

## Challenging the Cults

### 5. History of Jehovah Witnesses



**Charles Taze Russell, Founder of the International Bible Students Association, forerunner to the Jehovah Witnesses.**

Most people have had a visit by Jehovah's Witnesses from the local Kingdom Hall. Reactions vary, from rudeness, to hospitality. Just who are these Witnesses? Are they Christian? Are they a cult? To find these answers we need to examine the facts.

Today, the active number of Jehovah Witnesses is 6,429,000, and there are 95,919 congregations.<sup>1</sup> In 2003, 258,845 new Jehovah Witnesses were baptized. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the official name, claims to be God's prophet on Earth.

"The historical facts show that 1919 was the year when the remnant on earth of the 144,000 Kingdom heirs began to be freed from Great Babylon. In that year the message of God's established kingdom began to be preached from house to house and publicly by Jehovah's Christian witnesses in a fearless way. This preaching of the Kingdom as established in 1914 was in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy 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.'"

**Babylon the Great Has Fallen!, 1963, p. 515.<sup>2</sup>**

We acknowledge as the visible organization of Jehovah on earth the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and recognize the Society as the channel or instrument through which Jehovah and Christ Jesus give instruction and meat in due season to the household of faith.

**The Watchtower April 15, 1939**

How can somebody know if this organization is speaking for God? The Jehovah Witnesses give us the answer to this very question.

"Reasonable persons agree that the only fair method is to examine the evidence on both sides, both for and against a disputed theory. That is how one arrives at the truth." (**Awake, Oct. 22, 1973, page 6**)

"Can there be false religion? It is not a form of religious persecution for anyone to say and to show that another religion is false. It is not religious persecution for an informed person to expose publicly a certain religion as being false, thus allowing persons to see the difference between false religion and true religion." (**Watchtower, Nov. 15, 1963, page 688**)

#### **A Short history of the Jehovah Witnesses**

The founder of the Jehovah Witnesses is Charles Taze Russell, who was born in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania on February 16, 1852. He was the son of Joseph L. and Anna Eliza Russell, young Charles was raised a Congregationalist and spent most of his early years in Allegheny and Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. At the age of 16, in the year 1868 he found himself losing faith in Churches, Church Creeds, the Bible and God.

#### **Adventist past**

At this point, a chance encounter with Jonas Wendell, a Second Adventist preacher restored his faith.

Seemingly by accident, one evening I dropped into a dusty dingy hall in Allegheny, Pa., where I heard religious services were held, to see if the handful who met there had anything more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches. There, for the first time, I heard something of the view of the Second Adventists, the preacher being Mr. Jonas Wendell. *Zion's Watch Tower, July 15, 1906 Page 382 1 Society's reprints*

The Adventist movement and its teaching would influence the young Russell in the formation of his doctrines and teachings. The Adventist movement traces its roots back to William Miller a Baptist

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jw-media.org/people/statistics.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *Babylon the Great Has Fallen!*, 1963, p. 515., Publication of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

lay preacher who in 1816 began preaching Christ would return in 1843. His preaching attracted many from Baptist and mainline churches, close to 50,000 put their trust in Miller's timing of prophetic events. When in March 1843 the Lord did not appear, the date was recalculated to March 1844 and then to October 1844. Miller and the Millerites were disappointed and a shattered people. Dr. Josiah Litch, a Millerite leader in Philadelphia wrote on October 24<sup>th</sup>,

"It is a cloudy and dark day here—the sheep are scattered—the Lord has not come yet"<sup>3</sup>

Most of his followers returned to their churches before his death in 1849. Others kept the movement alive and formed into several sects. These "Adventist" groups included the Advent Christian Church, the Life and Advent Union, the Seventh-Day Adventist, and others which split to form the Watch Tower movement. David Reed, a former Jehovah's Witnesses connects the dots between Russell and the "Adventist" movement.

The end of the Civil War in 1865 found former Millerites promoting new dates for the Second Coming. George Storrs of Brooklyn, New York, who published the Bible Examiner and was instrumental in forming the Life and Advent Union, focused his followers' hopes on 1870, while a group headed by N.H. Barbour of Rochester, New York, looked to 1873 or 1874, and published their calculations in Barbour's periodical the *Herald of the Morning*. ....Barbour and Storrs were among the Adventist leaders who shaped the thinking of a newcomer to the religious scene, teenager Charles Taze Russell.<sup>4</sup>

Charles continued to study under Adventist teachers for sometime and at the age of 18 organized a Bible Study group. Two Adventist he gave credit to guiding him into greener pastures were Advent Christian Church minister George Stetson and the *Bible Examiner's* publisher George Storrs.

Thus I confess indebtedness to Adventists...And here I should and do gratefully mention assistance rendered by Brothers George Stetson and George Storrs, the later the editor of the *The Bible Examiner*, both now deceased. The study of the Word of God with these dear brethren led, step by step, into greener pastures....  
*Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1906, Page 3821 Society's reprints<sup>5</sup>

Russell's Bible study continued and in 1876, when he was 23, his bible study group elected him "Pastor". During this time, Russell received a copy of the *Herald of the Morning*, N. H. Barbour's magazine that foretold the return of Christ in 1874. The year of 1874, having since past Russell noticed the group believed Christ returned invisibly in 1874. The magazine was failing, as many readers refused to accept the invisible Second coming.



The summer of 1876, Russell became the financial backer of the magazine. He was added to the masthead as assistant editor, and he contributed articles and money to the publication. Russell's and Barbour's groups became affiliates. Since the Lord returned "invisibly" in 1874 they believed the saints would be "Caught away bodily" three and half years later, to be with the Lord in the spring of 1878. (*Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1906, Page 3823 Society's reprints) When the "Catching away" (The rapture) did not occur as expected Barbour and Russell split. Barbour had "New Revelations" to account for the lack of the rapture but Russell and others rejected his "Revelations".

#### **Zion's Watch Tower Magazine**

Russell would start his own magazine, His new magazine was called *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, and published its first issue in July, 1879. Russell no longer considered himself a "Adventist" or "Millerite" but considered their movements of God. He viewed these movements as fulfillment of the "Midnight Cry" that the

<sup>3</sup> The Kingdom of the Cults, Bethany House Publishers, 1997, Pg. 523

<sup>4</sup> Answering Jehovah's Witnesses, David A. Reed, Baker Book House, 1996, Pg. 21

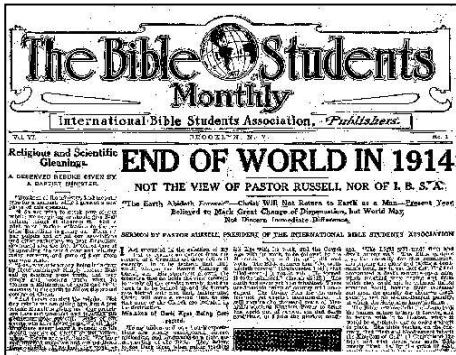
<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, Pg. 22

“Bridegroom cometh” in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Russell held that Christ came invisibly in 1874.

Barbour of Rochester, was we believe, the chosen vessel of God through whom the “Midnight Cry” issued to the sleeping virgins of Christ, announcing a discrepancy of thirty years in some Miller’s calculations...and the Bridegroom due in that morning in 1874...

If these movements were of God, and if Bros. Miller and Barbour were his instruments, then that “Midnight Cry” based on the prophetic and other statements and evidences, was correct, and the “Bridegroom came” in 1874. We believe that Midnight Cry was of God...

*Zion’s Watch Tower, November 1881, Pages 288-289 Society’s reprints*<sup>6</sup>



Starting with 6,000 initial issues the publication has grown to 17.8 million issues per month in 106 languages. In 1884, the “Pastor” incorporated “Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society” in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1886, the Society published the first of seven volumes entitled *Studies in the Scriptures*, originally published as *The Millennial Dawn*. The seventh volume was edited after his death in 1917. This volume, the *Finished Mystery* caused a split in the organization. One group became known as the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” under Rutherford’s leadership and the other as “The Dawn Bible Students Association”

In 1908, the headquarters of the movement was changed to Brooklyn, New York at 17 Hicks Street and became known as the “Brooklyn Tabernacle”. Today large tracts of land are owned by the society, the society also owns a large up-to-date printing plant, which has produced billions of pieces of literature. All employees in factory are voluntary and receive a nominal amount of money per month for personal expenses. (In 1995 that amount was \$14.00/month)



Russell’s life was filled with several legal entanglements including a divorce from his wife Maria Ackley who left him after seventeen years of marriage. In 1897, filing for separation in 1903, the divorce revealed the financial structure of Watch Tower as recorded in his obituary in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 1, 1916.

There was much litigation then that was quite undesirable from the “Pastor’s” point of view regarding alimony for his wife, but it was settled in 1909 by the payment of \$6,036 to Mrs. Russell. The litigation revealed that “Pastor” Russell’s activities in the religious field were carried on through several subsidiary societies and that all of the wealth that flowed into him through these societies was under the control of a holding company in which the “Pastor” held \$990 of the \$1,000 capital and two of his followers the other \$10.<sup>7</sup>

The teachings of Charles Taze Russell were central to the Watch Tower Society and its membership grew under his direction. Russell commenting on his *Studies in the Scriptures* published by the Watchtower wrote,

If the six volumes of *Scripture Studies* are practically the Bible, topically arranged with Bible proof texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes *the Bible in an arranged form*. That is to say, they are not mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself....

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

*The Watchtower, September 15, 1910, Page 298*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pgs. 25-26

<sup>7</sup> The Brooklyn Eagle, November 1, 1916 (Obituary Column), Kingdom of the Cults, The Kingdom of the Cults, Bethany House Publishers, 1997, Pgs. 80-81

<sup>8</sup> The Kingdom of the Cults, Walter Martin, Bethany House Publishers, 1997, Pg. 87

In 1886, Russell published *The Divine Plan of the Ages* projecting that 1914 would witness Armageddon and the dawn of Christ's thousand-year rule on earth. The date was later changed to 1915.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1916 Russell died aboard a transcontinental train in Texas. He was buried in Pennsylvania and was succeeded by Judge Rutherford. In Russell's cemetery, where early Jehovah Witnesses are buried there stands granite pyramid, measuring nine feet at its base with the name WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY with a Cross inside of a crown.

Russell taught and wrote that the Great Pyramid of Gaza was designed by Jehovah and was a blueprint to end-times chronology. This teaching was held by the Jehovah Witnesses till November 15<sup>th</sup> 1928 when Judge Rutherford reversed the teaching calling it Satan's teaching.



**Judge Rutherford**

#### **Judge Rutherford (November 1916-1942)**

After Russell's death, there was a contentious battle for control of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Russell had prepared detailed written instructions to distribute his authority with several followers. Joseph F. Rutherford served as legal counsel for Russell and the society. Rutherford ignored Russell's instruction and consolidated power under his authority.

The book *Faith on the March*, by A.H. Macmillan published in 1957 with Watch Tower approval and still found in Kingdom Hall libraries details the legal battle.

Rutherford consolidated his power in the local congregations by sending "Service directors" to each congregation to handle the literature shipped from Brooklyn. He began to increase their authority and decreased the authority of locally elected elders. He aimed to set up an organization ruled from the top, a theocratic organization with him being "God's mouthpiece".

Rutherford started to change doctrines taught by Russell, including the name of the organization to *Jehovah's Witnesses* from *International Bible Students Association*. Rutherford also denounced Russell's "Pyramid" prophecies as an attempt to find God's will outside of the Scriptures (1929). Rutherford credited the Pyramid to Satan rather than to Jehovah God as Russell attributed it construction.

Many of the followers left the organization as a result of this action, they were later threatened by Rutherford to "suffer destruction" if they did not repent and recognize Jehovah's will as expressed through the Society.



**Beth Sarim, House of the Princes built in 1929 for Abraham and other princes**

#### **Beth Sarim**

One of the more embarrassing episodes of Rutherford's tenure is known as Beth Sarim.

Rutherford, prophesied that Abraham and the other prophets of Hebrews 11 would soon rise from the dead by 1925. Beginning in 1920, Rutherford declared,

"As we have heretofore stated, the great jubilee cycle is due to begin in 1925. At that time the earthly phase of the kingdom shall be recognized."

How would it be recognized? What event would trigger the ushering in of the kingdom? Rutherford explained,

"Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the Apostle in Hebrews chapter eleven, to the condition of human perfection" (**Millions Now Living Will Never Die**, pp. 89-90).



**Pyramid at Russell's cemetery**

Watch Tower members were excited. Jehovah Witnesses saw their organization's vindication in the eyes of the world. In 1925 when Abraham and the rest of the prophets *did not come*, some of Rutherford's followers left. Still others believed, the arrival, the Hebrews 11 prophets would be soon. Though it had not occurred by 1929, it was still a topic of much excited anticipation. Therefore, Rutherford gave instructions to build them a house. In his book, *Salvation*, Rutherford mentions this house and the purpose for building it.

"At San Diego, California, there is a small piece of land, on which, in the year 1929, there was built a house, which is called and known as Beth Sarim. The Hebrew words *Beth Sarim* mean 'House of the Princes,' and the purpose of acquiring that property and building the house was that there might be some tangible proof that there are those on earth today who fully believe God and Christ Jesus and in His kingdom, and who believe that the faithful men of old will soon be resurrected by the Lord, be back on earth, and take charge of the visible affairs of earth"  
*Salvation* (p. 311).

With the house now built, there was nothing to do but wait. In the meantime, Judge Rutherford lived in this house while his wife lived in another part of the country. Moreover, Witnesses waited until 1942 when after the death of Rutherford, the house was sold.

### Nathan H. Knorr (1944-1977)



Following Rutherford, Nathan Knorr was immediately elected president and served in the position until June of 1977. During his tenure, the *New World Translation* was created which was the first translation by the Watchtower Bible and Tract society. During his time, the Watch Tower experienced explosive growth. When he began in 1942 there were 98,076 active members by 1977 there were 2,223,538.

Armageddon was to happen in 1975, and young Watch Tower men and women were discouraged from having children and pursuing careers. Knorr was responsible for designing the door-to-door evangelism system used today by the Watch Tower.

that not warm our hearts? Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end.—1 John 2:17.

Our Kingdom Ministry, 5/74, p.3

twentieth century an independent study has been carried on that does not blindly follow some traditional chronological calculations of Christendom, and the published timetable resulting from this independent study gives the date of man's creation as 4026 B.C.E.† According to this trustworthy Bible chronology six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 C.E.

† So six thousand years of man's existence on earth will soon be up, yes, within this generation.

Life Everlasting In Freedom Of The Sons Of God, 1966

**W**HAT about all this talk concerning the year 1975? Lively discussions, some based on speculation, have burst into flame during recent months among serious students of the Bible. Their interest has been kindled by the belief that 1975 will mark the end of 6,000 years of human history since Adam's creation. The nearness of such an important date indeed fires the imagination and presents unlimited possibilities for discussion.

The Watchtower, 8/15/68, p.494

### Frederick W. Franz (1977-1992)

Following Knorr death in June 1977, Frederick W. Franz a long-time leader and then vice-president was elected president. After his death, Milton Henschel became the President over the Governing Body. Henschel passed away in March 2003.



### *Are today's Jehovah Witnesses connected with Charles Taze Russell?*

For many Jehovah's Witnesses some of the teachings of Russell are an embarrassment, and many Jehovah Witnesses repudiate him, denying they follow his teachings.

"But who is preaching the teachings of Pastor Russell? Certainly not Jehovah's Witnesses! They cannot be accused of following him, for they neither quote him as an authority nor publish nor distribute his writings"<sup>9</sup>

This claim is not borne out in fact. Jehovah Witnesses have quoted Russell many times since his death in 1916. His is listed as the founder of the Watchtower Organization on the official website's short history of the modern Jehovah's Witnesses, says, (Paraphrased)

In the 1870 an unassuming bible Study group started in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Charles T. Russell was the main mover of the group. On July 1879, the publication Zion's Watch Tower was issued...In 1884 it was incorporated with CT Russell as president.<sup>10</sup>

1. In 1923, seven years after the "Pastor's" demise Judge Rutherford heir to the Russellite throne, wrote a booklet some fifty-odd pages long, entitled *World Distress: Why and the Remedy*

- Russell is quoted 16 times
- His book *Studies in the Scriptures* is referred to 12 times
- 6 pages at the end of the book advertise Russell's books

2. In 1953, the publication *Jehovah's Witnesses, Communists or Christians*

- Russell is quoted 5 times
- His best known works, *Plan of the Ages* (1886) and *The Battle of Armageddon* (1897)

3. *The Watchtower* (October 1, 1953)

- Quotes *Studies in the Scriptures* (4:554)

4. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (1959) a society history

- 50 pages are devoted to Russell and his contributions

### **Organization**

The Governing Body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society controls their followers through a tightly knit organizational structure that is dictated from Brooklyn, New York. This group is made of the "Heavenly Class" or "Anointed"<sup>11</sup> men (currently 12). Milton Henschel, the president presides over this group.

Future Members are baptized into the society through immersion at the local "Hall" level. New members must immediately begin training for fieldwork by spending time with older members as they conduct their fieldwork.

- *Publishers*: Are Witnesses who commit 1200 hours per year in "Fieldwork", including door-to-door recruitment, sidewalk soliciting and book studies with new prospective members.
- *Pioneers*: Are those who dedicate a significantly greater amount of time than 1200 hours

<sup>9</sup> Awake! (May 8, 1951)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.watchtower.org/library/jt/article\\_02.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/library/jt/article_02.htm)

<sup>11</sup> The Anointed are Jehovah Witnesses who are bound for Heaven, they number 144,000 with fewer than 9000 currently living. Those JW who are not part of the Anointed class are known as the "Great Flock" and will live on paradise earth.

Groups meeting together are called *congregations*; their meeting place is called a *Kingdom Hall*. Appointed leaders are called *Elders* or *Overseers*, the person who heads the meeting is called *Presiding Overseer*. The *Service Overseer* handles service business within the congregation. *Ministerial Servants* are delegated administrative responsibilities to the elders.

- *Circuits*: Are 20 congregations supervised by a *Circuit Overseer*.
- *Districts*: Are geographical collections of circuits (22 are in the United States) *District Overseer* organizes the annual district convention. Here all new "Teachings" and "Rules" from the Governing Body are announced to members and new publications are presented.
- *Branches*: Are collections of Districts
- *Zones*: are Collections of Branches
- *Headquarters*: Brooklyn Society Office
  
- *Memorial of Christ Death at Passover*: The only day of the year which Jehovah's Witnesses have ceremony. This event held in large Auditoriums, requires all members be present along with family, friends and prospective members. The elements of the Lord's Supper are passed through the crowd. Only the "Anointed Class" is allowed to partake of the elements. No one born after 1914 is eligible for the class.

#### Kingdom Hall Meetings

5 meetings per Week all members are expected to attend.

1. *Public Talk* is held each Sunday
2. *Watchtower Study* follows the Public Talk
3. *Theocratic Ministry School* is a weekday evening meeting
4. *Service Meeting* follows the Theocratic Ministry School
5. *Book Study*: Each Witnesses is required to attend a "Book Study" in addition to field work<sup>12</sup>.

#### Authority

The Watchtower Society is absolute authority. The Governing body is vested with all authority including to teach and understand the Bible. The Watchtower is God's "Visible organization" on Earth, no dissent is allowed.

- So Jehovah's visible organization under Christ is a channel for bringing his divine interpretation of his word to his devoted people.<sup>13</sup>
- We acknowledge as the visible organization of Jehovah on earth the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and recognize the Society as the channel or instrument through which Jehovah and Christ Jesus give instruction and meat in due season to the household of faith.<sup>14</sup>
- If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our father but his organization as our "Mother"<sup>15</sup>
- Make haste to identify the visible theocratic organization of God that represents his king, Jesus Christ. It is essential for life. Doing so be complete in accepting its every aspect.<sup>16</sup>
- They(Witnesses) must adhere absolutely to the decisions and scriptural understand of the Society because God has given it this authority over his people.<sup>17</sup>
- Avoid independent thinking...questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization...Fight against independent thinking.<sup>18</sup>
- To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Field-Work is a must and cannot be neglected.

<sup>13</sup> The Watchtower (June 1, 1938) 169.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. (April 15, 1939):125

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. (May 1957): 274

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. (October 1, 1967): 591

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. (May 1, 1972):272

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. (January 15, 1983):22, 27

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. (February 15, 1983):12

Those who choose to dissent are disfellowshipped. The congregation is to have nothing to do with the individual. Those in the congregation are not to have any communication the member.

A disfellowshipped person is cut off from the congregation, and the congregation has nothing to do with him. Those in the congregation will not extend the hand of fellowship to this one, nor will they so much as say "Hello" or "Good-bye"...(The congregation members) will not converse with such a one or show him recognition in any way.<sup>20</sup>

*Are only non-Witnesses are allowed to question their religion, but Jehovah Witnesses are not?*

Witnesses are not allowed to read any information this is contrary to the Watchtower. This includes material from those who have been disassociated Witnesses, disgruntled Witnesses or someone who was never a Witnesses.

Have no dealings with apostates...For example, what will you do if you receive a letter or some literature, open it, and see right away that it is from an apostate? Will curiosity cause you to read it, just to see what he has to say? You may even reason: "It won't affect me; I'm too strong in the truth. And besides, if we have the truth, we have nothing to fear. The truth will stand the test" In thinking this way, some have fed their minds upon apostate reasoning and have fallen prey to serious questioning and doubt.<sup>21</sup>

But those who investigating the Jehovah Witnesses are told to question what they believe, to investigate and search out God's will.

We need to examine not only what we personally believe but also what is taught by any religious organization with which we may be associated. Are its teachings in full harmony with God's Word, or are they based on the traditions of men? If we are lovers of the truth, there is nothing to fear from such an examination. It would be the sincere desire of every one of us to learn what God's will is for us, and then to do it.<sup>22</sup>

*Can anybody understand the Bible apart from the Jehovah Witnesses' Watch Tower Organization?*

The Jehovah Witnesses believe without the aid of their organization it is impossible to understand the Bible or God's will.

- Rather we should seek for dependent Bible study, rather than for independent Bible study.<sup>23</sup>
- He does not impart his holy spirit and understanding and appreciation of his Word apart from his visible organization.<sup>24</sup>
- The Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as a whole, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the bible. For this reason the bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind.<sup>25</sup>
- They (Questioners) say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such "Bible reading" they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Watchtower (July 1, 1963) 411-413

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. (March 15, 1986):12

<sup>22</sup> The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life (Brooklyn Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1968) 13

<sup>23</sup> The Watch Tower (September 15, 1911):4885

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. (July 1, 1965):391

<sup>25</sup> The Watchtower (October 1, 1967):587

<sup>26</sup> The Watchtower (August 15, 1981):29



## Beliefs of Jehovah Witnesses

### The Trinity

1. "The doctrine, in brief, is that there are three gods in one: 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost,' all three equal in power, substance, and eternity" (*Let God Be True*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946 ed., 100).
2. "The obvious conclusion is, therefore, that Satan is the originator of the Trinity doctrine" (*LGBT*, 101).
3. "Sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve Him find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God" (*LGBT*, 102).
4. "The Trinity doctrine was not conceived by Jesus or the early Christians" (*LGBT*, 111).
5. "The plain truth is that this is another of Satan's attempts to keep God-fearing persons from learning the truth of Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus. No, there is no Trinity" (*LGBT*, 111).
6. "Any trying to reason out the Trinity teaching leads to confusion of mind. So the Trinity teaching confuses the meaning of John 1:1–2; it does not simplify it or make it clear or easily understandable" (*"The Word," Who Is He? According to John, 7*).
7. Is Jehovah a Trinity—three persons in one God? No! Jehovah, the Father, is "the only true God" (John 17:3; Mark 12:29). Jesus is His firstborn Son, and he is subject to God (1 Cor. 11:3). The Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28). The holy spirit is not a person; it is God's active force (Gen. 1:2; Acts 2:18) (*What Does God Require of Us?*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1997, electronic version).
8. "Thus, neither the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Scriptures nor the canon of twenty-seven inspired books of the Christian Greek Scriptures provide any clear teaching of the Trinity. ... Thus, the testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout biblical times and for several centuries thereafter" (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1997, electronic version).

### The Deity of Christ

1. "The true Scriptures speak of God's Son, the Word, as 'a god.' He is a 'mighty god,' but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah" (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1943, 47).
2. "In other words, he was the first and direct creation of Jehovah God" (*The Kingdom Is at Hand*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1944, 46–47, 49).
3. "The Bible shows that there is only one God ... greater than His Son ... and that the Son, as the Firstborn, Only-begotten, and 'the creation by God,' had a beginning. That the Father is greater and older than the Son is reasonable, easy to understand, and is what the Bible teaches" (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1958, 164).
4. "Jesus was 'the Son of God.' Not God himself!" (*"The Word," Who Is He?*, 20).
5. "The very fact that he was sent proves he was not equal with God but was less than God his Father" (*TWWIH*, 41).
6. "Certainly the apostle John was not so unreasonable as to say that someone (the Word) was with some other individual ('God') and at the same time was that other individual ('God')" (*TWWIH*, 53).
7. "Thus, Jesus had an existence in heaven before coming to the earth. But was it as one of the persons in an almighty, eternal triune Godhead? No, for the Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation" (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?*).

### The Holy Spirit

1. "The holy spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God that moves his servants to do his will" (*Let God Be True*, 108).
2. "As for the 'Holy Spirit,' the so-called 'third Person of the Trinity,' we have already seen that it is not a person, but God's active force" (*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1968, 24).
3. "The Scriptures themselves unite to show that God's holy spirit is not a person but is God's active force by which he accomplishes his purpose and executes his will" (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1969, 1971, 1543).
4. "The Bible's use of 'holy spirit' indicates that it is a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish

a variety of his purposes. To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations" (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?*).

5. "No, the holy spirit is not a person and it is not part of a Trinity. The holy spirit is God's active force that he uses to accomplish his will. It is not equal to God but is always at his disposition and subordinate to him" (*SYBITT?*).

### The Virgin Birth

1. "Mary was a virgin. ... When Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a child, he did not want to take her as his wife. But God's angel ... said: 'That which has been begotten in her is by holy spirit'. ... He took Mary his wife home. 'But he had no relations with her until she gave birth to a son'" (Matt. 1:20–25) (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, 122–123).

2. "Jesus was conceived by a sinless, perfect Father, Jehovah God. ... The perfect child Jesus did not get human life from the sinner Adam, but received only a human body through Adam's descendant Mary. Jesus' life came from Jehovah God, the Holy One. ... Jehovah took the perfect life of his only-begotten Son and transferred it from heaven to ... the womb of the unmarried girl Mary. ... Thus God's Son was conceived or given a start as a human creature. It was a miracle. Under Jehovah's holy power the child Jesus, conceived in this way, grew in Mary's womb to the point of birth" (*FPLTPR*, 126–127).

3. "Jesus' birth on earth was not an incarnation. ... He emptied himself of all things heavenly and spiritual, and God's almighty spirit transferred his Son's life down to the womb of the Jewish virgin of David's descent. By this miracle he was born a man. ... He was not a spirit-human hybrid, a man and at the same time a spirit person. ... He was flesh" (*What Has Religion Done for Mankind?*, 231).

4. "While on earth, Jesus was a human, although a perfect one because it was God who transferred the life-force of Jesus to the womb of Mary" (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?*).

### The Atonement

1. "That which is redeemed or bought back is what was lost, namely, perfect human life, with its rights and earthly prospects" (*Let God Be True*, 114).

2. "Jesus as the glorified High Priest, by presenting in heaven this redemptive price, is in position to relieve the believing ones of Adam's descendants from the inherited disability under which all are born" (*LGBT*, 118–119).

3. "The human life that Jesus Christ laid down in sacrifice must be exactly equal to that life which Adam forfeited for all his offspring: it must be a perfect human life, no more, no less. ... This is just what Jesus gave ... for men of all kinds" (*You May Survive Armageddon Into God's New World*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1955, 39).

4. "Jesus, no more and no less than a perfect human, became a ransom that compensated exactly for what Adam lost—the right to perfect human life on earth. ... The perfect human life of Jesus was the 'corresponding ransom' required by divine justice—no more, no less. A basic principle even of human justice is that the price paid should fit the wrong committed. ... So the ransom, to be truly in line with God's justice, had to be strictly an equivalent—a perfect human, 'the last Adam.' Thus, when God sent Jesus to earth as the ransom, he made Jesus to be what would satisfy justice, not an incarnation, not a god-man, but a perfect man, 'lower than angels'" (*Should You Believe?*).

### Salvation by Grace

1. "Immortality is a reward for faithfulness. It does not come automatically to a human at birth" (*Let God Be True*, 74).

2. "Those people of good will today who avail themselves of the provision and who steadfastly abide in this confidence will find Christ Jesus to be their 'everlasting Father'" (Isaiah 9:6) (*LGBT*, 121).

3. "We have learned that a person could fall away and be judged unfavorably either now or at Armageddon or during the thousand years of Christ's reign or at the end of the final test ... into everlasting destruction" (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, 241).

4. "Make haste to identify the visible theocratic organization of God that represents his king, Jesus Christ. It is essential for life. Doing so, be complete in accepting its every aspect" (*The Watchtower*, October 1, 1967: 591).

5. "To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it" (*The Watchtower*, February 15, 1983: 12).

### **The Resurrection of Christ**

1. "This firstborn from the dead was raised from the grave, not a human creature, but a spirit" (*Let God Be True*, 276).
2. "Jehovah God raised him from the dead, not as a human Son, but as a mighty immortal spirit Son. ... For forty days after that he materialized, as angels before him had done, to show himself alive to his disciples" (*LGBT*, 40).
3. "Jesus did not take his human body to heaven to be forever a man in heaven. Had he done so, that would have left him even lower than the angels. ... God did not purpose for Jesus to be humiliated thus forever by being a fleshly man forever. No, but after he had sacrificed his perfect manhood, God raised him to deathless life as a glorious spirit creature" (*LGBT*, 41).
4. "Usually they could not at first tell it was Jesus, for he appeared in different bodies. He appeared and disappeared just as angels had done, because he was resurrected as a spirit creature. Only because Thomas would not believe did Jesus appear in a body like that in which he had died" (*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, 144).
5. "Having given up his flesh for the life of the world, Christ could never take it again and become a man once more. For that basic reason his return could never be in the human body that he sacrificed once for all time" (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1982, 143).

### **The Return of Christ and Human Government**

1. "Christ Jesus returns, not again as a human, but as a glorious spirit person" (*Let God Be True*, 196).
2. "Some wrongfully expect a literal fulfillment of the symbolic statements of the Bible. Such hope to see the glorified Jesus coming seated on a white cloud where every human eye will see him. ... Since no earthly men have ever seen the Father ... neither will they see the glorified Son" (*LGBT*, 186).
3. "It does not mean that he [Christ] is on the way or has promised to come, but that he has already arrived and is here" (*LGBT*, 198).
4. "Any national flag is a symbol or image of the sovereign power of its nation" (*LGBT*, 242).
5. "All such likenesses [symbols of a national power, eagle, sun, lion, etc.] are forbidden by Exodus 20:2-6 [the commandment against idolatry]" (*LGBT*, 242).
6. "Hence no witness of Jehovah, who ascribes salvation only to Him, may salute any national emblem without violating Jehovah's commandment against idolatry as stated in His Word" (*LGBT*, 243).

### **The Existence of Hell and Eternal Punishment**

1. "Those who have been taught by Christendom believe the God-dishonoring doctrine of a fiery hell for tormenting conscious human souls eternally" (*Let God Be True*, 88).
2. "It is so plain that the Bible hell is mankind's common grave that even an honest little child can understand it, but not the religious theologians" (*LGBT*, 92).
3. "Who is responsible for this God-defaming doctrine of a hell of torment? The promulgator of it is Satan himself. His purpose in introducing it has been to frighten the people away from studying the Bible and to make them hate God" (*LGBT*, 98).
4. "Imperfect man does not torture even a mad dog, but kills it. And yet the clergymen attribute to God, who is love, the wicked crime of torturing human creatures merely because they had the misfortune to be born sinners" (*LGBT*, 99).
5. "The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (1) Because it is wholly unscriptural; (2) it is unreasonable; (3) it is contrary to God's love; and (4) it is repugnant to justice" (*LGBT*, 99).
6. "It is ... a lie, which the Devil has had spread, that the souls of the wicked are tormented in a hell or a purgatory" (*You Can Live*, 89).

### **Man the Soul, His Nature and Destiny**

1. "Man is a combination of two things, namely, the 'dust of the ground' and 'the breath of life.' The combining of these two things (or factors) produced a living soul or creature called man" (*Let God Be True*, 68).
2. "So we see that the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul and therefore differs from the beast is not scriptural" (*LGBT*, 68).
3. "The fact that the human soul is mortal can be amply proved by a careful study of the Holy Scriptures. An immortal soul cannot die, but God's Word, at Ezekiel 18:4, says concerning humans: 'Behold all souls are

mine. ... The soul that sinneth it shall die” (*LGBT*, 69–70).

4. “It is clearly seen that even the man Christ Jesus was mortal. He did not have an immortal soul: Jesus, the human soul, died” (*LGBT*, 71).

5. “Thus it is seen that the serpent (the Devil) is the one that originated the doctrine of the inherent immortality of human souls” (*LGBT*, 74–75).

6. “The Scriptures show that the destiny of the sinful man is death” (*LGBT*, 75).

7. “The Holy Scriptures alone offer real hope for those who do seek Jehovah God and strive to follow his ways” (*LGBT*, 75).

8. “At death man’s spirit, his life-force, which is sustained by breathing, ‘goes out.’ *It no longer exists.* ... When they are dead, both humans and animals are in this same state of complete unconsciousness. ... That the soul lives on after death is a lie started by the Devil” (*You Can Live*, 77).

9. “The human soul ceases to exist at death. ... Hell is mankind’s common grave” (*Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Twentieth Century*, electronic version).

### **The Kingdom of Heaven**

1. “Who and how many are able to enter it [the Kingdom]? The Revelation limits to 144,000 the number that become a part of the Kingdom and stand on heavenly Mount Zion” (*Let God Be True*, 136).

2. “In the capacity of priests and kings of God they reign a thousand years with Christ Jesus” (*LGBT*, 137).

3. “He [Christ] went to prepare a heavenly place for his associate heirs, ‘Christ’s body,’ for they too will be invisible spirit creatures” (*LGBT*, 138).

4. “If it is to be a heavenly kingdom, who will be the subject of its rule? In the invisible realm angelic hosts, myriads of them, will serve as faithful messengers of the King. And on earth the faithful children of the King Christ Jesus, including faithful forefathers of his then resurrected, will be ‘princes in all the earth’. ... Then, too, the ‘great crowd’ of his ‘other sheep’ ... will continue to ‘serve him day and night,’ and many of them will also be ‘princes’. ... They will ‘multiply and fill the earth’ in righteousness and their children will become obedient subjects of the King Christ Jesus. And finally the ‘unrighteous’ ones that are to be resurrected then, to prove their integrity, must joyfully submit themselves to theocratic rule. ... Those who prove rebellious or who turn unfaithful during the loosing of Satan at the end of Christ’s thousand-year reign will be annihilated with Satan, the Devil” (*LGBT*, 318–319).

5. “The Creator loved the new world so much that he gave his only begotten Son to be its King” (*LGBT*, 143).

6. “The undefeatable purpose of Jehovah God to establish a righteous kingdom in these last days was fulfilled in A.D. 1914” (*LGBT*, 143).

7. “Obey the King Christ Jesus and flee, while there is still time, to the Kingdom heights. ... Time left is short, for ‘the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near’” (*LGBT*, 144).

8. “Only a little flock of 144,000 go to heaven and rule with Christ. ... The 144,000 are born again as spiritual sons of God” (*Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Twentieth Century*, electronic version).