

The Discerner

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A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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The Discerner

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Steiner

PO Box 206
Chaska, MN 55318
612-331-3342 / 1-800-562-9153
FAX 612-331-3342
info@ras.org <http://www.ras.org>
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WITH THIS ISSUE

We have three articles in this issue of *The Discerner*. The first is an excellent article by Peter Ditzel sounding the alarm about the lack of discernment amongst Christians today, and the need for churches and Christians to make a greater commitment to Scripture study. Please pray for Peter as he continues his recovery from a serious medical issue. The second article is the completion of my two-part article on the Watchtower's flip-flops and changes of teachings which prove definitely that the Jehovah's Witness organization is both a cult and a false prophet. Finally, Don and Joy Veinot offer an interesting update about new television programming exposing cults in America.

Check out our newly updated website (ras.org). We have added many great articles on a wide-variety of cults and "isms" in our archive. We have a new links page with links to many great conservative, Bible-believing ministries arranged topically for your convenience. See the Multimedia Tab for videos, Powerpoints, radio podcasts, and more on cults and apologetics.

You can easily donate or subscribe to *The Discerner* on the Donate/Subscribe tab. We welcome your feedback on our contact page.

Corrections

Please note these corrections from our last issue (Jan-Mar 2018). On the cover, the "Denomic" should be "Demonic" in the title of my article on the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Also, please note the error in our last issue's quiz. Question number eight somehow omitted the correct answer (the Roman General and later Emperor Titus) and instead provides all wrong answers. Our apologies for this mistake!

And of course, our latest quiz, this time on Jesus' 12 apostles. Take it and see how you do!

We love to hear your feedback. Let us know if *The Discerner* has been a helpful.

Blessings,

Steve Lagoon, President of Religion Analysis Service

“MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED”—LACK OF DISCERNMENT IN MODERN CHRISTIANITY

by Peter Ditzel, Word of Grace Ministries

Pastors who follow Paul's example try to empower their congregations by encouraging them to study the Bible and think for themselves. Their pleasure is to see believers growing. They know that helping Christians to become proficient Bible scholars is the best way to ensure that they are not waylaid by erroneous teachings. They allow people to question them, and they converse with them as brethren as they search the Scriptures together to find the answers. These pastors are a rare and endangered species.

What seems to be the more common type of pastor is the one who “plays his cards close to his chest.” Please forgive the expression from gambling, but it well describes what I mean. This pastor has what he believes to be some knowledge of the Bible, and he doesn't want it to leak out to others. In his sermons and so-called Bible studies (really lectures), he doles out crumbs and tidbits here and there. But he is always careful not to so educate anyone in his congregation as to empower that person. He is afraid of creating what he, in his mistrustful thinking, believes will be a rival or threat to his position in the congregation as the sole purveyor of biblical wisdom. The only people he delegates any responsibilities to are yes men who simply do his bidding. At least partly because this pastor never allows himself to be seriously questioned, his understanding of the Bible becomes defective. Thus, even the knowledge he gives out in paltry rations is flawed, but, because they put their trust in him, his congregation doesn't even know it. By keeping his congregation in a perpetual state of ignorance, this pastor promotes poor discernment.

Here are just two examples among many I could cite from my own experience and the reports of others. I chose these because they could be told simply, in one paragraph. But they are actually quite typical.

My family and I visited a church in which the pastor gave a sermon about angels. During the sermon, he gave several anecdotes of supposed real encounters with angels that he had read about. He cited these stories in a positive way, indicating that he believed them to be inspiring stories that we should find uplifting. The problem was that in each of the stories, there was an incident in which the supposed angel of God lied to accomplish his ends. Do God's angels lie? Anyone with even a child's understanding of Scripture should know that God's holy, righteous angels do not lie. But that pastor

didn't know something even that rudimentary. And no one in his congregation challenged him. All seemed to accept what he said with a disturbing naivety.

On another occasion, my family and I visited a church in a region we had never been to before. When we walked in, the pastor, instead of greeting us with a smile, acted suspicious toward us. Typical of most standard church meetings, the pastor was the only person who taught from the Bible. After his sermon, he did not ask for questions. Afterward, his wife kindly invited us as visitors from afar to their house for lunch. The pastor stayed behind for awhile for some church business. We enjoyed conversing with the pastor's wife until the pastor arrived home. Almost as soon as he sat down, without any apparent reason, he began saying how he would not tolerate anyone trying to steal his congregation. He said that someone had recently tried to steal his congregation but he had gotten it back. But now he was going to keep a sharp watch and make sure it didn't happen again. It was his congregation, and he was going to make sure he kept control of it. This, expanded in great detail, was almost his entire conversation during the meal. I smiled and listened politely and afterward we thanked his wife for her hospitality and left, never to return, but feeling sorry for the people in this man's congregation, living under the thumb of this little dictator.

Has your pastor ever said that it is the Christian's duty to submit to his teaching or that it is prideful to question what he says? Don't believe it. A literal translation of 1 Corinthians 14:29 says, "And prophets let speak two or three and the others scrutinize!" Today, instead of having two or three speakers, we often see pastors dominate the entire assembly. When was the last time your pastor allowed you to scrutinize what he said? (I will have more to say about what the Bible says a pastor is supposed to do and whether God wants His assemblies to be led by one man in a future article.) And, how many people in your congregation have the biblical discernment and competence to even begin such a scrutiny?

Lack of Serious Personal Bible Study

How do art experts know a real from a counterfeit Rembrandt? They know what to look for. And how do they know? They learn from careful study. That's why they're called experts.

Don't you think that we Christians should be experts on the message God has left with us? Shouldn't we be such experts that we can spot a counterfeit message when we see or hear it?

Since the invention of the printing press, Bibles have been readily available. And now there are Bibles for computers, various devices running Android and other platforms, and e-book readers. Plus there are programs and apps to assist our study of the Bible. And some of the Bibles and Bible helps are free. Christians *can* have the pure Word, but they are instead choosing the damaged and infected secondhand word coming from corrupt teachers.

Nothing in the Bible says that an understanding of God's Word can only be gained by certain "holy men" called clergy. Immediately after speaking of those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, Peter writes to the brethren, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:17-18). All Christians are expected to grow in both grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a reference to coming to understand His mind as expressed in the Bible.

So we have not only the scandal of the leaders becoming corrupt and corrupting those who listen to them, but also the shame of Christians being unwilling to take up the forkful of food for themselves and lift it to their mouths. As a result, as we have seen in Ezekiel 34:21, the flock has become diseased—spiritually perverted, doctrinally unsound, lame in their walk with God—and scattered—weakened by not being of one spirit and one mind as the Scriptures say we ought to be (Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8). The result is a general lack of discernment of truth from error in what is taught from the pulpit, published in Christian books and articles, broadcast on Christian radio and television, and believed by the average Christian.

To Timothy, Paul wrote, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:13–14). Timothy had learned from Paul. Today, we cannot sit as disciples at the feet of Paul and the other apostles or of Jesus. But we can still learn from them, directly from their inspired writings.

"Word of His Grace" takes its name from Acts 20:32. When the apostle Paul suspected that his arrest and eventual execution were drawing near, he called for the elders of the church in Ephesus. His farewell address to them is recorded in Acts 20. In verse 32, knowing that he would no longer be able to be their overseer and shepherd, he told them, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of

his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” The Bible is what is able to build us up. Paul did not delegate his authority to any man, but set the Bible as the brethren’s authority.

Again, Paul wrote to Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus” (2 Timothy 2:15-17). Yes, and today, too, we should shun the profane and vain babblings of popular Christian writers and television and radio evangelists and, yes, even local pastors when they are unbiblical in their teachings, stifling in their control, and not open to serious questioning.

Why don’t we do this? Because a general apathy has settled over many Christians. Shouldn’t we just leave these things to the experts we pay to study the Bible and preach? Aren’t we too busy with work and other cares to delve deeply into the Word of God? No, it is time to get our priorities straight.

Cures for Lack of Discernment

As someone has said, if we allow it, the immediate will always try to get in the way of the important. But understanding the Bible so that we are not led astray and so that we can help others is too important to allow this to happen. Because Christians are not taking seriously their responsibility to know the Bible, false teachers are growing in influence, distorting the Gospel, and giving Christianity a bad name. Several times, the Bible calls us priests and a priesthood (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul says, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” But the responsibility to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3) is ours.

Are we letting the immediate get in the way of the important? Are we being distracted by work, family responsibilities, or entertainment? These things have their place, but we must organize our days so that we have time for Bible study.

Another way to cure lack of discernment is to begin holding church leaders accountable. Absolutely nothing in the Bible says that anyone is to have the power of a despot over God’s people. As I have already pointed out, 1 Corinthians 14:29 allows for two or three men speaking in a meeting and, after they have spoken, other men are to thoroughly

judge (*diakrinetosan*) or scrutinize what they have said. If your church refuses to follow this biblical directive, maybe it is time to find the exit.

In this article, I'm calling on the reader to take responsibility for his or her own spiritual life. Wake up spiritually and be willing to make hard choices where necessary. May the Lord give each of us true, biblical discernment from this day forward.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE WATCHTOWER: NEW LIGHT OR DEMONIC DECEPTION?, PART 2

by Steve Lagoon

6000 Years ends when?

At this point, I will share a few examples of the Watchtower's creativity with dates and chronologies. It will become obvious that Watchtower's writers do not let things like facts get in the way of good prophetic imagination.

These examples may seem trivial until it is remembered that millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have based their lives upon these fallacies; even putting off marriages, having children, going to college, and selling business and other important life decisions based upon such faulty Watchtower speculations.

So for instance, Lorri MacGregor documents the changing "fact" of when 6000 years of human history had ended:

6000 years from Adam ended in A. D. 1872 (Daily Heavenly Manna, inside cover page). 6000 years of human history ended in 1873 (The Time Is at Hand, page 33). 6000 years of human history ended in 1972 (The Truth Shall Make You Free, page 152, 1943 edition). 6000 years of human history ended in 1975 (Awake! October 8, 1968, page 15).¹

Adam's Creation

Former Jehovah's Witness Edmund Gruss provides a similar comparison of Watchtower claims about the supposed year of Adam's creation. The first column is the supposed year of Adam's creation, followed by the Watchtower source for the claim, and then the year of publication of the source:²

¹ MacGregor, *Need to Know*, 124–125.

² (Edmond C. Gruss, *The Jehovah's Witnesses and Prophetic Speculation: An Examination and Refutation of the Witnesses' Position on the Second Coming of Christ, Armageddon and the 'End of the World'*, Phillipsburg NJ (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972) 69.

Year of Creation	Source	Publication Year
4129	Watch Tower Reprints, 1980	1896
4128	The Time is at hand, p. 53	1889
4028	The Truth Shall Make You Free, p. 152	1943
4026	The Kingdom Is at hand, p. 171,	1944
4025	New heavens and a new Earth, p. 364	1953
4026	All Scriptiure Is Inspired of God and Beneficial	1963

So, Gruss’s chart shows five different Watchtower claims as to the timing of Adam’s creation (going back and forth six different times), each one, no doubt, based upon “reliable” biblical chronologies!

Organ Transplantation Acceptable

Just as serious are the multitude of examples of the Watchtower imposing upon its followers bans on specific medical procedures that have resulted in much needless suffering and death for Jehovah’s Witnesses. In this example, we see the vacillation of the Watchtower concerning the question of organ transplantation. When the procedure began to be practiced, the Watchtower had no biblical objections to them:

The question of placing one’s body or parts of one’s body at the disposal of men of science or doctors at one’s death for purposes of scientific experimentation or replacement in others is frowned upon by certain religious bodies. However, it does not seem that any Scriptural principle or law is involved. It therefore is something that each individual must decide for himself. If he is satisfied in his own mind and conscience that this is a proper thing to do, then he can make such provision, and no one else should criticize him for doing so.³

This is a most reasonable position; let each Jehovah’s Witnesses weigh in their own conscience whether they would have an organ transplant when confronted with the medical question.

Organ Transplantation condemned

Unfortunately, that common-sense approach was overturned seven years later:

³ Watchtower 8/1/1961 p. 480.

Is there any Scriptural objection to donating one's body for use in medical research or to accepting organs for transplant from such a source? . . . Did this include eating human flesh, sustaining one's life by means of the body or part of the body of another human, alive or dead? No! That would be cannibalism, a practice abhorrent to all civilized people."⁴

"When men of science conclude that this normal process will no longer work and they suggest removing the organ and replacing it directly with an organ from another human, this is simply a shortcut. Those who submit to such operations are thus living off the flesh of another human. That is cannibalistic. However, in allowing man to eat animal flesh Jehovah God did not grant permission for humans to try to perpetuate their lives by cannibalistically taking into their bodies human flesh, whether chewed or in the form of whole organs or body parts taken from others."⁵

The new light the Jehovah's Witnesses received in their Watchtowers was that organ transplantation was nothing short of cannibalism and strongly condemned as unbiblical. Consequently, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses began opposing the practice of organ transplantations, and many suffered and died for that stand.

Organ Transplantation Acceptable

But after thirteen years of tragic loss of life, the Watchtower provided more new light; never mind what we said about cannibalism, organ transplantation is no longer biblically objectionable:

Other sincere Christians today may feel that the Bible does not definitely rule out medical transplants of human organs. They may reason that in some cases the human material is not expected to become a permanent part of the recipient's body . . . It may be argued, too, that organ transplants are different from cannibalism since the "donor" is not killed to supply food . . . While the Bible specifically forbids consuming blood, there is no Biblical command pointedly forbidding the taking in of other human tissue . . . It is a matter for personal decision. (Gal. 6:5) The congregation judicial committee would not take disciplinary action if someone accepted an organ transplant.⁶

4 Watchtower 11/15/1967 p. 702.

5 Watchtower 11/15/1967 p. 702.

6 Watchtower 3/15/1980 p. 31.

This is a breathtaking example of the dangers of following the Watchtower's alleged new light. For thirteen years, Jehovah's Witnesses courageously fought to uphold the Watchtower's edicts banning organ transplantation, and many gave their lives up for it. And why? Because a small group of men, totally unqualified as Bible teachers couldn't make up their minds how to interpret the Bible, while assuming the mantle as God's Faithful and Discreet Slave.

View of the Superior Authorities of Romans 13:1

Another example often offered up to show the wishy-washy biblical interpretations of the Watchtower is their explanation of just "who" is/are the superior authorities that Paul refers to in Romans 13:1:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Ed Gruss shows that the original position of the Watchtower under Russell was that the higher or superior authorities were secular governments of the world, and indeed, that Christians were to obey these governments "except in matters of conscience": "The Church must not resist the powers that be except in matters of conscience."⁷

Superior Authorities: Jehovah God & Jesus Christ

However, under Rutherford, the Watchtower inexplicably began to teach that the higher powers were not secular governmental authorities, but were rather "God and Jesus Christ:

In 1929 the Lord made clearly to appear to his people who constitute "the higher powers", and since then they have been enabled to see clearly that the faithful one must obey *Jehovah God and Christ Jesus, who are "the higher powers."*⁸

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom 13:1). The Devil has caused religionists to lay hold upon this Scripture text and to induce men to believe that the "higher powers" are those men who hold the official positions in the government of this world.⁹

Amazingly, not only has the Watchtower rejected its former common-sense position that the higher powers are the secular governments of the world, but it has even attributed the former belief to the devil!

7 Watchtower 6/1882 p. 362; Edmund C. Gruss, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Their Claims, Doctrinal Changes and Prophetic Speculation. What Does the Record Show?* Fairfax VA (Xulon Press, 2001) 285.

8 Watchtower 10/1/1934 p. 298; Gruss, *Record Show*, 285.

9 Watchtower 2/15/1936 p. 55; Gruss, *Record Show*, 286.

Nor does the Watchtower explain how the “higher powers” can be both “God’s servants” and yet be God himself?

Superior Authorities: Secular governmental leaders

Finally, in 1962, new light was said to have broken forth on the question:

Yet, over all these years, the Watchtower endeavored to provide timely spiritual food. In retrospect, a notable example of such “food at the right time” seems to have been the 1962 Watchtower articles clarifying the Christian position of relative subjection to governmental “superior authorities”—Rom. 13:1–7.¹⁰

Ray Franz provides key insight on the whole matter:

The initial understanding (in Pastor Russell’s time) was that this expression [higher powers of Romans 13:1–7] referred to the governmental authorities of earth . . . In Judge Rutherford’s time this was denied and the Watch Tower stated categorically (in 1929) that the “higher powers” were instead God and Christ. It said that the “higher powers” had no application whatsoever to secular authorities . . . This was acclaimed as evidence of the “advancing light” or truth shining forth to God’s chosen people . . . Thirty years later, in 1962, that “advanced light” was rejected and the view was reinstituted that the term did in fact apply to the secular authorities. As can be seen, the claim is made [by the Watchtower] that there was actual progress made, that in 1962 Jehovah’s Witnesses—ostensibly for the first time!—came to understand the principle of “relative submission,” and that while rendering submission to the secular authorities they could not render total subjections to them. If those “superior authorities” asked them to do things in violation of God’s laws they could not obey . . . The fact is that the understanding just stated was not in the least new; in Russell’s time it was always understood that subjection to secular authorities was only a relative subjection . . . The claim, then, that in Russell’s time there was a deficiency of understanding as to the relative nature of subjection to secular authorities is patently false.¹¹

We are seeing that the Watchtower “new light” is less like a light that get increasingly bright and illuminating, and is a rather like a blinker that turns on and off and on and off . . .

¹⁰ Watchtower 7/1/1979 p. 8; Gruss; Record Show, 287.

¹¹ Raymond Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom*, Atlanta GA (Commentary Press, 1991) 483–485.

Resurrection of the Sodomites: Yes

Another example frequently cited to show this back and forth nature of Watchtower new light is the relatively minor question of whether the Sodomites will be resurrected. Judge Rutherford taught that they would be resurrected:

God has given promise that in his due time the Sodomites and the Jews shall be awakened out of death and given a fair trial under the righteous reign of Christ Jesus.¹²

Resurrection of the Sodomites: No

However, twenty years later, the Watchtower reversed its position:

He [Jesus] was pinpointing the utter impossibility of ransom for unbelievers or those willfully wicked, because Sodom and Gomorrah were irrevocably condemned and destroyed, beyond any possible recovery.¹³

Resurrection of the Sodomites: Yes

Oh wait—Yes, they will be resurrected:

As in the case of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus showed that Sodom, bad as it was, had not got to the state of being unable to repent . . . So the spiritual recovery of the dead people of Sodom is not hopeless.¹⁴

Resurrection of the Sodomites: No

Or I guess not:

The people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected.¹⁵

One wonders how Jehovah's Witnesses can trust their eternal destinies to those responsible for such sloppy and reckless biblical interpretation.

The Devil's Calendar

12 Judge Rutherford, *His Vengeance*, 1934 p. 38; Gruss, *Record Show*, 333.

13 Watchtower 2/1/1954 p. 85; Gruss, *Record Show*, 333.

14 Watchtower 3/1/1965 p. 139; Gruss, *Record Show*, 333. Others have shown more flip-flopping dependent on the timing of and release of publications in 1988. I have not included them for the sake of clarity.

15 *You Can Live Forever in Paradise Earth*, Revised Edition, Brooklyn New York (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989) Revised edition, 179; Gruss, *Record Show*, 334.

From its inception in 1879 until 1935, the Watchtower followed the standard Gregorian calendar used in most western nations. However, in their 1935 Yearbook, the Watchtower published an alternative calendar called “The Calendar of Jehovah God” out of concern for the pagan association of the various names of months and days of the week (i.e. Thursday for Thor’s Day; January for the goddess Janus).

The Watchtower stated:

According to the Word of God the Gregorian calendar is entirely wrong . . . The making of the calendar . . . [was] done under the influence of Satan.¹⁶

In fact, they renounced the Gregorian calendar as “the Devil’s calendar.”¹⁷

Nevertheless, these attacks on the Devil’s Calendar were quietly dropped and the use of the satanically inspired calendars continued! Another flip-flop and then a flip back to the original position.

The Record and Tacking

In what can only be viewed as a massive understatement, the Watchtower tried to explain their unreliable record:

It may have seemed to some as though that path has not always gone straight forward. At times explanations given by Jehovah’s visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case.¹⁸

The foregoing, and much more that could be offered, shows the amazing deception involved in the quote above. The entire record of the Watchtower from its founding to the present has been of constant flip-flopping divorced from serious biblical scholarship.

The frequent changes are defended with an appeal to the tacking of a sailboat with the claim that all the while progress is being made. However, we have seen that frequently the Watchtower reverts completely back to positions it had rejected. This is not comparative to tacking, but, instead, representative of true 180% changes back and forth, and back again.

16 Watchtower 3/1/1935, p.80; Gruss, *Record Show*, 233; M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, Second Edition, Toronto Canada (University of Toronto Press, 1997) 66-68.

17 The Golden Age, 4/10/1935, p. 446.

18 Watchtower 12/1/1981 p. 27; Watters, *Thus Saith*, 172.

The Watchtower's "New Light" claims

We have seen the Watchtower's claims to represent God in a prophetic role. We have also seen their record as a prophet is a dismal failure. Yet, Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to explain away all the failures by their appeal to "new light." The new light concept is essentially that God progressively reveals new truth to the organization and its followers, and all the more so as the days draw closer to Armageddon.

This increasingly brightening new light, it is claimed, not only shows new truth, but makes clear what former teachings should be discarded. The teaching is based upon a misapplication of Proverbs 4:18, "But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established" (NWT).

"New Light" explained

Here is how the Watchtower explained new light in 1981:

As for the wicked, they walk in darkness. Yes, "the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble."—Prov. 4:18, 19, *New International Version*.

Note that the shining of light on the path of the righteous is progressive. It keeps "shining ever brighter." We might illustrate this by a man who gets up before daybreak and who sets out on foot to travel through the countryside. He might see an outline of a building in the distance, but at first cannot tell whether it is a barn or a house.

Gradually as day dawns and he gets closer he can see that it is a house. After a while he is able to tell that it is a wooden, not a brick, house. Then, later, he can make out the color of the house, and so forth. The experience of God's servants has been just like that. Viewing certain matters from a distance in time and with only a little light on the subject often we have had an incomplete, and even an inaccurate, view of things. In such situations we may well have been influenced by previously held views.

But as the light gets brighter and we draw much closer to events, then our understanding of the outworking of God's purposes becomes clearer. Prophecies open up to us as Jehovah's holy spirit sheds light upon them, and as they are fulfilled in world events or in the experiences of God's people. Has this not

been just the way that Jehovah God has dealt with his servants from early times? Indeed it has been!”¹⁹

This doctrine makes much criticism of the Watchtower’s past practices virtually futile. No matter how ‘damning’ the past teachings of the Watchtower have been, the Witness simply dismisses it as old light that has now been superseded by new light. Indeed, with an almost perverse logic, the past false teachings merely reinforce to the Witness that they are in the truth since God has progressively cleansed His organization.

We should not let slip by unnoticed the claim in the last sentence of the lengthy quote, “Has this not been just the way that Jehovah God has dealt with his servants from early times? Indeed it has been!”

The level of deception involved in this claim by the Watchtower is simply breathtaking. It is true that God revealed His truths progressively through biblical history, providing increasing detail as we move from Genesis to Revelation.

For instance, from the Old Testament, we know clearly that God is one (monotheism) and from the New Testament we know clearly that while God is one in being, in His being there are three distinct and related persons (Trinitarianism).

But this kind of progressive revelation is no justification for the Watchtower’s new light claims, in which false teachings are taught as true. Nowhere in the Scriptures are things taught as true, and then later rescinded, and then, after having been rejected by God as false, are then reintroduced as new light. The Watchtower claim is as ridiculous as it is false.

Problems with “New Light”

Let us recall that Jehovah’s Witnesses are expected at an instant to give up current truth for the new truth; old light for new light. They must give their full allegiance to a truth today, and be prepared to reject that same “truth” tomorrow. So “truth” is always tentative and just what the Society says it is.

James Penton, a former Jehovah’s Witness, shared a story by former Jehovah’s Witness Bethelite William Cetnar that illustrates the Jehovah’s Witness view of truth:

At headquarters the men of the Editorial Department often had differences of opinion . . . President Knorr made a significant

¹⁹ Watchtower 12/1/1981 p. 17–19.

and revealing statement in 1952 after some of the brothers in editorial had argued over a doctrinal matter. He stated, “Brothers, you can argue all you want about it, but when it gets off the sixth floor, *it is the truth*.” What he was saying was that once it was in print (the presses were on the sixth floor), *it is the truth*.²⁰

This lays bare the slipshod way that Watchtower “truth” is arrived at in distinct contrast with biblical Christianity that has preserved apostolic truth in its purity for two thousand years, anchored as it is to the Word of God.

“New Light” vs. Berean Bible Students

The foregoing places the Jehovah’s Witnesses in a paradoxical dilemma in regards to Bible interpretation, for on the one hand they are to accept without question the interpretation of the Bible provided for them by the ‘Faithful and Discreet slave.’ Yet, on the other hand, they are (at least ostensibly) to be Berean Christians who only accept teachings which conform to the biblical record as is commended to the saints by the apostle Paul:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11).

Berean Bible Students?

In light of the foregoing, it is truly amazing that the Watchtower claims that Jehovah’s Witnesses adhere to the Berean interpretive principle:

The Bible encourages us to check our beliefs against what it teaches. (1 John 4:1) Millions of readers of this magazine can testify that doing so has added purpose and stability to their lives. So be like the noble-minded Bereans. “Carefully examine the Scriptures daily” before you decide what to believe. (Acts 17:11) Jehovah’s Witnesses will be happy to help you to do this. Of course, it is your decision as to what you want to believe. However, it is the course of wisdom to make sure that your beliefs are shaped, not by human wisdom and desires, but, rather, by God’s revealed Word of truth.—1 Thessalonians 2:13; 5:21.²¹

²⁰ Penton, *Apocalypse*, 245.

²¹ Watchtower 8/1/2001 p. 6.

The Watchtower pays lip service to being Berean Christians. That is, they claim to accept what they are taught only after they have personally checked the teaching against the Scriptures. The reality, however, is that they are taught to accept without question, whatever the Watchtower teaches.

When the Society changes an interpretation, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses dutifully and instantly adopt the change. That is not being a Berean Christian but a brainwashed cultist. Consider further examples that display the real Watchtower interpretive principle:

"If we have love for Jehovah and for the organization of his people we shall not be suspicious, but shall, as the Bible says, 'believe all things,' all the things that the Watchtower brings out."²²

Avoid Independent Thinking

. . . Questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization.²³

Such thinking is an evidence of pride . . . If we get to thinking that we know better than the organization, we should ask ourselves: "Where did we learn Bible truth in the first place? . . . Really, can we get along without the direction of God's organization?" No, we cannot!²⁴

Jehovah is not pleased if we receive that food as though it might contain something harmful. We should have confidence in the channel God is using.²⁵

The Choice

So the Jehovah's Witnesses have two sources of truth, the Bible and the Watchtower. Unfortunately, for Jehovah's Witness, the higher authority is the Watchtower. That is, rather than accepting that the Bible is fully sufficient to lead one to Christian salvation and a godly life (2 Timothy 3:16-17), Jehovah's Witnesses have been deceived into believing that they need the Watchtower organization for the same, to their own destruction.

Watchtower Usurps the Bible

That this is the true case cannot be doubted. David Reed summarized an early Watchtower article by Russell that claimed his own Watchtower writings were of higher value than the Bible itself:

22 *Qualified to be Ministers*, 1955, p. 156, Reed, *Index*, 70).

23 Watchtower 1/15/1983 p. 22; Reed, *Index*, 67.

24 Watchtower 1/15/1983 p. 27; Watters, *Thus Saith*, 170.

25 Watchtower 2/15/1981 p. 19; Reed, *Index*, 71.

A person would go into darkness after two years of reading the Bible alone; would be in the light reading the Studies in the Scriptures alone.²⁶

More recent Watchtower publications make the same claim, that salvation and progress in the Christian life are more dependent on the Watchtower organization and its literature, than on the Bible:

Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do.²⁷

From time to time, there have arisen from among the ranks of Jehovah's people those who, like the original Satan, have adopted an independent, faultfinding attitude . . . They say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such "Bible reading," they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago."²⁸

This quote is an ironic confession from the Watchtower that following the Word of God alone actually does lead one to the orthodox teachings of historic Christianity. I am puzzled as to how the Jehovah's Witnesses failed to notice this!

And again:

That faithful slave is the channel through which Jesus is feeding his true followers in this time of the end. It is vital that we recognize the faithful slave. Our spiritual health and our relationship with God depend on this channel.²⁹

Further problems with the Faithful & Discreet Slave claims

These are amazingly haughty statements in which the Watchtower makes salvation dependent on the Governing Body rather than on Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Further, if as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim, the Bible cannot be understood without the Watchtower organization, what then of everybody that lived before 1879?

The Watchtower argues that a representative of this Slave has represented God since the apostolic age, although mixed in with false Christendom fulfilling Jesus' parable about the wheat and tares:

²⁶ Watchtower 9/15/1910 p. 4685; Reed, *Index*, 64.

²⁷ Watchtower 12/1/1981 p. 27; Reed, *Index*, 67.

²⁸ Watchtower 8/18/1981 p. 28-29; Reed, *Index*, 67.

²⁹ Watchtower 7/15/2013 p. 20.

Down through the years the slavelike congregation has been feeding its true members faithfully and discreetly. From Pentecost, A. D. 33, up to this very present hour . . . Yes, and these 'domestics' have been fed on progressive spiritual food that keeps them abreast of the 'bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.' (Prov. 4:18) All this has proved to be 'food at the proper time,' as stated by Jesus.³⁰

Is there any evidence of such a slave class or body giving out meat in due season over the nineteen centuries since the time of Christ beyond the imagination of the Watchtower leaders? And if such existed, why is there no record in his voluminous writings of Charles T. Russell ever having had contact with them? And if Russell could find the truth apart from the Faithful and Discreet Slave, why can't anyone else?

Again, if there had already been a Faithful Slave preceding Russell, and Russell never connected with it, then would he not be setting up a rival organization also claiming to be the Faithful and Discreet Slave?

And it gets worse! The Watchtower has taught that the 144,000 of the slave class have existed in scattered remnants throughout the centuries since the time of Christ, and became identifiable with the founding of the Watchtower organization under Russell:

From the 1870's onward the thin line of true Christians began to come into historic view again as in the days of the first century. A decided move was made by many of the "wheat" group to disassociate themselves from the many weedlike sects of Christendom. This gathered group of Christians from many parts of the earth formed a new association that later came to be known as Jehovah's Witnesses. From 1879 the Watch Tower magazine was used by this collective group to dispense spiritual food regularly to those of the anointed "little flock."³¹

Now, the Watchtower claims that Christ returned invisibly in kingdom power in 1914. That he would have been invisible corresponds to the Watchtower belief that Jesus is really Michael the Archangel, a spiritual being (in contract to orthodox teaching that affirms the biblical teaching of Christ's physical resurrection, ascension, and second coming).

30 Watchtower 7/15/60 p. 435; *Magnani, Who is the Faithful & Wise Servant*, 87

31 Watchtower 7/15/60 p. 435; *Magnani, Who is the Faithful & Wise Servant*, 87

The Watchtower teaches that when He returned, Christ did an examination of the sects of Christendom to find which to appoint as his representative of his kingdom interest on the earth, a work he completed with the appointment of the Watchtower Organization in 1919:

When did Jesus appoint the faithful slave over his domestics? To answer that, we need to go back to 1914—the beginning of the harvest season. As we learned earlier, at that time many groups claimed to be Christian. From which group would Jesus select and appoint the faithful slave? That question was answered after he and his Father came and inspected the temple, or spiritual arrangement for worship, from 1914 to the early part of 1919. (Mal. 3:1) They were pleased with a small band of loyal Bible Students who showed that their heart was with Jehovah and his Word. Of course, they needed some cleansing, but they humbly responded during a brief period of testing and refining. (Mal. 3:2-4) Those faithful Bible Students were true Christian wheat. In 1919, a time of spiritual revival, Jesus selected capable anointed brothers from among them to be the faithful and discreet slave and appointed them over his domestics.³²

This alleged scenario raises multiple questions. For instance, it seems incredible that it took Jesus five years to conduct this “examination.” But of course, we should remember that Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and so the five years. Still, one wonders why Jehovah could not have just revealed the truth to Jesus? Had Not God been keeping track until that point?³³

Also, it seems quite strange, to say the least, that Jesus would need to perform this search of the sects of Christendom to decide whom to appoint as the Faithful and Discreet Slave when he already had a Faithful and Discreet Slave in the form of the Watchtower, an organization that had already “decided . . . to disassociate themselves from the many weedlike sects of Christendom.”³⁴

Further problems arise when it is realized that the Watchtower claims that while Jesus was executing his examination to decide whom to appoint as the Faithful and Discreet slave, the Watchtower was actually already being punished by God for unfaithfulness, having compromises on their alledged neutrality position during

32 *Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?*, Watchtower July 2013, on line at: <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/w20130715/who-is-faithful-discreet-slave/>

33 This alleged investigation reminds one of the “investigative Judgment” doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist. In both cases, it paints a weak view of God who doesn’t seem to know what it is going on and needs to perform an examination.

34 Watchtower 7/15/60 p. 435; Magnani, *Who is the Faithful & Wise Servant*, 87.

World War One, and having been guilty of creature worship toward Charles Taze Russell.

For such compromises, the Watchtower was within the midst of its ‘Babylonian captivity.’ So, we have the dueling claims of the Watchtower that during Christ’s alleged examination from 1914 to 1919, the organization was in such serious apostasy that it was being punished by Jehovah God, and yet, at the same time, and for the same behavior, they were chosen to be God’s appointed Faithful and Discreet Slave.

Raymond Franz, a former member of the Watchtower’s Governing Body commented upon this strange set of Watchtower claims:

If these things make them “unclean”—so drastically that the newly enthroned King [in 1914] was obliged to abandon them to captivity, what must one assume? Surely that they would have to be cleansed of these things before they could come out from under his disfavor and be able to return to freedom . . . Yet, inexplicably, in 1919, when they are said to have “returned from Babylon,” they were still believing and practicing the identical things that are supposed to have made them unclean and which led to their captivity.³⁵

So it seems that if Jesus had performed such an examination of the Watchtower organization from 1914 to 1919 and upon that basis appointed it as his Faithful and Discreet Slave, such would be an endorsement of their beliefs during that period. It would seem most unusual to change the doctrinal belief structure that had apparently met with Jesus’ approval, and yet that is exactly what the Watchtower has done.

“New Light” Implications for Jehovah’s Witnesses

The Watchtower’s new light principle raises other serious questions for Jehovah’s witnesses. For instance, the Watchtower claims that there will be increasing new light as we get closer to the end, and that we are getting very close to the end, and so it follows that there will be more and more new light coming very soon.

But if this is the case, this means that some of what is in current Watchtower materials will soon be rejected as old light, and indeed, even as false teaching. So how does anyone reading Watchtower literature know which parts to believe or not to believe?

35 Raymond Franz, *In Search of Christian Freedom*, Atlanta GA (Commentary Press, 1991) 147.

Further, is it even ethical for Jehovah Witnesses to disseminate Watchtower materials knowing that they contain things which will soon be rejected as false teaching?

If one thinks that this line of thought is unreasonable, all one has to do is to show current Jehovah's Witnesses some of the false teachings in older Watchtower publications. Often, Jehovah's Witnesses will have a fearful response or a suspicious attitude when confronted to the Watchtower's old light.

The author can personally testify to multiple Watchtower teachings that Jehovah's Witnesses of the past believed would never be changed, and yet they have (i.e. "This generation" tied to 1914 long held until dropped in 1995).

Problems with "New Light"

As this article has shown, it is difficult to maintain that the Watchtower is being led by Jehovah through the supposed "new light" when so often the Watchtower reverts back to old light. How could God be the author of such confusion? This surely presents a distorted picture of our Almighty God.

John 16:12-13

Jehovah's Witnesses have appealed to John 16:12–13 to justify their confused interpretive record. In that passage Jesus stated:

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:12–13).

But surely this is no justification for their sordid history of biblical interpretation. Notice that Jesus directed these words to the apostles, and that Jesus fulfilled these words by later guiding the apostles in producing the inspired New Testament, through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

It is not as though Jesus taught His disciples things that He knew were wrong, with the intention of correcting their understanding with "New Light" at a later time when they were ready to receive it. There is no record that Jesus taught one thing as truth, and then later rejected it as false teaching, and then later returned to the original teaching. Nor is there any such example in the entire New Testament.

Such claims only further reveal the Watchtower's inability to correctly divide the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

Does Acts 1:6 support the Watchtower's "New Light" practices?

Jehovah's Witnesses point to the question the apostles asked Jesus about the timing of His kingdom being set up following His resurrection in Acts 1:6: "So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6).

Jehovah's Witnesses argue that this shows that even the inspired apostles had wrong understandings or teachings at times, and therefore, such similar mistaken teachings by the modern alleged 'Faithful and Discreet Slave' should not trouble faithful Witnesses today.

However, no such idea can be drawn from the passage since the apostles were simply asking Jesus a question; not teaching the faithful this and then that.

It is also important to remember that it was the writings of the apostles that were inspired and not the apostles themselves. In other words, not everything they wrote or said was inspired; but only those things they wrote or proclaimed by the agency of the Holy Spirit were inspired. Acts 1:6 (which is an inspired writing of Luke) simply records a theological question asked by the apostles.

Luke 18:34

The same can be shown for Luke 18:34 (and other examples Jehovah's Witnesses sometimes offer). After Jesus revealed to the disciples details about His coming death and resurrection, Luke states:

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about (Luke 18:34).

First, Jesus taught a consistent message to the disciples about His coming death and resurrection whether the disciples understood it or not.

He wasn't teaching something like: "I am going to be resurrected" and then later changed his teaching and said: "No, I am going to die, and that's it," and then a bit later say: "Well, Yes, I am going to be resurrected, that's the latest new light."

Nor did the disciples go around teaching something like: “Jesus is going to die and go to heaven” and then a short time later change it to: “Hey, Jesus is going to die and then rise from the dead, body and all,” and then later revert back to the claim that: “Jesus was soon going to die and that would be the end of him.”

No. Luke 18:34 shows that Jesus was teaching His disciples amazing truths that they struggled to comprehend. That’s it. They were not going around teaching in a wishy-washy way this is truth, no that is truth, and so on. There is simply no biblical support for the reckless hermeneutical mess that is the Watchtower’s historical record.

More problems with the Watchtower’s concept of “new light”

Further, appealing to alleged errors in the thinking of the apostles does not support the Watchtower’s case for new light. This is the case because the Watchtower claims the new light is from God who should know everything and would not need to keep correcting Himself.

The only other alternative would be that while God does know all things, He chooses to reveal His truth through such lies and reckless dissemination. But we know from the Scriptures that: “God is not a man that he should lie” (Numbers 23:19).

So, once Jehovah has provided new light on a subject, the matter should be settled. The fact that there are continual changes proves definitively that it is not Jehovah that is providing the alleged new light.

Further, by the Watchtower’s definition of new light, the reality is that there is virtually no teaching that the Watchtower could not reject or add, no matter how long they have taught to the contrary, since it is not bound by the Bible, but only to the whims of an ever-changing governing body.

The conclusion of the matter

Since the Watchtower claims to be a prophet and yet denies that it is inspired, we must conclude that the Watchtower is an uninspired prophet. Since this prophet has a history of false prophecies, it must be a false prophet, and should not be listened to:

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:22).

NEW A&E SERIES: “CULTS AND EXTREME BELIEFS”

by Don and Joy Veinot

Media interest in cults is on the rise again. Leah Remini had a couple of seasons on A&E about Scientology which was very popular. It seems it was so popular they have renamed it to "Cults and Extreme Beliefs" and according to *TV Fanatic* are including "Jehovah's Witnesses, Twelve Tribes, Sanctuary Church, Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, The Family, and U.N.O.I. now known as Value Creators." The *Twelve Tribes* is a group not many have heard about. There are some "Quick Facts" available at Apologetics Index. Chattanooga's Time Free Press just published an article, *Yellow Deli's Twelve Tribes back in the spotlight as subject of new podcast, documentary.*

The newspapers reported extensively on the group, founded by Gene Spriggs and formerly known as the Vine Christian Community Church, in the 1970s and early 1980s when the first Yellow Deli opened on Brainerd Road. The group's involvement in various controversies over its practices eventually lead to it leaving the area in 1980 after cult deprogrammers "rescued" some members.

Back in 1979 Chattanooga, the deli was labeled as "off limits" to students attending the now-closed Tennessee Temple University, Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, and Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee.

Administrators at the private institutions said the church "engaged in brainwashing and exploitation of the individual," according to Times Free Press records.

At the time, church elder Eddie Wiseman, who is still a local leader, said after a prayer session for the students at all three schools, "the judgment of God" is upon Bryan College and he asked God to lead students and teachers away from it.

The group now has communes around the world, including in Germany, Spain and Argentina.

With this growing interest there is also an increase in folks contacting us for help, guidance and assistance. These are all things the media cannot provide but merely leave the viewers alerted but without

resource. We ask for your prayers as God uses even non-believing media to alert viewers to spiritual dangers and that we would have the available resources to assist.

Don and Joy Veinot of Midwest Christian Ministries
<http://midwestoutreach.org>

QUIZ: THE 12 APOSTLES OF JESUS

1. Which apostle briefly walked on water with Jesus?
 - a. Peter
 - b. James
 - c. Bartholomew
 - d. Andrew

2. Peter and Andrew were brothers. Which other apostles were brothers?
 - a. Judas Iscariot and Thomas
 - b. James and John
 - c. Nathaniel and Philip
 - d. Matthew (Levi) and Simon the Zealot

3. Which disciple was not present when the resurrected Jesus first appeared to the apostles in the upper room?
 - a. Thomas
 - b. Simon the Zealot
 - c. Peter
 - d. Thaddeus Judas

4. Which three disciples were with Jesus at the transfiguration?
 - a. Peter, Philip, and Andrew
 - b. Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel
 - c. Peter, Paul, and Mary
 - d. Peter, James, and John

5. Which disciple was a despised tax-collector for the Romans before coming to faith in Jesus?
 - a. James the Lesser
 - b. James the More
 - c. Matthew (Levi)
 - d. Levi Jeans

6. According to church history and tradition, which disciple lived the longest?

- a. Thomas
- b. Peter
- c. Nathaniel
- d. John

7. Which disciple was not a fisherman?

- a. James
- b. John
- c. Peter
- d. Judas Iscariot

8. Which disciple did not author a New Testament book?

- a. Philip
- b. Peter
- c. John
- d. Matthew

9. Which disciple belonged to a radical Jewish group of freedom fighters determined to free Israel from Roman domination?

- a. Judas Iscariot
- b. Simon the Zealot
- c. Simon Bar Sinister
- d. Matthew

10. Which disciple was the Lord's half-brother, authored a New Testament book, and was leader of the early Christian Church as described in the Book of Acts?.

- a. John
- b. James
- c. Thomas
- d. George

Answers:

1, a; 2, b; 3, a; 4, d; 5, c; 6, d; 7, d; 8, a; 9, b; 10, b.

Personal Notes on the Articles:

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