

THE INCREDIBLE CREED OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

By Rev. Dr. Rumble, M.S.C.

The Witnesses of Jehovah constitute one of the most vigorous and spectacular religious propagandist bodies of the present day. Throughout the world an army of persistent enthusiasts tramp from door to door, urging people to adopt their teachings as a matter of life and death. They claim to have made over a million converts in recent years, chiefly in America; and they have been written up in the "Saturday Evening Post", "Collier's Weekly" and the "Reader's Digest" as a phenomenon of both national and international importance.

This new sect originated in the U.S.A., to which the world owes Mormonism, Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventists, Father Divine, and so many other strange religious outbreaks. Charles Taze Russell, a draper of Pittsburgh, afterwards known as "Pastor" Russell, was the founder of the movement in 1872. Nathan Homer Knorr, its present head, prefers to say, "We broke in on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses" in 1872. And that leads us to the question of names.

EVOLUTION OF A NAME

No modern movement, in its efforts to establish itself, save perhaps that of the Communists, can rival the Witnesses of Jehovah in the technique of masquerading under ever-changing titles. Russell began by preaching what he termed the "Millennial Dawn," and his followers soon became known as "Millennial Dawnists." Before long, however, Russell had adopted the title, "Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society." In 1896 this was changed to "The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society." In 1909 he thought the "People's Pulpit Association" sounded better, the headquarters of which he established at Brooklyn, New York. In 1909 he resumed the title "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society." In 1914 the work was being carried on as the "International Bible Students' Association."

The same tactics were adopted in the publishing of literature. In 1919 a magazine, "The Golden Age," appeared. In 1937 this same magazine was appearing as "Consolation." In 1946 its name was changed to "Awake." These constant changes compelled those who had refuted the movement under one name to begin all over again; and whilst they were catching up with current fashions, the Russellites were enabled to gain enough recruits to get firmly established. At last came their present and apparently permanent name. In 1931 Judge Rutherford decided that henceforth the "Millennial Dawnists" would be known as the "Witnesses of Jehovah."

Nathan Knorr now tells us that "Jehovah God is the Founder and Organizer of the Witnesses on this earth," and that He Himself indicated this as "the appropriate designation of His earthly ministers." Surely it is strange that Russell himself, the founder of the movement, had no notion of that! For Russell died in 1916, fifteen years before this discovery was made. And whence came the discovery? In 1931, Judge Rutherford came across the text in Isaiah 43:10, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

That Isaiah the prophet had the Russellites in mind over 700 years before Christ is an absurd supposition for which not an atom of proof exists. Anticipating that difficulty, Nathan Knorr protests, "We have not arbitrarily assumed this God-given name." Why not? "Well, we are witnessing, aren't we!" is his reply. "What we are doing proves that the name is applicable to us." But to what are these people witnessing? Certainly not to the truth revealed by God, as we shall see. If merely witnessing, no matter to what one witnesses, makes one a messenger of God, then Communists, who are witnesses par excellence with their world-wide propaganda on behalf of Marxian Socialism, have more right than the Russellites to pretend to a divine commission. But Nathan Knorr just by-passes these difficulties. "God," he writes, "has always had His witnesses. Abel first; then a long line through from Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah to John the Baptist. Taking pre-eminence over all is Christ 'the faithful and true Witness,' Who designated others. "Ye shall be witnesses to Me unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Jehovah's Witnesses are merely the last of this long line of God's earthly servants."

There is, of course, no proof whatever that the Witnesses of Jehovah have any connection with the previous witnesses mentioned. Moreover, their doctrines are a flagrant contradiction of the teachings of those previous witnesses.

CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL

Charles Taze Russell was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1852, the son of a draper who later established his business in Allegheny. Charles became an earnest worker in the local Congregational Church, but was soon obsessed with an overwhelming horror of hell and the gloomy prospects of the Calvinist theology of that time held out the mass of humanity. Charles went about chalking up in all kinds of places warnings of hell for unbelievers; and in 1869, at the age of 17, tried to convert an atheist whom he happened to meet. But the atheist destroyed Russell's own faith, and he became an infidel also. Never again would he believe in hell!

Russell, however, although he had given up attending church, could not leave his Bible alone, and soon he discovered that he could believe in the Bible without believing in hell — for the simple reason, he says, that the Bible does not teach the existence of hell at all.

At the age of 20 he began preaching this "good news," and with "no hell" as a most attractive plank in his platform, soon gained followers. He sold the draper's business he had inherited from his father, and in 1878 assumed the title of "Pastor Russell," founding a new religion of his own. He became a prolific writer, at first borrowing his ideas from the works of J. H. Paton, of Michigan, USA, published under the title of "Day Dawn". Russell proclaimed these ideas as his own divinely-inspired doctrines, merely substituting the title "Millennial Dawn" for "Day Dawn" to distinguish his system from Paton's. Later he changed to the less recognizable Studies in the Scriptures.

Russell claimed to have written more explanatory books on the Bible than the combined writings of Paul, John, Arius, Waldo, Wycliffe, and Martin Luther, whom he said to have been the six great messengers of the Church preceding himself. He began, as did the founders of so many other Adventist sects, with the idea that the Second Coming of Christ and the Final Judgment were near at hand; and then ranged over the whole of Sacred Scripture, claiming an infallibility far beyond that claimed by any Pope, as an interpreter of God's revelation. His followers accepted him as the "Seventh Messenger" or "Angel" referred to in Ezekiel 9, and held that he would rank next after St. Paul in the "gallery of fame" as an exponent of the Gospel of Christ, the Great Master.

Yet, what kind of a man was this Charles Taze Russell? He was certainly an expert at making money, whether in the drapery business until he sold it, or by investments in mines and real estate, or by the selling of his books, and of "miracle wheat." Unfortunately, he was legally compelled to restore to the purchasers the money he had obtained for his miracle wheat, on the score that it had been dishonestly extracted from them. But honesty was not Pastor Russell's predominant virtue. Under oath in court at Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 1913, he declared in support of his claims to be an expert Scripture scholar that he knew Greek. Handed a Greek New Testament, he was forced to admit that he did not know even the Greek alphabet; and that he knew nothing of Hebrew or of Latin, despite his pretensions to a knowledge of those languages also. Not to know such languages is no crime, of course. But to make lying pretensions to a knowledge of them is scarcely in keeping with claims to be a prophet of God; whilst to do so under oath is the still worse sin of perjury. Not less unbecoming in this self-styled prophet was the fact that his wife divorced him in 1897 on charges of adultery with two different women, a stenographer and a housemaid; and that the judge flayed him, after granting the divorce, for his general ill-treatment of his wife. To avoid payment of the alimony ordered by the court, Russell promptly transferred his property, worth over \$240,000, to the "Watch Tower Bible" and "Tract Society."

Russell died on October 31, 1916, in a Santa Fe train near Pampa, TX on his way to Kansas City; and he is now seldom mentioned by the Witnesses of Jehovah. This man, once held by his followers to rank next after St. Paul in the "gallery of fame," has been practically forgotten by the later generation dominated by his successor.

JUDGE J.F. RUTHERFORD

At the time of Russell's death there was a man named Joseph Franklin Rutherford serving a prison sentence in Atlanta

on a charge of sedition during the first world war then raging." This man, on his release from prison, took over control of the Russellite organization.

Rutherford was born in 1869, and became a lawyer in 1892. Chosen as attorney for the organization, he was shrewd enough to see its possibilities, and threw in his lot with it. As president, he wished to be known by the impressive title "Judge Rutherford," though he was never officially appointed as a judge.

His forceful personality set the movement definitely on its feet. He poured out unending books and pamphlets to keep the publishing business going, teaching new doctrines of which Russell had never heard and often quite opposed to what Russell himself had taught. It was he, as we have seen, who devised in 1931 the new title "Witnesses of Jehovah." The prominence he gave to the slogan, "Millions now living will never die," brought crowds flocking to hear him wherever he was billed to speak. But, alas, he was not one of the millions fated not to die. On January 8, 1942, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford bade goodbye to this world in the palatial villa he had built at San Diego, CA, as an official residence pending the return of the Lord to judge the living and the dead.

NATHAN HOMER KNORR

On Rutherford's death, Nathan Homer Knorr was elected as president of the Watch Tower Organization. Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1905, he was converted to the Russellites at the age of 16 through reading some Watch Tower publications. In 1923, aged 18, he became a full-time preacher on Sundays, working as a packer and shipper at the Brooklyn headquarters on week-days and devoting his evenings to the study of the Bible as interpreted by Russell and Rutherford. In 1932 he became general manager of the Brooklyn publishing offices; in 1934 was elected to the Board of Directors; and in 1942 was chosen as successor of Judge Rutherford, in whose place he still reigns supreme.

"THE NEW CHRISTIANITY"

The Witnesses of Jehovah conceive it to be their first duty to denounce all other religious bodies. Rutherford declared that "religion was introduced into the world by the Devil." "For more than three years," he declaimed, "Jesus continued to proclaim the truth and to warn the people against the practice of

religion." "For religion," declared Rutherford, "dishonors and reproaches the name of Jehovah God, whilst Christianity honors and vindicates the name of Almighty God. This is why true Christians are always persecuted by religionists."

It is clear from this that Rutherford uses the word religion in a sense all his own. Asked to define it on one occasion, he said, "Religion is any form of worship practiced by creatures in recognition of some real or supposed 'higher power,' and which practice finds support or authority only in the teaching handed down by tradition." That the doctrines of Russell and Rutherford are but the teachings of men, to be handed down amongst the Witnesses of Jehovah by tradition does not seem to have occurred to him!

Asked to define Christianity he replies, "Christianity means the worship of Almighty God in spirit and in truth, in accord with the commands of God and teachings of Jesus Christ. None other are Christians. There is no such thing as "Christian religion," because religion and Christianity are exactly opposite and diametrically opposed one to the other." Which, of course, is absurd. Christianity is religion, and is the true religion as opposed to all false religions—including that of the Witnesses of Jehovah, as will be seen in the course of this document.

HATRED OF OTHER CHURCHES

One of the main duties of the Witnesses of Jehovah seems to be to pour out a torrent of abuse against all Christian Churches, particularly against the Catholic Church. This, of course, is not a new trick. Every would-be founder of a new religion has had to commence by denouncing all previous religions, else how justify his new departure at all? In 1860, just 12 years before Russell thought of it, the Seventh Day Adventists had declared that all Churches except that of the Seventh Day Adventists have been deceived by Satan through the agency of the Papacy into the observance of Sunday. All of them constitute "Babylon," and are rejected by God. But this is particularly true of the Catholic Church, presided

over by "Antichrist" or the "Beast" in the person of the Pope.

Following this same line, Russell had said that, in 1878, God had rejected all existing Churches, constituting the Russellites as His only spokesmen thenceforward. But Rutherford did not like the implied admission that the Churches were all right till Russell appeared on the scene. He declared that, after the resurrection of Christ, the Devil at once set to work and built a great empire, the Papacy. Later, the Devil inspired the creation of various Protestant Churches—all of them, including even the Seventh Day Adventists.

All priests and all Protestant clergymen are of the Devil, said Rutherford. They are enemies of God, and are simply "Antichrist." Nathan Knorr tells us that "by 1881 growing differences in basic beliefs had created an immense chasm between the Witnesses and the orthodox Churches." The "growing" differences were due to the Russellites inventing new and unheard-of doctrines manufactured by themselves during the period from 1878 to 1881.

If, however, all Churches are to be branded as evil, what of the Witnesses themselves? They meet this difficulty by denying that they are a "Church" or a "Denomination." They say they can find no justification for a "Church" or a "Hierarchy" of any kind in the Bible. That will impress nobody who has any real knowledge and understanding of the contents of the Bible. For much is there which the Witnesses of Jehovah say they cannot find, whilst much that they claim to find there is not there at all. But let us see what they have to say of themselves. They claim to be but the precursors sent by God to warn men of a "Theocratic Kingdom" at present in the making. And they alone, of all men in this world, belong to that Theocratic Kingdom.

CIVIC DISLOYALTY

Insisting that they owe their sole loyalty to this Theocratic Kingdom, Witnesses of Jehovah refuse the duties of earthly citizenship. The world, they say, is divided into two opposed groups, that of the "Theocratic Kingdom," and that of "Satan's Organization." "Satan's Organization" includes all Churches and Governments. And just as amongst the Churches the Papacy is the "Beast" par excellence, so amongst the nations are America and Great Britain.

"In the formation of the Hague World Court of the League of Nations," wrote Judge Rutherford, "Great Britain and America took the lead, and this is proof that the Anglo-American Empire is the two-horned beast." (Light, Vol. II, p. 98) The "British Israelites" won't like that, for they claim to have proved from the Bible that Britain and America form between them the chosen people of God! But we can leave the British Israelites and the Witnesses of Jehovah to settle that matter between themselves.

In the meantime, consistently with their false principles, the Witnesses refuse to salute the flag of any earthly nation, are conscientious objectors to all forms of military service, and say they will fight only for Jehovah and His people—which means for their own opinions against all who oppose them.

As a consequence of their refusal to fulfill the New Testament admonition, "Be ye subject, therefore, to every human creature for God's sake; whether to the king as excelling, or to governors sent by him. Fear God. Honor the king" (1st Peter 2:13-17), many Witnesses of Jehovah have been fined or jailed, whilst in Australia and New Zealand during 1940 their organization was declared illegal.

The New Zealand Attorney-General said at the time that they were devoting themselves to "vilification of religion, of their fellow-citizens, of the State and of the Government."

PERSECUTION COMPLEX

The Witnesses complain that they are persecuted for their religious beliefs, quite inconsistently with their denial that their system constitutes a religion. But in any case their complaint is unjustified. Small sects get into trouble only when their practices transgress common decency. If the Witnesses are constantly running afoul of their communities, it is because they themselves make vile and insulting onslaughts on the religion of others, and delight in utterances of the most outrageous civic disloyalty.

"For conscientious cussedness on the grand scale," wrote America's Saturday Evening Post, when dealing with this

subject, "no other aggregation of Americans is a match for Jehovah's Witnesses. Defiance of what others cherish is their daily meat. They hate all religions—and say so from the house-tops. They hate all Governments with an enthusiasm that is equally unconcealed For being generally offensive they have been getting their heads cracked, their meetings broken up, their meeting-houses pillaged and themselves thrown in jail.

Nathan Knorr argues that the persistence of the Witnesses in spite of severest persecution, mobbings, beatings, tar and feather outrages, imprisonment and even death, is nothing less than miraculous and a sure proof of their divine mission. That the fanaticism and obstinacy by which he himself would explain the reckless zeal of Mahomet's followers could apply to the Witnesses themselves does not seem to have occurred to him. Certainly the same inducements have been held out to them, a deadly fear of a greater evil happening to them should they quail before lesser fears, and magnificent promises of temporal rewards should they die in the cause of the prophets Russell and Rutherford!

A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

Strangely at variance with their denunciation of all "organized religion," "Churches," "hierarchies" and "clergy," is their own formation of a highly organized and hierarchal religious society by the Witnesses of Jehovah!

Nathan Knorr, in his official contribution to "Religion in the Twentieth Century", begins the exposition of his system by asserting that no man is leader of Jehovah's Witnesses, since "Jehovah God has appointed Christ Jesus as their Leader and commander." But he declares that Christ directs affairs through a "visible organization" with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, USA.

The visible head on earth of this visible organization is Nathan Knorr himself. He is surrounded by a Board of Directors, as the Pope is surrounded by a College of Cardinals. Throughout the world there are local congregations called "Companies," which meet in "Kingdom Halls." But each "Company" has "organizational servants" to oversee all activities. Full time field-workers, aided financially by the Society, are called "Pioneers," and there are over 6500 of these. Every active Witness of Jehovah, however, is regarded as "a minister ordained and commissioned by God, not by man," and must go from house to house selling books in the territory assigned to him by his superior officers. But if all are ordained, consecrated and commissioned by God, what is this but a hierarchy or an organized sacred body of men with a divinely-given and graded authority? And how can Witnesses of Jehovah pour scorn on religion and on the clergy of other Churches, yet claim exemption from military service on the plea that they are all "ministers of religion," as they do? As for "organized religion," no Church has a more concentrated government than they. The Year Book for 1940, page 47, lays down the law:

"Every thirty days each and every branch office in operation on the earth . . . makes a report in writing to the president of the Society, setting forth in detail the work accomplished during the month. At the end of the fiscal year all branch office . . . will submit to the president in writing a report covering the activities of the Society during the year.

BIG BUSINESS

Mention of the "fiscal year" leads to a consideration of the organization's business activities. The attack on "organized religion" comes badly from one of the most highly organized religious societies in the world. In the same way, never was there such a religious racket as that of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, which declares all other Churches to be "rackets," engaged in "big business." Pastor Russell founded that Society as a worldwide publishing and distributing agency for his own writings; and Judge Rutherford kept it going for the same purpose. It has become a great money-making concern. The publishing house at Brooklyn pours out an amazing stream of books, pamphlets and periodicals. Since World War I, they have distributed more than 485 millions of these in over 80 different languages.

Judge Rutherford said that these books and pamphlets are sold at "a little more than cost price," and that the "negligible profits" go to the International Bible Students' Association. At an average of a penny profit per sale, over two million pounds would have been raked in. As the average profit would be fourpence or even perhaps sixpence, 10 million pounds profit over the period mentioned would be nearer the mark. Wisely, the Year Book says that no financial statements are

published, as enemies would use them "to hinder the work of the Society."

One thing is certain. Despite its vast income, the Society devotes none of its resources to any public works of charity. Challenged at the American Radio Commission's inquiry, Secretary Goux, of the Russellites, admitted that their New York property alone was worth over a million dollars, and that he could not say how much the general holdings of the Corporation were worth. When Mr. Sirovich, assisting the Commission, asked, "Outside of preaching, have you done anything for the poor devils who find themselves economically deprived of a living, and in starvation and hunger, or penury and want? Have you taken any of that money to help them?" Goux replied, "That is not the purpose of this activity. That is not the purpose of this Association. The commission entrusted to Jehovah's Witnesses is to bear testimony among the people.

Bearing this testimony, which means distributing Rutherford's booklets, are 22,304 travelling salesmen called "Publishers," going from house to house in their assigned districts. These people, for the most part, work for nothing, being engaged during the week in ordinary secular employment and devoting all their free time to "field service." Nathan Knorr explains, "Sincere persons, converted by literature, engage in the work of distribution.

New converts, on becoming active workers, are given a card of identification to show they are recognized as "ministers of God." It's a psychological phenomenon that so many credulous people can be so duped and conditioned into becoming voluntary agents in such an enterprise. But nothing succeeds like success. In 1919, at Cedar Point, Ohio, USA, 8000 Witnesses met in Convention and "girded themselves for publishing work." At the same place, 1921, 20,000 Witnesses acclaimed the slogan, "Advertise, Advertise, Advertise the King and the Kingdom." In more prosaic words that meant, "Propagate Rutherford's teachings and sell his books." In 1946, at Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 80,000 Witnesses were filled with similar enthusiasm.

In all this, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society never stands to lose.

Voluntary distributors pay for the books they receive; and if they give them away, do so at their own expense. Many such distributors return, not only the full price of the books, but additional donations from their own earnings in their secular jobs.

A further technical factor contributing to wide sales is that, as the books are offered for a "donation," and not "sold," no hawkers license is necessary, sales are not taxable, and business may be done on Sundays. It has all been very shrewdly devised.

Of course people have first to be converted to the new religion before they will work for it with such devotedness; and the religion to which they have been converted we must now examine more closely.

"BIBLE-CHRISTIANS"

The Witnesses of Jehovah claim to be "Bible-Christians." Nathan Knorr tells us that "the Bible is God's inspired Word, handed down for those now living in the last days." How he knows it to be God's Word, who handed it down, and why it is for those now living in the "last days" any more than for those who lived in previous ages, are subjects he prefers not to discuss. All he says is that Charles Taze Russell found "no Christian denomination teaching what the Bible contains," and therefore "began a thorough study of the Bible, particularly concerning Christ's Second Coming and Millennial Reign."

Unfortunately, Pastor Russell, inspired by God if we can believe his first followers, does not seem to have been very successful. After his death in 1916, Judge Rutherford took over and promptly began to teach doctrines very different from those of Russell. Internal dissension in the movement followed. But, writes Nathan Knorr, "Rutherford and the Directors were overwhelmingly supported. The beaten and disgruntled opposition force withdrew and set up an independent organization," splitting up "into many little groups of no consequence."

Judge Rutherford, then, remains the supreme prophet of the movement, and his interpretations of the Bible have become the Witness dogmas. Whilst the Witnesses say that they rely on what the Bible says, they rely on what Judge Rutherford tells them it says. To the Broadcasting Commission of 1934 Secretary Goux said, on behalf of the organization, that Rutherford's explanations of the Bible are not human opinions, but inspired by God. Papal claims to

infallibility are indeed mild in comparison with that!

In his explanations of the Bible, Rutherford followed no accepted principles of interpretation, whilst of critical scholarship he knew absolutely nothing. To support his theories he took any text he pleased, almost at random, and made it mean whatever he wished!

Still, his disciples insist that they are "Bible-Christians." They say that, whilst they do not believe in the "Christian Religion," they do believe in "Christianity." They have a way of speaking all their own, which is very difficult to follow; but it will be enough to show that their system contradicts almost every basic Christian teaching.

"JEHOVAH GOD"

One of the first peculiarities met with in this new religion is the strange use of the expression "Jehovah God." Nathan Knorr complains that "the masses of Christendom do not even appreciate the fact that "Jehovah" is God's name." But God certainly has not got a name to distinguish Him from other "gods," as Nathan Knorr himself is distinguished by his first name from others with the same surname! Nor is even the word "Jehovah" truly Biblical. The original authors of the Sacred Book knew nothing of it. They wrote in Hebrew the word Yahweh, which meant literally He who is. Yahweh, therefore, was an alternative name for God, not a kind of "Christian name" to identify God from among other divinities. "Jehovah God" is an expression found nowhere in the Bible, and is a combination of words grotesque in the extreme.

Again, Judge Rutherford tells us in his book, "Reconciliation," that the "constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God -- the dwelling place of Jehovah." What kind of a God is Rutherford's who dwells on a star? And how can the Pleiades, themselves not eternal, constitute the eternal throne?

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity Rutherford categorically denies. "Never was there a more deceptive doctrine advanced" he writes, "than that of the Trinity. It could have originated only in one mind, and that the mind of Satan the Devil." "Reconciliation," (p. 101). That Christ Himself commissioned His followers to "baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" carries no weight with Rutherford and his disciples. They have abandoned Christianity for Unitarianism. Christ for them is not the Eternal Son of God, nor is the Holy Spirit a Divine Person. Rutherford says that the Holy Spirit is any power or influence exercised by God. But Christ spoke of the Holy Spirit as Personal. "The Holy Ghost," He said, "whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things." (John 16:26)

But let us look a little more closely at Rutherford's doctrine about Christ.

CHRIST

One of the most vital questions in the Gospels is, "What think you of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42) Christians have ever replied to that with the unhesitating proclamation of faith, "Son of the Living God." But not so the Witnesses of Jehovah.

These Witnesses agree that Christ existed before He was born into this world, but say that He was himself only a creature -- the first creature made by God and used as an instrument for the creation of all else. Russell tells us that he was "Michael the Archangel"! When, millennia after his creation, this creature became man, his nature was completely changed from angelic and spiritual to material and human. "In obedience to God, he gave up his spirit-being and was born of Mary as a wholly-human being." Apparently that was the end of Michael the Archangel, a fact St. John unfortunately forgot when writing his Apocalypse, for there he has Michael still existing side by side with the Christ into whom Russell declared him to have been transformed!

But let us go on. When Christ died on the Cross, according to the Witnesses, he was merely a man, and his death was the end of him; completely and absolutely the end. But a "spirit-being" emerged from the tomb to become "a" god, not "the" God; which apparently was better than being merely Michael the Archangel who had existed in the first place.

This doctrine that Christ was three successive and independent beings: Michael the Archangel, the man Jesus, and the semi-divine king of the new world, is certainly not the Christian doctrine, whatever else it may be. Most intelligent people will rightly estimate it as fantastic nonsense.

And what becomes of the basic fact in the Christian religion—the resurrection of Christ? "If Christ be not risen," says St. Paul, "then is your faith in vain." (1st Corinthians 15:17) The Witnesses of Jehovah deny that he is risen. "The man Christ," they say, "is dead forever." "The Person who died," Russell tells us, "remained dead, and he will never be seen again in his human nature."

What became of his body? Russell says that no one knows. He suggests that possibly it was dissolved into gases, or super-naturally removed by God to be preserved until He chooses to produce it as a grand memorial or trophy of Christ's work. But it will be only a material corpse.

But we are told not to worry. If Christ is not risen in the long-accepted Christian sense of the word, he was raised a "spirit-being," receiving immortality and divinity as a gift from God. It is all very baffling. If the "person who died remained dead," who was the person receiving immortality and divinity? If God created a new being to enjoy those privileges, then that new being wasn't Christ but somebody else! Yet Russell goes on to say that Christ, despite his remaining dead, returned to his disciples after the resurrection in separate "body-appearances" specially created for each occasion!

At the ascension, Russell tells us that Jesus, no longer human, was exalted as a "spirit-being" to the divine nature; and that he remains an invisible spirit, having no longer any connection with our human nature. But if "the person who died remained dead," Jesus is not merely no longer human—he is no longer in existence! Russell may be able to think in such queer ways, but he has no right to pretend that he is giving to his followers anything like the genuine New Testament doctrine.

"THE SECOND COMING"

Let us turn now to what is really the starting-point of the Russellite system.

It is not without significance that it begins at the end and works backways from that, instead of attempting to follow divine revelation in the order in which God gave it. For Russell, as we have seen, began by concentrating on Christ's Second Coming and His "Millennial Reign." A theory having been decided upon in that regard, all else had to be distorted to fit in with it.

Russell took over from the Adventists the idea that the end of the world was very near at hand. By a mysterious process of mathematical calculation from the prophecies, he "discovered" that the Second Coming of Christ actually took place in 1874. If people had not the slightest idea of this, it was because they had been led astray by Acts 1:11: "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come, as you have seen Him going." Russell says that the Apostles did not see Him going, for He went invisibly as a spirit. And, in 1874, He returned invisibly as a spirit. But not yet to this earth. He returned only to the "upper air." In 1878, Russell further discovered, the apostles and other members of the "little flock," a favored few, were raised to meet the Lord, and they are hovering about with Him also in the "upper air."

In 1914, because that was 2520 years after the defeat of Zedekiah in 606 B.C., there came the "end of the times of the Gentiles." In that year, we are told, Satan began to wage a ferocious war against Christ and the saints in the "upper air," and simultaneously "nation rose against nation" on earth in the first world-war. Russell firmly believed that 1914 would mean the great final battle of Armageddon, the end of the world as we know it, the descent of Christ from the "upper air," and His enthronement as King on earth for a Millennium—after which thousand years the Final Judgment would take place.

When that did not happen, the Witnesses of Jehovah, undismayed by failure, moved the event up several times to 1916, 1918, 1924, 1928, etc., until Judge Rutherford hit on the ingenious explanation that the Second Coming (to the "upper air") took place as Russell had said in 1874. Christ was enthroned as King (in the "upper air") in 1914; and in that year, juridically at least, the world as we know it came to an end. In fact, and literally, the final destruction of all earthly kingdoms and Churches in the great final battle of Armageddon has been postponed -- until the Witnesses of Jehovah have completed their work of proclaiming the good news of Christ's enthronement and of warning all nations of the impending catastrophe!

Here we see again almost the same tactics as those adopted by the Seventh Day Adventists. William Miller, the Adventist, had calculated that the Second Coming of Christ would occur on 21 March 1843. When that failed, he said that 21 March 1844 was the correct date. He had merely made a slight mistake in his calculations. When that also failed, he moved the date forward to 22 October 1844. But, alas, nothing happened. Then there arose an Adventist named Hiram Edson, who had it "divinely revealed" to him that Christ did come on the last date after all, but not by returning to this world. On that date, He entered a "heavenly sanctuary" to begin investigating the records of all mankind, to find out who were good and who were evil. Mrs. Ellen G. White, the accepted prophetess of the movement, then discovered that as soon as Christ has finished auditing the books in the "heavenly sanctuary," He will descend to earth to execute judgment—and that will take place any moment now!

Rutherford working on the same lines, refuses to say just when God will decide that the Witnesses of Jehovah have completed their witness-work—but it will be any moment now! He even went so far as to insist that it would be within the lifetime of his own generation. Hence his slogan, "Millions now Living will never Die."

It is of little use to draw the attention of Witnesses of Jehovah to the series of failures in the predictions of their inspired prophets. When the end of the world did not come on schedule, and Russell died in 1916 instead of living to see it, as he expected, Rutherford offered his followers the consoling thought that, as Ezekiel was dumb for a year, five month and twenty-six days, so a similar period after the dumbness of Russell in death might elapse before the end. Twenty-six years elapsed, and then Rutherford himself died in 1942, instead of remaining among the millions who would live to see the end. But petty details like that cannot avail with the Witnesses of Jehovah against the whole magnificent scheme in which all others are to receive a fearful drubbing whilst they themselves are to be preserved from harm and elevated to eternal bliss as co-rulers of the world with Christ!

ARMAGEDDON

The battle of Armageddon, which Witnesses of Jehovah interpret literally with no allowance for apocalyptic symbolism, will begin any moment now, despite its having been unaccountably delayed for nearly forty years. The trouble is, apparently, that Satan has not yet had sufficient time to increase all the woes to the intense degree predicted by Scripture for the transition period. However, the signs of the times obviously indicate that the full measure has been practically attained. Christ, with His hosts, will soon descend from the "upper air," and in a great cataclysm the whole world will be cleansed of all wickedness and evil-doers, safety from which will be found only in God's organization—that of the Witnesses of Jehovah. And what then?

THE MILLENNIUM

In the Book of the Revelation (Apocalypse) 20:6, St. John speaks of Christ reigning for "a thousand years." The true interpretation of that expression, in keeping with the whole character of the Book, must be symbolically and not literal or numerical. It means simply "for a long period," and refers to the whole interval between the birth of Christ into this world and His Second Coming to judge the living and the dead.

Russell and Rutherford, however, won't have that. They take the Millennium literally, and declare that the Second Coming of Christ will precede it. When Christ comes again, it will be reign for exactly a thousand years on this earth; and then will come the Final Judgment. There is a slight confusion as to dates. Some Witnesses say that since Christ came again in 1874, the Final Judgment will be in the year 2874; but other say no, and that the period will be from 1914 till 2914.

Russell apparently held that there are to be seven millennia. The year 1874, according to him, was the exact 6000th year from Adam's creation. That geologists have discovered human remains belonging to the Neolithic and Paleolithic Ages, dating back to at least 20,000 years ago, was unknown to him, and would not have worried him had he known of it. For he allowed no evidence of any kind to interfere with his theories. There had to be six millennia to correspond with the six "working-days" of creation; and there had to be a seventh as the "Sabbath" of millennia, and the last of them.

Since the Lord has already returned—invisibly—He is even now ruling the world in the "Millennial Reign," and using the Witnesses to publish the fact. The "Theocratic Kingdom" has arrived. But the fullness of Christ's reign cannot come until after Armageddon, the battle between Christ and His enemies, which has been so unaccountably delayed. After Armageddon, according to Russell, all the dead who have ever lived will be raised to life and be given a second probationary period under much more favorable conditions, with Satan bound and a continual evangelistic campaign to help them to make the right choice.

Even on the basis of 6000 years of history wrongly held by Russell, this would mean over 250 million millions of people on this earth simultaneously, covering it so thickly that not all would be able to sit down together! Russell's successors, having had their attention drawn to the absurdity of this, now say that not all who have ever lived will return, but only those "faithful ones" who were not so incorrigibly wicked as to forfeit any claim to a second chance. The latter will just remain in their state of annihilation.

DENIAL OF IMMORTALITY

The doctrine of annihilation at death leads to the problem of the nature of the human soul. According to Russell and his followers, man has not "got" a soul; he "is" a soul. And his soul is his body. When a man's body dies, his soul just ceases to be. There is no spiritual soul, immortal of its very nature. "Death," says Russell, "means total annihilation. There are no souls anywhere awaiting a resurrection. No human being who has ever lived and died exists any longer.

Russell was not impressed by any of the references in Scripture to the living reality of the Patriarchs and Prophets after death, such as Abraham, Moses, Elias, Samuel and others. When confronted with the words of Christ to the dying thief, "Amen, I say to thee—this day thou shalt be with me in paradise," he said that the proper Greek reading of the text is, "Amen, I say to thee this day—thou shalt be with me in paradise." With all the Greek scholars of the world against him, this man who did not know even the Greek alphabet, tells us that the Greek meant that!

But on Russell's own principles, how can he hold that there will ever be a resurrection of anybody? There's nobody to resurrect! Resurrection does not mean extinction and re-creation. Completely non-existent beings cannot receive bodies as before. If the dead are completely out of existence, any newly existent beings will be completely different beings, and not those who previously lived at all!

Yet Nathan Knorr, instead of saying, "Since Jehovah's Witnesses believe in resurrection, they believe man possess an immortal soul," inconsequently says just the opposite. He argues that precisely because they believe in resurrection, they do not believe man possess an immortal soul! However, though we won't exist to come back, according to the doctrines of the Witnesses of Jehovah, we are all going to come back to have our second chance during the Millennium—unless, of course, we are among the "millions now living who will never die."

THE SECOND CHANCE

During the "Millennium," then, in the "Theocratic Kingdom," men will again be offered eternal life, on the terms of the New Covenant. This life is not our only probation. Despite the fact that nowhere in the Bible is hope held out for any further probation after death; despite the express teaching of Scripture that "it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27); despite the evident finality of Our Lord's warning, "This night thy soul will be required of thee" (Luke 12:20), the Witnesses tell us that we are to have our lives all over again, and that nothing that took place in this life is going to count. All will depend on the way we behave under the much better millennial conditions.

As the "Millennium" has already commenced, one would think we should be living under those conditions now! But things haven't been running to timetable. However, as soon as the Witnesses of Jehovah have sufficiently witnessed, Armageddon will be upon us, the resurrection of the dead will take place, and all men will be able to try again.

JUDGMENT

At the end of the Millennium, in 2874 or 2914, will come the Final Judgment.

God will then establish His new world of righteousness, and completely vindicate His name. Satan, who has been imprisoned for the thousand years, will be let out to spread evil by crafty means. All will then be tempted and tested. Those who survive successfully this final testing will be divided into two classes.

The first class, called the "Consecrated Class," or the "Overcoming Class," will be a "little flock," limited to 144,000, as declared in the Book of Revelation.

These will go as spirit-beings to the upper air, to live and reign with Christ the divine in a kingdom not of this world. They will have "inherent" life, eternal, and emancipated from the necessity of all food and nourishment. Needless to say, these will all be Witnesses of Jehovah, though which Witnesses of Jehovah will share this "heavenly glory" with Christ is an anxiety to the more than a million present members of the organization! The second class will consist of all the rest of the saved. These will be left in that flesh and blood which cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. This earth will be their eternal home. "The righteous rule of the heavenly Kingdom," writes Nathan Knorr, "will descend earthward and effect the answer to the prayer: Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." The saved on earth will constitute the "other sheep" as opposed to the "little flock" in the heavenly places. They will fulfill God's plan to extend Edenic conditions earth-wide, and have it inhabited by a righteous race of men and women; and in them will be fulfilled God's promise of the earth to the meek, to be their inheritance.

These will not have "inherent" life, but will live on earth's food supply in everlasting peace, free from war, oppression, sickness and death. And they will increase and multiply and populate the earth. What will result from a constant multiplication of human beings in this world, with no one ever dying, can only be left to the reader's imagination! And what of those who do not survive successfully their final testing? They will be annihilated, together with the Devil and all his angels. The Witnesses of Jehovah deny all suffering in another life. The dead, they say, are non-existent; therefore there is no purgatory. At the Final Judgment, the willfully wicked will be exterminated; therefore there's no hell. When the Bible speaks of hell, according to them, it merely means the grave. Any hell of eternal punishment is just a myth.

SECRET OF SUCCESS

This brief glance at the inconsistent and almost incoherent system of religion invented by Pastor Russell and amplified and altered in many ways by Judge Rutherford, leaves on wondering how it manages to thrive. Witnesses of Jehovah will say that the fact of its growth surely argues to its truth. But other sects with totally different doctrines, yet of similar expansion, would have to be admitted as true on that score. So we must look elsewhere for an explanation.

Firstly, it must not be overlooked that the Witnesses of Jehovah make their appeal chiefly to professing Christians who have drifted from their Churches, and who know little or nothing of Christian doctrine. When these people hear the Churches they have forsaken denounced, they find quite a consolation in the thought that, not they themselves, but the "Churches" are to blame for their neglect of religion. Their lingering attachment to a vague Christian sentiment then makes them listen sympathetically to claims by agents of the "International Bible Students' Association" that what is needed is a return to Bible Christianity. And they know so little of their religion that they fail to realize how opposed to the teachings of Christ is the mockery of the Bible put before them by the Witnesses in the name of "truth."

Secondly, among such lapsed Christians, besides ignorance, credulity and superstition are very prevalent. Figures from the Department of Justice in USA indicate that less than one per cent of the Witnesses of Jehovah have had a secondary education, whilst fifteen per cent have had less than a normal primary education. Credulity and superstition have moved them to accept on the authority of Charles Taze Russell and Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford what has been put before them.

Thirdly, for this they were disposed by world conditions, their own uneasy conscience, and their innate pride. One of the greatest assets of the Witnesses of Jehovah has been the failure of scientific progress to produce Utopia. The world's poverty and insecurity have made many of the poorer classes clutch at the idea of the early return of Christ, with an ensuing peace and security. Their own uneasy conscience over the neglect of their duties to God has been consoled by the new doctrine that there is no hell. Ingersoll, it is true, had denounced the idea of hell. But he was an infidel, and could

scarcely be trusted. Yet here were teachers from God assuring them in the name of religion that hell does not exist. Such an assurance could not fail to appeal to such people.

Meantime, the constant repetition of extravagant threats about the fearful fate soon to overtake Christendom, to escape which one had only to become a Witness of Jehovah and devote oneself to selling booklets, had an additional effect. It is a fact that the atom-bomb scare in America has given a new boost to the Witnesses of Jehovah, many people imagining the end of the world and Armageddon to be really at hand.

Nor must we overlook the subtle appeal to pride and covetousness; the pride of knowing, like the Gnostics of old, esoteric and occult doctrines which the greatest of Christian theologians have failed to grasp; the pride of becoming masters of the world, triumphing like a kind of religious proletariat over the religious capitalists who remained faithful to the spiritual treasures they themselves have forsaken.

These and many other reasons account for conversion to the Witnesses of Jehovah. Truth certainly does not.

ESTIMATE

What must be our estimate, then, of this new religion? Can we regard it as other than an absurd, false, blasphemous and extremely dangerous travesty of Christianity? The absurdity of the whole sorry scheme, so utterly unworthy of an infinitely wise Creator, is surely self-evident. The predications of Russell and Rutherford, the self-appointed prophets of the movement, have been proved false over and over again, compelling them to have recourse to subterfuge after subterfuge. For the Creeds of Christendom, embodying the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), we are given a new creed, one of deadly novelties and fallacies. The doctrines of the Holy Trinity, of the Divinity of Christ, of the Personality of the Holy Spirit, of the bodily resurrection of Christ, and of the Church as established by Him are all blatantly denied. The New Testament teaching about the Eucharist and the Sacraments is ignored as if it did not so much as exist. The immortality of the human soul is rejected.

The positive doctrines of this freak religion—for thus only can it be rightly described -- are ridiculous in the extreme. What reasonable person could believe that Christ, though He did not rise from the dead, was supplanted by some newly created "spirit-being" who as "a" god, but not "the" God, and who returned to the "upper air" of this world, there to be enthroned as King, in 1874! Who could believe that there He—or this substitute being—is waiting until the Witnesses have witnessed sufficiently to His plans, when he will descend for the great final battle of Armageddon and for a millennial reign of a thousand years on this earth, after which He will turn this earth into an eternal, material paradise!

Spiritually, the whole system is utterly bankrupt. One will read through the whole flood of literature published by this Russell-Rutherford organization without finding any inculcation of the basic Christian virtues of humility, of repentance of sin, or of charity. No genuine love of God or of one's neighbor finds expression there. There is no emphasis on character-building, on self-conquest, on the necessity of taking up one's cross and following Christ Our Lord. The supreme message of this caricature of Christianity is "Read, believe, and sell Russell's and Rutherford's books, speak of God as 'Jehovah' and of all Churches and Governments as 'Antichrist'—this do, and thou shalt be saved!"

The very doctrine of this system, that people can sin with impunity in this life, cannot but encourage wickedness, immorality and depravity. "God never punishes, either in this life nor in the next," declared Russell; despite the fact that the law of retribution is insisted upon all through Sacred Scripture. However badly people behave in this life, according to the Witnesses of Jehovah, it does not really matter, since our moral choices now have no effect whatever upon our eternal future. All are annihilated at death, and there's no purgatory, no hell. If, as Russell says, all are to be raised again and given a second chance, everything will depend on how we behave then, not on how we behave now. Witnesses of Jehovah even say that the more wicked a man has been in this life, the more likely he is to make good in the next! And even if he doesn't, he will merely be put painlessly out of existence, to experience no future evil consequences whatever of his contemptuous defiance of God.

No one who retains any real respect for Holy Scripture, for God, for Christ, for his fellow-men, for his own human dignity and intelligence, can do anything but reject utterly this counterfeit religion invented by Russell and Rutherford,

and so pathetically propagated by their deluded Witnesses of Jehovah.

NIHIL OBSTAT:

W. M. Collins,
Censor Dioc.

IMPRIMATUR:

✠ D. Mannix,
Archiepiscopus Melbournensis
