

and brotherly affection it would also be appropriate to use discrimination in one's choice of intimates—those most likely to influence our thoughts and actions. The matter of avoiding some within the fellowship who advanced unhealthy teachings is repeated by Paul in I Corinthians 15. In this chapter Paul refutes those who say there is no resurrection and follows this up by saying that "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (vs. 33) When we consider the context in which we find these words it seems apparent he is talking about those *within* the congregation that represented "bad associations" [Greek: *kakos honilia*, meaning evil (intrinsically so) companionship] Faithful Christians are not condemned for the sins of other Christians. We do not incur community guilt. Contamination takes place only if we adopt these views and ungodly practices. In the Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ is seen in the midst of seven congregations in Asia Minor. With the exception of Smyrna, each of these contained people advocating bad things or otherwise falling short in some manner. In these same congregations there were individuals who were serving loyally and who had the

Lord's approval. He encouraged these to remain faithful to the end and promised them spiritual rewards. These faithful ones were not condemned along with the others. We can take courage from that as well. (Rev. 2,3)

What can we conclude other than that the early congregations were spiritually flawed. Contamination set in at an early date. The apostles of the Lord helped to hold back that corrupting element to a large extent but not entirely. Some were denying the healthy teaching and substituting Hellenistic thought. Even within the Christian congregations there was a need to be discriminating. This must have been a trial some experience for many faithful ones. We, today, may experience similar trials within our local fellowship. Such trials test our loyalty and devotion to God and Christ. However, we have need of fellowship and should take advantage of it when available. We are not charged with the sins of others and, moreover, we can use whatever degree of influence we have to uphold Christian conduct and sound doctrine. □

How Much Loyalty and Gratitude is Owed the Watchtower Society?

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One of the charges hurled against those who begin to question the Watchtower Society is that they are lacking in gratitude. The Watchtower Society likes to remind Jehovah's Witnesses of how much they owe them in regard to the Christian faith. When it was learned in the Spring of 1980 that a number of Bethelites were challenging the validity of certain doctrinal positions held by the Society the reaction was as arbitrary as it was swift. It made no difference to the Watchtower leadership that these challenges were never made in an overt way but were confined to private and confidential conversation among friends. No attempt was made to recruit others to a questioning point of view. Nevertheless, several members of the headquarters staff were disfellowshipped as apostates including Edward A. Dunlap a highly respected member of the Writing Department and former Registrar of Gilead the Watchtower foreign missionary school. At the same time Raymond Franz, a member of the Governing Body, also came under suspicion and was asked to resign from that body and to leave the world headquarters staff. (for a more comprehensive account of these events see *Crisis of Conscience*, by Raymond Franz, published by Commentary Press, P.O. Box 43532, Atlanta, GA 30336)

Jehovah's Witnesses at large knew very little about

these events that took place at the Brooklyn headquarters of the Watchtower Society. What was known was highly distorted by unfounded rumor and character assassination. The harsh, overreaction on the part of the Watchtower Society was due, in part, to the notion that a major conspiracy had been uncovered and needed to be crushed. It mattered not at all that no such conspiracy ever existed. It was sufficient to the Governing Body that they believed there was one. At the "Divine Love" District Conventions held during the summer of 1980 a manuscript talk was given titled: "Confident in a World Beset by Doubts". This material also appeared in the August 1, 1980 issue of *The Watchtower*. It was clearly designed to intimidate those who might be experiencing doubts or questions regarding anything the Society taught. It also managed to put into question the motives of any doubting ones. Among other things it said:

"If insidious doubts ever begin to creep into his mind, the Christian would do well first to weigh the situation and ask himself a few pointed questions:

Where did I learn that God's name is Jehovah ... what is God's loving purpose for mankind ... why he has allowed suffering ... that Jesus is not a second part of a Trinitarian godhead ... the full meaning of

redemption ... What religion cleared up in my mind the question of the holy spirit ... set me straight on the pagan idea of the immortality of the human soul . . . the resurrection ... hellfire ... God's kingdom as mankind's only hope ... the last days With whom have I found a real purpose in life what group of Christians genuinely have 'love among themselves' ... Jehovah's Witnesses, as fed spiritually by the 'faithful and discreet slave' class and its governing body." -*The Watchtower*, August 1, 1980, page 14, par. 11

The purpose of this issue of *The Christian Respondent* is not to challenge these 'truths' but rather to explore the matter of obligation. What do we owe the individual or the religious community that assists us in our walk of faith? Surely, we should feel a deep sense of appreciation and gratitude toward the one who led us to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Experience shows that a special bonding takes place between a Christian and the one they help to embrace the faith. This gratitude is usually reflected in a manifestation of like-mindedness—a desire to share the faith with others. But this gratitude has its limitations. One is not put under obligation to the individual or the organization to which he may be introduced. Otherwise, one would become only a follower of followers instead of a disciple of Jesus Christ to whom he owes unquestioning loyalty. No other obligation other than to "love one another" rests upon the convert. (Romans 13:8)

Another vital factor to remember is that truth originates with God. Our loyalty must always be focused on the source of all truth and not the means by which that truth is made known. Whatever truth there may be in the organizational belief system imposed by the Watchtower Society on Jehovah's Witnesses that truth did not begin with them nor can they take credit for it. But by phrasing matters as they do in the foregoing quotation the Society is saying, in effect, "You owe us!" Such a mentality is foreign to the spirit of Christ. We recognize, for example, that the apostles of Jesus Christ did have spiritual authority in the early church. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he speaks of them as a secondary foundation upon which is built a spiritual temple. (Eph. 2:20,21) But this authority was never used to lord it over the congregation of God. (2 Cor. 1 :24) When factions began to develop within the Corinthian congregation he put matters in the proper perspective:

"When one of you says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos' -aren't you acting like worldly

people? After all, who is Apollos? and who is Paul? We are simply God's servants, by whom you

. were led to believe. Each one of us does the work which the Lord gave him to do: I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God who made the plant grow. The one who plants and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God that matters, because he makes the plant grow. There is no difference between the man who plants and the man who waters; God will reward each one according to the work he has done. For we are partners working together for God, and you are God's field." -1 Cor. 3:4-9 *Good News Bible*

The apostle put the focus on God—not man. Watchtower doctrine has it that Christ appointed a 'faithful and discreet slave' in A.D.33. This 'slave' was governed, they say, by the apostles and the older men in the Jerusalem congregation. Paul, as an apostle chosen by Christ, is viewed (by the Society) as a member of that governing body but he did not speak to the Corinthian brothers the way the Watchtower Society speaks to Jehovah's Witnesses. That the Society has been proven wrong on many of its teachings and time settings is a matter of historical record. What they presently herald as truth contains many questionable premises. The Society dismisses its many changes in doctrine by arguing that the 'light is getting brighter' and this necessitates change. Rather than viewing such changes as a weakness they view them as a strength. The text that is frequently called upon to validate this doctrine is Proverbs 4: 18. which, according to their *New World Translation* reads: "But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established." From the days of Charles T. Russell until now, this text has been called upon to explain-away errors in teaching and time settings advanced by the Watch Tower Society. By the use (*abuse*) of this text they absolve themselves of any serious responsibility for their many errors. If they are reminded that they taught for decades that 1914 would see the end of the world they merely reply: "Well, the light was getting brighter." When they are reminded that the so-called "light" that explained-away the 1914 error was also an error as regards what was to happen in 1918, 1920 and 1925, the same answer will be given. The fact is that Proverbs 4: 18 has nothing whatsoever to do with God's means of revealing His truth! Reading the fourth chapter in context clearly shows that what is being considered is the contrast in outcome of lives lived by the ungodly and the godly. "Do not enter the path of

the wicked, and do not walk the way of evil men. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made some one stumble. For they eat the bread of wicked-ness and drink the wine of violence. But [in contrast] the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble." -Proverbs 4: 14-19 *Revised Standard Version*

As light comes from the sun in a natural sense so light, in a spiritual sense, comes from God. What the Society says, in effect, is that this is all it has pleased God to reveal about the matter at any given point in time. While they do not say so they are really blaming God for any misunderstanding they postulate. After all, if God only reveals enough for them to draw the wrong conclusion whose fault is it? They even suggest that such allowed errors are God's way of testing people's love of truth! So, while placing the Witnesses under obligation to preach as *truth* everything they publish they take no responsibility for the errors therein. If you enforce the consequences of their argument that the 'light keeps getting brighter,' then you would have to conclude that *present truth* (light) may not be truth at all! That being the case, one would have to highly qualify what one taught as *truth* at any given point in time. But the Watchtower Society never speaks with such reservations or modesty. It always speaks authoritatively, dogmatically. The 'light getting brighter' doctrine not only lacks a scriptural base it also represents a contradictory premise that makes sense only to those who fail to think it through. Unfortunately, the Witnesses are all too eager to set aside the Society's history of failed 'light' and accept the ludicrous doctrine they teach in this matter because the alternative is too painful for them to consider.

Absolute loyalty toward individuals or organizations is not the mark of spiritual maturity. It is rather 'worldly.' The common saying: "My country-right or wrong," is matched by: "My religion-right or wrong. "" The former is a product of nationalism; the latter is a product of sectarianism. Both attitudes stem from the spirit of prideful exclusiveness that promotes prejudices, factions, discrimination and reinforces error. We can avoid the spirit of sectarianism if we focus on God and Christ-not men. Such a focus will not prevent us from showing loving appreciation for our fellow laborers in the Christian vineyard past and

present. How grateful we can be that men were moved to preserve the Sacred Text in handwritten copies long after the original autograph copies disappeared. Those societies that have produced Bibles in many languages and made them available to the general public are certainly worthy of our gratitude and respect. Bible commentaries, dictionaries, language studies, church histories and a host of other study aids are all part of the legacy of dedication brought to the cause of Christ. Since the giving of the Great Commission, faithful witnesses of Christ have selflessly carried the good news of salvation through Christ to the ends of the earth. (Matt. 28: 19,20) What do we owe to that great crowd of Christian witnesses who sealed their witness with their lifeblood to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom? But, above all else, what do we owe the Father and his Son for what they have done in our behalf? (John 3: 16)

Honest reflection will convince us that we all owe a great deal to many past and present brothers. In my own experience I feel a sense of gratitude and appreciation towards those who personally assisted me. I am grateful to my mother who first taught me an awareness of God. I am grateful to Sunday School teachers who introduced me to Bible stories. I am grateful to those churches I attended in my youth that introduced me to the community of believers and gave me a sense of God's presence in worship services. I still feel a sense of gratitude to the first Jehovah's Witnesses that visited our home and later conducted Bible studies with my mother and me. One dear lady, in particular, has a special place in my affections. This dear sister came to our home week after week-rain or shine-to share with us what she believed to be God's truth. I cannot say I remember a great deal about the content of those studies but I do remember her gentle and caring manner and her warm smile. Her devotion and example of faithfulness made a lasting impression on my young mind. Years later I had opportunity to tell her how dear she had been to me. I confess gratitude to the Watchtower Society for bringing to my attention many fine principles of truth. Among other things, they taught that the Bible-not the words of men-was the standard by which all Christian religions were to be judged. I was taught that it was not wise to put trust in men. (Psalm 146:3)

I grew to have deep respect for the Watchtower Society and considered it an honor to be in association with them. But I never confused what I read in their publications with what I read in the Bible itself. Nor was I taught to confuse the two. In time, however, I

found that they often violated their own counsel in these matters. The clear distinction between what the Bible said and what men claimed it said became blurred by the Watchtower leadership. Human reasoning and logic were often presented as equal to Bible truth. I still recall the discomfort I felt when a Lutheran minister challenged the Society's argument that each of the creative days were seven thousand years long. I could not find a text that confirmed that. I could only argue for it, and I did; but the Bible is silent on the matter. I came away from that discussion vowing never again to make such an assertion. I also came to realize in that experience that there were things I believed that could not be found in the Bible. I had to acknowledge to myself that I believed them simply because the Society said so. It was the first of many small lessons that would ultimately lead me away from that organization.

What about the Watchtower Society itself? Does it give credit where credit is due? Do they acknowledge the debt of gratitude they owe to others outside their organization? Do they show a sense of obligation towards those within the organization? It is well known that Jehovah's Witnesses were the target of much persecution in the late 1930s and 1940s. Court battles were fought to secure the constitutional rights of religious expression. Those who had conviction enough and courage enough to do what local authorities often told them they could not do found themselves verbally or physically abused, falsely accused or arrested. Those brave souls are worthy of our respect whether we agree that they always acted with discretion or not. But what about the United States legal system that allowed them their day in court? What about the American Constitution that guaranteed freedom of speech and the right to public assembly? That the courts of the land upheld the rights of an extremely unpopular religious minority in a time of extreme national emergency (during World War II) is also cause for respect and gratitude. In all of this it was people flesh and blood-not an organization-that took the blows and endured the abuse. It was thousands of men, women and children who put themselves in jeopardy. The Watchtower Society may boast of its publishing empire and expanding world headquarters but they owe it to the hundreds of thousands who forsook all to advance what they considered to be God's interests.

Today, their modern, high-speed presses produce tons of literature. Volunteer labor is used to man these presses and perform the thousand other functions of a private publishing empire. Millions of Witnesses

dutifully purchase this literature from the Society and, in turn, sell it to people in their community. While the Society reminds the Witnesses what they owe the organization they should reflect on what the organization owes them. Actually, there is nothing to boast about on anyone's part as to what we do religiously. Paul tells us: "God will reward each one according to the work he has done." (1 Cor.3:8) And, if the work built on the foundation of Christ is not of the right materials it will all be burned up. (1 Cor. 3: 13-15) Drawing attention to ourselves or an organization detracts from God and Christ. We cannot place a value on what we do. All must await God's evaluation.

To those boasting in men in his day Paul said: "So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future-all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me."-1 Cor. 3:21-4:4 *New International Version*. "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"-1 Cor. 4:7 *NIV*.

The history that the Watchtower Society presents of itself fails to acknowledge that nearly everything the Witnesses presently believe-truths and errors-were received from others. While Russell is said to have "revived the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles." -*Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 17, they fail to mention the strong influence others had on his thinking. A number of Second Adventists contributed greatly to Russell's belief system. It was the Adventist Nelson H. Barbour who convinced Russell of the "Gentile Times" chronology still held by Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell's first publication *The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return*, contained views obtained from a variety of sources. The Society acknowledges that Russell and Barbour co-produced the book *Three Worlds: or the Plan of Redemption* (1877). What they do not say is that Barbour wrote the book while Russell merely helped with the publication of it. This book provides the framework of dispensationalism from which Russell evolved his theology. This book is still available from

Witness Inc., P.O. Box 597, Clayton, CA 94517.
About this book the Society says:

"Nothing like it had ever been published before.

It combined for the first time the explanations of time prophecies with the work of Restitution. At this early date [1877] they recognized that the end of Satan's period of uninterrupted rule of the earth, called 'Gentile times,' would come in 1914. " -*Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 19. Written in the first person, Barbour identifies himself as the writer in the book's preface. Russell is named on the title page only as sharing in publishing. Even here Barbour's name is in bold type with Russell's name below it in much smaller type. All of the dispensational views together with their corresponding time feature elements are clearly set forth in this volume; views that Russell preached and wrote about throughout his active ministry. The book set forth the novel doctrine of the "invisible presence" teaching wherein it was said that Christ returned *invisibly* in 1874 and that this marked the beginning of a 40-year "harvest" period which would climax in 1914. As to what was to happen within that 40-year span Barbour wrote: 'And during this forty years, the kingdom of God is to be set up. (but not in the flesh, 'the natural first and afterwards the spiritual),' the Jews are to be restored, the Gentile kingdoms broken in pieces 'like a potter's vessel,' and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and the judgment age introduced. " page 83. [Note: For a more detailed presentation of Barbour's "Gentile Times" chronology read *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* by Carl Olof Jonsson, Commentary Press, P.O.Box 43532, Atlanta, GA 30336].

Apparently the Watchtower Society feels safe in misrepresenting what was taught in this hook regarding the year 1914 as no Witness is likely to ever question their assertions and certainly unlikely to ever see the book, much less read it. This lack of accessibility to the various publications mentioned in *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* enables them to perpetuate the prophetic mythology that surrounds their movement.

Another prominent Adventist that contributed much to Russell's early development as a Bible teacher was George Storrs. Storrs was the publishing editor of *The Bible Examiner* which published Russell's article:

"The Gentile Times: When do They End?" in

October of 1876. (Russell had gotten this time fear from Barbour in January of 1876.) An autobiography published by Russell in 1916 makes favorable mention of George Storrs and George Stetson and says: "The study of the Word of God with these dear brethren led step by step into greener pastures. an~ brighter hopes for the world .. " *Zion's Watch Tower*, 1916, page 170. George Storrs was born December 13 ,1796 in Lebanon, New Hampshire, the youngest of eight children. Like Russell, who was born 56years later, his early religious training was Calvinistic. While still in his teens he joined the Congregational Church. Still later he associated with the Methodists and in .. 1825, at the age of 29, he became an itinerant mister. of this denomination. He later withdrew from this fellowship after developing strong views. regarding conditionalism: that immortality is not inherent in humans but a gift bestowed by God .on the faithful. In 1837, three years before he left the Methodists, he had read the conditionalist viewpoint presented in a pamphlet written by Henry Grew. Storrs later published *Three Letters and Six Sermons which set forth his various scriptural arguments for his newly adopted on the mortality of the human soul and everlasting death (not conscious torment) as the punishment for sin. Six Sermons*, first published in 1842, reached a distribution of nearly 200,000 copies.

Storrs, like many other Adventists of his time, accepted the William Miller view which set the return of Christ in 1843-.1844. Following the disappointments surrounding that prediction Storrs became wary of date- setting. He came to view all religious organizations as abominations. He also believed and taught that an opportunity would be afforded those who had not heard the gospel to gain everlasting life on earth following Christ's return. That Russell had full access to Storrs writings and accepted much, if not all, of his theology cannot be honestly denied. Incidentally, *Six Sermons, The Doctrine of Election and The Seventh Sermon* by Storrs is still available from Haviland W. Davis, 5 Oakwood St., Albany, NY 12208. Those familiar with the views of Jehovah's Witnesses will note strong relationships between what they presently teach and what Storrs taught. To what extent Russell developed his own belief system is mote. The evidence is that he was greatly helped and influenced by others. And, we might add, not always for the best.

We must keep in mind that more than 100 years have passed since the early days of Russell's ministry and there have been a number of evolutionary changes made by those who followed him in the Watchtower

Society. Failed predictions have also forced changes in the particular dates preached regarding Jesus 'invisible presence' and the end of the world. But these changes, whether forced upon them or not, have been more cosmetic than substantial. Their doctrinal 'adjustments' represent a circular pattern of reasoning. Rather than abandon the false premise that got Russell and Rutherford into trouble they simply reinvent new schemes to save and support the primary false premise, namely, that Jehovah God has revealed to them his time schedule of events and has appointed them to make this time schedule known.

Whatever truth Russell may have learned from others he did not feel an obligation to follow men. And, when he perceived that a fellow Christian was wrong he had the courage to say so and to defend what he believed. His gratitude for whatever help he may have received did not obligate him to gloss over errors and neither should we. Those interested in a comprehensive and authoritative history of Jehovah's Witnesses would do well to read *Apocalypse Delayed - The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, by M. James Penton, University of Toronto Press, 33 E. Tupper St., Buffalo, NY 13203.

The Watchtower first quoted in this issue of *The Respondent* spoke of "insidious doubts." "Insidious has the sense of treacherous, seductive-awaiting a chance

to entrap. This places the entire range of doubting in a negative light. By putting matters in this way the Watchtower Society does not have to address the fact that there are sound reasons for having doubts about many things they teach. It serves to turn attention away from themselves and focus on the motives of the ones expressing doubts. By failing to point out that there is such a thing as appropriate doubting-doubting that leads to constructive investigation and study; they make doubting a form of sin. The intent of their argument is to make people feel guilty.

It takes a measure of moral courage to stand up to this kind of organizational intimidation. Those finding themselves in this kind of situation can take comfort in the knowledge that Jehovah God and Christ Jesus are not offended by honest doubts-especially those directed towards imperfect, error-prone humans. Our highest loyalty must always be towards God and not men. If we limit our beliefs to what is clearly taught in the Word of God we will not stray far from the truth. (2 Tim.3: 16, 17) It is when men presumptuously set themselves up as religious authorities and go beyond what is scripturally sound that difficulties arise. Given their record of failed prophecies and endless changes in doctrine (the light is getting brighter syndrome) they, above all others, should know that there are reasons for doubting them. □