Likewise the term to never "say a greeting" to him needs to be understood in light of first century practice.

"John here used *khaí ro*, which was a greeting like "good day" or "hello." (Acts 15:23; Matthew 28:9) He did not use *a-spa'zo-mai* (as in verse 13), which means "to enfold in the arms, thus to greet, to welcome" and may have implied

⁵⁶ 2 John 11 (NWT)

a very warm greeting, even with an embrace. (Luke 10:4; 11:43; Acts 20:1, 37; 1 Thessalonians 5:26) So the direction at 2 John 11 could well mean not to say even "hello" to such ones."⁵⁷

This article claims the word *khai'ro* is used to forbid a simple greeting, instead of *aspa'zo mai* which means a more affectionate embrace, enfolding in the arms, kiss, greeting or welcome. Of course, the average Witness is going to take this at face value, which is unfortunate because *Strong's Concordance* defines the two words as just the opposite of what this Watchtower is claiming:

5463 *chairo* {khah'-ee-ro} 1) to rejoice, be glad 2) to rejoice exceedingly 3) to be well, thrive 4) in salutations, hail! 5) at the beginning of letters: to give one greeting, salute

·783 *aspasmos* {as-pas-mos'} 1) a salutation, either oral or written

By applying the word *khai'ro* to the quote at 2 John 11, it is clear that the early Christian congregation did not completely ignore such ones. While they would not have 'greeted them with a holy kiss' or display an overly zealous greeting, it is obvious that they would have greeted the person in a courteous manner.

If the scripture at 2 John 10 were observed literally by Jehovah's Witnesses, they would be obliged to never to speak to *anyone* other than another Witness in good standing. Yet Witnesses work with people with various backgrounds including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists.....none of whom believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Why are they allowed to speak with these people, yet are obliged to shun life long friends and even family members when they get disfellowshipped?

How did Jesus say one expelled from congregation should be treated? Far from cutting the person off completely, Jesus encouraged kindness:

"Moreover, if your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more, in order that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. If he does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen even to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations ['Gentile' in some translations] and as a tax collector."⁵⁸

The instruction was to bring up the matter of sin first between the two individuals *alone*. If the sinner repented, there was no need to carry the matter further. If the sinner was not repentant, then one or two others should be sought for witnesses. If the sinner remained unrepentant, only then, as a last resort, should it be brought before the entire congregation (not privately with the "elders").

If, after all that, the person was still would not listen, he should then be treated the same as Gentiles and tax collectors. In other words, Christians were to treat former

⁵⁷Watchtower 1988 May 15 p.27

⁵⁸Matt. 18:15-17 (NWT)

members *just like anyone else who was not a member of the congregation*. To be treated like a "man of the nations" (which is to say, a Gentile or foreigner) was far from being shunned. Jewish people worked with, associated with, transacted business with, and preached to Gentiles. As for "tax collectors," Jesus ate and associated with them. Matthew was a tax collector. Tax collectors were not popular, but they were not shunned.

"Next, while passing along from there, Jesus caught sight of a man named Matthew seated at the tax office, and he said to him: "Be my follower." Thereupon he did rise up and follow him. Later, while he was reclining at the table in the house, look! many tax collectors and sinners came and began reclining with Jesus and his disciples. But on seeing this the Pharisees began to say to his disciples: "Why is it that your teacher eats with tax collectors and sinners?" Hearing [them], he said: "Persons in health do not need a physician, but the ailing do. Go, then, and learn what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners." ⁵⁹

The ironic thing about the Organizations' view of disfellowshipping, is that they do not 'practice what they preach'. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses do not disfellowship greedy persons. They often do not disfellowship people who regularly get drunk unless their conduct becomes so outrageous and publicly-known as to bring reproach upon Jehovah's Witnesses.

They do not disfellowship people for many of the things which they themselves class as "idolatry" (for example: materialism, worshipping an organization, etc.).

On the other hand, Jehovah's Witnesses do disfellowship and shun people for:

- Celebrating a birthday, Christmas, Easter, or other secular holidays (even though the founder of the religion, Charles Russell saw no problem with celebrating such days);
- Discussing personal views of the scriptures with anyone if your viewpoint differs from with the Governing Body says is 'truth'
- Independent study and discussion of the Bible that brings Watchtower doctrine into question (*even though the scriptures specifically tell Christians to "make sure of all things"*).
- possession of literature written by former members.
- having a meal with a former member, even if the former member professes to be a Christian and was not disfellowshipped for fornication, greed, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, or extortion.
- Going public with revelations that the Organization has covered up acts of pedophilia over the years ⁶⁰
- attending a service of any other church or religious organization.
- authorizing a blood transfusion, even to save the life of a child.

There are numerous other actions not mentioned in scripture, but deemed by the congregation elders to be "unclean conduct," or "conduct unbecoming" of a Jehovah's Witness. "Conduct" in this case covers a broad range of actions not clearly defined by the Society, leaving discernment about what is not acceptable to the discretion of the

⁵⁹Matthew 9:9-13 *New World Translation*

⁶⁰See *Dateline story*: www.watchtowerinformationsservice.org/dateline.htm

congregation's elders. As a result, standards by which people may be disfellowshipped are inconsistent throughout this religion which claims "unity" to be one of their identifying characteristics.

There is no scripture basis for mandating that Christians must totally shun former members (that is, have no communication or conversation with them). The instruction is to expel them from the congregation and treat them like anyone else who is not a member. More specifically, there is no scripture to support shunning of one's own relatives--parents, children and siblings.

The Society inevitably will use the scripture at Matthew 10:37 to support their view of shunning relatives where it says:

“...He that has greater affection for father or mother than for me is not worthy of me; and he that has greater affection for son or daughter than for me is not worthy of me....”

Yet again, this is referring to Jesus *himself*----not an Organization made up of imperfect men and who, we have seen, have been responsible for false prophecies, flip flopping on numerous doctrines over the years, who have completely misunderstood the whole concept of blood transfusions which has cost many Witnesses their lives, and who have admitted in a court of law that they have promoted false prophecies and feel that anyone whose conscience truly cannot accept some of their rather bizarre doctrines, should be “cut off” and are viewed as being “worthy of death”. It should also be noted that nowhere in the scriptures does it indicate that either Jesus or his disciples were ‘disfellowshipped’ by the Pharisees from Jewish fellowship, for promoting ideas that differed from what the Pharisees taught. They were hated by many for sure, but they were never shunned.

In addition, Paul counseled against abandoning those separated from the congregation:

“For your part, brothers, do not give up in doing right. But if anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, keep this one marked, stop associating with him, that he may become ashamed. And yet do not be considering him as an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother.”⁶¹

In the elder's manual *Pay Attention To Yourselves and to All the Flock* on page 103, it says:

"Normally, a close relative would not be disfellowshipped for associating with a disfellowshipped person unless there is spiritual association or an effort made to excuse the wrongful course."

Despite this statement, Jehovah's Witnesses the world over are taught that to please Jehovah God they must shun their siblings, their children, and even their parents or grandparents who either choose to leave or are disfellowshipped--especially if the

⁶¹ 2 Thes.3:13-15 NWT

crime is variance with Watchtower doctrine for which they are branded "apostates." And it is a fact that many Witnesses have been disfellowshipped for refusing to shun their disfellowshipped relatives.

This is painfully obvious by the experience of Annette Stuart, a then 77 year old grandmother who lived in West Brookfield, Massachusetts and who had been a faithful Witness for 30 years.⁶² Some time in the late 1970s, her then 17 year old granddaughter (who had been baptized as a 'minor' 3 years earlier) decided that the pressures put upon her as a Witness was too much and stopped going to the meetings. Instead of just letting her walk away, the elders concluded that since she had 'disfellowshipped herself', they would simply make it official and disfellowship her formally. However, at that time you were still allowed to talk to disfellowshipped persons and, although strained, their family continued on.

However, in 1981 with the Society's reversing (yet again) how you were to treat disfellowshipped family members, this family was torn apart. This young girl was kicked out of the family home with nowhere to go so her grandmother took her in. As her husband had never been a Witness, the elders could not do anything to him but ordered Annette to 'walk out of the room' whenever her granddaughter entered and she was not to 'eat a meal' with her. When she protested with many tears that she could not comply with such a heartless request (as it was neither scriptural or Christlike), she was disfellowshipped as well. This cruel act completely split the family apart and for what reason? Because a 17 year old girl felt (with good reason) that the Organization was far too demanding and because a grandmother did what the scriptures said she should do: she "provided for her own" and paid the price.

Another example of how inhumane and mean-spirited this obsession with "keeping the Organization clean" extends, is what happened to another elderly Witness, George West from the Maynard Massachusetts congregation in 1982.⁶³ George was dying of bone cancer and was deteriorating quickly:

"his head was supported in a cage arrangement since his neck bones could no longer bear the weight. The elders [had somehow heard] that George had submitted to a blood transfusion and attempted to ask him about it on several occasions. One night under interrogation he acknowledged having accepted the transfusion. His reason? His children from a previous marriage had heard he was dying and called to let him know they were coming.....to visit him at the hospital. He had not seen them since childhood. He decided to take the transfusion to extend his life a little longer in order to be reunited with his children. The elders disfellowshipped George West only days before he died."⁶⁴

As a Christian, can anyone imagine Jesus acting in such a heartless fashion? Didn't Jesus stress over and over again that Jehovah "wants mercy, not sacrifice"? How is

⁶²The entire story can be found on page 348 of *In Search of Christian Freedom*

⁶³*In Search of Christian Freedom*, p. 353

⁶⁴Printed in a letter to the editorial column of the *Concord Monitor* of December 8, 1984. No one from the Society could, or did refute them.

taking such a legalistic approach with an elderly brother who is near death beneficial to anyone? Especially in light of the fact that there is no scriptural basis to support the Organization's view on blood transfusions.⁶⁵ One can only imagine how this poor brother felt knowing he was dying in a "disfellowshipped state", which, according to the Organization, almost certainly means he is not worthy of a resurrection.

There have been countless other cases like these two mentioned above. The most famous "disfellowshipping" is probably that of Raymond Franz, who was a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses for 9 years. Despite all the certainty of the 'rank and file Witness' that Ray was disfellowshipped for "apostasy", he in fact, was not. He had resigned his position as a member of the Governing Body after realizing that the Organization was not being run in a loving or Christ-like manner, but had become far more legalistic, controlling and heartless and had caused irreparable harm to tens of thousands of Witnesses over the years. He was actually disfellowshipped for eating a meal with his employer, Peter Gregerson, who had disassociated himself at the time.⁶⁶ If anyone doubts that this is in fact the reason why he was disfellowshipped, a scanned copy of the letter he received from Brooklyn Bethel at the time can be found at the end of this chapter.

One can only wonder what Jehovah and Jesus think of such mindless legalistic tactics, especially as Jesus had condemned the Pharisees for offenses of a similar nature. And unfortunately, this is not just something that happens in isolated cases without the knowledge of the Governing Body members, as *all* disfellowshippings are reported to Brooklyn Bethel and they are only too aware of what is going on.

There is absolutely no historical or scriptural evidence that first century Christians practiced "disfellowshipping" as it is practiced by the Watchtower Society today and enforced on millions of Witnesses worldwide. In fact, the scriptures specifically says that it is a Christian's duty to provide "for his relatives". They way we know that this is speaking of those outside his immediate family is because that is exactly what the scripture in 1 Timothy 5:8 says:

"...If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."⁶⁷

(1 Corinthians 5:11-13) . . . But now I am writing YOU to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man.¹² For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Do YOU not judge those inside,¹³ while God judges those outside? "Remove the wicked [man] from among yourselves."

1 Corinthians 5: 11-13 is very specific as to who these words apply to. This advice is to be applied to someone "*called a brother*" who *is* a wrongdoer. There is no evidence that it is telling you to avoid this person when they are no longer

⁶⁵ See section on "Blood"

⁶⁶ *Crisis of Conscience* p. 363. Also see the attached letters at the end of this section

⁶⁷ 1 Tim.5:8 (NIV)

recognized as a Jehovah's Witness. As we have already discussed, once a person was 'removed' from the congregation, they were to be treated "as a man of the nations" or as "a tax-collector".

It is not unusual for the youth amongst the Witnesses to get into trouble and possibly disfellowshipped for smoking or fornication. Years later they may no longer practice what they were originally disfellowshipped for and they are not known in the community as a Witness, yet the extreme form of shunning continues, apparently until they die, which is completely unjustified, especially where family members are concerned. It should also be noted that Paul did not insist that every single Christian participate in the shunning. Later he wrote that the "majority" participate in the rebuke, showing that some in the congregation may choose not to show rebuke to the person (obviously without fear of being called before a Judicial Committee and disfellowshipped themselves).

"Now if anyone has caused sadness, he has saddened, not me, but all of YOU to an extent-not to be too harsh in what I say. This rebuke **given by the majority** is sufficient for such a man..."⁶⁸

Ironically, the Organization likes to use the example of Diotrephes as:

"A man mentioned by the apostle John in his letter to Gaius. In addition to being ambitious, proud, disrespectful of apostolic authority, rebellious, and inhospitable, Diotrephes tried to hinder those desiring to show hospitality to the brothers and to expel these from the congregation"⁶⁹

In actuality, Diotrephes was being reprimanded for attempting to disfellowship "those desiring to show hospitality to the brothers" by expelling them "from the congregation".

Historical Watchtower Development

Disfellowshipping in its present form, was not practiced by the Organization until 1952. Originally, the *congregation as a whole* discussed an individual's wrongdoing and if they came to a near unanimous decision to disfellowship, the unrepentant sinner was not shunned but treated as a 'person of the nations':

"The administration of discipline is not the function of the elders only, but of the entire Church. ... Thus it is evident that the Elders were in no sense to be judges of the members-hearing and judgment were left to the local body, or Church. ... Indeed, even if the transgressor refuse to hear (obey) the decision of the entire Church, no punishment is to be inflicted or even attempted. What then? Merely the Church is to withdraw from him its fellowship and any and all signs or manifestations of brotherhood. Thenceforth the offender is to be treated "as a heathen man and a publican." Matt. 18:17"⁷⁰

⁶⁸2 Corinthians 2:5-6

⁶⁹ *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol-1 p. 627 Diotrephes, 3 John 9,10

⁷⁰ *Studies Series VI - The New Creation* pp.289, 290

"According to this Scripture the very most that the church could do would be that, after having vainly endeavored to get the brother to repent and reform, it should withdraw special brotherly fellowship from him until such time as he would express willingness thereafter to do right. Then he should be received again into full fellowship. In the meantime the brother may merely be treated in the kindly, courteous way in which it would be proper for us to treat any publican or Gentile, withholding the special rights or privileges or greetings or voting opportunities that belong to the church as a class separate from the world" ⁷¹

Both Brother Russell and Judge Rutherford were more lenient towards doctrinal disagreements, as they realized that trying to force all believers to think alike on doctrine is what originally caused the "great apostasy" in the first place:

"Satans organization sails under the high-sounding name of "Christendom". It boasts of a membership of over 500,000,000 persons. Its members are in bondage to creeds, customs, rites and ceremonies; they dare not disown these or criticize or expose them. To do so would bring down on their heads taunts, reproaches, disfellowship and persecution. Many thousands of the Lords people are held in these denominations as prisoners, afraid to express their disapproval of the creeds, methods and customs of the organization." ⁷²

It was under Brother Knorr that the harsh set up the disfellowshipping arrangement began and it is followed to this day. In the *Watchtower* 1944 May 15 p.151, responsibility to judge an individual was moved from the congregation to judicial committees. A 1952 *Watchtower* article casually dismissed Jesus' remarks to refer a wrongdoer to the congregation, but with no explanation as why:

"There is one more scripture quite pertinent here, at Matthew 18:15-17. ... This scripture here has nothing to do with disfellowshipping on a congregational basis. When it says go to the congregation, it means go to the elders or the mature ones in the congregation and discuss your own private difficulties. This scripture has to do with merely a personal disfellowshipping." ⁷³

This *Watchtower* was devoted to delivering clear guidelines on updated Watchtower disfellowshipping policy, clarifying what was to become an ever increasing list of offenses. It denounced the disfellowshipped person in the strongest of terms:

"We might wonder, then, since this congregation which God is developing or bringing into existence is based on love, why anyone should ever want to talk about disfellowshipping or putting people out of this congregation. There certainly must be some reason. Well, the reason for disfellowshipping is that some persons get into this congregation of God that do not love Christ. ... Those who are acquainted with the situation in the congregation should never say 'Hello' or 'Goodbye' to him. He is not welcome in our midst, we avoid him. ... Such an individual has no place in the clean organization or congregation of

⁷¹ *Watchtower* 1919 Mar 1 p.69

⁷² *Watchtower* 1930 October 1 p.301

⁷³ *Watchtower* 1952 Mar. 1 p.147

God. He should go back to the wicked group that he once came from and die with that wicked group with Satan's organization." ⁷⁴

In the *Watchtower* 1955 October 1 p.607, even to associate with a disfellowshipped person became a reason to be disfellowshipped:

"If a publisher refuses to do this and ignores the prohibition on associating with the disfellowshipped one, that publisher is rebelling against the congregation of Jehovah, and "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. ... If after sufficient warning the publisher persists in associating with the disfellowshipped person instead of aligning himself with Jehovah's organization he also should be disfellowshipped."

Since the introduction of disfellowshipping in the 1940's, there have been a number of changes in Watchtower doctrine and hence the reasons for being disfellowshipped have also changed back and forth. How can this occur if the Organization's rules are directed by Jehovah? When a situation arises in a congregation that is not clearly specified in the Bible or in the literature, and the elders and branch feel unable to deal with it, it is referred to the Governing Body. How does the Governing Body arrive at a new principle for being disfellowshipped? Does the Holy Spirit guide them to examine scripture and arrive at a uniform consensus on what God's standard is?

No. When a new principle is discussed a vote is taken. The vote does not have to be unanimous, but rather, it is a two-thirds majority vote that decides the outcome.⁷⁵ For this reason both the regulation on organ transplants and oral sex was able to be changed back and forth within the space of little over a decade, with a devastating effect on some Witnesses lives. For instance, the practice of smoking, while always frowned upon, did not become a disfellowshipping offence until 1973. Having an organ transplant was a disfellowshipping offense for over a decade, but as of 1980, it became a "conscience matter".⁷⁶ Oral or anal sex between married couples was classified as;

- a disfellowshipping offence - *Watchtower* -1974 November 15 p.704
- no longer an offence - *Watchtower* 1978 - February 15 pp.30-32
- once again an offence - *Watchtower* 1983 - March 15 p.31

Jesus condemned the Pharisees for creating a 'fence around The Law', and promoted mercy, common sense and compassion for his followers. Unfortunately, the same can be said regarding the Governing Body's harsh rules regarding disfellowshipping, which inevitably tears families apart, can lead to severe traumatic depression or even suicide, when many times, the offense for which the member was disfellowshipped for is nowhere mentioned in the scriptures.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Watchtower* 1952 March 1 pp.131,134

⁷⁵ See *Crisis of Conscience* p. 85

⁷⁶ *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31

⁷⁷ Ironically, when a member is disfellowshipped for perhaps refusing to accept an erroneous teaching that the Governing Body members claim is "truth", that person is not automatically re-instated with an apology when the doctrine is changed down the road. Instead, the shunning remains intact because it is claimed that the person "ran ahead of the Organization" and therefore, apparently deserved the punishment even though their view may have been the one the Society is now promoting as "truth", and

Behind closed doors

In determining if a person should be disfellowshipped the elders form a judicial committee to meet with the accused. This is done in private, and the accused is not allowed to have a lawyer or recording device (although this probably violates his/her Rights). The word "judicial committee" does not appear in the Bible and both the Israelites and early Christian congregations kept matters open to ordinary persons. Rather than being done in private in front of elders only, matters were done at the city gates so a fair discussion with onlookers could be made. This prevented the injustice that could (and still does) take place whenever a trial is held in private and where the accused has few Rights.

Yet Jesus instructions at Matthew 18:17 says that unresolved wrongdoing should be taken "to the congregation", not to a three-man body and certainly not in private.

Overly Harsh Punishment

Depression is not uncommon amongst Witnesses who have been disfellowshipped. Even though the practice in the first century congregation bore no resemblance to the extreme methods employed today in the Organization, even being treated as a "man of the nations" was apparently punishment enough:

"Now if anyone has caused sadness, he has saddened, not me, but all of YOU to an extent—not to be too harsh in what I say. This rebuke given by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary now, you should kindly forgive and comfort [him], that somehow such a man may not be swallowed up by his being overly sad. Therefore I exhort YOU to confirm YOUR love for him."⁷⁸

Here Paul was actually concerned for this brothers' emotional state of mind and not simply "keeping the congregation clean". He realized that the rebuke given by many (though not all) of the congregation and for a limited time was "sufficient" and he encouraged the congregation to "kindly forgive him and comfort him" in order that he "not be swallowed up by his being overly sad." Today, there is absolutely no consideration whatsoever for a person's mental and emotional state of mind, or even of the possibility that he or she could be so traumatized that they could consider suicide. The only thing to be considered is: Keeping the congregation clean. How exactly is this any different than the harsh, legalistic practices that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for?

When a Pharisee expressed surprise that Jesus did not do ritual washing before dinner, Jesus' rebuke was particularly harsh:

which all members must accept, lest they get disfellowshipped themselves.

⁷⁸ 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

"But woe to YOU Pharisees, because YOU give the tenth of the mint and the rue and of every [other] vegetable, but YOU pass by the justice and the love of God!" (see also Matthew 12:1-10) *Matthew 12:7* "However, if YOU had understood what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice,' YOU would not have condemned the guiltless ones."⁷⁹

Today, disfellowshipping can have such a traumatic effect on the individual, that many contemplate and carry out suicide. It is not uncommon for the person to suffer Post Traumatic Shock Disorder, as their entire life has been ripped apart. Friends and family are no longer allowed to even greet them, lest they jeopardize their own stand in the congregation and find themselves in the same predicament.

Hundreds of thousands of Witnesses are currently disfellowshipped and estranged from their families and friends. This can have a dramatic effect on a person, often at a time when they most need help from others (especially minors who are treated the same as adults when it comes to wrong doing). The Watchtower Society claims that love is one of its most distinguishing marks and that Jehovah's Witnesses have a 'worldwide' loving brotherhood.

However, as we have seen, a comparison between how the Bible says to treat wrongdoers with how the Watchtower enforces disfellowshipping shows the Organization has gone way "beyond the scriptures", using it as a method for absolute control over its members. One of Jesus' greatest commands was to show love to one's brother and to one's neighbour (*Luke 10:27*). The doctrine on disfellowshipping puts serious question marks over any claim of love that Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to make, especially as we have seen that disfellowshipping today in the Organization, was not practiced in Jesus' day.

⁷⁹ Luke 11:42

607 BCE or 587 BCE?

It has long been accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. and it is of course, the pivotal date when calculating when Jesus began ruling in 1914. However, what happens when the data or evidence, from the bible, says otherwise?

It is really quite simple: The names and regnal lengths of the Neo-Babylonian kings are known. You start at 539 B.C.E. for the fall of Babylon, (a date which is accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses as is demonstrated in the literature) as well as secular historians. You list the years of the kings in reverse order and see what year the bible chronology arrives at:

Nabonidus, was the last Babylonian king so we start with him and work backward:

Babylon falls to Cyrus the Persia -- 539 BCE

Nabonidus -- 17 years

Labashi-Marduk -- 3 months

Neriglissar -- 4 years

Evil-Merodach -- 2 years

Nebuchadnezzar -- 43 years

Nabonidus -- 17 years

Year 17 = 539 BCE

16 = 540

15 = 541

14 = 542

13 = 543

12 = 544

11 = 545

10 = 546

9 = 547

8 = 548

7 = 549

6 = 550

5 = 551

4 = 552

3 = 553

2 = 554

1 = 555

0 = accession year = 556

Labashi-Marduk -- less than a year

3 months in 556

Neriglissar -- 4 years

4 = 556

3 = 557

2 = 558
 1 = 559
 0 = accession year = 560

Evil-Merodach -- 2 years
 2 = 560
 1 = 561
 0 = accession year = 562

Nebuchadnezzar -- 43 years
 43 = 562 BCE
 42 = 563
 41 = 564
 40 = 565
 39 = 566
 38 = 567
 37 = 568
 36 = 569
 35 = 570
 34 = 571
 33 = 572
 32 = 573
 31 = 574
 30 = 575
 29 = 576
 28 = 577
 27 = 578
 26 = 579
 25 = 580
 24 = 581
 23 = 582
 22 = 583
 21 = 584
 20 = 585
 19 = 586 BCE
 18 = 587 BCE

According to the bible itself, the date for Jerusalem's first destruction by Nebuchadnezzar was in 586/587 B.C.E., *not* 607 B.C.E.

Does this chronology agree with the Society's publications? Yes it does. Here are some quotes from the Society's own literature that shows they have the reigning years of these kings absolutely correct:

Nebuchadnezzar -- 43 years :

“...Nebuchadnezzar ruled as king for 43 years”⁸⁰

“Learning that his father Nabopolassar had died this young man...Nebuchadnezzar took the throne in 624 B.C.E. During his 43-year reign.”⁸¹

Evil-Merodach --- 2 years

“Evil-merodach reigned two years and was murdered by his brother-in-law Neriglissar”⁸²

Neriglissar -- 4 years

“Evil-merodach reigned two years and was murdered by his brother-in-law Neriglissar, who reigned for four years”⁸³

Labashi-Marduk -- less than a year

“His underage son Labashi-Marduk, a vicious boy, succeeded him, and was assassinated within nine months.”⁸⁴

Nabonidus -- 17 years

(Nabonidus) [from Babylonian meaning "Nebo [a Babylonian god] Is Exalted"]. Last supreme monarch of the Babylonian Empire; father of Belshazzar. On the basis of cuneiform texts he is believed to have ruled some 17 years (556-539 B.C.E.).⁸⁵

The following document is a summary of the work that Carl Olof Jonsson, who was a pioneer and an elder at the time, compiled and sent to the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* in 1977, showing that their date of 607 BCE was erroneous. For his efforts, Carl Jonsson was disfellowshipped.

⁸⁰ Insight on the Scriptures, Vol-2 p. 480: Nebuchadnezzar

⁸¹ Watchtower May 15, 2000 p. 12

⁸² Watchtower January 1, 1965 p. 29

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Insight on the Scriptures Vol-2 p. 457 Nabonidus



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The Watchtower and Chronological Speculation
by Tony Piper

In the year 1968 Carl Olof Jonsson was a 'pioneer' Jehovah's Witness, a full-time evangelist for the Watchtower Society (WBTS/The Society). During a Bible study that he was conducting he was challenged to prove the date that the Society had chosen for the desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians - 607 BCE. It was pointed out to him that all historical evidence marks that event as having occurred twenty years later, in 587 BCE. Like every other Witness, Jonsson was totally convinced that the WBTS's dating of the event was correct and that all other datings were, therefore, wrong. However, he promised to investigate the matter.

What, it may be asked, is the significance of this? Does it really matter whether the Society is right or wrong in its claim that 607 BCE was indeed the date of the fall of Jerusalem under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar?

The date 607 BCE is absolutely crucial to the WBTS for the following reasons. The Society claims that, as the Jewish exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem in 537 BCE, under Cyrus; and as Jeremiah had prophesied that Jerusalem would be desolated for seventy years, those seventy years must have begun in 607 BCE. The Society further claims that the destruction of Jerusalem began the period called the Times of the Gentiles, spoken of by Jesus in Luke 21:24 - 'And Jerusalem will be conquered and trampled down by the Gentiles until the age of the Gentiles comes to an end' (*NLT*). This period, the Times of the Gentiles, is said to last 2,520 years, and would therefore end 2,520 years after 607 BCE - ie. 1914 CE.

The Society's book *Reasoning from the Scriptures* explains this in more detail. The Society 'finds' the 2,520 years in the Bible. Daniel 4:16 says that Nebuchadnezzar would have the mind of an animal for 'seven times'. These 'seven times' are then subjected to the 'day counted as a year' rule, said to be found in Ezek 4:6 and Num 14:34. How many days are involved? Revelation 11:2 and 3 clearly state that 42 months (three and one half years) in that prophecy are counted as 1,260 days. Seven years would be twice that, or 2,520 days. Applying the 'day for a year' rule would result in 2,520 years (*Reasoning* p. 96). Thus: 607 BCE + 2,520 years = 1914 CE.

1914 CE is said, by the Society, to have been the year in which Jesus Christ began ruling in the heavenly kingdom and there can now be very little time before the battle of Armageddon breaks out, the war to end all wars at which only those associated with the WBTS will survive. This is why Jehovah's Witnesses are out every day of the year

knocking at doors, distributing their literature.

All this sounds very reasonable and certainly seems to be founded in Scripture. However, when closely examined it is found to be nothing but false speculation and error throughout. How so?

Firstly, the Bible nowhere explicitly states:

- *that Jesus, in speaking of the Gentile Times, associated them with the 'seven times' of Nebuchadnezzar's madness

- * that these 'seven times' were to be counted as seven years

- * that these years were prophetic years of 360 days each equalling a total of 2,520 days

- * that these years would not only apply to Nebuchadnezzar's madness but to a greater fulfillment

- * that in this greater fulfillment days should be counted as years

- * that this 2,520-year period began when Nebuchadnezzar desolated Jerusalem.

These six assumptions are nothing but a chain of speculative guesses and have no biblical foundation whatsoever to link them to form a succession of prophetic occurrences.

Secondly, as will be demonstrated below, there is evidence which proves that, not only is the above chain of guesses entirely erroneous but that even the date of 607 BCE is without corroboration either biblically or historically.

Jonsson did indeed investigate the matter and found that there was not one piece of evidence to back up the Society's date of 607 BCE for the destruction of Jerusalem. Between 1968 and 1977 he prepared a treatise on the whole issue and forwarded it to the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. As the Society today still clings to 607 BCE it is obvious that Jonsson's material had no effect upon the leaders of the Society and they disfellowshipped him in 1982. Since that date Jonsson has been researching and refining his findings and they are available in his book *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, now in its fourth edition (2004). The book is a virtual encyclopedia of information, all of which is pertinent to the issue at stake here. It forms the basis for the information presented in this article. It makes challenging but engrossing reading, and this writer found his copy on Amazon.co.uk for less than ten pounds including postage and packing. For anyone wanting to really understand how important the year 607 BCE is to Watchtower doctrine, and how their whole *raison d'être* falls to the wayside once its reliance on that date is shown to be false, this book is essential reading.

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY - CHRONOLOGY 607 BCE - 1914 CE

In the Society's publication *All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (1990; p. 285, article entitled 'Measuring Events in the Stream of Time') it states that the restoration of

Jehovah's worship began in the autumn of 537 BCE. It began when the Jews arrived back in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1) following Cyrus' decree that they might return there after his overthrow of the Babylonian dynasty in 539 BCE.

The article then states that this restoration of worship in 537 BCE marked the end of a prophetic period. What period is this referring to?

*"...It was the "seventy years" during which the Promised Land "must become a devastated place" and concerning which Jehovah also said, "In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to you people, and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place" (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10)..."*⁸⁶

The prophet Daniel, who is said to have been aware of the prophecy, is then said to have acted in harmony with it as the seventy years drew to a close (Dan 9:1-3).

The article then states that the seventy years that ended in the autumn of the year 537 BCE must have begun then in the autumn of 607 BCE. It then attempts to prove this by stating that:

*"...The facts bear this out. Jeremiah chapter 52 describes the momentous events of the siege of Jerusalem, the Babylonian breakthrough, and the capture of King Zedekiah in 607 BCE. Then, as verse 12 states, "in the fifth month, on the tenth day", that is, the tenth day of Ab (corresponding to parts of July and August), the Babylonians burnt the temple and the city..."*⁸⁷

Based on this assertion the article then claims that the seventy years began on or about 1 October, 607 BCE. From that date

*"...was the land in the complete sense "lying desolate...to fulfill seventy years" - 2 Kings 25:22-26; 2 Chron 36:20,21..."*⁸⁸

In other words the article is saying that the fall of Jerusalem, under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, is dated to the year 607 BCE. Seventy years later, in accordance with prophecy, the Jews were released from captivity (537 BCE) by the Persian ruler Cyrus and returned to restore the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem.

It must be stated now that the year 607 BCE given for the overthrow of Jerusalem has no backing whatsoever from the scholarly community. It exists only in the publications of the Watchtower Society, and is critical to their chronological speculations relating to the year 1914 CE. All historians are agreed that the year of Jerusalem's destruction should be 587 BCE. This would then make the Society's calculations regarding 1914 (607 BCE + 2520 years = 1914 CE) incorrect and 1914 would cease to have any theological significance in the 'stream of time'.

It may also be stated straightaway that the dates 539 BCE for the fall of Babylon, and 537 BCE for the commencement of the return to Jerusalem are not necessarily at issue

⁸⁶ All Scripture Is Inspired of God p. 285 par. 6

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

here. There are, then, two basic issues involved. If the restoration of worship in Jerusalem began in 537 BCE after seventy actual years of exile then the year 607 BCE may be correct for the destruction of Jerusalem. The Watchtower Society has got it right and everybody else, including the whole of the scholarly community specializing in ancient Neo-Babylonian historical documentation, encompassing people of impeccable credentials and no especial religious bias, has got it wrong. But if the fall of Jerusalem did not occur in 607 BCE but in 587 BCE, then the Watchtower Society is wrong to cling to 607 BCE in order to preserve its doctrinal beliefs on 1914. However, if this is the correct interpretation then how do we account for the seventy years prophecy for Jewish exile in Babylon, as 587 BCE - 537 BCE is only 50 years.

In attempting to resolve this seemingly unresolvable issue there are two initial steps to take. The first is to examine Jeremiah's prophecies referred to in the Society's article above, Jeremiah 25:11, 12 and Jeremiah 29:10, alongside any other relevant biblical matter. The second is to investigate the historical data on which historians arrive at the date 587/586 BCE for the fall of Jerusalem, and in doing so to ascertain whether 607 BCE could possibly be an alternative, feasible or even correct date, or should be accounted totally unacceptable and therefore disregarded.

Before beginning our investigation it must be stated that it is not possible, when attempting to ascertain when or whether biblical prophecy actually came to pass, to do this without reference to history. The events in the Old Testament are not documented in such a way as to specifically determine the date of their occurrence. The time span between, for instance, the fall of Jerusalem and the birth of Jesus is not ascertainable without due reference to historical events because the Bible gives no such information. Without the help of verifiable, historical information we shall never know when the fall of Jerusalem took place. On this basis the Society is, therefore, wrong to state, as is quoted above, that Jeremiah chapter 52 describes the events that took place in 607 BCE. That the events took place is indisputable, but the Bible gives *no indication* of the date of that event.

A: The Biblical Question - What Are We to Make of Jeremiah's Seventy Years?

The Watchtower Society asserts that Bible prophecy relating to these seventy years refers to and only refers to the period of time between the desolation of Judah, accompanying the destruction of Jerusalem, (alleged to be 607 BCE), and the return of the exiles to their homeland as a result of Cyrus' decree (537 BCE).

“...It clearly specifies that the 70 years would be years of *devastation of the land of Judah...*”⁸⁹

With this absolute statement the Watchtower Society clearly nails its colours to the mast. If they are correct in this assertion then everyone else is wrong. If they are wrong then all their associated theology regarding 1914 and its importance for the Kingdom of God is erroneous and the Society will have to admit that it has been totally and entirely mistaken for the best part of 135 years.

Jeremiah 25:10-12

⁸⁹Insight on the Scriptures Vol I p. 463

"And I will destroy out of them the sound of exultation and the sound of rejoicing, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the hand mill and the light of the lamp. And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it must occur that when seventy years have been fulfilled I shall call to account against the king of Babylon and against that nation," is the utterance of Jehovah, "their error, even against the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it desolate wastes to time indefinite". (New World Translation)

This was the original prediction dated the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 25:1). Jehoiakim ruled for eleven years and was succeeded by Jehoiachin (ruled three months), and then Zedekiah in whose eleventh year Jerusalem was desolated. It was therefore given eighteen years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Three things are predicted in this prophecy:

- (i) Judah would become a "devastated place"
- (ii) "These nations" would "serve the king of Babylon seventy years"
- (iii) When the seventy years had been fulfilled God would call Babylon to account

So what do we learn here about the seventy years?

We learn that "these nations", which includes Judah, will serve Babylon for seventy years (see verse 9), after which there would be a change of circumstances regarding Babylonian supremacy. We do *not* learn that Judah (or Jerusalem) would be **devastated** for seventy years. The seventy years is a period of **servitude** for Judah and surrounding nations. Devastation would only come as a result of a nation's refusal to serve Babylon (Jer 27:7, 8). If a nation served Nebuchadnezzar it would be allowed to remain in its own land (Jer 27:11). If it did not it would be removed and its land desolated. That Judah refused time and again to serve Babylon and ultimately paid the price for this at a later date is very evident from Jeremiah. His words at Jeremiah 27:17 prove that, had Judah continued to serve Babylon, it would have remained in the land:

"...Do not listen to them [false prophets]. Serve the king of Babylon and keep on living. Why should this city become a devastated place?..."

Judah did not serve Babylon and then later paid the price.

At what date did the servitude of the nations begin? In 605 BCE Babylon decisively overthrew the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish (Jer 46:2). The defeat of Egypt opened the way for Babylon to rule over that whole area, thus bringing Judah and all the nations into subjection. But does this fulfill Jeremiah's words at 25:10-12 that the nations, including Judah, would serve Babylon for seventy years? It does not, because 605-537 BCE is only 68 years. What, then, is the correct interpretation of the seventy year period?

The answer lies firstly in the fact that Babylon assumed control over Assyria in the year 609 BCE. Secondly, the period of servitude did not end in 537 BCE, when the Jews are said to have begun to return to Jerusalem because the prophecy did not refer to Judah alone, but to "the nations". Therefore the period of servitude for the nations ended when Babylon was called to account by Jehovah. (Jer 25:12). That date was 539 BCE

when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians.

Thus the period of servitude for Judah and the nations predicted by Jeremiah at 25:10-12 was the seventy years stretching from 609-539 BCE. The year 607 BCE is not significant in these calculations at all. The dates 609 BCE for the fall of Assyria, and 539 BCE for the fall of Babylon are not open to question.

Jeremiah 29:8-10

For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said:

"Let not YOUR prophets who are in among YOU and YOUR practitioners of divination deceive YOU, and do not YOU listen to their dreams that they are dreaming. For it is in falsehood that they are prophesying to YOU in my name. I have not sent them," is the utterance of Jehovah. For this is what Jehovah has said, "In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to YOU people, and I will establish toward YOU my good word in bringing YOU back to this place." (New World Translation)

This is part of a letter written to the exiles in Babylon after Jehoiachin and others had been deported there from Jerusalem (Jer 29:1-2) while Zedekiah was still on the throne there (v. 3). It clearly presupposes that the seventy years are in progress otherwise why mention them? Jeremiah was not urging the exiles to wait until the seventy years *began*, but to wait while they were *in completion*. Therefore, from the fact that this letter was sent while Zedekiah was still ruling in Jerusalem (ie. before its fall) we may reason that Jeremiah reckoned that the beginning of the seventy years was dated before the fall of Jerusalem. This ties in with what has been observed above, under Jeremiah 25:8-10.

This text makes it clear that the seventy years can be applied neither to the period of the desolation of Jerusalem nor to the period of the Jewish exile. Why is this?

The wording of verse 10 *"In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon..."* the *New World Translation's* rendering seems to depict the seventy years as a period of captivity for Judah **at Babylon**. The Hebrew preposition *le* may be translated 'at' in the sense of location, but its general meaning is 'for, to, in regard to, with reference to', which is how many modern translations render it. When the word 'for' is legitimately substituted in the phrase it reads *"In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years **for** Babylon"*. In other words it means that when Babylon has had seventy years of supremacy and servitude from the nations, in agreement with Jeremiah 25:11, Jehovah would turn his attention towards his people (Jer 29:12).

At this point it is worth mentioning that the *King James Version* (1611) translates *le* as 'at', in agreement with the *New World Translation*. However, as is well known, many ancient manuscripts of the Bible have been found since 1611 upon which better and more accurate translations may be made. The *New World Translation* revision of 1984 is said to have benefitted from updating in harmony with the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* of 1977. Also consulted were the Dead Sea Scrolls and numerous early translations into other languages [*Reasoning* pp. 276-277]. One wonders why the

Watchtower Society persists in using the rather obsolete and little used 'at Babylon' rather than the more modern and correct 'for Babylon'.

The reason simply is that 'at Babylon' indicates that, according to the Society, the Jews were at Babylon for seventy years, ie, 607-537 BCE. In reality it means that Judah and the nations served the Babylonians for seventy years and when those seventy years 'for Babylonian supremacy' were over Jehovah punished Babylon and began the rehabilitation of his people back to Jerusalem. Only this latter interpretation is faithful to Jeremiah's words 'And these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it must occur that when seventy years have been fulfilled I shall call to account against the king of Babylon... (Jer 25:11-12).

It is interesting to note that the Danish *NWT* of 1985 reads 'for Babylon' at this point, and the new revised Swedish *NWT* of 2003 now reads 'for Babylon' instead of the earlier 'in Babylon'.

Daniel 9:1-2

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes, who had been made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reigning I myself, Daniel, discerned by the books the number of the years concerning which the word of Jehovah had occurred to Jeremiah the prophet, for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem, [namely,] seventy years. (New World Translation, square brackets in original).

It is clear from Daniel 5:13-30 that Daniel would have been in no doubt, after his prophecy concerning Belshazzar and that on that same night Belshazzar was killed, that Babylon's time had ended. This is confirmed by Daniel 5:31, and occurred in October 539 BCE. But did Daniel connect this monumental event with the seventy years of Jeremiah, and in what way?

It is logical to assume, as Daniel does not refer to the seventy years in any of his subsequent prayers, that he understood what had happened and how that impacted upon Jeremiah's words. It is not known whether he had access to all Jeremiah's writings but it is possible that he knew something of them. Jeremiah 25:12 says that Jehovah would call Babylon to account after seventy years. Daniel certainly would have known, from the contents of the letter of Jeremiah 29, about the 'seventy years for Babylon' and that Jehovah would then turn his attention to his people to bring them back to Jerusalem. From both of these at least, Daniel would certainly have seen the vital importance of the fall of Babylon to the Medes in 539 BCE and its meaning for the Jewish people. This is, then, reflected in his prayers.

Daniel did exactly what Jeremiah called for in Jeremiah 29:12-14. He called to Jehovah and prayed to him (Daniel 9:3), and confessed the nation's sins (Daniel 9:4). Daniel was in no doubt that the seventy years had ended in 539 BCE (ie. they had therefore begun in 609 BCE).

But what does the phrase '*for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem, [namely], seventy years*' (Daniel 9:2) mean? We have said that the seventy years meant servitude to Babylon (609-539 BCE), and not an actual seventy years of desolation for the city of Jerusalem (607-537 BCE) as the Watchtower Society teaches.

It is clear, from this verse, that Daniel connected the end of Babylon's seventy years of sovereignty with the end of Jerusalem's desolation. But does the text actually say that Jerusalem would be devastated for seventy years? What the text says is that:

Daniel discerned, from Jeremiah's writings, that Babylon would be called to account after seventy years sovereignty, and that *at the end of that amount of time* Jerusalem's shame would be reversed. What amount of time - "[namely], seventy years".

Daniel does not equate the seventy years with the period of Jerusalem's devastation. It is only the expiration of that period, not the period as a whole that he relates to the fulfilling of the desolations of Jerusalem. Jeremiah nowhere stated that Jerusalem would be desolate for seventy years and neither does Daniel. He realises the incredible implications for his people now that Babylon's seventy years are at an end and goes before Jehovah in prayer to pave the way for the imminent return to Jerusalem under Cyrus.

Summary of part A

From a close examination of the texts dealing with the seventy years (Jer 25:10-12; Jer 29:8-10; Daniel 9:1-2) certain facts have been established.

The seventy years refers to many nations, not to Judah alone
 The seventy years refers to a period of servitude for these nations
 The seventy years refer to a period of Babylonian supremacy
 The seventy years were accomplished when the Babylonians were punished in 539 BCE
 The seventy years of servitude began before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The application given by the Watchtower Society that the seventy years refer only to Judah and the desolation of Jerusalem are in total and complete conflict with Scripture, and on this basis cannot be upheld. The statement that 'Bible prophecy does not allow for the application of the 70-year period to any time other than that between the desolation of Judah, accompanying Jerusalem's destruction, and the return of the Jewish exiles to their homeland as a result of Cyrus' decree (ie. 607-537 BCE) [*Insight on the Scriptures* Vol I p. 463] is now shown to be false. The teaching that the Gentile times began in 607 BCE and ended 2,520 years later in 1914 CE has no basis in scriptural fact. It must be rejected.⁹⁰

As noted above, the Watchtower Society nailed its colours firmly to the mast in saying that the seventy years of Jeremiah could only be applied to the time between the desolation of Jerusalem (alleged to be 607 BCE) and the return of the exiles to Jerusalem (537 BCE). It has been demonstrated that this claim is based on incorrect readings of key texts. The Society again firmly nails its colours to the mast in reference to the use of historical information in attempting to establish the dating of ancient events.

"...We are willing to be guided primarily by God's Word rather than by a chronology that

⁹⁰ **Endnote:** There are other lines of scriptural argument, which the Society brings in order to 'prove' its case for 607 BCE as the date of the commencement of the seventy years, eg. the Sabbath of rests for the land (2 Chron 36:20-23) but these have not been dealt with on the premise that one scripture cannot contradict another.

is based principally on secular evidence or that disagrees with Scripture.”⁹¹

Such statements are obviously intended to create the impression that those who reject the date 607 BCE for the desolation of Jerusalem have no real faith in the Bible. Those, like the Watchtower Society, who therefore place their faith in the Bible, must be prepared to hold to a date that is said to originate in the Bible but which contradicts all other evidences whatsoever. Having said that the Society is fully prepared to use the date 539 BCE for the fall of Babylon (*All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* p. 296), even though this date is nowhere found in the Bible. It is only identifiable and verifiable by referring to historical documentation.

How is this done? By synchronising the chronology of the Bible alongside the chronology of another country, one that can be fixed to our Christian era (ie. dated CE). This involves the use of material that is contemporary with the events mentioned in it. In other words absolute chronological dating uses historical artefacts that were written at the time of the events they describe and cannot, therefore, be dismissed as unscriptural or unreliable. Only a very determined person would dare to doubt the reliability of contemporary evidence. Dating historical events in this way also makes use of contemporary astronomical information, a fact that the Watchtower Society makes use of.

Thus, this tablet establishes the seventh year of Cambyses II as beginning in the spring of 523 BCE. This is an astronomically confirmed date. (*Insight on the Scriptures* Vol I p. 453).

It is worth noting, in passing, that the Society is very happy to use one historically verifiable date, that of 539 BCE for the fall of Babylon, in its chronology, but does not use another historically verifiable date, that of 587 BCE for the fall of Jerusalem. Why is this? It is because the whole of the Society's theology about the return of Christ and the beginning and the end of the Gentile Times and are bound up in its belief that the seventy years began in 607 BCE and that 2,520 years on from there bring us to 1914 CE.

So how can this all information help us to determine if 607 BCE is the correct date for the fall of Jerusalem, as the Society claims? Do historical artefacts help to prove that date or do they force us to consider another time scale for some of the events listed in the second paragraph above? We begin with a consideration of the lengths of the Babylonian kings who ruled during this decisive period for the people of God.

The Length of Reigns of the Neo-Babylonian Kings

The Watchtower Society maintains that the Jewish remnant returned to Jerusalem in 537 BCE. They further maintain that the seventy years of Jeremiah were seventy years of complete desolation for Jerusalem thus proving that the desolation began in 607 BCE.

The Bible tells us that the fall of Jerusalem took place in the eighteenth regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8; Jer 52:12, 29), which means that Nebuchadnezzar, according to Watchtower theology, must have begun his rule somewhere around 625 BCE.⁹² The article 'Nebuchadnezzar' (*Insight on the Scriptures* Vol II p. 480) has

⁹¹ *Let Your Kingdom Come* p. 189.

⁹² In dating the years for which a king ruled it must be remembered that according to the Assyrian and Babylonian system of reckoning the year in which a king came to power was reckoned as his 'accession

Nebuchadnezzar ruling for 43 years, from 624-582 BCE. Are these dates correct? Several ancient sources are available for consultation.

Ancient Historians

Berosus, a third century BCE Babylonian priest, wrote a history of Babylonia. The validity of the dates he quotes is evidenced by their accurate reflection of historical material now available on ancient cuneiform tablets unearthed in Babylon, particularly the Neo-Babylonian Chronicles (records of kingly succession) and also the Babylonian kinglists (the Uruk kinglist in particular) which list the Babylonian rulers by name along with the years of their reign.

The Royal Canon (Ptolemy's Canon) is a list of kings and their reigns beginning with Nabonassar in Babylon (747-734 BCE). It was compiled partially from the Babylonian Chronicles and kinglists but independently of Berosus, with whom it is in substantial agreement.

These documents give the following tables of reigns:

NAME BEROSSUS ROYAL CANON BCE

Nabopolassar	21 years	21 years	625-605
Nebuchadnezzar	43 years	43 years	604-562
Awel-Marduk*	2 years	2 years	561-560
Neriglissar	4 years	4 years	559-556
Labashi-Marduk	9 months	-	556
Nabonidus	17 years	17 years	555-539

*Called Evil-Merodach in 2 Kings 25:27; Jer 52:31.

The Royal Canon omits Labashi-Marduk as it only reckons whole years.

If these lists are correct the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, when he desolated Jerusalem, would be 587/586 BCE, not 607 BCE as the Society claims.

As these lists were compiled from earlier information we need to go further in order to ascertain whether they are accurate or not.

Today we need neither Berosus nor the Royal Canon to establish the length of the Babylonian period. There are now tens of thousands of cuneiform documents available for consultation, including chronicles and royal inscriptions that definitely fix the lengths of the reigns of the Neo-Babylonian rulers, such as Nebuchadnezzar. There are other royal inscriptions available for discussion but space does not permit their inclusion. In addition to what has been noted above, there are literally hundreds of thousands of cuneiform texts available. The overwhelming majority of them deal with economic-administrative and private legal items such as buy and sale contracts, and the sale or hiring of slaves and livestock. To a great extent they are dated with the year of the reigning king, the month and the day of the month. Every year of the Neo-Babylonian Era has provided many dated texts by which it is possible to determine not only the length of

year', while his first year always started on Nisan 1, the first day of the next year. Judah, at this time, did not apply the 'accession-year system', but counted the accession year as the first year.

each reign and the time of the year at which each reign changed, but sometimes even the very day on which the changeover happened. The last dated text from the reign of Nabonidus has VII/17/17 (October 13, 539), one day after the fall of Babylon, (given as VII/16/17 in the *Nabonidus Chronicle*). The tablet is dated to Nabunaid from Uruk, and is dated one day after the fall of Babylon because of the time lapse in news reaching the southern city 125 miles from the capital.

Why is all this business information so important? Because it begs the question: where is the documentation for the 20 missing years between the Society's alleged date of Jerusalem's fall in 607 BCE and the historically accepted and confirmed date of 587 BCE.

The Absolute Chronology of the Neo-Babylonian Era

In our investigation into whether the Watchtower Society's date for the fall of Jerusalem (607 BCE) is correct we firstly examined three key biblical texts (Jeremiah 25:10-12; Jeremiah 29:8-10 and Daniel 9:1-2) and found that the Society's reading of them is open to question.....The biblical and historical evidence so far examined, (by no means complete for reasons of space) has shown that 607 BCE has ***no corroborating biblical or historical evidence. All the evidence so far presented shows that 607 BCE is an incorrect date.***

Amongst the tens of thousands of discovered documents from the Neo-Babylonian period the Society has not found one single shred of evidence pointing to 607 BCE. If the Society has such a problem with the overwhelming evidence that points to 587 BCE then, by simple logical deduction, it should also reject 539 BCE, which is attested by the same historical and astronomical evidence. This, of course, it does not do.

If the reader has followed the information so far it must be asked, in all good conscience, whether he or she does not owe it to him/herself to pursue what has been put forward here in respect of the accuracy of 587 BCE and the errancy of 607 BCE as the date for the fall of Jerusalem. In doing so the reader will, no doubt, realise that, if 607 BCE is not the correct date, it therefore has no especial significance on the 'stream of time' and that 1914 CE is disproved as the 'end of the Gentile times' and has no significance on the 'stream of time' either.

Conclusion

The wealth of information presented here, and the greater wealth of information it has not been able to include, but which is contained in Carl Jonsson's book *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, all direct the reader to the conclusion that the Watchtower Society's date for the fall of Jerusalem is incorrect and must be discarded. It is proof that the Society is aware of all this information and more because not only has it attempted to discredit it in the Volume I of *Insight on the Scriptures*, as noted above, but it produced an appendix to its publication *Let Your Kingdom Come* (1981 pages 186-189).

For a full reading, read *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, available through the Commentary Press: http://www.commentarypress.com/Detail/eng_gentile.html

144,000

Another central believe of Jehovah's Witnesses, is that there are two classes of Christians: Those who make up the Great Crowd and those that make up the 144,000. This section will deal with the 144,000. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation is speaking of "spiritual Israel" and not 'fleshly Israel' or even other Christians in general. There are countless quotes throughout the literature over the years that we are all familiar with that specifically state this, but to drive home a point, here are a few:

"...Basically the Hebrew congregation was composed of natural Israelites. Persons comprising the anointed Christian congregation of God are spiritual Israelites, forming the tribes of spiritual Israel. (Re 7:4-8).....Usually when the Christian Greek Scriptures mention "the congregation" in a general sense, reference is being made to the 144,000 members thereof, the anointed followers of Christ exclusive of Jesus himself..."⁹³

"...ISRAEL OF GOD This expression, found only once in Scripture, **refers to spiritual Israel rather than to racial descendants of Jacob...**"⁹⁴

"...James wrote the letter to "the twelve tribes that are scattered about," literally, "the (ones) in the dispersion." (Jas 1:1, ftn) He here addresses his spiritual "brothers," those who hold to "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ," primarily those living beyond Palestine.....His reference to Abraham as "our father" (2:21) is in harmony with Paul's words at Galatians 3:28, 29, where he shows that one's being of the true seed of Abraham is not determined by whether one is a Jew or a Greek. **Therefore, "the twelve tribes" addressed must be the spiritual "Israel of God."**"⁹⁵

"...Not until about 96 C.E., in the Revelation to the apostle John, did He reveal that spiritual Israel, those "sealed" with God's spirit, which is a token of their heavenly inheritance, numbers 144,000 persons..."⁹⁶

"...The apostle Peter quoted what had been said to natural Israel and applied it to this spiritual Israel of God, saying it is in reality "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.....The 12 tribes mentioned in Revelation chapter 7 must refer to this spiritual Israel for several valid reasons. The listing does not match that of natural Israel at Numbers chapter 1.....John's vision of those standing on the heavenly Mount Zion with the Lamb revealed the

⁹³ Insight on the Scriptures Vol-1 p. 498 Congregation

⁹⁴ Insight on the Scriptures Vol 1 p. 1234 Israel of God:

⁹⁵ Insight on the Scriptures Vol 1 p. 1253 James, Letter of:

⁹⁶ Insight on the Scriptures Vol 2 p. 889 Seed

number of this spiritual Israel of God to be 144,000 "bought from among mankind."—Rev 7:4; 14:1, 4.⁹⁷

In addition, this group is said to be Christ's "brothers" as mentioned in Matthew 25:40 and are the only humans that are in line for heaven. This group of anointed ones, are said to have begun in Jesus' day with his disciples, and has continued on down to today, over 2,000 years later.

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells his apostles that in "the re-creation" they would "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The question is: Who are the "twelve tribes of Israel" that the apostles would be judging? If it is referring to *fleshly* Israel, that would indicate that they still had some special role in God's plan---otherwise, why would they be singled out from the rest of mankind with regards to being judged? As the Organization has said countless times, the 144,000 is not describing 'fleshy Israel':

"...It thus seems clear that the 144,000 sealed ones are of spiritual Israel, not fleshly Israel..."⁹⁸

Therefore, the '12 tribes of Israel' must be referring to "Spiritual Israel" right? But how can it be talking about 'Spiritual Israel' since the apostles would be *part* of that group? Would they be sitting in judgement on themselves? Even the Organization realizes that would make no sense whatsoever, as the *Insight On the Scriptures* Vol 2 pp. 1125-1126 says:

".....It is not reasonable that Jesus meant that they would judge the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel later mentioned in Revelation, for the apostles were to be part of that group. (Eph 2:19-22; Re 3:21)..."

However, since the Society has always maintained that the "12 tribes of Israel" spoken of in the Christian Greek Scriptures *is* referring to Spiritual Israel (as shown above), how do they explain this problem? As shocking as it may be, the section of the *Insight On the Scriptures* Vol 2 pp. 1125-1126 Tribe continues it says:

"Consequently, "the twelve tribes of Israel" mentioned at Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 **evidently represent "the world" of mankind who are outside that royal priestly class** and whom those sitting on heavenly thrones will judge.—Rev 20:4...."

How can the "twelve tribes of Israel" represent "the world" when they have clearly stated that it represents "spiritual Israel"?? You can't have a group with the identical name representing two different classes at the same time. If "the twelve tribes of Israel" represents "the world of mankind", then how can they also be the

⁹⁷ Insight on the Scriptures Vol 1 p. 1234 Israel of God

⁹⁸ Insight on the Scriptures Vol-1 p. 996 Great Crowd

144,000 who will ‘judge the world?’ And if “the twelve tribes of Israel” represent “the world of mankind” in this verse, then logically it would mean that the 144,000 also “represent the world of mankind” as well.

This is an obvious problem for the Organization, unless they were willing to concede either that:

- 1) The twelve tribes of Israel, are in fact, referring to the literal twelve tribes of Israel, or;
- 2) That more than 144,000 persons have the heavenly hope, (as the bible does indicate).

One major problem with the Organization’s view of the 144,000 or “spiritual Israel”, is that if the number is a *literal* number of ‘spiritual Israelites’ (which are all Christians), then history shows the numbers would have been filled centuries ago and not in 1935 as they have taught for decades up until May 2007. The following shows that this reasoning is flawed.

Jehovah’s Witnesses have long been taught that after Jesus’ apostles died, the ‘great apostasy’ set in, whereby true Christianity began to die out:

“But following the death of the apostles, a great apostasy set in, and the light of truth *began to flicker.*”⁹⁹ Indeed, there is scriptural evidence that an apostasy would occur, as illustrated by the “wheat and weeds” parable in Matthew 13:24-30:

“The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man that sowed fine seed in his field. While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat, and left. When the blade sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds appeared also. So the slaves of the householder came up and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow fine seed in your field? How, then, does it come to have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy, a man, did this.’ They said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go out and collect them?’ He said, ‘No; that by no chance, while collecting the weeds, YOU uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the harvest season I will tell the reapers, First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up, then go to gathering the wheat into my storehouse.’”

as well as the words at Acts 20:29-30: “. . . I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among YOU and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among YOU yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

⁹⁹ Watchtower, January 1, 1997 p. 10 pars. 14-15

There is no exact date in the scriptures or in any historical document pinpointing an exact date, but the Society's literature generally maintains that by the 3rd or 4th century CE, the majority of Christians were not 'true Christians' due to their following false teachings:

"The apostles and other early Christians followed in Jesus' footsteps. But after the close of the first century, as foretold, the "weed" class of false Christians, sown by Satan, began to persecute the "wheat" class, the true Christians. About the fourth century, some who rejected the pagan Trinity doctrine were labeled "Arians." Others who held faithfully to celebrating the Memorial of Christ's death on Nisan 14 were termed "Quartodecimans (or, Fourteenthers)." In the seventh century some who held to "genuine apostolic Bible-Christianity" were called "Paulicians." But this name-calling, along with persecutions, did not deter faithful anointed Christians from keeping their integrity!—Luke chapters 1 and 2; Matt. 13:24-30."

Sixth Millennium

Amidst Christendom's vast domain of imitation Christians, the true anointed Christians continued to remain loyal in the face of sadistic tortures and martyrdom at the hands of the Catholic priesthood. From the twelfth century C.E., the "Waldenses" in France rejected Catholic traditions in favor of adhering closely to the Bible. Many of these became martyrs. One of them said: 'The Cross should not be prayed to but loathed as the instrument of the Just One's death.' Starting in the sixteenth century C.E., the Reformation resulted in a breaking away from the authority of the Catholic Church on the part of many individuals and countries."¹⁰⁰

So we have evidence that the Organization teaches that despite the "weeds", there have always been "wheat-like Christians" over the past 2,000 years, who would all have been in line to be part of the 144,000. How many 'wheat-like' ones would there be? The scriptures do not stipulate an exact number, but as Jesus said that the weed and wheats would "grow together", (*not that the weeds would completely take over the wheat*), this would indicate that the number of true Christians would basically be on par with the weeds, or slightly less. With that in mind, let us see how many true Christians have been martyred over the centuries. The September 1, 1951 Watchtower p. 516 tells us that:

"Brief respite followed the death of Nero, but by the latter years of the first century the second great persecution, under Emperor Domitian, flared up. It is said that in the year 95 [C.E.] alone some 40,000 suffered martyrdom"

In addition to the 40,000 martyred in 95 CE, Charles Russell said that during a 10 year span from 303 CE - 313 CE:

"Seventeen thousand were slain in one month, and during the continuance of this persecution in Egypt alone 144,000 Christians died by violence, besides 700,000

¹⁰⁰Watchtower November 1, 1975 p. 583

that died through the fatigues of banishment or the public works to which they were condemned.”¹⁰¹

That is approximately 860,000 Christians martyred in a ten year span. When you add that to the 40,000 that “suffered martyrdom” in 95 CE alone, that brings the total up to 900,000 Christians who were martyred by the beginning of the 4th century CE. That's A LOT of Christians. How does the Watchtower explain this (obvious) problem? Quite simply. They deny that most of those that were martyred were true Christians. They claim that they were merely “professed Christians”:

Questions From Readers

According to the article “Hated for His Name” in the September 1, 1951, *Watchtower*, hundreds of thousands of Christians died in the “ten persecutions” starting in Nero’s time, 144,000 dying in Egypt alone during one of the persecutions. How can this be harmonized with the Scriptural limitation of 144,000 placed on the number being in Christ’s body, and which position was the only one open to Christians during those centuries?—J.A., Dominican Republic.

The article did not class with any finality the individuals that died during these persecutions, but spoke of the results in a general way. Note that a key qualification was made in the case referred to in the question: “In the province of Egypt alone, 144,000 such professed Christians died by violence in the course of this persecution, in addition to another 700,000 who died as a result of fatigues encountered in banishment or under enforced public works.” The victims are identified as “professed Christians”, not Christians in fact. Many of those persons might have been caught in the wave of persecution, but may never have actually preached the truth or followed in Jesus’ footsteps, being only professed Christians. They knew the world they lived in was rotten and they were listening to the message of the Christians and willing to die for it even though not in line for the high calling in Christ Jesus. Many professed Christians today might be willing to die for their faith, but still not be Jesus’ footstep followers and meeting the Scriptural requirements for such.”¹⁰²

On what basis do the men who write such articles base their assertion that these early Christians were “not in line for the high calling”? Did they know them? Could they read their hearts? Since the Watchtower Society is not willing to accept these peoples "profession" as being valid, can we make the same assumption in reference to the "professed" anointed Christians for today amongst the Witnesses? We have the justification from simple logic:

¹⁰¹ *The Finished Mystery*, p. 29-30

¹⁰² Watchtower, November 15, 1952 p. 62 Questions From Readers

If the calling to be "anointed" is based upon subjective feelings and is strictly between the individual and Jehovah, a person that was martyred for the cause of Christ in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd century has a claim that is just as valid as a person making the profession in the 20th or 21st century.

The "evidence" that you are of the "anointed" is purely subjective. It involves your personal thoughts, feelings and ideas. Since the Watchtower states *"...But one person cannot make this decision for another, and it is Jehovah who imparts the heavenly hope"*¹⁰³ how can they justify saying that the 860,000 martyred under Diocletian were not "anointed"? They never knew these people or had a chance to observe them and since the "anointed" calling is between the person and Jehovah, they cannot know. How is it logical to discount one subjective "profession" while accepting another based upon the same "evidence?"

Even if we give the Watchtower's assertion the benefit of the doubt here and surmise that most of those early Christian martyrs did not have the 'heavenly calling', it can still be shown that if the number 144,000 was literal, it would have been filled centuries ago.

Even going to the extreme and calculating that 75% of those early Christians martyred during the early 4th century were not "true Christians", that would mean that there were still about 215,000 that *were* "true Christians." They would have been of the "anointed" and thus, the number, if it were literal, would have been filled centuries ago.

Even taking it to the more extreme: If even 90% of those 860,000 were not "true Christians", there would still be 86,000 that were. If you add that number to the 40,000 that had been martyred in 95 CE, that right there gives you a total of 126,000. And that's going on the ridiculous idea that there were no true Christians killed in between 95C.E. and the early 4th century, which of course, is an absurd idea. When you factor in Acts 21:20 which says "You behold, brother, how many myriads of believers there are among the Jews." The same word 'myriads' is used in Jude 14 in the NWT. There is a footnote in the large revised 1984 edition which says. "holy tens of thousands."

So even if the "myriads" equaled the bare minimum of what "myriads" could stand for---20,000, right there you've got more than 144,000. You've in fact got 146,000. Plus, that doesn't even include the "3,000 souls" and "5,000 souls" that the bible talks about "being added". That would bring it up to a minimum of 154,000 "true Christians" by the time the Council of Nicea began.

This of course, is something the Society does not was anyone looking at too closely as it would raise too many unanswered questions.

¹⁰³Watchtower, March 15, 1991 p. 22 Who Really Have a Heavenly Calling?

In addition, the Watchtower also tries to cast doubt on exactly how many Christians there were in the first few centuries after Jesus' death, claiming that there is no actual "proof" of history's claims (and that of Charles Russell) that close to a million Christians were martyred by the beginning of the 4th century:

Questions From Readers

• Large numbers of Christians are said to have been put to death during the Roman persecution in the first few centuries of the Common Era. How, then, is it possible for thousands in this century to have been called to become part of the body of Christ composed of only 144,000 persons?—U.S.A.

There are historical indications that many Christians were bitterly persecuted, even killed, in the first few centuries. However, it should be remembered that, in itself, a martyr's death did not give a person merit before Jehovah God nor did it guarantee membership in the heavenly kingdom..... A person's claiming to be a Christian and even dying for his belief does not in itself mean that he is an approved servant of Jehovah God."

If this last statement applied to Christians 2,000 years ago, then the same argument can be made today, including those who are Jehovah's Witnesses. There is as much evidence for one person as what there is for another. The article continues:

"Thus the fact that today there is still a remnant of the 144,000 on earth would show that down to this twentieth century fewer than 144,000 finished their earthly course in faithfulness."

Eisegesis alert!¹⁰⁴ There is absolutely nothing in the scriptures that indicates that the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation is referring to only Jehovah's Witnesses or is even a literal number. This is a presupposition that Witnesses are taught as "fact" when in reality, there is nothing to support this conclusion other than their determination to make the scriptures fit with their beliefs.

"While some persons may be inclined to think that more persons must surely have been involved even as far back as the early centuries of the Common Era, actual proof to this effect is completely lacking. Today it is impossible even to establish how many persons were killed, much less the number of those who proved faithful to death."¹⁰⁵

This is an extremely damaging admission. If there are "few facts to go on", how can the be so sure that their 144,000 number is even correct? Since there is so little data to go on, the Watchtower says "Today it is impossible even to establish how many persons were killed, much less the number of those who proved faithful to death." If that is the case, how do we know that the numbers weren't double or

¹⁰⁴ If you are not familiar with this term, 'eisegesis' is the act of inserting one's own preconceived ideas or beliefs into a passage in the bible in an attempt to make it say what you want it to say.

¹⁰⁵ Watchtower, July 1, 1972 Questions From Readers

triple what history has told us? Charles Russell had no problem obtaining historical documents which put the number of early Christian martyrs at almost 1,000,000 by the beginning of the 4th century C.E.¹⁰⁶ In addition, if the Organization demands absolute historical “proof” that hundreds of thousands were martyred in the early part of Christianity, do they demand the same proof of Christ’s existence? Outside of the scriptures themselves, there are very few historical references to Jesus, yet the Society accepts that he existed and was the Son of God.

It may also be shocking to many Witnesses to know that Brother Russell actually taught that the ‘heavenly calling’ was closed in 1881:

“That which occurred in 1881, like that which occurred in 1874, can be discerned only by the eye of faith in the light of God's Word. It was the date of the close of the high calling, and hence the date for the beginning of restitution announcement - the Jubilee trumpet.”¹⁰⁷

"To our understanding the general call to this joint heirship with our Redeemer as members of the New Creation of God, ceased in 1881.”¹⁰⁸

“we recognize A.D. 1881 as marking the close of the 'high calling, ' or invitation to the blessing peculiar to this age - to become joint-heirs with Christ and partakers of the divine nature.”¹⁰⁹

How can the call cease in 1881 then be taught to cease in 1935? The answer will inevitably be: "the light gets brighter." The problem with this assertion is the "light" does not have anything substantial to stand on. The Organization has never kept records on those claiming to be of the anointed, as to their identity or location so it is impossible to tell mathematically, how many have claimed to have the heavenly calling from amongst the Witnesses from the late 1800's on down to today.¹¹⁰

The real reason the Organization insists that most early Christians who were martyred in the early centuries, were not "anointed" is, they cannot afford to have them be "anointed" or the doctrine that the 144,000 are a “literal number” of “symbolic Jews” collapses. If there was no special "anointed" class in 1879 then there was never a collective "Faithful and Discreet Slave Class" chosen by Jesus from among “all mankind”1918. If this is true then the Governing Body is not God’s “sole channel for communication" and that is something they will never concede to, no matter what the evidence shows.

¹⁰⁶ And that figure does not include Christians that died from either disease or a natural death

¹⁰⁷ *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 365-7

¹⁰⁸ *The New Creation*, 1915 ed 95

¹⁰⁹ *The Time Is At Hand*, 1915 ed 235

¹¹⁰ One possible reason might be, that if they had too many people professing the heavenly hope it would serve to undermine their whole numbering system.

True, there have been those in times past who predicted an "end to the world," even announcing a specific date. . The "end" did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying---Awake!, October 8, 1968, p. 23

WHAT CONSTITUTES A 'FALSE PROPHET'?

As anyone who has been in the Organization for over 10 years knows, there have been a few 'disappointments' in times past when it comes to interpreting when The End would come, but this is generally downplayed as not being very significant. Most Witnesses, and indeed the Organization itself, defends their erroneous interpretations against accusations of being "false prophets as is brought out in *Reasoning From the Scriptures*:

"Jehovah's Witnesses have pointed to evidence in fulfillment of this sign. It is true that the Witnesses have made mistakes in their understanding of what would occur at the end of certain time periods, but they have not made the mistake of losing faith or ceasing to be watchful as to fulfillment of Jehovah's purposes. They have continued to keep to the fore in their thinking the counsel given by Jesus: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." ¹¹¹

How does the bible describe what constitutes a "false prophet"? It is described here:

"...However, the prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. And in case you should say in your heart: "How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?" when the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it. You must not get frightened at him." ¹¹² [emphasis added]

It's really quite simple: If someone predicts an event and claims that they are speaking for God, either the event will come true (proving that they are a true prophet), or it will not come true (proving that they are a false prophet), end of story. There is no allowance in the scriptures for anything else, no matter how well meaning someone may be.

Yet this is exactly what the Watchtower Society has tried to do. While admitting that they have "made mistakes" regarding future events, they gloss over what turned out to be "false predictions" by claiming 'well, we've never lost faith or ceased to be watchful'----as though that somehow excuses them for "speaking

¹¹¹*Reasoning From the Scriptures*, p. 136 par. 3 False Prophets

¹¹²Deuteronomy 18:20-22

presumptuously". This concept is completely foreign in the scriptures as Jehovah has never said: "well, as long as you don't lose faith, I'll overlook your false prophesying". No, it simply says that if a prediction does not come true, then whoever predicted it constitutes a "false prophet."

To try and further distance themselves from the accusations, the *Reasoning* book further tries to justify the Organization by saying:

".....Matters on which corrections of viewpoint have been needed have been relatively minor when compared with the vital Bible truths that they have discerned and publicized.....Jehovah's Witnesses do not claim to be inspired prophets. They have made mistakes. Like the apostles of Jesus Christ, they have at times had some wrong expectations.—Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6. ¹¹³

"...There are some who make spectacular predictions of the world's end to grab attention and a following, but **others are sincerely convinced that their proclamations are true.** They are voicing expectations based on their own interpretation of some scripture text or physical event. They do not claim that their predictions are direct revelations from Jehovah and that in this sense they are prophesying in Jehovah's name. Hence, in such cases, when their words do not come true, they should not be viewed as false prophets such as those warned against at Deuteronomy 18:20-22. In their human fallibility, they misinterpreted matters..."¹¹⁴

Again, there is nothing in the scriptures that indicates that Jehovah would excuse someone for false prophesying simply because they may have gotten another doctrine right. And while the apostles were indeed expecting The End to come in their day, they most certainly never predicted any specific date and they certainly never enforced their views on the congregations, threatening to disfellowship someone for not accepting their views lock, stock and barrel. *It just isn't there.* Does "sincerity" alone count as the Organization tries to claim in justification for their numerous false predictions? Not according to their own publications:

"No matter how sincere a person may be, presumptuousness and disobedience never win God's favor." ¹¹⁵

"Hence, the courageous course is being adopted not in sincerity alone, but on the basis of reliable information, correct knowledge. And this under trustworthy guidance, better than the guidance of "valueless gods." **The correctness of the course is proved by the fact that it was foretold in a prophecy that has turned out to be no lie but the truth.**" ¹¹⁶ [emphasis added]

¹¹³ *Reasoning From the Scriptures* (1985, 1989) p.136 False Prophets

¹¹⁴ *Awake!* 1993 March 22 pp.3-4 Why So Many False Alarms?

¹¹⁵ December 15, 1983 *Watchtower* on page 6

¹¹⁶ *Watchtower* December 15, 1972 p. 742 par. 5

“...In the all-important matter of worshipping God, it is likewise true that **sincerity alone does not guarantee that God is pleased with our worship**. We may conscientiously believe we are doing well in this regard, yet we may be deluding ourselves.”¹¹⁷

"Since the Bible was completed and "inspiration" is no longer necessary, a true prophet is one who is faithfully proclaiming what is written in the Bible.....**It matters not whether he proclaims his message with deliberate, willful and malicious intent to deceive, or whether he is the blinded and deluded dupe of Satan** and hence unwittingly used of him. In either case, **he is a false prophet** and hence the agent of Satan".¹¹⁸

“...Merely sincerely accepting and following a religious organization will not guarantee God’s approval and protection through this world’s end. **Sincerity, conviction, or intensity of devotion will not change falsehood into truth...**”¹¹⁹

“...sincerity alone does not purify someone of wrong teachings...”¹²⁰

“For our worship to be acceptable to God, sincerity is not only desirable but also essential. Yet, note that sincerity alone is not enough. It must be complemented with truth.....For us to be acceptable to God, our sincere beliefs must be based on accurate information.”¹²¹

“The man who wants to please God must be sincere. But sincerity alone does not make one’s religion approved in God’s eyes.”¹²²

“A religion that teaches lies cannot be true.”¹²³

So if it matters not to Jehovah how “sincere” a person is, then how does the ‘Slave Class’ justify their numerous failed predictions since, according to their own words, sincerity alone does not win Jehovah’s approval. The next line of defense usually comes in the form of them not claiming to be “inspired prophets” and that they do not claim to “speak in Jehovah’s name” as mentioned above in *Reasoning from the Scriptures*. Is this true? Have Jehovah’s Witnesses ever claimed to be prophets speaking for Jehovah? Let the evidence speak for itself:

- **“Jehovah's Witnesses do not claim to be inspired prophets”**¹²⁴
- **“Truly there lived among us in these last days a prophet of the Lord**

¹¹⁷ Watchtower January 1, 1964 p. 4 Will Sincerity Alone Please God?

¹¹⁸ The Watchtower May 15, 1930, p 154

¹¹⁹ Watchtower October 15, 1960 pp. 614-615

¹²⁰ Awake! February 2006 p. 13

¹²¹ Watchtower February 1, 2003 p. 32 Sincerity—Desirable, but Is It Enough?

¹²² Watchtower March 15, 1969 p. 166

¹²³ *Watchtower* 1991 December 1, p. 7

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

- (referring to Charles Russell)...his works remain an enduring witness to his wisdom and faithfulness!" ¹²⁵
- "The facts substantiate that **the remnant** of Christ's anointed disciples have **been doing that prophesying** to all the nations.." ¹²⁶
 - "A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, **this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds**" ¹²⁷
 - "**We dare not lie against God's Word, adding to it or taking away from it, reading into it what it does not say and denying, passing over or explaining away what it does truthfully say.** "Every word of God is tried: . . . Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." (Prov. 30:5, 6, AS) We may not tell untruths in his name, for that puts God in the light of a liar. "Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." (Rom. 3:4, NW) **In Jeremiah's day the false prophets prophesied lies in Jehovah's name and lied against his purpose, foretelling in his name what he had not foretold. Therefore Jehovah was against them. He executed judgment against them at Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C. (Jer. 23:25; 27:15) Religious liars like them today cannot escape a like judgment but will meet a like end at Armageddon.** ¹²⁸ [Emphasis Added]
 - **You will be interested to learn that God has on earth a people, all of whom are prophets, or witnesses for God. In fact, they are known throughout the world as Jehovah's Witnesses.** ¹²⁹
 - "People today can view the creative works. They have at hand the Bible, but it is little read or understood. So, **does Jehovah have a prophet** to help them, to warn them of dangers and to declare things to come?.....These questions can be answered in the affirmative. **Who is this prophet? ... This "prophet" was not one man, but was a body of men and women. It was the small group of footstep followers of Jesus Christ, known at that time as International Bible Students. Today they are known as Jehovah's Christian witnesses.** ... Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a "prophet" of God. It is another thing to prove it. The only way that this can be done is to review the record." ¹³⁰ (*which we shall do in the next section*).
 - "... but, Who will be Jehovah's prophet to the nations, to speak to them everything that He should command? Who will be the modern Jeremiah? ... **So who will prophesy with his message in this time of the end of the nations of this world? ... How was the question answered? ... The fact that decides the answer to the question is, not, Do all the clergy of Roman Catholicism and of Protestantism agree that Jehovah's witnesses have**

¹²⁵ Watchtower 1917 June 1 p.6091

¹²⁶ Holy Spirit — The Force Behind the Coming New Order! (1976) p.148 ch.8

¹²⁷ Watchtower 1980 January 1 p.2 Page Two (inside front cover)

¹²⁸ Watchtower 1956 Feb 1 p.88

¹²⁹ Awake! June 8, 1986, p. 9

¹³⁰ Watchtower 1972 April 1 p.197

- been and are God's prophet to the nations?.....Who discerned the divine will for Christians in this time of the world's end and offered themselves to do it? Who have undertaken God's foreordained work for this day of judgment of the nations? Who have answered the call to the work and have done it down till this year 1958? Whom has God actually used as his prophet?**
- "...By the historical facts of the case Christendom is beaten back in defeat. **Jehovah's witnesses are deeply grateful today that the plain facts show that God has been pleased to use them. ... It has been because Jehovah thrust out his hand of power and touched their lips and put his words in their mouths...**"¹³¹ [emphasis added]
 - "...As Jehovah revealed his truths by means of the first-century Christian congregation so he does today by means of the **present-day Christian congregation. Through this agency he is having carried out prophesying on an intensified and unparalleled scale.** All this activity is not an accident. **Jehovah is the one behind all of it.**" ¹³²
 - "...In behalf of such individuals who at heart seek God's rule instead of man's rule, **the "prophet" whom Jehovah has raised up has been, not an individual man as in the case of Jeremiah, but a class...**" ¹³³
 - **"Jehovah's Witnesses do not claim to be inspired prophets"** ¹³⁴

This is yet another example of the Organization trying to have it both ways. On one hand, they clearly claim to be 'prophets', yet when it becomes obvious that they fit the description of a "false prophet", they say 'we've never said we're prophets', even though, as shown above, they most certainly have. Another attempt at explaining away "present truths" as now 'past truths', the Society says:

"..Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah foretold: "Instead of the copper I shall bring in gold, and instead of the iron I shall bring in silver, and instead of the wood, copper, and instead of the stones, iron." (Isaiah 60:17) Just as replacing an inferior material with a superior one denotes improvement, Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced improvements in their organizational arrangements all through "the conclusion of the system of things," or "the last days."—Matthew 24:3; 2 Timothy 3:1..." ¹³⁵

Once again, an argument that might seem reasonable on the surface, does not hold water when examined more closely. The scripture in Isaiah 60 that is quoted above, has absolutely nothing to do with interpreting scriptures or failed prophecies. When you read the entire chapter and not just verse 17, it is easy to see that it is talking about the Israelites' release from Babylon and the restoration

¹³¹ Watchtower 1959 January 15 pp.39-41

¹³² Watchtower 1964 June 15 pp.365-6 Jehovah, the God of Progressive Revelation

¹³³ Watchtower 1982 October 1 p.27 Be as Men Who Are Facing Har-Magedon Unafraid

¹³⁴ *Ibid*

¹³⁵ February 15, 2006 Watchtower p. 26 Walking in the Path of Increasing Light

of Zion and how Jehovah would bless them.

To compare the replacement of an 'inferior' metal with a 'superior' one and then compare it with all the doctrinal changes the Organization has made over the last 100+ years, makes no sense. Either a doctrine is true or it isn't. There is no middle ground. If a doctrine is replaced with a new "present truth", then it was never true in the first place----it was a false doctrine to begin with. There is absolutely no phrase or idea of anything called "present truths" in the bible; neither the Hebrew scriptures nor the Christian Greek scriptures ever refer to it and certainly Jesus never taught his disciples that they could enforce what they interpreted as 'present truth' (which might be nothing more than falsehoods) onto other believers on pain of cutting them off from all family and friends. "Present truth" is nothing but an invention to try and explain away why God's sole 'channel' here on earth has gotten so many doctrines wrong.

Perhaps the most telling sign that the Organization has 'acted presumptuously' and fits the biblical definition of a 'false prophet' is by their own words:

"...JEHOVAH GOD is the Grand Identifier of his true messengers. He identifies them by making the messages he delivers through them come true. Jehovah is also the Great Exposer of false messengers. How does he expose them? He frustrates their signs and predictions. In this way he shows that they are self-appointed prognosticators, whose messages really spring from their own false reasoning—yes, their foolish, fleshly thinking!.."136

"True, there have been those in times past who predicted an "end to the world," even announcing a specific date. . . The "end" did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying. Why? What was missing? Missing was the full measure of evidence required in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Missing from such people were God's truths and the evidence that he was guiding and using them." 137

"...True, many false alarms in the past have been sounded. But does that prove the present alarm sounded by Jehovah's witnesses to be false too? The Devil would like to have you believe nothing else. It would be folly for a fire department not to respond to an alarm just because the previous forty or fifty warnings were false alarms. This one might not be. Every alarm must be investigated to ensure security. Likewise, it would be folly for people of good will at the present time to ignore the intensified warning of Jehovah's witnesses, simply because some Bible believers of the past have sounded false alarms..."138

This last quote shows just how desperate the Organization must be, because if someone called in "forty or fifty" false alarms to the Fire Department, that person

¹³⁶Watchtower May 1, 1997 p. 8 par. 1

¹³⁷Awake!, October 8, 1968, p. 23

¹³⁸Watchtower November 1, 1953 p. 644

would be facing criminal charges and some serious time in prison. And like the boy who cried "wolf" after "40 or 50" times, it goes without saying that no one would believe anything he said after that, no matter how convincing he might appear. This is why Deuteronomy stressed that someone making a false prediction was to be put to death-----it was *that* serious.

While the writings in the literature make it appear that many of the failed predictions that failed to materialize are not significant, the following section will give you a better idea as to the magnitude of the deception of such a statement which is presently being foisted on 6.5 million Witnesses worldwide.

Do the Governing Body members feel that anything can justify false prophecy? Have they ever admitted openly that they have in fact, promoted false dates? The answer is Yes, they have. Not through the pages of their literature, but rather in an open court:

The Douglas Walsh Trial - Watchtower Admits False Prophecy in Court of Law

In November 1954, a trial was held in Scotland, in which the Watchtower Society tried to establish before the British court that certain of its members were ordained ministers. High ranking leaders of the Society testified, including vice-president Fred Franz and legal counsel for the Society, Haydon C. Covington. Covington's testimony before the attorney for the Ministry of Labour and National Service included the following:

Q. Is it not vital to speak the truth on religious matters?

A. It certainly is.

Q. Is there in your view room in a religion for a change of interpretation of Holy Writ from time to time?

A. There is every reason for a change in interpretation as we view it, of the Bible. Our view becomes more clear as we see the prophecy fulfilled by time.

Q. You have promulgated -- forgive the word -- false prophecy?

A. We have -- I do not think we have promulgated false prophecy, there have been statements that were erroneous, that is the way I put it, and mistaken.

Q. Is it a most vital consideration in the present situation of the world to know if the prophecy can be interpreted into terms of fact, when Christ's Second Coming was?

A. That is true, and we have always striven to see that we have the truth before we utter it. We go on the very best information we have but we cannot wait until we get perfect, because if we wait until we get perfect we would never be able to speak.

Q. Let us follow that up just a little. It was promulgated as a matter which must be believed by all members of Jehovah's Witnesses that the Lord's Second Coming took place in 1874?

A. I am not familiar with that. You are speaking on a matter that I know nothing of.

Q. You heard Mr. Franz's evidence?

A. I heard Mr. Franz testify, but I am not familiar with what he said on that, I mean the subject matter of what he was talking about, so I cannot answer any more than you can, having heard what he said.

Q. Leave me out of it?

A. That is the source of my information, what I have heard in court.

Q. You have studied the literature of your movement?

A. Yes, but not all of it. I have not studied the seven volumes of "Studies in the

Scriptures," and I have not studied this matter that you are mentioning now of 1874. I am not at all familiar with that.

Q. Assume from me that it was promulgated as authoritative by the Society that Christ's Second Coming was in 1874?

A. Taking that assumption as a fact, it is a hypothetical statement.

Q. That was the publication of false prophesy?

A. That was the publication of a false prophesy, it was a false statement or an erroneous statement in fulfillment of a prophesy that was false or erroneous.

Q. And that had to be believed by the whole of Jehovah's Witnesses?

A. Yes, because you must understand we must have unity, we cannot have disunity with a lot of people going every way, an army is supposed to march in step.

Q. You do not believe in the worldly armies, do you?

A. We believe in the Christian Army of God.

Q. Do you believe in the worldly armies?

A. We have nothing to say about that, we do not preach against them, we merely say that the worldly armies, like the nations of the world today, are a part of Satan's Organization, and we do not take part in them, but we do not say the nations cannot have their armies, we do not preach against warfare, we are merely claiming our exemption from it, that is all.

Q. Back to the point now. A false prophesy was promulgated?

A. I agree that.

Q. It had to be accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses?

A. That is correct.

Q. If a member of Jehovah's Witnesses took the view himself that that prophesy was wrong and said so he would be disfellowshipped?

A. Yes, if he said so and kept persisting in creating trouble, because if the whole organisation believes one thing, even though it be erroneous and somebody else starts on his own trying to put his ideas across then there is disunity and trouble, there cannot be harmony, there cannot be marching. When a change comes it should come from the proper source, the head of the organisation, the governing body, not from the bottom upwards, because everybody would have ideas, and the organisation would disintegrate and go in a thousand different directions. **Our purpose is to have unity.**

Q. Unity at all costs?

A. **Unity at all costs**, because we believe and are sure that Jehovah God is using our organisation, the governing body of our organisation to direct it, even though mistakes are made from time to time.

Q. And unity based upon an enforced acceptance of false prophecy?

A. That is conceded to be true.

Q. And the person who expressed his view, as you say, that it was wrong, and was disfellowshipped, would be in breach of the Covenant, if he was baptized?

A. That is correct.

Q. And as you said yesterday expressly, would be worthy of death?

A. I think - - -

Q. Would you say yes or no?

A. I will answer yes, unhesitatingly.

Q. Do you call that religion?

A. It certainly is.

Q. Do you call it Christianity?

A. I certainly do.

Fred Franz, then vice-president of the Society, also answered questions for the attorney for the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

Q. In addition to these regular publications do you prepare and issue a number of theological pamphlets and books from time to time?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me this; are these theological publications and the semi-monthly periodicals used for discussion of statements of doctrine?

A. Yes.

Q. Are these statements of doctrine held to be authoritative within the Society?

A. Yes.

Q. Is their acceptance a matter of choice, or is it obligatory on all those who wish to be and remain members of the Society?

A. It is obligatory.

The British government Counsellor later directed attention to certain teachings that the Society had in time rejected, including some involving specific dates. What, he asked, if someone, at the time when such teaching was promulgated, had seen the error in it and had therefore not accepted it? What would the organization's attitude toward such one be? The testimony explains:

Q. Did [Pastor Russell] not fix 1874 as some other crucial date?

A. 1874 used to be understood as the date of Jesus' Second Coming spiritually.

Q. Do you say, used to be understood?

A. That is right.

Q. That was issued as a fact which was to be accepted by all who were Jehovah's Witnesses?

A. Yes.

Q. That is no longer now accepted, is it?

A. No.

Q. But it was a calculation which is no longer accepted by the Board of Directors of the Society?

A. That is correct.

Q. So that am I correct, I am just anxious to canvas the position; it became the bounden duty of the Witnesses to accept this miscalculation?

A. Yes.

Q. So that what is published as the truth today by the Society may have to be admitted to be wrong in a few years?

A. We have to wait and see.

Q. And in the meantime the body of Jehovah's Witnesses have been following error?

A. They have been following misconstructions on the Scriptures.

Q. Error?

A. Well, error.

Again the question as to how great the authority attributed to the Society's publications is came in for discussion. While at one point the vice president says that "one does not compulsorily accept," his testimony thereafter reverts back to the earlier position, as can be seen:

A. These [Watchtower Society] books give an exposition on the whole Scriptures.

Q. But an authoritative exposition?

A. They submit the Bible or the statements that are therein made, and the individual examines the statement and then the Scripture to see that the statement is Scripturally supported.

Q. He what?

A. He examines the Scripture to see whether the statement is supported by the Scripture. As the Apostle says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good".

Q. I understood the position to be - do please correct me if I am wrong - that a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses must accept as a true Scripture and interpretation what is given in the books I referred you to?

A. But he does not compulsorily do so, he is given his Christian right of examining the Scriptures to confirm that this is Scripturally sustained.

Q. And if he finds that the Scripture is not sustained by the books, or vice versa, what does he do?

A. The Scripture is there in support of the statement, that is why it is put there.

Q. What does a man do if he finds a disharmony between the Scripture and those books?

A. You will have to produce me a man who does find that, then I can answer, or he will answer.

Note Fredrick Franz's contradictory statements. He is unwilling, even under oath, to admit that present understanding can be in error, even though he just finished testifying that what is published as truth today may be error in a few years. And while it was already established that acceptance of erroneous teachings is enforced on all members (on pain of disfellowshipping), Franz above tries stating that each member is not under compulsion to do so, but has a "right" to examine the Scriptures and presumably come to their own conclusion----a concept completely foreign in the Organization.

Q. Did you imply that the individual member has the right of reading the books and the Bible and forming his own view as to the proper interpretation of Holy Writ?

A. He comes - - -

Q. Would you say yes or no, and then qualify?

A. No. Do you want me to qualify now?

Q. Yes, if you wish?

A. The Scripture is there given in support of the statement, and therefore the individual when he looks up the Scripture and thereby verifies the statement, then he comes to the Scriptural view of the matter, Scriptural understanding as it is written in Acts, the seventeenth chapter and the eleventh verse, that the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they received the Word with all readiness, and they searched the Scripture to see whether those things were so, and we instruct to follow that noble course of the Bereans in searching the Scripture to see whether these things were so.

Q. A Witness has no alternative, has he, to accept as authoritative and to be obeyed instructions issued in the "Watchtower" or the "Informant" or "Awake"?

A. He must accept those.

In other words, no matter what an individual finds, he is obligated to believe whatever the Society teaches at that moment. At least, he is obligated not to publicly or privately disagree with the Society, and so if he really cannot bring himself to accept some doctrine, he must pretend to accept it, and live a lie in order to remain in good standing in the congregation.

This brings to mind a quote from the January 15, 1974 *Watchtower* on page 35 that asks:

“...WHAT results when a lie is let go unchallenged? Does not silence help the lie to pass as truth, to have freer sway to influence many, perhaps to their serious harm?..”

So, even though the Society states it is neither “infallible” nor “inspired”, no Witness is allowed to exercise their own Christian conscience (or even their common sense) on doctrinal matters without serious consequences ranging from ‘private reproof’ right up to disfellowshipment from the congregation. As you read above, those that run the Organization believes that any member who cannot accept that certain doctrines that are put forth from the “Slave Class” is ‘worthy of death’ in their eyes, even if the doctrine is shown later on to have been wrong. And although false prophecy was admitted under oath by members of the Governing Body, “absolute acceptance” of these false prophecies is forced upon on every single Witnesses, because “the overall result is what is important” and their desire for “unity at all costs”.

Ironically though, when the false doctrines are exposed for all to see, those that promoted the false teachings suggest that the Organization should not be judged too harshly because these false prophecies are only “incidental points” when compared to their main focus: the worship of Jehovah. To these men’s minds, it would be very unfair to equate the importance of those errors with their main message. “There is no comparison” said the Secretary-Treasurer.

But while they ask for tolerance and a balanced evaluation for *themselves*, they do not grant the same tolerance to any member who sincerely cannot accept the erroneous teachings when it can be proven false using the scriptures. Ironically, these same “incidental points” that the Governing Body members asked for leniency on, suddenly become “major points” whenever someone questions them. And they can become so important, that anyone who does not accept them as “truth”, will be disfellowshipped for “apostasy”, even though the doctrine could later on be exposed as being wrong all along. This is the case no matter how thoroughly the individual might accept the “main” point of the message or how sincerely they worship and love Jehovah, nor now many decades that may have been faithfully serving.

This warped thinking makes it appear that Jehovah is unhappy and angry with anyone who does not accept doctrinal errors that a claimed messenger of God may speak in His name, and that He is angry that the person should “make sure of all things” and “carefully examin[ing] the Scriptures.....as to whether these things [are] so.”

Where does the bible give certain men the authority to decide what others Christians must accept as “truth”, even though it may in fact, be a false doctrine. Did Jesus anywhere teach such a thing? No, he did not. Nor can the 100+ years of the Organization’s false predictions be tossed off with a shrug and a ‘nobody’s perfect’ attitude, especially as many of their false doctrines have had devastating effects on innumerable Witness over the years. We all make mistakes in life, but when a group of men who claim to be the channel that the Supreme Being of the universe is using to “dispense truths” to mankind, it takes on a much more serious connotation.

“...But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble....”-----Watchtower July 15, 1894

DATE SETTING

In the years before 1914, Charles Russell made a number of predictions but contrary to what the Society currently teaches, the outbreak of war in Europe was not one of them. The Witnesses (or Bible Students as they were then known), were fully expecting Armageddon, based on the predicted dates set forth in the literature by Charles Russell. *Nothing* that Brother Russell foretold came to pass. Not one single thing. We did not see the churches of Christendom fall, nor did we see the “end of the gentile nations”. In fact, the number of nations has *tripled* since 1914, so for at least 2/3rds of all the nations currently on earth this is their *beginning*----not the time of their end.

What follows is a list (by no means complete), of the numerous predictions, many of which involve specific dates, that the Society has made over the years----none of which came to pass. Keep in mind when you read the following, that the Bible Students, led by Charles Russell, were just as convinced that they had ‘the Truth’, as what the Organization does today. The quotations marked in red are for emphasis only, and were not in the original writings:

The Watchtower Reprints, October 1890, p. 1243: “...*The Millennium of peace and blessing would be introduced by forty years of trouble, beginning slightly in 1874 and increasing until social chaos should prevail in 1914...*”

The Watchtower Reprints, January 15, 1892, p.1355 “...*The date of the close of that ‘battle’ is definitely marked in Scripture as October, 1914. It is already in progress, its beginning dating from October, 1874...*”

The Watchtower Reprints, July 15, 1894, p. 1677: “...**We see no reason for changing the figures — nor could we change them if we would. They are, we believe, God’s dates, not ours.** But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble....”

The Watchtower Reprints, September 15, 1901, p. 2876: “...**The culmination of the trouble in October, 1914, is clearly marked in the Scriptures;** and we are bound therefore to expect a beginning of that severe trouble not later than 1910; — with severe spasms between now and then....”

The Time Is at Hand (SS-2), 1907, p. 101: “...*The ‘battle of the great day of God Almighty’ (Rev. 16:14), **which will end in A.D. 1914** with the complete overthrow of earth’s present rulership, is already commenced.*”

Thy Kingdom Come (Studies in the Scriptures Vol.3) (1908) p.228: “...*That the deliverance of the saints must take place some time before 1914 is manifest, since the deliverance of fleshly Israel, as we shall see, is appointed to take place at that time, and the angry nations will then be authoritatively commanded to be still, and will be made to recognize the power of Jehovah's Anointed. Just how long before 1914 the last living members of the body of Christ will be glorified, we are not directly informed...*”

Of course, when 1914 rolled around, it became clear that none of their predictions were going to be realized and they began the first of a long line of backtracking, claiming that they never “definitely” said The End would come in 1914:

“...As already pointed out, we are by no means confident that this year, 1914, will witness as radical and swift changes of dispensation as we have expected...”¹³⁹

“...While it is possible that Armageddon may begin next Spring, yet it is purely speculation to attempt to say just when..”¹⁴⁰

“...Studying God's Word, we have measured the 2520 years, the seven symbolic times, from that year 606 B.C. and have found that it reached down to October, 1914, as nearly as we were able to reckon. We did not say positively that this would be the year.”¹⁴¹

“...All of the Lord's people looked forward to 1914 with joyful expectation. When that time came and passed there was much disappointment, chagrin, and mourning, and the Lord's people were greatly in reproach. They were ridiculed by the clergy and their allies in particular, and pointed to with scorn, because they had said so much about 1914, and what would come to pass, and their 'prophecies' had not been fulfilled...”¹⁴²

“...There was a measure of disappointment on the part of Jehovah's faithful ones on earth concerning the years 1914, 1918, and 1925, which disappointment lasted for a time. Later the faithful learned that these dates were definitely fixed in the Scriptures; and they also learned to quit fixing dates for the future and predicting what would come to pass on a certain date.”¹⁴³

“...The Lord did not say that the Church would all be glorified by 1914. We merely inferred it and, evidently, erred.”¹⁴⁴

It is incredible that such a statement (which amounts to an outright lie) could be

¹³⁹The Watchtower Reprints, January 1, 1914, p. 5373:

¹⁴⁰The Watchtower Reprints, September 1, 1914, p. 5527:

¹⁴¹The Watchtower Reprints, November 1, 1914, p.5565:

¹⁴²Light, 1930 ed. p., 194

¹⁴³Vindication I, 1931 ed., p. 338-339

¹⁴⁴The Watch Tower April 15, 1916

put to print by those who claim to be the “Faithful and Discreet Slave” whom Jesus chose above all others to dispense truths to the world. What is so typical of the Society is whenever one of their ‘prophecies’ fail to materialize, they try to compare the Bible Students/ Jehovah’s Witnesses, with Jesus’ apostles:

“...In this they were somewhat like Jesus' apostles. The apostles knew and thought they believed the prophecies concerning God's Kingdom. But at various times they had wrong expectations as to how and when these would be fulfilled. This led to disappointment on the part of some.-Luke 19:11; 24:19-24; Acts 1:6....”¹⁴⁵

There is absolutely no record of Jesus’ apostles *ever* predicting a specific date for The End. While they may have expected something to happen in their life time, they certainly would have heeded the “no one knows the day or hour” and would have never presumptuously predicted a specific year where they expected specific things to happen. Yet by attempting to draw a favorable comparison between the two groups, the Organization downplays the very real fact that Charles Russell---- ‘God’s Mouthpiece’ (as he claimed he was), made numerous false predictions that never came true----something Jesus’ apostles never did and it is academically dishonest to insinuate otherwise.

How is it possible that such serious mistakes have been made in prophetic interpretation by those claiming to have a unique relationship with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ? If these men are the “Faithful and Discreet Slave”, why do they have such a dismal record of embarrassing failed prophecies? Surely Jehovah is capable of communicating error-free to his ‘servants’ here on earth isn’t He? It was spelled out time and again throughout the scriptures and there is not one case of individuals whom Jehovah worked through, who gave a false prediction. Had they done so, they would have immediately lost all credibility from those who followed them.

Of course, the average Witness today is not supposed to “dwell” on serious matters like date setting and false prophecies, lest they begin to realize that the Organization’s 120 year history reveals a pattern of presumptuousness, lies and cover-ups----something that is not supposed to exist in ‘the Truth’.

“Since the Bible was completed and "inspiration" is no longer necessary, a true prophet is one who is faithfully proclaiming what is written in the Bible.....It matters not whether he proclaims his message with deliberate, willful and malicious intent to deceive, or whether he is the blinded and deluded dupe of Satan and hence unwittingly used of him. In either case, he is a false prophet and hence the agent of Satan”.¹⁴⁶ [emphasis added]

Many Witnesses have explained past mistakes of your organization as an example of the *"light getting brighter and brighter"* as we near the end. But as was discussed in the section “New Light”, there is no scriptural basis for such a theory

¹⁴⁵Jehovah's Witnesses, Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, 1993 pp.635-6

¹⁴⁶Watchtower May 15, 1930, p. 154

and the Organization itself has made various comments themselves stating that it makes no difference if someone is “sincere”, or “blinded and deluded” when they make a prediction----if their prediction does not come to pass, they are what Deuteronomy describes as a “false prophet”.

...A presumptuous act is a much more serious sin than a mistake. Whether one is in a high position or a low one, the taking of liberties is a detestable thing in God’s sight....”---Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 2 p. 680

The Dating Game

To give you an idea of how many times the Organization has prophesied in total error, here is a list (by no means complete) of various events they predicted, but which never came true:

“...We need not here repeat the evidences that **the 'seventh trumpet' began its sounding in A.D. 1840**, and will continue until the end of the time of trouble....” ¹⁴⁷

“...We would like to correct this misapprehension once for all, by stating that we do not expect Jesus to come this year, nor any other year, for we believe that all time prophecies (bearing upon Jesus' coming) ended at and **before the fall of 1874, and that He came there**, and the second advent is now in progress and will continue during the entire Millennial age.” ¹⁴⁸

“...The Kingdom of God is already begun, which 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" which will end in 1914 with the complete overthrow of the earth's present rulership, is already commenced....” ¹⁴⁹

“...1878 will be the end of the period of disfavor to fleshly Israel....” ¹⁵⁰

Question. — If the ‘Times of the Gentiles’ can be changed as suggested in the July Tower, so that the anarchy will follow 1914 A.D., instead of preceding it, might not similar changes be made in respect to all the various lines of prophetic time proof set forth in Millennial Dawn, Vols. II and III?

Answer. — You are entirely in error. Not a figure, not a date, not a prophecy is in any sense or degree affected by the article to which you refer. Indeed the harmony and unity of the whole is the more fully demonstrated... The harmony of the prophetic periods of the correctness of our Bible chronology. They fit together like the cog-wheels of a perfect machine. **To change the chronology even one year would destroy all this harmony**, — so accurately are the various proofs

¹⁴⁷The Watchtower Reprints, November 1890, p. 1

¹⁴⁸Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence May 1 1881

¹⁴⁹Studies in the Scriptures Vol.2, 1906 p.101

¹⁵⁰Studies in the Scriptures Vol. 2, 1906 p.218

drawn together in the parallels between the Jewish and Gospel ages...”¹⁵¹

“...The parallel, therefore, would establish definitely that the harvest would close forty years thereafter; to wit, in **the spring of A.D. 1918. If this be true, and the evidence is very conclusive that it is true**, then we have only a few months in which to labor before the great night settles down when no man can work...”¹⁵²

“...The data presented in comments on Rev. 2:1 prove that the conquest of Judea was not completed until the day of the Passover, A.D. 73, and in the light of the foregoing Scriptures, **prove that the Spring of 1918 will bring upon Christendom a spasm of anguish greater even than that experienced in the Fall of 1914....**”¹⁵³

“...That the harvest began in 1878, there is ample and convincing proof. The end of the harvest is due in the spring of 1918....”¹⁵⁴

“...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 ... In view of this strong bible evidence** concerning the Times of the Gentiles, **we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of A.D. 1914...**”¹⁵⁵

“...Also, in the year **1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by millions**, it shall be that any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell to learn the meaning of the downfall of "Christianity".”¹⁵⁶

“...They are to be resurrected as perfect men and constitute the princes or rulers in the earth ... Therefore **we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old ... 1925 shall mark the resurrection of the faithful worthies** of old and the beginning of reconstruction... based upon the promises set forth in the divine Word...”¹⁵⁷

“...The date **1925** is even more distinctly indicated by the Scriptures than 1914....”¹⁵⁸

“...Our thought is, that *1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures*. As to Noah, the Christian now has much more upon which to base his faith than Noah had upon which to base his faith in a coming deluge....”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹The Watchtower August 15, 1904, p.3415

¹⁵²The Watchtower Reprints, October 1, 1917, p.6149

¹⁵³The Finished Mystery (SS-7), 1917 ed., p. 62 ***

¹⁵⁴The Watchtower Reprints, May 1, 1918, p. 6243

¹⁵⁵Studies in the Scriptures, vol. II, 1908 reprint (1889 orig.) pp.98,99

¹⁵⁶The Finished Mystery (Studies in the Scriptures, vol. VII) 1917 (1917 edition) p.485

¹⁵⁷Millions Now Living Will Never Die, 1920, 89, 90, 97

¹⁵⁸Watchtower September 1, 1922 p.262

¹⁵⁹Watchtower 1923 April 1 p.106

“... According to this trustworthy Bible chronology six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 C.E. ... It would not be by mere chance or accident but would be **according to the loving purpose of Jehovah God for the reign of Jesus Christ, the "Lord of the Sabbath," to run parallel with the seventh millennium of man's existence.**”¹⁶⁰

“...**Are we to assume from this study that the battle of Armageddon will be all over by the autumn of 1975, and the long-looked-for thousand-year reign of Christ will begin by then?** Possibly, but we wait to see how closely the seventh thousand-year period of man's existence coincides with the Sabbath like thousand-year reign of Christ. . **It may involve only a difference of weeks or months, not years....**”¹⁶¹

“...**Yes, the end of this system is so very near!** Is that not reason to increase our activity? In this regard we can learn something from **a runner who puts on a final burst of speed near the finish of a race.** Look at Jesus, who apparently stepped up his activity during his final days on earth. In fact, over 27 percent of the material in the Gospels is devoted to just the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry!—Matt. 21:1-27:50; Mark 11:1-15:37; Luke 19:29-23:46; John 11:55-19:30.

“...By carefully and prayerfully examining our own circumstances, we also may find that we can spend more time and energy in preaching during *this final period before the present system ends.* Many of our brothers and sisters are doing just that. This is evident from the rapidly increasing number of pioneers.....Yes, since the summer of 1973 there have been new peaks in pioneers every month. Now there are 20,394 regular and special pioneers in the United States, an all-time peak. That is 5,190 more than there were in **February 1973!** A 34-percent increase! Does that not warm our hearts? **Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end.**”—1 John 2:17.¹⁶²

“...In the early 1920's, a featured public talk presented by Jehovah's Witnesses was entitled “Millions Now Living Will Never Die.” **This may have reflected overoptimism at that time. But today that statement can be made with full confidence.** Both the increasing light on Bible prophecy and the anarchy of this dying world cry out that the end of Satan's system is very, very near!...”¹⁶³

“...**The immediate future** is certain to be filled with climactic events, for this old system is nearing its complete end. **Within a few years at most** the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these "last days" will undergo fulfilment.”¹⁶⁴

Serving with Everlasting Life in View Talk: “...Well now, as Jehovah's

¹⁶⁰*Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* 1966 pp.26-30

¹⁶¹Watchtower 1968 August 15 p.499 Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?

¹⁶²Kingdom Ministry May 1974 p.3 How Are You Using Your Life?

¹⁶³Watchtower January 1, 1997 p. 11 par. 18

¹⁶⁴Watchtower 1968 May 1 p.272

Witnesses, as runners, even though some of us have become a little weary, it almost seems as though Jehovah has provided meat in due season. Because he's held up before all of us, a new goal. A new year. Something to reach out for and it just seems it has given all of us so much more energy and power in this final burst of speed to the finish line. And that's the year 1975. ... Well, **we don't have to guess what the year 1975 means if we read the Watchtower. ... And don't wait 'till 1975. The door is going to be shut before then....As one brother put it, "Stay alive to Seventy-Five..."** ¹⁶⁵

"The fact that fifty-four years of the period called the "last days" have already gone by is highly significant. It means that **only a few years, at most, remain** before the corrupt system of things dominating the earth is destroyed by God." ¹⁶⁶

"In view of the short period of time left, we want to do this (pioneer) as often as circumstances permit. Just think, brothers, **there are only about ninety months left before 6,000 years of man's existence on earth is completed.**" ¹⁶⁷

"...One thing is absolutely certain, Bible chronology reinforced with fulfilled Bible prophecy shows that six thousand years of man's existence will soon be up, yes, within this generation! (Matt. 24:34) This is, therefore, no time to be indifferent and complacent. **This is not the time to be toying with the words of Jesus that "concerning that day and hour nobody knows,** neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matt. 24:36) To the contrary, it is a time when one should be keenly aware that the end of this system of things is rapidly coming to its violent end. Make no mistake, it is sufficient that the Father himself knows both the "day and hour"! ¹⁶⁸

"...nothing has created more interest in this textbook (*Life Everlasting—in Freedom of the Sons of God*) than the first chapter with its chart and fine information regarding the 7,000 years of God's rest day. The observation that 1975 may well mark the beginning of mankind's great Jubilee has intrigued many...." ¹⁶⁹

"...But now, by occurrence of every detail of the great sign Jesus gave, we know that **we face the imminent end of the present world system.** (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) We know too that we live now in most privileged times. There is an old worldly saying of some wit that states: "You will never get out of this world alive." Now, however, this is no longer necessarily true. God's people, his ministers, witnesses for his supremacy, today have their minds turned toward the new and righteous system of things looming just beyond this transition period.." ¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ *Wisconsin Sheboygan District Overseer Brother Charles Sunutko* 1967. If you have access to the internet, you can hear the discourse: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIEZx74P5ck&feature=related

¹⁶⁶ *Awake!* 1968 October 8 p.13

¹⁶⁷ March 1968 Kingdom Ministry

¹⁶⁸ *Watchtower* 1968 August 15 p.494 Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?

¹⁶⁹ *Watchtower* January 1, 1967 p. 29

¹⁷⁰ *Watchtower* December 1, 1952 p. 709

And most noteworthy, the Watchtower even placed a cautionary warning not to put too much stock into Jesus' own warning that 'no one knows the day or hour' when they said:

"...One thing is absolutely certain, Bible chronology reinforced with fulfilled Bible prophecy shows that six thousand years of man's existence will soon be up, yes, within this generation! (Matt. 24:34) This is, therefore, no time to be indifferent and complacent. This is not the time to be toying with the words of Jesus that "concerning that day and hour *nobody* knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matt. 24:36) To the contrary, it is a time when one should be keenly aware that the end of this system of things is rapidly coming to its violent end. Make no mistake, it is sufficient that the Father himself *knows* both the "day and hour"! ¹⁷¹

As we all know, the End did not come in 1975. But incredibly, rather than openly admit that they (the Governing Body members and in particular Frederick Franz) were responsible for generating false hope amongst the rank and file that 1975 would usher in the New System of things, they instead shifted the responsibility onto the average Witness insinuating that they had read too much into what had been said:

"...It may be that some who have been serving God have planned their lives according to a mistaken view of just what was to happen on a certain date or in a certain year. They may have, for this reason, put off or neglected things that they otherwise would have cared for. But they have missed the point of the Bible's warnings concerning the end of this system of things, thinking that Bible chronology reveals the specific date....Did Jesus mean that we should adjust our financial and secular affairs so that our resources would just carry us to a certain date that we might think marks the end? If our house is suffering serious deterioration, should we let it go, on the assumption that we would need it only a few months longer? Or, if someone in the family possibly needs special medical care, should we say, 'Well, we'll put it off because the time is so near for this system of things to go'? **This is not the kind of thinking that Jesus advised.**"¹⁷²

Given the fact that *just two year previously*, they were actually applauding the brothers and sisters for 'adjusting their financial affairs' by 'selling their homes and businesses'¹⁷³ so they could pioneer is truly astonishing and more than just a bit deceitful.

After the 1975 fiasco, the Watchtower Society attempted to downplay the fact that they had indeed predicted that date as the date for Armageddon. While the tone

¹⁷¹ Watchtower August 15, 1968 pp. 500-501 par. 35 Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?

¹⁷² Watchtower July 15, 1976 p. 440 par. 11

¹⁷³ "...Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end."---Kingdom Ministry May 1974 p.3

in the literature before 1975 was not as specific as their predictions in the past, there were various talks given at the local Kingdom Halls as well as the assemblies that *did* predict 1975 as the date for “the End”.

Since 2/3rds of the present membership were either not born or were not Witnesses during this time, it would be easy to brush the whole ‘1975’ fiasco as nothing very serious. However for those who did live through it, those who *did* sell their businesses and homes because they were told the New System would be here ‘within a few years’, there is nothing than can describe the after effect amongst the average Witness. To say they were disappointed, angry, dismayed and disillusioned that they had been lied to like that, would be the understatement of the year and resulted in a huge decline in membership.¹⁷⁴

It was not until 1980 that an admission of error had been made, although even that was downplayed:

“...In its issue of July 15, 1976, *The Watchtower*, commenting on the inadvisability of setting our sights on a certain date, stated: “If anyone has been disappointed through not following this line of thought, he should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that his own understanding was based on wrong premises.” In saying “anyone,” *The Watchtower* included all disappointed ones of Jehovah’s Witnesses, hence including *persons having to do with the publication of the information* that contributed to the buildup of hopes centered on that date.”¹⁷⁵

The question that should be asked is: How can a group of men who claim to be God’s sole channel of communication here on earth, make the same mistake over and over and over again, by giving specific dates for Armageddon and by doing so, encourage millions of followers to forego things such as education, getting married, having children or even having a normal life in the face of their (false) hope?¹⁷⁶ How does that reflect on them in light of the fact that they claim that they and they alone are the “channel” through which Jehovah works? As Jesus specifically told his followers not to try and predict when The End would come (lest they fall into the category of being false prophets), there can be no justification for the Organization’s dismal record of predicting dates that never amounted to anything.

¹⁷⁴In 1974, the Organization experienced at 13.5% increase in Publishers. In 1977 and 1978, they experience negative growth, -1.0% and -1.4% respectively.

¹⁷⁵Watchtower March 15, 1980 pp. 17-18 par. 6

¹⁷⁶Watchtower September 1, 2005 p. 20 par. 9

"Truly I say to YOU that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur."—Matthew 24:34, NWT

This Generation

What 'generation' was Jesus talking about? For decades, the Watchtower emphatically stated that it was the 'generation of 1914' that would see both the "beginning of pangs of distress" as well as "the End" of this System of Things. Unfortunately, those who whole-heartedly believed this doctrine, made life-long decisions such as marriage, having children, buying a home, having life insurance, saving for retirement and getting an education beyond high-school, based on the Society's assurance that they would never grow old in this System of Things. This was not just some off-hand minor belief that was occasionally spoken of as a 'possibility'. It was part of the central doctrine of the entire religion that was repeatedly spoken of as a "fact" and was continuously promoted on a regular basis to all the flock. The following (partial) list will give you an idea of just how often the 'fact' that the generation Jesus spoke of, was referring to the generation of 1914:

"The length of time is indicated by him when he said, "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matt. 24:34) The actual meaning of these words is, beyond question, that which takes a "generation" in the ordinary sense, as at Mark 8:12 and Acts 13:36, or for those who are living at the given period." ¹⁷⁷

"Counting from the end of the "appointed times of the nations" in 1914, we are 37 years into the "time of the end" of this world. (Luke 21:24, Dan. 12:4).....The final conflict of Armageddon draws near." ¹⁷⁸

"The generation that began to see these things in 1914 will witness the final accumulated judgments of Jehovah God, though some individuals who are part of ~~this~~ ¹⁷⁹ generation may die before the end of this world's system of things takes place."

"Well, we can be assured of that very thing! Back in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, where Jesus was showing the sign of the end of this old Satan-ruled system, he said, verse 34: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.".....All these things would happen in one generation! The sudden worsening of world conditions since World War I...was here foretold to end within one generation, within the lifetime of people who are now at least 40 years old! Certainly we can trust these prophecies. They are much surer than the political predictions that continue to fail." ¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Watchtower, July 1, 1951, p. 404

¹⁷⁸ Watchtower, April 1, 1951 p 214

¹⁷⁹ Watchtower February 15, 1953 p. 124 par. 35

¹⁸⁰ Watchtower October 15 1954 p. 612

“So “this generation” from 1914 shall not pass till the “time of the end” closes with the ‘great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.’ ” ¹⁸¹

“So since 1914 this generation, the generation that knows fear as no other generation has, is living in the “last days,” “the time of the end,” or that time when a corrupt, wicked system of things is doomed to pass away to make room for a righteous new world of God’s making”¹⁸²

“The separating of earth’s inhabitants by the good news of the Kingdom has been in progress for many years, but it will not continue beyond the lifetime of those who were living when it began shortly after 1914. Jesus made that clear when he said. “Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (Matt. 24:34) He meant the generation living when the world events that he foretold as marking the last days would be taking place.” ¹⁸³

“The time has finally come for Jehovah God to clean up the earth and to bring permanent peace to man. The generation living in 1914 will see it.” ¹⁸⁴

“Referring to those who would witness the beginning of those strange events, he added: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (Verse 34) Since A.D. 1914 the generation of your grandparents has witnessed these things taking place” ¹⁸⁵

“only in our day the destruction of Babylon the Great will not be delayed for centuries but only for a few short years, as Jesus intimated when he said regarding our day: ‘But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near. Truly I say to you, This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur.’ ” ¹⁸⁶

Interesting is that the Society has emphatically stated in the past that Jesus did not use the word “generation” to mean the anointed from 33 CE down to today, in direct contrast to the April 15, 2008 Watchtower study which says that that’s exactly who he was talking about:

“To what generation was Jesus referring? Not to the one living in his day but, rather, to the one that would experience the things he foretold, which, we have seen, began in 1914.”¹⁸⁷

“But what “generation” did Christ have in mind? Was Jesus using the word “generation” in a symbolic way? No we should not say that the word “generation”

¹⁸¹ Watchtower December 1, 1954 p. 712

¹⁸² Watchtower August 15, 1955 p. 486

¹⁸³ Watchtower March 1, 1959 p. 158

¹⁸⁴ Watchtower September 1, 1959 p. 519

¹⁸⁵ Watchtower March 1, 1964 p. 144 par. 2

¹⁸⁶ Watchtower October 1, 1965 p. 603

¹⁸⁷ Watchtower June 1, 1966 pp. 325-326

here has a symbolic meaning and that it refers, for example, to persons of the spiritual body of Christ exclusively, or only to the true Christian organization itself.....The word "generation" at Matthew 24:34 is to be viewed in an ordinary sense, as at Acts 13:36 and Mark 8:12. Acts 13:36 speaks of David's very own generation, a literal generation. The generation of persons living in Jesus' time.....was a literal generation.....That a symbolic application to a "generation" of wicked persons is not meant at Matthew 24:34 is apparent when we read the preceding verse: "Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors." It is the generation of persons who "see all these things" to whom Jesus refers in verse 34.....The generation living in 1914, millions of whom are still alive on earth, will be living when the end comes at Armageddon." ¹⁸⁸

"By that expression ['this generation], Jesus was not referring to the entire church or congregation of his faithful disciples, from the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E. until the glorification in heaven of the last member of Christ's congregation. True, the apostle Peter wrote to the Christian congregation and said: "You are 'a chosen race [génos].'" (1 Pet. 2:9) But that race or generation would by now be a race or generation over nineteen hundreds of years old. The life length of such a generation would not be a brief time, and so it would not be confined to a limited time of tremendous urgency.the expression "this generation" was used by Jesus to mark a very limited period of time, the life-span of members of a generation of people living during the time that certain epoch-making events occurred. According to Psalm 90:10, that life-span could be of seventy years or even of eighty years. ¹⁸⁹

"The fact that fifty-four years of the period called the 'last days' have already gone by is highly significant. It means that only a few years, at most, remain before the corrupt system of things dominating the earth is destroyed by God. How can we be so certain of this?Today we have the evidence required, all of it. And it is overwhelming! All the many, many parts of the great sign of the 'last days' are here, together with verifying Bible chronology... We today have all the many parts of the sign, nearly forty of them, being fulfilled in the same generation, and we have God's timetable, his 'calendar,' showing that the time has nearly run out for the present unrighteous system of things. This is very different indeed from the situation with those who proclaimed an 'end to the world' in earlier generations." ¹⁹⁰

"Besides, did not Jesus say that this generation will not pass away until all things are fulfilled? A generation, according to Psalm 90:10, is from seventy to eighty years. The generation that witnessed the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 does not have many more years left." ¹⁹¹

"They came on the scene after the foretold events were already under way. But there are people still living who were alive in 1914 and saw what was happening then and who were old enough that they still remember those events. This generation is getting up in years now. A great number of them have already passed away in death. Yet Jesus very pointedly said: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." Some of them will still be alive to see the

¹⁸⁸Awake! September 22, 1962 p.27

¹⁸⁹Watchtower December 15, 1967 p.751

¹⁹⁰Awake!, October 8, 1968, pp. 13, 23-24

¹⁹¹Watchtower December 1, 1968 p.715

end of this wicked system. This means that only a short time is left before the end comes!" ¹⁹²

"If you are a young person, you also need to face the fact that you will never grow old in this present system of things. Why not? Because all the evidence in fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that this corrupt system is due to end in a few years. Of the generation that observed the beginning of the 'last days' in 1914, Jesus foretold: 'This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur' (Matt. 24:34). Therefore, as a young person, you will never fulfill any career that this system offers." ¹⁹³

"This magazine has also repeatedly shown from the Scriptures that the distressing conditions that have developed and intensified since 1914 are solid proof that we live in the generation that will see God's will take place on earth." ¹⁹⁴

"Which 'generation' is that? The one that has witnessed the events in fulfillment of prophecy since 1914 C.E. There is no doubt about the truthfulness of what Jesus said. Forcefully he added: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." ¹⁹⁵

Q. Jesus said "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." Which generation is this, and how long is it?

*A. Based on the Bible and its fulfillment in history, Jehovah's Witnesses have often pointed out that Christ's prophecy was to have two applications: First, between 33 C.E. and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.; second, a larger fulfillment in this "time of the end" since 1914 C.E.....Jesus was not referring to a race of people over the centuries or just to Christians. He was first of all referring to his listeners and other Jews at that time. An indication of this is the fact that earlier that day, when condemning the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus spoke of their murdering the prophets and said: "All these things will come upon *this generation.*" ¹⁹⁶*

"At least some of the generation that saw the start of this age of lawlessness in 1914 are expecting to "be around" when it ends." ¹⁹⁷

"He foretold concerning those living in 1914 who would see the fulfillment of the 'sign of his presence': "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matthew 24:34) Among the things due to occur in

¹⁹²The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life, 1968 chap. 11 pp. 94-95

¹⁹³ Awake!, May 22 1969, p. 15

¹⁹⁴ Watchtower February 1, 1971 p. 69:

¹⁹⁵ Watchtower May 1, 1975 p. 277 par. 22

¹⁹⁶ Watchtower October 1, 1978 p. 31 Questions From Readers

¹⁹⁷ Watchtower July 1, 1980 p. 4

the lifetime of this generation is the fulfillment of a prophecy from an older part of the Bible.”¹⁹⁸

“As has often been shown in this journal, since 1914 this prophecy has been undergoing fulfillment on a grand scale. But Jesus added something very significant about the generation of 1914. What was it? He said: “When you see these things occurring, *know that the kingdom of God is near*. Truly I say to you, *This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur*.”¹⁹⁹

“Thus before the 1914 generation completely dies out, God’s judgment must be executed. This generation still exists in goodly numbers. For example, in 1980 there were still 1,597,700 persons alive in the Federal Republic of Germany who were born in 1900 or before. The figure would be even larger had not millions of its citizens experienced premature death during the two world wars.....In promising that “this generation will *by no means* pass away,” Jesus used the two Greek negatives *ou* and *me*. *The Companion Bible* explains this usage as follows: “The two negatives when combined lose their distinctive meanings, and form the strongest and most emphatic asseveration [affirmation].” Only now, at a time when it appears that the generation *could* pass away before all is fulfilled, do Jesus’ words “by no means” take on real significance.”²⁰⁰

“Might it be, though, that the sign could occur over the span of many human generations? No. The sign is to occur during one particular generation. The same generation that witnessed the beginning of the sign will also witness its climax in “a tribulation such as has not occurred from the beginning of the creation.” Three historians, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, recorded Jesus’ assurance of this.”²⁰¹ (*and as every Witness is now well aware, Jesus did not “assure” any such thing*).

“Jesus also indicated that this composite sign would be completed during the life of the generation that saw it begin in 1914. At Matthew 24:32-34, he said: “Now learn from the fig tree as an illustration this point: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors. Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.”²⁰²

“While not knowing the exact time, we *do know* that God’s judgment is to be executed within the lifetime of the generation that saw the beginning of the “last days.” Jesus Christ said: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (Matt. 24:34) Accordingly, the generation of people that witnessed the events of 1914 C.E. is the one that will also see the “great tribulation.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Watchtower May 1, 1984 p. 6:

¹⁹⁹ Watchtower May 15, 1984 p. 4:

²⁰⁰ Watchtower May 1, 1985 p. 4:

²⁰¹ Watchtower October 15, 1988 p.4

²⁰² Awake March 22, 1993 p. 11

²⁰³ Kingdom Ministry August 1974 p. 3

“Some, at least, of the generation that saw the “beginning of pangs of distress” in 1914 will live to see Paradise restored on earth” ²⁰⁴

“How long a time period would these last days prove to be? Jesus said regarding the era that would experience the “beginning of pangs of distress” from 1914 onward: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (Matthew 24:8, 34-36) Thus, all the features of the last days must take place within the lifetime of one generation, the generation of 1914. So some people who were alive in 1914 will still be alive when this system comes to its end. That generation of people is now very advanced in years, indicating that there is not much time left before God brings this present system of things to an end.” ²⁰⁵

“For Jesus says concerning persons who saw the “pangs of distress” start in 1914 C.E.: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” ²⁰⁶

“Jesus also said regarding the generation of people who saw the beginning of the “last days” in 1914: “Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (Matthew 24:34) This means that some of the people who were alive when World War I began in 1914 would still be alive to witness the end of this present system of things.” ²⁰⁷

So after decades of promising an entire generation of people that the New System would be here before their generation died off, of encouraging members to forego marriage, education, children, pension plans, or even buying a home, the Slave Class simply changed the meaning of the word “generation” in the November 1995 Watchtower. While they attempted to downplay the significance of the change, there was no mistaking it’s meaning. The new explanation effectively wiped out decades of the “assurance” and “fact” that the generation of 1914 would not die out before “The End” came. What most Witnesses don’t realize is that on the inside cover of the Awake! magazines just prior to the November 1995 bombshell is that the inside cover had the wording changed:

***Awake!* masthead from March 1988 until October 22 1995**

“Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.”

²⁰⁴ Look—I Am Making All Things New p. 27 par. 51

²⁰⁵ Purpose of Life section 7 pp. 27-28 par. 16

²⁰⁶ There Is Much More to Life! pp. 24-25 par. 35

²⁰⁷ Is there a God Who Cares? p. 22 par. 29

***Awake!* masthead as of November 8 1995:**

“Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world **that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.**”

In other words, the Creator never promised anything of the sort. It was the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* that promised an entire generation of people that they would live to see the end of this System and they went so far as to print on each and every *Awake!* magazine that it was Jehovah Himself who had made this promise----which of course, He didn't. If that doesn't fit the profile of someone making false predictions in God's name, then I don't know what does.

But rather than come out and publically admit that they were in fact, guilty of false prophesying in Jehovah's name, they instead did what they always do when backed into a corner: They attempt to minimize what they really have said over the year, as well as put part of the blame on the rank and file Witness for putting too much stock into what was said, as noted in the quote from the November 1995 article. Note that instead of saying “...*The Slave class has at times speculated...*” they instead say “*Jehovah's people have at times speculated...*” Since “Jehovah's people includes all Witnesses, the (absurd) idea is to suggest that the average Witness had some say in shaping this doctrine in the first place and must therefore bear part of the blame for “speculating”:

“...Eager to see the end of this evil system, Jehovah's people have at times speculated about the time when the "great tribulation" would break out, even tying this to calculations of what is the lifetime of a generation since 1914. However, we "bring a heart of wisdom in," not by speculating about how many years or days make up a generation, but by thinking about how we "count our days" in bringing joyful praise to Jehovah. (Psalm 90:12) Rather than provide a rule for measuring time, the term "generation" as used by Jesus refers principally to contemporary people of a certain historical period, with their identifying characteristics.”²⁰⁸

Why did they not just come out and say: “We were wrong. We apologize. We know that many made life-long decisions based on our speculations and we ask for your understanding and forgiveness.” Many middle-aged and elderly brothers and sisters were dismayed and more than a little upset that an event that they had long looked forward to witnessing, had suddenly vanished with no apology for their sacrifices nor explanation beyond: ‘we got new light’.

But that wasn't the end of it. In the February 2008 edition of the *Watchtower*, the study article: CHRIST'S PRESENCE—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU? changed the meaning of “this generation” *yet again*.

Paragraph 10:

²⁰⁸ *Watchtower* 1995 November 1 pp.16-20:

“...Previously, this journal has explained that in the first century, *“this generation”* mentioned at Matthew 24:34 meant “the contemporaneous generation of unbelieving Jews.”

That is only the latest of a long string of interpretations. As it has already been established, The Watchtower Society taught for decades that “this generation” was a “literal generation” that would see both the events of 1914 and Armageddon. And as it has already been shown, the Society, in 1962, specifically rejected the interpretation given in the 1995 article when they said:

“That a symbolic application to a ‘generation’ of wicked persons is **not meant** at Matthew 24:34 is apparent when we read the preceding verse: ‘Likewise also you, know that he is near at the doors.’ It is the generation of persons who ‘see all these things to whom Jesus refers in verse 34, irrespective of whether such persons are righteous or wicked.’”²⁰⁹

And in disputing their 1995 interpretation, the Society has gone full-circle back to their 1962 view that the generation is not necessarily “wicked” in its entirety. Paragraph 13 of the same article continues:

“....Jesus said that it was his disciples, soon to be anointed with holy spirit, who should be able to draw certain conclusions when they saw “all these things” occur. So Jesus must have been referring to his disciples when he made the statement: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.....They would “learn” from the features of that sign and “know” their true meaning. They would fully appreciate that “he is near at the doors.” While it is true that both unbelieving Jews and faithful anointed Christians saw a limited fulfillment of Jesus’ words in the first century, **only his anointed followers back then could learn from these events—could understand the true meaning of what they saw....**[emphasis added]

Now they are going to the other extreme. Now they are claiming that the generation is applicable only to the faithful disciples. This ignores the usage of the same phrase in Matthew 11:16, 12:39, 41-42, 45, 16:4, 17:17, 23:36. The article then says:

“.....Christ’s faithful anointed brothers, the modern-day John class, have recognized this sign as if it were a flash of lightning and have understood its true meaning.”

The “flash of lightning” that they interpret from Matthew 24, is *not* a metaphor for flashes of insight or “new light”. It is used to dramatize the sudden and unexpected arrival of the Son of Man, just as lightning “comes” without warning and just as the Flood “came” without warning.

“....As a class, these anointed ones make up the modern-day “generation” of contemporaries that will not pass away “until all these things occur.” This suggests that some who are Christ’s anointed brothers will still be alive on earth when the foretold great tribulation begins....”

²⁰⁹ Awake!, September 22, 1962, p. 27.

In other words, they are now saying that the “generation” that Jesus was referring to is talking of the “anointed” class that began over 1900 years ago right on down to today. This article follows a description of the “John class” behind the publication of the *Watchtower* as being the only ones having the ‘insight’ to understand the “true meaning” of the prophecy of Jesus, yet they did not have this insight in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, or 90s when they not only *promised* that the ‘Generation of 1914’ would not pass away before The End came. Instead, they **flatly rejected** the very idea that they are now promoting, that “this generation” could possibly be referring to a group of people who, as a class, would be over 1900 years old today:

Q. Jesus said “this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” Which generation is this, and how long is it?

A.”.....Jesus was not referring to a race of people over the centuries or just to Christians. He was first of all referring to his listeners and other Jews at that time...²¹⁰

“By that expression [‘this generation], Jesus **was not** referring to the entire church or congregation of his faithful disciples, from the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E. until the glorification in heaven of the last member of Christ's congregation.....that race or generation would by now be a race or generation over nineteen hundreds of years old.”²¹¹

December 1, 1984 Watchtower:

"....Have apostates who claim that "the last days" began at Pentecost and cover the entire Christian Era promoted Christian alertness? Have they not, rather, induced spiritual sleepiness?...."

February 15, 2008 Watchtower:

".....Since Jesus did not use negative qualifiers when speaking to them about "this generation," the apostles would no doubt have understood that they and their fellow disciples were to be part of the "generation" that would not pass away "until all these things [would] occur....."

So if you believe that "the last days" started 2,000 years ago at Pentecost, then you're an 'apostate', but if you believe that "this generation" (*which, according to the bible, is supposed to witness the beginning of "the last days"*²¹²) started 2,000 years ago, you're 'keeping up with Jehovah's Organization.

But that’s not all. At the end of the study article, the box on page 25 asks:

²¹⁰ Watchtower October 1, 1978 p. 31 Questions From Readers

²¹¹ Watchtower December 15, 1967 p.751:

²¹²Luke 21:28: “But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift YOUR heads up, because YOUR deliverance is getting near.”

Can We Calculate the Length of "This Generation"?

The word "generation" usually refers to people of various ages whose lives overlap during a particular time period or event. For example, Exodus 1:6 tells us: "Eventually Joseph died, and also all his brothers and *all that generation*." Joseph and his brothers varied in age, but they shared a common experience during the same time period. Included in "*that generation*" were some of Joseph's brothers who were born *before* him. Some of these outlived Joseph. (Gen. 50:24) Others of "that generation," such as Benjamin, were born after Joseph was born and may have lived on *after* he died. So when the term "generation" is used with reference to people living at a particular time, the exact length of that time cannot be stated except that it does have an end and would not be excessively long."

If "this generation" includes the 'anointed as a class', then that means that 'generation' is now over 1900 years old. Not 'excessively long?' How long would they consider it?"

Therefore, by using the term "this generation," as recorded at Matthew 24:34, **Jesus did not give his disciples a formula to enable them to determine when "the last days" would end.** Rather, Jesus went on to emphasize that they would not know "that day and hour."—2 Tim. 3:1; Matt. 24:36.

What was all this in the late 1960s and early 1970s about Jehovah's "timetable"²¹³ and the "overwhelming evidence" from "Bible chronology"²¹⁴ that proved that "only a few years at most remain" before Armageddon²¹⁵, so much so that young adults at the time would "never grow old" and "fulfill any career that this system offers."²¹⁶ And what of those back in the 1960's who did not believe 100% that The End was right around the corner?? They would have been marked as being "weak in the Truth" or possibly worse—disfellowshipped for "apostasy".

Proverbs 13:12 that says: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick" and that is exactly what many of Jehovah's Witnesses are experiencing today, due to the numerous false predictions that their leaders have made over the past 130 years.

Unfortunately, the Watchtower Society's sole purpose for existence is based on a date completely foreign to scripture (1914), and one that has caused numerous followers to defer things such as marriage, education, careers, and having children because they were given the "assured expectation" that the end was at hand. All those alive in the 1870s when Charles Russell founded the Watch Tower are now dead – and every single one of them fully expected to see the millennium in their lifetime. The "millions now living" in 1919, who were promised by Judge Rutherford that they would "never die" – are either dead or are not long for this world. At most only something like 18 veterans from World War 1 are still alive today.

What Christ's disciples should do today is what they did in the second century when they realized that the *pa-rou-si'a* was apparently not going to happen as soon as they thought it Might: *They Got on with the Rest of Their Lives*. Yes they hoped and waited and were ready in case Judgment Day suddenly came. But that did not prevent them from living

²¹³ Watchtower May 1, 1968 pp. 271-272 par.4-6

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ See section on False Prophecy and Date Setting

²¹⁶ Ibid

normal lives. It is one thing to be ready in case it happens, it is an entirely different thing to falsely claim with certainty that it is at hand and encourage followers to forego normal things such as a decent job, children, or higher education. The Watchtower's never-ending speculations over the years that 'the end is near' is actually in fulfillment of the prophecy at Luke 21: 8 that says:

"For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and 'The time is at hand.' Do not follow them." –Luke 21:8.

It couldn't be any clearer than that.

-----Who really is the faithful and discreet slave?----Matthew 24: 45

The Faithful and Discreet Slave

The scripture above in Matthew is one of the most cited scriptures in the Organization and is used on a regular basis to promote the idea that a small group of men in New York fulfill the description of the “faithful and discreet slave” class. And as such, they are the “channel” through which Jesus dispenses spiritual food “at the proper time”. Who is exactly is the ‘faithful and discreet slave’? Is it one person? A group of people?

As is well known amongst Witnesses today, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Charles Russell was viewed by many as the “faithful and wise servant” and indeed, he came to view himself as such. In the October 16, 1916 Watchtower (published after his death), it states:

Thousands of the readers of Pastor Russell’s writings believe that he filled the office of “that faithful and wise servant,”.....His modesty and humility precluded him from openly claiming this title, but he admitted as much in private conversation.”

This view of C.T. Russell being "that slave" was taught up until 1927 in *The Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*:

"No one in present truth for a moment doubts that Brother Russell filled the office of the 'faithful and wise servant', whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season'."²¹⁷

However before his death in 1916, there came to be doubt from amongst many who felt that they should be looking only to Christ for guidance, not any man and they challenged him on this point. The “opposers” (as they were called) took the stand that they should not be looking to any man as their leader, but rather to Christ Jesus himself; therefore, the “faithful and wise servant” was not one man, but “all the members of the church of Christ”²¹⁸, a view that did not sit well with Brother Russell. In addressing this issue, he accused these “opposers” as being “bitter”, “sarcastic” and “antagonistic”.²¹⁹

It is more that just a bit ironic that the Watchtower Society today holds the same view as the ‘opposers’ of a hundred years ago that Charles Russell denounced: that the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ is not one man, but is made up of all anointed Christians. In fact, the Society goes so far as to claim that this “slave” is more than 1900 years old through a continued, uninterrupted line starting in Jesus’ day right on down to our day:

²¹⁷ *Watchtower* April 1, 1920, p. 104 paragraph 6

²¹⁸ *Watchtower*, October 1, 1909

²¹⁹ *Ibid*

Jesus had said: “Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matt. 28:20) Jesus Christ is the Head of the congregation, his slave, and his words show that he would strengthen them to feed his “domestics” right down through the centuries. Apparently one generation of the “slave” class fed the succeeding generation thereof, as well as continuing to feed themselves.....We see, then, that Jesus Christ himself called attention to this method of feeding his people—not as isolated, independent individuals, but as a close-knit body of Christians having real love and care for one another. .²²⁰

Such an assertion raises a number of questions. If this “faithful and discreet slave” has always survived “as a close-knit body of Christians” and not as any “individual”, then where would they have been for most of the 1900 year span after the disciples passed away? If they were it would not have been through the Catholic Church, as that has been identified as “apostate” countless times by the Watchtower.

Occasionally, the Watchtower asserts that ‘break away’ Christian groups such as the Waldenses, Arians, Paulicians or the Lollards may have been anointed Christians,²²¹ but nothing definite. And they surely were not all ‘of the same mind’ by ‘dispensing truths’ to other Christians throughout the earth. For the most part, these splinter groups were isolated.

In light of the fact that the history of Christianity over the last 2,000 years has been written down with great detail, there should be some evidence of a continual “faithful and discreet slave” that fed the ‘next generation’ right on down to the time of Charles Russell. The fact is though, there is no evidence (beyond the Society’s vague assertion) that such an arrangement ever took place amongst a “close knit group of Christians” over a 1900 year span.

This leads to the next question: If there has always been a “faithful and discreet slave” class for the last 1900 years, one class “feeding” the next class, then who made up this slave class that fed Charles Russell? According to Brother Russell, he was not “fed” by any “faithful and discreet slave class, but came to his own conclusions by taking the bible down off the shelf and studying it independently:

“for though Adventism helped me to no single truth, it did help me greatly in the unlearning of errors.....in 1870, fired by enthusiasm, he and a few acquaintances in Pittsburgh and nearby Allegheny got together and formed a class for Bible study.”²²²

In actuality, Russell got numerous doctrines from the Adventists, including the idea that Jesus returned invisibly in 1874 which was revised, decades later (long after Brother Russell had died), to the year 1914.²²³ It is also worth noting that Charles Russell studied the bible

²²⁰ Watchtower, January 15, 1975 pp. 46-47

²²¹ *Watchtower*, October 1 1975 p. 583

²²² Proclaimers chap. 5 p. 44 *Proclaiming the Lord’s Return (1870-1914)*

²²³ *Ibid* p. 47

independently and on his own-----an action that today that the Organization strongly objects to:

“...the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah’s visible organization in mind.” ²²⁴

If the bible cannot be understood without the Organization’s interpretation, then why was it okay that Charles Russell studied the bible on his own, without any “Organization” or even a ‘Faithful and Discreet Slave” class to interpret it for him? There is no rational explanation for these questions found in any of the Organizations’ literature—the subject is simply ignored.

The *Proclaimers* book goes on to quote from a Watchtower article published after Brother Russell’s death that said:

“He was not the founder of a new religion, and never made such claim. He revived the great truths taught by Jesus and the Apostles, and turned the light of the twentieth century upon these.” ²²⁵

This idea of course, completely contradicts the Society’s doctrine that each Slave Class fed the next Slave Class, right on down through the centuries. By the time Charles Russell started studying the bible in 1870, this “Slave” class would have been 1800 years old. This of course, begs the question as to how Russell could have “revived the great truths taught by Jesus” independently of the “Slave”, if they had been ‘dispensing spiritual food’ for the last 1800 years. The July 15, 1960 Watchtower says of this:

“..Down through the years the slavelike congregation has been feeding its true members faithfully and discreetly. From Pentecost, A.D. 33, up to this very present hour this has been lovingly and carefully performed. Yes, and these “domestics” have been fed on progressive spiritual food that keeps them abreast of the “bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established...”

According to this last quotation, this ‘faithful and discreet slave’ class has been dispensing “progressive” spiritual food in an uninterrupted line for over 1900 years with the spiritual ‘light getting brighter’ all the time. If this were indeed the case, then each of the slave classes should have been growing in knowledge and understanding of scripture, and passing it on to the next ‘slave class.’ By the time of the Lollards and the Waldenses in the middle ages, there would have been over a thousand years of “new light” revealed, and by Charles Russell’s time, this spiritual “light” and understanding should have been shining with a radiance that would rival the Transfiguration in its brilliance.

And yet, by the Society’s own admission, this did not happen. According to them, Charles Russell was a novice who read the scriptures independently and who had to “revive” the teachings of Jesus, presumably because there had been no “increasing light” over the centuries. Yet for any Witness to point out this (obvious) contradiction in their doctrine

²²⁴ Watchtower October 1 1967 p. 587 par. 9

²²⁵ Watchtower December 1, 1916, p. 356

would more than likely result in a stern warning from an elder not to “question” the Organization, lest that lead to “independent thinking.”

It is clear that Charles Russell was not part of any chain that linked a progressive “faithful and discreet slave” class, nor did he teach such a thing himself. And while he was heavily influenced by the Adventists of his day, by his own admission (and that of the Watchtower), he acted independent of any “Organization” and drew his own conclusions from reading the bible on its own. Ironically, were he alive today, he would be strongly counseled against reading the bible by itself, lest he come to a conclusion that differed from the Governing Bodys.

What about the Society’s claim that in 1919, Jesus came to “inspect” them and chose a group of them as the “faithful and discreet slave” mentioned in Matthew? Is this doctrine based on facts of history?

“...The serving of food, the right sort of food, at the proper time was the issue. It had to be according to this that a decision must be rendered by the returned master. Well, then, what about that body of Christians internationally hated and persecuted? (Matthew 24:9) Down to 1919 C.E. they had endeavored to give “food at the proper time” to the “household of faith” or the “domestics” of the heavenly Master. They did this despite interference by persecutors and the warring nations. Not only was the regularity in serving the spiritual food a problem, but the quality of the food itself was to be considered. In this respect the body of hated, persecuted Christians, who always sought to be faithful slaves of Jesus Christ, met the test...”²²⁶

“..What about today? When Jesus’ presence began in 1914, did he find a group of anointed Christians who were faithfully dispensing food at the proper time? He certainly did. This group could be clearly identified because of the fine fruitage that it was producing. History since then has proved this identification to be correct.”²²⁷

Unfortunately for the Watchtower Society, history shows us no such thing. Why? For the simple reason that in 1914 the ‘spiritual food’ they were dispensing included many doctrines, practices and beliefs that are today considered “false”, or “demonic”. For example: In 1919—the year Jesus supposedly ‘inspected’ these men and judged them worthy based on what they were teaching at that time----- the Society was *still* teaching that celebrating Christmas was merely a sign of respect for Jesus, even though they knew he was not born on December 25th. Today it is viewed as ‘pagan’ and a disfellowshipping offense.

“Even though Christmas is not the real anniversary of our Lord's birth, but more properly the annunciation day or the date of his human begetting (Luke 1:28), nevertheless, since the celebration of our Lord's birth is not a matter of divine appointment or injunction, but merely a tribute of respect to him, it is not necessary for us to quibble particularly about the date. We may as well join with the civilized world in celebrating the grand event on the day which the majority celebrate - "Christmas day.”²²⁸

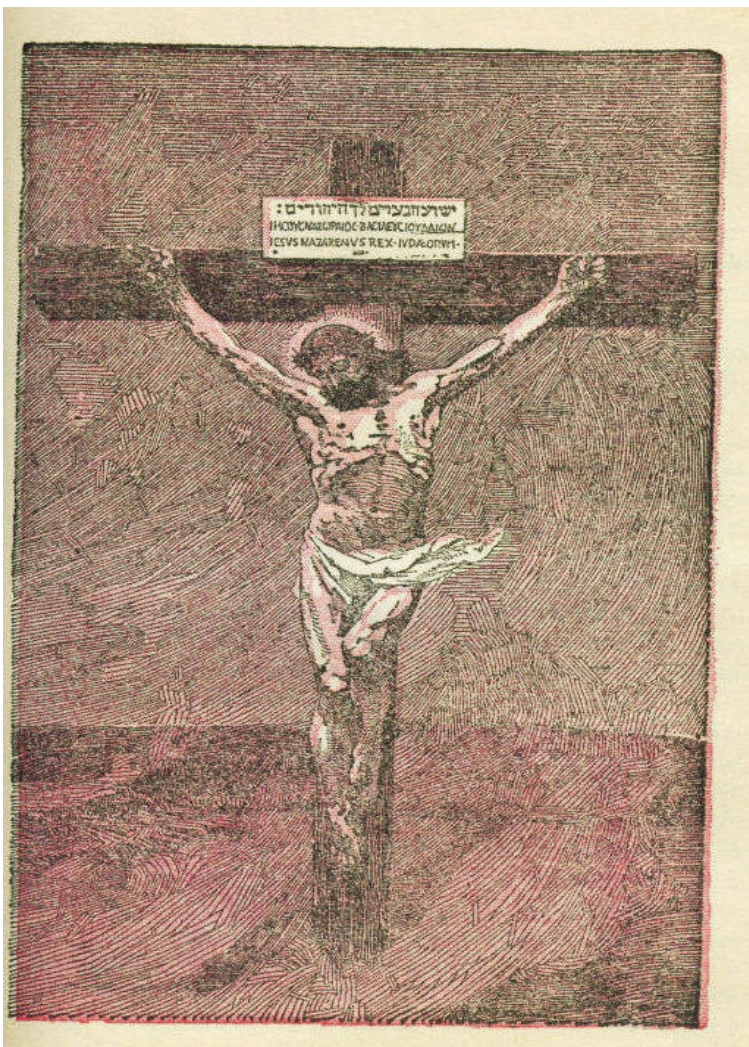
²²⁶ *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* chap. 17 p. 350 par. 40

²²⁷ *Watchtower* March 1, 2004 p. 11 par. 16

²²⁸ *The Watchtower*, 1st December 1904 p364



Above is the Bethel family celebrating Christmas in 1926—8 years after they supposedly abandoned 'Babylonish practices'.



In 1919 the Society was still teaching that Jesus died on a cross:

Picture taken from *The Harp of God* 1921, p.113

They also still practiced Pyramidology long after Charles Russell had died:

“...In the passages of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh the agreement of one or two measurements with the present-truth chronology might seem accidental, but the correspondency of dozens of measurements proves that the same God designed both pyramid and plan...”²²⁹

And as late as 1927 they were still teaching that Jesus returned invisibly in 1874:

“...Daniel then says: “blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty [1335] days.” Daniel 12:12 The watchers here are, without question, those who were instructed by the Lord to watch for his return. This date, therefore, when understood, would certainly fix the time when the Lord is due at his second appearing. **Applying the same rule then, of a day for a year, 1335 days after 539 A.D. brings us to 1874 A.D., at which time, according to biblical chronology, the Lord’s second presence was due.**”²³⁰

As late as 1928, they were still teaching that Jehovah lived in Pleiades:

“The constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades appears to be the crowning center around which the known systems of the planets revolve even as our sun’s planets obey the sun and travel in their respective orbits. It has been suggested, and with much weight, that one of the stars of that group is the **dwelling-place of Jehovah** and the place of the highest heavens;...the greatness in size of other stars or planets is small when compared with the **Pleiades in importance, because the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God**”²³¹

They were also still teaching that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be resurrected in 1925:

“We have no doubt whatever in regard to the chronology relating to the dates of .. 1925.....Using this same measuring line .. it is an easy matter to locate 1925, probably in the fall, for the beginning of the anti typical jubilee. **There can be no more question about 1925 than there was about 1914.**”²³²

There are many more examples in the literature that clearly shows that in 1918, far from ‘dispensing high quality spiritual food’ that was somehow set them apart from all other religions, they were in fact, still teaching many things that we know today are completely false, and in some cases, are disfellowshipping offenses.

²²⁹ *Watchtower* 1922 June 15 p.187

²³⁰ *Creation* 1927 p319

²³¹ *Reconciliation* 1928 p14

²³² *Watchtower*. May 15, 1922 (see also the section on Date Setting)

Another Contradiction

The question then of course is: How exactly were these men “chosen” to be a composite “faithful and discreet slave” in 1919, when they were still promoting false doctrines? Being ‘well-meaning’ or ‘sincere’ is apparently not good enough, at least by the Organization’s standards.²³³ And since they claim that all other religions were rejected by Jesus for promoting false doctrines such as the trinity, hellfire and immortality of the soul, why aren’t they held up to the same scrutiny? Why is teaching doctrines such as the trinity, hellfire and immortality of the soul enough to qualify as false teachings, yet teaching that Jesus returned in 1874, or that Jehovah lived in **Pleiades** and vaccinations were considered “devilish”, are not? Is that not a double standard?

It is with no little irony that the Society’s own literature asserts that their publication *The Finished Mystery* as “a powerful commentary on Revelation and Ezekiel”²³⁴ and was the catalyst that landed Brother Rutherford and seven other Bible Students in prison on charges of sedition.²³⁵ The irony is that these men were willing to spend years in prison for a book that was so full of nonsensical theories, errors and false prophecies, that it is no longer even in print and would be viewed as very embarrassing for the Society, were any Witnesses to read it today. It is absurd that the *Revelation Climax* book describes the “spiritual food” at this time as being “accurate and well founded.”²³⁶

Faithful and Discreet?

“Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things.”²³⁷

In order to ‘pass the test’, this slave would have had to have been both faithful and discreet in 1918 when Jesus came to “inspect” them. As we have already seen, far from having a monopoly on any “truth”, they were in fact, teaching many things that by today’s standards, are completely false and ‘pagan’. This would certainly not fall under the category of being “discreet”.

Were they at least “faithful”? Apparently not because by their own admission, in 1918, they were guilty of having “long association with Christian apostasy. They had many practices,

²³³ See page 73 under the section “False Prophecy”

²³⁴ *Revelation—Its Grand Climax Is At Hand* page 165

²³⁵ Pages 247-253 of the book included the denunciation of the military and of the war in general and was viewed as treachery by the government.

²³⁶ *Revelation—Its Grand Climax Is At Hand* chap. 25 p. 164 par. 13

²³⁷ Matthew 25:21

characteristics and beliefs similar to the weedlike sects of Christendom.”²³⁸ They also “*sold themselves because of wrong practices and came into bondage to the world empire of false religion.....an outstanding instance of this occurred during World War I of 1914-1918.*”²³⁹

So paradoxically, at the same time the Jesus is supposedly inspecting these men and declaring them “faithful and discreet”, they are, by their own admission, involved in ‘apostasy, wrong practices’ and compare themselves to ‘apostate Israel’. How can a rational thinking person possibly reconcile this dilemma? You would think that in order to become “approved” by Jesus, they would have to have abandoned all false doctrines before being declared “faithful and discreet”, yet after 1919 when Rutherford and the others were released from prison, they simply continued on with their present set of beliefs—many of which did not change for years. As one person noted: “*..It would be an insult to Christ Jesus to say that he selected this organization on the basis of what it was teaching, uniquely and distinctively, as of 1919. An abundance of words flowed out that later proved embarrassing to remember, along with a rash of new time prophecies that proved as erroneous as the past ones.*”²⁴⁰

One should ask themselves why Jesus would pick a group of men as being a “faithful and discreet slave”, based on what ‘spiritual food’ they were dispensing (and which turned out to be 100% incorrect in every, single prediction made), and then ‘use’ these men as being God’s sole channel here on earth, when they continued to make false predictions that were all eventually discarded and proved highly embarrassing. In fact, after 1925 when it became obvious that the ‘ancient worthies’ were not going to be resurrected after all, Rutherford admitted “*..I made an ass of myself.*”²⁴¹

So after 40 years of false date setting, of promoting Pyramidology and teaching a host of “truths” that were eventually abandoned, of becoming so ‘spiritually unclean’ that they were sent into ‘captivity’, we are being asked to believe that in 1919, Jesus said to them “*well done good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things, I will appoint you over many things.*” As Ron Frye noted:

“That’s like going to a businessman who, through his own foolishness got himself into financial difficulty and lost a good deal of your money, having to declare bankruptcy, and your then saying to this businessman, “Well done! You lost a small fortune of mine, so now I am going to entrust my whole fortune into your hands.”²⁴²

²³⁸ *Watchtower* July 15 1960 pp. 435-436 par. 18

²³⁹ *Watchtower* November 15, 1980 p. 25-26

²⁴⁰ *In Search of Christian Freedom*, p. 145

²⁴¹ *Watchtower* October 1, 1984 p. 24

²⁴² *In Search of Christian Freedom*, p. 151

Another point that should not be overlooked is that while the Society today teaches that all anointed ones make up the 'Faithful and Discreet Slave' class²⁴³, the nearly 9,000 Witnesses who partake of the emblems each year are not involved at all in dispensing any of the "food at the proper time" in any way, shape or form. The literature printed by the Society is, for the most part, written by those in the Writing Department who do not make any claim to being part of the "Slave" class. While the articles may be passed to a member of the Governing Body sometimes, the Governing Body members themselves do not write the majority of the literature.²⁴⁴ If at all doubtful, it might be worth phoning Brooklyn Bethel, ask to speak to someone in the Writing Department and find out for yourself.

Despite what the writers of the Organizations' literature try and promote, it has been more or less proven that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society have *failed* the test through their own actions, and therefore cannot possibly be the 'faithful and discreet slave'. Who is the 'faithful and discreet slave' (or 'faithful and wise servant')? It is clear that the parable is based on the story of Joseph during his time in Potiphars' home. Genesis 39:4-5 tells us that:

"Joseph found favor in his lord's sight and was pleasing to him, **and he appointed him over his house, and all that he had he gave into Joseph's hand.** And it happened that after he appointed him over his house, and over all that was his, the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian."

The account of Joseph bears close resemblance with the illustration of the Faithful and Discreet Servant discussed in Luke chapter 12 when it asks: Who really is the faithful steward, the discreet one, whom his master will appoint over his body of attendants to keep giving them their measure of food supplies at the proper time?

The scriptures do not clearly identify any one person or group of persons, but it would make the most sense that Jesus was addressing primarily his disciples as shown by several bible Commentaries:

*"...Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? The answer of Jesus shows that he especially addressed the disciples, for a steward is distinct from the household. On him the whole burden and care of the domestic establishment rested. Thus Jesus showed that he meant the disciples, yet did not exclude any who heard from profiting by his discourse. Fidelity is the first requisite in a steward, and wisdom is the second. All Christians are stewards; preachers, elders, Sunday-school teachers, etc., are stewards of place and office. Rich men, fathers, etc., are stewards of influence and possessions...."*²⁴⁵

"....Christ does not directly, and in express words, answer to Peter's question, but suggests, that though he intended it as a caution to all his people, and in it spoke to

²⁴³ Watchtower May 15, 1995 p. 16 par. 2

²⁴⁴ *In Search of Christian Freedom*, p 154-155

²⁴⁵ <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/TheFourfoldGospel/tfg.cgi?book=lu&chapter=012>

them all to be upon their watch and guard, (Mark 13:37) yet that he had a special regard to them, his apostles, and succeeding ministers of the Gospel, whose characters, office, work, dignity, and honour, are here described. Such are stewards in Christ's family, they are entrusted with the stores and provisions of his house, and "faithfulness" and "wisdom" are requisite in them; the one, that they do not corrupt and adulterate the word of God, and mix it with human doctrines, but that they deliver it out pure and sincere as it is; and the other, that they may rightly divide it, and wisely distribute it.....Christ's "household", or family, is his church, over which the ministers of the Gospel are appointed "rulers", to govern the house according to the laws of Christ, and keep every thing in good decorum and order; and particularly their work, and which agrees to their character as stewards..." ²⁴⁶

"...Who is that faithful and wise steward - Our Lord's answer manifestly implies, that he had spoken this parable primarily (though not wholly) to the ministers of his word: Whom his lord shall make ruler over his household - For his wisdom and faithfulness..."

²⁴⁷

So although many see the "servant" as a teacher or leader, no scholar or bible historian interprets it as a select body of men in a central location that ones must depend upon for their service such as the Watchtower Society insists on.

²⁴⁶ John Gill's Exposition of the Bible

²⁴⁷ *John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*

PREACHING HOUSE TO HOUSE

“. . .And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus.”---
Acts 5:42, *New World Translation*

The above scripture is used by the Society to support their idea that all Christians must preach door to door. Their insistence is that this is how the first century Christians preached. The Watchtower study article for the week of September 7, 2008 entitled: *The House to House Ministry: Why Important Now?* dedicated the entire article to promoting this idea. Did Jesus' disciples preach house to house? Let us examine the evidence by looking at a few of the paragraphs in this particular article.

“The method of preaching from house to house has its basis in the Scriptures. When Jesus sent forth the apostles to preach, he instructed them: "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving." How were they to search for deserving ones? Jesus told them to go to people's homes, saying: "When you are entering *into the house*, greet the household; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish it come upon it." Were they to visit without a prior invitation? Note Jesus' further words: "Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet." (Matt. 10: 11-14) These instructions make clear that as the apostles "went through the territory from village to village, declaring the good news," they were to take the initiative to visit people in their homes.-Luke 9:6.”²⁴⁸

As the average Witness is not well versed in ancient/historical cultural practices, they are going to take the above paragraph at face value. The context of Matthew chapter 10 has to be considered. The disciples are specifically told not to take money in their purse (verse 9) or to take any food with them (verse 10). Why would they be told this?

For the simple reason that the culture of first century Judaism regarding lodgings in a foreign city must be taken into consideration. These early disciples were Jewish and, as with many religions today, they had a network that could be used to their advantage when in a strange town or city. When they visited a new city, they would go to a Jewish home to seek lodgings where hopefully, the household would be receptive to the gospel and where they could stay until they finished preaching in that area (Think of being a Witness and traveling to another country for an assembly and staying with another Witness family for the duration).

If the household where the Christians were staying were not receptive to the gospel, they were to leave that home and to try and find another Jewish home where their message might be received better. If they could find no suitable home in which to stay, they were to leave and “shake the dust off” their feet and continue on until they found suitable accommodations where they could stay while they preached in the area. The preaching

²⁴⁸ The Watchtower July 15, 2008 pg 3

itself was done in the market places, the synagogues, in other Christian homes or anywhere public. *That* is what the context is referring to.

The WT CD-ROM references Matthew 10:11 with various other scriptures (noted below) in order to 'prove' that the disciples preached house to house. Incredibly, the scriptures they reference proves just the opposite: that it is actually referring to *lodgings and sustenance*, not preaching. The reason they were not to take any money or extra food or clothing with them is because in ancient times it was customary for the household to provide these things for visitors:

Luke 10:7: "So stay in that house, eating and drinking the things they provide, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not be transferring from house to house."

(Numbers 18:31) And YOU must eat it in every place, YOU and YOUR household, because it is YOUR wages in return for YOUR service in the tent of meeting.

(Mark 6:8) Also, he gave them orders to carry nothing for the trip except a staff alone, no bread, no food pouch, no copper money in their girdle purses,

(Luke 9:3) and he said to them: "Carry nothing for the trip, neither staff nor food pouch, nor bread nor silver money; neither have two undergarments.

(Luke 10:7) So stay in that house, eating and drinking the things they provide, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not be transferring from house to house.

(1 Corinthians 9:14) In this way, too, the Lord ordained for those proclaiming the good news to live by means of the good news.

Matthew Henry Bible Commentary confirms that of the above mentioned verse:

"....In strange towns and cities: when you come to a town, enquire who in it is worthy. [1.] It is supposed that there were some such in every place, as were better disposed than others to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy.....They must enquire out such; not enquire for the best inns; public houses were no proper places for them that neither took money with them (v. 9), nor expected to receive any (v. 8); but they must look out for accommodations in private houses, with those that would entertain them well, and expect no other recompense for it but a prophet's reward, an apostle's reward, their praying and preaching....In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue; which intimates that they were to make so short a stay at each town, that they needed not change their lodging, but whatever house providence brought them to at first, there they must continue till they left that town."

So basically, the Watchtower has combined two distinct practices (preaching and finding lodgings) into one so that it appears that this scripture supports the idea that first century Christians preached from "house to house". They further assert in paragraph 4 that:

"The Bible specifically mentions that the apostles preached from house to house. For example, Acts 5:42 says of them: "Every day in the temple and *from house to house* they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."²⁴⁹

This is a very interesting assertion that needs to be looked at a bit closer. The footnote on the Watchtower CD-ROM says of Acts 5:42:

"Lit., "according to house." Gr., kat' οικον Here *ka-ta'* is used with the accusative sing. in the distributive sense. R.C.H. Lenski, in his work *The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles*, Minneapolis (1961), made the following comment on Ac 5:42: "Never for a moment did the apostles cease their blessed work. 'Every day' they continued, and this openly 'in the Temple' where the Sanhedrin and the Temple police could see and hear them, and, of course also, kat' οικον which is distributive, 'from house to house,' and not merely adverbial, 'at home.' "

What the Watchtower hoped to prove by this quote is fairly obvious: it would be assumed by the any Witness who reads this, that R.C.H. Lenski's use of the term 'distributive' supports the "house to house" method of preaching. That Lenski meant no such thing is apparent from his own notes on Acts 2:46:

"Luke sketches the daily life of the first congregation. The three [kata] phrases are distributive: "day by day," "house by house" The believers both visited the Temple and broke bread house by house at home ... "Breaking bread" also refers to all the meals and not merely to such as might precede the Sacrament as an agape. "House by house" is like "day by day." It does not mean merely "at home" but in each home."-----*The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 1961, pp.120-21

For obvious reasons, the Watchtower failed to use Lenski's full quote on Acts 2:46. If those that write these articles were being completely honest, they would have included the *entire* quote, not just a select few words. But that would have shown that Lenski renders the phrase in question as: "*breaking bread house by house*", and views Acts 2:46 and Acts 5:42 as saying the same thing and obviously is not referring to preaching 'house to house', but is referring to the Christian lodging and taking meals, not preaching 'house to house'.

The notion that interpreting the Greek '*kata*' in a distributive sense and should be translated: "from house to house" in order to be correct and definite is destroyed by the Society's own literature. For any Witness who has a copy of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (the old purple bible), they can see that the identical phrase (katoikon) translated "from house to house" in both the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* and the *New World Translation* rendering of Acts 5:42, also occurs in Acts 2:46. Below is a copy of these verses as found in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* which contains the *New World Translation* in it's right-hand column (in English):

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, par. 4

Acts 2:46

46	καθ'	ἡμέραν	τε	προσκαρτεροῦντες	the need. 46 And day
	according to	day	and	persevering	after day they were
ὁμοθυμαδὸν	ἐν	τῷ	ἱερῷ,	κλῶντές	τε
like-mindedly	in	the	temple,	breaking	and
κατ'	οἶκον	ἄρτον,	μετελαμβάνον	in private homes	and
according to	house	bread,	they were partaking	partook of food with	great rejoicing and
τροφῆς	ἐν	ἀγαλλιάσει	καὶ	ἀφελότητι	sincerity of heart,
of food	in	exultation	and	simplicity	47 praising God and
καρδίας,	47	αἰνοῦντες	τὸν	θεὸν	καὶ
of heart,		praising	the	God	and
				having	

Acts 5:42

δι	κατηξιώθησαν	ὑπὲρ	τοῦ	dishonored in behalf	
because	they were counted worthy	over	the	of his name. 42 And	
ὀνόματος	ἀτιμασθῆναι·	42	πᾶσάν	τε	
name	to be dishonored;		all	and	
ἡμέραν	ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ	καὶ	κατ'	οἶκον	οὐκ
day	in the temple and		according to	house	not
ἐπαύοντο	διδάσκοντες	καὶ			
they were ceasing	teaching	and			
εὐαγγελιζόμενοι	τὸν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.				
declaring good news about	the Christ Jesus.				

As the left-hand Original Greek text shows, the exact same phrase, with the same distributive sense of 'kata' appears in both texts. Yet in Acts 2:46 the translation is not "from house to house" but "in private homes." Why? Because it is ridiculous to think that the disciples 'breaking bread' was done by going consecutively from "house to house".

However, the Society does not apply the same rule of thumb in the translation of Acts 5:42. Why not? Because then it would be obvious that the preaching was being done, not consecutively by knocking on strangers' doors, but rather in the homes of either those who were already believers, or in the homes of where the disciples were lodging.

Paragraph 4 of the July 15, 2008 Watchtower article continues:

"Some 20 years later, the apostle Paul reminded the older men of the congregation in Ephesus: "I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and *from house to house*." Did Paul visit those elders before they became believers? Evidently so, for he taught them, among other things, "about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:20, 21) Commenting on Acts 20:20, Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* says: "It is worth noting that this greatest of preachers preached from house to house."

Here's another example of the Organization giving a very selective quote. In a footnote on page 56 of *The Organization Book* the actual quote from Robertson is as follows:

"As regards the translation "from house to house" (kat' oi' kous) in Acts 20:20, which some modern translators would render as: "at your houses" (AT), "in your homes" (Je;NE), "in private" (NA), Doctor Robertson has this to say on pages 349, 350 paragraph 1: 'and from house to house (kai kat'oikous). By (according to) houses----
-It is worth noting that the greatest of preachers preached from house to house and did not make his visits merely social calls. He was doing kingdom business all the while as **in the house of Aquila and Priscilla**. (1 Cor. 16:19)"

Aquila and Priscilla?? Aquila and Priscilla were both already *Christians* when Paul preached in their homes. They weren't strangers whose door Paul happened to knock on Saturday morning. Corinthians 16:19 says:

"The congregations of Asia send you their greetings. Aquila and Prisca together with the congregation that is in their house greet you heartily in the Lord".

So the claim that Acts 20:20 is referring to Paul knocking on the doors of unbelievers does not hold up under scrutiny, nor does the quote from Dr. Robertson support that idea. And while Robertson allows that the Greek word kat'oikon can be rendered "from house to house", he refers to Acts 2:46, where precisely the same Greek expression kat'oikon occurs and makes it clear that it is referring to lodging and eating in someone's home:

"they [all that believed, v.44], continuing daily with one accord in the temple, **and breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Does it refer also to the possible *agapai* or to the Lord's supper afterwards as they had common meals "from house to house" (kat'oikon)? We know there were local churches in the homes where they had "worship rooms," the church in the house." [*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.3, p.39)

Acts 5:42, it shows that first Apostle Peter taught *publicly* at the temple. Communities of Christians were formed. Material possessions were sold and distributed to those in need; Every day they went to the temple, met in private homes to 'break bread' (or have a meal) pray and build each other up as a community, a close knit family in Christ. In the temple more persons would be converted, then baptized and would be invited to meet in private homes to further bond and become a part of the Christian brotherhood. These private homes acted as small house churches of communities of love and fine works towards one another to build each other one up in the Christ. They met in small groups, as close knit families, in private homes. No door to door activity was even remotely involved or part of the daily routine of the early Christian brotherhood.

The context of the book of Acts, along with the readings of the Gospels and the letters of the Apostles to the congregations all coincide with the "house to house" visits that applied to small family communities of Christians that met in 'house churches' or 'house congregations' *in private homes*.

So unfortunately, these scriptures do not support the idea that the early Christians preached by going consecutively from 'house to house. It actually show that the "preaching" was being done in the *homes of those who were already believers*—not strangers as well as in public places.

In addition, the Society insistence that *all* Christian believers MUST go preaching is another example of going far "beyond the scriptures". There is no evidence that ALL first century Christians were evangelizers. In fact, the scriptures make it quite clear that only some of them had this gift:

"...And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, **some as evangelizers**, some as shepherds and teachers..." Ephesians 4:11

"...And God has set the respective ones in the congregation, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then powerful works; then gifts of healings; helpful services, abilities to direct, different tongues. Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? **Not all are teachers, are they?** Not all perform powerful works, do they? Not all have gifts of healings, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all are translators, are they?" (1 Corinthians 12:28-30)

You'd never here the Organization tell 6.5 million Witnesses that they were *all* apostles, prophets or healers would you? Of course not. The scriptures above make it clear that the first century Christians all had different gifts that they were to use. Only "some" of them were actually evangelizers—those who had that gift. Yet somehow this point that not all early Christians went and preached is ignored and nearly 7 million Jehovah's Witnesses today are taught that they are under scriptural obligation to go preaching from "house to house" and then turn in a field service report at the end of the month in order to be in line for salvation.

Considering the billions of hours that are spent each year preaching, along with everyone's time and gas money, there's no way the end justifies the means. With so many various methods of preaching available with today's technology, it is ridiculous to insist on this antiquated method of preaching. It would be like plowing a 5,000 acre field using an ox instead of a John Deere tractor.

And even if the first century Christians *had* preached "house to house", it would have been because there was no technology to allow for any other form of preaching, other than orally. How does the WTB&TS print their literature? Do they copy it by hand the way things were written 2,000 years ago? Of course not. They take advantage of modern day technology and have excellent printing facilities. They could actually reach a lot more people if they used the television and radio.

Over 100 years ago Charles Russell presented his Photo Drama of Creation which was on the cutting edge of technology of its day. Judge Rutherford preached on the radio. Yet today, the Society does not, for the most part, take advantage of modern day technology

and insists on using a method of preaching that can only be compared with the Amish method of farming.

If one is to follow Acts 5:42 as a model to follow, should one not also teach in publicly in temples as well ?

Where did Paul teach and make converts according to All the accounts ?

- . At Pentecost in a Public Place (Acts 2:1-41)
- . In the Synagogue (Acts 13:44-48, 17:1-4)
- . At a River (Acts 16:13)
- . In a Jail (Acts 16:23-40)
- . The Market Place (Acts 17-16-34)

There is absolutely no mention of Paul or any other disciple or apostle, making converts by preaching to someone at their front door and then going to the next house to preach to another.

Are Jehovah's Witnesses the Only Ones Who Preach?

Jehovah's Witnesses the only group of Christians preach the good news? If that were the case, how do they explain the 1.2 billion Catholics, the 700 million Protestants or the 77 million Anglicans on the earth today? Even if you take a newer religion, the Mormons, they've got a membership of 13.2 million people----double that of Witnesses. And all these churches (with the exception of the Mormons who only let their male members preach for 3 years) managed to get to these numbers without using the 'house to house' method of preaching that Jehovah's Witnesses use today.

While the Organization occasionally acknowledges that other Christian denominations send out missionaries, they dismiss their efforts for the sole reason that not every single member participates in a 'house-to-house method of preaching:

"Perhaps some religious groups send some "missionaries" for a two-year stint into certain areas, but their rank-and-file members do not participate in any such ministry. Only Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized worldwide for their zeal in communicating their message to others on every suitable occasion." ²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ The Watchtower August 15 1984 p. 11 par. 2

Since we have already established that first century Christians did not preach 'house-to-house' or that all of them participated in preaching, it is immaterial whether or not modern day religions preach house-to-house or whether all of their members are missionaries. It is simply not true or honest to imply that only Jehovah's Witnesses preach. Following are just some notable examples of religions actively engaged in preaching.

Both Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists started at a similar period of time as the Watchtower Society and have similar numbers of members due to their active preaching. Seventh-day Adventists successfully preach the good news, including at peoples homes. See the following quote from Chapter 13 of the *Seven Day Adventist Church Manual*;

"Our highest responsibility is to the church and its commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all the world...."

Another group renowned for their preaching efforts are Baptists. Baptists have the most missionaries of any religion. In 2004 there were 7 million Baptists out side of America, 600,000 baptisms and 21,000 new churches. In 2004 Witnesses baptized only 200,000 globally. Interesting information on the significant efforts of Baptist missionaries can be viewed at www.internationalministries.org/ and www.namb.net .

At www.gideons.org (15th April 2006) it discusses the preaching work of the Gideons;

"The Gideons International, founded in 1899, serves as an extended missionary arm of the church ... The association has more than 250,000 members, located in 181 countries of the world. They are united in carrying out the same program using the same methods to accomplish the one objective of winning others to Christ. The emergence of more than 2,000,000 readers in the world each week creates an unprecedented need for reading material. ... Annually, The Gideons International is placing and distributing more than 63,000,000 Scriptures worldwide. To God be the glory!"

Pentecostalism is the world's fastest-growing Christian movement with over 150 million adherents, growing **at an estimated 19 million members per year**. For anyone who has access to the internet, you can check out various denominations that are active in preaching worldwide: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Protestant_missionary_societies

Many millions of missionaries devote their lives to the preaching work, and hundreds of millions informally discuss the good news. It shows a great lack of respect to these individuals when it is asserted that 'only Jehovah's Witnesses' participate in the work Jesus described.

Effectiveness

Preaching from 'house to house' is not an indicator of the true religion. The majority of preaching described in the Bible was done where people were, such as synagogues and in markets. If Witnesses were really interested in bringing people to Jehovah they would spend less time door knocking on empty doors or doing return visits five to a car mid week afternoons when most people are not at home.

The preaching work conducted by Jehovah's Witnesses is becoming less and less effective. A simple evaluation of the yearly report shows that it takes 5000 hours of witnessing per baptism (1 billion witnessing hours in 2004 resulted in only 200,000 baptisms). If you take the figure of 200,000 and halve it for those born into the religion, and then halve it again to account for those reached in informal witnessing, an even more realistic figure would be 20,000 hours of door-to-door work for one convert. That is the equivalent of 166 people doing 10 hours each a month for a year.

Other religious groups grow because members preach casually to friends at work, universities and anywhere else they may be found. They do not worry about where they preach, and how many hours they can report each month. Though Jehovah's Witnesses report a billion hours a year preaching, it is predominantly spent knocking on the doors of empty houses. If a religion's priority is in helping people and teaching them about the bible and not just in reporting hours, there are far more effective ways to preach than going 'house to house', especially in developed lands.

In third-world countries most houses called on usually has someone at home throughout the day. This is not the case in developed countries. In modern society the vast majority of houses are empty at the times Witnesses call, with both husband and wife working throughout the week and doing errands and domestic chores (such as grocery shopping or shopping for clothing) on Saturday mornings. For any Witness who goes out in Service, they are more than aware that fewer and fewer people are at home during these times, and even fewer are interested in getting into a long biblical discussion at their front door when they are busy with a million other things.

Jesus spent most of his time preaching in the streets, the synagogues and the markets---- anywhere that people were and did not preach house to house. Did the apostle Paul or any of the other early disciples preach door to door? There is absolutely no record that they did. Rather, they always headed straight to where the most people would be. If Jesus were alive today do you think he would have spread his urgent message by trudging door to door when he knew no one was going to be there?

What to Preach?

A brother in my old congregation once asked a question during a public talk *"Who else follows Jesus command at Matthew 24:14?"* To which a newly interested Bible study spoke up and said out loud: "the Mormons". The entire congregation was somewhat shocked as the question was intended as a rhetorical question----not one where they really wanted an answer and the answer given was certainly not considered 'acceptable' by Jehovah's Witnesses. Somewhat embarrassed, but realizing he had to say something, the brother replied that Mormons may go house to house but they do not preach about the kingdom.

What is the Good News of the Kingdom? It is the message about Jesus and his heavenly kingdom:

2 Timothy 4:18: The Lord will deliver me from every wicked work and will save [me] for his heavenly kingdom. . .

Matthew 4:17: From that time on Jesus commenced preaching and saying: "Repent, YOU people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near."

Matthew 10:7 "As YOU go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'

Jehovah's Witnesses spend far less time discussing Jesus and his heavenly kingdom than most Christian religions. Unfortunately, the emphasis is more on teaching the doctrines of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (many of which have been shown to be either false, or highly questionable). Rather than being told they are 'set free' and that eternal life is a free gift as described in John 4:10 ²⁵¹ Roman 3:23-24 ²⁵² and Ephesians 3:7, ²⁵³ potential converts are gradually indoctrinated with a list of man-made rules which Jehovah's Witnesses rigidly promote as being necessary for salvation. These rules include attending several meetings each week, participating in house to house preaching, and reporting how many hours you spend preaching each month. In addition, these converts will be encouraged to severely limit their association with family members and close friends who are not Jehovah's Witnesses, even though they may be living morally clean lives, have a love for God and Jesus, practice charity and are good neighbours.

There are countless other rules that Jehovah's Witnesses must follow in order to be deemed 'worthy' and many of these rules are found nowhere in the scriptures. The forbidding of celebrating any holidays, ²⁵⁴ the extreme practice of shunning or

²⁵¹ "If you had known the free gift of God and who it is that says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water"

²⁵² "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and it is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom [paid] by Christ"

²⁵³ "I became a minister of this according to the free gift of the undeserved kindness of God that was given me according to the way his power operates"

²⁵⁴ See section on "Holidays"

disfellowshipping that goes far beyond what the scriptures say,²⁵⁵ and the very real possibility that you may have to chose death over a blood transfusion²⁵⁶ for their yourself or a family member, including your children. Instead of teaching that salvation is a 'free gift', the Organization has instead become exactly like the Pharisees of Jesus' day: "...They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men.." ²⁵⁷

The Book of Acts shows how intertwined the good news was with the message of the Christ. Powerful works were display, the Holy Spirit received, and baptism was in Jesus name, not to an organization. The underlying message the Jehovah's Witnesses carry to the doors is predominantly about the Organization and the coming earthly paradise, not Jesus and the heavenly kingdom. Can it really be said that the Watchtower message is 'Good News' when in reality it is about the coming destruction of over 6 billion people at Armageddon?

It is incorrect to say that Jehovah's Witnesses alone have preached to the entire inhabited earth. Over half the world, 3 billion people have never seen a *Watchtower*. Between China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia there are almost 3,000,000,000 inhabitants and less than 50,000 Jehovah's Witnesses. Everyday on average over 200,000 people are born, but the number of active Jehovah's Witnesses increases by only 224 (2005 daily increase in average publishers). This means that each day Armageddon is delayed there is an extra 200,000 people that Jehovah will be required to destroy who have never heard of him. If the end is contingent on Jehovah's Witnesses preaching to "all the inhabited earth" then that time is far off.

Ponder on the statistics from the 2005 service year:

- 1032 Witnesses out of 145 million people in Pakistan
- A few thousand witnesses out of over 1.3 billion people in China.
- 25,000 to 1,000,000,000 Indians.
- 18,000 to 219,000,000 Indonesians

Has the Watchtower Society come close to completing their preaching work?

The message of Jesus and the good news of his heavenly Kingdom has been and continues to be preached throughout the world by Christianity. Jesus did not limit how this was to be done. The method of house-to-house was not prescribed by Jesus, nor is it the most effective way to preach. Selling brochures and submitting monthly reports is never indicated in Scripture as a requirement to be considered in good standing before God. Once this is

²⁵⁵ See section on "Disfellowshipping"

²⁵⁶ See section on "Blood"

²⁵⁷ Matthew 23:4

understood it is clear that many religions are fulfilling Christ's command to preach and that there is no scriptural support for Christians to preach "house to house".

The Cross

As is widely known, the Watchtower Society insists that Jesus did not die on a two-beamed cross but on a single-timbered 'torture stake'. While most Christians would say, "It doesn't matter *what* he died on; it matters *that* he died for us", the Watchtower Society has made this into such a huge deal that it is worth investigating to see what history tells us about what sort of instrument was used when Jesus died.

The main argument the Society uses focuses on the Greek words *stauros* and *xulon* and the Latin word *crux* (which translates *stauros* in the Latin Vulgate) did not actually mean "cross" in the first century. Where did this idea come from? The Organization claims that the Catholic Church adopted the cross symbol from pagan religions and grafted it into their religion after the 'great apostasy' began to take root. They The following quotation from the Society's literature is quite typical:

"The Bible shows that Jesus was not executed on a conventional cross at all but, rather, on a **simple stake**, or *stau-ros*'. This Greek word, appearing at Matthew 27:40, basically means a **simple upright beam or pole**, such as those used in building foundations."²⁵⁸

As quite often happens, the Society provides no reference for their assertion but simply makes a blanket claim. Without looking into the history of Roman executions, it is neither accurate or even honest to claim that *stauros* did not or could not mean "cross". If the Romans did use two-beamed crosses at the time to execute prisoners, there should be evidence of it both in the scriptures and in history.

The Origins of Roman Crucifixion

Historians generally believe that the *crux compacta*, consisting of a vertical stake and a transverse beam onto which the arms are tied or nailed, is a Roman invention combining native execution practices with those acquired from contact with neighboring peoples. To establish whether the Romans used an 'upright pole' or a two-beamed cross, let us examine some historical findings:

- From their interaction with the Persians, the Greeks adopted crucifixion as a military strategy. Crucifixion was practiced especially by Alexander the Great in his wars against the Persians in the 4th century BCE. After the siege of Tyre ended in 332 BCE, about "two thousand . hung fixed to stakes over a huge stretch of the shore"²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Watchtower November 15 1992 p. 7

²⁵⁹ *Curtis Rufus, Historia Alexandri 4.4.17; cf. also Plutarch, Alexander 7.2 on Alexander's crucifixion of his Persian physician).*

- the Phoenicians adopted the mass-crucifixion tactic for use in war;²⁶⁰
- During the Punic Wars in 264-146 BCE, the Romans discovered the Phoenician version of crucifixion and adapted it as a means of capital punishment for slaves. Straying away from the purpose the Persians intended it for, the Romans converted it into a brutal torture machine. This was accomplished by adding a second piece of wood called the *patibulum* to the execution stake, as well as a thorn-shaped seat (*sedile*) upon which the victim rested his weight (and which greatly prolonged the torture). Prior to the invention of crucifixion, the Romans used the *patibulum* to humiliate condemned slaves marching to their execution. *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (first century BCE) described this ancient practice:

"A Roman citizen of no obscure station, having ordered one of his slaves to be put to death, delivered him to his fellow-slaves to be led away, and in order that his punishment might be witnessed by all.....The men ordered to lead the slave to his punishment, having stretched out both hands and fastened them to a piece of wood (*tas kheiras apoteinantes amphoteras kai xuló prosdésantes*) which extended across his chest and shoulders as far as his wrists, followed him, tearing his naked body with whips."²⁶¹

This *patibulum*-bearing punishment, during which a slave is whipped and lead through the city, was practiced in pre-Republican times and was the direct ancestor of the portion of the crucifixion ritual in which the victim carries his own cross.

Original term	Meaning
<i>patibulum</i> or <i>furca</i>	crossbeam
<i>stipes</i>	upright stake
<i>crux simplex</i>	upright post
Infelix lignum	tree
Crux composita	Stipes and patibulum
Crux humilis	Low cross
Crux sublimis	Tall cross
Crux commissa	T-shaped (Tau) cross
Crux immissa/Crux capitata	V-shaped (Latin) cross
Crux decussata	X-shaped cross

²⁶⁰ cf. *Valerius Maximus, Memorabilium* 2.7; *Silius Italicus, Punica* 2.344).

²⁶¹ *Roman Antiquities*, 7.69.1-2

The Latin *Crux* in Early Sources

As mentioned in the introduction, if the Roman two-timbered cross (*crux compacta*) arose after the first century AD, then it would be obvious that Jesus could not have died upon one. The Society admits that the Latin word for the device was *crux*, but points out that it did not necessarily refer to a double-beamed cross:

"True, the Romans did use an instrument of execution known in Latin as the *crux*. And in translating the Bible into Latin, this word *crux* was used as a rendering of *stauros*. Because the Latin word *crux* and the English word cross are similar, many mistakenly assume that *crux* was necessarily a stake with a crossbeam"²⁶²

But even if it did not *necessarily* refer to a "stake with a crossbeam", was such a meaning possible? Logically, it depends on when the Romans invented the double-beamed cross and when the word *crux* began to refer to it.

When does the Society believe the meaning of *crux* changed to "cross?" Although it has never published any official statements on the matter, it has twice indicated that the change occurred after the first century A.D.

The 1963 publication *All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial* quoted **Tacitus** (who lived from 56 CE - 120 CE) as saying that Roman Christians were martyred on flaming "crosses" during the A.D. 64 persecution.²⁶³ They also make mention of it in the 1964 Watchtower:

Tacitus in his *Annals*: "Nero proceeded with his usual artifice. He found a set of profligate and abandoned wretches, who were induced to confess themselves guilty, and on the evidence of such men a number of Christians were convicted, not indeed on clear evidence of their having set the city on fire, but rather on account of their sullen hatred of the whole human race. They were put to death with exquisite cruelty, and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and left to be devoured by dogs; **others were nailed to the cross**; numbers were burnt alive; and many, covered over with inflammable matter, were lighted up, when the day declined, to serve as torches during the night."²⁶⁴

Here is evidence that the historian Tacitus who lived at the time in question, clearly stated that Christians from the 1st Century CE were nailed to a cross. Yet because this contradicts what the Society presumes, they simply claim that he couldn't have really mean

²⁶² The Watchtower 15 August 1987, p. 23.

²⁶³ (p. 235; cf. *Tacitus, Annals 15.44*).

²⁶⁴ The Watchtower August 15, 1984 p. 492 par. 10

a "cross". Why? For no other reason than it does not square with their own preconceived idea on the matter. The Society also falsely claims that *crux* meant only "stake" in the first century BCE during the days of the Roman historian **Livy** (59 B.C.-A.D. 17):

"The fact that *stauros* is translated *crux* in the Latin versions furnishes no argument against [the "torture stake" doctrine]. . . .A cross is only a later meaning of *crux*. Even in the writings of Livy, a Roman historian of the first century B.C.E., *crux* means a mere stake" ²⁶⁵

"The Latin word used for the instrument on which Christ died was *crux* which, according to Livy, a famous Roman historian of the first century C.E., means a mere stake" (p. 17). Finally, the version of the *New World Translation* published in the same year stated: "In the writings of Livy, a Roman historian of the first century B.C.E., *crux* means a mere stake. 'Cross' is only a later meaning of *crux*" ²⁶⁶

Unfortunately, this claim does not stand up to critical scrutiny. A look at **Livy's** writings shows that he never used *crux* the way the Society says he did, i.e. with specific reference to a *crux simplex*. According to Packard's *Concordance to Livy*,²⁶⁷ the word *crux* in various forms appeared six times in **Livy's** writings as follows:

"Whereupon he scouraged the guide, and, to terrify others, **crucified** (*crucem sublato*) him, and going into the camp behind the entrenchments, dispatched Maharbal with the cavalry" (**22.13.9**).

"Five and twenty slaves were **crucified** (*crucem acti*), on the charge of having conspired in the Campus Martius" (**22.33.2**).

"He thereupon . . . ordered them [high-ranking officials] to be scouraged and **crucified** (*cruci adfigi*). Then he crossed over to his ships to the island of Pityusa" (**28.37.3**).

(4) "The deserters were severely treated than the runaway slaves, Latin citizens being beheaded, Romans **crucified** (*crucem sublati*)" (**30.43.13**).

"Some, who had been the instigators of the revolt, he scouraged and **crucified** (*crucibus adfixit*), others he turned over to their masters" (**33.36.3**).

"In this I for my part should trust my own cause even if I were pleading, not before the Roman....where commanders are said to be **crucified** (*crucem tolli*) if they have conducted a campaign with successful but defective policy" (**38.48.13**).

Not in any of these statements was the *crux simplex* (upright post) used. When **Livy** did refer to the *crux simplex*, he used the word *palum*: "Bound to a stake (*deligati ad palum*)

²⁶⁵ *New World Translation* appendix p. 770:

²⁶⁶ *Awake!* June 22 1984 p. 1577

²⁶⁷ p. 1011

they were scourged and beheaded"²⁶⁸ The Society's claim that Livy meant an "upright post" is therefore false.

In contrast to the Society's attempts to suggest that the word *crux* did not refer to a two-beamed cross until after the time of Jesus there is in fact, evidence dating back to the 3rd century BCE to show that it was in use even before the Roman adapted it. The following writings from Plautus, Seneca, and Tacitus, who wrote from the third century BC to the second century AD, show that the *crux* could include a *patibulum* or *furca* (both meaning "crossbeam"); that the *patibulum* was nailed to the *stipes* (the upright stake); the victims carried the *patibulum* prior to their crucifixion, and (4) the victims "stretched out" their arms on the *crux* or *patibulum*.

Plautus 254-184 B.C:

GREEK

ENGLISH

*Frateor, manus vobis do. Et post dabis sub furcis.
Abi intro--in crucem.* "

'I admit it, I hold up my hands!' 'And later you will hold them up on a *furca*. Do go along to the *crux*'²⁶⁹

*Credo ego istoc extemplo tibi esse eundum actutum
extra portam, dispessis manibus, patibulum quom
habebis.*

"I suspect you're doomed to die outside the gate, in that position: Hands spread out and nailed to the *patibulum*"²⁷⁰

*O carnuficium cribum, quod credo fore, ita te
forabunt patibulatum per vias stimulis carnufices, si
huc reveniat senex.*

"Oh, I bet the hangmen will have you looking like a human sieve, the way they'll prod you full of holes as they run you down the streets with your arms on a *patibulum*, once the old man gets back"²⁷¹

These texts establish beyond reasonable doubt that the Roman *crux compacta* had come into existence by the late third century BC and early second century BC. Any suggestion the Society may have made that *crux* did not mean "cross" in the first century BC or AD can easily be dismissed as without any support.

What Did the Greek Word *Stauros* Mean?

The Society insists that the word *stauros* did not refer to crosses in the first century AD and merely referred to single-beamed stakes. Here are some typical statements to this effect in the literature:

²⁶⁸ Ibid 28.29.11; cf. also 26.13.15.

²⁶⁹ *Persa*, 295

²⁷⁰ *Miles Gloriosus*, 359-360

²⁷¹ *Mostellaria*, 55-57.

"*Stauros* in both classical and *koine* Greek carries no thought of a "cross" made from two timbers. It means only an upright stake, pale, pile, or pole"²⁷²

"The inspired writers of the Christian Greek scriptures wrote in the common (*koine*) Greek and used the word *stauros* to mean the same as in the classical Greek, namely, a stake or a pole, a single one without a crossbeam of any kind or at any angle. There is no proof to the contrary"²⁷³

"In classical Greek, this word [*stauros*] meant merely an upright stake, or pale. Later it also came to be used for an execution stake having a crosspiece"²⁷⁴

Now, it is true that the developmental meaning is something like "an object which stands firm" and *stauros* was originally meant as a type of pointed stake used to build fences.

Homer's Oddysey provides the earliest attestation of this word: "He had driven stakes (*staurous*) the whole length this way and that, huge stakes, set close together, which he had made by splitting an oak to the black core".²⁷⁵

Thucydides similarly describes the building of a fence by "fixing stakes (*staurous*)" along a ditch, and *stauros* was also used with the sense of "palisade" or "piles" serving as a foundation."²⁷⁶

So it is certainly true that *stauros* meant only "stake" originally. But it would be a mistake to think that the original or most basic sense of the word is the only one that matters. An example we could look at is the history of the word "car". Originally, the word "car" mean "chariot" and comes from the Latin word *carrus*. Thus in Middle English (which was when the word was borrowed into the language), we find it used to mean chariots; the 1382 Wycliffe translation of Isaiah 66:16 referred to "his foure horsid **carres**" and the original 1611 King James Version translated 1 Esdras 5:55 as: "They gause **carres** that they should bring Cedar trees from Libanus".

But by this time, the word was being used in a modern sense to refer to the horse-drawn "carriage". For example, in 1576 an Act of Queen Elizabeth referred to "**Cars** or Drags furnished for Repairing Highways", and a 1716 issue of the *London Gazeera* referred to "Carts, Drays, **Carrs**, and Waggon".

Then it was used to refer to the part of a hot-air balloon in which aeronauts sit; in 1794, G. Adams wrote about "Air Balloons": "To this a sort of **carr**, or rather boat, was suspended

²⁷² *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 1988, p. 1191

²⁷³ *New World Translation*, 1950 edition, p. 769

²⁷⁴ *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 1987, p. 89

²⁷⁵ *Homer's Oddysey 14.11*

²⁷⁶ *Herodotus, Historiarum 5.16; Thucydides, Historia 7.25.6-8.*

from ropes", and another source from 1825 refers to an aeronaut "seated in the car of his vehicle". Finally, the term began to be used to refer to "**motor cars**" when they were invented, and has become almost exclusively restricted to this meaning. It is entirely possible and very probable that the word will take on yet another meaning in the future.

So if a historian from the future discovered an advertisement on the latest Toyota or Ford cars, would they be justified in applying the *original* meaning of the word and conclude that Americans were still driving chariots in the 21st century? The idea to us is, of course, ridiculous, yet it is this exact same analogy that the Society claims regarding the word *stauros*.

As technology evolves, so do the meanings of the words and they can expand far beyond what the original meaning of the word is. And since we have established that the Roman cross was in existence and was widely used by the late third century BCE, the Greeks would have had a word for it. If *stauros* was the principal word used to refer to Roman crucifixion, and if no other word was commonly used to refer to the *crux compacta*, then it is just plain common sense that *stauros* began to refer to two-beamed crosses by the second century BCE. The actual shape of the object denoted by *stauros* probably did not figure very much in the word's meaning; as long as it had the *function* of executing people while alive on a wooden post, it was irrelevant how many beams or pieces of wood the *stauros* included -- it still was a *stauros* as we can see from the writings of Josephus.

"They were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and **were crucified** (*anestaurounto*), while they were still alive, and breathed. They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as **they were upon the crosses** (*anestaurómenón*). And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also" ²⁷⁷

"Now it happened at this fight that a certain Jew was taken alive, who, by Titus's order, **was crucified** (*anastaurósaí*) before the wall, to see whether the rest of them would be affrighted, and abate of their obstinacy" ²⁷⁸

"Nor did he fail of his hope; for he commanded them to set up a **cross** (*stauron*), as if he were just going to **hang Eleazar upon it immediately**; the sight of this occasioned a sore grief among those that were in the citadel, and they groaned vehemently, and cried out that they could not bear to see him thus destroyed" ²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 12.256-257; author lived between c. AD 37-100, wrote c. AD 95; the narrated event took place 168 BC.

²⁷⁸ Josephus, *De Bello Judaico* 5.289; the narrated event took place AD 66-70.

²⁷⁹ Josephus, *De Bello Judaico* 7.202

"Why do you obey the order to submit to trial? For if you wish **to be crucified** (*stauróthénai*), wait and **the cross** (*ho stauros*) will come" ²⁸⁰

"He was being escorted by crowds and getting his fill of glory as he gazed at the number of his admirers, not knowing, poor wretch, **that men on the way to the cross** (*stauron*) or in the grip of the executioner have many more at their heels...It is as if a man about to **go up to the cross** (*epi stauron anabésesthai*) should nurse the bruise on his finger" ²⁸¹

These references show that *stauros* was the most common word for the instrument of death and since the Roman two-beamed cross (*crux compacta*) had come into existence by this time, it should be obvious that it meant more than "stake" by the first century AD.

The Society's claim that the word *stauros* could not refer to the *crux compacta* by the first (or even the second) century AD is without support. By the first century BC, *stauros* had become the most common word referring to Roman crucifixion, which by that time increasingly included the addition of a crossbeam (*patibulum*). As direct evidence of the change of meaning of *stauros*, we have seen that by the first century AD (if not earlier) the crossbeam itself was called a *stauros* in references to the *patibulum*-bearing punishment practiced by the Romans.

What does the bible itself say? Is there any scriptural evidence that Jesus died on a cross and not just an upright stake? Let us examine the evidence.

Biblical Evidence

The Christian Greek Scriptures are not very explicit on the instrument Jesus died on. Nevertheless, there are several details that taken together indicate that Jesus was indeed put to death on a two-beamed cross and not just an 'upright stake'.

(a) **John 19:17**: "Jesus was led away, and *carrying the cross (stauron)* by himself went out to what is called the Place of the Skull".

This is a key text, and it is almost never mentioned in discussions on the cross in Watchtower literature. It is significant as it is an explicit reference to the Roman practice of *patibulum*-bearing. The Latin sources mentioned earlier, which more clearly distinguish the *patibulum* from the cross by having a distinct term for each, are quite explicit that it is the *crossbeam* that is carried and not the *stipes* (upright pole). Nowhere in ancient sources is a prisoner ever described as dragging a pole without a crosspiece, and such a practice would have nothing to do with the well-attested ancient Roman practice of forcing prisoners or slaves to bear a *patibulum* while walking through the city or a public area.

The *BAR* magazine describes it this way:

"...During this early period, a wooden beam, known as a *furca* or *patibulum* was placed on the slaves neck and bound to his arms. The slave was then required to

²⁸⁰ *Epicetetus, Dissertationes* 2.2.20; author lived between AD 55-135

²⁸¹ *Lucian, De Morte Peregrini* 34.7, 45.5; author lived between AD 117-180.

march through the neighborhood proclaiming his offense. This march was intended as an expiation and humiliation. Later, the slave was also stripped and scourged, increasing both the punishment and the humiliation. Still later, instead of walking with his arms tied to the wooden beam, the slave was tied to a vertical stake.....A soldier at the head of the procession carried the *titulus*, an inscription written on wood, which stated the defendants name and the crime for which he had been condemned. Later, this *titulus* was fastened to the victims cross. When the procession arrived at the execution site, a vertical stake was fixed into the ground. Sometimes the victim was attached to the cross only with ropes. In such a case, the *patibulum* or crossbeam, to which the victims arms were already bound, was simply affixed to the vertical beam; the victims feet were then bound to the stake with a few turns of the rope.....If the victim was attached by nails, he was laid on the ground, with his shoulders on the crossbeam. His arms were held out and nailed to the two ends of the crossbeam, which was then raised and fixed on top of the vertical beam.

Accounts of the suppression of the revolt of Spartacus in 71 B.C. tell how the Roman army lined the road from Capua to Rome with 6,000 crucified rebels on 6,000 crosses. After the Romans quelled the relatively minor rebellion in Judea in 7 A.D. triggered by the death of King Herod, Quintilius Varus, the Roman Legate of Syria, crucified 2,000 Jews in Jerusalem. During Titus' siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Roman troops crucified as many as 500 Jews a day for several months." ²⁸²

Since the Watchtower insist that Jesus was dragging an upright stake (*crux simplex*), they have no choice but to assert that it lacked the crossbeam that would have made it more carryable and continue to deny that *stauros* could refer to a cross with a crossbeam. One of their only statements on the matter is found in the *Insight* book:

"Tradition, not the Scriptures, also says that the condemned man **carried only the crossbeam** of the cross, called the *patibulum* or *antenna*, instead of both parts. In this way some **avoid the predicament of having too much weight** for one man to drag or carry to Golgotha". ²⁸³

Their assertion basically has no foundation beyond their own pre-conceived ideas. Religious "tradition" has nothing to do with what we know about *patibulum*-bearing—it is a historical fact and can be attested to in many ancient writings as we have already seen.

Matthew 27:37 "Above his head they had put the charge against him in writing: 'THIS IS JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS' ".

This text strongly indicates that Jesus was impaled on a cross, not merely an 'upright stake.' If he had been impaled on a simple stake as depicted in the more modern Watchtower literature, the sign would have been placed above his hands as noted in various publications:

²⁸² *Biblical Archaeology Review BAR* January-February 1985

²⁸³ *Insight on the Scriptures*, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 1191

"There is no definite evidence about the shape of Jesus' cross, but it was probably a vertical stake and a crossbeam. This is indicated by the placing of the *titulus* over the head of Jesus, evidently along the crosspiece" ²⁸⁴

"The form usually seen in pictures, the *crux immissa* (Latin cross †), is that in which the upright beam projects above the shorter crosspiece. From the mention of an inscription nailed above the head of Jesus, it may safely be inferred that this was the form of cross on which He died" ²⁸⁵.

(c) **John 20:25:** Another relevant text is the remark that Thomas to his fellow apostles:

"Unless I see ***in his hands*** the print of the ***nails***, and place my finger in the mark of the ***nails***, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe".

There is no reason to assume that this scripture means anything other than what it says. It refers to both his hands in the plural sense and 'the nails' in the plural sense. No one has ever suggested that the word "hands" is only referring to one hand and there is no reason to think that the word "nails" is referring to only one nail, yet all the Watchtower pictures from the late 1930s onward depicts a *single nail* piercing through Jesus' hands as he hangs on an upright stake.

The ***Gospel of Peter 6:21*** which, although not part of the bible canon itself, is dated to the second half of the 2nd century ²⁸⁶ also refers to more than one nail piercing Jesus' hands: "And then the Jews ***drew the nails from the hands*** of the Lord and laid him on the earth".

The Society dismisses these references, or at least the one in John 20:25 being insignificant in their literature:

"Some have concluded from John 20:25 that two nails were used, one through each hand. But does Thomas' use of the plural (nails) have to be understood as a precise description indicating that each of Jesus' hands was pierced by a separate nail? In Luke 24:39 the resurrected Jesus said: 'See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.' This suggests that Christ's feet also were nailed. Since Thomas made no mention of nail prints in Jesus' feet, his use of the plural 'nails' could have been a general reference to multiple nails used in impaling Jesus. Thus, it is just not possible at this point to state with certainty how many nails were used". ²⁸⁷

There is absolutely nothing in the context of John 20:25 to support the Society's interpretation. This scripture does not mention the feet, nor are they even implied. Thomas was only talking about nails used to pierce the hands. Why would there be any reference to the "nails" in his "hands" unless there were at least two nails used? Of course, the most logical conclusion would be to recognize that Jesus died on a cross with his arms

²⁸⁴ William R. Wilson's *The Execution of Jesus*, p. 167

²⁸⁵ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, p. 826

²⁸⁶ Foster(2007), p325

²⁸⁷ 1984 *Watchtower* "Questions From Readers" p. 31

outstretched, not on a simple upright stake. Incredibly, the Society has conceded that their own conclusion on the matter might not be 100% guaranteed:

Jesus **most likely** was executed on an upright stake without any crossbeam. No man today can know with certainty even how many nails were used in Jesus' case. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1979, Volume 1, page 826) comments: "The exact number of nails used . . . has been the subject of considerable speculation. In the earliest depictions of the crucifixion Jesus' feet are shown separately nailed, but in later ones they are crossed and affixed to the upright with one nail."

We do know that his hands or arms were not simply bound, for Thomas later said: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails." (John 20:25) **That *could* have meant a nail through each hand**, or the plural "nails" might have reference to nail prints in 'his hands and his feet.' (See Luke 24:39.) We cannot know precisely where the nails pierced him, though it obviously was in the area of his hands. The Scriptural account simply does not provide exact details, nor does it need to. And if scholars who have directly examined the bones found near Jerusalem in 1968 cannot even be sure how that corpse was positioned, it certainly does not prove how Jesus was positioned.

We thus recognize that depictions of Jesus' death in our publications, such as you see on page 24, are merely reasonable artistic renderings of the scene, not statements of anatomic absolutes. Such depictions need not reflect the changing and conflicting opinions of scholars, and the drawings definitely avoid religious symbols that stem from ancient paganism.²⁸⁸

So while the Society itself has admitted on rare occasions that their interpretations are "not statements of anatomic absolutes", for any Jehovah's Witness to assert that perhaps Jesus did die on a cross would be grounds for disfellowshipping----not because they were necessarily wrong, but simply because their conclusions did not agree with what the Organization says.

Another problematic scripture for the Watchtower, is the one found in John 21:18-19 that describes the prophecy by Jesus of how the Apostle Peter would die:

"Most truly I say to you, When you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk about where you wanted. But when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and another [man] will gird you and bear you where you do not wish." This he said to signify by what sort of death he would glorify God. So, when he had said this, he said to him: "Continue following me."

The Society has actually commented on this passage but has once again, attempted to diminish the importance of anything that hints of a "crucifixion":

²⁸⁸ Watchtower August 15 1987 p. 29

"The ancient religious historian Eusebius reports that Peter 'was crucified with his head downward, having requested of himself to suffer in this way.'

However, Jesus' prophecy was not that specific. Acknowledges *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*: 'As the extension of hands is set before girding and being led away, it is difficult to discern how it must be conceived. If the order is part of the prophecy, we must suppose the prisoner lashed to the *patibulum* before being girded and led out to execution.'

"So, were it not for the tradition recorded by Eusebius, Jesus' statement in itself would not point to death by crucifixion or impalement. Viewing the words of John 21:18, 19 **apart from tradition**, we would come to the following conclusion: In his younger years Peter was able to gird himself at will for whatever duty he wanted to perform. He had the liberty to go where he wanted to go. But in later life this would change. He would have to stretch out his hands, perhaps in submission to someone else. Another man would take control of him, girding Peter (either binding him or preparing him for what was to come) and bearing him to a place where he did not want to go, evidently the place of execution. Thus Jesus' prophecy regarding Peter indeed indicated that the apostle would die a martyr's death; but **the manner is not necessarily implied"** .²⁸⁹

I find it interesting that they are claiming to know what every single person would "conclude" when interpreting this scripture. There is of course, no evidence that everyone, or even anyone, would come to the conclusion they have. It is simply an assumption on their part. And once again the Society has made a very selective use of the *Catholic Commentary* in this discussion. They conclude that "Jesus' statement in itself would not point to death by crucifixion or impalement", but that is not necessarily true. If you read the *entire context* of the article's quotation from the *Catholic Commentary*, it's apparent that the manner in which Peter would die was most definitely "implied":

"The words have some of the mysterious obscurity of prophecy. Against the liberty of Peter's younger days (girding himself and walking where he pleased) is set this mysterious future event of his old age. If the counterpart contains only two terms, namely, girding by another, as an old man is helped to dress himself, and being led to a place not naturally desired (a place of execution), the prophecy envisages a violent death only, not the mode of death by crucifixion. **The extension of the hands must therefore be the term specifically corresponding to crucifixion**, but as the extension of the hands is set before girding and being led away, it is difficult to discern how it must be conceived. If the order is part of the prophecy, we must suppose the prisoner lashed to the *patibulum* before being girded and led out to execution. J[oh]n writing after Peter's death notes that Jesus said this 'signifying by what death he should glorify God' ".

Clearly, the writers of the *Catholic Commentary* believed that the phrase "stretch out the hands" in this verse is referring to Peter dying by *crucifixion*. The portion quoted by the Watchtower was taken completely out of context in order to try and conceal this damaging evidence.

²⁸⁹ Watchtower December 15 1971, "Questions From Readers" p. 768

WHAT OF THE XYLON?

Another word the Society uses to support of their belief that Jesus' cross was a simple upright stake (*crux simplex*) is the Greek word *xylon*. The Society argues that since the basic meaning of this word is "piece of wood" or "tree," Jesus must have died on a mere stake. This view is asserted (rather lamely) in the April 8, 1963 *Awake!* On page 28:

"Arguing in favor of this having been a simple stake or pole is the fact that both the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter speak of Jesus' having been put on a *xylon*, which simply means a piece of wood....If Jesus had been fastened to a cross made up of two pieces of wood and so constructed into a form, would it be described as merely a piece of wood?"

This argument is baseless for the same reason as their reasoning regarding the word *stauros*: they restrict a word's meaning to its most basic sense, and then deny that it could ever have a more specific meaning. If a magazine claims that a house is made out of "wood", would it be logical to conclude that it must be referring to a single upright stake? No reasoning person would ever come to such a conclusion, yet this is the sort of reasoning the Watchtower is insisting on.

Rather than admit the possibility that *xylon* is not restricted to mean on an upright piece of wood, the Watchtower claims (without citing any evidence) that a "special sense" of *xylon* is "an upright stake without a crossbeam".²⁹⁰ Since there is no reference to where they came up with this assertion, it does not lend any credibility to their claim.

In classical Greek the word *xylon* included a lot more than just 'a piece of wood'. It was used to refer to "logs" or "timbers",²⁹¹ "trees"²⁹² "benches"²⁹³, "wood market"²⁹⁴ and even a measurement of length.²⁹⁵ It eventually also "took on the sense of something disgraceful or shameful".²⁹⁶ It also came to describe a variety of instruments of punishment, including "pillory"²⁹⁷ "stocks"²⁹⁸, a combination of both²⁹⁹ and "club"³⁰⁰. Clearly the word meant more than just "a piece of wood".

²⁹⁰ 1950 *New World Translation* appendix p. 769

²⁹¹ *Iliad*, 8.507; *Thucydides, Historia* 7.25.2; *Herodotus, Historiarum* 1.186

²⁹² *Xenophon, Anabasis* 6.4-5,

²⁹³ *Demosthenes*, 1111.22; *Aristophanes, Vespae*, 90; *Achamenses*, 25

²⁹⁴ *Aristophanes, Fragmenta* 402-403,

²⁹⁵ *Hero, Geometrica* 23.4.11.

²⁹⁶ *Kittel and Friedrich*, Vol. 3, p. 37

²⁹⁷ *Aristophanes, Nubes* 592; *Lysistrata*, 680,

²⁹⁸ *Herodotus, Historiarum* 9.37

²⁹⁹ *Aristophanes, Equites* 367, 1049,

³⁰⁰ *Herodotus, Historiarum* 2.63, 4.180; *Plutarch, Lycurgus* 30.2

The Society has also attempted to discredit historical records that clearly state that Jesus died on a cross and never is this more clear than in the November 22, 1976 *Awake!* pg 27:

“But do not writers early in the Common Era claim that Jesus died on a cross? For example, Justin Martyr (114-167 C.E.) described in this way what he believed to be the type of stake upon which Jesus died: "For the one beam is placed upright, from which the highest extremity is raised up into a horn, when the other beam is fitted on to it, and the ends appear on both sides as horns joined on to the one horn." This indicates that Justin himself believed that Jesus died on a cross.

However, Justin was not inspired by God, as were the Bible writers. He was born more than eighty years after Jesus' death, and was not an eyewitness of that event. It is believed that in describing the "cross" Justin followed an earlier writing known as the "Letter of Barnabas." This non-Biblical letter claims that the Bible describes Abraham as having circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his household. Then it derives special significance from a Greek-letter cipher for 318, namely, IHT. The writer of this apocryphal work claims that IH represents the first two letters of "Jesus" in Greek. The T is viewed as the shape of Jesus' death stake.

Concerning this passage, M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia states: "The writer evidently was unacquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures, and has [also] committed the blunder of supposing that Abraham was familiar with the Greek alphabet some centuries before it existed." A translator into English of this "Letter of Barnabas" points out that it contains "numerous inaccuracies," "absurd and trifling interpretations of Scripture," and "many silly vaunts of superior knowledge in which its writer indulges." Would you depend on such a writer, or persons who followed him, to provide accurate information about the stake on which Jesus died?"

Like a lawyer who has a weak case, the Society simply attacks the credibility of Justin Martyr and the author of the *Letter of Barnabas* by saying they were not "inspired by God". The fact that these men were not "inspired" makes absolutely no difference in this case as they were not claiming divine inspiration on some prophetic message—they were simply referring to a historical practice that was common in the 1st century: crucifixion. It is also extremely hypocritical of the Society to attack these men, especially Justin Martyr as they have referenced him countless times in their literature as being accurate and reliable:

“The canonicity of this book, or its claim to a rightful place in the Bible, has never been questioned. From early times it has been accepted by the Jews, and it appears in the earliest Christian catalogs. **Justin Martyr** of the second century C.E. quoted from Amos in his *Dialogue With Trypho, a Jew* (chap XXII). The book itself is in complete agreement with the rest of the Bible..”³⁰¹

“..Rightly, then, **Justin Martyr, Origen, and Tertullian**, when reading Matthew 2:1, thought of *ma'goi* as astrologers..”³⁰²

³⁰¹ Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 1 p. 100 Amos, Book of

³⁰² Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 1 p. 206 Astrologers

“...**Justin Martyr** (died c. 165 C.E.) in his “Dialogue With Trypho, a Jew” (XLIX), used the expression “it is written” when quoting from Matthew, in the same way the Gospels themselves do when referring to the Hebrew Scriptures. The same is also true in an earlier anonymous work, “The Epistle of Barnabas” (IV). Justin Martyr in “The First Apology” (LXVI, LXVII) calls the “memoirs of the apostles” “Gospels.”—*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, pp. 220, 139, 185, 186.³⁰³

In addition, the April 8, 1974 *Awake!* article “*Benefiting From History*” pp. 24-25 stressed that it was not logical to reject all evidence merely “because of the uncertainties regarding some of the material presented by the ancient writers.....even when the ancient writings are obviously pocked with bias and personal loyalties, certain descriptive material and circumstantial evidence may be correct and quite valuable. Rather than giving up on history and pitching it all aside as useless, one needs to develop that important quality -- discernment.....How are the facts (which may be correct) being *used* by the writer? Does he have an ‘ax to grind’? ”

There is absolutely no evidence that Justin Martyr had an axe to grind and therefore invented a fable about Jesus dying on a cross. The logical conclusion, especially when it is factored in with everything else, is that Justin Martyr and other early Christians believed (and with good reason) that Jesus was executed on a two-beamed cross, not a single upright stake.

The main problem that the Organization has with the idea of Jesus dying on a cross is their assertion that the cross was a pagan symbol. While there is no doubt that the cross had its origin in paganism, the fact is: ***the Romans were pagans***. They would not have cared in the least that they were putting a Jew to death on a ‘pagan symbol’—it simply would not have factored into the equation at all. The Romans used a cross to execute prisoners simply because having their arms outstretched at that degree prolonged their agony and that was the Romans’ intent: to make the person suffer for as long as possible. Rather than concede that there is an abundance of evidence that points to the fact that Jesus (along with thousands of others in the 1st century CE) was put to death on a cross, the Society continues to ignore all evidence that points to that conclusion, and insists that Jesus died on an upright stake.

The real reason why the Society holds such an implausible theory is because it justifies their opinion that the cross *symbol* has no place in Christianity. It is no secret that Watchtower founder Charles T. Russell and his followers esteemed the cross as a symbol of Christ’s redemption of mankind from sin, publishing the cross-and-crown image (a symbol of the Millennial Kingdom) on Watchtower covers and wearing it as a clothing pin. Carey W. Barber, later a member of the Governing Body, described the pin: “It was a badge really, with a wreath of laurel leaves as the border and within the wreath was a

³⁰³ Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 1 p. 409 Canon

crown with a cross running through it on an angle. It looked quite attractive and was our idea of what it meant to take up our 'cross' and follow Christ Jesus in order to be able to wear the crown of victory in due time" (1975 Yearbook, p. 148).

However, the Society's next president JF Rutherford did not think it was so "attractive". He perceived the cross as nothing more than a pagan symbol, as a long-time Witness recalled: "This to Brother Rutherford's mind was Babylonish and should be discontinued. He told us that when we went to the people's homes and began to talk, that was the witness in itself" (*Ibid.*). It took Rutherford eight years to purge the Bible Students of the cross. His first move against it occurred in 1928, when he instructed his followers at a Detroit convention to discard the "objectionable" and "unnecessary" jewelry. Then in 1931 the emblem was removed from the Watchtower covers. At that point the cross symbol became non-biblical, non-Christian, and ungodly -- and was relegated to the forbidden trappings of Satan's organization.

The Witnesses however still believed that Jesus was executed on a traditional cross. No doubt Rutherford was uncomfortable about this, because this fact seemed to still legitimize the cross as a *Christian* symbol, and thus he saw the need to revise his assumptions about the Passion. Therefore, without much fanfare, he presented his new view in the book *Riches*. On page 27, he wrote: "Jesus was crucified, not on a cross of wood, such as exhibited in many images and pictures, and which images are made and exhibited by men; Jesus was crucified by nailing his body to a tree". It seems that Rutherford saw nothing wrong (as does the Society today) with using the word "crucify" to denote impalement. Therefore, according to the Society's own account, scholarship really had nothing to do with its adoption of the "torture stake" theory. It was entirely motivated by theological reasons long ago, yet it remains in vogue today because it offers a means of setting the JW's apart from other Christians as different and because the image of Jesus "impaled" on a single timber, expressed frequently through the Art Department, is so ingrained in the minds of most. It is also possible that the Society has not a clue how weak and unsupported their position is on the matter.

‘Pagan’ Celebrations

Rejection of Holidays

One of the more well-known practices in the Organization is the non-celebration of holidays. All holidays, including birthdays, Christmas, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Easter, New Years Eve, and Valentines Day are considered "pagan holidays" and may not be observed by Witnesses. The Society’s official website states:

“Jesus never commanded Christians to celebrate his birth. Rather, he told his disciples to memorialize, or remember, his death. (Luke 22:19, 20) Christmas and its customs come from ancient false religions. The same is true of Easter customs, such as the use of eggs and rabbits. The early Christians did not celebrate Christmas or Easter, nor do true Christians today.”

“The only two birthday celebrations spoken of in the Bible were held by persons who did not worship Jehovah. (Genesis 40:20-22; Mark 6:21, 22, 24-27) The early Christians did not celebrate birthdays. The custom of celebrating birthdays comes from ancient false religions. True Christians give gifts and have good times together at other times during the year.”

Specifically, the Organization condemns the celebration of Christmas and Easter as “clearly not in harmony with Bible principles”, yet the offer absolutely no scriptural reference to back up their assertion:

“In the past God condemned certain practices that may have been tolerated in some communities. These included child sacrifice, the misuse of blood, and various sexual practices. (Leviticus 17:13, 14; 18:1-30; Deuteronomy 18:10) **Likewise, certain customs that are common today are clearly not in harmony with Bible principles.** Among these are non-Biblical traditions connected with religious holidays such as **Christmas and Easter or with superstitious practices related to spiritism.**

But what about customs that may once have been linked to questionable practices but that today are primarily viewed as social etiquette? For example, many popular wedding customs—including the exchanging of rings and the eating of cake—may have pagan origins. Does this mean that Christians are forbidden to observe such customs? Are Christians required to scrutinize meticulously each custom of the community to see whether somewhere or at some time it had negative connotations?”

Paul points out that “where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17; James 1:25) God wants us to use this freedom, not as an inducement for selfish cravings, but to train our perceptive powers to distinguish right from wrong. (Galatians 5:13; Hebrews 5:14; 1 Peter 2:16) **Hence, in a matter where there is no clear violation of Bible principles, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not create a hard-**

and-fast rule. Instead, each Christian must weigh the circumstances at hand and make a personal decision.”³⁰⁴

So who exactly gets to determine what is a “clear violation of Bible principals”? Is it the individual or is it the Governing Body? What if an individual Christian sees nothing in the modern day celebration of Christmas or their child’s birthday as having anything to do with ancient pagan links? As there is nothing in the scriptures that forbids these celebrations, why are Jehovah’s Witnesses not allowed to exercise their own conscience in this matter? Why is the ancient custom of wearing a wedding ring a “conscience matter” while celebrating Christmas is a disfellowshipping offense?

According to the Society, virtually every holiday including Christmas, Easter, Birthdays & etc, cannot be celebrated for their ‘pagan origins’. They reason that since the customs of these celebrations are not found in the scriptures, it is viewed as partaking in false worship, "touching the unclean thing," which is displeasing with God. But is this really "becoming unevenly yoked with unbelievers?" Is the refusal to celebrate Christmas, Birthdays and many other non harmful customs the true meaning of Apostle Paul's words, "Get out from among them and separate yourselves ... and quit touching the unclean thing and I will take you in? (2 Cor 6:14-18; Deut. 32:16)

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial ? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty." ³⁰⁵

All of the commandments that both the Israelites and early Christians were to follow had to do with *directly worshiping other false gods*, going against God's teachings of love and mercy and by "yoking" or marriage of direct worshipers of other false gods, who had *harmful and immoral practices*. They did not apply to a Israelite who obeyed Jehovah's Mosaic Law, yet followed various *non harmful* pagan customs, as can be seen by many who worshiped Jehovah, yet continued to maintain the practice of *teraphim*³⁰⁶ statues throughout their living quarters and daily routines.

They also do not apply to modern *non harmful* customs and holiday celebrations that have Pagan religious origins. To interpret Paul's words as a legalistic and blanket condemnation to each and every custom containing pagan origins, is to miss the meaning of Christianity,

³⁰⁴ Awake! January 8 2000 pg 26

³⁰⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

³⁰⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, volume 18, 9:5 Josephus mentions that there was a custom amongst the Israelites of carrying *house-gods* on journeys to foreign lands

"love of God and neighbor, for on this the entire law and the prophets hang." (Matt 22:34-40; 7:12)

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."³⁰⁷

On the other hand, when a pagan custom or celebration *became harmful to others, or directly worshiped other gods*, with harmful, selfish and immoral practices, it went against the Mosaic Law, and the Christian law of love, thus against Jehovah. For instance, many Israelites were imitating the false god Molech and were sacrificing their children by burning them in fire to please God. This pagan custom went far beyond a mere celebration—it was directly against God's law, displeasing him and subject to His punishment.

Were Pagan Origins the Problem?

When Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he came down to find all of the Hebrews partaking in an Egyptian celebration. God became very angry at this and administered punishment. But was this for simply singing and dancing according to the Egyptian pagan customs? No, for this went far beyond a mere celebration of pagan customs. Not only was there a complete lack of appreciation of God's saving acts for them, but there was *direct worship of a golden calf statue*, and logically the Egyptian practices of immorality and selfish domineering and abusive lust that went along with it. It stands in harmony with the nature of God that pagan origins were not necessarily the issue but rather the harmful and abusive practices that accompanied the worship of other gods.

Can this account be applied to persons today, who worship the true God, but follow customs and celebrations that have pagan origins? Are these persons "fearing Jehovah, but ... following according to their former religion?" Is this what happened in the Samaritans case in 2 Kings? The context of 2 Kings, shows that the customs and celebrations of the Samaritan people were "*worship of graven images*," resulting in *harmful and immoral practices, in violation of God's laws*, as they were practicing sexual perversions and "burning their sons in the fire to Adrammelech and Adrammelech the gods of Sepharvaim." Certainly, if the Samaritans were practicing loving behavior to each other, they would be in harmony with the "God of the land," Jehovah. It was not a matter of mere Pagan customs but *harmful and immoral pagan practices*. (2 Kings 17:24-41)

When a family gets together and celebrates dinner over the death and resurrection of Christ, or simply gets together for the sake of getting together and eating and enjoying each other's company such as on the national holiday of Thanksgiving, does it have anything to do with what went on thousands of years ago with Baal and other hurtful pagan worship? When parents have a cake and some presents for their child to celebrate the anniversary of their birth, is anyone beheaded?

Balance and maturity are the answers to these questions. Seeing beyond the letter of the Law and blanket condemnations give sight to the real meanings behind the surface.

³⁰⁷ Matthew 7:12

When hurtful actions take place they are obviously unacceptable, however when a holiday is celebrated that may or may not have in some way been connected to Baal worship, does that constitute what is displeasing to God?

Literature from this dark culture abounds. A number of years ago, a Syrian peasant accidentally plowed up a flagstone that covered a subterranean passageway leading down into a burial chamber. Subsequent excavations unearthed a large library with inscriptions in various Near Eastern languages, including a new Semitic language now known as Ugaritic. The language was deciphered and the texts were translated. Much of the writing is comprised of erotic poems describing the racy escapades of Baal and his consorts. As a result, we've come to learn more than most of us would ever care to know about the theology and morality of that horrible religion.

The poems were filled with images and fantasies of a degraded and brutal culture. Without a doubt, Baal worship went hand in hand with appalling violence. Underlying the sophistication of the literature lie tales of murderous rage and frightening cruelty. Baal worshippers engaged in various perversions, sexual deviancy, polygamy, polyandry, prostitution, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, abusive homosexuality, casual gay encounters, pederasty and bestiality.

Does any of this sound like what happens at Easter, Christmas, Mother's day and the 4th of July? Where on Father's Day does anything even close resemble the above description of the pagan Baal worship? Does it make sense that God would hold a person responsible for what happened thousands of years ago during Baal worship against a person today who celebrates birthdays?

Christian maturity comes with freedom, freedom to have an individual faith and relationship with the fruitage of love, mercy and forgiveness of our fellow man. This is what the spirit of God supplies. The enemy of this spirit is the spirit of legalism, the very spirit that removes the freedom that Christ has given us, the freedom that has set us free from religious bondage. (Galatians 5:1; John 4:24)

God's True Servants Followed Some Pagan Customs

Embalming - According to the Egyptians, the practice of "embalming" was to help preserve the body, as a future vehicle, in support of their understanding that the body was a manifest form of the soul; a reflection of a divine inner being; a perfectly integrated, orchestrated union of entity and vehicle. Even after death, they believed that there remained an ethereal bond between the soul and body. They felt that entering a greater state of being depended upon several aspects which included preparation of the body, ceremonial procedures, and upon the aspirant having lived a life free from evil. The selective process was symbolically represented in the popular scene of the "Balance" where the heart of the deceased was weighed against a feather. Should the balance be unfavorable, the deceased's desire for a glorious new life remained unattained.

The implications of this understanding were felt in Hebrew and Christian scriptures and represented one of the earliest introductions of a sense of inner values which served to

control people in their relations to each other. As seen in Genesis, God's servant, Joseph, directly followed this above stated Pagan custom of embalming.

"Thus Jacob finished giving commands to his sons. Then he gathered his feet up onto the couch and expired and was gathered to his people. then Joseph fell upon the face of his father and burst into tears over him and kissed him. After that Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel, and they took fully forty days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the embalming, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days."³⁰⁸

The pagan origins of embalming a dead body, were not found to be against God and had no bearing on Joseph and Jacob's worship of Jehovah. And it is a fact today that countless Jehovah's Witnesses are embalmed when they die. Is the fact that this was practiced by pagans thousands of years ago of any significance to Jehovah's Witnesses today? Obviously not.

Mummification

According to *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, the purpose of mummification, widely practiced in Egypt, was to preserve the body as an aid to the soul as it made its journey to a new life. The body would be treated with myrrh and similar spices, washed, wrapped, and then placed within a cave in a mountain.

The scriptures make reference to the caves in the land of Canaan that held the sacredly prepared bodies of Abraham and his wife Sara, Isaac and his wife Rebekah, Jacob and his wife Leah. Of Joseph's death, the Torah states,

"Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt." King Asa of Israel, was also "filled with balsam oil and different sorts of ointment of special make."

Pagan origins of treating a dead body with various spices, wrapping them and burying them in caves, were not interference to the worship of the only true God. (Gen 23:11,17,19,20; 25:9; 49:29,30; 50:13; 2Ch 16:14)

According to the scriptures, the process in which Jesus' body was prepared shows he was mummified according to the widely accepted practice of the ancient Egyptians, who originally performed this process for purely religious reasons. The bible itself describes the entombment of Jesus as follows:

"...Now after these things Joseph from Ar-i-ma-the´a, who was a disciple of Jesus but a secret one out of [his] fear of the Jews, requested Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. Therefore he came and took his body away. Nicodemus also, the man that came to him in the night the first time, came bringing a roll of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds [of it]. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it up with bandages with the spices, just the way the Jews have the custom of preparing for burial."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Genesis 49:33 - 50:3

³⁰⁹ John 19:38-40

Jesus' body preparation had almost identical similarities with the Egyptian pagan custom of mummification. This can also be seen in the account of a man named Lazarus, a man Jesus found to be worthy of him resurrecting. Neither of these actions were found displeasing by God. (Mr 16:1; Lu 23:56; 24:1; John 19:39,40)

God also showed his approval by blessing the Christian congregation, pouring out his holy spirit on them at Pentecost 33 CE, making them an example for us to imitate as well. As Paul wrote, "Be imitators of me, even, as I am of Christ." There was no legalistic ruling forbidding either the Jews or the early Christians from wrapping a dead body in spices, or restricting such actions are of any consequence in regarding our relationship with God. Rather, what is conveyed in many scriptural accounts, is that the enforcement of following or restricting of various customs and celebrations equates to the enslavement of religious bondage that removes our individual freedom with Christ. In addition, pagan originated holidays are *not* presented scripturally to be an offense to God, unless the practice itself consists of *harmful, immoral and hurtful abuse and direct worship of other Gods are involved*. (1 Pet 2:21; Eph 5:1,2; 1 Cor 11:1; Acts 1:21-22; 1 Pet 1:3; Heb 1:2,8,12; 10:13; Psalm 110:1)

Channaka and Christmas

While Jesus was still alive, the practice of Channaka or "Festival of Dedication" was being celebrated by the Jews. Although this celebration does not have Pagan origins, nowhere is it found in the Hebrew scriptures as a command to celebrate. It is found in the Apocryphal. It is interesting that Jesus did not condemn this practice. Instead, he only denounced the self righteous, unkind treatment the Jews were receiving from their leaders. The celebration of Channaka was not harmful issue, but the religious leaders treatment of the Jews. (John 10:22)

"Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter." John 10:22

There is also a strong possibility that this rededication of the temple back to the God of the Hebrews accrued on December 25, making the date of Christmas to be of a non Pagan origin. "This Feast of Dedication" is still celebrated by Jewish people as Hanukkah. Under the subject "Maccabees" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, it says:

"Under Judas' brilliant leadership, what had begun as a guerrilla war turned into full-scale military engagements in which smaller Jewish forces managed to defeat much more powerful Syrian armies. Among Judas's most notable achievements were the recapture of Jerusalem (except for the Akra fortress, where the Syrian garrison continued to hold out) and the rededication of the Temple, after the defiled altar had been demolished and rebuilt. The date of the rededication, 25 Kislev (*December 25*) of 164 B.C., with the attendant eight-day festivities, has since that time been celebrated annually as Hanukkah or the "Feast of Dedication."

Since the original Feast of Dedications was celebrated on the same day that the Romans worshiped the sun-god, does that mean that the Jews were guilty of 'pagan worship'? Of

course not. A modern day example can show how ludicrous this sort of reasoning is: If a couples' wedding anniversary normally falls on October 30th, but they decide to celebrate it the next night on Hallowe'en, does that mean they're guilty of pagan worship? Not according to the Organization as I phoned Brooklyn Bethel and asked this very question. The answer I received was if the celebration of a person's wedding anniversary happened to fall on a secular holiday, that in no way means the couple is partaking in 'pagan customs'.

While this is a reasonable answer, for some reason the Organization does not apply the same sort of logic to modern day celebrations of Christmas or birthdays.

Birthdays

While the bible is mostly silent on the subject of birthday celebrations, there is some evidence that might indicate that Job's sons celebrated their birthdays regularly. Note the scripture at Job 1:4,5:

"And his sons went and held a banquet at the house of **each one on his own day**; and they sent and invited their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And it would occur that when the banquet days had gone round the circuit, Job would send and sanctify them; and he got up early in the morning and offered up burnt sacrifices according to the number of all of them; ..."

What indicates that they might have been celebrating their birthday? Note Chapter 3 verses 1-3:

"It was after this that Job opened his mouth and **began to call down evil upon his day**. Job now answered and said: "**Let the day perish on which I came to be born**, Also the night that someone said, 'An able-bodied man has been conceived!'"

While this is by no means direct evidence that a birthday was being celebrated, it's of interest to note that Job's sons had special days set aside where they celebrated on their 'own day' which would have made the individual throwing the party, the center of attention. This is one of the main reasons that the Watchtower Society gives for banning birthday celebrations as it 'makes the individual the focus of attention instead of Jehovah.'

Regardless of whether Job's children celebrated their birthdays, the point is that they each had a day where the individual was the focus of attention, yet this apparently was not displeasing to Jehovah. There is also another interesting account pertaining to Abraham and his son Isaac in Genesis 21:8.

"Now the child kept growing and came to be weaned and Abraham then prepared a big feast on the day of Isaac's being weaned."

Could this be compared to a birthday celebration? It sounds very similar to the baby showers that Jehovah's Witnesses have on a regular basis which is, in actuality, the celebration of a child's birth.

Pagan Names

Daniel and his three companions willingly were assigned different names within the pagan political government of Babylon, the very names of Babylonian gods. This shows the individual conscience is the determining factor and not any religious organization. But more important, their pagan names were not displeasing to God. The very name given to Daniel: Belteshazzar, was a name that comes from the false god Baal. And yet Daniel did not object or refuse this name, nor did it displease God. Does this mean that Daniel was acknowledging the validity of the false god Baal? Was he identifying himself with Paganism? Was he "touching the unclean thing?" Was he part of "Babylon the Great," who would "share in her sins?" Apparently not. (Daniel 1:6,7; 3:13-18; 4:19)

The Origin of the Honeymoon:

Most Witnesses go on a honeymoon after getting married, most likely without knowing that the 'honeymoon' itself also has roots in paganism. Among northern nations of Europe, in ancient times, it was the custom for newly married couples to drink mead (a kind of wine made from honey) for a period of about thirty days after marriage.

Antiquarians say that from this custom grew the term "honey month" or "honeymoon."

Another description is:

"...We do know that in the days of "marriage by capture," it was necessary for the bridegroom to remain in hiding with his bride until her kinsman tired of the search for her.

And later, when love entered marriage and elopements were frequent, it was necessary for bride and groom to remain in hiding for a while. Both of these "hiding periods" seem to point to possible origins of the honeymoon."³¹⁰

In fact it was the accepted practice in Babylon over 4,000 years ago, that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer, and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the "honey month" or what we know today as the 'honeymoon.

It appears the overall consensus is the origins of the honeymoon are entwined with pagan customs. The act of "marriage by capture" or abduction, the drinking of honey beer (mead) or honey wine and the lunar based time of hiding, all point to pagan teachings and customs, yet Jehovah's Witnesses are allowed to have honeymoons after the wedding day.

If you were to go by the "letter of the law, which kills" then the main teachings of God - Love and Mercy - are lost, and no honeymoon could be celebrated. But when following the "spirit of the law," what can be seen is the "forest from the trees," the understanding can be reached that loving kindness to others far outweighs the man made interpretations, rules, restrictions and legalistic (non) observances. How we treat our neighbor on a daily and

³¹⁰ Eichler, 255 - Eichler, Lillian. The Customs of Mankind. New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1924.

continual basis will determine our standing with God, not our interpretation of what constitutes a pagan teaching.

If the honeymoon custom was to harm others or worship other gods, making burnt offerings of our children, then we would not be loving, but cruel and selfish to others, thus displeasing God. But to take a harmless or actually beneficial custom that actually bonds persons and families together, and restrict it from one's self and others because of its pagan origins is to "have eyes and not see" "have ears and not hear," another wards, blinding intellectualism. (2 Cor 3:6; Jer 5:21)

Wedding Rings and Wedding Customs

Many wedding traditions that Jehovah's Witnesses are allowed to participate in all come from 'pagan origin. That wedding rings are steeped in pagan origin is no secret:

"The custom of giving a wedding ring dates back to the ancient Romans....Wearing the wedding ring on the ring finger of the left hand is another old custom. People once thought that a vein or nerve ran directly from this finger to the heart." ³¹¹

Even where the wedding ring is recognized as marking a married woman and serves notice upon anyone with passionate desires, *some may conscientiously object to featuring a ring in the ceremony, having in mind the pagan origin of the customary wedding ring in Christendom.* ³¹²

"The wedding cake has its origins far back in time....In Rome the early marriage rite was called conferreatio from the cake of wheat...which the couple first offered to the gods, then ate together." ³¹³

"Although for Americans covering the bride's face with a veil has come to represent innocence and purity, the practice was originally used in other cultures as protection from harm or molestation and was one of many rituals adopted out of concern for the happiness, safety, and fertility of the bride and groom....raised chairs, red carpets, special shoes and other forms of insulation or protection have been used to defend against malicious spirits on the ground....The current Western practice of having a bridal party to attend the couple evolved from a Roman tradition, in which the bridesmaids and ushers dressed exactly like the bride and groom, to protect the wedding couple by confusing evil spirits" ³¹⁴

Baptism

³¹¹ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, 2000, p. 221

³¹² Watchtower September 15 1956 p.571

³¹³ *The Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 28, 1999, p. 565

³¹⁴ *Something Old, Something New—Ethnic Weddings in America*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 1987), p. 8

Baptism is considered the most important day in a any Witnesses' life, yet it did not originate with Christianity, but in fact, was an ancient pagan practice that the Watchtower itself admits:

The practice of baptism, however, predates the Christian faith. It was employed in Babylonia and in ancient Egypt, where the cold waters of the Nile were thought to increase strength and bestow immortality. The Greeks also believed that baptism could bring regeneration or could procure immortality for the initiate.³¹⁵

The Egyptians had a custom when a crocodile dragged a person into the Nile and drowned him. When his body was recovered, the priests embalmed the remains, arrayed it in beautiful robes and placed it in a sacred sarcophagus. They treated his body "as one who is more than an ordinary being.' A man drowned in this way was called one who had been 'immersed' [baptized]." The Egyptians believed that the immersion of the drowned man identified him with special status. He was no longer ordinary, but extraordinary. So it is with Christians. Their baptism identifies them with their new extraordinary place in the plan of God: they are sons of God, royal priests, and raised to newness of life.

Despite baptism clearly being of pagan origin, Jehovah's Witnesses get baptized and insist on it as identifying individuals as being part of "God's organization." They are not allowed to celebrate a *holiday* that has any pagan origin, yet they will openly—and in fact are told they must—partake in a practice that clearly came from pagan origins. According to their reasoning a holiday that has pagan origins is displeasing to Jehovah. How can this be, if the pagan practice of baptism is not? Just as the Watchtower Society allows the use of pagan names for our modern day calendar and the use of wedding bands in marriage, where do holidays differ?

It is clear that Pagan origins had no impact on pleasing or displeasing God, for John the Baptist was sent to baptize for the forgiveness of sin against the Law Covenant. Jesus Himself submitted to the pagan practice of baptism by John the Baptist (Baptizer). And he sent his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He did not reject the practice of Baptism because of its "pagan" origins, just as he did not reject the "festival of lights" (Chanukah), the teaching in synagogues, the mummification and embalming of dead bodies and various other customs that came from either a man made tradition or a Pagan origin. (Mat. 3:7, John 3:22, etc.).

Love is the Laws Fulfillment

"One man judges one day as above another, another man judges one day as all others, let each man be fully convinced in his own mind." With the exception of the commandments to put faith in Christ and showing love of God by showing this to our neighbors, which include a moral code of non-hurtful actions towards others, each one of us must use our own "perceptive powers of understanding" and be "fully convinced in our own mind" of what pleases and displeases God, when it comes to the many conscience interpretations in the bible.

³¹⁵ Watchtower April 1, 1993 p. 4

All Christians would want to "welcome the man having weaknesses in his faith" and not to "be a cause for stumbling," however, to put undue restrictions and laws on others, because of our personal or organizational conscience, is to "put a heavy yoke on the shoulders of men" going beyond a stumbling factor and living by the "letter of the law that kills." It is the "spirit of the law that gives life." (Heb 5:14; 2 Cor 3:6; Rom 14:2-3,5,13,20; Matt 23:4)

For only with "the blood of Christ" "could our consciences be cleansed," removing the law code. The "new covenant" in which Christ made with his disciples was the covenant of "God's law's written on their hearts," an internal law of love, not an external law code of rules, regulations and technical meanings behind various customs and holiday celebrations. For "love is the laws fulfillment."

To put restrictions on various customs and holidays because of Pagan origins, is to practice the legalistic "minding of the flesh, which means enmity with God and death." Instead Christians are to "be in accord with the spirit, which means life and peace." And for this we have the "freedom," as followers of Christ, to engage in the many customs and holidays that have pagan origins, as long as they do not stumble others, and are loving, kind, modest and just in walking with our God and *do not involve direct worship of false gods or harmful, immoral practices.* (Jer 31:31-33; Heb 8:10-11; Rom 13:10; 8:1-11; Gal 5:1; Micah 6:8; 1 Cor 8:13)

The commandment we have to follow has nothing to do with customs, holidays and practices that originally had pagan origins, but rather as Apostle John put it,

"So now I request you, ... not a new commandment, but one which we had from the beginning, *that we love one another.* And this is what love means, that we go on walking according to God's commandments. This is the commandment, just as you people have heard from the beginning, that you should go on walking in it." ³¹⁶

³¹⁶ 2 John 5,6