ISSUE # 2 - JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES: CHRISTIAN OR CULT?

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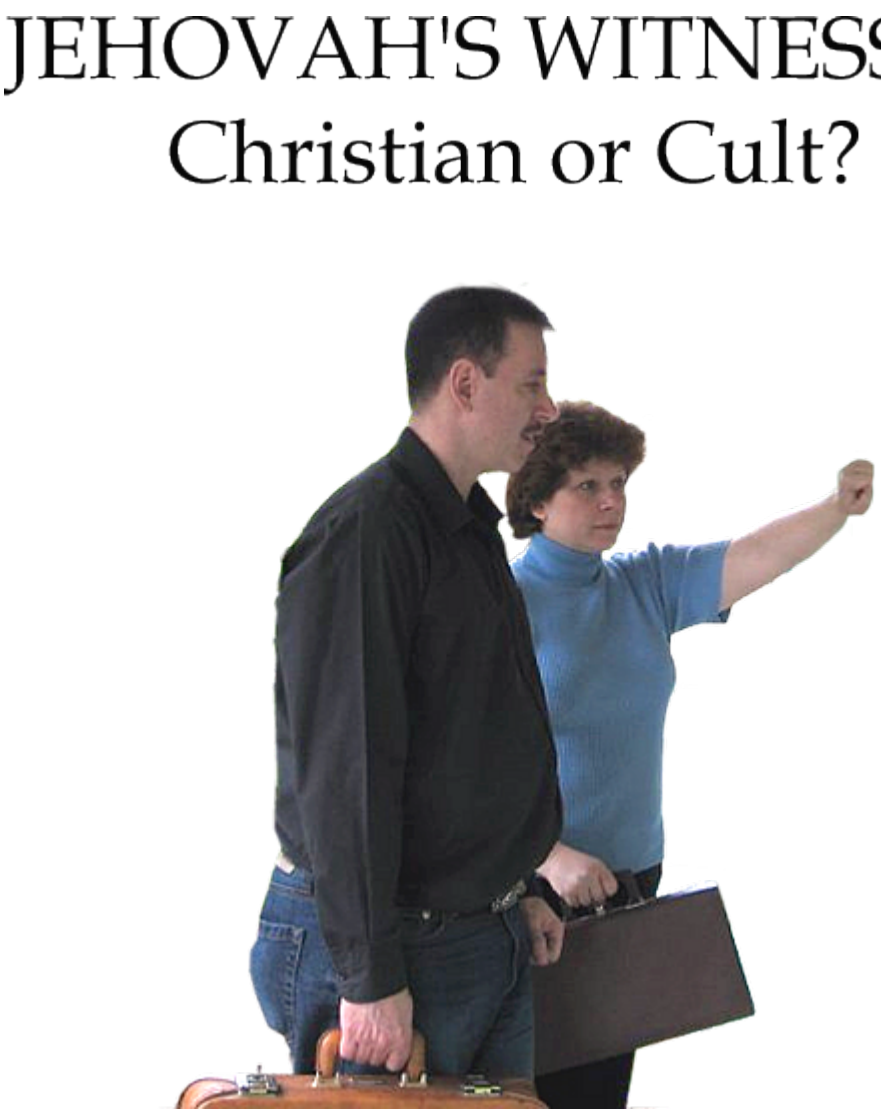


HISTORICAL VIEW: PART ONE: THE FOUNDER

Charles Taze Russell was the founder of the organization now known as *Jehovah's Witnesses*. He was born in 1852 in what is now Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. An enterprising young man, at fifteen he and his father were managing a number of their own clothing stores. His parents were Presbyterian, but

Charles switched over to the Congregational Church.

At an early age, Russell began to grow critical toward established Christian teachings. He became scornful of the concept of eternal punishment, he denied the deity of Christ, his views of the atonement of Christ were peculiarly his own, he renounced the accepted teaching that man possessed an immortal soul, and he refused to accept as fact Christ's physical resurrection. Nor did he believe in the future physical return of Christ to earth.

Russell was quite successful, in his lifetime, in promoting his views and gathering disciples unto himself. In 1870, at the age of eighteen, he started a small Bible class. In 1879 he published *Zion's Watchtower*, a magazine he used extensively to further his unconventional perceptions. In 1884 he established *Zion's Watchtower Tract Society* at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He wrote a series of seven books entitled, Studies in the Scriptures. He bought space in newspapers all over the world to herald his doctrines. He traveled extensively, and invested much energy promoting the Society.

Charles Russell considered his opinions to be unparalleled, even inspired. He once wrote in the Watchtower that his books, Study in the Scriptures, were "practically the Bible." He wrote: "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 them, after he has read them for ten years – if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On he other hand, if he had merely read the Scripture Studies with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years because he would have the light of the scriptures."

This statement reveals Russell was of the conviction no person could attain Biblical truths without his assistance, and his writings were more enlightening than the Bible itself. He did in fact consider himself to be God's "faithful and wise servant" giving to "the household of faith meat in due season." However, his human limitations were made obvious by such statements as this: "The drawing power which the Almighty exercises over humanity is in different degrees. Some have a strong desire to worship God, others have a weak desire, and others have no desire at all. The difference is due to the shape of the brain." Also, while alleging to be God's spokesman, Russell prophesied future events that never occurred.

Russell was of the opinion that God designed the great Egyptian pyramids and these could be used to predict future events. In one of his books (Volume 3 of Studies in the Scriptures), Russell explains how certain measurements within a pyramid proved that 1874 was to be the year of unprecedented troubles throughout the world. However, 1874 passed with no remarkable tragedy. While it is an embarrassment for anyone to make an inaccurate prediction, it is much more so for one who claims to be God's spokesman.

(It is interesting to note in the revised edition of 1923, now with the advantage of hindsight, the text is made to say that 1914 was Russell's predicted year of troubles – and since 1914 was the beginning of World War One, it would appear his prediction was accurate, unless of course the reader was aware of the original text. How did the revisionists accomplish such a feat? It was a simple matter of 'stretching' the "very accurate measurements" of the pyramid until they coincided with the year 1914. As one observer wrote, "If the war would not fit the Pyramid, the Pyramid must be made to fit the war.")

Russell was entangled in a number of legal confrontations over the years resulting in certain traits of his character, as well as some of his business dealings, becoming public record, truths that would otherwise have remained obscure. For instance:

In 1903 Russell's wife sued for separation, and in order for the court to determine fair alimony it was necessary to know of Russell's financial situation. Thus surfaced the fact that he alone controlled all the financial forces of the thriving Society and was accountable to no one. The secretary-treasurer of the Society declared, "We are not responsible to anyone for our expenditures. We are responsible only to God." In 1913 Mrs. Russell sued for divorce, stating the cause of the suit was her husband's "conceit, egotism, domination, and improper conduct in relation to other women."

Most of Russell's legal confrontations were initiated by Russell himself, this in spite of the fact he openly declared all governments and man-made laws to be

Satan (this is the last time satan will be spelled with a capital S) inspired. On one occasion Russell filed suit against The Brooklyn Daily Eagle after that newspaper belittled, in a cartoon, Russell's much-advertised "Miracle Wheat." Russell claimed his Miracle Wheat would grow five times as much as any other brand, and he encouraged his followers to purchase it so the work of the Society could be better financed. He asked the court for $100,000 damages. Government agents studied the Miracle Wheat and testified it to be inferior. Russell lost the case. (The Eagle continued to scrutinize Russell's activities, giving reports of shady maneuvers intended to bring unwarranted credibility to Russell and his organization, disclosing imaginary sermons given in imaginary locations around the world. But Russell never again filed suit against them.)

When a Mr. J. Ross, a Baptist minister from Hamilton, Ontario, published a pamphlet condemning Russell and Russellism, Russell hastily filed a suit against Ross for "defamatory libel" in an effort to suppress the damaging publicity. This court case turned out to be even more revealing then the previous one.

Ross had been very blunt in his affront against Russell's character, his qualifications (" never attended the higher schools of learning; knows comparatively nothing of philosophy, systematic or historic theology, and is totally ignorant of the dead languages"), and Russellism in general (" anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-Biblical, anti-Christian, and a deplorable perversion of the gospel of God's Dear Son"). Ross was not rattled by Russell's challenge but rather welcomed the opportunity

to publicly expose Russell as a fraud.

The scene was set. It was Russell's task to prove Ross' printed allegations were unfounded. If he could do so his reputation would be absolved. On the other hand, the onus was on Ross to prove his allegations to be authentic, or else the court would find him guilty as a defamer of character.

After swearing before the God whose anointed servant he claimed to be to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," the five-hour cross-examination of Russell began. The following is a sampling:

Q: Do you know the Greek alphabet?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Can you tell me the correct letters if you see them?

A: Some of them. I might make a mistake on some of them.

Q: Would you tell me the names of those on top of the page, page 447, I have got here?

A: Well, I don't know that I would be able to.

Q: You can't tell what those letters are? Look at them and see if you know.

A: My way (he was interrupted at this point and not allowed to explain.)

Q: Are you familiar with the Greek language?

A: No.

Another sampling:

Q: Is it true you were never ordained?

A: It is not true.

Q: Now, you never were ordained by a bishop, clergyman, presbytery, council, or any body of men living?

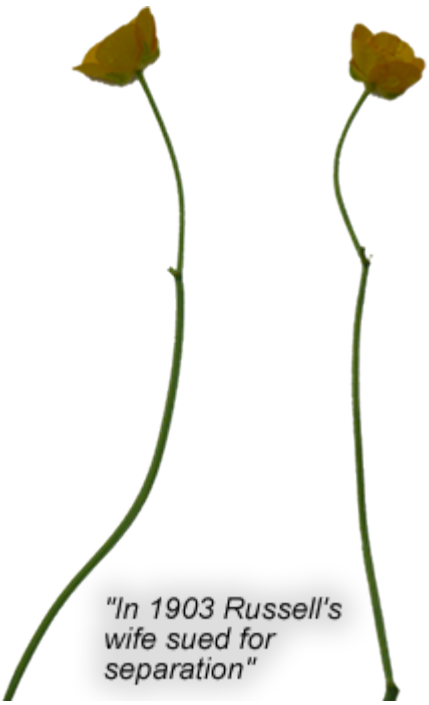
A (after a long pause): I never was.

Russell lost the case and proved himself to be a premeditated perjurer. It was revealed his education was limited to seven years of public school, and he knew nothing about Latin and Hebrew. His own testimony established the indisputable fact he had no qualifications whatsoever to challenge Biblical interpretations.

Russell's appetite for money, and questionable methods of obtaining it, activated more legal brawls, but his clever lawyer, J.F. Rutherford, soon to be Russell's successor, managed to keep him out of serious trouble with the law.

Russell's use of time prophecy (predicting future events), though every one of them failed to occur in the time predicted, had the effect of drawing many into his fold. And there were other contributing factors to the impressive growth of his beloved Society. He often expressed his conviction that God's mantle was on him alone, and only he was qualified to discern spiritual matters. These factors, coupled with his ability to persuade, an inordinate energy and remarkable daring, resulted in a life that was to make a formidable impact upon society.

Under Russell's direction the Society became a sturdy foundation on which was eventually built the leviathan it now is. When Russell died in 1916 Russellism was only beginning to mature. Today the Watchtower Society belittles the influence its founder has on its present-day tenets, perhaps because of embarrassment attached to his name, but the teachings of the Watchtower is definitely Russell-inspired, Russell-bred Russellism, with only sprinklings of grafted additives. And the person with the sachet who occasionally knocks on your door to ask you if you think there is any hope for our world is, whether he/she acknowledges it or not (or is even aware of it), a genuine Russellite.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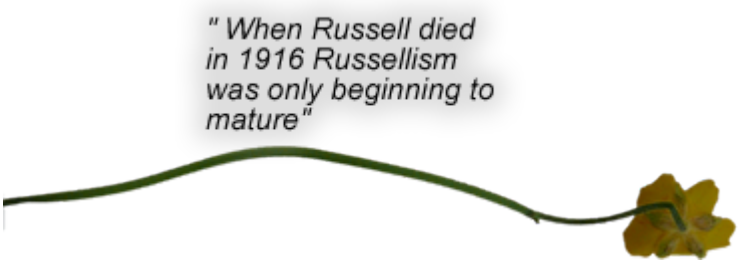


THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christians declare the Bible to be God's infallible word to man. Though penned by man "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2 Tim. 3:16), and therefore the Bible is in a class of its own, to be esteemed and obeyed. The Bible reveals many truths regarding the nature of God, creation of life, relationship between God and man, history of man, sin, God's plan of redemption, future happenings, etc. All true tenets of the Christian faith are derived from the Bible.

The following is a summary of the generally accepted evangelical view of the Christian faith. (The writer defines an evangelical as one who believes in the literal truths of Scripture – that the Bible means what it says and says what it means.)

Man arrived on the scene about seven thousand years ago. Adam, the first man, was a product of God's love and genius and, perhaps, God's desire for fellowship. Man is a spiritual being destined to live forever. While living on planet Earth he is housed in a physical body (an earthsuit), and when his body stops functioning he will live in another location. God and Adam had good fellowship. Adam's every need was supplied, including a wife to share his rich life. And God gave to Adam authority to rule the entire earth.

Man's problems started at an insurrection he had nothing to do with. The revolt took place in heaven, led by a mighty and glorious angel who possessed a great capacity to persuade and deceive. Lucifer convinced a third of the vast number of angels to rebel against God, but after a mighty battle they were defeated and cast out of heaven. Lucifer, now called satan, having failed in his attempt to gain command of heaven, plotted a maneuver to burglarize the authority over the earth that Adam possessed. Master of deception, he convinced Adam to disobey God. When Adam sinned he forfeited his authority to satan who could now boast that all the kingdoms of the world had "been delivered unto me." (Luke 4:6)

Adam was in real trouble. God had warned him if he disobeyed "you shall surely die." Adam was now spiritually dead and no longer had fellowship with his Creator. He now had a new master, that ruthless, diabolical satan. Adam could not help himself. There was nothing he could do to restore the relationship he once had with God. He was in desperate need of a savior.

And so it was with all mankind. Under satan's influence sin flourished. No one was guiltless. Every

person needed a savior.

And God promised a savior.

Old testament writers foretold of a coming Messiah. For many generations God's chosen people, the Israelites, anticipated the coming of this promised One. This Messiah was to be God's plan of redemption, that is, any person who chose to be delivered from the penalty of his/her sin and enter into fellowship with God could do so through this Savior.

Jesus entered mankind through the body and obedience of a young virgin who was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. A prophet once wrote, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." (Mat. 1:23) Immanuel means "God with us." The Messiah was actually God Himself, God the Son, who entered the human race for the purpose of attaining man's salvation.

Jesus, though tempted in every way, never sinned. He claimed to be the Son of God, equal to His Father, and was crucified for this 'blasphemy' by the jealous religious rulers.

It was there on the cross that the price of sin was paid in full. Redemption from sin and sickness and poverty came through the innocent blood of God Himself. The promise of a Messiah had been fulfilled. Man now has a means of escape. Jesus said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) When a person comes to Christ to be saved God gives spiritual life to that person, the same life Adam had before the fall. Relationship between this person and God is established.

To reiterate, one is saved by faith – faith in Christ. God's plan of redemption has nothing to do with man's good works or his abilities. The Bible declares man's best works "are as filthy rags." Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace (God's unmerited favor) you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works (effort), lest anyone should boast." God's salvation is a gift to be received, not a reward to be earned. When one comes to Christ (in prayer) to be saved, repentant and believing, something happens. The dead spirit (dead from sin) of the repentant one becomes alive for the first time (thus he/she is "born again") and that person becomes a new creation. That 'new creation' is now an adopted child of God, redeemed, justified, sanctified.

Over the past two thousand years since Christ's execution, multiple millions have experienced this second birth. Sadly, however, the majority of people have rejected Christ, and remain in their lost condition. For them the blood of Christ has been shed in vain. The reason many have refused Christ is deception. The one who deceived Adam (satan), and thereby bringing the ruination of man, also camouflages man's need of salvation and the reality of a Savior.

The future of the born-again believer is favorable beyond description and imagination. His ultimate home is a city in heaven called New Jerusalem. There he will dwell with God forever and ever.

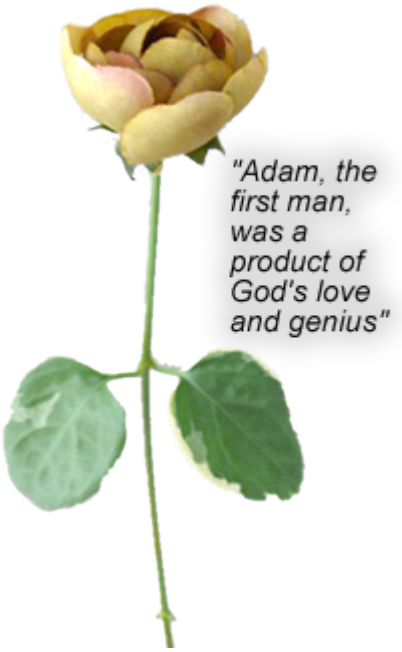
Conversely, the future of the non-believer is horrid beyond description and imagination. His ultimate

dwelling is a place called Gehennah, the lake of fire. There he will spend an eternity with satan and his hideous demons.

Just before Christ ascended into heaven (after His resurrection) He gave His church (the believers) a mandate to reach the lost with the gospel, the good news of salvation. Soon after the Holy Spirit came in a unique way to endow the believer with the needed enthusiasm and ability to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to teach the believers the ways of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit, like Jesus and the Father, is fully God. He actually takes up residence in the heart of the believer. He teaches the believer the things of God, and helps him to accomplish the will of God for his life.

The church (Christians) looks forward to Christ's return to earth. The Bible speaks more of His second coming than His first (as a babe in Bethlehem). He will reign (physically) over the earth from the city of Jerusalem, Israel. It is generally agreed the generation living during the time of Israel's declaration of independence (April 14th, 1948) will witness this second coming of Christ.



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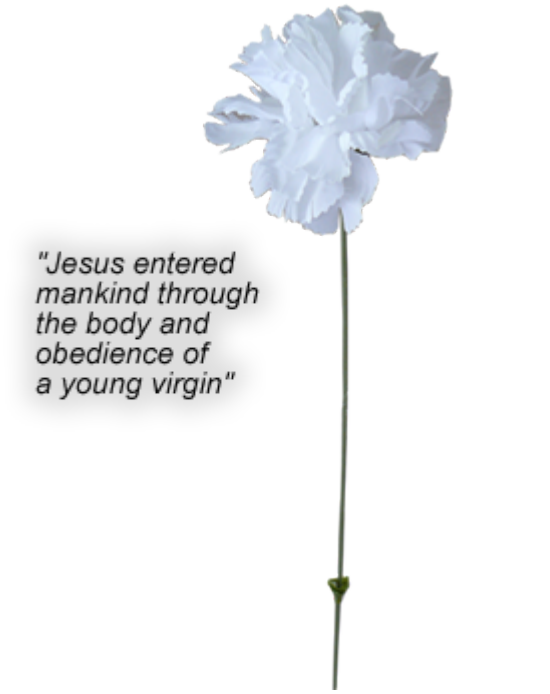
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THE "JEHOVAH'S WITNESS" FAITH

According to the Watchtower Society, true religion did not occur until sometime in the 1870's when its founder, Charles Taze Russell, began his Bible classes. Before this time the entire Christian church was (again, according to the Watchtower Society) thoroughly steeped in apostasy, including the early church just after Christ's resurrection. The Watchtower Society teaches that they – the Jehovah's Witnesses – are God's chosen people. All of Christendom (except for themselves) are of the devil, deceived followers of satan. Furthermore, governments of every nation are part of the devil's organization. (For this reason Jehovah's Witnesses are not permitted to salute a flag, go to war, vote, or hold political office.)

The Watchtower Society teaches that they are "the instrument or channel being used by Jehovah (God) to teach his people on earth." Whereas in days of old Jehovah chose individuals to be His spokesman (prophet), today He speaks through a group of faithful followers of Christ commonly recognized as Jehovah's Witnesses, ruled by 'the Governing Body' in Brooklyn, New York. It is impossible for one to attain spiritual truth without their help. To remain outside their organization is to dwell in darkness, for Jehovah will not enlighten anyone except through His earthly theocratic organization, the Watchtower Society. They alone are God's prophetic voice and they consider their perceptions to be of great value.

The Watchtower Society, too, believes in the infallibility of the Bible. However, they have marginal confidence in the translations that Christians, generally, accept as dependable – so much so that they produced their own version, The New World Translation, completed in 1961. The translators remain anonymous, saying they do not want to receive credit for this work. Their translation is

distinctly different from most other translations, especially in text where their beliefs differ from that of evangelical and traditional Christians. Whereby they hail The New World Translation as the most accurate of translations and pure of all bias, most recognized scholars do not share their sentiments.

The conclusions reached by the leadership of the the Watchtower Society in their study of Scripture, almost without exception, is contrary to evangelical (as well as traditional) Christianity. To begin with, they teach man does not have an immortal soul. When Adam died he "went nowhere but to the dust from which he had been taken." And so it is with everyone. There is no life hereafter. When one dies a physical death he simply ceases to exist.

So it therefore follows there is no hell to be saved from. Gehenna, "the lake of fire and brimstone," is merely a symbol of annihilation. If one goes to Gehennah one simply goes outside of God's memory – never to be resurrected. However, if one dies after living a worthy life he/she will not go to Gehennah, but will eventually be resurrected.

Resurrection, to a Jehovah's Witness, is actually a reconstruction. Because death is a total termination of life there is therefore nothing remaining to resurrect. But Jehovah will reconstruct a replica of a worthy person from His memory.

The Messiah, therefore, did not come to save man from eternal torment, but rather from annihilation of life. And He was not sent primarily because of His love for degenerate man, but rather because of His keen sense of justice. For He knew one day there would be a worthy group of followers (Jehovah's Witnesses) who do not deserve eternal annihilation.

Salvation for the Witness is not God's grace (unmerited favor), but rather one's own worthiness. Christ's innocent death was not payment for man's salvation, but rather a payment for another chance. Man now has a second opportunity to obtain salvation. Salvation, then, is not a gift to be received, but a reward to be earned.

To reiterate, a person is saved by proving himself worthy, as Christ did. One is not saved by faith, as evangelicals claim, but good works and honest motives. A man having honest motives will surely join God's true organization (the Watchtower Society), and refusing to do so is evidence of a corrupt heart. Good works is giving due worship unto Jehovah, and true worship means, primarily, witnessing to the less enlightened the truths about the Society's special calling. (That is why he/she appears at your door.) If one is faithful to God (by being faithful to God's organization) one may be saved from the destruction the Society has, since its inception, prophesied to be in the immediate future.

The Watchtower Society refutes the doctrine that the babe born in Bethlehem is God in the flesh. They teach rather that Jesus was a new creation. Before He became a man He was actually Michael the Archangel, a spirit-being. Christ was completely annihilated at Calvary, that is, he not only died physically but spiritually as well. (The Watchtower does not know what happened to the body of Jesus, but considers the possibility it is preserved by God for future display.) Today the Son is again a spirit-being, and He again is called Michael.

The person who died at Calvary was no more than a man. Certainly the only guiltless man, but nonetheless just a man. And He wasn't crucified on a cross, but rather "impaled" on a stake.

The Holy Spirit is not a person. While most translations refer to Him as "He," the New World Translation refers to the Holy Spirit as "it." Such a conclusion is reached because He does not have a name, and therefore cannot be a person. He is likened to electricity, or a radio beam, or an impersonal force.

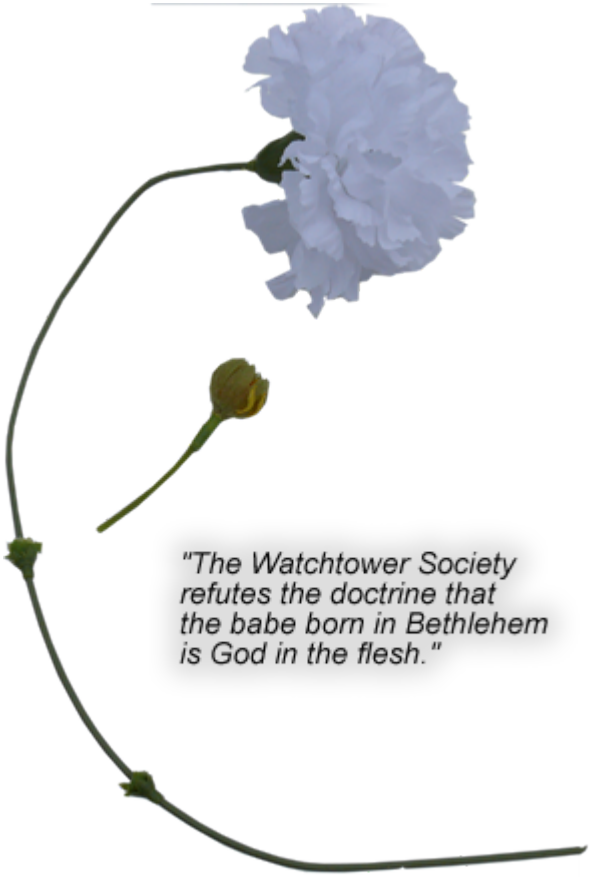
Jehovah's Witnesses are divided into two groups: 1) the anointed class and 2) the other sheep.

The anointed class (also called the heavenly class) consists of exactly 144,000 people. These are God's spiritual sons, born-again members of Christ's body, anointed by God to rule, with Christ, over the rest of mankind. There are only a few from this group still on earth, the rest are in heaven.

The other sheep is by far the largest group. This group, comparatively, is much less fortunate than the anointed class. They can never be born again, will never see heaven, will never be justified by God. They will, however, live an everlasting life of peace on earth if they prove to be faithful to God. (This includes, of course, being faithful to God's theocratic earthly organization.)

Planet Earth will never be destroyed, but will be an eternal paradise for the happy, faithful followers of Jehovah after He destroys the evil systems now in control.

" When one dies a phyiscal death he simply ceases to exist"



TEEN PROBE

S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T T-A-L-K T-O T-E-E-N-S

So here we go again.

Yep, I'm back. As I said last time, there's a lot of people out there after your allegiance and heart, and I intend to get in on the action. I covet you for Christ. In other words, I don't want you to become converted to anyone other than Jesus. And if you're already hitched to something, I want you to get unhitched so you can fasten yourself to Christ. Because anyone or anything other than Jesus is a dead end street. A story with a sad ending. Empty promises and much pain. Lots of mouth but no stuff.

But Jesus ain't like that. He can back up what He says. Hey, there's no One bigger than Jesus.

And that brings me to the question I got for you: IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Yeah, you got it. That's my question. If not, why not? If you're not a Christian, why don't you become one? There's a proverb that says, "He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame."

In other words, only an airhead would reject something before really considering it. Hey, you give so much fuss and attention to things of lesser importance – what you wear and how you look and do people really like me and stuff like that. But I'm talking about your future. Hey, not just old age, but your eternal future. I mean if you believe there's even a chance of life after death, don't you think you should give my question serious consideration? Jesus says if you reject Him your eternal future will be a nightmare. So I ask again: if not, why not? If you're not a Christian – that is, if you are not walking with Jesus – why don't you become one? What prevents you from repenting of your sins and bowing to the lordship of Christ? You have heard the gospel before and rejected it. Why? Perhaps the reason is..... Christians.

Yeah. Maybe that's it. Maybe you don't want to be a Christian because of Christians – AND those who you think are Christians but are not.

You know, Christians take the rap for those who call themselves Christians but are no such thing. You think, perhaps, that everyone that goes to church must be a Christian? Hey, you're dead wrong. Just because you see some guy standing in a garage, that doesn't make him a mechanic. And just because you see people going to church, that doesn't make them Christians. Hey, most people who go to church are not Christians (but at the same time, most Christians do go to church).

Some go to church simply because it's the thing to do. Mom and Dad went so I guess I should go too. Or perhaps they think this is the way to get on God's good side. Hey, the guys that spit in Jesus' face and had him crucified all went to 'church'.

Hey, a story. There was this ruler and warrior, a good guy who lived in medieval Europe, who heard about this dude who had the same name. Now this dude wasn't so nice. Which caused a bad reflection on himself. So this warrior catches up to the bad dude and says, "Hey Dude, either change your ways or change your name!"

Sounds like a reasonable request to me.

Counterfeit Christians are a bad reflection on real Christians. Which is a bad reflection on Christ. But unfortunately there isn't a mighty warrior that's going to make them change their name. That's why so many of us call ourselves 'born-again' Christians, to differentiate between us and the others.

What is a born-again Christian? Hey, good question! Thought you would never ask. A born-again Christian is a real Christian. He is an adopted child of God, a co-heir with Christ. And he became one because God made him one.

Only God can give life. And He will give that life to whoever will come to Him on His terms. What is His terms? The answer – the only answer – is Christ. Christ is God's plan of salvation. Christ is the door that leads into God's kingdom and family. Christ is the entrance into a new life.

One cannot make oneself a Christian. But one can come to Christ. When one comes to Christ, God births in that person a new spiritual life. It is a second birth, whereby one is born "of the Spirit." Thus

one is born-again.

So I'm talking about an experience. Do you get it? Something happens. Something deep and real and very good. When one is born of the Spirit of God, the Spirit moves in and makes that person's body His dwelling place. Don't ask me how, but He does. The Bible says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you received from God?"

If a person has never been born of the Spirit of God, and therefore does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, he is not a real Christian. Now that statement makes a lot of 'Christians' mad but this is supposed to be straight talk and I tell it the way that it is. So listen up, will you?

A real Christian is a follower of, and a believer in, Jesus Christ. A Christian follows after, or emulates, Jesus. And he does so by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives inside him. He believes in Jesus – no, not just believes with his head that Jesus is real or even that He is the Son of God and that He died for our sins – but "with the heart, man believes unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10) WITH THE HEART.

If you believe in your heart that a chair is strong enough to support you, you will sit in (entrust yourself to) that chair. And if you believe in your heart that Jesus can save you from your sins and give you a much better life than the one you now have, you will entrust yourself to Him. You will submit to Him – that is, obey Him. And serve Him. You will stop leaning on other things and other people and start leaning on Jesus. You will come to know Him and to love Him – more than anyone, even friends and family.

A Christian is one who is converted to Jesus. He has surrendered his life to Him. He is no longer his own boss but Jesus is now his boss (lord). He no longer does what he wants, but rather what Jesus commands. And he trusts Christ, and Christ alone, to save him from the punishment his sins have earned him. That's what a real Christian is.

Perhaps you have been disillusioned by those you thought were Christians but are not. They are, you say, no different than everybody else. But what about real Christians? Yes, you admit, there really is something different about these guys. And yet, perhaps, they too disappoint you occasionally. Sometimes Christians are themselves the reason why people do not become Christians. Let's look at it.

Let's do a bit of supposing. Suppose you make a decision to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. You become "born again" of the Spirit of God, a new creature in Christ. You become God's very own daughter or son. You are now the apple of His eye. Your sins are washed away, and for the first time in your life you are clean. You feel different inside, and indeed you are different because the Holy Spirit has taken up residence within you. You know in your heart all is well. You are safe and secure in His everlasting arms. (That's pretty good supposing, isn't it?)

So now you are perfect, right? Now that you are a Christian you would never do anything

dishonorable, would you? Wrong.

Wrong. Just because you became a Christian doesn't mean you will not make mistakes. Maybe small mistakes, maybe big ones. Perhaps you will sin against God – that is, do something you know God disapproves of. You won't always be as loving and patient as you should be. Yes, God is changing you by the power of His Holy Spirit, but in the meantime you sometimes behave like before. You face the same frustration all Christians face – you want to be perfect for Christ's sake, but you know you are not.

Now let's suppose your friends are watching you. Hey, let's check this guy out! Sometimes they will be impressed. Yeah, he's changed all right. But other times they may be disappointed and use that for an excuse not to accept your Jesus. Hey, I ain't going to be no phony Christian!

It happens. I know I have disappointed unsaved friends and relatives. If I were a more loving and generous person some of them would be Believers today. If only I had prayed more. If only I had given more of my time. If only I had loved deeper.....

The point is this: Christianity is conversion to Christ, not conversion to Christians. Every Christian fails periodically. I have many times. I mean many times. I don't know a Christian that hasn't. But that just demonstrates the love of Christ. He has never rejected me when I asked forgiveness. He has never said, "Hey, I'm getting tired of your failures and your selfishness." He loves so deeply. He is trustworthy. That is why in the Bible He is called a Rock.

So many times we Christians are hindrances to others. But let's look at the other side of the coin. If it were not for Christians you would never hear the gospel of Christ. If it were not for their prayers of intercession your chance of entering the kingdom of God are minute. There are many heroes, giants of the faith, who have laid down their life for the sake of the precious gospel. There are some who wet their pillows at night, crying out for the salvation of men, asking God to move by the power of His Spirit over the souls of men and women, to rescue them from the kingdom of darkness, and draw them into the kingdom of God. I know Christians who have sold their homes and possessions and headed out to other countries, sometimes subjecting themselves and their children to poverty lifestyles, just so they can tell others about Christ. And why? Why would they care so much, sacrifice so much? Because.....

They know. They know the value of your soul. They know how much God loves you. They know about heaven. They know about hell. They know of the blood that flowed down Calvary's cross in payment for your sins. They know there is one who hates you and desperately wants to drag you into the hell that awaits him. They know what it's like to be set free of sin. They know what it's like to have fellowship with God. That's why they care. That's why I care.

The Spirit of God is bidding you, wooing you, drawing you to Himself, and has been all your life. You have many times felt His magnetic pull, His gentle persuasion, His loving call, but until now you have withheld yourself from Him. He is the Father with outstretched hands, and you the child who

refused.

But you can change all that. There is an alternative. That alternative has a name. His name is Jesus.

Jesus can make sense out of your life. He can turn it around. Hey, when we talk about Christ we are talking about the one who made you. It was Jesus who put you here. It is Jesus who sustains you, keeps you alive. And it was Jesus who paid the price of your sins so you could be part of His eternal kingdom. You owed a debt you could not pay; He paid a debt He did not owe. Jesus knows you better, loves you more, is more concerned for your well-being than anyone else.

If you don't go with Jesus, where will you go? Who will you walk with? Who will you trust in? Who will take care of you?

So think about it. I mean really think about it. It's your life.

"why don't you become one?"

" Either change your ways or change your name"

"WITH THE
HEART"

" Stop leaning on other
things and other people"

" There are some who wet their pilows at night, crying for the salvation of men"

" They know there is one who hates you"

WHO SAID THAT?

"My book was written in the memory of the home where I was once happy and secure, where I belonged and was loved as a daughter. I wrote in memory of my parents – mine until the mean minds of the Watchtower Society decreed that any girl who strayed from "the truth" (their truth must surely be a daughter of the devil) would be in agony in Armageddon. Torn between their natural love for their own flesh and blood, and the creed they had made their life, my parents made their decision and severed all connections with me. From that day on, I was dead to them."

Valerie Tomsett, author, ex J.W.

"I know I have made an ass of myself."

J.F. Rutherford, re his 1925 prophecy

"Little did I realize at that time that I was entering into slavery so profound that I was not able to emerge free again as a Christian until thirty years had elapsed..... Little did I realize that I was leaving Christian individuality behind and was entering into a sort of Zombi existence, half individual and half mass. I then and there became a cog in the machinery of one of the greatest subversions of all time."

W.J. Schnell, author, ex J.W.

"We were a lot of automatons following a path beaten out by the gentlemen in Brooklyn. If they said the world was going to end on Tuesday, we said it would end on Tuesday. When Tuesday came and the world had not ended, the men in Brooklyn would write in the magazine and say, 'oops, not this time.' And we little zombies would go out and say, 'oops, not this time.' If they had told us to walk backwards

sucking a lollipop we would have become an army of backward walking lollipop lickers!"

Valerie Tomsett, author, ex J.W.

"If, for example, the hands of Milton Henschel, Fred Franz, Ted Jaraca and Lloyd Barry went up, one could generally be sure that the hands of Cary Barber, Martin Poetzinger, William Jackson, George Gangas, Grant Suiter and Jack Barr would go up as well. If the hands of the former stayed down, the hands of the latter would generally stay down also. Some others would likely vote with these but their vote was not as predictable. With rare exceptions, this pattern prevailed."

Raymond Franz, author, ex J. W., former member of Governing Body

"A grossly misleading translation. It is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John1:1 'the word was a god.' But of all the scholars in the world, as far as we know, none have translated this verse as the Jehovah's Witnesses have done."

Dr. Julius Mantley, Greek scholar

"Today more than two million Jehovah's Witnesses believe and teach that Christ's invisible presence began in 1914. Very few realize that for nearly fifty years the Watch Tower Society announced and heralded, in their role as prophet, that such invisible presence began in 1874. As late as 1929, fifteen years after 1914, they were still teaching this."

Raymond Franz, author

"Now you approach the first door. How can a person introduce himself? He may state variously that he is a minister, a representative of the Watch Tower Society, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, doing an educational work, calling to encourage Bible study in the home, bringing good news, carrying out a public service, working with an international research group, bringing the people the good results of this research, working in conjunction with a world-wide society of ministers, working together with more than a half-million ministers, representing a New World Bible Society. In presenting the New World Translation one may say he represents a bible translating committee. During assemblies one may style himself a visiting delegate to the convention being held."

Qualified To Be Ministers, page 175

"my parents made their decision and severed all connection with me"

MY FATHER

Why did he leave me, where did he go
Didn't he love me, I'll never know

One night he vanished into the night
Left us scared and alone, no hope in sight

Daddy I miss you, you will never know
Sometimes I wonder if I made you go

I try to remember your hand in mine
But memory fails for the pain in my mind

People told me it was all right
I'd soon forget you, all would be bright

Well that didn't happen though I tried in vain
Your loss in my life has caused too much pain

I looked for another to walk in your shoes
To help me feel right, but that didn't do

Inside I grew harder, my heart hurt so deep
My Father had left me, alone and so weak

I needed a man, a dad to behold
Someone to hug and even to scold

I needed his image to guide me along
To give me protection, to help when I'm wrong

I needed his life to reflect my own
A part of my being, a part of my home

Sometimes I wonder how it might have been
Had you remained real and not just a dream

I wondered in darkness, for years I prevailed
To replace what was taken, but oh how I failed

No one could be you, or so I thought
Till the day I met Jesus and the Father you're not

All my efforts, all the sins I had done
I needed Jesus, God's only Son

I opened my heart to Him that day
I saw His heartache, the price He had paid

Oh what a moment, pure joy filled my soul
My life was so empty, yet he filled every hole

He gathered me to Him, in his arms I found
Love and acceptance and mercy abound

All that he has he shares freely with me
His Father now my Father, most precious trophy

I wept as I sensed how Father wanted me so
Me, his own daughter, a child for his own

He told me he loved me and that I would be
With him forever, my new Father and me

No more do I travel this life all alone
I found purpose true love and a home

Though I cannot erase all the pain I went through
Jesus has given a life that is new

Now when I look back, it isn't so bad
I wasn't alone when no father I had

For God was beside me and he knew from the start
He'd be my Father when I gave Jesus my heart

Tracy Thring

HISTORICAL VIEW: PART TWO – ENTER THE JUDGE

J.F. Rutherford liked being called "the Judge." He was an ambitious, dominant, colorful, opinionated, charismatic leader of men. By using political manipulation, he secured presidency of the Society at Russell's death even though Russell had chosen other men to inherit that role. Rutherford silenced his offended peers with thunderous threats and accusations, and mutinous leaders were expelled from their positions. He considered himself God's spokesman, and anyone challenging that assertion would come under his fiery wrath. Under his leadership autonomous groups of Bible Students throughout the world – many who were sincerely endeavoring to know and serve God – were

forged into a regimented army of indoctrinated dependents ever so willing to promulgate Russellism or whatever imaginative gospel the Watchtower Society might invent. To do this was no easy chore, but J.F. Rutherford was no ordinary fellow.

From the very beginning, the Judge unabashedly condemned all Christendom and its clergy for the purpose of prying away and proselytizing loosely affiliated adherents. This method proved quite successful and was used consistently throughout his reign. Some of his anti-war material resulted in a twenty-year sentence in Atlanta, Georgia, a sentence reversed after the war. He emerged from prison a martyr-hero and his leadership was thereby firmly anchored.

Under Russell, the local congregations throughout the world were enjoying a certain autonomy with only a casual affiliation with the Brooklyn headquarters. Each elected their own elders, ran their services as they thought proper and conducted their own business affairs. Many congregations were active in charitable works and sincerely seeking the will of God in their lives. Rutherford immediately maneuvered to change all that. It was his goal to cleanse the organization of independent thinking, personal devotion to God, individual Bible study and private endeavor.

For Rutherford had a definite goal in mind. It was his ambition to create a theocratic organization (an organization ruled by divine appointment). It was to be a New Nation, that is, a nation within the nation. This New Nation was to consist of various classes of people. At the top would be the "Faithful and Wise Servant" class, the Watchtower Society. It would fall on them to receive spiritual manna from God and feed the underling classes with "meat in due season." Below them would be the anointed or heavenly class consisting of 144,000 spirit-begotten adherents who, together with Christ, make up the organized 'Christ' on earth. Many of these (supposedly) had already died and gone to heaven. The last and most inferior class was to be the slave class. The slave class would be a great multitude of non-spiritual Watchtower disciples throughout the world who would zealously promulgate the causes of the Watchtower Society.

To accomplish the task of creating this theocracy, it would take time and money and cunning and ruthlessness. The time required turned out to be twenty-one years, as 1938 seen Rutherford's Theocratic Organization a reality. The money came from a massive book-selling campaign launched at the Cedar Springs, Ohio convention (1922) with the slogan "Advertise, Advertise, Advertise The King And The Kingdom." The cunning was supplied mostly by the Society's dictator, J.F. Rutherford, a gifted analyst of human nature and master strategist. And the ruthlessness required was never in short supply in Brooklyn headquarters.

A pamphlet Millions Now Living Will Never Die was distributed worldwide by the millions in what was called The Millions Campaign. It promised unceasing life to anyone who would abandon evil Christendom and enter the Watchtower fold. This promise found many takers in this war-torn era, and the campaign was a complete success, swelling the ranks.

Rutherford prophesied the end of the world system would occur in 1925 (religions and governments

would be wiped out, and all but Watchtower adherents would be annihilated) and a New World would be ushered in by heavenly citizens. Rutherford wrote: “and since other scriptures definitely fix the fact that there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and other faithful ones of old and that these will have the first favor, we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representative of the new order of things on earth.” Many sold their property and took to the road to spread the message.

To house the expected heavenly guests, a choice mansion was built in San Diego, California and given the name Beth Saline, meaning "house of the princes." The deed was made out to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Most present-day Jehovah's Witnesses have never heard of Beth Saline.)

The prophecy was fanned right up to 1925 – at which time the Judge reprimanded his followers for selfishly yearning the coming of the New World. Was there not much work yet to be done? He belittled selfish efforts of spiritual development, and exhorted the wasted time be spent selling. He bestowed upon his footmen the title Kingdom Publishers which emphasized their role as book-sellers. That Rutherford never did believe his own prophecy was evident by the fact plans for expansion were in full swing (the purchase of land and printing presses, erection of office buildings, etc.) prior to 1925. But the prophecy had the desired effect, bringing many more book-sellers into the fold – which resulted in a greater flow of money into the Society. And since the heavenly visitors never did show up, the Judge moved into Beth Saline and remained their until his death in 1942.

The biggest obstacle to the take-over of the local congregations throughout the world were the Elders. The local Elders were usually elected and therefore favored, and their positions firmly entrenched. Many were not about to bow to the dictates of Brooklyn. This is when the Organization's great store of ruthlessness was harnessed. Sometimes hatchet men were sent out to take over by whatever means necessary. One such agent was sent to a large congregation in Germany and upon not being able to persuade the Elders to submit to headquarter edicts, declared the members “evil servants” and ordered those faithful to the Organization to follow him out the door. Only eight followed, but this newly-formed congregation was undergirded by neighboring congregations until it was just as large as the original. The old congregation was out, the new totally subservient to Brooklyn.

Such drastic action, however, was not always necessary. Zone directors, men selected by the Society, were sent from Brooklyn to each congregation. Over the years, by exercising political finesse, the Elders were pushed to the background as the zone directors were elevated. Or a congregation was divided into smaller congregations so the Elders' influence was reduced. Eventually the position of Elder was simply abolished (and later reestablished, the Elders no longer elected, but appointed). Thus Brooklyn (Rutherford) had successfully taken over the local congregations. Now the ranks could be fully purged of non-conformists and malcontents. If one were found to be uncooperative he would simply be dropped. No literature, no communication, no

favors. The ones most co-operative were given choice responsibilities and opportunities of advancement. There were always many to replace the ones that left or were ousted. The purer the ranks became, the better the book-selling business, because the Organization was now able to dictate hours spent selling, and impose quotas. The organization swelled.

The depression years were good years for the Judge and the whole organization. He lived in the San Diego mansion, summered in Europe and drove one of his two 16 cylinder Cadillacs. And the depression caused many of the disillusioned to turn to the Jehovah's Witnesses (as of 1931 everyone in the Organization were henceforth called Jehovah's Witnesses) for hope and security. In 1933, 403 stations worldwide were used by the Judge to condemn evil Christendom. Later, phonographs were carried door-to-door so people could listen to a six minute recording of the Judge's preaching. Young people were discouraged from marrying so they could better serve the causes of the Society. In order to rejuvenate a declining book-selling business, Rutherford, in 1935, decided it was time to start a war!

Rutherford's plan was to trigger confrontations in select cities so that the Society would appear to be martyred for their religious activities, and thereby gain public sympathy (and increased book sales). In the state of New Jersey the Witnesses were ordered by the Society to sell their books door-to-door on Sunday mornings. The citizens objected to this Sunday morning intrusion, and vigorously complained to the authorities who in turn forbade the selling of books without a permit. When the Witnesses refused to submit to this ordinance arrests were made. Defiantly, book-selling was then intensified, the wanted mass arrests made, and the ensuing sentences appealed. A peaceful community suddenly found itself in turmoil as their jails were filled with Jehovah's Witnesses crying out against religious intolerance, and the critical attention of the whole nation was focused on them. The Society was prepared, in advance, to take their cause to the Supreme Court. The Society could have ended the confrontation at any time by simply appealing to the freedom-of-press guaranteed in the Bill of Rights (which they eventually did to win their case), but the Society was profiting from all the publicity engendered. Everything was going according to a very sinister premeditated strategy, resulting in greatly increased sales from a sympathetic populace - and the formation of more congregations.

In 1939 Witnesses from neighboring Youngstown converged upon the small quiet town of Hubbard, Ohio. To lure the town into a confrontation, they paraded around in their sandwich signs which declared, "Religion Is A Snare And A Racket." The mayor politely asked the leader of this group to please stop parading up and down "with those ridiculous signs." The answer..... No! Arrests were made, and Hubbard was drawn into a legal battle they were not prepared to fight. The Witnesses handed out pamphlets denouncing the arrests and called for a special meeting. This resulted in a near riot, arrests, fines and appeals. Rutherford was elated. Thousands of Witnesses flooded Hubbard and mob violence ensued. Plots of land were rented at strategic locations and signs erected proclaiming, "Hubbard, Ohio is Unfair – Hubbard, Ohio is un-American!" The battle was

carried to the Supreme Court. Hubbard was the loser.

"The deed was made out to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"

"the Elders no longer elected, but appointed"

HUSBANDS BEWARE

It could never happen to me!, you say. *My wife is too smart to fall for anything the Jehovah's Witnesses have to offer. There's no way she would ever get caught up in their religion. And so what if she did! What harm can a little religion do?*

Husbands beware!

Of course every member of the family is susceptible – husbands, children, grandparents. But it seems that the wife, the one left alone in the home most often, is more so. Many husbands have lost their wives, and subsequently their children, to the *Watchtower Bible And Tract Society* of Brooklyn, New York. You think it can't happen to you? Think again. It has happened to husbands all over the world. How they wish they would have put a stop to it while they still could.

You leave the house for work. A few hours later..... *ding dong!* Oh, your wife has a visitor. I wonder who it could be? *"Good Morning, Mrs. Jackson* (nice teethy smile). *It's just me again, making my rounds. Ha ha! Isn't it amazing what's been happening in the Middle East since the last time I was here? Your neighbor, Mrs. Gray, was telling me she hopes all this will lead to world peace. Do you think we will ever see a time when we can all live in harmony with one another? In this magazine that I have here, it tells of a real hope for peace whereby God's faithful followers will all be able to live together in harmony. Don't you long for such a world, Mrs Jackson?"*

Yes, I know. Your wife told the Jehovah's Witness she really isn't interested. But did you notice she

didn't sound as emphatic as she used to? Now just suppose every week you went to a meeting just for the purpose of learning how to 'get through' to people just like your wife. You would get pretty good at it, wouldn't you? Well, some of the people who knock at your door have been in training for many years. They know how to drop a provoking word, when to back off, when to press a point, spot a weakness, ask the right question.

And keep in mind they have been coming to your wife for years now. They have become familiar, no longer the threat they once were. Their persistence pays off. Your wife, over the years, listens more attentively although she pretends not to. You know, she really does long for peace in the world, in her country, in her soul. *Perhaps,* she reasons, *these Jehovah's Witnesses really have the answer..... maybe it wouldn't hurt to listen to what they have to say..... perhaps someday I will take them up on their offer of a Bible Study in my home..... what harm could a simple Bible study do?*

But you disapprove. *No way..... no Jehovah's Witnesses here..... not in this house!*

Ding Dong! Well, it seems your wife has a visitor. Again. Different person, same teeth. And, as always, you are at work. *"Hello, I'm in this neighborhood sharing a couple of Scripture verses with your neighbors. My, it's such a beautiful day, isn't it? You know, one day soon God's going to change this old world into a fine place where the weather will always be this nice. Not only that, but He is going to make sure there are no wars or strife or hunger. See, it says here in Isaiah, chapter 11, verse 6:* The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. *Do you know that the Bible is referring to a time in the very near future when God's true followers will live on earth in peace. Doesn't your heart long for such a world?*

Oh, yes I do! Oh, Oh! Your wife has just done something she has never done before. She has shown interest. Until now she has always told them, politely but emphatically, she isn't interested. But listen, now she is responding.

"*You do believe the Bible, don't you?"*

"*Oh, yes. I don't read it as much as I should, but I certainly believe it."*

"*You know, you and your family can be a part of God's paradise. Perhaps God will use you to lead your family to this paradise that He promises in the Bible. I will be most happy to come back and discuss this with you further. Perhaps we could have a Bible study in your home."*

This time she doesn't bother telling you about her oh-so-nice visitor. Why should she? You would just get uptight and make a big thing out of nothing. She casually mentions she is going to a Bible study at a neighbor's house down the street. *No big deal,* you think, *just a harmless Bible study.* Some time later she casually mentions a friend has invited her to a service in town. *Who? Oh, you know that lady down the street I was telling you about. Where? Oh, it's at some place called the Kingdom Hall. You don't mind, do you, Hon? It might prove interesting. I won't be late.*

At the Kingdom Hall she is really impressed by the attention they give her. *This is okay,* she muses. *They sure make a person feel welcome..... maybe they've got what I've been looking for..... and they seem so very dedicated, so sincere..... I wonder.....*

And now the programming starts in earnest. At the Bible studies and the weekly services the things she believed in and relied upon are systematically belittled while at the same time she is being immersed in Russellism. Meantime, back at the ranch, you are enjoying your tv and babysitting the kids. You don't know it, but *you have lost your wife.*

You see, just a little while ago, deep in her heart, her loyalty switched from you to them. They got to her and they got her. She is now programmed into thinking that the only hope for herself and her family is the *Watchtower Society,* God's channel of peace and safety on earth. And for the sake of her family she will be loyal to them, and thereby loyal to God.

You could have reached her. You still could if you knew the truth yourself. You could sit her down and reason with her. But you were always too busy with important matters to be bothered with a trivial thing like truth. Anyhow, just a week ago you could have pleaded or got mad or made threats or something. But now the *Watchtower* has fully captured her trust and loyalty, and it is they whom she will fearfully obey. *She will get over it,* you think. *She will come to her senses.* Don't bet on it. The longer she is entangled with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the deeper she is entwined in a web of deceit. *What do you mean you are going to go knocking on doors?!* you protest. *Are you crazy? Are you trying to make a fool out of all of us? Why can't you just stay home and read your Bible? What will our friends think?*

Friends? Did you say 'friends'? Well you better get used to some changes. Your wife will soon be convinced not to associate with 'goats' (non-Witnesses), whether they be friends or relatives. *And by the way,* she says, *shouldn't our children be attending the Kingdom Hall services?..... should our children be deprived of wholesome teaching just because you have a thing against Jehovah's Witnesses?*

You have one hope: Join the Society. Forget your prerogatives, your hopes and dreams, your right to think and act for yourself, your opinions and independence. Become the android your wife has become. Swallow your pride, and propagate their gospel of death. Life otherwise is totally incompatible because her life will be wrapped around the 'Theocracy.' If you threaten her she has a lot of experienced people to turn to. Should you divorce her, you know who will get the kids. She will probably marry someone from one of the Kingdom Halls. Your children will be thoroughly washed in Russellism, and you, Sir, will be your children's enemy.

It can't happen? Oh, yes it can. Maybe it will.

You have been warned.

"Good morning,
Mrs Jackson"

"Perhaps, she reasons, these
Jehovah's witnesses really have
the anwer....."

" You have just
lost your wife"

"Are you crazy?"

"Should you divorce her, you know who will get the kids"

HISTORICAL VIEW: PART THREE: A SHIFT OF POWER

In the early 1970's there was a policy change that re-instated Elders to give oversight to the local congregations in place of a single Congregational Overseer (Rutherford had dismissed all Elders). This decision eventually led to an internal upheaval at Bethel Headquarters in Brooklyn, New York because it had the effect of pressuring leadership to make similar adjustments, that is, to likewise pass authority from one man to a group of men. At first the president, Nathan Knorr, balked at such a notion, but it was he who eventually made a motion that all matters be decided by a two-thirds majority of the Governing Body. The Governing Body was at that time a group of seventeen men with very little authority or influence. The motion was seconded by the vice-president, Fred Franz.

It was, however, these same two men who voiced the strongest opposition to the motion. Knorr once proclaimed change of authority "will be made over my dead body." Fred Franz said that it was "an attack on the presidency." On Dec. 3, 1975 the motion was voted on by a show of hands. Knorr and Franz refused to vote; all others voted in favor of the motion. The next day there was another vote taken with a plea that the vote be unanimous since it was going to pass anyway. Knorr and Franz raised their hands, the vote was undivided, and the Governing Body now became a governing body in fact. The monarchical days were over. The Governing Body was now, and still is, God's channel for dispensing "meat in due season."

The Governing Body always met in closed sessions and Jehovah's Witnesses, as before, were never informed about expenses or investments or decisions made. The majority of the seventeen men had limited understanding of Scripture, and traditional policy was adhered to over Biblical teaching. Most of the meetings were spent deciding what was and what was not grounds for disfellowshiping.

Jehovah's Witnesses fear being disfellowshiped because their lives are intricately entangled around

the Society. Outside relationships have been severed, and dependency upon the Society fixed. To be disfellowshiped, for many, means to lose everything. A committee of three to five men meet with the accused in a secret meeting, and if found guilty an announcement is made at the local Kingdom Hall that so-and-so has been disfellowshiped, and is from that moment shunned. So after the 'trial' the accused person has no opportunity to explain to friends his/her side of the story (because nobody is allowed to communicate with a disfellowshiped person). And he cannot verbalize his defense beforehand as that would make him guilty of causing dissension, another ground for being disfellowshiped.

Attending another church (even for a wedding or funeral), receiving a blood transfusion (or allowing a transfusion for one's child or loved one), immoral behavior, speaking to a disfellowshiped person (even if that person were one's mother, son, etc.), challenging the Society's position on any subject, saluting a flag, voting, joining the armed forces – these were all grounds for disfellowshiping.

The global influence the Governing Body has over the lives of men is certified by the decision made regarding Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi, a small African country. The rulers of that country decreed everyone must purchase a government party card. The Society (the Governing Body) forbids its people to do so. The result was that many Jehovah's Witnesses suffered brutal reprisals for their stand. At the same time, however, the Society condoned the falsifying of papers by young men in Mexico, through bribery of government officials, for the purpose of avoiding a one-year military service.

Again, the organization prophesied the arrival of a great Jubilee that was to last a thousand years. This time the year was to be 1975. Again, there was much hopeful expectation. Maybe this time. Again, many lives were upset as adherents made moves, sold property, and made other decisions on the basis of the prophecy. Again, the ranks swelled because of the enthusiasm the prophecy engendered. 1975 passed, however, and, as 1881, 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, and the 1940's, the prophecy went unfulfilled. The Governing Body was divided as to how to handle the dismay following the unfulfilled prophecy, and decided to simply say nothing. Until the numbers started to decline. Finally, in 1979 a statement was printed in the Watchtower acknowledging the error.

Still there was another problem to be confronted. The organization had for many years insisted the generation living in 1914 would not pass away without witnessing the promised millennium. But time was running out. Most adults living in 1914 were dead. Three members of the Governing Body proposed extending the 1914 date by utilizing the year 1957, the year the Russian Sputnik broke into outer space, suggesting this event could somehow be used to justify an extension. The idea was rejected but the Body was still divided on the 1914 date. (Ironically, any Jehovah's Witnesses outside the Governing Body daring to challenge the 1914 date would surely be disfellowshiped.) The 1914 date was maintained.

In 1980 there was a 'purging' of the headquarters staff. Longtime faithful employees were

disfellowshiped, accused of apostasy (making remarks contrary to accepted Watchtower teachings). One member of the Governing Body refusing to sign his name to material he deemed unacceptable was harassed to the point where he felt compelled to resign, and shortly thereafter was disfellowshiped (on the petty grounds he once shared a meal with a disassociated Witness). Thereafter there was added restraint on free expression, so much so that it became officially objectionable to even have thoughts contrary to the Society's teachings. Previously, expressing disapproval of Society policy was grounds for disfellowshiping, but now even having unexpressed opinions contrary to the Society was outlawed. One district overseer, picking up a green book, explained the new policy of conformity to an assembly of Elders this way: "If the Society told me that this book is black instead of green, I would say, 'Y'know I could have sworn it was green, but if the Society says it's black then it's black!'"

Knorr died in 1976, and Fred Franz replaced him as president. It was Franz's nephew, Raymond Franz, who was pressured into resigning from the Governing Body. After two years of silence he wrote a book, Crisis of Conscience (from which the information of this article was obtained), shedding much light on the very secretive Governing Body.

The Jehovah's Witnesses organization grew immensely since Rutherford's death in 1942 from 108,000 adherents to well over 3,000,000 today. The Society prints two bi-monthly magazines, Watchtower and Awake!, about 14,000,000 and 12,000,000 respectively in 108 languages. The Society to this day still holds to the 1914 date, that is, that the generation witnessing the events of 1914 would live to see the ushering in of the New World. However, most of that generation is long gone. A baby born in 1914 would be 93, and anyone old enough to witness happenings of 1914 would be much older.

DEAR MR. AND MRS. JEHOVAH'S WITNESS,

I would like to thank you in advance for the courtesy of giving this letter your consideration. My motive is not unkind. For many years I wanted to speak to you but somehow I could never hurdle the fences that separate us. I know it sounds melodramatic, but sometimes when I see you standing on the corner with that Awake! magazine in your hand a breath of sadness sweeps over me, and I wish we could just have a talk.

I confess there were times I was judgmental of you, times I lacked compassion and tolerance, times I should have prayed but didn't. I ask your forgiveness.

There are so many things I want to say to you. This is probably my one and only opportunity, and I ask you to please hear me out. To have become a Jehovah's Witness you must have tolerated others as they questioned my Christian faith and presented theirs. Would you please now extend to me that same tolerance?

I will tell the truth as I see it, and I know in so doing you may be offended, but I assure you I am not critical or judgmental toward you, and my attitude is not 'holier-than-thou.' There are simply some things I must say and you must hear. Nothing I tell you will bring you pain. I have nothing but good news, truths that will enrich your life immeasurably.

About thirty-four years ago something happened to me, a very real experience. I never heard the term 'born-again.' I had just accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, and I sensed that inside something very relevant happened. I was never to be the same again. I since learned this experience is what Jesus taught was being "born of the Spirit." If my life was worth a dollar before it is now worth a thousand.

I know the people at the Kingdom Hall would scoff at such a testimony. And yet I stand as a witness before you declaring that this experience is real. I do have a living, personal, day-to-day relationship with God. The purpose of this letter is to convince you that you too can realize God in such a dynamic, personal way, regardless of what they have taught you.

A while back I read a book by Ted Patrick who infiltrated a cult to see just how cults managed to captivate young people and keep them under their power. The cult workers knew they had to get the prospective victim away from his present realm of influence so they alone would be his influence. They would overwhelm their prey by 'loving' on the individual, making him feel of real importance – accepted, valued, wanted. At all times the workers would talk incessantly. Talk, talk, talk. Hour after hour. Day after day. Sometimes they would outnumber their quarry, other times one on one. When one worker tired of talking another took over. Eventually the victim weakened under this constant onslaught of words. The workers were practiced manipulators, and would withdraw their affection whenever the victim refused to co-operate. Soon the victim was saying only the things the cultists wanted to hear. Invariably the cults would spiritualize their purpose and cause, and convince the victim that they were a select people chosen by God for a special mission, and the leader of the cult was God's chosen agent. The prey would be taught that submitting to this messiah was actually submitting to God. They developed in their victim their us-against-them mentality, and encouraged him/her to separate from less enlightened friends and loved ones.

Eventually the individual became programmed, to the point he thought it evil to think for himself. He became both a dependent and a slave. Everyone except his group were now the enemy. From this new perspective, they were the enlightened and everyone else were poor, wretched creatures steeped in deception.

To keep this person programmed it was only necessary to 'protect' him from other influences. That really was not difficult since the individual was now totally reliant upon the group – emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. They made sure he was never left alone, but was continually watchdogged. The author told of daring kidnaps by friends and family so they could de-program the victim. Deprogramming was accomplished by the same methods as programming – loving on the

person and non-stop talking.

Now a programmed person doesn't know he is programmed. The moment he becomes aware of it is the moment he is set free. Such a person requires someone from the outside to rescue him. And that's what this letter and this edition of The Main Issue is all about - someone from the outside trying to reach you.

Do not be surprised if the phone rings and one of your 'friends' applies pressure on you not to read this paper in an effort to 'protect' you. They may scoff, they may threaten. They definitely do not want you to read this. (As a matter of fact, they do not want you to read anything that did not come off their own printing press.)

But I ask you to hear me. As I said before, you gave them the courtesy to listen to their rationale, and I am only asking for the same courtesy.

I challenge you to consider the fact that just maybe you have been overly affected by the Watchtower Society – yes, programmed – and that they have managed to cut you off from all but their influence. Consider the fact that most of your phone calls, other than business, are either to or from other Jehovah's Witnesses. When you go witnessing there is always at least two of you – you are never alone. Think of the last time you dined with another couple – they were Jehovah's Witnesses, right? Look at your bookshelf. Can you find anything (on spiritual matters) that is not Watchtower material? Are not almost all your associates now Jehovah's Witnesses, having dropped all friends that are not so? Have they not instilled in you an us-against-them mentality? – us being the enlightened sheep and them the goats, poor wretched creatures steeped in deception.

Can't you see it? Can't you see what they have done to you? They have driven a wedge between you and everyone else while building a corral around you and themselves. You are truly their captive audience, their disciples, their servants.

I am not being unfeeling. I know these are heavy words. But you must see that you have been victimized. Consider, when is the last time someone asked you your opinion? When did you last come to your own conclusion? When did you last read a book that did not come from their headquarters? I've been to one of their meetings. Their 'worship' service is really a programming service. They only ask you a question after they tell you where to find the answer – not only the page, but the very paragraph! They discourage the reading of other literature while pushing you to read the Watchtower's latest releases. They train you what to say at the door and how to respond to every possible question. If you or one of your children were to accept a transfusion you would be disfellowshiped and shunned. (They never told you it was once their policy to disallow vaccinations, but since received further 'enlightenment.') They keep record of every hour you witness. They taught you that you must work for your salvation. And good works to them means, primarily, to witness. And, of course, to witness means to recite to other victims what they tell you to say.

They convinced you that worshiping God means placing their magazines. They instilled in you that

unity is more vital than personal convictions, and it is your convictions that must give way to theirs. And the lowest trick of all, an old devious ruse that has been employed by most (if not every) other cult, is persuading you that they are God's special agent, and disobeying them is the same as disobeying God Himself. They hold over your head the threat of being disfellowshiped (from what they convinced you is God's organization), and if you have never felt that threat it is only because you have not stepped out of line. You are not today a Jehovah's Witness because it makes good sense to be so. You are a Jehovah's Witness because you have been victimized. They used unethical methods of imposing their views upon you. They are masters at it. They are practiced in the art of persuasion, and they bullied you into accepting their slanted conceptions. That is foul play.

Please consider, why did you not vote at the last election? Why is it you never sign petitions? Why is it when everyone else is singing "O Canada" you remain silent? It is admirable to stand by your convictions, but are they really your convictions? You know they are not.

I am not being critical of you. And I am not being critical of anyone else, for they are all, without exception, as one person said, "Followers of followers, victims of victims." I am only asking you to do something that perhaps you have not done for some time..... think for yourself, come to your own conclusions.

Again, I am not being critical of you. Actually, I can very much identity with you. I really can. I know what it's like to be indoctrinated. As a Catholic I was taught that faith came before reason, that is, if something the Catholic Church taught didn't seem to make sense you nonetheless accepted it by faith. For example, it just didn't make sense that the popes were infallible (they could not error on spiritual matters). After all, they sometimes disagreed with each other, and to believe one was to necessarily disbelieve the other. For instance, while one declared that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived without sin, another declared she was not. How could popes be in disagreement on spiritual matters and still be infallible? Yet I had been taught that faith in the church came before my own reasoning.

It really wasn't logic and reason that made me the avid Catholic I was, but rather the heavy impressions that church made on me. And I think it is the same with you. The things around us do much to impress and affect us. Subconsciously we conclude, "All these people just can't be wrong." Whenever you have gone to a Bible study or to the Kingdom Hall, an impression was made on you – the services, the people, the leadership, visiting speakers, the songs, etc. Add to this the weight of the whole international organization with its hundred-plus years of history and the magazines you read every month – it all makes a real impact. Impressions, if masterfully applied, can victimize the most intellectually hardy.

I know what it's like. There were so many things that imprinted my mind as a Catholic – a huge cathedral, statues of saints, mass, rosary, priests and nuns dressed in black, huge organ, stained-glass windows, the sacraments, feast days, bishops and cardinals and popes, over a thousand years

of history, etc. All these things made an indent on my mind and affected my thinking. I know what it is like to have an us-against-them mentality. We were the good guys, and they (non-Catholics) were the bad guys.

Again, I know where you are coming from. While the Society claims to be God's channel on earth, the pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ on earth. Whereas the dissenting Witness fears being disfellowshiped, the Catholic would likewise be threatened with excommunication. Apostasy is disagreeing with them. You get to think they must know something we don't. But Scripture says, "Thus says the Lord: cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength." Wasn't it silly of me to believe a man was infallible just because he said he was? And – please bear with me – isn't it equally illogical to believe an organization is God's spokesman and prophet just because it says it is?

I assure you the Watchtower Society is not God's organization, and if you stay with me just a while longer I think I can at least convince you that the question warrants further research. First, let's talk about their version of the Bible, The New World Translation.

I ask you to consider why you have so much confidence in their translation of the Bible. Why is it you do not even know the names of the translators? Oh, they told you they do not want to receive any credit for this work. Well what makes them assume there is any credit forthcoming?

I ask you to consider the fact that most of the writers of the Bible identified themselves. It is general practice, and has been through the ages, for writers to identify themselves so they can answer criticism. As you know, many newspapers will not print unsigned letters.

Who is there to face the challenges to their translations? – and believe me there are many. They ask you to entrust your spiritual lives to their translation, yet they will not even tell you who they are. How can their credentials be checked to determine if they are indeed qualified to translate? Doesn't it make you just a little suspicious that their only excuse for secrecy is they do not want to receive credit? Actually, the fact is their translation does not warrant commendation. Mr. William Cetnar, who worked at the Watchtower Headquarters during the time the translation was being accomplished, made this statement: "Knowing who the translators were, for this was common knowledge at Bethel, if I were on the translation committee, I would want my name to be kept secret also."

You may be surprised that the names of five of the translators are known. I quote from Jehovah of the Watchtower (Martin and Klann): "The five known members of the New World Translation committee…are as follows: chairman, Nathan H. Knorr; Fred W. Franz; George D. Gangas; Milton G. Herschell; and A. D. Schroeder. With the exception of F.W. Franz, none of the committee attended college; and he dropped out of the University of Cincinnati after his second year. None of the committee members reads New Testament Greek or, for that matter Hebrew or Aramaic. They 'translated' a text they could not read."

Is it becoming obvious why the translators wish to remain anonymous? Who would want to sign their

name to a translation of a text they could not read? Not only were they incompetent to translate, but were often guilty of dishonest translations.

A dishonest translation differs from a poor translation in the sense that a poor translation is a product of human frailty, to which we all are vulnerable, but a dishonest translation involves deliberate fraud. I will give you an example of a dishonest translation, one that has nothing to do with The New World Translation, so you can clearly comprehend what I am saying.

Matthew 1:24,25, King James Version, states: "Joseph..... took unto him his wife (Mary): And knew her not (did not have sexual intercourse) till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus." The word "till" (or until) conveys to us the fact that after the child was born Joseph "knew" Mary as man and wife. (Just like if a friend said to you, "I didn't wash my car until I finished my trip," you conclude two things: one, your friend went on a trip and two, he washed his car.) All other translations I know of, including The New World Translation, although phrasing the words differently, have the same meaning. Except one.

In 1966 the Catholics produced a translation, the Jerusalem Bible. The verse in question are an inconsequential matter to most translators, but the Catholic Church teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary (Mary never had sexual intercourse). What to do? This verse proves the very opposite. Let's look at their 'translation': "he (Joseph) took his wife to his home and though he had not had intercourse with her (Mary), she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus." This is a sample of a dishonest translation. (It is like someone misquoting your friend, "Although I didn't wash my car, I went on a trip.") Now I will point out another dishonest rendering in a translation with which you are familiar.

John 1:1 KJV: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Everyone, including the Watchtower Society, recognizes the fact that the "Word" is Jesus Christ. Now let's zero in on the last part of that verse, "and the Word was God." The New American Standard, the New International Version and the Jerusalem Bible translate it the same way. The New English reads, "and what God was, the Word was." The Amplified says, "and the Word was God Himself." But the 'translators' of The New World Translation, like their Catholic counterparts, had a real problem because, as you are well aware, they have always taught that Jesus Christ is not God. What to do? If they translate this verse as everyone else they would thereby be admitting that Jesus (the Word) is indeed Jehovah God. So the 'translators' wrote, "and the Word was a god." This, in fact, is a dishonest translation, a deliberate deception.

If you are not yet convinced that the Watchtower's rendering of John 1:1 is a dishonest translation, consider this: In the book Twenty-six Translations Of The Bible (Zondervan Publications), not one of the translations say "a god." The authors of these many translations come from various eras and backgrounds, and are mostly independent of each other. Surely that should impress you.

With no hope of finding a reputable scholar to endorse this dishonest translation ("the Word was a

god"), they pointed their followers to the translation of a Johannes Greber, an ex-Catholic priest who lived many centuries ago, who also translated John 1:1, "the word was a god." However, they failed to mention the fact that Greber was a spiritist who got his information from the demon-spirit world.

And common sense tells us their rendition of John 1:1 is an impossibility. Let's look at it again:

John 1:1, The New World Translation: "In beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

Now please ask yourself, "How many true Gods are there?" I think you agree there is only one true God. Now The New World Translation calls Jesus "a god." My question to the 'translators' is this: "Is Jesus a true God or is Jesus a false God?" If their reply is that Jesus is a true God, and there is only one true God, therefore Jesus must be that one true God. And if they say that Jesus is not a true God they are thereby saying He must be a false God. For anyone who is not true is false. (For example, there are only two kinds of prophets, a true prophet and a false prophet; every prophet is either one or the other.) Ask the Watchtower Society if Jesus is a true God or a false God.

If Jesus really was 'a god' it thereby follows that " 'a god'(the Word) was with God." But what does God Himself say? "I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God." (Isaiah 46:6) John 1:l is but one sample of a dishonest rendering in The New World Translation. There are many others. I think it would be prudent for you to research the matter further.

Now my question to you is this: IS IT EVEN REMOTELY POSSIBLE THAT AN ORGANIZATION THAT WOULD DELIBERATELY MISCONSTRUE GOD'S HOLY WORD BE GOD'S SPOKESMAN (prophet, channel)?

The teachings that the Watchtower derive from Holy Script is no less devious than their translation. They say the Holy Spirit is not a person but merely "an impersonal force" likened to a radio wave or electricity – this in spite of the fact that the Bible tells us the Holy Spirit had been lied to, was grieved, teaches, helps, leads, inspires, etc., all of which prove He is indeed a person.

They told you Jesus was merely a man (and was at one time Michael the Archangel!) and not God. I want to tell you plainly that the Russellites (Jehovah's Witnesses) make Jesus to be something much less than what He is.

They lied to you when they taught you that you do not have an immortal soul, and that there is a no literal hell. These truths are, unquestionably, vindicated many times in Scripture.

They taught you only 144,000 people are going to make it to heaven, and the quota was filled a long time ago. The most you – one of the "other sheep" may hope for is everlasting life on earth IF you are loyal to the Society and continue to proselytize on their behalf. This doctrine has its roots in hell – and I am not referring to the grave! If you had earnestly studied Scripture for fifty years, without their 'help,' you would never have come to such a conclusion. (The fact you believe only 144,000 are going to make it to heaven - while all other religions, most having a much longer history, teach no

such thing - must show you just how much the Watchtower has influenced your thinking.) The Bible teaches that 144,000 Israelites will be saved during the future tribulation. (How can they take the number 144,000 literally and yet say these Israelites are not really Israelites at all?) Jesus said, "there will be one flock." Paul spoke of "one body..... one spirit..... one faith," but the Russellites have fancied two classes, the heavenly class and the earthly. Does that sound like "one flock" and "one body"? The "other sheep" of which Jesus spoke, to which you are supposed to belong, is simply the Gentile believers. These "sheep," together with those of His own Jewish people, were to be "one flock."

They told you that as a member of this earthly class you can never be "born again." Yet Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) The Russellites say you can't be born again, and Jesus says you must. Who will you believe?

The Watchtower has twisted and misaligned the gospel (the good news) of Jesus Christ so thoroughly that it really isn't such good news at all. Do you remember the apostle Paul writing to the Galatians, "even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond what we declared to you as good news let him be accursed"? Do you really think the gospel Paul preached to the Galatians is the same gospel the Russellites preached to you? Do you really think Paul proclaimed to the Galatians, "The first 144,000 of you to believe in Christ will go to heaven, and the rest of you will have to stay down here"? Isn't that absurd? Now Paul said, in effect, that every other gospel than the one he preached was false. So who do you think preached the true gospel, Paul or the Watchtower? Which gospel are you going to embrace?
Paul taught salvation is a gift to be received, not a reward to be earned. The Russellites taught you that Jesus was slain so that you could have another chance to prove yourself faithful by doing good works (proselytize on their behalf) and by living a righteous life, thereby earning your salvation. But what does Scripture clearly teach?

Ephesians 2:8,9: "For by grace (unmerited favor) you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works (effort) lest anyone should boast."

Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works: otherwise grace is no longer grace."

2 Timothy 1:9: "Who has both saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace."

Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

The Russellites teach an earned righteousness. Paul, however, only preached a "righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ." (Rom. 3:22) He writes of the Israelites (who rejected Christ), "being ignorant of God's righteousness (that's faith in Jesus), and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:3) You see, these people were so intent on being good guys that they refused to simply accept God's righteousness (Jesus Christ) which He was wanting to give to them as a gift. Jehovah's Witnesses are working very

hard at being good enough. Such is impossible. Isaiah writes, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (64:6) Paul writes to the Romans (4:5), "to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." When Jesus was asked (John 6:28), "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Can't you see what is happening? They are getting you to work for something that can only be received by faith. Now we are talking about salvation. You cannot take this matter lightly. You must determine for yourselves whether God's salvation comes by faith, as the Bible declares, or by works, as the Watchtower professes.

God would have you stop working for your salvation and simply receive it as a gift. And what is God's salvation? The answer is simple – Jesus Christ. Jesus, whose precious name the Russellites have cheapened and defiled in its entire 100-year history, is God's plan of salvation for you. This treasured salvation – Jesus Christ – is accepted by faith. Having faith in Christ means trusting Him (and Him alone) to save you. It means entrusting your very life into His care. It means embracing Him as the lord (master) of your life.

The Russellites have taught you that trusting in their organization will save you. They have made themselves a savior. It's an old trick. There was a time in my life when I trusted the Catholic Church to save me. But it was no church or organization that hung on that cross, bearing our foul sins and paying the price of our redemption.

Jesus taught us a very simple method of testing those who claimed to be His spokesmen. Listen to Jesus (Mat. 7:15-18,20): "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit..... Therefore BY THEIR FRUITS YOU WILL KNOW THEM."

So let us glance at the fruit of the Watchtower Society to determine whether the fruit is good or bad. One would think that good fruit of a true prophet of God would be accurate prophecies, and bad fruit would be false prophecies. Let us look at the record. Beginning with its founder, Russell, we see all, not some, of his prophecies never occurred in the time he predicted. His successor, Rutherford, did no better. After Rutherford's death the Society prophesied that the 1940's and 1975 would see the end of "gentile rule" – more false prophecies. The society awaits the fulfillment of its prophecy which says that the generation living in 1914 would not pass before witnessing the new order. That generation is almost gone.

One would think the good fruit of "God's channel," referring to the Society's founder, would be honesty and integrity. It is on public record that he perjured, deliberately lied after swearing before

God, whose faithful servant he claimed to be, to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Rutherford did not believe his own prophecy regarding 1925, as he was making plans prior to that time that carried past 1925. Nathan Knorr married at a time when his own policy was to discourage singles from doing so.

One would think that bad fruit of translators of God's Word is deliberate dishonest translations which is the case regarding The New World Translation. John 1:1 is only one of many reprobate renditions.

And there is so much more bad fruit: children dying because they are denied blood transfusions; families split because the Society will not allow its adherents to speak to relatives if those relatives are disfellowshiped; people denied the right to think for themselves, to express opinions contrary to accepted policy (for example, anyone expressing doubts that the absurd 1914 prophecy will be fulfilled is liable to disfellowshiping). The list goes on and on.

Jesus taught that it's a bad tree that bears bad fruit. A 'tree' that has produced so much bad fruit, as has the Watchtower Society, does not pass Jesus' test; it cannot be God's prophet. You must choose whom you will believe, Jesus or the Society. It really does come to that choice. Whom will you choose as lord of your life?

When I made the decision to remove my trust from man and place that trust in Jesus, God did a mighty and sovereign work in my heart – I was "born of the Spirit." I became a new creation in Christ. I now know my name is in "the Lamb's book of life." I became God's adopted son, "an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. 4:7) And now I reach out to you. You can have all that I and every other Christian has, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus said (John 10:9), "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." Jesus says He is the door. Where will this door take you? - it will take you into God's kingdom. This door, Jesus, will take you into eternal life. It will take you into a relationship with God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), yes, into His very family.

There are many doors. There is the Mormon door, the Hindu door, the World Wide Church of God door, the New Age door, the Catholic door, the Muslim door, the Watchtower Society door, the Humanism door, the Christian Science door, etc., etc. There are hundreds, even thousands, of doors, each promising much but delivering nothing. Every one is satan's counterfeit. With so many doors it is hard to find the true one, and that is why they were contrived. Each of these doors involve works and effort. There is only one that is entered by faith. That door is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what God would have you do: Renounce Russellism; repent of (turn away from) your sins; go to Jesus in prayer; tell Him you trust Him and Him alone with your life; tell Jesus that from this day onward you intend to serve Him and Him alone; ask Him for the new life He promises to those who believe in Him.

It is essential that, for at least three or four months, you do not communicate with Jehovah's

Witnesses unless there is a Christian with you. And it would be very foolish to go to a Jehovah's Witness for the truth about the Watchtower Society, (or the content of this issue of The Main Issue). It would be like the little girl who accepted a ride in a car from a stranger. Her mother scolds, "Honey, have I not told you a dozen times to never accept a ride from a stranger?" "But Mommy," the little girl protests, "I asked the man if he was a good man, and he said 'yes'!"

I know it will not be easy to turn from the Society, especially if your loved ones are there. They will shun you. You will be as a dead person to them, someone who died and is no more. If you pass them on the street they will look in another direction, fearful that if they talk to you they will be disfellowshiped.

And yet you must. Your eternal future depends on it. Perhaps your withdrawal will influence others to do the same. Listen again to the words of Jesus (Mat. 10:32,33,37): "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven..... He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Yes, it will be difficult to cut ties but there is simply no alternative.

I want to thank you again for the courtesy of reading this letter. What I told you was the truth and that truth is very good news. Salvation is as close as a prayer of surrender and repentance to Jesus. He said (John 6:37), "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Rev. 22:17: "And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."
See you in heaven?

Sincerely in Christ,
The Editor

"Would you please now extend to me that same tolerance?"

"I stand as a witness before you"

"you have been overly affected by the Watchtower Society – yes, programmed"

"I know what it's like to be indoctrinated"

"They 'translated' a text they could not read"

"They say the Holy Spirit is not a person"

"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"

IN CONCLUSION

Jehovah's Witnesses are not the only religious group needing to be reached for Christ. Oh no. There are hundreds of religions offering themselves as alternatives to Christ to attain salvation. The one trusting in any one of these alternatives is no better advantaged than the Jehovah's Witness. Each is

a deception, and each will lead to eternal destruction.

It should be obvious to the religionist that, at least, his religion is not required for salvation – for the simple reason his/her religion did not exist at the time of Christ's duration on earth when Jesus presented Himself as God's salvation. He declared He would save those who trusted in Him. "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37) When He spoke those words there were none of the religions (other than that of the Jews) that we are familiar with today. Obviously if one could at that time come to Christ to be saved without belonging to one of these groups, it is surely not required today.

Paul (as well as all other apostles and disciples) is a case-in-point. What denomination did he belong to? The word 'denomination' did not even exist in his day. Yet he was saved and transformed by his simple faith in Christ. He was an ardent Jew, yes, but in fact his religion was his greatest obstacle to coming to Jesus.

Religion often keeps people from coming to Christ to be saved. Paul's religion was but one alternative to Christ. Since his day man has invented many more which declare, "You need us. You cannot make it without us. We have a special 'in' with God. We are God's channel of salvation."

It is not that they directly deny salvation is through Christ, but they add conditions Christ never sanctioned. Salvation, they imply, is not simply Christ, but Christ and.....

Christ and something else. Christ and good works. Or Christ and 'my' denomination. Or Christ and a particular religion. Or Christ and a number of rituals. It's like Christ is no longer able to save but needs the help and endorsement of a religion or denomination. No longer is the precious blood of Calvary sufficient in itself to justify the sinner. Somehow it lost its power over the centuries. Now what's needed is the sophistication of religion with its hierarchies and decrees and burdens and funny attire and sanctimonious prayers and rituals.

But trusting in Christ and something else is not trusting in Christ at all. God loathes man's alternatives. God doesn't need Adders and Subtracters to add to and take away from His gospel. Such are enemies of the cross. God doesn't need Negotiators and Compromisers to negotiate a different gospel, or water down the simple truth that Christ alone is the way to the Father, the entrance into His kingdom and family. Such are stumbling blocks to those who might otherwise enter.

The religionist (one who leans on his religion or religious practices) refuses to accept God's salvation as a gift to be received by faith. What glory is there in that? Rather he must earn his salvation. Now that's something one can take pride in. And so he attempts to prove to himself and to God that he is good enough.

Paul wrote of his own people, the Israelites (Rom. l0:3): "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the

righteousness of God." These people were so intent on establishing their own uprightness – trying very hard to be good enough, to be worthy by their own good deeds – that they could not recognize the righteousness of God when it (He) stood before them. Christ is the righteousness of God. Christ wanted to make the Israelites righteous in the only way possible, by imputing this righteousness upon them as a free gift. This gift only had to be received by faith. But, generally, they were not interested in receiving righteousness, but being upright in themselves. They therefore "have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

The religionist of today is likewise "ignorant of God's righteousness" which is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He busies himself in being good enough, establishing his own righteousness. Good works and faithfulness to his religion or denomination are his passport to heaven. Or so he thinks.
A challenging question to the one who declares himself to be a denominational or religious person would be, "Who made you one?" For it is not God who makes people such. God makes those who respond to His invitation His children. His sons and daughters. His redeemed. His heirs. But He does not turn men and women and children into denominational or religious people. It is something they make of themselves, or allow others to make of them.

Another thorny question: "When did you become one?" To which they would probably have no answer, because they have no idea when they became one. It is all kind of blurry. It is something they just unintentionally slipped into. First it was a little misty, but the mist evolved into a dense fog cutting off all vision and reason. They became beguiled into thinking that, because of their status in their religion, they do not need Christ.

Religionists are touchy. They are so offended by the 'intolerant' fundamentalist who insists that faith in Christ is the only way into God's kingdom. Such narrow-mindedness! Such intolerance to the convictions of others! "You go your way and I'll go mine," they say. Yet Jesus declares there is only one way, and He is that one way. Jesus said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:16-19)

You see, it comes down to this, the words of Christ Himself. Do you believe Him? Can you trust Him? Or should you, rather, trust in your religion or denomination to save you from perdition? You cannot trust both. To hold to one you must let go of the other.

God sent His Son into the world so the world could be saved through His Son. There is no other way. Pathetic is the one secure in one's own merit. Pathetic is the one trusting in a religion, or rituals, or a denomination to save him.

Pretend for a moment that you lived in Galilee at the time when Christ was there. There are none of the familiar religions and denominations to confuse. No church buildings. No clergyman, no priests or pastors or anything. You meet Jesus along the road. Just the two of you. Jesus looks directly into your eyes and says, "I am the only way to the Father. I am the only One who can wash you of your many sins. I alone can give you life. Will you surrender your life to Me? Will you trust Me and Me alone to save you from the terrible consequences of your sin? Will you accept My lordship over your life?"

And really, it is that simple. Forget about all the confusing religions and opinions of men, and listen to the call of your Savior inviting you to join Him, to be one with Him. In reality you cannot see Him in person, but His Holy Spirit is drawing you, wooing you unto Him. Jesus has sent people into your life, telling you of His love for you, of His great mercy that is yours for the receiving.

Just you and Jesus. A yes or a no. To not reply is considered a refusal. Now don't say yes if you really mean no; that's hypocrisy. Come to Christ in childlike faith. Don't be blinded by religion. Christ is not calling you into religion, but into relationship – fellowship with Him. You and Jesus. What will it be? Yes or no?

"Such are enemies of the cross"

" Christ is the righteousness of God"

"God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son"