

July 24, 1979
Gladewater, X 756077
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Dear Mr. McNair,

Was Pastor Russell's work part of Sardis?

The enclosed item "Excerpts from Reprints of Zion's Watch Tower" is part of the research done here over the past seven years. I was searching out Jehovah's Witnesses' Passover dates (which now differ from ours 80% of the time) and kept going back, back into Rutherford's time, and then earlier into the time of Pastor Russell. Dates Russell assigned almost always agreed with the Nisan 14 of the Hebrew calendar.

The source I had stumbled onto some 4 years back was entitled Reprints, bound volumes with an index, here at the Ambassador Big Sandy Library. But in looking for these Passover dates, other articles caught my attention. A Articles contrary to what JW's teach today. Yet some articles paralleled the teachings of the Radio Church of God and the Worldwide Church of God in a most remarkable fashion.

The order in which I ran onto these doctrines peculiar to the Church of God is difficult to reconstruct, so I have listed them in the Excerpts in pretty well chrono order. Only bit by bit one realizes what the Editor of that magazine was teaching. And only bit by bit does one become aware of the fact that modern JW's simply reject the teachings of the man they claim as their founder. And yet among the doctrines of Russell that the JW's reject, it is baffling to find that we believe and teach some of them, with minor variations to be sure but that is to be expected. And we saw Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong dig some of these out of the Bible independantly in those early years, not from Russell, but from the Bible! Though certainly the preachers Mr. H.W.A. heard in Stanbery had read Russell.

There are several articles on being "begotten by God's Spirit", growing throughout one's Christian life, and then at the Resurrection, and not until then being "born of God" and becoming a Son of God in the full sense of the word, a Son of God on the God plane. That I found spelled out in full detail in the December 1, 1914 issue on page 5583.

The Plan of God, that God is not trying to save the world now, but that task will be assigned to Christ and His Wife during the Millennium, that doctrine is the essence of the Gospel, and it is truly good news! And it is this understanding in 1876 that caused Russell to put his wealth, his energy and the remaining 40 years of his life into preaching that Gospel.

Would you believe that Russell taught his followers to keep a 7 day "spiritual Feast of Tabernacles"? For a man coming out of darkness and into the Light, the progress of this man was remarkable. I had to conclude that he was not blind, but seeing. Only a person with sight can head toward the light. And I will grant that a measure of what he saw was not in focus.

Russell also taught that the Jews would return to Palestine and be established once more as a nation. Zionism took heart at his preaching (Mr. Kaplan is familiar with the topic) and yet, yes, the return of the Jews is premature. Many Jews listened to him and made plans for "Next year in Jerusalem".

Scanning page 4170 of Reprints one day, the words "ig Sandy" popped into view! In the year 1908 there were 17 people keeping the Passover here at Big Sandy on the right evening and in a manner that we would approve. Symbolic bread add wine (well, it could have been grape juice, or grape juice with a spoonful of wine in it), they sang a hymn, and then with an absolute minimum of conversation went to their homes. Big Sandy has no J.W. congregation today!

The recommended name for these groups of Bible Students? Jehovah's Witnesses? Not at all! That did not come until 1931. They were taught to call themselves Christians, Church of God or Church of Christ; Bible names only.

The most intriguing thing about the work of this man Pastor Russell and his publication Zion's Watch Tower (Note the 5, 5, 5) is the persistent deterioration of the teachings of that group under Judge Rutherford; and that the final slump doctrinally of that group coincides in time with the arrival of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong on the scene and his ordination. And the building of a College in the Crown City. (We used that as an Envoy there one year.)

Is it coincidence that Mr. HWA was selected number 40 in that group of Seventy? Or that he was ordained in 1931, the year that Dugger, the recognized leader of the group we have called Sardis, 's chosen to go to Jerusalem?

Russell's 40 year ministry and the 40 years of his magazine reprinted (1879-1919) and the fact that the cover bore a Crown, Cross and Laurel Wreath for 40 years (1891-1931), those could be coincidences and contrived.. Or are they more than that?

And is it a coincidence that in 1931, the steadily deteriorating Watchtower under the "misguidance" of Judge Rutherford tells people to drop their goal of becoming part of the Bride, and rather to join the "Great Multitude". In that year that magazine, which must have been read by many genuine Members of the true Church of God, drops its symbolic Crown, Cross and Laurel Wreath!

And it seems odd that while both SDA's and the inner circle with Russell and later Rutherford considered themselves to be in the Laodicean era, the 7th era, yet all thought the "number 5" in some way holy or sacred and put it everywhere.

Note that "Zion's Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society" count 7 x 5, which proves nothing. Then look at "Signs" or "Signs of the Times". And a dozen other titles these two related religious groups chose.

The conclusion I come to is that 5th era Sardis is far broader than we had ever realized. Note that any great part of those members were Spirit begotten, but that they for a time at least had the name Church of God and carried out a work, though spiritually they were dead, with few exceptions.

With this I leave you to scan the Excerpts.

Sincerely,

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