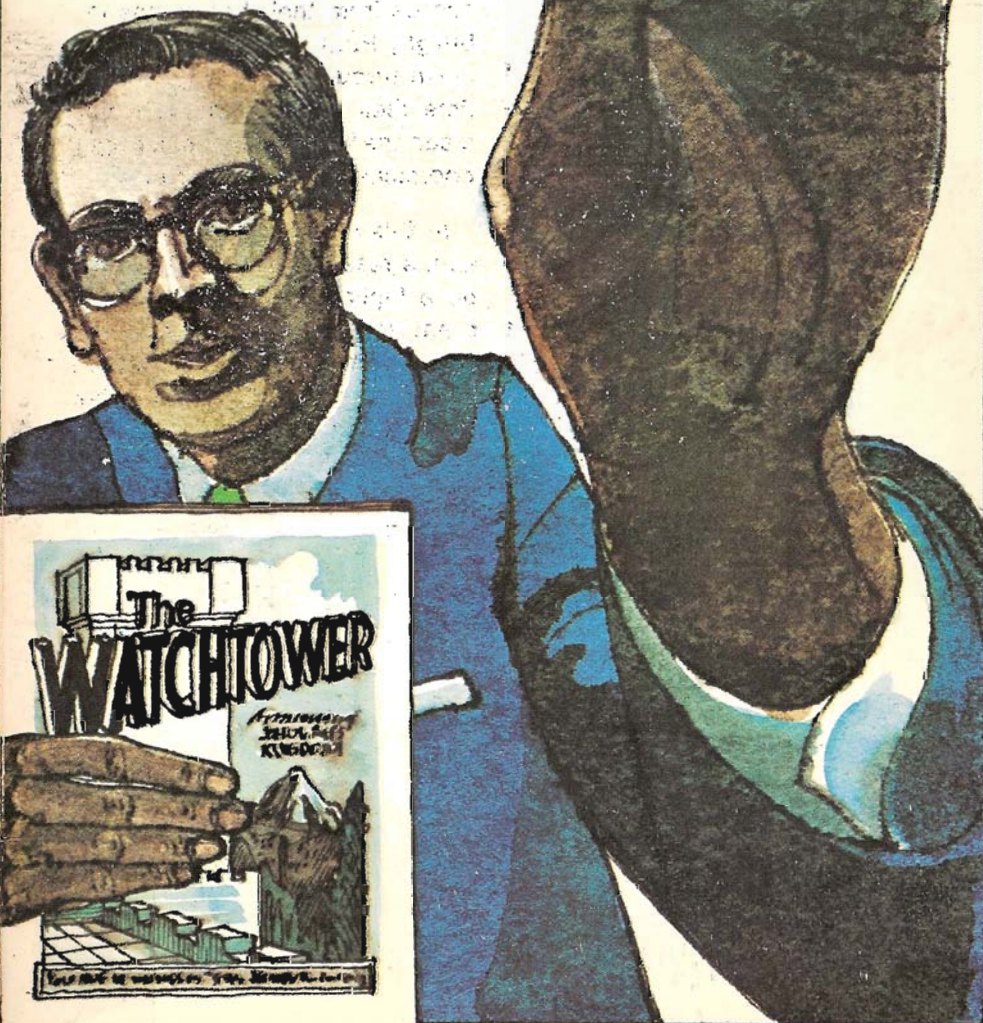


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The Inside Story of Jehovah's Witnesses

W. C. STEVENSON



The Inside Story of
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

W. C. Stevenson

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Except when the Authorised Version of 1611 is used, or it is specifically stated otherwise, all scriptures quoted in this book have been taken from *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which is the official Jehovah's Witness' Version of the Bible.

'Six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 C.E. . . . It would not be by mere chance or accident . . . for the reign of Jesus Christ . . . to run parallel with the seventh millennium of man's existence'

Life Everlasting - In Freedom
Of the Sons of God (1966), pp.29-30

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In Gratitude for
the Loyalty of
my Grandmother

Preface

There can be few people today who have not heard of the religious organisation known as Jehovah's Witnesses. The general impression of them has usually been formulated on a wind-swept Sunday morning, shivering in a dressing gown, having been aroused from sleep by their knock at the door, and detained by their polite insistence on reading a few Bible verses before the householder returns to bed with a couple of their magazines to read. Although they have been considered as something of a nuisance, they have appeared to be most sincere people, inspired by tremendous zeal and enthusiasm, and possessing an extraordinary ability to turn up texts in the Bible with bewildering dexterity. These first impressions have been unfavourably influenced by press reports of Jehovah's Witnesses for some obscure reason permitting their loved ones to die because of refusing blood transfusions, or of young men in the movement being sent to prison for refusing to perform national service.

Yet despite these unfavourable impressions, Jehovah's Witnesses are very much on the increase. In fact they have been described as 'the fastest-growing religion'. What is the secret of their success in recruiting new members when religion generally seems to be very much a spent force? What is the nature of their appeal? And how do they engender such fervent devotion in their members that they are prepared to spend so much of their time quite freely in canvassing from house to house on the movement's behalf?

This book, written by a former member of the movement, attempts to answer these questions. It is to a degree auto-

biographical, as it must be, because the writer can only describe the movement in the light of his own experience. It is not a theological treatise, although some discussion of the theology of the movement is at times obviously relevant. But this book is not trying to answer the question 'What do Jehovah's Witnesses believe?' or even 'Who are Jehovah's Witnesses?' Rather the question for answer is 'Why do so many people become Jehovah's Witnesses?'

The book is really in two parts. In the first part the various steps by which a person becomes a member of the movement are outlined, with an assessment of its appeal and an explanation of its methods. The second part of the book attempts to give an all-round picture of what it means to be a Jehovah's Witness, an explanation of how the Witnesses see themselves in relation to world history, and of their attitude towards those outside their organisation, and a glimpse into the inner workings of their society. Whilst the writer does not agree with many of the organisation's teachings and methods, he hopes that what he has written will seem fair, for this has been his chief concern, to present the facts as they are, letting them speak for themselves before making any comment upon them.

The title of the book refers to the recently pronounced belief by Jehovah's Witnesses that the end of the present world will definitely have taken place by the year 1975. The writer feels that this pronouncement is unfortunate, because the movement is thereby staking its existence on the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this prophecy. It would seem that 1975 will be a year of doom, if not for the world, for Jehovah's Witnesses.

The writer was a member of Jehovah's Witnesses for fourteen years, five of which were spent in full-time service in the movement. What follows is a first-hand description of what in retrospect appears to him as a fascinating social phenomenon of the twentieth century. W. C. S.

Promise of Paradise

AT half-past four on a pleasant Friday afternoon in the summer of 1951, as a fifteen-year-old schoolboy I arrived home from school. I had just deposited my bag full of books on the dining-room table when there was a knock at the door. My mother answered it. I heard a man's voice speaking, although I was too far away to hear exactly what he was saying. I assumed that he was someone selling something, and that therefore he would soon be despatched. But as it turned out I was wrong on both counts. The conversation between my mother and the man continued for some time, perhaps five minutes. Then my mother called me to the door. She introduced me to the caller.

'This gentleman,' she said, 'has been talking about the Bible, and I've just been telling him that it would be good for you to listen to him, as you don't go to church or seem to have much inclination in that way.'

'How do you do?' I said politely but without much interest. It was true that I did not go to church, but at fifteen years of age and just entering the sixth form at the grammar school I was intelligent enough to have given some thought to the subject of religion. My reaction had been one of scepticism, probably born of an awareness of the hypocrisy and class snobbery with which in our neighbourhood church-going seemed to be equated. I had a deep-rooted feeling for more than just the material aspect of life, however. Perhaps at that age most of us are first

awakening to the controversial realities of politics and religion.

Whatever my exact state of mind was at the time I shall never be able to completely recall. But whatever it was, this man had appeared at the right psychological moment. As I looked at him, I was immediately impressed by two things. First, his clothes. His trousers were darned at the knee, the suit was obviously old, even second-hand, but he was clean and neat. The conclusion I drew from his appearance was that, contrary to my conception of most religious people I had met, clergymen and others, this man was not in it for what he could get out of it. The work he was doing was financially unrewarding. Just as I pictured Christ and his disciples as poor men working out of love for their fellow man, this man seemed from that point of view in the same mould. Second, after his clothes, I noticed his eyes. As he spoke of his beliefs and his hope for the future, they were ablaze with conviction. They had an almost supernatural lustre, which to me, an impressionable fifteen-year-old, was quite hypnotic in its effect. I can remember vividly how I said to myself at that moment, apart from listening to his words, 'This is the first real Christian I have ever met.'

But if the man was impressive the message he was preaching was astonishing! His opening gambit was to ask my mother how she would like to live in a world without sorrow, sickness or even death, a world where poverty and injustice were unknown, a world where—and here he was an astute salesman touching on a woman's weakness—people never grow old but always remain beautiful (just think if there were no grey hair and no wrinkles!), where—looking to our weed-choked garden for inspiration for his next point—there will even be no weeds in the garden. 'This is the kind of world that the Bible holds out for everybody living today. And not a world in heaven beyond our comprehension, but right here on earth. We believe that this

transformation is going to take place in our lifetime, and if you will give us time, we can prove it to you from your Bible.'

My mother was quite amazed. 'To think,' she said later in the house, 'that someone has called at the front door today and told me that I'm never going to grow old or have grey hair or wrinkles, and that there will be no weeds in the front garden. Either the man is mad or else he has got something!' And reasoning on this dubious alternative, when the man had asked at the conclusion of the conversation if he could call again, 'One evening next week to discuss the matter further', and mother had looked a little uncomfortable, so the man being a good psychologist hastened to add that he would bring his wife with him, 'and it would be nice if your husband would listen in too', mother agreed. The following Friday evening was fixed as the next appointment, and the man left with a beaming smile, put his worn leather briefcase over the handlebar of his bicycle, and rode off to his next call.

In this way I was introduced to the international religious movement known since 1931 as Jehovah's Witnesses. Because of the widespread prejudice against the movement the man who called did not mention the name 'Jehovah's Witnesses' on any occasion until he was asked some weeks later by my father what organisation he represented. In my own family's case it would not have mattered if he had mentioned it, because none of us had heard of the Witnesses before. But this shrewd holding back of information which might raise a barrier to gaining a convert is typical of the expertise with which Jehovah's Witnesses set about their converting work, from house to house. Their door-to-door ministry, as it is called, is conducted like a military operation, with attention to every detail, the ultimate object being the capture of your mind, your heart, your vital being, and the harnessing of every ounce of your physical and mental

energies to the service of what is called 'God's organisation'.

But more of this later. Let us first of all examine the initial approach at the doorstep by the Witnesses. What do they offer which captures the imagination of so many people and results in their joining the movement? For certainly there is no denying the tremendous numerical increase which the movement has enjoyed every year, particularly since the Second World War. All the work that Jehovah's Witnesses do in house-to-house preaching is reported weekly on a specially provided form. As well as reporting the amount of time spent each day in actual canvassing, they also report how many books, booklets and magazines they have sold in their work, how many back calls they have made on interested people they have met before, and also how many Bible studies they are conducting in private homes each week. This information is reported to the local congregation to which the Witness is affiliated. Each month this is all totalled up and sent to the branch office of the country which in turn sends the complete total for that country to the head office of the society, which is in Brooklyn, New York. On the basis of the reports thus received the Society is able to publish an annual report of remarkable accuracy of all the work done all over the world by Jehovah's Witnesses. In view of this it would be foolish of anyone to question the accuracy of the figures issued by the Witnesses, and they can undoubtedly be accepted as completely genuine.

These figures show that since the First World War there has been a consistently spectacular increase from year to year. According to one of the Society's books called *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, in 1928 there were 44,080 Witnesses preaching the world over. In 1938 there were 59,047. In 1948 there were 260,756, and in 1958 798,326. According to the 1965 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, in 1964 there were 1,001,870 preaching Witnesses.

One must bear in mind that these more than a million people are not just attending a church once a week and thereby calling themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. Unless a person actively 'witnesses' from door to door (or by some other acceptable means if he is incapacitated), he is not recognised as a Jehovah's Witness, even though he may have been baptised into the movement. So these figures are of persons actively preaching. And when one considers that in 1964 these more than a million people spent a total of 162,808,312 hours in preaching from house to house, the reader will realise that these people do not spend an odd half-hour or so when they feel like it in witnessing. To be fair, this total figure of hours includes the work of missionaries and full-time workers who have a quota set for them of either 100 or 150 hours a month in preaching work. But, even so, the ordinary member of the movement with a secular job to do and a family to keep will spend at least ten hours a month in preaching from house to house. In fact, this is the quota that is set for them by the Society.

How then can we explain this fantastic increase? What in other words do the Witnesses say to the people they meet at the doorstep which results in so many giving all their spare time (and in some cases, like myself, giving up lucrative jobs or promising careers to spend all their time) to work for the further increase of the movement?

The answer is that the Witnesses are purveyors of a Utopia beyond our wildest dreams. Their cardinal teaching is that in this present generation God, whose name is Jehovah, is going to bring about the end of the world. By this they do not mean the end of the planet. The earth, they believe, will never be destroyed. Why are they so sure? Because the Bible, which they implicitly believe to be the infallible Word of God, assures us so. Does it not say in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter one, verse four, 'The earth abideth for ever?' Indeed it does, and by these words the

Witnesses are convinced that the earth will never be reduced to a cinder by an international nuclear war. The reader might well reflect that it is a wonderful thing when one can be so easily comforted.

But if the end of the world does not mean the old-fashioned idea of the burning up of the planet, then what does it mean? The word 'world', the Witnesses point out, as used in the Bible is translated from three different Greek words in the New Testament. When it speaks of the end of the world, the Greek word used is '*kosmos*', which means 'organisation' or 'system of things'. So the Witnesses believe that the present system of things in which we live, which they declare to be hopelessly corrupt and evil, is about to pass away. It is evil because it has as its ruler not Jehovah the Almighty but Satan the Devil, who the Bible says is 'the god of this world' (II Corinthians iv, 4), and keeps all mankind in subjection to him through the unseen influence of his minions, called demons, who blind men to the truth of God's Word, and encourage them to works of evil.

The Witnesses see themselves as the sole possessors of God's revealed truth, the only ones who have the correct understanding of Jehovah's Word and an insight into His purposes. So commissioned by Jehovah, they witness to others about the end of this world, warning all mankind of its rapid approach and giving scriptural proof of their warning.

And what prospect is there for the Witnesses and those who listen to their witnessing? In the words of the first epistle of John, chapter two, verse seventeen, 'The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains for ever'. This is the rendering of the verse given by the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which is the Witnesses' own version of the Bible. In other words, after the great Battle of Armageddon (mentioned at Revelation xvi, 16), in which Jehovah destroys Satan and

all his followers, demon and human, after the passing of this present evil world, Jehovah will create a new world, a new system of things, a new *kosmos* for the righteous survivors of that holy war. That is why the Witnesses call themselves a New World Society, because they believe that they will form the nucleus from which Jehovah will re-populate the globe with people that are pleasing to Him.

In this new world obedient mankind will gradually lose its imperfection by the restoring power of Jehovah's spirit. They quote the twenty-first chapter of the book of Revelation to describe it: 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away.' In other words, in God's new world the fortunate inhabitants, who have listened to, obeyed and preached the Word of Truth, will never grow old, never suffer so much as a headache, never even die, but enjoy perfect health and eternal youth.

This is the crux of the Witnesses' message at the doorstep, and it is presented with first-class salesmanship methods, and at the same time, one must add, with staggering conviction and sincerity. An examination of the methods of presentation will give the answer to the person who asks how anyone could come to accept such a far-fetched message as just outlined. Because the scriptural 'proof' offered in support of these beliefs is very tenuous, as will be shown later. A very good example of the preaching methods of the Witnesses, which are I believe all-important in an explanation of the success of their work, is furnished by a booklet printed especially for their house-to-house work, called *Look! I am making all things new*. Before I explain how this booklet is used, however, I should first give the reader and insight into how their house-to-house work is organised for maximum effectiveness.

Most readers who have received a visit from the Witnesses will have seen, if not read, their two journals published twice each month called *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* One of the most popular methods of canvassing an area is to make a brief presentation of the two magazines, offering them for sale at the two together for eightpence. In this magazine work, as it is called, the Witnesses are encouraged to spend only a little time at each door—thirty- to sixty-second presentations are recommended—the object being to cover as much ground as possible, and of course to sell as many magazines as possible. At each house where magazines are bought, the Witness is instructed to note the number of the house, the name of the person who bought them, the particular issue sold, and if relevant any point of issue discussed in any article in the magazine. All this information is to be written down on a *House to House Record* form duly provided by the Society, which contains suitable symbols which might be used as abbreviations in noting the points down. The purpose of all this is that all the houses now noted down will be made the subject of intensive back-calls a week later. This back-call work is the key to the Witnesses' success in their house to house work, and it is in this back-call work that the booklet I mentioned a few moments ago proves very effective indeed.

This particular booklet is a thirty-two-page publication, and contains the principal message of the movement, explaining how God is going to 'make all things new' (Revelation xxi, 5) in our lifetime. On the front cover it bears a rather crudely drawn picture of what life will be like in God's new world. It shows a blissfully peaceful scene, with man and animal living together without fear or antagonism, people of all races in harmony; in fact it is a picture of all that the Old Testament prophets dreamed would take place in the reign of Messiah. But the manner in which the Witnesses present it is a lesson in astute

salesmanship and a credit to their training, which is a subject of later discussion.

The object of this second call is to arouse sufficient interest in the message so that the householder will agree to a regular call each week for an hour, when he will be systematically taught the doctrines of the movement. How can a cold canvass call in which the person has merely bought two religious magazines be converted into a regular hourly visit to his home? Listen to this imaginary conversation between a Witness who is making a back-call and a Mr. Jones who has bought two magazines the previous week, unaware of the chain of events he has unwittingly set in motion.

Witness: Good evening, Mr. Jones. Do you remember my calling last week and leaving with you two of our magazines called *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*? I have called back as promised to see how you have enjoyed them.

Mr. Jones (who hasn't read a word of them): Well, I'm afraid I have been rather busy and I haven't had much time to look at them.

Witness: Well, that's understandable because life keeps us all very busy, doesn't it? In fact, because we are all such busy people today our Society, realising this, has published this small booklet, only thirty-two pages long, which doesn't take very long to read, and it is designed to follow up the interest you showed in the magazines. The booklet outlines the wonderful hope contained in the Bible for our times and proves quite clearly that God is going to do something about the present evil conditions. A number of people have been quite intrigued by the picture on the front of the booklet called, as you can see, *Look! I am making all things new*. Have a look at it for yourself. (Hands the booklet to Mr. Jones, who eyes the picture curiously.) Do you notice anything different about the scene depicted there? Different from present-day conditions?

(Mr. Jones is really caught now, but he is scrutinising the picture a little uncertainly because he is not sure what he is supposed to be looking for. Sensing this, the Witness prompts him.)

Well, do you notice anything different about the people?

Mr. Jones: Er . . . well, they all seem to be of different races.

Witness: Quite true, and yet although they're all of different nationalities, do you notice that there appears to be no friction between them? No sign of racial segregation or colour bar, is there? And of course, you know, there shouldn't be according to the Bible, because if you'll read with me here at Acts xvii, 26 you will see what the apostle Paul says of Almighty God, '. . . and (He) hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'. So since we are all of one blood, we are all equal in the sight of God and should live together as one happy family. We believe that in the near future all races will live together happily as in the picture.

(So much for point one, a pertinent one, and one that is generally acceptable. It is always a wise course to make sure that your first point is one that the householder is almost bound to agree with, and then proceed to the more controversial ones later.)

Mr. Jones, do you notice anything unusual about the animals in the picture?

Mr. Jones: Well, they seem to be getting on all right together too, don't they? (He is beginning to enjoy this little quiz.)

Witness: Yes, Do you notice that the artist has put a lion and a lamb together in the picture? Today the lamb would not last long under such circumstances, would he? (Mr. Jones smiles at the touch of macabre humour.) But the artist is merely portraying what a text from the Bible prophesies for the future, here at Isaiah lxxv, 25: 'The wolf and the lamb

shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.' So the Bible foretells a time when there will even be peace in the animal kingdom. By the way, do you see anything in the picture which reminds you of war at all?

(Mr. Jones has another careful look at the picture.)

Mr. Jones: Why no, I can't say that I do.

(On one occasion in using this method of presentation the writer was taken completely out of his stride by a lady, who, on being asked this question, noted the clouds drawn in the background to make the sky look more realistic, and said quite seriously, 'Well, is that an atomic cloud at the back there?')

Witness: No, wouldn't it be wonderful if all over the world there was no sign of war? Well, again God's Word assures us that a time is coming when there will be no more war. Read with me at Isaiah ii, 4: 'they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' So, according to that, the people who say there will always be wars are wrong, aren't they?

(Mr. Jones has to agree.)

One final question, Mr. Jones. Do you see any old people in the picture?

(Well, Mr. Jones scrutinises the picture and each face depicted there, but no, he has to admit:)

Mr. Jones: Well, not what I'd call old.

Witness: No, that is quite true. Now you might say, why shouldn't the old people have a share in this beautiful paradise depicted here? The answer is, that the old people are there, but what has happened is that they have grown young again.

(Mr. Jones justifiably looks bewildered.)

Witness: Do you know that the Bible even foretells that in the future people are going to grow young again? (Mr. Jones laughs incredulously.) Read with me here at Job xxxiii, 25: 'His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.' Wouldn't it be wonderful to wake up tomorrow morning, look in the mirror and be able to say, instead of 'I'm getting a bit older', 'I'm getting a bit younger'?

Mr. Jones: Well, I suppose it would, yes. But what are you getting at?

Witness: Mr. Jones, if I told you that all these changes we've just discussed were promised by God to take place in our lifetime what would you say?

Mr. Jones: Well, quite honestly I wouldn't believe you.

Witness: I wouldn't blame you because it does sound rather far-fetched, doesn't it? But look what the fourth paragraph in the booklet has to say: 'Unbelievable did you say? First, though, consider the facts in proof. It is possible for you and your family to survive the passing of the present troubled world, and to enter the new world represented on our cover.' Mr. Jones, I'd like to give you a copy of this booklet for you to consider the facts in proof. Have you any children?

(Mr. Jones has three children.)

Would you not like to think that in your generation you and your family could live on into a new world like we've just described?

(Of course Mr. Jones would. Like any other person he wouldn't sniff at the promise of paradise. But how can this man be so sure that it will happen?)

Mr. Jones, with your permission I'd like to come back next week and this is what we could do: you get out your Bible and I'll get out my Bible, you'll have a copy of this booklet and I'll have a booklet, and we'll discuss this together. See how the booklet is divided into paragraphs

and all the paragraphs are numbered? These numbers correspond to the questions at the foot of the pages, which are designed as a basis for study. I'm sure if you'll give me twenty minutes of your time next Friday evening that I could prove to you what a marvellous future there is to look forward to. How about it?

Mr. Jones considers the proposal, which seems a fair one. After all, the local vicar has never been round to study the Bible with him, and this man is obviously sincere and is willing to spend his own time quite freely with a complete stranger. He has been quite impressed by the message and after all . . . and suddenly he hears the Witness echoing his own thoughts at that moment.

Witness: And, after all, Mr. Jones, if you look into it and find out that it is wrong, at least you will have lost nothing, and gained some knowledge of the Bible you might not otherwise have had. And if you find out it's true? Why, just think what a happy man you'll be with such a wonderful prospect to look forward to!

So Mr. Jones agrees, the date is set, and the Witness goes away having concluded a highly successful back-call. He will even quote a scripture to himself to prove to himself that divine approval is upon his work: 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow' (I Corinthians iii, 6, *New World Translation*).

There are two observations which are, I believe, worth making on this brief but fair sketch of how the Witnesses 'get a foot in the door', as it were. First, they are obviously adept at marshalling Biblical texts for their own purposes, and this is entirely the result of the programme of training provided by the Society, in which each individual Witness is groomed to give his testimony. Each one is provided with a small booklet called *Sermon Outlines*, which fits into the back of the Bible for easy reference. This booklet contains numerous 'sermons' or series of texts strung together

with interlinking remarks, by which it is claimed that a Witness can scripturally refute virtually any objection he may meet in his work. It is hardly necessary to comment that as all these texts are being used without regard for their literary or historical context, as in the sketch outlined, it is inevitable that a good proportion of them are being misinterpreted.

In fact the most fundamental objection to the Witnesses' theology is that in arriving at their beliefs they use the Bible in a way in which it was never intended to be used. I have often thought since that the biggest mistake ever made was when someone decided to divide the Bible into chapters and verses. By this act the door was opened for such a torrent of isolated quotations with perverted meanings as the Witnesses have unleashed upon an unsuspecting public. As someone once wrote bitterly:

Of petulant, capricious sects,
The maggots of corrupted texts.

The second observation on the Witnesses' presentation of their message relates to the reaction of the householder. As I have said previously, it might be wondered how anyone could be so impressed by such a far-fetched message. This obviously depends to a great extent on a person's state of mind and circumstances. The vast majority of people living today, whilst acknowledging that this is a predominantly irreligious age, nevertheless have had a basic religious upbringing, even though they may not now engage in any active religious pursuits. Consequently it comes naturally to many people to ask such questions as 'Where do we come from?' or 'Where do we go to after death?' or 'What is the purpose of life?' Even though they have long ago rejected the conventional religious answers to such questions, they have not given up the habit of asking these questions. To other people without such a background, who perhaps consider themselves more realistic than religious, these

seem to be foolish questions because to them they appear to be quite unanswerable. And even if we did know the answers, such ones will argue, it is hard to see how we would be in any way benefited. They live quite happy lives without believing that there is an all-pervading purpose in life which they must serve. And so, when they observe the pattern of life of religious people, they feel that such ones are foregoing a great deal of happiness in life because they are so obsessed with this search for 'ultimate truth', looking for something which they will never find because, as they see it, it does not exist.

I am sure that there are many religious people who would agree that there are a number of questions which, in this life at any rate, will remain unanswerable. Even Jesus Christ left the question 'What is Truth?' unanswered. But the Witnesses undertake, not only to tell us what is Truth, but to answer a whole host of quite unanswerable questions. Since there are so many who ask these questions, however, the Witnesses have a ready audience eager to hear the answers. Without meaning to be unkind, it would seem that to such people in this state of mind any answer, however absurd, is to be preferred to none at all. And yet if we reflect on how as grown-ups we are often embarrassed by that unanswerable question 'Why?', which our children are always posing, it must surely be a great pity that so many of us remain in this childish state and continue to ask the unanswerable 'Why?' for the rest of our lives, instead of accepting life as it is, on its own terms, and being grateful for it. A great pity, because we must accept that if we ask foolish questions, it is inevitable that we shall receive foolish answers.

Because this religious concept of the existence of 'absolute truth' is so prevalent in the subconscious thinking of so many people I feel that this is an important factor in explaining why the Witnesses get such an encouraging response at so many homes. Because they claim to be the

sole possessors of 'absolute truth', they are therefore in a position to answer any question you might care to ask. Even though we may feel that some or all of the answers are absurd, we must acknowledge, even admire, the courage (or is it audacity?) with which they square up to the unanswerable. So when someone in the frame of mind I have just described is approached by the Witnesses, and learns that they will answer such questions as 'What is the purpose of life?', 'Why is there evil in the world?', 'What happens to the dead?', and so on *ad infinitum*, or *ad nauseam*, depending on one's outlook, such a person is immediately impressed. Many Witnesses have told me, when I have asked them why they became Jehovah's Witnesses, 'Because they were the first people to answer the questions that I had been asking for years.'

But this quest for ultimate truth is not the only explanation of the Witnesses' success in gaining converts. When people have been having a rough time in their personal lives, when adversity has struck hard, in other words when they are off balance, the message of a New World in which poverty and injustice, war and oppression will be unknown is obviously most attractive. And it is undeniable that the movement makes its most phenomenal gains in countries which have been the scene of war or other troubles. During and after the war in Korea, for instance, the Witnesses made extraordinary advances in that country. In 1954 alone the increase was a fantastic 120 per cent! But when life is comparatively comfortable, and the international situation less tense, the increase is much less marked. In Britain at the present time the movement is virtually at a standstill and has been for some time. And yet it only takes a flare-up on the international scene to bring hundreds of lapsed members running for cover. At the time of the Cuban crisis a few years ago I remember that faces suddenly appeared at the Witnesses' meetings which had not been

seen there for years. So this is a religion that does well in times of adversity, and rather less well in times of prosperity. It thrives on bad news.

Of course, this is hardly surprising. It is much easier to believe that this is the Devil's world when nations are at each others' throats, or there is massive unemployment or food rationing. Then the Promise of Paradise is grasped more firmly to the bosom of the faithful in consolation. 'Ah well, it's wonderful to think that conditions won't always be like this, isn't it? Just round the corner is Jehovah's new world.' And so the promise of future blessings sweetens the pill of present troubles.

But given all these things which contribute to the susceptibility of so many to the teachings of the Witnesses, this does not explain the unbreakable conviction and almost fanatical devotion of the members of the movement. To understand this we must look at their teaching methods more closely and this is the subject of the next chapter.

The Seed is Watered

A WEEKLY home Bible study is the way in which almost all of Jehovah's Witnesses have become members of the movement. Generally lasting for an hour, it is based upon one of the Society's publications, usually one called *Let God Be True*, which discusses the fundamental teachings of the organisation.

By a home Bible study, however, the reader should not imagine that he is being invited to a free discussion of the scriptures, a fair exchange of opinions. This is not what the Witnesses have in mind when at your doorstep they offer an hour of their time to study the Bible with you. The whole idea of such an arrangement is to tie the person down to a systematic study of one of their publications, and the Bible will only be used to substantiate the views that the book is propagating. This expression 'tie down' I do not think the Witnesses will object to, because it is one which they often use themselves. How many times I have heard someone say of a potential convert, 'Oh yes, he's very interested, but I haven't been able to tie him down to a study yet.' What is meant by this? It is the next phase in the carefully planned conversion of our Mr. Jones of the last chapter. With the expertise illustrated in their back-call work, it is not difficult for the Witnesses to embark on this next phase, the introduction of their 'home Bible study method'.

If you imagine yourself in the position of our Mr. Jones of the last chapter you receive the Witness the following

week as arranged and ask him into your home. You have read some of the booklet which he gave to you and it is very probable that you do not agree with some of the points in it and you say so. I say very probable, because the Witnesses' doctrinal teachings are in most cases directly opposite to orthodox teachings, so much so that some have mistakenly concluded that the desire to be different is the mainspring of the Witnesses' theology. For example, the Church says that God is a Trinity, three persons in one God. The Witnesses deny this. The Church believes that man possesses an immortal soul, which leaves the body at death to reside in a supernatural sphere. The Witnesses say that man is a soul, and that at death man the soul dies, completely ceases to exist, in the hope that at some future time God will resurrect him back to life on earth. It is not the purpose of this chapter to enter into a detailed discussion of the Witnesses' theology. Suffice it to say at this stage that you as Mr. Jones, having read the booklet left with you, would find in it much that would seem new and strange and quite contrary to your previously accepted beliefs.

This usually forms the basis for a beginning of discussion, but the Witness is too well trained to allow such a free-ranging discussion to continue for very long. He will point out to you that religion is a very big subject, and that you and he could go on discussing it for hours, flitting from one subject to another without settling once and for all any point at issue. At this point it is customary for him to produce from his briefcase the book *Let God Be True*, and to explain that his Society, realising that such fruitless discussion could very well take place, had produced this guide to Bible discussion. It is a book which devotes a chapter to each controversial subject, starting with such fundamental subjects as 'Who is God?', 'Who was Jesus Christ', and proceeding through the complete range of religious polemics.

He will show you that the method generally used in Bible study is one of question and answer, and to facilitate this the Society has thoughtfully numbered all the paragraphs in each chapter, and at the foot of each page provided a numbered question which the correspondingly numbered paragraph will answer. In each paragraph scriptures are quoted to confirm each point made. By using this method, the Witness will say, each point can be thoroughly discussed and thrashed out.

Now this at first sounds a very reasonable proposition, but when one sees it in operation, as I have on countless occasions, the effect of such a method is to transfer the initiative so completely from the householder to the Witness as to give to the latter an enormous psychological advantage. For now, once this arrangement is accepted, the Witness through the book dictates what subject shall be discussed, what questions shall be asked, and, of course, by reference to the paragraphs what answers shall be given. He is at one stroke in complete charge of the situation. Whilst in the first two or three weeks the householder will try to explain his own views, and give his own answers to the carefully framed questions, under such unfavourable circumstances he will find that his own views are gradually completely submerged by his submitting to such a method. So much so that when the Witness suggests at say the third study that he would do well in reading the book beforehand and preparing for his study to underline in pencil the sentences in the paragraphs which contain the Society's answers to the Society's questions, in nearly every case he will tamely acquiesce. I do not feel that this method can honestly be called a study of the Bible. It is rather a study of one of the Witnesses' books with the Biblical references quoted in isolation to suit the purpose.

The inevitable result of a person's submitting to such an arrangement is that eventually all his own thoughts will be

replaced by the thoughts contained in the book he is studying with such earnestness and application. And if one were able to watch this person's development as he progressed further and further into the activities of this organisation, it would be quite obvious that he was gradually losing all individuality of thought and action. One of the characteristics of Jehovah's Witnesses is the extra-ordinary unanimity of thinking on almost every aspect or issue of life. If one asks a hundred Jehovah's Witnesses for an opinion on a certain subject, one can guarantee that the answer will be in all the hundred cases the same, because they are not expressing their own personal opinion which they have long since discarded in favour of the opinions they have been taught to consider as the thoughts of God. In view of this there seems to be some justification for the charge that their study methods are in fact a subtle form of indoctrination or brain-washing. The words of Adlai Stevenson, quoted in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1955, in a different context, seem singularly applicable:

'Even conformity—thought control—has reappeared in our land just at a time when we are exhorting the world to stand fast against the tyrannies of Soviet fascism. And it looks as though we are in more danger nowadays of exploitation of the mind than the body, of becoming mental robots than economic slaves' (page 100).

This uniformity of thought and action which is the chief characteristic of the movement, and the methods of teaching which are responsible for bringing it about, are justified by quotations from the Witnesses' own translation of the Bible, called *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. This translation is of little literary merit, because it is very stilted and often slavishly literal, and it is spoiled even more by most unfortunate lapses into the use of slang and colloquialism. For instance, the words of Paul at Romans xii, 2 are rendered; 'Quit being fashioned after

this system of things'. In I Corinthians i, 19 we find put into the mouth of God the words, 'I will shove the intelligence of the intellectual aside.' Many times throughout their publications the Witnesses have declared that the Bible was not designed to be read just as beautiful literature. If one possessed only *The New World Translation* of the Bible I am afraid that one would have no alternative but to wholeheartedly agree with them.

However, if the only objection to *The New World Translation* were one of grammar and literary style this could easily be overlooked and forgiven. What is less excusable is the fact that so many times scriptures are translated in such a manner as to make them more useful in supporting the Witnesses' ideas than they really are. For instance, the scriptural justification for their home Bible study method used to be Paul's words at II Timothy ii, 15, which read according to the *Authorised Version*, 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God.' This was taken to mean that a systematic study of the Bible was essential to gain God's approval (see *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945), page 24). Of course, the word 'study' was being used here in the Shakespearean sense, meaning to work hard, or to exert oneself. Hence *The New World Translation* rendered the verse in up-to-date English: 'Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God', and the verse was no longer used by the Society to justify its study methods. It was, however, replaced by a verse, which as rendered by *The New World Translation* has proved even more useful. This text is John xvii, 3, which reads according to their translation, 'This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.' In any other translation the phrase 'taking in knowledge' appears merely as 'knowing'. 'And this is life eternal, that they know thee, the only real God' (*Moffatt*). 'And in this consists the Life of the Ages—in

knowing thee the only true God' (*Weymouth*). What the scripture means to any ordinary reader, bearing in mind the circumstances in which the words were said, as a prayer to God by Jesus on behalf of his disciples before he was taken from them and betrayed, is surely that eternal life depends on a spiritual appreciation of the love of God, particularly as expressed in the sending forth of His Son. But the Witnesses wish to interpret it with extreme literalness. They want it to mean that eternal life depends on systematically studying the Bible with them and filling ones mind with knowledge as dispensed by them, and hence the text has been translated 'taking in knowledge of you' rather than the more spiritual 'knowing you'.

There are a number of other texts which acquire a somewhat sinister meaning as interpreted and used by the Witnesses. I have already quoted part of Romans xii, 2 with its horrid colloquialism. The whole verse reads: 'And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and complete will of God.' Again, note the phrase 'making your mind over', which simply appears as 'renewing of your mind' in the *Authorised Version*. It is a phrase which aptly describes the sacrifice a person makes in order to become a Jehovah's Witness.

It is claimed that the uniformity of thought throughout the movement is unchallengeable proof of divine blessing. I Corinthians i, 10 is quoted, where Paul says according to their translation: 'Now I exhort you, brothers . . . that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought.' This translation would give the impression that everyone ought to be thinking exactly the same thoughts in every detail, and would therefore justify the methods used by the Witnesses to ensure that every member of the

Christian congregation speaks 'the party line', as it were. One has only to read a translation such as James Moffatt's, which renders the verse: 'Brothers . . . I beg of you all to drop these party-cries. There must not be cliques among you; you must regain your common temper and attitude', to realise that Paul's words cannot rightly be used as a justification for mass indoctrination.

Returning to the home Bible study method, I have already mentioned that this cannot rightly be called a study of the Bible, because it is in fact a book study with the Bible merely being used to support the points made. Of course it must be conceded in all fairness that there is nothing objectionable in principle in using the Bible in this way, provided always that scriptures are not quoted out of context. It would seem that the Witnesses themselves are aware of this danger, because the book *Let God Be True* in its first chapter states that so many people have said, 'Oh the Bible is an old fiddle upon which you can play any old tune.' Yet they above all people have produced the most extraordinary tunes out of this old fiddle, and this has come about because they have approached the Bible in a markedly unintelligent manner.

Believing that every word of the Bible is absolutely true, and that therefore equal weight can be attached to every word, they ignore the literary and historical context of the verses they seize upon, and so can make them mean whatever they wish. They see nothing foolish in jumping from the book of Ezekiel, which was written around 600 B.C, to the book of Revelation, written in A.D. 96, quoting from the latter to explain something written in the former. They believe that Jehovah inspired the writing of the complete Bible as one book, even though thousands of years separated the first writer from the last. And since Jehovah is above human limitations His Word must be viewed likewise. It does not matter, therefore, when

different books of the Bible were written, or where, or by whom, or in what language or literary style. These factors are only of importance in reading the works of imperfect human creatures. But this is the Word of God, not the word of man, and it is therefore eternally relevant and completely infallible.

Now it is quite obvious that if the Bible, like any other book is to be read intelligently and interpreted properly, account must be taken particularly of the type of writing from which we are quoting, whether it is poetic or prophetic, and also the time in which it was written. Professor Anthony Hoekema, in his recent book¹, *The Four Major Cults*, gives a free translation of a quotation from a German work², which has much to say about the Witnesses' methods of Biblical interpretation:

'The Bible should be interpreted in an organic fashion, in a manner which does full justice to the differences between Old and New Testaments, between poetic books and prophetic books, between histories and epistles, and which takes into account that revelation is progressive—that it advances from lesser to greater clarity' (p. 252).

The writer goes on to say that in direct contrast to this intelligent approach, 'The Bible for (the Witnesses), is like a flat surface in which every text has equal value'.

This acceptance of every word of the Bible just as it stands, without regard for its historical or literary context, is at once the mainspring and the weakness of the Witnesses' beliefs. They believe that 'the Word of our God shall stand for ever', and that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever'. So do many other Christians, of course, but to the Witnesses these texts mean that the Bible speaks today in a literal sense in exactly the same way as when it was first written. No one will deny that there are many

1. Anthony Hoekema: *The Four Major Cults* (Exeter: Paternoster Press; 1963).

2. Kurt Hutten: *Seher, Gruebler, Enthusiasten* (Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag; 1960).

Biblical principles which are eternal and apply to every generation. But to suggest, for instance, that what Moses spoke to the children of Israel in 1500 B.C., which had reference to the way of life of those times and the standard of civilisation that had then been attained, applies with equal force to people living today is absurd.

Yet it is this type of fallacious reasoning which leads the Witnesses into making an issue of such matters as blood transfusions. The Witnesses object to this medical life-saving practice on the grounds that the ninth chapter of the book of Genesis prohibited the eating of blood in 2369 B.C. This prohibition was also enjoined upon Christians in A.D. 49 in Acts, chapter xv. It is quite obvious from reading these scriptures that the writers were not referring to human blood, against the straight practice of eating which there has always been a very strong natural revulsion. In a repetition of the prohibition in Leviticus vii, 26, the writer states: 'Ye shall eat no manner of blood', but qualifies his statement by adding 'whether it be of bird or of beast'. The writer would, of course, have no idea that nearly 4,000 years later, thanks to the remarkable advances of medical science, blood of one person could be transferred to another person in dire need under completely hygienic conditions, and thus a life which in his day would have been inevitably lost could be saved. And I am sure that he would be most upset if he thought that people would wilfully refuse the benefits of this practice on the basis of his words of 4,500 years ago referring to animal blood.

Even supposing that the Biblical prohibition on the use of blood included human blood (which I am sure it does not, because such a thought would never even cross the writer's mind—fancy having to tell people that cannibalism is wrong!) any intelligent reader could readily appreciate the value of such a prohibition in the days of Moses when lack of medical skill and knowledge would have made tampering

with human blood a very risky business indeed. He would have regard for the historical context of the words of Genesis, and understand them in the light of the civilisation of those days. But the Witnesses unfortunately are unable to do this. Instead they pluck these words from their literary and historical context and use them as a rule of conduct for this twentieth century, a rule which would prohibit a person from giving or receiving blood, to be administered with the skill and knowledge which has been laboriously acquired by dedicated men of medicine over the years, a rule which in effect prohibits an act which is surely full of real Christian compassion and humanity.

One may well ask how those who read the Bible, write the literature and formulate the doctrines of the movement can be so unintelligent in their approach, when so much has been written to help any reasonable person to approach the Bible on the right lines. It is unfortunately true that, whilst the literature of the movement contains much information on the historical background of the Bible, the scriptures themselves are never read with this information in mind. And any book reviewed by the *Watchtower* writers which attempts to approach the Bible intelligently as written by devout religious men of many years ago, rather than as written by Jehovah's finger and applying with equal force to every generation, is dismissed as a 'work of the Higher Critics', of which the Witnesses should beware as destroyers of the faith.

The attitude towards blood transfusions, as I have pointed out, has been brought about by the Witnesses' completely ignoring the historical context of the verses which they have seized upon. Very often it is the literary context which is ignored with results which are just as startling. It is alarming to note how so many times highly poetic language is interpreted just as if it was historical narrative. This wringing of a literal interpretation out of even the

most poetic parts of the Bible reached its ultimate in absurdity in the days of the late Judge Rutherford, who was the second president of the Society. This man to me will always be held responsible for the worst aspect of the movement, its belligerent extolling of itself as God's people, and its derisive sneering at the devout religious practices of other Christians. Rutherford was convinced that the Battle of Armageddon would bring an end to this present evil world in his lifetime to be followed by a new world of righteousness, inhabited exclusively by Jehovah's Witnesses, of course. At a large convention just prior to his death he said:

'If this be the last convention to be held by God's faithful people prior to Armageddon, then we will look forward with unabated joy to that great and glorious convention that shall never end.' (Tumultuous applause.)

As Royston Pike³ noted, Rutherford had some pretensions to oratory. Because he believed the end was so near, and because he interpreted the Bible so literally, when he read the scripture at Isaiah xxxii, 1, 'Behold, A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice', he came to an extraordinary conclusion. He believed, as Jehovah's Witnesses still do today, that God's kingdom was established in heaven in the year A.D. 1914. Therefore the first part of the scripture was now being fulfilled, namely, that a king, Christ Jesus, was reigning in righteousness. Where though were the princes that were to 'Rule in justice', and who were they?

Using the Bible as 'a flat surface in which every text has equal value', Rutherford found the answer by referring to the highly poetic forty-fifth psalm, the sixteenth verse of which reads: 'Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.' Ah, this is David speaking to Jesus Christ, Rutherford explained

3. Royston Pike: *Jehovah's Witnesses* (London: Watts; 1954).

(how the context can possibly support this interpretation is another matter), and telling him that Jesus' fathers, that is his fore-fathers, are going to be his children in his kingdom, in that they will receive life on earth again through his power of resurrection, and he will then make them princes in all the earth. Rutherford, once on the scent, took it to what he considered its logical conclusion. Based on this interpretation of the text, it was that these princes were due to start ruling in justice at any time, and that therefore the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and other ancient worthies was imminent. Rutherford was so convinced that this noteworthy occurrence was due to take place that he gave immediate thought to the practical problems of where they should live on their return. And so in 1924 the Society purchased a large house in California, renamed it 'Beth-Sarim', meaning 'House of the Princes', and kept it in readiness for these venerable prophets who would live in a style worthy of their honorary title.

Today the Society holds the view that the princes are those occupying responsible positions in the movement, who are ruling God's people in justice, and have therefore sold the 'House of the Princes' intended for the Old Testament notables. This is an extreme example of the absurdity of a completely literal interpretation of the Bible, but it is by no means an isolated one. Most of the doctrines and ideas of the movement are arrived at by similar methods of interpretation.

For instance, I have already said that the Witnesses believe that God's kingdom was established in heaven in the year 1914. How do they arrive at this date? They believe that the only time that Jehovah God has directly ruled over any of mankind since the fall of Adam was during the days of the nation of Israel, when a line of kings descending from David sat on the throne at Jerusalem and ruled by divine right. This was a theocracy, say the Witnesses, a

people ruled by God through his appointed and anointed kings. This line of kings was abruptly terminated when Zedekiah was led away captive by the victorious Babylonian armies in 607 B.C. (this date is virtually without any support from recognised historians, but, of course, these are mere 'Higher Critics'). Describing this fall of the Jewish theocracy, Ezekiel xxi, 26, 27 says: 'Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him.' In other words, from this scripture we should understand that this theocracy, this God-rule, was to be no more 'until he come whose right it is', namely the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will rule as king of God's theocratic government in heaven.

Is there any means of calculating the period of time which would elapse from 607 B.C. 'until he come whose right it is'? Oh yes indeed, say the Witnesses, and here begins a series of the most amazing leaps and jumps about the Bible. Note, as the argument unfolds, how the context of the texts is completely ignored, how no regard is paid to the differences between Old and New Testaments, poetry and prophecy, historical writing and visionary utterance. It is as if someone has simply looked up a word in the Bible concordance, in this case the word 'times', examined each occurrence of the word in the Bible, and then in some remarkably distorted way linked them all together for his own purpose.

We begin in the gospel of Luke, chapter xxi, verse 24, where Jesus himself gives us the first clue to help us work out when God's kingdom would be established. The verse reads: '. . . and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled'. Jerusalem is here taken as a symbol of theocracy which

since its overthrow in 607 B.C. has been trampled on by the nations, who have preferred their own methods of government to Jehovah's theocracy. So 'the appointed times of the nations' refers to the period of time when the nations rule the earth completely, without any interference from God, without any sign of theocracy being restored. If those times began in 607 B.C. when do they end?

The next clue is, believe it or not, in Daniel, chapter iv, written 500 years before Christ! Here is recorded a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had, the king of Babylon, the nation which overthrew the theocracy in 607 B.C. He saw in his dream a great tree which reached to heaven. Suddenly a voice from heaven commanded that the tree be cut down, but that its stump should remain in the earth and be bound with a band of iron and brass, and that then *seven times* should pass over it. After these times it is to be assumed that the band would be removed allowing the tree to grow again. Daniel interprets this dream as referring to Nebuchadnezzar himself. He foretells that Nebuchadnezzar as symbolised by the great tree, is suddenly to be cut down, he is to lose his sanity and therewith his throne, and will go out to graze in the field believing himself to be an animal. This insanity will last for seven years, after which he will be restored to normality and reinstated on his throne.

Now this, say the Witnesses, is a miniature picture of what is to happen to the theocracy. Cut down like the great tree in 607 B.C., the stump has been banded whilst seven 'appointed times of the nations' pass over it. After this, the theocracy will be given to him 'whose right it is', namely Jesus. I need hardly point out that nowhere in the book of Daniel or elsewhere in the Bible is there anything to suggest that this incident had any other application than to Nebuchadnezzar. However, taking it as it stands, we have now established according to the Witnesses that there

are seven 'appointed times of the nations'. But how long are they? In the case of Nebuchadnezzar they were seven years. This is obviously not the case as far as the theocracy is concerned.

We now leap out of the book of Daniel into the middle of the book of Revelation, written about A.D. 96. Why? Because there in the twelfth chapter and the sixth and fourteenth verses we not only have the magic word 'times' mentioned again but also the number of days to which they correspond. We are really getting warm now. The sixth verse reads: 'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.' The fourteenth verse is more enlightening: 'But the two wings of the great eagle were given the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place; there is where she is fed for a period, periods and a half a period of time away from the face of the serpent.' The footnote in *The New World Translation* on this verse gives the alternative rendering: 'Or "for a time, times and half a time".'

What we are supposed to deduce from these verses together is that 1,260 days is equivalent to a time, times and half a time, totalling three and a half times. Why 'a time, times and half a time' should mean just three and a half times is not clear, since the word 'times' need not necessarily mean just two times. However, the assumption is that if three and a half times equal 1,260 days, then seven times will equal twice as many days, that is 2,520 days. But even then this cannot be that the seven 'appointed times of the nations' equal 2,520 days, because starting from 607 B.C. they would not even extend to the days of Jesus, who spoke of these times as still continuing.

So we must make one final leap to the book of Ezekiel, written about 600 B.C, for the final clue to this riddle. There in Ezekiel iv, 6, Jehovah says: 'I have appointed thee

each day for a year.' And so, quite arbitrarily and without any justification, the Witnesses apply this to their figure of 2,520 days, and thus turn it into 2,520 years. Counting from 607 B.C. forward 2,520 years, provided that you do not become confused in the crossing over from B.C. to A.D. (as the founder of the movement, Pastor Russell, did, so much so that he had to start at 606 B.C. in order to arrive at the year he wanted), you will finally arrive at the year 1914, in which year therefore the Lord Jesus Christ began to reign in His heavenly kingdom, Satan the Devil was thrown out of heaven and the last trump was sounded!

But, as has often been pointed out, in the Witnesses' interpretation of the Bible they do not always take the scriptures literally. Very often they will submit that a particular verse or chapter must be understood symbolically. How they do decide whether to understand a scripture literally or symbolically? The Witnesses answer that it all depends on which interpretation will harmonise the text with the rest of the Bible. What they mean is that, since the Bible is viewed as the complete Word of God, we must avoid interpreting it in such a way that it appears to contradict itself. So if to interpret a scripture literally will mean its contradicting another scripture in the Bible, one perhaps written thousands of years before, the Witnesses will resort to a symbolic interpretation, however fanciful it may be.

It is not always true, however, that it is just a matter of harmonising different scriptures from different parts of the Bible. It is more often a matter of harmonising the text with the Witnesses' preconceived ideas. An often quoted example of this is the Witnesses' interpretation of Revelation vii, 4-8. On the basis of this scripture the Witnesses teach that the kingdom of heaven is made up of 144,000 persons resurrected from the earth to rule with Jesus Christ. The fourth verse reads: 'And I heard the number of those

who were sealed, a hundred and forty four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel', and the following verses enumerate the twelve tribes and specify 12,000 persons from each tribe. Now whilst the Witnesses take the number 144,000 literally, they interpret the selecting of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes symbolically. The book *This Means Everlasting Life*, published in 1950, states on page 127: 'Their being pictured as divided into twelve tribes, with no partiality to any tribe as to numbers, symbolises that the Theocratic congregation is completely organised in a well-balanced way.'

Obviously the Witnesses cannot accept the literal meaning of this scripture because this would preclude all of them from a heavenly inheritance in favour of the Jews!

Similarly, the Witnesses have had great difficulty in coming to terms with the parable Jesus gave of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter xvi, verses 19 to 31, because it appears to support the idea of a hell-fire torment after death, which the Witnesses completely deny. They put a very far-fetched interpretation on this parable, suggesting that the rich man pictures the clergy of Christendom and Lazarus those of the Witnesses who have a heavenly calling. (See *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (1951), pp. 246-256, 302-312.)

And so it is by such methods of teaching and Biblical interpretation that the seed of interest sown at the doorstep is watered regularly in the home week by week. Whilst I cannot approve of these methods for reasons which I hope I have made clear, there is no denying the success achieved by them in laying a solid foundation for the future conversion of the individual, giving him a thorough grounding in the teachings of the movement. After his home Bible study has been running for some weeks, the next stage is to introduce our Mr. Jones to the meetings of the Witnesses at the local Kingdom Hall. These meetings play a most

important part in the lives of the Witnesses, serving as a continuous confirmation of their faith. The next chapter gives a detailed description of what takes place each week at the local Kingdom Hall.

God Makes It Grow

THE Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is the centre of New World activity in the community. Its main purpose is its use for congregation meetings.' So states a small booklet issued to members of the movement after baptism called *Preaching and Teaching in Peace and Unity*, which is in effect the organisation's handbook. In most towns and villages of any size today a Kingdom Hall will be found, and in the big cities there are several. Some will not be easy to find, because, almost without exception, they are unpretentious buildings. It may be a disused chapel which the Witnesses have taken over. More often it is a suite of rooms hired for the purpose. The writer has attended meetings held in public houses (outside licensing hours, of course), but these were quite exceptional. There are many very pleasant new halls that are now being built in different parts of the country, but even then they are not designed to have any architectural merit but are severely utilitarian.

The Witnesses condemn the building of costly cathedrals and churches for the worship of God, arguing with some justification that these tend to glorify the creatures who built them rather than the Creator. In any case, Acts vii, 48 says: 'The Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; just as the prophet says: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, Jehovah says?".' So the Kingdom Hall is not viewed as the House of God, in which a reverently hushed silence is to be maintained as if in the presence of

God himself. It is purely a meeting place for the Witnesses, where they gather for more Bible instruction and training in their house to house ministry, where they report their work each week and draw their supplies of literature. It is also where they will be married and buried. In other words, it is for them the centre of their restricted social life.

The introduction of our Mr. Jones to the meetings of the Witnesses is just as carefully planned as any other phase of his conversion. As he receives his weekly home Bible study, the Witness at the conclusion of each study is instructed to spend the last ten minutes in what is called 'directing interest to the organisation'. This consists of small lecturettes about different features of the movement's activities. One week the Witness will talk about the public lecture that is being held the following Sunday at the hall. He will discuss the subject of the lecture briefly, explaining who the speaker is and where he comes from, and giving some details of the large public meeting campaign throughout the country which the Witnesses run each year. Another week he will describe their national and international assemblies, and will bring along photographs and programmes of these large gatherings in different parts of the world. Perhaps one week he will show Mr. Jones the annual *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, which contains reports from every country in the world on the progress being made, and the totals of all the work done in the previous year.

The idea of this of course is to arouse Mr. Jones's curiosity, to give him a mental picture of the organisation, preparing him for the time when he will be invited to his first contact with the movement. When the Witness considers that the time is ripe, and Mr. Jones is in the right frame of mind and at the right stage of development, then he will invite him to go along with him to the Kingdom Hall the following Sunday. If the Witness has prepared the ground properly,

if he has spent the last ten minutes each week directing Mr. Jones's interest to the organisation, then the chances are that Mr. Jones will be so curious to see the organisation which he has been hearing so much about, that he will readily agree. The Witness then sets the time at which he will call for Mr. Jones and take him along with him. This too is most important, because if Mr. Jones is left to go alone to the hall, he is obviously going to feel strange in walking into a strange meeting for the first time on his own.

It is said that first impressions are lasting ones, and the Witnesses are very keen to ensure that your first impression of them is a favourable one. When Mr. Jones arrives at the Kingdom Hall, he immediately receives what to him may well seem like V.I.P. treatment. The Witness who has brought him along will introduce him to the various members, particularly to the 'congregation servant', who is appointed by the Society to be responsible for the local organisation of the movement and to preside at its meetings. Everyone is most friendly and there is a pleasant, informal atmosphere at the hall which is quite infectious. This is not contrived or artificial. It is completely genuine, and results from the sincerity with which the Witnesses hold their beliefs and the esteem in which they hold each other as 'God's chosen people'.

The Witnesses are carefully trained in the art of hospitality, as we shall see later in this chapter, but they are willing pupils and although the hospitality is offered according to a predetermined method, it is without hypocrisy. After shaking hands with several people, all of whom express various shades of delight at seeing him at the hall (so much so that Mr. Jones begins to feel that he has known some of them for years rather than for just a few minutes), he is taken round the hall in a kind of miniature conducted tour.

He is first of all shown the 'congregation chart'. This is like a large hoarding on the wall of the hall, which records the amount of work done by the congregation from house to house each month. It is divided into columns, the first of which is headed, much to Mr. Jones's surprise, 'PUBS'. The Witness hastens to explain that 'PUBS' is short for publishers. Each Witness is considered to be a publisher of 'the good news', based on the Biblical use of the word in Isaiah lii, 7: 'How comely upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, the one publishing peace.' So the column headed 'PUBS' records the number of Witnesses in the congregation who reported time in house to house work during the particular month. The other columns record respectively the total hours spent, the average hours per publisher, the number of back calls and the average, the number of home Bible studies held and the average, and lastly the number of magazines sold (or as the Witnesses would rather have it, 'placed') and again the average. The reason for the recording of the averages per publisher is because the Society sets a quota for each phase of the work done, and these quotas are recorded at the top of the chart. The service year for the movement starts in September and ends in August. By December of each year each congregation is expected to have made a ten per cent increase in the number of house to house publishers over the average number participating in the previous year. And by April it is expected to record a twenty per cent increase. Because of this arrangement December and April are two months in which extra efforts are made to ensure that everyone in the congregation reports some time in the ministry, even if it is only an hour. It is a matter of great rejoicing if the congregation is able to reach these quotas, and the 'congregation servant' is able to write the words 'We made it!' at the foot of the report sent to the branch office.

The Society also sets quotas for the number of hours each person should spend in house-to-house work, the number of back-calls he should make, the number of home Bible studies he should conduct, and the number of magazines he should sell or 'place'. The current quotas are ten hours per month, six back-calls, one home Bible study, and twelve magazines. These quotas are extremely important, particularly to the male members of the congregation, because unless a man consistently reaches these quotas each month then he will not be considered by the Society for any responsible position in the local congregation, to which most male Witnesses aspire.

Obviously this chart speaks volumes about the organisational methods of the movement (which many people will, I am sure, find somewhat repugnant), but it is for this reason that it will be one of the first things shown and explained to our Mr. Jones. He is then taken past the platform, on which there is a speaker's stand, two chairs and a piano, with a Biblical text adorning the rear wall. This is the year text of the Witnesses which appears on the official calendar of the movement and is changed every twelve months. He is then led out of the main hall into a series of ante-rooms which house the various departments of the congregation organisation.

I have already mentioned that the 'congregation servant' is the one in charge of the local organisation. Under him to assist him are seven men appointed by the Society. His immediate assistant, called the 'assistant congregation servant', is responsible for collecting all the reports of house to house work each week, compiling them and sending the total report each month to the branch office of the Society. The second assistant, called the 'Bible study servant', collects all the reports on the home Bible studies held each month. These reports detail how many times the study has been held each month, how many attended each

sitting, the publication studied, the time of the week it is held, and any other useful remarks that might be relevant. On the basis of these reports the Bible study servant can assess the potential of prospective new converts for the congregation's future progress. He is expected to visit as many of these studies as he can each month to offer help and advice to the Witness who is conducting the study on how to accelerate progress. In other words, he is the congregation's progress-chaser.

Three assistants deal with the supply of literature to the members of the congregation and the keeping of accounts. The first, called the 'magazine-territory servant', as his name implies, is responsible for supplying the new issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines as they are received from headquarters. He has also what is called a territory file. The whole district assigned to the congregation to canvass is divided up into small maps or 'territories' with about three hundred houses on each map. A street map is usually used for this purpose and cut up into small sections. It is the responsibility of this servant to issue the territories to the Witnesses at properly spaced intervals to ensure an even coverage of territory. The second, called the 'literature servant', is as is obvious, responsible for all the books, pamphlets and Bibles which the Witnesses use in their work. The third, the 'accounts servant', is in fact the congregation's treasurer.

The final two assistants are responsible for conducting the congregation's meetings. One is the *Watchtower* study conductor, who takes the study of the Society's official journal each Sunday, and the other is called the 'Ministry School servant', who is in charge of the midweek training school run by the movement in each congregation, which will be described later.

The designation 'servant' is one that is used throughout the organisation to all appointments high and low. It is

felt that it is more in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament and particularly the relationship of Christ towards his apostles. The actual choice of the word seems to have come from the words of Jesus at Matthew xxiii, 11, 'He who is greatest among you must be your servant' (*Moffatt*).

Between them these eight men run the congregation organisation with business-like efficiency. So the whole set-up is geared to ensure that the house to house work of the Witnesses is accomplished with maximum productivity, and with minimum waste of time, manpower or resources. The picture of the 'Witnesses' accomplishing their work in such a highly organised manner according to a set formula reminds one of the instinctive efficiency of the ant or locust. The Witnesses will not object to this comparison because on several occasions they have compared themselves to these insects and, of course, given the usual scriptural quotations in support. One of the most curious applications is that given to Joel i, 4, which reads: 'That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.' This is taken to refer to the successive waves of Witnesses going through the territory eating up all that is good and worthwhile, in other words making converts of all the right kind of people.

Our Mr. Jones on his conducted tour is introduced to the seven assistants in turn and their departmental work is explained to him. By the time this is completed, the meeting is due to begin. The piano strikes a few chords to obtain attention, and the *Watchtower* study servant (for this is the regular Sunday study of the main article in *The Watchtower* magazine) calls for quietness.

The meetings always start with a song from the Witnesses' songbook. They do not call them hymns, presumably

because they do not wish to invite comparison with a church service. The songbook is a peculiar mixture of hymn-tunes, tunes from the classical composers, and some home-made tunes, one or two of the latter being virtually unsingable! A theme from Weber's overture 'Oberon' provides one song, as does a theme from the first movement of Beethoven's 'Appassionata' sonata. Side by side with these are several first-class hymn tunes such as 'Oft in danger, Oft in woe', although the wording has been suitably modernised and adapted, and one tune that sounds suspiciously like 'He promised to buy me a bunch of new ribbon' from 'Oh dear, what can the matter be? Johnny's so late at the fair'. At the time of writing the Society has just published a new song book in which the hymn tunes and many of the classical tunes have been replaced by more home-made ones, because of the worldly connections of the former.

After the song has been sung, the conductor calls on one of the male members to offer prayer. Mr. Jones will have noticed by now that the Witnesses do not call each other 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.' They use the terms 'Brother' and 'Sister', so that if our Mr. Jones became a Witness he would be called 'Brother Jones'. The Witnesses have no prayer book and no set prayers. They believe that prayers should come from the heart and therefore should be spontaneous. Prayer books and the rosary are condemned because of Jesus' words at Matthew vi, 7, 'But when praying do not say the same things over and over again.' Why then did Jesus give the Lord's prayer immediately after these words? Because the Lord's prayer was intended as a model, a guide as to what one should pray for. For this reason, the *New World Translation* renders Matthew vi, 9: 'You must pray then this way: Our Father in the heavens,' etc., which would certainly indicate that Jesus was merely setting forth a model prayer.

I have mentioned that it will be a male Witness who offers prayer. The Witnesses are completely convinced of the superiority of men over women as leaders of the organisation, both biologically and emotionally, and indeed in every other way. They are supported in this by the writings of the apostle Paul, who many times enunciated the principle of man's headship over woman. We read at I Corinthians xi, 3: 'But I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn, the head of every woman is the man.' Also at Ephesians v, 22: 'Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord.' In harmony with these clear statements, the Society is run and organised completely by men. Women have no authority in the movement whatever, except in the extreme case of a very small congregation where there are no baptised male members. In such a case a sister will be appointed by the Society to preside at meetings, but she must at all times cover her head in accordance with Paul's further instructions at I Corinthians xi, 4-10, to remind herself that she is fulfilling a role which by right belongs to a man. As soon as a man joins such a congregation and is baptised, then after twelve months of proving himself he will replace the sister as the presiding minister on the Society's express instructions. So there is no such thing as 'petticoat government' in Jehovah's Witnesses. Indeed, if a married man in a position of responsibility were found to be influenced by his wife, he would undoubtedly be removed from office as soon as this undesirable influence came to light.

After the prayer has been offered, invoking the blessing of Jehovah on the meeting, the study of the main article of *The Watchtower* gets under way. It is conducted on exactly the same lines as the home Bible study. The main article has as usual numbered paragraphs, with correspondingly numbered questions at the foot of the pages. The *Watchtower* study conductor asks the Society's questions,

and those wishing to answer the questions raise their hands. Invariably the answers are as expressed in the paragraphs. If we had the opportunity of perusing each individual's copy of the magazine, we would find that almost all had underlined the key sentences in each paragraph which contain the basic answer to the question. The answers of course are not read from the paragraph, except in the case of young children, whose parents point out the particular sentence to read out, and who then proceed to do so much to the delight of all concerned. It is very important that the Witnesses should put the Society's answers in their own words, for then they are making the Society's thoughts their own. So if someone reads the answer straight from the paragraph, it is not uncommon for the study conductor to say, 'Very good. But could someone now put that for us in his own words?' And so the same teaching methods used at home are similarly employed week by week at the Kingdom Hall.

The *Watchtower* study is by no means the only meeting held by the Witnesses each week. The reader may be surprised to learn that there are no fewer than five meetings which the Witnesses are expected to attend each week, each meeting being an hour in length. This is obviously the key to understanding how the remarkable uniformity of thinking throughout the movement which I have previously referred to has been achieved. It is because the Witnesses receive such a large amount of religious teaching each week. And of course there is the usual scriptural justification for regular meeting attendance. Does not Paul say at Hebrews x, 25, 'Not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near'? So missing meetings is considered to be a sign of spiritual lethargy. An even more powerful argument is brought into play to encourage the Witnesses to attend

every meeting, in fact to feel under compulsion to do so. Christ's words at Matthew xviii, 20 are quoted: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. If this is so, that Christ never misses a meeting, it is an act of disrespect to Christ not to be present when he is present. In this way the Witnesses are committed to five hours of religious instruction every week.

They are also instructed to take their children with them, no matter how young they may be. Even as an enthusiastic, completely dedicated member of the movement, I was always somewhat disturbed at the sight of babies in arms and very small children being present at a midweek evening meeting, which did not end until half past nine. If the father of these unfortunate children was a servant in the congregation, they would then have to wait for at least a further half hour whilst he performed his duties in one of the ante-rooms of the hall. Bearing in mind that after finally leaving the hall there would be a considerable bus ride home, it is quite certain that a little child of say three or four years of age would not be in bed until almost eleven o'clock. It is undeniable that one of the features of the meetings in the Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses, especially midweek meetings, is a company of crotchety, over-tired children crying to go home.

This bringing of young children to such long meetings, the substance of which they cannot possibly understand, is justified on the grounds that the Israelites took their children with them to listen to the law of Jehovah God as expounded by Moses. Deuteronomy xxxi, 12, 13 is quoted: 'Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones... that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear Jehovah your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear Jehovah your God.' (American Standard Version). On the basis of such scriptures as this,

the Society has condemned parents who have brought books for their children to colour and scribble in during the meetings, in order to keep them occupied. Children should be taking an interest in the meeting, not doodling away the time. Or, as *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1956, put it on page 310:

‘Just having our children with us at the meetings however is not adequate. Here they will be expected to pay attention and not play, draw pictures or have side attractions.’

To help them to pay attention it was suggested that children could make a note on a piece of paper of the number of times say the name ‘Jehovah’ was spoken during the meeting, and then see at the end of the meeting who had the right total. Undoubtedly religious education in its simplest form begins early in the Witnesses.

For similar reasons the Society refuses to run Sunday schools for the children, because there were no Sunday schools in ancient Israel. They also prohibit the provision of rest rooms or playrooms at Kingdom Halls for very young children.

‘Today little ones are not to be side-tracked into a sound-proofed room to romp, nor is it wise to supply them with trinkets to toy with and drop during meetings.’ (*The Watchtower*, January 15, 1954, page 50.)

By sitting with their parents throughout the two hours of religious teaching it is reasoned that they are at the same time learning to be obedient, and picking up some small titbits of knowledge which they can usefully assimilate. Inevitably a significant proportion of those who have been brought up in the movement from birth, when they reach an age of understanding completely rebel against the movement and cut themselves off from its influence. Unfortunately some go to the opposite extreme on the rebound, and the writer has witnessed some very sad cases of young people going completely ‘off the rails’, as it were,

for a time, a tragedy for which he feels the Witnesses' methods are to some extent responsible.

I have previously mentioned that the Witnesses hold five meetings a week. Two of these meetings are held on Sunday. The usual custom is for the *Watchtower* study, to which I have already referred, to be preceded by a public lecture, also of an hour's duration, which will have been quite heavily advertised during the previous week by printed handbills. One meeting is held each Tuesday and is called 'The Congregation Book Study'. This is a group study of the most recent of the Society's publications, held in private homes in different parts of the town, not as in the case of the other meetings at the Kingdom Hall. These small groups play a very important role in the congregation organisation. There are usually about fifteen Witnesses assigned to each group, and as well as attending the Tuesday-evening book study, they are organised for house-to-house work from the home where they meet. The alternative name for the congregation book study is 'Service Centre', and this is really the fundamental purpose of this small group arrangement, that these should act as centres from which the witnessing work can be organised locally. The reader will appreciate the wisdom of breaking down a large congregation of people into small groups for this purpose. It would be very difficult indeed to organise over a hundred people for canvassing work. The effect on a neighbourhood of seeing such a large number of people descending on it would be most unfavourable in any case. They would feel quite justifiably that they were being invaded! But a small group of ten to fifteen people is easily organised for this work. Everyone's personal circumstances can be taken into account, and the arrangements made accordingly.

It is a proverb in the movement that a congregation is only as strong as its service centres, and this is true. The

seven assistants to the congregation servant, whose duties at the Kingdom Hall I have just described, are also assigned to take charge of these groups, one per man. They conduct the Tuesday-evening group study and lead the group in house to house work. These men are certainly kept busy. The group will meet for house to house work at the very least three times a week, (five times is recommended by the Society) and will canvass for anything up to a period of three hours. When one reflects that many of these men have a number of children to look after and bring up in the faith, and an exacting job to hold down in their secular work, and that as well as their responsibilities at the Kingdom Hall and in the leading of the group in house to house work they will probably be conducting two or three home Bible studies each week, and also preparing public lectures which they will deliver to various congregations in turn, one will appreciate that they will have little time left for reflection or relaxation. They are certainly not one day a week Christians. Their religion is their way of life.

This group arrangement is also most useful when the congregation is chasing quotas the Society has set it. Each week the group leader receives from the assistant congregation servant a list of those attached to his group who have not yet reported any house to house work so far for that particular month. It will then be his responsibility to call on these delinquent publishers at their homes, give a little pep talk, laced with suitable scriptural quotations of course, and make a definite arrangement for them to share in the house to house work the following week. In this way the congregation keeps a check on all its members, and ensures that all spend some time in the service each month.

The other two meetings held by the Witnesses are normally arranged for Thursday evening, and are perhaps the most interesting of the five. They are called the Theocratic Ministry School and the Kingdom Service

Meeting, and both play a vital role in equipping the Witnesses for their work. The Ministry School as its name implies is a school for ministers. It is designed to train the Witnesses in the basic principles of good speech and public speaking, and to a more limited extent of house to house canvassing. Each Witness is enrolled in the school and periodically given a subject on which to speak for eight minutes, using the assembled Witnesses as an audience. After his eight minutes is up, he is counselled by the Ministry School Servant on how he can improve. He will refer the student to the Society's textbook called *Qualified to be Ministers*, which contains much useful information and practical suggestions on how to improve the various features of public speaking. This book is undoubtedly one of the most worthwhile of the Society's publications.

To illustrate how practical is the training which the Witnesses receive, if the student needs to develop more resonance in his voice, the book suggests on page 69: 'A very beneficial exercise to this end is humming, not singing, of tunes. Not humming with tight jaws, but with them loosened, and with relaxed soft palate, lips barely touching, with relaxed facial muscles and throat.' It also explains how to develop diaphragmatic breathing, which is one of the first essentials of public speaking, and other most useful points of counsel, and, of course, all this very excellent training is driven home with the same zeal and intensity with which the Witnesses approach everything they do. As a result of such training I have known men who have entered the school scarcely able to read or write, who are now able to speak with compelling eloquence.

The Ministry School servant uses a *Speech Counsel* form on which to note the various points of counsel he gives. On this form the basic elements of good speech are catalogued, including such things as Enthusiasm, Sincerity and Conviction, Confidence and Poise, Volume, Articula-

tion, Sense Stress, Modulation, Conversational Quality, Audience Contact, etc., etc. After each assignment the school servant marks the appropriate qualities 'W' for weak, 'I' for improved, or 'G' for good. The Witness will then study the pages of the textbook which refer to the points on which he has been marked weak, and, by working on them in preparation, hopes that at the next assignment the servant will alter 'W' to 'I', and eventually to 'G'. I have nothing but praise for the Ministry School arrangement, which is run in every congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, because it is in effect a free facility for further education offered to the members of the movement.

Up to a few years ago only men and boys were permitted to enrol in the school because of Paul's words at I Timothy ii, 12, 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' (*Authorised Version*). However there are far more women in the organisation than men. This is perhaps because so many of the house-to-house calls of the Witnesses are made at a time when the husbands are out at work. Or there may be a deeper reason, that a woman is perhaps more impressionable than a man, or more susceptible to emotional appeal. Whatever the reason, the Witnesses have come to realise that since the women do the bulk of the witnessing work anyway, they need training just as much in the art of public speaking. So now they are also enrolled in the school, but unlike the men, are not allowed to address the audience directly, as if they were teaching. They always present their assignment to another sister who is on the platform at the same time. The scene is usually presented as at a doorstep, with one sister acting the part of the householder and the other as the Witness. In this way the Witnesses feel that they are not contravening Paul's instructions to Timothy, and yet the sisters are receiving needed training in the principles of good speech.

The Ministry School is then followed by the other hour-long meeting, the Service Meeting. This is a very practical meeting designed to train the Witnesses in the art of door-to-door work. Much of this training is done by demonstration. That is, scenes are enacted in house-to-house work, making back calls, conducting home Bible studies, directing interest to the organisation, even welcoming new persons to the Kingdom Hall. It is very much like a Sales meeting held to refresh jaded sales representatives. Attention is paid to every detail of every phase of activity, and the most carefully worked out instructions are given.

As an example, we saw earlier how our Mr. Jones was welcomed at the hall, and at the time I said that the Witnesses are carefully trained in the art of hospitality. How is this done? One way this is achieved is by putting on a demonstration in the Service Meeting showing first how it should not be done and then how it should. This is an excellent method of teaching because to see something done deliberately wrongly is often amusing and entertaining and, more important, the points remain in the mind so much longer. I have seen the art of hospitality demonstrated very effectively in reverse at a Service Meeting. The demonstration was mimed throughout, and one of the Witnesses took the part of the stranger visiting the Kingdom Hall for the first time. Twelve others made up the congregation and one acted as the *Watchtower* study conductor. Not a word was spoken throughout the demonstration, its being mimed, but the thoughts of the stranger as he reacts to his 'welcome' are spoken by a voice relayed to the audience by a microphone hidden off stage. The following is an actual script of the demonstration which I prepared for it at the time.

'The scene begins before the *Watchtower* study has started. The servants are not mixing with the publishers but are too busy with papers and duties and hurry hither

and thither very officiously. Others talk in small cliques. At this point the stranger appears at left of stage.

Voice off begins: Ah, this must be it. Kingdom Hall. Wonder what it's like inside? I wish Mr. Brown who takes my study would have called for me. I wouldn't feel so bad as I do walking in on my own. Still I expect he's waiting for me inside. So now I'm here I might as well pluck up courage and walk in. (Straightens tie, combs hair, breathes deeply, walks in. Starts to look for Mr. Brown but cannot see him. Nobody seems to have noticed his arrival.)

Voice: Oh dear, I can't see Mr. Brown anywhere. Perhaps he's late. I do hope he comes. I feel very uncomfortable not knowing anybody. (One of servants approaches him with hand outstretched. Stranger smiles gladly, but servant walks straight past stranger to give one of sisters her school assignment.)

Voice: Well, I thought he was going to shake hands with me. I feel a bit in the way here. I think I'd best sit down.

(*Watchtower* study servant goes to front and claps hands. Everyone rushes for seats. Push past stranger who is sitting at end of row.)

Voice: They certainly seem in a hurry to get started. (Everything goes quiet for a moment.) I wonder what the order of service is. I do wish Mr. Brown would come. (All stand to sing a song. Stranger stands up. Tries to look over next man's songbook but man will have none of it.)

Voice: There must be something in that songbook he doesn't want me to see! (Conductor motions all to sit. Study begins in mime. Stranger has no copy of *The Watchtower*. However hardly has study started when there is a sound off of banging of a door, and a latecomer stamps in, walking past all and waving to a friend, sits down heavily in front row, turns round and starts conversation with friend in row behind.)

Voice: Well, I don't think much of her. She doesn't seem to have much respect for what's going on. Can't someone tell her to be quiet? I can't concentrate on what's being said. I wish I had a copy of *the Watchtower* too. I could follow it so much better.

(At this point the sound comes on, miming stops, and the study servant asks a question. Sister in back row starts to give a very long involved answer.)

Voice: Phew! Can she talk! It's a good job they don't ask me to answer. I couldn't possibly carry on for that long. It's a wonder she isn't suffering from asthma after all that.

(Here a little girl in the same row as stranger wants to go to toilet. As she passes, she stands on stranger's feet.)

Voice: I wonder where she is going to? (Another little girl from same row also goes to toilet and treads on his feet). It's getting to be quite a procession. (First girl returns, than after short interval second girl returns.) You'd think their parents would make sure they'd been before the meeting started.

(A little boy very noisily takes out a large bag of sweets and proceeds to unwrap one.) Well, what next? Eating sweets in church is something I do not agree with. (Here little boy turns and offers the bag round. Two take a sweet. Stranger politely refuses. Little boy insists. Stranger definitely refuses. Little boy turns round in disgust.)

Voice: Well, I think that's the last straw. First, Mr. Brown doesn't come after inviting me here. Nobody speaks to me. And I don't think much of their behaviour either. I'm off. I don't want to come here again. (Stamps out. For the first time publishers notice him and turn round to watch him go out.)'

Now although the Witnesses would laugh at this gross exaggeration they would undoubtedly take note of the points of counsel put across in this way, which would in any case be highlighted in the talk following the demonstra-

tion, and the points would be reiterated at succeeding meetings. In this way the Witnesses are trained for their work, in fact are instructed in every aspect of their lives in the theocratic arrangement.

So much for a brief outline of the meetings which are held each week at every Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses the world over. It is worth mentioning in concluding that wherever the Kingdom Hall was situated into which one walked for one of their meetings, one would find the same programme being followed, the same copy of *The Watchtower* being studied, and the same demonstrations being enacted. This is because the outline of meetings is decided on at headquarters level, and each month every congregation is supplied with a set of instructions in a broadsheet called *Kingdom Ministry*.

In this chapter I have tried to give the reader an insight into the kind of life these dedicated people live, a life full of meetings, Bible studies and house-to-house canvassing. This ceaseless activity is motivated very largely by the belief that we are living in the last days of this world. The battle of Armageddon is constantly breathing down the necks of the Witnesses, spurring them on into more intense activity to ensure that they pass through that great war into the new world of righteousness. But how can they be so sure that we are living in the 'time of the end'? On what grounds do they submit that the end of the present system of things will have taken place by the autumn of the year 1975? The next chapter examines the evidence offered in support of this belief.

The Illusion of 'The Last Days'

IN six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and proceeded to refresh himself.' So reads *The New World Translation's* rendering of Exodus, chapter xxxi, verse 17. The Genesis account of creation is taken quite literally by Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that the order in which creation is recorded as taking place is in harmony with modern scientific knowledge. However although the order of creation is accepted literally, the idea of the whole creative process taking place in seven days is interpreted symbolically. The seven days, we are told, refer to periods of thousands of years in length. This is a very reasonable assumption, because he would be considered foolish who today would insist that all life on earth was brought about in one literal week. But the Witnesses, taking the matter a stage further, presume to tell us exactly how long each creative day is. According to their calculations, each day is seven thousand years long, making the whole creative process cover a period of 49,000 years. How do the Witnesses arrive at this conclusion?

It is based upon the assumption that the length of the seventh day, the sabbath, can be calculated. Since it is assumed that God has not created anything or anybody since man, He is therefore presumed to be still resting from His creative work. In other words, the seventh day, or sabbath, is still in progress. By starting at the year 539 B.C., which is claimed to be the absolutely proved year in which

Cyrus, King of Persia overthrew the Babylonian Dynasty, and working backwards through the Old Testament by means of its various chronological records, the Witnesses have arrived at the year 4026 B.C. as the date for the creation of Adam. It is therefore roughly 6,000 years since the creation of Adam in Eden. Since the Witnesses believe that in this generation the millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ, is due to begin, we must therefore add another 1,000 years to the already elapsed 6,000, giving us 7,000 years in all as the length of the seventh day. If the seventh day is 7,000 years long, then it is reasonable to suppose that all the other six days are of the same duration.

Of course, apart from the objection which is immediately raised to assuming that we are living on the threshold of the millennium, it might well be asked on what grounds we can correctly conclude that Jehovah will finish His sabbath at the end of the millennium. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that God will cease to rest at that time, and begin new works of creation. In fact, the Bible has very little to say about the happenings on earth after the millennium. But I have outlined the Witnesses' ideas on creation because I think that they illustrate very well the most important feature of the movement: everything it believes, everything it does, is prompted by the conviction that we are living in the last days of this world. All calculations, such as the one just outlined, are based on this assumption. It is in fact a religion that will either stand or fall by the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of its prophecies in this generation. We must then try to answer the question, Why are the Witnesses so convinced that all these prophecies will take place in our lifetime?, because it is so fundamental to the thinking of the movement.

The Witnesses explain that there are two lines of evidence which lead them to conclude that these are the last days. One is chronology, and the other is prophecy. I have

already outlined in the second chapter something of the chronological proof to which they are referring. By resorting to different parts of the Bible and quoting isolated texts therefrom, they believe that they have proved that 'the appointed times of the nations' which began in 607 B.C. ended in A.D. 1914. Yet such is the unanimity of Bible scholars that the fall of Jerusalem took place, not in 607 B.C., but in 586 B.C., that an impartial reader must conclude that the starting point of the whole operation being wrong, the exercise itself is therefore unworthy of further attention.

The other line of evidence is prophecy. It is claimed that there are thirty-nine different signs of the last days, which are all prophetic scriptures thought to be having fulfilment at the present time, and which together make up a composite sign of the last days. Taken singly, it is conceded that they may not amount to much. But taken all together, it is stated that they provide irrefutable evidence that this is the last generation prior to the millennium.

In considering the list of thirty-nine signs, as it appears in the book *Make Sure of All Things* (1953), it is not necessary to discuss each one individually because broadly speaking they fall into two categories. First, on the assumption that the Witnesses are God's chosen people, they are attempts to show that the modern history of the movement since 1914 has been foretold in scripture. Thus we have listed, apparently in all sincerity, as a sign of 'the last days': '37. Work of Jehovah's Witnesses stopped in 1918.' I will not comment on this type of 'sign' here other than to refer the reader to chapter seven, which traces the history of the movement and describes these attempts to equate Biblical prophecy with its changing fortunes.

In the second, far larger, category are signs which are references to world conditions which it is thought are peculiar to this generation, and which have been foretold in Scripture. Under this heading we have such signs as '2.

World Wars', '3. Widespread Famines', '4. Unusual Number of Earthquakes', '9. Increased Lawlessness', '23. People overly Concerned with Everyday Affairs of Life', '31. Moral Degeneracy in Public and Private Life', and so on. Most of these signs are based on Jesus' words at Matthew xxiv and Luke xxi, in which chapters Jesus answers the disciples' question: 'Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?' (Matthew xxiv, 3). Jesus' famous answer is that nation shall rise against nation, and there will be famines and earthquakes and pestilences and the like, and that these occurrences will be a sign of his coming and of the end of the world.

Now it is most important in reading these chapters to remember the historical context of Jesus' words. When the disciples ask Jesus, 'When shall these things be?', the question has been prompted by his remarks in Matthew xxiv, 2, where he foretells the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. 'See you not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left a stone on a stone that shall not be thrown down.' In other words, these chapters must be read in the primary sense as applying to the foretold downfall of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish world, and the subsequent dispersion of the Jews. The Witnesses, to be fair, acknowledge this themselves, but explain that the prophecy has a major and a minor fulfilment, the minor fulfilment being on the Jews in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies sacked Jerusalem, but the major fulfilment being on this whole evil world at the Battle of Armageddon.

Now it is true that much of what Jesus says in these chapters would appear to have a wider application than just to the Jews, and I think it is a fair comment to say that Jesus himself in uttering these words seems to have in mind this broader application. But this one incontrovertible fact must not be overlooked: the early Christians undoubtedly

applied these words of Jesus to their own generation, and believed that the end of the world would take place in their lifetime. The words of the apostle John at I John ii, 18: 'Dear children, the last hour has come' (*Weymouth*), is typical of the attitude of all the New Testament writers. They were convinced that they were living at the end of the age and that Christ was due to reappear at any time. In fairness to them, the words of Christ in these passages relating to his second coming would certainly cause them to believe so.

The conclusion to draw from this is surely that whilst one may speculate on whether the words of Christ were intended to have a wider application than just to the end of the Jewish system, the destruction of Jerusalem, it is quite impossible to apply his words to any other generation than his own, because the signs which Jesus gave are in the context of any other generation so vague. It is obviously true that every generation has experienced wars, earthquakes, famines and diseases, lawlessness has always tended to increase rather than decrease, and as far as I can imagine, people have always been 'overly concerned with everyday affairs of life'. The Witnesses try to support their theory that these conditions have been more in evidence in this generation than any other by quoting statistics of the number of people who have died through wars, earthquakes and pestilence since 1914, as compared with those who died before that date. These statistics are quite unacceptable on two counts: first, the keeping of such records now is much more comprehensive and accurate than in the pre-1914 period. Coupled with this first point, the second, the tremendous population increase since 1914, would entirely explain the rise in the figures quoted.

The Witnesses depend so much on the bleak side of life for support of their belief that this is 'the time of the end', that they inevitably take an unbalanced, pessimistic view

of the present generation, which tends to be portrayed as a bunch of sex-mad, pleasure-crazy atheists. They minimise its remarkable technical achievements, and by keeping the spotlight on its defects grossly exaggerate them. The underlying reason for this is their belief in the gradual devolution rather than evolution of man. They believe that ever since Adam, who was created perfect, human beings have gradually become more and more imperfect. The universe is compared to a clock which is running down. After the Battle of Armageddon in His New World, Jehovah is going to wind it up again. To support this gloomy view of history they point to the extraordinary ages attributed to the men whose lives are recorded in the early chapters of the book of Genesis. The reason for Methusaleh's living to the age of 969 years is because he was so much closer to perfection than we are today, and so would take much longer to wear out.

In accepting this view, they are of course diametrically opposed to the theory of Evolution, popularly associated with the name of Charles Darwin and his famous book of the last century *Origin of Species*. To debunk the fashionable theory of Evolution is an essential part of the propagation of the Witnesses' teachings, because if one accepts the principle of human evolution, it is impossible at the same time to accept the Witnesses' view of history as a record of man's speedy decline into degradation and ruin, from which only a tiny minority are due to be plucked by the benevolent Jehovah.

The arguments employed by the Witnesses against the theory of Evolution are for the most part sensible and thought-provoking. It is pointed out that the history of the development of this theory is merely a record of ideas proffered as evidence and proof of evolution constantly having to be withdrawn as the light of further knowledge on the subject has shown such 'proof' to be untenable.

Listed amongst the now discarded 'proofs' are Lamarck's theory that an organism acquires characteristics from its environment and passes them on to its offspring, Darwin's theory of natural selection and survival of the fittest, and the mutations theory of Hugo de Vries. The book *Let God Be True* (revised edition, 1952) sums it up on page 84:

'Repeatedly the theories behind which evolutionists entrenched themselves have been smashed by new facts, and these forced retreats should rout evolution from the minds of sober thinkers.'

To return to the thirty-nine signs, one of the most unexpected the reader would find would surely be: '12. Formation of the League of Nations and the United Nations to stand in the place of Established Kingdom of God.' The Witnesses are violently opposed to the United Nations Organisation, so much so that they have applied to it various obscure but distinctly unpleasant passages from the book of Revelation. As an example we can take Revelation xvii, 3: 'I caught sight of a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured wild beast that was full of blasphemous names and that had seven heads and ten horns.' The wild beast is, believe it or not, the United Nations Organisation. Who is the woman sitting on it? Because for some reason the Witnesses suspect that the United Nations Organisation is subject to religious influence, we are told that this woman is 'Organised Religion', including particularly the Roman Catholic hierarchy! Since verse five of the same chapter informs us that the woman has 'upon her forehead—a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth', it is not surprising that the Church considers this application to be highly offensive.

The reasoning behind this opposition to the United Nations Organisation is quite simple. Since the Kingdom of God was set up in heaven in the year 1914, the nations on earth therefore owe their allegiance to it, and should

surrender their sovereignty to it. So any other organisation which attempts to unite the nations under its control is really 'a man-made substitute for God's kingdom'. The Witnesses never tire of quoting the words of the Council of the Federation of Churches of Christ in America in 1919, which hailed the formation of the League of Nations as 'the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth'. To the Witnesses this was the last word in blasphemy, because they believe that the Kingdom of God has no political expression on earth except possibly through the governing body of their own Society.

They also apply Revelation xvii, 11 to the chequered history of the United Nations. The verse reads: 'And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition'. The United Nations is considered to be the eighth world power, which was preceded by seven others, namely, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Anglo-American combine. This eighth world power is thus 'of the seven', that is, it is a combination of all the nations. The part of the text which states that the beast 'was and is not' is interpreted as a prophecy of how the League of Nations would be in existence, then would cease to exist, (the League collapsed during the Second World War), and then would arise again (as the United Nations in 1945). This is one of the most ingenious of the Witnesses' interpretations of prophecy in the light of modern history.

Another most peculiar 'sign of the last days' is '36. Improper Restrictions Placed on Marriage and Eating of Food.' This has reference to the words of Paul at I Timothy iv, 1-3: '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 . . . forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them

which believe and know the truth.' This is applied particularly to the Roman Catholic Church's imposition of celibacy on its clergy and the prohibition of meat-eating on Friday. Even if the apostle were referring to these (he is obviously referring to Jewish practices which were still being observed unnecessarily by some of the early church) it is hard to see how these could be called 'signs of the last days', since the Catholic clergy have been celibate and both clergy and laity Friday fish-eaters from long before the year 1914, when the 'last days' are supposed to have begun.

This application of scripture to the clergy of the orthodox Christian religions is a feature of the Witnesses' publications. The clergy are their favourite target for scathing denunciation and the butt for their heavy-handed sarcasm. In recent years this wave of criticism has lost some of its momentum. But in the days of the late Judge Rutherford, the second president of the Society, the most offensive and shocking accusations were hurled at a class of men who, speaking fairly of them, by and large possess a degree of spirituality which many of the Witnesses are quite incapable of emulating. It was nothing for Judge Rutherford to label the clergy as 'allies of the Devil', 'emissaries of Satan', or 'Satan's mouthpieces'. To add vividness to this portrayal of the clergy, when the booklet *Theocracy* was published in 1940 it carried on its front cover a picture which showed Satan the Devil, with Adolf Hitler at one shoulder and His Holiness the Pope at the other! Since the death of Rutherford the Society has toned down its vicious anti-clericalism to some degree, but it still leaves one in no doubt of its attitude when the opportunity arises.

The reason for this hostile attitude is again quite simple. The Witnesses believe that they are the one truly and divinely appointed organisation, and it therefore follows that all others must be false. Since the Witnesses preach the truth of God's word to all people, the fact that the clergy

of other denominations have not listened to their teachings shows that they are in fact enemies of truth. For, having an opportunity of hearing the truth from the Witnesses, they still persist in the preaching and promulgation of error. So these apostles of error must be shown up for what they are, and hence the outspoken hostility to all 'gentlemen of the cloth'. It is not surprising therefore that three more 'signs of the last days' are, first, that there is '26. One Organisation Selected by God as His Faithful Representative', second, that there are '1. Many False Christian Religions', and third, that '35. Organised Clergy of Christendom and Evil Slave Manifested in Open Disobedience'.

Having reviewed some of the evidence brought forward by the Witnesses which confirms them in their belief that this is 'the time of the end', the reader may register surprise that such flimsy, tenuous evidence could convince an intelligent person. I think it is important to realise that this generation with its astounding technical progress has given the ever-present prophets of doom more material for their message than any other. Many people, bewildered by the speed with which man has learnt and exploited the secrets of atomic and nuclear power, have wondered if man has developed sufficient sense of responsibility to match his newly acquired knowledge. The fact that such nuclear power has often been harnessed to the fashioning of implements of mass destruction has merely served to underline their fears.

The fears and phobias of such people are skilfully played upon by the Witnesses, who of course can easily find scriptures to fit the present situation in which man finds himself. Man could so easily destroy himself and the whole planet, and indeed the Bible shows that, if Jehovah were not to bring about Armageddon, this is exactly what man would do. Revelation, chapter xi, verse eighteen, says that God will 'destroy them which destroy the earth'.

And indeed the fearful person is told that his condition is just another sign of 'the last days'. The twentieth sign listed in *Make Sure of All Things* reads: 'Men Becoming Faint Out of World-Wide Fear.' With the Witnesses pandering to such immature fears and at the same time painting such lurid pictures of the battle of Armageddon, to which the words of Revelation, chapter xiv, verse 20, are applied, that so many will be slaughtered that their blood will reach up to the horses' bridles and extend like a river for 200 miles, it is not surprising that people become faint out of fear.

Presumably to comfort those who are in this state of fear, the Witnesses have also foretold the future development of international events prior to Armageddon between the Eastern and Western blocs of nations. This prophecy of the future international scene is based upon the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel, which relates the conflict between what are called 'the king of the north' and 'the king of the south'. In the book *Your Will Be Done On Earth*, published in 1958, the king of the north is identified as Soviet Russia and the king of the south as the Anglo-American power. The reader would, I am sure, find a complete explanation of the Witnesses' interpretation of this prophecy most tedious, and this is in any case outside the scope of this chapter. He can read the full story in the above-mentioned book, pages 220 through to 307. Here I will only refer to the most interesting part, that which applies to the present-day international situation.

This, according to the Witnesses, is contained in Daniel, chapter xi, verses 40 to 45. The fortieth verse reads: 'And at the time of the end shall the king of the south (America) push at him (that is, the king of the north, Russia), and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.' This verse is interpreted to mean that

just prior to Armageddon America will push against Russia either out of protection or to prevent Russia's taking over other countries. That Russia is then going to come against America 'like a whirlwind, with chariots, etc.', means according to the book, that 'the kings will have opportunity and occasion to try out and use their frightful, deadly weapons against each other' (page 297).

Verse 42 reads: 'He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape.' Egypt, we are informed, is a symbol of this evil world, and so the verse is taken to mean that Soviet Russia's plans for complete world domination will be well advanced by this time. Similarly, when verse forty-three reads: 'But he shall have power over the treasures of gold, silver and over all the precious things of Egypt', this means that Russia will 'gain control over the treasures of gold, silver and all the precious things of this commercialised, materialistic world, including oil' (page 303).

But the most astonishing interpretation is left for verses 44 and 45, which read: 'But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore shall he go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.'

Whence do the tidings issue which so infuriate the Kremlin that it essays forth on such an orgy of destruction? Incredible as it seems, the Witnesses aggregate to themselves the role of frightening the mighty Kremlin. After some obscure reasoning on the text, the book says quite baldly: 'The terrifying reports must therefore come from Jehovah's sanctuary class in the beautiful land of spiritual prosperity' (page 304).

In other words, from the leaders of the organisation. And what are the Witnesses going to say that will

put the Russian leaders into such a state of bloody-mindedness? Here the Witnesses refuse to be drawn, the book coyly saying, 'What contents the report will bear . . . Jehovah now knows and will yet determine' (page 305).

The 'glorious holy mountain' of verse 45, which is to be the object of Russia's attack, is, of course, none other than the organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses. And so the Witnesses see themselves as being the main object of this Communist campaign of violent destruction. The book with incredible naivety says on page 306: 'A campaign against these Kingdom publishers becomes more important than the king's aggressive campaign against the king of the south.' And for this reason, 'he shall come to his end, and none shall help him', because he has presumed to touch the Lord's anointed, the apple of Jehovah's eye, His dedicated Witnesses! So down the great king of the north is hurled into destruction at Armageddon. Certainly in all the Witnesses' publications the imagination of the writer has never ranged more fancifully than in this fantastic prediction of the future course of international events.

Since the Battle of Armageddon is considered to be the climax of these last days, it may be worth while to complete this chapter with a word-picture of what this battle will be like, based on the Witnesses' own writings on the subject.

In 1958 the Watchtower Society made a considerable departure from its usual policy and produced a book intended primarily for children and for use in more backward countries. Called *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, it is printed in very large type with an abundance of pictures. It has been very easy for the Witnesses to sell from door to door, because it is presented as a book which makes the Bible so easy to understand that even children can read it with enjoyment. As a letter received from a

highly satisfied purchaser in 1961 said: 'This book is written in such easy to understand language that it is now possible to answer many of the questions that my three year old son is now asking me about God and all of his creations'. (*Kingdom Ministry*, May, 1961).

Many parents on superficially glancing through its pages have assumed it to be merely a book presenting Bible stories with accompanying pictures, and have accordingly bought a copy for their children. The Witnesses have very often presented this book just prior to Christmas for obvious reasons, although, of course, the Witnesses themselves do not celebrate Christmas, denouncing it as a pagan celebration.

But whether the book is a suitable Christmas present for children I will leave the reader to decide in the light of what follows. The book is in fact just as much a presentation of the doctrines of the Witnesses as any other of their publications. And for the most vivid description of the Battle of Armageddon it is without equal in the current range of Witness literature. We are informed on page 207: 'Great will be the terror at Armageddon. "Every kind of terror" will be used to destroy this evil world—cloudburts, lashing rains, over-flowing floods, earthquakes, giant hailstones, and a rain of fire. There will be terror on the land, terror in the sea and terror in the air'. So terrified will people be that 'they will begin killing one another.'

Many will be destroyed by a flesh-eating plague. Quoting from Zechariah, chapter xiv, verse 12, 'Their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet, their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths', the writer then grimly savours each detail of this revolting text:

'Eaten up will be the tongues of those who scoffed and laughed at the warning of Armageddon! Eaten up will be the eyes of those who refused to see the sign of the 'time of the end'! Eaten up will be the flesh of those who would

not learn that the living and true God is named Jehovah! Eaten up while they stand on their feet!

Accompanying this horrific description of what the ever-loving Jehovah God is shortly to inflict on the vast majority of His creation is a full-page illustration which shows buildings collapsing, people up to their necks in water, houses on fire, crazed men fighting each other to the death, and the earth opening up a vast chasm down which are falling numerous people, followed rather illogically by a bicycle, a motor-car and a set of doorsteps complete with handrail. All this is included in a book which purports to make the Bible so easy to understand that even children can read it with enjoyment! I am sure that no parent in his right senses would feel happy at the thought of his child's mind being infected with this sort of obnoxious rubbish. Apart from the sheer horror of the description, the unfavourable light in which God appears as a Person of fiendish cruelty, could quite easily poison the mind of an impressionable child, as well as giving him nightmares.

To complete the picture, the writer informs us that 'after Armageddon the surviving sheep of the New World Society will go forth to look upon the slain of Jehovah'.

It will certainly not be a pretty sight because the writer adds for our further edification: 'Worms will not stop swarming over the millions of bodies until the last body is eaten up. Birds and beasts also will eat their fill of human flesh until nothing is left but white bones' (p. 210).

When the birds have finished their work the Armageddon survivors, acting with the immaculate precision in which they have been so well trained in the pre-Armageddon days, will spend the next seven months burying all the bones. Where an unburied bone is found, they will set up a sign by it so that the buriers will notice it when they pass by. This is based upon the scripture at Ezekiel xxxix, 12-16.

It seems almost incredible that anyone could really believe

that God will destroy two billion people in this way, leaving by comparison a mere handful on the earth to make a fresh start. But Jehovah's Witnesses do, most sincerely, and that is why they preach with such fervour. Time is running out, they believe, and anyone who dies at Armageddon will never be resurrected. He is for ever destroyed. So it is vital that the life-giving message reach as many as possible as soon as possible, that all the sheep may be gathered to the right side of God's favour.

In fact, according to the latest chronological prediction of the Society, counting from the time of writing in the year 1967, it would seem that there are but eight short years left at the outside before the Battle of Armageddon brings an end to this evil world. In the October 8, 1966 issue of *Awake!* the basis of this prediction is explained. Since the Witnesses believe that the creative days of Genesis are 7,000 years in length, for reasons which I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and since man was created at the close of the sixth day, 'in the autumn of the year 4026 B.C.', as this article precisely puts it, it follows that 'we are nearing the end of the first six thousand years of man's existence'. If the date of the creation of man (4026 B.C.) is also the date of the beginning of the seventh creative day or sabbath, it is therefore calculated that the end of the first 6,000 years of this 7,000-year-long day will take place in the year 1975. Since the last thousand years of this seventh day are to be occupied entirely by the millennial reign of Christ, it follows that the year 1975 will witness the Battle of Armageddon and the ushering in of the long-awaited new world under the King Jesus Christ. As the article concludes, 'So we can expect the immediate future to be filled with thrilling events for those who rest their faith in God and his promises' (p. 20).

Since the calculation is such a simple one of merely counting six thousand years forward from the year 4026 B.C.,

why has this startling revelation about 1975 not been made before? In answering this question, a quite extraordinary contradiction of previous statements made by the Society on this matter comes to light. For, only three years prior to the publication of this article, the Society discussed this subject quite fully in the book *'All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial'* (1963). A full quotation from page 286 is of such interest as to be worth while reproducing here:

'Of what significance is this today? It means that by the fall of 1963 mankind has dwelt upon this earth 5,988 years. Does this mean, then, that by 1963 we had progressed 5,988 years into the "day" on which Jehovah "has been resting from all his work"?' (Gen. ii, 3). No, for the creation of Adam does not correspond with the beginning of Jehovah's rest day. Following Adam's creation, and still within the sixth creative day, Jehovah appears to have been forming further animal and bird creations. Also, he had Adam name the animals, which would take some time, and he proceeded to create Eve. Whatever time elapsed between Adam's creation and the end of the "sixth day" must be subtracted from the 5,988 years in order to give the actual length of time from the beginning of the "seventh day" until now. It does no good to use Bible chronology for speculating on dates that are still future in the stream of time.'

Yet three years later the Society does this very thing that the book so specifically condemns! If we turn further back into the Society's literature to the February 1, 1955, issue of *The Watchtower* the confusion and contradiction worsen considerably, for we read on page 95:

'The very fact that, as part of Jehovah's secret, no one today is able to find out how much time Adam and later Eve lived during the closing days of the sixth creative period, so no one can now determine when six thousand

years of Jehovah's present rest day come to an end. Obviously, whatever amount of Adam's 930 years was lived before the beginning of that seventh-day rest of Jehovah, that unknown amount would have to be added to the 1976 date.'

The date 1976 is not a misprint for 1975. It is because the Society has on several occasions changed its mind about the date of Adam's creation. In the book *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (1943) it is given as 4028 B.C. In 1944, in the book *The Kingdom Is At Hand* it is given as 4026 B.C. But in 1953 in the book *New Heavens and a New Earth* it was altered to 4025 B.C. Hence in the above quotation, counting from 4025 B.C. forward 6,000 years, we arrive at 1976. Since then of course the date of Adam's creation has been altered yet again and so we are now fixed on 1975 as the potential year of doom.

It would be difficult to explain why there has been such a change in ideas about speculating on dates 'that are still future in the stream of time'. Perhaps the Society has noted a growing apathy among the Witnesses as the years keep passing by and Armageddon is still in time future, and so has brought out this date in order to rekindle zeal and devotion. Whatever the reason, it has been a most unfortunate decision in the view of the writer, because the Society is gambling with its own future. Whilst it can always return to the ideas expressed in 1955 and 1963 if the year 1975 passes without incident, undoubtedly irreparable damage will then have been done to the faith and confidence of so many in the Society as God's channel of communication. As I mentioned in the preface, it would seem that 1975 will be a year of doom, if not for the world, then for Jehovah's Witnesses.

So much for the illusion of 'the last days' with which the Witnesses are so caught up. But it is time that we returned to our Mr. Jones to see how he is faring.

The Price of Paradise

THIS is the day of all days. Behold, the King reigns! You are his publicity agents. Therefore advertise, advertise, advertise the King and His Kingdom!' With these words, spoken on Friday, September 8, 1922, at a convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, the then president of the Society, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, launched the world-wide house-to-house preaching campaign that has been the characteristic feature of the movement ever since.

In fact, if one were to ask Jehovah's Witnesses how they worship their God, the answer would be, by preaching about His Kingdom from house to house. The book *Make Sure of All Things* has already been referred to. It is a small book which, as its subtitle informs us, is 'a compilation of scriptures from the Holy Bible under seventy main headings to enable the searcher for truth to ascertain the fundamental doctrines and be assured thereof'. Under the heading 'Jehovah's Witnesses', we find the subheading 'Active Service, Not Ritual, Comprises their Worship; They Must Preach', and this is followed by selected texts to prove the point made. The next subheading immediately following reads: 'Each Witness is a Minister; One Not Preaching is not One of Jehovah's Witnesses'. In fact the Witnesses believe that unless they preach from house-to-house they will never achieve salvation. On page 198 of this book the subheading appears, 'Their Preaching Results in Salvation to Themselves and Others', and the scripture quoted in support is from the first epistle of Paul to Timothy,

chapter iv, verse 16: 'Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you' (*New World Translation*).

And so the ultimate object of all the work the Witnesses do is to turn out more and more house-to-house preachers. The words of Jesus are often applied, 'The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest' (Matthew ix, 37, 38). And using our Mr. Jones as an example, this is the ultimate goal towards which he is being skilfully and tactfully led step by step. As I recall myself once saying in a public lecture, 'Coming into Jehovah's organisation is like getting into a hot bath, one does it gradually.'

Having been suitably impressed by the friendly atmosphere of Kingdom Hall, our Mr. Jones begins to make meeting attendance a regular habit. To encourage him to continue in this good habit, it is pointed out to him that in Acts, chapter ii, verse 46, it is said of the apostles, 'And day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord.' And since Mr. Jones is, after all, rubbing shoulders with the wrong kind of people for so many hours a week at his place of work, surely he needs at the very least his five hours a week of association with the right kind of people, namely the Witnesses, to counteract the evil influence that those on the outside, people like you and me, may have had on him.

So with five hours spent at meetings, and a further hour at home for his continued home Bible study, it is not long before our Mr. Jones is at the right stage to be invited to participate in the house-to-house work. The invitation is of course made with great tact and backed up with plenty of reassurance. In the last ten minutes after his home Bible study, the Witness concentrates on talking about the work.

He tells Mr. Jones of the extent of the work done in well over 150 countries and islands of the sea. He will, of course, read scriptures such as the ones I have just quoted to show that the work is divinely commissioned. He will also explain the way in which the territory is regularly and systematically covered by the various methods of presentation which the Witnesses employ. He will probably conclude by giving a demonstration of how he presents the Society's two magazines, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* to prove to him how simple it is. He then suggests that Mr. Jones might like to come along with him next Sunday morning and see how it is done. Mr. Jones makes the usual objections, to which the Witness gives the stock answers which he has been trained to give at the Service Meetings at Kingdom Hall. Mr. Jones says that he does not think he knows sufficient yet to go from house-to-house. The stock answer is that Mr. Jones will not have to share in the witnessing to start with. He will merely accompany the Witness and watch how it is done. But, of course, if he feels like breaking into the conversation to make a point, he should not hesitate to do so. The Witness will not be upset in the least.

In any case, Mr. Jones is assured that the people whom he will meet at the door will know far less about the Bible than he does, even though he has only been studying for a few weeks. This of course is a most lamentable truth, that the vast majority of people do not know anything at all about the Bible. And so when someone calls at their home with the merest smattering of isolated texts, most people are quite incapable of refuting the scriptural perversion that is being foisted upon them. I am afraid that we must accept the fact that the growth of such organisations as Jehovah's Witnesses is largely attributable to the failure of the orthodox Churches to teach their flocks properly. For I am quite sure that an intelligent, well-informed student

of the Bible would have no difficulty in detecting the errors of the Witnesses' interpretations.

Our Mr. Jones thus reassured agrees to go with the Witness the following Sunday morning. The Witness calls for him at quarter past nine (no extra hour in bed on Sunday morning any more!) and together they walk to the house where the group study is held each Tuesday, because this house is the centre for the work in the area. At half past nine a short meeting commences which consists of a consideration of the day's text from the Society's Yearbook, followed by a discussion and demonstration of the current sermon that is to be used in the work that morning.

Here I must explain that the Witnesses employ two distinct methods of canvassing an area. One, to which I have already referred, is the magazine work which is a brief presentation of the two journals of the Society. This is usually done on Saturday, which is appropriately called 'Magazine Day'. The other method is called 'sermon work', to which the Witnesses attach much more importance. For this work, a selection of three or four texts on a particular theme is used. The Witness calling at the door will try to read these to the householder, making appropriate comments about them, and building his whole presentation into a small three to eight minute 'sermon'. The sermon is concluded by offering to the householder one of the Society's publications. The theme is such as will directly link in with the theme of the publication being offered, to give the whole presentation coherence.

On the particular morning on which our Mr. Jones attends the service centre, the theme to be used that day is called 'The Bible's Promise of a Better System of Things', to be climaxed by the offer of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. This theme is not decided on by the local Witnesses of course. This would smack too much of

a democracy, which is a dirty word to the Witnesses. It is printed in the monthly broadsheet, *Kingdom Ministry*, which gives each congregation full instructions as to what sermon to use in the house-to-house work, what publication to offer, and what is to be discussed at each weekly Service Meeting. This is printed by the branch office of the country in harmony with instructions received from Brooklyn headquarters.

This theme contains three texts, namely Revelation xxi, 3, 4, Psalm xxxvii, 10, 11 and John xvii, 3. These are three old warhorses of the Witnesses' sermon work which have been used over and over again. Indeed if one were to analyse the actual number of different texts used by the Witnesses in this work it would undoubtedly be very small.

The group leader reads from the *Kingdom Ministry* the suggested introduction to the sermon, explains how the texts can be linked together by appropriate comments, how the lead-in to the literature offer can be accomplished smoothly, and the final offer made enthusiastically. He then demonstrates how the sermon should be delivered, using one of the group as the householder. We may as well record this demonstration for there are a number of points of interest about it, not least the way in which in the introduction the unpleasant side of world conditions is deliberately overdrawn in order to contrast sharply with the new world conditions the Witness is offering.

Leader: Good morning, my name is —, and I am one of a number of Bible students calling on you and your neighbours this morning. In these days when sickness, death, delinquency and disunity among people are the main points of the news, I would like to brighten your day by showing you briefly the Bible's promise of better conditions to come on earth. Certainly you would enjoy receiving good news for a change, isn't that true?

Householder: Oh yes, good news is always welcome.

Leader: Well, read with me here at Revelation xxi, 3,4 some very good news. (This is the text previously referred to which says that there is to be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.)

Householder: Very nice text indeed, but I can't see how that will ever come about.

Leader: Well, of course, man could never bring about such a transformation, but this is a promise from God, and it is His Power that will bring it about. Even so, if He did bring an end to such things, there would still be men on earth who would ruin it for Him though, wouldn't there?

Householder: Well, I suppose there would. There are some people who would ruin anything.

Leader: Exactly, and that is why, before God brings about this transformation, He is going to do something about such people first. Read with me here at Psalm xxxvii, verses 10 and 11: 'And just a little while longer and the wicked one will be no more . . . but the meek ones themselves will possess the earth and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.' So God is going to destroy the wicked and preserve the righteous into a new system where there will be an abundance of peace. Now the question for us is, what must we do to be among the meek ones who will inherit the earth? This final scripture gives us the answer. (And of course, he turns to the well-worn John, chapter xvii, verse 3, which I have previously referred to, with the *New World Translation's* rendering 'taking in knowledge'.) Now then, where only can we take in knowledge of God and Jesus Christ?

Householder: Oh well, of course, from the Bible.

Leader: Precisely, and for the purpose of helping you to take in knowledge of God more easily we are offering the Bible in modern English. This *New World Translation of*

the Holy Scriptures is available to you for only seven shillings and sixpence.

He also make a few more sales points in favour of the *New World Translation*, and of course the householder in the demonstration accepts the offer. After the demonstration is finished, the leader reminds the group to keep careful note of all the houses where the literature is sold, prayer is offered on the work to be done, each Witness is assigned a street to canvass, and without delay they set out for the territory, knocking at the first door by ten o'clock on this pleasant Sunday morning.

Our Mr. Jones finds this experience of house-to-house work quite a fascinating one. He notes that, whilst the Witnesses do not accept the first No for an answer, they are not unduly persistent where opposition is met. The allegation that they adopt 'foot-in-the-door methods' in their work is most unfair and untrue. The Society frowns on over-persistence and when one is being trained for the work, this is a point which is stressed very much. 'Don't get his back up by being too persistent. We will have to call again at that house in three or four months' time' is a typical exhortation. Or, 'Leave him sweet even if he does not accept the literature'.

Mr. Jones notices that even young children do this work, and finds the sight of a child of seven talking to a man of sixty about the Bible somewhat incongruous, to say the least. The Witness in answer points to the second verse of the eighth Psalm, which reads: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.' Despite such a scriptural reassurance, I have often in the past found myself feeling rather uncomfortable at the sight of young children on their own at the doorstep, turning up the texts and reading them to adults.

Mr. Jones is interested to note how flexible the Witness is, particularly in his introduction, which he varies according

to the type of householder he meets. If a person is busy he just uses one text from his sermon in order to abbreviate it accordingly. When one person states that he is a Roman Catholic, Mr. Jones, in harmony with what he has learned at his home Bible study, is surprised to hear the Witness, instead of uttering a fiery denunciation, say, 'Well, we are always pleased to meet Catholics at the door, because we usually find them to be sincere people who practice their religion.' When they leave this particular door, Mr. Jones asks the Witness why he said this. The Witness explains that they are not against individuals as Catholics, but against the false teachings of that Church. It would not be very tactful to start by immediately denouncing such teachings to a devout member of the Church though, would it? Does not Paul say that we must become 'all things to all men'? And Christ himself said, 'Be ye cautious as serpents and innocent as doves.' This is a theocratic war that is being waged, explains the Witness, and we are fighting for the minds of these people, which are held in captivity to Satan and error. So we must use theocratic war strategy. Always start off your discussion on a point of agreement. Find some common ground of agreement between you and the householder. In this way you will establish a beachhead in that person's mind from which you can branch out. With points such as these Mr. Jones is being let into the subtle secrets of house-to-house witnessing, and being carefully prepared for the time when he will go to the doors on his own, Bible in one hand, briefcase full of literature in the other.

Let us assume that in fact our Mr. Jones does begin to share regularly in the preaching work. He is encouraged of course to try to reach all his quotas in all phases of Kingdom activity, particularly the ten hours a month goal. If we now review a typical week in the life of our Mr. Jones, it will follow a schedule very much like this. Beginning with

Sunday, the morning is spent in three hours of house-to-house work using a sermon and offering the publication selected by the Society. The afternoon he will spend preparing for the evening's *Watchtower* study. He is instructed not just to read through *The Watchtower* before he goes to the meeting, but really to study it, that is, underline the key points in each paragraph and look up all the scriptures cited of which there is always an abundance. This will take about two hours to do properly. The evening will be spent at the two-hourly meeting, the public lecture and the *Watchtower* study.

When he arrives home from work on Monday evening he devotes the time to private study. He has to prepare his book for his home Bible study on Wednesday, underlining all the answers once again and looking up all the scriptures. We can rightly assume that by this time he has joined the Ministry School and that therefore more than likely he will have an assignment to prepare, an eight-minute talk on a given subject, and he will probably want to rehearse it well in front of the bedroom mirror, as the Society suggests. So there will be very little of Monday evening left by the time all this is finished.

Tuesday evening is the group study in a private home. Before the study starts at eight o'clock, there is an hour's canvassing with the magazines, what is called appropriately pre-study activity. Wednesday evening he will have his home Bible study. Thursday he will be at the Kingdom Hall for two hours listening to the Ministry School and the Service Meeting. Friday night is back call night with his local group, this evening being set aside for return visits on people who accepted literature the previous Sunday or whenever it was. Saturday is Magazine Day, when the two current magazines are offered. Perhaps Saturday night can be set aside for a little relaxation, and the Society, with extraordinary audacity, after a week spent like this, strongly

recommend a Bible quiz as the most wholesome form of relaxation! One would think that this would be the last straw of the proverb!

Such is the Price of Paradise, a life without a minute to breathe, to take stock, or to reflect on how life is really being spent. Now if Mr. Jones's wife also becomes a Witness, such a schedule might just about be borne even though at tremendous personal sacrifice. But if as all too often happens, his wife does not see eye to eye with the Witnesses, then the result for this previously happy home may be grim indeed. For what wife can be expected to put up with a husband whose every minute is suddenly taken up with such frenzied religious activity? Unless some compromise can be achieved, a broken home will be the inevitable result.

In fairness, the Society does suggest that in divided homes the believer should try to have regard for the unbeliever and share out his time between his family obligations and his duties to Jehovah and His organisation. But certainly the atmosphere in such a home, even granted this more reasonable viewpoint, will never be the same, because the unbeliever knows, and is made to feel, that the previously devoted husband or wife now thinks more of his or her religion than he does of him or her. And no one wants to play second fiddle to anyone or anything in a marriage relationship.

Of course the Witnesses will quote scriptures again to assure such a person in a divided home that the state of his household is only in fulfilment of Bible prophecy and a sign of 'the last days'. Did not Jesus say at Matthew x, 34-6: 'Do not think I came to put peace on the earth; I came to put not peace, but a sword. For I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother in law. Indeed a man's enemies will be persons of his own household?'

(*New World Translation*.) Indeed he did, but whether he intended by these words to license a whole series of broken homes, separations and divorces is another matter entirely.

This filling of every part of ones life, every minute of ones existence, with Kingdom activity is considered to be the only way to please God. 'I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion' (Exodus xx, 5). What a Christian owes to God is a complete unreserved dedication of himself to do the will of God. And this is the final step that our Mr. Jones will be required to take. But he must also make a public declaration of his dedication before witnesses, and this he will do by submitting to complete immersion in water before onlookers, usually at a local swimming baths hired for the purpose.

The Witnesses' views on baptism vary considerably from the orthodox, as is usual with nearly all their views. They consider the baptism of infants to be entirely unscriptural, and use the baptism of Jesus by John in the river Jordan as the model on which to base their own mass baptisms. In Jesus' baptism we notice three things. First, he was not a baby when he was baptised, but a fully grown man of thirty years of age. Second, he was not just sprinkled with water from the river Jordan, he was completely submerged in the river. In Mark's account of his baptism, chapter one, verse ten reads: 'Immediately on coming up out of the water he (Jesus) saw the heavens being parted'. (*New World Translation*). Third, his baptism could not be for forgiveness of sins, as a symbol of sins washed away, because Jesus was sinless. Instead it was a symbol of his dedication to do the will of God. As John the Baptist lowered him backwards into the water, this signified that he was dead as to his past course of life, because if John had kept Jesus prone in the water he would very soon have died anyway, hence the symbolism. His being brought up out of the water and stood on his feet again signified that Jesus was alive to a

new course of life, the doing of his Father's will. This is exactly the procedure adopted by Jehovah's Witnesses at their baptismal ceremonies. In other words, baptism is not a sacrament. It imparts no benefit to the person being baptised. It is merely an act which symbolises the already taken inward decision of a person to dedicate himself whole-souled to do the will of Almighty God.

Once a person has been baptised, then he is officially a Jehovah's Witness, and he must live up to his dedication vows. He has vowed to give of all his time and energy to the service of God's Kingdom, and it is up to God's organisation to see that he does not break such vows. In view of such vows as these, everyone really ought to be doing nothing else but preaching full-time. But because Jehovah is reasonable and realises that many have domestic responsibilities, He kindly gives them back a certain proportion of all the time they have unreservedly given to Him, so that they can look after their scriptural obligations. But the rest of the individual's time is God's, which the individual gave to Him at baptism. So all the spare time is to be spent in God's work. After all, looked at correctly, getting our priorities right, the Christian ministry is really our full-time job, our secular work being strictly secondary to this all-important vocation!

With such reasonings as these being constantly expounded from the platform of Kingdom Hall, at the group studies, home Bible studies, and at large conventions, the reader will be able to understand why the Witnesses are so pre-occupied with their religion to the exclusion of everything else. Because, reasoning on such lines, it is a sin to call your time your own!

I have already outlined the weekly schedule of our Mr. Jones prior to baptism. After baptism, we must also add to this already busy schedule, the duties he will incur as one of the servants in the congregation. For all the male

members are encouraged to aspire to these privileges. Again the scriptures are used to facilitate acceptance of these further responsibilities: 'If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a fine work' (I Timothy iii, 1, *New World Translation*). And so he will somehow or other be required to fit into his week the duties of leading the brothers in the house-to-house work, the duty of making sure that they are all out in the work and reporting their time each month, the duty of visiting those spiritually or physically sick, praying for them, and giving them scriptural encouragement, and so on *ad infinitum*. It is hardly surprising that the Society feels called upon to encourage the faithful with such scriptures as Galatians, chapter vi, verse 9: 'So let us not give up in doing what is right, for in due season we shall reap by not giving out'. The footnote rendering of this verse in *The New World Translation* is perhaps even more appropriate: 'For in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out.' 'If we do not wear out' would seem to be even better still!

I have mentioned previously that the Society teaches that everyone should be doing nothing else but preaching full-time, unless he has family obligations. When single people or married couples without children are baptised the full force of this argument is applied to them. They have no family obligations, and they have just dedicated their lives to Jehovah. Therefore Jehovah rightly expects them to become full-time workers for His organisation.

Such full-time workers are called 'pioneers'. There are two types of pioneer, one called the 'regular' pioneer, the other the 'special' pioneer. The regular pioneer has as a quota to spend 100 hours each month in house-to-house work. Coupled with this, he must fit in a part time job to keep himself, because of course the Society does not pay him for the work he does. The only financial help the Society offers is to allow him to purchase literature at a

special rate. Thus a bound book, offered to the public at three shillings and sixpence, will be purchased by the pioneer at eightpence. A *Watchtower* magazine which costs fourpence to the public is charged to the pioneer at a penny. However what the pioneer will make on his sales of literature will certainly not keep him in food, clothes and lodgings. It will usually only offset his normal travelling expenses.

The call to pioneer is directed with greatest intensity at the teenagers about to leave school. The Society discourages advanced education in favour of the pioneer work, and particularly frowns upon university education. In view of the proximity of Armageddon, it is obviously foolish to spend all ones time in studying for certificates and degrees, when there are so many doors which need knocking on with the good news. In any case this is God's time that is being wasted, time that has been dedicated to Him and that therefore should only be spent in His service.

This extraordinary attitude of shutting the door of further education to the young people in the movement is difficult to explain and, in my view, quite impossible to justify. The Society in justifying this attitude says that at grammar schools and universities it is very easy to fall victim to 'Higher Criticism' of the Bible, 'Evolutionists', intellectual pride, and so on. Yet if one is so sure that one has the Truth, surely it will only strengthen ones belief to note how the Truth will stand up under the attack of worldly wise unbelievers? By depriving the young people in the movement of the benefits of further education in this way, one cannot help but wonder if the Society's reason for this is that they are uncertain whether the doctrines and beliefs they are propagating would survive under the searchlight of enlightened intelligent examination. To the impartial reader of their literature who has had the benefit of a university education, they certainly seem to

paint the intellectual scene in lurid colours, where faith in God, morality, and all other positive qualities are subtly undermined. For this reason, as *The New World Translation* renders the text at I Corinthians i, 19: 'I [God] will shove the intelligence of the intellectual aside', a translation which demonstrates quite clearly that the Witnesses are really very much in need of the benefits of further education which they so ruthlessly 'shove aside'.

Many young people in the movement with promising careers in front of them have in the past had such abruptly terminated by this insistent demand that they must pioneer. The writer is a case in point. Despite the Society's insistence on withdrawing from the pursuit of further education, which was repeated with great emphasis by my father, I gained a place at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where for a year I read English literature. However the pressure of 'theocratic conscience', the feeling that I was misusing dedicated time, enforced by a continuous flow of counsel from the publications of the Society and from the talks given at the Witnesses' meetings, resulted in my leaving Trinity Hall after only a year of study. I could have had no peace of mind until the decision was made. I reasoned according to my theocratic training, that I was either for God or against Him. If I was lukewarm, God would spew me out of His mouth. I was a dedicated servant of God, and I felt that this could only be fulfilled by full-time preaching for the Society. And so, to ensure a complete severance of myself from Cambridge, when the examinations came round, I just sat through the several three-hourly sessions, writing nothing on the papers but simply passing them in blank. The last words of my tutor to me as I left Trinity Hall were, 'Well, Stevenson, I hope you never regret what you have done'. I am quite sure now that this was the worst mistake of my life. But an even bigger mistake, of course, would be to allow myself to become embittered by the

experience. However, I must say that I cannot deprecate too strongly the Society's attitude towards further education.

The second category of pioneer is the 'special' pioneer. These full-time workers are required to spend 150 hours each month in house-to-house work, in return for which the Society pays them a small allowance. Small indeed is the word, for when the writer last inquired of the amount of the allowance, it was ten pounds a month, and of course if the quota of 150 hours is not met, then the allowance is only partly paid or even not at all. Now I think it is reasonable that the remuneration for such a work should not be excessive. Otherwise, although the nature of the work would make it most unlikely, it could be that people would be taking it up for financial reward instead of for the correct motive. But having conceded that, I do not think that ten pounds a month is in any way a reasonable sum, as a living allowance. I have before me a letter from the Society dated March 14, 1958, addressed to all special pioneers. It reads:

'Dear Brothers, We are very pleased to advise you that Brother Knorr (the president of the Society) has authorised a further increase in the special pioneer allowance. From April 1, 1958, you may request up to £10 per month. (Previously it was eight pounds). This will enable you to meet the increased costs of living and give of your best to the ministry.'

The writer of this letter must have had a peculiar sense of humour! Certainly labour must be cheaper in this movement than anywhere else in the country. Professor Anthony Hoekema in his book *The Four Major Cults* also notes that the salary paid to the headquarters staff responsible for printing, etc., is very low and comments, I think fairly: 'This extremely low salary is undoubtedly one of the biggest reasons why Jehovah's Witnesses can sell most of their bound books for as little as fifty cents a copy' (page 235).

The special pioneer work is I think the hardest assignment in the Society, because generally they are sent to areas where there is no established congregation, their object being to start as many home Bible studies as possible and thus build up a nucleus of converts to make up a new congregation. They are pioneers in the true sense of the word. The regular pioneers on the other hand are usually assigned to established congregations, and so the local Witnesses will often open their homes to them and provide meals and so on, which of course is a great help to them. But the special pioneer is more or less on his own. He is completely dependent on his tiny allowance from the Society and the return from the literature he sells. A tough job indeed! The writer did this work for some eighteen months before being transferred to other work. The spell of eighteen months was interrupted by four months' imprisonment as a conscientious objector, four months which I found I weathered quite well, perhaps because of the arduous nature of everyday life at the time.

On the report which the special pioneers make to the Society each month, they are required to state how many persons with whom they are studying have started in house-to-house preaching, and how many have been baptised. The reason for this is because the actual results of the special pioneers' work in the number of converts made decides whether they are eligible for promotion to the next grade in the Society, which is the circuit servant. All the congregations are grouped into circuits, much as churches belong to dioceses, and the circuit servant spends a week in turn with each congregation, inspecting its work by referring to the detailed records which the congregation keeps, and by listening to the local Witnesses' testimony as they work from door-to-door, auditing its accounts, reporting to head office on its condition, and recommending any changes in personnel he considers necessary. In this

work again, the Society pays very little because the servant is accommodated free of charge for the week by one of the members of the congregation, and his meals are provided on a rota system by other members.

Above the circuit servant is the district servant who visits the various circuits assigned to his district twice each year. Again he is provided for by the local members. And above him are various other responsible officials leading finally to the President himself.

The system by which the Society decides whether to promote an individual from one grade to another is an interesting one. When a district servant visits a circuit, or a circuit servant visits a congregation or group of special pioneers, he is required to fill in a 'Personal Qualifications Report' on the person or persons he has visited. In other words, the progress of each individual in the full-time service depends very much on the type of report his immediate superior sends in to head office about him.

This 'Personal Qualifications Report' is a printed form. On it each person is rated or graded by scoring so many points out of a maximum of one hundred. There are fifty questions on the individual which his superior must answer. At the side of each question are three boxes, one called 'superior', one 'average' and the other 'inferior'. He must tick one of these boxes in answer to each question. If he rates a person 'superior' in answer to some question, this scores two points. Average scores one point and Inferior nothing. Thus if all the fifty questions were ticked 'superior' the individual would score 100 points. An average worker would obviously score around fifty.

The fifty questions are in five groups each of ten. The first group relates as might be expected to his house-to-house work (Is he meeting all his quotas? How much literature is he selling?) There follow ten questions on his organising ability (Does he display initiative? Is he able to get things

done?), ten on his relationships with others (Is he a good mixer? Is he respected by others?) ten on his knowledge of scripture and mental attitude (Does he willingly accept counsel? Is he eager to learn?), and ten on his disposition, physical characteristics (Is he truthful? Is he neat and clean in appearance?). On the basis of scoring two, one or no points in answer to these questions, his rating is added up as a score out of one hundred. It is this rating which will decide what future progress if any he will make in the movement. The Society thus has a pretty clear picture of all its full-time workers, not just as capable preachers or otherwise, but as people, by means of this form, the existence of which is not generally known to the members of the movement.

If the reader found the weekly schedule of our Mr. Jones somewhat taxing, it would appear as a slow foxtrot when compared with the schedule of a conscientious circuit servant. As I have explained, he spends a week with the congregation, which begins on Tuesday at one o'clock. From that time until half past three he examines and analyses all the congregation records, its work reports and its accounts. At half past three he holds a meeting with all the pioneers assigned to the congregation and discusses their work with them and attempts to help them with any problems they may have. This usually lasts at least an hour. At quarter to seven he has a meeting at the Kingdom Hall with the various servants in the congregation to discuss their work with them and analyse the congregation's progress. Then at half past seven he listens in to the Ministry School and Service Meeting. After the two meetings he gives his opinion of the meetings and offers any constructive suggestions he may have for improving their quality. Then he talks to the congregation for half an hour.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are spent in this way: he meets the local Witnesses each morning about 8.30 a.m.

for three hours of house-to-house work. He works with different ones in turn, listening to their presentation and counselling them accordingly. At 1 p.m. he meets them again for three hours back call work. The evenings are spent at different group studies. He engages in an hour's magazine work prior to the study, held at 8 p.m. After the group study concludes he talks to the members for fifteen minutes, after which at 9.15 p.m. he has a meeting with the leader of the group and the congregation servant to discuss improvements in the group's activities. So his day begins at 8.30 a.m. and does not end till close on 10 p.m.

Saturday is magazine day, of course, and starting at 8.30 a.m. as usual three hours of magazine work occupy the morning. This work is continued in the afternoon until 3.30 p.m. when he meets with the three senior servants of the congregation, who comprise what is called the congregation committee. The committee meeting lasts for an hour. Then at 6.30 p.m. he has another meeting with all the servants in the congregation. At 8 p.m. he gives a lecture to the congregation which lasts for about an hour and a half.

Sunday morning is spent in three hours of house-to-house work, and in the afternoon he gives the public lecture. This is followed by the usual *Watchtower* study and the visit is concluded by a half hour talk to the congregation. Sunday evening he will spend typing out as many reports as he can, including the answering of fifty personal questions on each pioneer. What is not finished Sunday evening will be done on Monday, which is his official rest day. But of course he has his own personal chores to attend to, including washing and ironing. And since he has to make up his own talks and lectures which he gives throughout the week, he must give some time to private study and preparation of material. Tuesday morning he must pack all his baggage and move off to new lodgings at the next congregation

he is scheduled to visit. I think that by any standards his life could fairly be described as extremely hectic. Added to this he is also responsible for the organising of semi-annual circuit assemblies, the hiring of halls for this purpose, and the supervision of catering, etc., at the assembly. Also when the Witnesses hold their large annual conventions, the circuit servants are assigned to the responsible positions in the organisation of the assembly. This is extremely hard work, because very often the Witnesses hire football grounds, which means that they have to install their own gas, water and electricity, which the circuit servants will be responsible for getting done. To cater for 8,000 persons coming to dinner, which is the general size of the task at such assemblies, is a very onerous undertaking which involves a tremendous amount of planning. Yet the Witnesses accomplish the task with such brilliant efficiency that the Army on one occasion sent representatives to see how it was done!

The writer was a circuit servant for three years, and they were certainly the busiest years of his life to date. But I believe that this extraordinarily crowded schedule is the key to understanding why once someone is so far into the movement it is very difficult for him to see things in any other way than that taught by the movement. Because once one is in such a position, one is carried forward inexorably at a gradually increasing speed, until there is not a minute to think about anything else other than the immediate work in hand. Of course the Witnesses realise this themselves and make it part of their teaching. Quoting the old maxim 'An empty mind is the Devil's playground', they reason that the only way to ensure that no worldly thoughts creep into the mind is to keep busy in the Lord's service, always studying, preaching, praying, never allowing oneself a moment to reflect, much less to look back. 'Any man that has put his hand to the plough and looks back is

not worthy of the Kingdom of God' (Luke ix, 62). In other words, the complete uniformity of thinking throughout the movement, and the corresponding absence of individuality of thought and personal opinion, may be to some extent explained by the fact that the schedule of life of these busy people is so hectic that it leaves them with no time to formulate ideas and opinions of their own.

Certainly in their personal lives the Witnesses are paying a high price for their hope of eternal life in the Paradise to come. But it is one which they pay gladly, such is their confidence that in a few short years God's new world will be here with all its attendant blessings. In view of these tremendous sacrifices that the Witnesses are required to make for their religion, I hope I will be forgiven for coining a famous expression in saying that, if the long-awaited Armageddon never comes, then never in the history of mankind will so many have given up so much for so little.

Having examined the various steps by which one becomes a dedicated and baptised member of Jehovah's Witnesses, I think it is time to try to answer the questions, How did this religious organisation start? How has it been built up to its present strength of over a million adherents? However before these questions can be tackled, since the movement itself is less than a hundred years old, it will be necessary to explain how the Witnesses see themselves in the context of world history, for then the reader will be able to appreciate why the Witnesses are so convinced that they alone are God's chosen people.

Jehovah in History

JEHOVAH'S Witnesses are the most ancient religious group of worshippers of the true God, the people whose history runs back farther than any religious denomination of Christendom, or even of Jewry.' So states the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, on page eight, a book which must be considered the official account of the Society's history. Considering that the book informs us a few pages later that the modern-day movement of Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be held to have commenced any earlier than 1872, such a statement certainly needs considerable clarification. In order to do so, it is necessary to give a brief account of the Watchtower Society's interpretation of world history, so that the reader will be able to understand what role the Witnesses in various forms and guises are presumed to have fulfilled throughout the ages.

As I explained in an earlier chapter, the word 'world' is to be understood as meaning 'organisation' or 'system of things', translated from the Greek word '*kosmos*'. Now the Witnesses believe that the world is made up of two parts, a heavenly part and an earthly part, the heavenly part being that which directs or governs, and the earthly part being that which accepts the heavenly direction as subject to the heavenly government. In other words the official Witness teaching is that mankind on earth, whether it is aware of the fact or not, is always under the direct, though unseen, influence of supernatural heavenly authority, whether for good or bad. So when we speak of world history, we are

not just referring to events on earth, but to events in heaven also, since the two spheres are closely interrelated.

According to scripture, the heavens were created long before the earth, and so the heavenly inhabitants existed long before man's creation. Heaven is of course populated by angels, who are spirit creatures, and these were appointed to look after the different forms of life as Jehovah created them in different parts of the universe. To use an illustration from the business world which I often found helpful in public lectures on the subject to clarify this conception, we might say that Jehovah is the Creator and Owner of this large company, and the various angels in heaven, which is the company's headquarters, are appointed as a board of directors, each with responsibility for different planets and the life created on them. Heaven is thus conceived as the controlling seat of universal government.

We should comment here on the position given to the Son of God. Jesus, before he came to earth as a man, existed in heaven as a spirit. He is the foremost of the spirits, because he was the first one whom God created. That is why he is called 'the only-begotten Son'. Prior to Jehovah's creating Jesus, God was alone in universal space. So he begot Jesus on His own without anyone else's help. Thus Jesus was Jehovah's first-born son, begotten by the power of Jehovah only. None of the other angels share this distinction of being only-begotten, because after creating Jesus, Jehovah used him to help Him in all His other works of creation, using him as a co-creator. So the other angels were created by the power of Jehovah and Jesus together, and thus cannot be called only-begotten.

We thus have a hierarchy throughout creation, with Jehovah as the Almighty Creator in the first position of power, Jesus as his Son second, followed by all the angelic hosts a close third. Man is 'a little lower than the angels' and is therefore fourth. He is the head of the woman, who

must therefore rank fifth. The lower animals are subject to man and presumably sixth.

When God created the earth and all life on it, He put one of His angels in charge of it, to look after it and to ensure that all life on it should act in harmony with Jehovah's purpose in creating it. He should see that all worship and praise be directed to Jehovah as the Creator. This angel was given a large number of other angels to help him in this task. Thus the heavens of this world or *kosmos* consisted of this guardian angel and his helpers, and the earth consisted of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. 'Heavens' and 'Earth' together made up a perfect world, since all its inhabitants spirit and human had been created perfect by Jehovah.

But here the fairy-tale starts to follow an unexpected course. The plot thickens, as it were. For the guardian angel begins to find the power of his position as overlord of mankind as heady as intoxicating liquor. Hearing the praise and worship of Adam and Eve ascending daily to Jehovah, he thinks how much more pleasant it would be if all this were being offered to him instead. Idly dreaming on these lines, he begins to have visions of endless business expansion. He becomes a business tycoon, gripped by avarice, intent on taking over complete ownership of the world. Instead of the fairy godmother he becomes the wicked uncle. He subtly presents himself to Eve in the Garden of Eden in the guise of a serpent, and with devilish cunning succeeds in seducing her and her husband from their obedient worship of Jehovah into disobedient worship of him. When he presents his idea of a take-over bid to his board of directors, the other angels appointed to help him, they (amazing but true) readily acquiesce. Thus with one fell stroke this guardian angel, for ever after to be called Satan, meaning 'Opposer', had taken over control of both heavens and earth, which composed the originally perfect world.

The angels making up the heavens were now called demons by Jehovah. The earthly paradise was lost, as Adam and Eve were banished from Eden by the cherubs still loyal to Jehovah. In this way the world became wicked, and still is, because Satan and his demons are still in control of the earth. This is still Satan's world because Jehovah has not as yet removed him from his position as overlord of mankind.

Why did the almighty Jehovah not do something about this rebellion as soon as it reared its ugly head? Being omniscient, could He not read the mind of the guardian angel, and noting the trend of his thoughts have him destroyed on the spot? Well, the Witnesses concede, He could have done this of course, but consider what was at stake. Imagine yourself as a great Potentate being challenged to a duel by one of your generals. If you issued the command 'Off with his head!' what would your subjects think? Why, they would conclude that you were frightened of accepting the challenge. To have the man killed on the spot would be a sign of weakness, not of strength. It was so with Jehovah. When Satan challenged Him that he could turn all His earthly subjects away from Him to his own worship, with the eyes of millions of the heavenly hosts fixed upon Him, Jehovah had no alternative but to accept the challenge.

But He did so with one important qualification. He set a time limit on Satan's attempt to prove the challenge. What He said in effect was this: 'An issue has here been raised, as to who is supreme in the universe, Satan or Myself. Now I am prepared to give Satan 6,000 years in which to prove his challenge. And to do that, at some time or other, he must have all people without exception worshipping him on earth. When the six thousand years have elapsed, if he has not proved his side of the issue, I shall then be quite justified in destroying him and his

followers. Then everyone on earth will worship me, and thus I will be vindicated in my position as Overlord of the universe. The issue of world domination, as to who is the supreme ruler, will then have been settled once and for all time.'

And so since the time of Eden, Satan, misusing his position as Overlord of the earth, has been doing his worst to prove his side of the issue, by having everyone on earth worship him. To do this, he has encouraged immorality, crime and violence, selfishness of all kinds to seduce everyone from Jehovah's worship. But, and here is the most important point, there has always been someone on earth who has carried the flag for Jehovah throughout the ages. In other words, there have always been Jehovah's Witnesses on earth. The first one of this long line was Abel, the son of Adam, who was killed by his brother Cain in a fit of envy. And all the righteous men of Old Testament times were likewise Witnesses of Jehovah. The principal scriptural support for this labelling of all the Bible characters as Witnesses comes from the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle lists all the ancient worthies and then says in the first verse of chapter twelve: 'So then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us'. What the apostle means in the light of the context is that since Christians are being watched by all the men of the past of great faith from their position of eternal glory, this thought that we are living under their gaze should prompt us to works of faith like theirs. In a footnote on this verse in his translation of the New Testament, Francis Weymouth says: 'I. Witnesses. Not merely spectators, but such as were qualified by their own experience to judge of our faith'. But to the Society's editorial staff the text can only mean one thing. All the men of faith stretching right back to Abel were Jehovah's

Witnesses, possessed of the same religion as they now have.

It is with such reasoning in mind that the book previously quoted claims that Jehovah's Witnesses are the oldest religion on earth. It is admitted that at times this line of faithful Witnesses may have been dangerously thin. Indeed, where was this line of Witnesses in the years between the writing of the Old and New Testaments, some four hundred years about which we have no Biblical information? (The Witnesses do not accept the Apocryphal books as being inspired by God and therefore do not include them in the Bible at all). Where were the Witnesses from the death of the apostles to 1872? It is asserted in the book *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945), on page 359:

'Though weakly at times, the gospel torch continued to burn down throughout the centuries, unquenched by religion's flood of opposition. Faithful Witnesses of Jehovah continued to triumph over religion, by God's grace.'

But who were these faithful Witnesses? We have vague references to men such as Tyndale, Wycliffe and Luther, who had faith according to the light then shed on God's Word. Whether such men would feel flattered at being considered Jehovah's Witnesses is perhaps questionable. But we are assured, despite these uncertainties, that there has been complete continuity in this line of Witnesses to prove that Satan is a liar in his challenge that all men will serve him and not Jehovah God. The book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* on page 10 refers to 'the long succession of Witnesses that He has had down through the past millenniums all the way back to Abel'.

But during these 6,000 years of Satan's uninterrupted rule over the earth, Jehovah did not go to sleep and say 'Wake me up when Satan has finished', as it were. He had already laid His plans to create a new heavens and a new

earth to replace this wicked world which would be destroyed when Satan's time was up. He would first of all need a new 'heavens', someone to replace Satan as the guardian angel, the Overlord of mankind, and a group of spirits to replace the demons as his board of directors. This time Jehovah was determined to ensure that there should be no slip-up. If human creatures had to suffer a further 6,000 years of misery to settle yet another issue which to them might very well seem irrelevant and unnecessary, even the loyalty of His Witnesses might be shaken! So this time Jehovah decided to replace Satan with the most trustworthy person in the universe next to Himself, His only begotten Son. So that he would make an understanding sort of guardian angel, He sent him down to earth, where for thirty-three years he experienced human life with all its frailty and imperfection. As the guardian angel of mankind, he will therefore be a loving sympathetic overlord, because he knows all our problems by experience.

Reasoning on these lines, who better to join him in his work as his board of directors than earthly men of faith who have had similar experiences to his own? Accordingly Jehovah decided to use men instead of angels for this all-important work, 144,000 of them to be exact, whom He would resurrect at death to spirit life in heaven. Thus Jehovah purposed to have Jesus replace Satan as the guardian angel, the 144,000 men redeemed from the earth to replace the demons, these together constituting 'the new heavens'. 'The new earth', to replace Adam and Eve and all their sinful descendants, would be made up of all the rest of obedient mankind, those who are living at the time of the end of the six thousand years, and those already dead whom God considers worthy of a resurrection to life on earth under the new arrangement.

Unfortunately, for some scriptural reason which to anyone except the Witnesses will seem at once unjust and

obscure, only those who have lived since Christ are eligible to become members of the 144,000, the governing heavenly class. So despite the fact that the ancient worthies, in the words of Paul at Hebrews xi, 37, 38, 'were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn asunder, they died by slaughter with the sword, they went about in sheep skins, in goat skins, while they were in want, in tribulation, under ill-treatment, and the world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth', they must rest content to be members of the 'new earth' class, because they lived and died too soon.

In this way there will be a righteous 'new heavens' and a 'new earth' to make up a righteous new world, all worshipping Jehovah in perfection. Judged from this viewpoint then, Jehovah's Witnesses can rightly be called 'A People with the Most Ancient History', as the first chapter of the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* is entitled, a people who have performed a service of the greatest value throughout the ages. For they alone have kept burning the light of true worship in a world of darkness, without which Satan would have proved his challenge, and evil would have for ever conquered good.

Having this appreciation of the ideas of the Witnesses about their antiquity, one is in a position to understand such extravagant claims as that made by the president of the Society, Nathan H. Knorr, on the completion of *The New World Translation* in 1960.

'With no room allowed for scriptural contradiction, it may be said that the Holy Bible is the Book by Jehovah's Witnesses' (*The Watchtower*, October 1, 1960, page 594). All that Mr. Knorr meant, of course, was that the Bible was written by devout religious men of a bygone age, whom he assumed were of the same faith as he is now. Obviously this assumption leaves plenty of room for contradiction, scriptural and otherwise.

Now there are, I believe, very serious objections to this interpretation of world history as a settlement of an issue between God and Satan. The Witnesses hope to show by their presentation of matters that Jehovah is not responsible for world distress, but it is Satan who is the trouble maker, because he can only prove his point by having everyone completely bent on works of evil. But it is surely impossible to exonerate Jehovah from all blame for world distress if we accept the Witnesses' views. If He is as powerful and as loving as they would have us believe He is, when He sees the appalling effects of Satan's efforts, countless worthy individuals completely overwhelmed by Satan's unrelenting pressure towards evil, billions of humans dying and dead through war, disease and starvation, generation after generation of innocent people suffering agony and pain from one cause or another, surely He could not help but rise from His throne and with one wave of His almighty sceptre shout 'Stop!' Even the most hardened sinful old Potentate, sitting through such a harrowing experience for his short lifetime, would feel a twinge of conscience knowing it was in his power to stop it all. This would only be human. But we are expected to believe that the Divine Jehovah has been watching this horrible spectacle not for seventy years, but for 6,000 years, steadfastly refusing to interfere because of this issue between one of His underlings and Himself, when all the time, having at His command myriads of angels, He could stop the carnage by merely raising His little finger! This picture of Jehovah in relation to world history certainly does not flatter the Divine Person.

What I have just said should not be taken as a criticism of religion in general. I would point out that the Witnesses believe that Jehovah is about to stop world distress within the next few years. If a religion preaches this gospel, it surely lays itself open to the very relevant question as to why this all-important act has not taken place before, long

ago. The answer which the Witnesses give is tantamount to saying that God is for some obscure reason unwilling to do so until His time schedule permits it.

I say for some obscure reason, but the obscurity begins to clear somewhat when we examine the motives of Jehovah, as presented by the Witnesses. In all that Jehovah has done for mankind, He has been prompted by two motives, the desire to vindicate His name, and the desire to bring salvation to man. Now it is repeatedly stated throughout the Society's publications that the first motive is far more important than the second. In other words, Jehovah is far more interested in vindicating His name than He is in saving His human creation. Numerous quotations could be made from the Witnesses' books to verify this statement, but one must suffice here, from *Let God Be True*. To those who have always believed that Jesus came to earth and gave up his life to save mankind, it will come as a surprise to read that 'Jesus went to John, showing the primary purpose for which he came to earth, namely, to bear witness to God's Kingdom which will vindicate the sovereignty and name of Jehovah God' (page 37).

On the following page we read: 'John showed the secondary purpose for which the Son of God came to earth, namely, to die as a holy sacrifice to Jehovah God in order to cancel the sins of believing men and to free them from death's condemnation.'

Thus man's salvation is strictly secondary to God's vindication.

So it would seem that this is why Jehovah has been able to watch 6,000 years of human suffering, presumably without batting an eyelid, because through it all He has noted with the utmost satisfaction that Satan has been unable to persuade all men to worship him. And so Jehovah can proclaim to all concerned, 'I am supreme. There is no one like me in all the world'. He has cleared His name of the

reproach Satan cast upon it in heaven thousands of years ago. 'Ah well', He says to Himself, 'now the issue is settled and this all-important business is closed, let's turn to minor matters. Let's see now, what can we do for the suffering human race?' When the answer turns out to be that He will destroy ninety-nine per cent of them at His Battle of Armageddon, it is not surprising that to most people Jehovah, as presented by the Witnesses, is a decidedly unattractive God. If the name of Jehovah needs clearing of anything at all, it is surely of the reproach incurred from the picture His self-appointed Witnesses have painted of Him.

Having outlined the Witnesses' interpretation of world history as a struggle to the death between Jehovah and Satan, let us see what they make of the history of Christianity from Christ to the present day. In a public lecture on this subject, I remember using an illustration adapted from Jonathan Swift's book *A Tale of a Tub*. The story I told was of a young man attending his father on his deathbed. Both father and son had spent their lives in great poverty, so that the father had little of value to bequeath to his son other than something to which he was sentimentally attached, which was the coat he was wearing. His father had worn it all his lifetime and had become known by the coat, plain as it was in appearance, devoid of the trappings of changing fashions.

In giving him the coat, the father asked the son for two promises: first, that he would always wear it in remembrance of him, and second, always keep it in the same plain style, adding nothing to it. To this the son agreed. However after his father's death, when it became the fashion to wear lace cuffs, the son in compliance sewed lace cuffs to his father's coat. When silk collars were in vogue, he added one of these. In other words, he trimmed the coat to every wind of fashion, so that in the end the coat was quite unrecognis-

able as the one which his father had originally bequeathed to him. The story ends with an old friend of the father meeting the son in the street one day. He recognises the coat and what has been done to it, and so takes out a large pair of scissors and cuts off all the trimmings, thus restoring the coat to its original plainness.

The point of the story was then made. The coat which the father bequeathed to his son represents the true Christian religion bequeathed by Christ to his followers, plain and pure in the truth of its teachings and beliefs. But as his followers travelled the world over, wearing the coat, they came into contact with various pagan philosophies which were then in vogue. Rather than appear out of fashion, they adapted their pure Christian religion to the fanciful ideas of men. And so wherever Christianity went, it accepted the influence of whatever worldly ideas it encountered, until eventually it came to be quite unrecognisable as the plain Christian truth which Christ had left behind him. It was not until 1872 that Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Witnesses, came along with a large pair of scissors and began to snip off all these trappings of false religion to reveal once again the original purity of doctrine enjoyed by the early Christian church.

In other words, the Witnesses view the history of Christianity as a record of ever-worsening apostasy, a movement further and further away from the original teachings of Christ, a movement which remained unarrested until the sudden appearance of Pastor Russell in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Of course there is considerable truth in the allegation that much of Church teaching and practice, and particularly ceremonial, has been derived from non-Christian sources. No Churchman, who is honest and in possession of all the facts, could possibly disagree on this point. Nor would he want to. The Witnesses quote the words of Cardinal

Newman in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*: 'The rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction the existing rites of the populace, as well as the philosophy of the educated class'.

And again: 'The use of temples, and those dedicated to the use of particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the east, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the song Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church' (quoted in *What Has Religion Done For Mankind?*, (1951), pp. 276-7).

This is obviously the crux of the matter. Whilst the Church sees nothing wrong in accepting ideas and practices from sources extraneous to the Bible, probably viewing them as necessary and welcome steps forward in its own evolution and doctrinal development, the Witnesses hold that to add anything to the words of the Book will undoubtedly result in God's adding to those responsible all the plagues written in this Book.

What are the trappings which the modern-day movement of Jehovah's Witnesses has succeeded in stripping from Christianity in order to restore it to its original doctrinal purity? It will be interesting to review some of these so-called 'false doctrines', because we shall find that we need to go far back into the Old Testament to explain why many of them are considered false.

It is worth mentioning that up to a few years ago the word 'religion' was absolutely anathema to the Society. Consider this definition of the word in the book *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers*, published in 1945: 'Religion

means everything that is against doing the will of God. It is the worship given to a creature and is based upon the sayings of creatures in contradiction of God's Word, and hence disannuls the Word of God and makes such of none effect. It is the fear of creatures rather than the fear of Almighty God, the Creator' (pages 284-5).

In the same vein, the information marchers of the late 1930's would often parade the streets with a placard which read on one side 'Religion is a snare and a racket', and, much to the surprise and bewilderment of onlookers, on the other side 'Serve God and Christ the King'. It was not until around 1950 that the Society changed its use of the word, explaining that religion in itself need not be false. It could be either true or false depending on whether it conformed to God's Word, the Bible.

The basic teaching of false religion is held to be the immortality of the human soul. This is because Satan is the originator of false religion, and the first lie he is ever reported to have told is considered to be a statement of belief in human immortality. In the Garden of Eden where Satan as a serpent is tempting Eve to disobey Jehovah by eating the forbidden fruit, Eve resists the temptation by saying, 'God has said "You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it, that you do not die"'. Genesis, chapter iii, verse 4 gives the Devil's answer. ' "You positively will not die, for God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad" '. In other words, Satan was telling Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would not die at all, as God had said, but would be like Him in having immortality.

But Eve of course did die eventually as a result of her transgression. So what of Satan's promise then? Ah, well, here is where he displays such devilish cunning. For when Eve died, he merely had to say that her death was just an

appearance of dying. Her body had died, yes, but her soul would go on living 'like God' in a supernatural sphere. On the basis of this first lie, Satan has built up a huge empire of false religion. By a promise of eternal bliss at death, Satan has in return received the whole-souled devotion of countless millions of worshippers of false religion.

The actual truth of the matter, according to the Witnesses, is that man at death simply expires, lapses into complete unconsciousness, a dreamless sleep, awaiting the day of resurrection when God will restore him to life in His new world. Man does not possess a soul, he is a soul. The Hebrew word '*nephesh*' and the Greek word '*psyche*' are both held to mean life itself when translated soul. Genesis chapter ii, verse 7 is often quoted: 'And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul.' He did not receive a soul, he became one. Thus the soul is a combination of two things, the dust of the ground and the breath of life. When the breath leaves the body and the body returns to the dust from which it was created, man the soul ceases to exist.

How then can God resurrect someone who has ceased to exist? This miracle is attributed to the wonderful power of God's memory. The person still exists in God's memory, because Jehovah remembers the life pattern, the personality, the characteristics of that person. On the day of resurrection God will create a new body out of the elements of the ground and reclothe this memorised personality with flesh, thus resurrecting the individual. To use an illustration to clarify the idea, when a gramophone record is made, a master disc is produced which, when stamped on to the blank wax, thus creates the record. In this case, the master disc is the personality, the previous life pattern with all its personal characteristics, which is stamped on to a blank wax, the newly created body from the dust of the ground.

This is what Jesus is understood to have meant when he said at Matthew chapter x, verse 28: 'And do not become fearful of those who kill the body (the wax gramophone record) but cannot kill the soul (the master disc); but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna' (that is, Jehovah who can destroy both your life now and the prospect of future life in His new world).

There are three observations worth making on this theory. First, it is not very clear whether we shall be able to recognise the resurrected ones in God's new world by their facial characteristics, but when they open their mouths to speak, and when we watch their course of action and how they behave, we shall be left in no doubt as to their identity. The Witnesses are understandably a little vague about this question of identifying the resurrected. Second, it goes without saying that if our resurrection depends on the memory of God, we must be people worth remembering as far as He is concerned. In other words, our pattern of life on this earth must be such as meets with His approval. Otherwise He will not wish to remember us. And Third, a critical analysis of the whole theory will, I am sure, lead one to confirm the conclusion reached by Professor Hoekema in *The Four Major Cults*, that this is not really a resurrection at all which the Witnesses are describing. Because by the very meaning of the word, it is impossible to resurrect something or someone which no longer exists in any tangible form whatever. What the Witnesses are really teaching is a re-creation of the soul, not a resurrection.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, then, is one of the major trappings which needs to be removed from Christianity. Why? Because if man were inherently immortal, what would be the point of sending Christ to the earth to bring everlasting life to man? And how can the Church speak of the future day of resurrection and yet believe in the immortality of the soul, by which teaching

the faithful are transferred to heavenly life 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye'? It is not the purpose of this chapter or this book to become involved in theological disputations for which the writer has little taste. But these are some of the reasons given for rejecting so decisively this 'Satan-inspired doctrine' of the immortality of the soul.

I think the impartial reader will concede to the Witnesses in all fairness that the future hope of life after death which they offer to their faithful followers is a more comforting one than the orthodox for two reasons. First, the hope of eternal life in a Paradise earth is more easily imaginable than that of eternal bliss in heaven, of which none of us can have any real conception at all. And second, although it is true that the Witnesses teach that death means complete non-existence, this does not really detract from the comfort offered by their re-creation hope. For in viewing death as a sleep, they rightly point out that in sleep there is no awareness of the passage of time. One could sleep for a thousand years and not know it, as in the famous fairy-tale of Rip Van Winkle. So if a Witness dies today, he is comforted in this thought, that it will just be like going to sleep today, and waking up tomorrow morning in Paradise. I can think of no better teaching for taking the sting out of death.

It is true too that the funerals of Jehovah's Witnesses are generally not as depressing and morbid as the orthodox, and I think this is because their hope for the dead is more easily grasped and understood, couched in terms and offered within a sphere which we can comprehend. It is a refreshing change from the wings, harps and clouds which are offered to us as consolation by the more conventional religions.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is considered to be another trapping which must be stripped from the coat of

true Christian religion. Since God the Father is held in such high esteem and identified by His personal name of Jehovah, it is not surprising to find that the idea of the Trinity is condemned as blasphemously depriving Jehovah of His exclusive glory in order to share it with the other two persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

But the historical objections to the Trinity idea are most interesting. It is alleged that almost all the religions of pagandom have worshipped God in the form of a Trinity, and that many of them still have this conception of the godhead. Particular attention is focussed on the religion of ancient Babylon, which is considered by the Witnesses to be the seat of false religion. So much so that when the book of Revelation in its eighteenth chapter and its second verse reads, 'She has fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen! and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a lurking place of every unclean exhalation', Babylon the Great is identified as 'the world empire of false religion', as typified by the original Babylon, the source of false religion.

The Society has become increasingly preoccupied in recent years with the subject of Babylon, and in 1963 published a 700 page book on the subject entitled *Babylon the Great Has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules*. The readers who are devout followers of the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or any other faiths, all of which are supposed to be part of this 'Babylon the Great', will be interested to know that their religious empire fell, according to Bible prophecy, in March, 1919, when despite all the efforts of Christendom to stop it the release took place of Judge Rutherford and seven associates from the Atlanta, Georgia prison, where they had been held on charges of subversion for nine months! (*Babylon the Great Has Fallen*, pages 504-5). This book is an extraordinary phantasmagoria of wild beasts with seven heads and ten horns goring scarlet-coloured harlots.

It consists of 700 pages filled with such fantastic scriptural interpretation that one begins to wonder about the mental stability of those who have written it.

It is claimed in the study of the religion of ancient Babylon that a triad or trinity was worshipped, being Nimrod as both Father and Son, and Semiramis as his mother, because Nimrod is supposed to have killed his father, Cush, and married his mother. Numerous other instances are cited of ancient triads of deities (*Babylon the Great Has Fallen*, pages 37-40), leading to the conclusion that this idea was adopted into Christianity as it expanded over the surface of the earth, receiving at the same time a Christianised form as the now familiar Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The effect of this has been to push Jehovah into the background, giving greater prominence to the Son, Jesus Christ, and in some notable religions, to his mother Mary, just as in ancient Babylon, mother and son occupied the central positions of worship at the expense of the murdered Cush. For this reason the Witnesses utterly condemn the Trinity doctrine as blasphemous, and endeavour to disprove it by arguing text for text with those who believe the idea to be founded in scripture.

To complete the picture, they also seek to prove that Jesus was not God the Son, not divine as Jehovah is, and that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but rather the active impersonal force of God. They seem to me to meet with rather more success in showing that Jesus is not God from the Bible than they do in their efforts to impersonalise the Holy Spirit. I am certain that anyone reading the New Testament with an open mind would have to conclude that the Holy Spirit was undoubtedly a person in the view of the writers. I must also add that an impartial reader without preconceived ideas must surely conclude that Christ was never God Almighty, and on this agree with the Witnesses.

Their views on the status of Christ are very similar to those held by Arius of the fourth century, whose views are generally termed by the Church as 'the Arian heresy'. The Witnesses' regard for Arius is shown in the book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* on page 271: Arius, who had wielded the "sword of the spirit" to prove that the trinity was not Scriptural or Christian, was banished, and the emperor (Constantine) sided with Athanasius. From this developed the Athanasian creed'.

It is chiefly because of the Witnesses' views on the divinity of Christ that the orthodox Church refuses to recognise the Witnesses as Christians.

The idea of a hell-fire awaiting the wicked at death is vigorously condemned as being quite unscriptural, unreasonable, contrary to God's love, and repugnant to justice. The chapter dealing with this subject in the book *Let God Be True* is called 'Hell, a Place of Rest in Hope', which is certainly a vastly different picture from the usual conception. According to the original meanings of the Hebrew word 'sheol' and the Greek word 'hades' from which the word 'hell' is translated, hell is nothing more than the common grave of mankind, a place in which mankind rests in hope of a resurrection. Hell is therefore a place to which both good and bad repair at death. The text at Job xiv, 13 is quoted which reads, according to the Roman Catholic *Donay* version, 'Oh that thou wouldest hide me in hell, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me.' When one bears in mind the acute physical discomfort which Job was suffering at the time of making this request of God, it is reasonably suggested that Job would hardly ask God to hide him in a place of fiery torment to relieve his suffering, for that would merely amount to begging to be taken out of the frying pan and placed on the fire. The Witnesses seem to be on firm ground when they are dealing

with the word 'hell', as translated from the two words 'sheol' and 'hades'.

However, there is another Greek word '*Gehenna*' from which the word 'hell-fire' is translated. The Witnesses explain that *Gehenna* has reference to the Valley of Hinnom which was outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Here a fire was always kept burning because it was used as the city's rubbish dump. For purposes of hygiene to keep the heat intense, brimstone was added by the Jews. Hence we have the idea of fire and brimstone as being the lot of evildoers.

The disagreement arises when we ask what *Gehenna* with its fire and brimstone was intended to symbolise. The Witnesses rightly say that it was not a place where anyone was tormented for ever, because if one were thrown into *Gehenna* one would be consumed immediately by the fierce heat. Yet this word has been translated 'hell-fire' in many Bible versions, as in the Authorised Version's rendering of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire' (Matthew v, 22). It is reasoned that to the Jews of Jesus' day *Gehenna* would by its very nature be a symbol, not of torment, but of eternal destruction, a state of extinction from which there would be no possibility of a return. This is the basic difference between hell as translated from '*Sheol*' or '*hades*', and hell-fire as translated from '*Gehenna*'. From *Sheol* or *Hades*, a place of rest in hope, you will be resurrected. From *Gehenna*, a place of eternal extinction, you will not. So a person who dies and whom God intends to resurrect has gone to *Hades*. A person who dies and whom God has no intention of resurrecting has gone to *Gehenna*.

I would like to accept without qualification this view as being completely supported by scripture. But I find it very hard to deny all reference to eternal torment in the New

Testament. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, whilst admittedly only a parable, is obviously a reference to the conditions of after-life. The Witnesses try to give the parable a symbolic interpretation, in which the rich man represents the clergy tormented by the preaching of the Lazarus 'class', Jehovah's anointed Witnesses. This is of course absurd. The Apocalyptic references to being tormented for ever and ever (for example, Revelation xx, 10) unpalatable though they are, merely confirm the feeling throughout the New Testament.

However the hell-fire doctrine is condemned as dishonouring God, frightening men away from Him, painting Him as a sadistic torturer. In any case, if the human soul is not immortal, how can it be suffering conscious torment for eternity? And as *Let God Be True* says, 'The hell-fire doctrine was taught by pagans hundreds of years before Christ' (page 99). In this the Witnesses are on the side of humanity, and are to be applauded for this stand against a particularly revolting religious concept.

Once on the trail of religious teachings which for hundreds of years have been accepted as Christian, but under scrutiny can be proved to be of pagan origin, the Witnesses have certainly cut off from their Christian garb trappings which the vast majority holds dear. Most of the Christian festivals, such as Easter and Christmas, are condemned as being of pagan origin. It is suggested that December 25 was not the birthday of Christ at all, but rather the birthday of Nimrod of ancient Babylon. The cross is held to be a phallic symbol of the male and female sex organs united, and has nothing to do with Christianity, because Jesus was not impaled on a cross but on an upright pole. This view appears to be confirmed by history and archaeology. And did you know that the initials I.H.S. which in a religious context you always thought stood for the Latin motto '*Jesus Hominum Salvator*' (Jesus the Saviour

of Men) really were originally the initials of the three pagan gods of a pagan trinity, Isis, Horus and Seb?¹ Of course, once one begins a witch-hunt of this nature there is no end to what one can find as being tinged with some pagan tradition or other.

The average person's natural reaction to all this is to say, But does it really matter where these things have come from? What if the cross were originally a phallic symbol? It certainly does not mean that to me today. But the Witnesses insist that Jehovah is the kind of Person who resents having His pure worship sullied with anything from any other source than His Word. He is, in other words, a jealous God. One can hardly refrain from the rejoinder that if such trivial matters seem all important to God, He must surely be a very small-minded Person.

I believe that it would be true to say that the Witnesses have something of an obsession with this idea of purity of worship and doctrine. They are quite incapable of taking a historical view of the development of Christianity, as a gradually maturing appreciation of Christ and his gospel. Instead Christianity is pictured as a sow, washed clean by Christ Jesus, that has gone wallowing in the mire of pagan tradition and philosophy. But thanks to God's undeserved kindness the filthy sow began to be hosed down again towards the end of the last century and now eighty years later stands before us, spotless and unblemished, for us to admire!

How the hosing down began in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1872, and how it has continued to the present day, attracting more support from all over the world as it continued, is explained in the next chapter.

1. *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop (London: Partridge, 1916), page 164

A Theocracy is Born

IN contrast with other religious movements, the writings of the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, Pastor Charles Taze Russell, have long been out of print. Today, if one were to ask any of the Witnesses who called at the door if he had read any of Russell's books, the answer in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred would be no. It would not be unfair to say that the Witnesses are discouraged from reading the literature published in the past by the two former presidents, Russell and Rutherford. When I started to attend the meetings of the Witnesses, I noticed at the Kingdom Hall a bookcase filled with the publications from the past. One of the women members of the congregation who had been associated with the movement since the days of Russell, noticing my browsing through some of the old books, came up to me and said, 'I wouldn't do that if I were you.' In surprise I asked her why not. 'Well, there's so much up to date literature to read isn't there? It takes us all our time to keep up with that. And in any case,' she added somewhat mysteriously, 'it can sometimes be dangerous to read old literature. One can easily be stumbled.' I happened to hold this person in high esteem, probably because I knew that she claimed to be one of the 144,000, the heavenly class. So obediently I closed the book and returned it to the shelf.

Why do the Witnesses ignore the writings of their founder in this way? It is not because they do not hold him personally in high esteem. Indeed the book *Qualified to be*

Ministers (1955) says of him on page 312: 'By the fruits he brought forth in his multitude of labours as a minister of the gospel, Brother Russell surely proved to be a faithful witness of Jehovah'. It is rather because the Witnesses believe that their understanding of the Bible is so much more complete and accurate now than it was in the days of Russell. They apply the scripture at Proverbs chapter iv, verse 18, to the development of their knowledge: 'The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.' As the Society has applied itself to the study of the scriptures, they have been unfolded to them more and more, as the light of understanding from Jehovah has beamed brighter and brighter. Whilst they are grateful to Pastor Russell for his pioneering work in setting the movement in motion, they feel that little good can be gained from studying his writings today, because much of what he wrote is now known to be wrong in the light of further understanding of the Bible acquired since his death.

Taking this attitude then, the Witnesses will not be embarrassed in the least by someones pointing out to them the mistakes of Russell or Rutherford. Jehovah is a God of Progressive Revelation, they believe. And they will use the plausible argument to justify this belief, that men could hardly be expected to absorb the full truth all at once. It would obviously be beyond the powers of mortal man, as Jehovah knows only too well. So, having regard for human limitations, Jehovah has chosen to reveal His truth progressively, little by little. In view of this there is little point in reading the half-truths of Russell when one can read the full truths in the Society's current publications. In this way the Society explains its past mistakes and retains the confidence of the Witnesses as God's channel of communication to mankind.

Since the Witnesses do not take any note today of the teachings of Pastor Russell, it follows that little good would be served by discussing his doctrinal teachings here, except to say that they were in some ways closer to the orthodox than present-day Witness teachings. But some details about the man himself and the way in which his work expanded are obviously relevant.

Charles Taze Russell was born in 1852, the son of a clothier, in Old Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents were Presbyterians, but he joined the Congregational Church 'because it was more liberal' (*The Watchtower*, January 1, 1955). However many of the doctrines of the church were quite unacceptable to him, particularly predestination and eternal punishment, and so by the age of seventeen he had lost faith in both the Bible and the Church.

The religious climate of Pittsburgh in those days, it would seem, was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Second adventists, who had on numerous occasions in the previous fifty years set dates for the return of the Messiah without success. Into such an Adventist meeting in 1870 the eighteen-year-old Russell wandered, 'to see if the handful who met there had anything more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches'. He there listened to the teachings of Second Adventism for the first time. He wrote in 1894 of the experience: 'Though his scripture exposition was not entirely clear, and though it was very far from what we now rejoice in, it was sufficient, under God, to re-establish my wavering faith in the divine inspiration of the Bible' (*Harvest Siftings* (1894), pages 93-5).

With his faith restored and his curiosity aroused, Russell and five others began a systematic study of the Bible together. One of the main conclusions at which they arrived was that Christ's second coming was to be invisible, in the spirit, contrary to the ideas of the Second Adventists.

This conclusion was embodied in a pamphlet by Russell, called *The Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return*, of which it is said that some 50,000 copies were distributed.

In 1876 he joined forces with another keen Bible student, N. H. Barbour, who also had his own study group, and together they edited a magazine entitled *Herald of the Morning*, and published a book called *Three Worlds or Plan of Redemption* (1877), in which the year 1914 was first predicted as the date for the end of all the kingdoms of the world. However as a result of doctrinal differences two years later Russell and Barbour parted company. Russell decided to publish a magazine of his own, and accordingly on July 1, 1879, the first issue of *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* appeared. As *The Watchtower* magazine it has been published without interruption ever since.

Russell now decided to close down his business interests, 'which had netted him more than a quarter of a million dollars' (*The Watchtower*, January 15, 1955), to concentrate on evangelistic work. In 1879 he had married Maria Frances Ackley, who was a member of his study group and a contributor to *The Watchtower* magazine. Theirs was a childless marriage and it would seem from later developments an unhappy one. In 1897 Russell and his wife separated, principally it would seem, because other Society members objected to a woman's being in such a prominent position of influence contrary to the teaching of Holy Writ. The book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* states on page 45: 'When Mrs. Russell realised that no article of hers would be acceptable for publication unless it was consistent with the Scriptural views expressed in *The Watchtower*, she became greatly disturbed and her growing resentment led her eventually to sever her relationship with the Society and also with her husband.'

In 1906 divorce proceedings were instituted and Russell was compelled to pay for a court settlement of several thousand dollars.

There have been many attempts to vilify Pastor Russell personally. It would not be overstating the case to say that there is hardly a book written about the movement which does not contain some allegation of misconduct or unscrupulous business transaction. I am in no position to state categorically whether any or all of these allegations are true. What I do know is that since most of them are made by members of other Christian religions, it does seem slightly comical to me that they should be making such scurrilous attacks on Pastor Russell, when in comparison with the private lives of many of their past leaders, Roman Catholic Popes and Protestant dignitaries, Russell would appear as the holiest of saints. If the only objection to Jehovah's Witnesses lay in the personal shortcomings of Pastor Russell, it would be small objection indeed. Many of these writers, particularly of church tracts designed to expose 'heresies', which I have always found to be most obnoxious, seem to work by the rule that any old stick is good enough to beat a dog with. By adopting such tactics they merely weaken their whole position in the eyes of any fair-minded reader.

Russell, like anyone else, should be judged as a religious teacher by his teachings not his personal foibles. In reading his books, Russell seems to me to have been a man of deep religious conviction, possessed of many spiritual qualities which unfortunately have now disappeared from the movement he started as a result of the sweeping changes to which it was subjected after his death.

With the publication of *The Watchtower* and the intensive evangelising campaign on which Russell now embarked throughout America, congregations began to be established in many major cities. Wherever a person began to read

The Watchtower efforts were made to encourage him to share in distributing the magazine to others. In 1881 Russell and others contributed 35,000 dollars to launch 'Zion's Watch Tower Society', a tract publishing organisation. Through this channel millions of tracts and magazines were printed and distributed, two workers even being sent to Britain in 1881 to distribute them in this country. In 1884 the Society became a legal corporation.

The first step towards internationalising the Society took place in 1891 when Russell undertook a world trip, the first of several, calling at all the major cities in Europe. As a result of his preaching, interest was kindled in different countries, and on his return he arranged for the translating and publishing of his books into foreign languages. In 1893 a convention was held at Chicago, to which all the faithful travelled. This was the first of what has become one of the most noteworthy features of the movement, the large mass gatherings up and down the country at football grounds or large public halls. The Chicago convention like all its successors was most successful in confirming the faith of those in attendance, for certainly there is strength in numbers.

There is no record kept of the actual number of associates at that time, but some indication is given by the fact that in 1902 4,700 attended the annual Memorial celebration, and by 1903 over 20,000 were subscribing to *The Watchtower* magazine. With this considerable increase in the circulation of the magazine and the number of associates, the organisation began to receive attention from the orthodox religions. It was generally unfavourable attention because its doctrines were then as today very different from the conventionally held beliefs. It became even more unfavourable when 'In 1900 specially printed 'Withdrawal Letters', on Watch Tower Society stationery, were begun to be sent to the respective churches of their former associa-

tion by those withdrawing. Newly interested ones were encouraged to do this as they became firmly convinced of the truth. This practice continued for thirty years arousing much wrath among the clergy' (*The Watchtower*, February 15, 1955, page 106, footnote).

Little wonder!

In 1900 a branch office was opened in London, in 1903 at Barmen-Elberfeld, Germany, and in 1904 in Australia. In 1905 a convention in Kingston, Jamaica, drew an audience of 600. In 1908 because of the expansion of the work the Society's headquarters were moved from Pittsburgh to New York, where they have remained, except for one brief intermission, ever since. From 1909 onwards the warning of the end of the world in 1914 was preached with ever-increasing zeal. In early 1912 Russell and seven associates made a round the world tour, speaking in places as far apart as Honolulu and Hong Kong.

And so the fateful year of 1914 dawned, and the followers of Russell held their breaths. All expectations were that they who had worked so hard to warn the world of impending catastrophe would be resurrected to heaven, and the world war which then began would develop into the great Battle of Armageddon, resulting in the cleansing of the earth of all unrighteousness. When these expectations were not realised, the inevitable disappointment resulted in much heart searching and rebellion against the Society. The work of distributing the Society's literature began to tail off, as is evidenced by the published figures for those years, viz. 1914—71,285,037; 1915—55,149,578; 1916—30,547,172. This decadent condition was further accelerated by the death of Russell on October 31, 1916, on a train near Pampa, Texas. One can only assume that, dying when he did at a time when the organisation had reached such a low ebb, he must have passed away a most disillusioned and disappointed man.

With the death of Russell a most extraordinary and undignified struggle for power developed within the Society's headquarters at Brooklyn. Judge Rutherford was elected president of the Society in January, 1917. But Rutherford was a completely different man from Russell, and it was the character and personality of this man that was to transform the organisation in a very short period of time, and to give it its distinctive characteristics of the present day which to many people are so repellent. Even the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* concedes that the personality of Rutherford may have had something to do with the troubles of the 1917-1918 period:

'Although Russell was progressive, energetic and positive, still in his dealings with others in the organisation he was kind, warm and very tactful. Judge Rutherford was warm and generous towards his associates, but he also was a brusque and direct type of person, and his legal background and experiences in early life gave him a directness in his approach to problems in dealings with his bothers that caused some to take offence' (page 68).

In sharp contrast with Pastor Russell, the details of whose personal life are common knowledge, almost nothing is known of Rutherford personally. There is very little information about his personal life in the society's literature. I was reading a recent book¹ about the Witnesses some time ago and was surprised to learn that Rutherford was married with children. I do not know the source of this information, but it is certainly true that the Witnesses generally are unaware of this. To them Judge Rutherford is, as he was in his lifetime, something of a legendary figure, the voice of Jehovah speaking from gramophone record and printed page, almost like Melchizedek of old, without human genealogy.

1. Royston Pike: *Jehovah's Witnesses* (London: Watts; 1954).

Whatever else may be said about Rutherford, it is to my mind quite clear that the Society really started afresh under his presidency. His methods were completely different from Russell's, and gradually the message presented in his innumerable books became quite different from that presented by Russell. Under Russell the organisation had been run on democratic lines. Rutherford claimed to have replaced democracy with theocracy. We shall see later how he did this and what in fact the changes involved.

To return to the situation in 1917, knowing the type of man Rutherford was, it would have been surprising if he had been accepted without a murmur by his fellow directors. As it was, only a few months after he became president, he was faced with a rebellion of such magnitude that of the seven men on the board of directors including himself, four declared their opposition to him. Such a situation coming at a time when the fortunes of the organisation were in any case at such a low ebb would have daunted a lesser man. But the four directors in rebellion underestimated Rutherford's ability to successfully overcome crises such as this and deal with opposition. On a legal technicality by which he argued that they had never been properly elected to the board of directors, he dismissed them from office. The upshot of this action was that these men left the Society completely and formed a splinter group, to which many of the members all over the world switched their allegiance. This splinter group, although spintering more and more since 1918, still exists, holding the works of Russell in high esteem, but completely discrediting anything published by the Society since his death. Two of the most prominent of these splinter groups operating today are the *Dawn Bible Students' Association* with headquarters in New Jersey, and the *Laymen's Home Missionary Movement*, which is organised from Philadelphia.

But if Rutherford managed to weather the storm of opposition from within, he was quite swept away by that from without. 1918 was the wrong year to begin issuing inflammatory statements as the Society found out to its cost. America was just entering the war, and the members of the movement, as now, refused to be conscripted. To many in the patriotic atmosphere of wartime, reading their literature which at the time was viciously anti-religious, and hearing of their refusal to fight for their country, they appeared to be seditious, anti-American. And with much publicity about the movement, the government began to think so too.

On May 7, 1918, Judge Rutherford and seven principal officers of the Society were arrested on charges of 'unlawfully, feloniously, and wilfully causing insubordination, disloyalty and refusal of duty in the military and naval forces of the United States of America, when the United States was at war'. When the case was heard the following month, seven of the men including Rutherford were sentenced to eighty years imprisonment, twenty years on four different counts to run concurrently, and one man to ten years on each of the same four counts. With the principal officers of the Society in prison, an executive committee of five was appointed to head the Society. These five continued the writing of *The Watchtower* magazine, but felt obliged under the pressure of public opinion, to sell the Society's premises in New York and move back to the less inflamed climate of Pittsburgh. However when the war ended, the eight men were released on bail pending appeal, and finally on May 14, 1919, their convictions were reversed, because, in the words of the then judge, 'the defendants in this case did not have the temperate and impartial trial to which they were entitled, and for that reason the judgment is reversed'. It is surprising how the process of justice can operate so differently in the heat of war to the tranquillity of peace!

With the release of Rutherford and his associates from gaol, the Society received the psychological impetus it needed to implement the theological about-face which had already been worked out concerning the events of 1914-18. All that had happened, it was explained, was that 1914 had been misunderstood as the end of all kingdoms, instead of the end of the Gentile times, or 'the appointed times of the nations'. God's kingdom had indeed been set up in heaven invisible to human eyes, but a generation was to elapse before it would finally bring an end to all the kingdoms of the earth. In the sense that the setting up of God's kingdom sounded the death knell of Satan's hope of world domination, ensuring the ultimate destruction of him and his world at the not too distant Battle of Armageddon, it could be said that to all intents and purposes the world had ended in 1914. On March 24, 1918, just prior to his incarceration, Rutherford had given a lecture at the Brooklyn Academy of Music entitled, 'The World has Ended—Millions Now Living Will Never Die!', a title which became to many Rutherford's signature tune over the years. The fact that this lecture was delivered early in 1918 illustrates the speed with which the Society had remodelled its thinking on 1914 to conform to the historical facts of the time.

For two reasons the troubles of the Society and the imprisonment of its leaders at this time all worked for a rebirth of zeal and enthusiasm. First, the leaders were viewed as martyrs for the faith, suffering as did the early Christians for the righteous cause of true religion. It is a well-known fact that persecution tends to fan the flames of fervour rather than extinguish them. And second, immediately after the release from prison, the Society asserted that all its past troubles including the imprisonment of its leaders were in fulfilment of Bible prophecy.

Revelation, chapter xi, verses 1 to 13, was selected to

explain what had happened. Jehovah had in fact been angry with his people. Why? Because they had been held in spiritual bondage to Babylon, the symbol of the world empire of false religion. In other words, they had still been tainted with many of the pagan teachings and practices which stemmed from ancient Babylon.

'Such pagan holidays as Christmas were being celebrated, and even the sign of the cross was used as a sign of Christian devotion' (*Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 91).

They were organised democratically instead of theocratically. They believed that the governments of the world were ruling by divine power and hence were in slavish fear of them. For this reason Jehovah addressed to them the words of Revelation, chapter xi, verse 3, 'I will cause my two witnesses to prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days dressed in sackcloth.'

This period of three and a half years was interpreted to apply to the decadent condition of the movement from November 1914 to May 7, 1918. On that latter date verse seven is held to have applied: 'And when they have finished their witnessing, the wild beast that ascends out of the abyss will make war with them and conquer them and kill them.' In other words, this verse is believed to refer to the imprisonment of Rutherford and his associates. But the scriptures go on to show that the Witnesses were due to rise out of the dust of inactivity for renewed zealous service. Verse eleven reads: 'And after the three and a half days spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet...and their enemies beheld them.'

If one might be permitted a play upon words to sum up this Biblical interpretation, one could say that this is indeed an ingenious hood-winking of ingenuous people. But this newly found wisdom after the event, this ability to put a glamorous scriptural gloss on what had been an extremely

sordid and unpleasant period of the Society's history worked like a charm. When a convention was held at Cedar Point, Ohio, in September, 1919, over 7,000 were in attendance at the public lecture. It simply goes to prove that when people really want to believe, are desperate for reassurance that their faith in a movement has not been ill-founded, then they will believe almost anything, however absurd it may seem to the uncommitted observer.

The reason given for all the Society's troubles—that in the pre-1919 period it had been tainted with Babylonish traditions and religious teachings—gave Rutherford the all-important lever he had been needing. For now he had the excuse, Scripturally supported, for remodelling the Society according to his own ideas, taking a position far more extreme than Russell would ever have contemplated or approved. Of course nobody could very well dispute the changes being made, because a dissenter would be made to realise that these changes were being made in the interests of pure worship, to avoid ever incurring the displeasure of Jehovah again, as had happened under Russell during the First World War.

When one reviews the changes that Rutherford brought about one sees 'the sweet reasonableness of the Christ', which the Society had to some degree possessed under Russell, swiftly disappearing as the era of big business methods under the eagle eye of 'Big Brother' emerged. The tolerance of a democratically run society was stamped out by the dictatorship of a totalitarian theocracy. With every step it took from 1919, the Society became more authoritarian, more intolerant, more aggressively self-assertive, with each step being justified by reference to Holy Writ, and with every so often a backward glance at itself, its history up to that time being presented as a miraculous fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. If this sounds a harsh assessment, I will leave the facts of the

Society's history under Rutherford to establish its fairness.

It is important to see the Rutherford era as the gradual evolution of a 'theocratic' organisation, because this is in fact what it was, an ideal to which Rutherford dedicated every effort to realise. In the days of Russell the congregations had been run by elders elected by the members, thus making the congregations completely autonomous, independent of headquarters control. Step by step this arrangement was replaced by direct supervision by the Society.

The first step was taken when Rutherford outlined the work that was to be done in advertising the fact that God's Kingdom now rules and will shortly bring an end to this evil world. A new magazine was introduced in 1919 called *The Golden Age* (now known as *Awake!*), and this magazine was to be used in the house-to-house campaign which Rutherford launched. In a pamphlet entitled *To Whom the Work is Entrusted* (1919), Rutherford explained: 'The Golden Age work is a house-to-house canvass with the Kingdom message, proclaiming the day of vengeance of our God and comforting them that mourn.'

If a congregation wished to take part in this new campaign, it was asked to register as a service organisation with the Society, who then appointed one of its members as the 'service director'. In this way the Society gained control of the congregations' house-to-house work, bringing it under its direct supervision. The 'elective elders' however still had control of the congregations' meetings.

In 1920 everyone in the congregations who engaged in house-to-house preaching was required to turn in a weekly report of his activities. The Society was really beginning to organise the work, and gradually to introduce the business methods which I have outlined in previous chapters. In 1922 the monthly broadsheet of instructions began to be published 'encouraging all as "valiant warriors" to memorise Society-prepared testimonies, first called a

“canvass”, in offering the Bible literature’ (*The Watchtower*, May 15, 1955, page 299).

The word ‘organisation’ was insistently repeated year after year in the Society’s publications, and finally in 1932 *The Watchtower* published two articles on ‘Jehovah’s Organisation’, which resulted in the abolition of the ‘elective elders’ system to be replaced by the ‘theocratic’ arrangement of Society-appointed servants. By 1938 the transformation was complete. No longer would the congregations vote its elders into office. Rather they would be appointed by the Society’s headquarters staff. Quoting from the resolution on this matter which the congregations were required to adopt:

‘We . . . recognise . . . that “THE SOCIETY” is the visible representative of the Lord on earth, and we therefore request “The Society” to organise this company for service and to appoint the various servants thereof, so that all of us may work together in peace, harmony, righteousness and complete unity.’

Thus ‘Big Brother’ emerged, and of course as one would expect he had full scriptural backing for his dominant position. The verses used this time are found at Matthew xxiv, 45-7: ‘Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings’ (*New World Translation*). The Society was thus identified as the faithful and discreet slave whom Jehovah had appointed over all his belongings, the congregations of his people. All those who in the past had refused to accept the Society’s right to assume autonomous control, such as many of the deposed ‘elective elders’, were identified with the ‘evil slave’ of the following verses. ‘But if that evil slave should say in his heart, “My master is delaying”, and should start to

beat his fellow slaves and should eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect . . . and will punish him with the greatest severity and will assign him his part with the hypocrites. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be' (Verses 48-51). Thus did the Society brand its opposers, the upholders of the old democratic system which 'Big Brother' had so cleverly destroyed.

Every event in the Rutherford era of the Society's history was ingeniously equated with the fulfilment of Bible prophecy, to prove to the faithful that Jehovah was indeed approving and blessing the setting up of this 'theocratic' arrangement. For instance, the verses at Daniel xii, 11, 12, were applied to the early days of the Rutherford administration. These read: 'And from the time that the constant (feature) has been removed and there has been a placing of the disgusting thing that is causing desolation, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Happy is the one who is keeping in expectation and who arrives at the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days!' The 'constant feature' was removed in the year 1918 when the constant praise to God by His people was stopped by the imprisonment of the Society's leaders. The 'disgusting thing that causes desolation' refers to the League of Nations which was set up by January, 1919. So by the close of this month both of these events had taken place and the 1,290 days can begin to count. Counting three years and seven months from the end of January, 1919, brings us (roughly) to September 8, 1922, when at the Cedar Point convention Judge Rutherford launched the world-wide preaching campaign with the words 'Advertise, advertise, advertise the King and His Kingdom!'

The 1,335 days are held to count from this day and therefore bring us to May, 1926, when, lo and behold, an international convention was being held in London. We

should then turn to Daniel viii, 13, 14 for our next prophetic fulfilment, which reads: 'And I got to hear a holy one speaking, and another holy one proceeded to say to the particular one who was speaking, "How long will be the vision of the constant feature and of the transgression causing desolation, to make both the holy place and the army things to trample on?" So he said to me, "Until two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; and the holy place will certainly be brought into its right condition.'" It is asserted that 'the transgression causing desolation' was committed by the nations of the world in May, 1926, when they refused to listen to Judge Rutherford's condemnation of the League of Nations at the London convention (even though the Society paid for a full page of *The Daily News* to be devoted to a complete report of the speech), or to withdraw their support from it and turn instead to supporting God's established Kingdom. Hence on May 26, 1926, began the period of 'two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings'. Counting from that date, we are brought to October 15, 1932, on which date according to Daniel 'the holy place will certainly be brought to its right condition'.

Well, about that date, the New York congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses adopted a resolution calling for the ridding of the organisation of the 'elective elder' system, which was modelled 'after the political style of the ancient Greek states and the democratic Anglo-American dual world power' (*Your Will Be Done on Earth* (1958) page 215). So by this resolution which was generally adopted throughout the world and published in *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1932, the 'holy place', that is, the Society, had certainly been brought into its right condition, as a full-blooded theocratic system stripped of the corrupt trappings of democracy.

In the years 1922-28 a convention was held each year with

gradually increasing audiences. At each one Judge Rutherford spoke in his highly hostile manner condemning the League of Nations, the clergy of Christendom, the Anglo-American dual world power, in fact, the Devil and all his works. These seven successive conventions were then shown to be in fulfilment of Revelation, chapters eight and sixteen, in which seven angels each blew a trumpet and poured out seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth.

Now although all this scriptural perversion is absurd to anyone outside the movement, it is quite easily acceptable to those inside, who in any case study these scriptural applications regularly each Tuesday at their group studies. If one believes that the organisation to which one belongs is one that is directly ruled by Jehovah through His Society, it seems quite natural to believe that Jehovah with His remarkable foreknowledge should be able to foretell each step of its future progress. In this way the faithful are greatly strengthened by these manifestations of Jehovah's direction of His Society, and are more convinced than ever that the Society is indeed God's channel of communication with human creatures on earth.

With the advent of radio, the Society was quick to realise the potential of this new medium of mass communication and through its own radio station, WBBR, on Staten Island, New York, 'Rutherford's was the best-known and most frequently heard voice in America' (*The Watchtower*, July, 1955, page 392). Efforts were made to drive him off the air, for as well as the voice being the best-known, it came to be the most detested. The Catholic Church was particularly energetic in this campaign against Rutherford's broadcasts, not without reason because that Church was the chief object of attack in such broadcasts. These efforts met with considerable success, and to counteract this, the Society switched to a different medium of publicity. The lectures of Judge Rutherford were recorded on gramophone

records, each Witness was supplied with a portable gramophone, and instructed to employ this new method of preaching in his house-to-house work. In this way Judge Rutherford quite literally spoke at the doorsteps of the world.

Opposition to this work was understandably aroused in religious circles, especially when one considers that Rutherford would quote regularly on his records such statements as 'All religion originates with the Devil' and the like. Particularly attempts were made to invoke by-laws to suppress this work, but these efforts met with little success because the Witnesses were quite prepared to appeal such cases to the Supreme Court if necessary, which often it was. It is fair to say in this regard that the Witnesses performed a service of great value in America by this litigation, because in securing their own right to freedom of worship they were also securing it for other minorities. As C. S. Braden says in his book *These Also Believe* (1950), 'They have therefore made a definite contribution to the preservation of some of the most precious things in our democracy.'

Since this has been accomplished by a group which is unalterably opposed to the principles of democracy in its own organisation, this provides a rather strange illogicality!

When the Second World War began the Witnesses experienced great persecution because of their stand of Christian neutrality. This is examined and explained in the next chapter. They suffered as much if not more than the Jews at the hands of the Hitler regime in Germany, but in every country they were disliked intensely for their attitude towards the war.

During the war Judge Rutherford died at the age of seventy-two, on January 8, 1942. As a postscript to the Rutherford era, it is interesting to note that whilst the Society was thus presented as 'the faithful and discreet slave', which was feeding the brothers with spiritual food,

it was in effect Rutherford who had been doing this because he was writing all the Society's literature, and there can be little doubt, making all the major decisions from his position of autonomous control. But of course it was only wisdom to refer to the Society being the faithful and discreet slave rather than himself for two reasons. First, if Rutherford had made such a personal claim it would have appeared that he was putting himself in the position of God, building up a 'Rutherford-ocracy', as it were, instead of a theocracy, seeking to establish his own religion and attract followers for himself. And, second, his death would then have been a crippling blow to the organisation which he had built up. So Rutherford never presented himself in this light to the members of the organisation, but rather, as *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 68, puts it: 'Rutherford . . . realised that the president of the Society was merely an instrument to be used to maintain the entire organisation as a servant of God, and to see that this servant of God was equipped to carry on the work assigned to it.'

It is important too to appreciate that Rutherford laid no claim to a direct revelation from God in reaching his decisions and formulating his ideas. In this respect he adopted the same attitude as his predecessor, Russell, of whom it is said on page 17 of the same book: 'He made no claim of a special revelation from God, but held that it was God's due time for the Bible to be understood; and that, being fully consecrated to the Lord and to His service, he was permitted to understand it.'

This has always seemed to me to be a difficult point to grasp because it does not really answer the question, 'How did Russell or Rutherford arrive at their decisions?'. If the Lord did not actually reveal the truth to them, the least He can be said to have done is to have opened their eyes to see it, or as the above quoted book put it, have permitted

them to understand it. There does not seem to me to be much difference between having ones eyes opened by God to see the truth and having the truth especially revealed to one, and so I must conclude that both Russell and Rutherford in actual fact believed themselves to be recipients of divine revelation.

Prior to his death, it would seem that Rutherford had already made it clear as to who should be his successor, for at the last general meeting of the Society which he attended at Pittsburgh Nathan H. Knorr had been elected vice-president. So this time there was to be no undignified struggle for power as in 1916, when Russell died. Rutherford had organised the Society so efficiently and the recognition of 'the faithful and discreet slave', the acceptance of theocratic rule and procedure, was now so well established in the minds of all concerned, that the transition of power took place smoothly and without incident. This in itself was a tribute to the success of Rutherford's work in transforming Russell's democratic system into a theocratic organisation from which independent thoughts and ideas had been completely rooted out. *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1942, described the transition very well and provided a fitting epitaph on Rutherford himself:

' . . . the Lord's work is now so well organised under the leadership of the Lord himself that there is complete unity and harmony in the field at large, at the Bethel family, and among the members of the boards of directors of both the Pennsylvania and New York corporation of the Society. There are no "fifth columnists" of the adversary anywhere manifest as were so noticeable from 1916 to 1918. . . . On the afternoon of January 13, 1942, the full membership of the two boards convened in the parlor at the Brooklyn Bethel home. Nathan H. Knorr, who at the last general election at Pittsburgh was elected vice-president, had requested several days before that the members of the

boards make it a point to earnestly seek divine wisdom by prayer and meditation, that they might be guided aright; and this they did. . . . After due and careful consideration the following brethren were respectively nominated and unanimously elected, namely, Nathan H. Knorr, as president, and Hayden C. Covington, as vice-president, of the two corporations' (pages 61-3).

Nathan Knorr, who has been president since 1942 to the present day, was born in 1905, and has been a Jehovah's Witness since the age of sixteen and a full-time worker for the Society since the age of eighteen. His career has been mainly associated with the business side of the organisation,—for instance, in 1932 he was appointed general manager of the publishing office and plant—and there is no doubt that he has brilliant organising and executive abilities, and that the spectacular progress of the movement since his accession to the presidency is due in no small part to the shrewdness and determination of his leadership. As a speaker he is much less of an orator than was Judge Rutherford, but appeals more to the reasoning powers of his audience and is therefore more interesting to listen to. His position is certainly one which carries a very onerous responsibility, and often towards the end of large conventions he is visibly tiring as a result of his extensive travelling and non-stop crowded schedule. His major speeches are read from a manuscript, presumably for fear of misquotation, which of course is a much more arduous method of delivery than extemporaneous speaking. His audiences generally enjoy his impromptu talks, usually at the end of conventions, most of all.

The changes under the new administration have been markedly fewer than those adopted after the death of Russell. One of the most notable is that the personality of the president has been much less in evidence. The Society has become completely anonymous. All the books published

since the death of Rutherford bear no name as the author, but simply 'Watchtower Bible and Tract Society'. When the Society writes a letter to an individual or congregation, it always rubber stamps it with the Society's title in place of a personal signature. This is presumably to ensure that no personality cult shall arise, or the mistaken impression be given that 'the faithful and discreet slave' is any individual rather than the Society.

There has been much more emphasis on the training of the individual Witnesses for house-to-house work. Since the accession of Mr. Knorr, the Theocratic Ministry School has been introduced, and first class facilities have been created for the training of missionaries for work abroad. As a result of all this training, instead of the voice of Rutherford booming forth at the doorsteps from a gramophone record, each individual Witness can now present his own individual testimony. And as an inevitable result of the message being presented so much more effectively, from 100,000 Witnesses preaching at the death of Rutherford in 1942, there are now well over a million reporting service today. I believe that it would be true to say that the Society has become much more constructive in its outlook over the past decade. Rutherford seemed intent on pulling down the edifices of false religion, commerce and politics. The Society today seems much more interested in building up a New World Society in place of what Rutherford destroyed, ready for the day when they will take over the world.

One of the most far-reaching consequences of this gradually evolving theocratic organisation has been the growing awareness that light has no fellowship with darkness. The theocracy is completely separate from this evil world and all its political and religious systems. Christians want no part of it. The theocracy works on different principles, has different laws from the rest of man-

kind. But though Christians are no part of the world, they are still in it, having to earn a living in it, and having certain social duties in respect to it. How a theocratic organisation can come to terms with a world which it considers to be its enemy has set the Society many problems in the past and still does today. Some of these problems and the Society's solution to them will now be examined.

A Society within Society

ADULTERESSES, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God.' These words of the apostle James (chapter iv, verse 4) are as it were engraved on the heart of every Jehovah's Witness. Their whole attitude towards the world outside is set by this text. To the Witnesses, two worlds at present exist side by side, Satan's old world to which the vast majority of mankind belongs, and Jehovah's new world to which His Witnesses belong. The worlds are as diametrically opposed to each other as are their rulers. The Witnesses thus see themselves on one side and the rest of the world on the other side of a great dividing wall far more impenetrable than the Iron Curtain which at present exists between the Eastern and Western blocs of nations. And there is no such thing as 'sitting on the fence' in this issue. As Jesus said, 'He that is not for me is against me'. If you are not pro-Jehovah, you must be pro-Satan. There is no position of neutrality. It would constitute what is termed 'spiritual adultery' therefore, for the Witnesses who are wedded to Christ as it were, to have relations with the Devil's world, a sin of which the Church stands condemned as being obviously guilty.

Now the Witnesses rightly point out that it is natural to be influenced to some degree by those with whom we associate. But, as *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1961, put it on page 394:

'In an unrighteous society this influence is not for your good and should be resisted. The closer you associate with such a community the more difficult it will be to combat its power to mould you to be like it. The safe course is to keep separate from it, and this can be done although you live in it'.

Hence the Witnesses avoid as far as possible association with non-Witnesses, because to become unduly friendly with one of the world could result in making oneself an enemy of God. For this reason, if one of the Witnesses happens to work at your place of employment, you will notice that whilst he usually does his work conscientiously and well (because this is part of the Society's teaching also), he will be conspicuous by his absence from works outings or parties or from any social rendezvous outside working hours. Of course with his crowded schedule he would hardly have time to be present anyway. But even so it would be against all theocratic principles to have social intercourse with those outside the organisation, except for the purpose of preaching to them in an attempt to convert them.

The Society not only states this principle of isolationism, but is at pains to show how it works out in individual cases so that there will be no possibility of misunderstanding how all-embracing is its application. A typical example of this is given in the same issue of *The Watchtower* just quoted which states on page 401:

'Single persons who are not living at home often find it advantageous financially to share a room with another single person. When a dedicated Christian finds this necessary, he will be making a serious mistake if he chooses to room with a worldly person who does not share his love for God and for the righteous standards of the Scriptures. Such close contact with a person whose thinking is not Scripturally good can be a corrupting influence on him. It

would be better for him to room by himself than with someone who would be a continually bad influence on his thinking.'

One would have thought that if a person really believed he possessed the Truth, as the Witnesses do, then he could exercise a very good influence on someone with whom he shared rooms, in fact he could perform a most valuable service to that person by teaching him by example as well as precept what possessing the Truth really means. One cannot help thinking that the motive behind such admonition as this seems to be a fear that by listening to a worldly person's conversation a Witness might compare the free climate of individual thought to the highly restricted climate of controlled thought in which he is contained, and might draw unfavourable conclusions.

In view of this isolationist attitude therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses can quite fairly be described as a society within Society. For this withdrawal from social intercourse with the outside world is only a superficial expression of an attitude which goes much deeper. For the Witnesses claim that they are governed by a different law, 'theocratic law', than the law of whatever type of society in which they happen to find themselves. With such an attitude they are indeed a separate community within our society and this concept is worthy of some attention.

It is most important to appreciate that when Jehovah's Witnesses say they believe that God's Kingdom was established in heaven in the year 1914, this is not just a vague theological notion to them. God's Kingdom is for them a practical reality. It rules their lives quite literally through 'the faithful and discreet slave', the Society. They do not so much consider themselves as subjects of the British government with the Queen as their head of State. Rather they are subjects first of all of God's heavenly Kingdom, and their allegiance is therefore given to it

rather than to the country of their birth. Patriotism is therefore completely alien to the spirit of the movement. The spirit of nationalism is seen to be wrong because it exercises such a divisive force. Under God's Kingdom are found subjects of all races, colours and nationalities. The Witnesses thus see themselves as a new nation, composed of people from all over the earth who have given up their original nationality, as it were. Whilst living under different forms of worldly government, they are really only temporary residents, aliens, because they belong to this supra-national new nation, subjects of God's heavenly Kingdom, whose laws contained in the Bible they must obey. I cannot stress this conception too much in trying to explain the basic thinking of the movement, because unless this idea is appreciated it is quite impossible to understand properly the Witnesses' attitude to the governments of the world.

But how can one live in a society with one form of government, earning a livelihood in it and drawing social benefits from it, and at the same time be governed by the laws of another, a supra-national society, to which one gives complete allegiance? The answer is provided by the words of Jesus at Mark, chapter xii, verses 14 to 17, where Christ was asked whether it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar or not. He then asked for a Roman coin and questioned his inquisitors as to whose image and inscription it bore. On being informed that it was Caesar's, he then enunciated the famous principle 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'.

For the Witnesses this principle works out in the following way. Since they live in a society governed by Caesar, they must render to Caesar what rightfully belongs to him. When asked for tax they must pay tax, because they are thereby merely paying for the social benefits in which they along with everyone else participate. Whatever Caesar provides for them they will gladly pay for. But that is as

far as their obligation goes towards Caesar. God, not Caesar, gave them life. God through Christ is their real ruler now that His Kingdom is established in heaven. So they do not owe their lives to Caesar, and will not lay down their lives for him in his military service. They will not worship him in any way. They will not salute his flags nor stand to attention at his national anthems. Their worship, their allegiance, their support, their lives, these are God's things that can only rightfully be rendered to God.

As long as Caesar merely demands what rightfully belongs to him, he will find that he has no more co-operative people with which to deal than Jehovah's Witnesses. For they are taught that, whilst at work, they should give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. 'Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah and not to men' (Colossians iii, 23, *New World Translation*). It is considered to be stealing time from an employer if one plays when one is being paid to work, if one leans on one's shovel when one is being paid to dig a hole, if one extends a tea-break far longer than the employer lays down. And stealing time is just as reprehensible as stealing money. In the same way the Witnesses will only support a strike if it is officially sanctioned by the union. They will have no part in 'wild-cat' strikes. They will neither attempt to fiddle their income tax returns nor accept money which has not been honestly earned. For this reason they refuse to gamble. 'If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat' (II Thessalonians iii, 10, *New World Translation*). This is not just because the law of Caesar prohibits these things. The theocratic law prohibits them too, and this is much more important to the Witnesses. All this is obviously very laudable theory with which everyone will concur, but human nature, even Witnesses nature, being what it is, it does not always work out quite so laudably in practice. However the important thing is that a high standard is set,

and so better results are undoubtedly achieved in the field of public morals by the movement than in the world at large.

It is when Caesar begins to demand things which belong to God that trouble starts. Then the Witnesses take their stand on the words of Peter and the apostles when being ordered to stop preaching by the Sanhedrin. 'In answer Peter and the apostles said: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men"' (Acts v, 29, *New World Translation*). Therefore Caesar's laws must in this case be disobeyed despite the consequences.

But does not Paul write at Romans xiii, 1, 2: 'Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God. Therefore he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God; those who have taken a stand against it will receive judgment to themselves'? Unfortunately he does, and the Witnesses have had more difficulty in trying to interpret this text to fit in with their ideas than any other in the Bible. They have several times changed their views on how the scripture is to be understood, casting doubts thereby on Jehovah as the God of progressive revelation, and making it appear that He is One who is unable to make up His mind. In the days of Russell the text was accepted on its face value, but after the troubles of 1918, Judge Rutherford was quick to point out that this was one of the main reasons why Jehovah had been angry with His people. For accepting the text in this way had resulted in their being held captive by fear of man.

The text, Rutherford explained, was not referring to the worldly governments as 'the superior authorities' at all. Rather they were in fact Jehovah God and Christ Jesus, the principal rulers of God's congregation. This view continued to be held by the Society until 1962, even though in reading

the whole of the thirteenth chapter of Romans it is quite obvious that the words of Paul could not possibly support this interpretation. But in 1962 the Society suddenly reverted to the old Russellite interpretation. By reading the introductory context of the words, the Society had eventually arrived at the conclusion, which must be obvious to the most superficial reader of scripture, that 'the superior authorities have their setting logically in the world outside the congregation' (*The Watchtower*, November 15, 1962, page 683).

This did not revolutionise their attitude to the world outside the congregation however. The article went on to say that 'the subjection that Christians must render to the "superior authorities" is merely relative, for it does not leave God and conscience out of consideration'. And a little later it made the position quite clear: 'When Christians subject themselves to Gentile "superior authorities" with their different systems of government and law, they conform themselves to those laws that show the work of conscience according to what God originally wrote in man's heart. Since the Christians' subjection to worldly "superior authorities" is only relative, it does not obligate them to obey any worldly laws that go contrary to the laws of the Supreme Lawgiver, Jehovah God' (page 690).

Indeed the article goes on to state with some justification that one of the worst offenders in the past against this scriptural rule to be in subjection to worldly authority has been the Roman Catholic Church, which in times past 'tried to boss the political "higher powers" instead of being subject to them like true Christians' (page 692). This would seem to be a fair verdict supported by the facts of history.

This article on Romans, chapter xiii, is a well-written one, because it displays an intelligent approach to the Bible, a desire to take account of the context of Paul's words,

both literary and historical, in order to arrive at the proper meaning. It is a pity that this should be an exception rather than the rule.

Despite this 'new light' on scripture, as I have said, the Society's attitude remained unchanged towards the laws of Caesar in cases where they conflict with the laws of God's kingdom. One of the most important conflicts of law takes place when a war begins and conscription follows, for then, as is well known, the Witnesses dig in their heels most firmly and refuse to be conscripted. Not only this, but they refuse to be directed into any other work of a non-combative nature such as agricultural work. The Witnesses' attitude towards war is very often so completely misunderstood that it will be worthwhile to go into some detail to explain the basis of it and the reason for their actions.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not, emphatically not, pacifists. It would be very difficult indeed for them to take such an attitude when they are looking forward with such expectancy to the Battle of Armageddon, the greatest war of all time. They point out quite rightly that in times past Jehovah has been a God of war, particularly in the days of ancient Israel. Obviously nobody can be a pacifist who reads and believes such words as 'Jehovah is a manly person of war. Jehovah is His name' (Exodus xv, 3), or, 'Pass through the city and strike. Let not your eye feel sorry, and do not feel any compassion. Old man, young man, and virgin and little child and women you should kill off—to a ruination' (Ezekiel ix, 5, 6). But the attitude of Jehovah has changed towards war. If the Witnesses had thought that in the Second World War Jehovah's interests had been definitely identified with one of the sides involved and required their taking up arms in defence of those interests, there is no doubt that they would have been the first to do so. But since the days of Jesus, God has not been taking sides in wars between nations, and so His Witnesses do not do so either.

In such wars they are neutral, as they claim Jesus himself was. The only war in which they can engage on behalf of God's Kingdom is a spiritual warfare, in which their weapons are the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the large shield of faith, and their enemy is this Devilish system of things, to which men are enslaved and from which by the Witnesses' preaching they can be emancipated. The symbolism is Paul's at Ephesians vi, 10-13. They cannot fight for God's kingdom in any other way, because Jesus said at John xviii, 36, 'My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But as it is, my Kingdom is not from this source.'

Why though will the Witnesses not permit themselves to be directed into other work as many other conscientious objectors do? Because of their dedication vows to Jehovah. They have given their lives exclusively to God's service, and are under obligation to preach of His established Kingdom. Therefore 'any refraining from preaching because of complying with men's arbitrary commands to stop are in Jehovah's eyes unfaithfulness' (*Let God Be True*, page 236).

The Witnesses claim exemption from military service on two grounds apart from their being conscientious objectors. First, because they are ministers of religion. In Britain a test case was brought in 1954 and was appealed as far as the House of Lords. The man selected was a pioneer, a fulltime worker for the Society, and also a congregation servant, a presiding minister in charge of a congregation. Surely such a man should be recognised as a minister of religion and therefore be granted exemption from military service like ministers of other religions?

The case was heard in Edinburgh, where Lord Strachan gave his judgment on January 7, 1955, to the effect that Jehovah's Witnesses was undoubtedly a religious denomination. Since the movement had been operating in Britain

since the 1880s, this finding was not altogether surprising, although on reflection it seemed strange that it had taken so long for the movement to be so recognised. If this was so, then according to the provisions of the National Service Act of 1948, could any of its members claim exemption as, to quote the Act, "a regular minister of any religious denomination"? Lord Strachan decided not. A minister of religion, according to him, "is in some way set apart in spiritual things from the ordinary members of his communion". In the case of the Witnesses, this requirement was not satisfied because, since all preach, all are therefore recognised as ordained ministers. That is why the congregation servant is often termed 'presiding minister', because he is in fact presiding over a congregation full of ministers.

When the argument was raised that the apostles did not have any particular qualifications and yet were ministers and the Witnesses were merely following their example, Lord Strachan commented: 'That argument is, in my opinion, beside the point, for it is quite obvious that in exempting a regular minister of a religious denomination from national service in 1948, parliament was not thinking of a minister such as those who preached in the early church, but of ministers of religion as known in modern times.' Obviously Lord Strachan was not prepared to set aside historical context as the Witnesses are in the habit of doing all too often. Even though the case was eventually appealed to the House of Lords, this original judgment was upheld. And so, in the eyes of British law, Jehovah's Witnesses is a religion without ministers!

The other ground on which exemption is claimed is as ambassadors of God's Kingdom. It is pointed out that an ambassador of a foreign power who resides in this country is exempted from rendering political obligations of any sort to the government. Using Paul's words at II Corinthians v, 20, rendered somewhat ungrammatically by *The*

New World Translation, 'We are therefore ambassadors substituting for Christ', the Witnesses present themselves as ambassadors of God's kingdom. 'Since that government will stand for ever it is the greatest of all governments. It follows that its ministers or ambassadors deserve the same rights and exemptions as such officials of this world enjoy' (*Let God Be True*, page 235).

It is hardly surprising that the powers that be are quite unmoved by this argument, which is only convincing to the Witnesses themselves.

Still, however unacceptable the arguments put forth, there is no denying the tremendous courage displayed by the Witnesses in support of their ideals. Nowhere was this courage more apparent than in Hitler's Germany, where the same stand against military service which in this country brought upon them terms of imprisonment, in Germany brought sudden death in front of a firing squad. Along with the Jews, the Witnesses bore the brunt of Hitler's insane persecutions in the concentration camps without flinching or renouncing their faith. In a letter to the Society in 1945, quoted in the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, Genevieve de Gaulle, niece of the General, wrote of her experience of the Witnesses in the Ravensbrück prison camp for women:

'I have true admiration for them. They . . . have endured very great sufferings for their beliefs . . . They could have been immediately freed if they had renounced their faith. But on the contrary, they did not cease resistance, even succeeding in introducing books and tracts into the camp, which writings caused several among them to be hanged. In my block I knew three Bible students of Czech nationality fairly well. As a protest they refused several times, together with other members of their faith, to go to the roll call. I was present myself at very painful scenes where I saw them beaten and bitten by the dogs without renouncing

their resolutions. Moreover, in faithfulness to their beliefs, the majority of them always refused to participate in war industries, for which attitude they suffered maltreatment and even death.'

Hitler's followers were obviously the victims of gross political indoctrination. But as strength met strength, the power of religious indoctrination triumphed. Hitler had no answer to the Witnesses short of slaughtering them by the thousand. Although the Nazi regime took a fearful toll of the Witnesses, when it toppled in 1945 the movement experienced fantastic increases in Germany in the post-war years.

I admire greatly the Witnesses' stand against war, although I cannot now fully concur with their reasons for taking such a stand. But of course the important thing is, that in contrast with so many people who merely talk about their distaste for war, the Witnesses acted upon their beliefs. They stood up for their faith at great personal cost to themselves and the world took notice of their united stand. I myself was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for refusing to perform national service and, feeling strongly even now about the futility of war, do not regret that decision. It would seem to me now however that there can be no real objection to being directed into other work not connected with the war effort. For then one is doing something constructive rather than placing an additional burden on the State to keep one in prison, which is a somewhat futile and negative gesture.

The war issue is of course only one of many raised by the conflict between the laws of Caesar and the laws of God. I have already mentioned that the Witnesses refuse to salute the flag or stand for the national anthem. The flag-saluting issue brought them a tremendous amount of trouble in America during the war, because flag-saluting was compulsory even in the school classroom, and many times they

became victims of mob violence. To salute the flag is interpreted as an act of worship, 'an act that ascribes salvation to the national emblem and to the nation for which it stands' (*Let God Be True*, page 242). This is surely a most extreme view to take of an act which to most people is nothing more than a demonstration of their respect and affection for the country of their birth. The refusal to stand when the national anthem is being played is made even more incomprehensible by the fact that the Witnesses have no objection to standing when a judge enters a courtroom, because this latter act is merely acknowledging respect for his authority! I cannot help thinking that, since one of the signs of 'the last days' is held to be that God's people will be 'hated of all nations for my name's sake' (Matthew xxiv, 9), these unnecessary issues are raised merely to provoke persecution to fulfil such Biblical prophecy, and at the same time satisfy the Witnesses' deep-rooted sense of martyrdom. For their courageous stand against war they gained the unstinted admiration of many people. It is a pity that this childish attitude towards the flag and the national anthem should alienate such hard-earned sympathy.

One of the most disturbing features of the Witnesses' interpretation of Jesus' words on the rendering of Caesar's things to Caesar but God's things to God has been their complete abnegation of all social responsibility. Because they see themselves as a society within society, separate and distinct from it, they therefore see themselves under no obligation to vote for any candidate at elections or to serve on juries. Their vote has already been cast for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, their Government already holds office without the need of democratic sanction. In view of this, to vote for some worldly politician would constitute a traitorous act towards God's established kingdom, an act worthy of death at Armageddon. In any case, God holds a democratic community responsible before Him for the

acts of the leaders it has thus empowered. And who would want to be held responsible before Jehovah for the behaviour of the corrupt politicians of these 'last days'? And so the world, minus the Witnesses, must elect its own governments; the world, minus the Witnesses, must judge its own criminals.

What of all the social reform and welfare work which is being tackled so vigorously and so admirably by so many dedicated people through numerous charitable organisations, missionary societies and other social institutions? All this work, we are crisply informed by *The Watchtower* magazine, is a complete waste of time. The only work in which Christians can profitably engage is of course the preaching of the good news of God's kingdom, which, when its benefits eventually reach the earth after the Battle of Armageddon, will sweep away all social injustice, all vice, poverty and oppression. For the Witnesses to spend their dedicated time in social work would be wasteful, to say the least, for the following reason. If they were to call on old people and clean through their homes for them, the houses would eventually get dirty again. If they were to give money to someone starving, that person would soon spend it and be reduced to the same condition again. But if instead they preach to these old or starving people the good news of God's established kingdom, this message will bring such ones hope and contentment now (and I must be fair and add that, provided the message is accepted, the Witnesses will then help these people materially also) and for the future an assurance that soon in God's kingdom all the evils which are afflicting them now will be for ever removed. In other words, the social gospel can bring only temporary benefits. The Kingdom gospel gives everlasting life with permanent benefits.

Of course if all the assumptions were true, the social reformers would indeed be wasting their time. For what

point would there be in trying to reform and improve a world which God has set His mind to destroy? *The Watchtower*, in its issue of August 15, 1960, page 488, put it even more bluntly: 'To join in with this world's programs of reform, preaching the "social gospel" instead of the Kingdom good news, places one at enmity with God.'

And so we are to understand that the devoted workers in such causes as The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief or Alcoholics Anonymous, are by performing such work of incalculable value to society thereby incurring the incalculable wrath of Jehovah!

Although the Witnesses thus contract out of all social responsibility in the world, an attitude which seems to me both anarchical and pernicious, yet it should be realised that they do assume these responsibilities within their own small society. Whilst they refuse to spend time in social welfare work in the world at large, they do, as I have already mentioned, recognise the need, the Christian duty, to help members of their own faith materially as well as spiritually. Whilst they will not serve on a jury, they have their own judicial system for dealing with offenders within their theocratic arrangement.

Since this is so, and we have now reviewed the Society's attitude to the world outside, it will be interesting to proceed to look inside, into this closely knit society and examine its own theocratic judiciary. In doing so, we shall have opportunity to explain its ideas on crime and punishment, its views on sex, marriage and morality, and its attitude towards the controversial issues of our day such as birth control, abortion and many others of topical interest.

Judge, Lawgiver and King

‘UNLIKE man-made democratic government, all the judicial force, legislative power and executive authority reside solely in the Theocrat. Says the prophet: ‘Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King’’ (Isaiah xxxiii, 22, *American Standard Version*). And yet such is not a harsh, dictatorial and cruel authoritarian regime.’ (*Let God Be True*, pages 139-140). It is certainly unusual in any free society to find the judiciary, legislature and executive all in the hands of one person. It would normally be deemed most undesirable because of the risk of such a regime becoming just what the above-quoted book specifically denies the theocracy to be. The risk is only present, the Witnesses will argue, when such all-inclusive powers are placed in the hands of an imperfect human. In a theocracy these powers are in the hands of a perfect God. But of course the Witnesses must concede the obvious point that, since we are referring to a system of government operating in a human society, the powers that are presumed to belong to Jehovah God must be delegated to someone in that society. God must have human representation. Since Jehovah has judicial, legislative and executive powers, then whoever is delegated these powers on Jehovah’s behalf is obviously being put into a position of unassailable strength. Since the Witnesses are taught to believe that Jehovah has delegated all this authority to His ‘faithful and discreet slave’, the governing body of the organisation, ‘the Society’ as it is called, it is not difficult for the reader to appreciate

how easily the Society has built up a regime which, to the outsider looking in, has become the epitome of everything that the book *Let God Be True* asserts it is not.

The judicial responsibility in each congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses is vested in a committee of three men, the congregation servant, his assistant, and the Bible Study servant. These three men, in addition to their normal duties, have the responsibility of 'keeping the organisation clean', and thus must hear all cases of misconduct which come to their notice either as a result of private confession or by information supplied to them by someone else. They do not deal with personal difficulties between individuals, unless these are proving to be completely irreconcilable. It is assumed that the individuals will sort out such matters between themselves. Only where some scriptural rule or principle is alleged to have been violated is it a matter for the committee's consideration, on the congregation's behalf.

The committee will send a letter to the individual who is charged with misconduct, summoning him to a meeting at the hall. As in a court of law, he is at liberty to call any witnesses he chooses to speak on his behalf. But the committee is not interested in just 'character witnesses': they must have testimony pertinent to the charge. The prosecution of course will call on witnesses to substantiate the charge. It is a scriptural principle that the testimony of one witness is insufficient for a point to be established. There must be at least two or three.

When the committee has heard all the evidence, it then adjourns to consider its verdict. If it finds the person guilty of the charge, there are two punishments it can mete out. If it believes that the person is guilty and unrepentant of the wrongdoing, or that the wrongdoing has been committed many times over a long period of time, being thus a practice of sin rather than an impulsive act, or if the wrongdoing is such as to attract a deal of notoriety and

adverse publicity for the movement, then in most cases of this sort the committee will decide to disfellowship the person. *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963, on pages 411-12 outlined what this action means:

'A disfellowshipped person is cut off from the congregation, and the congregation has nothing to do with him. Those in the congregation will not extend the hand of fellowship to this one, nor will they so much as say "Hello" or "Good-bye" to him. He is not welcome in their private homes, even if such home serves as a centre of worship for a local group of Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . While he may attend all meetings at the Kingdom Hall that are open to the public, he will not be permitted to talk to individuals, address the congregation from the platform, nor contribute to discussions from his seat. As long as he behaves properly he may come and sit, but if he becomes obstreperous he will be asked to leave. Additionally, he will no longer represent Jehovah's organisation in the field ministry. His activity will not be recognised by the congregation, and if he turns in a report of any activity, it will not be accepted or recorded.'

In other words, he is in a very complete way being 'sent to Coventry'. This discipline generally lasts for twelve months, at the end of which time it is assumed that by a person's submitting to such treatment in complete humility he has thereby demonstrated his repentance for his offence. The committee will then summon him to a meeting, and if he satisfies them of his change of heart, they will probably decide to reinstate him in the congregation. But he will never be used in any position of responsibility in the congregation again, as he can never be considered as completely trustworthy.

When one considers that the Witnesses are discouraged from having any other friends than those in the movement, based on *The New World Translation's* rendering of

I Corinthians xv, 33: 'Bad associations spoil useful habits', the reader will have some idea of the severity of this punishment. The writer has experienced this punishment, and was very glad that he had not been so foolish as to reject all association other than the Witnesses, as he had been instructed. Otherwise, he would have been in a sorry plight indeed. Anyone of a nervous or sensitive disposition being subjected to this grossly immoral treatment could quite easily suffer very serious reactions.

The scriptural justification for this action is revealing. Deuteronomy chapter seventeen, verse five is quoted with evident approval: 'You must also bring that man or that woman who has done this bad thing out to your gates, yes, the man or the woman, and you must stone such one with stones, and such one must die. . . . The hand of the witnesses first of all should come upon him to put him to death, and the hand of all the people afterward; and you must clear out what is bad from your midst.' The Witnesses are fortunately prevented by law from enacting this revolting scene literally. Instead they enact it symbolically. The offender is thrown outside their walled city, their organisation, and by the members refusing to speak to him they are in effect stoning him with stones of disapproval of his offence. If the new world of righteousness that the Witnesses believe is just round the corner did materialise and was controlled and inhabited exclusively by Witnesses, one shudders to think what would happen to anyone who stepped out of line!

On the other hand, if the committee feels that the wrongdoing was committed impulsively, and that the individual is sorry for what he did and is determined not to commit it again, then it will most likely put the person on probation for twelve months. During this time, certain privileges will be taken from him and he will need to report to the congregation servant at the end of each month

that there has been no repetition of the offence. At the end of the probationary period the committee will meet the individual again and, all things being equal, will restore him to full privileges in the congregation. Unless circumstances such as pregnancy make it unavoidable, the committee will not normally inform the congregation of a person's being thus probated. By means of this machinery in each congregation 'Jehovah is our Judge'.

The theocratic law which the committee is empowered to enforce is said to be based completely on the Word of God, the Bible. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that whilst the Bible is held to be the Lawbook, the Witnesses specifically state that they are not bound by the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai in 1513 B.C. This belief is based on the numerous statements in the New Testament both by Christ himself and his apostles, to the effect that the Mosaic law was embodied in a covenant between God and man which Christ came, not to destroy, but to fulfil. At Christ's death, this covenant was nailed with him to the torture stake and replaced by a new covenant based on two principles, first, to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and second, to love your neighbour as yourself. Obviously if I am to love my neighbour as myself, I will not steal from him, or desire to have intercourse with his wife, and most certainly will not attempt to murder him. As Paul put it at Romans xiii, 10, 'Love is the law's fulfilment'.

However although the fulfilment of the Mosaic law covenant in no way altered the necessity for Christians to refrain from stealing or committing adultery, the Fourth Commandment is considered by the Witnesses to have been a fatal casualty of this fulfilment. This commandment, of course, refers to the keeping of the sabbath day. This law only applied to the Jews under the old law covenant and passed away with the death of Christ, as did all the

ceremonial and sacrificial laws. So the Witnesses do not keep the sabbath except in the sense that they observe it every day 'by exercising faith in the life-giving provision through His Son Jesus Christ' (*Things in Which it is Impossible for God to Lie* (1965), page 297). So, as we review the various theocratic laws, we shall find that very few of them are based entirely on texts from the Old Testament. Unless they are carried over into the New Testament, unless they are quoted with approval by Christ or the apostle Paul, we can rightly conclude that the Witnesses have assumed that any other Old Testament regulations passed away at the time of Christ's impalement.

By far the greater proportion of misdemeanours with which the committee will have to deal will be of a sexual nature. Before we discuss some of these, it will be well to review the Society's attitude towards sex and marriage.

The word 'sex', *The Watchtower* informs us, is taken from the Latin verb 'secare' meaning 'to cut'. When Adam in the Garden of Eden was put into a deep sleep in order to have one of his ribs removed, around which the Almighty God could build his newest and latest creation, Woman, it was just as if he was cut in half, half of him being taken from himself and embodied in the woman. This is the basis of sexual attraction between man and woman, for the two halves are merely being irresistibly drawn together to be united in their original oneness again.

When Adam opened his eyes the next morning and beheld the woman Eve before him, perfect, naked and unashamed, Jehovah, by making the formal introduction of one to the other, thus performed the first wedding ceremony. Marriage is thus conceived to be of divine origin, and the marriage relationship one which transcends all other human relationships. The Witnesses thus have a very high regard for the sanctity of marriage, for the

permanency of the ties which are bound and of the vows of faithfulness which are uttered at the ceremony.

Not only do the Witnesses explain the origin of marriage, but they also speak surprisingly of its future termination. In their house-to-house preaching work, when they explain their conception of God's new world as a place in which everyone will live for ever and bring forth perfect children, they are often asked the obvious question as to where all the increasing crowd of people are going to live as the human race continues to reproduce without anyone's dying off. The answer given is that when God sees that the earth is filled to a comfortable capacity, then child bearing will cease. *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1960, on page 654 explained it in this way: 'When this purpose (of filling the earth) had been accomplished, the perfect married couples would exercise perfect self-control and refrain from producing further children. According to God's will and arrangement, their power to reproduce would also reach its limit and would cease functioning.'

I can hardly imagine this statement making the new world any more attractive to the normal man or woman! In the same vein, in the marriage ceremony as performed by the movement, the bride and bridegroom are required to repeat after the minister, 'I call upon these persons here present to witness that I . . . do take you . . . to be my lawful wedded wife, to love and to cherish according to the divine law as outlined in the Holy Scriptures for Christian husbands for as long as we both shall live or until the divine termination of the marital arrangement.' In view of this idea that the marriage state will cease to exist when no more children are required, one could be forgiven if one assumed that the Witnesses believed that sexual union was exclusively for the purpose of procreation.

But in fact the Witnesses take a much more realistic view

of this matter than that. *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1962, page 703, admitted:

'That it (sexual union) should be not only the means of procreation but also a means of allaying passion and a source of satisfaction and delight is not out of harmony with God's Word'.

The Society therefore takes a neutral attitude towards birth control, holding that the use of any type of contraceptive is entirely a matter of individual conscience. It has never presumed to lay down strict rules on this matter, and thus has avoided the extraordinary dilemma which at present faces the Roman Catholic Church on this issue.

But if birth control by natural or artificial means is unobjectionable the Society has felt obliged on a number of occasions to interpret the words of Paul at Hebrews xiii, 4: 'Let marriage be honourable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement.' The above quoted issue of *The Watchtower* had this to say:

'There are definite organs, male and female, for sexual intercourse. Their intended purpose and proper use are very apparent. It is only in this proper and God-ordained way that these organs should be used. Departures from the proper and natural use of these organs in order to satisfy the craving for unnatural intimacy with sex organs, or in order to excite animal passions is unclean. It is degrading . . . It is a perversion and is unhealthy.'

It would seem that a lively imagination in such matters can be a distinct disadvantage here! What the writer of *The Watchtower* would have to say about the thirty or so different methods of congress outlined in the infamous *Kama Sutra* one shudders to think!

Sexual union, then, is permissible to Christians on two conditions: one, that they are married, and two, that it is conducted in a manner that is 'proper and natural', whatever that may mean. It goes without saying that sex before or

outside marriage is absolutely taboo. When this happens and a confession of it is made, the unhappy couple are usually put on probation. If they decide, or are required by circumstances, to get married while they are still on probation, they will not be permitted to use the Kingdom Hall for their wedding and so must resort to the office of the Registrar. By doing this of course the couple will thereby be informing the congregation tacitly that they have been guilty of fornication and are on probation, a fact that the committee, out of consideration for them, had refused to disclose.

The Society has recently had much to say about the importance of proper sex education of children by their parents, and much of its counsel on this matter is quite admirable. Sex problems are approached and discussed with a refreshing frankness. There is no 'hole in the corner' attitude, no vague discussion of the 'birds and the bees'. The problems are faced in a completely healthy, uninhibited manner, which coming from a religious organisation is saying something. A very good example of the excellence of the Society's counsel on this is furnished by an article in the *Awake!* of June 8, 1965, entitled 'A Father Talks to His Sons'. The purpose of the article was to give suggestions to parents as to how to discuss sex with their children. In this instance the father was explaining to his twelve-year-old son the mechanics of sexual intercourse, and that God has rules to govern this because it is the means of passing on life. So his son asks,

"So God has rules on sex because of babies?"

"Yes, Johnny, that's one of the main reasons. God has rules on sex because he intended that every baby brought into the world should have both a mother and a father who would take all the responsibility of raising that child."

"That's a lot of responsibility."

“Yes, indeed. So, what if you used the sex organs for a wrong purpose? What if you started a new life through misuse of them? You could ruin the life of a girl and ruin the life of a baby. Moreover, how could a young boy with no job and no home of his own take on the responsibility of providing for a family?” (pages 18-19).

The article continues in the same vein to outline the imaginary conversation, which I am sure any father would find most helpful and useful.

Since sex before marriage is prohibited, anything which is likely to cause the breaking of this rule is therefore strongly discouraged. And so we read:

‘Proper conduct in courting is very important, because it is a dangerous thing to overstimulate the powerful sex impulses. It is something that is not to be trifled with’ (*The Watchtower*, June 15, 1963, page 365).

In similar vein, ‘Flee “necking” and “petting” as you would the plague! As for dancing, that would depend upon the type of dancing, the individual you danced with as well as yourself. It may prove to be a means of wholesome relaxation and then again it may prove to be the worst thing for you’ (*The Watchtower*, September 1, 1959, page 543).

Again: ‘Single persons in dancing with those of the opposite sex should certainly not dance so close as to develop some type of sensual pleasure from the dancing. That would be grossly improper’ (*The Watchtower*, January 1, 1965, page 31).

Or, ‘The wearing of extremely tight-fitting and revealing clothing should be avoided’ (*The Watchtower*, June 15, 1963, page 364).

And it follows that ‘Christian parents should always know where their children are, and teenagers should never be ashamed to tell their parents where they were and what they did’ (*The Watchtower*, June 15, 1963, page 365).

The Society also strongly condemns the practice of masturbation, to which it understands the text at II Corinthians vii, 1 is referring: 'Beloved ones, let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit.' Debating at length on this subject, *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1959, said on page 543:

'We must resolve in our minds that it is displeasing to Jehovah for it is unclean in his sight, and that even though it may be a source of physical pleasure to us it definitely interferes with our giving Jehovah exclusive devotion'.

Interestingly, although the above quotation is from a *Watchtower* answer to a number of readers' questions on the matter, one of which apparently asked if the practice were not justifiable on the grounds of its being universally practised, no attempt is made in the answer to tackle this justification.

Now I do not wish to be misinterpreted as condoning or encouraging immorality, but there does seem to me to be an element of extreme puritanism in this advice to young people which I feel betrays a lack of realism. Let us uphold the standards of morality by all means and stress moral values to young people. But it is surely the wrong way to go about it to lay down rules and regulations to cover every contingency of their private lives. Let us make proper sex education available to them, as the Society so admirably does. But having done that, it would surely be a wiser course to leave it at that, allowing young people to apply these principles themselves, rather than applying them for them and turning them into rules. Otherwise I can quite imagine young people, on being informed that it is not permissible for them to 'neck' or 'pet', or join in modern dancing because it is too sexy, or wear fashionable clothes because they are too revealing, or even indulge moderately in the medically harmless practice of masturbation, asking the Society, 'What then should we do? Hold hands and

exchange Bible quotations?' Of course if they have been subjected to proper theocratic training, they will not need to ask this question because they will know the answer already. They should be studying God's Word together and preaching from door to door.

In view of this rather puritan unrealistic attitude, when the Society begins to discuss such sexual deviations as homosexuality, it is not surprising that the brickbats begin to fly with a vengeance. Whilst psychiatrists and the most learned men of the world who have spent a lifetime studying this subject are unable to give a complete explanation of the causes of this social phenomenon, the Society is apparently quite convinced that it knows all the answers. Homosexuality, we are assured, is caused by extreme selfishness, it is a condition which men have brought about themselves for their own selfish purposes, and one which, social surveys have shown, hardly one of them wishes to alter. Thus the homosexuals are described as 'those who are disgusting in their filth' (Revelation xxi, 8), 'past all moral sense' (Ephesians iv, 19), and undoubtedly will not inherit God's Kingdom. 'It should be viewed as an abominable thing that leads its willing victims in the way of death' (*Awake!*, January 8, 1965, page 16).

It could hardly be expected that the Witnesses would subscribe to the modern, enlightened view which has been expressed recently in both Houses of Parliament (and, the Witnesses add, by archbishops and bishops too, people who ought to know better!) that since there have always been homosexuals in every society and always will be, they must therefore be accepted as a part of society, to which in any case some of them make an important contribution. Admittedly, it is usually an artistic contribution, but the world would be a very much poorer place from any point of view if it had been deprived of the works of Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Tchaikovsky or Hans Christian

Anderson, to name but a few of a long list of great men who I am given to understand were all homosexuals during their lifetime. If this is so, I find it very difficult to understand how such works of unsurpassed beauty could have been created by men who, according to the Witnesses, were 'disgusting in their filth'. The Witnesses quote with utmost disapproval the Quaker view of this subject expressed in a pamphlet published in 1963, which suggested that society 'should no more deplore homosexuality than left-handedness. . . . Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse.' I think the Witnesses can be forgiven for not accepting this attitude because it is as yet by no means the generally accepted one, although it seems to me to be a realistic one.

But we might have expected that, from instincts of humanity, although they could not accept the homosexual, they might have viewed him as many other Christian religions do, with compassion, even pity, as someone who is sick and in need of psychiatric attention, or as someone to be pitied because he is unable to enjoy the fuller pleasures of life which accompany the bringing forth of children and the entry into the happiness of family life. But because a voice thundered forth from heaven 3,500 years ago, 'Thou shalt not lie down with mankind as with womankind, it is abomination', the Witnesses are trained to consider this subject only with the deepest loathing, which shuts out any humanitarian considerations they as individuals might otherwise have harboured. The homosexual is not in need of help or understanding. He is in need of burning.

Before leaving the subject of sex and marriage, I should add that marriage is not recommended to young people generally as the better course to take. Singleness is much to be preferred. The whole tone of the Society's attitude is set by the seventh chapter of Paul's first letter to the

Corinthians. There Paul writes: 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman; yet, because of prevalence of fornication, let each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband' (verses 1 and 2). 'Now I say to the unmarried persons and the widows, it is well for them that they remain even as I am. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to be inflamed with passion' (verses 8 and 9). 'Consequently he also that gives his virginity in marriage does well, but he that does not give it in marriage will do better' (verse 38). This sounds a very strange attitude indeed towards marriage, and it is true that much of Paul's writing, especially when he seems to be expressing a personal opinion on something as here, is criticised today as being rather unbalanced and immature. It is certainly a very distasteful recommendation that one should get married merely 'because of the prevalence of fornication'. I can hardly imagine a father saying to his son today, "I say, son, there's a lot of fornication about, you know. You'd better get married." However, it should be appreciated that Paul believed he was living in 'the last days'. 'Moreover, this I say, brothers, the time left is reduced' (verse 29), and it was because of this firm belief that he thought it better for Christians to remain unmarried. For being unmarried, they would then be undivided in their attention to spiritual things. 'The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord's approval. But the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he may gain the approval of his wife, and he is divided' (verses 32-4).

So then, on the basis of Paul's words, young people are encouraged to pursue singleness as the better course, one in which more opportunities in missionary work are open to them, greater privileges in the Society are extended to them. And it is suggested, for their further encouragement, that in God's new world in which all persons will be

married and participate in the divine mandate to reproduce the species (much to the horror of some elderly spinsters in the movement who cannot accept this at all!) Jesus Christ will find for these ones perfect marriage mates. He will pick the partners so that a perfectly happy marriage is assured for them. God's new world is certainly going to be a highly organised place!

The other side of the coin to marriage, divorce, is by comparison simply explained. There is only one acceptable ground for divorce according to Scripture as Jesus put it at Matthew xix, 9, 'I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery.' So the only Scriptural ground for divorce is adultery. This act breaks the marriage tie in the eyes of Jehovah, and so to seek divorce on this ground is not a case of man putting apart what God has put together. God already sees the marriage as null and void. The commencement of divorce proceedings is merely an outward endorsement in the eyes of men of a severance that has already taken place in the eyes of God.

But what of two Witnesses, man and wife, who find that for reasons of temperament or other reasons they are incompatible? Obviously divorce is out of the question. So what are they to do? *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1963, commented on such a situation: 'One or both of those professing to be Christians are not applying Bible principles. Somewhere these vital principles are being pushed aside, ignored, and personal inclinations have taken their place. Where God's counsel is applied, the results cannot fail' (page 570). In other words the Society cannot accept that there is such a thing as a genuine case of incompatibility among the Witnesses. However if all attempts at reconciliation fail, then they will be permitted to separate, but, of course, must live lives of complete chastity. This is certainly a very sad and unsatisfactory situation.

The position changes considerably in complexion when one marriage mate is a Witness and the other is not. I have already mentioned some of the difficulties which this position brings about in a household in a previous chapter. The Society's views on separation in these circumstances is that the initiative on this should come from the unbeliever if at all possible.

'If it is to be broken, the Christian should endeavour not to be the one that makes the break. However, if the unbeliever separates, the Christian would let him depart' (*The Watchtower*, September 15, 1963, page 571.)

Three valid grounds for separation are however suggested on which the believer could make the break himself. One is wilful non-support. If the unbelieving husband wilfully refuses to support his wife and family, the believer may then leave him taking the children with her but of course she is not free to remarry. Extreme physical abuse is given as another reason. If this treatment is such as to be placing health and life in jeopardy, then separation is permissible. If the believer is finding it quite impossible to practise his religious activities as he believes he should because of the extreme restrictive action of his partner, then he may choose separation on this third ground also. But *The Watchtower* emphasised:

'Naturally, if the circumstances are extreme, one may choose to resort to separation, but it should be a step taken only as a very last resort, after all other efforts to correct the situation have been exhausted, and after prayerful consideration' (page 572). The Society over the years has toned down its counsel considerably to those living in religiously divided homes. Whilst today it does not advocate compromise, it certainly goes to great lengths to demonstrate how argument and contention can be avoided and the raising of unnecessary difficulties sidestepped.

I have already mentioned the Society's attitude towards birth control. In leaving the subject of sex and marriage, I will briefly comment on the viewpoint taken of the other vexed subjects of abortion and sterilization. Both of these practices are absolutely condemned on any ground whatever. 'Abortion is a violation of God's law against killing' (*Awake!* December 8, 1964, page 20). So even if such an operation were being performed to save the life of the mother, it would seem, although this article does not expressly say so, that the practice is still considered to be morally wrong. Again the Witnesses find the views expressed in the Houses of Parliament utterly abhorrent. Sterilization is condemned because the law of Moses in effect prohibited it. No man sterilized or castrated could serve as a priest in the nation of Israel, and *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1959, drew our attention to the curious law set forth in Deuteronomy xxv, 11, 12: 'God so cared for the procreative organs of the male that if any woman took part in a fight between her husband and another man and reached out and grabbed that man by his privates to disable him, she was to have her hand cut off' (page 415). The *Authorised Version* in translating this verse, with becoming modesty renders the word for 'privates' as 'secrets'. On the basis of such scriptures therefore the Society cannot see any justification for sterilisation being used to combat the population explosion, as I understand is at present being contemplated in China.

There are many other grounds on which a person can be disfellowshipped from the organisation other than just sexual misdemeanours. One of the most objectionable is for attending the religious services of other denominations. If a Witness becomes persuaded of the truth of another religion, and leaves the organisation for that church or society, the Witnesses cannot just leave the matter at that, viewing it as any other church would do, that the individual

is exercising his freedom of religious belief and should be respected for it. Rather a letter is sent to him in the usual way, summoning him to a meeting of the committee. If he does not attend, as in these cases he usually will not of course (why should he?), then his case will be heard in his absence and he will undoubtedly be 'sent to Coventry' for interfaith or apostasy. This action is justified by reference to Paul's words at II Corinthians vi, 14, 15: 'What fellowship does light have with darkness? . . . Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever?', and the basis for action is held to be contained in verse 17: "Therefore get out from among them and separate yourselves", says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing." This is a particularly revolting example of gross religious intolerance.

The drinking of alcoholic beverages is not in itself condemned, contrary to the uninformed opinion of many. Provided that moderation is observed, and the places in which such drinking takes place are not of ill-repute, the Society views this with complete tolerance. However if someone is habitually drunk despite all the warnings and admonitions he receives, then he will eventually be disfellowshipped for this.

The practice of smoking tobacco is condemned by the Society, strangely enough on the same grounds as masturbation is condemned, as a defilement of the flesh. Whilst no disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who uses tobacco, such a person will not be used in any position of responsibility in the Society until he has broken the habit. If a servant in the congregation is found to be smoking, he will automatically be deprived of his position. Nor can anyone who smokes be appointed as a pioneer, a full-time worker for the movement.

The taking of a fellow Witness to court is particularly frowned upon. Paul's words in the sixth chapter of First

Corinthians are quoted to show that God disapproves of such action: 'Does any one of you that has a case against the other dare to go to court before unrighteous men, and not before the holy ones' (verse one). Rather the Witnesses, for the sake of public relations if nothing else, should settle their differences using the facilities offered by the congregation. It should be clearly understood of course, that if an indictable offence were brought to the committee's notice, the offender would be turned over immediately to the civil authorities. This would simply be rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. But if a Witness takes another to court when the matter could have been settled within the organisation, he will not be disfellowshipped for this action, but he will be considered to be immature and will not be appointed to any position of responsibility within the Society.

Thus in review, a person can be disfellowshipped for fornication, adultery, sodomy, stealing, gluttony, drunkenness, for attending the religious services of another church, or giving or taking blood as in a blood transfusion. But for smoking, masturbating or taking a fellow Witness to court he will merely be restricted as to his privileges within the Society. In this way 'Jehovah is our Law-giver'.

In concluding this discussion of the Witnesses' views on crime and punishment, it is worth noting that the Society in no way approves of the present penal system. The idea of depriving someone of his freedom in a prison as a method of punishment has no precedent in scripture, at least as far as the Israelites were concerned. It is correctly pointed out that there were no prisons in Israel. It is to be assumed therefore that in God's new world the Witnesses would not employ themselves in building such penal institutions for the incarceration of offenders against God's law. Taking the pattern from Israelite times, it would seem that in that theocratic arrangement to come, an unrepentant offender

will simply die the death. It will be a case of Obey or Die. This is what it would mean for mankind if that day ever dawned when the Witnesses could say on behalf of all mankind, 'Jehovah is Our King!'

So much for this outline of theocracy in action, a brief glimpse into the inner workings of their organisation. This, then, is the New World Society of Jehovah's Witnesses as it exists and operates today, which I have tried to depict as fairly as I can, giving as full and many sided a picture as possible. Such it is now. But what of the future? The final chapter contains an assessment of its possibilities for the future, and suggestions on how to receive the Witnesses at the doorstep.

Whither the Witnesses ?

IN attempting an answer to the question as to what future there might be for Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious movement I have found it helpful to look back to the early days of the movement at the close of the last century, and to read some of the writings of Pastor Russell. The pattern of the past usually provides some clues to the pattern of the future.

In the third volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, entitled *Thy Kingdom Come*, Pastor Russell outlined his chronological calculations by which he had arrived at the conclusion that the year 1914 would see the end of all kingdoms and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God. The calculations were based on the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the book of Daniel. By referring to the prophecy which relates the long drawn-out struggle between 'the king of the north' and 'the king of the south' (the present day interpretation of this is outlined in chapter iv), Russell arrived at the conclusion that 'the time of the end' began in the year 1799 and would end in 1914. He believed that Daniel chapter eleven applied to the struggles of Napoleon with the Papacy and that the year 1799 marked the end of an era of papal oppression. 'With that year terminated the limit of Papacy's 1,260 years of power to oppress, and the Time of the End began' (*Thy Kingdom Come*, page 48). He thus believed that Papal power arose in A.D. 539 (with very little justification), and that 'the time, times and half a time' mentioned in Daniel xii, 7 referred to 1,260 days,

that is, 1,260 years, starting in A.D. 539 and ending in 1799, the limit of Papacy's 'power to oppress'. The 1,290 days of Daniel xii, 11 equalled 1,290 years dating again from A.D. 539, and thus ending in 1829, in which year a Second Adventist group under William Millar was organised in the United States. This group prophesied that the presence of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom would take place in 1844. In contrast with these 'foolish virgins' who could not wait for the Lord's full revelation, the 'wise virgins' under Russell applied to themselves the words of Daniel xii, 12, 'Happy is the one who is keeping in expectation, and who arrives at the 1,335 days'. Counting again from A.D. 539, 1,335 days as equalling 1,335 years brings us to 1874, around which time the Witnesses' movement was just beginning, and more important, Russell believed, Christ's invisible presence as King of the Kingdom began. After 1874 there would then be a 'harvest' period of forty years, when all the saints would be called and chosen 'until the overthrow of the professedly Christian Kingdoms, really "kingdoms of this world", and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God in the earth after 1914, the Terminus of the Times of the Gentiles' (*Thy Kingdom Come*, page 126).

I mentioned these ideas of Pastor Russell because the reader can then compare them with the ideas held by the Witnesses today on the same prophecies, since the passage of time has proven Russell wrong. But in making such a comparison, it is surely astonishing that the movement could survive such an upheaval, such a complete reappraisal of its theology. As Matthew Arnold once said so truly in his essay *Literature and Dogma*: 'To a not small portion of our religious community a difficulty to the intelligence will for a long time yet be no difficulty at all.' Certainly, under normal circumstances it would present an insuperable difficulty to the intelligence to find after some forty years'

affiliation to a religious movement that the basic ideas were completely unfounded, that Christ had not after all been invisibly present since 1874, that the 'time of the end' had not begun in 1799, and that 1914 did not mean the end of all kingdoms and the translation of the faithful to heaven. But this difficulty was to the majority of Russell's followers apparently as Matthew Arnold put it, 'no difficulty at all'. When Rutherford completely reinterpreted the whole chronological operation, giving a completely new set of dates to fit Daniel's prophecies, to the effect that 'the time of the end' had begun, not in 1799, but in 1914, and that Christ had been invisibly present, not since 1874, but since 1914, the members of the movement by and large accepted it gladly and without a murmur.

This acceptance of what was in reality a complete about-face by the Society prompts one to wonder what would happen if such an about-face became necessary again. For now it is firmly maintained that by the autumn of the year 1975 the Battle of Armageddon will have been fought and God's new world will have been established. If such predictions turn out to be false, what will be the reaction of the members of the movement this time?

I am quite sure that the Society today would have much more difficulty in surviving an upheaval on the scale of that of 1914-18. For one thing, the membership in those days could be numbered in hundreds in a handful of countries. Today membership is well over a million in every country in the world. For another thing, the followers of Russell in 1914 generally possessed a far greater degree of spirituality than is evidenced in the Society today. This is understandable because all the members in 1914 believed that they were of the heavenly calling, and applied all the New Testament writings to themselves. They were the saints, 'the holy ones', and they also believed in what was called 'character development', 'the belief that there were

certain saving qualities in their self-merit' (*Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 91), an idea which Rutherford was later to condemn completely. At death they believed that they would be resurrected to heaven immediately. So the fulfilment of all the chronological calculations was not so vitally important in that their personal hope of salvation was relatively unaffected.

But the position today is of course quite different. Today we have a million people whose personal hope of salvation rests completely on the fulfilment of the chronological and prophetic predictions of the Society. They believe that they are of the 'millions now living who will never die'. Being of the earthly class (less than twelve thousand claimed to be of the heavenly calling by partaking of bread and wine at the annual Memorial celebration on April 16, 1965), their hope is to pass through the Battle of Armageddon into God's new world in which they will live forever. If these hopes are realised to be ill-founded and Armageddon does not after all take place in this generation, they will have no comfort to draw from the belief that they will be resurrected to heaven at death, as Russell's followers had in 1914. For them, death will be the end, a lapsing into complete unconsciousness. Nor does it seem to me that they possess the necessary spirituality to survive such an upheaval of their hope and faith. For since the New Testament is understood to be addressed primarily to the heavenly class, 'to the holy ones and faithful brothers in union with Christ' (Colossians i, 2), much of what it has to say which exhorts one to the development of a spiritual life (the concept of being 'born again', for instance), is lost upon them, because they do not believe that it applies to them.

On these grounds therefore, I submit that the New World Society of Jehovah's Witnesses, as it is constituted today, is essentially a phenomenon of this twentieth century. As it

becomes more and more painfully obvious that the movement has been built upon the sand of false prophecy instead of on the rock of intelligent understanding of the Bible, it will gradually be swallowed up out of sight in a quicksand of its own making.

It is most important, however, that its present-day short term appeal should not be minimised or overlooked in this long term assessment. In his book *These Also Believe*, C. S. Braden expresses his opinion that the movement could continue for a long time because of its Utopian promise and its ready-made answer to life's problems. I feel that this is a somewhat superficial assessment of the movement, because its Utopian promise can only appeal as long as the belief can be maintained that the promise will soon be fulfilled. But at present its appeal is undeniable, and supported by its methods of presentation followed by its militant regimentation, is as dangerous as ever.

I say dangerous in all seriousness, having reviewed the ideals of the movement, its teachings and its methods. Because the movement demands so much from its followers and basically gives so little in return apart from empty promises of a Paradise to come, from the individual's point of view I believe the movement is dangerous. It can and does divide previously happy homes, ruin marriages, and cause people to throw their lives away by mistakenly refusing medical attention in the form of blood transfusions. More than this, it engenders in previously humane individuals a marked intolerance of the religious beliefs and practices of others, and causes them to separate themselves from the rest of society as a people apart, an exclusive club, as it were. It also teaches its members to wash their hands completely of all social responsibility other than that of attempting to indoctrinate others with their own ideas. And above all, it deprives its followers of the ability to think for themselves, to hold individual views of their own, but

requires them to submit to, and submerge themselves into, a controlled mass thinking, with which they are brainwashed pitilessly week in, week out. In view of all this, which I believe the facts I have presented substantiate beyond all doubt, I do not think that it is being unfair to state that this is a movement which is aggressively militant to the point of being totalitarian, and as such is definitely dangerous.

In all this there is one sobering thought which is of the utmost relevance in regard to the future progress of the movement. That is, that the future of the movement depends entirely on the public's reaction to the Witnesses as they call at the door. It is from such future calls that the Witnesses will recruit their future members. All, sooner or later, will receive a call from them. What should be ones reaction, to nullify the danger of the movement to oneself, and at the same time to help if possible the person who is standing at the doorstep representing the movement by which he has become so completely indoctrinated?

It is much easier to suggest how to nullify the danger than how to help the Witnesses of course. To the vast majority of people who have neither the knowledge nor the inclination to want to help the Witness who calls at the door, I can only recommend most urgently that they on no account accept any of the literature offered to them at the doorstep. This is not because the subject matter is so persuasive that they might easily be convinced and converted. Indeed much of it will be so obscure to a layman that he will put it down in bewilderment after reading a page or two. But once a person accepts literature, he is unwittingly setting in motion a chain of events, as in the case of our Mr. Jones of the first chapter. His name and address will be noted down on a *House to House Record*, he will be made the subject of a back-call, and all the salesmanship methods culled from big business will be used to carry him forward step by step into the whirlpool of

the movement. So, if a person values his freedom of thought and action, if he has no desire to become one of the Witnesses, then I advise him, Do not accept the literature. There is no need to be rude, because in his state of mind the Witness is more to be pitied than blamed. Politely but firmly close the door.

It should be said also that there is no point in trying to argue with the Witnesses, because they have closed minds. They will appeal to you to have an open mind free from prejudice, but they will not open theirs. This is not because they will not, but because they cannot. Under such circumstances you will be beating your head against the wall by entering into an argument with them, and may very well be endangering yourself by laying yourself open to their insidious propaganda. So although it may sound a defeatist attitude to take, I believe that the only safe course for the ordinary person to take who has little knowledge of scripture or religion generally is to state quite plainly that he is not interested, and the Witness will then depart.

I believe that there is much more that Christians of other denominations can do, however, than merely take this negative line. They are in a better position than anyone else to help the Witnesses. But it seems to me that little good will be served by arguing with the Witnesses, text for text, about some doctrinal difference, as some Christians seem to be in the habit of doing. To do this is surely to descend to the same unintelligent level of Biblical interpretation as themselves. Yet it is not easy either to take the obvious approach, to attempt to explain to the Witnesses that the Bible was never intended to be used in the way they use it, 'as a flat surface on which each text has equal value.' I say that this is not easy, because the Witnesses are so taught that they consider that anyone who does not use the Bible as they do does not really believe in the Bible at all. It is beyond their comprehension that anyone can read the

Bible today with the utmost value and edification to himself without having to believe in every single word as being written by Jehovah's finger. To overlook the coarse brutality of some of the Old Testament stories as being unfortunate evidence of a less developed civilisation than we are now blessed with, is in the eyes of a Witness to be taking away from the words of this Book, which will result in having ones name erased from the Book of Life. In other words, an attempt to help the Witnesses to take a more intelligent approach to the Bible runs the risk of being misconstrued as a subtle attempt to undermine his faith in the Bible as God's Word.

I think that the most one can do at first is to point out some of the most obvious chinks in the Witnesses' armour, the absurd chronology, and the isolation of verses from their context as in the case of the texts used to condemn blood transfusions. In doing this, it is most important to be constructive at the same time, to express ones own belief in the power of God and His Word to make a better person of an individual, to concentrate on the Biblical teachings on charity and the basic Christian virtues and to discuss these with the Witnesses. In this way a Christian can convince the Witness of his own sincerity and his deep love of God and respect for His Word, of which virtues the Witnesses at present believe they hold the sole monopoly. The Church can thus be presented in a new light to the Witness, not as an institution full of hypocrites and pious sinners, which is how he is instructed to see it, but as a congregation of sincere believers holding a faith which is not just dependent like his on the fulfilment of prophecy in the next few years, but which is based on an intelligent approach to scripture and which has stood the test of centuries of time. This is so important because one of the reasons why the Witnesses cling so tenaciously to their beliefs, even when assailed by doubts, is because they cannot visualise that there is any-

thing else to fill the void that would be created by the disintegration of their beliefs. 'Where would we be without the Truth?' is a continual rallying call to the faithful.

In this respect I believe that other Christians will be able to help the Witnesses much more than someone who has little or no religious faith. A purely destructive approach will accomplish little. For this reason this chapter while saying something that I believe it is essential should be said, will do no more than act as 'the thin end of the wedge'. Something must be offered in place of what is being taken away. The Church can do much to help in this matter, and should treat the Witnesses as a challenge to its evangelistic powers and its basic Christian charity.

There are two reactions which Christians often adopt when accosted by the Witnesses at the doorstep which do more harm than good and I mention them as reactions to avoid if possible. The first is the emotional, evangelistic approach. It usually begins by the Christian asking the Witness 'Are you saved?', and continues with a personal testimony of faith which begins 'I believe that Jesus Christ is my personal saviour'. I am not criticising a person who sincerely feels like this, of course. But what I do want to say is that this type of approach is of no value whatever in trying to help the Witnesses. The religious beliefs of the Witnesses are arrived at by study, by taking in knowledge of the movement's teachings. Becoming a Jehovah's Witness is not an emotional experience, it is an intellectual exercise. With this type of background of religious training the Witnesses are deeply suspicious of anything which to them savours of emotionalism. Because of their training, it is virtually impossible to communicate a personal experience of Christianity to them. For this reason the methods of Billy Graham, for instance, leave them completely cold. Reason with the Witnesses by all means but do not try to win them over by emotional appeal. It is a pity

that for the Witnesses Christianity is not really a personal emotional experience at all. But since this is so, the narration of ones own personal experience will help them little.

The other reaction which should at all costs be avoided is I think usually an involuntary one. The worst possible thing a Christian can say to the Witness calling is, 'Thank you very much, but I have my church', and then slam the door. This happens far too often, and apart from the appalling smugness and self-satisfaction which it betrays is a shirking of a Christian duty. The Witness who calls at the door to help you in his way is himself in need of help, help which an educated Christian is in the best possible position to give. It may be very annoying to reflect that the Witness thinks you are one of Satan's agents because you attend Church, that you are following in the skirts of 'the mother of Harlots', Babylon the Great, and has a bag full of literature under his arm which says so in no uncertain terms. But as Paul put it, 'Love is long-suffering and kind . . . it . . . does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury'. (I Corinthians 13: 4, 5). The Witnesses are as people worth helping. They are, for the most part, people with a deep sense of devotion and loyalty, completely sincere and with a tremendous capacity for self-sacrifice. With such qualities they could be accomplishing so much good in so many worthy causes and fields of human endeavour. I would strongly recommend that a person who feels keenly about this and would like to help the Witnesses consider some of these suggestions, and also read the chapter in Antony Hoekema's book *The Four Major Cults*, which gives much helpful advice on how to talk to members of such cults.

In conclusion, as I have attempted to answer the question, 'Whither the Witnesses?', I have also felt bound to answer the personal question, 'Whither myself?' I am quite certain that, although I now know that I remained a Jehovah's

Witness for so long because I was indoctrinated by methods which are utterly foreign to the spirit of Christianity, my initial interest in a religious movement was in response to a deeply felt spiritual need. That need is still there, and I am as keenly aware of it as ever. How it is to be satisfied?

There has been much discussion recently as to whether the Church as an institution is dying, because its work in the community seems to have been taken over by the Welfare State, the probation officer and other civil servants. It has been suggested that religion has been but a phase in man's development, something out of which he is growing in his evolutionary progress. I am not at all sure that I can subscribe to this outlook because it seems to be based on rather sweeping assumptions. I would have thought that a purely materialistic philosophy was obviously foolish to anyone with any perception, for the appetite of materialism is insatiable, and yet its utter emptiness a constant source of frustration and unhappiness. And yet the Welfare State by its very nature can surely only satisfy ones material needs. How then can it reasonably be argued that the Church can be adequately replaced by the Welfare State? It is true that much good work of a philanthropic nature is done through the Welfare State, but as Father Trevor Huddleston so rightly pointed out in a recent television interview, Christian charity is very much more than just philanthropy. In reading Paul's definition of Christian charity in I Corinthians chapter 13, it becomes obvious that this all-important charity can only be engendered and developed in the hearts of men by an institution such as the Church, which recognises the spiritual needs of men and knows how they can be satisfied.

But in accepting the meaning of spiritual values and the role that a religious organisation can play in enhancing ones appreciation of such values, I am quite sure that one does not need to bow to the authority of an all-demanding

militant church or society. I am equally sure that in answering the question, Whither myself, I could never again accept the imperious voice of an authoritarian religious regime. For after one has directed every step of ones way according to such a voice, it is most difficult not to hear the echo long after one has ceased to associate with the regime. I remember that after being released from prison in 1957, I found it very hard to readjust myself to normal living because all the time I was waiting for someone to tell me what to do, even when to go to the toilet. This may sound strange, but anyone who has suffered imprisonment will know what I mean, and at the same time realise the importance of prison after-care. When one leaves such a regime as the Witnesses the experience is similar. One has been brainwashed so thoroughly that one has to take a definite stand against the 'Big Brother' complex which one has developed. I have perhaps been fortunate because I had some very good after-care from friends who in time of difficulty proved that they were real friends. But I have particularly found difficulty in reconciling myself to attending a church. I am sure that religion must play an important part in the life of a well-balanced person. But I have been so thoroughly brainwashed into thinking that all religion, apart from the Witnesses, originates with the Devil, that as yet I have been unable to bring myself to attend a church service. Similarly although I now believe that the act of giving blood is one of Christian charity, because of the taboo which the Witnesses have placed upon it I still find it hard to repress an involuntary shudder as I contemplate making a donation myself. It may sound foolish to admit this, but it just goes to show how deeply indoctrination can penetrate into the mind. The only answer of course is to take oneself to task, to rationalise the matter, to reason on it with oneself, and to take a definite stand against thoughts and feelings which one knows to

be bigoted and wrong. 'Resist the Devil and he will flee from you' is a wise scripture and a comforting one.

Since leaving the Witnesses, I have experienced a gradual changeover of ideas which is now, except in the few points which I have just mentioned, almost complete. After all this time, I find it a delightfully refreshing experience to be able to formulate and hold opinions which are my own, expressions of my own personality. In some respects I feel like a butterfly, which has just emerged from an over-long stay in its chrysalis, and is now learning to fly. In my relationships with other people, I no longer try to 'pigeon-hole' them as I had always done before. I try to listen to their views with respect and interest, where before I would have summarily dismissed them. It is as if life has suddenly acquired a new and exciting dimension. I find my present work as a sales representative helpful in this respect, because every day I am meeting all sorts and conditions of men, and now that my mind is open and receptive to the ideas of others after being closed for so many years, I am eager and happy to learn, and in my work I am learning rapidly every day. It is, I suppose, a development—an enjoyable phase of life—which would normally be experienced in the late teens. I am experiencing it now because of my arrested development, but I think that the experience is more enjoyable now than it would have been in my late teens because I have the maturity to evaluate and appreciate which I would have lacked then. My enjoyment of life has vastly increased since leaving the Witnesses, and I can honestly say that I am happier today than I have ever been in my life.

I started to write this book with profound misgivings, mainly because I realised that since I had been disfellowshipped from the movement, it might be assumed that I was simply writing in a spirit of revenge or spitefulness. I hope that what I have written will dispel any ideas such as

this that Witnesses or non-Witnesses may have had. I bear no malice whatsoever towards those who performed the act of disfellowshipping me, because they were merely acting in harmony with the rules governing the Society. And now I am quite sure that they performed a great service to me in two ways. First, the discipline I received made me aware of the wrong course I was taking in life at that time, and my present happiness and peace of mind owes much to their action, severe though it was. As *The New World Translation* renders Hebrews xii, 11: 'True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit.' And second, by cutting me off so completely from the movement, they gave me the opportunity of looking at the organisation in a new light, from the outside looking in rather than from the inside looking out. For now no longer attending meetings five times a week, no longer engaging in house-to-house work, no longer filling every minute of my life with ceaseless activity, for the first time for fourteen years I have had time to take an individual look at life, and to form an objective opinion of Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious movement. The conclusions I have come to are the substance of this book, which I have written in the hope that it will prove helpful to all those who have had some experience or contact with this religious organisation.

I am sometimes asked if I do not consider that I have wasted the best years of my life in this religious movement. I suppose that I could easily look on the negative side of the matter and accept this outlook. But I always answer, I think sincerely, No. If this book which contains a record of these years of my life, performs a useful service in giving an objective view of this religious movement, then the past fourteen years will not have been a waste of time at all. They will have been most valuable.

APPENDIX

Publications of the Society

For those interested in studying the movement further, I have compiled a list of the Society's publications, together with comments where relevant as to their subject-matter and relative importance. I have felt it worth while to include the works of Russell and Rutherford, even though today the Witnesses do not read these publications and they are no longer in print. But they are of considerable historical and theological interest.

There are two semi-monthly magazines published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *The Watchtower, Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*, which appears on the first and fifteenth of each month, and *Awake!* which appears on the eighth and twenty-second. *The Watchtower* is the official organ of the Society, and is undoubtedly the most important of the Society's publications. It has appeared without interruption since 1879. Its pronouncements are received by the Witnesses with a respect which is little short of reverence. It is far more important than any of the Society's bound books, which simply recount what *The Watchtower* has said on different subjects in different issues.

Whilst *The Watchtower* deals with the theology and doctrine of the movement, *Awake!* gives the Society's views on current affairs. It is rather like a religious version of *Reader's Digest*, in that its articles cover every field of human interest. But invariably at the end of each article, what has been discussed is compared with the Society's interpretation of the Bible and its application of scriptural principles.

Following is a list of the Society's current publications all of which are still in print unless specifically noted otherwise. They are all published anonymously in the name of the Society. *The New World* (1942). Now out of print. *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (1943). Now out of print.

- 'Thy Kingdom is at Hand'* (1945). Now out of print.
- Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945). The textbook for the weekly Theocratic Ministry School. Now out of print.
- Equipped for Every Good Work* (1946). A summary of the contents of each book of the Bible, and when and where the various books were written.
- Let God Be True* (1946). Revised in 1952. This is the most important of the current books, because it is an exhaustive discussion of the main doctrines of the movement.
- This Means Everlasting Life* (1950).
- What Has Religion Done For Mankind?* (1951). The Society's views of the development and ideas of the major so-called pagan religions.
- New Heavens and a New Earth* (1953). Contains an interesting discussion of the Vailian theory of creation as expounded at the end of the last century, which linked the Noachian flood with the creative process described in the first chapter of the book of Genesis.
- Make Sure of All Things* (1953). A compilation of texts under different headings for use by the Witnesses in their house-to-house work.
- Qualified to be Ministers* (1955). A replacement textbook for *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (1945).
- You May Survive Armageddon into God's New World* (1955). An attempt to show how there are forty-two prophetic pictures in the Bible of the earthly class in God's Kingdom.
- Your Will Be Done On Earth* (1958). Attempts to interpret the book of Daniel with startling results.
- From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* (1958). Fully illustrated story book of the Bible in bold print intended more for children and backward countries.
- Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (1959). A very significant book which traces the history of the movement from the days of Russell.
- Let Your Name Be Sanctified* (1961).
- All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (1963). A replacement for *Equipped for Every Good Work* (1946).
- Babylon the Great Has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules!* (1963).
- Things in which it is Impossible for God to Lie* (1965). Virtually a replacement for *Let God Be True* (1946).

Life Everlasting—in Freedom of the Sons of God (1966).

In addition to all these books, there are numerous booklets. The most important of these is *Preaching and Teaching in Peace and Unity* (1960). This is not generally distributed but, as the organisation's handbook, is only issued to baptised members of the movement. *Blood, Medicine and the Law of God* gives the Society's viewpoint on blood transfusions. *The Word—Who Is He? According to John* is a theological disputation on the meaning of John, chapter one, verse one. *What Do the Scriptures Say About Survival after Death?* discusses spiritualism, which the Society considers to be a manifestation of Satanic power. *Evolution versus the New World* endeavours to debunk the scientific evidence for the theory of Evolution, and in doing so is in my opinion at times unfair in its choice of 'evidence'. *God's Way is Love* is written particularly for Roman Catholics, and as such takes all its quotations from the Catholic Douay and Knox versions of the Bible. *Basis for Belief in a New World* has much thought-provoking information on archaeology and the Bible. Attempts to prove the authenticity of the Bible. There are many others which are mainly reprints of public lectures given at large conventions.

Each year since 1927 the Society has published an annual *Yearbook* which gives a full report of all work done in each country of the world.

In addition to *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, the Society also publishes the *Emphatic Diaglott*, a New Testament translation completed in the last century by Benjamin Wilson, who was a Christadelphian. Its chief virtue to the Witnesses is that it reproduces the actual Greek text with an interlinear word for word translation. This has at times well served the Witnesses' purposes in Biblical interpretation. The American Standard Version of the Bible is also published by the Society.

I see no need to go into great detail about the works of Judge Rutherford. He was a most prolific writer during his twenty-five years' presidency of the Society. Among his books are *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920), *The Harp of God* (1921), *Deliverance* (1926), *Creation* (1927), *Reconciliation* (1928), *Government* (1928), *Life* (1929), *Prophecy* (1929), *Light* (two volumes) (1930), *Vindication* (three volumes) (1931-2), *Preservation* (1932),

Preparation (1933), *Jehovah* (1934), *Riches* (1936), *Enemies* (1937), *Salvation* (1939), *Religion* (1940), *Children* (1941).

Apart from *Three Worlds or Plan of Redemption* (1877), which was written jointly by Pastor Russell and N. H. Barbour, Russell's main literary work was the *Millennial Dawn* series, later known as *Studies in the Scriptures*, which consisted of seven volumes of Bible studies. The most famous was the first volume called *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, published in 1886. It was followed by *The Time is At Hand, Thy Kingdom Come, The Battle of Armageddon, At-One-Ment between God and Man,* and *The New Creation*. The seventh volume was published posthumously in 1917, and was entitled *The Finished Mystery*.

I should reiterate what I have already said in the seventh chapter, that in reading these books of Russell and Rutherford, one will not find them of much help in understanding the movement as it exists today, but will find them of interest in tracing the development of the ideas of the movement.

Bibliography

Considering the size and influence of Jehovah's Witnesses as a movement, there has been surprisingly little written about it, and much of that has come from sources so hopelessly prejudiced that their contribution is quite worthless. It is of course difficult to write in a completely impartial manner about a movement which raises such controversial issues, but the least one can expect of any book about a religious organisation is an attempt to explain why it has flourished or what is its appeal. A book which merely condemns a sect or cult as heretical because it happens to teach differently to the orthodox views of the writer is to me of very little value or interest. I have therefore selected the books for mention which are either worthwhile objective studies of the movement or else are of such a nature as to make a valuable contribution to the literature on the subject.

Braden, C. S. *These Also Believe* (New York, McMillan: 1950).

Contains a chapter on the Witnesses which is completely free from prejudice, and gives praise liberally where praise is due.

Pike, Royston. *Jehovah's Witnesses* (London, Watts: 1954).

Impartially written and therefore one of the most worthwhile books.

Cole, Marley. *Jehovah's Witnesses, New World Society* (London, Allen & Unwin: 1956). A very favourable account of the movement, it certainly catches well the spirit of the movement. Mr. Cole has been criticised for 'his starry-eyed enthusiasm'. I can only say that if Mr. Cole is not a member of the movement then he certainly ought to be.

Schnell, W. J. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave* (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott: 1956). In his thirty years in the movement Mr. Schnell as a full-time worker was in the inner circles of the movement in America, and offers some startling informa-

tion about its inner workings. It is particularly strong on the Rutherford era of the Society. I am left with the impression from reading the book that Mr. Schnell not only thinks the movement to be evil but some of the people in it to be evil also. I have stated my belief in the last chapter that the movement is dangerous, but I have never had any reason to doubt the sincerity of anyone in any position of responsibility in the organisation and cannot therefore from my experience substantiate this impression which Mr. Schnell's book gives me. It would seem that Mr. Schnell's experience has been rather less fortunate than mine.

McMillan, A. H. *Faith on the March* (London, Prentice Hall: 1957). An autobiography of a founder member of the movement. Even though one may completely disagree with Mr. McMillan it is impossible not to respect him as he relates his fascinating life story.

Hoekema, Antony. *The Four Major Cults* (Exeter, The Pasternoster Press: 1963). A quite invaluable book, particularly from the point of view of the theology of the movement. I read the subsections on the Society's methods of Biblical interpretation with great benefit.

The Inside Story of JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

W. C. Stevenson

Here is the story of the fastest growing religion in the world. Today, more than one million zealous men and women belong to that dedicated sect who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses.

These men and women predict the end of the world in 1975. They believe that they alone will survive the coming Armageddon.

They sneer at the religious beliefs of others, attacking Catholicism with particular virulence.

A Witness would rather suffer his child to die than to permit a blood transfusion which, according to his lights, is forbidden by the Bible. They recruit new members with a sales promotion technique that would do credit to a veteran door-to-door encyclopedia salesman.

And the Jehovah's Witnesses forecast, among other things, a Russian take-over of America!

W. C. Stevenson writes his revealing account from firsthand knowledge. He was a member of the Witnesses for 14

years, five of which he spent as a full-time minister of the sect.

He traces the growth of the Witnesses from their beginnings in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1872 right down through the 1960's. During this time their vigorous proselytizing has made the Witnesses familiar figures at doorsteps around the world.

In this startling book, you will find all the reasons why the Witnesses oppose higher education for their children; why they have pictured the Pope, along with Hitler, as riding on the shoulders of the Devil; why they believe in the superiority of men over women; and why they discourage relationships with outsiders, except for recruiting purposes. Here, too, are the group's views on sex, marriage, birth control, abortion, and homosexuality.

Mr. Stevenson has tried to be fair, even when critical. However, if his personal experience is a guide, the book sounds a warning for potential recruits that should not be taken lightly.

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