

Review: William J. Schnell, *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*,  
Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, 1957 (1963 5<sup>th</sup> edition)

Pages: 220

### Save Someone Thirty Years

This is a fascinating 'behind-the-scenes' account of the Bible Student/Jehovah's Witnesses/Watch Tower Society (WTS) from one who was involved in its upper echelons, both in Germany and America.

Not only can today's activities of the Witnesses be understood through William's record, there are political insights into how any large hierarchical organisation operates, religious or otherwise.

The Society moved through the following stages on its journey to today's Theocracy:

\*First dictatorship under Charles Russell (1879-1916).

\*Dissolution from 1916 to 1919; a 'deadly wound'.

\*Second dictatorship under Judge Joseph Rutherford (1919-1942).

\*Third and current dictatorship under a consortium replete with Board of Directors, President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Dictator egos were evident, e.g. Rutherford's visit to Germany and coercing the Director into shaving off his Russell-like beard in exchange for new printing equipment.

Hypocritically, “God's Organisation” ended up becoming both a religion and a corporate entity, just like the 'Egyptians' they so despise.

At the date of writing (1963 edition), Witnesses were described as having 'delusions of persecution and Armageddon tremors' and 'carrying a permanent chip on their shoulders'.

With William's help the Society invented an ingenious seven step indoctrination program:

- (i) Get books to people.
- (ii) Back call.
- (iii) 'Home Bible Study' (which uses a WTS-published book).
- (iv) Friday 'area' book studies in conference forum.
- (v) Kingdom Hall attendance on Sunday.
- (vi) Attend service meetings and training.
- (vii) Water baptism.

The hold over victims is telling; despite a Christian Bible Student background, William made the fatal mistake of joining up in Germany, then found himself unable to leave for thirty years. To his own shame his record (wiped after leaving) showed 463 baptisms into the Organisation's slavery.

For *kadaver gehorsam* trying to break free, part of his treatment plan is avoid the Society's materials like the plague!

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**It Appeared So Harmless** (pp. 11-18)

In Germany, many of the authors generation became pawns used by forces which either led them into Communism or Nazism.

Back in 1921, Bible Student *Ecclesias* were far from what 1963 Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall meetings were. Bible discourses were on Sunday and Wednesday night prayer and experience. Such meetings were highly instructive and never authoritarian.

In between, works of charity occupied most of the Student's time.

William carried out a door-to-door witnessing ministry from 1500-1700 every afternoon motivated by the prevailing uncertainty of the times.

### **Early Machinations** (pp. 19-27)

The new President Judge Rutherford sought to exploit world conditions, and build a second tier of the Watch Tower edifice on Charles Taze Russell's work.

The Watch Tower leadership rightly discerned there were millions of shallow-grounded Christians who could easily be recruited into a new organisation with half-lies. Loosely held truths are difficult to defend by adherents and easy to destroy.

The attack was against 'religion', however, once the Watch Tower was fully built they became a religious organisation! The attack came in the tract *The Fall of Babylon the Great* (1919) (TFOBTG) which said Christendom was the Babylon of Revelation.

Once Babylon was brought down a replacement was needed. The Watch Tower received 'new light' from a secret place presented in the book *Millions now living shall never die* (1920) (MNLWND). This was excellent marketing as post-WWI millions had just tasted mortality in war and an opportunity now

arose for immortality, if only people would join the Watch Tower.

Williams would travel the *Ring-Bahn*<sup>1</sup> all day Saturday hawking MNLWND.

The brainwashing was complete by 1938 with individual thinking replaced by *organisation-mindedness*. Financing was to come from book-selling. Watch Tower hours were set and book placement quotas given.

The society's slogan was “Advertise, Advertise, Advertise, the King and the Kingdom.”

Most Bible Students cut contributions to what they saw as an abhorrent group.

Between 1919 and 1922 the leaders thought of a global book selling campaign. The kick-off was the Cedar Point Convention in September 1922.

Bible Students were going to use money from the 'Egyptians' to build their Organisation. This blasphemously applied Jehovah's blessing of Israel to the construction of the WTS, who had no right to any 'spoils'.

### **Entering Watch Tower Slavery** (pp. 29-36)

From 1925, Bible students had the dilemma of giving their time to the Watch Tower and sacrificing Christian individuality. Those who chose not to were deemed 'evil servants'.

In Germany, the Society headquarters were moved to larger premises at Magdeburg, from Barmen in the East. This was funded with American dollars from the book selling campaign there!

William entered the headquarters in 18/8/1924 and was to become a zombie, a cog in the machinery of one of the great subversions of the age.

One of the deceptions of the Watch Tower was its self-styled 'beast of burden' image, limited to providing Bibles, helps and other materials, including the *Watchtower*. In time the 'beast of burden' would turn on those whom it formerly served.

In meetings company servants had to testify to Jehovah's Witnesses they were good Kingdom Publishers and had fulfilled set quotas. These were a 'mixed multitude' (not all 'born again' JWs).

In 1931 there was the Mordecai-Naomi class, succeeded by the Ruth-Esther class, then Jonadabs ('people of good will'). Jonadabs are taught they will never be spirit begotten and can only find spiritual fulfilment through the Watch Tower.

William was nineteen when he joined and was obedient with the natural German love for orderliness and organisation. He became involved in mass distribution of *Das Goldene Zeitalter* ('The Golden Age'). From 1925-1927 the edition went from 50,000 to 325,000 copies per issue. Through this work William lost his 'first love'.

The Watch Tower has always been an eccentric body, predicting the end of the world in 1914. With TFOBTG and MNLWND they switched this date to 1925, when the Kingdom would come with the re-appearance on earth of the OT saints. These prophecies made some of the Bible students 'irrational crack-pots'.

While the 1925 date was approaching, the Watch Tower was buying land, buildings, and printing presses!

In the *Watchtower*, 1925, the society claimed *itself* to be the 'nation of kings and priests' that Christians were. They became

the 'head of gold', a 'Faithful and Wise Servant Class'. All this fuelled the Jonadab class growth.

### A Look At The Organization in America (pp. 37-42)

With Russell's death in 1916 came an immediate power struggle. Despite his will containing strict instructions, executor Judge Rutherford was able to manipulate proxies so *he* became President.

To quell the bad blood an external incident was created of WWI protests. Rutherford and the directors were jailed, and the Society dissolved. After the war they were exonerated and the event was proof of the Judge's divine nomination. This 'aura' never departed till his death in 1942. The hope was to turn Beth Sarim ('House of Princes') where he died into a Jehovah's Witness shrine), but the lot could not be rezoned.

The war differentiated the Watch Tower from all other Christian groups and it was placed to lead millions into the New World Society that would last a millennium.

Paradoxically, Bible students were extremely hardy and independent, having already left other organisations. Their motto in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was 'Non-Conformity'. The Judge seize on this and became known as 'uncompromised foe of organized Christianity'.

The Watch Tower is “God's organisation” while all others are the devil's. They had to weed out all recalcitrant s via a 'spiritual purge' to which a majority of Bible students 'passively acquiesced'.

Literature had to be introduced to trigger a change of thinking. The first book published was *The Harp of God* (1922). It was soon producing books at 35c each, then down to 25c.

The book-selling had three goals:

- (i) Introduce organisation-minded thinking.
- (ii) Occupy Bible Students with selling to create issues of 'cleavage'.
- (iii) Generate funds for a sustained world-wide campaign.

Further, in 1925 a rigid accounting method of time spent witnessing and selling books was implemented. This helped bring issues to a head. Coupled with the new doctrines great dissension arose amongst students.

From 1921 to 1931, three quarters of the original Bible students left; precisely what the Watch Tower had hoped! This gave them quorum to now ignore individuality of members.

### **A Look Ahead** (pp. 43-48)

By 1927 millions of books had been put out and they were ready for the step of creating classes within the Organisation. Mordecai-Naomi was first, then from 1922-1929 Ruth-Esther, then post-1931 the Jonadabs. The Faithful and Wise servant title was usurped from Charles Taze Russell by the Organisation itself.

Physical headquarters were at 124 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York.

The Society used Matthew 20.1-6 and said the twelve hours were 1919-1931 (!), the Society was the vineyard. The crux was the penny was the new name of Bible students: 'Jehovah's Witnesses'!

In 1938 the Theocracy had a vote to eliminate autonomy in spiritual matters of Jehovah's Witness companies, giving themselves sole right to appoint 'Theocratic Exactors' ('zoneservants'). Work had reached 144 countries and Gilead Watch Tower College had been built for missionary training.

## The Judge Visits Germany (pp. 49-54)

A million copies of *The Harp of God* in German were printed in the cellar of a building called the 'Crystal Palace' in Magdeburg.

In Spring of 1925 the Judge visited Germany, and at a dinner with the German Director Rutherford asked him to shave off his great beard, grown in imitation of Charles Russell. He did not want any reminders of his predecessor. In exchange the Judge bought the German operations a new rotary press.

The Magdeburg convention of 15,000 was synchronised with the Judge's visit. Large circus tents were rented and set up in fields, temporary plumbing built and a cafeteria organised. The cafe sold hot meals and this became so financially successful it became standard at future conventions.

Bible student attendees were sold the world-wide witnessing campaign, time reporting, and book placement. At the climax the Judge fed every soul a hot dog on a bun with some potato salad, in imitation of Jesus' mass-feeding miracle. This personal touch was remembered by Bible students for years to come, even if they had experienced great hardships or rejection.

While in prison the Judge is quoted as prayer for deliverance, in exchange for never ceasing to expose Christendom.

In *Deliverance* (1926), Rutherford outlined the Society's path out of Egypt, wilderness journey, creation of the Monarchy and building of Solomon's Temple.

In 1938 with the advent of the Theocracy a third layer of Government was inaugurated; a consortium rather than a single man.

William's name was struck off the Watch Tower's records on 15/2/1951 after 22 year's full time service.



## **Sifting** (55-68)

By 1927 most Elders had been pushed into the background, and younger members were being raised up. The *Watchtower* eventually eliminated the position of Elder altogether. Tactics used were surrounding recalcitrants with Society unwanted assistants and white-anting Elders by Magdeburg interacting directly with assistants.

Ultimately assistants were lauded in front of the congregation which made Elders look incompetent. Friends of these Elders often complained bitterly to the Society, which only served to identify them as targets!

This 'sifting' happened from 1924-1926 where turnover averaged 75%.

The Magdeburg members were in reality 'stooges' for Brooklyn, a test case for the work in the U.S. Every technique of subversion that was tried and tested was reported back to Brooklyn.

To break up stronger congregations a two-fold strategy was needed: (i) continually feed in new members believing the Watch Tower gospel, (ii) arbitrarily break the groups up into six to twelve semi-autonomous units, each headed by a Society Service Director.

Relations with Elders went from bad to worse, so they were labelled by the 'Faithful and Wise Servant Class' as 'evil servants' and 'disfellowshipped'.

## **God's Organization** (pp. 63-68)

Rutherford said the *Watchtower* was supposedly 'God's woman'. Political and commercial organisations were classified as Egypt, Catholics and Protestants were the Moabites /Ammonites

/Edomites. Saluting to State emblems was 'bowing to Satan's image'.

An apostate member would have been killed if the Theocracy were in power, but currently they should be treated as if dead (this happened to William by his family members).

Bethel workers and the Pioneers in 1963 were getting books for 5 cents and selling them for 25; an 80% margin! Supply chain pressures grew and member volunteers were instructed by the Director to be *kadaver gehorsam* ('obedient-corpses') which was a German military term. This caused half the workers to quit so they had to hire outsiders!

### **From Zest to Disgust** (pp. 69-48)

To differentiate from Christendom, the name of "Jesus" had to be replaced strictly with "Jehovah". This matched with the Watch Tower theology they were God (Jehovah's) woman.

The Protestants sued for blaspheming God, and the Catholics tried to drive them from Bavaria. These actions only served to increase publicity for the Watch Tower. External circumstances also helped-they were 'fishing in troubled waters of the German population'.

Magdeburg time and motion studies were made and it was found for example 4 hours of horizontal movement would tire a worker, but vertical movements could be done all day. Profits were huge as distribution costs were borne by every Publisher.

The Society also borrowed from members when capital was needed, by issuing bonds. But for WWII, William felt the Watch Tower would have become the dominant religion of Europe and in Germany the whole nation!

Voicing grievances against the Society will automatically brand a member.

Time was rigidly organised; three meetings per week, six (often seven) scheduled for work. The Directors spies and pets received the only favouritism. A dossier was kept on every member with which they were hit if they got out of line.

The Director became quite wealthy, having silk shirts, socks, travelling in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes, etc. To neutralise complaints to the Judge, he got himself arrested in Bucharest, Romania.

### **Pioneers! Oh Pioneers”** (pp. 77-88)

William migrated to New York on June, 1927 and wanted to bring his family over. The sense was all who would differ from *Das Deutsche Wesen* (the German soul and blood) would be at risk from the Nazis.

The German Society way did not work in America due to their rebellious character. The 1929 Great Depression was a circuit breaker where for four years an insecure people could be exploited. The Pioneers became the Judge's spiritual shock troops and full-time servants.

In 1931 William's father, sister and her husband bought a Ford and built a house trailer. They began to Pioneer up-state New York.

The Watcher Tower is not and cannot afford to be a charitable organisation, seeing such acts as 'maudlin sentimentality'. In Kingdom Hall meetings charts are erected and quotas set. Members look for Appointments as servants.

Pioneers were taught not to look for any support from the Society in any measure<sup>2</sup>, and all Pioneers were put on commission.

In Georgia, pickings for William were poor so they contemplated moving. This was loathed due to the money it took to travel. The society's main goal was to pile up books in

people's homes for indoctrination. Selling to people was also 'putting one over on the Egyptians'.

Pioneers were those of the coming 1938 Theocracy.

Names and addresses were collected of all those who bought books. When book selling dried up, it became necessary to create 'issues' and play victimisation.

The Achilles heel of the Society is its top-down structure. If its organ the *Watchtower*, editorial committee, etc. were removed it would immediately disintegrate.

### **Doctrinal Gyration** (pp. 89-98)

When Russell died the Watch Tower was 'wounded to death'. It revived in 1919 with the return of Judge Rutherford from jail. Eventually the Jehovah's Witnesses became 'spiritual Israelites'.

### **Strategy Pays Off** (pp. 99-108)

The Faithful and Wise class were quick to exploit any opportunity to pit classes against each other: Remnant against Jonadab; within Remnant Mordecai-Naomi and Ruth-Esther; within Jonab 'people of good will' and 'the Great Multitude'.

Book sales and contributions were drying up and the name of the Witnesses had to be sensationalised somehow. To this end Witnesses were to become 'hated of all men' by their preaching.

Divisions of fifteen companies were created to make possible quick mass-action. Campaigns were fought to 'capture the cross section of slumbering individuality'.

Zephaniah 2.1-3 became a key doctrinal verse to keep Witnesses obedient. They became sick due to the severe psychological pressure being put on them.

The new Jonadabs knew little Scripture so the Society created testimony cards. This had the double benefit of stifling older Witnesses who may have had the Spirit.

The Kingdom Publisher was reduced to an animal-verbal introduction, hand over the testimony card, show and place the book, then return home and make out a time report. This was deemed their 'reasonable service' (Romans 12). Witnesses then (1963) are described as having 'delusions of persecution and Armageddon tremors' and 'carrying a permanent chip on their shoulders'.

### **Upheld by the Courts** (pp. 109-114)

The goal towards which the whole Organization gravitates is to make the while world a New World Society.

It is easy to become a Jehovah's Witness: become a Kingdom Publisher going house to house, selling books and report.

The U.S. eventually caught up to where Berlin was in 1926, which had divided itself into forty units.

The Watch Tower had become a legal religion-and like Lorelei of the Rhineland saga had lured millions of souls into death.

### **Service in New York** (pp. 115-127)

By 1935 they were no longer sending boys to oust men as in Germany.

William states the Organisation made many blunders, proving its claim to infallibility erroneous.

Errors included personnel selection and legal. Once case was the decision from the legal desk of the Society to nail a pamphlet on Church doors. A lawyer friend of the author stated this would libellous.

Meetings were designed solely to make the Servant Class better publishers.

The author was unable to regain his status as a new Christian creation that he lost on 18/8/1924 when first entering the Society's offices. Part of the treatment in becoming free is throwing out all the Society's publications and avoiding them like poison.

In moments William did experience Christian individuality, observing the Organisation from a 'sphere of detachment'.

He knew for certain what was done in Germany in the early 1920s was carefully recorded and now being put into practice in America. This meant he was able to always anticipate the Organisation's next move.

In 1937 he received an invitation to the office of Judge Rutherford. Despite everything inside him to refuse an offer to work at Brooklyn headquarters, he relented. Brooklyn was the same as Magdeburg although rebukes of the 'Family' were more low key. On occasion the Judge did bear down on people.

In Brooklyn there was a spy system which was identified by William via selective leaking of information. Eventually, the Service Department servant who 'knew everything' said 'I guess you don't like us here'.

### **A Seven Step Program** (pp. 129-142)

The invention of the phonograph was capitalised upon by playing six-minute recordings of the Judge's diatribes against Christianity on door steps. The Organisation also shifted resources from radio advertising to the phonographs (partly due to difficulty in getting radio time).

If handled right, censorship is the best advertising.

The Society invented an ingenious seven step indoctrination program:

(i) Get books into the hands of people.

(ii) Back call the people.

(iii) Try and book a weekly study. This 'Home Bible Study' used a Watch Tower Society published book as the source text. This was the beginning of developing *Organisation mindedness*.

(iv) Friday 'area' book studies which utilised the 'conference method' of indoctrination. At Christmas it would be demonstrated Jesus was born in October, and at Easter the pagan rabbit, egg, and pomegranate symbols were debunked. The studies were also used to identify pet peeves of attendees. At the end of each study was a 5 minute announcement time: Company matters; *Watchtower* study time; Kingdom Hall meeting time; witnessing parties. Only 6.5% of the Scriptures were used in Watch Tower books.

(v) Watch Tower study attendance at the Kingdom Hall on Sunday. Great fuss was made over these 'people of good will', 'strangers within the gates'. They were long lost friends finally come home. Nothing was taught of Jesus and the way of salvation.

(vi) Attend service meetings, training in proper methods of group witnessing, conducting back calls, book studies, how to get contributions, etc.

(vii) Baptism, after which they can be recognised as 'Kingdom Publishers'. Life must remain completely regimented by the Organisation until death. The Witness develops an alter ego of routine.

Possibilities for advancement in the organisation are servant, Company servant, going to Bethel, becoming a Pioneer, go to

Watch Tower Bible College and become a missionary, a Watch Tower prince, or Director.

William had direct input into this program in Magdeburg (1924-1927) and America (1936-1938).

### **Action In New Jersey** (pp. 143-147)

William went on assignment to Atlantic City, New Jersey in the summer of 1938. The work was to create an 'issue' at the famous Boardwalk by using it as a grandstand, also being the 'patsy' to give the talk.

William had been arrested many times before (sixteen) in both countries, stoned twice and hit over the head with an oak chair.

By getting arrested his loyalty was proved with the Society and he was made Zone servant with the establishment of the 1938 Theocracy. The first task was to eliminate cliques that ruled, and raise 'issues'. This set William on a sixteen year path of self-destruction.

### **The Theocracy of 1938** (pp. 149-154)

From 1919-1931 the Mordecai-Naomi class defected, making room for the Ruth-Esther class.

The first tier of the dictatorship was under Charles Russell (1879-1916). The second Rutherford (1919-1942). The third was being formed, a consortium of six to eight 'charter members' of each State of the Union (ensuring U.S. control). From these members were selected the Board of Directors, and from the Board the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

William's record showed he was baptised 463 into the Organisation.

While the Judge was speaking against Fascism and Nazism he was employing the same tactics in the Organisation. The 1941



booklet *Neutrality* was distributed by the millions. Witnesses only received five-year jail sentences for refusing service if convicted. This was a great recruitment point which is used to this day (1963) for those wishing to stay out of conflict.

Young people were preferred by the Judge as they were childless and unencumbered. With the book *Children*, they hoped to persuade many to remain childless permanently-after all, Armageddon was so close! Catch-cries of 'watch for the UN', or 'look out for Russia' from Brooklyn were common.

### **Bringing Zone I Into Line** (pp. 155-168)

Once signed up, Zone servants became rulers over Witness Companies. These servants spent less time with the smaller and more with the larger.

William was trained long time to never be shocked by anything that Watch Tower politics might bring. He knew a counter liaison had been established for him.

For the new system to work, everyone had to be compromise and be mediocre with independence or brilliance 'nipped in the bud'. The Organisation is likened to Moloch, whose fire continually burns and was devouring Kingdom Publishers.

Efforts were being made in the new leadership to blacked William, by using the same tactics he had used on others in Magdeburg!

An issue was made in Hubbard, Ohio with 'Religion is a snare and a Racket' sandwich signs. Despite the Mayor's conciliatory overtones William pushed forward and was arrested, earning the Judge's favour.

At another issue in New York, fifteen men were armed with sturdy canes. They went into the crowd swinging.

The Judge gave William opportunity to come back to Bethel which he shunned. With the Judge 'laughing him off', he knew he would eventually be dropped.

**Establishing a World Wide Theocracy** (pp. 169-177)

Glaring inadequacies showed up when Witnesses were pitted against educated men in Christendom who knew their Bible.

**Who Is The Big Bad Wolf?** (pp. 179-191)

The book *Preservation* likened the clergy to Haman.

**Coming Out Of The Labyrinth of Watch Tower Slavery** (pp. 193-201)

**A Warning** (pp. 203-207)

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<sup>1</sup>A rail network circumnavigating Berlin.

<sup>2</sup>This identical to Freemason entry requirements.