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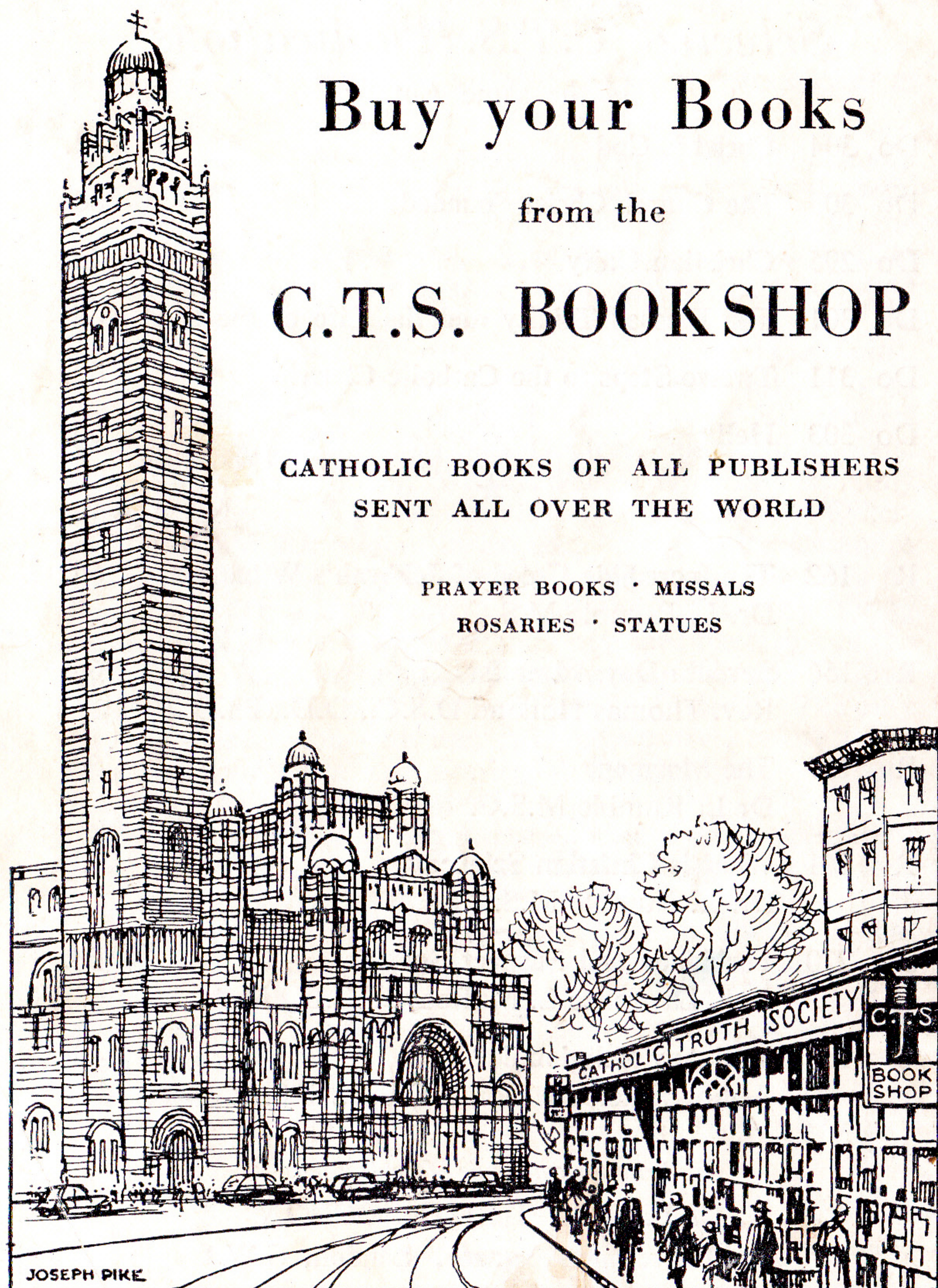
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The Witnesses of Jehovah

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Rev. Francis J. Ripley



London: Catholic Truth Society



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THE WITNESSES OF JEHOVAH

Questions and Answers

by REV. FRANCIS J. RIPLEY

LONDON

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THE WITNESSES OF JEHOVAH

Questions and Answers

Who are Jehovah's Witnesses ?

They are a sect founded in America in 1872.

Who was their founder ?

Charles Taze Russell, a Pittsburgh draper.

What kind of person was Charles Taze Russell ?

Born in 1852 he became an earnest worker in the Congregational Church. At the age of 17 he tried to convert an atheist but lost his own faith and became an infidel. He had been obsessed by the thought of the horror of hell. Even as an atheist he could not leave the Bible alone. Aged 20, he began preaching "the good news" with "no hell".

Is not C. T. Russell known as "Pastor Russell" ?

He assumed that title in 1878 when he was founding his new religion.

Was not Russell a very great Scripture scholar, learned in the Greek language ?

No, he was not. 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. Neither did he know Latin or Hebrew.

But surely Russell wrote many explanatory books on the Bible ?

He wrote on the Bible, but every acknowledged Scripture scholar in the Universities of the world today will agree that Russell's explanations are for the most part quite contrary to the obvious meaning of the words of the Bible. Russell was never a scholar in the accepted sense of the word.

Did Russell lead a saintly life such as we would expect of the founder of a religious sect?

No. His followers write: "Russell must have had a rare capacity for business. Before he was 30 years old he had expanded his father's clothing store in Alleghany, Pennsylvania, and rapidly established four more. By the time he was 30 he had sold out the chain for 250,000 dollars, which in the 1880's was equivalent to more than a million dollars today". (*Jehovah's Witnesses* by Marley Cole, p. 73). He was an expert too, at making money by investments in mines and real estate, and by selling his books. He sold what he called "miracle wheat" at sixty dollars a bushel to credulous farmers, the fraud being eventually stopped by the Federal authorities, who made him refund the money. (Rumble, *Radio Replies*, Vol. 2, No. 1352). In 1911 the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published a caricature of Russell and beneath it this question: "If Pastor Russell can get a dollar a pound for miracle wheat, what could he have got for miracle stocks and bonds as a director in the old Union Bank?" Russell sued the *Eagle* for libel. The *Eagle* won the case.

In 1897 Russell's wife left him and applied for a separation on the grounds of his immoral conduct with two women, Rose Ball, a secretary, and Emily Matthews, a servant. The case dragged on and assumed further importance when *The Washington Post* of May 4th, 1906, in an article headed 'The Rev. Jellyfish Russell' said: "When the Rev. Charles T. Russell made the opening statement in his own defence, he riveted the attention of the entire reading public. 'I am like a jellyfish,' said the reverend culprit; 'I float around and I touch this one and that one, and, if they respond, I embrace them'." Little wonder that Mrs. Russell obtained a divorce in 1909 on the grounds of her husband's immoral conduct with members of his 'Church'. (*Les Témoins de Jehovah*, by G. Hébert.)

He died in 1916.

The name of Judge Rutherford is always associated with Jehovah's Witnesses. Who was he?

After Russell's death he was succeeded as head of the sect by a man named Joseph Franklin Rutherford, who called himself 'Judge', although he had never held an official appointment as such.

On May 8th, 1918, together with other 'Russellites' he was arrested under the Espionage Act and later sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for spreading insubordination and disloyalty in the American navy and army. He was, however, released after serving nine months in Atlanta Penitentiary.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states that Rutherford "was the descendant of a Baptist family of Morgan county (Mo.). Though he had never studied, he was given an attorney's licence in 1892. He frequently defended C. T. Russell in the courts and became a resourceful supporter of his sect, and in 1917, after Russell's death, its head. Under his leadership, the organisation took on an increasingly revolutionary aspect. In 1918-19, he served a term of imprisonment in Atlanta (Georgia) for insubordination and disloyalty and he was frequently accused of fraudulent practices, even by his own followers. He originally assigned the Second Coming to 1914. Later he held that Christ had returned invisibly in that year, and that the final Armageddon between Jehovah and Satan was imminent, though no precise date was fixed."

It was he who in 1931 devised the new title "Witnesses of Jehovah" and publicised the slogan: "Millions now living will never die". He was not one of the millions! He died in 1942 in the palatial villa he had built at San Diego, California, as an official residence pending the return of the Lord to judge the living and the dead.

You say Rutherford devised the new title "Witnesses of Jehovah". What was the sect previously called?

Russell began by preaching the "Millennial Dawn". His followers then became known as "Millennial Dawnists". Soon Russell adopted the title "Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society". In 1896 this was changed to "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society". For a time he thought the "People's Pulpit Association" sounded better. In 1914 the name became "International Bible Students' Association".

Who succeeded Rutherford as head of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Nathan Homer Knorr. He had been on the Board of Directors since 1934.

What has Knorr done for the Witnesses?

He announced a long-range "education" programme. His policy has been to tone down the vicious and lurid literature

of the Rutherford era and to add a smattering of scholarship to the sect's newer tracts or books. Says Neil McCluskey S.J.: "Most of Rutherford's violent polemics, meaning the bulk of his writings, along with his own redoubtable person, were by degrees assigned to the same limbo of oblivion to which he had consigned the movement's founder, Charles Taze Russell". (*Who are Jehovah's Witnesses?* by Neil McCluskey S.J., p. 5).

Does this mean that the Witnesses have altered their creed?

If they have, they stand condemned for having misled all their followers for many years. If they have not, they still merit the universal condemnation of the works of Russell and Rutherford by all orthodox Christians. There is no evidence that the Witnesses have altered their beliefs. But there is much evidence that they are toning them down in the hope of making them more acceptable especially to those who are not in a position to recognise their errors.

Are Jehovah's Witnesses Christians?

In the orthodox sense they are not, for they deny that Christ is God.

Is the teaching of the Witnesses a new religion?

It is certainly new. But they themselves deny that it is a religion. They 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 declared, "Jesus continued to proclaim the truth and to warn the people against the practice of religion". "For religion", declared Rutherford, "dishonours and reproaches the name of Jehovah God". (Rumble, op. cit., p. 7). According to him religion and Christianity are exactly opposite and opposed one to the other. That, of course, is ridiculous. Christianity is the one, true religion revealed by Jesus Christ who was God Himself.

Is it true that the Witnesses hate Christian churches?

We can judge by their own writings. Russell said that in 1878 God had rejected all existing Churches and made the Russellites the only spokesmen thenceforward. Rutherford went further. He did not like to admit that the Churches were all right till Russell came on the scene. After Christ's Resurrection, he said, the Devil built up a great empire, the Papacy. Later, he inspired the creation of the Protestant Churches. So, all

priests and Protestant clergymen are of the Devil, enemies of God. Antichrist. The Witnesses deny that they are a Church or a denomination. There is no justification, they say, in the Bible for a Church or a Hierarchy.

What is the attitude of the Witnesses to civil authority?

They say they owe their only loyalty to a "Theocratic Kingdom" and refuse the duties of earthly citizenship. There are two groups in the world, the "Theocratic Kingdom" and "Satan's Organisation". This latter includes all Churches and Governments. Just as amongst the Churches the Papacy is the "Beast" par excellence, so amongst the nations are America and Britain.

Are the Witnesses pacifists?

They deny that they are. They say they will fight only for Jehovah and his people (i.e., in practice for their own opinions against all who oppose them). They will refuse to salute the Flag of any earthly nation and are conscientious objectors to any form of military service. This rejection of legitimate civil authority is directly opposed to the teaching of the New Testament (cf. 1 Pet. 2 : 13-17).

Have the Witnesses been condemned by the civil courts of law?

"From 1946 to 1953, Jehovah's Witnesses were involved in 1,665 prosecutions in Quebec". (Cole, op. cit., p. 188).

We continually read of the fining and gaoling of individual Witnesses in many parts of the world. In Australia and New Zealand during 1940 their organisation 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 is said to be a mark of the true Christian religion. The Witnesses maintain they are persecuted. Is not this something in their favour?

No, quite the contrary. Christ foretold that His followers would be persecuted for teaching the truth and practising His religion. Jehovah's Witnesses get themselves into trouble (often deliberately for the sake of publicity) by attacking the cherished beliefs of their fellow-men, on which our Christian civilization is based, and by promoting disloyalty to lawful authority.

"For conscientious cussedness on the grand scale, 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 into gaol". (*Saturday Evening Post*, Sept. 14, 1940.)

It would be interesting to know how the Witnesses reconcile their contentions that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs and that their preachers are ministers of religion (entitled to many privileges, like that of travelling at reduced fares in America) with their basic article of faith that religion is of the Devil.

If belief in a Hierarchy or a Church is contrary to the Bible, how do the Witnesses organise themselves ?

That is just one of the many contradictions inherent in this fantastic system. In his official contribution to "Religion in the Twentieth Century" Nathan Knorr asserts that Christ directs affairs through a "visible organisation" with headquarters at Brooklyn, New York. The visible head of this visible organisation is, of course, N. H. Knorr himself. He is surrounded by a very visible Board of Directors. All over the world there are visible local congregations called "Companies". They meet in visible rooms called "Kingdom Halls". Visible "organizational servants" oversee all the "Company" activities. Visible full time field-workers, called "Pioneers" are given visible money by the Society. Every active Witness of Jehovah is regarded as "a minister ordained and commissioned by God, not by man". If this system is not a visible hierarchial organisation, what is? They claim exemption from military service on the grounds that they are all "ministers of religion". Their own Year Book (1940) enjoined: "Every 30 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 offices . . . will submit to the President in writing a report. . .". All this goes to prove beyond doubt that Jehovah's Witnesses is one of the most contradictory systems ever foisted on mankind.

Jehovah's Witnesses sell many thousands of publications each year. Is any information available on the disposal of the profits from all this literature ?

"There never was such a religious racket as that of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society" (Rumble, op. cit., p.13).

Their own Brooklyn Factory Production Report lists the output for 1955 as no less than 264,089,460 items ! (Cole, op. cit., p. 231). Rumble estimates that a profit of £10,000,000 must have been made since 1918. And that is a very conservative estimate. We are not surprised when the Witnesses Year Book says that no financial statements are published because enemies would use them "to hinder the work of the Society".

Are any works of public charity maintained by the Witnesses corresponding to the great charitable institutions of the Catholic Church ?

No. When Mr. Goux, the Witnesses Secretary, was challenged at the American Radio Commission's enquiry to state what his Society had done "for the poor devils who find themselves economically deprived of a living and in starvation and hunger or penury and want" he 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".

Are not Jehovah's Witnesses true Bible Christians ?

No. They reject the only authority there is in the world for the Bible, namely the Catholic Church. Russell, Rutherford and Knorr have no means of knowing that the Bible is God's word, apart from the Catholic Church. Rutherford actually wrote that C. T. Russell found "no Christian denomination teaching what the Bible contains". So he went to work himself. His followers seem to have been convinced that he was inspired by God. But when he died in 1916, Rutherford began to teach some very different doctrines. There was strife within the organisation. Rutherford triumphed. To the Broadcasting Commission Secretary Goux said, on behalf of the organisation, that Rutherford's explanations of the Bible are not human opinions, but inspired by God. The Pope's claim to be infallible is mild compared with that.

What accepted Christian beliefs do the Witnesses contradict ?

Almost every basic Christian teaching. And those they don't contradict they usually ignore.

What about God, for instance ?

A leaflet published from the London Office called *What do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?* tells us : " Since there are many 'gods' and many 'lords' the true God has a personal name to distinguish him from all other gods." The name is Jehovah.

The truth is that there is only one God and He certainly has not got a name to distinguish Him from other 'gods'. Even the word "Jehovah" is not really Biblical. The original writers of Holy Writ did not know it. In Hebrew they wrote "Yahweh" which means "He who is". It is an alternative name for God. The Witnesses, however, claim that Jehovah is a personal name for God. It is very hard to decide exactly what the Witnesses mean by all this, but it seems that for them Jehovah is to god as oak is to tree—one amongst many but the best of the lot. The expression "Jehovah God" so commonly used by the Witnesses is nowhere found in the Bible.

Do the Witnesses believe God is everywhere ?

In his book *Reconciliation*, Rutherford says that "the constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God—the dwelling place of Jehovah".

Do the Witnesses believe in the Holy Trinity ?

No. Rutherford wrote : "Never was there a more deceptive doctrine advanced than that of the Trinity. It could have originated only in one mind and that the mind of Satan, the Devil". (*Reconciliation*, p. 101).

Do they believe that Christ is the Eternal Son of God, equal to the Father and that the Holy Spirit is the third equal Divine Person ?

No. Although Christ revealed clearly the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and spoke of the Holy Ghost as personal (John 14: 26) Rutherford says the Holy Spirit is any power or influence exercised by God.

But what of Christ ?

He was Jehovah's "first creation". He is not equal with his Father. (*What do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?*, p. 2).

Russell taught that Christ was "Michael, the Archangel". "In obedience to God, he gave up his spirit-being and was born of Mary as a wholly human being". To make it fit in with their strange beliefs the Witnesses do not scruple to manipulate the words of the Bible. For example, where St John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel : "the Word was God", the Witnesses' version is "the Word was a god". This, of course, is thorough deception and dishonesty.

What do the Witnesses teach about Christ's death, resurrection and ascension ?

A tissue of contradictions and blasphemies supported neither by Scripture nor Tradition. In Cole's work we read : "Jesus had to be wholly human. This mighty spirit had to become human in every way ; and incredible though this may seem, why should it be doubted?" The next paragraph is so unbelievably blasphemous that it cannot be quoted here. "... Jesus did rise from the dead. . . . He was restored to spirit life. . . . He does not return again and take up his humanity. . . . The right to it is transferred to Adam's offspring, who were born without the life-right. . . ." Such fantastic nonsense is certainly not Christianity, whatever else it is. Although they use the words "Jesus did rise from the dead", the Witnesses do not, in fact, believe in the Resurrection of Christ in the orthodox Christian way. The man Christ is dead for ever. "The Person who died", Russell tells us, "remained dead, and he will never be seen again in his human nature". No one knows what became of his body. Russell suggested that it might have been dissolved into gases. Similarly, the Witnesses reject the true Scriptural and traditional teaching on the Ascension of Christ and substitute for it some utter nonsense they have invented themselves.

What do the Witnesses teach about the human soul ?

Man *has* not a soul. He *is* a soul. "Adam was a soul. . . . The lower animals also are souls. . . . Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the doctrines of eternal torment and immortality of the human soul". (*What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?*, pp. 3-4). Thus in a few sentences do these fantastic people debunk several basic Christian doctrines which are clearly taught in Scripture and by all the Fathers of the Church. No man can remain a Christian and believe such rubbish.

Do the Witnesses believe in hell ?

Although few things are so clearly taught in Scripture as the existence of an eternal hell, where the wicked will be punished, * the Witnesses reject it. "Once the Devil has invented immortal souls, he had to invent a place somewhere outside heaven or earth for wicked immortal souls to go to. What else could he do but fall back on eternal conscious torment as the explanation?" (Cole, op. cit., p. 163). That quotation is extremely mild in comparison with many of the blasphemies of Russell and Rutherford. * *Luke 16: 22-27*

If there is no hell how do the Witnesses believe God will punish sinners ?

They do not. "The Bible does not teach that man possesses an 'immortal soul' that can endure endless roasting in torment" (Cole, op. cit., p. 72). The world already belongs to the Devil (ibid., p. 73). "God never punishes either in this life nor in the next" declared Russell. It does not, therefore, matter how badly people behave in this life, according to the Witnesses, for our moral choices now have no effect whatever upon our eternal future. We might just as well sin with impunity. There is no purgatory. There is no hell. Russell says that all are to be raised again and given a second chance. So everything depends on how we behave then, not on how we behave now. The more wicked a man has been in this life, the more likely he is to make good in the next. Even if he doesn't make good and continues to defy God with contempt, he will simply be put painlessly out of existence and experience no future evil consequences whatever.

What do the Witnesses believe about the Eucharist and other Sacraments ?

Nothing. They are completely ignored, as are so many other vital Christian truths. The purpose of baptism is obscure.

What is their teaching on prayer and Christian perfection ?

You will search Witnesses literature in vain for any coherent teaching on these matters. The great Saints of God are apparently as much children of the Devil as the rest of us. They have no significance whatever for the Witnesses.

What do the Witnesses have to say about Christ's Church ?

If you mean the Catholic Church, she is the arch-enemy of the Witnesses. But on this point, as on everything else, they pervert the meaning of the Bible to a fantastic extent. Let us have their own words : "Since Pentecost God has been calling and preparing a 'bride', a 'little flock', a body of 144,000 . . . to share heavenly life and rulership 'as kings with (Christ) for the thousand years'". (*What do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?*, p. 5). We note that God has been 'preparing a bride since Pentecost'. But the Witnesses only came into existence in 1872 ! They are rather late on the scene. There is not the slightest evidence in Scripture that Our Lord intended his Church to be restricted to 144,000. The Witnesses conveniently forget the parable of the smallest of seeds which grew into a great tree (Matt. 13 : 31). The 144,000 are found in the Apocalypse of St John (14: 3). All scholars believe it to be a figurative expression referring to the whole company of the redeemed. Similarly, the 1,000 years (Apoc. 20: 4) is not to be taken literally and numerically but figuratively as the whole context demands.

Do the Witnesses believe that they are the 144,000 who alone will be saved ?

No. But they have made sure of the ringside seats ! Apart from them, there is to be another branch of Christ's kingdom. They will be in heaven, the rest will be on earth, dwelling for ever, marrying and multiplying. No one will ever die and there will be no time limits. It need hardly be said that this is just one more in the list of unbelievable misinterpretations of the words of Christ.

I have heard Witnesses talking of Armageddon. What do they mean ?

It is hard to know. They have changed their explanations so often. The summary of beliefs we have already quoted describes Armageddon as the day when all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy. Not the literal earth, of course, but this wicked system of things or world of which Satan is the god (op. cit., p. 5). The starting point of Russell's system was Armageddon or Christ's second coming. He said it actually took place in 1874 when Christ returned as a spirit to the "upper

air". In 1914 Satan began to wage a ferocious war against Christ and the saints in the "upper air". At the same time war broke out on earth.

Russell believed that Armageddon, the end of the world as we know it, would be in 1914, when Christ would descend from the "upper air" and be enthroned as king on earth. After a reign of 1,000 years the Final Judgment would take place.

When Christ failed to appear in 1914, the Witnesses moved the event up several times—1916, 1918, 1924, 1928, etc. In the end Rutherford settled for the explanation that Christ had come to the "upper air" in 1874. There he was enthroned as king in 1914. But the great final battle of Armageddon, the destruction of all earthly kingdoms and Churches, has been postponed until the Witnesses have done their job which is to proclaim the good news of Christ's enthronement and warn all nations of the impending catastrophe.

Nowhere is there to be seen in print a concentration of nonsense in any way comparable to the writings of Russell and Rutherford about Armageddon and the Millennium. Their ramblings, prophecies and warnings, which have again and again been proved false, are completely devoid of foundation. They are flatly contradicted by Holy Scripture and the constant teaching of the Church Christ established.

Are there many Witnesses of Jehovah and is the sect increasing ?

Here are the figures produced in Marley Cole's book (op. cit. pp. 224 ff.)

	Numbers of Witnesses		
	1938	1948	1955
U.S.A. ..	25,596	72,945	163,875
British Isles ..	4,959	14,676	28,073
World ..	47,143	230,532	570,694

How do you account for this great increase in numbers ?

1. The appeal of the Witnesses is essentially to the mentally and economically underprivileged. Less than one per cent. of the group have had a college education (*Colliers*, 2nd Nov., 1946). No genuine scholar who is sincere could accept for a moment the Witnesses' explanations of Scripture. No historian could believe their concept of history. No philosopher could approve of their complete disregard of the elementary laws of logic.

2. The Witnesses' religion is unblushingly materialist and hedonist. The faithful Witness is promised, in the words of their President, N. H. Knorr : "An earth on which no natural disasters occur, on which your fellow creatures enjoy complete health and permanent youthful beauty and vigour and where never a hospital or graveyard mars the grandeur of a perfectly cultivated land".
3. The spiritual bankruptcy of the system with its supreme message : " 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 they shall be saved", itself appeals to certain mentalities. Everything is so marvellously simple.
4. Sales profits and a monthly subsidy are a bait for many who would prefer it to hard manual work.
5. The attitude of the Witnesses to war is attractive to some.
6. The zeal, organisation and persistence of the Witnesses themselves, especially in places badly served by the Church, is an important factor.
7. There is the point, too, that the system of the Witnesses in which one can so easily be looked upon as a " minister " and receive a smattering of knowledge (together with privileges in some countries—half-fare in the U.S.A.) may be a powerful psychological attraction.
8. The system will certainly appeal to the malcontents of society, the bitter, disgusted, hopeless, despairing anarchical types who, for one reason or another, like to be " against the Government ".
9. The very insecurity of the modern world, the failure of Protestantism, the prevalence of so much unrest, the disunity of Christendom—all these are factors which the Witnesses are not slow to use.

Are the Witnesses of Jehovah a real danger ?

A system that contradicts all our basic Christian ideals must be a danger. Particularly in countries like S. America, where there is such a serious shortage of priests, great ignorance of religion and much material distress, Jehovah's Witnesses represent a real menace. Their system is based on the destruction of Christianity, of all organised religion and of all

lawful civil authority. It is hard to imagine anything more false or more dangerous than that.

What should be the attitude of a Catholic when a Witness calls at the home ?

Always be charitable. Say quite frankly and definitely that you have your own fixed beliefs and you are quite satisfied with them. Generally speaking it is waste of time to argue with the Witnesses on the doorstep. The answers in this booklet will have made it obvious that there can be little common ground between Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses. For the latter such fundamental terms as God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Religion, Salvation, etc., have a meaning quite different from that which they have had for nearly 20 centuries for the Church and all her Fathers, Doctors, Saints and scholars. Remember too that your Witness visitor is almost certainly mentally underprivileged or unreasonably prejudiced. Otherwise he would not remain in his sect. Only those Catholics who are sufficiently qualified might hope to gain anything by discussion. They should always retain the initiative by talking about the Church as they see it and not about the errors of the Witnesses. Remember that the poor Witness knows nothing of the beauties and treasures of the Church. The only hope in a discussion with him is to be positive, refuse to be drawn and concentrate on passing on the picture of the Faith that is in the true Catholic mind.

NEVER under any circumstances accept or buy literature from the Witnesses. Never give them money. Never lose your temper or use insulting language.

Remember that these Witnesses do not always reveal themselves for what they are. If anyone comes to your house and asks, for example, if you are interested in the Bible, ask at once if he is a representative of the Witnesses of Jehovah. Then act accordingly.

We should pray for the poor misguided souls who have been led into this sect, which is certainly one of the tools of Satan.

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