

As 1916 began, Christ's ransom and the restitution hope for mankind were being preached far and wide. About eight million volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures* had already been circulated worldwide, colporteurs were distributing them on every continent, and Pastor Russell's sermons were published weekly in over a thousand newspapers. But overseas work was being impeded by the war in Europe. Pastor Russell made no trips abroad that year. He was slightly ill as he began what turned out to be his last railroad trip, with destination Los Angeles. His discourse in that city was delivered with a weak voice and while seated, rather than with his usual ambulatory presentation. Afterward Joe Brown drove him and Menta Sturgeon to the railroad station for the return trip. On October 31 on the train near Pampa, Texas, the pastor died. The body was removed from the train in Oklahoma. A Presbyterian minister offered his home for the viewing of the body, although it was taken to the only mortuary in town. Helen Noah (later Williams, Swanson) and her carload were the first on the scene a few hours later.

Menta Sturgeon wired his wife that Pastor Russell had died. A. H. MacMillan intercepted the telegram at the Brooklyn Bethel home and wired J. F. Rutherford, then at a convention in Oakland, Maryland: "The old man is dead."¹ Rutherford came immediately to Brooklyn and took over.

Pastor Russell's will had designated a five-member Editorial Committee: Wm. E. Page, Wm. E. VanAmburgh, H. Clay Rockwell, E. W. Brenneisen, and F. H. Robison. Then, "The names of the five whom I suggest as possibly amongst the most suitable from which to fill vacancies in the Editorial Committee are as follows: A. E. Burgess, Robert Hirsh, Isaac Hoskins, George H. Fisher (Scranton), J. F. Rutherford, Dr. John Edgar." The declaration of "five" names, followed by **six** names, could possibly be because John Edgar (of Scotland) had died (although seemingly Rutherford's name should have appeared after Edgar's, if that were an added codicil), or because, as keeper of the will, he had added his own name. (It is said that Rutherford denied all requests to see the will.) Rutherford was added to the Editorial Committee.

At the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society's next annual meeting on January 6, 1917, Rutherford insisted that some new by-laws needed to be passed in order to continue Watch Tower operations, though he did not allow the new by-laws to be read to the elders' meeting or the membership meeting. Among the by-laws were provisions that votes for officers of the Watch Tower board would be counted only for those nominated, and that election as president of the Peoples Pulpit subsidiary would be for a life term.² At the annual meeting A. H. MacMillan was chairman; for election as president he recognized only those who would nominate or second for J. F. Rutherford, and then those who moved and seconded that all votes be cast for him. Rutherford's assertion in the January 15 *Watch Tower* that "There being no further nominations ... Brother Rutherford was declared the unanimous choice of the convention as President of the Society for the coming year," hardly seems to epitomize the matter.

Pastor Russell's last will and testament left "all my voting shares ... in the hands of five Trustees, as follows: Sr. E. Louise Hamilton, Sr. Almata M. Nation Robison, Sr. J. G. Herr, Sr. C. Tomlins, Sr. Alice G. James. J. F. Rutherford convinced these five that it was contrary to law for them to vote those shares (which constituted a majority of all shares). It is unclear whether Rutherford then proceeded in the name of the Watch Tower to vote those shares himself, as he did in subsequent elections.

Rutherford's efforts to establish control met increasing resistance from the majority of the board. On July 17, 1917, Rutherford claimed the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society charter provided for the election of directors annually; thus only the three officers of the board (elected January 6) were "legally" members of the board. So he appointed A. H. MacMillan, G. H. Fisher, J. A. Bohnet,

and W. E. Spill to replace Ritchie, Wright, Hoskins, and Hirsh.³ The board majority, joined by F. H. McGee, countered that officers of the board cannot be elected unless they are first members of the board; therefore, there are either seven members or no members. Both sides purchased legal opinions to support their claims. The ousted members decided not to institute legal proceedings, following 1 Corinthians 6:6,7.

A series of publications ensued from various sides, including:

Harvest Siftings (August 1917, by Rutherford)

Light After Darkness (September 1917, by the ousted board members)

Harvest Siftings No. 2 (October 1917, by Rutherford)

Harvest Siftings Reviewed (November 1917, by P. S. L. Johnson)

Facts for Shareholders (November 1917, by the ousted board members)

The Watch Tower proxies for the January 5, 1918, annual meeting were solicited with Power of Attorney (granting the proxy holder the right to override the designated vote). About 13% of the votes recorded were for M. Sturgeon, A. I. Ritchie, H. C. Rockwell, I. F. Hoskins, R. H. Hirsh, J. D. Wright, and W. J. Hollister.⁴ The convention then voted to ask R. H. Hirsh to resign from the Editorial Committee.

Thereupon several withdrew to a hastily-convoked mini-convention at the Fort Pitt Hotel. A Committee of Seven was elected to carry on work outside the Watch Tower and IBSA (International Bible Students Association, as a voluntary association, not the British corporation of the same name). The first convention scheduled outside the IBSA was held on July 26-29, 1918, at Asbury Park, New Jersey. Two or three hundred attended the Providence, Rhode Island, convention on November 8-10, where it was resolved to form the Pastoral Bible Institute (PBI). The first board of directors consisted of J. D. Wright, chairman; Ingram I. Margeson, vice-chairman; I. F. Hoskins, secretary; P. L. Greiner, treasurer; H. C. Rockwell; F. H. McGee; and E. J. Pritchard. (The Committee of Seven was dissolved.) *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* (*The Herald*) journal commenced publication in December under an Editorial Committee of I. F. Hoskins, Randolph Elwood Streeter (Providence, Rhode Island), I. I. Margeson (Westwood, Massachusetts), H. C. Rockwell, and Dr. S. N. Wiley (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). PBI offices were in Brooklyn, New York.

When P.S.L. Johnson, Raymond Grant Jolly, and Robert Hirsh were not re-elected to the Committee of Seven, they, with most of the Philadelphia church, severed association with the Committee. Johnson began publishing *The Present Truth and Herald of Christ's Epiphany* in December, 1918. The Laymen's Home Missionary Movement (L.H.M.M.) was organized in 1920 and *The Herald of the Epiphany* issued regularly for public witness work. (In 1952 the name was changed to *The Bible Standard*.) The L.H.M.M. calls Pastor Russell the Parousia Messenger, and P.S.L. Johnson the Epiphany Messenger.

When the so-called "seventh volume" of *Studies in the Scriptures* was published in July 1917, suggesting that the Gospel age harvest period was to end in the spring of 1918, the ibsa classes in the Pacific Northwest backed it all the way. But C. E. Heard, of Vancouver, and many others felt Rutherford's recommendation in the spring of 1918 to buy war bonds was cowardice, and sacrilegiously perpetuating harvest work. The Stand Fast Bible Students Association was organized on December 1, 1918, at Portland, Oregon. It published *Old Corn Gems* (Joshua 5:11,12) monthly, and organized many conventions in the Northwest and even in the Midwestern states. Perhaps 40% of the Watch Tower adherents in the Northwest left in favor of the Stand Fast. Many (non-doctrinal) divisions followed a Seattle convention in July 25-27, 1919.

In 1922 John A. Hardeson and C. D. McCray organized the Elijah Voice Society for an ambitious regathering and witness work. They published the *Elijah Voice Monthly*, and became the most prominent “Seventh Volume” group.

In 1923 Ian C. Edwards and C. E. Heard organized the Stand Fasts into the Star Construction Company in Victoria, British Columbia, although Heard was persuaded by his wife to stay in Vancouver. Fearing the prophesied time of trouble, Edwards in 1924 took the company of more than three hundred to Sooke and the Gordon River on the southwest part of Vancouver Island. Because the business failed in 1927, most packed up and went home.

From twelve hundred adherents in 1919 in the Northwest and near Wisconsin, these “Seventh Volume” movements have dwindled to near vanishing.

Overseas, Alexander Freytag started the largest movement to break with the IBSA: the Man’s Friends group (or Philanthropic Society). They numbered several thousand until the French and Swiss groups divided.

In Great Britain, Jesse Hemery was progressively centralizing power in himself⁵ but was opposed by Henry J. Shearn and Wm. Crawford. P. S. L. Johnson was sent by J. F. Rutherford to England, where he expelled Shearn and Crawford. Secession from Hemery and the Watch Tower Society progressed rapidly after World War I ended. The Bible Students Committee was constituted on April 5, 1919, in London to coordinate publishing, pilgrim service, etc., outside the IBSA. Its seven initial members were H. J. Shearn, W. Crawford, and Frank B. Edgell of London (west side); Fred G. Guard, Sr. and Alex Guy of Forest Gate (London east side), William Seager of Ipswich; and George B. Tharratt of Bishops Stortford. (The Committee was dissolved in 1945.) Edgell began publishing *Fellowship* in 1923. Shearn began publishing the *B.S.C. Monthly* (then *Bible Students Monthly* until 1951, now *Bible Study Monthly*) in 1924. Crawford commenced *The Old Paths* in 1925 (continuing to 1961).

In Australia, R. E. B. Nicholson rejected the “Seventh Volume” and in 1918 formed the Berean Bible Institute in Melbourne; it began publishing *Peoples Paper* which continues today.

In India, S. P. Devasahayam (“Davey”) from near Nagercoil had begun the work in 1912, including the translation of *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 1, into Tamil and then Malayalam. After Pastor Russell’s death, contact with the Watch Tower was lost for many years, but contact with the PBI was quickly established.⁶ Davey appointed V. Devasandosham to succeed him around 1920, and he organized the Associated Bible Students (later, India Bible Students Association) and centered the work in Madras.

In Germany and Switzerland, Samuel Lauper published *Herold des Königreiches Christi*, which was the German *Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*. He also published a German translation of R. E. Streeter’s two Revelation volumes.

Polish activity outside the Society began with the journals *Strasz* [Watchman] in 1923, edited by R. H. Oleszynski, and *Bzask Nowej Ery* [Dawn of a New Era] in 1930. Oleszynski also translated the six volumes and *Tabernacle Shadows* into Polish.

Probably a few thousand left the IBSA in the U.S. and Canada at this time, and many thousands overseas. Of the several groups, all continued to stress Ransom and Restitution. While the Stand Fasts, Elijah Voice Society, P. S. L. Johnson, and A. Freytag all believed the door to the high calling was now closed and that the hope of newcomers would be restitution on earth, Johnson rejected *The Finished Mystery* as the “seventh volume” of *Studies in the Scriptures*, and hence was not associated with the other two groups. Freytag’s claims to direct divine revelations were a concern to those outside his group.

The PBI, Bible Students Committee [England], and similar committees on the European continent (also in India), and the Berean Bible Institute (Australia), all stressed that the high [heavenly] calling remained open (though the called, chosen, and faithful were getting fewer), that Christ's second presence had occurred, Israel was to return to her land, and the end of the present evil world would occur soon. It seems a majority of those with the heavenly hope eventually left the IBSA, though not all for the same reason.

In the 1920s F. H. Robison contacted Adolph Ernst Knoch of the Concordant Publishing Concern, then in Los Angeles, and was converted to universal reconciliation. He soon persuaded Menta Sturgeon, O. L. Sullivan, Walter H. Bundy, W. T. Hooper, and most of the ex-IBSA Bible Students in Finland and Sweden to go with him.

Of Pastor Russell's nieces and nephews, Alice Land Williamson was sister-in-law to A. Ed. Williamson, a leader in the 1909 New Covenant movement; Ada Land White, in Kansas, followed P. S. L. Johnson; May F. ("Thelma") Land Kendall, in Florida, and Joseph Russell Land, in Atascadero, California, associated with the Dawn. None stayed with Rutherford.

Prominent Personnel

Many who had been with Pastor Russell were well known to Bible Students around the U. S. and Canada, and some overseas also. All were well versed in Scripture.

Alfred I. Ritchie (1871-1946): Watch Tower Vice-President. The principal administrator of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, including its main office and publishing plant. Originally from Nova Scotia. A capable administrator, though not gifted as a leader.

Alex Hugh MacMillan (b. 1877): The greatest orator the IBSA had. Widely known for his September 1914 discourse, "I Am Ready to Be Offered," in which he said, "This is positively my last public address on this side of the veil [meaning in this life]." But Pastor Russell then persuaded him to speak at the New York Temple the following Sunday. (MacMillan did not get along well with A. I. Ritchie and several others at the Bethel home.) He apparently was given charge of the Brooklyn Bethel, home for the Watch Tower workers, in 1916.

William E. VanAmburgh (d. 1947, age 83): Secretary/Treasurer of the Watch Tower. Originally from South Dakota. A man of financial integrity. Some gift for writing, including poetry.

Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1861-1942): From a large Calvinist family; formerly a small-town lawyer in Missouri; at least once appointed to serve as judge in a case; politically active in Democratic politics. Custodian of Pastor Russell's last will and testament. Apparently dismissed from Bethel in early 1915, living in Monrovia near Los Angeles, working as a lawyer for a department store in Los Angeles. Forceful in disposition and persuasive. Debated Rev. John H. Troy at First Baptist Church in Glendale, California, April 21-24, 1915.

Clayton Woodworth (d. 1951, age 81): A bright idea-man, living in Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 1907 he had assembled a Bible commentary from Watch Tower publications, called the *Berean Comments*.

James Dennis Wright (d. circa 1920): Elderly, of gentle manner. The senior member of the Watch Tower board of directors.

Isaac F. Hoskins (d. 1957): An able journalist. Often had a sharp tongue for those who differed with him. One of many Hoskins brothers and sisters in the IBSA. A Watch Tower director.

Paul Samuel Leo (formerly Levitsky) **Johnson** (1873-1950): A converted Jew, then Lutheran

pastor, and then one of Pastor Russell's personal secretaries and Watch Tower pilgrim. A brilliant man, delved heavily into Bible types. A strong leader, though controversial.

Robert H. Hirsh (d. 1949): An able journalist.

Fredrik Homer Robison (1885-1932): Formerly Disciples of Christ, later a personal secretary to Pastor Russell. Perhaps the most scholarly in the Watch Tower office.

Menta Sturgeon (d. 1935): An able speaker. Older than most of the others. Was Pastor Russell's personal attendant on his final train trip to and from Los Angeles.

John G. Kuehn: Had a large Ohio family, all in the IBSA. Managed the extensive Watch Tower pilgrim work.

Henry Clay Rockwell (d. 1950): On the Editorial Committee, but a relatively new member of the Watch Tower board of directors.

Francis H. McGee: A lawyer in Freehold, New Jersey. Assistant to the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey.

Charles E. Heard: A Watch Tower pilgrim from Vancouver, British Columbia.

George H. Fisher (d. 1926): Another in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Active also in the German Watch Tower. (In 1926 urged the German classes to disfellowship J. F. Rutherford.)

R. Hipolit Oleszynski (1857-1930): Polish immigrant to Chicago. Active in Watch Tower work in the USA since 1891, and intermittently in Poland since 1894.

Jesse Hemery (b. circa 1863, d. 1963): Manager of the IBSA (the British subsidiary corporation of the Watch Tower) in London, England.

Henry J. Shearn (d. 1946): Secretary of the IBSA in London.

William Crawford (d. 1957): From Scotland. Treasurer of the IBSA in London.

R. E. B. Nicholson (d. 1955): Former colporteur. Manager of the Australian branch of the Watch Tower since 1909.

Alexander Freytag (1870-1947): Manager of the Watch Tower office in Switzerland. Capable in the French language, but also in German and English.

1. It is perhaps possible the wording was a coded message, rather than simply disrespectful.

2. J. F. Rutherford was the only one seeking that office. (The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was a Pennsylvania corporation; the Peoples Pulpit Association was a New York subsidiary, incorporated to do business in that state when Watch Tower offices were moved to Brooklyn, New York.)

3. The simultaneous release of "The Finished Mystery," advertised as the "seventh volume" of *Studies in the Scriptures*, appears to have been irrelevant to the arguing that followed this move.

4. If the shares C. T. Russell had contributed to the Watch Tower were excluded, this percentage might have been closer to 16%. Had Power of Attorney not been exercised, it is unknown how much higher it would have been.

5. Hemery later published Futurist interpretations of Revelation, but he could not be forced out of the London Bethel home because of a lifetime contract with the IBSA.

6. A letter from S. P. Davey of S. Travencore appears already in *The Herald* of December 15, 1918.

Bible Students Fragments

1917-1967

After the death of Pastor C.T. Russell on 1916 October 31, multiple divisions rent the International Bible Students Association.

At the moment of C.T. Russell's death, the surviving directors of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society were Alfred I. Ritchie, Vice President; William E. VanAmburgh, Secretary-Treasurer; James D. Wright, Isaac F. Hoskins, H. Clay Rockwell (replaced 1917 March 29 by Robert H. Hirsh), and Joseph F. Rutherford, all having been appointed by C.T. Russell. Two days later Andrew N. Pierson was elected by the others to fill the vacancy. The board thereupon constituted A.I. Ritchie, W.E. VanAmburgh, and J.F. Rutherford an Executive Committee. The publication of the Watch Tower continued under an Editorial Committee of W.E. VanAmburgh, J.F. Rutherford, H.C. Rockwell, F.H. Robison, and R.H. Hirsh.¹ A.H. MacMillan continued in charge of the office staff. The pastoral work (organized "follow-up") continued under the direction of Menta Sturgeon.

Election of the Society's officers took place 1917 January 6 (Saturday) during a two day convention at Pittsburgh.² J.F. Rutherford (d. 1942) was elected President. A.N. Pierson was elected Vice President over A.I. Ritchie. W.E. VanAmburgh was reelected Secretary-Treasurer unanimously. At this time the Executive Committee was dissolved.

At the 1917 January 6 elders meeting and ensuing Watch Tower annual meeting, several by-laws had been adopted (at Rutherford's urgent insistence, but without being read), among them: votes should be counted only for those nominated, and whoever is elected president of the Peoples' Pulpit Association (subsidiary corporation in New York state) is elected for life.³ Chairman of the business meeting, A.H. MacMillan, recognized only those nominating/seconding Rutherford for president, or moving/seconding that nominations be closed. The *Watch Tower* wording of January 15, "There being no further nominations...Brother Rutherford was declared the unanimous choice of the convention as President of the Society for the ensuing year," hardly seems to sum up the matter.

For the 1919 annual business meeting, the rule about counting votes only for those nominated was abolished. Pierson, who had fallen from Rutherford's favor, was thereby voted out, possibly by Rutherford, et. al., voting the C.T. Russell shares now held by the Watch Tower. [In later years, Watch Tower officers used this method to do away with annual voting at the business meeting, citing the number of shares held by the Watch Tower as greater than the sum of all shares represented by voters and proxies.] In 1916 Nov. the Executive Committee, at Rutherford's urging, asked Clayton J. Woodworth and George H. Fisher of Scranton to compile a volume on Revelation and Ezekiel (and also Canticles), to be published as "The Finished Mystery," the Seventh Volume of Studies in the Scriptures, as the posthumous work of Pastor Russell. It was ready the following July. (Subsequent reception of the Revelation portion among Bible Students was somewhat mixed. During the remainder of World War I many countries on both sides banned it, on grounds that it advocated religious conscientious objection against joining the armed forces.)

¹ Pastor Russell's will, as published, says, "The names of the five whom I suggest [as replacements on the Editorial Committee]...are as follows:" (six names follow, including that of J.F. Rutherford, who was also custodian of the will. Although Dr. John Edgar had already died (1910), Edgar's name appears last, making it unlikely Rutherford's name had been substituted by C.T. Russell).

² Rutherford prevented the five Trustee sisters from voting C.T. Russell's shares (previously donated to the Watch Tower); it is not clear if he voted those shares in the name of the Watch Tower. In 1918 he evidently did, as the reported 194,106 cumulative number of votes for Rutherford considerably exceeded the approximately 164,000 shares voted.

³ P.S.L. Johnson alleges that J.F. Rutherford arranged to have I. Margeson of Boston, O. Ostrander of Cleveland, and R.H. Bricker of Pittsburgh appointed to recommend these by-laws to the voting shareholders.

Dissension

Tensions began rising almost immediately between Ritchie, Hoskins, Hirsh, and Wright on one side and MacMillan, Rutherford, and VanAmburgh on the other (actually a resumption of tensions from the past few years). On 1917 July 17 Rutherford claimed that since the Society charter provided for the election of directors annually, only the three officers of the board (having been elected officers that January) were truly board members. He therefore appointed A.H. MacMillan, G.H. Fisher, J.A. Bohnet, and W.E. Spill to the board positions occupied by Ritchie, Wright, Hirsh, and Hoskins. [The board majority, joined by Francis H. McGee, assistant to the Attorney General of New Jersey, countered that the three could not have been elected officers of the board unless they had already been members of the board; therefore, there were either seven board members, or else none. They later decided not to institute legal proceedings, based on 1Co 6:6-7.]

Hirsh, et. al., issued a protest pamphlet, "Light After Darkness," during the summer. Rutherford answered with a special "Harvest Siftings No. 2" in 1917 October. Within a month P.S.L. Johnson issued "Harvest Siftings Reviewed." A straw poll of IBSA classes (ecclesias) in December showed 95% backing for Rutherford. The annual election of Society officers and the first election of the Board of Directors came 1918 January 5, during the Pittsburgh convention January 2-6. R.H. Barber nominated for director: J.F. Rutherford, W.E. VanAmburgh, A.N. Pierson, A.H. MacMillan, W.E. Spill, J.A. Bohnet, and G.H. Fisher. F.H. McGee of Trenton, N.J., then nominated: Menta Sturgeon, A.I. Ritchie, H.C. Rockwell, I.F. Hoskins, R.H. Hirsh, J.D. Wright, and P.S.L. Johnson (Johnson withdrew). Elected were: Rutherford, MacMillan, VanAmburgh, Spill, Bohnet, C.H. Anderson (not nominated), and Fisher. McGee's nominees plus W.J. Hollister (not nominated), received votes of about 13% of the total shares voted. Rutherford was reelected President, Anderson elected Vice-President, and VanAmburgh reelected Secretary-Treasurer. The convention voted also to ask R.H. Hirsh to resign from the Editorial Committee.

Among those who parted with the Society about 1918 were McGee and his nominees, R.E. Streeter, I.I. Margeson, H.A. Friese, P.L. Read, and P.E. Thomson. A.E. Burgess wavered for a year before leaving. Raymond G. Jolly sided with Paul S.L. Johnson.

Those avowing loyalty to the Society at this time include: O.L. Sullivan, F.T. Horth, M.L. Herr, E.H. Thomson, E.J. Coward, W.E. Page, J.F. Stephenson, H.H. Riemer, E.D. Sexton, W.A. Baker, R.E. Nash, C.P. Bridges, W.J. Thorn, G.S. Kendall, J. Hutchinson, B.M. Rice, E.A. McCosh, Jesse Hemery, E.G. Wylam, J.H. Hoeveler, F.P. Sherman, and J.R. Muzikant. Dr. L.W. Jones said he was not in opposition.

It was also about this time that Edwin Bundy, who had dissented from the Society in 1912-1917, returned to its fellowship.

Watch Tower Arrests

World War I, which had been occupying Europe since 1914 Summer, saw U.S. participation beginning 1917 April 6. The Watch Tower stand on conscientious objection then occasioned the 1918 May 8 arrest and subsequent conviction of J.F. Rutherford, W.E. VanAmburgh, A.H. MacMillan, R.J. Martin, C.J. Woodworth, G.H. Fisher, F.H. Robison, and Giovanni Dececca. (Warrant for the arrest of R.H. Hirsh was also issued, but he had already resigned under pressure; so the warrant likely was not pursued.) These were imprisoned in Atlanta from 1918 June 21 until their release on bail 1919 March 21. Their convictions were reversed 1919 May 15.

During the imprisonment of these eight Watch Tower leaders, C.H. Anderson was acting President and J.F. Stephenson was acting Secretary-Treasurer. The Watch Tower offices were temporarily removed to Pittsburgh in 1918 ca. Sept. 25 for barely more than a year. The Society's annual meeting in 1919 Jan. 4 in Pittsburgh reelected J.F. Rutherford President and W.E. VanAmburgh Secretary-Treasurer. But the others elected to the Board of Directors, viz. C.A. Wise (Vice President), R.H. Barber, W.E. Spill, W.F. Hudgings, and C.H. Anderson, were freer to carry out their responsibilities. When the imprisoned leaders were released, Barber resigned in favor of MacMillan.