

goes without saying. It serves to remind one of the suffering and death of our Lord On our behalf. It reminds us that he bought us with this price and that in every respect he is our Master. These are sobering reflections and can have a beneficial effect on our spiritual life. That seems to be the thrust of Paul's comments at 1 Corinthians 11 :27-32 "Consequently, whoever eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty respecting the body and the blood of the Lord. First let a man approve himself after scrutiny, and thus let him eat of the loaf and drink of the cup. For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgement against himself if he does not discern the body. That is why many among you are weak and sickly, and quite a few are sleeping (in death). But, if we would discern what we ourselves are, we would not be judged. However, when we are judged, we are disciplined by Jehovah, that we may not become condemned with the world." – 1 Corinthians 11:26-32 NW.

There were nearly 7.5 million in attendance last year when Jehovah's Witnesses came together to observe the Lord's evening meal. It seems likely that even more will attend this year's observance. Last year 9,081 partook of the emblems. How many will do so this year remains to be seen, but the trend is to fewer and fewer doing so. It is assumed that the mortality rate of these elderly ones figures into this decline. The artist's drawings of the hands pictured handling the emblems are old hands. It is not likely that many new, younger ones will partake of the emblems. Why? Because in this magazine as well as all other magazines and books that deal with this matter the Society continually stresses the point that by 1935 the ones who were to make up the 144,000 had been gathered.

Commenting on the change in the good news

introduced by the Society it says the following: "The modern history of Jehovah's Witnesses shows that since 1931, more attention started to be given to the 'other sheep' through the Kingdom message. Then on May 31, 1935, with the delivering of the talk 'The Great Multitude,' the 'great crowd' that the apostle John saw in vision was clearly identified with the 'other sheep.' What did this new emphasis indicate? Surely that *the gathering of the 'little flock' was drawing to a close* and the time had come for Jesus, through the administration of 'the faithful and discreet slave,' to turn his attention to gathering the 'other sheep.' " Matthew 24:45-47 (Page 21, par. 18) Italics added.

The above represents a self-fulfilling prophesy. The Witnesses are told that the good news that had been preached for 19 centuries ceased to be valid after 1935. Therefore, how could anyone who came under the influence of Watchtower preaching draw any other conclusion but that he was not to consider himself a child of God?

If millions of Jehovah's Witnesses conclude that Jesus is not addressing them when he said: "keep doing this in remembrance of me," it is not because they concluded this from their own reading of the Bible, but because they have been systematically taught it by the Society. That what was decided upon at a religious convention in 1935 can be cited as *the authority* for changing the historical good news is more than remarkable. The whole structure of different classes of Christians with different hopes and relationships with God and Jesus Christ rests on nothing more substantial than the chronological speculations of the Watchtower Society and the heretical teachings that accompany these speculations. These speculations have been repeatedly and consistently refuted by the outworking of history. □

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## ***Baptism: Dedication to God or an Organization?***

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"(1) Have you repented of your sins and turned around recognizing yourself before Jehovah God as a condemned sinner who needs salvation and have you acknowledged to him that this salvation proceeds from him, the Father, through his son Jesus Christ?"

"(2) On the basis of this faith in God and in his provision for salvation, have you dedicated yourself unreservedly to God to do his will henceforth as he reveals it to you through Jesus Christ and through the

Bible under the enlightening power of the holy spirit?" *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1973, page 280

The two questions above are put to those about to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. Those who can answer "Yes" to these questions are declared eligible for water baptism. Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have affirmed their faith in this manner-usually at one of the Watchtower-arranged circuit or district assemblies. It will be noted that there is nothing in these questions to

suggest that by this confession the person is pledging unconditional adherence to any earthly religious body or its representatives. The confession of faith is clear and unmistakable in that it entails a relationship between the person presenting himself for discipleship on the basis of faith in God, the Father and "his provision for salvation," Jesus Christ. It shows a willingness to do the will of God as that will is made known "through Jesus Christ and through the Bible under the enlightening power of the holy spirit." According to the Watchtower Society those who agree to these conditions are qualified for baptism: "if you find that you can answer 'Yes' to these questions, then it would be appropriate for you to speak to the presiding overseer in the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses with which you associate, with a view to getting baptized." *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1973, page 280

What happens though, if some time after one is baptized he begins to reevaluate his association with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society? Is there any honorable way that he can separate himself from this religious association? Not in the eyes of the Watchtower Society. Those who grow beyond Watchtower theology may be doing nothing more than acting consistently with the promise made at the time of their baptism. At that time they were, at best, only 'babes in Christ.' The ability to discern all of the ramifications of Watchtower teaching could hardly be fully appreciated. They may have had certain perceptions based on what later proved to be very naive perceptions of matters. They may later learn that much of the Society's history of prophetic failures was deliberately concealed from them, or if mentioned at all, done in such a manner as to minimize the seriousness of these failures. Greater experience with the Bible itself may reveal to them that the Society has made many serious departures from the original good news of Jesus Christ as taught by the apostles. They may begin to question the right of a religious organization to do this.

If this happens-and it is happening to many Jehovah's Witnesses around the world- then 'the fat is in the fire,' as they say. As soon as a baptized Witness begins to voice certain doubts, reservations or questions about any teaching, practice or policy of the organization, he comes under critical scrutiny. Efforts will be made to "readjust" this person's thinking. This readjustment usually means nothing more than pointing out that all must submit to Watchtower

thought and direction if they want life. If this effort does not meet with success and the person remains unconvinced, then the next step is to threaten him with official action, that is, a committee hearing before certain elders in the local congregation. Should this happen, the outcome will almost certainly result in disfellowshipment as an "apostate." In such hearings, it matters little that the person remains faithful to his baptismal vows and beliefs. He may voice strong conviction in both the Father and the Son as his redeemer. He may still

demonstrate faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the holy spirit as teacher and comforter, but these are not the issues upon which he will be judged. The question is never "Do you believe in God and Christ?," but rather "Do you accept the Watchtower Society organization as God's exclusive channel of communication to men on earth and will you submit to it?" If one cannot, in good conscience, make an unconditional surrender to the Society on every matter then he will be viewed by the elders as an apostate-a modern-day Judas.

It is as though a person starts out making a commitment to God and Christ and ends up under obligation to the Watchtower Society. One may wonder at what point in their Christian experience this happened? When did they agree to allow the Society to over-rule their conscience? At what point did they agree to parrot everything the Society publishes as truth regardless of what it proves to be? Why is it that the Society reserves for itself the right to change its thinking on Bible matters, but denies this right to those whom they baptize? The Society assumes spiritual authority over the individual who apparently forfeited all his rights at baptism. Such "lording it over" the Christian community does not represent the spirit of Christ who specifically warned against such assuming of power:

"You must not be called 'Teacher' because you are brothers of one another and have only one Teacher. And you must not call anyone here on earth 'Father' because you have only the one Father in Heaven. Nor should you be called 'Leader' because your one and only Leader is the Messiah. The greatest one among you must be your servant. Whoever makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great." -Matthew 23:8-12, *Good News Bible*

The Watchtower Society may boast that it does not glorify men with titles and does not have a clergy--laity system of worship, but the facts are that the Society and its elder system is a clergy class and one that exercises considerably more power and control over the individual Jehovah's Witnesses than do most of the ministers of other religions whom they routinely condemn. Not even the apostles who *did have spiritual authority*, exercise their authority in such a heavy-handed manner. (1 Cor. 3 :4-7) Just avoiding the use of the name does not mean they are not playing the game.

As serious as all of the foregoing is, it is but the 'tip of the iceberg' in the matter of baptism and what it represents as presently taught by the Watchtower Society. They acknowledge that the "Pauline declaration" found at Ephesians 4:4-6 has been in force for nearly two thousand years. This declaration is the heart and the soul of the body of believers in relation to God, Christ and one another. "One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons, who is over all and through all and in all." -Ephesians 4:4-6, *New World Translation*.

The "one baptism" was the baptism commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ: "An authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you, and know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." -Matthew 28: 19-20, *Jerusalem Bible*. On the festival day of Pentecost the apostle Peter gave a bold inspired witness concerning the one God, one Lord and one Spirit. To those who responded in faith and asked: "Men, brothers, what shall we do?" Peter said: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit." -Acts 2:38, *NW*.

Thus the disciple-making congregation of Jesus Christ began its implementation of the "one baptism" in Jesus' name. On that day we are told that three thousand were baptized. Concerning the significance of being baptized in Jesus' name, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* says the following: "Distinct from this (John's baptism) is the baptism enjoined by Christ, Matt. 28: 19, a baptism to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing to their

identification with Him in death, burial and resurrection. e.g. Acts 19:5; Rom. 6:3,4; I Cor. 1:13-17; 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12. The phrase in Matt, 28: 19, 'baptizing them into the Name' (R. V.; person was closely bound to, or became the property of, the one into whose Name he was baptized." (Page 97).

The ancient Israelites who escaped through the Red Sea are spoken of having been "baptized into Moses by means of the cloud and of the sea." (1 Cor. 10:2) Moses was Yahweh's chosen leader, law-giver and mediator to the nation of Israel. In the Christian system of things in the new covenant these positions are held by Jesus Christ. This view of the Lord is central to the matter of baptism. It can represent no other meaning than that when one is baptized: he comes under the immediate authority of Jesus Christ who is the head of the body of believers. (Col. 1:18) "For just as the body is one, but has many members and all the members of that body, although being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. For truly by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink one spirit." -1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13, *NW* Nothing could be clearer than that the "one baptism" is an inseparable part of the "one faith" to which all the Scriptures bear witness. Why is it then that the Watchtower Society teaches that Christians can no longer come into this spiritual relationship with Christ and share in the "one hope" and the "one baptism" that makes them a part of the congregation of Christ? Consider what they have to say about this in the following quotation:

"Down to the spring of 1935, the dedicated baptized witnesses of Jehovah had entertained in true faith the 'one hope' that was set before them in Ephesians 4:4-6, as follows: 'one body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons.' But, in that memorable year of 1935, at the convention held in Washington, D.C., the "great multitude," as visualized at Revelation 7:9-17 (*Authorized version*) was identified as being composed of the Fine Shepherd's "other sheep" of John 10: 16. The anointed remnant who still held on to their valid 'one hope' rejoiced greatly over this *advancing light* upon the Holy Scriptures and set themselves to act wholeheartedly in the gathering of these 'other sheep.' They did not feel that the 'other sheep' were infringing on the 'one baptism' by themselves getting immersed in water, for

the baptism of such 'other sheep' was as much a symbol of their dedication to Jehovah God through Christ as that of the anointed remnant had been." -*The Watchtower*, Dec. 15, 1982, Page. 19 Italics added.

The gravity of the above declaration cannot be exaggerated as to its violence against historical Christianity. They are saying that from the spring of 1935 the way into the congregation of Jesus Christ is barred to those believing in Jesus Christ! Now, according to the Watchtower prophet, a different hope replaces the one we read about in the Bible. And what is the basis for this new hope? Nothing more substantial than that the Society declared it so. Such a declaration represents a supreme example of sectarian presumptuousness that effectively renders the Christian hope invalid. In another Watchtower the same occasion is described as follows: "It was as if the 'faithful and discreet slave' class had used a 'key of knowledge' (Matt. 24:45-47; Luke 11 :52) and had unlocked the door for prospective members of the 'great multitude' to enter into wonderful privileges." - *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1979, page 28

It is easy for men to make strong assertions and color these assertions in exaggerated phrase. We ought not be influenced by the weight they place on their own

declarations. There is no end to this kind of rhetoric coming from various sectarian movements. But what were the *spiritual credentials* of the man and the organization he served as its official spokesman that we should set aside a two thousand-year Christian hope? The man was Joseph F. Rutherford, second president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. This is the man who preached that Charles T. Russell was the "faithful servant" of Matt. 24:45. This is the man who preached that Christ became invisibly present in 1874. Here was a man who predicted that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the rest of the Hebrew prophets would all be resurrected in 1925. He authorized the writing and publication of *The Finished Mystery* in 1917 that predicted the end of Christendom in 1918 and the violent end of all worldly governments in 1920. All of these things and much, much more were presented as "advancing light upon the Holy Scriptures," by this man and the organization he represented. Now, in the spring of 1935, we are told that another "truth" had been revealed-one that terminated the historical gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ and the significance of baptism. The facts are clear to those who wish to accept them. The Society has many times proven itself unworthy of being relied upon for spiritual guidance. (Deut. 18: 20-22) □