

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, BLACKS AND DISCRIMINATION

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Abstract

This paper researches the history of the racism found in the official teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, whose followers are now known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Their history reveals they are not free of racism as they now claim, but have manifested extreme racist views in their official, mandatory teachings. Even though 52% of the Witness' membership are non-white, not a single minority person held a leadership position in 1994.

Background

Jehovah's Witnesses are one of the fastest growing denominations, now over 12 million members and sympathizers. They are the only major American non-ethnic denomination that consists of a majority of persons from minority groups. One study found that fully 52% of all American Witnesses are Afro-American or Hispanic, yet the leadership from circuit overseer and above, is almost totally white (Kosmin and Lachman, 1993). This contrasts to the Lutheran churches in which only 3% of adherents were black or Hispanic, Mormons only 6%, Presbyterians 7%, Episcopalians 10%, and Methodists 24%. Of the Baptists, the group with the highest number of minority members aside from the Witnesses, only 31% were black or Hispanic. Kosmin's study was based on an American nationwide survey which used a large enough sample to include the smaller sects.

Why are such a high per cent of American Witnesses Afro-American? Whalen (1962) concluded that one reason they are attracted to the Witnesses is its recent policy of racial equality. Whalen concluded from actively participating in their activities since the late 1950s that since the 1960s it appears that blacks were generally treated equally by the Witnesses. World wide Blacks who become Jehovah's Witnesses usually feel that they will be welcomed as human beings equal to other members.

Although many segregated Kingdom Halls existed in the deep south in the 1950s, the race record of the Witnesses is much better than that of many Christian churches (Carr, 1993; Jackson, 1991). Harrison (1978) concludes that a black male can achieve status in the Watchtower even if he is only average in intelligence and secular skills. He may be a janitor in the world, but an Elder in the Watchtower, a respected leader looked up to by whites and blacks alike. He is also a privileged person because, while the men of the world may be intelligent, they cannot understand the Watchtower message, what they refer to as the truth (1978:252).

This topic is of concern partly because a significant number of American Witnesses are Afro-Americans. Even in the 1960s some estimates put the percentage as high as twenty to thirty percent of all American Witnesses and, as noted above, the number has drastically increased since then (Whalen 1962:203). As to research on the number of Afro-American Witnesses, Cooper concluded that:

There is no way to know precisely the number of Negro Witnesses in the United States as the Society doesn't reveal or encourage any knowledge about the extent of its Negro membership. Estimates of this membership in the early 1960s ran from 20% to 30% of the total Witnesses in the U.S.... Such... estimates... indicate a considerably higher proportion of Negro Witnesses than there are blacks in the general American population (10.6% according to the 1960 U.S. Census and estimated 12% for 1970). In the Witnesses' circuit assemblies in North and West Philadelphia during the research period, each of which included more than 2,200 persons, 99% of the audience were Negroes, figures well above the 70% Negro population in North Philadelphia and 60% in West Philadelphia (1974:705).

Although the sociological as well as the religious factors for their success in gaining Afro-Americans adherents are complex, a major factor is most Kingdom Halls, as Watchtower churches are called, appear on the surface to welcome blacks as full members. This fact is not unknown in the black community, and has also aided Witness missionaries working in Africa to achieve much success there (Cole 1953, 1953a). The attraction of Afro-Americans to the Watchtower is explained by Cooper as follows:

As a "publisher" in the New World Society they are convinced they are Jehovah's chosen people. One is no longer identified as Bill Green, warehouse clerk or shoe salesman, lower middle or lower class, Negro. As a "publisher" he is Brother Green, the West View Study Servant, one of Jehovah's elect. It is an identity impervious to outside opinion. By following the Society's rules for "publishing" and morality, thereby assuring his place among the chosen, Brother Green gains a sense of purity and superiority, factors of importance to an American Negro seeking, as Charles Keil says, a new image of self-esteem to overwhelm feelings of self-hatred (1966:165; Cooper 1974:715).

The Real State of Affairs

The subject of race is not a topic the Watchtower has spent an enormous amount of time discussing. Nonetheless, a large number of official statements in their publications clearly reflect

their racist attitudes. For example, an October 15, 1919, *Golden Age* article about prohibition (p. 44) stated, "from a criminal viewpoint the desirability of sobering the southern negro speaks volumes for national prohibition." Another article refers to Orientals as "coolies" who were "cutthroats and murderers" (*Golden Age*, March 10, 1926, p. 374). Many articles, though, are much more direct. One states that the British Empire nations are all ruled by Whites, whom the Watchtower describes as having "superior mental, moral, or physical force" and that this superiority is disappearing because the "powers of the colored races are expanding" (May 5, 1926:483). A *Golden Age* article vehemently condemned a book sympathetic to blacks, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which it called "the work of Satan" and they even once stated that the Spaniards were a "backward" race (Bolling, 1927:141). The racism is also obvious in statements such as "careful observations in a London school showed that children enjoyed the heartiest laughs, not from slapstick comedies, but from [such activities as] ... watching a negro miner enjoying a square meal" (*Golden Age*, 1928:684).

A first person account of the attraction of an Afro-American to the Watchtower is found in a *Watchtower* article, the official Journal of Jehovah's Witnesses which prints policy and doctrine that all members must adhere to under pain of disfellowshipping. In this article, the anonymous author admitted that behind the common outward appearance of acceptance was another side:

I am not saying Jehovah Witnesses are perfect. At times I detect among certain ones of them leftover attitudes of racial superiority, and I have sometimes seen a certain uncomfortableness of some of them when in close association with persons of another race (December 1, 1974:713-714).

This other side of the seeming racial harmony of the Watchtower can be traced back to their early history. Although the Watchtower claims to believe that all races are biological brothers, all descendants of Adam and Eve, they have for decades officially taught the doctrine of biological inferiority of the black race (Bergman, 1984). Formal segregation of blacks was once rigidly enforced in their organization, both during the rule of their first president, C.T. Russell (1852-1916) and their second, Joseph F. Rutherford (1869-1942) and even until the late 1950's:

Recognizing that it meant either the success or the failure of the...[Photo] Drama as respects the whites, we have been compelled to assign the colored friends to the gallery... Some were offended at this arrangement. We have received numerous letters from the colored friends, some claiming that it is not right to make a difference, others indignantly and bitterly denouncing [us] as enemies of the colored people. Some ... told us that they believe it would be duty to stand up for equal rights and always to help the oppressed.... We again suggested that if a suitable place could be found in which the Drama could be presented for the benefit of the colored people alone, we would be glad to make such arrangements, or to cooperate with any others in doing so (*Watchtower*, April 1, 1914:110).

The administration then concluded that the Watchtower interests were to be put ahead of efforts to achieve racial justice and human rights, a policy that continues today. Specifically the Watchtower reasoned that:

Our explanations were ... it is a question of putting either the interests of God's cause first, or else the interests of the race first. We believed it our duty to put God first and the truth first--at any cost to others or to ourself! We explained that we thought that all the colored brethren should know... that we love to serve them in any way possible and to give them the very best we have to give of the Gospel message; and that it is only a question of whether our giving to them in one way would entirely deprive us of giving the truth to others (*Watchtower*, April 1, 1914:110).

Being viewed as inferior supposedly made a person a better servant the Watchtower then taught, and consequently the official Watchtower publication *The Golden Age* magazine (now called *Awake!*) commented that:

...the curse which Noah pronounced upon Canaan was the origin of the black race. Certain it is that when Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," he pictured the future of the Colored race. They have been and are a race of servants, but now in the dawn of the twentieth century, we are all coming to see this matter of service in its true light and to find that the only real joy in life is in serving others; not bossing them. There is no servant in the world as good as a good Colored servant, and the joy that he gets from rendering faithful service is one of the purest joys there is in the world (*The Golden Age*, July 24, 1929: 702).

As recent as 1952, the Watchtower extolled the "servant" and "teachable" qualities of blacks in their publications, a teaching that all members must accept as God's teachings under pain of total excommunication:

...our colored brothers have a great cause for rejoicing. Their race is meek and teachable, and from it comes a high percentage of the theocratic increase (*The Watchtower*, Feb. 1, 1952: 95).

As Russell explained in the late 1800s, he confidently believed that the end of the world and the start of the millennial kingdom will occur very soon, bringing humankind into an earthly paradise and a rapid restoration of the whole earth to the perfect garden of Eden state. Russell acknowledged that the conditions for Afro-Americans were poor in the present system, but he argued that this will work for their advantage during the millennium because they will have learned humility from their inferior position. The current conditions, he taught, were important to help them develop the needed "strength of character", but only if they remained humble and did not challenge the status quo:

If nature favors the colored brethren and sisters in the exercise of humility it is that much to their advantage, if they are rightly exercised by it. A little while, and [their]... humility will work out for [their]... good... those who have been faithful... will be granted new bodies, spiritual, beyond the veil, where color and sex distinctions will be no more. (*Watchtower*, April 1, 1914:110).

Russell taught that those privileged to live in the "new world" which is just upon us would also be physically returned to humankind's original bodily state, including our "original" skin color and language, which the Watchtower taught was white and Hebrew:

A little while, and the Millennial kingdom will be inaugurated, which will bring restitution to all mankind--restitution to the perfection of mind and body, feature and color, to the grand original

standard, which God declared "very good," and which was lost for a time through sin, but which is soon to be restored by the powerful kingdom of the Messiah (*Watchtower*, April 1, 1914:110).

This teaching is discussed in more detail in the Watchtower's answer to the question "Can The Ethiopian Change His skin color?" The Watchtower Society's official response to this question is:

No. But... what the Ethiopian cannot do for himself God could readily do for him. The difference between the races of men... have long been arguments against the solidarity of the human family. The doctrine of restitution has also raised the question. How could all men be brought to perfection and which color of skin was the original? The answer is now provided. God can change the Ethiopian's skin in his own due time... Julius Jackson, of New Frankfort, Montana, a negro boy of nine years, began to grow white in September, 1901, and is now fully nine-tenths white. He assures us that this is no whitish skin disease; but that the new white skin is as healthy as that of any white boy, and that the changed boy has never been sick and never has taken medicines (*Zion's Watch Tower*, February 15, 1904: 52-53).

This case history, the Watchtower argues, demonstrates that God can and will change "Ethiopians" (blacks) into whites in the New World. The Watchtower taught that the black race needs to become white because blacks are descended from Ham, whose special "degradation" is mentioned in Gen. 9:22, 25. Actually, Mr. Julius Jackson was likely suffering from Vitiligo, a skin disease involving a loss of melanocytes which affects about one percent of all Americans. The Watchtower adds that Noah prophetically declared:

...that Ham's characteristics which had led him to unseemly conduct ... would be ... inherited by his son,--and prophetically he foretold that this degeneracy would mark the posterity of Canaan, degrading him, making him servile. We are not able to determine to a certainty that the sons of Ham and Canaan are negroes; but we consider that general view as probable as any other (*Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1902:216).

The change in skin color, in other words, was needed to remove the "curse" of dark skin which was a major part of the whole curse by God. In an article entitled "The Negro Not a Beast", which attempted to prove that the bigots of the day were in error, the Watchtower declared that "negroes" were human, but this was true only with qualifications:

While it is true that the white race exhibits some qualities of superiority over any other, we are to remember that there are wide differences in the same Caucasian (Semitic and Aryan) family; and... that some of the qualities which have given this branch of the human family its preeminence in the world are not... in all respects admirable... (*Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1902:215-216).

In an effort to provide encouragement for the World's blacks, the Watchtower Society gave hope that they can become white in an article entitled: "Restitution Can Change The Ethiopian's Skin". The story is about a person whose skin color changed--today we know this person was suffering from Vitiligo. The Watchtower reported that this is the third case they have seen, and this suggested to them "the process of restitution [is] soon due." The story "From Black to White He

Slowly Turned" they took as a miracle from God, and it vividly illustrates their racist beliefs and their teaching that in the new world, all blacks would turn white. The item reads:

... Rev. William H. Draper... gave a living affirmative answer to the famous Biblical question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" Though once as black as charcoal, the Rev. Mr. Draper is now white. His people say that his color was changed in answer to prayer. Many years ago Draper was employed by a fair-skinned man, and he was often heard to remark that if he could only be white like his employer, he would be happy. While in the white man's service Draper 'experienced' religion.

From that day forward he prayed constantly and fervently that he might become white.... He first experienced a prickling sensation on his face, and upon close investigation found a number of small white spots scarcely larger than the point of a pin. He became alarmed, thinking he had some peculiar disease but he did not suffer and aside from the prickling sensation felt nothing unusual. Gradually the white spots became larger and extended themselves, until now, after the change has been in progress for over 30 years, Draper has not a single dark spot on his body (*Zion's Watch Tower*, October 1, 1900:296-297).

The Watchtower has historically viewed blacks in general as having less interest and intelligence concerning the Bible than other races. A *Zion's Watch Tower* of April 15, 1900 stated that "There are probably as many as a hundred colored brethren on the Watch Tower lists, some of them very clear in the truth, and very earnest in its service, financially and other-wise", but they were not allowed to participate in the "pioneer work" then because,

although we have received letters from several of these, who had intended engaging in the volunteer work, expressing surprise that in the call for volunteers in the March 1, 1900 issue we restricted the inquiry to white Protestant churches. They rightly realized that we have not the slightest of race prejudice, and that we love the colored brethren with just the same warmth of heart that we love the white, and they queried therefore why such a distinction should be made in the call. The reason is colored people have less education than whites--many of them quite insufficient to permit them to profit by such reading as we have to give forth. Our conclusion therefore is based upon the supposition that reading matter distributed to a colored congregation would more than half of it be utterly wasted, and a very small percentage indeed likely to yield good results (122).

If the problem was "less education" it would seem that the solution was the opposite to what the Watchtower recommend here. Education programs should have been established, as was often done later so as to provide this "humble race" with the skills needed to make use of the reading matter in question (Cole, 1953). They also argued that although "the negro is not a beast" whites were clearly superior to them, and based this conclusion on the following logic:

The secret of the greater intelligence and aptitude of the Caucasian undoubtedly in great measure is to be attributed to the commingling of blood amongst its various branches; and this was evidently forced in large measure by circumstances under divine control. It remains to be proven that the similar commingling of the various tribes of Chinese for several centuries would not

equally brighten their intellects; and the same with the peoples of India and Africa (*Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1902:216).

Jehovah's Witnesses today are not taught about this history of the Watchtower organization. The few Jehovah's Witnesses who are aware of the above often excuse their organization's historical position with the words "the light was dim in our early history, but the governing body is now more enlightened". The Watchtower, though, has not fully shed their old mentality. Bethel headquarter's worker, Watters, while in charge of the printing of the Watchtower's Bible encyclopedia called *Aid to Bible Understanding* was told that it was not going to be translated into Spanish partly due to the "lack of interest" of Spanish Jehovah's Witnesses in the "deeper things of God's Word"! The conclusion of the Watchtower administration was that this scholarly work would be wasted among the Hispanics (Watters, 1988:2).

Other Watchtower statements are more difficult to interpret, but some even appear to be sympathetic. One *Golden Age* article noted without comment that "in Brazil a person of any color may marry persons of any other color, but in thirty of the forty-eight states in the United States it is illegal for a Negro to marry a white" (1930:810). Another article stated "Wherever the white man goes, he confiscates the land as far as possible, and treats the native as an inferior being--a barbarian" (Harrison, 1926:680). He concludes, though, that "A day of reckoning is approaching. There are ominous signs that the growing intelligence of colored races will not always tolerate the arrogant dominance of the white." One reason for this sympathy is because the Witnesses were clearly a minority group, and were not always treated very well in many societies, including America.

Other indications of sympathy include the discussion of the death rate of "colored" babies which shows that "the colored people get a raw deal all around" (*Golden Age*, March 9, 1927, p. 362). Less obvious is an article on "Negroes Grateful for Rescue," (*Golden Age*, August 10, 1927, p. 709), and a 1926 article (p. 44), which discussed the case of a mob of whites who descended upon the home of "an aged Negro" in order to beat him and steal his land and property, was especially sympathetic to the plight of Afro-Americans. Another example is an article in *The Golden Age* which states "the attendance at night schools in the largest Negro city in the world, namely in the Harlem district of New York, proves that the Negroes are one of the most studious and ambitious classes of people in this metropolitan area. The enrollment of one of the Harlem night schools last year was 1,788, the largest in any of the five boroughs" (1927:263).

Of course, the ultimate solution to racism, the Watchtower taught would be the new world, when the races become equal by all blacks becoming white. A 1926 article was reasonably fair, noting that a major reason for the "clash between the white and the colored races is the growing feeling of resentment that is now rankling in the minds of thousands of educated blacks, browns, and yellows, over the boasted 'superiority' of the white races" (Harrison, 1926:681). Unfortunately, it ends with the conclusion that "some look upon the League of Nations as the coming panacea; but this is a forlorn hope, for the whites dominate the League.... Help will come only by and through the promised kingdom of Messiah, in which both Jew and Gentile, Christian, white, black, brown and yellow, will realize their highest hopes and noblest desires." The fallaciousness of this "wait and do nothing" attitude is, of course, illustrated by the radical change in race relations that has

occurred in the United States, South Africa, and other nations through the hard work of both blacks and whites and especially the various Christian churches.

Actually, the antagonism against the Jews was probably much greater than that against Blacks--referring to Jews, none other than J.F. Rutherford stated "Be it known once and for all that those profiteering, conscienceless, selfish men who call themselves Jews, and who control the greater portion of the finances of the world and the business of the world, will never be the rulers in this new earth. God would not risk such selfish men with such an important position" (1927:343).

Have the Old Teachings and Practices Really Changed?

The Watchtower in their publications today tries to convey the impression that they never taught these prejudicial views, and that only the churches of Christendom, all which they regard of Satan, are guilty of this sin (Bergman, 1990; Carr, 1993). Yet the Catholic Church officially dropped these racists views long before the Watchtower formally did. The Watchtower even once admitted that the Catholic Church dropped their official prejudice against Afro-Americans at least 40 years before they did.

Even up to a hundred years ago the Catholic Church held the view that blacks were cursed by God. ... this view "apparently survived until 1873 when Pope Pius IX attached an indulgence to a prayer for the 'wretched Ethiopians in Central Africa that almighty God may at length remove the curse of Cham [Ham] from their hearts (*Awake!*, October 8, 1977:29. See also the 2/8/82 issue).

The Watchtower taught that the curse of Ham applied to the black "race" as late as 1929! A factor that must be considered in understanding the racism problem in the Witnesses is:

...it would be very surprising indeed if Jehovah's Witnesses - even today a community largely composed of converts - did not carry with them many of the values and attitudes of the larger societies out of which they have come. Hence one often finds among ordinary Witnesses a certain degree of rather covert prejudice towards persons of other nationalities or races. Occasionally one may hear Witnesses, high and low, make racial slurs. (Penton, 1985:286).

Changes came about only because of outside "worldly" social and legal forces:

The appeal and the need to belong, are so great it makes it impossible for black Witnesses to question the monolithically white nature of their leadership; it allows them to defend the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses were among the last of all religious groups to be integrated in the South. They waited until integration became law; they did not question the segregation laws that had kept them apart until then, nor did they protest them in the name of God. When nuns and priests and ministers and students marched to protest against what the Watchtower Society believed was Caesar's business, the Society called them "crazed mobs." (Harrison, 1978:261)

The modern Watchtower also acknowledges that some white Witnesses do not live up to high non-racists standards. They claim that the modern Watchtower can pride itself on its supposed freedom from racial prejudice only as an organization. The Watchtower often quotes the many news media comments on their massive assemblies held across the world each year at which people from all races and nationalities allegedly attend in harmony. One observer often quoted is G. Norman Eddy, who once stated Jehovah's Witnesses had a:

genuine high regard for the people of all races. Unlike some who pay lip service to the doctrine of racial brotherhood, the Witnesses welcome all to their society--even to places of outstanding leadership--without reference to color or feature (*Journal of Bible and Religion*, as quoted in the January 15, 1973, *Watchtower*, p. 37. See also Cole 1953).

Former high level Watchtower official Watters comments on this claim as follows:

It is true that the assemblies of Jehovah's Witnesses are remarkable in this regard, but so are many modern church groups across the country, especially among the charismatic persuasions. Yet unlike the churches, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has never had a non-Caucasian in its membership, Negro, Hispanic or otherwise (1988:1).

One study of Afro-American Watchtower members concluded that as late as the middle 1950s:

While... about one half of the membership of the Witnesses is Negro, the leadership is almost completely white. When I visited the national headquarters in Brooklyn in 1952, I was told that there were only two Negroes in the headquarters staff of over four hundred; one Negro worked in the mailing room, the other was a linotypist. The national organizational work, the editing and writing, the supervision of the various departments--all these functions were the exclusive provinces of the white members(Cohn, 1956:8).

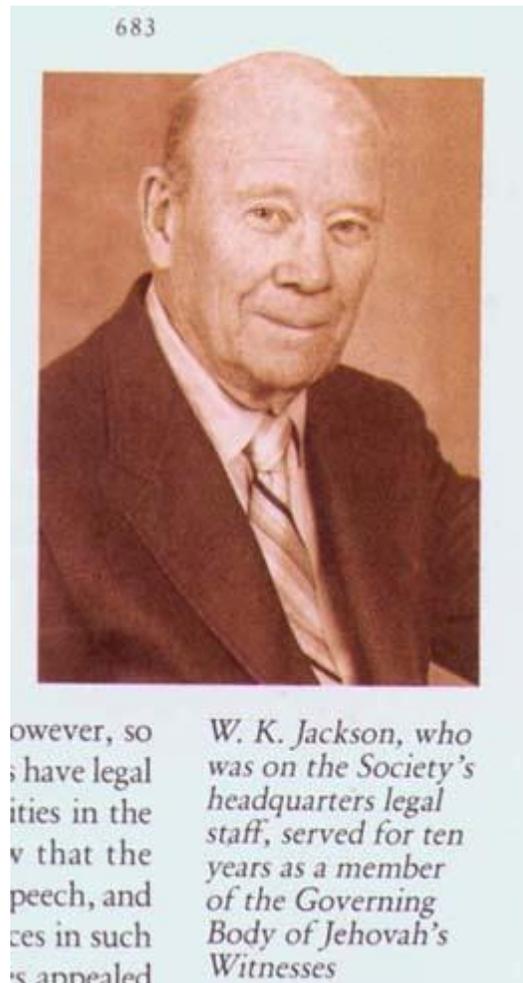
In the Watchtower official 1953 report of their international convention, not one African American is identified as having a position of oversight at this convention:

Two foreign Negroes are pictured as delegates from African countries, and what appear to be American Negroes are pictured as "cleaning up the kitchen"; another witness, apparently Negro, is pictured as helping in the immersion exercises. It is difficult indeed to escape the impression that the role which the Negro plays in the Witness organization is very similar to that traditionally assigned him by the least enlightened sections of white society: he is regarded as best kept separate and not quite equal; often he is merely "cleaning up the kitchen" while his white brother does all the important theologizing (Cohn, 1956:8-9).

Even as late as 1973, the Watchtower Society wrote, in answer to the question if any blacks were on the governing body that:

The answer to your question regarding blacks on the Watch Tower Society's directors is No... however... membership in the corporation is not something determined on the basis of race... selecting of men to handle unusual responsibilities is on the basis of spiritual qualifications and not on the basis of racial or national points, and this is in accord with what we read at Acts

10:34,35: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Letter from Watchtower Society EG; E1, 1973).



Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, 1993, p. 683.

In a review of one work written by Afro-American Witness Firpo Carr--who attempted in his book to rationalize why there have not been any blacks on the Watchtower's governing body--Watters concludes "his most astounding claim is that there WAS a black man on the Governing Body--William K. Jackson! ...Having known Bill Jackson from my six years at Bethel (1974-1980) and [I could not understand how he came to this conclusion because] he was as white as a sheet with no black features whatsoever." Carr's only evidence was that Bill Jackson "openly stated that he was black" to which Watters adds, "That is news to all of us who worked at Bethel. Perhaps Carr needs a second book to correct the incredible fantasies of his first one, if the Watchtower doesn't disfellowship him first" (1993:11). In response to this book, Jones wrote:

Writing from another "Black American Perspective," I can tell you that "blacks" are still second-class in the Watchtower movement regardless of what Firpo states. Only very recently has the Watchtower ventured to place "blacks" in its regional management posts--i.e.: circuit or district overseer--in its Southern territories of the USA. Also, from the representative stance, the Governing Body lacks Asian, Hispanic, and "black Americans." ... the latest slew of "young people" articles ... bombast a popular and predominantly "black" music form ("rap" music) [shows] ... the Watchtower's strong, white, middle-class orientation. It notes very little on the more acceptable "white" suburban music forms of country, modern rock, metal, pop, etc. but focuses on the suburban white, middle-class "fear"--black rappers invading the white home. Additional evidence of the Watchtower's "white," "good ole boys" club mentality (1993:9).

One of the more subtle reasons behind the Watchtower's reluctance to use minorities to serve on the Governing Body is its belief that only Caucasians of Northern European American descent can serve in such high capacities. As Watters notes:

Any aspiring soul brother must put on the same attitudes of English Caucasians in order to be trusted. While the Watchtower does have a few blacks in high position, including Circuit Overseers and members of the Service Department at Bethel, such ones have been promoted no higher in spite of their adopting "white" attitudes. Perhaps with increased public pressure and the passing away of the older diehards, a black may be appointed to the Governing Body--time will tell. One thing for sure, they will have to lose their "soul" in order to do so! (1988:2)

This lack persists in spite of the fact that the education level is now markedly higher for Afro-American Jehovah's Witnesses compared to white Americans. The most extensive survey found only 67.6% of the white Jehovah's Witnesses are high school graduates, and a mere 4.4% college graduates (Kosmin and Lachman 1993:272). In contrast, 82.6% of the black Jehovah's Witnesses are high school graduates, and fully 7.6% college graduates. The socioeconomic and educational status of Afro-American Witnesses is also considerably higher compared to whites (272). For the high school graduates, only those 18 and above, and for college graduates, only those age 25 and above were surveyed. The authors concluded that blacks outperformed whites among most of the religious groups with low levels of educational attainment (272). Interestingly, the national average for the percent of U.S. adults that have attended college is 48% (*U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 3, 1988:71). In California, fully 64% have attended college--a number fifteen times higher than the Witness percent of 4.7%.

Conclusions

In evaluating the Watchtower's statements on race, one must keep in mind that these official pronouncements are considered quasi-inspired by Jehovah Witnesses and must be accepted by them as next to God's Word under pain of total excommunication. Changes only came about in response to the civil rights movement and societal changes:

When I was at Bethel headquarters in the 1950s, there were only, as I recall, two (male) black Witnesses working there --both at menial tasks. The explanation given for this disproportionately

low number of black Witnesses was that it might "stumble"--that is, distress, or give a bad impression to--the Witnesses' Brooklyn Heights neighbors, who were presumed not to want Negroes in their moneyed midst. In the late 1960's, when not to be overtly racist became chic (the Heights is a liberal neighborhood), the Watchtower Society pragmatically admitted many more blacks to its headquarters staff (Harrison, 1978:255).

Although the Watchtower admittedly has changed their teaching in this area, none-the-less major race problems are still a concern. One example is :

It had, in fact, amazed me (but not the Witnesses, apparently) that at an earlier convention in Yankee Stadium, in the Witnesses' "demonstrations" (skits), white Witnesses role-played middle-class businessmen, while young black Witnesses role-played street kids who smoked what they anachronistically referred to as "reefers." (Harrison, 1978:256).

As Carr admits "racism rears its ugly head, even among the witnesses from time to time" (1993:219). As of 1995, not one non-white person is on their governing body which consists totally of "old white men" most in their 80's or older. This is to be deplored in an organization with almost 10 million adherents and sympathizers and a high disproportionate number of non-whites (Cole, 1953). What is most to be deplored is the Watchtower's lack of condor about their history and their resistance to correcting it.

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