

The Incredible Creed of Jehovah Witnesses

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IT is always to be deplored that the teachings of any religion should be misrepresented, whether consciously or unconsciously, by unsympathetic critics. Yet it is not always possible to do justice to the religion of others in a way satisfactory to all its adherents. Above all, this is true of the religious beliefs of the Witnesses of Jehovah, who pour out such an unending stream of books and pamphlets that one feels confronted by practically an ocean of "printed confusion." The task of discovering their main tenets, not to speak of subjecting them to a reasoned analysis, is enough to fill one with despair. Perhaps that is why so few have attempted a doctrinal study of their theological system.

Some detailed consideration of their teachings is, however, urgently needed. The writer of this booklet has had almost desperate inquiries from many quarters as to where a detailed examination of the claims of this new sect in the light of the Bible can be obtained. For the members of the Jehovah Witness organization, in their aggressive proselytizing, are doing their utmost to induce adherents of other Christian Churches to join their ranks, deluging them with literature, filling their letter-boxes with leaflets, and unsettling many good and simple people who are just unable to cope with a torrent of biblical texts which, for all they know, may mean everything or nothing.

The provision of a study of their doctrines within a brief compass has at last been made possible, however, by the publication of a reasonably concise summary of their teachings by the Witnesses of Jehovah themselves, entitled "What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?" - a leaflet issued by the "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society."

This official statement appeals to its readers: "Why listen to prejudiced sources on what the Witnesses believe? Let the Witnesses themselves tell you!" It will be a great relief to do so, for at last we are given something tangible and authentic with which to deal.

"Scribes and Pharisees."

The document begins disarmingly with an appeal for fair-play. "From time to time," we are told, "a religious writer discusses the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, in view of the unfriendly and critical tone of these discussions, it would be a mistake to expect to obtain from such discussions an accurate picture of what Jehovah's Witnesses really do believe." There is something in that, although it does not necessarily follow that one has not accurately stated the doctrines of others because he is not favourably impressed by them and is critical of them. But as we are here considering the doctrine; of the Jehovah Witnesses as stated by themselves, they will have no room for complaints from that point of view.

At once, and typically, they begin playing with the two-edged sword of Scripture in a way which is a "begging of the question" if ever there was one. "We would not expect," they say, "to obtain from the scribes and Pharisees a correct picture of what Jesus believed, would we?" The futility for their purposes of that illustration from the Bible can be seen at once by putting it in reverse. For Jesus Himself undoubtedly adopted an "unfriendly and critical tone" in discussing the teachings of the

scribes and Pharisees. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," He said again and again. (Matt. 23: 13-15.) Not very friendly! He denounced their doctrines and bade His disciples; 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.' (Mark: 8:15.) Surely a critical attitude! Will the Witnesses of Jehovah say that we could not, therefore, expect to obtain from Jesus Himself "an accurate picture" of what the scribes and Pharisees believed?

The biblical illustration employed by the Witnesses could just as easily be to their own detriment as to the detriment of those against whom they think to use it. Its value depends entirely upon the nature of the doctrines they teach, and the doctrines therefore must be assessed before we can admit that they are justified in ranking themselves with Christ as teachers of the truth, and their critics with the unscrupulous scribes and Pharisees

The God of the Witnesses

The official exposition of the fundamental beliefs of Jehovah Witnesses opens with a statement of their doctrine about God. "Since there are many 'gods' and many 'lords,'" we are told, "the true God has a personal name to distinguish him from all other gods."

Here we have what amounts to a straight-out profession of "monolatry," or idolatry restricted to the worship of one of the pagan "gods." Christians are monotheists; that is, they believe in and worship only one God. There are no other "gods." The ancient pagans were polytheists, worshipping many so-called "gods," and knowing nothing of the true God. Their religious systems were idolatrous. The Jehovah Witnesses now come on the scene and, while speaking of "the true God," rank him as only one of a whole lot of "gods" and needing to be distinguished from them by a personal name. It is as if one going through columns devoted to the name "Brown" in a telephone directory had to look for particular personal initials, such as "J.K." or "H.W." Brown to make sure he had got the right Brown.

The conclusion can only be that Jehovah Witnesses are polytheists in so far as they speak of the existence of a whole lot of "gods," but that their system is one of monolatry in so far as they reserve their worship for only one of those "gods." This idolatrous worship of one false "god" is not the worship of the true God known to both Jews and Christians. And to those who really believe in the true God it is nothing short of blasphemy thus to choose one out of a whole lot of false gods and call him (or it) the "true God," as the Witnesses do.

But what is the personal name distinguishing their God from all other gods? They tell us that it is to be found in Psalm 83:18, where we read: "Thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." So they declare the name of their deity to be "Jehovah God," the personal name distinguishing him from other gods, as "James K. Brown," apparently, is distinguished from "Harold W. Brown" in the telephone directory!

The Hebrew Name.

The Witnesses will reply, of course, that they are speaking of the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. Have they not quoted Holy Scripture itself for the name "'Jehovah?'" But alas for the penalties of ignorance! In reality they have not done so at all. For the word "Jehovah" is simply a mistranslation found in Protestant Bibles. No such word occurs in the original text of Scripture. God never gave Himself such a name, nor did He ever ask to be given such a name.

The Hebrew word in Psalm 83:18, mistranslated in Protestant Bibles as "Jehovah," is "Yahweh," meaning "He who is." The idea, therefore, that the word "Jehovah," non-existent in Hebrew, is the

divinely-revealed personal name distinguishing one particular god from a whole lot of other gods is entirely without scriptural foundation.

Thinking to confirm their strange teaching, the Witnesses then urge that, "referring to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God said to Moses (Exodus 6:3): 'But by my name Jehovah I was not known to them'." Once again, however, God did not say that to Moses. Never did any inspired writer of Holy Scripture use the word "Jehovah." The Hebrew text said: "By my name Yahweh I was not known to them." Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had known the Supreme Being as "El Shaddai," which means "God Almighty." To Moses the title "Yahweh" was revealed, not as a personal name in our modern sense of the word, but rather as a description of God's nature; for it means "He who is," in the sense that God is the "Supreme and Self-existent Being."

Still thinking of their beloved word "Jehovah," the Witnesses plunge more deeply into their sea of errors when they go blissfully on to declare that Jesus made this name known to His followers, quoting Jn. 17:6: "I have made your name manifest to the men you gave me." The truth is that Jesus never used, nor did His followers ever hear of the word "Jehovah." That word, which is not a Hebrew word at all, arose from a misreading of the Hebrew word "Yahweh," to which the vowel signs of the Hebrew word "Adonai," which means "the Lord," had been assigned by Jewish writers. In a spirit of profound reverence, whenever they met with the sacred word "Yahweh," the Jews, rather than pronounce it, substituted for it the word "Adonai." Now the vowel signs for the purposes of Hebrew writing were not invented until some six centuries after Christ, and the misreading of them, leading to the mistaken "Jehovah" idea, was not possible before they existed. The word - Jehovah," therefore, never came from the lips of Christ and was quite unknown to His immediate followers. And in any case, Christ's words: "I have made manifest your name," have no reference to any specific "name," but mean: "I have revealed to them your 'nature' as their Father as well as My Father."

It is a crowning folly, therefore, when this official document tells us: "Jehovah's Witnesses today likewise make known Jehovah's name: 'Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God.' Isaiah 43:10-12." Isaiah also had never heard of the word "Jehovah." Nor did God, in whose name Isaiah did speak, ever ask the self-styled "Jehovah's Witnesses" to be His witnesses. The text from Isaiah in no way applies to this modern sect founded in America in the 19th century by the ex-Congregationalist Charles Taze Russell. The only biblical words which can rightly be applied to "Jehovah's Witnesses" are those of Our Lord Himself: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets... to deceive if possible even the elect." Matt. 24:24.

Denial of Christ's Divinity.

Turning next to the subject of Christ Himself, the Witnesses declare that "Jehovah's first creation was his Son, 'the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God (Rev. 3:14)', 'the firstborn of all creation (Coloss. 1:15)'." But neither of the texts quoted supports their contention that "Jehovah's first creation was His Son," (understanding their word "Jehovah" in the sense of "God").

According to the teaching of the New Testament, the Eternal Son of God is as uncreated as the Eternal Father Himself. The Witnesses of Jehovah have merely revived here the Arian heresy of the 4th century which taught that the Person of Christ did not eternally pre-exist as God the Son, being equally God with the eternal Father, but that He was a created spirit-being made by God and used as a created instrument in the work of producing other creatures.

To support this heretical notion, the Jehovah Witnesses misquote Rev. 3:14. That text does not say that the pre-existent Person who later became incarnate as Christ was "the beginning of the creation by God." The sense of the Greek text is "the beginning of God's creation"; and the reference is not to the original creation of all things by God, but to the restoration of God's creation by the redemptive work accomplished by the Divine Son as incarnate. In the created human nature in which He was born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ is the first in honour and dignity in the whole of God's creation. To refer this passage to the original creation instead of to the restoration of creatures effected by the incarnation and redemption is to take an absolutely inexcusable liberty with Holy Scripture and to manifest abysmal ignorance of its meaning.

The Witnesses are on better ground in referring the second of their texts to the Person of Christ as existing before the incarnation. But the significance of the words is not as they imagine. For St. Paul had no thought of telling the Colossians that the Son of God was "the firstborn of all creation" as part of that creation. In the very verse quoted, and immediately before speaking of Him as "the firstborn of all creation," St. Paul had declared Him to be "the image of the invisible God." In His created visible humanity Christ was not that. The allusion was to the Eternal Son's own invisible and uncreated Divine Nature. He existed before all created things, and by Him these were created. Thus St. Paul goes on to say at once: "In Him were all things created in heaven and on earth." (Coloss. 1:16). And he adds that therefore all created things (of which He is not one) are subordinate to Him. That St. Paul had no intention of reducing the Son of God to the level of a creature is further evident from the same Epistle where he says: "In Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Coloss. 2:9.

St. John's "Logos" Doctrine.

The official statement of the Witnesses feels it necessary to destroy precisely this doctrine of the full possession of the Godhead by the Person of Christ. It goes on to explain, therefore, that "before coming to earth he was known as the Word or 'Logos,' and apart from him not even one thing came into existence." (Jn. 1: 1,3.)

But what does St. John say in the first verse of his gospel? He writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The expression "in the beginning" was used to indicate that St. John's thoughts had gone back to what existed before the work of creation began at all. And in the rest of the text we have the distinction of Persons - "the Word was with God" - yet identity in the Divine Nature - "the Word was God." In order to escape this, and contrary to the clear meaning of the Greek text, the Witnesses translate the final phrase as: "The Word was a god." There is no justification for such a flagrant mistranslation of the Greek.

Also, correctly translated, the text of St. John goes on to say: "Each and every thing was made through Him, and without Him not a single thing was made that was made." The Word, or the Son of God, was not Himself one of the things that was made or created. He was the Uncreated Maker, equally God with the Father; and rightly, therefore, St. John had said that "the Word (or Logos) was with God, and the Word was God."

Utterly false, then, is the statement of the Witnesses which follows, namely, that Christ was "far from claiming to be equal with His Father." The New Testament gives the lie to that! Thus Philippians 2:5-7 tells us that, being in the form or same nature as that of God, Christ did not content Himself with being equal with God, remaining God and nothing but God, but that He descended to our own lower level by the incarnation, taking the form also of a man.

The Witnesses quote against this Jn. 5:30: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative"; and Jn. 14:28: "the Father is greater than I am." The first of these two texts, however, proves Christ to be God. Even as incarnate, the Person of Christ remains God; and as God, He cannot escape the unity of activity with the Eternal Father in virtue of the Divine Nature they both possess, together with the Holy Spirit. The words of the second of the two texts Christ used when speaking of His going to the Father in the Ascension; that is, precisely as incarnate and possessing a created humanity. From the viewpoint of that finite and created humanity, the Father was indeed greater. But in Jn. 10:30, when speaking from the viewpoint of His Uncreated and Divine Nature, Christ said: "I and the Father are one"; and He meant "one Being."

Where these last words are concerned the Jehovah Witnesses are blind to what even the Jews themselves saw, to whom Christ spoke them. For the Jews took up stones to stone Him, saying to Him: "For a good work we stone you not, but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God." The Jews did not accept His claim; but they knew what He claimed. The self-styled Witnesses of Jehovah do not know even that much.

They say in their official statement that "therefore, in view of the foregoing, Jehovah's Witnesses have no alternative but to reject the doctrine of the trinity as unscriptural." But they have another alternative It is that they should secure an elementary knowledge of the principles of sound interpretation of Sacred Scripture. For the rest, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is anything but unscriptural. In Matt. 28:19, we find Our Lord commanding the Apostles to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; not in the "names," but in the one name, indicating the unity of the Godhead possessed equally by the three Divine Persons. The 4th century Arian heresy, revived in our own days by Jehovah Witnesses; is still what it ever was, utterly false teaching.

Nature of Man.

Next to be considered is the nature of man. The Witnesses tell us that after preparing the earth for man's habitation, Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; "and man became a living soul. Gen. 2:7."

Now, whatever be the interpretation of the process of man's formation, the account itself stresses two distinct principles as proper to his nature, a material, body and, over and above that, an animating force or soul infused into that body by God. But the Witnesses do not see the significance of the description of a separate action on God's part for the communicating of a separate entity to an already existent body as its animating principle.

"Note," they say, "that man did not receive an immortal soul; he became, he then was, a living soul." As an effort at reasoning, this is simply appalling. For the expression "man became a living soul" is merely an ordinary figure of speech common to all languages and known as "synecdoche," or the description of a thing by allusion to some principal part of it only; as when one says that a person went by sail from San Francisco to Honolulu. We could not argue from that that a boat is a sail! In the same way, we could speak of that boat as having set out with a hundred souls on board. Every sensible man would realize that we meant a hundred human beings, and that they had their bodies with them. But in the interests of their peculiar religion the Jehovah Witnesses seem to feel no obligation to pay any attention even to the demands of ordinary common-sense.

Penalty of Sin

To describe the tragic lapse of our first parents into sin, the Jehovah Witness summary repeats briefly the account given of it in the Book of Genesis. "God commanded man," it declares, "not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree. Adam's life depended upon his obedience. If he disobeyed, 'in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' Gen. 2:17. Adam and Eve disobeyed, and so they were sentenced."

There is no need to discuss here the precise interpretation of those particular details.

What is of importance for our purposes are the comments of Jehovah Witnesses on the nature of the sentence itself. "Sentenced to what?" they ask. "To eternal torment? No, to death: 'For dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return'."

By what right, we must first ask, do the Jehovah Witnesses conclude from the fact that our first parents were sentenced to death that the sin they committed did not of its very nature deserve eternal torment and incur liability to that penalty also? The text simply does not deal with that further aspect of the subject, and no argument either for or against an eternal hell in the next world can be based upon the wording as it stands. The account deals with one particular penalty of sin, without saying anything of any others. It implies that man, created with a body subject to physical death, was intended to have an exemption from such physical death as a special privilege. That privilege was forfeited by the first sin; and man became liable to physical death.

Elsewhere in the Bible we are taught clearly that there is an eternal hell in the next life for those who die in a state of serious and unrepented sin. To stake all on each isolated text of Scripture which one happens to be reading at any given moment, losing sight of everything said elsewhere in the Bible, is no way of proper understanding of the whole revelation of God. In a discussion of the subject of hell, those passages must be considered which do deal with that subject, not those which do not profess to deal with it.

Nor is anything to be gained by citing any mere words which just look as if they would fit in with what one wants to hold, regardless of the real sense intended by the author of them. It is to no purpose, then, that the Witnesses here introduce Rom. 6:23: "The wages sin pays is death." For St. Paul is not there speaking of the physical death of the body. He is speaking metaphorically, declaring "sin" and "grace" opposites, as "death" and "life" are opposites. Sin is 'death' to grace, as grace is 'death' to sin. Therefore he writes, in Rom. 6:11: "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Thus the wages of sin is already spiritual death to grace.

But St. Paul goes on to say that, while the wages of sin is spiritual death even in one still physically living, so the grace of God is "life eternal through Jesus Christ Our Lord." There he declares that the life of grace is not restricted to this temporal life. If we have it, and encounter physical death still possessing it, we shall find that it continues into eternity. And he intends exactly the same thing of the spiritual death he contrasts with it. If we are in a state of serious sin or spiritual death while living in this life of time and space, and if we die without recovering the life of grace, the state of spiritual death will continue for eternity in hell. St. Paul's whole thought is that both what is morally good and what is morally evil have their counterparts in eternity, a good eternal destiny or an evil eternal destiny, the latter being the wages of sin.

Immortality Denied

Jehovah Witnesses think to nullify all the foregoing considerations by declaring that in any case the human soul is not immortal and does not survive the death of the body. "Death," their official

summary says, "is the absence of life. In 'Sheol' or the grave 'there is no work; nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom.' Ecclesiastes 9:10."

Now it is true that a dead body is not a living body. Also, when a man is dead and buried, he is no longer able to work or devise anything in this world; nor is he able to manifest his knowledge or wisdom in conversation with his fellowmen as before. But that says nothing as to what has become of his soul beyond the grave. On the other hand, the same Book of Ecclesiastes, 12:7, tells us of the different fates of body and soul, saying that at death "then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it." The inactivity of the lifeless body in the grave affords no indication of what is happening in the case of the soul which has returned to the God who created it.

In their simplicity, however, the Witnesses just hurry along. "Adam was a soul," they say. "Adam died. Adam the 'living soul' died? Yes." Adam, of course, like any other human being, consisted of a material body and a spiritual and immortal soul. Thus Christ said: "Fear you all not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul." Matt. 10.28. Were body and soul but one and the same thing, the death of the one would be the death of the other. The expression "living soul," as we have seen, means merely "living being." Adam, as a living human being in this world died, his material body returning to the dust from which it was derived, his spiritual and immortal soul returning to the God who gave it as Ecclesiastes declares.

One of the favourite texts of the Witnesses is next produced. Does not Ezekiel 18:4 say: "The soul that sinneth it shall die?" It does. But probably nowhere is their unintelligent literalism which pays no attention to the real sense of Sacred Scripture more evident than in the use made by the Jehovah Witnesses of this particular text. For Ezekiel is merely refuting the idea of the Jews that all their sufferings came upon them as a punishment of sins committed by their forefathers. The prophet stresses individual and personal responsibility. All that his figurative and stark announcement means is that each one will be held responsible for his own iniquity by God. The text has no reference whatever to either the nature of the soul or to the question of its essential immortality. He was discussing the moral problem of responsibility for sin, stressing individual guilt as opposed to collective guilt.

But did not Isaiah 53:12 foretell of Jesus that "he poured out his soul unto death?" Undoubtedly Isaiah said that. But all that he meant speaking in an idiomatic way proper to the Hebrew language of his time was: "He died." If however we are going to be slavishly literal the text would anyway be the end of the Witnesses' idea that man has not got a soul, but that he is a soul. For if a man pours out his soul he is pouring out something which is part of him from something else also belonging to him, with a resultant death of that something else - obviously, his body. In other words, the soul separates from the body, with the result that only a dead body remains to those among whom the man previously lived. But neither Ezekiel nor Isaiah were really talking about the physiology of death. Ezekiel was talking about individual responsibility, and Isaiah was prophesying that the Christ would suffer and die to justify the many.

One more effort is made on this subject, the Witnesses drawing again upon the Book of Ecclesiastes. "According to the Scriptures," they say, "the lower animals also are souls, and so we read: "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they all have one breath.' Eccles. 3:19."

There is no need to dwell on the fact that that passage does not prove that the lower animals are souls. Ecclesiastes admits that they have souls, for in verse 21 he asks: "Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?" The whole passage merely declares the simple truth that animals and men alike die. But in Ecclesiastes 12:7, as we have seen, we find said of men what is not said of beasts - namely, that while the human body goes back to the dust, the human spirit returns to the God who gave it.

"There is no misunderstanding these plain statements," the Witnesses proclaim, although they themselves have been quite successful in misunderstanding them, "Therefore Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the doctrines of eternal torment and the immortality of the human soul."

For their unbelief they have offered not a single sound reason. They have given only an exhibition of utter incompetence in scriptural interpretation. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare makes Bassanio say: "In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text!" Those words are certainly applicable to Pastor Russell's particular travesty of religion, even though Shakespeare, writing over 200 years beforehand, never foresaw its advent on the American scene.

God's Supremacy at Stake!

The Witnesses of Jehovah now plunge into still more profound depths of their so-called biblical theology. "To guide and protect mankind," they say, "God provided an 'anointed cherub that covereth' (Ezekiel 28:13,14), a guardian angel. This cherub became ambitious to be worshipped like Jehovah God and so turned traitor and caused man to disobey God."

That is sheer nonsense. The prophet Ezekiel is describing in highly symbolical language the King of Tyre, comparing him to an inmate of the Garden of Eden who is cast out for his sin. The passage has nothing like the sense attributed to it by Jehovah Witnesses. There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that any "guardian angel" became ambitious and turned traitor to God, causing man to disobey God. In fact, Ezekiel prophesies that, as the guardian angel drove our first parents out of the Garden of Eden because they disobeyed God, so the King of Tyre will also be dethroned and cast out. Read the whole chapter for yourself. (Some Church Fathers, by accommodation, compared the fate of Lucifer to that of the King of Tyre in his pride.)

"This," continue the Witnesses, "immediately raised the question: Whose fault was it that men sinned?" The irrelevancy of the passage by which they seek to introduce that problem really raises no question except that of their own right to make Scripture mean whatever they please. Letting that go, however, we can go along with their new line of thought. "Had Jehovah God," they ask, "made man weak and yet required of him perfect obedience if he would live? So the Devil contended, boasting that he could turn all men away from God. See Job, chapters 1 and 2."

One will look in vain in the chapters mentioned for any suggestion that the devil contended that God had made man weak yet required of him perfect obedience. We can dismiss those chapters as having no more to do with the case than the Gilbertian "flowers that bloom in the Spring."

It is true, of course, that God required obedience of our first parents; but He did not make them weak. He endowed them with free will, which means that He would not compel them to be good, even as the devil could not compel them to be evil. The devil could do no more than tempt them. They were under no compulsion to yield to that temptation. They were fully able to resist it, and it

was their own fault that they did not do so, but chose to sin by disobedience, as the devil had suggested to them. But now for the dire consequences - to Jehovah!

"Jehovah's name and supremacy thus became involved," we are told in all seriousness. Yet nowhere in Holy Scripture does the name "Jehovah" anywhere occur, as we have seen. Nor was there any threat to God's supremacy. What was involved by the sin of our first parents was man's own eternal destiny. Whether, after sin, mankind would receive an opportunity of repentance and be given the means of salvation from eternal disaster depended entirely on God's love and mercy. And we are told in the New Testament that, as a matter of fact, "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16) for man's redemption.

But the Witnesses see things differently. "To prove his supremacy," they tell us, "to prove the devil a liar, to prove that he could put men on earth that would remain faithful to him in spite of all that the devil could do, Jehovah permitted the first human pair and the devil to live."

This is all quite fantastic. God had no need to prove anything to anybody. In His mercy He postponed the infliction of the penalty of physical death upon our first parents, promising them a future Redeemer, and giving them an opportunity to repent. The souls of men, and also the devil, being immortal spirits of their very nature, were constitutionally unable to cease existing, whatever might be the conditions of their existence, whether of happiness or of misery. No special permission was required to enable them to live on, as they had to do by a very necessity of the natures God had given them in the first place.

But let us back to God. To provide Him with some kind of self-justification, the Witnesses now imagine on His behalf that "Jehovah knew that some of their offspring would remain faithful to him and thus witness to his supremacy." As if it were in the least necessary to God that any of His creatures should witness to His supremacy! If any creatures acknowledged His supremacy, that could not bestow supremacy upon Him; nor could He possibly lose His supremacy if any creatures denied it. The effects of submission to God or of rebellion against God affected, not God, but creatures themselves. In His mercy, God provided mankind with a remedy for the evil effects of sinful rebellion which human beings had brought upon themselves.

It happens to be true, as we are next told, that "from Abel on, Jehovah has had witnesses on earth," taking the unscriptural name "Jehovah" as meaning "God." But the self-styled "Witnesses of Jehovah" are not to be numbered among any authorized witnesses on behalf of God. They merely constitute a modern Protestant sect founded by Charles Taze Russell, an ex-Congregationalist of Pittsburgh, Penn., who at the age of 20, in 1872, imagined that he alone had at last discovered the true meaning of the Bible and commissioned his followers to witness to his own peculiar opinions throughout the world. To rank Pastor Russell's "witnesses" with any divinely-authorized messengers from God to mankind would not only violate reason, but would also be an insult to God scarcely falling short of straight-out blasphemy!

Why God Became Man

Do not be misled by our own sub-title here; for, as we have seen, Jehovah Witnesses do not believe that God became man. They hold that Christ Himself was a kind of incarnate spirit-creature who, although He existed before other creatures, did not pre-exist eternally, and who was certainly not equal with God.

However, having set the stage, as it were, they now attempt to explain the mission of Christ, such as they hold Him to be.

"That his name might be vindicated, that his purpose regarding the earth might be realized, and that men who kept integrity might get life," they say, "Jehovah sent His Son into the world 'to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many' and to 'bear witness to the truth'."

Denying the Holy Trinity and that there is any God-the-Son, as they do, the Witnesses would have been more honest had they declared frankly that they believe their Jehovah to have sent some spirit-creature into the world; as indeed Charles Taze Russell originally said, identifying this spirit-creature with Michael the Archangel.

As for God's purpose, we can rule out at once the vindication of His name (although that name was not "Jehovah"). God could have vindicated His own rights by letting men endure to the full the just punishment of their sins. And Holy Scripture itself teaches that God's redemptive work was an entirely free act of love and mercy on His part. Nor was God's motive the realization of His purpose for this "earth" as a planet. It was that fallen mankind might be given the means to attain to a destiny of eternal happiness in heaven.

Wrong also is the assertion that this was restricted to "men who kept integrity," which the Witnesses of Jehovah do not in any case. The ransom was for men who are repentant sinners. Does not the New Testament tell us that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"? (1 Jn. 1:8.) And did not Christ Himself say: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners"? (Matt. 9:13.) Jehovah Witnesses perpetually quote the Bible, but have no idea of what it really teaches.

"Exaltation of Christ."

The official Jehovah Witness document now turns to the thought of what His mission meant to Christ Himself. And it begins this section with a further denial of His Divinity. "Conceived by a virgin," we are told, "the Word became flesh, being produced out of a woman; thus he was an actual flesh-and-blood creature."

Jehovah Witnesses mean, of course, that He was only that. All their talk of God sending His Son into this world is sheer pretence. They do not believe that God has a Son. Yet what is the truth as revealed in Holy Scripture? It is that the Eternal Son of God, the Word "who was with God, and who was God," (Jn. 1:1-3) whilst still remaining God, took to Himself also a human nature born of the Virgin Mary. That human nature was an actual flesh-and-blood creation; but the Divine Person who possessed it could still say, in virtue of the Divine Nature He ever retained: "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30); and also: "Before Abraham was made, I am" (Jn. 8:58) - a clear declaration that He was the Almighty God who had said to Moses: "Say to the people of Israel: I AM sent me to you." Exodus 3:14.

A further travesty of the teaching of the Bible follows. "Because of his demonstrating that a perfect man can keep integrity in spite of the devil," they say, "God raised Jesus from the dead and 'exalted him to a superior position.' Philippians 2:5-11." No genuine Christian can accept that. Not because Our Lord demonstrated that one who is merely man, however perfect, can keep integrity in spite of the devil, but because a Divine Person, equally God with the Father, humbled Himself in the incarnation, and by suffering death in the human nature He then took to Himself, did the will of the Father - for that reason Jesus has been exalted even in His humanity; and not merely to a "superior

position," but to eternal glory in that humanity. As a consequence, the very worship due to God Himself is due to Christ both in His Divine Nature and in the created humanity He assumed to Himself. In that humanity He is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Apoc. 17:14), so that, as St. Paul insists: "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth." Philippians 2:10.

The supreme adoration due to God alone, therefore, is due to the glorified humanity of Christ in virtue of His being the Second Divine Person of the Holy Trinity. Rightly we can apply to the very earthly-minded Witnesses of Jehovah the words: "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

Christ's Church

The continuing work of Christ in this world next engages the attention of the Jehovah Witnesses. "Since Pentecost," they say, "God has been calling and preparing a 'bride,' a 'little flock,' a body of 144,000 'purchased from the earth' to share heavenly life and rulership 'as kings with Christ for the thousand years.' These, Christ and His bride, constitute the 'kingdom of the heavens'."

The first thought that occurs to one here is that, if God has been calling and preparing His "bride" since Pentecost, the Witnesses of Jehovah, who came into existence only in 1872 as the hare-brained scheme of the twenty-years' old Charles Taze Russell, of Pittsburgh, Penn., are some nineteen centuries too late on the scene to warrant serious consideration as having any part with that "bride."

The "bride," of course, as the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul make clear, is a symbolical expression for the Church Christ founded, and upon which He sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday in Jerusalem. With that Church He promised to abide "all days even to the consummation of the world." Matt. 28:20. His Church, therefore, must have been in this world all days since Pentecost. As that cannot be said of the Jehovah Witnesses, founded only in the nineteenth century by Pastor Russell, they can claim no connection with anything that transpired on Pentecost Sunday, fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. But something must be said here also of the other scriptural references in this rather remarkable passage.

When Christ spoke of His Church as a "little flock" (Lk. 12:32), He was talking to His then mere handful of disciples and bidding them not to fear lest they should lack temporal necessities. They were a "little flock" indeed when He spoke to them. But He did not say that they would remain a "little flock." In His parable of the smallest of seeds which grew into a great tree (Matt. 13:31-32), He predicted the immense future expansion of His Church. He certainly never intended the "little flock" to be restricted to "a body of 144,000."

The reference to the "144,000 who were purchased from the earth" occurs in another context altogether, where St. John describes in highly symbolical language his vision of the Lamb in heaven (Apoc. 14:3). There the number 144,000, the square of 12, a thousand-fold, is a figurative expression for a perfected number; and it refers to the whole company of the redeemed. It does not mean literally 144,000. The interpretations of the Book of Revelation by Jehovah Witnesses bring out the truth of the remark by the Protestant Scripture scholar, Prof. C. H. Dodd, that unqualified freedom of biblical interpretation has led to limitless aberrations, exemplified particularly in the exploitation of the more obscure apocalyptic writings such as the Book of Revelation, which has become "the licensed playground of every crank." *The Bible Today*, p. 23.

This is, perhaps, still more apparent in the Jehovah Witness explanation of St. John's reference to reigning with Christ "for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). A literal interpretation of the "thousand years" is entirely at variance with the method the rest of Revelation or the Apocalypse demands. The number "a thousand" is not to be taken numerically but figuratively, as meaning an indefinitely long age. The Protestant "New Commentary on Holy Scripture" rightly says, therefore, that the "thousand years" symbolize the whole period between the coming of Christ in the incarnation and His second coming at the end of time to judge all mankind. The idea of a literal "Millennium," as taught by the Witnesses of Jehovah, is quite false.

Fate of Mankind

It must not be thought that the Jehovah Witnesses hold out hope only to the "144,000," the number they have so misunderstood. "Jesus also died," they tell us, "for His 'other sheep,' of which there are many. To such sheep-like ones the call now goes forth."

Their idea is that for all eternity there will be two branches of the kingdom of Christ; one section in heaven, to which only 144,000 chosen ones will go; the other on earth, where all the rest of the "saved," the "Jonadabs," will dwell forever, marrying and multiplying, and no one ever dying, with no time-limits at all. The problem of space-limits on this earth they simply ignore. (Of course for an all-powerful and infinite God even this dilemma could be solved!) The "other sheep" are to have the doubtful privilege of eternally jostling with the countless multiplying millions on the surface of the earth. Evidently the 144,000 tickets for ringside seats in heaven have already been exhausted; and the Witnesses of Jehovah conceive it to be their duty now to book people as sheep for the eternal grazing-paddocks on the face of this planet.

Needless to say, Our Lord's reference to His "other sheep" has been completely misapplied by the Jehovah Witnesses. In Jn. 10:10, we find Him saying: "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring... and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." He was merely contrasting the Church He had established with Israel of old. Israel, as God's chosen people, had been restricted to the Jews. Jesus here declares that Gentiles as well as Jews are to have the privilege of membership in the "New Israel," His Church, all forming one flock under one supreme visible head as its shepherd on earth.

Labouring under their own obsession however, the Jehovah Witnesses proceed to warn mankind of the fearful disaster which they say will come upon those who reject their particular message. "Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger, the day when all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy, known as 'Armageddon'."

The righteousness of which they speak is easily obtained. The "righteous ones" have become such by the mere fact of their becoming Witnesses of Jehovah; although the fanatical arrogance so characteristic of these people is far removed from meekness! As for the crude literalism with which they interpret the battle of Armageddon, no one will be impressed by that who understands the mysterious and symbolical character of the Book of Revelation. There "Armageddon" is but a figurative expression symbolizing the final victory through Christ of good over evil, St. John using as an analogy a reference (Judges 5:19) to the defeat of the kings of Canaan at the Mount of Megiddo (Har-Magedon).

The Satanic World

"The literal earth, of course," they hasten to explain, "will not be devoured with fire, for 'it abideth forever'." That the earth will abide forever, however, is further exegetical rubbish. The Bible nowhere declares such a thing. True, Ecclesiastes 1:4 says: "One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever:" But not for a moment did he intend that the earth will abide for all eternity. He meant simply that, as far as our present experience goes, the earth continues as generations succeed one another. He spoke just as did Tennyson in his poem, "The Brook," where he makes the brook say: "Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever." To interpret that literally as meaning "for all eternity" would be quite absurd.

What will be devoured with fire, if not the earth according to Jehovah Witnesses, is "this wicked system of things, or world of which Satan is the god." For them, everything and everybody is Satanic except the Jehovah Witness organization and its members. Yet they would find very disturbing for themselves St. John's description of the real agents of Satan, could they but realize the significance of his words. "You have heard," he wrote, "that Antichrist comes; even now there are become many Antichrists... ..This is Antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son." (1 Jn. 2:18,22.) The Witnesses of Jehovah themselves do just that by their denial of the Holy Trinity and of the Divinity of Christ.

To support their denunciation of "the world," however, they declare that Jesus said: "My kingdom is no part of this world." Jn. 18:36: thus they give us yet another example of their utterly irresponsible mishandling of biblical texts. For the words quoted contain no reference whatever to any supposed wickedness of earthly kingdoms, nor any suggestion that Satan is the god of them all. Jesus merely told Pilate that His was not an earthly temporal kingdom as are other kingdoms in this world. That is all. What Christ thought of the world from a moral and spiritual point of view must be sought elsewhere.

One more try. "The disciple James warned," they say, "that 'friendship with the world is enmity from God' (James 4:4). Therefore Jehovah's Witnesses shun it." This, however, simply will not do. St. James is not condemning the world as such, in the sense intended by Jehovah Witnesses. He is dealing with the moral dispositions of people towards the wealth, pleasures and honours one can gain in the world. Either these things master us, so that we are prepared to seek them even at the expense of breaking God's laws, thus forfeiting His friendship; or we master ourselves, observing sufficient self-restraint in our use of this world's advantages that not for any of them would we offend God; preferring to do without them if they cannot be had without sin. This is a very different thing from denouncing as "the wicked world" all who do not accept the Jehovah Witness organization, and finding a malignant and vindictive pleasure in the thought of the most dreadful imaginary disasters by which they are to be punished!

Signs of the End

To secure a hearing for their warning, the Jehovah Witnesses never tire of proclaiming that the end of the world is near at hand. "The present generation is seeing the sign marking Christ's second presence: 'nation will rise against nation... there will be food shortages and earthquakes... you will be hated by all the nations... and this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth.' (Matt. 24)."

Now, if one thing has been made clear in this commentary, it is surely that the message of Charles Taze Russell is not "the good news of the kingdom." It consists only of the queer ideas of yet another of the long line of self-constituted prophets of whom the world has long since grown weary.

What reason is there why any more confidence should be placed in Russell's misinterpretations of Scripture than in those of founders of other and similar modern sects, whether of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy with her Christian Science, or of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, or of Mrs. Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists, or of Father Divine with his "Peace - it's Wonderful" mission, or of so many others?

As for our present generation seeing the "signs," in every generation during the past twenty centuries there have been those who have imagined the signs of Christ's second coming to have been verified in their own age. There is no more reason to believe the "signs" particularly evident now than in previous centuries. Christ deliberately refrained from speaking clearly on the subject, telling His disciples: "It is not for you to know the times or the moments, which the Father has put in His own power." Acts 1:7. He promised His continual presence with those who belong to Him, that His power in them would enable them to overcome sin, and that eventually the struggle between good and evil would culminate in His own manifest triumph when He comes again in all His majesty and glory. The self-assurance of fanatics who indulge in predictions based on a crudely literal and materialistic interpretation of Holy Scripture is sheer presumption.

Eternity On Earth

But Jehovah Witnesses are not backward in telling us what will be the result of the imminent judgement. "After destroying this old world," they say, "Christ will usher in the new world wherein 'righteousness is to dwell.' Then no more war, fear or want."

But the spurious paradise for all eternity on this earth is a chimera, wholly without evidence for it. When Christ does come again it will be, as He Himself declares, to judge all mankind; and the result of that judgement will be that the unrepentant wicked "shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." Matt. 25:31-48. The final destiny will be either an other-worldly state of hell or an equally other-worldly state of heaven. Moreover, Christ's return will witness the resurrection of the dead and the mysterious transformation and renewal of the cosmos which scripture calls "the new heavens and the new earth" (2 Pet 3:15).

With their next statement that "even the dead will be remembered, for 'there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous'," no Christian could ordinarily quarrel. But even when the Witnesses of Jehovah say the right thing, it can be taken for granted that they understand it in the wrong way. As a matter of fact, according to their own teachings, there can be no resurrection at all. For they deny the immortality of the human soul. They insist that when a man dies nothing of him survives. He becomes simply non-existent. There is nothing of him, therefore to resurrect. At most, God could create another being who would be a replica of some previous being. But the new being would be a different being and not the same person at all. This would certainly not be the resurrection of a person who had previously existed. But Jehovah Witnesses seem to be complete strangers to philosophy and logic as well as to the meaning of Sacred Scripture.

The beatific vision of this earth now swims once more into their consciousness. "All pain, sorrow and crying will be wiped out, and even the enemy death will be destroyed. The earth will be made one vast paradise." But nowhere does the Bible teach that the earth will ever become one vast paradise! Christ Himself ascended into heaven from this earth in His risen and glorified body, having told His disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be." Jn. 14:2,3. As to the other conditions of heaven, He would say to the self-styled Witnesses of Jehovah what He said to the Sadducees: "You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in

the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven." Matt. 22:29,30. If we are to be as the angels of God in heaven, we will not need any absurdly-conceived material habitation on this earth. [The interested reader, rather than accept the 'absurd' ideas of the Jehovah Witnesses, ought to consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1038 to 1060 for a grand insight into the mystery of the enduring 'last things'.]

Conclusion

"Thus Jehovah will be vindicated, as his purpose regarding the earth is fully realized," concludes this official statement of doctrine, issued by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. "This, in brief, is what Jehovah's Witnesses understand the Bible to teach and what they believe."

For a last time it must be said that God nowhere acknowledges "Jehovah" as His name. And He has no purpose regarding the earth which in any way resembles what the Witnesses have imagined on His behalf. This whole sorry scheme is unworthy of the human intelligence, opposed to the teachings of Holy Scripture and really an insult to God Himself. The doctrines are due to an almost complete misunderstanding of the Bible, not to an understanding of it: and belief in them is but credulity.

So much then, for the explanation the Jehovah Witnesses themselves have given us of their new religion. They began by saying complainingly that others do not give an accurate account of their teachings; but, as we said when commenting on that, there is no reason why anyone should resort to misrepresentation in order to disprove the truth of what they say. Nothing could better reveal the falsity of their doctrines than their own exposition of them.

Much more, of course, could have been said on this whole subject than has been possible in this little book, which has been deliberately restricted to an examination only of so much as their own official summary contains. Above all, the almost total absence of any truly moral and scriptural values from their system would call for even greater attention than the aspects there put before us. One searches in vain for a genuinely religious spirit in it all. Instead of the vital Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity, it offers superstition, presumption, little personal love of Our Lord, and only bitter denunciations of fellow-human beings. It inspires none of the corporal works of mercy. Humility, gentleness and patience are quite foreign to its outlook. If, as they triumphantly proclaim, the Witnesses of Jehovah suffer at the hands of others (however unjustifiable the conduct of those others may be) they do not suffer gladly, but resentfully; and they quite overlook the fact that, as a sign of true followers of Christ, only those sufferings count which are inflicted for His sake, not those which professing disciples bring upon themselves for their own ill-mannered behaviour.

But there is no room to go fully into these very important matters. We must content ourselves with the analysis of their own official statement which, after all, is already more than enough to reveal the falsity of their teachings. Only unfamiliarity with history, ignorance of sound principles of scriptural interpretation, and almost a complete lack of acquaintance with the elementary laws of logic - all these deficiencies being blended with unlimited credulity - could find their creed even remotely credible.
