

Chapter 1

Recruiting Techniques of the Watchtower Society

The Watchtower Society is an aggressive cult. The individual members of the Watchtower Society are known as Jehovah's Witnesses. They believe it is their responsibility to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom. In Belize, Jehovah's Witnesses staff carts in public places and go door to door in their communities. Their goal is to make contact with individuals that might be open to hearing about the Watchtower Society. Generally, they follow a predictable pattern. When they make contact, they attempt to establish a dialogue and provide written material for the person to read. During return visits, they encourage the person to enter into a Bible Study. The Bible Study often lasts 3 to 6 months and uses Watchtower Society materials rather than just the Bible. They tell the potential recruit that the use of the Watchtower Society materials is very helpful because it is much more understandable than the Bible and the material has Bible verses throughout. The recruit is also asked not to tell anyone about the studies. They will explain that Christians who are doing the will of God are often persecuted. Therefore, it is best not to share about the Bible Study. Finally, when ready, the recruit is invited to the Kingdom Hall. There they are shown great attention and made to feel wanted and important. Over time they are assimilated and learn to think and act like a Jehovah's Witness.

Initially this does not seem very threatening. In fact, aside from using Watchtower Society materials and being secretive, it does not seem so different from how evangelical Christians might share their own faith with others. There is outreach, teaching, and ultimately, incorporation into a church. The difference is that the Watchtower Society is a cult. It teaches an entirely different Gospel, creates dependency upon an organization, and exerts control over every aspect of Jehovah's Witnesses lives. Rather than leading followers to freedom and salvation, the message of the Watchtower Society leads to entrapment in a human made, human directed organization. Even worse, the message leads to serious theological error and ultimate destruction.

What Is a Cult?

Jehovah's Witnesses vehemently deny they are a cult. Instead, they claim to be the only true Christians and believe that the Watchtower Society is God's organization on earth. Are they correct? The answer is, no; they are not the only true Christians. Instead, the Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult. This means that they differ significantly from orthodox or traditional Christian theology. Alan Gomes, associate professor of historical theology and chairperson of the department of theology at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, defines a theological cult in the following way:

A cult of Christianity is a group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization,

which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible.¹

Since Jehovah's Witnesses freely deny the trinity, the deity of Christ, the efficacy of Jesus sacrifice, the bodily resurrection of Christ, salvation through grace alone, and the personality of the Holy Spirit, they clearly deny doctrines that are central to the Christian faith. Therefore, by definition, the Jehovah's Witnesses are a theological cult. In addition to being a theological cult, one should ask if they are a cult sociologically as well. Sociologically, cults are known for behaviors that are ultimately harmful to the psychological or physical well-being of the cultist. Typically, cults have an authoritarian leadership that stifles independent thought and action. They are exclusive, identifying their particular group as the only true group. They often isolate the new recruits and minimize contact with the outside world, creating an echo chamber where the claims of the cult can be uncritically accepted without being confronted with error or incoherence. They also employ an element of fear to maintain control of their believers. The fear can be a fear of being made socially unacceptable. This happens when there is a possibility of being dissociated, disfellowshipped or shunned. It can also be fear of satanic attack or loss of salvation if they fail to follow the leader of the group.² All of the above are true of the Watchtower Society. Therefore, the Watchtower Society is a cult theologically and sociologically. As a side note, the Watchtower Society was not always a sociological cult. It is true that the original founding group, the International Bible Students,³ has always been a theological cult, but they were not a cult sociologically. Charles Taze Russell valued free and independent study. All of the individual groups that comprised the Watchtower organization were independent. Russell initially had a tolerance of diversity, so initially there was little central control. He saw the groups as voluntary associations of believers gathered to do the work of God.⁴ As the groups grew, it was necessary for there to be some structure to connect the groups, arrange for conventions and take care of the business of publishing the materials, but there was no control of the individual. People could come and go without repercussion, and people could

¹ Alan W. Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 7, Kindle.

² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Seven Shepherds, Eight Dukes—What They Mean for Us Today," *Watchtower*, 15 November 2013, 20, accessed August 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2013%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.pdf>. "At that time, the life-saving direction that we receive from Jehovah's organization may not appear practical from a human standpoint. All of us must be ready to obey any instructions we may receive, whether these appear sound from a strategic or human standpoint or not."

³ Russell founded the International Bible Students. This group would splinter at his death, and the largest remaining group would be renamed the "Jehovah's Witnesses" by Rutherford in 1931 so they would not be confused with the other splinter groups.

⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Church of the Living God," *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, September 15, 1893, 266, accessed August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1893%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "In the meantime these unorganized but merely called out ones . . . are a voluntary association of believers, drawn together for mutual assistance. . . ."

think independently. It was not a totalitarian environment. Russell was revered and had been identified by many as the faithful servant of Matthew 24. People voluntarily followed his teaching. Therefore, even though a large following developed around his charismatic personality and his teaching, there was no controlling organization. The people's faithfulness and devotion to Russell held the group together. While Russell espoused tolerance and seemed to value it in terms of church structure, he had little patience with people who disagreed with his personal theology. Many times he would establish relationships with other leaders only to break those relationships when the other parties did not support his particular theological positions.

Most people that become involved in a cult will eventually become defenders of its theology. However, most initially have little interest in the group's theology. They join because the cult meets a need for love, acceptance or security. Those same reasons make it difficult for a cult member to leave. Leaving may cause feelings of rejection and fear of the future. Leaving may also result in the cult members' being separated from their family, friends, and social network. Therefore, to think of a cult solely in terms of theology is to misunderstand cults.

When it comes to exiting a cult, bad theology may not be enough of a motivator for someone to leave a cult. It is unlikely that a cultist will easily change his or her theological views. Even if someone shows them Bible verses that refute their theology, there may be no outward sign of doubt or uncertainty. This is because leaving has many negative ramifications, including the possible loss of family and friends. Leaving a cult usually occurs slowly and with much soul searching. In fact, many people opt for comfort and security rather than truth.

Recent Recruiting Efforts in Belize

The last year that statistics are available from the Watchtower Society is 2017. Government statistics for 2018 claim a population of 6,593 Jehovah's Witnesses in Belize. This would be equal 1.7% of the total population. However, the Watchtower Society claims a far smaller number. In Belize, they claim 2,555 average monthly publishers or 0.66% of the population. This, according the Watchtower, is an annual increase of 2 percent over the last year. Therefore, the number of publishing Jehovah's Witnesses grew by about fifty members. However, approximately 2 percent of the total membership leaves or is disfellowshipped annually. Therefore, to maintain growth, the actual number of individuals recruited was approximately 100. In the past, the recruitment rate was quite high. In the 1940s and 50s, 20 percent or more of the people approached would respond to an invitation to a Bible study. That figure has now dropped to about 3 percent worldwide. This means it is likely that recruiting those 100 people required 3,334 individual contacts.

While it is impossible to determine who will be successfully recruited, it is most likely that the people who will be recruited have no strong family or church attachments. The cultist's offer of friendship and support tend to draw the lonely, insecure, or guilty. The

individual recruits may come to believe that their situation can be resolved and peace found if they will embrace the group's beliefs. It is also true that people undergoing a significant life crisis are at greater risk of being recruited.

A surprising number of people recruited into the Watchtower Society come from a Christian background. Often those who are drawn to the Watchtower Society come from a church that has failed to provide a sense of community and a place of involvement. To the church's embarrassment, many of those who are successfully recruited to the Watchtower Society lack an understanding of both the Bible and their church's doctrine. However, not all who are drawn to cults are theologically ignorant. A few are religious seekers or idealists who are hoping to find truth and change their lives.

The First Goal Is Disrupting Old Bonds

Whether the Jehovah's Witness is at their cart, or at a person's door, the goal is to place a piece of literature and begin a relationship. Prior to that initial contact, the Jehovah's Witness has trained and rehearsed for just about every conceivable situation.⁵ They have opening statements and replies for people who are in a hurry, who are not interested in religion, and who do not like Jehovah's Witnesses. If someone mentions a deceased relative, the Watchtower representative is prepared to ask if that person would like to see the person again. They have contemplated virtually every possible situation. As the conversation opens, the Witness is looking for an opportunity that will open a door for future contact.

Once they make the initial contact, there will be more friendly contacts. Eventually, a suggestion will be made that the recruits request a free home Bible study. Those studies are generally held weekly for a period of three to six months.

As the Bible study progresses, the Jehovah's Witness will encourage the recruits to evaluate their own religious beliefs. This is a necessary step in undermining the recruits' prior religious understanding. It also creates an opportunity to build up the Watchtower Society in the eyes of the recruits.

The literature from the Watchtower Society will suggest that many of the things that the recruit believes are wrong. Through a process of positive and negative reinforcement, the recruit will learn what they need to know in order to fit in with their new friend and mentor. Their confidence in their own church will be undermined. The JWs teach them that their church has lied and deceived them.

As the study progresses they absorb what is taught and learn not to ask too many questions. During this time, the Jehovah's Witness will begin to prepare them to fit into the

⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1985), 9-24, accessed July 28, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Internal%20Documents/Preaching/\(rs-E\)%201985%20Reasoning%20from%20the%20Scriptures%20\(1st%20edition\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Internal%20Documents/Preaching/(rs-E)%201985%20Reasoning%20from%20the%20Scriptures%20(1st%20edition).pdf).

organization by encouraging changes in behavior and dress. All through this time, the organization will be presented in an idealistic light.

When it is time to visit the Kingdom Hall, the recruit will be overwhelmed with people who are glad that the recruit is there. It is designed to be a great experience. Everyone will pay attention to the recruit, and everyone will seem to be the recruit's friend. Slowly bonds will develop, and the recruit will be absorbed into the organization.

As mentioned earlier, the recruits were not likely seeking theological enlightenment when the JW first approached them. It is more likely that the positive attention they received and the opportunity to feel appreciated and loved were the main factors that brought the recruits to the point that they wanted to adopt the views and behaviors of the Witnesses.

The Witness will use the recruit's lack of familiarity with the Bible and Christian doctrine to undermine any loyalty the recruit may have had to their church. The literature being studied will claim that the church has lied and misled them. During the Bible study, it is almost certain that the trinity and the deity of Christ will be questioned. The issue of the trinity is an excellent topic for the Witnesses because it is a difficult doctrine to explain and few people have taken the time to become familiar with it. This makes it is easy for the Witnesses to discredit teaching about the trinity in the eyes of the new recruit. During discussion, the Witness will raise a number of arguments against the trinity. A source of typical arguments can be found in the book *Should You Believe in the Trinity*⁶ where on page 3 the Watchtower quotes a supposed scholar as saying,

Supporters of the Trinity say that it is founded not only on religious tradition but also on the Bible. Critics of the doctrine say that it is not a Bible teaching, one history source even declaring: "The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan."⁷

This is a forceful argument, but what is not mentioned is that the author of the quote, Arthur Weigall, is a non-believer with very liberal views. Weigall finds most biblical history and doctrine to be based in pagan beliefs that have been culturally appropriated by the early church. Among those beliefs he has identified are the virgin birth, the birth narrative of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, the wilderness temptation, the crucifixion, the piercing of Jesus side, the ascension, Jesus as an atoning sacrifice, Jesus as the slain Lamb of God, baptism, and communion. Therefore, for the Watchtower to be consistent, if they accept Weigall's theology, they must also reject each of those beliefs. However, they will not. Weigall's views

⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Should You Believe the Trinity* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1989), accessed March 22, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1989%20Should%20you%20believe%20to%20the%20trinity%20\(ti-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1989%20Should%20you%20believe%20to%20the%20trinity%20(ti-E).pdf).

⁷ Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1928), quoted in the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Should You Believe the Trinity* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1989), 3, accessed March 22, 2018, [http://watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1989%20Should%20you%20believe%20to%20the%20trinity%20\(ti-E\).pdf](http://watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1989%20Should%20you%20believe%20to%20the%20trinity%20(ti-E).pdf).

are presented so that a naïve reader will assume those views are an unbiased and scholarly view of the trinity. Nothing could be further from the truth. The approach is intellectually dishonest. In essence, the Watchtower Society quotes an author known to be disreputable because the author makes a point that they wish to make. However, Jehovah's Witnesses would discount almost everything else he says. This example of Watchtower scholarship demonstrates the necessity of checking sources and quotes whenever the Watchtower references something.

The Watchtower also attempts to link the trinity to ancient pagan religions.⁸ They note that three seemed to be a popular number among the ancients and that a number of pagan gods were presented as trinities. However, the trinity is not said to be three separate Gods, but one God in three persons. The trinity has no pagan counterpart. Additionally, these groupings of three gods in pagan religions were often the head of a pantheon of gods. They were also all mythological. In reality, the Watchtower understanding of Jesus as a separate lesser god or a demigod puts the Watchtower theology in a position where it has more similarity to the pagan gods mentioned than the trinity of Christianity. No credible contemporary theologian or New Testament scholar links the trinity with pagan gods.

JWs claim that the trinity cannot be biblical because the term trinity is not found in the New Testament.⁹ This is not a logical claim. The trinity is a descriptive term describing something in the Bible. The argument does not seem to reflect clear thinking. If that were to become our criteria, the Watchtower Society would find itself with a problem. Not only would the word trinity need to be rejected, but also key Watchtower terms such as organization, theocratic, Watchtower study, circuit overseer, district overseer, governing body, publisher, pioneer, auxiliary pioneer, pioneer, Kingdom Hall, and presiding overseer would also need to be stricken.

A further objection is that the trinity is incomprehensible.¹⁰ Since the Watchtower Society has a rational approach to Scripture and rejects mystery, the trinity could appear to be troubling since it is beyond our ability to understand. However, it seems foolish to suggest that we must be able to understand the divine nature for it to be real. The book of Job in the Old Testament seems to make this exact point. God is beyond our comprehension. Most Christians and most thinking people recognize that the divine nature is beyond our ability to comprehend. However, because we cannot fully understand the workings of the Trinity, nothing prevents our being able to understand that this is how God has presented Himself in the Bible.

Finally, the Watchtower attempts to undermine the trinity by quoting a number of scholarly references. This is very troubling because many of the references quoted in *Should You Believe in the Trinity* fail to quote the sources selected accurately. This is typical of

⁸ Watchtower, *Should You Believe the Trinity*, 11.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Watchtower, *Should You Believe the Trinity*, 11.

much of Watchtower research and documentation. The either leave out portions of the article quoted or insert an ellipse to hide a portion of the article that contradicts the point the Watchtower is trying to make. As a result, the reader should check Watchtower materials, footnoting and other references to see if the material actually supports the position the Watchtower is advancing. An example of this problem can be found in a quote from the *New Bible Dictionary*.¹¹ The quote, located on page 3 of *Should You Believe the Trinity*, reads, “The word Trinity is not found in the Bible. . . . It did not find a place formally in the theology of the church till the 4th century.” This strongly implies that the first four centuries of the church passed by before the trinity became an issue. However, the whole passage actually says,

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, and, though used by Tertullian in the last decade of the 2nd century, it did not find a place formally in the theology of the Church till the 4th century. It is, however, the distinctive and all- comprehensive doctrine of the Christian faith and 'gathers up into the seam of a single grand generalization with respect to the being and activity of God all the major aspects of Christian truth' (Lowry). Theology seeks to define the subsistence of God by stating that God is one in His essential being, but that the divine essence exists in three modes or forms, each constituting a Person, yet in such a way that the divine essence is wholly in each Person. (emphasis added)¹²

The article, having pointed to the centrality of the doctrine to the Christian faith, states later in the very same article,

As already indicated, Scripture does not give us a fully formulated doctrine of the Trinity, but it contains all the elements out of which theology has constructed the doctrine. The teaching of Christ bears testimony to the true personality of each of the distinctions within the Godhead and also sheds light upon the relations existing between the three Persons. It was left to theology to formulate from this a doctrine of the Trinity. The necessity to formulate the doctrine was thrust upon the Church by forces from without, and it was, in particular, its faith in the deity of Christ and the necessity to defend it, that first compelled the Church to face the duty of formulating a full doctrine of the Trinity for its rule of faith. Irenaeus and Origen share with Tertullian the responsibility for the formulation of the doctrine which is still, in the main, that of the Church catholic.¹³

¹¹ J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas, F. F. Bruce et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 1298-1299, accessed September 3, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014729894;view=1up;seq=1319>.

¹² Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1298-1299.

¹³ Ibid.

So for the Watchtower to quote from this article and suggest that it supports the view that the trinity was not seen or considered until the fourth century is misleading and dishonest.

There is an important lesson to be learned when considering the arguments the Watchtower advanced against the trinity. In every case, whether dealing with the trinity or another topic, it is necessary to check all footnotes and references as well as to examine the books quoted and the theology of the authors. Raymond Franz, an ex-Jehovah's Witness, commented about his mindset when he was writing for the Watchtower Society in his book *Crisis of Conscience*.¹⁴ He revealed that research was not done so much to search for truth but to support and defend what was already believed to be the truth. If they could not find support for a position, then information undermining the opposing position needed to be marshaled.¹⁵ The goal was not to search for and discover the truth, wherever that might lead. Instead, research became similar to a team sport: their team against the other team. The goal was to help their team win at all costs. When that approach is taken, the results are exactly what are found in *Should You Believe the Trinity*.

The second critical topic that will surface in the Bible studies is Jesus Christ. Who is he, and what is his nature? The Watchtower claims that Jesus is a created being. They state, "One's being in the image of God and according to his likeness would never mean that one was the equal of Jehovah God. An 'image' is not the real thing."¹⁶ They also claim that in his pre-incarnation state he was Michael the archangel. They state, "There is Scriptural evidence for concluding that Michael was the name of Jesus Christ before he left heaven and after his return."¹⁷ In his incarnation, he was a perfect human.¹⁸ Following his crucifixion, his spirit returned to heaven, but his body was forever destroyed. Therefore, Jesus now exists as a

¹⁴ Raymond Franz was the nephew of Frederick Franz, the fourth president of the Watchtower Society. Raymond had a long history with the Witnesses and ultimately was one of the members of the governing board. However, his research and his observations eventually convinced him that the Watchtower Society was not what it claimed to be. Private discussions he had with friends were brought to light by detractors, and he was disfellowshipped. His uncle did nothing to help him and cut him off from any future contact.

¹⁵ Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 4th ed. (Atlanta, GA: Commentary Press, 2004), 30-31, accessed August 15, 2108, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>.

¹⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *God's "Eternal Purpose" Now Triumphant for Man's Good* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1974), 37, accessed September 3, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1974%20Gods%20eternal%20purpose%20now%20triumphant%20for%20mans%20good%20\(po\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1974%20Gods%20eternal%20purpose%20now%20triumphant%20for%20mans%20good%20(po).pdf).

¹⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Crushing All Nations in Our Day by God's Kingdom," *Watchtower*, May 15, 1969, 307, accessed September 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1969%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

¹⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jesus Christ—Sent By God?", *You Can Live Forever On Paradise Earth* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1982), 62, accessed May 13, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20\(pe-E\)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20(pe-E)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf).

spirit creature.¹⁹ The Watchtower notes that in Gospels, Jesus never claims to be God, and he is always subordinate to the Father. They also attempt to repudiate the translation of John 1:1, noting that Jesus is a lesser god. This effort can be observed in one of Russell's earliest Watchtowers where he states,

“In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with *the* God, and the Logos was *a* God. The same was in the beginning with *the* God. All things mere made by him [the Logos], and without him was not anything made that was made.”-John 1:1-3. . . . We adopt the word Logos as one of our Lord's many names. . . . Another difference between the above translation and the common version, is the addition of the italicized words *a* and *the*. These are supplied in order to give the reader the true sense of the Greek text. In which the presence or absence of the Greek article is very important. In the above translation *the* represents the article, while *a* shows that the article is lacking. With this translation verified and appreciated (as can be done by consulting any Greek Testament or any Greek scholar). . . .²⁰

The fact that this leaves us with two gods is apparently not an issue for most Witnesses, but it should raise concern. God affirms in Isa. 43:10, “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘And my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He. Before me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me.’” So there is the question of how this impacts John 1:1. If Jesus is a false god, then there is no problem as both Satan and men in positions of power are referred to as gods. They are indisputably false gods. However, if Jesus is not a false God and is instead a true God, then Isa. 43:10 would seem to indicate that there is but one God and the addition of “a” is unwarranted.²¹ Additionally there are numerous Greek scholars who believe that grammatical rules prohibit the use of “a” in the translation.²² It is for this reason that the vast majority of Bible translations utilize the traditional understanding of John 1:1. Those that differ tend to be translated by individual translators or groups with an identifiable bias against the deity of Christ.

¹⁹ Watchtower, “Jesus Christ—Sent By God?”, 172.

²⁰ Charles Taze Russell, “The Word Was a God,” *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, April 15, 1893, 1514, accessed August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1893%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

²¹ Bruce Metzger, “The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal,” *Theology Today* 10, no 1 (April 1953): 65-85, accessed April 10, 2019, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/metzger.jw.html>.

²² Brian O'Connell “John 1:1 What do scholars say?”, Crossbearer.net, accessed April 10, 2019, <http://crossbearer-brian.tripod.com/id237.htm>. Rev. O'Connell cites 15 scholars who have commented on John 1:1. He quotes their response to the introduction of the anarthrous ‘a’ into the verse. He also shows four other verses in John having the same grammatical structure, where the Watchtower did not use the anarthrous ‘a’ before God.

A secondary approach in denying the deity of Christ is to claim that Jesus is a created being. However, a serious Bible student will quickly realize that no place in the Scriptures presents Jesus as a created being. The passage to which the Watchtower Society refers when claiming Jesus is a created being is Col. 1:15. The New World Translation, the Bible produced by the Watchtower Society, states, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” However, the Greek term for firstborn, πρωτότοκος,²³ has more than one possible meaning. Louw and Nida in sections 13.79 and 87.47 explain that the first meaning is “existing prior to something else—‘existing first, existing before’. πάσης κτίσεως ‘existing before all creation’ or ‘existing before anything was created’ Col 1:15.”²⁴ However, an equally valid meaning is “existing superior to all else of the same or related class—‘superior to, above all’. πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως ‘existing superior to all creation’ Col. 1:15.”²⁵ So πρωτότοκος can legitimately be understood in two different senses. One sense is chronological, as in the first-born child in a family, and the second sense is that of preeminence. Some examples of the second sense are found in Exod. 4:22 and Jer. 31:9 where Israel is spoken of as God’s firstborn people. Likewise, in Ps. 89:27 David is called God’s firstborn king. This same concept is found in the early church fathers. Jerome writes about Polycarp, “(Polycarp) went to Rome in the time of the emperor Antoninus Pius while Anicetus ruled the church in that city. There he led back to the faith many of the believers who had been deceived through the persuasion of Marcion and Valentinus, and when Marcion met him by chance and said ‘Do you know us?’ he replied, ‘I know the firstborn of the devil.’”²⁶ So understanding firstborn as a term of preeminence is well-attested in the Old Testament and in the New Testament period. The context and other scripture will guide the choice of meaning.

The Watchtower uses a number of verses attempting to show the subordination of Jesus or his lack of total knowledge about the future. But this neglects two important considerations. First, the incarnation described in Phil. 2:5-8 demonstrates that Jesus laid aside his God nature to live as a human.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

²³ Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993), Col. 1:15.

²⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 157.

²⁵ Louw and Naida, 737.

²⁶ Jerome, “‘Polycarp’, De Viris Illustribus,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 3, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1892), chap. 17, accessed September 3, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm>.

Second, in the act of laying aside his God nature and living as a human, he was functionally subordinate to God, the Father. He was dependent upon the Father for all things. Therefore, he prayed to the Father and directed attention towards him.

Even while in his incarnate state, Jesus demonstrated the attributes of God. He forgave sin, and accepted worship. He controlled nature, cast out demons, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. In addition, he accurately predicted his own death and resurrection. All of these are strong indications of his deity. He also fulfilled multiple Old Testament prophecies describing the coming Messiah. Additionally, the New Testament authors, writing about him, used titles previously reserved for God,²⁷ and acknowledged him as God directly.²⁸ The early church fathers also proclaimed his deity.²⁹

The third area of disagreement is over the nature of the Holy Spirit. The Watchtower Society rejects the idea that the Holy Spirit is an individual or a person in any sense of the word. They reveal their position in an article in the “Bible Questions Answered” section of www.jw.org. The article is titled “What Is the Holy Spirit?”³⁰ They teach that the Holy Spirit is the active force of God. They deny the personality and personhood of the Holy Spirit and reject the idea that the Holy Spirit is part of the trinity.

People claim five basic arguments against the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit. The first argument is that the Holy Spirit does not have a name.³¹ They argue that since people are given names in the Bible, the lack of a distinct personal name means that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force. This argument falters when their own literature concludes that demons are referred to as spirits.³² Demons are not believed to be an impersonal force by

²⁷ Among the titles shared by Jehovah and Jesus are Savior (Acts 4:12), Rock (1 Cor. 10:4), Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13), I Am (John 8:24), God (John 1:1) Lord of Lords (Rev. 17:14), Creator (John 1:3), Light (John 8:12), and Judge (2 Tim. 4:1). A helpful chart by Bill and Joan Cetnar can be found on the blogsite *Jesus is Jehovah*. Accessed September 4, 2018, <http://jesusisyhwh.blogspot.com/2011/10/jesus-is-jehovah-contents.html>.

²⁸ Following are some verses that refer to Jesus as God: John 10:30, John 8:58, John 1:1, John 4:26; Col. 1:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 1:23; Luke 7:16; John 5:18; Mark 14:61-62; John 20:28; 2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; 1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 1:8; and Titus 2:13.

²⁹ Justin Martyr says, “For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that **He was God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God.**” For a list of some of the quotes where the early church fathers referred to Jesus as God see the blog by Tim Barnett, “**Nine Early Church Fathers Who Taught Jesus Is God,**” *Stand To Reason Blog*, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://www.str.org/blog/nine-early-church-fathers-who-taught-jesus-god#.W47TmLgnbb0>.

³⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “What Is the Holy Spirit,” *JW.org*, accessed September 7, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/Bible-teachings/questions/what-is-the-holy-spirit/>.

³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 406, accessed July 28, 2018,

³² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Demon,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, vol. 1, Aaron—

the Watchtower Society. Instead, they are understood to be rational agents of the Devil. Since the vast majority of demons are not given names in the Scripture, the argument that a lack of a name negates the possibility of personality or independent existence is shown to be false.

The second argument is grammatically based. Since the word spirit has a neuter gender in Greek it must be an impersonal object, an “it.”³³ This betrays a misunderstanding of the use of gender in the language. Both child and demon are neuter nouns. Neither a child nor a demon are an “it.” Additionally, in the book of John a masculine adjective is utilized with the Holy Spirit suggesting that John understood that the Holy Spirit was a person.

The third argument is that the Scriptures present the Holy Spirit acting like a force but not a person.³⁴ Acts 2:1-4 speaks of a noise similar to a violent wind, followed by tongues of fire resting on people. It also notes that people are filled with the Spirit. The argument states that a person could not cause a great wind and then fill the room. Likewise, a person could not be divided up and rest on people as fire, nor could a person fill another person. However, these issues are resolved when by looking at Scripture. In 2 Sam. 22:11, God thunders from heaven. That would seem to be very similar as creating a rushing wind. Scripture also speaks of God filling the heavens. Jer. 23:24 makes the point that God is omnipresent. If that is true of God, then what prevents the Holy Spirit from filling those he desires to? Eph. 4:10 indicates that Jesus ascended so he could fill the whole universe. Therefore, the filling of believers with the Spirit is not an impossible concept.

The fourth argument is that all the places where the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as if he has personality and volition are personifications. God is actually at work and that is just a way of describing his work.³⁵ However, it is equally possible to understand those verses as being an accurate description of who the Holy Spirit actually is. The category of personification is generally reserved for situations where a literal fulfillment is not possible. For instance, in Isa. 55:12 the trees are spoken of as clapping their hands. That cannot be literal; it must be a personification. However, if someone read about a human clapping, he would not say it was a personification.

The fifth argument states that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not established as a formal doctrine until the fourth century. That is true. However, the Watchtower Society also

Jehoshua (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 612, accessed March 22, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20\(it-1-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20(it-1-E).pdf).

³³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Spirit,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, vol. 2, *Jehovah—Zurim* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 1019, accessed June 4 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200004211>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1017.

³⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Identifying the Holy Spirit,” *Watchtower*, January 15, 1991, 4, accessed September 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/991%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

claims that the early church fathers did not teach that the Holy Spirit had personality or was divine.³⁶ That is not accurate. Beginning with Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and the Martyrdom of Polycarp there are abundant references that demonstrate that the early church fathers believed the Holy Spirit was a divine personality.³⁷

The Watchtower Society uses their literature to present both Jesus and the Holy Spirit through the lens of Watchtower theology. Therefore, the Witnesses are going to lead a person who is studying with them to the conclusion that Jesus is a created being and the Holy Spirit is the operative force of God. However, if one were to study just the Bible and avoid Watchtower literature, one would never find the truths the Jehovah's Witnesses proclaim. This can be illustrated by looking at a quote from Russell's writings. In 1910, Russell claimed that reading his material was like reading the Scriptures. In fact, in reading his material, a person would learn Bible truths that could not be learned by just reading the Scripture. However, he cautioned, if a person stopped reading his material and read only the Bible, he would soon fall back into his old, erroneous beliefs.³⁸ From this it appears clear that the teaching of Pastor Russell and the teaching found in the Bible must be quite different since they lead to two different ends.

Once pre-existing beliefs have been swept away and replaced with Watchtower truths, it is time for the next step. In place of their old beliefs, the recruit has a new and exciting understanding of the Bible that the world does not have. In addition, the recruit has experienced acceptance and encouragement from the Witnesses. Bonds are developing. Now the recruit will be encouraged to attend the Kingdom Hall.

Building New Attachments

After they tear down the old framework of beliefs, it is only necessary to build a dependence upon the Watchtower organization. Once that is done, everything else will fall into place. The Jehovah's Witnesses will speak of the Watchtower Society in glowing terms, describing life as a JW as positive and rewarding. Negative parts of life as a witness are glossed over. Any failures or problems the recruit may have heard about, such as failed prophecies or changes in doctrine, are explained away. God is constantly providing new light where he takes away the imperfect and moves the organization closer to perfection. Past problems are airily dismissed. Any mistakes are the result of fallible men. New light

³⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Spirit," *Insight*, vol. 2, *Jehovah—Zurim*, 1019, accessed June 4, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200003640>.

³⁷ James Richardson, "Quotes from the Early Church Fathers: The Holy Spirit," *Apostles Creed*, accessed September 7, 2018, <http://apostles-creed.org/confessional-reformed-christian-theology/theology/quotes-from-the-early-church-fathers-the-holy-spirit/>.

³⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Is the Reading of 'Scripture Studies' Bible Study?," *Watchtower*, September 15, 1910, 298, accessed June 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1910%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

continues to move the organization forward. They teach and envision the recruit an idealized Watchtower Society.

One goal is to destroy an independent spirit and replace it with a dependence of the Watchtower Society. By the time the Bible Study is complete, the new recruits will ideally have lost confidence in their ability to interpret Scripture. In part this occurs because of the recruits' inability to defend their beliefs. Without outside assistance or resources, they will have come to believe that their previous beliefs were in error. After that, it is up to the Witnesses to complete the process and teach the recruit to be dependent on the Watchtower Society.

Obedience to Jehovah is one of the first things that the new recruit must learned. The Watchtower Society insists that its members avoid independent thinking.³⁹ The member's study should be limited to reading and accepting the teaching found in Watchtower literature. This is the only information that members are supposed to consult.⁴⁰ Independent reading is discouraged, even to combat worldly ideas.⁴¹

If the recruit is inclined to resist the control of the Watchtower Society, as they may have resisted their church or school in the past, they will be reminded how important the Watchtower Society really is. The recruit will soon realize that the Watchtower Society is God's organization on earth; no other group speaks authoritatively for God.

The recruit will learn that the Watchtower Society was assigned this privilege in 1918. In 1914, both Jesus and Jehovah had come to earth to inspect all the churches of the world. After the inspection it was determined that, only the Watchtower Society was faithful

³⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Exposing the Devils Subtle Designs," *Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, 22, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Avoid Independent Thinking-From the very outset of his rebellion Satan called into question God's way of doing things. He promoted independent thinking. 'You can decide for yourself what is good and bad', Satan told Eve. 'You don't have to listen to God. He is not really telling you the truth'. (Genesis 3:1-5) To this day, it has been Satan's subtle design to infect God's people with this type of thinking.—2 Timothy 3:1,13. 21 How is such independent

thinking manifested? A common way is by questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization."

⁴⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Do Not Be Quickly Shaken from Your Reason," *Watchtower*, March 15, 1986, 13-14, accessed August 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1986%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "First, we can ask what, exactly, has caused the concern. It may be only one or two points. Then we can stick to these and answer from the Scriptures, from the Society's publications, and from what we truthfully know about the subject. We need not conclude that we have to read a book or a pamphlet that is filled with slander and half-truths in order to refute the false claims and teachings of opposers."

⁴¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Are You Remaining Clean in Every Respect?," *Watchtower*, November 1, 1987, 20, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1987%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "False religious propaganda from any source should be avoided like poison! Really, since our Lord has used 'the faithful and discreet slave' to convey to us 'sayings of everlasting life', why should we ever want to look anywhere else?"

to God. Therefore, Jehovah appointed the Watchtower Society to be God’s sole representative, God’s mouthpiece on earth.⁴² Whatever the Watchtower Society presents or teaches, it is from Jehovah and must be obeyed. All literature, though not identified as inspired, is treated as inspired. All books, magazines and programs are presenting God’s will. They must be obeyed in an unquestioning manner.

Second, the recruit must learn that the Watchtower organization is central to God’s plan on earth. The role of the organization is so important that a person’s salvation rests upon their being in communication with God’s channel.⁴³ If a person is not faithful to the organization, when Armageddon occurs, they will be destroyed without hope of resurrection.

The recruit is taught that no person is able to understand Scripture on his or her own.⁴⁴ They are not capable of correctly interpreting the Bible. Only the Watchtower Society is able to interpret Scripture.⁴⁵ The Bible was written not for the individual but for the whole community, so the Watchtower is the only qualified interpreter.⁴⁶

If the recruit develops a different understanding of something that is being studied, they will be taught that presenting anything that contradicts the Watchtower Society is inappropriate. Instead, they need to humble themselves and adopt the Watchtower understanding. Otherwise, they are engaging in independent thinking, and that is a mark of

⁴² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Loyal to Christ and His Faithful Slave,” *Watchtower*, April 1, 2007, 22, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2007%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “‘On arriving’ to inspect the ‘slave’ in 1918, Christ found a spirit-anointed remnant of faithful disciples who since 1879 had been using this journal [the Watchtower] and other Bible-based publications to provide spiritual ‘food at the proper time’. He acknowledged them as his collective instrument, or ‘slave’, and in 1919 entrusted them with the management of all his earthly belongings.”

⁴³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth—But How?,” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1983, 12, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Serving Jehovah ‘Shoulder to Shoulder,’” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, 19, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “We all need help to understand the Bible, and we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ organization.”

⁴⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Channel to Understanding the Bible,” *Watchtower*, Oct 1, 1994, 8, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1994%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “All who want to understand the Bible should appreciate that the ‘greatly diversified wisdom of God’ can become known only through Jehovah’s channel of communication, the faithful and discreet slave.”

⁴⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Finding Freedom with Jehovah’s Visible Organization,” *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, 587, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Thus 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.”

pride.⁴⁷ Independent thinking will lead to discipline.⁴⁸ Raymond Franz recounts how Edward Dunlap, a dedicated Jehovah's Witness for many years, was dismissed from his positions within the Watchtower organization and disfellowshipped because he privately expressed a difference of opinion regarding certain Watchtower teachings. Dunlap expressed these differing viewpoints to close friends in private conversation. They were not widely shared or taught to others. However, having doubts or reaching an alternative understanding is independent thinking, and it led to his disfellowshipping.⁴⁹ Franz also produced a photocopy of a 1981 letter sent to the overseers of the organization that warns them to be on the lookout for people with apostate views. One key section states,

Keep in mind that to be disfellowshipped, a apostate does not have to be a promoter of apostate views. . . . Therefore, if a baptized Christian abandons the teachings of Jehovah, as presented by the faithful and discreet slave, and persists in believing other doctrine despite Scriptural reproof, then he is apostatizing. . . . he continues to believe the apostate ideas and rejects what has been provided through the 'slave class' then appropriate judicial action should be taken.⁵⁰

The recruits will eventually be taught that, even if what is being taught does not seem to make sense, it is their task to accept it, and if it requires action, to act immediately.⁵¹ The individual Jehovah's Witness should not be presumptuous. God speaks through the Watchtower Society. Unquestioning obedience is expected.

If all of those principles can be instilled in the recruit, they are ready to fit into the Watchtower community. The recruits will learn to look and act like Jehovah's Witnesses.

⁴⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Armed for the Fight Against Wicked Spirits," *Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, 27, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Uphold Jehovah's Righteousness," *Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock* (Watchtower. New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1991), 94, accessed August 4, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Internal%20Documents/Elders/ELDERS%20BOOK%201991%20Pay%20attention%20to%20your%20selves%20and%20to%20all%20the%20flock%20WITH%20CONFIDENTIAL%20NOTES%20\(ks91-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Internal%20Documents/Elders/ELDERS%20BOOK%201991%20Pay%20attention%20to%20your%20selves%20and%20to%20all%20the%20flock%20WITH%20CONFIDENTIAL%20NOTES%20(ks91-E).pdf).

⁴⁹ Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 4th ed. (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 2004), 5, accessed July 19 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁵¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Seven Shepherds, Eight Dukes—What They Mean for Us Today," *Watchtower*, November 15, 2013, 20, accessed August 6, 2018. <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2013%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.Pdf>. "At that time, the lifesaving direction that we receive from Jehovah's organization may not appear practical from a human standpoint. All of us must be ready to obey any instructions we may receive, whether these appear sound from a strategic or human standpoint or not."

Every aspect of their lives is subject to the control of the society. They are to be excellent examples that reflect the best of the Watchtower organization.

How to Avoid Entrapment

How can people avoid entrapment by a cult? The most important thing a person can do is to maintain the relationships that are important for wholeness and happiness. Keep close to family and friends. Seek deepening community. Discuss new friends and new ideas with family and friends and listen closely to their replies. Get to know the Bible well and become familiar with basic doctrine. If theological issues come up, have a network of close trusted friends that can provide guidance. Develop a good relationship with a Bible believing church and participate in or create opportunities for fellowship. If these things are done, it is much less likely that anyone would become involved in the Watchtower Society or with any other cult.

Chapter 2

The Watchtower Society and Its Leaders

Who Are the Jehovah's Witnesses?

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult known for frequently doing door-to-door witnessing and more recently, operating bookstands in public places. In spite of their high visibility, many people do not know much about them. Who are they? Are they Christian or are they a cult? What do they teach and what are their goals? This introductory chapter will provide a description of the Witnesses and the Watchtower Society, utilizing their own documents. The chapter endeavors to present an accurate view of what the Jehovah's Witnesses say about themselves and what they teach.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a comparatively small religious group comprising about 1 percent of the number of people believing in God in any nation. The total number of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide is approximately 8,457,107. These are spread across 120,053 congregations in 240 lands.¹

Looking at United States, the Pew Research statistics indicate that the Jehovah's Witnesses are more racially diverse than any other religious group, are primarily female and

¹ "Jehovah's Witness Statistics," *JWFacts.com*, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>. This is a fascinating article providing an analysis of Jehovah's Witness statistics since the 1960s.

are less educated than most other religious groups.² They also have the lowest retention rate of any religious group. Two thirds of those born into the religion leave.³

Jehovah's Witnesses meet in relatively simple buildings known as Kingdom Halls. A circuit consists of twenty Kingdom Halls linked together under the care of a circuit overseer. There are no paid ministers in the congregation. The congregation is guided by spiritually mature elders who oversee each Kingdom Hall. Jehovah's Witnesses claim to minimize the use of titles and ranks but in reality, utilize titles rather freely. Both men and women minister outside the Kingdom Hall, but only men can speak and pray in the Kingdom Hall and only men can be elders. No collections are taken but donations can be placed in a box located at the Kingdom Hall.⁴

Jehovah's Witnesses are perhaps best known for their vigorous door-to-door outreach. Each active Jehovah's Witness is expected to publish or share God's good news. This is done by distributing the two primary magazines, *Awake* and the *Watchtower*. People are invited to join the Witnesses in Bible Study and to begin attending the Kingdom Hall. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught to be respectful and to state that they do not want to pressure people into changing their religion.

Jehovah's Witnesses are part of the Watchtower Society. The Watchtower Society is the organization that Charles Taze Russell incorporated to guide his Bible Students. The Watchtower became a source of prophetic and doctrinal truth for the students. Today it is taught that it is not possible to understand God's Word⁵ or find salvation apart from the Watchtower organization.⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses believe in the Bible but they do not believe

² Michael Lipka, "A closer look at Jehovah's Witnesses living in the U.S.," *Pew Research Center*, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>. "36% are white, 32% are Hispanic, 27% are black and 6% are another race or mixed race. Most Jehovah's Witnesses—roughly two-thirds (65%)—are women, while only 35% are men. . . . Jehovah's Witnesses tend to be less educated. A solid majority of adult Jehovah's Witnesses (63%) have no more than a high school diploma."

³ Ibid. "Jehovah's Witnesses have a low retention rate relative to other U.S. religious groups. Among all U.S. adults who were raised as Jehovah's Witnesses, two-thirds (66%) no longer identify with the group."

⁴ Joe Carter, "9 Things You Should Know About Jehovah's Witnesses," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-jehovahs-witnesses/>.

⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Finding Freedom with Jehovah's Visible Organization," *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, 587, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.witforjesus.org/downloads/english/pdfs/jehovahs-witness/Bibleread/wt10-1-67p587.pdf>. "Thus 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."

⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth -But How?" *Watchtower*, February 15, 1983, 12, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "A third requirement is that we

in inerrancy.⁷ The Watchtower Society created its own translation of the Bible.⁸ They think that it is more accurate and more correct than other translations, though they continue to utilize multiple Bible versions. Their version is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. There are several variant readings in the text of this translation that Jehovah's Witnesses claim provide better accuracy and clarity. The translation "restored" the name of Jehovah where God or Lord had been used in the Old Testament.⁹ It also restored Jehovah 237 times in the New Testament where God or Lord had been used.¹⁰ Scholars who are not Jehovah's Witnesses have noted that the translation has a number of errors and insertions that are designed to support the Witnesses theological positions but that cannot be justified by reading the original texts.¹¹

Jehovah's Witnesses take some pride in the claim that when they have discovered errors or found areas where their beliefs that were out of line with their understanding of the Bible, they have changed their beliefs. This is related to the concept of new light, the idea that God has been consistently enlightening the Watchtower governing board so that they have an increasingly better understanding of God's Kingdom. This "new light" has led to a

be associated with God's channel, his organization. God has always used an organization. . . . To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it."

⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "An Interesting Question," *Watchtower*, April 15, 1928, 126, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1928%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Of course this is another method that the enemy adopts to confuse the minds and furnish an excuse for not being faithful to the Lord. As every one knows, there are mistakes in the Bible and there never has been a book written yet that is perfect that has been written by any human hand."

⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Foreword," *New World Translation* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2013), accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/Bible/nwt/holy-scriptures-foreword/>. "Those who love Jehovah God and worship him desire an accurate, understandable translation of God's Word. (1 Timothy 2:4) To that end, we have made this revision available in English, with the intention of translating it into as many languages as possible."

⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Divine Name in the Hebrew Scriptures," *New World Translation* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2013), accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/Bible/nwt/appendix-a/tetragrammaton-divine-name/>. "Why, then, does this translation use the form 'Jehovah?' Because that form of the divine name has a long history in the English language."

¹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Divine Name in the Christian Greek Scriptures," *New World Translation* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2013), accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/Bible/nwt/appendix-a/divine-name-christian-greek-scriptures/>. "The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures does not follow this common practice. It uses the name Jehovah a total of 237 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In deciding to do this, the translators took into consideration two important factors: (1) The Greek manuscripts we possess today are not the originals. Of the

thousands of copies in existence today, most were made at least two centuries after the originals were composed."

¹¹ Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 100.

number of doctrinal changes.¹² This is troublesome since, if the truth they have proclaimed in the past is now error, it means that it was false when it was first proclaimed.¹³ Since the Jehovah's Witnesses have a very long list of adjusted understandings, it appears they are an unreliable source of information. What is proclaimed as true today stands a good chance of being error tomorrow. That is a problem since God's true prophets do not lead his people into falsehoods.

The History of the Watchtower Society

The current Watchtower Society can trace its origin to Charles Taze Russell, though they prefer to claim an alliance with the small remnant of true Christians that have lived across dark centuries of apostasy. According to the Watchtower, soon after the last apostle had died the church fell into apostasy.¹⁴ The spiritual decline continued until, by 1870, it was difficult to find any spiritual truth.¹⁵ It was only with the restoration of the Watchtower Society that true Christianity began to be proclaimed again.¹⁶ In spite of the claims of near apostolic succession, it is clear that the spiritual DNA of the Watchtower Society originated directly from the efforts of Charles Taze Russell.

¹² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Light Keeps Getting Brighter," *2016 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2016), accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/books/2016-yearbook/highlights/jehovahs-witnesses-beliefs-clarified/>. "As a result, their path 'is like the bright morning light that grows brighter and brighter'. (Prov. 4:18) Increasing light from Jehovah continues to illuminate their way organizationally, doctrinally, and morally. What are some of our beliefs that have been clarified in recent years?"

¹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "They Shall Know a Prophet Was Among Them," *Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, 197, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1972%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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. They are still proclaiming a warning, and have been joined and assisted in their commissioned work by hundreds of thousands of persons who have listened to their message with belief."

¹⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Learning from First-Century Christians," *Awake!*, August 8, 2002, 8-9, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/2002%20Awake.pdf>. "Following the death of the first-century Christian apostles, apostate church leaders increasingly deviated from Christ's teachings, just as God's Word had foretold. (Acts 20:29, 30) A corrupted church eventually became more and more entangled with the secular state."

¹⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1993), 706, accessed June 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20\(jv-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20(jv-E).pdf). "Clearly, when the time of the end began in 1914, none of the churches of Christendom were measuring up to these Bible standards for the one true Christian congregation. What, though, about the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known?"

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 707. "A biography of Russell, published shortly after his death, explained: '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.'"

Russell's spiritual revival began at a meeting of the Second Adventists in 1869. Previously estranged from his faith, he came to believe he had finally discovered the truth. In 1870 he began meeting in Allegheny, Pennsylvania with friends and family.¹⁷ Russell demonstrated himself to be an effective Bible study leader and organizer. By 1880, Russell determined that he should meet with other groups and gather them together for mutual support and encouragement.¹⁸ Soon the Bible study groups grew in number and size. Russell was elected pastor in Pittsburg in 1882.¹⁹ As his Bible Students increased in number, the Allegheny Bible Study began to be responsible for the activities of what would become the Watchtower Society. Russell chartered the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Pennsylvania on December 15, 1884.²⁰ In a short time, as the group expanded, the Watchtower Society had two offices. However, it was soon evident that a larger facility needed to be built. In 1889, a four-story building was erected that became the headquarters of the Watchtower Society for 19 years. By April of 1900, Russell had opened an overseas branch in London.²¹ The new and growing Watchtower Society recognized its need for a formal office and an area where it could do its own printing. In 1908, following a time of investigation, property was purchased in Brooklyn, New York.²² By chance, the Watchtower

¹⁷ Ibid., 44. "So, in 1870, fired by enthusiasm, he and a few acquaintances from Pittsburgh and nearby Allegheny got together and formed a class for Bible Study."

¹⁸ Watchtower, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 50. "The answer came in the Watch Tower issues of May and June 1880. There Russell announced his plans to visit a number of towns and cities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York. For what purpose? 'Our readers,' the announcement explained, 'are much scattered, some places 2 and 3, and on up to 50. Many places they are totally unacquainted with each other, and thus lose the sympathy and comfort which our Father designed should come to them by "The assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is." It is His design that we should 'Edify: one another,' and build each other up in the most holy faith.'" , *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 50. "The answer came in the Watch Tower issues of May and June 1880. There Russell announced his plans to visit a number of towns and cities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York. For what purpose? 'Our readers,' the announcement explained, 'are much scattered, some places 2 and 3, and on up to 50. Many places they are totally unacquainted with each other, and thus lose the sympathy and comfort which our Father designed should come to them by 'The assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is'. It is His design that we should 'Edify: one another,' and build each other up in the most holy faith.'"

¹⁹ Ibid., 54. "The first group to vote him their pastor was the congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1882. Thereafter, he was voted pastor by some 500 other congregations, in the United States and Britain."

²⁰ Ibid., 210. "To prevent disruption of the work in the event of his death, and to facilitate the handling of donations to be used in the work, Brother Russell filed for legal registration of the Society, and this was officially recorded on December 15, 1884. This brought into existence a needed legal instrumentality."

²¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The First One a Hundred Years Ago," *Awake!*, December 22, 2000, 17, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/102000925>. "When that first branch was established a hundred years ago, England had a total of 138 Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. Two years later, in 1902, a second branch was opened, in Germany; and by 1904, additional branches had been set up in Australia and Switzerland."

²² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1993), 59, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses->

Society was able to locate and purchase a property once belonging to Henry Ward Beecher a famous evangelical preacher. The property had previously been named Bethel by Beecher, and the name was retained. In 1909, the headquarters of the Watchtower Society relocated to Brooklyn, New York.²³ Over time, the Watchtower Society prospered, and the Brooklyn location was enlarged and modernized. Through their investments and publishing, in the time between 1909 and 2016, they obtained 36 properties in New York with a value of more than a billion dollars.²⁴ In the years immediately prior to 2016, the Watchtower Society made a decision to relocate the headquarters. “The printing plant where the Jehovah’s Witnesses produce Bibles and religious tracts moved from Brooklyn to the town of Wallkill in 2004.”²⁵ In preparation for the move to Warwick, their new consolidated headquarters, many of the 36 New York properties were sold. In April of 2017, the Watchtower Society officially opened their new headquarters in Warwick, New York.²⁶

A key ingredient to the success of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has been its publishing facilities. Those who are introduced to the Witnesses quickly learn that the

Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20(jv-E).pdf. “In 1908, therefore, several representatives of the Watch Tower Society, including its legal counsel, Joseph F. Rutherford, were sent to New York City. Their objective? To secure property that C. T. Russell had located on an earlier trip. They purchased the old ‘Plymouth Bethel,’ located at 13-17 Hicks Street, Brooklyn. It had served as a mission structure for the nearby Plymouth Congregational Church, where Henry Ward Beecher once served as pastor.”

²³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Brooklyn Bethel—100 Years of History.” *Watchtower*, May 1 2009, 22-23, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2009330?q=brooklyn+bethel&p=par>. “He believed that moving the Society’s headquarters from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Brooklyn, New York, would be an important step in doing so. Preparations for the move had begun in 1908, and the move was made early the following year.”

²⁴ “Jehovah’s Witnesses could get \$1 billion for Brooklyn properties,” *Daily News*, New York Online December 14 2015, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/jehovah-witnesses-1-billion-nyc-properties-article-1.2464957>. “The Jehovah’s Witnesses, the door-knocking religious group that’s been based in Brooklyn for a century, is selling its headquarters and other properties for an expected price tag of \$1 billion or more.”

²⁵ *Ibid.* “The printing plant where the Witnesses produce Bibles and religious tracts moved from Brooklyn to the town of Wallkill in 2004.”

²⁶ “Open House at Witnesses’ New World Headquarters Draws Positive Community Response,” *JW.Org*, Newsroom, May 22, 2017, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://www.jw.org/en/news/releases/by-region/united-states/open-house-new-world-headquarters-jehovahs-witnesses/>. “This past Saturday, Jehovah’s Witnesses hosted the first of two special open-house receptions at their recently constructed world headquarters campus in Warwick, New York.”

literature is indispensable. No one can understand the Bible²⁷ or gain eternal life²⁸ apart from the Watchtower Society and the literature is their link to the Society. This has resulted in vast amounts of printed material being circulated wherever Jehovah's Witnesses are located. The voice of the Watchtower Society is its published material. The same message is read Sunday in every Kingdom Hall around the world. People gain their knowledge of the Jehovah's Witnesses, not primarily through sermons or talks but through reading aloud the scheduled study guides and asking the assigned questions. *Awake* and *The Watchtower* speak with the authority of the Watchtower Society. It is mandatory to both believe and obey everything proclaimed in those magazines. Jehovah's Witnesses and their proselytes must be faithful in reading the literature the Watchtower Society provides. The magazines have been the glue that holds the Watchtower Society together.

The Watchtower Society has printed numerous books, magazines, studies and tracts. The two best know are *The Watchtower* and *Awake* magazines. The *Watch Tower* began as *Zion's Watch Tower* and *Herald of Christ's Presence* in July 1879.²⁹ The name has changed twice times in its history. In 1909, the publication became *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* celebrating Christ's invisible presence.³⁰ In 1939, Judge Rutherford removed the reference to Christ and in its place substituted Jehovah, celebrating their message vindicating Jehovah. The new title became, *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*.³¹

The Watchtower is a theological and biblical publication. The goal of *The Watchtower* is to explain the Bible and related doctrinal issues. The primary focus is what the

²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Do We Need Help to Understand the Bible?", *Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, 17, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "From such experiences it can be seen that Jehovah God caused the Bible to be written in such a way that one needs to come in touch with His human channel before one can fully and accurately understand it. True, we need the help of God's holy spirit, but its help also comes to us primarily by association with the channel Jehovah God sees fit to use."

²⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Path of the Righteous Does Keep Getting Brighter," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1981, 27, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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."

²⁹ *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 724, accessed June 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20\(jv-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20(jv-E).pdf). "When first produced, in July 1879, it was called *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. This magazine, which was a champion of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, was published to the household of faith."

³⁰ *Ibid.* "On January 1, 1909, the title was changed to *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, in order to focus attention more clearly on the objective of the magazine."

³¹ *Ibid.* "Then on March 1, 1939, by changing the title to *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* attention was directed more prominently to Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign, the one who gave ruling authority to his son."

Bible teaches about God's Kingdom.³² The magazine, *Awake!*, focuses on general topics such as nature and science. It is lighter and more interesting reading for the casual reader.³³ *The Watchtower*, followed by *Awake!*, has the largest magazine circulation in the world.³⁴

By any standard, the Watchtower Society has been very successful. While there is no current information available about the worth of the Watchtower, an article from 2003 indicates that they have substantial resources. In addition, they have recently sold a billion dollars worth of property as they consolidated for the move to Warwick.³⁵

In 2017, the Watchtower Society's "Fast Facts" page shows the Jehovah's Witnesses to be active in 240 nations. They boast 8,340,982 members and have done 10,115,264 free home Bible courses in the last year. At the annual Memorial of Christ's death, 20,085,142 attended. They list 119,485 congregations worldwide. In spite of internal and external controversies, the Watchtower Society continues to prosper.³⁶

The Influence of the Watchtower Society

Unless the reader is familiar with the absolute control that the Watchtower Society wields over the membership of the Society, it is impossible to understand the commitment of the average Jehovah's Witness to the theological positions espoused in the *Watchtower* magazine and in *Awake!*. It is also impossible to understand the reluctance of the Jehovah's Witness to develop friendships with those who are not Jehovah's Witnesses and their

³² "The Watchtower—No Other Magazine Comes Close," JW.Org, accessed on September 29, 2017, <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/activities/publishing/watchtower-awake-magazine/>. "The purpose of The Watchtower is to explain Bible teachings—and particularly what the Scriptures say about God's Kingdom. It has been published continually since 1879."

³³ Ibid. "Awake! deals with general subjects, such as nature and science, with a view to building faith in the Creator. It also stresses how the Bible can be of practical value in our life."

³⁴ Ibid. "The Watchtower has a circulation larger than any other magazine in the world. Each issue has a print run of more than 42 million copies. *Awake!* is second, with a circulation of 41 million copies each issue. Both magazines are published by Jehovah's Witnesses and are distributed in 236 lands."

³⁵ "34th Biggest Company in New York," *Jehovah's Witnesses.Com*, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/43014/watchtower-34th-biggest-company-ny?page=1>. "Industry: Publishing CEO: President: Don Adams Employees: 3,181 in Brooklyn (volunteers) Revenue (in millions): 951"

³⁶ "Fast Facts," *JW.Org*, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/>. "2017 Grand Totals: Branches of Jehovah's Witnesses: 90, Number of Lands Reporting: 240, Total Congregations: 120,053, Worldwide Memorial Attendance: 20,175,477, Memorial Partakers Worldwide: 18,564, Peak of Publishers: 8,457,107, Average Publishers Preaching Each Month: 8,248,982, Percentage of Increase Over 2016: 1.4, Total Number Baptized: 284,212, Average Pioneer Publishers Each Month: 1,249,946, Average Auxiliary Pioneer Publishers Each Month: 439,571, Total Hours Spent in Field: 2,046,000,202, Average Bible Studies Each Month: 10,071,524, During the 2017 service year, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$202 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and circuit overseers in their field service assignments. Worldwide, a total of 19,730 ordained ministers staff the branch facilities. All are members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses."

unwillingness to listen to, read, or consider material from any source other than the Watchtower Society. The members live in a world where their failure to conform to the standards set by the Watchtower can result in their being disciplined, expelled, and shunned by the Watchtower Society.

It is difficult for a non-witness to understand the impact that being disfellowshipped has. A disfellowshipped witness has been taught that being disfellowshipped separates them from God's Watchtower Society on earth and therefore places them outside the kingdom. There is no longer any hope for salvation. In addition, they will be shunned. Even their family will break ties with them. Because the witnesses are a closed system, this means that, as they exit the Witnesses, they will have no social support system, and everyone they have known, everyone they thought loved them, will turn their back on them. In addition, once free of the cult, the lack of education common among Witnesses will make finding gainful employment difficult.

This kind of totalitarian control does not appear to be what Charles Taze Russell had in mind when he began his Bible studies. He was a precocious youth and an intelligent and talented adult. He was successful in business and continued to be a good businessperson even while pursuing his ministry. While Russell is faulted for being egotistical and stubborn, he was able to speak to people's hearts and encourage them. Many people were drawn to his personality and style. Russell was deeply loved. He could hold people spellbound for hours preaching and lecturing, and he could encourage and support people in person. He also had boundless energy and enthusiasm. His writings and his actions showed that he was not interested in developing a personal kingdom. He appeared to believe that the end was coming soon. It does not appear that he wanted to develop a regimented army of clones. Russell legitimately seemed to have valued personal autonomy and freedom.

Ironically, Russell encouraged people to avoid organizations. He had looked at the existing churches and their structures and believed that the churches of Christendom were holding Christians down and keeping them from being what they could be. He wrote that organizations were unnecessary.³⁷ He believed that it was a better testimony that an unorganized people should accomplish the work of God.³⁸ This was good insight. Even today, people become confused and are drawn into denominations where they learn to support the denomination and the denomination's beliefs but are not given the freedom to develop a relationship with Jesus and develop their own ministry gifts. As a result, some

³⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Concerning Profitable Meetings," *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, September 15, 1895, 216, accessed August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1895%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Beware of 'organization'. It is wholly un-necessary. The Bible will be the only rules you need. Do not seek to bind other consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey so far as you can understand God's word today, and so continue to growing in grace and knowledge day by day."

³⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions and Answers," *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, March 1883, 6, accessed August 4, 2018 <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1883%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

churches have become barriers to an authentic relationship with Christ. So his advice was good. He encouraged believers to develop their own system of belief and not to allow themselves to be coerced by the beliefs of others without good scriptural support.³⁹ Russell's ecclesiae or little churches were independent, loosely structured groups that sought to follow Russell's teachings. If individuals had a disagreement with their group, they were welcome to go and start another group as long as they did not interfere with the group they left. There was no governing body to exert control over the groups. Russell believed that such control would be out of harmony with God's will.⁴⁰ He rejected systems that replaced relationships with rules and policies.⁴¹ Russell recognized that history is full of movements that started well, but eventually lost their compass and became self-sustaining organizations primarily intent on perpetuating their own group. Those groups, having lost their mooring, became harmful and were a detriment to the cause of Christ. He referred to this as a fatal mistake.⁴²

³⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Concerning Profitable Meetings," *Zion's Watch Tower*, September 15, 1895, 216, accessed on August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1895%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Beware of 'organization'. It is wholly un-necessary. The Bible will be the only rules you need. Do not seek to bind other consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey so far as you can understand God's word today, and so continue to growing in grace and knowledge day by day."

⁴⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Twelve Sent Forth," *Zion's Watch Tower*, December 1, 1894, 384, accessed August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1894%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "In view of these facts and also of the nature of the harvest work, and the addition. In fact, that each one so gathered is expected to enter into the harvest work as a reaper, and will do so to the extent of his ability and opportunity, it is plain that the forming of a visible organization of such gathered out ones would be out of harmony with the spirit of the divine plan; and, it done, would seem to indicate on the part of the Church a desire to conform to the now popular idea of organization or confederacy. . . . While, therefore, we do not esteem a visible organization of the gathered ones to be a part of the Lord's plan in the harvest work, as though we expected as an organization to abide here for another age, we do esteem it to be his will that those that love the Lord should speak often one to another of their common hopes and joys, or trials and perplexities, communing together concerning the precious things of his Word, and so help one another, and not forget the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is; and so much the more as they see the day approaching."

⁴¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions and Answers," *Zion's Watch Tower*, March 1883, 6, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1883%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We believe that a visible organization and the adopting of some particular name would tend to increase the numbers and make us appear more respectable in the estimation of the world. The natural man can see that a visibly organized body, with a definite purpose, is a thing of more or less power. . . . But the natural man cannot understand how a company of people, with no organization which they can see, is ever going to accomplish anything."

⁴² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Church of the Living God," *Zion's Watch Tower*, September 1 and 15, 1893, 266, accessed August 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1893%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "There is no organization today clothed with such divine authority to imperiously command mankind. There is no organization doing this today; though we are well aware that many of them in theory claim that they ought to be permitted to do so; and many more would like to do so. This was the fatal mistake into which the Church began to fall in the second century; and the effort to realize this false conception culminated in the boastful, imperious counterfeiting of the coming Kingdom in Papacy, which for centuries sought to dominate the world, by claimed 'divine authority'. This idea more or less pervaded and poisoned the ideas of all the Protestant 'clergy' as well; who copying Papacy's false

Raymond Franz, once a member of the governing body, made a similar point when trying to explain why the Jehovah's Witnesses followed the same tragic pathway into error. The lengthy footnote below is profoundly helpful in understanding the development of the Watchtower Society.⁴³

Following Russell's death there was a power struggle for control of the Watchtower Society. The struggle was won by Judge Joseph Rutherford. Rutherford, a ruthless individual, was used to getting his own way. He wielded power in an authoritarian manner and was able to stamp his personality and will on the Watchtower Society.

Though he may not have been personable, Rutherford was intelligent and perceptive. He realized that the Bible Students were not going to be loyal to him personally, so he began masterfully to switch allegiance from the "faithful servant" Russell to the Watchtower Society.⁴⁴ Since, the governing board would not exist in any meaningful way until after the death of President Frederick Franz, the Watchtower Society was actually synonymous with the president. Therefore, people not inclined to follow Rutherford followed the Watchtower Society, not understanding they were following Rutherford. Then, the governing board was a useful fiction. The Watchtower Society and more specifically the governing body would ultimately be transformed into the faithful and discrete slave of Matthew 24.

ideas of the Church, claim also that the Church of Christ is now organized, though they now make less boastful claims to 'divine authority' to teach and rule mankind in general, that the Papacy does."

⁴³ Fred Franz, *In Search Of Christian Freedom*, 36-37, accessed August 4, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. "But above and beyond the rather unpredictable, even unstable, nature of the attitudes and expressions proceeding from such a source, I believe that there is a more basic cause for the very strong authoritarian approach manifested. It all illustrates a pattern of human behavior, one that has been repeated down through the centuries with almost depressing regularity. It is the pattern of a group of people who leave an established religion or religions, who start out with the avowed determination that the Bible is and will be their sole definitive guide, their only true source of authoritative information; who then grow in numbers and in historical age as an entity, and who gradually produce a set of teachings that they now establish as the norm, the 'Truth,' the definitive test for measuring any person's Christianity. This is complemented by the parallel development of an authority structure to assure that all members hold to that set of teachings. In extreme cases, it may eventually come to prescribe what shall be read, studied, talked about, taught and practiced by all those adhering to that structure, which now assumes as its rightful authority the disciplining of any not holding to its humanly established norms. Such groups thus become very much like the established religions they originally left. This has been the pattern of development of many of the now-existing religions. That perennial pattern is preceded by, and underpinned by, a still more basic factor, one that contributed to the subversion of the original Christian congregation, changing it from a brotherhood, united only by the bonds of love and a common agreement on essential beliefs, into a hierarchical system of religion, thoroughly institutionalized. That fundamental factor is simply the tendency of men to seek to impose their own will on others, a tendency against which Christ Jesus found it necessary to admonish his disciples repeatedly. That conclusion is, I believe, supported by both Scripture and history."

⁴⁴ "Charles Taze Russell's Modern Day Bible Students: A History of the Watchtower from the Perspective of a Former Bible Student," *What's Up Watchtower*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.whatsupwatchtower.com/articles/2017/2/11/charles-taze-russells-modern-day-Bible-students-a-history-of-the-watchtower-from-the-perspective-of-a-former-Bible-student-part-2>.

In a move likely intended to quell dissent, Rutherford began teaching that since Jesus returned invisibly in 1914, the Holy Spirit was no longer needed. After Jesus was enthroned in 1919, he began using angels to deliver his instructions to the Watchtower Society.⁴⁵ This teaching effectively neutered those who would claim to be Spirit guided when they were attempting to argue against the Rutherford or the Watchtower Society. Rutherford also tried to keep those who had been loyal to Russell from leaving by teaching that Russell had gone to heaven at the time of his death and was still providing guidance from heaven. Rutherford continued nurturing Russell's memory until 1929. Once firmly established, he began diminishing Russell's influence and discarding his teachings.⁴⁶

Rutherford recruited Bible Students to be loyal to the Watchtower Society. The Bible Students were taught that the Watchtower Society was God's organization on earth. Slowly, building on the trust that the Bible Students had that Russell had been God's 'faithful servant'; the Watchtower Society redefined the faithful servant as a corporate entity. The 'faithful servant' became a composite of the anointed 144,000. This corporate, anointed, faithful servant was expressed through the anointed leaders at Watchtower headquarters. In doing this, the Watchtower Society effectively placed itself in the role of speaking for God. It placed itself between its followers and Jesus.

The Watchtower Society does not show great tenderness towards those who have joined its ranks. The Society is central; the members are more or less expendable. Raymond Franz commented on his experiences while on the governing board. He noted that during disciplinary hearings the board never sought input from the parties being discussed nor considered their individual situations. Those in the governing body were detached from the plight of the average Jehovah's Witness.

In practice, the governing body has become to the Jehovah's Witnesses what the Pope is to the Catholic Church, however, with much more control over the lives of individual followers. The governing body seeks compliance to the will of the Watchtower, even when

⁴⁵ Joseph Rutherford, *Vindication* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1932.), 3:250, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://ia800209.us.archive.org/29/items/VindicationVolume3/ByJudgeRutherford/1932-VINDICATION-3.pdf>. "This pictures the heavenly messenger or angels of the Lord, now used by the Lord in behalf of the remnant. These angels are invisible to human eyes and are there to carry out the orders of the Lord. No doubt, they first hear the instruction which the Lord issues to his remnant and then these invisible messengers pass such instruction on to the remnant. The facts show that the angels of the Lord with him at his temple have been thus rendering service unto the remnant since 1919."

⁴⁶ Joseph Rutherford, *The Finished Mystery* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1917), 144, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.jwfacts.com/publications/studies/Studies-7-the-finished-mystery-1917.pdf>. "And another angel.— Not the 'voice of the Lord,' mentioned in the preceding chapter, but the corporate body— the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, which Pastor Russell formed to finish his work. This verse shows that, though Pastor Russell has passed beyond the veil, he is still managing every feature of the Harvest work. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society is the greatest corporation in the world, because from the time of its organization until now the Lord has used it as His channel through which to make known the Glad Tidings."

the Watchtower is knowingly wrong.⁴⁷ An important demonstration of this occurred in a 1954 trial that took place in Scotland. The trial concerned the conscription of Douglas Walsh into the Scottish Military. The Jehovah's Witnesses were then opposed to military service or any type of alternative service. The lawyer for the Watchtower, Hayden Covington, was being questioned. Covington was a high-profile lawyer and had won a number of cases before the Supreme Court of the United States on behalf of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The transcript reveals a number of important details, but two in particular stand out. The first was that even though the Watchtower knew that a particular prophecy was an error, they still demanded that the individual Jehovah's Witness believe it to be true or be disfellowshipped.⁴⁸ The second was the admission that anything published in their magazines was to be adopted as truth and followed without question.⁴⁹ That degree of control

⁴⁷ The term governing body is frequently used by the Watchtower Society, and it has been a concept for some time. However, there was no functioning governing body until 1971. Even then, the strong personality of Frederick Franz kept the governing body from functioning as freely as it should have. As a result, it was 1992 before the concept finally became a reality. Until that point the first three presidents had ruled with absolute and unquestionable authority, and any board decision was a sort of rubber stamp. With the fourth president, even though the structure formally changed, he continued to exert tremendous influence until his death.

⁴⁸ "Transcript of Douglas Walsh 1954 Trial," 345-348, accessed August 4, 2018, <https://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/131122/1954-douglas-walsh-transcript-pdf?size=10&page=1>. "HAYDEN C COVINGTON - Former Lawyer for the Watchtower Society (Answering =A.) Q. Is it not vital to speak the truth on religious matters? A. It certainly is. 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. 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 short discussion of evidence given by Fred W Franz about 1874 takes place here.) Q. That was the publication of false prophecy? A. That was the publication of a false prophecy, it was a false statement or an erroneous statement in fulfillment of a prophecy 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. Back to the point now, a false prophecy was promulgated? A. I agree to 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 prophecy was wrong, and said so, would he be disfellowshipped? A. Yes, if he said so, and kept on persisting in creating trouble, because if the whole organization believes one thing, even though it be erroneous, and somebody else starts on his own trying to put his ideas across, then there is a disunity and trouble, there cannot be harmony, there cannot be marching. . . . 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 organization, the governing body of our organization, to direct it, even though mistakes are made from time to time. Q. A unity based on an enforced acceptance of false prophecy? A. That is conceded to be true. Q. And the person who expresses 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 that Christianity? A. I certainly do."

⁴⁹ Ibid., 122-123, accessed August 4, 2018, <https://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/131122/1954-douglas-walsh-transcript-pdf?size=10&page=1>. "Q. A witness has no alternative, has he, to accept as authoritative and to be obeyed, instructions in the 'Watchtower' or the 'Informant' or 'Awake!?' A. He must accept those" [emphasis in the original].

is incredible. The Watchtower Society has essentially denied other human beings the right to function as truly autonomous individuals. If persons shows any independent thought, they can be disfellowshipped. This, their lawyer acknowledges, is a theological death sentence according to Watchtower theology.

The History of the Leaders

Charles Taze Russell

Russell was born February 16, 1852 to Joseph L. Russell and Anna Eliza Russell.⁵⁰ He was the second child in a family of five children. His older brother died at age 5 and two of his younger brothers both died at age 1. His sister, Margarete was born in 1854 and was an ardent lifelong supporter of his ministry. After Russell's death she rejected the changes made by Rutherford.⁵¹ Russell's family was Presbyterian, and there is some indication that they wanted Charles to enter the ministry.⁵² Charles Russell attended the Presbyterian Church with his parents as a child and for a while became very evangelical. However, as he developed some understanding of theology, he found he disagreed with the idea of eternal torment in hell.⁵³ This caused him to begin attending a Congregationalist Church.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, this shift did not assuage his doubts, and he continued to have theological concerns. As a result, at sixteen, he left the formal church. He researched a number of religions but was not satisfied with any of them. After a year of drifting theologically, Russell attended a meeting led by Second Adventist Jonas Wendel.⁵⁵ By 1870, Russell was

⁵⁰ Charles T. Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (Brooklyn, NY: International Bible Students Association, 1923 ed.), 1:1.

⁵¹ "Early Life," *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "Margaret ('Mae', married name Margaret Land) who died nearly 90 years old in the late 1940s, having opposed the changes initiated by the new leadership of the Bible Society her brother formed."

⁵² Ibid. "Growing up in an intensely religious household, Charles' mother expressed to him when he was but seven-years-old her hope that he would one day become a missionary in God's service. Two years later on January 25, 1861, his mother died."

⁵³ Ibid. *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "At the age of sixteen Charles was having a lively debate with a childhood friend on the contradictions of Christian creeds and the hypocrisy both of the Churches, and of those who claimed to be Christians, but were leading worldly lives. The discussion succeeded in causing Charles to question whether the Bible was the word of God, and whether Christianity was nothing but an empty faith. In an effort to get a reasonable answer to his new concerns, he approached the head Pastor of the Congregational Church with his queries."

⁵⁴ Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, 1-2. "At an early age he became interested in theology, united himself with the Congregational church, and became active in local mission work. The doctrine of eternal torment of all mankind except the few elect became so abhorrent to him that at the age of seventeen he was a sceptic. He said, 'A God that would use his power to create human beings whom he foreknew and predestinated should be eternally tormented, could be neither wise, just nor loving.'"

⁵⁵ "Early Life," *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "In 1870, at the age of eighteen, he heard that a presentation was going to be given by the famous Adventist preacher, Jonas Wendell. (December 25, 1815-August 14, 1873) At the last minute he made the decision to attend this presentation to see if it offered anything new or reasonable."

captivated by their theology. He began a detailed study of prophecy on his own.⁵⁶ This is quite fascinating. Russell must have been incredibly precocious. He would have been sixteen years old when he doubted, seventeen when he was openly agnostic, and eighteen when he began to study with the Second Adventist. Few teenagers have that level of theological interest. In 1876, Russell met Nelson H. Barbour and John H. Paton who were publishers of the *Herald of the Morning*, an Adventist paper. They explained to Russell that the prophecies of Christ's return were not in error. Christ had returned as prophesied. He came in 1874, not visibly, but invisibly. Russell was convinced and at the age of twenty-two became a financial supporter of their paper and a co-editor.⁵⁷

During this time, Russell began studying the Bible intensely with a small group of family and friends. The group began meeting in 1870 and would eventually be the nucleus of the International Bible Students Association.⁵⁸ His initial outreach efforts were successful, and he soon had a large local congregation. Next, he began gathering likeminded people, starting congregations across seven states.⁵⁹ In 1881 he laid the groundwork for Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, which was incorporated in 1884.⁶⁰ A tireless leader, by 1916, Russell could boast of a large community of Bible Students.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid. "Wendell's presentation focused on the accuracy of Old Testament prophecy while pinpointing specific dates given in the Bible for events of historical importance to God's faithful followers all down through the Jewish and Christian ages. After establishing his premise, Wendell went on to show that the scriptures also clearly indicated that Christ would return to earth in 1873/1874."

⁵⁷ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2015), 13-46, Kindle.

⁵⁸ "The Beginnings of His Ministry," *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "From the years 1870 through 1875 Charles, his father Joseph, his sister Margaret, along with several other interested friends and associates, such as the well studied Millerite pastors George Storrs, and George Stetson, were actively engaged in careful, analytical Bible Study."

⁵⁹ Charles Redeker, "Bible Students: Who Are They? Where Did They Come from?", *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*, accessed June 19, 2018, http://www.heraldmag.org/literature/hist_2.htm. "In the years 1879 and 1880 alone, about 30 congregations were founded in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Delaware, Ohio, and Michigan."

⁶⁰ "Life and Ministry," *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "In 1881 'Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society' was founded with the purpose of disseminating tracts, papers, doctrinal treatises and Bibles, and was officially chartered in 1884. From this point onward, Russell's ministry grew by leaps and bounds. His Bible Study group had grown to over 200 local members who annually elected him 'Pastor'. Other congregations followed this habit as they were founded in the coming years throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, and other nations in recognition of their love, respect, and admiration for the man God was using to reveal the truth of the creeds."

⁶¹ Redeker, "Bible Students: Who Are They? Where Did They Come from?" "Subsequently hundreds of congregations across the land sprang up and elected him as their Pastor. (By 1916 there were 1,200 such Bible classes worldwide.) They appreciated his doctrine, his exemplary manner of life and his warm, kind personality."

His relationship with the Adventist became shaky as he developed his own personal theology. In spite of his essentially permissive approach to Bible study and his “little churches,” Russell could be dogmatic with his personal theology. He had theological disagreements with Nelson Barbour concerning the Ransom doctrine and in 1879, left the *Herald of the Morning* and began publishing the *Zion’s Watchtower*.⁶² That magazine would ultimately become *The Watchtower*. This pattern of developing relationships and then having them dissolve acrimoniously was repeated several times. Russell did have limits to his tolerance.

In 1879, he married Maria Francis Ackley who was apparently taken by his Bible knowledge and believed Russell to be the “faithful and wise servant” of Matt. 24:45.⁶³ The marriage was reportedly celibate.⁶⁴ They appeared to have married to collaborate on the Watchtower and develop the ministry.⁶⁵ The fact that they chose to marry and then to maintain a celibate relationship raises questions that are not addressed in the written history available. Maria was the director of the Watchtower Society and served as treasurer and secretary on occasion.⁶⁶

Russell was not only a charismatic leader and excellent preacher, but he was also a shrewd businessperson. He recognized the potential profit that could be made through publishing books and tracts. He set about developing a publishing empire built around his theological positions. He recruited book and tract sales persons, called colporteurs, and sent

⁶² “Nelson Barbour,” *Advent Christian Times*, accessed June 20, 2018, <http://pastorrussell.blogspot.com/2009/04/nelson-n-barbour-and-1873.html>. “In December 1875 Charles Taze Russell, a businessman from Allegheny, received a copy of The Herald of the Morning. He met the principals in the Barbourite movement and arranged for Barbour to speak in Philadelphia in 1876. Barbour and Russell associated together until 1878 when they parted ways over conflicting views on Ransom and Atonement doctrine.”

⁶³ Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, 7. Many of the Witnesses believed him to be the “faithful and wise servant.” They believed Russell was uniquely used of God. We will return to this later.

⁶⁴ “Life and Ministry,” *Pastor Russell.Com*, accessed on June 21, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. “On March 13, 1879, Russell married Maria (pronounced 'moriah') Frances Ackley (1850-1938) after merely a few months' acquaintance. Although expressing a fondness for each other, the marriage was not based on a romantic love, but was a mutually agreed upon celibate partnership established for preaching the gospel.”

⁶⁵ Jonalyn Grace Fincher, “Defending Femininity: Why Jesus is Good News for Women,” in *Apologetics for a New Generation: A Biblically and Culturally Relevant Approach to Talking about God*, ed. Sean McDowell (Eugene: Harvest House, 2009), 224. It appears that the union of Maria and Charles was by mutual agreement one of celibacy. This may be why some of the later scandals involving sexual impropriety arose, as well as the hostility in their marriage.

⁶⁶ “Maria F. Russell (1850 - 1938),” *Pastor Charles Taze Russell & The Watch Tower Society*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastorrussell.blogspot.com/2009/04/maria-f-russell.html>. “Mrs. Russell was a director of the Watch Tower Society and served as its secretary and treasurer for some years. She also was a regular contributor to the columns of Zion’s Watch Tower and for a time was an associate editor of the journal. Eventually, she sought a stronger voice in what should be published in the Watch Tower.”

them out to distribute his book series, pamphlets and Watchtowers.⁶⁷ These colporteurs went door to door and waited outside churches to share the Good News that Pastor Russell had for them. Through their efforts, the coffers of the Watchtower were filled and more people were drawn into the Watchtower web. He also pursued other successful business ventures.

Russell understood the need to be in the public eye. He attacked orthodox theology and the churches that held those views. He was boisterous and convinced of his positions. He drew attention to his writings and encouraged people to follow his teachings. He identified those in disagreement with him as being motivated by Satan.⁶⁸

As preposterous as it seems, Russell believed that God had chosen to reveal His plans to Russell alone.⁶⁹ As a result, he taught and apparently believed that since the actual Apostles, only he, Charles Taze Russell, could understand what God was teaching and share it with the world. That amazing claim by someone with no formal education or training and who dismissed nearly 1800 years of church history and teaching is breathtaking. Russell had tremendous confidence in his hermeneutical prowess.

Those who studied with Charles Taze Russell believed that he was bringing them new truths. Many believed he was restoring the church to what it had been in the Book of Acts. However, this was not true. He had taken much of the Advent Christian doctrine he had been

⁶⁷ Charles T. Russell, "Wanted, 1000 Preachers," *Watchtower*, April 1, 1881, 7, accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1881%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "To those so situated that they can give one-half or more of their time exclusively to the work of the Lord, we have a plan to suggest. [We refer to those who have not families dependent on them for support—both men and women,] viz: That you go forth into large or small cities, according to your ability, as Colporteurs or Evangelists, seek to find in every place the earnest Christians, many of whom you will find possessed of a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; to these seek to make known the riches of Our Father's grace, and the beauties of His word, giving them tracts; and as a work of kindness and love to them, endeavor to sell them the 'Day Dawn,' or to take their subscription for the 'Watch Tower,' [or if interested, but too poor to purchase, presenting the same as a gift from God.]"

⁶⁸ Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, ii. "The great Adversary, of course, has no love for anything which opens the eyes of God's people. . . . The great Adversary, therefore, as we might have expected, is very much opposed to this book. . . . This Prince of Darkness transforms himself into a minister of light in order to fight the truth and destroy it."

⁶⁹ Ibid. "Few realize that from the time creed-making began, AD 325, there was practically no Bible Study for 1260 years. Few realize that during that time the creeds were riveted upon the minds of millions, shackling them to horrible errors, and blinding them to the Divine character of Wisdom, Justice, Love, Power. Few realize that since the Reformation- since the Bible began to come back into the hands of the people- well-

meaning but deluded reformers have been blinded and handicapped by the errors of the past, and in turn have served to keep the people in darkness. Few realize that real Bible Study, such as was practiced in the early Church in the days of the Apostles, has only now come back to Bible students."

studying and repackaged it.⁷⁰ To that mix, he added some ancient heresies⁷¹ and perhaps a few original beliefs.⁷²

Russell's ministry was tumultuous. He was involved in several situations that had the appearance of impropriety. His followers avidly supported him, denying that there was any evidence of wrongdoing. His detractors embellished every account of wrongdoing, hoping to derail his ministry. The truth is likely found between the two extremes.

Two areas where Russell's detractors claimed wrongdoing involved his relationship with his wife and his supposed involvement with the Masons. There does not appear to be enough conclusive evidence to support either of the claims.

Russell's marital relationship ended in disaster as Maria pressed for more autonomy in her writing for the Watchtower and Russell resisted.⁷³ It also appears that Maria may have resented the lack of marital affection.⁷⁴ In 1897 she separated from Russell and ultimately accused Russell of cruelty.⁷⁵ In her 1903 court case seeking separation, she also inferred that

⁷⁰David J Stewart, "Jehovah's Witnesses an Adventist Cult," *Watchtowerlies*, accessed September 29, 2018, https://www.watchtowerlies.com/origins_of_jehovah_s_witnesses.html. "Among them he took the ransom doctrine, heaven on earth, critics on the traditional churches, the soul sleep after death and the memorial celebrated once a year by George Storrs. The dates calculated for the return of Christ, the denial of the immortality of the soul and hell."

⁷¹ "Doctrine and Beliefs," *Pastor Russell.com*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "God is not a Trinity, but the Father alone is God. Jesus, the son of God, was given a higher nature than what he had before he became a human due to his faithfulness. The Holy Spirit is the manifested power of God, and not a person at all. (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 17:5; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 5:8,9; I Corinthians 11:3; John 14:28; Luke 1:35; John 7:39; 20:22)"

⁷² Charles Taze, Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come*, vol. 3, *Millennial Dawn* (1891), 341, accessed May 5, 2018, http://watchtowerdocuments.org/documents/1891_MD_Thy_Kingdom_Come_1st_Ed.pdf. "The fact that the Pyramid's secrets were kept until the close of six thousand years of the world's history, but that it now begins to give its testimony as the Millennial Dawn draws on, is in perfect harmony with the written Word, whose abundant testimony relative to the glorious plan of God has likewise been kept secret from the foundation of the world, and only now is beginning to shine forth in its completeness and glory."

⁷³ *Ibid.* ". . . had done her injury by increasing her self-appreciation. . . . Gradually she seemed to reach the conclusion that nothing was just proper for the WATCH TOWER columns except what she had written, and I was continually harassed with suggestions of alterations of my writings. I was pained to note this growing disposition so foreign to the humble mind which characterized her for the first thirteen happy years."

⁷⁴ "Truth Is Stranger than Fiction," *Watchtower*, July 15, 1906, 221, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://mostholyfaith.com/Beta/Bible/Reprints/Z1906JUL.asp>. "Mrs. Russell's bill of complaint admitted that there had been no cohabitation between herself and her husband, and her attorney attempted to make out of this that she was deprived of one of the chief pleasures of life. The Court would not permit this. The fact is that the matter was in Mrs. Russell's own control. She did understand that her husband preferred to live a celibate life, but she agreed and expressed the same as her preference."

⁷⁵ "Criticisms," *Pastor Russell.Com*, accessed on June 21, 2018, <http://pastor-russell.com/misc/bio.html>. "Mrs. Russell sought a legal separation in 1906 under the claim of 'mental cruelty'. This claim was in reference to the fact the couple had never engaged in sexual relations (which they had mutually agreed upon before marrying)."

Russell had engaged in some sexual impropriety with an adopted daughter and with one of the maids.⁷⁶ Under cross-examination, Maria denied that Russell had been sexually intimate with anyone or that he had committed adultery.⁷⁷ However, the court hearings were public information. Several newspapers and individuals who opposed his ministry made charges of immorality against Russell.⁷⁸ Many of his enemies sought to discredit him through twisting of the information.⁷⁹ However, Russell successfully sued for libel, and eventually the newspaper involved settled out of court.⁸⁰ Russell's followers have always claimed his innocence, and he himself has denied any immorality against anyone.⁸¹ In addition, a maid, Emily was supposed to have been found behind locked doors with Russell. Russell explained the situation adequately and Emily denied any impropriety took place.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ibid. "When the matter went to court, Mrs. Russell's attorney claimed that Charles was an adulterer and had been inappropriately affectionate with a foster daughter for which they were caring."

⁷⁷ Ibid. "The Judge inquired if this was something they wished to pursue in court, and if Mrs. Russell was insisting it was true. She said 'No.'"

⁷⁸ Ibid. "A man from Canada (claiming to be an ordained minister) acquired the transcript, it was taken far out of context and important phrases left out. The Washington Post and Chicago Mission Friend reprinted

the claim that Russell was a 'jellyfish.'" (Maria had said Russell told Rose he was like a Jellyfish, floating along until someone responded to his amorous proposals. Evidence for the veracity of the statement is lacking.)

⁷⁹ "A Church for All Creeds," *The New York Times Archives*, February 1, 1909, 8, accessed June 21, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1909/02/01/101865121.pdf>. "Man called a 'jelly fish' in wife's suit starts a new movement."

⁸⁰ Ibid. "The jury voted in his favor, awarding him one-dollar. After appealing this decision, Russell received a cash settlement of \$15,000, an agreement for an article defending his character, and an agreement that their newspapers join in publishing his weekly syndicated sermons."

⁸¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Pastor Russell's Sermon," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1916, 376, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://mosthollyfaith.com/Beta/Bible/Reprints/Z1916DEC.asp#Z374:10>. "It reads as follows—'In view of my soon departure for a foreign shore, and in view of the increasing virulence and threats of my enemies, and under the assumption that they may await my absence to make a fresh attack, by advice of my counsel I make under oath the following sweeping statement; namely, "That I never was guilty of immorality toward any person. Furthermore, I never cohabited with any person at any time and, further, I have never desired to do so. Witness my hand and seal to this declaration this Twenty-Eighth day of September 1911.'"

⁸² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction," *Watchtower*, July 15, 1906, 221, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://mosthollyfaith.com/Beta/Bible/Reprints/Z1906JUL.asp>. "One morning 'Emily' was sick, and he was called on to see her and prescribe medicine. 'Emily's' room contained a sink and a pump used for the second floor refuse and water. The noise from the pump made it difficult to hear, and Mr. R. turned the key in the door to prevent confusion until he could hear what 'Emily' had to say about her condition—certainly less than a minute, probably not half a minute. 'Emily,' now married, put upon the witness stand, swore that she had no knowledge that the door was locked even for a moment, and that then and at all times Mr. R.'s conduct toward her had been most exemplary."

There is not enough information available to make a solid argument for immoral behavior having occurred. No one knows for sure what took place or did not take place after reading the information available. Those who follow him will think the best, and those who dislike him or his ministry will think the worst. Since ad hominem arguments are never justified, and since we believe that a person is innocent until proven guilty, there does not appear to be enough information to make a case of immorality against Russell.

It was also claimed by some that Russell's father was heavily involved in Freemasonry and that there is ample evidence that Charles Taze Russell absorbed much of his father's knowledge.⁸³ Barbara Anderson, who had been a Watchtower researcher, researched the issue and wrote to the Masonic Temple, Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and received a reply that neither Charles Taze Russell nor his father had ever belonged to the Masons.⁸⁴ It also appears that the use of Masonic imagery was common in the era and was not as important an indicator as some have claimed.⁸⁵ In addition, statements made by Russell claiming to be a Mason, were taken out of context⁸⁶ as Russell plainly denied being a Mason.⁸⁷ There is no evidence showing Russell to have been a Mason, and the claims to the contrary appear to be speculation.

While it may not be appropriate to accuse Charles Taze Russell of being a Mason or of having committed adultery, the same is not true regarding his fraudulent business practices. During the course of his ministry, Russell received much publicity due to his questionable business practices.

⁸³ David J Stewart, "Jehovah's Witnesses an Adventist Cult," *Watchtowerlies*, accessed September 29, 2017, https://www.watchtowerlies.com/origins_of_jehovah_s_witnesses.html. "Charles Taze Russell was born from a Presbyterian family. His father was an elite Freemason."

⁸⁴ Barbara Anderson, "C. T. Russell Was Never a Freemason," *Barbara Anderson's Watchtower Documents*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://watchtowerdocuments.org/charles-taze-russell-was-not-a-pennsylvania-freemason/>. "Dear Ms. Anderson, Charles Taze Russell was not a Pennsylvania Freemason, nor does he appear in the records of England or Ireland."

⁸⁵ "Anti-masonry Frequently Asked Questions Section 3, version 2.9," *Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon*, accessed June 18, 2018, <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/anti-masonry03.html#russell>. "Neither the symbols found in the Watchtower nor the cross and crown symbol are exclusively masonic. And the cross and crown symbol does not appear on his gravestone in the Rosemont United Cemetery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — it appears on a memorial erected some years later."

⁸⁶ Ibid. "'Now, I am a free and accepted mason. I trust we all are. But not just after the style of our masonic brethren.' He further develops this idea: 'true Bible believers may or may not belong to the masonic fraternity, but they are all masons of the highest order, since they are being fashioned, chiseled and polished by the Almighty to be used as living stones in the Temple Built Without Hands. They are free from sin, and therefore accepted by the God of Heaven as fit stones for the heavenly Temple.'"

⁸⁷ Ibid. "Later in this address, Russell stated quite clearly that 'I have never been a mason.'"

At the beginning of the second decade of the 1900s, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle began to take an interest in Pastor Russell's ministry. In 1911, Russell marketed "miracle wheat."⁸⁸ The price for the wheat was much higher than the regular price of wheat.⁸⁹ It was claimed that the miracle wheat would produce much more than regular wheat, but government testing did not support that claim.⁹⁰ Russell states he offered a refund to anyone who was concerned, but no one requested a refund. He also claimed that he did not make any profit from the wheat but that it went directly into the ministry. What was not mentioned was that he owned 990 shares out of 1000 in the ministry, so in reality whatever came to the ministry actually came to him.⁹¹ Russell did not appreciate the newspaper bringing the "miracle wheat" to the

public's attention, and he sued the newspaper for libel but lost.⁹²

In 1910-11, Pastor Russell embarked on a tour of the world.⁹³ During the time of the tour, many press releases were sent to the ports he would be visiting. After his visits, reports of his visit and sermons were sent to the American press. However, when the Brooklyn Daily

⁸⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "A Donation of Miracle Wheat," *Watchtower*, June 15, 1911, 195, accessed July 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1911%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

⁸⁹ William Edward Biederwolf, *Russellism Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d.), 5, "It is history that he has encouraged dealing in what was called 'Miracle Wheat,' which was supposed to grow about fifteen times as much as the average wheat and which was sold only to the faithful for sixty dollars per bushel."

⁹⁰ Vernon Parker, "Watchtower vs. Eagle," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, accessed July 2, 2018, http://50.56.218.160/archive/category.php?category_id=23&id=33727. "Government departments investigated the wheat for which \$1.00 a pound was asked, and agents of the Government were important witnesses at the trial of the libel suit in January, 1913. 'The "Miracle Wheat" was low in the Government tests,' they said. The Eagle won the suit."

⁹¹ Ibid. "Some Jehovah's Witnesses these days may wish to minimize the significance of the 'Miracle Wheat,' claiming that the profits from its sales went to the Watchtower Society and not to Russell himself. However, the records show that Russell owned 990 of the 1,000 shares of Watchtower Society stock. By this figure, 99 percent of every 'contribution' for 'Miracle Wheat' was in effect a contribution to Russell himself."

⁹² "'Pastor' Russell Loses Libel Suit," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/54382078>. "Jury returns verdict for the *Eagle* after forty minutes deliberation."

⁹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Biography," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1916, 357, accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "In 1910 Pastor Russell visited Palestine and Russia. He there orally delivered lectures to thousands of orthodox Jews on the regathering of Jews to Palestine. In 1911 he was one of a committee of seven who made a journey around the world and especially examined into the conditions of missionary work in Japan, China, Korea and India."

Eagle began to examine his itinerary and his reports, they discovered that he did not actually deliver the sermons he had reported, and the crowds were not what he had reported.⁹⁴

Later he lost another libel suit against a Canadian pastor. Russell's practice was to threaten to sue individuals who wrote articles against him. This was designed to silence them. Many times this was successful, and the party apologized and retracted their article. However, Pastor Ross of Ontario, Canada was an exception. He wanted to show that the "Pastor" was a fraud. In a tract, he impugned Russell's character, education, and religious standing.⁹⁵ Pastor Ross wrote that Russell had no formal education, was immoral, and had never been ordained. When a retraction and apology was demanded by Russell, he declined and went to court to defend his position. The trial sustained those accusations.⁹⁶ It was disclosed that Russell's education had ended when he was 14 and that he had no working knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, Systematic Theology or Philosophy.⁹⁷

Russell was tremendously resilient and had a core of very loyal followers. While the setbacks he experienced might have ended the ministry efforts of other men, Russell vigorously plunged forward blaming others for his difficulties and denying any wrongdoing. As a result, the movement he had founded kept growing, and his foibles were largely overlooked by those who followed him.

⁹⁴"Pastor Russell's Imaginary Sermons," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 19, 1912, 18, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/54537031>. "It has long been known that 'Pastor' Russell has a strong imagination, but it appears that he is now capable of delivering imaginary sermons."

⁹⁵ J. J. Ross, *Some Facts and More Facts about the Self-Styled "Pastor" Charles T. Russell* (Winnipeg, Canada: The North-West Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.), 4–7. "At the present time, the 'Brooklyn Eagle' has its talons in Russell, and shows him to be a most undesirable citizen. . . . he stands charged with defrauding his wife of her dower interest, with having his name sensationally connected with those of other women, with giving himself out as an interdenominationalist, . . . publishing himself as giving addresses to great crowds in important places, where he has not spoken a word at all, with seeking to dupe certain ministers into supporting daring transactions, with being connected with lead, asphalt and turpentine companies, with selling or causing to be sold 'Miracle Wheat,' at \$60 a bushel, with influencing the sick and dying to make their wills in his favor, with engineering the sale of a property worth \$35,000 for \$50 for the purpose of defrauding another. . . . These and other charges have been made against this false teacher and shepherd, and remain unanswered. . . ."

substitutes for the truth as it is in Christ the destructive doctrines of one man, who is neither a scholar nor a theologian."

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45. "The fact is that he took action in the civil court of New York and failed, and then, thinking that he would be successful he took action against me in the criminal court of Canada. The both courts have pronounced against him, and he stands before the world still covered with the many sins charged against him."

⁹⁷ Ross, *Some Facts and More Facts*, 18. "'Now,' asked Mr. Staunton, 'Are you familiar with the Greek language?' 'No,' said Mr. Russell, without a blush. When he saw that he was caught, then he admitted that he knew nothing about Latin, and Hebrew and neither had he ever taken a course in Philosophy, Systematic Theology and neither had he ever attended any of the higher schools of learning."

Charles Taze Russell died in 1916 on a train in Pampas, Texas while returning from a preaching tour.⁹⁸ At his funeral and in his biography, it was clear that many of his followers had great respect for him and felt that he had been a spiritual father to many.⁹⁹ Joseph Rutherford elevated him to the rank of apostleship saying that he was the greatest preacher and teacher since Paul.¹⁰⁰

Whatever one may think of Charles Taze Russell, it is evident that he was an ambitious and talented individual with great communication skills. He founded both the International Bible Students Association and the Watchtower Society. Russell's influence continued to be felt in the decade following his death. With the ascension of Judge Rutherford to the presidency of the Watchtower Society, the International Bible Students Association would ultimately splinter. Many of the alienated International Bible Study students would claim that Rutherford's changes made the Watchtower Society unrecognizable. They would go on to form other groups that sought to preserve Russell's theology and teachings. The Watchtower Society itself would grow and become an authoritarian cult. Russell's influence, initially important for holding together the Watchtower Society, was on display for a decade after his death. That influence provided the stability Rutherford needed. By 1929, Judge Rutherford, was firmly established. From 1929 onward, as part of consolidating his own power, Rutherford would seek to diminish Russell's influence.

Joseph Franklin Rutherford

When Charles Taze Russell died, the Bible Students were devastated. His death had not been anticipated, and he was deeply loved by his followers. No matter who was chosen to

⁹⁸ Menta Sturgeon, "Addresses at Afternoon Services," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1916, 366, accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "These continued until the finger nails became discolored, the cold perspiration settled upon that noble forehead, his hands and feet grew cold, his face indicated a break, he drew his feet up in the bed like Jacob of old, his quiet breathing became less frequent, his drooping eyelids opened like the petals of a flower and disclosed those eyes—those wonderful eyes! in all their magnificence that we will never forget. Presently he breathed no more; we pressed our lips upon his noble brow, and knew that he had gone to be forever with and like the Lord, whom he loved so well."

⁹⁹ D. Kihlgren, "All That Was Noblest, Holiest, Best," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1916, 372, accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It was my privilege to know our Pastor upwards of twenty years, and his

personal example was perhaps even more inspiring than his teachings. He never worried, was never impatient. His peace of mind was wonderful. Our beloved Pastor took a genuine, personal, interest in all of the Lord's people. He rejoiced in their progress, and treasured their interesting experiences in his wonderful memory."

¹⁰⁰ J. F. Rutherford, "Oration at Evening Service," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1916, 373, accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The greatest man that has lived since the Apostle Paul has passed from the earth. We have come aside this evening from the busy rush of this great city to pay tribute to the memory of Pastor Russell. Let us in calmness and sobriety seek to know why this man was great, why we say with such assurance that he had the approval of God."

follow him, they were going to find it impossible to fill his position. That is why it seems particularly unfortunate that Joseph F. Rutherford maneuvered himself into the position of leadership. He seemed like the least likely to succeed. He had little charisma or personal appeal. It was rumored that he had recently been sent to the West Coast to get him out of Bethel.¹⁰¹ When he heard of Russell's death, Rutherford returned immediately and quickly took over.¹⁰² To be fair to Rutherford, the situation was a difficult one, and because of the continuing loyalty to Russell, forward movement was going to be difficult. However, Rutherford's autocratic style did not help things.¹⁰³ However, in his favor, as a lawyer, he had knowledge of the intricate workings of the Watchtower Society as well as the means and disposition to control and manipulate people.

There is a great deal of information about the transition period. This is because a number of factions developed shortly after the transition. Those who were loyal to the existing Watchtower Society and Judge Rutherford had one perception of reality, and those that felt they had been forced to leave had a very different perspective.¹⁰⁴ Both wrote about their experiences. According to those who would eventually split off from the International Bible Students Association, the choice of the new president was the result of political maneuvering. However, according to the Rutherford faction, the transition was smooth and Rutherford, who had been asked to return, was selected unanimously.

¹⁰¹ "A Brief History of the Watchtower after Pastor Russell's Death," *Friends of Jehovah's Witnesses*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.friendsofjehovahswitnesses.com/2011/09/24/a-brief-history-of-the-watchtower-after-pastor-russell%E2%80%99s-death/>. "Before Pastor Russell's death, the Pastor had dismissed Rutherford from Bethel and provided him funds for a new start in California. When Pastor Russell died, Rutherford was working as a floorwalker in a department store. Upon hearing of the Pastor's death, he telegraphed Bethel and told them to hold everything until he arrived. At the time of his death, Pastor Russell was in process of making several changes in the Bethel family, and evidently had not yet updated the members of the board of directors. Since he no longer wanted Rutherford at Bethel, it is doubtful that he wanted him on the board of directors in event of his death."

¹⁰² Ibid. "Rutherford was an extremely forceful, self-seeking character. By legal tricks and maneuvers, he was able to avoid the will's intent and directives to establish himself as President of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, contrary to the wishes of the majority of the Board of Directors. 'Judge' Joseph Franklin Rutherford usurped total control of the Society and became an absolute dictator."

¹⁰³ "Charles Taze Russell's Modern Day Bible Students: A History of the Watchtower from the Perspective of a Former Bible Student," *What's Up Watchtower*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.whatsupwatchtower.com/articles/2017/2/11/charles-taze-russells-modern-day-Bible-students-a-history-of-the-watchtower-from-the-perspective-of-a-former-Bible-student-part-2>. "Rutherford appears as a difficult man with poor social skills who bullied people to get his way. ... Rutherford may have been sincere but he was ruthless against those who would not support him exactly the way he wanted. Rutherford had a black and white worldview, was a nasty bully, and a deluded eccentric. However, his lack of likeability and positive character qualities do not mean that he was insincere. He had a sense of righteous indignation, and for those who opposed what he believed to be Jehovah's intent, he would treat with no mercy."

¹⁰⁴ Without going into detail here, there is a long history of the Watchtower Society being less than truthful in order to preserve their image. This has been adequately demonstrated with the cover up of thousands of cases of sexual child abuse that are now documented in court cases in Australia and in the US.

Joseph Franklin Rutherford was born to James Calvin Rutherford and Lenora Strickland Rutherford November 8, 1869. He was one of eight siblings. Their home was located in a small farm about three and a half miles north of Versailles, Missouri. His parents had a good reputation in the community and the family attended a small Baptist church where his parents remained until their deaths.¹⁰⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses report Rutherford went to college at the age of 16.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, no local college records document his attendance. In 1889, at the age of 20, Rutherford obtained a job as a court stenographer and studied law, apparently informally, under the tutelage of Judge E. L. Edwards, who was a state Supreme Court Justice. In 1891, Rutherford applied for and received his license to practice law.¹⁰⁷ As was common of most attorneys in Missouri, they could be asked to stand in for the local judge if he was called away. Rutherford stood in four times. He tried minor cases on two of those occasions. After that, he preferred to be known as Judge Rutherford.¹⁰⁸

After being elected unanimously as the president of the Watchtower Society, Judge Rutherford initially attempted to avoid controversy. He increased the evangelism Russell had been doing but refrained from any change in direction.¹⁰⁹ In the end, the safe course he charted was not enough to avoid conflict, and resentment developed. Some board members had wanted to have either the presidency or more control in the organization. Ultimately, a rebellion was incited by four board members. What they did not know, and Rutherford did,

¹⁰⁵ "The Mystery Years of 'The Judge' Joseph Franklin Rutherford in Missouri," *Free Minds, Inc.*, accessed July 9, 2018, http://www.freeminds.org/history/mystery_years.htm. "His parents, according to the Catholic priest Rev Richard Felix who lived in the same Missouri county and wrote the booklet Rutherford Exposed (Our Faith Press, Pilot Grove, MO) were "honest, hardworked, respected" people. They were James Calvin Rutherford and Lenora Strickland Rutherford who lived nearly fifty years on a small farm 3 ½ miles north of Versailles."

¹⁰⁶ *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 67, accessed June 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20\(jv-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20(jv-E).pdf). "When Joseph was 16, his father consented to his attending college, provided that he pay his own way and that he pay for a hired laborer to take his place on the farm. A determined young man, Joseph secured a loan from a friend and managed to go to college while also studying law."

¹⁰⁷ "The Mystery Years of 'The Judge' Joseph Franklin Rutherford in Missouri," *Free Minds, Inc.*, accessed July 9, 2018, http://www.freeminds.org/history/mystery_years.htm. ". . . he was under the tutelage of a Judge E. L. Edwards whom Missouri handbooks indicate had been a state supreme court justice. Consulting the history and other works shows that in 1889 when twenty years old he was made an official court reporter, and he obtained a license to practice law on May 5, 1892."

¹⁰⁸ "The Mystery Years of 'The Judge' Joseph Franklin Rutherford in Missouri," *Free Minds, Inc.* "In the state when a Presiding Judge was absent the bar picked a local attorney to fill in as a substitute judge. This occurred four times in his own case. Each time it was for only a day. Twice there were no trials that he presided over and on the other two occasions he presided over only minor trials. Therefore his sometimes being called 'Judge' Rutherford is rather misleading."

¹⁰⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 67. "The year 1917 opened with rather a discouraging outlook," stated The Watch Tower of December 15, 1917. Yes, following the death of C. T. Russell, there were some misgivings, some doubts and some fears. Yet the yearend report was encouraging; field activity had increased. Clearly, the work was moving ahead."

was that even though Russell had appointed them, they had never been formally approved in a board meeting. As a result, Rutherford simply replaced them and then had them forcibly evicted from Bethel. This caused great turmoil.¹¹⁰

This was just the beginning. Rutherford was a tyrant, autocratic, and forceful. He began by reorganizing the society and purging all dissenters.¹¹¹ This autocratic style is still imbedded in the Society. Rutherford also took steps that led to greater control over the individual congregations. He began the process by appointing Watchtower representatives to each ecclesia (church) to oversee the efforts of each congregation.¹¹²

Many of the Bible Students lamented the changes that were occurring. They noticed a change in the attitude of the Watchtower Society. Their churches were beginning to change.¹¹³ Rutherford also began to make significant changes and pitted member against member. He recognized that there were factions not loyal to him, and he wanted to purge the group of all dissenters.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ibid. “However, when it became evident that they would not discontinue their opposition, Rutherford acted within his authority and responsibility as to replace them with four others whose appointments were to be confirmed at the next annual meeting, to be held in January 1918.”

¹¹¹ “Charles Taze Russell’s Modern Day Bible Students: A History of the Watchtower from the Perspective of a Former Bible Student,” *What’s Up Watchtower*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.whatsupwatchtower.com/articles/2017/2/11/charles-taze-russells-modern-day-Bible-students-a-history-of-the-watchtower-from-the-perspective-of-a-former-Bible-student-part-2>. “A bitter feud broke out within the movement with the ousted Directors and Rutherford publishing arguments and accusations against one another, in an attempt to win over the movement. At the end of this controversy, a schism resulted in the formation of three independent Bible Student groups: 1) Layman’s Home Missionary under PSL Johnson; 2) Pastoral Bible Institute (PBI) formed by R. E. Streeter; 3) and the Pacific Northwest Movement called Standfasters. While many hundreds of Bible Students left Watchtower to join these new organizations, others like my maternal great-grandparents had become so disenchanted with the leadership of the movement they dropped out altogether. These events occurred early on between 1917 and 1919.”

¹¹² Ibid. “Rutherford knew that he could never achieve his goals without the full support of the movement. He needed tighter control. Watchtower representatives began to be assigned to each ecclesia to track the Witness effort. This was one of the first steps made by Watchtower to gain control over Bible Student classes.”

¹¹³ “A Brief History of the Watchtower after Pastor Russell’s Death,” *Friends of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.friendsofjehovahswitnesses.com/2011/09/24/a-brief-history-of-the-watchtower-after-pastor-russell%E2%80%99s-death/>. “Bible Students left the Society by the thousands. It was no longer the organization they had known under Pastor Russell. They recognized the noble, holy, spirit of Christ in Pastor Russell, but the new head was an entirely different type of leader: a scheming, cunning man with a dictatorial spirit. The first book Rutherford published after Pastor Russell’s death, ‘The Finished Mystery’, was a very different kind of book than Pastor Russell’s ‘Studies in the Scriptures’. One doesn’t find the spirit of Pastor Russell in the ‘The Finished Mystery’, nor does one find the spirit of the ‘Finished Mystery’ in Pastor Russell’s writings.”

¹¹⁴ “Charles Taze Russell’s Modern Day Bible Students: A History of the Watchtower from the Perspective of a Former Bible Student,” *What’s Up Watchtower*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.whatsupwatchtower.com/articles/2017/2/11/charles-taze-russells-modern-day-Bible-students-a-history-of-the-watchtower-from-the-perspective-of-a-former-Bible-student-part-2>. “During the 1920s the very

Rutherford continued making significant doctrinal changes. These changes resulted in serious friction developing in the Bible Student groups around the country. Those who remained loyal to Russell began to argue with those who agreed with Rutherford. Churches that had been together for years split, and members shunned one another.¹¹⁵

Those loyal to Pastor Russell were upset. They believed that the changes were so extreme that the group under the control of Rutherford no longer reflected Russell's understanding of the Bible. In 1931, Rutherford changed the group's name from the International Bible Students to Jehovah's Witnesses. The splinter groups that had formed since Rutherford became president denied that the Jehovah's Witnesses were founded by Charles Taze Russell. Instead, they saw Rutherford as the founder of a new and different group.¹¹⁶

At some point, it became clear to Rutherford that he would never command the full loyalty of those who had loved Russell nor was it likely that those loyal to the Watchtower Society would ever be personally loyal to him. In a move of genius, Rutherford began to teach about the channel. The Watchtower was God's channel of revelation. The channel was necessary to understand the Bible and to be in relation to God. This was not far from where the Bible Students had been with Russell so it apparently felt right to those following the Watchtower Society. In addition, it meant that people did not need to feel that they had to be loyal to Rutherford, instead they had loyalty to the Watchtower.¹¹⁷ This led to the

movement that had been associated with and supported Watchtower for over forty years became Rutherford's main obstacle. So with a surgeon's skill, he removed what he viewed as the necrotic flesh of the Society using the scalpel of doctrine change to excise the opposing mindset."

¹¹⁵ "Russell's Modern Day Bible Students." "One critical doctrinal change came around 1923 when Rutherford published an article in Watchtower stating that Adam and Eve would not receive a resurrection. This one doctrinal change shook many Bible Students. This was a profound change to what most Bible Students considered to be the foundation doctrine of the truth. My grandfather was an elder in the Roseburg Oregon Bible Students at the time. He would recount that he had given a number of talks contending this Watchtower doctrinal change. This matter split the Roseburg class into two opposing ecclesias, one supporting Watchtower and the other retaining the original belief as taught by Russell. The two classes never met together again from thereon after."

¹¹⁶ "A Brief History of the Watchtower after Pastor Russell's Death," *Friends of Jehovah's Witnesses*, accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.friendsofjehovahswitnesses.com/2011/09/24/a-brief-history-of-the-watchtower-after-pastor-russell%E2%80%99s-death/>. "Their claim that Pastor Russell is their founder is patently false. Rutherford founded the Jehovah's Witnesses. Some viewed this move as a marketing stroke of genius."

¹¹⁷ "A Brief History of the Watchtower after Pastor Russell's Death," *Friends of Jehovah's Witnesses*. "My grandfather talked about his own personal mistrust in Rutherford during this time. I well remember my grandfather very passionately recounting the concept of the Channel. Rutherford knew that he could never gain the hearts and loyalty of the Bible Students like Russell had, so he directed as much attention to the organization as being God's one true organization through the channel concept. In this view, Watchtower was Jehovah God's single instrument in bringing the truth to the human race. By focusing the devotion of the movement to God's channel of truth, Rutherford could institute changes in doctrine designed to sift out those whose minds and loyalty couldn't be directed to the channel model."

Watchtower Society becoming the authoritarian organization that it is now. Only the Watchtower can properly hear from God, interpret Scripture and direct the organization. Those outside the Watchtower are without salvation. The fact that the Watchtower Society and the president were virtually synonymous did not seem evident to most.

At the beginning of his tenure, at the same time he was ousting the four rebellious board members, Rutherford released the *Finished Mystery*. This was reputed to be a collection of final works by Charles Taze Russell. After reading the *Finished Ministry*, many of the Bible Students did not recognize the tone of the volume and did not think it sounded like Russell's previous work. In it there was a strong anti-war, anti-American tone. Rutherford knew that it was beneficial for group cohesion to have a group feel marginalized and persecuted. It increased loyalty. Many things that Rutherford did seemed to seek that sort of re-enforcement of group loyalty. This time, however, it backfired. There was a strong reaction against the Jehovah's Witnesses. Rutherford and his board were accused of treason. They went to trial, and they were sentenced to twenty years in the Federal Penitentiary.¹¹⁸ However, after serving nine months, they were released. Their lawyers had filled complaints about trial errors, and the verdict was thrown out. Since the war was over, the government declined to prosecute them a second time.¹¹⁹

When Rutherford was released, he realized that the movement needed to be re-invigorated. Conventions were scheduled, and it was proclaimed that it was time to be faithful to Jehovah. The Bible Students needed to reach out and advertise, advertise, and advertise. Rutherford set about creating a sense of urgency.¹²⁰

This was a timely move, and people were drawn to the end-time message the Bible Students proclaimed. Rutherford also shifted the movement's focus from inward personal holiness to evangelism. This was a major factor in the Watchtower Society's success.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. "This last Volume of the Studies in the Scriptures series made strong denunciations against the Great War that was raging in Europe at the time of the book's publication. United States Government officials

based charges of treason by using the strong anti-government statements made within the pages of the 7th Volume. The Society's Board was convicted to serve some 20 years each in Federal Prison. This experience had a profound effect on Rutherford, both in his health (he lost the use of a lung) and in his outlook on the 'world'. For the rest of Rutherford's life, he used the Watchtower as a weapon to rail against government and the nominal church system."

¹¹⁹ Jim Whitney, "Did J. F. Rutherford Lie about Being Exonerated?", *Free Minds, Inc.*, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.freeminds.org/history/exonerated.htm>. "What then did the Government do? The Government issued what is called a Writ Of Error. This merely means that the Government agrees and recognizes that 'errors' were made in trial, and that it is not saying the defendants are innocent, but rather, that the defendants will have to be retried to correct the errors. The Government decided that since the war was over, it was not worth it to try the case again, though they could have."

¹²⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 78. "The Bible Students came away from that convention with a burning zeal for the preaching work. As Sister Ethel Bennecoff, a colporteur then in her late twenties said, 'We were aroused to "advertise, advertise, advertise the King and his kingdom." Yes, with more zeal and love in our hearts than ever before.'"

Rutherford motivated the Bible Students to do “door to door” ministry.¹²¹ Soon radio broadcasts, phonographs, and vehicles with loudspeakers were part of the outreach effort. During this time, Rutherford emphasized that the Watchtower Society was the only channel of God’s truth, and he was God’s mouthpiece.¹²²

During his tenure as president, Rutherford made many changes in Watchtower theology. He also wrote approximately a book a year. Some of these books were prophetic in nature. For example, in 1920 Rutherford published *Millions Now Living Will Never Die!* This booklet predicted 1925 as the end of the world, ‘the completion of all things.’¹²³ Many believed him and this created an urgency to carry out God’s work before the end. Many more became followers to escape the coming judgment. In 1925, when nothing materialized, many left the movement.

Rutherford was feared. Within the Jehovah’s Witnesses, no one would oppose him. As he continued to establish his base of support, he decided Russell’s influence needed to be minimized. Therefore, in 1927, Rutherford began a plan to diminish Russell’s influence among the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Rutherford began to teach that Russell was not the faithful and wise servant; instead, he claimed it was the Watchtower Society itself. The “servant class,” known as the anointed 144,000, was declared God’s channel of communication.¹²⁴ Following this, in 1928, Rutherford rejected the Great Pyramid of Gizeh as a method of determining biblical end-time chronology.¹²⁵ It had been Russell’s firm belief that the

¹²¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 78. “As the spiritual light of understanding grew brighter, the Bible Students began to perceive some thrilling Bible truths. (Prov. 4: 18) The understanding of these precious truths gave a powerful impetus to their work of proclaiming God's Kingdom.”

¹²² *Ibid.*, 143. “The truths I present, as God's mouthpiece, were not revealed in visions or dreams, nor by God's audible voice, nor all at once, but gradually. . . . Neither is this clear unfolding of truth due to any human ingenuity or acuteness of perception, but to the simple fact that God's due time has come; and if I did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out.”

¹²³ Joseph Franklin Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 89, accessed July 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1920%20Millions%20now%20living%20will%20never%20die%20\(mls-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1920%20Millions%20now%20living%20will%20never%20die%20(mls-E).pdf). “Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the Apostle in Hebrews chapter eleven, to the condition of human perfection.”

¹²⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Servant-Good and Evil,” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1927, 53, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/faithful-discreet-slave.php>. “He represents himself as a man about to travel into a far country who, before he departs, calls his servants and delivers unto them his goods. (Matthew 25: 14-19) The Christ collectively is The Servant of Jehovah God, and the body members are a part of that Servant; they are also the servants of Christ himself, who is their Head.”

¹²⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Altar in Egypt,” *Watchtower*, November 15, 1928, 344, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1928%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “It is more reasonable to conclude that the great pyramid of Gizeh, as well as the other pyramids thereabout, also the sphinx, were built by the rulers of Egypt and under the direction of Satan the Devil. The rulers of Egypt are known for their oppression of slaves. The Devil is the great oppressor.”

pyramids gave insight into the Bible so this rebuff was not lost on Russell's followers. Then in 1929, Rutherford taught that Romans 13 meant that all governments were satanically controlled. The government was to be resisted when it made unreasonable demands. This of course created division between followers and their friends and family.¹²⁶ In 1930, he revisited Russell's teaching and changed the date of Christ's Second Presence from 1874 to 1914.¹²⁷ He also taught that Christ has been present invisibly at Watchtower since 1919.¹²⁸ Because Christ has been present in his temple, the Holy Spirit is no longer necessary and is no longer present with us.¹²⁹ Instead, Christ utilized His angels to bring revelation to the Judge.¹³⁰

At the convention on July 26, 1931, Rutherford renamed the International Bible Students Association the Jehovah's Witnesses.¹³¹ He based this on Isa. 43:10. "You are my

¹²⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Higher Powers," *Watchtower*, June 1, 1929, 163, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1929%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The instruction of the thirteenth chapter of Romans has long been misapplied. The improper application has really been the basis for the false doctrine of the 'divine right of kings' or rulers to rule and oppress the people. The instruction given therein by the apostle was not intended for mankind in general, but for the benefit of the church. If intended for anyone outside of the church, then it must follow that God has been judging" the people throughout the period of the Gentile times, whereas other scriptures show that God has appointed a special time for the judgment of mankind in general."

¹²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *The Golden Age*, April 30, 1930, 503, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1930%20Golden.Age%20Num269-Num294.pdf>. "If it is true that Jesus has been present since the year 1914, then it must be admitted that nobody has seen Him with his natural eyes. The only way that He can be seen is by signs or evidences, which Jesus declared indicate His presence."

¹²⁸ J.F. Rutherford, *Preservation* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1932), 211, accessed July 10, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1932%20Preservation%20\(pr32\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1932%20Preservation%20(pr32).pdf). "The class of spirit-begotten ones on earth whom Naomi pictured at this point (1919) came to a realization that Christ Jesus the great Judge had come to the temple. of Jehovah and that the famine had ended, and that God had lifted the 'rod of the wicked from the lot of the righteous', and now they must busy themselves with the kingdom work and henceforth hold themselves entirely aloof and separate from the wicked."

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 193-194, "By his spirit, the holy spirit, Jehovah God guides or leads his people up to a certain point of time, and thus he did until the time when 'the comforter' was taken away, which would necessarily occur when Jesus, the Head of his organization, came to the temple and gathered unto himself those whom he found faithful when he, as the great Judge, began his judgment, in 1918."

¹³⁰ J. F. Rutherford, *Riches* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1936), 316, accessed July 10, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1936%20Riches%20\(ch\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1936%20Riches%20(ch).pdf). "That does not mean that those who prepare the manuscript for The Watchtower are inspired, but rather it means that the Lord through his angels sees to it that the information is given to his people in due time, and he brings to pass the events in fulfillment of his prophecy and then invites those devoted to him to see the same."

¹³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 156. ". . . that having been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer, justified and begotten by Jehovah God and called to his kingdom, we unhesitatingly declare our entire allegiance and

witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.'”

According to A. H. MacMillan this decision was made on a whim when preparing to preach the next day.¹³² This change in both the name and the focus of the group was in response to the many who had left the Watchtower Society and formed independent Bible Student groups. Rutherford had needed a way to distinguish his group from the multiple groups that had splintered away and he determined that this was how to do it. The name change was designed to separate his followers from the "evil slave class" that had arisen. It was an effort to consolidate and rebranded the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 1934 Rutherford wrote the book *Jehovah*. In that book, he charted a new way forward. His message called for the vindication of Jehovah.¹³³ This was to be done by living such righteous lives that the world would see that Jehovah really is sovereign.¹³⁴ The vindication of Jehovah's name became a central focus. The early Christocentric focus was reoriented toward Jehovah of the Old Testament. Jesus was diminished.

Rutherford continued to make changes that would create friction between Jehovah's Witnesses and the public. This was likely deliberate and designed to minimize influence from the world while isolating his followers into a strong community. In 1935, saluting the flag

devotion to Jehovah God and his kingdom; that we are servants of Jehovah God commissioned to do a work in his name, and, in obedience to his commandment, to deliver the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to make known to the people that Jehovah is the true and Almighty God; therefore we joyfully embrace and take the name which the mouth of the Lord God has named, and we desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, Jehovah's Witnesses.”

¹³² 1975 Yearbook (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1975), 151, accessed July 11, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1975%20Yearbook%20\(yb75-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1975%20Yearbook%20(yb75-E).pdf). “Brother Rutherford told me himself that he woke up one night when he was preparing for that convention and he said, ‘What in the world did I suggest an international convention for when I have no special speech or message for them? Why bring them all here?’ And then he began to think about it, and Isaiah 43 came to his mind. He got up at two o'clock in the morning and wrote in shorthand, at his own desk, an outline of the discourse he was going to give about the Kingdom, the hope of the world, and about the new name. And all that was uttered by him at that time was prepared that night, or that morning at two o'clock. And [there is] no doubt in my mind- not then nor now, that the Lord guided him in that, and that is the name Jehovah wants us to bear and we're very happy and very glad to have it.”

¹³³ J. F. Rutherford, *Jehovah* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1934), 123, accessed July 10, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1934%20Jehovah%20\(jh\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1934%20Jehovah%20(jh).pdf). “Jehovah's purpose is to vindicate his name. Let that great truth always be foremost in the mind of every faithful student of God's Word. All other things are incidental to and hence secondary to the vindication of Jehovah's name.”

¹³⁴ Meleti Vivlon, “Ever heard of ‘The Vindication of Jehovah's Sovereignty’?”, *UndercoverJW*, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://undercoverjw.wordpress.com/2017/03/30/ever-heard-of-the-vindication-of-jehovahs-sovereignty/>. “We are taught that we are like witnesses in a court case. What is being judged is God's right to rule and the righteousness of his rule. We are told that we live under his rulership; that the Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses is a true theocracy—a nation ruled by God with a population larger than that of many countries on earth today. By our conduct and by showing that life in our nation is “the best way of life ever,” we are said to be vindicating Jehovah's sovereignty.”

became idolatry.¹³⁵ In 1936, the cross, commonly displayed by Christians and their churches was declared a pagan symbol.¹³⁶ In 1939, the name of the magazine “Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence” was changed to “The Watch Tower Announcing Jehovah’s Kingdom,” rebranding the Watchtower Society and again moving it further from a Christo-centric worldview.¹³⁷

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that due to a lack of evidence, judgment had to be withheld concerning Charles Taze Russell regarding both his involvement with the masons and his behavior towards two women in his household. With Joseph F. Rutherford, that is not the case. There is adequate evidence to paint a disappointing picture of Rutherford. There are personal reports, legal records and third party stories that indicate that Rutherford was prideful, vengeful, lustful and full of avarice.

Judge Rutherford enjoyed a lavish lifestyle. He had a huge mansion, multiple expensive cars and luxury. He travelled extensively. He justified his lavish 5000+ foot residence on the 1925 return of the ancients that he had predicted.¹³⁸ He was also known for his excessive consumption of alcohol.

The disparity between the lifestyle he lived as a leader and that of the common Jehovah’s Witnesses, who worked under harsh conditions, raised serious questions. One

¹³⁵ Winston Bowman, “Flag Salute Cases,” *Federal Trials and Great Debates in United States History*, 3, accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.fjc.gov/sites/default/files/trials/Flag_Salute_Cases_0.pdf. “In a 1935 address at a convention of Witnesses in Washington, D.C., the group’s de facto temporal leader, Joseph Rutherford, praised the principled resistance of his German colleagues and argued that American Witnesses should similarly resist saluting or pledging allegiance to the ‘graven image’ of the flag.”

¹³⁶ J. F. Rutherford, *Riches* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1936), 27, accessed July 10, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1936%20Riches%20\(ch\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1936%20Riches%20(ch).pdf). “Jesus was crucified, not on a cross of wood, such as is 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. His being put to death in this manner symbolically said: ‘This man is cursed of God.’”

¹³⁷ M. B. Mufika, “Jesus: God, the Only God, or No God? A Study of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ and Branhamism’s Influence in Kolwezi, DRC,” *Doctoral Thesis*, 49, accessed July 10, 2018, https://repository.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/26371/Mufika_MB_2017.pdf?sequence=1. “In 1939, the society changed the name of its flagship publication from Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence to the Watch Tower Announcing Jehovah’s Kingdom. These name changes reflected several developments very clearly. Among other things, it indicated that the Society discarded most of the chronology in Russell’s teaching.”

¹³⁸ Joseph Franklin Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1920), 89, accessed July 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1920%20Millions%20now%20living%20will%20never%20die%20\(mls-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1920%20Millions%20now%20living%20will%20never%20die%20(mls-E).pdf). “The chief thing to be restored is the human race to life; and since other Scriptures definitely fix the fact that there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones of old, and that these will have the first favor, we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth.” Theoretically, it was to prepare for these faithful ones that Beth Sarim was built. In reality this dwelling became a mansion at which Rutherford would spend much of the year.

source believed Beth Sarim was a “time out place” for Rutherford. It kept him out of Bethel.¹³⁹

One of the Watchtower’s attorneys, Olin Moyle had observed the poor treatment of the Bethel staff by Rutherford and noted that his lifestyle was ostentatious while the average worker lived in poverty. He brought this to Rutherford’s attention hoping to effect a change. Instead, it ignited a bitter fight that culminated in a libel suit against the Watchtower Society. In court, Olin Moyle prevailed and the Watchtower Society was found guilty of libel.¹⁴⁰

There were also some questions raised about his moral behavior. In addition to his drinking, there were questions about sexual impropriety. On one occasion Rutherford, who travelled extensively overseas, was criticized for attending a burlesque show.¹⁴¹ But even that charge pales against the circumstantial evidence that he kept a mistress.

Berta Peale, his alleged mistress, divorced her husband and came to Bethel. She promptly began working as Judge Rutherford’s dietician, although he already had one. She traveled extensively with him. Her family relates that there was sufficient evidence for them to believe she was living as his mistress.¹⁴² Though Rutherford had a wife and a child, he neither visited nor spent time with them after he assumed control of the Watchtower Society.

¹³⁹ Farkel, “The House That Joe Built,” *Watch the Tower*, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.watchthetower.net/deed.html>. “A former JW who goes by the pseudonym, ‘Edward J. Ford, Jr.’ served as a JW for forty-plus years and worked on the staff at Bethel. He related in a conversation about five years ago that A. H. Macmillan was a frequent visitor to his family home. A. H. Macmillan, you will recall, was a famous JW-apologist and major supporter of Rutherford. He also wrote the thoroughly whitewashed and WTS-sanctioned book “Faith on the March.” I bring this up because Macmillan was not an ‘opposer’ or an ‘apostate’, but a very loyal dub even ‘til his death. Macmillan told Edward Ford’s father the real reason for building Beth-Sarim was ‘for no purpose other than to get the drunken and declining Rutherford out of Brooklyn.’ Even Haydn Covington, a high-ranking WTS official and famous defender of the legal rights of Jehovah’s Witnesses in this country said that Fred Franz stated, ‘They built the judge a house out in California just to get him out of Bethel.’”

¹⁴⁰Olin Moyle’s Letter to J. F. Rutherford, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://www.watchthetower.net/olin.html>. This letter documented Rutherford’s bullying and chastising approach to the Bethel staff, the vast difference in what other Bethelites possessed and received versus his opulent lifestyle, his glorification of drinking, the acceptance of the sexually improper language common at Bethel, favoritism and other unstated behavioral issues.

¹⁴¹ “Joseph Rutherford and Burlesque,” *Jehovah’s Witness.com*, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/8064/joseph-rutherford-burlesque>. “On April 27, 1926, George H. Fisher wrote a letter to W. Nieman of Magdeburg, Germany accusing Rutherford of attending Al Jolson’s Winter Garden Theater to see the Paris Edition of the then notorious show ‘Artists and Models’. . . . Rutherford’s lame answer to Fisher’s charge was that he was too busy in the Lord’s work to be bothered with replying to such criticism, and anyway, had never seen Al Jolson in his life and did not know what he looked like.”

¹⁴² “Rutherford Exposed: The Story of Berta and Bonnie,” *Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watchtower*, accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.watchtowerlies.com/rutherford_exposed_the_story_of_berta_and_bonnie.html. “If the statement that soon follows catches your curiosity, keep reading. It was made by a beautiful woman who was Rutherford’s constant traveling companion who did not work her way up the Bethel ladder (like almost all other women had to do) yet immediately came into his inner circle upon entering Bethel.

Joseph Rutherford died of colon cancer in 1942. When he died, his death was announced at Bethel. From the report, it did not appear that those who heard were devastated. It notes only that no one took off the day to mourn. Instead, they went back to work and worked harder.¹⁴³ For a man whose decisions had affected millions, his funeral was small. Only four attended, noticeably missing were his wife and son.¹⁴⁴

Nathan Homer Knorr

Nathan Knorr was born in 1905 in the town of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and raised in the Dutch Reformed Church. At the age of sixteen he encountered the Jehovah's Witnesses and soon became part of the Watchtower Society. He was industrious and in 1923 became a full time colporteur (a door-to-door salesperson who sold JW literature). He was invited to come to the Brooklyn Bethel and once there became actively involved in the work at Bethel. He rose through the ranks and in 1932 became the general manager of the publishing department. In 1935, he was named director of the New York Corporation, and vice president of that society. In 1940, he became vice president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. While some saw him as a yes man, seeking to advance, he found full acceptance with Rutherford who ultimately chose him as his successor. Following Rutherford's death he was unanimously elected president on January 13, 1942. Unlike the transition following Russell's death, this transition was smooth and many within the Watchtower Society believed Knorr would be a good president.¹⁴⁵

Knorr was a hard, business-like person. When relaxed and with friends he could be friendly but in public or when involved in business he was not to be trifled with. He was harsh with those that he thought were not dedicated enough and he was aloof with others. He

It was made by a woman who abandoned her own husband of fifteen years to enter Bethel. It was made by a woman who in later years wore crotchless panties and bras which had holes in the nipple areas. It was made by a woman who during all of what I've described was an anointed sister and pioneer to the end of her life and was never reprimanded for any of the conduct I've just mentioned. What did she say about Judge Rutherford? She said, 'He was like a husband to me in every way.'

¹⁴³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 89. "How was news of Brother Rutherford's death received at Bethel? 'I will never forget the day we learned of Brother Rutherford's passing,' recalled William A. Elrod, who had been a member of the Bethel family for nine years. 'It was at noontime when the family was assembled for lunch. The announcement was brief. There were no speeches. No one took the day off to mourn. Rather, we went back to the factory and worked harder than ever.'"

¹⁴⁴ Farkel, "The House That Joe Built," *Watch the Tower*, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.watchthetower.net/deed.html>. "A.H. Macmillan stated in disappointment that there were only FOUR people who attended Rutherford's funeral, and NONE of these four included his wife Mary or his son Malcolm. Nor did they include a single other relative of his. His hand-picked successor, Nathan H. Knorr did not even bother to attend. Nor did Fred Franz, his oft-ghostwriter and the one who concocted all the doctrinal lies about Beth-Sarim so Rutherford could indulge himself in his rants and booze far, far away from the Brooklyn Bethel."

¹⁴⁵ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division), 105-106, Kindle.

could also be mean and vindictive when he felt he had been crossed.¹⁴⁶ However, he had a gift for organization that Rutherford lacked and a good sense of what needed to be done to advance the Watchtower Society.

Knorr did not share in the vices of the previous presidents, though at Bethel he lived a more lavish lifestyle than the other Witnesses did. He neither engaged in sexual immorality nor drank to excess. He encouraged singleness until his own marriage in the 1950s.

Knorr was overly concerned that Jehovah's Witnesses not engage in sexual immorality. He became known for his obsessive teaching against masturbation, homosexuality and fornication at the Bethel house.¹⁴⁷ Some of that zeal was unleashed within the local Kingdom Halls in the 1970s when Jehovah's Witnesses were counselled about sexual sins in the marriage bed.¹⁴⁸ Many, out of a perceived obligation to God, confessed their particular sins to the elders and as a result were interrogated.¹⁴⁹ This led to a number of disfellowshippings and some divorces.¹⁵⁰ Within five years these interrogations were determined to be overstepping the bounds of privacy and were discontinued under a don't ask

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. "Only occasionally, especially when he was with close friends and Witness missionaries for whom he had real affection, would he demonstrate the ebullient good humour shown by J. F. Rutherford when he was enjoying himself or the kindness so often manifested by C. T. Russell to his loyal followers. But he could be stern and severe like Rutherford to any and all who, in his eyes, were disloyal or failed in their duties. Furthermore, he could sometimes be petulant, unkind, and thoroughly mean to those for whom he developed a dislike."

¹⁴⁷ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 105-106. "Unlike either of them, he had a healthy appreciation for the institution of marriage and proper sexual relations. Yet his fixation on sexual sins became almost a fetish with him as will be shown below."

¹⁴⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1972, 734-735, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1972%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It is certainly not the responsibility of elders or any others in a Christian congregation to search into the private lives of married couples. Nevertheless, if future cases of gross unnatural conduct, such as the practice of oral or anal copulation, are brought to their attention, the elders should act to try to correct the situation before further harm results, as they would do with any other serious wrong. Their concern is, of course, to try to help those who go astray and are "caught in the snare of the Devil." (2 Tim. 2:26) But if persons willfully show disrespect for Jehovah God "s marital arrangements, then it becomes necessary to remove them from the congregation as dangerous "leaven " that could contaminate others.—1 Cor. 5:6,11-13."

¹⁴⁹ Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 48, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. "Letter after letter revealed that the persons involved felt positively responsible before God to report to the elders any deviance from the norm established by the Governing Body."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. "The Governing Body's decision in 1972 resulted in a sizeable number of "judicial hearings" as elders followed up on reports or confessions of the sexual practices involved. Women experienced painful embarrassment in such hearings as they responded to the elders' questions about the intimacies of their marital relations. Many marriages, where one of the mates was not a Witness, underwent a turbulent period, with the non-Witness mate objecting strenuously to what he or she considered an unwarranted invasion of bedroom privacy. Some marriages broke up with resulting divorce."

don't tell policy.¹⁵¹ However, the policy stands and a Jehovah's Witness can be disfellowshipped for engaging in certain types of sexual behavior while married.¹⁵²

Knorr was not as proficient a writer as his predecessors had been. Nor did he possess their charisma. However, he was an excellent executive, which is what the Watchtower Society needed at that point in history. He was hardworking, highly organized, and focused. In addition, he was a good speaker. In 1942, compensating for his lack of writing and charisma, and to cement loyalty to the Watchtower Society, he deemphasized individual personalities. He made all correspondence and all publications anonymous. While Russell and Rutherford were talented and able, Knorr possessed a greater ability to manage and advance the interests of the Watchtower Society.¹⁵³ In his thirty-four year tenure, he would grow the Watchtower Society from approximately 115,000 members to 2 million members.¹⁵⁴

When he became president, Knorr recognized that the Jehovah's Witnesses needed to change their structure and approach to ministry. He began the process of restructuring. In doing so, he also hoped to shed some of the negative history associated with the Jehovah's Witnesses. He understood that the Jehovah's Witnesses needed more education and training. He also recognized there were weaknesses in their understanding of doctrine and apologetics. In 1943, the Theocratic Ministry School was established in order to train men to speak in public and use Bible aids.¹⁵⁵ In the same year, the Watch Tower Bible School of Gilead was

¹⁵¹ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 53. When finally, after some five years, the matter came up again on the agenda, the disfellowshipping policy was reversed and the Governing Body in effect now withdrew itself from that intimate area of others' lives." See the February 15, 1978, *Watchtower*, pages 30 and 32 for Franz article.

¹⁵² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Honor Godly Marriage," *Watchtower*, March 15, 1983, 31, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "As already stated, it is not for elders to "police" the private marital matters of couples in the congregation. However, if it becomes known that a member of the congregation is practicing or openly advocating perverted sex relations within the marriage bond, that one certainly would not be irreprehensible, and so would not be acceptable for special privileges, such as serving as an elder, a ministerial servant or a pioneer. Such practice and advocacy could even lead to expulsion from the congregation."

¹⁵³ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 106. "Although possessing little if any ability as a writer, and certainly lacking the personal charisma of his predecessors, in many ways Knorr was a more able man than either."

¹⁵⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Appreciating the Things of God," *Watchtower*, January 1, 1975, 23, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1975%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "There were 2,021,432 who turned in reports to the congregations with which they are associated, indicating that, not only had they shared in preaching the Kingdom message, but they plan to keep on doing so."

¹⁵⁵ Edmund Gruss, *Apostles of Denial* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), 68-69, accessed July 19, 2018, https://ia802605.us.archive.org/26/items/ApostlesOfDenial/1970_Apostles_Of_Denial.pdf. "The Theocratic Ministry School was established in 1943 to train the men of each congregation in public speaking and in the use of Bible aids. A portion of this training was devoted to argumentation."

founded to meet the need for overseas missionaries. This school received the best candidates available.¹⁵⁶ Knorr insisted “the Bible could not be understood apart from direction from the Watchtower” and he was committed to developing the best educational system possible for the training of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He desired that the Witnesses have a professional demeanor and be able to relate well to those they approached. In 1958, the Kingdom Ministry School for circuit overseers was developed.

Knorr also revamped the Watchtower publications. The older publication for general readers, *Consolation*, which had replaced the *Golden Age*, was itself replaced by *Awake!* The earlier magazines had articles about miracle cures and health products that sometimes made Jehovah’s Witnesses appear gullible. The new publication, *Awake*, was designed to appeal to the reading public without being a source of ridicule.¹⁵⁷ Knorr was instrumental in producing and printing the first *New World Translation* of the Bible. The project started in 1950 and it was completed in 1961. While beloved by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, it has changes in the text and insertions that supported JW doctrines.¹⁵⁸

Knorr was not only active in developing the religious aspect of the Watchtower Society. He also oversaw considerable development of physical plant of the Watchtower Society. In 1957, he oversaw the development of a thirteen-story printing plant, and in 1960, the eleven story Headquarters.¹⁵⁹

Of his decisions, the one that had the greatest impact had to do with the chain of command that he established. Knorr wanted to consolidate all of the power in the Watchtower Society. Rutherford had begun the process by placing a representative in each local congregation but Knorr further limited the autonomy of the individual congregations by implementing circuit and district overseers over the congregations.¹⁶⁰ Within each

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. “In 1943 the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead was founded in South Lansing, New York. This school ran two classes each year, with five months training for each class. A prerequisite for application was that the candidate had spent at least two years in full-time witnessing work.”

¹⁵⁷ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 112. “The journals which replaced The Golden Age–Consolation (1937 to 1946) and Awake! (1946 to the present)—quietly abandoned a number of positions which had made the society look foolish; gone were the tirades against vaccination and aluminum poisoning. Watchtower literature assumed a more measured and subdued tone, at least in comparison with the one it had maintained under Rutherford.”

¹⁵⁸ *The New World Translation*, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.Bible-researcher.com/new-world.html>. This link is not to the actual NWT but is a critique of the NWT as an English Bible translation.

¹⁵⁹ NEIRR, *Chronology of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://neirr.org/jwschrono.htm>. This is a chart of prominent events arranged in a yearly manner.

¹⁶⁰ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 111. Almost immediately he restored the system of zone and regional servants. Eventually the zone servants came to be known as circuit servants or overseers and the regional servants as district servants or overseers.

congregation, elders and a judicial committee were appointed to carry out the wishes of the Watchtower Society.

Knorr made some theological changes as well. In 1961, he made one of his most controversial decisions. The Watchtower Society took the position that receiving a blood transfusion was a violation of God's law.¹⁶¹ Receiving a blood transfusion became a "disfellowshipping" offense.¹⁶² This poorly thought out doctrine has led to a needless loss of life while damaging the image of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Knorr continued to be the sole authority figure in the Watchtower Society. His authority was felt at all levels and increased as time went by. He provided detailed instructions for congregations and individuals. The Watchtower Society managed the lifestyle and conduct of their members closely. The local congregations became an extension of the authority for the Watchtower Society and the local elders held trials enforcing lifestyle and moral guidelines.¹⁶³

Even though the Watchtower Society began to discuss the Governing Board as if it was a functioning body in the mid-fifties, the production of the New World Testament in 1950 gives a better picture the actual situation. The board met periodically at the request of the president to perform requested work. They would discuss disfellowshipping issues or property issues. They were essentially a sounding board and a stamp of approval. The governing board had no authority and never had. At the 1950 board meeting, the board met and Knorr informed them of the Bible project. It was the first the board had heard of it and the Bible was ready to go to print. It was one of the largest projects of the time and it was

¹⁶¹ Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, *Blood, Medicine and the Law of God* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1961), 13-14, accessed July 19, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1961%20Blood%20medicine%20and%20the%20law%20of%20God%20\(bml-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1961%20Blood%20medicine%20and%20the%20law%20of%20God%20(bml-E).pdf). "Is God's Jaw violated by these medical procedures that involve the use of blood? 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 law God gave to Noah made it unlawful for anyone to eat blood, that is, to use it for nourishment or to sustain life. Since this is wrong in the case of animal blood, it is even more reprehensible in the case of human blood."

¹⁶² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, January 15, 1961, 63-64, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "If, however, he refuses to acknowledge his nonconformity to the required Christian standard and makes the matter an issue in the Christian congregation and endeavors to influence others therein to his support; or, if in the future he persists in accepting blood transfusions or in donating blood toward the carrying out of this medical practice upon others, he shows that he has really not repented, but is deliberately opposed to God's requirements. As a rebellious opposer and unfaithful example to fellow members of the Christian congregation he must be cut off therefrom by disfellowshipping."

¹⁶³ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 118. "Knorr changed that, however, and replaced such nominations with 'congregation committees' of three men. These committees plus the circuit servant were to nominate prospective congregational servants to the Watch Tower Society for appointment. More significant was that such committees were now to act as church courts called 'disfellowshipping committees' and later 'judicial committees.'"

only at publishing that the board found out about it. It was 1976 before the governing board began to function independently and it did not fully function as an autonomous body until 1992.

It was Knorr who determined what projects to consider and whether to pursue them. He had total control of everything that transpired.¹⁶⁴ He pragmatically yielded to the vice President, Frederick Franz, on biblical matters. Franz was much more a Bible scholar and Knorr was not. However, if the biblical issue affected the business of the Society, Knorr would ultimately make the final decision.

In 1971, President Knorr gave his famous, tail wagging the dog, speech.¹⁶⁵ In that speech, he described a situation where the Watchtower board controlled the Governing Body. In the speech, he explained that the board could not control the Governing Body. The Governing Body was the real ruling body. The concept was good but it was not anchored in reality. In reality, the Watchtower Society was a monarchy. The President held all authority and made all decisions. Following that speech, the issue remained dormant for four years.

In 1975, there were problems at Bethel. Poor working conditions had led to poor morale among the staff.¹⁶⁶ The low morale was felt by the governing body. They were frustrated that nothing had changed in structuring of the leadership. There was discontentment. The Governing Body began to resent that they were not allowed to govern.¹⁶⁷ Discussion following the board meeting of May 1, 1975 led to a tense and sometimes heated discussion. Both Knorr and Franz felt that the current system worked well

¹⁶⁴ Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 75, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. “The Directors of the Board were first informed by the president of the existence of the New World Translation (probably one of the biggest projects ever engaged in by the organization) only after the translation of the Greek Scripture portion had already been completed and was ready for printing.”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. “Right up until 1971 when the “tail wagging the dog talk” was given, the Board of Directors did not meet on any regular schedule but only as the president decided to convene them. Sometimes months went by without any meetings, the most frequent agenda evidently being such corporate matters as the purchase of property or of new equipment. As a rule, they had nothing to say about what Scriptural material would be published, nor was their approval sought.”

¹⁶⁶ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 84. “In 1975, two Bethel Elders (Malcolm Allen, a senior member of the Service Department and Robert Lang, the Assistant Bethel Home Overseer) wrote letters to the Governing Body expressing concern over certain conditions prevalent within the headquarters staff, specifically referring to an atmosphere of fear generated by those having oversight and a growing feeling of discouragement and resultant discontent.”

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 87. “Discussion went back and forth. A turning point seemed to come with remarks made by Grant Suiter, the crisp-speaking secretary/treasurer of the Society’s principal corporations. Different from the comments made till then by those favoring a change, his expressions were quite personal, seemingly the release of a long pent-up feeling about the president, whom he directly named. While discussing the authority structure he made no specific charges, except as regards the right to make a certain change in his personal room that he had requested and had been denied, but as he went on his face became flushed, his jaw muscles flexed and his words became more intense. He closed with the remark: ‘I say if we are going to be a Governing Body, then let’s get to governing! I haven’t been doing any governing till now.’”

and were resistant to change. However, the board eventually prevailed and on January 1, 1976, a structure was put in place that gave committees control over specific areas of the Watchtower Society. Nathan Knorr died from a brain tumor in 1977. *The Proclaimers* history states that the transition from a president to a governing board structure was the result of his illness. The transition is presented as occurring smoothly.¹⁶⁸ In reality, the process was rocky and President Knorr opposed the changes. He did not encounter significant disability until after the governing structure had changed.

Frederick Franz

President Knorr died June 8, 1977. Two weeks later on June 22, 1977 Frederick Franz was elected to the Presidency. The transition was smooth. Franz had been Vice President since 1945 and had shared closely in the decision making process with the president.¹⁶⁹

Frederick W. Franz was born in Covington, Kentucky a small city of approximately 40,000. His parents were Edward Frederick Franz and Ida Louise Nee Krueger. His father was a German Lutheran, and Franz was baptized into the Lutheran Church. As a child, he attended a nearby parochial school for a year and went to the Catholic Church. His parents then moved across the river to Cincinnati. From that point, Franz attended public school and began attending the Presbyterian Church. In school he initially fared poorly and failed third grade.¹⁷⁰ To prevent him from staying behind a year, his father transferred him to another school. An attitude adjustment took place at home, and Franz became a diligent scholar. He

¹⁶⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 108, accessed June 9, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20\(jv-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1993%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses-Proclaimers%20of%20Gods%20Kingdom%20(jv-E).pdf). “By 1976, Brother Knorr had worked diligently as president of the Watch Tower Society for over three decades. He had traveled the globe many times over, visiting and encouraging missionaries, teaching and instructing branch office personnel. He was privileged to see the number of active Witnesses increase from 117,209 in 1942 to 2,248,390 in 1976. But by the summer of 1976, 71-year-old N. H. Knorr had noticed that he had a tendency to bump into things. Subsequent tests indicated that he was suffering from an inoperable brain

tumor. He struggled to continue to carry a workload for some months, but his physical prognosis was poor. Would his failing health impede the forward movement of the work? Enlargement of the Governing Body had already begun in 1971. During 1975, there were 17 members. Throughout much of that year, the Governing Body had given serious and prayerful consideration to how they could best care for all that is involved in the global preaching and teaching work outlined in God's Word for our day. (Matt. 28:19,20) On December 4, 1975, the Governing Body had unanimously approved one of the most significant organizational readjustments in the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses.”

¹⁶⁹ “Fredrick W. Franz (1893-1992),” *Pastor Russell Blog*, accessed July 21, 2018, <http://pastorrussell.blogspot.com/2010/04/frederick-w-franz-1893-1992.html>. “In 1945 he became vice president of the Watch Tower Society and other associated bodies.”

¹⁷⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Looking Back Over 93 Years of Living,” *Watchtower*, May 1, 1987, 22-30, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1987%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. [This article is an excellent autobiography and should be read by anyone researching Frederick W. Franz.](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1987%20The%20Watchtower.pdf)

began to excel academically and at the end of his high school years, he was the Valedictorian.¹⁷¹

He went on to attend the University of Cincinnati. There he studied liberal arts, giving attention to classical languages. He demonstrated himself to be an excellent scholar. Franz applied to the University of Ohio and was in competition for the Cecil Rhodes Scholarship when his brother, Alfred, introduced him to the Watchtower Society. He quickly determined that it was the truth and decided to join the movement. Franz left the Presbyterian Church, left college, and contacted the scholarship committee to remove his name. He was baptized as a witness April 5, 1914, in Chicago.¹⁷²

In May of 1914, Franz became a colporteur, selling literature for the Society. Franz fondly relates meeting Russell on two occasions during his early years with the Watchtower Society, once in 1914 and once in 1916. In 1920, while Rutherford was speaking at Cincinnati, Franz had opportunity to speak to him. Rutherford invited him to come to Bethel, so in 1920 Franz arrived at Bethel. For a few months, he worked at the printing press. Then he was transferred to the Colporteur desk where he remained until 1926. After that he served with the radio station and began traveling with Judge Rutherford, Nathan Knorr, and Hayden Covington. Ultimately, he became part of Rutherford's inner circle. After Rutherford's death, he began to travel with and for President Knorr.¹⁷³

Franz was one of the few people with an education in biblical languages, and he soon developed a reputation for being a scholar.¹⁷⁴ In his later years, he believed he was one of few people who could teach the Bible correctly.¹⁷⁵ Even prior to being president, his opinion

¹⁷¹ "Looking Back Over 93 Years of Living," 22-30.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 23, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. "The Society's vice president, Fred Franz, was acknowledged as the organization's principal Bible scholar. On a number of occasions I went to his office to inquire about points. To my surprise he frequently directed me to Bible commentaries, saying, 'Why don't you see what Adam Clarke says, or what Cooke says,' or, if the subject primarily related to the Hebrew Scriptures, 'what the Soncino commentaries say.'"

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 102. "He stated that he believed it meant that it was God's will that there be just a few men in the entire Christian congregation who could rightly be called "teachers." I inquired who such would be in our time. Speaking very calmly his reply was: Well, I believe that I am. I have been here at headquarters for over fifty years and have been involved in the field of writing and research during most of that time, so I believe that I am. And—there are some other brothers throughout the earth who are."

carried a lot of weight, and his articles were not challenged.¹⁷⁶ President Knorr relied heavily on Franz's abilities.¹⁷⁷

During the last part of his vice presidency, there was a movement within the board to limit the power of the presidency and to distribute the power throughout the board. Franz did not believe this was God's will and resisted the change.¹⁷⁸ The board however demanded and obtained the concessions that they sought. The power of the presidency was sharply curtailed, and six committees were established to do the work of the society. These changes theoretically took place January 1, 1976.¹⁷⁹ However, Franz was able to continue to exert great control through the force of his personality and the deference that was shown to a man who had known both Russell and Rutherford.¹⁸⁰

During the Franz' presidency there was some paranoia about apostasy. This resulted in a purge of many independent thinking witnesses, some of whom had served the society for forty years or more. It was an ugly expression of totalitarian control. Some were disfellowshipped for the content of private conversations, others for eating a meal with someone who was disfellowshipped. The Watchtower Society and its president demanded complete submission of mind and body to its will.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 72. "He pointed out the one exception, namely, any material written by the vice president, stating that "what comes from Brother Franz is viewed as 'ready for publication,' with no adjustments to be made."

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. "Not a writer nor particularly a student of Scripture, Knorr relied on Fred Franz (the vice president) as more or less the final arbiter on Scriptural matters and the principal writer of the organization. Questions such as those discussed at Governing Body sessions (related earlier in this chapter) were, for decades, submitted to Fred Franz for decision. If President Knorr felt that the decision might have some critical effect on the Society's operation in certain countries of the world, he would usually discuss it personally with Fred Franz and would not hesitate to make known what he felt the circumstances made advisable in a pragmatic way, overruling the vice president if necessary."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 106. "Four years later, in 1979, in a Governing Body session, Fred Franz, now president, stated that his vote for the change back then was made "under duress." I would agree. When Nathan Knorr conceded, Fred Franz felt compelled to join him. He went on to say that he had not been in favor of the change then and that from that point forward he had "just been watching" to see what would result."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 90. "The president's last-mentioned words ("over my dead body") nearly proved prophetic. At the time of saying them he evidently had already developed a malignant tumor on his brain, though this did not become known until after the reorganization was definitely a fait accompli, its completion taking place officially on January 1, 1976, and Knorr's death occurring a year and a half later, on June 8, 1977. The president's quite vocal opposition was matched, perhaps even surpassed, by that of the vice president."

¹⁸⁰ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 296. "When Knorr was succeeded by Frederick Franz as Watch Tower president in 1977, the office had been downgraded significantly. But Franz's personal influence remained so great that he was shortly able to regain some of the powers of his predecessors. He continued to be the primary ideologue on the Governing Body and had the prestige of having been the society's 'oracle' since the early years of Judge Rutherford's presidency."

¹⁸¹ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 161. "Increasing dissension within the organization plus the Governing Body's shrill name-calling and reprisals against "apostates" created a siege mentality among Witness loyalists while many others reacted with disgust and revulsion. During the purge at the Brooklyn

During his leadership at the Watchtower Society, Fredrick Franz researched and wrote about many topics. In his writing, there was little interaction with others, and even when the articles were reviewed, there was little time for others to look at the background and form a solid opinion. As a result, articles generally simply passed through.¹⁸² This led to some at the headquarters feeling less than settled about the truthfulness of articles.¹⁸³

Frederick Franz enjoyed good health, and even with failing eyesight, he continued to work faithfully for the Watchtower until his death in 1992 at the age of 99. He had served for 6 years as a colporteur, for 25 years as a member of the Bethel staff, for 32 years as the vice president and for another 13 as the president. He was a skilled leader, and his life was without personal scandal

The Remaining Presidents

After the death of Frederick Franz in 1992, the era of the monarch-like president was over. Following Franz, Milton Henschel was elected president. At that time, the Governing Body began to function as a group of equals. Henschel was a long-time member of the Witnesses and had served as secretary to President Knorr before becoming vice president under Franz. During those years he traveled internationally doing business for the Governing Body. In his activities, he was noted to be very conservative by nature. The only notice of his ascendancy to the presidency was a brief note in the Watchtower¹⁸⁴ and a change in the

Bethel in the spring of 1980, it seems from various reports that well over fifty workers at the world-wide headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses left the organization."

¹⁸² Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 108-109, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. "But these brothers were by no means alone, for the discussions themselves clearly demonstrated that by far the majority of the Body had done little else than

read the material written. The subject was often one that had originated and developed in the mind of the writer without consultation with the Body, even though it represented some "new" understanding of Scripture, and often the writer had then worked up all his arguments and put the material in final form without having talked things over, tested his thinking, with even one other person. (Even during Nathan Knorr's lifetime this was the normal procedure followed by the Society's principal writer, Fred Franz. Only when put in completed form did anyone else—and usually only the president—have opportunity to consider and discuss the ideas or interpretations developed.) The argumentation was frequently complex, involved, of a kind that no superficial reading could ever allow for sufficient analysis to test its validity and determine if it was scripturally solid or just a case of 'acrobatical logic,' a skillful juggling of texts that made them say something other than what they really said. Those who had only read the material usually voted in favor; those who had done extra study and research were those most likely to raise serious questions."

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 113. "Thus, after one discussion of an article by Fred Franz which presented the view that the 'festival of the harvest ingathering' (celebrated, according to the Bible, at the close of the harvest season) pictured a circumstance in the history of the Witnesses at the start of their spiritual harvesting, sufficient members voted in favor for it to be accepted. Lyman Swingle, who had not voted in favor and who was currently serving as Coordinator of the Writing Committee, then said: 'All right, if that's what you want to do I'll send it over to the factory for printing. But that does not mean that I believe it. It is just one more stone piled on the enormous monument of testimony that the Watchtower is not infallible.'"

¹⁸⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Rewarded with the Crown of Life," *Watchtower*, March 15, 1993, 31, accessed July 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines>

copyright acknowledging him as president.¹⁸⁵ He functioned as an administrator serving on a board. The time of larger than life personalities was over. The Watchtower Society would only infrequently mention the presidents from that time forward.

Milton Henschel served as president for 8 years. At the end of that time, in the year 2000, the Governing Body resigned from the Pennsylvania Corporation and assumed the role of supervising all the corporations. Milton Henschel, age 79, stepped down, and Don Adams was appointed president. When Milton Henschel died in 2003 at the age of 82, there was little notice compared to the previous four presidents. In fact, while his time on the governing board was mentioned, his time serving as president was not mentioned in the press release.¹⁸⁶ The role of the presidency was being downplayed.

The appointment of Don Adams was shrouded in mystery, and it came as part of a large reorganization of the Watchtower structure. The Governing Body was stripped of all of its legal authority and re-established as a non-profit. Three corporations were established to oversee the affairs of the U.S. congregations. One would oversee church construction, another would oversee personnel, and the third would oversee publications. The Governing Body would be restricted to religious affairs such as Bible doctrine, evangelization, and pastoral care. The role of the current president was again minimized.¹⁸⁷ Adams was 75 when he was elected president. He had worked at the headquarters for 54 years. Previously he was Nathan Knorr's secretary too and had overseen worldwide mission activities.

Don Adams was president of the Governing Body until 2014, when without announcement or fanfare, Adams, then 89 years old, was replaced by Robert Ciranko. This

/The%20Watchtower/1993%20The%20Watchtower.pdf. "On December 30, 1992, "Brother Milton G. Henschel was chosen as the Society's fifth president, to succeed Brother Franz."

¹⁸⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Watchtower*, March 15, 1993, 2, accessed July 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1993%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "© 1993 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Milton G. Henschel, President."

¹⁸⁶ "For Immediate Release, March 27, 2003, Milton Henschel dies at 82," *Jehovah's Witnesses Official Media Web Site*, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091217195241/http://www.jw-media.org/gbl/20030327.htm>. "Brooklyn, New York—Milton G. Henschel, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, died Saturday at the age of 82." This was followed by two brief paragraphs mentioning his birth August 9, 1920 and outlining his career at Bethel. His time as president is not mentioned.

¹⁸⁷ "Changing the Watch at Watchtower," *New York Daily News*, October 14, 2000, accessed July 22, 2018, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/changing-watch-watchtower-article-1.938075>. "The president resigned, the ruling Governing Body was stripped of its legal power, and three new corporations were set up to run the society's U.S. operations. For many of the 980,000 or so Witnesses in the U.S., news of the changes hit like a bolt of lightning. They were made last weekend at an annual business meeting, in Jersey City, but without any public notice or discussion. Milton Henschel, 80, the fifth president, stepped down after eight years, along with six other directors of the Watchtower Society. He remains a member of the Governing Body, which had run the 5.9-million member society with an absolutist hand. The Governing Body was not abolished, but under the new setup, it will oversee only religious affairs, among them Bible doctrine, evangelization and pastoral care."

become evident when literature began showing Robert Ciranko as president. At the time, the Watchtower Headquarters would not comment on whether a change had occurred, or if it had occurred, why the change occurred. There is little biographical information about Ciranko in the current JW literature.

The Organizational Structure of the Jehovah's Witnesses

The organizational structure of the Jehovah's Witnesses is Episcopalian and is very similar to the Catholic Church. It is an entirely top down structure. Initially the president was like the pope, but now the Governing Body occupies that place. The Governing Body directs the branch offices, who direct the District Overseers, who direct the Local Overseers, who direct the Elders, who direct the Publishers. Like the Catholic Church, the organization is concerned for its own well-being. And like the Catholic Church it has covered up sexual abuses rather than exposing them and helping the victims.¹⁸⁸

Outreach

The Watchtower Society has always relied on the volunteer efforts of its members to do outreach and assist with the ministry. All active Jehovah's Witnesses are required to spend time preaching (publishing). The most basic way to do this is to go door to door. According to their own literature and anecdotal accounts from ex-witnesses, the return is low, and many people who go out do not like the feeling of rejection that occurs when people refuse to talk to them. In the past few years, there has been an emphasis on setting up book carts in public places. There is no attempt to stop or engage people unless they are approached. A significant number tracts and books are given out free. These mandatory "volunteer" activities have made the organization successful.

¹⁸⁸ PBS News Hour, "How a Catholic sex abuse report in Pennsylvania echoed around the U.S." *PBS.org*. Oct 19, 2018, accessed July 5, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/how-a-catholic-sex-abuse-report-in-pennsylvania-echoed-around-the-u-s>.

Chapter 3

Three Factors Central to Watchtower Theology

The Development of Charles Taze Russell's Theology

When discussing the beliefs of the Watchtower Society, one should examine the sources from which Charles Taze Russell fashioned the framework of Watchtower theology.

The beliefs he adopted developed during a period of widespread theological flux and uncertainty. Following the Second Great Awakening, many people were searching for a faith that would carry them through difficult times.

During the 1800s, there had been a great deal of theological anxiety and uncertainty. The majority of American cults developed during that period. The first of these was the Campbellite movement of the 1820s. The Campbellites claimed they were leaving apostate Christianity behind and returning to the original form of worship found in the New Testament. Groups that followed the Campbellites, chronologically if not to some degree theologically, are Mormonism from 1830, Christadelphianism from 1848, Seventh-day Adventism from 1861, Jehovah's Witnesses from 1879, Christian Science from 1879, and the Unity School of Christianity from 1895. The development and growth of these aberrant groups demonstrate that theology during the 1800s was unstable and many different theological beliefs were available to develop or incorporate into a belief system. It was from this theological muddle that Russell formed his belief system.

Russell, reflecting on his theology, explained how he believed his beliefs had formed. In a supplement to the normal 1894 Watchtower, Russell discussed the development of his doctrinal positions. He claimed that rather than getting flashes of insight, his theological positions developed slowly over two decades.¹ While his perception of how his theology developed may be partially correct, there was more to it than that. The period was inundated with theories regarding the return of Christ. Russell, whether consciously or subconsciously, adopted the theology of those that he had read or known. Little of his theology was original.

While it is impossible to say where he obtained all of his ideas, Russell credits a few preachers that influenced his theology. In addition, he is known to have read journals that presented the theology he later adopted. He also directly quotes other authors from whom he borrowed.

¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Harvest Gathering and Siftings," *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, special ed. April 25, 1894, 93, accessed July 26, 2018, http://www.a2z.org/wtarchive/docs/1894_WT_Extra_A_Conspiracy_Exposed.pdf. "No, the truths we present, as God's mouthpieces, were not revealed in visions or dreams, nor by God's audible voice, nor all at once, but gradually, especially since 1870, and particularly since 1880, a period of about twenty years. And this present clear unfolding of truth is not due to any human ingenuity or acuteness of perception, but to the simple fact that God's due time has come; and if we did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out."

The period Russell lived in was ripe for change. The Second Great Awakening (1790-1840) had occurred, and many people who had initially been impacted were searching for a deeper experience. People were hungry for God and for certainty. The theology that Russell encountered in the United States was the result of three religious traditions coming together. They fueled the development of a unique but not entirely new system of theology. The first influence encountered was that of William Miller who had drunk deeply from the well of prophetic teachings. He believed that the return of Christ would occur in 1844. His predictions were wrong, but even so, he was responsible for further developing the prophetic movement within the Evangelical churches in America and England. The Adventist movement developed out of his failures. Another stream of theology came from the earlier millenarian movements found in the Anglicanism of the 1600s, and a third stream of theology was found in English Protestant nonconformity.²

Russell's interest in Christianity was re-ignited by the preaching and teaching of the Adventist preacher Jonas Wendell sometimes during 1869. He worshipped with Wendell for some time but never became a Second Adventist.³ Instead, he began to study the Scriptures diligently. While doing this, he gathered people together and began a Bible study class. During this time, he developed close ties with Adventists George Stetson and George Storrs.

George Stetson mentored Russell from 1870 to 1873. During this time, he taught Russell a form of Neo-Arianism that he had learned from Henry Grew, an English pastor.⁴ He also taught Russell a non-Trinitarian ransom theory that he published the same year that Russell stated that he had developed his ransom theory.⁵ In addition, Russell copied the pattern of assembly that Stetson utilized in his church.⁶

George Storrs also met with Russell, and Russell, as a result, adopted many of his views. Storrs was a leading proponent of Conditional Immortality.⁷ Storrs also taught that the

² James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2015), 13, Kindle.

³ Ibid., 14. "Sometime in 1869, Jonas Wendell, an Advent Christian preacher, was holding a service in 'a dusty dingy hall' in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Russell stumbled onto the meeting and stayed and listened. As a result, his faith in the Bible was restored. Yet he did not become a 'Second Adventist' at that time, or from his own standpoint, ever after."

⁴ Ibid., 16. "... he evidently taught Russell the Neo-Arian doctrines that were espoused by Henry Grew (1781-1862), an English-born, ex-Baptist pastor who finally settled in Philadelphia after spending many years in New England."

⁵ Ibid. "It seems that Russell borrowed his peculiar, non-Trinitarian ransom doctrine of the atonement from Stetson, who had published it in 1872, the very year Russell asserted he had learned the ransom doctrine."

⁶ Ibid. "... Stetson's 1863 church in Norwalk, Ohio, shows that it served as a doctrinal model for the congregations that were later to come into existence under Russell's oversight."

⁷ Ibid. "From the tract, Storrs came to believe in what is called 'conditionalism' the idea that a man does not have an immortal soul but instead gains everlasting life on the condition that he receive such as a gift of God through Christ."

dead are asleep until the resurrection.⁸ While Storrs initially supported William Miller's and Samuel S. Snow's prophetic chronologies, after the failure of 1844, he refused to engage in date setting.⁹ Russell, however, did not follow his example.

In 1871 Storrs, then a member of the Life and Advent Union, changed his views regarding the eschatological resurrection of the lost. As a result, he left the denomination. He initially had believed that after a man died, there was judgment. This view changed. He came to believe that those who had no chance to receive Christ in this lifetime would be resurrected and experience a second chance to follow Christ. If they were faithful, they would live forever on a restored paradise on earth.¹⁰ In the meantime, those who had formed the true church would be in heaven. Russell incorporated Storrs's new view into his own theology. Additionally, Russell adopted Storrs's practice of taking communion once a year on the 14th of Nisan.¹¹

Russell also absorbed much of the current theology involving the millennium. The early church believed in the pre-millennial reign of Christ, and some expected there would be a six thousand year period followed by the return of Christ and a thousand years of paradise.¹² During the middle ages, the millennial theories were largely pushed aside and amillennialism, the belief that the millennium was the time period between Christ's coming and his return, became more prominent. It was championed by Augustine and was a dominant view at the time of the Reformation. Later, under the influence of Daniel Whitby, postmillennialism became prominent in America from the 1700s until the early 1800s. Postmillennialism taught that Jesus would return at the end of the millennium after the church had perfected the world.

In England there had been a resurgence of millennial speculation during the 1600s, but its influence waned and postmillennialism became the prominent position in the 1700s. The French Revolution during the last decade of the 1700s brought uncertainty to the faithful

⁸ James M. Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2015), 16, Kindle. “. . . and of the teaching that the dead are unconscious or asleep until the resurrection.”

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17. But when Snow's prognostication failed as well, Storrs abandoned Millerite time calculations and refused thereafter to set a date for Christ's return.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* “. . . teaching instead that those who had died without knowledge of Christ would be given an opportunity to lean of his sacrifice for them after an earthly resurrection; if faithful, they would receive the gift of everlasting life on a restored paradise earth.

¹¹ *Ibid.* “It is evident too, that the practice of celebrating the Memorial of the Lord's Supper once a year on the supposed date of Christ's death, 14 Nisan, as Jehovah's Witnesses and various independent Bible Student movements do today was learned by Russell from the editor of the Bible Examiner.

¹² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972). In chapter 9 of his text, Ryrie states, “Premillennialists hold that the second coming of Christ will occur before (pre) the millennium and that Christ, not the church (as in postmillennialism) will be the one to establish the kingdom.”

in Europe and undercut the popularity of the current rationalism. Because of the uncertainty of the times, millenarian beliefs became much more popular.

There was a consensus among the millennial thinkers that the events of 1790s were those prophesied in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. This “set point” allowed the year day theory to be utilized to determine the end of the age.¹³ Prophetic conferences were held at Asbury Park in England between 1826 and 1830. Henry Drummond was a prime financial supporter and religious leader at the conferences. Although Russell would not be directly affected by the events taking place during these conferences, the ideas circulated through the religious world and were developed, discussed, and put into print. When Russell encountered the conclusions of the conferences in his reading, he adopted them as part of his theology with little change.¹⁴

Two of the ideas that the conference supported, the idea of a two-stage return of Christ and the pre-tribulation rapture, came from the writings of Manuel Lacunza y Diaz, a Jesuit priest from Chile.¹⁵ His book was translated by Edward Irving, a prominent religious leader of the time. The translation was made available for the Albury Park conferences and was well received. Interestingly, Henry Drummond had already developed an identical pre-millenarian scheme with one twist; the return of Christ was to be invisible.¹⁶ The invisible return of Christ was a doctrine that Russell adopted, and it is still upheld by his followers. He did not get it directly from Drummond though, but instead, through the writings of Rev.

¹³ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 20. “The fixed point came to be 1798 when French General Louis Alexandre Berthier seized Rome, took the pope captive, and replaced the Papal States with a Roman Republic.”

¹⁴ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 20. The points of the conference follow: “1. This dispensation or age will not end insensibly but cataclysmically in judgment and destruction of the church in the same manner the Jewish dispensation ended. 2. The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of judgment. 3. The judgment to come will fall principally upon Christendom. 4. When the judgment is past, the millennium will begin. 5. The second advent of Christ will occur before the millennium. 6. The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out and the Second Advent is imminent. Besides the above, the Albury Park conferences popularized three additional concepts that came to be central to Russell’s teachings. These were that Christ’s second advent would be marked by two stages, that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture before the destruction of the government of the world, and Christ’s coming would be invisible.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. “. . . Chilean Jesuit Priest named Manuel Lacunza y Diaz (1731-1801). . . by 1791 he produced a manuscript entitled *La venida del Mesias en Gloria y majestad* (*The coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*) that was published in Spanish in 1812 under the pseudonym of Juan Josef Ben-Ezra, a supposed Jewish convert to Christianity . . . stoutly defended millenarianism, asserted that the Catholic priesthood constituted a collective antichrist, and argued for the conversion and restoration of the Jews. Furthermore, he was the first to develop what is commonly called the two-stage doctrine of Christ’s second coming or advent.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23. “. . . Henry Drummond had already come up with an identical millenarian, pre-tribulation rapture schedule for the second advent. It was Drummond, not Lacunza, who was to add another seemingly peculiar second advent doctrine that was taken up by many nineteenth-century millenarians and was eventually passed on to Charles Russell. That was the teaching that Christ’s coming in glory and majesty would be invisible to all but the resurrected and changed living saints.”

Robert Govett.¹⁷ Govett had begun his career as an Anglican Priest but had severed his relationship with them over the issue of believer's baptism and became the pastor of an independent church. He understood the term "parousia" to mean not a coming, but presence. This made a significant impact in Russell's eschatology.

Russell read extensively. One journal that he read was *The Rainbow* in which there is a great deal of discussion regarding the secret rapture and other millennial topics. Most of Russell's mentors subscribed to *The Rainbow*. *The Rainbow* was founded in 1864 by William Leask, a congregational minister. Leask served as editor for several years. *The Rainbow* originally provided a forum for discussion of premillennial dispensationalism but eventually became equally supportive of Conditional Immortality.¹⁸ It is assumed that Russell also read the journal though there is no record of his subscribing. However, the topics covered in *The Rainbow* appear in his writings.¹⁹ Another author that had a direct impact on Russell was Joseph A. Seiss. He is mentioned as being "a major, direct source for Russell's earliest eschatological ideas." Seiss was the author of several books and was the editor of the *Prophetic Times and Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*. Russell read Seiss's works and quoted extensively from Seiss's 1856 book *The Day of the Lord*. In fact, Russell described four of his beliefs by quoting directly from *The Day of the Lord*, but without attribution.²⁰

The prophetic chronology that has marked the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's history came to Russell through Nelson Barbour. Russell had heard Barbour's ideas and invited Barbour to show him the proof of his projections. They met and Barbour was able to demonstrate to Russell's satisfaction how his prophetic time line was developed. As a result, they worked together publishing Barbour's magazine and proclaiming the soon coming end.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24. "He also argued that the Greek word Parousia, usually translated 'coming' in English translations of the Bible should be understood to mean 'presence'. Thus, he held that after Christ came to resurrect his sleeping saints and meet them in the air, he would be present invisibly in the last days of the

ungodly world. Russell was to accept the idea that parousia meant presence rather than coming, something believed by his successors to this day."

¹⁸ Martin Spence, *Heaven on Earth: Reimagining Time and Eternity in Nineteenth-Century British Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 158.

¹⁹ Ibid., 25. "Jonsson then goes on to point out: '*The Rainbow* is important for our discussion because of its influence on Charles T. Russell . . . and his early contacts and associates. Those associates, George Storrs, Gorge Stetson, Miles Grant, Joseph A. Seiss and Nelson Barbour, were all subscribers to it, as Russell himself likely was, although this cannot definitely be established. In any case many of the ideas repeatedly advocated in *The Rainbow* repeatedly appeared in Russell's writings.'"

²⁰ Ibid. "In the work Russell published on 1 July 1879, *A Supplement to Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Significantly, Russell described four of his beliefs by directly quoting *The Day of*

the Lord. These beliefs concerned the upcoming and destructive 'Day of the Lord,' the 'Restoration of the Jews,' the 'Office of the Glorified Church,' and 'Spiritual Bodies'. His doctrine of the 'glorified church' and its role during the millennium seems to have been taken directly from Seiss, although Russell failed to admit it."

Later a dispute over the ransom doctrine split their friendship. However, Barbour was not the person who had developed the original chronology. The chronology was developed by John Aquila Brown. He outlined his beliefs in the book *Even-Tide* (1823). The chronology began with the fall of Judah. Brown chose 604 B.C. as the date of that fall.²¹ Then utilizing Daniel, chapter 4 he determined that the end of all things would be in 1917. However, Barbour found some discrepancies and revised the date to 1914.²² Otherwise, the time line was accepted intact. For any that have not seen the date 604 used for the fall of the Jewish nation, it is because the date accepted by most, if not all, historians and theologians is 586 BC.

Russell's theology was novel in its configuration, but it was representative of what other individuals of that time were writing and thinking. Little was original. Russell primarily took what was available and utilized it. Therefore, when Russell said his theological system had developed in first two decades following 1870, he was only partially right. His belief system had been evolving over the history of the entire church age and, for the most part, represented minority opinions and, in a few cases, beliefs considered heretical.

The Centrality of the Watchtower Society

One of the reasons that theological discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses tend to go poorly is that Jehovah's Witnesses are insistent that their position is correct, and they refuse to consider the possibility that they might be wrong. This stems from their being taught that there is only one entity on the face of the earth that is capable of understanding the Bible and that is the Watchtower Society.²³ This obviously starts any conversation out unequally because the Witnesses know that they are the only ones in the room who have a correct understanding of Scripture. This is compounded by their understanding that the Bible belongs to the Watchtower Society as a whole. It is not designed for individual Bible study. Therefore, the Witness is likely to view any person opposing his or her view as ignorant of God's truth. This is at least in part because the person to whom the Witness is speaking has been studying the Bible without guidance, so all of their conclusions are suspect.²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 30. "What he posited was that the typical theocratic kingdom of Judah had fallen under Gentile rule in 604 BC. Thereafter there would be no godly government on earth until the four great empires—the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman—had had their sway."

²² Ibid., 31. "Instead of using 1917 as the terminus for those times, he calculated slightly differently and marked them as concluding in the autumn of 1914. In that year, Christ's kingdom would come to hold fully sway over the earth, and the Jews, as a people, would be restored to God's favor."

²³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Praise Jehovah With His People," *Watchtower*, July 1, 1973, 402, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1973%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Consider, too, the fact that Jehovah's organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God's holy spirit or active force. (Zech. 4:6) Only this organization functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone God's Sacred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book. . . . How very much true Christians appreciate associating with the only organization on earth that understands the 'deep things of God!'"

²⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Finding Freedom with Jehovah's Visible Organization," *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, 587, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "As the canon of books of

Additionally, the individual Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the Watchtower Society is their link with the truth. Only they have the ability to understand the Scripture correctly because Jehovah shares His truth with the governing body and then governing body makes that truth available to the individual Jehovah's Witnesses.²⁵ When a message comes from the Watchtower Society, the Witness is to accept the message and do what it takes to implement the message. The witness is not to second-guess Jehovah or be rebellious. There is no room for independent thinking.²⁶ The Witness needs the help of the Watchtower Society to understand the Bible.²⁷ Since the witness must be careful of error, any understanding of

God's Word was expanded and the Christian Greek Scriptures were added to complete the Bible, each book was written directly to the Christian congregation or to a member of the Christian congregation in its behalf. Thus, 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."

²⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Righteous Requirements," *Watchtower*, July 1, 1943, 204, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1943%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The Scriptures and the facts clearly establish that the commission given to the 'faithful and wise servant' is grounded in the Word of the Lord. There is only one organization on earth today fulfilling the righteous requirements outlined in this commission from the Lord. The Society, represented by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, is the only one."

²⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jehovah's Theocratic Organization Today," *Watchtower*, February 1, 1952, 79-80, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1952%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We must show our understanding in these matters, appreciating our relationship to the visible theocratic organization, remembering the fate of those like Korah and Achan and Saul and Uzziah and others who forgot the theocratic order. Are we assigned as individuals to bring forth the food for the spiritual table? No? Then let us not try to take over the slave's duties. We should eat and digest and assimilate what is set before us, without shying away from parts of the food because it may not suit the fancy of our mental taste. The truths we are to publish are the ones provided through the discreet-slave organization, not some personal opinions contrary to what the slave has provided as timely food. Jehovah and Christ direct and correct the slave as needed, not we as individuals. If we do not see a point at first we should keep trying to grasp it, rather than opposing and rejecting it and presumptuously taking the position that we are more likely to be right than the discreet slave. We should meekly go along with the Lord's theocratic organization and wait for further clarification, rather than balk at the first mention of a thought unpalatable to us and proceed to quibble and mouth our criticisms and opinions as though they were worth more than the slave's provision of spiritual food. Theocratic ones will appreciate the Lord's visible organization and not be so foolish as to pit against Jehovah's channel their own human reasoning and sentiment and personal feelings."

²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Do We Need Help to Understand the Bible?," *Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, 19, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We all need help to understand the Bible, and we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the 'faithful and discreet slave' organization."

the truth must come from the Watchtower, not suspect sources.²⁸ The Witness is to be thankful for the truth that Jehovah has made available to them.²⁹

The Watchtower warns the Witnesses that they need to evaluate their attitude toward the Watchtower Society. Just as loving Jesus shows a love toward God, loving the Watchtower Society also shows a love toward God. Rejecting the Society is rejecting God.³⁰ The warning not to wander from the guidance of the Watchtower Society is important. The Watchtower Society has noted that just studying the Bible alone leads people back into error.³¹ This claim may be seen as a warning to be faithful to the Watchtower Society but there are questions that arise. If the reading of the Bible alone leads to conclusions that are different from the Watchtower Society's teaching, would it not be logical to wonder if the Watchtower is teaching another Gospel?³² Moreover, if the Bible seems to teach one thing, and the Watchtower Society amends or redirects the meaning in a way other than it was intended to be understood, does that not make the Bible subordinate to the teaching of the Watchtower Society?

²⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Watchtower," *1939 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1939), 85, accessed August 4, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1939%20Yearbook%20\(yb39-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1939%20Yearbook%20(yb39-E).pdf). "It should be expected that the Lord would have a means of communication to his people on the earth, and he has clearly shown that the magazine called The Watchtower is used for that purpose."

²⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Channel to Understanding the Bible," *Watchtower*, Oct 1, 1994, 8, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1994%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "All who want to understand the Bible should appreciate that the "greatly diversified wisdom of God" can become known only through Jehovah's channel of communication, the faithful and discreet slave."

³⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Following Faithful Shepherds with Life in View," *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, 591, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We cannot claim to love God, yet deny his word and channel of communication."

³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Serving Jehovah 'Shoulder to Shoulder,'" *Watchtower*, August 15, 1981, 28-29, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "They say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such 'Bible reading,' they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago, and some have even returned to celebrating Christendom's festivals again, such as the Roman Saturnalia of December 25! Jesus and his apostles warned against such lawless ones."

³² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "If God Has an Organization, What Is It?" *Watchtower*, May 1, 1981, 17, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "This is something that they

unwittingly do this article. Let the honest-hearted person compare the kind of preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom done by the religious systems of Christendom during all the centuries with that done by Jehovah's Witnesses since the end of World War I in 1918. They are not one and the same kind. That of Jehovah's Witnesses is really "gospel," or "good news," as of God's heavenly kingdom that was established by the enthronement of his Son Jesus Christ at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914. (Luke 21:24)"

Theology in Flux: “New Light”

Once Russell had developed his basic theological framework, it would have seemed likely that the theology of the group would become stable and predictable. This did not happen. Like many of his Second Adventist associates, Russell believed that God was continuing to speak through the chosen leader(s) of His people. This extra-biblical revelation was referred to as “new light.” As a result, God, who is said to have chosen the Watchtower Society to be His representative on earth in 1919, would provide greater understanding through His mouthpiece. That mouthpiece would initially be Russell, followed by the next three presidents of the Watchtower Society and finally the Governing Body.³³

This “new light” doctrine, or special revelation, is at the root of virtually every doctrinal error, policy reversal and failed prophecy the Jehovah’s Witnesses have experienced. It is based on the assumption that God continues to speak to selected individuals with the same or similar authority as that given to the Scriptures. Exactly where Russell developed his understanding of “new light” cannot be known for sure but an early co-worker of his, Nelson Barbour, believed in “new light” and spoke about how it changed his understanding of some of his mistaken prophecies.³⁴

Barbour had received revelation and twice predicted the return of Christ based on a thirty-year adjustment of William Millers failed prophecy of 1844.³⁵ Barbour then used “new light” to explain his apparently flawed predictions. He ultimately taught that Christ returned invisibly in 1874.³⁶ Russell adopted Barbour’s chronology and the doctrine of Christ’s

³³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Light Keeps Getting Brighter,” *2016 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2016), 25, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/books/2016-yearbook/highlights/jehovahs-witnesses-beliefs-clarified/>. “As a result, their path “is like the bright morning light that grows brighter and brighter.” (Prov. 4:18) Increasing light from Jehovah continues to illuminate their way organizationally, doctrinally, and morally. What are some of our beliefs that have been clarified in recent years?”

³⁴ “Jehovah’s Witness: A History of Deception,” *Now The End Begins Magazine*, accessed March 14, 2018, <http://www.nowtheendbegins.com/pages/cults/jehovahs-witness.htm>. “Russell and Barbour believed and taught that Christ’s invisible return in 1874 would be followed soon afterward, in the spring of 1878 to be exact, by the Rapture—the bodily snatching away of believers to heaven. When this expected Rapture failed to occur on time in 1878, The Herald’s editor, Mr. Barbour, came up with “new light” on this and other doctrines.”

³⁵ Nelson Barbour, *Midnight Cry* (Rochester, NY: Nelson Barbour, 1871), 98-99, accessed March 14, 2018, <http://absonh.net/Downloads/BSL3/Library/History/BARBOUR.PDF>. “In 1860, on a voyage from Australia to London, Barbour discussed the failed expectations of the Adventists with a chaplain. During a systematic study of the prophecies, Barbour noticed something about the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 12 that the Adventist explanation of the setting up of the ‘abomination that maketh desolate,’ the Adventists view of 1843 was actually thirty years before it was set up. In Barbour’s recalculation of the prophecy he came to the 1873 date for the coming of the Lord.”

³⁶ “Jehovah’s Witness: A History of Deception,” *Now the End Begins*, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.nowtheendbegins.com/jehovahs-witnesses-a-history-of-failed-prophecies-and-deception/>. “It meant that this Adventist splinter group had not remained defeated, as others had, when Christ failed to appear in 1874 as Adventist leaders had predicted; somehow this small group had managed to hold onto the date by affirming that the Lord had indeed returned at the appointed time, only invisibly. Was this mere wishful thinking, coupled with a stubborn refusal to admit the error of failed chronological calculations? Perhaps, but

invisible return. He also utilized the idea of progressive revelation or “new light” to introduce his own teachings.

To provide a rationale for “new light,” Russell allegorized the parable of the faithful servant found in Matt. 24:45. He taught it as an illustration of how God was spiritually feeding his people. The parable showed how God would provide spiritual food for his followers until the rapture. Through the chosen faithful servant, God gives the servants (the church) food (spiritual teaching) at the proper time. Initially, Russell taught that all dedicated anointed Christians had this task.³⁷ However, his followers soon came to believe that Pastor Russell was the faithful servant. He publicly claimed the Watchtower Publication was the faithful servant. However, he admitted in private that it made sense that he could be that faithful servant.³⁸ So during his ministry, Russell was the source of “new light.”

After Russell’s death, Rutherford taught that Jehovah and Jesus Had come to earth to inspect all the churches in 1914. After studying all he churches, they determined that only the Watchtower Society was faithful to Jehovah’s Word. Therefore, in 1919, God selected men from among the anointed 144,000 thousand, to be His mouthpiece on earth. Those chosen and anointed believers were the men who published the Watchtower.³⁹ So the vehicle for “new light” became the Watchtower Society or more specifically the Governing Body. However, in reality the Governing Body was a “rubber stamp” for the President’s decisions until the early 1990s. The President was the source of “new light” for the first four presidencies.

Barbour had some arguments to offer in support of his assertions. In particular, he came up with a basis for reinterpreting the Second Coming as an invisible event: In Benjamin Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott translation of the New Testament the word rendered ‘coming’ in the King James Version at Matthew 24:27, 37, 39 is translated ‘presence’ instead.”

³⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, October 1894, 432-433, accessed March 16, 2018, https://ia800200.us.archive.org/34/items/1881ZionsWatchTower/1881_Watch_Tower.pdf. “We believe that every member of this body of Christ is engaged in the blessed work, either directly or indirectly, of giving meat in due season to the household of faith. "Who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household," to give them meat in due season? Is it not that "little flock" of consecrated servants who are faithfully carrying out their consecration vows—the body of Christ—and is not the whole body individually and collectively, giving the meat in due season to the household of faith--the great company of believers?”

³⁸ Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, 7. “Thousands of the readers of Pastor Russell’s writings believe that he filled the office of ‘that faithful and wise servant’; and that his great work was giving to the household of faith meat in due season. His modesty and humility precluded him from openly claiming this title but he admitted as much in private conversation.”

³⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?”, *Watchtower*, July 15, 2013, 22, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/w20130715/jesus-parable-wheat-and-weeds/>. “In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Note, however, that the word ‘slave’ in Jesus’ illustration is singular, indicating that this is a composite slave. The decisions of the Governing Body are thus made collectively.”

Under Russell, and later the Watchtower Society, the *Watchtower Magazine* became the vehicle for God's new teaching. Rutherford taught that the Holy Spirit ceased to speak to the Church in 1918 when Jesus came into His spiritual temple.⁴⁰ Instead, God provided His Word to the Watchtower by angels.⁴¹ The angels delivered the content of the writings in the Watchtower through an undisclosed process. The teachings, because of their heavenly nature, are to be believed and obeyed without question. Questioning the teachings of the Watchtower Society or disobeying them is independent thinking and willful disobedience, both of which can lead to being disfellowshipped. Therefore, believing "new light" is essential to life.

Jehovah's Word To Us?

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jehovah communicates directly with his chosen channel, the Watchtower Society, and that he reveals new truths to those who are the faithful slave class (The Governing Body). Watchtower proclaims that these truths are binding upon all who hear them.⁴² They cannot be questioned, only believed and obeyed. The Watchtower also tells us that we must be faithful since Jesus and God fully trust the Watchtower.⁴³

These revelations are of the highest priority, and even the Bible is interpreted in light of these new revelations. This is why it is only possible to understand the Bible with the guidance of the Watchtower.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Rutherford, *Preservation*, 202-203.

⁴¹ Rutherford, *Vindication*, 3:250. "These angels are invisible to human eyes and are there to carry out the orders of the Lord. No doubt, they first hear the instruction which the Lord issues to his remnant and then these invisible messengers pass such instruction on to the remnant. The facts show that the angels of the Lord with him at his temple have been thus rendering service unto the remnant since 1919."

⁴² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Path of the Righteous Does Keep Getting Brighter," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1981, 27, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "No matter where we may live on earth, God's Word continues to serve as a light to our path and a lamp to our roadway as to our conduct and beliefs. (Psalm 119:105) But Jehovah God has also provided his visible organization, his "faithful and discreet slave," made up of spirit anointed ones, to help Christians in all nations to understand and apply properly the Bible in their lives. 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."

⁴³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "They Keep Following the Lamb," *Watchtower*, February 15, 2009, 28, accessed March 17, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2009%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.Pdf>. "As individual Christians, how do we view the timely spiritual food that the faithful slave dispenses by means of Bible-based publications and through Christian gatherings? Do we gratefully partake of it and readily apply what we learn? What is our response to organizational decisions made by the slave? Our willing obedience to the direction provided gives evidence of our faith in Jehovah's arrangement."

⁴⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Spirit, the Organization, and the Word," *Watchtower*, June 15, 1951, 375, accessed March 17, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1951%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>.

"But if each of us were left to himself just because he has a copy of the Bible and were to direct his movements independently as he thought he understood the Word, what? It is likely, or possible, that there would be a great deal of confusion or working in competition among us. Hence, besides individually possessing God's Word, we

Apologists for the Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the concept of progressive revelation or new light is not new.⁴⁵ They claim that orthodox Christianity or Christendom utilizes a form of progressive revelation when it allows the Bible to reinterpret the events of the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. However, it must be noted that this is not an example of how the Jehovah's Witnesses actually understand progressive revelation. In addition, the church believes that when the canon was closed, God ceased to speak to the church through progressive revelation.

One apologist for the Jehovah's Witnesses mentions a number of supposed examples of progressive revelation in orthodox Christianity.⁴⁶ On examination, it is clear that none of them would meet the criteria of progressive revelation. One example is the claim that "Gregory Nazianzen, in his 32nd Oration, states that God used gradually increasing light to introduce the belief in a Triune God."⁴⁷ However, Oration 32 does not say anything like this. In Oration 32, he speaks of using the sun, the ray and the light to describe the trinity, but notes it is an inadequate representation. There is no reference to or suggestion of progressive revelation.⁴⁸ A second example is from John Gill's *Exposition of the Bible*.⁴⁹ However, a reading of the commentary reveals that the commentator was speaking of an individual coming to salvation and walking according to God's Word. The section comments on Prov. 4:18. It contrasts those following an evil path that leads to great darkness to those following the path of righteousness, which leads to great light. The commentary does not suggest that progressive revelation leads to greater light but that through study of God's Word and prayer,

need a theocratic organization. Yes, besides having God's spirit of illumination, a Christian needs Jehovah's theocratic organization in order to understand the Bible."

⁴⁵ Elijah Daniels, "'New Light'—Should Opposers of Jehovah's Witnesses Really Be Taken Seriously When They Can't Even Use the Correct Phrase?" *Defend Jehovah's Witnesses Blog*, accessed March 13, 2018, <http://defendingjehovahswitnesses.blogspot.com/2011/08/new-light-should-opposers-of-jehovahs.html>. "In his attempt to explain why the Trinity was not taught until the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen in his 32nd Oration states that God used gradually increasing light to introduce the change to a belief in a Triune God."

⁴⁶ Ibid. "Both Protestant and Catholic commentators have applied the "expanding light" idea to an increase in Bible understanding regarding doctrine: In his attempt to explain why the Trinity was not taught until the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen in his 32nd Oration states that God used gradually increasing light to introduce the change to a belief in a Triune God." Gill's Expositor says: "that shineth more and more. . . the light of the knowledge of Christ the way . . . is increased by means of the ministry of the word, . . . Light into the Gospel, and the doctrines of it, increases yet more and more . . . when the light of knowledge will be clear and perfect."

⁴⁷ Daniels, "'New Light', *Defend Jehovah's Witnesses Blog*. The author seems to be referring to the Fifth Theological Oration 31, chapter 32

⁴⁸ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7, rev. by Kevin Knight (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), accessed March 13, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm>.

⁴⁹ Daniels, "'New Light', *Defend Jehovah's Witnesses Blog*.

and by following righteousness we develop a deeper relationship to God.⁵⁰ Both of these last examples show that Watchtower scholarship is at best biased and at worst dishonest. Interestingly progressive revelation is commonly associated with cult groups. If progressive revelation were a biblical concept, there should be some scriptural indication.

The Scriptural Basis of “New Light”

Jehovah’s Witnesses do offer scriptural support for their use of progressive revelation. In addition to allegorizing Matthew 24, they quote Prov. 4:18, which states, “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.” This is understood to mean that God has chosen to reveal his truth gradually, and the longer we persevere the more truth we have. God, they teach, will continue to supply new doctrinal teaching and prophecy.

Since it is important to find the truth regarding biblical teaching, the supporting Scriptures need to be examined in context. Prov. 4:18 is the strongest verse put forth by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. It is used almost exclusively in their support of progressive revelation. Therefore, the passage needs to be analyzed.

Proverbs 4 is wisdom literature written by Solomon. It provides a warning to a growing son. The son is to stay clear of the paths of wickedness and instead walk in the paths of righteousness. Those who walk in wickedness face ever-increasing darkness, and those who walk in righteousness will find themselves walking in greater light. Because they walk in righteousness, they will find happiness and security. The verse has nothing to do with prophetic knowledge increasing across time. It does not provide any basis to believe that God is supplying the Watchtower Society with increasing understanding.

If readers were to read Proverbs 4 without being indoctrinated with Watchtower theology, they would never see the passage as supporting progressive revelation. More than a dozen commentaries examining Prov. 4:18 were consulted. Not one provided any support for the Watchtower understanding of the text. They were unanimous in their understanding that the text was a warning to a young man to walk in the paths of righteousness.⁵¹

⁵⁰ John Gill, “Proverbs 4:18,” *Exposition of the Bible* (London: Mathews & Leigh, 1810), accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.Biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-Bible/proverbs-4-18.html>. “Such is the light beamed in at first conversion, which directs men to walk in the above mentioned paths; it is a light after a night of darkness, as such is the state of unregeneracy; which, though at first is but glimmering, yet afterwards is clear and shining; especially when Christ the sun of righteousness appears, or is revealed, as the hope of glory. The first grace in conversion is a “true light [that] shines” (1 John 2:8), by which a soul sees its own vileness and filthiness, the insufficiency of its own righteousness; and the fulness, suitability, and ability Christ as a Saviour, and has some discerning of Gospel truths.”

⁵¹ The following commentaries were consulted regarding the meaning of Prov. 4:18. Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*, The Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 233. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Proverbs*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 89–90. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 392. John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Pr 4:18–19. Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 6 (Peabody, MA:

Two other verses are infrequently quoted as supporting “new light,” John 16:12 and Daniel 12:4. John 16:12 says, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come.” It would seem that this verse could be a claim to be receiving new light from the Spirit, but the Watchtower Society states that it has made no claims to be inspired or infallible.⁵² Also Rutherford’s own teaching indicates that the Spirit no longer provides teaching to us. In his book *Preservation*, Rutherford states that since Christ has been enthroned, the comforter has been taken away.⁵³ Several other Rutherford quotes note that the role of the Holy Spirit has been changed and that angels are now ministering in the Spirit’s place.⁵⁴ One perceptive individual noted that if the Holy Spirit were no longer necessary and his role was fulfilled by angels, only those at Watchtower headquarters had access to the truth. Since Rutherford had alienated many Bible Students, this was one way to deny the validity of any counter-claims to truth that they might have.⁵⁵

Hendrickson, 1996), 80. Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Pr 4:14. John E. Goldingay, “Proverbs,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 590. James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), Prov. 4:14–19. R. K. Harrison, “Proverbs,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 412. Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Prov. 4:18.

⁵² “Has the Watchtower Society Ever Claimed to Be Infallible?”, *Defend Jehovah Witnesses*, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://defendingjehovahswitnesses.blogspot.com/2009/11/>. “[The fact that some have Jehovah's spirit] does not mean those now serving as Jehovah's witnesses are inspired. It does not mean that the writings in this magazine, The Watchtower, are inspired and infallible and without mistakes.”—May 15, 1947, page 157.”

⁵³ Rutherford, *Preservation*, 193-194. “By his spirit, the holy spirit, Jehovah God guides or leads his people up to a certain point of time, and thus he did until the time when ‘the comforter’ was taken away, which would necessarily occur when Jesus, the Head of his organization, came to the temple and gathered unto himself those whom he found faithful when he, as the great Judge, began his judgment, in 1918.”

⁵⁴ Michael J. Felker, “Did the Watchtower’s ‘Faithful Slave’ Claim the Holy Spirit’s Functions Ceased?”, *MichaelJFelker*, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://michaeljfelker.com/2014/05/24/did-the-watchtowers-faithful-slave-claim-the-holy-spirits-functions-ceased/>. “But it seems certain that when Jesus came to his temple and began his work of judgment he would direct his holy angels to take the necessary action to cause the separation of the disapproved ones from the approved ones, and would use his angels to bear messages to them to direct the approved ones as to what to do...the angels are there for this purpose, and it is not the demonstration of the parakletos or holy spirit as a helper that directs men to do the separating work. If the holy spirit as a helper were directing the work, then there would be no good reason for employing the angels.” (Salvation, 1939, 263)

⁵⁵ Ibid. “Comments” (first commenter), “Mike: As I see, the things are clearly shown in the above quotes. The Holy Spirit was an obstacle for Rutherford’s leadership. . . . The Holy Spirit can be the helper for any sincere Christian, the Holy Spirit can give many to the Truth. So, if you remove this helper, and you claim that since 1918 the “temple class” or “the servant class” is receiving angelical messages from God, no one, except you and your closer friends in the Writing Department, can claim divine authority to establish new teachings. This was specially written to minimize the Christian freedom of those early Bible Student who were

Christian commentaries interpret Bible passages in light of the surrounding context. The context indicates that the Holy Spirit will reveal Jesus and the meaning of his ministry in the coming years. This allows the Spirit to guide the formation of the New Testament and be available for disciples as they share Jesus. The verse is not understood to suggest wide ranging progressive revelation.⁵⁶

The last verse offered concerning progressive revelation is Dan. 12:4, “But you, Daniel, close up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will dash about, and knowledge will increase.”⁵⁷ This verse adds little to the idea of ongoing progressive revelation.

Inherent Difficulties With “New Light”

There are a number of problems with progressive revelation. First, there does not seem to be any scriptural support for the idea. None of the verses that the Watchtower or individual Jehovah’s Witnesses have supplied support progressive revelation. Second, the use of “new light” often reshapes the clear meaning of scriptural passages. Third, the use of “new light” has led to many significant doctrinal changes as well as a number of false prophecies. Based on these factors, it seems doubtful that “new light” is a valid concept. In addition, other problems plague the concept of progressive revelation. If the Watchtower Society treats its declarations as God’s Word, but those words lead to error, God is responsible for the error. However, if the author is admittedly not inspired, how can the delivered “new light” be treated as inspired?

Functional Inspiration

opposed to the new teachings of Rutherford. This was an ad hoc “new light,” used to increase the “divine authority” of Rutherford’s leadership. It shows how evil was this man.”

⁵⁶ Edwin A. Blum, “John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 2:329. “Also the Spirit would teach what is yet to come. This statement helps one understand the promise that He will guide you into all truth (lit., ‘all the truth’). This was a promise to the apostles that their partial understanding of the person and work of Jesus as the Messiah would be completed as the Spirit would give them insight into the meanings of the soon-to-come Cross and the Resurrection as well as truths about Jesus’ return (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10). The New Testament books are the fulfillment of this teaching ministry of the Spirit.”

⁵⁷ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 321, “Literally the Hebrew text may be rendered either, ‘Many will go here and there *and* the knowledge will increase’ (cf. KJV, NASB) or, ‘Many will go here and there *that* the knowledge may increase’. The latter translation expresses the purpose of the going about, and the NIV seems correctly to have adopted this meaning. An increase in travel toward the end of the age is not the idea of the phrase ‘will go here and there’. In a number of Old Testament passages (e.g., 2 Chr 16:9; Jer 5:1; Amos 8:12; Zech 4:10), Hebrew *yēšōṭēṭû* denotes ‘to go here and there’ in search of a person or thing, and that is the meaning here. An ‘intense’ searching seems indicated by the verb form. The purpose of this search will be ‘to increase knowledge’. But what kind of knowledge is being sought? ‘Yet Gabriel was not predicting a mere surge in scientific ‘knowledge,’ and so forth, in the last days. The article appears with ‘knowledge’ (lit., ‘the knowledge’), showing that a particular kind of ‘knowledge’ was intended, that is, when and how Daniel’s message is to be fulfilled. As the time of fulfillment draws nearer, the “wise” will seek to comprehend these prophecies more precisely, and God will grant understanding (‘knowledge’) to them.”

A key problem faced by the Watchtower Society is how to view discredited doctrines and prophecies. When they have “new light” and a new truth replaces the old truth rather than building on it, it means that the old truth is no longer true. If the Watchtower is divinely inspired, how can this be explained? Does God make errors? Is God unaware of the future? Does God mislead or lie?

To escape responsibility, the Watchtower Society denies that it is inspired.⁵⁸ They are just fallible men trying to follow Jehovah. However, while they make that claim, the word that the Watchtower Society produces is treated as if it is inspired. They state, “It is vital that we . . . respond to the directions of the ‘slave’ as we would to the voice of God. . . .”⁵⁹ To add to the confusion, the Watchtower both claims⁶⁰ and later denies prophetic authority.⁶¹ However, since the Watchtower teachings are considered binding and unquestionable, it would seem logical that one understands that the Watchtower and its authors functionally claim inspiration.

After his death and until 1929, to support progressive revelation, Witnesses taught that Charles Russell conveyed God’s Word to the Watchtower Society from heaven.⁶²

⁵⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Do We Need Help to Understand the Bible?”, *Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, 19, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “True, the brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired, as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views. (Prov. 4:18) However, this has resulted in a continual refining of the body of Bible-based truth to which Jehovah’s Witnesses subscribe.”

⁵⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Overseers of Jehovah’s People,” *Watchtower*, June 15, 1957, 370, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1957%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “It is vital that we appreciate this fact and respond to the directions of the ‘slave’ as we would to the voice of God, because it is His provision.”

⁶⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “They Shall Know a Prophet Was Among Them,” *Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, 197, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1972%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “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. They are still proclaiming a warning, and have been joined and assisted in their commissioned work by hundreds of thousands of persons who have listened to their message with belief.”

⁶¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Why So Many False Alarms?”, *Awake!*, March 22, 1993, 3, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1993%20Awake.pdf>. “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.”

⁶² Rutherford, *The Finished Mystery*, 1917, 144, accessed March 20, 2018. “And another angel.— Not the “voice of the Lord,” mentioned in the preceding chapter, but the corporate body— the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, which Pastor Russell formed to finish his work. This verse shows that, though Pastor Russell has passed beyond the veil, he is still managing every feature of the Harvest work. “The Watch Tower Bible and

However, in 1929, Rutherford began to erase Russell from Watchtower history. Earlier in 1927, Rutherford began to teach that the Faithful Servant was a composite consisting of the anointed 144,000.⁶³ These selected members received the message of Jehovah's that was brought by angels. They then transmitted that message through the Watchtower.⁶⁴ Russell was no longer considered the faithful servant.

Watchtower, under Rutherford and later under the Watchtower Society, continued to receive flashes of "new light." The Jehovah's Witnesses held these prophetic words in high esteem. Over time, because Jehovah's Witnesses were taught that they are not capable of understanding the Bible apart from the Watchtower, the Watchtower Society created a sense of dependency among the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁶⁵ A similar claim from the Watchtower states plainly that only through the Watchtower can we learn the Bible and experience God's gifts.⁶⁶

While teaching that they are the sole source of light for the world and the sole source of biblical knowledge, they are also teaching that no other denomination or Christian group has either truth or salvation.⁶⁷ The Watchtower Society points out that though the world is in

Tract Society is the greatest corporation in the world, because from the time of its organization until now the Lord has used it as His channel through which to make known the Glad Tidings."

⁶³ Neirr, *Chronology*, 1927, accessed July 19, 2018. Rutherford begins to change emphasis from Russell to the Society as the "faithful and wise servant." This "servant class," the 144,000, is now God's channel of communication.

⁶⁴ Rutherford, *Preservation*, 269.

⁶⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Finding Freedom with Jehovah's Visible Organization," *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, 587, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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."

⁶⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Praise Jehovah with His People," *Watchtower*, July 1, 1973, 402, accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1973%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Consider too, the fact that Jehovah's organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God's Holy Spirit or active force. (Zech. 4:6) Only this organization functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone God's Sacred Word the Bible is not a sealed book. . . . How very much true Christians appreciate associating with the only organization on earth that understands the 'deep things of God'! . . . Furthermore, this organization alone is supplied with 'gifts in men' such as evangelizers, shepherds and teachers. . . ."

⁶⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Who Are Following the Light of the World?", *Watchtower*, April 1, 1993, 208, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1993%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "And Christendom's condition is even worse today. The so-called light that she reflects from the world is in reality darkness because that is all Satan and his world have to offer. No, there is no light of truth coming from the conflicting and thoroughly worldly religions of Christendom."

darkness, the light of Jehovah purifies the Watchtower Society.⁶⁸ Therefore, we can see that Jehovah’s Witnesses do understand that the utterances of the Watchtower Society are inspired. The Witnesses come to look forward to “new light” with expectation.

“New Light” Is Encouraged and Anticipated

Jehovah’s Witnesses are encouraged to expect and appreciate the continued delivery of progressive revelation, and they are generally not disappointed. “New light” is often available at annual meetings and is frequently presented in the Watchtower publication. The Watchtower is the official magazine of the Watchtower Society and is a primary source of theological teaching. In 1987, they noted that the two previous decades had seen an increase in “new light” revealing truth.⁶⁹ They explain the “new light” as gradual divine revelation of Jehovah’s truths.⁷⁰ The Watchtower Society encourages individual Jehovah’s Witnesses to be thankful for this ongoing enlightenment.⁷¹ It cannot be denied that many Jehovah’s Witnesses are excited when they receive “new light.” One article introduces a lifelong Jehovah’s Witness to testify how exciting it is to receive God’s truth continually.⁷² This same

⁶⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Walking in the Path of Increasing Light,” *Watchtower*, February 15, 2006, 26, accessed March 20 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2006%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Jehovah is the source of spiritual light. While the world remains in dense darkness, the true God continues to shed light on his people. Increasing light from Jehovah continues to illuminate the path of his people. It refines them organizationally, doctrinally, and morally.”

⁶⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Value of Singing in True Worship,” *Watchtower*, December 1, 1987, 26, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1987%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Almost another two decades passed during which the light of truth kept increasing.”

⁷⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Flashes of Light, Great and Small,” *Watchtower*, May 15, 1995, 15, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1995%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “It is proof of divine wisdom that, in keeping with Proverbs 4:18, the revealing of spiritual truths has taken place gradually by means of flashes of light. In the preceding article, we saw how this text was fulfilled in apostolic times. If the large body of Scriptural truth had been revealed all at once, it would have been both blinding and confusing—much like the effect of coming out of a dark cave into brilliant sunlight. Moreover, gradually revealed truth strengthens the faith of Christians in a continuous way. It makes ever brighter their hope and ever clearer the pathway they are to tread.”

⁷¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Keep in Step with Jehovah’s Organization,” *Watchtower*, January 15, 2001, 18, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2001%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Regarding progressive spiritual enlightenment, Proverbs 4:18 has proved true. It says: ‘The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established’. How thankful we are for the progressive spiritual enlightenment we have experienced!”

⁷² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Thriving Spiritually During Gray-Headedness,” *Watchtower*, June 1, 2007, 22, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2007%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Worth, a Christian elder in his 80s endeavors to keep up to date with the spiritual food dispensed by ‘the faithful and discreet slave’ He says, ‘I’m just absolutely in love with the truth, and I’m thrilled to see how the light of truth gets brighter and brighter.’”

desire for ongoing enlightenment is common in cult groups that have special revelation or “new light.” There is a hunger to see what God will do and a dread of missing anything that God is doing. It makes traditional Christianity seem dull and uninspired to those who are used to a sense of urgent expectancy.⁷³

Mitigating the Damage

This “new light” has brought frequent doctrinal changes and unfulfilled prophecies. This has unsettled some Jehovah’s Witnesses and led to many leaving the Watchtower Society. Therefore, the Watchtower has made efforts to reassure Jehovah’s Witnesses. Because there is often an inability to see progress, they teach that there is a continued need to adhere to the teachings of the Watchtower Society in spite of any apparent problems. They use the analogy of tacking while sailing to explain this apparent lack of progress.⁷⁴

When it becomes obvious that changes in doctrine or prophecies have not gone well, the Watchtower speaks of God’s progressive truth and encourages a positive attitude towards what they refer to as refinements.⁷⁵

Rebranding doctrinal changes as refinements, the Watchtower attempts to minimize the internal public relations damage done by the doctrinal changes and prophetic errors. The Watchtower recognizes that these changes sometimes cause stress and leave the Witnesses open to criticism. This of course discourages some Jehovah’s Witnesses, and they are tempted to drop out of the Watchtower. However, the Watchtower reminds its adherents of a time when many of Jesus’ followers abandoned him because of a hard teaching. His disciples, however, stayed because they knew only he had the light of God. The Watchtower Society encourages its people to do likewise.⁷⁶ In fact, the Watchtower cautions its people

⁷³ The author of this thesis belonged to a cult group (The Move) in early 70s that practiced progressive revelation. There was always a sense of expectation and a desire to be at the forefront of what God was doing. Traditional churches lacked this sense of expectancy and urgency.

⁷⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Path of the Righteous Does Keep Getting Brighter,” *Watchtower*, December 1, 1981, 31, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Of course, such development of understanding, involving ‘tacking’ as it were, has often served as a test of loyalty for those associated with the ‘faithful and discreet slave’. However, progress is being made continually toward fuller appreciation of the “good news” and all that it means. It has been the experience of those who stay close to God’s organization that questions and things hard to understand are always cleared up with the passing of time. And as the light shines forth ever more clearly, how heartwarming and satisfying the way proves to be!”

⁷⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Following Christ the Perfect Leader,” *Watchtower*, May 15, 2011, 27, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2011%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.pdf>. “‘The path of the Righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established,’ states Prov. 4:18. ‘Yes, Jesus’ leadership is progressive, not stagnant. Another way to cooperate with Christ’s ‘brothers’ is to have a positive attitude toward any refinements in our understanding of Scriptural truths as published by ‘the faithful and discreet slave.’”

⁷⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Are you letting Jehovah be your share?,” *Watchtower*, September 15, 2011, 14, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2011683>. “How do you

not to regress. It reminds them that they had once been part of Christendom and had held erroneous beliefs. However, they left those errors behind to obey the true light. Now, shaken by the errant flashes of new light, these same Jehovah's Witnesses find themselves tempted to return to the beliefs that they had before.⁷⁷

However, the Watchtower has found that sometimes even a healthy dose of guilt may not be enough to keep people in line. The Watchtower must find a way of justifying the changes and the seeming errors. How can they do this?

Justification of Errors

The Watchtower encouragement to remain constant asks a great deal of the Jehovah's Witnesses. With many of the flashes of "new light," they are asked to embrace positions that are not logical development of prior new light but actually contradict the old light. Sometimes the "new light" may have been previously rejected. This is illogical, but because the changes are "new light," the teachings must be accepted. What are the excuses commonly used by Jehovah's Witnesses to lessen the impact of changed doctrine and failed prophecies?

Apologist for the Jehovah's Witnesses suggest that the Jehovah's Witnesses should be allowed some leeway with their proclamations of "new light." They argue that the Apostles in the New Testament also made mistakes.⁷⁸ If the Apostles made errors, it is not surprising that the Watchtower Society also makes occasional errors requiring readjustment.⁷⁹ However, this approach fails. The Scriptures the Watchtower Society

react when Jehovah, the Source of spiritual enlightenment, sheds light on "the deep things of God" found in the Bible? (1 Cor. 2:10-13) We have an excellent example in the Apostle Peter's reaction when Jesus told His listeners the words of today's text. Taking those words literally, many disciples said: "This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?" They "went off to the things behind." But Peter said: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life." (John 6:60, 66, 68) Peter relied on God for spiritual enlightenment. When spiritual light on some matter gets brighter, do you try to understand the underlying Scriptural reasons for the adjustment? (Prov. 4:18)."

⁷⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Preaching Christ Through Envy Or Good Will?", *Watchtower*, May 15, 1976, 298, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1976%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It is a serious matter to represent God and Christ in one way, then find that our understanding of the major teachings and fundamental doctrines' of the Scriptures was in error and then after that, to go back to the very doctrines that, by years of study, we had thoroughly determined to be in error. Christians cannot be vacillating—wishy-washy—about such fundamental teachings. What confidence can one put in the sincerity or judgement of such persons?"

⁷⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The End of the World Fear, Fascination, and Frustration," *Watchtower*, January 1, 2013, 8, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2013%20The%20Watchtower%20PUBLIC.Pdf>. "Like Jesus' first-century disciples, we have sometimes looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecy ahead of God's timetable."

⁷⁹ Watchtower, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 136. "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."

selected, to show the teaching error, do not show that.⁸⁰ Instead, they show the Apostles seeking Jesus' wisdom about the coming of the Kingdom of God and the end of things. The Apostles did not teach error in any of the Scriptures cited by the Watchtower apologists.

Earlier apologist for the Watchtower claimed that erroneous teachings have been permitted by God to test the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁸¹ However, James 1:13 states, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me'. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." Therefore, this approach fails as well.

Other Jehovah's Witness apologist have explained away errors in a more casual way. They suggest that Watchtower is only guilty of being too eager for God's Kingdom to come. Who can speak badly about that? The mistakes were rooted in a desire to be vigilant and alert to the movement of God. Unfortunately, this sometimes led to error.⁸² The prediction of false dates is viewed sympathetically by Jehovah's Witnesses because those who made the predictions were longing for God's Kingdom.⁸³ In fact, the Watchtower finds fault with other sects or denominations for not predicting future events. They accuse those groups of inducing apathy.⁸⁴

The Watchtower Society is quick to excuse its own failings as due to virtue, while castigating other religious group as being unacceptable to God because of their untruths. Jehovah's Witnesses reach out to others assuring them the Watchtower Society has the truth,

⁸⁰ Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:1-2.

⁸¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Typical Experiences of Elijah and Elisha," *Watchtower*, February 1, 1916, 38, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw->

[wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1916%20The%20Watchtower.pdf). "We inferred from this that the Church's 'change' would take place on or before that date. But God did not tell us that it would be so. He permitted us to draw that inference; and we believe that it has proven to be a necessary test upon God's dear saints everywhere."

⁸² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Why So Many False Alarms," *Awake!*, 4. "Jehovah's Witnesses, in their eagerness for Jesus' second coming, have suggested dates that turned out to be incorrect."

⁸³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Choosing the Best Way of Life," *Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, 17, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1980%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "In modern times such eagerness, commendable in itself, has led to attempts at setting dates for the desired liberation from the suffering and troubles that are the lot of persons throughout the earth."

⁸⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Keep Ready," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1984, 18, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1984%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It is easy for the established churches of Christendom and other people to criticize Jehovah's Witnesses because their publications have, at times, stated that certain things could take place on certain dates. Have they not, rather, encouraged spiritual sluggishness by considering expectation of "the end" to be "meaningless" or "an insignificant myth"? Have apostates promoted Christian alertness? Have they not, rather, induced spiritual sleepiness?"

the only truth.⁸⁵ Yet the Watchtower is all too ready to excuse itself, letting us know, when necessary, that they are not infallible and they do make mistakes.⁸⁶ This can be confusing because they, at one and the same time, state they are not infallible while claiming that the message they deliver is from God and spoken as He commands.⁸⁷

Judge Rutherford was clear; the message delivered from the Watchtower is from God. However, God is not the purveyor of imperfect messages. This raises a significant issue. Is God mistaken? It would seem so. A number of claims seem to implicate Jehovah as being a God of error and change. This is compounded by the occasional, but vacillating claim the Watchtower Society speaks as God's prophet.⁸⁸ If this is true, all of the mistaken prophecy and all of the illogical doctrinal changes are the work of Jehovah. It is a difficult problem.

The Watchtower Society has claimed that angels delivered the truth to the leadership so that they might distribute it.⁸⁹ Later they claimed these angels caused God's truth to be published in the Watchtower.⁹⁰ So treating the Watchtowers pronouncements as functionally

⁸⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Sincerity-Desirable. but Is It Enough?", *Watchtower*, February 1, 2003, 32, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2003%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "For us to be acceptable to God, our sincere beliefs must be based on accurate information. Jehovah's Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you in examining what is involved in serving God with sincerity and truth."

⁸⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Who Is Leading God's People Today?", *Watchtower*, February 2017, 26, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2017283>. "Of course, Jesus did not tell us that his faithful slave would produce perfect spiritual food."

⁸⁷ Joseph Franklin Rutherford, *Vindication*, vol. 1 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1931), 45, accessed March 22, 2018, http://ia601406.us.archive.org/23/items/WatchtowerLibrary/books/1931_vin1_E.pdf. "The 'servant' is not to tell his own message. Jehovah has made his 'faithful servant' the 'watchman', and only as the Lord God directs the 'servant' to speak he does speak, having always a 'Thus saith the Lord' for every part of the message that is delivered."

⁸⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "They Shall Know a Prophet Was Among Them," *Watchtower*, 197, "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."

⁸⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "His Organization," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1933, 364, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1933%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Angels are delegated by the

Lord to convey his instructions to the members of his organization on earth. Just how this is done is not necessary for us to understand."

⁹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jehovah's Battle," *Watchtower*, February 1, 1935, 41, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1935%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Without a doubt the Lord uses his angels to cause the truth to be published in The Watchtower. . . . Certainly God guides his covenant people by using the holy angels to convey his message to them."

inspired implicates God. To deflect the blame from Jehovah some Watchtower apologist claim that Jehovah's Witnesses are only imperfect and fallible men. The errors that exist fall upon them.⁹¹

This is an interesting position because on one hand they require that the message delivered by the Watchtower be accepted and adhered to without question because it is God's message. On the other hand, they deny infallibility. It seems they are attempting to have the benefit of an infallible message with none of the risk that claiming infallibility brings. In response to this, it seems appropriate to look at the Watchtower to see how we should respond to the fact that they wish to be known as imperfect and fallible men. Watchtower admonishes Jehovah's Witnesses not to trust in imperfect men.⁹² So if they wish to be known as imperfect men themselves how can they be wise? Wisdom would mean avoiding imperfect men.⁹³ If we allow the Watchtower to guide us it appears that we should yield to the Bible and forsake other guidance.⁹⁴ It would be unwise to follow the philosophies of imperfect men.⁹⁵ Those who chose to follow imperfect men will encounter problems.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Do We Need Help to Understand the Bible?", *Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, 19. "True, the brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views."

⁹² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "What Price Government," *Watchtower*, November 1, 1966, 668, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1966%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Do not despair, neither trust in 'imperfect men', who come to disappointment, but look to the secure and certain fountainhead of all government and the source of life."

⁹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Man's 'World of Tomorrow' or Christ's 'Kingdom Rule', Which?", *Watchtower*, March 15, 1966, 168, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1966%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "You may wisely decide against putting your trust in 'imperfect men' and their fallible predictions and promises."

⁹⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Is the Bible Simply a Product of Human Wisdom?" *Watchtower*, March 1, 1975, 133, accessed March 22, 2018, [Online], available: <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1975%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The Bible's main objective is to provide sound guidance for living in harmony with the will of God. Logically, therefore, what it says should be far superior to what imperfect men not following it have recommended and continue to recommend as a guide."

⁹⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, September 1, 1975, 543, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1975%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "According to 1 Timothy 6:20, it would be unwise to fill one's mind with philosophies of imperfect men."

⁹⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Recognize Christ's Vital Place," *Watchtower*, April 1, 1978, 20, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1978%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Whenever God's Word is displaced by the views of 'imperfect men' as a source of guidance, serious problems can result."

The Watchtower is caught in the horns of a dilemma. If the “new light” is inspired, God is awash in error. If the Watchtower Society is imperfect, their own literature condemns them and there is no need to adhere to their teaching or doctrines.

Is it possible that “new light” is actually reliable and the Watchtower can be acquitted of the claim that it is erroneous? Could there be a simple test that should be accepted by both Jehovah’s Witnesses and non-Witnesses?

A Simple Test For the Reliability of “New Light”

In his early writing, Russell established parameters that are still useful for evaluating the use of “new light” by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. He wrote that “new light” should be progressive and that the new teachings would not contradict the old. In other words, the truths would build upon one another in linear fashion.⁹⁷ Therefore, whether we accept the idea of progressive revelation or not, we have been given criteria for evaluating “new light” by the very man who founded the Watchtower Society. He taught that “new light” would add to and further explain older light. The “old light” would not be contradicted or extinguished. So doctrinal reversals would be a clear case of “new light” being erroneous.

Using Russell’s criteria, we find a number of serious doctrinal reversals and failed prophecies. We will look at one example. It is of no real significance other than it clearly demonstrates contradictions and flip-flops in what is supposed to be “new light.” The example is the fate of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. For some reason, there arose a concern about the fate of those who had been in Sodom and Gomorrah. Were they beyond redemption? How does their fate fit with the Ransom doctrine? People wanted to know if they would be annihilated or whether they would be raised to participate in the millennium and have a second chance at earning eternal life. The Watchtower Society received “new light” several times regarding the status of those who had inhabited Sodom and Gomorrah. The different flashes of light did not add one on the other to provide new light but instead contradicted one another. This was exactly what Pastor Russell warned was an indication of error, a refutation of “new light.”

In the 1879 *Watchtower*, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah had a chance for redemption.⁹⁸ However, in 1951 Jehovah made a different determination. Their redemption

⁹⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence,” *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, February 1881, 3, accessed March 22, 2018, <<http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1881%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “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. . . .”

⁹⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “In Re: the Last Trump,” *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, July 1879, 8, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1879%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “But let us read the prophecy further. After comparing Israel with Sodom and Samaria. and pronouncing her worse. v. 53 says: “When I bring

was an utter impossibility.⁹⁹ In 1952, Jehovah affirmed his prior decision. They would not be resurrected.¹⁰⁰ However, in 1965, Jehovah reconsidered and the door for resurrection was again open for them.¹⁰¹ But, in 1967, Jehovah again reversed himself and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were faced with annihilation.¹⁰² Nevertheless, in 1974 Jehovah again was feeling more charitable and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah could look forward to resurrection.¹⁰³ However, 1982 and 1988¹⁰⁴ were bad years for the men of Sodom and

again the captivity (in death, all are captives and Christ came to ‘set at liberty the captives and to open the prison doors’ of the grave,) of Sodom and Gomorrah, then will I bring thy captives in the midst of them.” (These will be raised together.) In v. 55 this is called “a return to restitution.”

⁹⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from The Readers,” *Watchtower*, May 1, 1951, 287, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1951%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Those perishing in the Flood and in the fiery rainfall on Sodom and Gomorrah did not die because of inherited sin from Adam, but were condemned because they ignored Jehovah’s warning and were slain by him. They became warning examples of everlasting judicial punishment.”

¹⁰⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Get Out of Her My People,” *Watchtower*, June 1, 1952, 338, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1952%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “These Jewish cities had heard the warning and had seen powerful works; they had had their fair judgment trial and by their decision showed they were worthy of eternal destruction.”

¹⁰¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, August 1, 1965, 479, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1965%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “For it to be ‘more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah’ than for others, it would be necessary for former inhabitants of that land to be present on Judgment Day. It is not the literal land, the ground, that is to be judged. Revelation chapter 20 shows that it will be persons raised from the dead who will stand ‘before the throne’. Nor will judgment be passed on them as groups, as former inhabitants of certain lands, but they will be ‘judged individually according to their deeds’ during the time of judgment. So apparently individuals who used to live in that land will be resurrected. What is it, then, that underwent ‘the judicial punishment of everlasting fire’? While the inhabitants of the cities were certainly destroyed, apparently it was not the people but the cities themselves that were everlastingly destroyed.”

¹⁰² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Can Any War Be Wholly Just?”, *Watchtower*, July 1, 1967, 409, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “It means the death from which there is no resurrection. They will be burned up root and branch, as completely gone forever as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which Jehovah God burned up by a rain of fire and sulphur from heaven, never to be rebuilt. It is destruction in Gehenna in which God destroys both body and soul (any right or possibility of living).”

¹⁰³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “How God Has Actively Shown His Care,” *Awake!*, October 8 1974, 20, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1974%20Awake.pdf>. “Moreover, God’s undeserved kindness and care are so great that he will bring back the people of Sodom by a resurrection, with opportunity to learn and turn around to the way of life, even as his Son stated.”

¹⁰⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, June 1, 1988, 31, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1988%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction.”

Gomorrah, and they were again consigned to annihilation. The year was not totally bad though, because while still in 1988 it was determined that Jehovah will resurrect some of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁰⁵ Things were definitely looking up. It was determined that it was the city itself that would undergo eternal destruction.¹⁰⁶ The men of Sodom and Gomorrah could sleep restfully. Unfortunately, Jehovah rethought things, and in the latter part of 1988 and 1989¹⁰⁷ he finally decided to annihilate all of the men of Sodom and Gmorrah. On the positive side, according to Jehovah's Witness doctrine, these men are asleep so have not had to endure the anxiety induced by Jehovah's indecision.

We know that the God of the Bible is always the same. He does not lie or mislead people, and his judgment is perfect. These flashes of "new light" demonstrate as well as anything that the "new light" doctrine has led to serious error and implicates God in being dishonest. Can any doctrine that suggests God does not know from one year to the next what is true be true? Can any doctrine that suggests that God is misleading or deliberately playing with His people be true? The answer is clear; it cannot be true. "New light" is a false doctrine. Since this false doctrine is the foundation of many of the teachings that have set the

¹⁰⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Destruction," *Insight On the Scriptures*, vol.1, 616, accessed March 22, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20\(it-1-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20(it-1-E).pdf). "This is also illustrated by what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their inhabitants. Jude indicated that these cities were everlastingly destroyed. (Jude 7; compare 2Pe 2:6.) However, Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 10: 15 show that at least some of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection."

¹⁰⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Sodom," *Insight On the Scriptures*, vol. 2, 985, accessed March 22, 2018, <[http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol2%20\(it-2-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol2%20(it-2-E).pdf)>. "Jude mentions that 'Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire'. This would not conflict with Jesus' statement about a Jewish city that would reject the good news: 'It will be more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city'. Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as cities, but this would not preclude a resurrection for people of those cities."

¹⁰⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Revelation—Its Grand Climax* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 273, accessed March 22, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988-2006%20Revelation-Its%20grand%20climax%20at%20hand%20\(2006%20printing\)%20\(re-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988-2006%20Revelation-Its%20grand%20climax%20at%20hand%20(2006%20printing)%20(re-E).pdf). "He said that it would be 'more enduring for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day' than for the religionists who spurned his message. (Matthew 11:23,24) Jesus was here using hyperbole to show that those religious leaders who rejected the Son of God and his teaching were even more reprehensible than the Sodomites. Jude 7 states that those Sodomites underwent 'the judicial punishment of everlasting hell', meaning eternal destruction. (Matthew 25:41,46) How severe, then, will be the judgment of so-called Christian leaders who blindly lead their blinded flocks away from the high moral standards of God's Kingdom into the permissive, debauched ways of this world!" For comments in 1989, see Rutherford, *You Can Live Forever*, 179. "Will such terribly wicked persons be resurrected during Judgment Day? The

Scriptures indicate that apparently they will not. For example, one of Jesus' inspired disciples, Jude, wrote first about the angels that forsook their place in heaven to have relations with the daughters of men. Then he added: 'So too Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, after they in the same manner as the foregoing ones had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use, are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.' (Jude 6, 7; Gen. 6:1, 2) Yes, for their excessive immorality the people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected."

Jehovah's Witnesses at odds with orthodox Christianity, the entire theological base of the Watchtower Society is suspect.

Chapter 4

Important Theology Unique to the Jehovah's Witnesses

The Gospel

What is the Gospel? For those steeped in an evangelical subculture, it does not seem possible that there could be any question. The Gospel is Christo-centric. It is what Christ has done to restore humankind's relationship with God. The basic Gospel message is that humans are unrighteous sinners (Rom. 3:23). In fact, no one is righteous (Rom. 3:10). Our works are inadequate to remove the damage of sin (Rom. 3:20). Christ came as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2). When we believe in Him (which *implies* that the belief produces a change of heart and motivation to follow), our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God is restored (Rom. 10:8-10). We pass from death to life (John 5:24). Both Peter and Paul recognized Jesus, the Messiah, as the one who came to set us free.

An evangelical defines the Gospel as the hope of forgiveness and eternal life found through faith in Jesus Christ. It includes the message Jesus proclaimed during His ministry, and the recounting of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The Gospel tells of a present salvation with the hope of a future resurrection and eternal life.

On the other hand, Jehovah's Witnesses are not fond of the term 'Gospel'. While they do identify the four historical books of Jesus' life as Gospels, they use the term 'Good News' in place of the word 'Gospel' elsewhere. Their Good News differs from the Gospel with which the evangelical is familiar. For the Jehovah's Witness the Good News has a strong emphasis on the Kingdom of God (God's theocratic rule on earth). Jesus has been enthroned since 1914; the last days will end soon and Armageddon will occur.¹ Then God will raise the dead, and the millennium will begin. The emphasis of the Good News is directed at what Jehovah is doing. The Jehovah's Witness is to proclaim this coming Kingdom and be part of the Watchtower Society. They must work hard to qualify for the eternal life that will be available at the end of the millennium.² The idea of 'being saved' is foreign to the Jehovah's

¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Kingdom of God Is Among You," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1928, 365, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1928%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Now we are in the day of greater fulfilment. In 1920, that is, after the imprisoned condition and beheading experience of God's people during the war period, Bible Students came to a correct understanding of our Lord's prophecy contained in Matthew 24: 14. They then realized that "this gospel" which was to be preached in all the world for a testimony to the Gentiles or all nations, was not a gospel of a kingdom yet to come but a gospel to the effect that the Messianic King has begun His reign over earth, and 'the kingdom of God is among us' therefore."

² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Working Hard for the Reward of Eternal Life," *Watchtower*, August 15, 1972, 493, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1972%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Why are God's dedicated people working so hard? It is because their heart is in God's work. Their dedication is genuine. They meant it when they chose to put God's will first in their lives. And besides that, they are mindful of the rich reward that God holds out to them—the reward of everlasting life! What a powerful incentive this! All lovers of life should want to join the ranks of Jehovah's witnesses."

Witness. The majority of verses we associate with being a believer in Christ are said to be for the 144,000. Those in the Great Multitude do not benefit from those verses. They cannot be ‘born again’.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses recognize that they are presenting another or a different Gospel and believe that this does not constitute a problem.³ The prior Gospel of Christendom is really no Gospel at all. Since 1914 they have been faithfully proclaiming the ‘Good News’ that leads to life. The true Gospel had been unavailable from the time of the last Apostle until Charles Taze Russell founded the Watchtower Society.

In summary then, the typical evangelical understands that the Gospel is bound to what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf. The Gospel is a message directed at individuals and calling for a response. The result of responding to the Gospel occurs in the present and leads to the forgiveness of sin, to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and to eternal life. The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe the focus of the ‘Good News’ is the vindication of Jehovah’s name and the development of Jesus’ Kingdom on earth. For the Jehovah’s Witness the benefit of the ‘Good News’ is future. It will require much work here and will later lead to the forgiveness of sin and eternal life following a lengthy process of being perfected during the millennium.⁴

³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “If God Has an Organization, What Is It?”, *Watchtower*, May 1, 1981, 17, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Let the honest-hearted person compare the kind of preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom done by the religious systems of Christendom during all the centuries with that done by Jehovah’s Witnesses since the end of World War I in 1918. They are not one and the same kind. That of Jehovah’s Witnesses is really “gospel,” or “good news,” as of God’s heavenly kingdom that was established by the enthronement of his Son Jesus Christ at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914. (Luke 21:24)”

⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth—But How?” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1983, 12, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “However, not everyone will be permitted to live in the Paradise earth. Requirements must be met. That is reasonable.—Matthew 6:10. Consider: If you were the owner of a beautiful home surrounded by well-kept gardens, would you allow just anyone to live there? No, he would have to meet with your approval, meeting your requirements. What does God require of those who will reside forever upon his Paradise earth? Let us examine four basic requirements. Four Requirements Jesus Christ identified a first requirement when he said in prayer to his Father: ‘This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.’ (John 17:3) Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God’s purposes regarding the earth and of Christ’s role as earth’s new King. Will you take in such knowledge by studying the Bible? Many have found the second requirement more difficult. It is to obey God’s laws, yes, to conform one’s life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible. This includes refraining from a debauched, immoral way of life.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:3, 4. A third requirement is that we be associated with God’s channel, his organization. God has always used an organization. For example, only those in the ark in Noah’s day survived the Flood, and only those associated with the Christian congregation in the first century had God’s favor. (Acts 4:12) Similarly, Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it. The fourth requirement is connected with loyalty. God requires that prospective subjects of his Kingdom support his government by loyally advocating his Kingdom rule to others. Jesus Christ explained: ‘This ‘Good News’ of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth’. (Matthew 24:14) Will you meet this requirement by telling others about God’s Kingdom?”

Jehovah's Witnesses place a strong emphasis on sharing the 'Good News' that Jesus is currently enthroned, and the Kingdom is coming.⁵ Because of this Jehovah's Witnesses look forward to living in a restored new earth, a paradise where there will be order and everything will be stable. They do not acknowledge the current forgiveness of sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or the reception of eternal life. Those benefits are future.

It is interesting that even though there are many Bibles available, the door-to-door activity is considered essential. This is because a person reading just the Bible without the assistance of the *Watchtower* will be unable to understand the 'Good News'.⁶ This is reminiscent of what Russell said about his own writings. He claimed that if Bible Students were to stop reading his materials and read just the Bible, they would fall back into error within two years. To a logical person that should suggest that the 'Gospel' of the Bible and the 'Good News' of the *Watchtower* are actually two very different things.

The 144,000 and the Great Multitude

The 144 Thousand

According to Jehovah's Witness eschatology (theology of the end times), a special class of believers has been designated the anointed. Those 144,000 will go directly to heaven

⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Good News," *Insight On The Scriptures* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 1:988, accessed July 30, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20\(it-1-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988%20Insight%20on%20the%20Scriptures-Vol1%20(it-1-E).pdf). "While Jesus was on earth, he and his disciples announced: 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near'. (Mt 4: 17; 10:7) Jesus, anointed as Christ, the King, said to the Pharisees, his enemies: 'The kingdom of God is in your midst.' (Luke 17:20, 21) This was the theme, or central point, of the 'Good News' during Jesus' earthly ministry. However, it is not reported that after Jesus' death the disciples proclaimed the Kingdom as having "drawn near" or as being at hand. Rather, the 'Good News' they preached was that after Jesus had laid down his life as the ransom price for salvation, he ascended to heaven and was then sitting at God's right hand. They also preached about Jesus' return at a later time and his Kingdom to come."

⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Kingdom of God Is Among You," *Watchtower*, December 1, 1928, 363, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1928%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Can we say that this circulation of the Bible accomplished the foretold preaching of the gospel of the kingdom? Decidedly no! In spite of this Bible distribution it is still necessary for God's little band of witnesses in the earth to print literature explaining God's plan of the ages and to call upon the homes where these Bibles have been placed. Otherwise the people would be left in ignorance as to the setting up of the Messianic government in our day."

at their death, to rule and reign with Christ.⁷ Russell believed that the Scriptures indicated that the ‘little flock’ of Luke 12:32 and the sheep of John 10:1-15 were synonymous with the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14. This is the most exalted class called the ‘little flock’ or God’s congregation.⁸ Those were faithful and true believers. They gave all to please God. They lived self sacrificially and sought the truth.

As a result, Jehovah selected them to rule with him.⁹ The promises of the New Testament are for them, but not for others. At death, they immediately change, receiving a spiritual body and go directly to heaven to be with Jehovah.¹⁰ There they rule and reign with Christ. Some early Christians were in the 144,000, but the apostasy of early Christendom meant that few in that time found their way into the 144,000. Only after Charles Taze Russell restored the church did God begin to select large numbers of faithful believers to be part of the ‘little flock.’ As a result, the majority of the 144,000 are followers of the Watchtower Society.¹¹ Russell taught that in 1878 all the anointed saints, who had previously died, were raised as a part of the ‘little flock’. From that time forward, all those chosen to be part of the ‘little flock’ would receive a spiritual body and go to be with Christ immediately at death. This special calling will continue until the anticipated harvest of the whole group takes place.¹² The great multitude, another class of believers, will be subject to the anointed class

⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Serve with Eternity in View,” *Watchtower*, June 15, 1974, 376, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1974%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Also, it is to the spirit-anointed Christians who will rule in that kingdom that of the Christian Greek Scriptures is directed, including the promises of everlasting life.” Spirit anointed Christians are members of the little ‘flock,’ the 144,000 thousand.

⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Who Go to Heaven and Why,” *You Can Live Forever On Paradise Earth* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1982), 125-126, accessed May 13, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20\(pe-E\)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20(pe-E)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf). “When the Bible speaks of ‘the congregation of the living God’, it is referring to a particular group of Christ’s followers. (1 Timothy 3:15) They are also called ‘the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens’. (Hebrews 12:23) So this ‘congregation of God’ is made up of all Christians on earth who have the hope of heavenly life. In all, only 144,000 persons finally make up the ‘congregation of God.’”

⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-126. “So it was from the earth that Jehovah arranged to take a ‘little flock’ of persons to be associated with his Son in the heavenly kingdom. They are the ones who, by their faithfulness to God, proved false the Devil’s charge that men serve God only for selfish reasons.”

¹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The First Resurrection Now Under Way,” *Watchtower*, July 1, 2007, 25-30, accessed May 13, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2007006>. “As Christ’s presence progresses, anointed Christians who faithfully finish their earthly course are changed ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ into powerful spirit creatures.” (1 Corinthians 15:52)

¹¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom*, 1993, 706, 709. “Clearly, when the time of the end began in 1914, none of the churches of Christendom were measuring up to these Bible standards for the one true Christian congregation. What, though, about the Bible Students, as Jehovah’s Witnesses were then known?”

¹² Russell, *Millennial Dawn*, vol. 3, *Thy Kingdom Come* (1891), 234. “And since the resurrection of the Church must occur sometime during this ‘end’ or ‘harvest’ period we hold that it is a most reasonable inference,

of believers. Russell also taught that the time for the selection of those special individuals was to end in October of 1881.¹³ He said that “the favour has now ended” and “the door was shut.”¹⁴ Those who were dedicated followers of Charles Taze Russell could become members of the 144,000 until then. They could share in the promises of Scripture, escape Armageddon, have spiritual bodies, and live in heaven.¹⁵ Over time, the Watchtower has changed the 1881 date a number of times. In 1919 there was said to be a final harvest of the anointed. Then the date of 1931 was set as the last opportunity to be among the anointed. Finally, it was decided that it was not possible to know for sure when the last anointed might be selected.¹⁶

The Great Multitude

Those who did not follow Russell, those who were lukewarm and undiscerning, yet Christian, would become part of the great multitude but would never rule and reign with

and one in perfect harmony with all the Lord's plan, that in the spring of 1878 all the holy apostles and other ‘overcomers’ of the Gospel age who slept in Jesus were raised spirit beings, like unto their Lord and Master. And while we, therefore, conclude that their resurrection is now an accomplished fact, and hence that they as well as the Lord are present in the earth, the fact that we do not see them is no obstacle to faith when we remember that, like their Lord, they are now spirit kings, and, like him, invisible to men.”

¹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, January 1881, R176, 2, accessed May 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1881%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “This last class is to be the bride. . . . Careless of the opinions, smiles or frowns of the world, she cares only to be in favor with her beloved—the heavenly bridegroom. And these are to recognize him now, the others are to stumble and not recognize Him until these have all gone in to the marriage and the door to that high position is closed. Our understanding is that the Bridegroom came in 1874; and this little company is being brought to a knowledge of his presence, and in that sense, being separated from other true Christians who either are overcharged with the affairs of this world or bound by chains of denominationalism, are making void the word of God through their traditions, etc., and still others, who, not being in condition of heart to receive Him on the evidence of His word, but who turn to seek light on His presence in other directions and find it not until the door to that high calling is shut. Matt. 25:10.”

¹⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, October/November 1881, R289, 3, accessed May 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1881%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The seven years which ended October 3d, 1881, were years of favor during the presence, that of the living generation all of readiness of heart might become members of the little flock and enter into the joys of our Lord's presence. If our application of Scripture be correct, the favor has now ended, and in the language of the parable, “the door was shut”; and to those who have never fully consecrated and sacrificed self to God, we cannot any longer hold out the great prize of our high calling, viz.: to be members of the Bride of Christ, joint heirs of Glory, Honor and Immortality.”

¹⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, October 1879, 37, accessed May 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1879%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “I know of no scriptures which teach that any but the ‘little flock’ or ‘bride company’ and the company that comes out of the tribulation (Rev. vii 14.) will ever be given spiritual bodies.”

¹⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, May 1, 2007, 30-31, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2007327#h=4>.

Christ.¹⁷ The great multitude, by being apathetic and associating with corrupt Christendom, had associated with spiritual Babylon and was defiled.¹⁸ Russell believed the great multitude would come from believers in apostate Christendom, this group was spoken of somewhat disparagingly. Russell taught the great multitude was destined to go to heaven. He said that when members of the great multitude die, they do not go directly to heaven but sleep until the resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous. When resurrected, they will have fleshly, not spiritual, bodies even in heaven.¹⁹ If Armageddon were to occur while they were alive, God would protect them.²⁰ The great multitude will worship God and serve Jesus and the ‘little flock’, but they will never rule. Because this great multitude has second hand status, it exists to support the 144,000. Therefore, most of the New Testament does not apply to the great multitude.²¹ They are not part of the New Covenant.²² They are not part of the Congregation

¹⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Aaron as a Priest,” *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, November 1880, 160, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1880%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “When that is done, all are rewarded,—Christ his saints and the great multitude who are to serve before the throne. That the great multitude are Christ’s in the sense we have presented seems evident even from the fact that they have robes; that is, they had been counted holy, or had Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. But they had defiled their garments by contact with Babylon, and therefore their loss of the crown, and the need of the judgments to separate them.”

¹⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Gathering to Christ,” *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, November 1880, 156, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1880%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The ‘Great multitude’ must wash their robes, and make them white. Rev. vii. 14. Had their garments not been ‘defiled’ they would not have needed washing. Christ gives all His people clean robes, but the mass have suffered their garments to become spotted with the flesh and by contact with the world.”

¹⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, October 1879, 37, accessed May 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1879%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “I know of no scriptures which teach that any but the “little flock” or “bride company” and the company that comes out of the tribulation (Rev. vii 14.) will ever be given spiritual bodies.”

²⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Remaining Organized for Survival into the Millennium,” *Watchtower*, September 1, 1989, 19, accessed May 17 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1989%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Only Jehovah’s Witnesses, those of the anointed remnant and the ‘great crowd,’ as a united organization under the protection of the Supreme Organizer, have any Scriptural hope of surviving the impending end of this doomed system dominated by Satan the Devil.”

²¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Serve with Eternity in View,” *Watchtower*, June 15, 1974, 376, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1974%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Also, it is to the spirit-anointed Christians who will rule in that kingdom that of the Christian Greek Scriptures is directed, including the promises of everlasting life.” Spirit anointed Christians are members of the little ‘flock,’ the 144,000 thousand.

²² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, April 1, 1979, 31, accessed May 17, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1979%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The new covenant will terminate with the glorification of the remnant who are today in that covenant mediated by Christ. The ‘great crowd’ of ‘other sheep’ that is forming today is not in that new covenant.”

of God.²³ They are not born again.²⁴ They do not have Jesus as their mediator.²⁵ They are not Jesus' brothers.²⁶ They do not inherit the earth.²⁷ And finally, the Spirit does not pray for them.²⁸ This is the earthly hope to which the Jehovah's Witnesses aspire. It is essentially a hope to be resurrected to a 1000-year probation where they can prove themselves by being perfected, doing what Adam could not do, thereby receiving eternal life.

Over time there have been significant changes made in the composition and location of the great multitude. Russell had taught that the great multitude was composed of those who were lukewarm. They were members of Christendom who did not really give of themselves. Because of their failings, they became the "other sheep." They were not going to rule and reign, but instead they would be servants. They would live in heaven but would have physical bodies. However, under Rutherford, the identity of the great multitude changed, and the negative associations diminished.²⁹ Rutherford, perhaps realizing that a 144,000 was not

²³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Congregation," *Insight*, Vol. 1 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 498, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200001021>. "This congregation is referred to as 'the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens,' the full number of which, under Christ the head, is 144,000."

²⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Triumph of True Worship Draws Near," *Watchtower*, July 1, 1996, 21, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1996%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "They are not born again as spiritual sons of God with heavenly citizenship. Does this make them feel envious or covetous? No. Rather, they rejoice in their privilege of supporting the remnant of the 144,000, and they show deep appreciation for God's purpose in adopting these spiritual sons, who will share with Christ in uplifting mankind to perfection."

²⁵ *Ibid.* "So in this strict Biblical sense Jesus is the 'mediator' only for anointed Christians." Anointed Christians are members of the little 'flock,' the 144,000 thousand.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 377. "And what reward did Jesus hold out for the 'sheep' who help and serve with his anointed 'brothers' but who are not themselves such 'brothers' of Christ who have heavenly life in view? He promised that these righteous ones will enter into 'everlasting life,' yes, life right here on earth."

²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Blessed Are the Meek," *Watchtower*, March 1, 1958, 139, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1958%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "However, the principle enunciated at Matthew 5:5 applies also to Jesus' other sheep who, as meek ones, will receive everlasting life on earth. How so? In that they will hold the earth in trust for Christ and his bride, permanent tenants, as it were."

²⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jehovah's Spirit Leads His People," *Watchtower*, September 15, 1992, 16, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1992%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Those holy ones for whom God's spirit pleads are Jesus' anointed followers, with a heavenly hope. But whether you have a heavenly calling or an earthly hope, as a Christian you can have the help of God's holy spirit."

²⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 170, "At that time it was seen that the great crowd of Revelation 7:9, 10 are included among the "other sheep" to which Jesus referred (John 10:16); they are the ones that come to the aid of Christ's "brothers" (Matt. 25: 33-40); they are the people marked for survival because they are appalled at the disgusting things done in Christendom and shun these (Ezek. 9:4); they are like Jehonadab, who openly identified himself with Jehovah's anointed servant in carrying out that one's God-given commission (2 Ki. 10:15, 16). Jehovah's Witnesses

a large enough group for a growing denomination, made some startling changes. In 1935, he announced during a presentation that it had been revealed that the great multitude was actually the grouping of faithful Jehovah's Witnesses.³⁰ It was not made up of the lukewarm or of other denominations of Christendom. In addition, it was revealed that rather than being in heaven they would live on a recreated perfect earth. Amazingly, this revelation was well received, and Jehovah's Witnesses are content to be relegated to a second hand status where most of the New Testament does not apply to them. They are even comfortable in the belief that they have an earthly calling where they can anticipate a millennium of testing before they are adopted and given eternal life.

The Non-Believing World

There is yet another class of people that is neither the little flock nor the great multitude. This class of people consists of those who have not had enough exposure to Jehovah to understand what is required of them.³¹ These would be referred to as 'the lost' by most evangelicals. They are considered unrighteous, but when they die, the ransom removes the curse of original sin, and their own death pays for their personal sin. At the resurrection, they will be raised with physical bodies on the new earth.³² Russell taught that even Adam was included in this redemption. Those resurrected will learn of Jehovah and come to follow him. In the end, those who learn to be obedient to Jehovah will be adopted to eternal life.

understand that these are loyal servants of God who will survive Armageddon with the prospect of living forever on an earth restored to the condition of Paradise.”

³⁰ Ibid., 166. “For years, even down till 1935, they were not understood to be the same as the sheep in Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. As already noted, it was thought that they were a secondary heavenly class, secondary because they had been negligent about obeying God. However, that view gave rise to persistent questions. Some of these were discussed early in 1935 at the noon meal at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters. Some among those who expressed themselves at that time suggested that the great multitude was an earthly class.”

³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Resurrection—for Whom, and Where?”, *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1982), 171, accessed May 21, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20\(pe-E\)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20(pe-E)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf). “It is true that this man did bad things. He was ‘unrighteous’. Also, he was ignorant of God's will. But would he have been a criminal if he had known about God's purposes? To find out, Jesus will resurrect this unrighteous man, as well as thousands of millions of others who died in ignorance.”

³² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Resurrection,” *Insight*, Vol. 2 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 790, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200003709>. “The heavenly ones receive a spiritual body, for it pleases God for them to have bodies suitable for their heavenly environment. But those whom Jehovah pleases to raise to an earthly resurrection, what body does he give them? It could not be the same body, of exactly the same atoms. . . . Rather, he would be given a body as it pleases God. Since God's will and pleasure are that the resurrected person must obey the “things written in the scrolls,” it would have to be a sound body, possessing all its faculties. . . . In this way the individual could properly and justly be held responsible for his deeds during the judgment period. Yet the individual would not be perfect when brought back, for he must exercise faith in Christ's ransom and must have the priestly ministrations of Christ and his “royal priesthood.”

Those who rebel will be destroyed.³³ Russell understood that only a very small number known only to God would not be resurrected. Later teaching by Rutherford restricted those who would benefit from the ransom. Those who have committed especially heinous sins such as Adam, the residents of Sodom, Judas Iscariot, and those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will not be resurrected.³⁴ Current Jehovah's Witness doctrine teaches that in addition to the number of people deemed incorrigible, billions alive on earth will perish without hope of resurrection at Armageddon unless they have a relationship with Jehovah and the Watchtower Society.

Interestingly, there is very little difference between the fate of those in the great multitude and those who have not known or followed Christ. The exception to this would be if Armageddon occurred during their lifetime since the Jehovah's Witnesses not in good standing and the lost would all perish with no hope of resurrection. However, with that one exception, according to current Watchtower theology, both the lost and the great multitude are saved from the effects of original sin by the ransom, both have had their individual sins forgiven through their own death, and both will be resurrected with a clean slate. Both groups will live during the millennium and will learn to follow Jesus. After proving themselves faithful and dedicated, there will be a great final test. If the test is passed, members of both groups will have earned the right to adoption by God and eternal life.³⁵ Some, however, will be obstinate and continue to reject God's love. They will perish.³⁶ They will be annihilated, but they will not experience torment.³⁷

³³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Judgment Day and Afterward," *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1982), 178-179, accessed June 4, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20\(pe-E\)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1982%20You%20can%20live%20forever%20in%20paradise%20on%20earth%20(pe-E)+Stern%20Magazine.pdf). "So after being given full opportunity to change their ways and to learn righteousness, such wicked ones will be destroyed. Some will be put to death even before Judgment Day ends. (Isaiah 65:20) They will not be permitted to remain to corrupt or spoil the paradise earth."

³⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Armageddon—A Happy Beginning," *Watchtower*, December 1, 2005, 6, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2005881>. "What, then, is to be done with those who threaten the peace and security of their fellow humans? God must eliminate such 'pests'—the incorrigibly wicked—for the sake of the righteous ones.—2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9; Revelation 21:8." So...at this happy beginning 7.7 billion pest must be eliminated. Then the 8 million or so Jehovah's Witnesses can inherit the new world where they will work towards perfection for 1000 years.

³⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Millennial Hope Triumphs," *Watchtower*, April 15, 1981, 19-23, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "What is more, the millennium will be just a beginning. After a final test, when the 1,000 years have ended, those men and women who remain faithful to God's universal sovereignty will be ushered into an eternity of life on a paradise earth."

³⁶ Russell, "The Divine Plan of the Ages," 1886, 127. "Many have imbibed the erroneous idea that God placed our race on trial for life with the alternative of eternal torture, whereas nothing of the kind is even hinted at in the penalty."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 144. "They enter into everlasting life, and the others are remanded to death, extinction ('second death'), the same sentence as in the first judgment, from which they had been reckonedly released by Christ who secured the right to release them by the payment of their ransom—by his death. This will be their

The Bible, the 144,000 and the Great Multitude

A number of concepts Russell developed or borrowed came the Book of Revelation. Revelation is apocalyptic literature and is rich in both figurative language and symbolism. Many passages in Revelation have a number of possible meanings. Therefore, Revelation should be used very cautiously if it is being used to develop or understand doctrine. The meaning of many passages is not clear and cannot be spoken about dogmatically. In spite of this, Russell draws heavily from the Book of Revelation to develop key doctrines. The Book of Revelation provides Russell with the 144,000, the great multitude and the millennium.

When “new light” symbolic texts and doctrinal development come together, there is seemingly no limit to what may be discovered. An example of this is found in a Watchtower study on Revelation in print between 1988 and 2006.³⁸ In the book, the trumpets of Revelation chapter 8 are identified with seven conferences that the Watchtower Society held in the 1920s following Rutherford’s release from prison. During those conferences, the Jehovah’s Witnesses called out the sin of Christendom and pronounced judgment, fulfilling the trumpet judgments. However, if an unbiased reader were to read these same verses and find them applied to those conferences, it would be clear to that reader that the interpretation of Scripture by the Watchtower Society has no mooring in either exegesis or reality. This should serve as a warning for those evaluating their other doctrinal teachings based on Revelation.

Russell is sure that the 144,000 found in Revelation 7 and 14 is a literal number that describes the size of the little flock of Luke 12:35 and the sheep of John 10:1-15. They are the faithful and true believers. The ones who have embraced God’s organization on earth. Because of their faithfulness, God has chosen them to rule from heaven. However, a quick read of the passages in context would seem to negate that understanding. The passage in Revelation 7 describes who this group is and why they were sealed. The passage is preceded in Revelation 6 by a great impending judgment and the wrath of God. These believers, who live on the earth at that time, are marked in chapter 7 so that the judgment of God will not affect them. It is important to note that in his exegesis Russell translated the 144,000 literally but the tribes of Israel figuratively. Very few commentators would do that. In short, Russell’s interpretation of the passage is speculative and unverifiable. Very few, if any, of those interpreting the passage in context would come away with the Russell’s understanding of the passage.

second death. No ransom will be given for them, and there will be no release or resurrection for them, their sin being a willful, individual sin against full light and opportunity, under a most favorable, individual trial.”

³⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 129-141, accessed March 22, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988-2006%20Revelation-Its%20grand%20climax%20at%20hand%20\(2006%20printing\)%20\(re-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1988-2006%20Revelation-Its%20grand%20climax%20at%20hand%20(2006%20printing)%20(re-E).pdf).

Regarding the identity of the great multitude, Russell initially said the great multitude was composed of those who had not sought God sacrificially. They were either apathetic or belonged to the churches of Christendom. Later, Rutherford redefined the great multitude as Jehovah's Witnesses who did not have a heavenly calling. Rutherford received new light that the great multitude was to live on earth forever. However, when the passage in Revelation 7 is examined, the Bible itself interprets who this great multitude is. Again, we see that the Watchtower development of particular classes of believers is speculative and requires that the reader suspend disbelief. Who is the great multitude? Rev. 7:14 says, "I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows'. Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

The Watchtower is pre-millennial in its understanding of Revelation. However, a plain reading of the text seems to destroy the Watchtower interpretation. Teaching on the millennium is based on a relatively few verses in Revelation 20. Historically these verses have been understood three different ways: amillennialism,³⁹ pre-millennialism,⁴⁰ and post-millennialism.⁴¹ Watchtower theology states that the millennium begins following Armageddon. To that point, they are doing well. However, they then claim that all who are not of the anointed class are resurrected, both believers and non-believers. All have a clean slate when raised, and they together begin a thousand year period of probation hoping to be approved after a great test at the close of the millennium. A look at the passage quickly dispels the Watchtower interpretation of Rev. 20:4-5. The text says,

Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

³⁹ Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 7237-7238, Kindle. "Contrary to what the name (amillennialism) implies, amillennialists do believe in a millennium. The millennium, however, is now: the present age of the Church between the first and second comings of Christ in its entirety is the millennium."

⁴⁰ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 336. "Premillennialism is the belief that Christ's second coming will occur before the millennium and that he will then reign for 1,000 years on the earth. It is often mistakenly equated with dispensationalism, which is premillennial in its eschatology; however premillennialism long predates dispensationalism. The distinction is frequently made by speaking of historic premillennialism, from which dispensationalism is a departure."

⁴¹ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1938), 716. "Postmillennialism is the position . . . that the return of Christ will follow the millennium, which may be expected during and at the close of the gospel dispensation. Immediately after it Christ will come to usher in the eternal order of things."

So the first resurrection does not seem to contain the great multitude nor does it contain those who had died without Christ. It also is not a time of training and probation because they are already reigning with Christ for a thousand years. Following this the devil is again released, and after that pandemonium there is the resurrection of all those who have ever lived. Those raised at the end of the millennium are raised, not to a period of probation, but to judgment. Watchtower attempts to skirt this passage by saying that “coming to life” means being perfected at the end of the millennium.⁴² That does not seem to be the intent of the actual verse.

Finally, traditional Christian scholarship does not find a two-tier system of salvation in the Scriptures. Christians do not believe the Bible teaches that some Christians are fully “saved” while others are not. Nor do they believe that one class of believers has spiritual bodies and reside in heaven while others have physical bodies and reside on earth. Christians believe the world contains two types of people, those who are saved and those who are lost. Those beliefs are firmly rooted in Scripture and have been the testimony of the church for more than 2000 years. The teachings of the Watchtower are specious. Perhaps this is why Russell warns his followers that they must faithfully read his materials. He claims that if people read only the Bible, in a period of two years, they will revert to the doctrines of Christendom.⁴³ The obvious question would be “why is that?” If the *Watchtower* and *Scripture Studies* are so radically different from the Bible that just reading just the Bible alone would lead someone away from Watchtower theology and back to orthodox Christianity, then the Watchtower theology cannot be biblical.

The Ransom Doctrine

The ransom doctrine is a keystone doctrine of Watchtower theology. Understanding the implications of the ransom doctrine helps explain much of the rest of Watchtower

⁴² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Judgment Day and Afterward,” *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, 181-182. “By the end of the 1,000-year Judgment Day nobody on earth will be in a dying condition because of Adam's sin. Truly, in the fullest sense everyone will have come to life. This is what the Bible refers to when it says: ‘The rest of the dead [those besides the 144,000 who go to heaven] did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.’ (Revelation 2 & 5) The reference here to ‘the rest of the dead’ does not mean that others are resurrected at the end of the 1,000-year Judgment Day. Rather, it means that all persons come to life in that they finally reach human perfection. They will be in the same perfect condition as were Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. What will happen then?”

⁴³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Is the Reading of ‘Scripture Studies’ Bible Study?,” *Watchtower*, September 15, 1910, 298, accessed June 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1910%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “But we see, also, that if anyone lays the *Scripture Studies* aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the *Scripture Studies* with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.”

theology. The ransom doctrine has three important implications. First, the ransom doctrine, as understood by Russell and the Watchtower, argues against the deity of Jesus Christ. Second, the development of the doctrine minimizes grace and makes people ultimately responsible for their own salvation. Third, the doctrine gives support to the Watchtower position on the immortality of the soul, hell, and resurrection.

Russell's understanding of Christ's ransom was controversial. It resulted in a split between Russell and his co-worker Nelson Barbour and alienated the Adventists.⁴⁴ From the time of the split, the relationship between Russell and Barbour was acrimonious and never healed.⁴⁵

What is the ransom doctrine? Russell taught, in agreement with orthodox Christianity, that Adam's sin infected all humankind.⁴⁶ As a result, sin separated humankind from God, and death entered the world. God, holy and perfect, must, by nature, judge sin. However, Russell also believed that the Bible was a reasonable book and God was a reasonable God. Therefore, Russell reasoned that he could use his intellect to determine what the Scriptures meant.⁴⁷ The result was that Russell "reasonably" assumed that he could determine God's nature and purpose. It was here that Russell's understanding of Scripture went astray. Concerning the ransom sacrifice, Russell reasoned that God could only accept an equivalent or corresponding sacrifice to atone for Adam's sin.⁴⁸ A perfect man had sinned, now a

⁴⁴ A. H. McMillan, *Faith on the March* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1957), 27, accessed July 31, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books%20Endorsed%20by%20The%20Wt/1957%20Faith%20on%20the%20march%20\(A.%20H.%20Macmillan-introduction%20by%20Nathan%20Knorr\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books%20Endorsed%20by%20The%20Wt/1957%20Faith%20on%20the%20march%20(A.%20H.%20Macmillan-introduction%20by%20Nathan%20Knorr).pdf). "It was right at the time of this disappointment, as Russell shows, that a permanent breach developed between Barbour and Russell."

⁴⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, June 11, 1894, 170-171, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1894%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "At Rochester, in addition to the misrepresentations of my husband and all connected with the TOWER office, Mr. Rogers had introduced Mr. Barbour, an old enemy of -the cross of Christ and of Brother Russell, its fearless champion thus endeavoring to put the flock there under the influence of a bold and relentless enemy and his blasphemous teaching."

⁴⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Why Will There Be a Second Advent," *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, July, 1879, 7, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1879%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'. As death came by the first Adam, so life comes by the second Adam. Everything that mankind lost in the first is to be restored."

⁴⁷ Charles Taze Russell, *Millennial Dawn*, vol. 1, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (1886), 10, accessed May 5, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1886%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol1-The%20Divine%20Plan%20Of%20The%20Ages%20\(1st%20edition\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1886%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol1-The%20Divine%20Plan%20Of%20The%20Ages%20(1st%20edition).pdf). "And we have endeavored to do this in a manner that will appeal to and can be accepted by reason as a foundation. Then we have endeavored to build upon that foundation the teachings of Scripture, in such a manner that, so far as possible, purely human judgment may try its squares and angles by the most exacting rules of justice which it can command."

⁴⁸ Charles Taze, Russell, *Millennial Dawn*, vol. 5, *The At-One-Ment Between God and Man* (Allegheny, PA: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1899), 473-474, accessed June 8, 2018,

perfect man must be sacrificed to free humankind from original sin. Russell believed the ransom doctrine was a reasonable doctrine because it was fair. A perfect man died for a perfect man. Russell had previously rejected the trinity as unreasonable. Russell believed Jesus was not divine and certainly not a member of the trinity. He understood that Jesus was actually Michael, the archangel.⁴⁹ Michael, the first creation of God, was incarnated as a perfect human being. The ransom doctrine buttressed Russell's non-Trinitarian belief because it was not reasonable for the one who ransomed Adam's lineage to be deity. Adam was a perfect human being who had fallen. This required a perfect human without sin who could become the required sacrifice. So the ransom doctrine becomes an argument against the deity of Christ for it is unreasonable that God will allow a divine being to be substituted for a perfect man. For someone outside of the Watchtower there might be a question concerning how it is different to have an angel become a perfect man as opposed to having God become a perfect man. Both are superior to Adam in rank at the time of the ransom. It is not an equal exchange in either case.

In addition to arguing against the deity of Christ, the ransom doctrine undercuts the doctrine of grace. It has the paradoxical effect of placing humankind in a situation where each person is responsible for earning his or her own salvation. Both the great multitude and the unbelieving world will be resurrected to live during the millennial period because the shed blood of Jesus has paid for original sin, inherited from Adam.⁵⁰ The ransom payment is for all. The payment is essential not only for paying the debt of original sin, but also for bringing those resurrected to perfection.⁵¹ Russell believed the atonement of Christ was

[http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1899%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol5-The%20Atonement%20Between%20God%20and%20Man%20\(1st%20edition\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1899%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol5-The%20Atonement%20Between%20God%20and%20Man%20(1st%20edition).pdf). "If it was right six thousand years ago to deprive mankind of life because of sin, it would always be wrong to restore the life unless the pronounced penalty were justly cancelled by the payment of an equivalent price. And

this could only be accomplished by the willing sacrifice of another being of the same kind, whose right to life was unforfeited, giving himself as a substitute or ransom." Russell provides an example of a prisoner exchange where a private would be swapped for a private and a general for a general.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 145. "The same events are referred to in Daniel's prophecy : -"And at that time shall Michael [Christ] stand up [assume control], the great Prince. . . ."

⁵⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jehovah Provides 'a Ransom in Exchange for Many,'" *Draw Close To Jehovah* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2002), 142-143, accessed May 2, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/2002%20Draw%20close%20to%20Jehovah%20\(cl-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/2002%20Draw%20close%20to%20Jehovah%20(cl-E).pdf). "Jehovah arranged to have a perfect man voluntarily sacrifice his life. According to Romans 6:23, 'the wages sin pays is death'. In sacrificing his life, the ransomer would 'taste death for every man'. In other words, he would pay the wage for Adam's sin. . . . This would have profound legal consequences. By nullifying the death sentence upon Adam's obedient offspring, the ransom would cut off the destructive power of sin right at its source."

⁵¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Resurrection," *Insight*, vol. 2 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 788, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200003709>. "Thus God, with his almighty power and wisdom, is able to bring his purpose to a glorious conclusion fully within the framework of the laws and arrangements he has made for mankind from the beginning, with the added undeserved kindness of the resurrection."

sufficient to bring every person to resurrection.⁵² So at first glance, it does appear that the ransom doctrine demonstrates God’s grace and perhaps more than most Christians believe. The doctrine had a strong undercurrent of universalism. Russell taught that the ransom Christ paid removed original sin from every person that ever lived.⁵³ Just as Adam’s transgression affected his entire lineage, so the sacrifice of Christ freed all of humankind from the effects of original sin. However, what at the front end appeared to be grace filled became a works project at the back end. The Watchtower Society eventually came to understand that the ransom atonement removed original sin but did not atone for the actual sins individuals committed. Fortunately, it was revealed that the death of the individual atoned for his or her own sin.⁵⁴ Russell taught that following Armageddon God would judge the world, and the millennium would begin.⁵⁵ Those who had died would be recreated and resurrected. They will not bear guilt for their past life.⁵⁶ However, after their resurrection each person progresses toward adoption and immortality based on his own works. There is a one thousand year period of training and testing. Those who show themselves faithful and who pass the final great test will earn adoption and receive immortality.⁵⁷ Those who do not work

⁵² Russell, *The At-One-Ment Between God and Man*, 356. “He is now under the curse or penalty of the divine sentence, death ; that man’s privileges and rights were all purchased by the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; that as a consequence death is not to be accounted as death, utter destruction, but merely as a temporary ‘sleep’, from which the world of mankind will be awakened by their Redeemer in the resurrection morning of the Millennial age.”

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 178. “By the holy Spirit, therefore, our Redeemer was enabled to perform his great work, being guided thereby to do that which was pleasing and acceptable before the Father, and which provided the ransom for all humanity.”

⁵⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, October 1, 1974, 607, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1974%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “This means that when a person has died his sinful record no longer stands against him. And were it not for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and God’s purpose to resurrect the person, he would never live again. Still, he would remain acquitted from sin, as God would not repeatedly reexamine his case and then sentence him to other kinds of punishment for his sin.”

⁵⁵ Charles Taze Russell, *Millennial Dawn*, vol. 2, *The Time Is at Hand* (Allegheny, PA: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1889), 99-101, accessed August 5, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1889%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol2-The%20Time%20Is%20At%20Hand%20\(1st%20edition\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1889%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol2-The%20Time%20Is%20At%20Hand%20(1st%20edition).pdf). “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 by the end of A. D. 1914.”

⁵⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Judgment Day—What Is It,” *What Does the Bible Really Teach* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2005), 214, accessed May 27, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/2005%20What%20does%20the%20Bible%20really%20teach%20\(bh-E\)%20\(2012%20printing\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/2005%20What%20does%20the%20Bible%20really%20teach%20(bh-E)%20(2012%20printing).pdf). “Are these scrolls the record of people’s past deeds? No, the judgment will not focus on what people did before they died. How do we know that? The Bible says: ‘The one who has died has been acquitted from his sin’. (Romans 6:7) Those resurrected thus come to life with a clean slate, so to speak. The scrolls must therefore represent God’s further requirements.”

⁵⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Millennial Hope Triumphs,” *Watchtower*, April 15, 1981, 19-23, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw->

hard, the obstinate and rebellious, will ultimately perish.⁵⁸ The wicked ones will be put to death permanently during Judgment Day.⁵⁹ So the ransom doctrine does not posit that we are saved by grace but rather teaches that God's grace gives us a second opportunity to earn eternity on the recreated, perfect earth.⁶⁰ That would appear to be the antithesis of grace.

The ransom doctrine also helps to shape Watchtower Theology in other areas as well. The Watchtower teaches that men and women do not possess immortality.⁶¹ This is helpful because it eliminates the need for a doctrine of eternal torment, something the Watchtower denies.⁶² The ransom doctrine reinforces this by teaching that those who belong to great multitude and those who are without Christ at all will not be granted immortality until the end of the millennium when they have proved their faithfulness. Those who do not work faithfully and fail their probation will lose their existence. On the other hand, the Watchtower Society does not believe there will be punishment or torment. Instead, Watchtower teaches that those judged incorrigible in this lifetime would not be resurrected. Additionally, those who are resurrected and fail their trial during the millennium will cease to exist.

wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1981%20The%20Watchtower.pdf. "What is more, the millennium will be just a beginning. After a final test, when the 1,000 years have ended, those men and women who remain faithful to God's universal sovereignty will be ushered into an eternity of life on a paradise earth."

⁵⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, July/August 1881, R247, 6, accessed May 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1881%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We thank God that he is showing us a little of his boundless love, and the value of Jesus' death, as being great enough to ransom all from the great prison-house of death. He came to 'bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and opening of prison doors to them that are bound'. This was the substance of Jesus' preaching, and it is proper, as the theme of all the church, which is his body, during this Gospel Age (or 'acceptable year'). But the Millennial reign will not be a proclamation, but a performance of the things now proclaimed. The great prison house—death—is to be destroyed, and the blind and deaf shall all be brought to know of their redemption through his

blood—that Jesus Christ (by the grace of God) tasted death for every man—to be testified in due time." However there will be those that resist this grace of God and find destruction.

⁵⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Judgment Day—What Is It," *What Does the Bible Really Teach*, 215. "In the land of straightforwardness he will act unjustly and will not see the eminence of Jehovah." These wicked ones will be put to death permanently during Judgment Day.—Isaiah 65:20."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 214. "To live forever, both Armageddon survivors and resurrected ones will have to obey God's commandments, including whatever new requirements Jehovah might reveal during the thousand years. Thus, individuals will be judged on the basis of what they do during Judgment Day."

⁶¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Immortality," *Insight*, vol.1 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 1189, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200002155>. "Therefore the Christian Greek Scriptures do not dispute or alter the inspired teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures that man, the human soul, is mortal, subject to death."

⁶² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "What Is Hell? Is It a Place of Eternal Torment?," *Bible Questions Answered, JW.Org.* accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/Bible-teachings/questions/what-is-hell/>. "The idea that he would punish people in hellfire is contrary to the Bible's teaching that 'God is love'.

Russell had taught that the ransom was for all. The Watchtower Society under Rutherford felt that God could and should refuse to accept the atonement sacrifice for some who had done great evil. According to Rutherford, Adam was not atoned for, nor were those of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁶³ Current Watchtower theology also teaches that those living at the time of Armageddon, who are not Jehovah's Witnesses in good standing, will be killed and will not be resurrected. This theological change from Russell's ransom that covered all to Rutherford's partial ransom leaves non-Jehovah's Witnesses with a concern for their own safety. If Armageddon occurs during their lifetime and they are not in good standing with the Watchtower Society, they will be killed and not be resurrected. This amounts to theological extortion, a calculated decision to motivate people to be loyal to Jehovah in case Armageddon occurs during their lifetime.

When conservative Christian scholars look at the ransom paid by Christ, they see it as potentially effective for all, but actually effective for those who respond in faith.⁶⁴ They also see the ransom being effective to save completely any person with faith. All the promises of the New Testament apply to the one who has faith in Jesus. So the ransom doctrine does not demand a universal application of salvation. Further, there is no reason that the ransom doctrine demands an identical sacrifice. There are parameters for a sacrifice but those parameters does not prevent Jesus from being both divine and human. Scriptures show Jesus sharing titles with God,⁶⁵ accepting worship (Matt. 14:33), forgiving sin (Mark 2:1-12), controlling nature ([Mark 4:36-41](#)), healing and casting out demons (Mark 5:1-20). Jesus also predicted his death (Matt. 16:21). God raised him from the dead in fulfillment of his claims. The ransom doctrine is not a strong argument against the deity of Christ.

Whether man is natively immortal or will receive immortality is an interesting discussion. This understanding of immortality is not unique to the Watchtower Society. It is common among Adventist, and a significant number of evangelical scholars believe in conditional immortality.⁶⁶ As a Christian doctrinal position, *conditional immortality* affirms

⁶³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Ransom," *Insight*, vol. 2 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 736, accessed June 4, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200003640>. "Under the Law the deliberate murderer could not be ransomed. Adam, by his willful course, brought death on all mankind, hence was a murderer. ([Rom 5:12](#)) Thus, the sacrificed life of Jesus is not acceptable to God as a ransom for the sinner Adam." See also Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Prepare for Deliverance into a New World," *Watchtower*, April 15, 1990, 20, accessed June 4, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1990%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Yes, the destruction of the gross sinners in those cities was eternal, as will be the destruction of the wicked at the end of the present system of things."

⁶⁴ Roy B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 345. "While such substitution is potential for all, it is effective ("especially") for those who believe (1 Tim. 4:10)."

⁶⁵ Edward H. Bickersteth, *The Trinity (1892)* accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/The%20Trinity%20-%20E%20H%20Bickersteth.pdf>. This classic is an excellent source for places where God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit share titles, descriptions, and attributes.

⁶⁶ Peter Grice, "Conditional Immortality—An Acceptable View?", *Rethinking Hell, Exploring Evangelical Conditionalism*, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://www.rethinkinghell.com/2016/08/conditional->

that immortality—living forever and never dying—is a gift from God given only to the saved ([1 Tim 6:16](#); [Rom 2:7](#); [2 Tim 1:10](#); [1 Cor 15:54](#); [John 6:50-51](#); [John 11:25-26](#); [Luke 20:36](#)).⁶⁷ Evangelical conditionalist understand that Hell is a real place and that punishment will be meted out to the lost. They do not believe conditional immortality leads to immediate annihilation. Instead, they believe that punishment is perfectly applied and is of perfect conscious duration. However, when the Watchtower denies conscious punishment and accepts annihilation because God is love, they err. The Bible speaks of the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous and notes that following death there is a certainty of judgment (Heb. 9:27). The Bible also tells us there will be a punishment following the judgment (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9).

Who Is Jesus

According to Russell, Jesus was the first creation of God and therefore legitimately a Son of God.⁶⁸ He was known as Michael the Archangel⁶⁹ prior to his incarnation on earth. On earth he was Jesus, the Messiah. Following his successful atonement, he returned to heaven as a spirit being.⁷⁰ There was no resurrection of the body of Jesus, and as a result, Jesus is now a spirit creature.

Salvation

immortality-an-acceptable-view/. “Among the many celebrated proponents of evangelical conditionalism are Basil Atkinson, Richard Bauckham, E. Earle Ellis, Roger Forster, R. T. France, Michael Green, Harold Guillebaud, P. E. Hughes, David Instone-Brewer, Dale Moody, I. Howard Marshall, John Stackhouse Jr., John Stott, Richard Swinburne, Anthony Thistleton, Terrance Tiessen, Stephen Travis, John Wenham and Nigel Wright.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Russell, *The At-One-Ment Between God and Man* (1899), 92. “As he was the highest of all Jehovah's creation, so also he was the first, the direct; creation of God, the ‘Only Begotten.’”

⁶⁹ Ibid., 92. “As chief of the angels and next to the Father, he was known as the Archangel (highest angel or messenger), whose name, Michael, signifies, “Who as God,” or God's representative.”

⁷⁰ Ibid., 93. “His resurrection not only restored to him a spirit nature, but in addition conferred upon him a still higher honor, and as the Father's reward for his faithfulness made him partaker of the divine Nature—the very highest of the spirit natures, possessed of immortality.”

Jesus died to pay the ransom for the Adam's sin. Because of his sacrifice, a perfect man for a perfect man,⁷¹ he opened the door for the salvation of all exercising faith in him.⁷² Russell believed that the death of Jesus paid for the original sin of all men. Therefore, all men would be resurrected and have an opportunity to learn to live for God in the millennium. Later witness theology would teach that each individual's death would pay for his or her own personal sin. Everyone resurrected would in effect be raised with no guilt for past sin. Though the imagery of the cross was utilized by Russell, Rutherford taught that Jesus died not on a cross but on a torture stake.⁷³ For that reason, Jehovah's Witnesses do not use the imagery of the cross.

The Kingdom

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the Kingdom of God is a real government that has influence over this world. Jesus' authority began to be displayed when he was installed as king in 1914.⁷⁴ Their goal is to obey God, spreading His Kingdom. Ultimately, the whole world will be under the control of God's Kingdom. This is the message they proclaim, God's coming rule.

Man

⁷¹ Ibid., 473-474. "If it was right six thousand years ago to deprive mankind of life because of sin, it would always be wrong to restore the life unless the pronounced penalty were justly cancelled by the payment of an equivalent price. And this could only be accomplished by the willing sacrifice of another being of the same kind, whose right to life was unforfeited, giving himself as a substitute or ransom." Russell later utilizes an example of a prisoner exchange where a private would be swapped for a private and a general for a general.

⁷² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Resurrection," *Insight*, vol. 2 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 790, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200003709>. "In this way the individual could properly and justly be held responsible for his deeds during the judgment period. Yet the individual would not be perfect when brought back, for he must exercise faith in Christ's ransom and must have the priestly ministrations of Christ and his 'royal priesthood.'"

⁷³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Torture Stake," *Insight*, vol. 2 (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988), 1116-1117, accessed June 9, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200004456>. "In classical Greek the word (stau·ros') rendered "torture stake" in the New World Translation primarily denotes an upright stake, or pole, and there is no evidence that the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures used it to designate a stake with a crossbeam."

⁷⁴ Charles Taze Russell, *Millennial Dawn*, vol. 2, *The Time Is at Hand* (Allegheny, PA: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1889), 99-101, accessed August 5, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1889%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol2-The%20Time%20Is%20At%20Hand%20\(1st%20edition\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1889%20Studies%20in%20the%20Scriptures%20Vol2-The%20Time%20Is%20At%20Hand%20(1st%20edition).pdf). "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 by the end of A. D. 1914."

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe the soul is immortal.⁷⁵ They also believe that at the time of death a person loses all awareness and ceases to exist. Figuratively they sleep. After Armageddon, God will recreate each person, and each will have an opportunity to learn to follow God. Eventually they will achieve perfection. Then they will be adopted by God and be given eternal life. Those who fail to follow God and reach perfection will be annihilated.

⁷⁵ Ibid. "It is based upon the unscriptural theory that God created man immortal, that he cannot cease to exist, and that God cannot destroy him ; hence the argument is that the incorrigible must live on somewhere and somehow, and the conclusion is that since they are out of harmony with God their eternity must be one of misery. But God's Word assures us that he has provided against such a perpetuation of sin and sinners: that man is mortal, and that the full penalty of willful sin against full light and knowledge will not be a life in torment, but a second death. *'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'"

Chapter 5

Dates and Issues within the Jehovah's Witness Community

Major Dates and Prophecies

It is significant that Charles Taze Russell began his ministry studying with the Second Adventist. The Second Adventists had followed or studied the ministry of William Miller and his failed prophecy. Miller had erroneously taught that the end of the world was to occur in 1844. Some who would become Seventh Day Adventist accepted the 1844 date and believed that Jesus had returned invisibly at that time.¹ However, the Second Day Adventist, rejected 1844 as an error and developed alternative dates. None of those alternative dates came to pass either. During this time, a number of impressive prophetic schemes developed, and many people believed it would be possible to pinpoint the time of Christ's return. Ultimately, all these schemes were demonstrated to be wrong. Russell, who had no theological training prior to his contact with the Second Adventist, adopted part of the faulty prophetic system of the Second Adventist as well as a number of their doctrines. Those that followed Russell kept some, but not all of his teaching. They also made multiple failed predictions concerning Christ's return. Following are significant dates in the history of the Watchtower Society.

1799

Charles Taze Russell adopted the historicist teachings of the Second Adventist. The Second Adventist interpreted prophecy using the day-year theory. This system understood that a biblical day was in reality a prophetic year. Viewing Daniel and Revelation, the Adventist sought to apply biblical prophecies to their time, a trait that is still common among Advent Christians. It was agreed by many that the year AD 539 marked the beginning of Papal rule and therefore the beginning of the 1260 years spoken of in Daniel. Therefore, the date of the beginning of the end times was arrived at by adding 539 years and 1260 years. The chosen date was 1799. Nelson Barbour, who initially taught Russell about the prophetic dates, understood the date to be 1798, a date Russell corrected to 1914.²

Russell taught that 1260 years of oppression at the hand of the papacy was drawing to an end. The judgment of God was coming. In this interim, God's Word would go forth

¹ Tony Wills, *A People for His Name: A History of Jehovah's Witnesses and an Evaluation*, 2nd ed. (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Enterprises, 2006), 4. “. . . the largest group, branching off under Ellen White into the modern day Seventh Day Adventist. These still accepted the 1844 date but said that what had taken place then was in heaven, invisible to human eyes.”

² Nelson Barbour, *Three Worlds and the Harvest of This World* (Rochester, NY: Nelson Barbour, 1877), 158, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1877%20The%20three%20worlds.pdf>. “The wonders there referred to, were the ‘time of trouble, the resurrection,’ etc., and with present light, we understand that the definite time in this case reached to the end of the 1260 years of papal dominion, and therefore ended in 1798; but the completion of the scattering of the power of the Holy people, will not be ended until the end of the times of the Gentiles, or in 1914.”

declaring His Kingdom.³ The power of sin was broken.⁴ Following Russell's death, 1799 would continue to be proclaimed as 'the beginning of the end' in publications through the 1920s. Rutherford wrote of the 1799 date in the *Harp of God* and *Creation*.⁵ Watchtower also mentions the date in 1922.⁶ The date is significant because it sets the foundation for 1914, a date, unique and central to Watchtower doctrine. Now, however, the events claimed for the date of 1799 have been moved forward to 1914 and 1799 has been discarded.⁷

1874

³ Russell, *The Time Is at Hand* (1889), 296. "Henceforth we deal with the Antichrist, whose gradual development and organization from secretly working ambition are a fitting prelude to the terrible character displayed after the coveted power had been grasped—from 539 A.D. to 1799 A.D., 1260 years. Of this period the first three hundred years mark the rise of this temporal power; the last three mark its waning under the influences of the Reformation and civilization; and the intermediate period of seven centuries embraces Papacy's glory-time and the 'dark ages' of the world, full of frauds and deceptions in the name of Christ and true religion."

⁴ Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come* (1891), 122. "Since the beginning (1799) of the Time of the End, God has been preparing his consecrated 'holy people', his 'Sanctuary', for the great blessings he intended to pour upon them during these forty years of harvest: which blessings are also intended as special preparation for their entering with Christ into full joy and joint-heirship with him, as his bride. At the exact 'time appointed,' 1799, the end of the 1260 days, the power of the Man of Sin, the great oppressor of the Church, was broken, and his dominion taken away."

⁵ J. F. Rutherford, *The Harp of God: Proof Conclusive that Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1921), 228-229, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1921%20The%20harp%20of%20God.pdf>. "While he was doing this, the British in the north, under the leadership of Lord Nelson, were making an effective attack upon Napoleon's form at sea. Napoleon began this Egyptian campaign in 1798,

finished it and returned to France on October 1, 1799. The campaign is briefly, yet graphically, described in the prophecy, verses 40 to 44; and being completed in 1799, marks, according to the Prophet's own words, the beginning of the 'time of the end'" Also J. F. Rutherford, *Creation* (1927), 294-295, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1927%20Creation.pdf>. "In Biblical symbology a 'time' means a year of twelve months of thirty days each, or 360 days. Each day is considered for a year, as the prophet says: 'I have appointed thee each day for a year'. (Ezek. 4:6) Here are mentioned, then, three and a half times of 360 prophetic days each, or a total of 1260 prophetic days, which would mark the beginning of the time of the end of this beastly order. Twelve hundred and sixty years from 539 A. D. brings us to 1799, which is another proof that 1799 definitely marks the beginning of 'the time of the end'. This also shows that it is from the date 539 A. D. that the other prophetic days of Daniel must be counted."

⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Who Is Wise," *Watchtower*, March 1, 1922, 71, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1922%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The Lord showed Daniel that from the time of this union or formation of the 'dreadful and terrible beast' to the 'time of the end' would be 1260 years; thereby marking 1799 again as the date of the 'time of the end.'"

⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Who Can Accurately Predict Man's Future?," *Awake!* January 22, 1973, 8, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1973%20Awake.pdf>. "Jehovah's witnesses pointed to the year 1914, decades in advance, as marking the start of "the conclusion of the system of things."

Russell, following Barbour and the Second Adventist, understood that when man had been on the earth for 6000 years, Jesus would come, the church would be raptured, and the thousand years of Sabbath rest would occur. Russell calculated that man's time on earth was coming to an end in 1874. He believed that this would bring about the second advent of Christ and a time of harvest.⁸ Russell believed that Jesus was now a spirit creature and would not be seen by human eyes.⁹ The Second Adventist did not believe this and thought that His return would be visible. Following 1874, Russell taught that Jesus was present, invisibly. Rutherford maintained this belief until the beginning of the 1930s. A Watchtower from 1924 confirmed 1874 as the year of Jesus' return.¹⁰ As late as 1929 a book written by Rutherford vouched for the 1874 date.¹¹ However, in 1932, 1874 was ignored and the date of Jesus' return was changed to 1914.¹² Then in 1943 a new chronology was proposed and the date

⁸ Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come* (1891), 128. "The six thousand years in which God has permitted evil to dominate the world, prior to the beginning of the great seventh or sabbatic thousand, or 'Times of Restitution, dates, from the entrance of sin into the world. And since the Times of Restitution began with October 1874, that must be the end of the six thousand years reign of Sin ; and the difference between that and the date shown in the chronology from Adam's creation represents the period of sinlessness in Eden, which really belongs to the reign of righteousness."

⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "View from the Tower," *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, August 1883, 1, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1883%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "And concerning the Lord's second coming, while we realized that he is no longer a man but is now the new creature—the express image of the Father's person—a quickening spirit, yet we failed somehow to make a proper application of this to his second coming, and unthinkingly and ignorantly, rather expected his coming to be as a glorified man, than as a spiritual being. It was not until about 1874 that these things became clearer, so that we realized that when Jesus should come, it would be as unobserved by human eyes as though an angel had come; and that it could be known only by some miracle, by some manifestation or demonstration."

¹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Outlook for 1924," *Watchtower*, January 1, 1924, 5, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1924%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Surely there is not the slightest room for doubt in the mind of a truly consecrated child of God that the Lord Jesus is present and has been since 1874. . . ."

¹¹ Joseph Franklin Rutherford, *Prophecy* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1929), 65, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1929%20Prophecy.pdf>. "The Scriptural proof is that the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 A.D."

¹² Joseph Franklin Rutherford, *What is Truth?* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1932), 48, accessed August 5, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1932%20What%20is%20truth%20\(wtr-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1932%20What%20is%20truth%20(wtr-E).pdf). "The Scriptures show that he must wait until the end of the Gentile times, which times began in 606 B.C., extended over a period of 2520 years, and came to an end in the autumn of 1914. That was the period of time in which Jehovah permitted Satan to carry on his wicked work without interference. At the end of that period of time. Jesus Christ, in obedience to his Father's will, began the great work of ousting Satan and establishing kingdom. The year 1914, therefore, marks the second coming of Christ."

1874 was retired. 1914 became the new date of Jesus' invisible return, and 1874 was abandoned as a significant date.¹³

1878

In the years prior to 1878, Russell worked with Nelson Barbour, an Adventist publisher. Russell and Barbour had reasoned that Jesus must return to rapture the church in 1878.¹⁴ They reached that conclusion because they believed Jesus had returned invisibly to earth in 1874. They had made the calculations utilizing reasoning common to premillennialism in that era.¹⁵ Mirroring was common in prophetic teaching. Some believed significant events were going to be mirrored in the coming prophetic events. As an example, after Jesus' first advent occurred, he began his ministry. This ministry took three and a half years. A mirroring of that time would mean that Jesus would return to heaven with his 144,000 saints three and a half years after his invisible return. At that point he would be installed as the ruling king.¹⁶ Therefore, Russell believed the rapture of the church would occur in 1878. Based on this, both Barbour and Russell began to teach and preach that the time was short for the church. When 1878 came and went, many were disheartened. Nelson Barbour struggled to understand how they could have been wrong. However, Russell was not

¹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1943), 152, accessed August 5, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1943%20The%20truth%20shall%20make%20you%20free%20\(tf\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1943%20The%20truth%20shall%20make%20you%20free%20(tf).pdf). "From Adam's creation to the end of 1943 A.D. is 5,971 years We are therefore near the end of six thousand years of human history, with conditions upon us and tremendous events at hand foreshadowed by those of Noah's day."

Therefore, since 1874 was in place because it was thought to be the end of 6000 years and the beginning of the Sabbath thousand years, the rearrangement of the prophetic timeline meant that 1874 was no longer a contender for the return of Jesus. That event would logically be located in the mid-1970s except that 1914 is central to Watchtower theology and Jesus was to have returned in 1914.

¹⁴ Jason Wright, "C. T. Russell and the date 1878," *Watchtower Investigated UK* (June 17, 2014), accessed May 5, 2018, <https://watchtowerinvestigated.wordpress.com/2014/06/17/c-t-russell-and-the-date-1878-by-jason-wright/>. "Hence Barbour proclaimed a three and a-half year period was already underway, starting in 1874 (Jesus invisible return/Parousia) and ending in the spring of 1878, it was what he called the anti-typical harvest period (parallel dispensation). This period ended with the translation of the Elijah class (little flock) and Jesus taking up his throne and became king in heaven. So there we have it! In 1877 Russell and Barbour were absolutely sure the translation of the little flock (true church) would occur at latest April 6th 1878."

¹⁵ Russell, *The Time Is at Hand* (1889), 218. "As shown in the accompanying diagram, the period of their favor, from the commencement of their national existence at the death of Jacob, down to the end of that favor at the death of Christ, A.D. 33, was eighteen hundred and forty-five (1845) years."

¹⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632. "Based on the premise that events of the first century might find parallels in related events later, they also concluded that if Jesus' baptism and anointing in the autumn of 29 C.E. paralleled the beginning of an invisible presence in 1874, then his ride into Jerusalem as King in the spring of 33 C.E. would point to the spring of 1878 as the time when he would assume his power as heavenly King."

discouraged. After considering the matter, Russell decided that he was not mistaken about the date. The problem was that he had been mistaken about what would transpire. Though there was no change in the visible church, there was a change in spiritual realms. The Adventist had expected a fleshly manifestation, not a spiritual manifestation. This did not occur, and Russell determined that what had actually happened was that those of the anointed class (144,000) who had previously died were in fact resurrected to be with Jesus, and from that point on all those who were anointed would go directly to be with Jesus when they died.¹⁷ In addition, Jehovah installed Jesus as King in 1878. This was a spiritual event and Jehovah was in the process of establishing his kingdom.¹⁸

Since Rutherford moved the date of the invisible return of Jesus forward to 1914, the year 1874 was vacated. Therefore, the dates of 1878 and the date of 1881 were also vacated, as they were dependent on 1874.

1881

Russell called his followers to serve God diligently, to give everything to the service of his Kingdom. He believed God was filling the ranks of the 144,000 and the time to join the anointed 'little flock' would soon come to a close.¹⁹ The opportunity to be among the anointed would end in 1881.²⁰ After that time, it would be the job of the anointed to call people to become part of the Great Multitude. Because this date was based on the 1874 return of Jesus which was vacated, it also is no longer a pertinent date.

1914

The year 1914 is unique for Jehovah's Witnesses. The use and centrality of this date sets them apart from all other groups. The rest of their theology, aberrant or not, can be found elsewhere in different groups, but 1914 is unique.

¹⁷ *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632. "They also thought they would be given their heavenly reward at that time. When that did not occur, they concluded that since Jesus' anointed followers were to share with him in the Kingdom, the resurrection to spirit life of those already sleeping in death began then."

¹⁸ *Ibid.* "They also thought they would be given their heavenly reward at that time. When that did not occur, they concluded that since Jesus' anointed followers were to share with him in the Kingdom, the resurrection to spirit life of those already sleeping in death began then. It was also reasoned that the end of God's special favor to natural Israel down to 36 C.E. might point to 1881 as the time when the special opportunity to become part of spiritual Israel would close."

¹⁹ Russell, *The Time Is at Hand* (1889), 235. "As in the type that date—three and a half years after the death of Christ—marked the end of all special favor to the Jew and the beginning of favor to the Gentiles, so 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."

²⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632. "It was also reasoned that the end of God's special favor to natural Israel down to 36 C.E. might point to 1881 as the time when the special opportunity to become part of spiritual Israel would close."

The date had been calculated by Russell as he searched for the meaning of the “Time of the Gentiles.” He first determined the beginning of this time by determining when the rule of the Jews was broken. He identified that time as the year that the tribe of Judah went into captivity to Babylon. Russell accepted a date of 606 BC that had been suggested previously by John Aquila Brown.²¹ The date itself was later changed by a year to 607, but the 1914 date was not adjusted. The length of the period was found by examining Daniel, chapter 4. Believing that the cutting down of the tree represented the fall of Judah, Russell focused on a period of seven times or seven years. Since each year is 360 days long (lunar years), the total number of years was 2520 years. When this is added to 606 BC, it gives the date 1914. Therefore, the end of the “Time of the Gentiles” was 1914. Russell knew immediately that time was short and that the end was drawing near.²²

There are a number of significant flaws with the calculation of 1914. The first is the calculation of the date for the end of the Jewish times. The return from the Babylonian exile is the date used to begin calculating the end of the Jewish times. The dates 536 thru 539 BC are commonly used for the return from the exile to Babylon. There is inadequate information available to choose one over the other. Since the initial date used to calculate the end of the Jewish times is uncertain, it would be difficult to be precise. The date selected for the end of the Jewish times, the year Judah went into captivity, is said to be 607 BC. The Watchtower Society alone presents that number. There is not a single shred of historical data to suggest that 607 is the correct date.²³ The vast majority of archeologist, historians, and biblical experts (essentially everyone) believe the correct date is 586 BC. Further difficulty arises

²¹ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 30. “In fact, it was John Aquila Brown who first explained what he considered to be the key to the length of those times in a book called *Even-Tide*, published in London in 1823. What he posited was that the typical theocratic kingdom of Judah had fallen under Gentile rule in 604 B.C. Thereafter, there would be no godly government on earth until four great empires –the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman–had had their sway. Then Christ, as David’s heir, would rule in Jerusalem. But how long would it be before those empires expired? Brown found his answer in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel.” Brown believed 1917 was the year of the end. Barbour found fault with his calculations and decided upon 1914, a date Russell followed.

²² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Heed God’s Prophetic Word for Our Day,” *Watchtower*, April 1, 1984, 16, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1984%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Writing in the *Bible Examiner* of October 1876, Russell said: ‘The seven times will end in A.D. 1914.’ He also was a joint publisher of the 1877 book *Three Worlds, and the Harvest of This World*, which showed (on pages 83 and 189) that the 2,520-year period of Gentile world domination without interference by any kingdom of God began with the Babylonian overthrow of the kingdom of Judah in the late seventh century BCE and would end in 1914 CE. Similarly, the *Watch Tower* issue of March 1880 stated: ‘The Times of the Gentiles’ extend to 1914, and the heavenly kingdom will not have full sway till then.’”

²³ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 29-30. “Months of research were spent on this one subject of ‘Chronology’ and it resulted in the longest article in the Aid publication. Much of the time was spent endeavoring to find some proof, some backing in history, for the 607 BCE date so crucial to our calculations for 1914. Charles Ploeger, a member of the headquarters staff, was at that time serving as a secretary for me and he searched through the libraries of the New York city area for anything that might substantiate that date historically. We found absolutely nothing in support of 607 BCE. All historians pointed to a date twenty years later.”

when the idea of a second fulfillment of Daniel chapter 4 is suggested. No other section of Daniel has a second fulfillment. Then there is the problem of calculating with lunar years (360 days) and utilizing the result in a system of solar years (365 days). Further, nothing in the Daniel verses hint at the Gentile times or the end times. Therefore, it appears therefore that the selection of 1914 has multiple fatal flaws.²⁴

The date was felt by Russell to be significant for a number of reasons. It was the end of the Gentile Times. False religion and all government would be cast down. Armageddon would occur, and all the dead would be raised. Finally, Jesus would begin his thousand-year reign on paradise earth.²⁵ Therefore, it is clear that Russell and the early Bible Students taught and understood that 1914 marked the end of the world. Rutherford, and those who followed him, changed the focus and began to teach that 1914 was the beginning of the ‘end times’ as none of the predicted events occurred in 1914. This was because the date is central to Watchtower theology and cannot be easily abandoned. It became more prudent to change the significance of the date than maintain the earlier understanding. So rather than being the end of all things, 1914 became the ‘beginning of the end’. Along with this new understanding, it was proclaimed that the generation of 1914 would not pass away without Armageddon occurring. That did not happen, and the Watchtower Society has now abandoned the claim that those alive in 1918 would not die before Armageddon. The Watchtower Society uncoupled the end of time from 1914, saying that anyone who knew an anointed person from that generation also belongs to the generation that would see Jesus return. This is referred to as an overlapping generation.²⁶ The major issue that prevents the Watchtower Society from abandoning 1914 is that it is the underpinning for 1918, the year that Jesus and Jehovah are said to have come and inspected the churches of the world. Based on that that inspection, in 1919 only the Jehovah’s Witnesses were found to be pure and true to His Word. Therefore, Jehovah appointed the Watchtower Society as His organization and

²⁴ “607: 1914: Seven Times,” *JWFacts.com*, accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/607-seven-times-prophecy.php>. “There are numerous issues and inconsistencies with how Watchtower interprets the Seven Times. The major issue with how Watchtower arrives at 1914 is that Jerusalem did not fall in 607 B.C. . . . However, even if the assumption is made that 607 B.C. is correct, Watchtower's interpretation fails at a number of other levels. There is no reason to believe Daniel 4 has two fulfillments, 606 B.C. or 607 B.C.? 539 B.C. or 537 B.C.? July or October? 70 Weeks and the 7 Times? 360 Day ‘Prophetic Year’ for a Solar Year?”

²⁵ “Changed Dates: Failed Predictions,” *JWFacts.com*, accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/1800s.php>. “1914 has been a pivotal date for the Watchtower. The expectations prior to 1914 included it being the end of the Gentile Times, the end of Armageddon, the fall of false religion, the end of all governments, the resurrection, the start of Jesus 1000 year reign and paradise on earth.”

²⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Holy Spirit's Role in the Outworking of Jehovah's Purpose,” *Watchtower*, April 15, 2010, 10, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2010%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.Pdf>. “He evidently meant that the lives of the anointed who were on hand when the sign began to become evident in 1914 would overlap with the lives of other anointed ones who would see the start of the great tribulation. That generation had a beginning, and it surely will have an end.”

His mouthpiece for the world. If 1914 is abandoned, the declaration of the Watchtower Society's as God's mouthpiece disappears as well.

1918

When 1914 failed, there were many who looked to 1918 to be the date of the end.²⁷ As with the previous failures, the date was moved forward continuing the expectancy that something momentous was about to happen.²⁸ During this time, Rutherford taught Jesus accompanied Jehovah to the spiritual temple to cleanse his people.²⁹

1919

The Watchtower teaches a cleansing of the temple took place in 1918. There was also in inspection of all the churches that was to have begun in 1918. Jesus and Jehovah determined that only the Watchtower Society was mature and capable enough to be His mouthpiece.³⁰ Later there was a revision, and it was determined that the inspection had begun, not in 1918 but instead in 1914.³¹ Still, only the Watchtower could be God's Society. Interestingly there is no logical or scriptural reasoning for these claims.

²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "1917 Annual Report," *Watchtower*, December 15, 1917, 373-374, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1917%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It is with sincere joy that we are privileged to report that amongst the activities of the Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society for 1917 the Seventh Volume of Studies In The Scriptures has been published and is now going forth. We count this as another one of the strong proofs that the harvest is nearing the end, and that in all probability the Spring of 1918 will mark the beginning of the closing up of all activities of the kingdom class on this side the veil."

²⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Concluding Work of the Harvest," *Watchtower*, October 1, 1917, 292-293, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1917%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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."

²⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The True Lord Comes for Judgement," *Watchtower*, July 1, 1989, 31, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1989%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "During his earthly ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple. In 1918 he accompanied Jehovah to the spiritual temple to cleanse God's people"

³⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Loyal to Christ and His Faithful Slave," *Watchtower*, April 1, 2007, 22, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2007%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "'On arriving' to inspect the 'slave' in 1918, Christ found a spirit-anointed remnant of faithful disciples who since 1879 had been using this journal [the Watchtower] and other Bible-based publications to provide spiritual 'food at the proper time'. He acknowledged them as his collective instrument, or 'slave,' and in 1919 entrusted them with the management of all his earthly belongings."

³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Look I Am with You All the Days," *Watchtower*, July 15, 2013, 11, 14, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2013%20The%20Watchtower%20STUDY.Pdf>. "In 2013, this teaching was simplified by removing 1918 from the equation. . . . To settle that question, Jesus began to inspect

1925

Soon after he assumed the presidency, Judge Rutherford began preaching that the year 1925 would bring the end of the world as we now know it. An earthly paradise without death was just around the corner. The Old Testament saints would be raised and mingle with the current inhabitants of the earth.³² The earth would bear luscious fruits, and there would be no more war. Christendom would disappear, and the earth would be populated with true followers of Jehovah.³³ The reasoning for the choice of 1925 was said to be firm.³⁴ He taught there was great evidence showing 1925 to be a sure thing. However, reviewing the scriptural proofs reveals that it does not seem like there was much of a foundation.³⁵ The expected events of 1925 did not come to pass, and many left the movement at that time.

1975

In 1966, it was determined that 1975 would mark the end of 6,000 years of man's existence. Armageddon would occur ushering in the Millennial reign.³⁶ Having learned little

the spiritual temple in 1914. That inspection and cleansing work involved a period of time—from 1914 to the early part of 1919.” Endnotes: “This is an adjustment in understanding. Previously, we thought that Jesus’ inspection took place in 1918.”

³² W. E. Van Amburgh, *The Way to Paradise* (London: International Bible Students Association, 1925), 224, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1924%20The%20way%20to%20paradise.pdf>. “The year 1926 would therefore begin about October first, 1925. . . . We should, therefore, expect shortly after 1925 to see the awakening of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Melchisedec, Job, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John the Baptist, and others mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.”

³³ “1925—‘Millions Now Living Will Never Die!’” *JWFacts.com*, accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/1925.php>. “Expectations for 1925 included: the end of Christendom, the return of earth to a paradise, the resurrection of the dead onto earth, the Zionist teaching of the reestablishment of Palestine”

³⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “The Strong Cable of Chronology,” *Watchtower*, July 15, 1922, 217, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1922%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “. . . this chronology is not of man, but of God. . . . the addition of more proofs removes it entirely from the realm of chance into that of proven certainty. . . . the chronology of present truth [is] . . . not of human origin.”

³⁵ Van Amburgh, *The Way to Paradise*, 223. “Seventy times 50 are 3,500. The whole period would therefore have been 3,500 years from the time the Jews entered Canaan until all the types would have been fulfilled. As they entered Canaan 1,575 years before Christ there would be 1,925 years of types after Christ, or 1925 A. D.”

³⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “How Much Longer Will It Be,” *Awake!*, October 8, 1966, 19-20, accessed July 20, 2018, http://liberalgeek.com/sites/default/files/1975_awake_magazine_watchtower_Bible_and_tract_society_jehovahs_witnesses_predictions.pdf. “6,000 Years Completed in 1975- There is another chronological indication that we are rapidly nearing the closing time for this wicked system of things. It is the fact that shortly, according to reliable Bible chronology, 6,000 years of human history will come to an end.”

from their 1914, 1925, and 1941 experiences, the Watchtower hyped the coming of the end.³⁷ From 1966 until 1975, there was excitement in the Watchtower Society. It was believed that the chronology of the end had finally been done correctly.³⁸ In 1974, the Witnesses were encouraged to sell their homes and spend the remaining months in full time service to Jehovah.³⁹ Couples were encouraged to remain childless.⁴⁰ As the time grew short, people

³⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Rejoicing Over ‘God’s Sons of Liberty’ Spiritual Feast,” *Watchtower*, October 15, 1966, 631, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1966%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “‘What about the year 1975? What is it going to mean, dear friends?’ asked Brother Franz. ‘Does it mean that Armageddon is going to be finished, with Satan bound, by 1975? It could! It could! All things are possible with God. Does it mean that Babylon the Great is going to go down by 1975? It could. Does it mean that the attack of Gog of Magog is going to be made on Jehovah’s Witnesses to wipe them out, then Gog himself will be put out of action? It could. But we are not saying. All things are possible with God. But we are not saying. And don’t any of you be specific in saying anything that is going to happen between now and 1975. But the big point of it all is this, dear friends: Time is short. Time is running out, no question about that.’”

³⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1966), 26-30, accessed August 6, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1966%20Life%20everlasting%20in%20freedom%20of%20the%20sons%20of%20God%20\(li-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Teachings/1966%20Life%20everlasting%20in%20freedom%20of%20the%20sons%20of%20God%20(li-E).pdf). “The published timetable resulting from this independent study gives the date of man’s creation as 4026 BCE 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 CE So six thousand years of man’s existence on earth will soon be up, yes, within this generation. So in not many years within our own generation we are reaching what Jehovah God could view as the seventh day of man’s existence. How appropriate it would be for Jehovah God to make of this coming seventh period of a thousand years a Sabbath period of rest and release, a great Jubilee Sabbath for the proclaiming of liberty throughout the earth to all its inhabitants! This would be most timely for mankind. It would also be most fitting on God’s part, for, remember, mankind has yet ahead of it what the last book of the Holy Bible speaks of as the reign of Jesus Christ over earth for a thousand years, the millennial reign of Christ. 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.”

³⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “How Are You Using Your Life?”, *Kingdom Ministry*, May 1974, 3, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Our%20Kingdom%20Ministry/1974%20Kingdom%20Ministry.pdf>. “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.”

⁴⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Is This the Time to Have Children?”, *Awake!* November 8, 1974, 11, accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1974%20Awake.pdf>. “Today there is a great crowd of people who are confident that a destruction of even greater magnitude is now imminent. The evidence is that Jesus’ prophecy will shortly have a major fulfillment, upon this entire system of things. This has been a major factor in influencing many couples to decide not to have children at this time. They have chosen to remain childless so that they would be less encumbered to carry out

the instructions of Jesus Christ to preach the good news of God’s kingdom earth wide before the end of this system comes.— Matt. 24:14” The organization has long preferred its missionaries to remain single so that they can fully devote themselves to the Organization.

were encouraged to give themselves to full time ministry. Many listened to the Watchtower, and marriage and child bearing were put off by some if not many. Education seemed pointless.⁴¹ The end was just around the corner. The Watchtower Society made many comments about the coming end, but for the most part avoided making clear pronouncements. However, there was little ambiguity about what they meant, and the members believed wholeheartedly that the end was coming. Membership grew rapidly between 1966 and 1975 as people heard the message and joined the Jehovah's Witnesses to prepare for the end. However, when 1975 came and went without any sign of the end, there was considerable disappointment. Many left the Watchtower Society in the following year. The Society did not formally comment on the missed prophecy for four years.⁴² They initially blamed the individual Witnesses for being overly

excited by the comments from headquarters.⁴³ It was not until 1980 that the Society finally admitted responsibility for the erroneous prophecy.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "What Influences Decisions in Your Life," *Watchtower*, March 15, 1969, 171, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1969%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Many schools now have student counselors who encourage one to pursue higher education after high school, to pursue a career with a future in this system of things. Do not be influenced by them. Do not let them 'brainwash' you with the Devil's propaganda to get ahead, to make something of yourself in this world. This world has very little time left! Any 'future' this world offers is no future! Wisely, then, let God's Word influence you in selecting a course that will result in your protection and blessing. Make pioneer service, the full-time ministry, with the possibility of Bethel or missionary service your goal. This is a life that offers an everlasting future!"

⁴² Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 253, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/281913142/In-Search-of-Christian-Freedom-by-Ray-Franz>. "It had taken nearly four years for the organization through its administration finally to admit it had been wrong, had, for an entire decade, built up false hopes. Not that a statement so candid, though true, could be made. Whatever was written had to be acceptable to the Body as a whole for publishing. . . . Today, all the decade-long buildup of hopes centered on 1975 is discounted as to being of any particular importance. The essence of Russell's word in 1916 is once again expressed by the organization: It 'certainly did have a very stimulating and sanctifying effect upon thousands, all of whom can praise the Lord—even for the mistake.'"

⁴³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "A Solid Basis for Confidence," *Watchtower*, July 15, 1976, 440-441, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1976%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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."

⁴⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Yearbook, 1980* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1980), 30-31, accessed August 6, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1980%20Yearbook%20\(yb80-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Books/Yearbooks/1980%20Yearbook%20(yb80-E).pdf). "The brothers also appreciated the candor of this same talk, which acknowledged the Society's responsibility for some of the disappointment a number felt regarding 1975."

Issues within the Witnesses Community

Medical Issues

To the detriment of all, the Watchtower Society has inserted itself in the medical decisions of its people. Watchtower Society has made decisions based on poorly thought out theology and sheer medical ignorance. Then, they have insisted that their positions be rigidly followed under fear of being disfellowshipped.

It is difficult to understand how an organization could develop and enforce policies that lead to the death and suffering of its own members. It is also impossible to say whether the Watchtower Society is entirely ignorant of medical and biological facts or whether there was another agenda. Perhaps it was an effort to isolate Jehovah's Witnesses culturally from those who do not support the Witnesses' teachings, or perhaps it is a control issue. To enforce their demands, it appears that they were relying on the fact that their devotees are poorly educated and conditioned to follow the Watchtower Society without question. Whether through malice or ignorance the demands of the Watchtower Society have caused unnecessary death and suffering. The Watchtower's history concerning vaccinations, organ transplantation, and blood transfusions is appalling. Callous, poorly reasoned decisions have cost untold lives. In addition, the ongoing confusion has created a bit of a dilemma for the Watchtower Society itself. As God's mouthpiece, it has forced its adherents to refrain from accepting available lifesaving medical treatment because God would, according to their understanding, require their blood for violating his law. God, who had earlier allowed transfusions, vaccines and organ transplants, changed His mind and prohibited them. And even after that, God changed his mind again and in many cases reversed His position due to 'new light'. However, these reversals violate the criteria that Russell had insisted would be seen with 'new light'. So, is God at fault? Or does the Watchtower, which denies inspiration but insists that its people follow Watchtower's inspired word, need to be recognized as a calloused, hard hearted, and evil society that insists that its members die rather than reject the Watchtower's unethical medical instructions?

Vaccines

Smallpox has been a destroyer of civilizations for ages.⁴⁵ In the United States, smallpox played a role in the Revolutionary War. During that time, a primitive system for vaccinating against smallpox had been developed, and Washington had his troops vaccinated.

⁴⁵ Marcella Piper-Terry, "History of Infectious Disease and Vaccination in the United States," *VaxTruth*, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://vaxtruth.org/2011/08/history-of-infectious-disease-and-vaccination-in-the-united-states/>. "Smallpox is mentioned in ancient Sanskrit from China (1122 BC), and the mummified remains of Ramses V bears scars suggesting the Egyptian pharaoh's death in 1156 BC may have resulted from smallpox. Smallpox epidemics were responsible for bringing about the end of at least three empires and its potential for use as a biological weapon dates back to the French-Indian War (1754-1767) when a British commander suggested using the virus to reduce the Indian population."

Because of the horrendous living conditions of the troops, British and American, epidemics of smallpox decreased troop strength and effected operational readiness. One historian credits the vaccination of Washington's troops with the success of his forces.⁴⁶ Vaccination for smallpox was generally viewed positively, and the process became safer across time.⁴⁷ In the nineteenth century a number of communities had mandatory vaccination policies.⁴⁸ In the early decades of the twentieth century, vaccines were developed for pertussis, diphtheria, and tetanus.⁴⁹ This increased the anxiety of those who had fought against all forms of vaccination. In the early 1920s the issue of vaccinations became important to the Watchtower Society. In 1921 there were articles in *Golden Age* critical of the vaccines.⁵⁰ In 1922 there was a rebuttal.⁵¹ These back and forth arguments went on for a nine-year period. The

⁴⁶ "A Very Short History of Mass Immunization in America," *Frontline*, accessed July 31, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/a-very-short-history-of-vaccines-in-america/>. "Gen. George Washington knew this. The problem for him was that the process to inoculate soldiers would take weeks, and he hesitated to take any troops off the front lines. However, after losing a battle over British-occupied Canada—in part due to an outbreak of smallpox in the camps—Washington made a decision to have his soldiers inoculated. Today, many historians credit the move with helping the Continental Army win the Revolutionary War."

⁴⁷ Piper-Terry, "History of Infectious Disease and Vaccination in the United States." "In the late 1700s, a young English physician named Edward Jenner began experimenting with using cowpox virus to inoculate humans against smallpox. Jenner collected data in controlled experiments and wrote articles publishing his findings among his peers in the medical societies of Europe." This was much safer because transmission of human borne illnesses such as syphilis and tuberculosis were eliminated.

⁴⁸ Ibid. "The first mandatory vaccination law in the United States was enacted in 1809 in Massachusetts, giving the government the power to enforce mandatory vaccination or quarantine in the event of a disease (smallpox) outbreak that posed a threat to the public health. Throughout most of the 1800s, vaccination against smallpox in the United States was voluntary, though coercion was often used to convince citizens to receive the procedure."

⁴⁹ Piper-Terry, "History of Infectious Disease and Vaccination in the United States." During the first half of the twentieth century there was a great expansion in vaccine research, leading to the development of new vaccines for pertussis, diphtheria, and tetanus in 1902, 1926, and 1938, respectively. The polio vaccine was licensed in 1955, followed by the development of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccines in the late 1960s. Although smallpox vaccination had been a requirement of school attendance for decades, it was during the late 1930s that compulsory vaccination against other illnesses began to be instituted for children enrolling in public school.

⁵⁰ R. Walter Maygrove, "Vaccination a Failure," *Golden Age*, October 12, 1921, 17, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1921%20Golden.Age%20Num035-Num059.pdf>. "Vaccination never prevented anything and never will, and is the most barbarous practice of an otherwise civilized nation. When will men learn as much about their own bodies as they do about their motor cars?" . . . "In our judgment vaccination does not protect from smallpox but on the contrary weakens the system .and renders the patient more likely to take smallpox. If the physicians would call things by their right name, vaccination would soon go out of practice. A vaccination sore is a poison sore, and the constitutional symptom is septic fever. Even those who recover from the acute symptoms cannot be sure that they are done with the matter, as a portion of the virus may remain in the system. The damage done may lurk in the system for years, and then break out in full fury."

⁵¹ G. del Pirla, "Facts About Vaccination," *Golden Age*, February 15, 1922, 314, accessed July 31, 2018, available: <<http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1922%20Golden.Age%20Num060-Num085.pdf>>. "It is a well-known fact that before calf-lymph vaccine was discovered smallpox

arguments against the vaccinations were emotional and sometimes hysterical, being long on innuendo but short of scientific fact.⁵²

During this time, vaccinations became an increasingly contentious issue.⁵³ In 1931, there was an article written that tied vaccines to the issue of eating blood. This made vaccines a religious issue, and it became improper for witnesses to be vaccinated.⁵⁴ The use of vaccines was banned for Jehovah's Witnesses, and the use of vaccines was thoroughly thrashed.⁵⁵ There were a number of court cases as Jehovah's Witnesses refused to allow their children to receive vaccinations.⁵⁶ The failure of Jehovah's Witnesses to vaccinate their

used to claim thousands of victims during epidemics, apart from the endemic and sporadic havoc. Last year in the town of Glasgow, there was an epidemic of Smallpox. . . . it is a matter of common knowledge to everyone who read the papers that the disease hardly attacked the vaccinated, or if attacked the patients recovered comparatively easily whilst in the case of the non-vaccinated who were affected by the trouble, they either succumbed to the disease or recovered with great difficulty. . . . It is a well-known fact that thousands of lives have been saved by diphtheria antitoxin serum.”

⁵² Andrew J. Holmes, “The Vaccination Fraud,” *Golden Age*, January 3, 1923, 214, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1923%20Golden.Age%20Num086-Num111.pdf>. “Dr. Walton Hadwen of England has the following to say: “No official statistics of any disease associated with inoculation processes are trustworthy. The endeavor to save the face of the inoculation fetish at all cost- and at the same time the face of the men whose reputations (and even incomes) depend upon its success brushes every scientific consideration aside. The whole system of inoculation is built upon imagination and false and superstitious theories; and it is steeped from foundation to summit in commercial interests. ‘I view the whole inoculation system- no matter to what disease it is applied- as a scientific error of the grossest description; so blind and willful an error that it constitutes an imposition upon the public. The efficacy of inoculation has never been proved. Its unscientific nature, its uselessness, and its dangers have been established beyond dispute. If health is to be maintained, the constitution must be safeguarded by sound, sanitary, and hygienic conditions; but to suppose that disease can be prevented by inoculating the system with the products of disease is as sensible as to invoke the power of Satan to cast out sin.”

⁵³ H. R. Rickards, “Vaccination,” *Golden Age*, May 1, 1929, 502, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1929%20Golden.Age%20Num243-Num268.pdf>. “Thinking people would rather have smallpox than vaccination, because the latter sows the seed of syphilis, cancers, eczema, erysipelas, scrofula, consumption, even leprosy and many other loathsome affections. Hence the practice of vaccination is a crime, an outrage and a delusion.”

⁵⁴ Charles A. Pattillo, “The Sacredness of Blood,” *Golden Age*, February 4, 1931, 293, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1931%20Golden.Age%20Num295-Num320.pdf>. “Vaccination is a direct violation of the everlasting covenant that God made with Noah after the flood. In Genesis 9:1-17 we read: ‘And God blessed Noah. . . . But the flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require. . . .’

⁵⁵ Pattillo, “The Sacredness of Blood,” 293. “In the New Testament it is deserving of particular notice that at the very time when the holy spirit declared by the apostles that the Gentiles are free from the yoke of circumcision, abstinence from blood, was explicitly enjoined (Acts 15: 28, 29), and the action thus prohibited was classed with idolatry and fornication. This plainly suggests that much of the looseness of our day along sexual lines may be traceable to the easy and continued violation of the divine commands to keep human and animal blood apart from each other. With cells of foreign blood racing through his veins man is not normal, not himself, but lacks the poise and balance which make for self-control.”

⁵⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “True Christian Heard in Court,” *Golden Age*, April 24, 1935, 471, accessed <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1935%20Golden.Age>

children doubtless led to many unnecessary deaths as smallpox and diphtheria were still a common public health issue during this period.⁵⁷ In spite of this, the ban on vaccines was general policy for a number of years. In the 1940s, there was a softening of the Watchtower position. In fact, one ranking Jehovah's Witness was allowed into a prison to explain to Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors that the acceptance of vaccines did not constitute an issue of faith.⁵⁸ Finally, this ban, in effect for twenty-one years, was reversed on April 15, 1952.⁵⁹ This reversal was reaffirmed in 1961. Vaccines are now considered a matter of conscience.⁶⁰ The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower proclaim neutrality regarding

%20Num399-Num424.pdf. "The court has no more right to vaccinate my child than to insert a knife in them. I am a true Christian, and know and study the law of Jehovah God, which is the Bible. The law of Jehovah God is against the intermingling of animal matter with any human blood, as is stated in Leviticus, Chapter 18. The life is in the blood, and as vaccination is a direct injection of animal matter in the blood stream, vaccination is a direct violation of the holy law of Jehovah God."

⁵⁷ "Blood Transfusion in Modern History," *AJWRB*, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://ajwr.org/the-historical-perspective/the-modern-historical-perspective>. "It's important to remember how serious a problem smallpox was at this time. In 1921 there were 100,000 cases of smallpox in the U.S. alone, with mortality as high as 40%. One can only wonder how many Witnesses suffered real physical harm or even death as a result of conforming to the Society's ban on vaccination."

⁵⁸ Macmillan, *Faith on the March*, 188. "One of the more serious problems I had to deal with, as I remember, was vaccinations. An order was received from the health department in Washington for all the inmates and guards to be vaccinated. Some of our boys in one prison in particular considered this the same as blood transfusions, and refused to submit. This caused considerable trouble. Then the order came from Washington to put all the men who refused to be vaccinated in solitary confinement. This did not change our men. The prison authorities hesitated to be overly strict about it; still they had their orders from headquarters . . . I asked the Warden to permit me to talk to all the men who refused to be vaccinated. . . 'I was in prison,' I reminded them, 'and I bared my arm and received the shot. Furthermore, all of us who visit our foreign branches are vaccinated or we stay at home. Now vaccination is not anything like blood transfusion. No blood is used in the vaccine. It is a serum. So you would not be violating those Scriptures which forbid taking blood into your system.'"

⁵⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from The Readers," *Watchtower*, December 15, 1952, 764, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1952%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Is vaccination a violation of God's law forbidding the taking of blood into the system? — G. C., North Carolina. The matter of vaccination is one for the individual that has to face it to decide for himself. . . And our Society cannot afford to be drawn into the affair legally or take the responsibility for the way the case turns out. After consideration of the matter, it does not appear to us to be in violation of the everlasting covenant made with Noah, as set down in Genesis 9:4, nor contrary to God's related commandment at Leviticus 17:10-14."

⁶⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, November 1, 1961, 670, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "As to the use of vaccines and other substances that may in some way involve the use of blood in their preparation, it should not be concluded that the Watch Tower Society endorses these and says that the practice is right and proper. However, vaccination is a virtually unavoidable practice in many segments of modern society, and the Christian may find some comfort under the circumstances in the fact that this use is not in actuality a feeding or nourishing process, which was specifically forbidden when God said that man was not to eat blood, but it is a contamination of the human system"

vaccines.⁶¹ In fact, some recent articles have acknowledged the effectiveness of vaccines in controlling tuberculosis and several other diseases. The Watchtower did a TB Fact Sheet to encourage use of the TB vaccination.⁶² In addition they published articles that noted the decrease in serious disease for those who had been vaccinated.⁶³ Without question, the vaccination controversy hurt the image of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The arguments were weak, and the anti-scientific bias left the Witnesses looking foolish. In addition, the ban led to illness and death for a significant number of Witnesses. This created a theological issue. If the Watchtower is the mouthpiece of God, how is it possible that God got this so wrong? This is a real dilemma. If God was responsible for the information in the articles, then there is adequate information to understand that God is confused, befuddled, and inept. If the Watchtower is responsible for the information, there is no reason to think that they are God's mouthpiece and they can safely be ignored.

Organ Transplants

The knowledge, technology and skill available in the medical community has rapidly advance over the last two hundred years. Advances in the medical field have provided the means to increase a person's lifespan and to improve the quality of life. This has come about with new medicines, new technology, and even the ability to transplant organs.

The first organ transplant was in 1869. A physician successfully preformed a simple skin graft. It would be thirty-seven years later in 1906 before medicine had advanced enough do a corneal transplant. In 1954 the first kidney transplant was done. By 1963 lungs were transplanted. In 1966 there was a successful pancreas transplant, followed in 1967 by a successful liver transplant. Also in 1967 there was the first successful heart transplant. In 1968 a successful bone marrow transplant was done.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Should My Family Be Immunized," *Awake!*, August 8, 1993, 25, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1993%20Awake.pdf>. "Previous articles in this journal and its companion, Watchtower, have presented a consistent position: It would be up to the Bible-trained conscience of the individual Christian as to whether he would accept this treatment for himself and his family."

⁶² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "TB Fact Sheet," *Awake!*, December 22, 1997, 5, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1997%20Awake.pdf>. "Who should be tested: Those who either have TB symptoms or have had close, repeated exposure to a TB patient—particularly in poorly ventilated rooms. Vaccination: There is only one vaccine—known as BCG. It prevents severe TB in children but does little for adolescents and adults. At best, the vaccination gives protection for about 15 years. BCG only protects those who are uninfected; it does not benefit people who are already infected."

⁶³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Use Medicines Wisely," *Awake!*, September 22, 1996, 11, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1996%20Awake.pdf>. "Vaccines alone have dramatically reduced the death toll from measles, whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria. Thanks to vaccines, smallpox has been wiped out. Polio too may soon be a disease of the past."

⁶⁴ "Timeline of Historical Events and Significant Milestones," *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.organdonor.gov/about/facts-terms/history.html>.

It is reasonable to ask whether there is enough benefit to transplants to make the surgery worthwhile. The evidence indicates that there is an increased quality of life and an extended life expectancy. Kidney failure patients who have transplants do not require special diets, food restrictions, and frequent dialysis. Transplant patients have been shown to live normal lives and live much longer than those on dialysis.⁶⁵ Liver transplant patients live decades longer and far more comfortably.⁶⁶ Heart transplant patients have a better than fifty percent chance of living for another decade.⁶⁷ So by most standards transplants would be a valuable means to help people. A transplant can reduce suffering and extend life.

Until 1967 there was no resistance to the idea of having a transplant. It was deemed a matter of conscience. An article in 1961 addressed a readers concern and assured them that there was no scriptural reason to refuse a transplant.⁶⁸ However, in 1967 the Watchtower determined that it was cannibalistic to allow an organ transplant, and the procedure became off limits to Jehovah's limits.⁶⁹ This was declared to be God's will in the matter, so many

⁶⁵ "What Is the Life Expectancy after a Successful Kidney Transplant," *Kidney Disease Treatment Center*, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.kidney-support.org/treatment-options/1035.html>. "The life expectancy after a successful kidney transplant is longer than with staying on dialysis. Data from the Scottish National Health Service showed that life expectancy in patients receiving a cadaveric kidney was 17.19 years compared with only 5.84 years for those who remained on dialysis."

⁶⁶ "What Is the Average Life Span Following a Liver Transplant Operation?," *Reference.com*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.reference.com/health/average-life-span-following-liver-transplant-operation-f78b20ac346b6c22?qo=contentSimilarQuestions>. "The average life expectancy for an adult liver transplant recipient is 22.2 years, as reported by the National Institutes of Health based on a study outlined in the journal Gut...An adult who has received a liver transplant lives, on average, seven years less than a person of the same age and gender who has not had a transplant, according to NIH."

⁶⁷ "What Is the Life Expectancy of Patients Who Have Had Heart Transplants?," *Reference.com*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.reference.com/health/life-expectancy-patients-heart-transplants-646c8262121ae9d7?aq=Life+expectancy+heart+transplant&qo=cdpArticles>. "Approximately 80 percent of heart transplant recipients survive two years, 70 percent reach the five-year mark, and 50 percent live 10 years or more, according to the National Institutes of Health."

⁶⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, August 1, 1961, 480, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The question of placing one's body or parts of one's body at the disposal of men of science or doctors at one's death for purposes of scientific experimentation or replacement in others is frowned upon by certain religious bodies. However, it does not seem that any Scriptural principle or law is involved. It therefore is something that each individual must decide for himself. If he is satisfied in his own mind and conscience that this is a proper thing to do, then he can make such provision, and no one else should criticize him for doing so. On the other hand, no one should be criticized for refusing to enter into any such agreement."

⁶⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, November 15, 1967, 702, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1967%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "When there is a diseased or defective organ, the usual way health is restored is by taking in nutrients. The body uses the food eaten to repair or heal the organ, gradually

replacing the cells. When men of science conclude that this normal process will no longer work and they suggest removing the organ and replacing it directly with an organ from another human, this is simply a shortcut. Those who submit to such operations are thus living off the flesh of another human. That is

Jehovah's Witnesses perished because they had kidney or heart disease and needed a transplant to survive.

What followed had to be painfully embarrassing to any educated Jehovah's Witness. A number of articles in *Awake!* used deception to discourage the use of transplants. To put things in perspective, consider one of the articles, written in 1971. Nixon was president of the United States. We were engaged in the Vietnam War, and we launched the Mariner spacecraft to Mars. Tobacco advertising was banned on TV and Radio, and *All In The Family* ran its first episodes. It was a time when the population was generally well educated. Yet the Watchtower Society began to explain to the public why they should be wary of transplants using bogus, pseudo-scientific arguments. One concern mentioned was that the seat of the emotions was located in the kidneys, and having a transplant would change the personality of the recipients.⁷⁰ Another concern was that since the heart participated in a person's thought processes, a mind, heart, dichotomy existed. Both were necessary for normal thinking. This line of reasoning was amazing. In 1971, the Watchtower society was teaching that the heart was literally the seat of our thoughts.⁷¹ Then having established the importance of the heart, they insinuated that a person with a heart transplant really doesn't have a heart anymore.⁷² As a scare tactic they began to blame transplants for psychiatric breakdowns.⁷³ Those who had a

cannibalistic. However, in allowing man to eat animal flesh Jehovah God did not grant permission for humans to try to perpetuate their lives by cannibalistically taking into their bodies human flesh, whether chewed or in the form of whole organs or body parts taken from others."

⁷⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Insight On the News," *Watchtower*, September 1, 1975, 519, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1975%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Transplant Problems: A peculiar factor sometimes noted is a so-called 'personality transplant'. That is, the recipient in some cases has seemed to adopt certain personality factors of the person from whom the organ came. One young promiscuous woman who received a kidney from her older, conservative, well-behaved sister, at first seemed very upset. Then she began imitating her sister in much of her conduct. Another patient claimed to receive a changed outlook on life after his kidney transplant. Following a transplant, one mild-tempered man became aggressive like the donor. The problem may be largely or wholly mental. But it is of interest, at least, that the Bible links the kidneys closely with human emotions."

⁷¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "How Is Your Heart," *Watchtower*, March 1, 1971, 134, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1971%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Most psychiatrists and psychologists tend to overcategorize the mind and allow for little if any influence from the fleshly heart, looking upon the word "heart" merely as a figure of speech apart from its use in identifying the organ that pumps our blood. . . . The heart is a marvelously designed muscular pump, but, more significantly, our emotional and motivating capacities are built within it. Love, hate, desire (good and bad), preference for one thing over another, ambition, fear-in effect, all that serves to motivate us in relationship to our affections and desires springs from the heart."

⁷² *Ibid.*, 135. "These patients have donor-supplied pumps for their blood, but do they now have all the factors needed to say they have a 'heart'? One thing is sure, in losing their own hearts, they have had taken away from them the capacities of 'heart' built up in them over the years and which contributed to making them who they were as to personality."

⁷³ *Ibid.* "Medical World News (May 23, 1969), in an article entitled 'What Does a New Heart Do to the Mind?' reported the following: 'At Stanford University Medical Center last year, a 45-year-old man received a new heart from a 20-year-old donor and soon announced to all his friends that he was celebrating his twentieth

heart transplant seemed to be at high risk of losing their minds because the new heart was not in contact with the mind anymore and the person became unstable.⁷⁴

The Watchtower also ran an article by a surgeon who was a Jehovah's Witness. He did not use transfusions and had a large clientele of Jehovah's Witnesses. He believed that the use of blood products was a health risk with no benefits.⁷⁵ He also doubted that God would approve of transplants.⁷⁶

In addition, the Watchtower Society used scare tactics in its publications. While granting no positive benefit from transplants, they listed horror stories about the bad results of transplants.⁷⁷ In addition, they made claims that would seem to be unsupported regarding the detrimental effects of a transplant.⁷⁸ It is true that there are health risks to those receiving

birthday. Another recipient resolved to live up to the sterling reputation of the prominent local citizen who was the donor. And a third man expressed great fear of feminization upon receiving a woman's heart, though he was somewhat mollified when he learned that women live longer than men. According to psychiatrist Donald T. Lunde, a consultant to surgeon Norman Shumway's transplant team at Stanford, these patients represent some of the less severe mental aberrations [italics ours] observed in the Shumway series of 13 transplants over the last 16 months.' The article continues: 'Though five patients in the series had survived as of early this month, and four of them were home leading fairly normal lives, three of the non-survivors became psychotic before they died last year. And two others have become psychotic this year.'"

⁷⁴ Ibid. "It is significant that heart-transplant patients, where the nerves connecting the heart and brain are severed, have serious emotional problems after the operation. The new heart is still able to operate as a pump, it having its own power supply and timing mechanism independent of the general nervous system for giving impulse to the heart muscle, but just as it now responds only sluggishly to outside influences, the new heart in turn registers few, if any, clear factors of motivation on the brain. To what extent the nerve endings of the body and the new heart are able to make some connections in time is not clear, but this cannot be ruled out as one of the several factors causing the serious mental aberrations and disorientation that doctors report are observed in heart-transplant patients."

⁷⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "My Life as a Surgeon," *Awake!*, March 22, 1974, 21, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1974%20Awake.pdf>. "It has been especially gratifying to me to see at firsthand evidence of the truthfulness of the Bible's directives on blood. The medical profession itself has gradually come to appreciate that blood is not an innocuous lifesaver. Blood transfusion is now recognized as a dangerous procedure—as hazardous as any other organ transplant."

⁷⁶ Ibid. "Today much is also made of the transplanting of various organs—kidneys, hearts, lungs and livers. . . . Because of what I have reason to believe is the Creator's view of organ transplants, I have serious reservations as to their Scriptural propriety."

⁷⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Watching the World," *Awake!*, February 22, 1975, 30-31, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1975%20Awake.pdf>. "'Transfusion Horror: Two babies were infected with syphilis by blood transfusions at Germany's Kiel University Clinic last year,' reports Wiesbadener Kurier. Infection spread to the parents. Not knowing the source, at least one of the families involved threatened to break up, each partner accusing the other of being unfaithful. Even though the truth came out in court, the damage was done. 'Two people will have told one another things of which they would be ashamed when they learned the truth,' notes the article."

⁷⁸ Ibid. "More Transplant Complications: Recently it was reported that the incidence of cancer is 100 times greater among organ-transplant recipients than among the general population. However, the frequency of brain tumors is 'about 1,000 times greater,' according to Dr. Wolff M. Kirsch, of the University of Colorado

a transplant, but it also true that the transplant is lifesaving. An individual facing a transplant would die without it. Rather than having the bleak prognosis suggested by Watchtower, the patient has a prognosis of a continuing life and with that comes the hope of survival for many.⁷⁹

Watchtower in 1971 suggested that the heart was literally the seat of emotional influence and decision making.⁸⁰ However, when the transplant ban was reversed in 1980, it was not long before the articles became more balanced.⁸¹ In 1984, the Witnesses determined that the term heart was often used figuratively in the Bible, not literally.⁸² Ironically, they

Medical Center. The prolonged immunosuppressive therapy to prevent rejection of the new organ frequently entangles the patient ‘in a snare of pathological processes,’ he says. Prospects for helping such patients are considered bleak.”

⁷⁹ Mario C. Deng, “Cardiac transplantation,” *Heart* (February 2002), 177-184, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1767010/>. “Malignancies play a major role as cause of death after cardiac transplantation. In the long-term course after cardiac transplantation, the risk of malignancies occurring is 1–2% per year. This risk is 10–100 fold higher than the risk in an age matched control population. Malignant tumours of the skin and lymphomas are the most frequent types, but any solid organ tumour may

occur. The incidence of post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder with a cyclosporine based immunosuppressive regimen is estimated to be around 2–4% and is a frequent and often fatal complication of organ transplantation. It most often results from an Epstein-Barr virus transformed B cell clone, which expresses B cell surface markers such as CD20. While these lymphomas may respond to reduction of immunosuppression, they may be successfully treated with the CD20 antibody rituximab.”

⁸⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “How Is Your Heart,” *Watchtower*, March 1, 1971, 140, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1971162>. “To illustrate, suppose the time comes when you must make a decision on buying a new suit or dress. First, the mind is confronted with certain facts. Perhaps older clothes are getting past their usefulness or there is a need for a change for some good reason. The heart comes very much into the picture too, as there is a desire at heart to look presentable. Heart and mind are in agreement that a new dress or suit be obtained. The mind now collects information on prices, quality, styles, and so forth, so that when you go shopping you have a pretty good idea which suit or dress should be purchased. But when you arrive at the store, there in the window is quite an eye-catcher, just waiting for the impulse buyer. It is not really practical for you; it involves much more money; it is rather extreme in styling; but how it tantalizes the heart! ‘It’s the heart’s delight!’ Now what will be done? What decision will be made? Will it be a practical, reasoned-out one, or one according to this new desire of the heart? If you are not very careful, the heart will overwhelm the mind.”

⁸¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, 31, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1980%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Should congregation action be taken if a baptized Christian accepts a human organ transplant, such as of a cornea or a kidney?” . . . “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 from cannibalism since the ‘donor’ is not killed to supply food.”

⁸² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “That Amazing Organ- Our Heart,” *Watchtower*, Sept 1, 1984, 6-7, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1984%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “What are we to understand, then, by the word ‘heart’? . . . What an amazing number of different functions and capabilities are ascribed to the heart! Do all of these reside

later noted that ancient civilizations had believed that the heart was the seat of the emotions and had outgrown that belief. However, they did not own up to the fact that they had recently held that same erroneous belief.⁸³

The thought processes that went into the ban on organ transplantation were unquestionably faulty. The Watchtower Society reversed an earlier position and ultimately reversed it again. This meant that for thirteen years, Jehovah's Witnesses who had serious health issues were sacrificed to a bad decision. Those who followed the leading of the Watchtower Society and refused to submit to the world by having a transplant died. While some may have seen them as loyal heroes, their deaths were unnecessary. Based on the reasoning the Watchtower Society utilized in banning organ transplants, one is forced to wonder if the Watchtower Society is an echo chamber cut off from all meaningful contact with the society around it.

Blood Transfusions

Blood transfusion were being done at the beginning of the twentieth century, and primitive blood banks were operational in the period between 1920 and 1935. It was not until 1945, more than fifty years after Russell began studying and working with the International Bible Students, that blood transfusions became an issue.

Russell was familiar with the Scriptures quoted by the Watchtower Society to prohibit blood transfusions. Russell did not identify any connection between Bible verses in Leviticus and Acts that speak of eating blood and the act of transfusing blood medically. He appeared to believe that the reason that Christians would want to abstain from eating blood was so that Jewish brethren and possible converts would not be offended.⁸⁴

in the literal heart? That could hardly be so. . . . in nearly a thousand other references to 'heart' in the Bible, 'heart' is obviously used in a figurative sense. . . . obviously, a distinction must be drawn between the heart organ and the figurative heart."

⁸³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Determined to Serve Jehovah with a Complete Heart," *Watchtower*, June 1, 1986, 15, accessed August 1, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1986%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The ancient Egyptians believed that the physical heart was the seat of intelligence and the emotions. They also thought that it had a will of its own. The Babylonians said that the heart housed the intellect as well as love. The Greek philosopher Aristotle taught that it was the seat of the senses and the domain of the soul. But as time passed and knowledge increased, these views were discarded. Finally, the heart became known for what it is, a pump to circulate the blood throughout the body."

⁸⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The Apostolic Council," *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, November 15, 1892, 1473, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1892%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Verses 19, 20. 'Wherefore,' said he, 'my judgment is that we should not trouble them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God'—they are justified by faith in Christ, and have already received the spirit of adoption, in uncircumcision, thus showing that faith in Christ the Redeemer is the only requisite to salvation. He further suggested writing to them merely that they abstain from pollutions of idols, i. e., from meats offered to idols (verse 29), and from things strangled and from blood—as by eating such things they might become stumbling blocks to their Jewish brethren (See 1 Cor. 8:4-13)—and from fornication. The eating of blood was forbidden,

Clayton J. Woodworth became the editor of the *Golden Age* magazine in 1919. He was very concerned about vaccinations and blood products. In the 1920s there was significant debate about vaccines and whether they were harmful. Articles were written that coupled the literal eating of blood with transfusions and other medical uses of blood. These articles presented an absolutist position that the use of blood products would bring about God's judgment.⁸⁵

Woodworth was a driving force seeking to ban the use of blood products. He was known to have strong views on the subject and the *Golden Age* and *Consolation* reflected his views.⁸⁶ Still the early members of the Watchtower Society did not see the medicinal use of blood as eating blood and even more interesting did not see the directive of Acts 15 as a law but rather as a "necessary thing."⁸⁷

Witness literature demonstrates that there was not a bias against donating blood, and there did not appear to be concern about transfusions. An article from 1929 noted that a British man had donated eleven gallons of blood during his life, for which he was commended.⁸⁸ In 1931, an article in *Golden Age* undercut the current argument used to condemn transfusions.⁸⁹ The argument was straightforward. The Watchtower Society equates

not only by the Jewish Law, but also before the Law was given. The same command was given to Noah. see Deut. 12:23; Gen. 9:4."

⁸⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "One Reason for God's Vengeance," *Watchtower*, December 15, 1927, 371, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1927%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "This is a description of what shall fall upon the Devil's organization; and one of the reasons why this shall befall the nations of Christendom especially is that these nations have broken the everlasting covenant and made the blood of man as common as the blood of beasts. Before the Lord does this he says to his anointed ones, 'Go and tell the peoples of the world what is my purpose. Give witness that I am God, and that the day of my vengeance is at hand, and that with the fall of Satan's wicked organization I will bring forth blessings to the people.'"

⁸⁶ "Blood Transfusion in Modern History," *AJWRB*. "A key to the development of the current blood doctrine was the appointment of as editor of the *Golden Age* Magazine. Woodworth used the magazine as a voice to air his extraordinary personal views on science and medicine. It is here amidst the lunacy and paranoia we find the seeds of the WTS' blood doctrine."

⁸⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Settling Doctrinal Differences," *Watchtower*, April 15, 1909, 4374, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1909%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "When they briefly summed up, not as law, but as 'necessary things,' the followings: (1) Abstain from sacrifices to idols; (2) And from blood; (3) And from things strangled; (4) And from harlotry, it 'was not intimated that abstinence from these things would make them Christians.'"

⁸⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Flotsam and Jetsam," *Golden Age*, July 29, 1925, 683, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1925%20Golden.Age%20Num139-Num164.pdf>. "Mr. B. W. Tibble of London, England, has on forty-five different occasions given a pint of blood, for transfusion to patients in the London Hospital The usual fee is five guineas, twenty-five dollars, but Tibble has always refused to receive any pay for his services. He has been made a life governor of the hospital and been honored with an Order by the king."

⁸⁹ Charles A. Pattillo, "The Sacredness of Blood," *Golden Age*, February 4, 1931, 294, accessed July 31, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1931%20Golden.Age%20>

a transfusion with eating blood. Their claim is that placing nutrients directly into the bloodstream is still like eating. The article in 1931 stated that it was not the eating of blood that was the problem, but the bringing the blood of an animal in contact with a human. This argument may have been developed to discourage vaccinations, but it runs counter to the current arguments against blood transfusions. In 1940 there was an article praising a physician who had donated blood during a surgery to save the patient.⁹⁰ Therefore, it is clear that there were decades when having a transfusion or giving blood was not a theological issue. That was not to last though. In 1945 the article “One Reason for God’s Vengeance” from a 1927 Watchtower resurfaced and the use of blood and blood products was declared to be pagan and immoral. Transfusions were effectively banned.⁹¹

Because of the ban, people began to look at alternatives. It was known that the components of blood could be separated. The question then became, “Are the components of blood acceptable?” Because of this, the Watchtower history involving the use of serums and blood fractions is interesting. Serum is a blood based clear fluid in which cells are suspended. The cells are removed, and the serums are used to provide immunity from disease and to treat certain medical conditions. Like other blood products, they were initially approved of until the ban of 1945. The Watchtower by banning blood and serum products was putting itself in the place of God. It was literally forcing people to choose to die in order to remain faithful to the Watchtower Society. If the victims of this policy did not do as they were instructed, they would be disfellowshipped. To the individual Witness this meant that they were cast away from God and they would perish without the hope of eternal life. So, the Watchtower Society, acting as God’s mouthpiece, implemented a policy that would lead to the unnecessary deaths of at least 33,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses. Even worse, children that were

Num295-Num320.pdf. “All reasonable minds must conclude that it was not the eating of the blood that God objected to, but it was bringing the blood of the beast in contact with the blood of man.”

⁹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Surgery,” *Consolation*, December 25, 1940, 19, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1940%20Consolation%20Num530-Num555.pdf>. “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.”

⁹¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Immovable for the Right Worship,” *Watchtower*, July 1, 1945, 198-201, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1945%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Jehovah’s worshipers are cautious to avoid all blood-guilt. As long ago as December 15, 1927, an article appeared in this magazine entitled ‘One Reason for God’s Vengeance,’ and it called attention to the gross violation by the nations of Jehovah’s everlasting covenant. . . . They reasoned that as the blood is the principal medium by which the body is nourished, transfusion, therefore, is a quicker and shorter road to feed an ill-nourished body than eating food that turns to blood after several changes. So transfusion was thought of not only as a cure, but also as a rejuvenator.” Hence, a blood transfusion is the same as eating blood. Food changes to blood after several changes according to the Watchtower.

faithful to the Society and died as a result were hailed as heroes of the faith. “New light” was leading to unnecessary loss of life.

Because decisions like the ones the Watchtower Society was making were critical, it would be reasonable to expect a well thought out series of linear decisions leading to a better endpoint. However, this is not what is seen. Instead, the Watchtower made several confused and contradictory decisions about serum products. In 1954, during the polio epidemic, the Witnesses were told that Gamma Globulin, the only treatment currently available, was a blood product and they should decline all serum-based products.⁹² Four years later, in 1958, the teaching changed and blood based serum products were no longer banned. It was now a matter of conscience.⁹³ However, five years later, in 1963, blood serums and blood fractions were again banned.⁹⁴ Less than 21 months later, in 1964 the Watchtower again reversed itself.⁹⁵ There were four reversals in ten years. There was no progress; the Watchtower Society simply returned to the ‘old light’ and then came back to the ‘new light’. There is no evident, logical reason for these flip-flops and every time they banned blood products, someone was put at risk. In 1974, the Watchtower re-affirmed that using serum was a matter

⁹² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Gamma Globulin Versus Poliomyelitis,” *Awake!*, January 8, 1954, 24, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1954%20Awake.pdf>. “We are told that it takes one and a third pints of whole blood to get enough of the blood protein or ‘fraction’ known as gamma globulin for one injection. . . . its being made of whole blood places it in the same category as blood transfusions as far as Jehovah’s prohibition of taking blood into the system is concerned.”

⁹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, September 15, 1958, 575, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1958%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “While God did not intend for man to contaminate his blood stream by vaccines, serums or blood fractions, doing so does not seem to be included in God’s expressed will forbidding blood as food. It would therefore be a matter of individual judgment whether one accepted such types of medication or not.”

⁹⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Carry Your Own Load of Responsibility,” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1963, 124, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1963%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “‘From what was the plasma taken?’ ‘How are the red cells obtained?’ ‘Where did you get this substance?’ If the answer is ‘Blood’, he knows what course to take, for it is not just whole blood but anything that is derived from blood and used to sustain life or strengthen one that comes under this principle.”

⁹⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Employment of Your Conscience,” *Watchtower*, November 15, 1964, 680-683, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1964%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The Society does not endorse any of the modern medical uses of blood, such as the uses of blood in connection with inoculations. Inoculation is, however, a virtually unavoidable circumstance in some segments of society, and so we leave it up to the

conscience of the individual to determine whether to submit to inoculation with a serum containing blood fractions for the purpose of building up antibodies to fight against disease. If a person did this, he may derive comfort under the circumstances from the fact that he is not directly eating blood, which is expressly forbidden in God’s Word. It is not used for food or to replace lost blood. Here the Christian must make his own decision based on conscience. Therefore, whether a Christian will submit to inoculation with a serum, or whether doctors or nurses who are Christians will administer such, is for personal decision.”

of conscience.⁹⁶ In 1978, RhoGAM⁹⁷ use was declared a matter of conscience.⁹⁸ This is important as the failure to utilize RhoGAM can lead to a high rate of infant mortality.⁹⁹ The lack of consistency and the overarching confusion is clear evidence that decisions are not being made by God but by very fallible men.

When the Watchtower Society effectively banned blood transfusions in 1945, they did not follow a policy of disfellowshipping. Elders were instructed to be merciful and supportive while still encouraging obedience.¹⁰⁰ However, in 1961 the Watchtower Society began to take a hard-line position regarding transfusions. Anyone who disregarded Jehovah's Organization was to be disfellowshipped unless they repented and diligently sought restoration.¹⁰¹ In 1997, elders were encouraged to seek a justice that was tempered with

⁹⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, June 1, 1974, 352, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1974%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We believe that here the conscience of each Christian must decide. Some may feel that accepting such a serum does not constitute an act of disrespect for the sacredness of life and of God as the life Source that it does not constitute a flouting of God's expressed will concerning the use of blood to feed the body. On the other hand, the conscience of others may call on them to reject all such serums. Each must answer to God as his or her judge with regard to the reason for one's conscientious decision."

⁹⁷ *RhoGAM*, April 10, 2018, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.rhogam.com/patients/about-rhogam/>. RhoGAM is a prescription medicine that is used to prevent Rh immunization, a condition in which an individual with Rh-negative blood develops antibodies after exposure to Rh-positive blood.

⁹⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, June 15, 1978, 30-31, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1978%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "What, however, about accepting serum injections to fight against disease, such as are employed for diphtheria, tetanus, viral hepatitis, rabies, hemophilia and Rh incompatibility? This seems to fall into a gray area. Some Christians believe that accepting a small amount of a blood derivative for such a purpose would not be a manifestation of disrespect for God's law; their conscience would permit such. (Compare Luke 6:1-5.) Others, though, feel conscientiously obliged to refuse serums because these contain blood, though only a tiny amount. Hence, we have taken the position that this question must be resolved by each individual on a personal basis. We urge each one to strive to have a clear conscience and to be responsive to God's guidance found in His Word."

⁹⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "The RH Factor and You," *Awake!*, December 8, 1994, 27, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1994%20Awake.pdf>. "We have noted that in all pregnancies antibodies freely pass the placenta between mother and baby. Hence some Christians have concluded that to them it does not seem a violation of Bible law to take a shot consisting of antibodies, like RhIG, since the process is essentially like what happens naturally."

¹⁰⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, August 1, 1958, 478, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1958%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "We, of course, regret with you that this sister who professes to be one of the anointed remnant took a blood transfusion voluntarily during her stay in the hospital. We believe that she did the wrong thing contrary to the will of God. However, congregations have never been instructed to disfellowship those who voluntarily take blood transfusions or approve them."

¹⁰¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, January 15, 1961, 63-64, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "According to the law of Moses, which set forth shadows

mercy.¹⁰² In the year 2000, it was decided not to disfellowship individuals that have had a transfusion or used a blood product. If they are deemed unrepentant, they will be considered to have disassociated themselves.¹⁰³

Before looking at some practical approaches that have been developed to provide the best possible medical care without blood products, the arguments used to support the ban on blood products needs to be examined to see if they have any weight. The first type of argument was that blood, or an organ, carried within it the personality of the donor. Therefore, the recipient is at risk of developing mental illness or aberrant personality traits. It is difficult to believe that these arguments were seriously proposed in the 1960s.¹⁰⁴ A second type of argument was built around the real but negligible risk of disease or rejection. This type of argument fails when it is realized that the blood transfusion is designed to prevent death in a time of real danger. While it is true there is a risk, a low probability of getting hepatitis¹⁰⁵ or HIV,¹⁰⁶ when compared to a high probability of dying does not seem like a

of things to come, the receiver of a blood transfusion must be cut off from God's people by excommunication or disfellowshipping.”

¹⁰² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Bioethics and Bloodless Surgery,” *Watchtower*, February 15, 1997, 20, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1997%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Since the backbone of Christianity is love, the elders would want, as in all judicial cases, to temper firmness with mercy.”

¹⁰³ “Blood Transfusion in Modern History,” *AJWRB*. “In the spring of 2000, Circuit overseers in the United States receive a letter instructing them to inform local bodies of elder not to disfellowship anyone who accepts blood transfusions. If their conduct becomes known and they are deemed unrepentant, they will be considered to have disassociated themselves.”

¹⁰⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Using Life in Harmony with the Will of God,” *Watchtower*, September 15, 1961, 564, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The blood in any person is in reality the person himself. It contains all the peculiarities of the individual from whence it comes. This includes hereditary taints, disease susceptibilities, poisons due to personal living, eating and drinking habits. . . . The poisons that produce the impulse to commit suicide, murder, or steal are in the blood.” And Dr. Americo Valerio, Brazilian doctor and surgeon for over forty years, agrees. ‘Moral insanity, sexual perversions, repression, inferiority complexes, petty crimes—these often follow in the wake of blood transfusion,’”

¹⁰⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Watching the World,” *Awake!*, February 22, 1975, 30, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1975%20Awake.pdf>. “‘Almost 40 percent of 113 hemophiliacs studied had cases of hepatitis. All these patients had received whole blood, plasma, or blood derivatives containing [the factors],’ notes the report. Of course, true Christians do not use this potentially dangerous treatment, heeding the Bible’s command to ‘abstain from blood.’”

¹⁰⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Why Has AIDs Spread So Widely?,” *Awake!*, October 8, 1988, 11, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1988%20Awake.pdf>. “Others were infected by blood transfusions. The Medical Post of Canada reports: ‘Dr. Thomas Peterman, a medical epidemiologist with the AIDS branch of the Centers for Disease Control. . . estimated that 12,000 Americans became infected with HIV [AIDS virus] from contaminated blood transfusions from 1978-1984.’” In 1985 a test for HIV was developed so blood could be tested before being stored for use. This has markedly reduced the transmission of HIV by blood transfusion.

strong argument. A third argument was developed around the fact that there will be some incompatibility between the donor and the recipient. However, this incompatibility is generally medically insignificant.¹⁰⁷ The fourth and final argument is the religious argument. If we love Jehovah, we will find the idea of a blood transfusion repugnant.¹⁰⁸ However, the Scriptures do not address the issue of transfusions, and the blood prohibitions of the Old and New Testaments are not related to the medical use of blood products, but to prevent the adoption of pagan behaviors.

Because transfusions of whole blood products remain prohibited, there have been attempts to find alternatives. These alternatives have improved as medical technology has improved. Initially the Watchtower Society was less than cooperative in pursuing surgical alternatives. Surgical technology existed that allowed for the scavenging of blood that was lost during the surgery. This blood would be salvaged and returned to the patient. The Watchtower Society stated that once the blood had left the circulatory system, it could only be poured out.¹⁰⁹ Following much discussion, procedures were developed that were helpful for the Jehovah's Witness who would not receive blood from others during surgery. In conjunction with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the medical community designed devices to recover blood in a manner that was acceptable to the Watchtower Society. It was decided that if blood remained in circulation, even an artificial circulation, it could be used again.¹¹⁰ In

¹⁰⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Question of Blood* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1977), 41, accessed August 2, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1977%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses%20and%20the%20question%20of%20blood%20\(bq-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Brochures/1977%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses%20and%20the%20question%20of%20blood%20(bq-E).pdf). “Consequently, whether having religious objections to blood transfusions or not, many a person might decline blood simply because it is essentially an organ transplant that at best is only partially compatible with his own blood.”

¹⁰⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Exercising Maturity- a Safeguard,” *Watchtower*, July 1, 1966, 401, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1966%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Are you one to whom disobeying God's law is repulsive? Then the taking of blood is just as despicable to you as cannibalism. Think of eating of the flesh of another human creature! It is shocking! Is drinking human blood any different? Does bypassing the mouth and putting it directly into the veins change it? Not at all!”

¹⁰⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Questions from Readers,” *Watchtower*, October 10, 1959, 640, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1959%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “The removal of one's blood, storing it and later putting it back into the same person would be a violation of the Scriptural principles that govern the handling of blood.— Gen. 9:4-6.”

¹¹⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Question from Readers,” *Watchtower*, March 1, 1989, 30-31, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1989%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “As we can see, there is a growing variety of equipment or techniques involving autologous blood. We cannot and should not try to comment on each variation. When faced with a question in this area, each Christian is responsible to obtain details from medical personnel and then make a personal decision.”

addition to methods to reclaim lost blood, medications were developed to stimulate blood cell production, and non-blood products that could carry oxygen were developed.¹¹¹

Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept any of the four major blood components. However, they currently can accept fractions from each of the groups. This means that they are able to access the equivalent of whole blood, just in a reformatted form. However, most Jehovah's Witnesses do not appreciate what this means and continue to carry the "no transfusion cards" and refuse blood products.

Like the serum, blood fraction acceptance was not a linear process. It had reversals. Like other blood products, they would be banned and then reinstated.¹¹² Given the lifesaving nature of these products, it almost seems callous to keep people with serious medical issues guessing and sometimes uninformed. In 1982, the Watchtower became open to utilizing minor blood components. At the same time heart-lung and dialysis equipment was okayed as long as they were not primed with blood.¹¹³ In 2000 the use of blood fractions became a matter of

¹¹¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Blood Transfusions Reconsidered," *Watchtower*, August 1, 1995, 30, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1995%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Including the reinfusion of a patient's own blood, a technique that some Witnesses may find unobjectionable under certain circumstances. Another treatment involves the use of drugs that stimulate the patient's blood production. Additionally, a synthetic blood substitute is occasionally employed to bolster the delivery of oxygen without the need for transfused blood." Acute Normovolemic Hemodilution (ANH) and autologous blood salvage procedure (Cell Saver) are acceptable and involve brief storing of the blood outside of the body.

¹¹² "Blood Transfusion in Modern History," *AJWRB*. "Four months later a reversal. The Governing Body decides that blood fractions for Hemophiliacs are acceptable as a matter of conscience. Beginning in the early 1970's brothers were told that they could accept a one time only treatment. Those phoning the Society after June 11th (1978) are told that they may make a personal decision about whether or not to use Factor VIII and IX. This policy will not become official for three more years, apparently because the governing body does not want to officially reverse itself so quickly. Those who have written about using factor VIII and IX are contacted directly by the society. Those who called by phone cannot be contacted and likely die."

¹¹³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Jehovah's Witnesses—The Surgical/Ethical Challenge," *Awake!*, June 22, 1982, 25, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1982%20Awake.pdf>. "Physicians face a special challenge in treating Jehovah's Witnesses. Members of this faith have deep religious convictions against accepting homologous or autologous

whole blood, packed RBCs [red blood cells], WBCs [white blood cells], or platelets. Many will allow the use of (non-blood-prime) heart-lung, dialysis, or similar equipment if the extracorporeal circulation is uninterrupted."

conscience.¹¹⁴ and oxygen carrying substitutes are approved for blood replacement.¹¹⁵ Hemoglobin is now available as an acceptable fraction, so those needing blood have access to all the components of the four major blood groups.¹¹⁶

In 1976 the *Awake!* magazine celebrated the deaths of a number of children who loyally followed the Watchtower Society's instructions and declined blood products.¹¹⁷ These children were presented as heroes of the faith when in reality they died needlessly. Bad theology and total control over the lives of people has been responsible for more than 33,000 deaths. Facilitating the death of these children, who were pawns in the effort to have complete control over people's lives, was evil. A sincere belief in a falsehood does not make it true.

Disfellowshipping

The Watchtower Society is a high control organization.¹¹⁸ When members are baptized, they proclaim allegiance not only to Jehovah and Jesus but also to the Watchtower Society.¹¹⁹ Independent thinking is discouraged, and there are many behavioral

¹¹⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Questions from Readers," *Watchtower*, June 15, 2000, 29-31, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2000%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Beyond that, when it comes to fractions of any of the primary components, each Christian, after careful and prayerful meditation, must conscientiously decide for himself." See also Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Be Guided by the Living God," *Watchtower*, June 15, 2004, 22, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/2004%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "The medical article continued: 'Witnesses' religious understanding does not absolutely prohibit the use of [fractions] such as albumin, immune globulins, and hemophiliac preparations; each Witness must decide individually if he can accept these.' Since 1981, many fractions (breakdown elements derived from one of the four major components) have been isolated for use."

¹¹⁵ "Blood Transfusion in Modern History," *AJWRB*. "In September (of 2000) it becomes evident that the WTS will permit the use of bovine hemoglobin."

¹¹⁶ "Blood Transfusion in Modern History," *AJWRB*. "The June 15th (2004) Watchtower expands on the June 15, 2000 article. For the first time, the rank and file Jehovah's Witness learns that the single largest blood component (hemoglobin) is now permitted as a matter of personal choice. (Insiders and AJWRB members have known for four years. JW's have been using Polyheme and Hemopure where available in clinical trials as well)."

¹¹⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Youths Who Put God First," *Awake!*, May 22, 1994, 3-15, accessed August 2, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1994%20Awake.pdf>. "In former times thousands of youths died for putting God first. They are still doing it, only today the drama is played out in hospitals and courtrooms, with blood transfusions the issue."

¹¹⁸ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Subjecting Ourselves to Jehovah by Dedication," *Watchtower*, June 1, 1985, 30, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1985%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Since 1985 the second Jehovah's Witness baptism vow became; '(2) Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?'"

¹¹⁹ "Disfellowshipping and Shunning," *JWfacts.com*, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/disfellowship-shunning.php>. "At baptism a person commits themselves to

expectations.¹²⁰ The group views itself as a ‘clean’ organization and does not tolerate theological dissent or moral carelessness.¹²¹

Historically the Watchtower Society under Charles Taze Russell practiced a shunning of Christians who brought disrepute on the name of Christ.¹²² They were not to be treated as brothers. Those who were part of the Watchtower Society were not quickly disfellowshipped but encouraged when they fell into difficulty. Efforts were made to restore the erring one, and as a last resort, they were disfellowshipped. This, however, did not mean treating them as if they were dead.¹²³

the Watchtower Organization, despite the word organization never appearing in the Bible. Few realize that they have committed their bedroom lives, work choices and life long relationship with family and friends to the Organization. Terms such as ecclesiastical government of Jehovah's Witnesses are never used in the Watchtower publications that are issued to the public, but are terms used within confidential letters to branches and the elders. Would as many people be baptized if they realized it was not only to Jehovah, Jesus and the Holy Spirit that they were being baptized but to an ecclesiastical government that had the right to introduce any rule at any time?”

¹²⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Exposing the Devils Subtle Designs,” *Watchtower*, January 15, 1983, 22, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1983%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “Avoid Independent Thinking- From the very outset of his rebellion Satan called into question God’s way of doing things. He promoted independent thinking. ‘You can decide for yourself what is good and bad,’ Satan told Eve. ‘You don’t have to listen to God. He is not really telling you the truth’. (Genesis 3:1-5) To this day, it has been Satan’s subtle design to infect God’s people with this type of thinking.—2 Timothy 3:1,13. 21 How is such independent thinking manifested? A common way is by questioning the counsel that is provided by God’s visible organization.”

¹²¹ “Disfellowshipping and Shunning,” *JWfacts.com*. “During the years following World War II the moral corruption of the world began to reach frightful proportions. The possibility existed that God’s clean organization could become contaminated by such corruptive influences. But Jehovah was interested in his people, just as in times past, so through his channel of communication he lovingly brought forward information to counteract the filth that could tarnish or cause his people to become unholy.”

¹²² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Consider Him,” *Zion’s Watchtower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, December 1882, 423, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1882%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “We are not of those who disfellowship Christian brethren on account of some differences of opinion; but when it comes to the point of

denying the very foundation of all Christianity we must speak out and withstand all such to the face, for they become the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

¹²³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “Punishing Fellow Members,” *Watchtower*, March 1, 1919, 69, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1919%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. “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.”

The early Watchtower Society pointed out that disfellowshipping was not a biblical practice, but instead sprung from paganism and the Catholic Church.¹²⁴ However during both Rutherford's and Knorr's presidencies, the Watchtower Society began to exert greater and greater control on the members. To have the type of control desired it was necessary to utilize strong discipline. As a result, disfellowshipping became acceptable.¹²⁵ During Knorr's presidency, he continued a centralizing of the authority of the Watchtower Society. He implemented district and circuit overseers and established a procedure for installing elders through the Watchtower Society rather than by direct congregational vote. Judicial Committees operated locally but under the authority of the Watchtower Society. Elders and committees often received advice from the Society. The president of the Watchtower Society was absolutely in control of the Watchtower Society and the Watchtower Society was absolutely in control of the individual Kingdom Halls.

The Watchtower Society produced books training elders how to deal with the congregations. In one such book, seven out of twelve chapters dealt with disfellowshipping individuals.¹²⁶ At the congregational level, the elders exert tremendous control over individuals. When advised that there is some form of sin in the camp or some theological aberration, they will quickly assemble a judicial committee and call a hearing. The individual who is summoned cannot bring a lawyer or support person, cannot have anyone testify on

¹²⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Are You Also Excommunicated," *Awake!*, January 8, 1947, 27, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/Awake/1947%20Awake.pdf>. "Where, then did this practice originate? The Encyclopaedia Britannica says that papal excommunication is not without pagan influence, 'and its variations cannot be adequately explained unless account be taken of several non-Christian analogues of excommunication' The superstitious Greeks believed that when an excommunicated person died the Devil entered the body, and therefore, 'in order to prevent it, the relatives of the deceased cut his body in pieces and boil them in wine'. Even the Druids had a method of expelling those who lost faith in their religious superstitions. It was therefore after Catholicism adopted it pagan practices, AD 325, that this new chapter in religious excommunication was written. Thereafter, as the pretensions of the Hierarchy increased, the weapon of excommunication became the instrument by which the clergy attained a combination of ecclesiastical power and secular tyranny that finds no parallel in history."

¹²⁵ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Keeping the Organization Clean," *Watchtower*, March 1, 1952, 131,134, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1952%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "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 God. He should go back to the wicked group that he once came from and die with that wicked group with Satan's organization."

¹²⁶ "Disfellowshipping and Shunning," *JWfacts.com*. "Only elders have access to *Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock* and letters from the Society. In 2010, an updated Elder's book—"Shepherd the Flock of God"—was released. Seven of its twelve chapters are devoted to disfellowshipping."

behalf of his character and cannot record the proceedings.¹²⁷ In the case of sexual issues this can mean that young ladies are forced to describe their intimate sexual behavior to three male congregational elders that they likely know, while having no one present to observe or support them. Those elders will then pass sentence. The committees tend to be punitive rather than nurturing.

The list of behaviors that can lead to disfellowshipping is extensive and goes beyond what the Scripture identifies as behavior that calls for separation.¹²⁸ The separation that is called for is also more severe than what the Bible calls for. The Bible nowhere calls for families to shun family members. In addition, the attitude the congregation is to have towards someone who has been disfellowshipped is harsh and different from what the Bible counsels.¹²⁹

If someone is disfellowshipped, it is a traumatic event. Once the disfellowshipping is announced, no Jehovah's Witness can associate with that person. There is to be no acknowledgment that they are alive. If that person is a family member, other than a husband

¹²⁷ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Shepherd the Flock of God* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2010), 90, accessed August 6, 2018, [http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-%20flock%20of%20God%20\(ks10-E\).pdf](http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-%20flock%20of%20God%20(ks10-E).pdf). "Hear only those witnesses who have relevant testimony regarding the alleged wrongdoing. Those who intend to testify only about the character of the accused should not be allowed to do so. The witnesses should not hear details and testimony of other witnesses. Observers should not be present for moral support. Recording should not be allowed."

¹²⁸ "Disfellowshipping and Shunning," *JWfacts.com*. The following are some of the potential reasons for disfellowshipping and their sources. [The key for the numbers and letter is the following: FY—*The Secret of Family Happiness* (1996), G—*AWAKE!*, IT1—*Insight on the Scriptures* vol. 1 (1988), IT2—*Insight on the Scriptures* vol. 2, JV—*Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (1993), LV—*Keep Yourselves in God's Love* (2008), OM—*Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* (1989), and W—*Watchtower Magazine*. Numbers following G and W are year, month, day, and page. All others indicate only page number.] "Disfellowshipping grounds: w98 3/15 22; w92 7/1 19; w89 9/15 18; w88 4/15 26-27; it-1 788; absolute endangerment of mate's spirituality: w88 11/1 22-23; apostasy: w89 10/1 19; w86 3/15 15; w86 4/1 30-31; w86 10/15 31; bestiality: it-1 292; bloodguilt: w06 9/15 30; blood transfusion: jv 183-184; dishonest practices: w86 11/15 14; drunkenness: it-1 656; employment involving gambling: w95 5/15 23; extortion: w89 1/15 22; it-1 789; extreme physical abuse of family members: lv 221; g01 11/8 12; fy 150; w88 11/1 22; fits of anger: w10 6/15 30; lv 221; g01 11/8 12; g97 6/8 20; fy 150; g93 2/8 14; fornication: w06 7/15 29-30; it-1 863; fraud: om 142-143; gluttony: w04 11/1 30-31; greed in relation to bride-price: w98 9/15 25; gross uncleanness: lv 137; w06 7/15 30-31; loose conduct: w06 7/15 30-31 lying: w09 6/15 18-19; lv 163; g00 2/8 21; obscene speech: lv 136-137; persistent gambling: w89 7/15 30; polygamy: jv 176; pornography in certain cases: w06 7/15 31; promoting sects: it-2 886; reviling: lv 138; w96 7/15 17-18; it-1 991; it-2 802; sexual abuse of children: g93 10/8 10; slander: w89 10/15 14; om 142-143; subversive activity: w95 10/1 31; use of tobacco: w06 7/15 30-31; w95 5/15 23; whether violation of secular law is: w86 10/1 31; willful nonsupport of family: lv 220-221; w88 11/1 22.

¹²⁹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "A Time and Place for Everything," *Watchtower*, July 15, 1961, 420, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1961%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Jesus encouraged his followers to love their enemies, but God's Word also says to "hate what is bad." When a person persists in a way of badness after knowing what is right, when the bad becomes so ingrained that it is an inseparable part of his make-up, then in order to hate what is bad a Christian must hate the person with whom the badness is inseparably linked."

or wife, there can be no associating with them.¹³⁰ Families are often permanently disrupted by this discipline. Children go for decades without seeing their parents, and parents may never see their disfellowshipped child or their family again. For the disfellowshipped person this can be devastating. Being raised in a Jehovah's Witness community, Witnesses are discouraged from forming friendships with anyone other than another Witness. This means that when persons are disfellowshipped, they have no social support system at all. Their family, who used to love them, now shuns them, their friends who used to act like they loved them now shun them.¹³¹ In fact, the Watchtower literature tells the Witnesses to hate those who are disfellowshipped. In addition, the witness knows that the theological penalty for being separated from Jehovah's Organization is irreversible death. To die without being restored would mean no resurrection.¹³²

The penalties imposed are draconian. Once disfellowshipped an individual needs to come back and repentantly attend meetings, generally for a year. During that year, the members continue to shun them. Finally, after their time of waiting is over, they meet with the elders, and when the elders are convinced of their repentance, they are again allowed into the society. When that happens, everyone will again associate with him or her. Once back in, they can go door to door witnessing, but they cannot answer questions at meetings or

¹³⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Family Responsibilities in Keeping Jehovah's Worship Pure," *Watchtower*, July 15, 1963, 444, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1963%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "It is vital that dedicated Christians in the congregation, by their actions, make clear to the disfellowshipped relative that his course of conduct is disapproved by the family. They must maintain a firm stand for righteous principles. The wrong doer has to realize that his status is completely changed, that his faithful Christian relatives thoroughly disapprove of his wicked course and show this disapproval by limiting contacts to only those which are unavoidable."

¹³¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Flag Salute, Voting, and Civilian Service," *Keep Yourself in God's Love* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2008), 207-208, accessed June 9, 2018, <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/books/gods-love>. "Is strict avoidance really necessary? Yes, for several reasons. First, it is a matter of loyalty to God and his Word. We obey Jehovah not only when it is convenient but also when doing so presents real challenges. Love for God moves us to obey all his commandments, recognizing that he is just and loving and that his laws promote the greatest good. (Isaiah 48:17; 1 John 5:3) Second, withdrawing from an unrepentant wrongdoer protects us and the rest of the congregation from spiritual and moral contamination and upholds the congregation's good name. (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7) Third, our Bible principles on this subject apply equally to those who disassociate themselves from the congregation. A firm stand for Bible principles may even benefit the disfellowshipped one. By supporting the decision of the judicial committee, we may touch the heart of a wrongdoer who thus far has failed to respond to the efforts of the elders to assist him. Losing precious fellowship with loved ones may help him to come 'to his senses', see the seriousness of his wrong, and take steps to return to Jehovah."

¹³² Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "We Should Not Neglect the House of Our God," *Watchtower*, December 15, 1965, 751, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Magazines/The%20Watchtower/1965%20The%20Watchtower.pdf>. "Disfellowshipping means the casting of a member out of God's household; and if one should remain in this disfellowshipped condition till he died, it would mean his everlasting destruction as a person who is rejected by God. Staying away from meetings leads in that very direction."

participate in the services until the elders feel like they are ready.¹³³ Generally, it is advised that ten years pass before they are allowed to give a public talk.¹³⁴

Statistically, 1 percent of all Witnesses will be disfellowshipped annually. That means that approximately 80,000 Witnesses are disfellowshipped annually. Of these two-thirds will never re-associate with the Watchtower Society.¹³⁵

Child Sexual Abuse

There is one glaring oversight in the rules regarding discipline and disfellowshipping. It is referred to as the two-witness rule. Individuals cannot be judged unless they confess to the behavior or there are two witnesses to the action. Therefore, a woman who is suspected of bad behavior and who will not lie, but confesses, is punished, while a person accused of sexual child abuse simply denies the allegation, and because there are not two witnesses, escapes punishment. The victim is without recourse because it is unlikely that there will ever be a second witness. Therefore, even if the victims report the abuse to the elders, they will have to stay in a congregation with their abuser. That is an incentive not to report abuse.

It is interesting that the Catholic Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses both have similar authoritarian, top down systems of government. Both also have high levels of child sexual abuse because the systems protect the priest or elders. Both groups also value the organization above the victim and silence the victims when possible. Ultimately, the motivation to preserve the organization protects the molester and damages the victim. It is hard to imagine how things could be so twisted.

Until recently, the Watchtower Society made no effort to report child sexual abuse to law enforcement since they considered it a moral issue, not a legal issue. This created a situation where thousands of child victims were sexually abused among the Witnesses. The

¹³³ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Continued Increase Calls for Simplification of Procedures," *Kingdom Ministry*, August 1986, 6, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Our%20Kingdom%20Ministry/1986%20Our%20Kingdom%20Ministry.pdf>. "A full year must have passed from the time a judicial reproof was given or since reinstatement following disfellowshipping before one could be considered for auxiliary or regular pioneer service."

¹³⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Question Box," *Kingdom Ministry*, December 1970, 4, accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.watchtowerwayback.org/jw-wb/English/Our%20Kingdom%20Ministry/1970%20Kingdom%20Ministry.pdf>. "If at one time a person had been disfellowshipped or disassociated, may he ever give a public talk? This might occur, but only after at least ten years from reinstatement. (For details see *The Watchtower*, 8/15/65, p. 497; *Lamp*, p. 121.)"

¹³⁵ "Disfellowshipping and Shunning," *JWfacts.com*. "For every 100 Jehovah's Witnesses more than 1 is disfellowshipped each year; over 80,000, with two out of every three never reinstated. Being disfellowshipped results in serious emotional side effects because: those that continue to believe Watchtower doctrine are told that whilst disfellowshipped they are condemned to everlasting destruction. Those who become unbelievers, with no intention of returning to the Watchtower Society, realize they are unlikely to freely associate with Witness family and friends for the remainder of their lives."

problem is so prevalent that the governments of different nations have launched hearings into the problem.

Barbara Anderson, a Jehovah's Witness who was a researcher at Bethel, uncovered records of extensive child molestation occurring in the Watchtower Society. She quickly discovered the society did not wish for this to become public nor did the society wish to change the policies that made this possible. Because of Barbara's unwillingness to be silent, she was disfellowshipped from the Jehovah's Witnesses. Undeterred, she did detailed research detailing Watchtower payouts to victims and ongoing cover-ups of sexual abuse. She has documented multiple court cases where the Watchtower Organization has been forced to make large payments for its complicity in child abuse.

This is an ongoing issue and the Watchtower continues to insist that the two-person rule will not be changed. It appears that the child sex abuse, prevalent among Jehovah's Witnesses and documented on multiple web sites, will continue to be an issue until the Watchtower decides to aggressively address the issue. See the footnote for sites that have information on this plague.¹³⁶

Dishonest or Poor Scholarship

Anyone that has carefully read the literature of the Watchtower Society is aware that it is sometimes misleading. In fact, some note that the Watchtower Society has obtained a reputation for scholastic dishonesty. They are known to pull Scripture out of context, use poor logic, misquote scholars, and quote the sources that they use selectively. As a result, it is necessary to examine the material that is advanced to support Watchtower claims carefully.

The goal of reading and studying is to uncover truth. Therefore, it would be expected that everyone engaged in serious discussion would avoid the use of Scripture taken out of context. Misleading statements should also be avoided. Ideally, beliefs should be presented simply and without distortion. While an individual cannot be responsible for the beliefs or statements of another person, each one is responsible for his own. Discussion and dialogue is not a team sport where the only goal is to win. The goal of discussion and dialogue must be to find the truth.

Raymond Franz (an ex-JW) commented about his scholarship during the time he wrote for the Watchtower. As he distanced himself from the Watchtower and reconsidered his writing, he came to believe that his preconceived beliefs had constrained his understanding. After he was disfellowshipped and had the time and resources to do unhurried Bible study, he found that his views changed.¹³⁷ He found that rather than defending an

¹³⁶ Barbara Anderson, *Barbara Andersons Watchtower Documents*, accessed August 15, 2018, <http://watchtowerdocuments.org>. This site provides links to multiple sites that report on sexual child abuse in the Watchtower. Barbara is a hero. She took a stand on behalf of good and faced down the Watchtower at great personal cost.

¹³⁷ Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 48. "But above all it was seeing the need always to let the context guide, always to let the Scriptures themselves control, that made the major difference. There was no overnight change of viewpoint but rather, over a period of years, a gradual deepening of appreciation of the crucial need to let God's Word speak for itself to the fullest extent possible."

established position at all cost, he had the freedom to evaluate his beliefs fully and to discuss theology openly.

In order to avoid being misled, it is necessary to look at the arguments of the Watchtower Society closely. We must avoid the tendency to quickly peruse material and instead learn to approach it in an unhurried manner.¹³⁸

When evaluating Scripture, it is important to check the translation being used. When viewing any passage, different translations should be compared to see if the translation being used presents the Scripture in the same way that the majority of translations do. If not, it is important to determine if the translation is based on good scholarship or if there are possible problems with the translation. Next, the Scripture should be read in context. The context provides meaning. The meaning should make sense not only for us, but it should also fit the context of those who first read the Scriptures. Unusual interpretations of ambiguous scriptures should not be the basis of doctrine. In addition, if the first century believers would not have recognized the interpretation and meaning of the text, it is certainly not correct.

When evaluating non-biblical literature, it is important to evaluate the statements to see if the position taken is logical and the arguments that are advanced support the conclusion. Truth claims need to be evaluated as to the authority they claim. Is the person making the claim knowledgeable? Is the person an expert? On what basis has the claim been made? Is the claim verifiable?

When evaluating footnotes, it is important to read the quotes in their original context. While it takes some effort to find the original sources, sometimes it will be discovered that the original quote makes an argument that is opposite that which the person using the quote is making. Quotes can become misleading when they are selectively used. Additionally, when an ellipse is noted, it is especially important to read the original because the ellipse indicates that something has been left out. Ostensibly, the omission is for brevity, in order to include only the pertinent information. However, sometimes the use of the ellipse eliminates material that contradicts the position the person who is quoting the material is making. When Scriptures are listed in the footnotes, they should be read to see if they actually support the argument. Often, they do not.

When scholars are quoted, it is important to determine their credentials and underlying philosophy. It is of little value to quote a scholar as debunking a doctrine if that scholar opposes all Christian theology. It is of much greater weight to quote a conservative theologian who is in disagreement with a specific doctrine. When a scholar is quoted, his

¹³⁸ Edmund Gruss, *Apostles of Denial* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), 255-257, accessed July 19, 2018, https://ia802605.us.archive.org/26/items/ApostlesOfDenial/1970_Apostles_Of_Denial. Gruss outlines several steps that need to be taken to avoid being duped by arguments based on bad or dishonest scholarship. It is important to understand these steps since misleading statements are commonly encountered.

quotation should be looked at in context. In the past the Watchtower Society has quoted conservative theologians out of context and been rebuked by those theologians.

When evaluating doctrines it should be noted whether the current position is different from when it was originally proposed. Historically how has it developed? Is the development rational? Additionally, is the doctrine clearly rooted in the Scripture, or is it the result of “new light”?

Every passage of interest should be read several times. It may be necessary to utilize lexicons, grammars, concordances, commentaries, and other Bible tools to arrive at a correct understanding. Always use due diligence when studying. Even small deviations over great distances can put traveler miles from their destination. The same is true with Scripture. Be sure that all Scripture is properly translated and understood.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The Watchtower Society and its followers are a virulent theological and sociological cult preying on individuals who are insecure, lonely, or unfulfilled. The group recruits individuals into the Watchtower organization and ultimately demands total obedience to its culture and teachings while discouraging independent thinking. The Watchtower Society is harmful to those who participate. It takes away self-autonomy, requires the refusal of certain lifesaving medical care, and in the past has forced its adherents to maintain political positions that have led to death and imprisonment.

More importantly, the Watchtower Society falsely claims that it is God's only organization on earth. As demonstrated in previous chapters, this claim is demonstrably false. Multiple lines of evidence lead to that conclusion. There is not one shred of evidence, other than their own self-serving proclamation, demonstrating that they are God's organization. Even the history of their being bestowed with this honor can be shown to be false by examining the dates used to arrive at 1914.

Bad Theology

Theologically the Watchtower Society is bankrupt. They use of the concept of "new light" to create doctrine out of thin air and then re-interpret Scripture to support those doctrines. The Watchtower Society has a different Jesus and a different Holy Spirit. They have created a works based system that claims that the death of the man, Jesus, was adequate only to bring them to a sinless state. They insist that their salvation will be the result of their work towards perfection during the millennium. Those who work diligently at serving Jehovah and being obedient to Jesus will ultimately be adopted by Jehovah into eternal life on earth. They also teach that the promises of the New Testament apply to only the elect 144,000 who will be located in heaven with God.

Their concept of "new light" is especially troublesome. The Watchtower Society places itself beyond criticism by claiming they have heard directly from God. Members cannot question the Watchtower Society's interpretation of Scripture or its development of doctrine. There is no biblical warrant for the position. The "new light" claim is bogus, and it always has been. It is a bit like a game of "let's pretend" with a friend, where only the friend gets to lead. The Watchtower cannot credibly be believed when it claims to hear from God on other peoples' behalf.

In addition, an examination of doctrinal changes shows that "new light" has not added knowledge to existing light, thereby cumulatively increasing knowledge. Instead, it has often contradicted and reversed previous "new light." It seems that "new light" is a means to manipulate and maintain control of the organization.

Because of "new light" the Jehovah's Witness have a history of many failed prophecies and changed theological positions. Why join a group that has not pronounced a single prophecy

right for more than a hundred years and which frequently changes doctrine? Their current record of accomplishment indicates that association with them will only lead to future disappointments.

The Watchtower Society is also prone to re-writing history to suit their own purposes. This is seen in the changing and reinterpreting of dates and prophetic events. They also ignore any science or history not supporting their doctrine. Their history books both whitewash events and conceal information. In addition, a lack of scholarship and integrity is evident in their literature and in the New World Translation.

Even though the teachings of the Watchtower Society are available back to their founding date, the Watchtower Society website only makes material available back to 1950. In order to find older materials, it is necessary to go to non-Jehovah's Witness sites, something Jehovah's Witnesses are strongly encouraged not to do. These non-Watchtower websites have available all the literature produced since 1879. This is useful because it allows the reader to see how much has changed since Russell was president. None of the literature produced by Russell or Rutherford is currently in use because of doctrinal changes.

Another theological issue is the Watchtower Society's excitement about the coming Armageddon⁵⁶⁰. The organizations joyfully looks forward to Armageddon as the beginning of the millennium and the end of all evil systems. However, since Armageddon will bring about the annihilation of 7.6 billion people and since those who perish at Armageddon will not be resurrected and have an opportunity to seek eternal life, how can Jehovah's Witnesses be so casual about people becoming Jehovah's Witnesses? It is common for them to say that they are fine with people believing whatever they want. They graciously say they are available if someone wants to know the truth, and they say they are not here to convince anyone of anything. Does that make sense? Where is the sorrow and the longing for people to be saved? This is not their finest moment; it appears they care little for the world outside their own group.

Damage to Members

The organization is harmful to the individual members. It does not allow any type of independent thinking. The Watchtower Society prefers and insists that a person believe a lie rather than protest an error. People are compelled to believe things they do not understand, or even worse, believe things that they suspect might be wrong. Those who protest or dare to read apostate literature or even Russell's original writings face possible disfellowshipping. In addition, even if a person could agree with all of today's theology, he risks being disfellowshipped in the future, as the current positions change and the leadership demands full allegiance to the new policies. The Watchtower Society is a totalitarian organization controlling all of life. Conformity is valued over truth.

⁵⁶⁰ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, "Armageddon—A Happy Beginning," Watchtower, December 1, 2005, 7, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2005881>. "The war of Armageddon will cleanse the earth of all corruption and wickedness and open the way for a righteous new system of things under the rule of God's Messianic Kingdom. (Isaiah 11:4, 5) Instead of being a frightening cataclysmic end, Armageddon will signal a happy beginning for righteous individuals, who will live forever on a paradise earth."

The organization has little concern for its own members. The policies it has enacted have caused grievous harm to its own members. The Watchtower Society is either hopelessly ignorant or deeply malevolent. The current blood transfusion policies have led to the deaths of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses, including many children. The two-witness rule has led to thousands of children being sexually molested. However, the organization will not change the two Witness rule and continues to be slow to report child abuse unless compelled. The Watchtower Society places the interest of the organization over that of the victims. Currently millions of dollars are being assessed against the Watchtower Society as the result of court cases they have lost. Shunning is also a major issue with Witness wellbeing. The practice of shunning has torn apart families, caused tremendous psychological suffering and led to suicides. All these things indicate that the Watchtower Organization is irreparably flawed and there is no indication that future decisions by the Watchtower will not be equally damaging.

The Watchtower Society has a totalitarian hold on Jehovah's Witnesses. If a person was baptized and later wanted to leave, the organization would disfellowship that person. None of the people that had previously loved the person would ever acknowledge their existence again. Even if they repented and came back, they would still endure shunning until they had proved their repentance. That generally takes a period of a year. The unwillingness to allow individuals the right to be autonomous individuals, making their own decisions, is deeply troubling.

It is also true that the individual Jehovah's Witnesses are encouraged to stand out from others by being faithful Jehovah's Witnesses. They are not to be worldly. While that sounds very Christian, the Jehovah's Witnesses are being asked to assume a victim's role. They are compelled to act in socially awkward ways and are sometimes persecuted by those outside the group for their actions. They may not participate in holidays or birthdays. They cannot salute the flag; they cannot belong to the military. They should not have non-Witness friends. All this helps to create isolation and calls attention to the group, both of which are desired results. As a result, they feel they must isolate themselves from the evils of society and avoid non-witness family and non-witness friends.

Due to social and theological conditioning, there is a failure of individual Witnesses to engage seriously in dialogue and discussion. This makes it difficult to communicate with the Witnesses and the Watchtower Society. While they appear to prey on those who do not have biblical knowledge, they avoid people who can discuss theology and history. Individual Witnesses are not encouraged to search for truth by the Watchtower Society. The Watchtower has done their studying for them and then makes it available in the literature.

It is useful to think about the Jehovah's Witnesses in the context of a team sport. The Witnesses have their position and their team. Their goal is to defend their team at all cost, while destroying or minimizing opposing arguments. Unfortunately, for Jehovah's Witnesses, they do not see discussion as a search for truth. Instead it is a competition to beat the opponent. Truth is sacrificed for the sake of the organization. That is never appropriate. Truth is far too important to be sacrificed. Healthy individuals are created to pursue for truth. In fact, Scripture indicates that God is truth.

