

1919 were "appointed over all the master's belongings" they have, in fact, appointed themselves! What was the message the Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses) were preaching in 1919—the year of their "appointment" for "faithful and discreet service"? They were teaching that the Lord had been invisibly present since 1874 and that the world would end in about six years—1925—at which time the Hebrew prophets would be resurrected. They were preaching that Charles T. Russell was the "wise and faithful servant" of Matthew 24: 45-47 and still directing the Lord's work from heaven since his death (and resurrection) in 1916!

The good news of the Kingdom is the good news about Jesus Christ. This good news began to be preached at Pentecost and has been faithfully preached for over 19 centuries since. It is the good news of salvation from God through Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:34—43). It is the theme that runs through all of the inspired Christian Writings. We are promised eternal life by a resurrection from the dead. Everyone putting faith in Jesus Christ is made righteous by God. (Romans 10:4). It was concerning this good news that

Paul wrote: "For if you publicly declare that 'word in your own mouth,' that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation." —Romans 10-9,10 AW. And the apostle John wrote: "God has given us eternal life, and this life has its source in his Son. Whoever has the Son has this life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." —1 John 5:11,12, Today's English Version. D

**UPDATE:** Since writing this material in 1984 I have discovered much more about the spiritual food being provided in the 1914-1918 period. The book *The Finished Mystery*, published by the Society in 1917 said that all of the churches and church-goers would be destroyed in 1918. The same book taught that 1920 would see the destruction of all of the earth's governments and institutions. This was the entree—the main course—of the food being served up during that period they were being inspected by Jesus Christ as to their worthiness of additional responsibility, according to their interpretation of matters! □

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## **God's Use of Organization**

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Responding to *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1984. Two study articles consider how essential organization is to acceptable worship of Jehovah God. The first article: "Organized to Serve Jehovah," raises the question: "Does God deal with people solely on an individual basis? What does the Bible indicate?" —page 10. They acknowledge "that Jehovah does show concern for people as individuals" and quote several scriptures that establish that view. Then they raise the following question:

"But does this mean that individuals here and there throughout many religious organizations of the world are acceptable to God? Or should it be expected that such persons would be associating with one another, would be organized to serve Jehovah?"—page 10.

From this point forward they attempt to establish that one must be in association with but one organized fellowship to have one's worship validated by God. It is interesting to observe how they inject the concept of "organization" into the Bible record when in reality it is lacking in the Sacred Writings. It serves to illustrate the "hidden Manna"-approach to Bible study, namely, finding in the Bible what one has already concluded before reading it. Note how they insert the concept of organization into the account of the Flood: "But what about the human realm? Well, the Deluge of Noah's

day brought an end to all antediluvian organizations that might have existed on earth—except one. Noah and the seven other Flood survivors emerged from the ark as a family organization. A matter of prime importance to them was the rendering of united worship to God, for we read: 'Noah began to build an altar to Jehovah and to take some of all the clean beasts and of all the clean flying creatures and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar.' The Flood survivors did not immediately go their separate ways religiously, but they were all together for this significant event that culminated in blessing, instruction and a covenant originating with God. (Genesis 8:18-9:17) Yes, after the Deluge, Noah's family started off as an organization that served Jehovah."—page 11, par. 6.

The Scriptures speak of Noah as a "good man, a man of integrity among his contemporaries, and he walked with God."—Genesis 6:9 *Jerusalem Bible*. As regards the religiosity of his family the Bible is silent. What was "of prime importance to them," is a matter of speculation. They survived the Flood as a family but to what extent they shared their father's devotion to God the Bible does not say. Referring to them as a "family organization" is certainly a misnomer. A family may be "organized" to eat breakfast together but that hardly constitutes them a "family organization." When was the last time you heard a family speak of itself as

a organization?

There is no indication in the Bible that Noah and his family remained together to worship God in some organized or systematic manner. In fact, soon after the Flood, Noah pronounced a curse upon one of his sons. (Genesis 9:20-27) Later when some of the descendants of Noah's sons tried to collect themselves together in some kind of organized city-state to avoid being "scattered all over the earth," God was very displeased and confounded their speech so they could not carry out this scheme. (Genesis 11:1-9)

The Watchtower article next considers the nation of Israel: "The descendants of Abraham were richly favored by Jehovah, and nobody can reasonably deny that they eventually became a national organization. Why, the Bible book of Exodus alone shows how they were delivered from Egyptian bondage and were organized as a theocracy! The book identifies Jehovah as the God of theocratic organization. When the Israelites obeyed God's Law, they were able to worship him as an orderly, secure and joyful organization. They were undeniably organized to serve Jehovah."—page 11, par. 7.

The writer of the above paragraph managed to get some form of the word "organization" into it five different times. It illustrates the obsession the Society has with the "organization" concept and the practice of overkill in its use. Obviously, the priestly Tabernacle service and later the Temple service required considerable organization and scheduling to carry out the endless cycle of sacrifices and ritual in connection therewith. But this "organizing" was merely a means to an end and not an end in itself.

The following paragraph considers the "Evidence of fine organization ... in connection with service at Jehovah's earthly sanctuary." It quotes several scriptures, in which the *Revised Standard Version*, uses the coveted word "organized" in connection with this service. (1 Chron. 23:2-6; 24:1-6; 2 Chron. 23:18) Interestingly, they ignore the use of their own *New World Translation* in quoting these verses because it uses the word "distributed" instead of "organized" in these references. In any other context they would argue that the *New World Translation's* rendering is to be preferred, but because the *RSV* uses the preferred term "organized," they quote it here.

The section in the Watchtower from which all the

foregoing quotations are taken is headed: "Jehovah—A God of Organization"—page 11. If, as the Watchtower Society insists, organization is a hallmark of Jehovah's worship, it is strange that the Bible is silent about it. The word "organization" doesn't even appear in the *New World Translation*, nor is it a subject considered in standard Bible dictionaries. Even the Society's Bible dictionary, *Aid to Bible Understanding*, fails to list it as a topic. [Update: *Insight on the Scriptures*, 1988, also omits the subject.] Why? Because the Bible does not develop organization as a theological concept or present God as "A God of Organization."

Furthermore, the "national organization" of Israel is a poor example to use in arguing for the merits of "organization." With but few exceptions its religious history is a sad commentary on the integrity of the descendants of Abraham. The kings and priests (organizational leaders) led the nation into apostasy time after time. The few individuals who were inspired by Jehovah God to speak out against such corruption and warn of God's judgments to come were viewed as rebels and disloyal to God. For this they were hated, persecuted and slandered for their speaking out against Jehovah's "national organization." The cries of "the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah," held no sacred magic to avoid the consequences of their error. Jehovah God did not overlook their apostasy because they were called by his name. To the contrary, they became more reprehensible than the pagan nations around them. (Jeremiah, Chap.7) As regards the Christian community, the Watchtower argues that the early believers were "well organized" under a "governing body comprised of the apostles and older men at Jerusalem." —page 12, par. 10) While it was true that there was a measure of community and cooperation among early Christians who recognized the authority of the apostles and other teachers, it is not true that the congregations were under the direction of a governing body. A reading of the Acts of the Apostles shows that the holy spirit worked independently of any earthly body and not through one.

The conference held in Jerusalem to consider the issue of what was and what was not binding upon Gentile believers was not called by any so-called "governing body." It was decided in Antioch by the congregation to send Paul, Barnabas and others up to Jerusalem. There were certain brothers from Judea troubling the Gentile brothers with the insistence that they must not only be circumcised, but also observe the Law of Moses. The delegation from Antioch did not

travel to Jerusalem to learn the truth but rather to present the evidence that the holy spirit had already demonstrated to them and others. The conclusion verbalized by James was not the product of any voting or secret meeting of a "governing body," It was a conclusion forced upon James and others in Jerusalem by the operation of God's spirit which could not be contested! (Acts 15).

Concerning why it is important to be organized today the article states: "There must be agreement among all true Christians, a unified message, if people are to hear what is correct, put genuine faith in the true God and call upon Jehovah's name with the prospect of being saved."—pages 14,15 par. 19.

"Today, Jehovah's Witnesses alone are declaring the good news that the Kingdom has been functioning in the heavens since 1914 with Jesus Christ as King." —page 15, par. 20.

The "good news" preached exclusively by Jehovah's Witnesses as taught to them by the Watchtower Society bears no resemblance to the good news preached by the early disciples of the Lord. (Acts 8:12,35; Romans 10:6-10) It is clearly a *different* Good news. (Galatians 1:6—8) It is a gospel derived from 19th century Adventist thought which has undergone constant revision as history has given the lie to their expectations for deliverance into a new world. There is no merit in being well organized to preach a good news that is not scripturally sound.

Much of the success of the Watchtower organization to marshal the unquestioning devotion of Jehovah's Witnesses lies in their "'crisis theology." By that is meant the expectation and anxiety created in the minds of the Witnesses that the end is at hand—or nearly so. Over many decades phrases like "in the short time remaining" or "very shortly now" have been used constantly to stress the imminence of the end. This tactic continues to dominate in Watchtower literature. Young minds have been conditioned to believe that they would never have to worry about growing old in this system of things. Older ones have lived in expectation of surviving alive into a cleansed earth because the Society convinced them that the end was at hand—or nearly so.

The measure of success the Watchtower Society has experienced in getting its gospel preached, has been due to the religious energy generated by its

"crisis theology." Normal considerations and pursuits of life are left undone because of the perceived urgency of getting the message out in order to save lives. A few, brief quotations here will serve to illustrate the constant mental reinforcement the Witnesses are exposed to:

"The great climax is at hand."—*Light*, book two, page 327 (**1930**).

"Armageddon is near, and the conclusion of God's 'strange work' is nearer."—*Face The Facts*, page 58 (1938).

"All the facts show that the woes beginning in 1914 have continued to increase upon the earth, and at the present time the distress and woes are greater than ever before known, and this indicates that Armageddon is very near."— *Children*, page 151 (**1941**).

"That Armageddon is at the door the fulfillment of Bible prophecy clearly indicates."— *Awake!*, May 22, **1956**, page 7.

The *Watchtower* under consideration in this issue of *The Christian Respondent* is no exception in this regard. The study article: "Build Your Future With Jehovah's Organization," goads its readers to more and more activity under the direction of the Watchtower Society. They write: "We are now *deep into 'the last days'* of this wicked system of things. . . How soon will that occur? *Surely before long*, for this is the 70th year of Kingdom rule! . . . *Its time has nearly run out*. . . . With the storm clouds of the 'great tribulation' *already forming on the horizon*, this is no time to plan for a prosperous future in some worldly business firm or to be climbing the corporate ladder." (excerpts from several paragraphs on pages 16 and 17. Italics added).

The problem with "crisis theology" is that it generates wrong motives for living the Christian life. It has always been an urgent matter for people to hear the good news of salvation from God through Jesus Christ. The pressure or force to make that good news known must come from within—not from without. And herein lies the weakness of "crisis theology;" it is a zeal based more on fear than it is love. If we have love in our hearts for God and Christ and live each day as they would have us live it we have no need to fear the sudden return of our Lord. Each Christian has to take responsibility for how he or she balances their commitment to God and their obligations toward their fellow man.

For all generations of believers the Lord said: "Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the door-keeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because

you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!" Mark 13:33—37 *Jerusalem Bible*. □