

Bible Student History

Part 3

1916 into 2004

**Whether you have been a Bible Student
one year or sixty years, this is your Heritage.**

From My Vantage Point

Other histories have recently been written covering this time frame. However, interesting and important details have been omitted or blurred. I probably had contact with more brethren who personally knew Br. Russell than any other Bible Student now living. This is nothing to be proud about. It just happened this way. Up to the age of fifteen, most of the speakers, Dawn or PBI, who came through Detroit stayed at my parents' home. I remember well the conversations in our living room. At the age of 11, besides what happened in Br. Russell's day, I could tell you which speakers in the 1930s and 1940s believed in the Presence of Christ and those who did not.

From 1939 onward I have a vivid memory of the Truth movement. Then being at the Dawn from 1947-1958, I spent much time with Dawn trustees and traveling speakers who personally knew Br. Russell. Also, I was privy to important actions taken in both the Dawn and PBI. I will be willing to compare notes with my brethren any time.

It has been said many times—unless we learn from the lessons of history we are doomed to repeat them. It is for this reason I am presenting this history.

Br. Ken Rawson
July 18, 2004

The Shepherd Was Smitten and the Sheep Were Scattered

Br. Russell's death precipitated a series of siftings in the Truth movement that have continued to our day. Br. Morehouse related that he was in the Chicago class at that time. He said the elders called a meeting of the elders and deacons to discuss what effect Br. Russell's death would have upon the movement. Certainly the adversary would use this as a time of great temptation and deception. They wanted to pre-determine in which area the test would come. They couldn't agree on what line the adversary's temptation would come. But they all agreed on the area that it wouldn't come—that is, the adversary would not use a doctrinal deception. Why? Because he knew Bible Students were all so sound doctrinally.

However, that was just the deception that the adversary used. What this revealed was that most Bible Students at that time were **not students of the Bible**. Unfortunately, many of them were just “parrot” students. They parroted what they heard because it sounded so wonderful and they really didn't prove it for themselves Scripturally.

Rutherford Dismissed by Br. Russell

Br. W. A. Baker told me that in 1915 Br. Russell called Judge Rutherford into his office, handed him severance pay and dismissed him. Pastor Russell died October 31, 1916. Bible Students were devastated. Br. MacMillan wired the Judge that Br. Russell died. A sinister plot began to unfold. Rutherford wired MacMillan, manager in the absence of the Pastor—“Don't do anything until I get to the Brooklyn headquarters.” They were cronies.

At Br. Russell's funeral in Pittsburgh, November 6, Br. MacMillan said to Br. Isaac Hoskins:

I think everyone of you directors except Bros. Rutherford and Van Amburgh ought to resign There is not one of you fit to manage anything ... and if you don't resign you will, everyone one of you, get kicked out. (*“Light After Darkness”*)

Judge Rutherford seized control of The Watch Tower and the Bible Student Movement. The siftings began and continue to our day. He had Brothers George Fisher and Clayton (not Norman) Woodworth write the *7th Volume*. Published in July 1917, it was billed as the posthumous work of Brother Russell. With WWI raging, the Judge was convinced the time of trouble had started and that things were going to wind up quickly. So he made the *7th Volume* a very strong message in order to smite the Jordan. *The Watch Tower* articles between 1917 and 1918 stated that the harvest had ended, the door was shut, and they were smiting the Jordan. (You can confirm this if you have the old green Reprints.)

Volume 7 was a harsh indictment against Babylon—the churches and civil government—especially the clergy. Much of it was quotations from Br. Russell. Judge Rutherford and the Board of Directors of the Watch Tower were indicted. Why? When the US entered WWI, the hyper-patriotic *1917 Espionage Act* was legislated. The clergy were so incensed with the *7th Volume* that they used it to turn the government against the Bible Students.

They succeeded. This conspiracy of the clergy and government was primarily against “Russellism” and his Bible Students. Rutherford and the Directors were the representatives of both. The clergy were out to settle a 40-year-old festering grudge against Br. Russell. At the sentencing of Rutherford and the Directors, Judge Harland B. Howe declared:

In the opinion of the Court, the religious propaganda which these defendants have vigorously advocated and spread throughout the nation as well as among our allies, is a greater danger than a division of the German Army.

T- men brazenly entered Bible Student meetings demanding the right to give a war bond pitch. Bible Students active in witnessing were picked up by the police. Public witnessing virtually stopped. The Watch Tower moved back to Pittsburgh. **Clergy across the country along with Protestant and Catholic periodicals proudly proclaimed the death of “Russellism.”** (2 illust.)

Divisions

We are going to be dealing with divisions that started taking place. I will make the divisions significant by objectively mentioning names of groups and perhaps, at times, individuals so you will more readily recognize where we are in the stream of Bible Student history.

Shortly after publishing the 7th *Volume* in July 1917 the Judge, on July 27, carried out Br. MacMillan’s threat by dismissing four directors, Bros. Ritchie, Hoskins, Wright and Hirsh. Br. P. S. L. Johnson, probably the most popular speaker at that time, was roughly put out of Bethel the same day.

Enough Was Enough

Between January 1918 and July 1918 brethren separated from the Watch Tower together as **one group**, but soon went three different ways. Some claimed *Volume 7* was not a factor in this separation. Individuals who were involved told me personally it was a factor.

Another lesson. It is incredible how seemingly soon ambition changed the spirits of these brethren. But their spirits didn’t change suddenly. The death of Br. Russell merely revealed qualities already in their hearts. It gave them the opportunity to be ambitious.

Lesson for us. Whether we are victorious or a failure in a trial is not because that experience has changed our heart. Rather, the trial merely reveals what is already in our hearts.

Pastoral Bible Institute

In January 1918, a committee including Bros. Paul Johnson, Raymond Jolly and Robert Hirsh was formed to conduct Truth activities. At a convention, November 8-10, 1918, in Providence, Rhode Island, nearly 300 separated brethren with hearts aching for the former days tearfully gathered in sweet fellowship. A resolution was passed to organize the Pastoral Bible Institute. Bros. Wright, Margeson, Rockwell, McGee, Streeter, the Hollister brothers, Isaac Hoskins and Paul Thompson were some early names in the PBI.

Layman’s Home Missionary Movement

But for some the sweetness turned bitter. Bros. Johnson, Jolly, and Hirsh were not elected to the PBI board of directors. Neither were they selected for the editorial board of *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom* magazine that the PBI began to publish in December 1918. Ironically, those from the “city of brotherly love,” Bros. Johnson, Jolly, and Hirsh, with the majority of the Philadelphia class, terminated their short relationship of warm love.

Under Br. Johnson they organized the Layman’s Home Missionary Movement (LHMM). Soon they began publishing two magazines—*Present Truth* and *Herald of Christ’s Epiphany* and the *Bible Standard*. Johnson remained close to the *Six Volumes* with one big exception—the door to

The Clergy Show Their Feelings

Reactions of religious periodicals to the sentencing of J. F. Rutherford and his associates in 1918 are noteworthy:

- ♦ *“The Christian Register”*: “What the Government here strikes at with deadly directness is the assumption that religious ideas, however crazy and pernicious, may be propagated with impunity. It is an old fallacy, and hitherto we have been entirely too careless about it. . . . It looks like the end of Russellism.”
- ♦ *“The Western Recorder,”* a Baptist publication, said: “It is a matter of small surprise that the head of this cantankerous cult should be incarcerated in one of the retreats for recalcitrants. . . . The really perplexing problem in this connection is whether the defendants should have been sent to an insane asylum or a penitentiary.”
- ♦ *“The Fortnightly Review”* drew attention to the comment in the New York *“Evening Post,”* which said: “We trust that teachers of religion everywhere will take notice of this judge’s opinion that teaching any religion save that which is absolutely in accord with statute laws is a grave crime which is intensified if, being a minister of the gospel, you should still happen to be sincere.”
- ♦ *“The Continent”* disparagingly styled the defendants as “followers of the late ‘Pastor’ Russell” and distorted their beliefs by saying that they contended “that all but sinners should be exempted from fighting the German kaiser.” It claimed that according to the attorney general in Washington, “the Italian government sometime ago complained to the United States that Rutherford and his associates . . . had circulated in the Italian armies a quantity of antiwar propaganda.”
- ♦ A week later *“The Christian Century”* published most of the above item verbatim, showing that they were in full agreement.
- ♦ The Catholic magazine *“Truth”* briefly reported the sentence imposed and then expressed the feelings of its editors, saying: “The literature of this association fairly reeks with virulent attacks on the Catholic Church and her priesthood.” Endeavoring to pin the “sedition” label on any who might publicly disagree with the Catholic Church, it added: “It is becoming more and more evident that the spirit of intolerance is closely allied to that of sedition.”
- ♦ Dr. Ray Abrams, in his book *“Preachers Present Arms,”* observed: “When the news of the twenty-year sentences reached the editors of the religious press, practically every one of these publications, great and small, rejoiced over the event. I have been unable to discover any words of sympathy in any of the orthodox religious journals.”

by asserting that the Bible Students were carrying on propaganda

FINED FOR SELLING "MYSTERY" BOOKS

Association if They Do Not Pay—Wireless Raid Causes Puzzle.

INDICT RUSSELL FOLLOWERS ON CHARGE OF CONSPIRACY

Action Against Six Follows Alleged Disloyal Statements in Watch Tower and Other Publications. Joseph F. Rutherford, successor of the National Bible Students' Society, a of his associates were arrested on Federal indictments charging they "conspired to cause insubordination, disloyalty and a refusal of duty and naval forces while they were in the United States."

ARREST MORE AS DISLOYAL.

Nine Now in Custody for Distributing Book: "Kingdom News" Remains with "Finished Mystery." Federal Official Says Fall will meet are determined to report the results of this investigation in the near future.

OFFICES OF ALL CHURCH

of "Just Treason" in Canada. The report was made on the 10th of the year by Federal Agents in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

RUSSELL'S BOOK

ORDERED SUPPRESSED U. S. EXAMINING RUSSELL'S BOOKS Government Wants to Learn if Pastor's Followers Have Espionage Act.

BAND MADE ON OFFICES OF RUSSELL CHURCH

Federal Agents Seize Copies of Bible Called "Just Treason" in Canada.

Sedition Charges Against Russellites

Although charged with sedition literature in the past, Stanley Young, Albert Beckow, of Michigan, and other Bible Students today had to appear in court. They will be charged with espionage.

'BIBLE STUDENT' VIRUS IN ITALY.

Reasonable Propaganda Revealed with Sentencing of Rutherford Et Al. WASHINGTON, June 21.—Anti-war propaganda of the International Bible Students' Association was not only circulated in the training camps under the guise of literature to the

Newspapers fanned the flames of persecution of the Bible Students in 1918

the high calling was shut in 1914. The LHMM tried to top the PBI by announcing that Br. Russell was the *Parousia Messenger* until 1914 when P. S. L. Johnson replaced him by becoming the *Epiphany Messenger* of the church. They continue basically the same to this day. In the 1950s two breakaways occurred. First, by Br. John Hoefle of Mount Dora, FL. Then, by Br. John Krewson of Fort Myers, FL.

Original Independent Brethren

But then there was a third segment, and I call them the original Independent brethren, but there is no organic connection between them and the Independent brethren we are a part of that began in the 1970s. They believed that the last organization the Lord used was the Watch Tower, as long as the “wise and faithful servant” was alive. When Br. Russell died, the Lord would not use another organization, so they would have nothing to do with the PBI or LHMM. Neither would they have anything to do with the Dawn when it started in 1932.

This original Independent movement was led by Brother Bricker along with Br. McComb, both in a Pittsburgh class. Br. Cox with a class in Boston, the Jersey City Class with Br. Frey, and the predominantly black class in Brooklyn with Br. Greaves and Br. Brisette were all a part of this original Independent movement. There are speakers today who were raised in this movement. Br. Hirsh went with P. S. L. Johnson, but he broke with P. S. L. Johnson in either 1921 or 1922 and joined with this Independent movement.

The only thing these Independent brethren printed were the actual writings of Br. Russell. For the most part, they were very sound in the doctrines of the Ransom, Jubilee Trumpet sounding, Covenants, Presence, and Chronology, but every movement had its shortcomings. Over a period of time, many of them concluded that there was no need for public witness work. Also, some concluded that the door was shut. What was left of this grouping merged into the larger Bible Student groupings in the 1960s.

Stand Fast Movement

On December 1, 1918, some brethren in the Midwest and Northwest left the Watch Tower Bible Students and organized the Stand Fast Bible Students Association. What were they standing fast for? *Volume 7* was the only doctrinal issue at that time. Remember, the Judge and the Board of Directors were indicted on the basis of *Volume 7* under the *1917 Espionage Act*. The government based the indictment on material contained in pages 247-253. Therefore, the Judge had those pages cut out of *Volume 7* before any more were offered to the public. But the US government still pressed the indictment. Consequently, the Judge ordered the distribution of *Volume 7* suspended.

The Stand Fast brethren broke away—1,200 strong. But what were they standing fast for? They were standing fast for the first edition of the *7th Volume*. They believed that the Jordan should be smitten, therefore, they should be giving a harsh message. They agreed with the *7th Volume*, that the door was shut and the Kingdom would be set up in 1925.

The Stand Fast movement had some sad experiences which I will not go into. Many came into the Dawn movement though the ministry of Br. Christian Zahnnow. By 1950 little was left of the Stand Fast movement.

Lessons

It is sobering to realize that the overwhelming majority of Bible Students—those that remained with Rutherford, the Stand Fast brethren and followers of P. S. L. Johnson, supported the closed

door concept—thousands compared to the hundreds associated with the PBI and original Independent brethren.

It is surprising to realize that the overwhelming majority of Bible Students, those that remained with Rutherford and also the Stand Fast brethren, supported the concept that the Jordan was being smitten. Whether one believes the smiting of the Jordan is past or future, there are lessons to be learned in the failed efforts of Rutherford and the Stand Fast brethren, including their Elijah Voice split-off, to smite the Jordan.

The 1920s

The Watch Tower brethren continued to diverge further from the Truth. The PBI's first general membership meeting (1918) came out very strongly for the Presence and expressed harmony with the teachings of Br. Russell. The PBI brethren and original Independent brethren were the most sound in the Truth at that time. But the PBI was in a continual state of flux doctrinally. In the early 1920s, the PBI replaced 606 B.C. with 586 B.C. and taught that the Times of the Gentiles would end in 1934. As a kid, I remember a black and silver book in Dad's library entitled *1934: End of the Times of the Gentiles*. After that, many of them began to lose sight of the Reign, the Times of Restitution and the Jubilees, etc. A few doubted the Presence of Christ.

No group up to 1930 remained pure doctrinally. The elders in the Bible Student Movement up to the 1950s directly or indirectly had roots in one of these groups. This is our background. In addition to the groups of Bible Students mentioned, there were individuals like Br. A.M. Saphore who chose to meet with a class that remained isolated from all other classes.

Pittsburgh Reunion Conventions

A phenomenon began in 1929 that in many respects **became the basis of the Bible Student Movement as we know it today**. Br. George Wilson, of the Pittsburgh area, who was Ernest of the "Frank and Ernest" radio program, and four other elders led over 100 brethren out of the Watch Tower.

They said, we're all by ourselves—what are we going to do? So the elders had a meeting. They said, we know that brethren have been leaving—a big group left in 1918—and on a small scale some have trickled out over the years. This was in August, 1929—the anniversary of Br. Russell's death was at the end of October. They said, let's have a reunion convention at the end of October and invite everyone we know who left the Watch Tower from 1918 onward. We have their names and addresses in our *Mannas*. So they had a convention. It was a big success. The convention body voted to continue the convention annually.

As a kid, I attended many Pittsburgh Reunion Conventions. Dad was immersed in the Pittsburgh area in 1909—mother in 1917. We frequently drove from Detroit. The convention stopped because of WWII gas rationing and never picked up again after the war.

By the 1930 Reunion Convention the Pittsburgh elders began to realize—this was an odd mix. Those exiting the Watch Tower were very zealous for public witnessing. Soon they realized that many of the PBI brethren they were now associated with did not believe in public witnessing. The 1930 Pittsburgh Convention business meeting had a special subject for discussion: "*Have we a message to give out to the world?*" (Conv. Report illust. Page 10)

Br. Norman Woodworth came out of the Watch Tower in 1930 and attended the 1930 Pittsburgh Convention. Although not scheduled, he was asked to speak. Of course, he was well known as the organizer of the “Frank and Ernest” radio program, which he conducted on the Watch Tower’s own station on Staten Island. Br. Wilson had a comparable program going in Pittsburgh. Br. Woodworth joined the only class in New York City, which was the old Brooklyn PBI class. In 1931 Br. Woodworth convinced the class to run a year long “Frank and Ernest” radio program on **WOR**.

The Brooklyn class selected a Radio Committee to handle the details, but still it required many class business meetings. By 1932 the Radio Committee developed a speakers’ service and was printing a large amount of literature. Finally, the Brooklyn Class requested that the Radio Committee ask the PBI to sponsor the Radio Committee work. Also, the Pittsburgh Convention business meeting passed a resolution that the PBI and Brooklyn Class Radio Committee consolidate. Br. Woodworth told me the details of the meeting between the PBI and Brooklyn Class Radio Committee. The PBI rejected the proposition and the Brooklyn elders recommended the Radio Committee incorporate. The Dawn was born. **If the PBI had agreed to sponsor the Radio Committee work, there would not have been a Dawn Bible Students Association.**

In the early 1930s brethren associated with the PBI were the largest segment of Bible Students outside of the Watch Tower. Many of them became involved in regular fellowship with the New Covenant brethren who dated back to the New Covenant movement that broke away from Br. Russell. Consequently, some of the PBI brethren lost sight of a proper understanding of the Presence of Christ, the Church’s share in the Sin-Offering and the Covenants.

Watchers of the Morning Born

This doctrinal divergence was especially disturbing to Br. Isaac Hoskins, who was on the editorial board and Executive Secretary of the PBI for a number of years. In 1936 he made an effort to stop the doctrinal shift away from Br. Russell’s writings. This failed. Therefore, he led a group of brethren from the PBI and began publishing a magazine entitled *Watchers of the Morning*. This represented a return to many of the doctrines of Present Truth, however, they strongly believed that the need for concerted public witnessing was over. This journal discontinued with the death of Br. Hoskins in the late 1950s.

After the founding of the Dawn, the majority of the Brethren began to shift their moral and financial support towards the Dawn. There were two reasons for this. First, most of the large exodus from the Watch Tower between 1929 to 1939 favored the Dawn’s doctrinal position. Second, from 1937 to 1940 there was an influx of several hundred young Polish brethren into the English *ecclesias*. With the exception of the Cicero Class, who then sided with the PBI, the majority favored the doctrinal position of the Dawn. However, up until 1939, the brethren were still together in the same *ecclesias*. The speakers at the Pittsburgh Reunion Conventions were now all Dawn oriented.

Midwest General Convention

In 1939 the Chicago and Pittsburgh *ecclesias* initiated the Midwest General Conventions conducted by a committee composed of two members representing each class. The beautiful grounds of Lake Webster in Indiana accommodated the 1939 convention. The program consisted of Dawn speakers plus two PBI speakers. When planning the 1940 Midwest convention, the Pittsburgh Class stipulated only Dawn speakers could serve. Chicago agreed.

Between 1939 and 1945 divisions took place within classes across the country over the doctrinal issues between the Dawn and the PBI. As a result, the Dawn movement emerged the largest movement of Bible Students separate from the Watch Tower.

In either 1943 or 1945 a motion was passed on the Midwest General Convention floor that the Midwest Convention become the General Convention with the convention committee being elected annually at the General Convention business meeting. It was understood that the Dawn would promote the convention. Some who voted for that motion by hindsight now believe that was a step backwards since the *ecclesia* is the only Scripturally authorized organization.

Glory Days of the Dawn

In 1941 the Dawn reprinted the *Six Volumes of Studies in the Scriptures*. If you were there, what would your reaction be? This put the Dawn on the national Bible Student map. The brethren were now convinced the Dawn stood for the doctrines of Present Truth promulgated by that “wise and faithful servant.” Dawn speakers like Br. Zahnow visited isolated brethren and little independent classes. Where did they invite them to associate? With Bible Students in general? **NO!** With classes associated with the PBI? **NO!** They invited them to become associated with classes cooperating with the Dawn because the Dawn was standing for the teachings of the *Six Volumes*. In fact, if there was a PBI associated class in the same town, brethren were often encouraged to travel to the next town where there was a Dawn associated class.

A few years later, 1946, the Dawn published the booklet *When Pastor Russell Died*. Without mentioning names, it described many of the groups of Bible Students that separated from the Watch Tower since 1918. The booklet asserted that the reason there were so many different groups was because they did not accept Br. Russell as that “wise and faithful servant.” Then it stated that the mutual acceptance of the chronology and *Six Volumes* should be the basis of cooperation. Some of us worked at the Dawn during these years. This was a wonderful time. **These were days of healing. These were days of uniting the sheep that had been scattered and rallying them around the banner of Present Truth dispensed by that “wise and faithful servant.”**

National Radio

Another unifying force of the Dawn movement occurred around 1947 when the radio program “Frank and Ernest” went from a few individual stations onto the national Mutual Network. This was a gigantic step. The General Convention voted that the Dawn sign a national contract. Brethren at the General Convention promised good hopes for the year. The weekly radio responses jumped from an average of 200 to over 2,000. Isolated brethren and brethren in little classes across the country eagerly tuned in.

When Br. Don Copeland announced that the program was sponsored by the “Dawn Bible Students Association and the Friends of Frank and Ernest Everywhere,” the brethren were electrified. They were the “Friends of Frank and Ernest Everywhere.” They were a part of this great nation-wide radio witness. Soon the General Convention attendance topped a thousand. The brethren came from the woods, the valleys, the mountains, the towns, the cities, from all over the country. Yes, They were the “Friends of Frank and Ernest Everywhere” and they lifted up their voices and sang joyfully as they sat in the heavenlies together for a week. Two professors at Bowling Green University were walking by the auditorium while the brethren in 98-degree heat were singing their hearts out with joy. One professor turned to the other and said, “I never saw so many happy people so happy over so little.” **Yes, these were the glory days of the Dawn.**

Back to the PBI Movement

The PBI lost its movement status for two reasons. One, when it closed its central office and/or became a post office box number it began to wane as an influence in the classes. Brethren like to see their central office. This gives them the stature of feeling like they are a part of something big. The Dawn is now struggling with this same problem. Two, a “No Presence of the Lord” leadership took the *Herald Magazine* far afield. Finally, a few years back, the powers within terminated that leadership and gave the responsibility of the editorial committee to several brethren in the liberal wing of the Independent brethren.

The doctrinal tone of the articles has improved. Several months ago a complete issue of the *Herald* dealt with the Second Presence of Christ and the sounding of the 7th Trumpet, albeit without giving any dates. The editorial pattern has been to deal with one central theme in each issue that is portrayed in the picture on the front cover. The *Herald* is attracting considerable individual interest. The PBI seems to have no movement aspirations. It still tends to be liberal doctrinally as noted by its Spring 2004 issue that had an article attempting to prove that Jesus never partook of the Passover Supper before he instituted the Memorial.

Foreign Volume Request

Human nature being what it is, problems arose in the Dawn like in any Bible Student movement. We include this point of history to show that these problems were solvable. Around 1950 brethren overseas asked the Dawn to print the *Six Volumes* in their respective languages. It was decided that since there was neither time nor money to do this, the Dawn would print an abridged edition of the *Volumes* in the various languages requested. Of course, this resulted in a crisis, but the brethren were willing to talk out the issue. In a three-month period of discussion, which at times was very heated, the issue was resolved because the brethren were willing to talk it out. Finally, it was agreed that the foreign *Volumes* would not be abridged.

Failed Quest for Unity

In the 1950s the leadership of the Dawn and PBI conducted a series of discussions and exchange of letters on the possibility of merging. Br. Woodworth at the Dawn dinner table announced this merger effort and stated that the Dawn position for merging was based on the following: Not only must elders believe correctly concerning the Presence, Sin-Offering and Covenants, but in order to qualify as elders and speakers they must believe that these doctrines were important. This latter point killed any merger possibilities. Years later the Dawn dropped this point.

Prophetic Package of Volumes 2, 3, 4

Some Dawn articles during the 1950s affirmed that the Reign of Christ, the Millennium, Times of Restitution, the Jubilee Trumpet sounding, etc., had begun. The early 1960s saw an avoidance of these issues. In the late 1960s a few Dawn speakers aggressively attacked the prophetic package of *Volumes 2, 3 and 4*. There were always some doctrinal differences within the Dawn movement, but the brethren lived with their differences. But in 1969 the Dawn trustees for the first time took an official stand on a doctrinal issue among its own supporters. They published the booklet *Oh the Blessedness* which disagreed with many of the prophetic teachings of *Volumes 2, 3 and 4*. The publication of *Oh the Blessedness* polarized the Dawn brethren across the county into two camps.

New Independent Grouping Emerges

At a Dawn membership meeting a request was made to recall the booklet *Oh the Blessedness*. It was agreed that another meeting would be held in six months in which a larger grouping of

brethren would be involved in this discussion. The agreed upon meeting never happened. Shortly after the date for that meeting, divisions began to take place in the Dawn movement across the country over the prophetic **package** of *Volumes 2, 3 and 4*. **This was sad. If the booklet had been recalled as requested, these divisions might have been avoided.** As in all divisions, some on both sides manifested a wrong spirit.

The main issue was not fellowship, but doctrinal qualifications for eldership. Brethren were concerned who their teachers would be. Thankfully, I was never in a class division, but I felt more comfortable with the Independent brethren.

Ft. Collins and The New Independent Movement

As a result of the divisions over the prophetic package of *Volumes 2, 3 and 4*, a separate general convention was started in Ft. Collins in 1970. After several years, it merged into I.O. The new Independent movement of brethren began. It was sometimes wrongly identified as the Divine Plan brethren. Actually, the overwhelming majority of the Independent brethren never cooperated with the Divine Plan organization simply because they had become leery of any organization. A word about the Divine Plan organization.

Divine Plan Organization

When it began, several classes were already using the name Divine Plan, not as their official class name, but merely as a mailing name and address. This was true of the Chicago Class and the New Brunswick Class. When the Divine Plan organization began, these classes stopped using the name Divine Plan for their mailing work. However, the Divine Plan organization had a very good policy. That was, it would not initiate or carry out any Truth activity under its own name, Divine Plan. Rather, it would encourage classes to become active in various Truth services and would donate money to those class activities, but never have their name used in association with those particular activities.

There was tension in this new Independent movement of Bible Students over what was the Harvest work and certain prophetic doctrines. Some felt that most of the time of trouble prophecies and destruction of Babylon occurred in 1914. A few separated for this reason, but most of us endeavored to live with these differences.

Greatest Development Since Death of Pastor

Perhaps the greatest lasting benefit for **all** of the brethren grew out of the Ft. Collins conventions. For many years there was an unwritten law that only service organizations like the Dawn and PBI could conduct Truth activities for the brethren. This was ironic because the *ecclesias* around the country contained brethren with a wealth of talents and abilities. Within the limited staff of service organizations there was a minimal amount of **talent**.

As a result of the Ft. Collins conventions, *ecclesias* became very active on their own using the talents within their *ecclesias* in the service of the Lord. Chicago has republished many of Br. Russell's writings. Ft. Worth became active in radio and television work. The Dayton Class/Miami Valley Class, have published the Bible Student Newsletter which has proved to be a blessing to the brethren over the years. New Brunswick republished the *Volumes* both in English and foreign languages for the brethren overseas. Oakland County, Central Ohio and other *ecclesias* are using the talents within their classes to advance Truth activities. This has been such

a blessing that even organizations like the Dawn and PBI are dependent on some of these classes for their own activities.

Even non-*ecclesia* activities began to blossom, such as *For This Cause*, the Chicago Bible Students Publications, the comfort message to the Jews and individual writing of booklets.

Regroupings

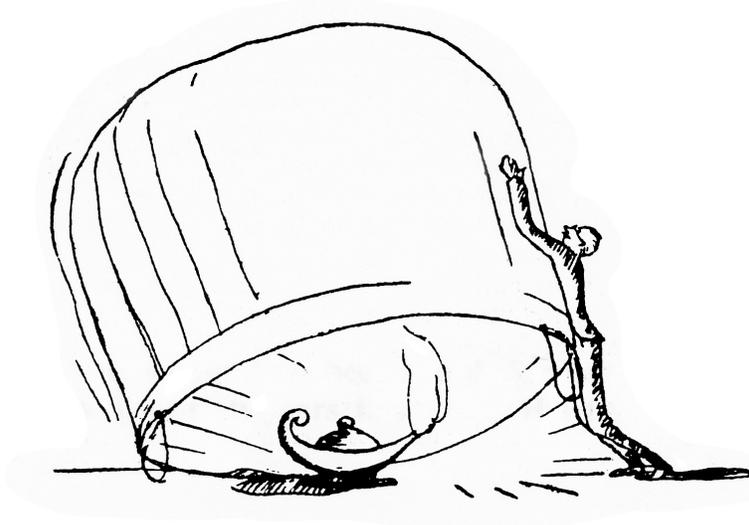
Since the 1960s there has been a progressive effort by brethren associated with the Dawn and PBI to come together. Today there is a desire of many in both the Dawn and Independent movement to forget the past and to get together. There is motion in this direction and there is opposition.

Personal Observations

The issue is not fellowship. There has not been a time since the death of Br. Russell that there has been such an outpouring of love and prayer concern between the brethren, even between brethren with doctrinal differences. “Old Ron’s” email list is one proof of this unprecedented loving concern of all the brethren that crosses the lines of doctrine. Never before in the history of the Harvest has there been such loving prayer-fellowship between different groups of Bible Students. Many attend conventions of other groups. We are not divided in the area of fellowship.

The issue is qualifications for elders—not fellowship. All of us have a doctrinal standard in voting for elders and speakers. Once we take the liberty to draw a doctrinal line for speakers, it is only just and loving that we give our brother the same liberty to set doctrinal standards for speakers that he believes are Scriptural. If we do not grant our brother this same liberty we take, then we have to ask ourselves, who is narrow-minded?

Another problem. Since 1970 many brethren have been raised in or have come into the Bible Student movement without having studied the *Six Volumes* personally or in class. Some of these brethren are now elders. If the *Six Volumes of Studies in The Scriptures* and *Tabernacle Shadows* are not retained as the basis of the Bible Student Movement, the Bible Students will change drastically in the future.



Scriptural Lessons

1. Acts 19:8-10, and elsewhere, tells of the great success Paul had in founding churches in Asia Minor, including Ephesus.
2 Tim. 1:15 – All they in Asia are turned away from Paul.
We have seen in the history from 1918 until now that at times the majority of Bible Students were in error.
2. Fellowship with all our brethren within certain scriptural limits.
2 Cor. 7:2-3 – The brethren at Corinth were a great trial to Paul—doctrinal and otherwise. Yet, Paul could say: “You are in our hearts to die together and live together.”
3. Titus 3:10 – “A man that is a heretic [divisive] after first and second admonition reject.”
A heretic is not only one that rejects basic doctrine. In the Greek, two things made a heretic. One, a major or minor error that (two) causes dissension among the brethren. If a brother has a different viewpoint that is disturbing the brethren, he should drop it or be voted out as a speaker or elder.
4. Spirit of elders. 2 Tim. 2:24-25 (NAS) – “The Lord’s bond-servant [elder] must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”
5. In-depth fellowship. 1 John 1:7 – “If we walk in the light, ... we have fellowship [*koinonia*] one with another.”
During Christ’s presence, the light we fellowship in depth with our brethren, is found in Rev. 11:15,17,18.
“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
“Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty ... because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”