

Historical Idealism and Jehovah's Witnesses

A critical analysis of how they present their history

Thomas Daniels

The religious movement known today as Jehovah's Witnesses had its start in the 1870's.¹ Although this was not particularly long ago when compared to the history of many other religious groups, it is still far enough in the past that those interested in the history of this organization are entirely dependant upon the printed page today.

Jehovah's Witnesses are somewhat unique in this respect inasmuch as there is a wealth of such material available. As the publishing entity for Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society has from its inception, printed and distributed prodigious quantities of literature,² much of which is still fairly accessible today. This includes two official history books as well as several minor treatments of church history over the last fifty years.³

For Jehovah's Witnesses, their past is important not just for its own sake, but because it carries an important doctrinal significance. It is their belief that they as an organization were either directly involved with or in some cases actually the target of a number of biblical prophecies and prophetic parallels realized during the 20th century.⁴ Therefore accuracy in the presentation of the past would ostensibly be very important to them, as differences between what is believed to have happened and what actually did happen could potentially carry a certain and perhaps severe doctrinal cost.

In this, Jehovah's Witnesses are not alone. To use another contemporary religious organization as an example, a charge commonly leveled by critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is that the church attempts to make itself more attractive to potential converts through the deliberate presentation of an idealized history. To cite one of many examples, it is alleged that there are substantial differences between Joseph Smith's handwritten account of his first vision and the version that is actually presented to the public today.⁵ While as a general rule it would be unrealistic to expect the official history of any religion to perfectly match its period literature, especially when it comes to details that may be subjective, significant discrepancies in regard to material details would be clearly indicative of something amiss. Were the aforementioned charge true, it would place the leadership of the LDS church in a very unenviable position, as their official history would differ materially from what can be established through the church's own documents.

¹ *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom* 1993, p. 42

² *Ibid* p. 348

³ Two official histories produced by the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society are *Jehovah's Witnesses In The Divine Purpose* (1959) and *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom* (1993) Significant other works include the *1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* and *The Watchtower* of 1955 and 1956

⁴ Examples would include Matthew 24:14-30, 45-51; 25:1-12; Revelation 7:4-10; 8; 12:5, 6; Isaiah 2:2-3; and Zechariah 8:23

⁵ Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World Of Mormonism*, Moody Press, 1981, p. 151

Regardless of the motives or reasons why it is done, the deliberate presentation of a fictionalized history would be dishonest. Commenting on the importance of honesty in religious organizations, the JW publication *Is This Life All There Is?* stated on page 46:

Knowing these things, what will you do? It is obvious that the true God, who is himself “the God of truth” and who hates lies, will not look with favor on persons who cling to organizations that teach falsehood. (Psalm 31:5; Proverbs 6:16-19; Revelation 21:8) And, really, would you want to be even associated with a religion that had not been honest with you?

For any thinking member of the JW faith, what did or did not happen in the late 19th and early 20th centuries cannot simply be dismissed as irrelevant. Discrepancies between the period literature and what is presented to potential converts today on material details should be a cause for serious concern. This paper will through a thorough comparison between current and past publications analyze this question, specifically in regard to the eschatology taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses .

Although the idea that the Second Coming of Christ is both imminent and in some cryptic way, predicted in Scripture significantly predates the 19th century, the interpretive elements upon which Jehovah’s Witnesses base their version of this belief have their roots in the early 1800’s. One individual that is of some interest in this regard is John Aquila Brown, who in the year 1823 wrote a two volume work entitled *The Even-Tide; or, Last Triumph of the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. Brown predicted that “The full glory of the kingdom of Israel shall be perfected” based upon a period of 2520 years.⁶ This is the first known record of an expositor claiming that the “seven times” of Nebuchadnezzar were a prophetic 2,520 year period. There is no record that Brown either sought or attained any significant following, but his ideas and methods were to greatly influence others for years to come.

Around 1818, another gentleman by the name of William Miller became convinced that he could calculate the date for Christ’s return. Miller initially based his calculation upon the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. He believed that this period of days was prophetic inasmuch as it actually stood for a corresponding number of years that should be counted from 457 BC., which he believed to be the year when Persian king Artaxerxes issued the order to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Eventually Miller’s scriptural reckoning was expanded to fifteen separate proofs that Christ’s return and the start of the millennium or 7th “day” would occur sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. These included such things as counting 2520 years from the year 677 BC, which he believed to be the year when Jerusalem fell, and an intricate adaptation of the Jewish Jubilee cycle, that involved counting 2450 years from 607 BC, which he believed to be the last year of Josiah’s reign. Miller recorded his interpretation in a sixty-four page pamphlet published in 1833 entitled *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ About the Year AD 1843*.

⁶ John Aquila Brown, *The Even Tide* Volume I, 1823, pp. 130-131

Although Miller never intended to form a new sect, this seems to have been the unavoidable consequence of the sensationalistic nature of his teachings. Miller traveled America preaching about Christ's return and the time of the end. His message spread across most Protestant denominational lines and he soon came to have a large following made of up Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. These so-called "Millerites" were labeled by religious watchers of the day as "Adventists." As 1843 approached Adventists became increasingly divisive and antagonistic towards fellow Christians who would not join their movement. They began to publicly denounce all churches that rejected Miller's message, labeling them as "Babylon the Great," a term drawn from the fourteenth and seventeenth chapters of Revelation.

Initially, Miller had been somewhat vague about the exact date of Christ's Second Coming, simply stating that it would occur "about 1843." This was to change in January of 1843 when Miller stated that Christ would return sometime between March of 1843 and March of 1844. However the year 1843 closed uneventfully. Although the Millerites were resolute in the early weeks of 1844, when March had passed without anything having happened, Miller became very despondent and even admitted publicly that a mistake had been made. It was at this point where Samuel S. Snow, one of Miller's followers suggested that based upon the Jewish calendar, Christ should be expected in the fall of 1844 rather than the spring as Miller had thought. Although this new date was looked forward to with even greater anticipation than the previous one, October 22, 1844 would become known in religious history as the "Great Disappointment." After the second failure of Miller's eschatology, the movement split into several sects. A few of the prominent leaders within the Millerite movement however, expressing what has become a familiar justification among end-times speculators, contended that what had been predicted was the "wrong thing at the right time." What this means is that they "spiritualized" the prediction, teaching that Christ had in fact arrived right on schedule except that instead of descending to earth, he had entered into the most holy of the *heavenly* temple.⁷ Since this was an invisible spiritual event, it was impossible for any human to either prove or disprove and so became a matter of faith. Those that accepted this explanation eventually came to be known as Seventh Day Adventists.

Nelson H. Barbour, who had joined the Millerite movement in 1843 at the age of 19, did not accept this explanation. In Barbour's own words, he "...lost his religion completely after the Great Disappointment."⁸ He subsequently became a miner during the Australian gold rush and did not return home until some years later in 1859. It was during his voyage home that Barbour discovered what he believed to be the critical error in Miller's reckoning. While Miller had started his count of the 1260, 1290, and 1335 "year days" of Revelation 11 and Daniel 12 at different points in the past, Barbour decided that all three periods should be counted from a common starting point --- 538 CE. This would move the end point for the 1335 "year days" and the time for Christ's arrival forward from 1843 to 1873. Upon his arrival in London, Barbour's subsequent research indicated that 1872 would mark 6000 years since man's creation. This he saw as a remarkable confirmation of the validity of his approach. Soon an eschatological picture every bit as complex as Miller's emerged based upon additional concepts such as "Israel's double," the "Jubilee cycle," "Parallel dispensations" and Brown's 2520 years derived from the seven times of Daniel chapter four. Barbour located the latter between the years 606 BC and 1914 AD.

⁷ P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Blessings Of The Disappointment*, Adventists Affirm, vol. 8, no. 2, Autumn 1994

⁸ Nelson H. Barbour, *Evidences for the Coming of the Lord in 1873; or the Midnight Cry*, 1871, p. 32

Barbour published his findings in both the *World's Crises* and the *Advent Christian Times*, the two leading papers of the Advent Christian Association. In 1873, he started a monthly of his own titled *The Midnight Cry and Herald of the Morning*. What followed is in some ways similar to the earlier events surrounding the Millerite movement. When the year 1873 ended with no visible confirmation, the date was extended to the fall of 1874. When that year too came and went, Barbour and his followers experienced great concern. It was at this point that B. W. Keith, a reader of *The Midnight Cry* noticed that Benjamin Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*, an interlinear translation of J. J. Griesbach's recension of the New Testament renders the Greek word *παρουσία* (Parousia) as "presence." Based upon this rendering, he suggested that perhaps Christ really had come in fall of 1874 after all, and that this had been an *invisible* event. Barbour, who was unwilling to abandon his intricate chronology found this solution attractive.⁹ Once again it was a case of expecting the "wrong thing at the right time."

Barbour subsequently published specific details as to the end of the Gentile Times in his monthly periodical, which now carried the abbreviated title *Herald Of The Morning*. However, unlike John Aquila Brown, he failed to account for the lack of a "zero year" between 1 BC and 1 AD.

I believe that though the gospel dispensation will end in 1878, the Jews will not be restored to Palestine, until 1881; and that the "times of the Gentiles," viz. their seven prophetic times, of 2520, or twice 1260 years, which began where God gave all, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, 608 B. C.; do not end until A. D. 1914; or 40 years from this.

Herald Of The Morning September, 1875 p. 52

Charles Taze Russell, who would later found the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, first came into contact with Barbour's research in January of 1876. Although Russell had been intrigued by some aspects of Adventism since about 1869, he had previously rejected Adventist chronology and date setting.¹⁰ However he was so impressed with Barbour's work that he paid his expenses to come to Philadelphia to meet with him. Russell would later describe this meeting in the July 15, 1906 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower*:

Anxious to learn, from any quarter, whatever God had to teach, I at once wrote to Mr. Barbour, informing him of my harmony on other points and desiring to know particularly why, and upon what Scriptural evidences, he held that Christ's *presence* and the harvesting of the Gospel age dated from the Autumn of 1874.

[Reprints p. 3822]

⁹ Charles Taze Russell, *Harvest Gatherings And Siftings*, The Watch Tower; July 15, 1906, p. 230

¹⁰ *Ibid*

Russell explained that Barbour's scriptural evidence had convinced him of the reality of Christ's invisible presence and then continues:

I determined to curtail my business cares and give my time as well as means to the great harvest work. Accordingly, I sent Mr. Barbour back to his home, with money and instructions to prepare in concise book-form the good tidings so far as then understood, including the time features, while I closed out my Philadelphia business preparatory to engaging in the work, as I afterward did, traveling and preaching.

The little book of 196 pages thus prepared was entitled *The Three Worlds*; and as I was enabled to give some time and thought to its preparation it was issued by us both jointly, both names appearing on its title page—though it was mainly written by Mr. Barbour. While it was not the first book to teach a measure of restitution, nor the first to treat upon time-prophecy, it was, we believe, the first to *combine* the idea of restitution with time-prophecy. From the sale of this book and from my purse, our traveling expenses, etc., were met. After a time I conceived the idea of adding another harvest laborer and sent for Mr. Paton, who promptly responded and whose traveling expenses were met in the same manner.

[Reprints p. 3822]

The resultant work, *Three Worlds And The Harvest Of This World* bore the names of both men as publishers. *Three Worlds* explained in extremely lengthy and at times, tentative terms that 1874 and the commencement of Christ's invisible presence had marked the start of a forty-year "time of trouble" prior to the millennium.

Another publication produced during the brief partnership between Russell and Barbour was a 64 page booklet written entirely by Russell entitled, *The Object And Manner Of Our Lord's Return* which is the first known written record of Russell's belief in an invisible *Parousia*. This was also published in the year 1877.

The partnership between Russell and Barbour ended just a year later when the latter rejected the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.¹¹ Russell however retained the elaborate chronology, prophetic speculation and eschatology outlined in *Three Worlds* largely intact throughout the rest of his life. After the two parted company, he commenced publication of a monthly of his own entitled *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, the first issue of which appeared in July of 1879. As the title suggests, the purpose of this periodical in part, was to announce the fact that unknown to the vast majority of humanity, the Second Advent of Christ was underway, having commenced in 1874.

ZION'S WATCH TOWER

HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

"Watchman, What of the Night?" "The Morning Cometh."—Isaiah xxi. 11.

Vol. I

JULY, 1879

No. 1

ZION'S WATCH TOWER

AND
HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Published Monthly, 101 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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TERMS 50 Cents per Year
In Advance—Includes Postage

All communications should be addressed to "Zion's Watch Tower," as above, and drafts, money orders, etc., made payable to the Editor.

PROSPECTUS

This is the first number of the first volume of "Zion's Watch Tower," and it may not be amiss to state the object of its publication.

That we are living "in the last days"—"the day of the Lord"—"the end" of the Gospel age, and consequently, in the dawn of the "new" age, are facts not only discernible by the close student of the Word, led by the spirit, but the *outward* signs recognizable by the *world* bear the same testimony, and we are desirous that the "household of faith" be fully awake to the fact, that—

"We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time;
In an age on ages telling
To be living is sublime."

And not alone to help awaken, but to assist them to "put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day;" and, besides all this, that giving all diligence, they add to their faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, self control, [temperance,] brotherly kindness, charity; when, as a result of these indwelling and flourishing graces, they shall be God-like [godly].

But, recognizing the beauty and necessity of these *adornments* of the spiritual man, they fail not to recognize that the merit toward God lies not in these moral virtues, but in *Christ's perfect sacrifice*, and though adorned by all these gems of character, *we* could not be recognized as God's children now, nor permitted ever to enter His presence without *the robe of Christ's righteousness*, the "wedding garment" necessary to our participation in "the marriage of the Lamb."
Christians to whom an apology would be needed for directing

attention to these things, should blush and be ashamed. Everything desirable, hopeful and precious stands closely and ever connected with them. They embrace nearly all the great motives to faith, watchfulness, obedience, holiness.

If God has given us a revelation, and tells us that it is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work, where do so many Christians who profess to accept that Word of God as their rule and guide, get liberty to ignore more than one-half of it, thereby virtually saying it is *unprofitable*? When God has given us "a sure word of prophecy wherunto we do well to take heed," and when "the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done," shall those servants feel under no obligation to seek to understand those heavenly messages?

Should they heed worldly men and a worldly church who deem it pious and wise not to bother with these things, who would have us put them aside as empty fables and curious stories, and strange imagery, which could only unsettle our minds and interfere with Christian work; or shall we heed God who declares "these sayings faithful and true" and says: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein!" Surely He knows what is best calculated to inspire "a zeal according to knowledge," and what is necessary that we "be not soon shaken in mind."

"To him that hath an ear to hear what the spirit saith unto the churches," ZION'S WATCH TOWER hopes to give assistance and encouragement. It is in bondage to no man, no party and to no creed but the Bible; yet in the bonds of love and sympathy to "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in truth and sincerity." It aims to represent "the chaste virgins," the prospective "Bride of Christ," and with them acknowledges only one master and head—Christ Jesus.

As its name indicates, it aims to be the lookout from whence matters of interest and profit may be announced to the "little flock," and as the "*Herald of Christ's Presence*," to give the "meat in due season" to the "household of faith."

It issues monthly, and if you desire its visit to your home, address at once as per notice on this page. If you have a neighbor or friend who you think would be interested in or benefited by its instructions, you might call it to their attention; thus preaching the Word and doing good unto all men as you have opportunity.

The terms, fifty cents a year, (postage paid,) are moderate; but to all interested and desirous of having it, who cannot afford to pay, we will *gladly send it free*, but you must ask that ye may receive.

IN RE "THE LAST TRUMP"

BRO. H. B. RICE, editor and publisher of *The Last Trump*, has been obliged by circumstances beyond his control to suspend its publication. Knowing that such a course was probable, we two months ago proposed to Bro. Rice that we would supply THE WATCH TOWER to his subscribers, instead of *The Trump*, up to the close of their subscriptions, and we invited him to speak to his old subscribers, and others of the *body of Christ*, through ZION'S WATCH TOWER.

He has accepted both propositions, sent the list of subscribers, and in an open letter to them says, "I will endeavor to contribute something to THE WATCH TOWER every month," &c.

As we are much crowded, we have published this letter as a *supplement*, and sent it to the subscribers of *The Last Trump*.

[Reprints p. 3]

¹¹ Charles Taze Russell, *Harvest Gatherings And Siftings* The Watch Tower; July 15, 1906, p. 229 See also Nelson H. Barbour, *The Herald Of The Morning*, August 1877

The first issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* plainly stated that the object of its publication was to make known the fact that mankind was living in the "last days" and the end of the "Gospel age."

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[Reprints p. 3]

The May 1881 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* on page 5 emphasized the fact that the Bible Students were not looking forward to Christ's return as a future event:

We would like to correct this misapprehension once for all, by stating that we do not expect Jesus to come this year, nor any other year, for we believe that all *time* prophecies (bearing upon Jesus' coming) ended at and before the fall of 1874, and that *He came there*, and the second advent is now in progress and will continue during the entire Millennial age. We believe that his presence will be *revealed* to the *eyes of men's understandings* gradually during this "Day of the Lord," (forty years—from 1874 to 1914,) as it now is to ours; except that we, discern it through the word of prophecy revealed by the Spirit, and they will recognize his presence by His judgment upon Nominal Zion, and the World—for the Father "hath committed all *judgment* unto the Son."

[Reprints p. 224]

The January 15, 1892 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* on page 19 spoke of the events which were expected to occur in the coming years:

The Scriptures give unmistakable testimony to those who have full faith in its records, that there is a great time of trouble ahead of the present comparative calm in the world—a trouble which will embroil all nations, overthrow all existing institutions, civil, social and religious, bring about a universal reign of anarchy and terror, and prostrate humanity in the very dust of despair, thus to make them ready to appreciate the power that will bring order out of that confusion and institute the new rule of righteousness. All this, the Scriptures show us, is to come to pass before the year 1915 (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II., Chapter IV.)—that is, within the next twenty-three years. And in view of these calamities the Lord's consecrated ones are told not to be alarmed, knowing what the grand outcome is to be.

[Reprints p. 1354]

The same issue on page 21 again stressed the fact that Mankind was living in the short time between Christ's invisible *Parousia* and his visible advent, reiterating the fact that everything would be over with by October of 1914:

While it was an agreeable surprise to us (in view of the contrary sensational accounts so often published) to find the situation in Europe as we here describe it—in harmony with what the Scriptures had led us to expect—yet so great is our confidence in the Word of God and in the light of present truth shining upon it, that we could not have doubted its testimony whatever had been the appearances. The date of the close of that "battle" is definitely marked in Scripture as October, 1914. It is already in progress, its beginning dating from October, 1874. Thus far it has been chiefly a battle of words and a time of organizing forces—capital, labor, armies and secret societies.

[Reprints p. 1355]

The July 15, 1894 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* on page 224 explained the uniqueness of the times:

No one can be indifferent to the phenomenal times in which we are living; for, although the rush and crush of business and pleasure continue, and even increasingly, there is, deep down in men's hearts, even at the theaters and sporting grounds, a feeling of unrest which cannot be better described than by the prophetic words of our Master: "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after [toward] those things coming upon the earth."

We who know *what* is coming are relieved from anxiety; for, although we see near us a dark night of intense trouble, such as has not been since there was a nation, we see also the glorious beyond—the Millennial day, which "lights the gloom with healing ray." We can wait patiently, although not without interest and deep concern, for the development of God's great plan of the ages, now so near its consummation.

It is interesting to look back and note the accuracy of the fulfillment of God's Word, so that our hearts may be established with the greater confidence respecting the future—the things coming upon the earth. For instance, as we look back and note that the Scriptures marked 1873 as the end of six thousand years from Adam to the beginning of the seventh thousand, and the fall of 1874 as the beginning of the forty-year harvest of the Gospel age and day of wrath for the overthrow of all the institutions of "this present evil world [or order of affairs],"* we can see that *facts* have well borne out those predictions of Scripture. We see that the present world-wide distress had its beginning there; that it has been progressing with increasing momentum every year since; and that, as the Apostle Paul declared it would be, so it has been, and so it is—"As travail upon a woman with child." Each spasm of pain is more intense; and so it evidently will continue to be until the death of the present order of things and the birth of the new.

[Reprints p. 1675]

The same issue on page 266 reiterated that 1914 was the date for the *end* rather than the *beginning* of the "time of trouble," confidently stating that in the author's opinion, these were "God's dates":

CAN IT BE DELAYED UNTIL 1914?

Seventeen years ago people said, concerning the time features presented in *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, They seem reasonable in many respects, but surely no such radical changes could occur between now and the close of 1914: if you had proved that they would come about in a century or two, it would seem much more probable.

What changes have since occurred, and what velocity is gained daily?

"The old is quickly passing and the new is coming in."

Now, in view of recent labor troubles and threatened an-

archy, our readers are writing to know if there may not be a mistake in the 1914 date. They say that they do not see how present conditions can hold out so long under the strain.

We see no reason for changing the figures—nor could we change them if we would. They are, we believe, God's dates, not ours. But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the *beginning*, but for the *end* of the time of trouble. We see no reason for changing from our opinion expressed in the view presented in the *WATCH TOWER* of January 15, '92. We advise that it be read again.

The March 15, 1902 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* on page 88 questioned whether any Bible student who at this point was ignorant of this important event was properly awake to the use of his privileges and opportunities:

To our understanding there are strong proofs that our Lord's *parousia* began in the Autumn of 1874. We have seen nothing with our natural eyes; only with the eyes of the understanding, only in the light of "the more sure word of prophecy," do we know this, which we sincerely believe and affirm, and which is important news to all who claim to be watchers. The fact that any watcher should have remained in ignorance of this important event for now more than twenty-seven years, would seem of itself to be an indication that he had not been properly awake to the use of his privileges and opportunities—that he had not been sufficiently watchful of the sure word of prophecy to which he was instructed to take heed; and that *therefore* he had been left at least partially ignorant of the important things transpiring throughout the world during these years.

[Reprints p. 2676]

Between the years 1886 and 1904, Russell wrote and published six volumes in a series of books originally known as *Millennial Dawn* and in printings subsequent to 1904 as *Studies in the Scriptures*. These books systematically described Russell's views in considerable detail. The first volume, originally titled *The Plan Of The Ages* was intended to give a broad overview of God's plan by defining terms as basic and fundamental to the discussion as the Lord's return, the day of judgement, the kingdom of God, etc. On page 288, Russell explained that when fully set up, there would be two parts or "phases" to this kingdom:

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

While it is true, as stated by our Lord, that the Kingdom of God *cometh not*—does not make its first appearance—with outward show, in due time it is to be made manifest to all by outward, visible and unmistakable signs. When fully set up, the Kingdom of God will be of two parts, a spiritual or heavenly phase and an earthly or human phase. The spiritual will always be invisible to men, as those composing it will be of the divine, spiritual nature, which no man hath seen nor can see (1 Tim. 6: 16; John 1: 18); yet its presence and power will be mightily manifested, chiefly through its human representatives, who will constitute the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God

The Divine Plan Of The Ages p. 288 (1916 edition)

It can be seen then that Russell believed that the earth served an important purpose in the Divine plan and accordingly, the Kingdom of God would exist on earth as well as in heaven.

Russell held a very clearly defined view of where he was in the stream of time and in the volumes that followed, this was amplified upon at length. Russell for example, believed that he was living in the closing days of the "Time of the End." The third volume in the Millennial Dawn series, *Thy Kingdom Come* (1891) explained on page 23 what he understood this term to mean:

STUDY II

"THE TIME OF THE END," OR "DAY OF HIS PREPARATION" —DANIEL XI—

THE TIME OF THE END—ITS COMMENCEMENT, A.D. 1799—ITS CLOSE, A.D. 1914—WHAT IS TO BE PREPARED, AND THE OBJECT—THE WORLD'S HISTORY PROPHETICALLY TRACED THROUGH ITS CHIEF RULERS—FROM B.C. 405 TO THIS DAY OF PREPARATION—THE BEGINNING OF THE TIME OF THE END DEFINITELY MARKED, YET WITHOUT NAMES OR DATES.

THE "Time of the End," a period of one hundred and fifteen (115) years, from A.D. 1799 to A.D. 1914,¹ is particularly marked in the Scriptures. "The Day of His Preparation" is another name given to the same period, because in it a general increase of knowledge, resulting in discoveries, inventions, etc., paves the way to the coming Millennium of favor, making ready the mechanical devices which will economize labor, and provide the world in general with time and conveniences, which under Christ's reign of righteousness will be a blessing to all and aid in filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. And it is a day or period of preparation in another sense also; for by the increase of knowledge among the masses, giving to all a taste of liberty and luxury, before Christ's rule is established to rightly regulate the world, these blessings will gradually become agencies of class-power and will result in the uprising of the masses and the overthrow of corporative Trusts, etc., with which will fall also all the present dominions of earth, civil and ecclesiastical. And thus the present is

¹See Author's Foreword (1916), p. i.

Pages 304 and 305 explained that the seventh millennium had begun in 1873; that Christ's Second Advent had begun in 1874; and that the setting up of the kingdom had commenced in 1878:

While in nominal Zion, as the Prophet Isaiah predicted, the sinners who have forgotten or failed to keep their covenant with the Lord are afraid of the dark clouds that obscure the brightness of his face, and fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites, true Zion with eyes of faith sees the King in his beauty, and beholds the land that is yet far off—the land of corn and wine, the glorious inheritance into which this mighty King and great Deliverer has come to lead the fallen race—a land wherein the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be one whose iniquity is forgiven.—Isa. 33:14, 17, 24.

That glorious land, that Paradise restored, we now clearly discern beyond the vista of a thousand years; and with joy and singing, under the leadership of this greater Prophet than Moses, who is even now in our midst, shall the triumphant hosts of the redeemed be led along the grand highway of holiness toward that fair land of rest from sin and death and every evil thing.

“O, sing unto the Lord, ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger [which must necessarily be manifested in the great trouble that will soon overwhelm the world] endureth but a moment. In his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” And soon the chastened and converted world shall catch the strain of praise and sing, “Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee and never be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever.”—Psa. 30:4, 5, 11, 12.

Now call to mind the steps, well founded in the “sure word of prophecy,” by which we have come to this heart-cheering and soul-stirring knowledge. Behind us are all the prophetic landmarks which point to this time as the

most wonderful period in all the history of the world. They have shown us that since 1873 we have been living in the seventh millennium; that the lease of Gentile dominion, “The Times of the Gentiles,” will expire with the year 1914; and that the advent of him whose right it is to take the dominion was due in 1874. They have shown us that in the days of these Gentile kings, before their lease of power expires, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom, and that the setting up of that Kingdom has actually been in progress since the year 1878; that there the resurrection of all the dead in Christ was due; and that therefore, since that date, not only is our Lord and Head invisibly present in the world, but all these holy messengers are also with him. And observe, further, that this date of the resurrection of the dead in Christ parallels the date of the resurrection of the Head of the body. Our Lord's resurrection occurred three and a half years after his advent as the Messiah, in A. D. 29; and the resurrection of his body, the Church, we have seen, was due in the year 1878, three and a half years after his second advent, in October 1874.

Prophecy has also indicated the manner of our Lord's return, so that, though he is present, we should not expect to see either him or the risen saints, who are now in his likeness, except by the eye of faith—faith in the “sure word of prophecy;” though we have learned that those who now constitute “the feet of Christ” shall also shortly be changed to the same glorious likeness. They shall then be spirit beings, like him, Christ, and like all the risen saints who are now with him, and will in due time see him *as he is*. (1 John 3:2.) We have also seen that the coming of the foretold Elias and of the predicted Man of Sin, which were to precede his advent, are accomplished facts.

We have marked, too, the fixed dates to which the Prophet Daniel calls attention. The 2,300 days point to 1846 as

On pages 306 and 307, the significance of the dates was again emphasized:

the time when God's sanctuary would be cleansed of the defiling errors and principles of Papacy; and we have noted the cleansing there accomplished. We have noted the fulfilment of the 1,260 days, or the time, times and half a time, of Papacy's power to persecute, and the beginning there, in 1799, of the Time of the End. We have seen how the 1,290 days marked the beginning of an understanding of the mysteries of prophecy in the year 1829, culminating in the great movement of 1844 known as the Second-Advent movement, when, according to the Lord's prediction, the wise virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom, thirty years prior to his actual coming. We have seen the fulfilment of the predicted tarrying; and for fifteen years the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom!" has gone forth. We have marked with special delight the 1,335 days, pointing, as they do, to 1874 as the exact date of our Lord's return; and we have since that time experienced the very blessedness promised—through the clearer unfoldings of the wonderful mysteries of the divine plan.

Then we have seen the great harvest work, in its appointed time and order, beginning in the autumn of the year 1874, gradually and silently, but rapidly, progressing. We have marked the bundling and binding of the tares, and the gathering of the wheat. And what blessing and joy come to us in the assurance that since the summer of 1878, when the King took his great power and began his reign by the resurrection of those who slept in Jesus, it is no longer needful that his members should "sleep" and wait for glory, but that for each the moment of finishing his course in death is the moment of the joyful "change" to the full perfection of the divine nature and likeness. Indeed, "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth" forever. They rest from their *labors*, but their works continue; for the work on the other side the veil is the same

work in which all the overcomers are engaged on this side the veil; except that, with those who have entered into the glory of the divine nature, the work is no longer laborious, and no longer costs fatiguing sacrifice.

In addition to all this, we see the beginnings of the return of divine favor to fleshly Israel already manifested in the beginning of a turning away of their blindness and prejudice against Christ Jesus, in the opening up of the land of promise and their expulsion from other lands, and also in the returning fruitfulness of Palestine itself. These outward signs alone, aside from all prophetic dates and times, would be strong evidences that we are living in the close of the age appointed for the selection of the Church or Kingdom class, because of the positive assurance of the Scriptures that their blindness and cast-off condition would continue only until the members of the body of Christ had been selected.


Standing thus, as we do, at this late date in the Time of the End, and in the very midst of the harvest of the age, and looking forward for the settlement of all the complicated questions of these feverish times within the brief space of the next twenty-three years, how solemn and intense are the feelings of those who have faith in the sure word of prophecy. The momentous and perplexing questions which will culminate in the great trouble, of which Daniel forewarns us, are now agitating the public mind, and are fast approaching the terrible crisis. But this great crisis of the "day of vengeance" and "wrath" upon the nations we must leave for consideration in the succeeding volume, as the subject is too large and too important for our present space. But let us rejoice in the fact that beyond the trouble, and even beyond the helpful discipline of the reign of Christ, we see the glorious land of rest, the blessed and eternal inheritance of a redeemed and restored race.

(1905 edition)

Volume II, *The Time Is At Hand* (1889) on pages 76, 77 & 78 specifically listed seven items due to occur before the year 1914

become corrupt, vain and idolatrous, in proportion as they had attained national distinction. This was in the days of King Zedekiah; and the divine decree was expressed in the words of the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21: 24-27.

This overturning of the crown, or dominion, has been accomplished. It was first turned over to Babylon, then to Medo-Persia, then to Grecia, and then to Rome. The character of these empires, as recorded on the pages of history, we have found to agree perfectly with the prophetic descriptions, as portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image and in Daniel's vision of the four beasts. This overturned condition of Israel's dominion was to continue until Christ, the rightful heir to the throne of Israel and all the earth, who purchased it with his own precious blood, would come and take control. His, as we have seen, will be the fifth universal empire of earth, the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens. But unlike the preceding four dominions which were permitted for an appointed time, and therefore recognized, though not approvingly, this one will be approved and established by God, as his representative in the earth. It will be God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jehovah's Anointed. It will be established gradually, during a great time of trouble with which the Gospel age will close, and in the midst of which present dominions shall be utterly consumed, passing away amid great confusion.

 In this chapter we present the Bible evidence proving that the full end of the times of the Gentiles, *i. e.*, the full end of their lease of dominion, will be reached in A. D.

1914; and that that date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men. And be it observed, that if this is shown to be a fact firmly established by the Scriptures, it will prove:—

Firstly, That at that date the Kingdom of God, for which our Lord taught us to pray, saying, "Thy Kingdom come," will have obtained full, universal control, and that it will then be "set up," or firmly established, in the earth.

Secondly, It will prove that he whose right it is thus to take the dominion will then be present as earth's new Ruler; and not only so, but it will also prove that he will be present for a considerable period before that date; because the overthrow of these Gentile governments is directly caused by his dashing them to pieces as a potter's vessel (Psa. 2: 9; Rev. 2: 27), and establishing in their stead his own righteous government.

Thirdly, It will prove that some time before the end of A. D. 1914 the last member of the divinely recognized Church of Christ, the "royal priesthood," "the body of Christ," will be glorified with the Head; because every member is to reign with Christ, being a joint-heir with him of the Kingdom, and it cannot be fully "set up" without every member.

Fourthly, It will prove that from that time forward Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down of the Gentiles, but shall arise from the dust of divine disfavor, to honor; because the "Times of the Gentiles" will be fulfilled or completed.

Fifthly, It will prove that by that date, or sooner, Israel's blindness will begin to be turned away; because their "blindness in part" was to continue only "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11: 25), or, in other words, until the full number from among the Gentiles, who are to be members of the body or bride of Christ, would be fully selected.

Sixthly, It will prove that the great "time of trouble such

(1907 edition)

as never was since there was a nation," will reach its culmination in a world-wide reign of anarchy; and then men will learn to be still, and to know that Jehovah is God and that he will be exalted in the earth. (Psa. 46:10.) The condition of things spoken of in symbolic language as raging waves of the sea, melting earth, falling mountains and burning heavens will then pass away, and the "new heavens and new earth" with their peaceful blessings will begin to be recognized by trouble-tossed humanity. But the Lord's Anointed and his rightful and righteous authority will first be recognized by a company of God's children while passing through the great tribulation—the class represented by *m* and *t* on the Chart of the Ages (see also pages 235 to 239, VOL. I.); afterward, just at its close, by fleshly Israel; and ultimately by mankind in general.

Seventhly, It will prove that *before that date* God's Kingdom, organized in power, will be in the earth and then smite and crush the Gentile image (Dan. 2:34)—and fully consume the power of these kings. Its own power and dominion will be established as fast as by its varied influences and agencies it crushes and scatters the "powers that be"—civil and ecclesiastical—iron and clay.

THE BEGINNING OF GENTILE TIMES, 606 B. C.

Our Lord's words, "until the *times** of the Gentiles be fulfilled," imply that the times of the Gentiles must have a definitely appointed limit; because an unlimited, indefinite period could not be said to be fulfilled. So, then, Gentile rule had a beginning, will last for a *fixed time*, and will end at the time appointed.

* The Greek word here rendered "times" is *kairos*, which signifies a *fixed time*. It is the same word translated "times" in the following passages: Mark 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 12:14; Acts 3:19; 17:26. The word "seasons" in Acts 1:7 is from the same Greek word.

Pages 98 and 99 acknowledged that the Bible Students were making a fairly sensational claim, but concluded that because of the strong biblical evidence, the author considered this an established truth:

How refreshing the prospect brought to view at the close of these seven times! Neither Israel nor the world of mankind represented by that people will longer be trodden down, oppressed and misruled by beastly Gentile powers. The Kingdom of God and his Christ will then be established in the earth, and Israel and all the world will be blessed under his rightful and righteous authority. Then the root of promise and hope planted first in Eden (Gen. 3: 15), and borne across the flood and transplanted with Israel the typical people (Gen. 12: 1-3), will sprout and bloom again.

It began to sprout at our Lord's first advent, but the appointed season had not arrived for it to bloom and bring forth its blessed fruitage in the restitution of all things. But at the end of the Gentile Times the sure signs of spring will not be lacking, and rich will be the summer fruitage and glorious the autumnal harvest to be reaped and enjoyed in the eternal ages of glory to follow. Then the original lord of earth, with reason restored, will be fully re-instated, with added excellence and glory, as in the type, and will praise and extol and honor the King of heaven.

Already we begin to see reason returning to mankind: men are awakening to some sense of their degradation, and are on the lookout to improve their condition. They are thinking, planning and scheming for a better condition than that to which they have been submitting under the beastly powers. But before they come to recognize God and his dominion over all, they will experience one more terrible fit of madness, from which struggle they will awake weak, helpless, exhausted, but with reason so far restored as to recognize and bow to the authority of him who comes to re-establish the long lost, first dominion, on the permanent basis of experience and knowledge of both good and evil.

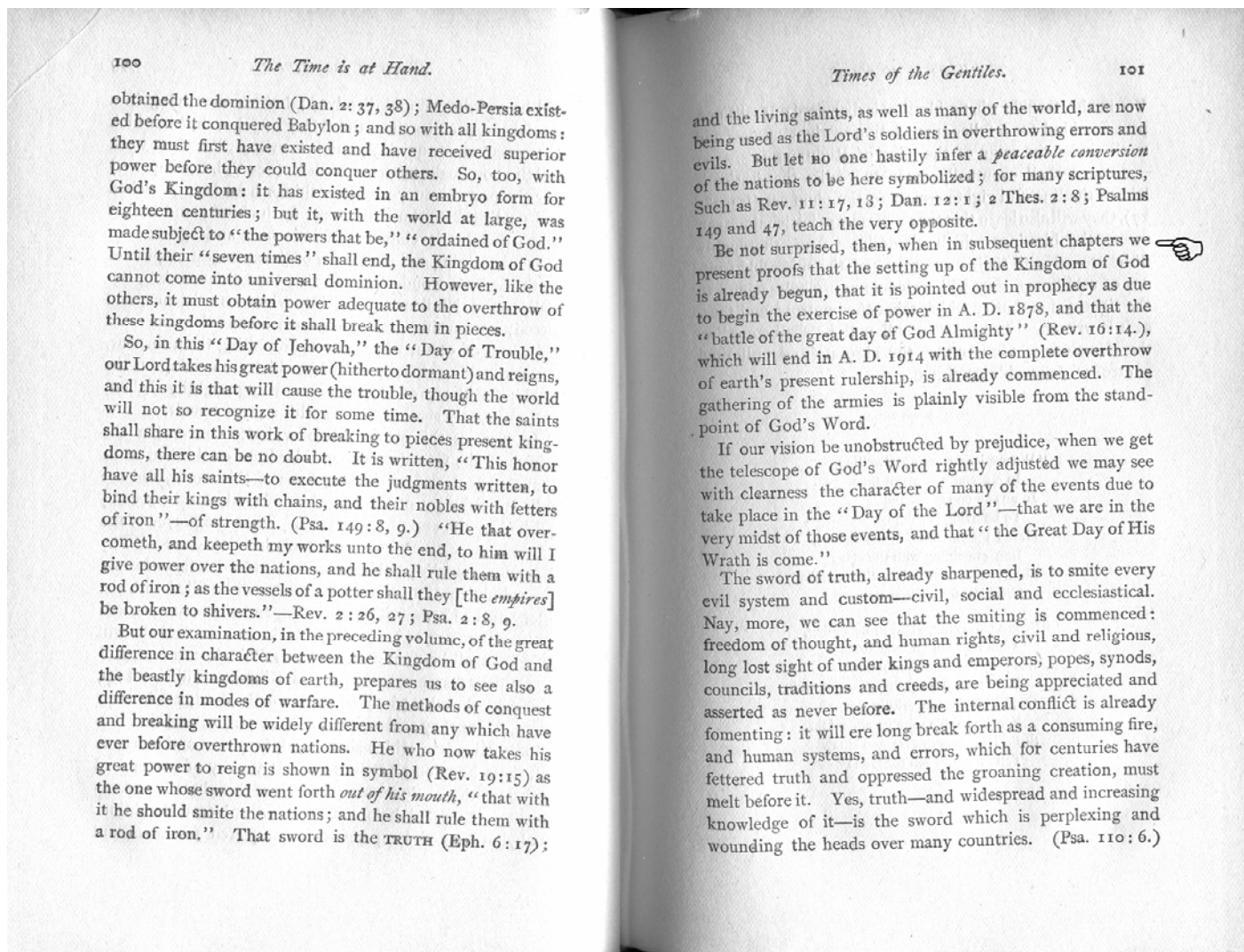
True, it is expecting great things to claim, as we do, that within the coming twenty-six years all present governments

will be overthrown and dissolved; but we are living in a special and peculiar time, the "Day of Jehovah," in which matters culminate quickly; and it is written, "A short work will the Lord make upon the earth." (See Vol. I., chap. xv.) For the past eleven years these things have been preached and published substantially as set forth above; and in that brief time the development of influences and agencies for the undermining and overthrow of the strongest empires of earth has been wonderful. In that time Communism, Socialism and Nihilism sprang into vigorous existence, and already are causing great uneasiness among the rulers and high ones of earth, whose hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the present powers are being mightily shaken, and ultimately shall pass away with a great tumult.

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. Then the prayer of the Church, ever since her Lord took his departure—"Thy Kingdom come"—will be answered; and under that wise and just administration, the whole earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord—with knowledge, and righteousness, and peace (Psa. 72: 19; Isa. 6: 3; Hab. 2: 14); and the will of God shall be done "*on earth, as it is done in heaven.*"

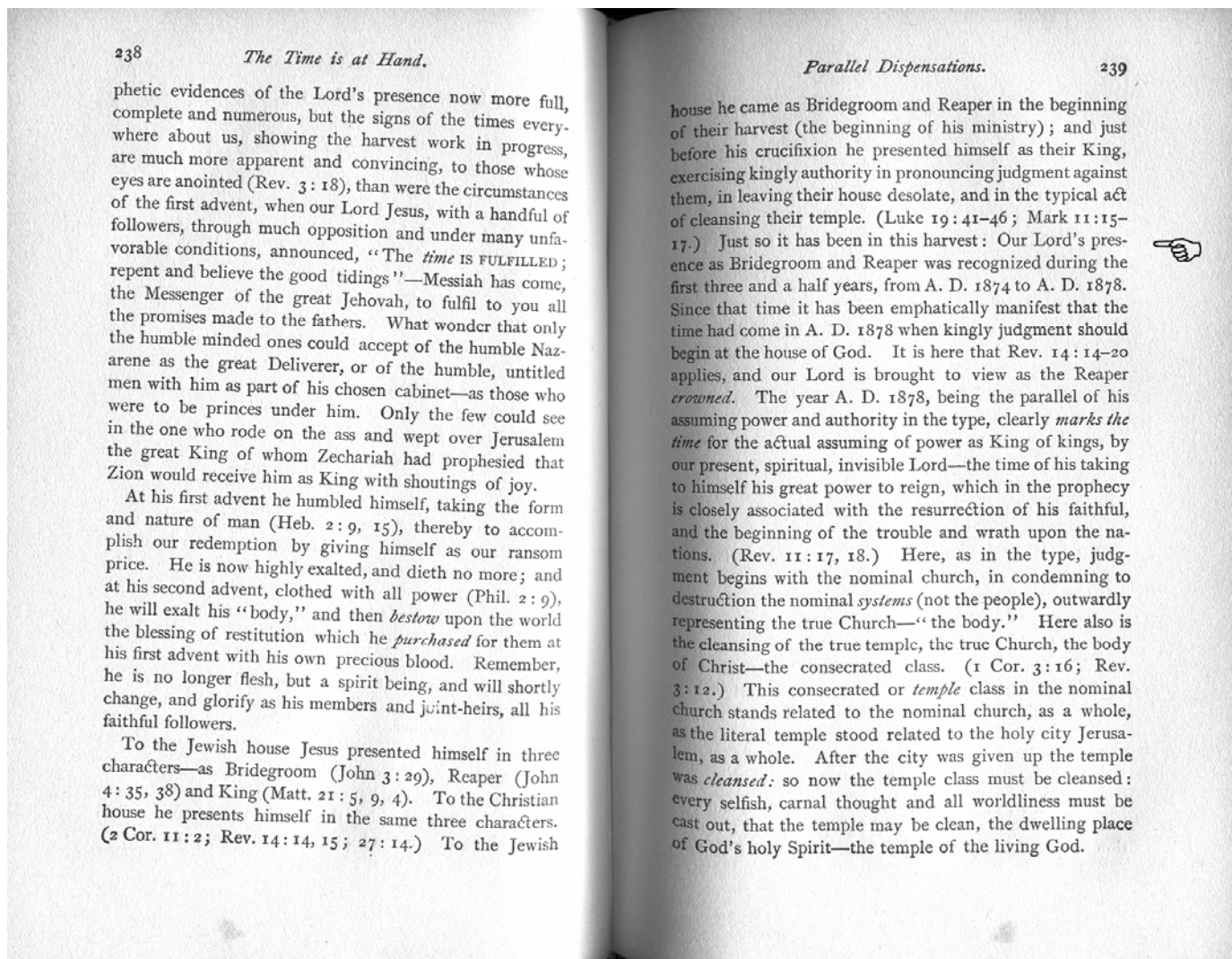
Daniel's statement, that God's Kingdom will be set up, not after these kingdoms of earth are dissolved, but in their days, while they still exist and have power, and that it is God's Kingdom which shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms (Dan. 2: 44), is worthy of our special consideration. So it was with each of these beastly governments: it existed before it acquired universal dominion. Babylon existed long before it conquered Jerusalem and

Page 101 introduced further proof that the battle of Armageddon would be over with by 1914:



(1907 edition)


Drawing upon a parallel with the length of Jesus' earthly ministry, *The Time Is At Hand* taught that Christ was crowned as King in the year 1878:



(1907 edition)

Pages 242 and 243 again express confidence in the 1874 date, and emphasize the importance of the various interrelationships to the overall integrity of the time prophecies

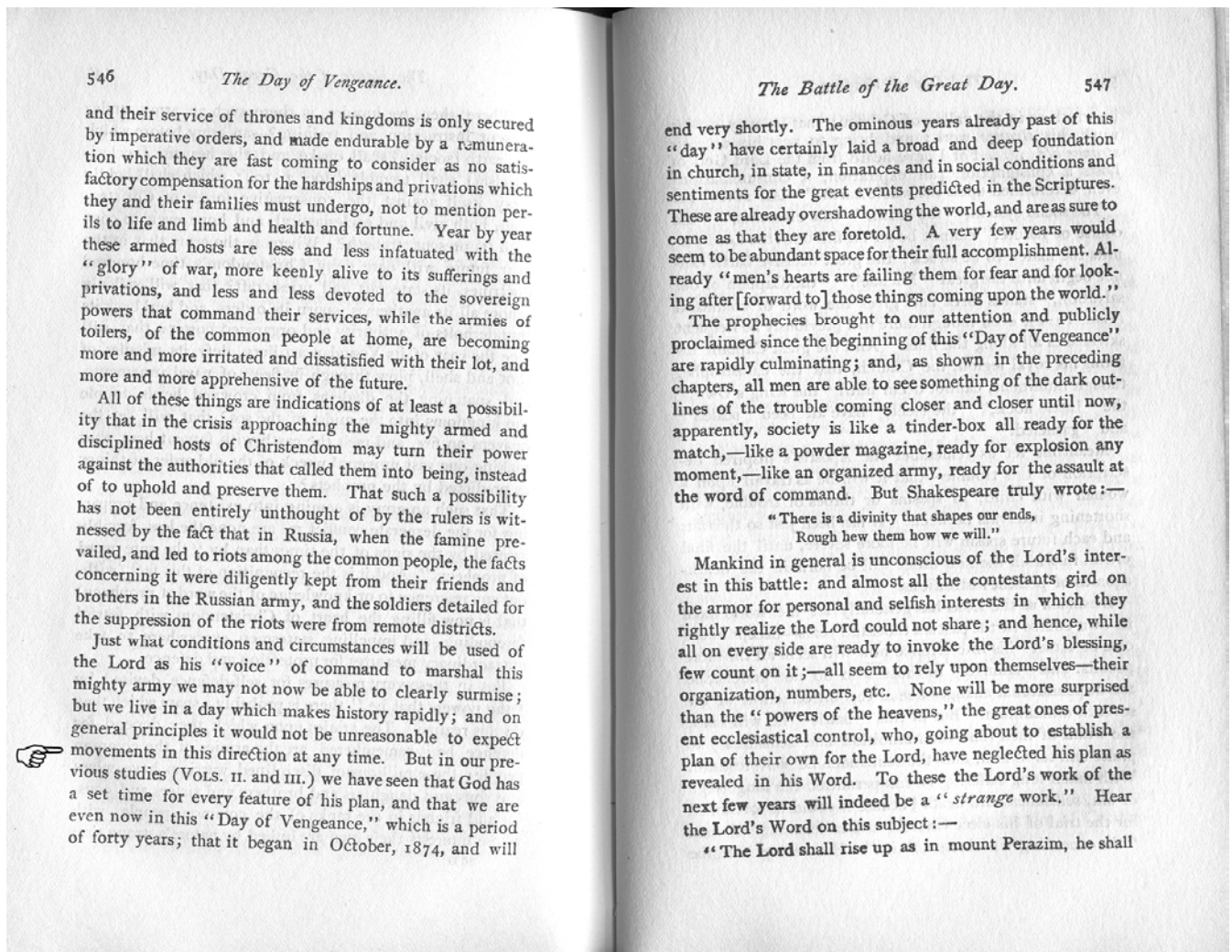
mark the periods which correspond so exactly with these in the Jewish parallels. It is not an imagination that the Jewish and Christian ages are type and antitype—the apostles and prophets testify to their correspondency. Nor do we rely merely on the parallels in proof of the harvest work of the Christian dispensation now in progress: this harvest, as already shown, is otherwise marked—both its beginning and its close. The Jubilee cycles prove that our Lord Jesus was due to be present and begin the restitution work in the fall of 1874 A. D. And the parallelism above referred to shows that date (1874) to correspond exactly with the anointing of Jesus as the Messiah, at the beginning of the Jewish “harvest,” at the first advent. The “Gentile Times” prove that the present governments must all be overturned at the close of A. D. 1914; and the Parallelism above shows that this period corresponds exactly with the year A. D. 70, which witnessed the completion of the downfall of the Jewish polity. A reasonable question, then, in view of all this, is, Are these time-correspondencies mere accidents, or are they of the same divine ordering which we have seen arranged the other affairs of the fleshly house as shadows of the realities of this dispensation?

 No, they are not accidental: undoubtedly the same all-wise One who taught us through the Chronology that six thousand years from Adam's creation ended with A. D. 1872, and that the seventh thousand, the Millennial age, began there; who through the Jubilee cycles taught us that the Lord would be present and the Times of Restitution begin in the fall of 1874; and who through the Times of the Gentiles showed us that we must not expect these things to be done in haste, but by seemingly natural means covering a period of forty years, has in these Parallel Dispensations marked by Israel's “double” given us evidence which not only itself teaches clearly the Lord's presence, the harvest

and the restitution (beginning with favor to fleshly Israel), but at the same time furnishes a *proof* of the correctness of the other prophetic evidences and of the Chronology. For be it distinctly noticed that if the Chronology, or any of these time-periods, be changed but one year, the beauty and force of this parallelism are destroyed. For instance, if the Chronology be altered but one year, more or less—if we add one year, say to the period of the Kings or the Judges, or if we make it one year less—it would spoil the parallelism. If we should add one year it would make the first of Israel's periods 1846 years long, and the double or other half of it would thus be thrown *one year later*, while, on the contrary, by such a change of the Chronology the Jubilee cycles would be thrown one year earlier, *i. e.*, A. D. 1873; and it would make the 6000 years end in A. D. 1871, while the Gentile Times would not be affected by it at all. All can see that the harmony or parallelism would thus be utterly destroyed. Or, if one year should be deducted from the Chronological reckoning the confusion would be just as great, the changes to the several periods being in an opposite direction. Thus these various time-prophecies corroborate each other, while the parallelism of the two dispensations clinches their testimony.

It will be noticed by those at all familiar with the calculations usually made by “Second Adventists” and others, relative to the prophetic periods, etc., that this method of dealing with these subjects is very different from theirs. They usually attempt to make all prophecies end at some *one* date. Their erroneous expectations lead them to this. They expect that a few moments will witness the entire program which will really occupy a thousand years—the Lord's coming, the resurrection, and the judgment of the world. And their expectation concerning those few moments is that they close by the burning up of the world.

The Battle Of Armageddon (1897) on pages 546 and 547 reiterated the fact that "The Day of Vengeance" had begun in 1874 and would last for forty years:



(1913 edition)

Owing to the fact that Russell dated both the crowning of Christ as King of the kingdom and the resurrection of the sleeping saints to 1878, he felt that God's Kingdom had in a real sense, been set up in heaven in that year. All that remained for the kingdom to be complete was the gathering of those remaining ones of the Lord's "elect."

"The dead in Christ shall rise *first*," explained the Lord through the Apostle: and the resurrection of the Church shall be in a moment.* Consequently the Kingdom, as represented in our Lord, and the sleeping saints already fitted and prepared and found worthy to be members of "his body," the "bride," was *set up* in 1878; and all that remains to be done for its completion is the "gathering together

unto the Lord" of those of the "elect" who are alive and remain—whose trial is not yet complete.

The Battle Of Armageddon pp. 621, 622 (Reprint of 1916 edition)

This was reiterated in the August 1, 1904 issue of Zion's Watch Tower on page 229:

Our Lord's presence, as shown in *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, Vol. II., dates from October, 1874, where the forty years' harvest began, of which he is the great Chief Reaper. The date for the final anarchy in no sense affects it. April, 1878, marks the date of the establishment of the kingdom, as shown in the same volume. At that date was due the resurrection of the sleeping saints who died "overcomers." Thus the establishment of the kingdom commenced: it has since progressed as one after another of the same class have since died and been "changed" in the moment of death. The kingdom will be fully established or "set up" by October, A. D. 1914, as already pointed out; for that date closes the forty years of "harvest" and accomplishes its design—the gathering of all the wheat into the garner of the heavenly condition.

[Reprints p.3405]

Russell assigned a number of names to the period intervening between 1874 and 1914. As he used them, the terms “Time of Trouble,” “Day of Vengeance,” “Day of Jehovah,” and “Day of Wrath” were all explicit references to this period. Like Barbour, he envisioned this period as a gradually worsening class struggle between capital and labor that would result in the collapse of all human institutions, economic, political and religious. Although he felt that this descent into anarchy would likely include wars as well, it was the millennial reign of Jesus Christ and the restoration of all things that was supposed to occur in 1914.

This was reaffirmed in the September 15, 1901 issue of *Zion’s Watch Tower* on page 293:

all to go down in anarchistic chaos. The culmination of the trouble in October, 1914, is clearly marked in the Scriptures;* and we are bound therefore to expect a beginning of that *severe* trouble not later than 1910;—with severe spasms between now and then.

Should the severe trouble come in 1910 we may infer that it will be preceded by a period of gradual financial and social disturbances, similar to those of the past, and leading on toward the condition of desperation then, or sooner, to be reached. For these reasons we expect the present wave of prosperity to roll on a little while: and since it could not do so without war, or something of the kind, to put more money and more bonds into circulation—therefore we look for war, possibly numerous small wars, possibly great ones. It is a time for wars and rumors of wars, and of crying Peace, Peace; but the end is not yet,—a more pronounced *federation* of Protestantism is first to be expected, and a consequent persecution of such as will refuse to worship it.

[Reprints p. 2876]

However, as 1914 approached, events did not quite unfold as Russell had expected they would. Just after the turn of the century, his views on the subject began to noticeably waver. One minor change appeared in the July 1, 1904 issue of *Zion’s Watch Tower* on page 197. Russell introduced his newly adjusted view thusly:

What seems at first glance the veriest trifle and wholly unrelated to the matter, has changed our conviction respecting the time when universal anarchy may be expected in accord with the prophetic numbers. We now expect that the anarchistic culmination of the great time of trouble which will precede the Millennial blessings will be after October, 1914, A. D.—very speedily thereafter, in our opinion—“in one hour,” “suddenly.”

[Reprints p. 3389]

The idea that the final culmination of the "time of trouble" would follow rather than precede 1914 caused a degree of uncertainty on the part of some of the Bible Students as is apparent from the question subsequently published in the August 15, 1904 issue of *Zion's Watchtower* on page 250. Note that Russell was quite firm in his view that nothing was really changed.

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

Answer.—You are entirely in error. Not a figure, not a date, not a prophecy is in any sense or degree affected by the article to which you refer. Indeed the harmony and unity of the whole is the more fully demonstrated. Read again the article you refer to, "Universal Anarchy, etc." (July 1 issue), and you surely will see this. If it is not apparent to you upon a further study let us know the particular *point* of your difficulty and we will endeavor to make it plain.

The harmony of the prophetic periods is one of the strongest proofs of the correctness of our Bible chronology. They fit together like the cog-wheels of a perfect machine. To change the chronology even one year would destroy all this harmony,—so accurately are the various proofs drawn together in the *parallels* between the Jewish and Gospel ages. It would affect the ending of the Jubilee cycles, the 1335 days, the 2300 days and the times of the Gentiles, throwing out of gear all the wonderful harmonies of these in the "parallel dispensations."

We commend to you a fresh and careful study of the presentations of DAWNS, Vols. II. and III., on these points. Evidently the time features of present truth all stand or all fall together, and we see no weakness or signs of their falling: on the contrary everything throughout the world is confirmatory of them.

And while it is true that the great mass of present truth is in many respects entirely independent of our "times and seasons," nevertheless they are so related that the latter are almost *necessary* to explain the former. For instance, without recognizing that we are now living in the "harvest" of the Gospel age and in the *parousia* of the Son of Man, how could we account for our great increase in knowledge respecting the various features of the divine plan?

[Reprints p. 3415]

By 1914 though, Russell seemed willing to accept the possibility that much of his chronology could be wrong. This erosion of his confidence was plainly evident in the January 1, 1914 issue of *The Watch Tower* on page 1:

As already pointed out, we are by no means confident that this year, 1914, will witness as radical and swift changes of dispensation as we have expected. It is beyond the power of our imagination to picture an accomplishment in one year of all that the Scriptures seem to imply should be expected before the reign of peace is ushered in.

Letters from all over the world assure us that the sentiment of THE WATCH TOWER readers is in full accord with that of the Editor in a resolution that, whatever may occur during these years, our faith in the great divine plan of the ages and in the harvest shall not be one bit shaken. We know in whom we have believed. We consecrated our lives to his service—even unto death, whether that death shall come within this year or at another time.

[Reprints p. 5373]

This implication here was not entirely lost upon the reading audience. This can be seen in another inquiry. Note the melancholy tone of resignation in Russell's reply:

QUERIES OF A COLPORTEUR

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—

How shall we do respecting the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES after October, 1914? Will the Society continue to publish them? Will the colporteurs and others continue to circulate them? Is it right to circulate them now, since you have some doubt respecting the full accomplishment of all expected by or before October, 1914? With Christian love,

Your brother,

M. F. C.

IN REPLY

MY DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST:—

Yours of May 20th has reached me. Thanks! I think that you are not taking a right view of the matter treated in STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. II. It is our thought that these books will be on sale and read for years in the future, provided the Gospel age and its work continue.

So far as the features are concerned, we have merely set forth the Scriptures and our view respecting their application and significance. We have not attempted to say that these views are infallible, but have stated the processes of reasoning and figuring, leaving to each reader the duty and privilege of reading, thinking and figuring for himself. That will be an interesting matter a hundred years from now; and if he can figure or reason better, he will still be interested in what we have presented. In any event, we think that the consummation cannot be long deferred.

To cease to print and circulate the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES because everything suggested therein has not been, apparently, fulfilled, would be like rejecting our Common Version of the Bible because the chronology given in the margin throughout is known to be incorrect to the extent of a number of years. Usher's chronology is used in our Common Version, and shows the birth of Christ in the year 4004. Scholars are agreed that the event varied at least two years from that date—some say four years. And STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES show from the Bible that the date was actually 4128. Nobody thinks of throwing away his Bible on this account. No more need any one think of throwing away his STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES or failing to circulate them on account of the fact that October, 1914, may not witness all that we had expected and in the manner expected. With much Christian love,

Your brother and servant in the Lord.

[Reprints p. 5496]

The dates that Russell was sufficiently confident in to refer to as "God's dates" in the year 1894 were only "views" that were potentially fallible twenty years later. The acknowledgment made in so many words, that his books might only be of academic interest to Bible students in one-hundred years further testifies to the doubt Russell was experiencing.

One month later however, when World War I broke out his confidence appeared by degrees to be restored and he simply revised some of his predictions. Russell had taught for many years that the "Day of Vengeance" had begun in 1874 but after World War I commenced he decided that this was actually *the* beginning of Armageddon. This is reflected in the following quotes.

The February 1, 1916 issue of *The Watch Tower* said on page 38

WHAT SMITING OF THE WATERS MAY MEAN

Did the Times of the Gentiles end by October 1st, 1914? It certainly looks very much as if they did. The great nations of the world there began to go to pieces under the terrible shaking process then begun. The shaking is still going on, day by day, week by week, and will continue until the work of destruction is complete. Do we see anything definite as yet as to when we are to finish our earthly course? We do not see anything positive thus far. If any of you find out anything, we wish you would tell us.

[Reprints p. 5845]

The September 1, 1916 issue of *The Watch Tower* on page 265 said:

We see no reason for doubting, therefore, that the Times of the Gentiles ended in October, 1914; and that a few more years will witness their utter collapse and the full establishment of God's kingdom in the hands of Messiah. But by that time, the Elijah class will have passed beyond the Veil; for "when he [Jesus] shall appear in his glory, we [the church] also will appear with him."

[Reprints p. 5950]

The same issue said on page 265:

Our present attitude, dear brethren, should be one of great gratitude toward God, increasing appreciation of the beautiful truth which he has granted us the privilege of seeing and being identified with, and increasing zeal in helping to bring that truth to the knowledge of others. In the meantime, our eyes of understanding should discern clearly the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty now in progress; and our faith, guiding our eyes of understanding through the Word, should enable us to see the glorious outcome—Messiah's kingdom. Furthermore, we can be fully content not to know how long the harvest work will last—content that the great Captain, who by divine appointment has the entire matter in charge, is too wise to err, and has promised us that all of our experiences shall work together for our good if we love him and are of "the called ones according to his purpose," seeking to make our calling and election sure.

[Reprints p. 5951]

The author's foreword to the 1916 edition of *The Time Is At Hand* said on page iii:

We could not, of course, know in 1889, whether the date 1914, so clearly marked in the Bible as the end of the Gentile lease of power or permission to rule the world, would mean that they would be fully out of power at that time, or whether, their lease expiring, their eviction would begin. The latter we perceive to be the Lord's program; and promptly in August, 1914, the Gentile kingdoms referred to in the prophecy began the present great struggle, which, according to the Bible, will culminate in the complete overthrow of all human government, opening the way for the full establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

Charles Taze Russell died in October of 1916, firmly holding to the mistaken belief that the great war was the "annihilation of all kingdoms" preceding the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on earth. As it can be seen, from about 1879 to 1904 Russell had predicted that the time of trouble would end sometime before 1914 and from about 1904 until his death he felt it would end very soon after 1914. Although Russell felt that wars could occur at any point during this time of trouble, he never specifically predicted war in 1914 or for that matter, any other year. More importantly, it should be apparent from the foregoing that he never expected that 1914 would witness a war that would mark the *beginning* of a generation long period of trouble.

In the years following Russell's death, a number of changes had to be made. Particularly relevant to this discussion was the gradual dismantling of the original Barbour/Russell chronology during the 20's and early 30's. This began in 1920 when the significance of the 1878 date was modified. Although this date was not discarded entirely, the crowning of Jesus as King of the Kingdom was moved forward from 1878 to 1914.

“Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it [to] him.” (Ezekiel 21: 26, 27) It is well known that at this time the first universal Gentile empire was established, with Nebuchadnezzar as the ruler; and the Gentile times beginning there covered a period of seven symbolic times, or 2,520 years. The date of the beginning being 606 B. C., it would follow that the Gentile times would end in 1914: i. e., the legal lease of power would at that time expire and then the time would be due for him “whose right it is” to receive and exercise kingly authority.

The Watch Tower July 1, 1920 p. 196

Closely intertwined with this adjustment was a new viewpoint introduced two years later, in 1922. What had been hoped for in 1914 or 1915 was something tangible, the rapture of the saints, the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth and the Restitution. When this failed to occur, a degree of uncertainty followed and the Bible Students subsequently looked to 1918, 1919 and finally, to 1925 which was the focal point of the Millions campaign. However it became necessary long before 1925 to specifically explain just what the expiration of the Gentile Times *had* actually meant. In the address “The Kingdom Of Heaven Is At Hand” at the 1922 convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, J. F. Rutherford told his audience that the Kingdom of God had in fact been established right on schedule, only *invisibly* in the *heavens*.¹² Christ had come to the *heavenly* temple and was even now preparing to judge the nations.¹³

¹² *New Heavens and A New Earth*, Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1953, p. 225

¹³ *The Watch Tower* November 1, 1922 pp. 332 - 337

Three years later, in 1925, he specifically applied Revelation 12 to this event, stating that the symbolic events prefigured the birth of the Kingdom:

²⁶It is not an unusual thing to speak of the birth of a nation or government. In 1776 the people of the American colonies were an organized body of people for action. They were hoping for the birth of a nation, and they endured much trouble and hardship to that end. The nation was born at the surrender of the British forces under Cornwallis. At the time of that great struggle, not all the people in the country were in favor of the new government; but after the birth of the American government, then the others came in and became a part of it.

²⁷And even so it is with Zion. From 1878 forward Jesus was gathering together his consecrated followers; and these, with the hope of an early birth of the new nation or government, have struggled on for the cause of righteousness, holding fast to the precious truths. They expected this birth in 1910 and at other dates, but particularly in 1914. In that year the Lord took his power and began his reign. There the "man child [the Nation], which was to rule the nations with a rod of iron," was born. Up to 1914 not all the anointed who loved the Lord were of Zion. Since that time more have come into harmony with Christ and the new government.

The Watch Tower March 1, 1925 p. 69

With Christ taking his power to reign, the birth of the man-child and the ousting of Satan from heaven, a new nation technically had come into existence in a manner similar to that of the American colonies when England finally recognized their independence. This interpretation was a radical departure from what had been taught up until this point in more ways than simply the expectations associated with the end of the Gentile Times. Just a few years prior to this for example, it was taught that Michael, the dragon, and the man-child of Revelation chapter twelve were the Pope, the Roman Empire, and the papacy respectively.¹⁴

¹⁴ *The Finished Mystery*, People's Pulpit Association, 1917, pp. 183–188

The newly adjusted Bible Student eschatology was summarized thus:

***From 1878 to 1914 the people of Zion were expecting the birth of the new nation. At the same time the dragon stood by, waiting to devour whatsoever was born. In 1914 the birth of the nation occurred. In 1914 the war in heaven began, and Satan and his official family were thrown out of heaven. In 1918, after Satan recovered from his dazed condition, he set about to persecute the members of the Church on earth. In 1918 he caused the imprisonment of the officers of the SOCIETY and others. On March 26th, 1919, these were released from prison; and the Church (representing the woman) there fled into the wilderness for 1260 literal days. From March 27th, 1919, to September 8th, 1922, inclusive was exactly 1260 days, at the end of which period the remnant of the Church on earth makes a bold proclamation of its allegiance to the King and his kingdom, and announces its determination to begin and press the fight against Satan's empire until it is excluded from the earth.**

The Watch Tower March 1, 1925 p. 73

Further adjustments followed. In 1927 the date for the first resurrection was moved forward from 1878 to 1918.¹⁵ At this point, the significance of 1878 was for all intents and purposes discarded entirely. However from a purely doctrinal standpoint, the reinterpretation of Revelation 12 in 1925 was arguably the most significant change of the 1920's, one that the Witnesses often point to today as a milestone in their development.¹⁶ The idea that God's kingdom was born in the heavens in 1914, that Jesus has since been ruling as king of that kingdom and that shortly, this kingdom will be established upon the earth is the core message of the "Good news of the Kingdom" which Jehovah's Witnesses have preached since.¹⁷

The reader will notice that in some ways the eschatological framework that was emerging in the 1920's was a mirror image of what Russell had believed and taught. In other words, the events Russell thought were past, the events he thought were still future, where he imagined himself to be in the stream of time and what he hoped for was in many ways the same as what Jehovah's Witnesses have believed since the 1920's and still believe today.

Russell believed he was living in the closing days of the Biblical "Time of the End." He dated the *Parousia* to 1874, the crowning of Christ as king of God's kingdom and the resurrection of the sleeping saints to 1878. On this basis, he believed that the heavenly kingdom had been set up in that year. He believed that he was living in a period of ingathering, a harvest separating the heavenly and earthly phases of God's kingdom. He saw the political and social disturbances of his day, the panics and depressions of the late 1800's, the rise of labor movements, the increased pace of human advancement and discovery following the industrial revolution all as confirmation of these dates. Russell believed that at the close of this harvest, the nations of the earth would be overturned and the kingdom of God would be fully set up, that is to say established upon the earth as it was in heaven.

¹⁵ *Light* volume I, p.226; See also *From Paradise Lost To Paradise Regained* Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1958, p. 192

¹⁶ See for example *Flashes of Light Great and Small*, The Watchtower May 15, 1995, p. 21

¹⁷ This is reaffirmed over and over in WTB&TS literature. See for example *The Watchtower* February 1, 1996, p. 19; December 15, 1992, p. 4; April 1, 1991 p. 7; August 15, 1991, p. 17; December 15, 1991, p. 27; January 1, 1990, pp. 3 & 13; July 1, 1990, p. 28; September 1, 1989, p. 19; January 1, 1988, pp. 4 & 21; January 1, 1985, p. 19; April 1, 1984, p. 16; April 15, 1984, p. 6; July 15, 1984, p. 15

This is not to say that there are no differences. Although Russell believed that since 1878 each anointed Christian was resurrected to a heavenly body at the moment of their death, he also believed that there would be a mass rapture of the saints at the close of the harvest. Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses today believe that since 1918, each anointed Christian is resurrected to a heavenly body at the moment of their death, but unlike Russell, they believe that this will continue until the last one finally finishes his or her earthly course. Russell believed that this harvest would last for forty years, stating that "*The culmination of the trouble in October 1914 is clearly marked in the Scriptures...*"¹⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses since 1995 no longer assign any length of time to this period, not even one as general as the life span of a generation.¹⁹

What made this replication possible was the systematic relocation of most of the events Russell thought had occurred during the years 1874 – 1878 forty years forward to the years 1914 – 1918. Although some of these changes were made with considerable fanfare, others were phased in gradually.

¹⁸ Charles Taze Russell *Views From The Watch Tower* Zion's Watch Tower September 15, 1901 p. 293


¹⁹ *A Time To Keep Awake* The Watchtower November 1, 1995 pp. 16-21

The years 1799 and 1874 are two such examples. Although in 1921, their doctrinal significance was still very much intact as the quote below shows, in ten years time both would be abandoned completely.

Our Lord's Return

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some extent at least, depends upon accurate calculations and there is always some possibility of mistakes. Fulfilled prophecy is the record of physical facts which are actually existent and definitely fixed. Physical facts do not stultify themselves. They stand as silent witnesses whose testimony must be taken as indisputable.

 ⁴⁰⁰There are two important dates here that we must not confuse, but clearly differentiate, namely, the beginning of "the time of the end" and of "the presence of the Lord". "The time of the end" embraces a period from A. D. 1799, as above indicated, to the time of the complete overthrow of Satan's empire and the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah. The time of the Lord's second presence dates from 1874, as above stated. The latter period is within the first named, of course, and at the latter part of the period known as "the time of the end".

⁴⁰¹The understanding of the prophecies with reference to "the time of the end" and the Lord's presence was purposely concealed by Jehovah until the due time. Daniel desired to know what would be the end of these things, but God said to him: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end". (Daniel 12:4) It is reasonable to expect that Jehovah would indicate something by which "the time of the end" could be discerned when it arrived. He did not say to Daniel to look for some words emblazoned across the sky that the end had come, but told him to look for such evidences as could be seen and understood by men familiar with the prophecies, and who in the light of the prophecies should be watching for their fulfillment. He did not expect Daniel to understand it in his day, because he said: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end".—Daniel 12:9.

The Harp of God 1921 p. 231
(See page 236 in 1927 and later editions)

On page 244 the importance of 1874, 1878 and 1914 was restated,

of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it [to] him."—Ezekiel 21: 24-27.

⁴³⁰In the year 606 B. C. Zedekiah was overthrown. He was taken a prisoner, carried away to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar established in the earth the first universal empire and the gentile times dated from that time forward. The length of the gentile times is definitely fixed in the Scriptures as a period of seven symbolic times of 360 years each, or a total of 2,520 years. This period beginning with the year 606 B. C. necessarily must end in 1914 A. D. God had declared that he would overturn the right of the descendants of Abraham to rule, thereby permitting the gentiles to have an uninterrupted sway until he should come whose right it is. The one whose right it is is the great Messiah, Christ Jesus the Lord. It would be reasonable to expect him to be present some time before he would take unto himself his great power to reign. His presence beginning in 1874, he has carried on his harvest work from 1878 forward, but has not interrupted the gentile dominion until that dominion should end. The end of the gentile rule, therefore, would mark necessarily the end of the present order; therefore, the end of the world. We should expect, then, to find 1914 as the beginning of the end of the old world or order of government. And that this would take place during the presence of the Lord he definitely stated.

⁴³¹When the gentile dominion legally ends, the order being a wicked one under the supervision of Satan, the god of the evil world (2 Corinthians 4: 3, 4), and all

As the following sampling shows, Watch Towers during the 1920's were most emphatic about the 1874 date:

Fulfilled prophecy consists of historical and physical facts, which are indisputable. Such facts never stultify themselves. While we have a line of Bible chronology showing the presence of the Lord due in 1874, even if we did not have this the evidence given by fulfilled prophecy clearly marks the date of the Lord's second presence. Having now in mind God's unchangeable promise, that during the "time of the end" the wise should understand, and added to that the testimony of St. Paul that greater light would be given to the watchers at the end of the age, it is to be expected that some one in the world, waiting and watching for the coming of the Lord, would be numbered among the wise.

The Watch Tower March 1, 1922 p. 71

Bible prophecy shows that the Lord was due to appear for the second time in the year 1874. Fulfilled prophecy shows beyond a doubt that he did appear in 1874. Fulfilled prophecy is otherwise designated the physical facts; and these facts are indisputable. All true watchers are familiar with these facts, as set forth in the Scriptures and explained in the interpretation by the Lord's special servant.

The Watch Tower November 1, 1922 p. 333

ITS MEANING TO THE CHURCH

¹⁶ 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; that the harvest has been in progress during that time; that most of the saints have now been gathered. Therefore, can there be a reasonable doubt about the early completion of the church and its glorification in view of the fulfilment of prophecy? Do not all the physical facts about us indicate just exactly what we expected during the concluding hours of the church's earthly pilgrimage?

The Watch Tower January 1, 1924 p. 5

²⁰ The proof is quite clear and convincing that the second presence of our Lord dates from 1874, and that from that time forward the Lord Jesus has been gathering together those who have made a covenant with the Lord God by sacrifice. (Psalm 50:5) Jesus declared that he would be present in the end of the age and conduct the harvest work, which would mean a gathering work. (Matthew 13:30) The fact that a great harvest work progressed from about 1874 forward is the best evidence of the Lord's presence at that time and since. From that time forward the Lord has been doing a preparatory work. During this preparatory work the great truths that had long been hid from God's people by reason of the action of the enemy were restored to his people.

The Watch Tower February 15, 1927 p. 54

The 1927 book *Creation* also taught the 1874 date as the beginning of the *Parousia*:

is described in the Scriptures as "the day of his preparation", during which time Christ, as the Messenger of God, prepares the way.—Mal. 3:1.

During that period of time Christ Jesus must be present. That presence does not mean that he must leave heaven to be on the earth; but what it manifestly means is that his special attention is given to the gathering together of his true followers and separating them from the nominal followers, and making ready conditions to take charge of the world's affairs. The Scriptural proof is that the period of his presence and the day of God's preparation is a period from 1874 A. D. forward. The second coming of the Lord, therefore, began in 1874; and that date and the years 1914 to 1918 are specially marked dates with reference to his coming.

The "world" includes both visible and invisible governments; hence it means heaven and earth. For centuries Satan has been the invisible ruler of governmental organizations on earth; and, being invisible to man, he has also ruled man's heaven. The time must come when Satan's world must end, and when he is ousted from heaven; and the Scriptural proof is that the beginning of such ousting took place in 1914.

The temple of the Lord means his approved followers, those constituting "the body of Christ". The time must arrive when Christ Jesus comes to his temple to take an account with his followers. The Scriptural proof supports the conclusion that the coming to his temple was in the year 1918. Later there must follow the complete overthrow of Satan's organization, both visible and invisible, and the establishment of an invisible and visible government of righteousness.

Jehovah caused his prophets to write concerning the coming of Christ, and their writings were couched in "dark sayings" or prophetic phrase. Prophecy can

record specifically what would happen when the time of the end should begin. The "time of the end" means a specific period at the end of the Gentile dominion.

"And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown." (Dan. 11: 40, 41) The fulfilment of this prophecy fixes the beginning of the "time of the end"; for the prophecy definitely so states. The campaign of the great warrior Napoleon Bonaparte is clearly a fulfilment of this prophecy, as reference to the historical facts concerning his campaign plainly shows. The "king of the south" mentioned in the prophecy refers to Egypt; the "king of the north" means Great Britain, which was then an integral part of the Roman empire.

Napoleon was in Egypt, fighting the Egyptian armies, which were led by Murat Bey, and which he defeated. His victory struck terror not only to the Egyptians, but far into Africa and Asia; and all the surrounding tribes submitted to the conqueror. While he was doing this, the British in the north, under the leadership of Lord Nelson, were making an effective attack upon Napoleon's forces at sea. Napoleon began this Egyptian campaign in 1798, finished it, and then returned to France on October 1, 1799. The campaign is briefly, yet graphically, described in the prophecy, verses 40-44; and its being completed in 1799 marks, according to the prophet's own words, the beginning of "the time of the end".



From the time of the overthrow of Zedekiah (606 B. C.) and the establishment of the Gentile universal empire under Nebuchadnezzar, the organizations of the world powers or governments have been desig-

Creation 1927 p. 293

This however was the last such reference to 1799 as the beginning of the time of the end in the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The 1929 book *Prophecy* reaffirmed the validity of the 1874 date:

The Scriptural proof is that the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 A.D. This proof

is specifically set out in the booklet entitled *Our Lord's Return*. In the Scriptures there are three different Greek words used in connection with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those words are, to wit: *parousia* (Matt. 24:3), which means presence; *epiphaneia* (2 Tim. 4:1), which means presence and *shining forth* with increased light; and *apokalupsis* (Rev. 1:1), which means the presence of the Lord shining forth with increased light and to a complete *uncovering* or *revelation*. Thus is shown the progressive unfolding of the prophecies during the presence of the Lord. That is the period of refreshing mentioned by Peter, and that refreshing is given to, and is for, the benefit of the faithful students of God's Word, because God has turned his face to them and the Lord Jesus Christ is manifesting his presence and is ministering to them.

The above reference from the book *Prophecy* was the last clear, unambiguous mention of the 1874 date in connection with the *Parousia* ever to appear in the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses. From this point forward the significance of 1874 began to be played down. For example, in contrast with the clarity of the 1920's Watch Towers concerning 1874, note the vagueness of the following quote from the October 15, 1930 issue of *The Watch Tower* on page 308:

*** The second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ dates from about A. D. 1875, when he began to 'prepare the way before the Lord'. There were those who loved God and who were looking for the coming of Christ. They had been long oppressed and devastated by the forces of the world, and these faithful ones are well represented in the psalm: "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire; it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."—Ps. 80: 14-19.**

Even more indeterminate is a statement appearing two years later in the November 1, 1932 issue of *The Watchtower* on page 325:

TIME

¹⁶ From approximately 1875 forward Christ Jesus, the Chief Executive Officer of Jehovah, was 'preparing the way before the Lord Jehovah'. In 1914 Jehovah placed his royal Son upon his holy hill in Zion, that is to say, made him the capital or head of his organization, and which marks the birth of the kingdom. (Ps. 2: 6; Rev. 12: 5) The war in heaven followed

The first distinct reference to 1914 as the date for Christ's Second Coming did not appear in *The Watchtower* until the December 1, 1933 issue on page 362:

When Jesus reached heaven he was told by Jehovah that he must sit and wait until God's due time to put the enemy Satan under his feet. In the year 1914 that due time of waiting came to an end. Christ Jesus received the authority of the kingdom and was sent forth by Jehovah to rule amidst his enemies. The year 1914, therefore, marks the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory.

At this point, virtually every element of the original Barbour/Russell eschatological framework had either been relocated or discarded. Aside from the idea that 1873 had marked the end of 6,000 years of Bible chronology,²⁰ the only thing left was the expiration of the "Gentile times" in 1914 and even the significance of that event had at this point, been changed completely.

²⁰ This was moved up to the mid-1970's in the year 1943. See the chapter "The Count Of Time" in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 1943, pp. 141 – 152

During the period prior to 1914, those associated with the Bible Students understood that the end of the Gentile times would mean the complete overthrow of all earthly governments, their total elimination and replacement by the earthly rule of Christ's kingdom. No human government would remain. By 1925, the significance assigned to the expiration of the Gentile times was understood to mean the end of their "uninterrupted rule" of the earth, the "interruption" resulting from Christ's invisibly having taken kingdom power and begun reigning in 1914. The fact that nothing whatsoever had changed since 1914 as regards the earthly government's dominion of the earth was of no consequence as their "lease" of power had expired, being *invisibly* cancelled by the *invisible* King, and thus the end of their appointed time had come. As was the case with both William Miller in 1844 and Nelson Barbour in 1874, real expectations of tangible events were spiritualized into heavenly invisible events. The hopes of an entire generation had turned out to be the "wrong thing at the right time."

These observations are not to imply that there is something *inherently* wrong when students of the Bible make adjustments to their eschatological views as time progresses. A sincere Bible student would have little choice when either new information comes to light or events simply do not unfold as they were originally expected to. However in view of the fact these adjustments *were* made, there are certain claims that obviously cannot truthfully be said about the Bible Students prior to 1914:

- It cannot be said that they pointed forward to 1914 as the date for Christ's invisible return.
- It cannot be said that they pointed forward to 1914 as the date for the heavenly birth of God's kingdom
- It cannot be said that they preached the good news of that *established kingdom* at or before 1914.
- It cannot be said that they pointed forward to 1914 as the date for Christ to receive Kingly power
- It cannot be said that they pointed forward to 1914 as the beginning of the time of the end.

None of these statements would be truthful. If any of these were either stated or implied deliberately, it could only be viewed as attempts by Witness writers to falsify and create an idealized history more attractive to potential converts today. This brings us to the crux of the matter, and the purpose of this paper. Do Jehovah's Witnesses accurately present their history today, or do they attempt to create an illusory picture of harmony between current and past beliefs?

Unfortunately, a disturbing trend developed halfway into the 20th century when the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society began to claim in effect that the new eschatological framework that had emerged in the 1920's was actually what had been taught all along. Statements that were irrevocably incompatible with the period literature, almost to the point of facetiousness began to appear with some regularity. For example, little more than 20 years after the 1874 date was discarded, the following quote appeared in The Watchtower:

*** Why, then, do the nations not realize and accept the approach of this climax of judgment? It is because they have not heeded the world-wide advertising of Christ's return and his second presence. Since long before World War I Jehovah's witnesses pointed to 1914 as the time for this great event to occur.**

The Watchtower June 15, 1954 p. 370

Since it had been taught from 1879 clear up into the early 1930's that "Christ's return and his second presence" had commenced in 1874, it should be obvious that Jehovah's Witnesses "long before World War I" could not possibly have been pointing "to 1914 as the time for this great event to occur." The above statement amounts to a claim that the 1874 date for the *Parousia* was never taught as such, a claim that is thoroughly untrue and utter nonsense.

Was this simply a mistake? Given the 1954 date, it seems unlikely so soon after the fact that anyone except perhaps an adolescent could possibly have been ignorant of the position the *Watch Tower* had advocated for more than the first half-century of its existence. Nevertheless it is conceivable that this statement was the unfortunate result of carelessness rather than design. However such an explanation understandably becomes less plausible in direct proportion to the number and type of repeat occurrences. What follows is a sampling of statements Jehovah's Witnesses have made about their history that are contradicted by their own period literature, many of which, the reader will note, were made just 20 to 30 years *after previous teachings had been abandoned*. Although a brief explanatory note is included with each, most require no explanation at all.

(Matt. 24:45-47, NW) It was therefore not a mere occurrence when devoted men and women began to be gathered out of faithless Christendom from and after the year 1870. God purposed to use them as an organization to do a twofold work. First, they must proclaim that the Gentile times that began in 607 B. C. were due to come to an end A. D. 1914, at which time Jehovah would take to himself his official power and begin to reign in the heavens by his anointed King. So for some thirty-seven years prior to 1914 this proclamation was sounded.*

The Watchtower April 1, 1953 p.215

The Bible Students could not have sounded the proclamation that Christ's reign would start in 1914 "for some thirty-seven years prior to 1914" since it was taught clear up until 1920 that 1878 was the date for this event.

¹⁹ As we look back over the years, we can clearly see how God's organization in modern times has progressed in understanding. For example, it learned that Christ's second presence was to be in the spirit, and not in the flesh as many professed Christians believe. His rule would be from the heavens. This was a new revelation of great importance to God's people who had been anxiously awaiting his second presence toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The Watchtower July 15, 1965 p. 428

This quote deviates from the truth in two distinct ways. First, the 19th century Bible students were not "anxiously awaiting his second presence" as they believed that Christ was already present and had been

since 1874. Second, there is no evidence that anyone including C. T. Russell himself came to the conclusion that Christ's return would be invisible prior to 1874. Therefore one cannot truthfully say that they taught anything about what "was to be" but only about what "was," or had already occurred.

⁵ Today, Jehovah's Witnesses point to the "sign" given by Jesus and look back upon 1914 as the year when his invisible presence in Kingdom power became a reality. But how could they have had advance knowledge of such a momentous event? Not because of extraordinary human wisdom. No, but because they have prayerfully studied the Scriptures, heeded God's prophetic word and paid more than usual attention to what God's Son foretold. (2 Peter 1:19; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2:1) Grateful that Jehovah has 'told them fresh things before they have appeared,' the Witnesses are delighted to be spreading this knowledge earth wide. (Isaiah

The Watchtower April 1, 1984 p. 16

Since the 1874 date was not discarded until the 1930's, it is clear that the Bible Students had no such "advance knowledge."

Tremors in Human Society

⁴ From the mid-1870's, Jehovah's people had been anticipating that catastrophic events would start in 1914 and would mark the end of the Gentile Times.

As far back as 1879, the publishers of this magazine pointed to the year 1914 as a marked year in Bible prophecy, as the starting point for what the Bible calls "the time of the end."*

Revelation – Its Grand Climax At Hand! 1988 p. 105

Awake! October 8, 1972 p. 15

At no point did the 19th century Bible Students teach that 1914 would mark the **beginning** of the "Time of the end." They taught clearly and in no uncertain terms that this period had commenced in 1799. Nether did they teach or predict that catastrophic events **would start** in 1914. These events were to start well before and culminate in 1914 at which point the commencement of the earthly phase of the kingdom, the dawn of the "Golden Age" would begin.

How Near?

If you are inclined to dismiss all of this as pie in the sky, too good to be true, pause again and reflect. In addition to the features of the composite sign of Christ Jesus' presence, there is Bible chronology that pointed to 1914 as the beginning of his presence. Jehovah's Witnesses published the date 1914 as a significant year in the development of Jehovah's Kingdom rule of the earth, doing so in the *Watch Tower* magazine of July 1879. Many historians and observers of world affairs have noted that the year 1914 ushered in an entirely different and significant period in human history, as the accompanying box indicates.

Awake! March 22, 1993 p. 10

This quote deviates from the truth in at least three distinct ways:

First, The July 1879 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* mentions neither the 1914 date nor the Gentile times. The year 1914 is not mentioned in this magazine until the December 1879 issue on page 3, as being the *end* of the "day of wrath." The idea that the "Times of the Gentiles" extend to 1914 is not mentioned until the March 1880 issue on page 2

Second, This chronology set the beginning of "Christ's invisible presence" at the year 1874, not 1914.

Third, Russell predicted that by 1914 all the kingdoms of the world and false religion would have been destroyed and God's kingdom established on the earth. So he did not "predict" the first world war, because the nations who would have participated in it were to have already been destroyed by 1914.

Similarly, a prophecy providentially caused sincere 19th-century Bible students to be in expectation. By linking the "seven times" of Daniel 4:25 with "the times of the Gentiles," they anticipated that Christ would receive Kingdom power in 1914. (Luke 21:24, *King*

CLIMAX OF THE ISSUE

¹⁷ As explained in detail in the book *The Time Is at Hand*, published by the Watch Tower Society in 1889, Bible prophecy, including that at Daniel chapter 4, pointed to the year 1914 as a marked date.* This was to be the end of "seven times," or 2,520 years, of uninterrupted domination of the earth by the nations under Satan. It would be the time for the promised "seed" to take kingdom power in heaven.

The Watchtower September 15, 1998 p.15

The Watchtower October 1, 1969 p. 589

As was clearly explained in *The Time Is At Hand*, the 19th century Bible Students maintained that Christ had received Kingdom power in 1878. They were not looking forward to 1914 as the date when this event would occur. The idea that this event had occurred in 1914 did not appear until the year 1920.

Much more common than statements in obvious and direct conflict with dates that Jehovah's Witnesses once linked to certain events are statements that conflict with doctrinal positions that they once taught. By far the most prevalent example of this involves the doctrine of the heavenly establishment of God's Kingdom in 1914. Commenting on the fact that the Bible Students did not grasp this concept until some years *after* the event ostensibly occurred, the 1930 publication *Light* volume I states:

Note that it opens with the statement: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven." The *Revised Version* says: "A great sign was seen in heaven." Truly it is a "great" sign, because of its importance. The kingdom or nation was born with the end of 1914, but this fact was not intelligently discerned by the people of God until some time after 1918.

This statement, though not terribly precise, is nevertheless completely true. It can clearly be seen from the period literature that the Witness doctrine of God's kingdom as a *heavenly government* establishment in the year 1914 AD did not even begin to emerge until the year 1920 and did not reach its final form until the year 1925. In this regard, the article "Birth Of A Nation" appearing in the March 1, 1925 issue of *The Watch Tower* is routinely pointed to as the first biblical explanation of this concept.²¹ This is further corroborated by other statements appearing in *The Watchtower* from time to time. For example, the 1955 article "The Triumphant Message of The Kingdom" stated:

° In its issue of July 1, 1920, the magazine *The Watch Tower* published the article "Gospel of the Kingdom." It was not till then that Jehovah's witnesses throughout the earth saw that the "good news" or gospel was about the now established kingdom and that the good news of this kingdom must begin to be preached now, after the "beginning of pangs of distress" experienced during the period of World War I; and that the preaching must continue until the battle of Armageddon,

The Watchtower October 15, 1955 p. 623

However not only is it common at other times for Witness literature to claim that this message was preached prior to the year 1920, the claim is even made that it was actually announced *well before* 1914. The 1930 – 1960 *Watchtower Publications Index* under the heading "1914 – Kingdom's Establishment – advance announcement" lists *twenty separate references*.²² The 1930 – 1985 Index lists *more than thirty*.²³

Even those figures are misleading, as statements that in one way or another assert that the birth or establishment of God's *heavenly* kingdom in 1914 was proclaimed at or before the time it occurred

²¹ See *The Watchtower* September 1, 1989, p. 18; May 15, 1986, p. 14; July 1, 1985, p. 20; February 1, 1984, p. 23; September 1, 1983, p. 9

²² See page 202.

²³ See pages 611, 612.

positively abound in the modern literature of Jehovah's Witnesses. A very small sampling can be seen in the following excerpts:

⁵ To the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites, the raging of World War I in 1914, with food shortages and pestilences accompanying it, was a confirmation that God's Messianic kingdom was fully established, fully brought to birth in the heavens, at the end of the Gentile Times in that year. So they went preaching the good news of God's established kingdom until war conditions and bitter persecution practically stopped them.

Man's Salvation Out Of World Distress At Hand! 1975 p.243

Even earlier, however, C. T. Russell wrote an article entitled "Gentile Times: When Do They End?" It was published in the *Bible Examiner* of October 1876, and therein Russell said: "The seven times will end in A.D. 1914." He had correctly linked the Gentile Times with the "seven times" mentioned in the book of Daniel. (Dan. 4:16, 23, 25, 32) True to such calculations, 1914 did mark the end of those times and the birth of God's kingdom in heaven with Christ Jesus as king. Just think of it! Jehovah granted his people that knowledge nearly four decades before those times expired.

1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses p.37

¹⁵ The Gentile nations, including the Republic of Israel, have no reason to be ignorant of this. Twentieth-century history shows why, for since the very year of 1914 C.E. notice has been served on all nations concerning the establishment of God's Messianic kingdom in the heavens. Not in vain did Jesus Christ say, in Matthew 24:14: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."

The Watchtower April 15, 1969 p.244

Some whose expectations for 1914 were too great were disappointed and left the truth. But, for the most part, the brothers remained faithful. Today we know that they were right in believing that the Gentile Times of 2,520 years would run out about October 1, 1914. The Messianic kingdom then started to rule in heaven. One of the greatest events in human history had occurred, and the brothers had been privileged to share in announcing it!

1977 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses p. 203

By having an understanding of what these "appointed times of the nations" were, and by being able to measure and calculate the length of time involved, God's servants on earth would be able to discern when God's kingdom was to be established in heaven. That marvelous event would coincide with the ending of the "appointed times of the nations," and the beginning of the "time of the end."—Dan. 11:27, 40; Matt. 24:3; 2 Tim. 3:1.

The Watchtower May 1, 1968 p. 265

²¹ This humiliating blow to Philistine pride has a modern-day parallel. From its first year of publication, in 1879, *Zion's Watch Tower*,* official journal of the "faithful and discreet slave," consistently proclaimed the year 1914 as the date for the end of "the Gentile times" and the establishment of God's kingdom by Christ.

The Watchtower February 15, 1967 p. 110

These and similar statements are representative of an idealized view of the history of Jehovah's Witnesses, a history that is thoroughly contradicted by their own period literature.

At the 2001 *Teacher's of God's Word* district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses a discourse was given entitled "Jehovah Hates the Course of Treachery" This lecture contained the following statement:

"Are we personally alert that no unrighteousness be found on our lips? For example, can our family members, including our mate really trust what we say? Can our brothers and sisters in the congregation? It would be so easy to develop the habit of couching one's words so that they are technically accurate, yet deliberately misleading to others."

Jehovah's Witnesses, therefore recognize that statements that are technically true can nevertheless, be deliberately crafted so as to deceive. Does the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses practice what it preaches in this regard? In the context of this discussion, there is certainly cause for concern. There are several distinct techniques in which technically accurate statements can be crafted in such a way as to convey a false impression, all of which can be found in the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The first is simply a misleading use of tense. This can be illustrated by the following statement. Notice the bolded text:

"By 1879 the Bible Students had become convinced that Christ's Second Coming **would begin** his invisible presence."

It is true that in the absence of a distinct anchor point, the future tense in English is not always clearly indicative of posteriority. If for example, we were speaking of Christianity as a whole from the 1st century clear to the present, we might use the future tense in connection with Christ's Second Advent without indicating a definite temporal relationship between this event and the subject group. However that is clearly not the case in the above statement which deals with a specific group of persons at a specific time prior to 1914. It implies that Christ's *Parousia* was a future event relative to the Bible Students in 1879.

However C. T. Russell, by his own testimony was convinced by N. H. Barbour in 1876 that Christ's invisible presence was already underway **and had been since 1874**. Consequently, he looked upon the start of the *Parousia* as a past, rather than a future event. A correct statement about his views and those that shared them **in the year 1879** would have to read:

"By 1879 the Bible Students had become convinced that Christ's Second Coming **had begun** his invisible presence."

With this in mind, note the use of the future tense in the following quotes:

By 1879 they had become sure that Christ's second coming would begin his invisible presence; that a hard time of world distress was ahead; that thereafter would follow a millennium—the thousand-year reign of Jehovah's Christ, to bring about restoration (restitution) of paradise conditions on earth with everlasting life for men of good will from all nations; and that the glad tidings of such "restitution" blessings should be heralded the world over. Their field ex-

¹⁰ In 1879, however, it became clear which "second coming" voice was being chosen by Jehovah to speak the pure language as his Witnesses. By then a small Bible-study group led by Charles Taze Russell was meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. They had become certain that Jesus' second coming would begin his invisible presence, that a time of world distress was ahead, and that this would be followed by the Thousand Year Reign of Christ that would restore Paradise on earth, with eternal life for obedient humans. In July 1879 these Bible Students began to publish the magazine now known as *The Watchtower*. Only 6,000 copies were distributed of the first issue. But "the hand of Jehovah" was with those Witnesses, for this journal is now published in 111 languages, with an average printing of over 15,000,000 for each issue. —Compare Acts 11:19-21.

The Watchtower January 15, 1955 p.45

The Watchtower May 1, 1991 p. 17

In both of the above examples, references to Christ's Second Coming made in the future tense are placed at the head of a list of other things that the Bible Students really were looking forward to. This combination virtually guarantees that the average reader will come away with an incorrect understanding minimizing or even wiping away entirely the significance of the 1874 date. Two additional examples can be seen below:

From the outset, the *Watch Tower* showed that at Christ's second coming his *parousia* would be an invisible presence as a mighty spirit person. (Matt. 24:3; 1 Pet. 3:18) Moreover, in keeping watch, this journal's early issues (March and June 1880) pointed to 1914 C.E. as a climactic year. It was to mark the close of the 2,520-year-long Gentile Times, during which non-Jewish nations would rule the earth without interference by any kingdom of God. —Luke 21:24, *Authorized Version*.

The Watchtower July 1, 1979 p. 5

³ So Jehovah's people of the 19th century correctly understood that the *pa-rou-si'a* of Christ would be an invisible one. They had also come to an understanding that the end of the Gentile Times would occur in the autumn of 1914. As spiritual enlightenment progressed, they later understood that Jesus Christ was enthroned in heaven as King of the Kingdom in that same year, 1914. —Proverbs 4:18; Daniel 7:13, 14; Luke 21:24; Revelation 11:15.

The Watchtower May 1, 1993 p. 11

Note the use of the term “would be” in both quotes. The temporal frame of reference in each case makes this usage misleading.

A second and slightly more subtle technique is implication through ambiguity. Briefly, this occurs when a number of statements that the target audience accepts as true are strung together in an equivocal manner. The result is that the audience believes afterwards that they were told something that in reality was never specifically stated at all. One of the most common ways to implement this technique is by grouping statements together that are “true” for entirely different reasons. The reading audience will likely fail to grasp the differences between the various frames of reference, either temporal or otherwise that make each statement true. This may sound complicated, but in actual practice, it is really quite simple. Consider for example, the following series of statements:

- a. *Bible chronology fixes the time of Christ's second presence*
- b. *This was understood as pointing to 1914.*
- c. *Zion's Watch Tower pointed out the significance of 1914 in the year 1879.*

In this example, all Jehovah's Witnesses accepted statement “a” as true. Statement “b” is true, but it did not become true until the early 1930's and therefore by the time the significance of the chronology was realized, it was actually pointing *backward* rather than *forward*. Statement “c” is also true but both the 19th century time frame as well as the meaning assigned to the “significance of 1914” are not the same as that of statement “b.” Simply put, the “**significance of 1914 in the year 1879**” had absolutely nothing to do with “**the time of Christ's second presence.**” But when the audience fails to grasp this, it is a virtual certainty that this sequence of statements will be interpreted to mean that the Bible chronology pointing to 1914 as the time of Christ's second presence was understood in 1879. All three of these elements can be seen in the following quote:

¹⁶ As for the time of Christ's second presence, Daniel's prophecy is again the one that gives the chronology for it. (Dan. 4:16) It was figured out as pointing to A.D. 1914, and *The Watchtower* called notice to the significance of 1914 in the year 1879.

The Watchtower November 1, 1952 p.658

Note that in this excerpt, the misdirection occurs not as a result of an out and out prevarication, but because the sudden and undisclosed shift in the frame of reference makes the series of statements ambiguous when read consecutively. A false impression although not specifically stated is still clearly conveyed.

Another example of this phenomenon can be seen in the following quote:

³¹ So, right up to the very brink of World War I, world leaders were forecasting an age of social progress and enlightenment. But the Bible had foretold the opposite—that the unprecedented war of 1914 to 1918 would highlight the beginning of “the last days.” (2 Timothy 3:1) The Bible also provided chronological evidence that 1914 would mark the birth of God’s heavenly Kingdom, to be followed by unprecedented world trouble.²⁸ But was anyone living back then aware that 1914 would be such a turning point in history?

³² Decades before that date, there was an organi-

zation of people who were making known the significance of 1914.

Life – How Did It Get Here? By Evolution Or By Creation? pp. 227 & 229

The problem with this quote lies in the sudden shift in how the “significance of 1914” is defined. An explanation of the significance as understood by Jehovah’s Witnesses today is immediately followed by a reference to its significance prior to 1914. When read consecutively, the idea is clearly conveyed that the “significance of 1914” as understood by the Bible Students “decades before that date” included the knowledge that “1914 would mark the birth of God’s heavenly Kingdom” and the beginning of “unprecedented world trouble” which again, is utter nonsense and completely false.

The following is a sampling of additional examples of implication through ambiguity as they have appeared in contemporary Witness literature:

er. The prophetic chronology contained at Daniel 4:10-17, 20-27 points to 1914 as the time for Jesus to begin ruling in the midst of his enemies. (Psalm 110:2) For decades in advance, anointed Christians keenly awaited that year. The first world war and accompanying woes on mankind furnished proof that Jesus was indeed enthroned as King in 1914. (Matthew 24:3, 7, 8) Shortly thereafter, the time having arrived for “judgment to start with the house of God,” Jesus would fulfill the promise to his anointed disciples who had fallen asleep in death: “I am coming again and will receive you home to myself.”—1 Peter 4:17; John 14:3.

The Watchtower July 1, 1996 p. 19

Although it is true that the Bible Students “keenly awaited” the year 1914, this had nothing to do with Christ’s enthronement as King.

A careful study of Bible prophecies, including Jesus' own prophecy regarding the last days, reveals that "the Lord's day" began in the history-making year 1914, yes, within this generation! So it was in 1914 that Jesus returned invisibly, without public fanfare and with only his faithful servants being aware of his return. In that year Jehovah gave Jesus the command to go subduing in the midst of his enemies!

The Watchtower May 15, 1991 p. 9

The "awareness" which Jesus' "faithful servants" had of his return had nothing to do with 1914.

That period of time proved to be 2,520 years. It began with the downfall of Jerusalem in the year 607 B.C.E. It concluded in the year 1914, and God's people on earth were able to calculate the date even before it came, although the details of just what would occur were not clear. But by being able to appreciate Jehovah's use of time features, his worshipers on earth realized that the "last days" foretold in God's Word had indeed begun. And the fact that the "time of the end" had commenced meant that the kingdom of God had been established in the heavens under Christ. All of this proved to be a great encouragement during those critical years, particularly when true worshipers were undergoing persecution.

The Watchtower May 1, 1968 p. 265

It is technically true that the Bible Students at or around the year 1914 believed that the "time of the end" had begun. However linking that event to the establishment of God's kingdom in the heavens under Christ in 1914 as the above excerpt does, clearly conveys the impression that they believed the "time of the end" had begun in 1914, which is completely untrue.

In the latter part of the 19th century, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., a group of sincere Bible students was organized and became the nucleus of God's modern-day witness class. These Christians drew attention to the Scriptural evidence that the conclusion of the present world system was at hand. True to Bible prophecy, this world's "conclusion" began in 1914 and was marked by the outbreak of the first world war. (Matthew 24:3, 7)

The Watchtower January 1, 2000 p. 8

Like the other examples, the problem here also revolves around the sudden shift from one sentence to the next in how basic terms are defined. In this instance it is a case of how one defines the "world's conclusion." As the reader should be well aware of by now, the 19th century Bible Students did not teach that 1914 would mark the *start* of an extended period that would culminate in Armageddon, they taught that this period would *end* in 1914. C.T. Russell in fact, thought that the first world war *was* the Armageddon of the scriptures. Mixing the two views by prefacing a statement on the accuracy of Bible prophecy indicating 1914 as the beginning of the world's conclusion with a reference to term as understood by the 19th century Bible Students serves no other purpose save the creation of an illusory picture of harmony between current and past beliefs through deliberate misdirection.

A third technique of creating a false impression without actually lying involves simply asking questions:

One feature of Jesus' composite sign is: "*Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.*" (Matthew 24:7) In 1914, World War I started. Jehovah's Witnesses of that decade were immediately on the alert. And why? In December 1879, some 35 years earlier, the *Watch Tower* magazine had said, based on Bible chronology, that 1914 would be a pivotal year in human history. Could this war, the first war on a truly worldwide scale, in which 28 nations were eventually involved and 14 million persons were killed, be the beginning of events fulfilling Jesus' composite sign of the end? Would the other features of the sign follow?

The Watchtower April 1, 1991 p. 5

As with the previous examples, note that nothing has been said that is untrue in the technical sense. Questions are asked, but nowhere is it stated that the Bible Students asked them. However only someone intimately familiar with the history of Jehovah's Witnesses would realize what the significance of 1914 actually was at that time, or know that by 1914 the Bible Students had been convinced that they were witnessing the events fulfilling Jesus' composite sign for years.

Occasionally, two of these techniques are skillfully combined. Note the following two examples:

¹⁶ Prior to that unforgettable year the anointed Christians proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom that was coming. Since that year God has supplied the theme of a new song. For in 1914 the heavenly Father and Source of theocratic government brought that glorious kingdom to birth by enthroning and crowning the Seed of his woman, the Heir of the covenant that was made with David for the everlasting kingdom. That was something new indeed.

The Watchtower April 15, 1958 p. 238

If by the phrase, "the good news of God's kingdom that was coming" the writer refers to the birth of an invisible heavenly kingdom, then his use of the future tense is inappropriate and misleading since the Bible Students did not teach this concept until 1925. If on the other hand, the writer is referring to the millennial earthly kingdom that the Bible Students actually were looking forward to, then the sudden undisclosed shift to the discussion of a heavenly kingdom makes the paragraph misleadingly ambiguous.

Russell and his associates also saw that Christ's presence was to be invisible, in spirit. The Gentile Times, during which period God's sovereignty was not being expressed through any government on the earth, were to end in 1914. Then God's Kingdom would be established in heaven. These teachings are identified with Jehovah's Witnesses today.

Russell and his companions announced these truths far and wide by talks and printed page. In July 1879 Russell began to publish *Zion's Watch Tower* (now called *The Watchtower*).

Jehovah's Witnesses Unitedly Doing God's Will Worldwide p. 8

It is possible that Russell accepted the idea of an invisible *Parousia* prior to 1874. Although he was not specific, Russell stated as much in the July 15, 1906 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower*. Unfortunately there is no material evidence to prove this claim. Regardless, Russell certainly never announced that Christ's presence **was to be** invisible "far and wide by talks and printed page." Further, the significance of 1914 in relation to the heavenly kingdom was that it would be *fully established* in that year, meaning that the full number of the anointed would be with Christ in heaven and that this kingdom would be ruling over earth. The claim that "These teachings are identified with Jehovah's Witnesses today" is therefore misleadingly ambiguous, as Jehovah's Witnesses today do not believe that those events happened in 1914.

It would be a mistake however to conclude from the foregoing that the writers of the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses are ignorant of the history of their own organization. This is most certainly not the case. As the foreword to the 1993 publication *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom* observes, "Certainly, no one knows their modern-day history better than they themselves do." Correct statements about some of the dates that have been covered thus far can be found within the corpus of contemporary Witness literature.²⁴

WTB&TS writers also at times, exhibit an intimate knowledge of their period literature and do not hesitate to quote from it in support of the point or points they wish to make. The excerpt below for example, quotes from the March 1880 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower*.

God's King Enthroned!

In the first century, John the Baptizer announced the imminent appearance of Jesus as God's designated King. In the 19th century, the time had come to announce the imminent appearance of that King in heavenly power. Accordingly, in its March 1880 issue, *Zion's Watch Tower* declared: "The Times of the Gentiles' extend to 1914, and the heavenly kingdom will not have full sway till then."

Thus, the group today known as Jehovah's Witnesses went on public record well over a hundred years ago in making known that the year 1914 would mark the beginning of God's Kingdom. The enthronement of God's King was a preliminary step toward the final snuffing out of false religion's flickering candle,

so that it might no longer obscure divine light.

As the 19th century drew to a close, Christendom's religion had no garments to identify itself as God's servant. It deserved to be abandoned by God. Its time of judgment was drawing near. Learn more about this in our next issue.

Awake! October 22, 1989 pp. 20,21

Unfortunately however, this was only a partial quotation. The original article, written by J. H. Paton, entitled "One Body One Spirit One Hope" was a discussion as to the degree to which the "Saints" would participate in the coming conquest of the earthly "Gentile" kingdoms. The sentence in its entirety reads:

"The Times of the Gentiles" extend to 1914, and the heavenly kingdom will not have full sway till then, but as a "Stone" the kingdom of God is set up "in the days of these (ten gentile) kings," and by consuming them it becomes a universal kingdom—a "great mountain and fills the whole Earth." Dan. ii. 35-44.

Zion's Watch Tower March 1880 p. 2 [Reprints p. 82]

The complete sentence with its accompanying scripture caption does not support the idea that the phrase "full sway" meant either "the beginning of God's Kingdom" or "the enthronement of God's King" which events Russell dated to 1878. Neither did it mean, "fully set up in heaven" as Jehovah's Witnesses have understood the concept since 1925. Russell never taught that 1914 would see a heavenly establishment of God's Kingdom.

²⁴ For accurate statements about:

1874 See *The Watchtower* August 15, 1974 p. 507
Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom pp. 47, 133, 631
God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached pp. 188, 189

1878 See *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* p. 632

As it was used in the source material the term “full sway” was an explicit reference to the point in time when the “stone” crushes the “dream image” and therefore meant complete control over the earth.²⁵ Although Russell and his associates believed that this would occur in 1914, this is an event that Jehovah’s Witnesses are still waiting for.²⁶

Quoting a sentence only partially, punctuating it as if it were complete and then failing to indicate this omission by ellipses is not a terribly accurate or honest quoting practice. When it is done solely for the purpose of forcing a statement out of the source material that in reality, it doesn’t make at all, this can only be viewed as deliberate, calculated manipulation. This practice cannot be ascribed to human error or carelessness no matter how charitable we are willing to be. Yet this particular reference has been reproduced in this context over and over in Witness literature.²⁷

Another example of source manipulation occurs in the 1959 publication *Jehovah’s Witnesses In The Divine Purpose*. Discussing the book *The Diving Plan Of The Ages*, the following statements are made on page 31:

Then, near the end of the book, appeared a chapter called “The Day of Jehovah” that is highly significant even in our day. Note this brief excerpt:

The “Day of Jehovah” is the name of that period of time in which God’s kingdom, under Christ, is to be gradually “set up” . . . while the kingdoms of this world are passing away and Satan’s power and influence over men are being bound. It is everywhere described as a dark day of intense trouble and distress and perplexity upon mankind. . . .

That some of the saints will still be in the flesh during at least a part of this burning time seems possible. [This has proved to be true.] Their position in it, however, will differ from that of others, not so much in that they will be miraculously preserved (though it is distinctly promised that their bread and water shall be sure), but in the fact that, being instructed from God’s Word, they will not feel the same anxiety and hopeless dread that will overspread the world. [Here again is exactly the picture of Jehovah’s witnesses in these present times since the first world war.] . . . The troubles of this “Day of Jehovah” will give opportunity for preaching the good tidings of coming good, such as is seldom afforded, and blessed are they who will follow the footsteps of the Master, and be the good Samaritans binding up the wounds and pouring in the oil and wine of comfort and cheer.¹

Although this was still decades before the first world war, it is surprising how accurately the events that finally took place were actually foreseen.

²⁵ See *The Time Is At Hand* p. 78 photographically reproduced on page 14 of this paper

²⁶ *Pay Attention To Danie’s Prophecy*, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1999, pp. 61,62

²⁷ See for example *Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy* Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1999, p. 261; *The Watchtower* April 1, 1984, p. 6; April 15, 1984, pp. 3-4; July 1, 1973, p. 402; August 1, 1971, p. 468 *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1958, p. 170

The problem here is that Russell did not “foresee” anything that can truthfully be said to be relevant to the year 1959. As Russell used the term, the “Day of Jehovah” was synonymous with the “Day of Vengeance,” “Day of Wrath,” and “Time of Great Trouble.” This was quite clear in the chapter heading:

STUDY XV

THE DAY OF JEHOVAH

THE “DAY OF JEHOVAH,” THE “DAY OF VENGEANCE,” THE “DAY OF WRATH”—A TIME OF GREAT TROUBLE—ITS CAUSE—THE BIBLE’S TESTIMONY REGARDING IT—ITS FIRE AND STORM, ITS SHAKING AND MELTING, SHOWN TO BE SYMBOLIC—DAVID’S TESTIMONY—THE REVELATOR’S TESTIMONY—THE PRESENT SITUATION AND THE FUTURE OUTLOOK AS VIEWED BY THE OPPOSING PARTIES, CAPITALISTS AND WAGE-WORKERS—A REMEDY WHICH WILL NOT SUCCEED—THE VEIL LIFTED AND LIGHT ADMITTED JUST IN DUE TIME—THE PROOF OF THIS—THE CONDITION OF THE SAINTS DURING THE TROUBLE, AND THEIR PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD IT.

THE “Day of Jehovah” is the name of that period of time in which God’s kingdom, under Christ, is to be gradually “set up” in the earth, while the kingdoms of this world are passing away and Satan’s power and influence over men are being bound. It is everywhere described as a dark day of intense trouble and distress and perplexity upon mankind.

The Divine Plan Of The Ages p. 307
(Reprint of 1916 edition)

All of these terms described the “forty years of trouble” inclusive of the period between 1874 and 1914.²⁸ As can be seen below, Russell was quite clear on this point as well as his intention to elaborate further in the next volume, much of which information has been reproduced for the reader already:

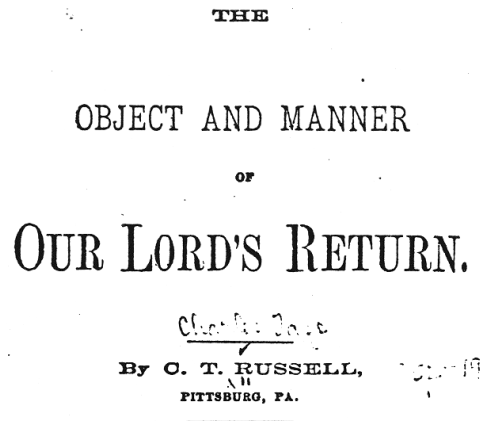
Another thought with reference to this Day of Trouble is that it has come just in *due* time—God’s due time. In the next volume of this work, evidence is adduced from the testimony of the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, as well as from Jesus and the apostolic prophets of the New Testament, which shows clearly and unmistakably that this Day of Trouble is located chronologically in the beginning of the glorious Millennial reign of Messiah. It is this necessary preparation for the coming work of restitution in the Millennial age that precipitates the trouble.

The Divine Plan Of The Ages p. 336
(Reprint of 1916 edition)

²⁸ See pages 20 and 21 of this paper.

Therefore Russell was explicitly referring to the time period *prior* to 1914. The “saints” of whom he spoke were his contemporaries, adults living in the year 1886, not persons who would live seventy-three years later. The author or authors of *Jehovah’s Witnesses In The Divine Purpose* carefully chose comments about the “Day of Jehovah” out of 36 pages of material²⁹ and presented them as a contiguous excerpt in an attempt to claim that Russell had foreseen the period *following* 1914. Yet the omitted material clearly contradicts that notion. The year 1914 was the *end point* for the “Day of Jehovah.”

A different type of manipulation involves the publication date of an important document in Witness history, *The Object And Manner Of Our Lord’s Return*. The reader can see from the frontispiece that the publication date is clearly 1877.



“Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with...the cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares.”—Luke 21: 34.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.:
OFFICE OF HERALD OF THE MORNING.
1877.

In harmony with this, the 1930 – 1960 *Watch Tower Publications Index* listed 1877 as the publication date for *Object And Manner*:

- Booklets**
 1877, *The Object and Manner of the Lord’s Return*: jp 15; w55 7; w49 6, 196
 1881, *Food for Thinking Christians*: jp 25, 30; w55 47-8; qm 302-3
Tabernacle Teachings: jp 25; w55 47; qm 303
 1893, “*Thy Word Is Truth*”
 1894, *Harvest Siftings*: jp 71; w55 6
 1896, *What Say the Scriptures About Hell?*

(p. 306)

The 1877 publication date is of interest, because this booklet is *the* crucial piece of evidence that would substantiate the idea that the young Russell had ever looked to the *Parousia* as a future rather than a past event. As should be obvious at this point, a publication date of 1876 or later lends no support to this idea. However this was to change in the mid-1970’s when the *1975 Yearbook Of Jehovah’s Witnesses* simply moved the publication date back four years to 1873:

²⁹ The excerpt was taken from pages 307, 338 and 342

Earnestly endeavoring to counteract such erroneous teachings, in 1873 twenty-one-year-old C. T. Russell wrote and published at his own expense a booklet entitled "The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return." Some 50,000 copies were published and it enjoyed a wide distribution.

(p. 36)

The 1930 – 1985 *Watch Tower Publications Index* followed suit, listing the "new" publication date for *Object And Manner*:

Booklets

1873, *The Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return*: yb75 36; jp 15; w55 7; w49 6, 196

1881, *Food for Thinking Christians*: yb75 40; yb73 88-9; jp 25, 30; w55 47-8; qm55 302-3

Tabernacle Shadows of the "Better Sacrifices": yb75 43

The Tabernacle and Its Teachings: yb75 40; jp 25; w55 47; qm55 302-3

1882, *Outlines of Sermons*:

(Page 916)

Unfortunately, an 1873 publication date simply cannot be reconciled with the material within the booklet itself:

62 OUR LORD'S RETURN.

Son of man the world will not know, yet the church, ye brethren, are expected to know; not from outward sign but from the light shining upon the pathway. Our Father undertakes to furnish the light as fast as it is due, but we must walk in it if we would not be in darkness.

The day of the Lord is frequently referred to as a snare or trap into which those without light go unawares. *As a thief it comes stealthily.* But some think as a thief means suddenly; we think not, but if it does, then "ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should come upon you *suddenly.*" When Jesus said: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." It seems as though he meant, if you are watching you shall know. Does it not?



But it is not my object in this pamphlet to call your attention more fully to the TIME of the second advent than I have above, in answering some of the chief objections to the investigation of it. (Those interested in knowing the evidences as to the time, I would refer to Dr. N. H. Barbour, editor of the "Herald of the Morning," Rochester, N. Y.) I simply add that I am deeply impressed, and think, not without good scriptural evidence, that the Master is come and is now inspecting the guests to the marriage. (Matt. 22: 11.) That the *harvest* is progressing, the separation (mental) between wheat and tares now going on, and that the two in the field, mill and bed may be bodily separated at any moment, the wise virgins go into the marriage, and the door to the *high calling* be forever shut.

Even the outward signs seen by the world seem to point to the fact that a great dispensational change may be near. From their stand-point the last century would seem to be the "day of [God's] preparation." Improvements and inventions progress as never before. Now we are beginning to realize that these inventions, which in and of themselves are blessings, are, under present conditions of society, a curse. Every machine made, after a certain limit, tends to decrease the demand for each mechanic's labor; supply and demand regulates the wages he receives. To-day there is employment for less than three-fourths of the industrial labor of this as well

Note Russell's explicit reference to Barbour's publication. *Herald of the Morning* did not begin publication until June of 1875, and its predecessor, *The Midnight Cry and Herald of the Morning* ceased publication in October of 1874. Also, according to Russell himself, he did not come across this publication or contact N. H. Barbour until January of 1876. Further, Russell made the statement, "the Master **is come** and.... the harvest **is progressing**," neither of which would have been said until after the harvest began, "in October,

1874." It would therefore seem extremely unlikely that *"The Object and Manner Of Our Lord's Return"* could possibly have been published prior to 1877.

Why then was the publication date moved from 1877 to 1873? Had new information come to light? Had an earlier printing been found? Or was this simply a case of manipulation? It appears that the latter was the case, as the 1993 publication *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* reset the publication date to 1877.³⁰

³⁰ See pages 47, 557, 575

Another area of interest has to do with the fact that the boundaries Nelson Barbour calculated for the 2,520 prophetic years were incorrect. Originally, he thought that 536 BC was the first year of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon. By adding the seventy years to this date, he came up with 606 BC as the date for the desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and by subtracting 606 from 2520, he came up with 1914 AD as the end of the Gentile Times. However since there is no "zero year" between 1 BC and 1 AD, one cannot simply subtract 606 from 2520 to arrive at 1914 when the boundary between BC and AD has been crossed. Sooner or later this problem would have to be dealt with and there were only two real ways to do this. Either the end point of the 2520 years could be moved from 1914 to 1915, or the starting point could be moved from 606 to 607. It should also be realized that if the adjustment were made to 606, than a further adjustment to the 536 date as the end point of the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation would also be required.

Charles Taze Russell had been confronted with this problem as early as 1904, and had addressed this topic in a sermon given on January 11 of that year. He again addressed this problem in the December 1, 1912 issue of *The Watch Tower*. As can be seen in the following excerpt, Russell was not overly concerned with a discrepancy of one year, allowing that the date for the end of the Gentile Times could be either 1914 or 1915.

AN OPEN QUESTION

Coming now to a very critical examination of the date 536 B. C., there is an open question: Shall we call it 536 full years to A. D., or 535 full years? The difference in time between October 1st and January 1st would be the fourth of a year; hence our query is respecting $536\frac{1}{4}$ or $535\frac{1}{4}$ years B. C. What is the proper method of calculation, is in dispute. If we count the first year B. C. as 0, then the date $536\frac{1}{4}$ B. C. is the proper one for the end of the seventy years of captivity. But if we begin to reckon it by counting the first year before the Christian era as B. C. 1, then evidently the desolation ended $535\frac{1}{4}$ years B. C.

As to the methods of counting, Encyclopaedia Britannica says, "Astronomers denote the year which preceded the first of our era as 0 and the year previous to that as B. C. 1—the previous year B. C. 2, and so on."

Whichever of these ways we undertake to calculate the matter the difference between the results is one year. The seventy years of Jewish captivity ended October, 536 B. C., and if there were $536\frac{1}{4}$ years B. C., then to complete the 2,520 years' cycle of the Times of the Gentiles would require $1913\frac{3}{4}$ years of A. D., or to October, 1914. But if the other way of reckoning were used, then there were but $535\frac{1}{4}$ years of the period B. C., and the remainder of the 2,520 years would reach to A. D., $1914\frac{3}{4}$ years, otherwise October, 1915.

[Reprints p. 5141]

However after 1914 had passed, and the date was, doctrinally speaking, pretty well "set in stone," the fact that no "zero year" is included at the beginning of our Christian era was simply ignored.³¹ It was not until the year 1943 that any attempt was made to resolve this problem. This appeared in the newly released publication *The Truth Shall Make You Free*

In Nebuchadnezzar's time the year began counting from the fall of the year, or about October 1, our time. Since he destroyed Jerusalem in the summer of 606 B.C., that year had its beginning in the fall of 607 B.C. and its ending in the fall of 606 B.C.

Inasmuch as the count of the Gentile "seven times" began its first year at the fall of 607 B.C., it is simple to calculate when they end. From the fall of 607 B.C. to the fall of B.C. 1 is exactly 606 years. From the fall of B.C. 1 to the fall of A.D. 1 is one year, do not forget. Hence from the fall of B.C. 1 to the fall of A.D. 1914 is 1,914 years. Add now 606 years and 1,914 years, and the sum total is 2,520 years, ending in the fall of A.D. 1914.

The Truth Shall Make You Free p. 239

While the resolution of discrepancies through an appeal to ancient calendaring systems is certainly nothing new in the field of end times chronology, there are still some interesting aspects to this explanation that should be noted. First of all, notice that Jerusalem's fall is explicitly stated to have occurred in 606 BC. The explanation above makes no attempt to relocate that event and simply holds that, for reasons that are left unstated, the seventy years of desolation should synchronize with the ancient calendar and therefore should be counted from the autumn of the *previous* year. Also worthy of note is the focus upon the fall rather than the destruction of the city. Witness publications, both before and since, have consistently maintained that it is the latter which is the pivotal event.

To any that stopped and thought about it, both ideas, first that there was any need to synchronize with the "vulgar year," and second, that the seventy years of desolation should begin their count a year before the city was actually desolated must have seemed somewhat farfetched. The very next year a slightly different explanation was given. This appeared as a footnote in the book *The Kingdom Is At Hand*.

The following chronology shows the date of Jerusalem's destruction as in the year 607 before Christ. This recognizes the fact that the ancient reckoning of the vulgar year began in the fall. In other words, the vulgar year 606 B.C. really began in the fall of 607 B.C. As stated on page 239 (§ 1) of "*The Truth Shall Make You Free*": "Inasmuch as the count of the Gentile 'seven times' began its first year at the fall of 607 B.C., it is simple to calculate when they end. From the fall of 607 B.C. to the fall of B.C. 1 is exactly 606 years. . . . Hence from the fall of B.C. 1 to the fall of A.D. 1914 is 1,914 years."

The Kingdom Is At Hand p. 171

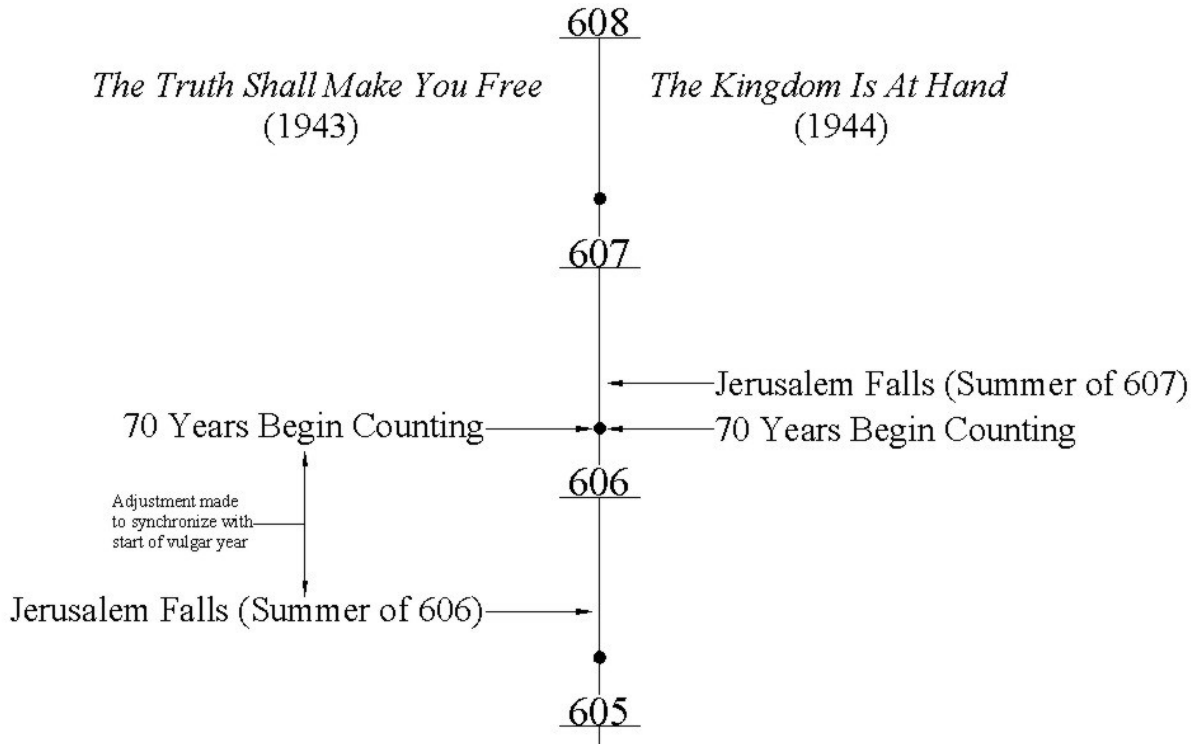
³¹ See for example *The Harp Of God* pp. 229,244; *Comfort For The Jews* pp. 44,58,59; *Deliverance* pp. 101,246; *Creation* pp. 293,303; *Government* pp. 91,164,166,167,169,249,277; *Life* pp. 107,128,129; *Light* vol. I p. 195; *Vindication* vol. I pp. 20,21,47,48,50,123,296,313; *Vindication* vol. III pp. 104,174; *Preservation* p. 15; *Jehovah* pp. 9,342; *Riches* pp. 60,172; *Enemies* p. 217; *The New World* p. 77

The relevant portion of the chronology referenced in this quote appeared on page 175:

[Jerusalem destroyed in fifth month (Ab)] 2 Ki. 25:2, 8; Jer. 52:12-14	OBADIAH Obad. 11-14 (?) JEREMIAH Jer. 43:8; 44:1 DANIEL Dan. 2:1, 19 EZEKIEL Ezek. 40:1 DANIEL Dan. 5:13-31; 11:1	607 607 to 593 539 537 535 520	[Land of Judah abandoned and left desolate in seventh month (Ethanim)]. 2 Ki. 25:22-26; Jer. 41:1-3; 43:1-7 [Babylon falls and Darius rules] [First year of Cyrus] 2 Chron. 36:20-23 [Third year of Cyrus] [Second year of Darius II]
[Jerusalem's 70-year desolation ends] 2 Chron. 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1; 3:1	DANIEL Dan. 10:1 HAGGAI Hag. 1:1 ZECHARIAH Zech. 1:1; Ezra 5:1		

The Kingdom Is At Hand p. 175

On this basis it can be seen that there are serious discrepancies between the 1944 and 1943 explanations. First of all, a technical distinction as to the point in time from which the seventy years should be counted does not in any way justify physically moving the date of Jerusalem's fall. Yet no other reason was offered for making this change save an appeal to the 1943 explanation. Secondly, note that in the chart above, the fall of Jerusalem is located in the month of Ab, a summer month that corresponds to the latter half of July and first half of August in our calendar. This adjustment cannot be justified in the name of synchronization with the ancient calendar year for the simple reason that this places the fall of Jerusalem *before* the start of



the seventy years, in the summer of the year that by this self same explanation, technically began in the autumn of 608 BC. Although not specifically stated, it would appear that the pivotal event was once again the desolation, rather than the fall of the city. The one time shift in 1943 was necessary for the plausibility of the explanation, but becomes a mere pretense when the calendar is rolled back exactly a full year. This can easily be seen in the chart above. Taken together, these two explanations amount to little more than a "smoke and mirrors" method of preserving the 1914 date and it is difficult to imagine that any thinking Witness could have contemplated them without a great deal of consternation.

Eight years later, an entirely different explanation appeared, one that adjusted the date for Jerusalem's fall indirectly by relocating the terminus for the 70 years:

²¹ At this point some will inquire why Charles T. Russell in 1877 used the date 606 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem whereas *The Watchtower* of late years has been using 607 B.C. This is because, in the light of modern scholarship, two slight errors were discovered to have been made which cancel each other out and make for the same result, namely, 1914. Concerning the first error, Russell and others considered 1 B.C. to A.D. 1 as being two years whereas in fact this is only one year because, as has been said above, there is no "zero" year in the B.C.-A.D. system for counting years. "The Christian era began, not with no year, but with a 1st year."—*The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 102.

²² The second error had to do with not beginning the count of the 2,520 years at the right point in view of historic facts and

circumstances. Almost all early Bible chronology ties in with secular history at the year 539 B.C., in which year the fall of Babylon to Darius and Cyrus of the Medes and the Persians occurred. In late years several cuneiform tablets have been discovered pertaining to the fall of Babylon which peg both Biblical and secular historic dates. The one tablet known as the "Nabunaid Chronicle" gives the date for the fall of Babylon which specialists have ascertained as being October 12-13, 539 B.C., Julian Calendar, or October 6-7, 539 B.C., according to our present Gregorian Calendar.* This tablet also says that Cyrus made his triumphant entry into Babylon 16 days after its fall to his army. Thus his *accession year* commenced in October, 539 B.C. However, in another cuneiform tablet called "Strassmaier, *Cyrus* No. 11" Cyrus' first *regnal year* is mentioned and was determined to have begun March 17-18, 538 B.C., and to have concluded March 4-5, 537 B.C.† It was in this first *regnal year* of Cyrus that he issued his decree to permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1:1) The decree may have been made in late 538 B.C. or before March 4-5, 537 B.C.

²³ In either case this would have given sufficient time for the large party of 49,897 Jews to organize their expedition and to make their long four-month journey from Babylon to Jerusalem to get there by September 29-30, 537 B.C., the first of the seventh Jewish month, to build their altar to Jehovah as recorded at Ezra 3:1-3. Inasmuch as September 29-30, 537 B.C., officially ends the seventy years of desolation as recorded at 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, so the beginning of the desolation of the land must have officially begun to be count-

To understand exactly what had happened here, a little background is required. As can be seen in the following excerpt, Barbour's original claim was that the 536 BC date was derived from Ptolemy's kinglist:

The fact that the first year of Cyrus was B. C. 536, is based on Ptolemy's canon, supported by the eclipses by which the dates of the Grecian and Persian era have been regulated. And the accuracy of Ptolemy's canon is now accepted by all the scientific and literary world. Hence, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the Christian era, there is but one chronology.

Three Worlds And The Harvest Of This World p. 194

However in waving his hand before the difficulties of biblical chronology,³² Barbour quite apparently failed to realize that this kinglist allows from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to the last year of Nabonidus, only sixty-six years for the entire Neo-Babylonian period. This fact was not lost on Russell, who simply rejected not only those portions of the kinglist with which he did not agree, but all other methods of secularly establishing biblical chronology as well.³³ Paradoxically however, he continued to insist that 536 BC was a reliable date.³⁴ As with the "zero year," this problem was completely ignored throughout the entire Rutherford era. All of the Society's publications up to and including *The Truth Shall Make You Free* list the 606 BC/536 BC anchor points for Jerusalem's seventy years of desolation. The year 536 BC was held to be both the first year of Cyrus and the terminus of the seventy years. The 1944 book, *The Kingdom Is At Hand*, adjusted the anchor points to 607 BC/537 BC, but as has been pointed out, the explanation that was given did not justify the adjustment that was actually made. The November 1, 1949 issue of *The Watchtower* gives 537 BC as the end of the seventy years, but states that this was the year in which the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt,³⁵ which would move the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus back to some unstated point prior to this. Finally, by accepting the secularly established date of 539 BC for the fall of Babylon, the 1952 explanation makes an additional adjustment, but retains the 537 BC date for the end of the seventy years through the assertion that the Jews were repatriated in the fall of that year. Although there is not sufficient evidence to justify setting the time of this event with such precision,³⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses have accepted this explanation ever since.

Jehovah's Witnesses today portray the resolution of the "zero year" problem thusly:

* Provisionally, those Bible Students had not realized that there is no zero year between "B.C." and "A.D." Later, when research made it necessary to adjust B.C. 606 to 607 B.C.E., the zero year was also eliminated, so that the prediction held good at "A.D. 1914."—See "*The Truth Shall Make You Free*," published by the Watch Tower Society in 1943, page 239.

Revelation - Its Grand Climax At Hand! p. 105

³² Barbour claimed on page 68 of *Three Worlds* that the entire chronology of the Bible could be worked out in one evening with pencil and paper.

³³ *Zion's Watch Tower*, May 15, 1896, pp. 104,105 [Reprints 1975]

³⁴ *Ibid* pp. 104,105,113 [Reprints 1975,1980]; *Zion's Watch Tower*, October 1, 1904, p. 297 [Reprints 3437]

³⁵ On page 326, the following statement was made: "She was trodden down under the Gentile heel and she never afterward regained absolute independence from the Gentile heel under a ruler of King David's line, even after she and here temple were rebuilt seventy years later, in 537 B.C."

³⁶ Carefully read paragraph 23 of the May 1, 1952 issue of *The Watchtower* appearing on page 63 of this paper. Note that it is simply assumed that the Jews returned to their homeland in the fall of 537 BC.

This above quote, though succinct, contains a number of obvious inaccuracies:

First: The early Bible Students had certainly been aware of the lack of a "zero year." This simply did not become a problem of any significance until after 1914.

Second: The explanations that were given *at the time the adjustment was actually made* cannot truthfully be portrayed today as the product of "research." Research became necessary only after the fact as a means of replacing these faulty, embarrassing explanations and this took nearly a decade to work out.

Third: Like the 1952 explanation, this quote implies that the resolution of the "zero year" problem involved two errors that simply cancelled each other out. In reality three separate errors were by degrees, made to cancel each other out, and each time, the result was the preservation of the 1914 date:

1. Failing to account for the lack of a "zero year."
2. Assigning the wrong year for the fall of Babylon.
3. Assigning the wrong event as the terminus for the seventy-years.

Fourth: This quote pretends that a one-time adjustment was made in 1943 and everything has been fine since then. This is untrue.

Thus far, little has been said about the largest and most recent historical work produced by the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom*. Billed at the time of its release in 1993 as "objective and candid,"³⁷ this book afforded WTB&TS writers and policy makers with a unique opportunity to make a clean break with what can only be viewed as nearly half a century of historical idealism.

In this respect, there are certainly positive things that can be said about *Proclaimers*. One that is immediately noticeable is its forthrightness concerning things that have at times, evidently caused the Witnesses some degree of embarrassment. One example involves C. T. Russell's connections with a number of prominent Adventist figures of his day such as Jonas Wendell, George Storrs and George W. Stetson. It is a fact easily documentable from the period literature that Russell openly acknowledged his indebtedness to these men on certain points and quite apparently considered them to be his Christian brothers. The *Proclaimers* book frankly acknowledges this fact.³⁸

As has been pointed out already, the *Proclaimers* book honestly acknowledges the 1877 publication date of *The Object And Manner of Our Lord's Return*. Further, the *Proclaimers* book accurately describes not only the doctrinal significance attached to the year 1874,³⁹ but that of 1878 as well, the *only* such instance in the modern literature of Jehovah's Witnesses.⁴⁰

Another example involves Nelson H. Barbour. Despite the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses today are indebted to Barbour for the one single chronological element taught during the entire Russell era that they still accept as valid, Witness publications typically have managed only a few generally derisive comments about Barbour when and if they even spoke of him at all. Barbour's position in the disagreement with Russell over the mechanics of the Ransom has routinely been twisted into a rejection of the Ransom itself.⁴¹ For years, instead of giving credit where credit is due, Jehovah's Witness writers have attempted to claim that C. T. Russell was actually the author of the 2,520 year time calculation. A typical example can be seen in the following excerpt:

A Day for a Year

How do we know that the "seven times" are 2,520 years? The calculations are made in a way similar to

**1914 marked the time when
Christ began to rule as King
in God's heavenly government**

those made by the Watch Tower Society's first president, C. T. Russell, in 1877 and recorded in the book he coauthored entitled *The Three Worlds*.

The Watchtower April 1, 1984 p. 7

³⁷ This was stated in the discourse at the time of its release, in *The Watchtower* May 1, 1994 p. 16 and in the publisher's foreword to the book itself.

³⁸ See pages 45-46

³⁹ See pages 47, 631-632

⁴⁰ See pages 631-632

⁴¹ See for example *The Watchtower* March 1, 1989 p. 23; January 1, 1955 p. 8. Barbour explained his position at length in the August 1877 issue of *Herald Of The Morning* pp. 26-28. Although Barbour's move towards Socinianism proved to be incompatible with what was in many respects, an essentially Arminian outlook on the part of Russell, Barbour certainly never rejected the doctrine of the Ransom itself.

In reality, the calculations in question were entirely Barbour's.⁴² Further, while in regard to *Three Worlds*, it is true that Russell both financed and "gave some time and thought to its preparation,"⁴³ he was not its coauthor and in point of fact did not ever refer to himself as such. *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom* marks a refreshing departure from previous treatments of the subject by presenting a more accurate presentation of the difference of opinion between Russell and Barbour concerning the Ransom.⁴⁴ Even though it is strongly implied that Russell independently arrived at the 1914 date at around the same time as Barbour,⁴⁵ the indirect acknowledgement that Barbour's application of the 2,520 years to the period of 606 B.C. to 1914 A.D. predates anything Russell wrote on the subject⁴⁶ is nevertheless, a unique occurrence within contemporary Witness literature.

Despite the greater candor however, *Proclaimers* is no more an objective look at Witness history than the Witness publication *Life How Did It Get Here? By Evolution Or By Creation?* is an objective look at evolutionary theory. And this is not simply a case of a human failing on the part of the author or authors to hold their personal feelings, prejudices and doctrinal bias in abeyance. *Proclaimers* does not provide the reader with anything resembling an orderly chronological record of events, instead selectively presenting the history of Jehovah's Witnesses as a tool in the promotion of the theological precepts peculiar to Jehovah's Witnesses. These include the idea that Jehovah's Witnesses are God's chosen people, that they are fulfilling a unique, important and privileged role both as proclaimers of God's Kingdom, and His sole channel in the dissemination of Bible truth today, and that their efforts are divinely directed.

Since Jehovah's Witnesses do not actually claim to be divinely inspired, they hold these beliefs not because God or Christ have in some tangible fashion, told them so, but as an inference drawn from their perception of events in conjunction with their own unique interpretation of Scripture. Consequently, this is not only an extremely complimentary organizational self-portrait, it is one that is almost entirely subjective as well.

This observation is not made as a criticism *per se* because in truth we would hardly expect a book written by Jehovah's Witnesses, and for Jehovah's Witnesses to present anything other than a pleasant picture. Although it is problematic that a book that is not objective and quite evidently not intended to be would be billed as such, the real issue with *Proclaimers* is not its lack of objectivity, but its lack of accuracy. Both in content and execution, the same pattern of dissemblance documentable in contemporary Witness literature is present in *Proclaimers* as well. This pattern ranges from statements that are simply misleading to those that are demonstrably false. For example, in regard to where the Bible Students immediately following 1914 imagined themselves to be in the stream of time, *Proclaimers* states

As the events following 1914 began to unfold and the Bible Students compared these with what the Master had foretold, they gradually came to appreciate that they were living in the last days of the old system and that they had been since 1914.

Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom p. 137

⁴² Barbour clearly stated his belief that the Gentile times were a 2520 year period extending from 606 B.C. to 1914 A.D. in the September 1875 issue of *Herald Of The Morning*, several months before he met Russell. Russell by his own testimony had soundly rejected Adventist chronology and date setting prior to meeting Barbour.

⁴³ Charles Taze Russell, *Harvest Gatherings And Siftings* The Watch Tower; July 15, 1906 p. 230

⁴⁴ See page 131 as well as page 620 where a page from both Barbour's and Russell's opposing articles as they appeared in the *Herald of The Morning* are partially reproduced.

⁴⁵ See p 134

⁴⁶ See page 135 and 622

As was plainly stated in the prospectus appearing on the first page of the July 1879 issue of *Zion's Watch Tower*, the Bible Students had thought from the very beginning that they were living in "the last days."⁴⁷ Consequently the most that can truthfully be said is that the Bible Students gradually came to appreciate that "the last days" had started in 1914 instead of 1799 as they had originally thought.

In regard to significance the Bible Students attached to the expiration of the Gentile Times, the following statement is made on page 135:

But what would the end of the Gentile Times mean?

The Bible Students were not completely sure what would happen. They were convinced that it would not result in a burning up of the earth and a blotting out of human life. Rather, they knew it would mark a significant point in regard to divine rulership. At first, they thought that by that date the Kingdom of God would have obtained full, universal control. When that did not occur, their confidence in the Bible prophecies that marked the date did not waver. They concluded that, instead, the date had marked only a starting point as to Kingdom rule.

Jehovah's Witness Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom p. 135

No justification accompanies the idea that the Bible Students "were not completely sure of what would happen" save the fact that they revised their expectations when these went unrealized in 1914. Yet this fact by itself does nothing to establish what their attitude had actually been prior to this date. In reality, the seven point enumeration of the expectations attached to 1914 appearing on pages 76 - 78 of *The Time Is At Hand* was very specific and distinct. The discussion abounded with words and phrases like "facts," "proof," "established truth," "Bible evidence," and "firmly established in the Scriptures."⁴⁸ *Proclaimers*, which on this question, carefully avoids actually quoting the period literature, asserts that the Bible Students simply "thought," "suggested," or "earnestly hoped," that this or that might happen but "were not completely sure."⁴⁹ Thus the significance attached to the end of the Gentile Times is wrapped up in false and misleading statements which completely obscure the aggressive message preached by the Bible Students for over a quarter century prior to 1914.

In discussing the views of C. T. Russell and his associates, *Proclaimers*, like virtually all other Witness literature, uses the future tense to describe events that were not in fact regarded as such:

Noteworthy too is what Brother Russell did with other highly significant truths that he learned from God's Word. He discerned that Christ would return as a glorious spirit person, invisible to human eyes. As early as 1876, he recognized that the year 1914 would mark the end of the Gentile Times. (Luke 21:24, *KJ*) Other Bible scholars had likewise perceived some of these things and had advocated them. But Brother Russell used all his resources to give them international publicity on a scale then unequalled by any other individual or group.

Jehovah's Witness Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom p. 622

Russell did not at any point attempt to give international publicity to the idea that Christ *would return* invisibly. As has been explained and documented at length, Russell's message was that Christ *had returned*.

⁴⁷ See pages 8 and 9 of this paper. See also pages 121, 718 and 724 of *Proclaimers*.

⁴⁸ *The Time Is At Hand* pages 76 - 102

⁴⁹ *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers Of God's Kingdom* p. 135

Proclaimers also attempts to perpetuate the fiction common in Witness literature, that Russell and the Bible Students had expected a *heavenly* rather than an *earthly* establishment of God's Kingdom in 1914. One such example occurs on page 635:

In its issue of October 15, 1913, *The Watch Tower* had stated: "According to the best chronological reckoning of which we are capable, it is *approximately* that time—whether it be October, 1914, or later. Without dogmatizing, we are looking for certain events: (1) The termination of the Gentile Times—Gentile supremacy in the world—and (2) For the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom in the world."

How would this come about? It seemed reasonable to the Bible Students then that it would include the glorification of any still on earth who had been chosen by God to share in the heavenly Kingdom with Christ.

Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom p. 635

Although it is true that Russell expected the fully glorification of the church in 1914, this is not what he was here referring to. As the complete quotation clearly shows, Russell's use of the term "the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom in the world" was an explicit reference to that kingdom's *earthly establishment*.

We say that according to the best chronological reckoning of which we are capable, it is approximately that time—whether it be October, 1914, or later. Without dogmatizing, we are looking for certain events: (1) The termination of the Gentile times—Gentile supremacy in the world—and (2) For the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom in the world. The kingdoms of earth will come to an end, and "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom." (Daniel 2:44) The Scriptures do not say that the trouble will come in an hour, or in one day, or in one year. The intimation is that the catastrophe coming upon our civilization will be a very sudden one. (Revelation 18:8, 10, 17, 21; 1 Thessalonians 5:3) But it will be very sudden if it comes within twelve months. The flood required many days to come, and many days to assuage.

The Watch Tower October 15, 1913 p306 [Reprints 5328]

Aside from the obvious moral implications of such a practice, does the presentation of an idealized doctrinal history affect anyone? This would naturally vary with the individual, but several striking examples appear in Witness publications themselves. For example, the life stories of those who have been Jehovah's Witnesses for many years are often told in *The Watchtower*. One such story appearing in the May 1, 1988 issue told of a woman named Matsue Ishii who was born in Japan in the year 1909. She first came into contact with the Bible Students in the latter half of the 1920's and her recollection of this experience is as follows:

At the back of our house in Tojo-cho, Osaka, there was a house with a sign: "Osaka Branch of the International Bible Students Association." Assuming it to be a Christian group, I visited the house.

"Do you believe in the second advent of the Lord?" I asked the young man who came to the door.

"Christ's second advent was realized in 1914," he answered.

In astonishment, I told him that was impossible. "You should read this book," he said, handing me *The Harp of God*.

To keep my husband from seeing the book, I hid it in a straw bag containing charcoal and read it whenever I could.

The Watchtower May 1, 1988 p. 22

According to the article, this occurred in 1928. The problem is that Matsue Ishii's recollection of this event cannot be reconciled with reality because all editions of *The Harp Of God* clearly and explicitly teach that Christ's second advent was realized in 1874.⁵⁰ For that matter the same can be said for the 1927 book *Creation*, the 1929 book *Prophecy*, as well as all of the 1920's Watch Towers.

Another life story concerns Jack H. Nathan, a British man born in 1897. He gives a similar rendition of his first encounter with the Bible Students:

Finding a Purpose in Life in India

After the war ended in 1918, there was no work available in England, so I rejoined the army and went off to India as part of the peacetime garrison. In May 1920 the malaria flared up again, and I was sent up into the hills to recuperate. There I read all the books I could get my hands on, including the Bible. Reading the Scriptures intensified my interest in the Lord's return.

Months later, down in Kanpur, I started a Bible study group, hoping to learn more about the Lord's return. It was there that I met Fredrick James, a former British soldier who was now a zealous Bible Student. He explained to me that Jesus had been present since 1914, invisible to man. This was the most thrilling news I had ever heard. My first urge was to get out of the army. The bloodshed and death of the European war had disgusted me. I wanted to be a peaceful missionary and preach this good news about Christ's presence.

The Watchtower September 1, 1990 p. 11

⁵⁰ See pages 30 and 31 of this paper.

By Nathan's own testimony this happened on or about the year 1920, more than ten years before Jehovah's Witnesses would even begin to phase out the doctrinal significance of 1874 and at a time when the main teaching publications were still Russell's *Studies In The Scriptures*. Further, since Nathan subsequently became a colporteur⁵¹ in 1922, he would have been intimately familiar with a number of other books over the next few years that all taught the 1874 date for the *Parousia*.⁵²

It hardly seems likely that both Nathan and Ishii would remember in ways that are demonstrably false what were obviously very important turning points in their lives, Yet this clearly appears to be the case. If we give everyone involved the benefit of the doubt by assuming that:

- (a) These two individuals were both telling the truth as they remember it.
- (b) That their memoirs were neither edited nor tampered with by other writers prior to publication.

What are we left with? What explanation can there be for this type of a lapse, especially on the part of Jack Nathan? Where could these two individuals have gotten the erroneous idea that Jehovah's Witnesses have always taught that Christ's invisible presence dates from 1914?

These are not the only examples of this phenomenon. In 1967, the Life story of Maxwell Friend appeared in *The Watchtower*. He relates how in 1912 he obtained a copy of *The Divine Plan Of The Ages*, how he eagerly read it, and how the message contained therein brought tears to his eyes. He then claims that he "...shared in spreading the good news of God's kingdom as well as in giving emphatic warning that the year 1914 would see the beginning of the world-shaking "time of the end" of the present evil disorder of things."⁵³ This is incredible in view of the fact that it was taught clear up until the late 1920's that the "time of the end" began in 1799

The life story of Seth Keith appeared in the 1969 Watchtower. Keith relates how in 1911 he received two pieces of literature from a traveling Bible Student. In Keith's words, "One told about the condition of the dead and the other intimated that the Second Coming of Christ Jesus was due"⁵⁴ This too is incredible given the fact that this was some 21 years before the 1874 date would be discarded.

It can be seen then, that the history of Jehovah's Witnesses has been thoroughly idealized. Official church history abounds both with false statements and statements that give false impressions. Period literature, when it is quoted at all, has been misrepresented and openly manipulated. Even the life stories of elderly Witnesses, for reasons that we can only speculate upon, are irreconcilable with church literature contemporary with those accounts.

History is neither kind nor cruel. Whether it is our friend or our enemy is entirely dependent upon our own willingness to honestly acknowledge it. It is unfortunate that Jehovah's Witnesses seem to prefer that it be their enemy.

⁵¹ A traveling evangelist.

⁵² These would include: *The Harp Of God* (1921) *Deliverance* (1926) *Creation* (1927) *Government* (1928) *Reconciliation* (1928) and *Prophecy* (1929)

⁵³ *A Theatrical Spectacle to the World, Both to Angels and to Men* The Watchtower April 15, 1967 p. 252

⁵⁴ *Over Half a Century of Satisfying Service* The Watchtower August 15, 1969 p. 507