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Watchtower Flip-Flops Make Silent History

The summer of 1988 was a pivotal time for Jehovah's Witnesses. Within a time frame of no more than 19 months, their governing body would change its position on a key doctrinal teaching three times.

The changes were whether the ancient inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah would merit a resurrection. The teaching would boil down to a **YES** or a **NO** position, so each change could not be considered as trivial. Each would inevitably be looked at as a contradiction, a diametrically-opposite view, a position reversal, the common flip-flop^[i p 34].

In that summer of 1988, however, who would notice when this pivotal second of three changes took place? The change is buried in a pair of volumes of reference material^[ii p 34], 2,560 pages deep – buried in the sense that in all of its five articles¹ on this teaching, there is not a single mention that the compositions represented a complete doctrine reversal from what they had taught before.

"Why must we accept everything that the churches teach when many of the teachings are confusing and contradictory?" *The Watchtower*, 2003, 12/1 p. 4. [embraced testimonial from book, *31 Reasons Why Young People Leave the Church*]

The Watchtower Society persuasively argued within this newly-released **Insight on the Scriptures** that the wicked Sodomites would receive merciful treatment – a resurrection to further judgment instead of the irreversible destruction which they had taught before. The release for this new light^[iii p 34] began on Friday, June 17 of that year.

What was so astonishing is that the contents of the June 1 issue of *The Watchtower* had convincingly argued the polar opposite – the same ancient Sodomites had been doomed to having no hope of a resurrection. This position quickly became old light as the ink had barely dried.

But, wait. Perhaps more remarkable is that the Society then turned that old light of June 1 back into new light during a span of less than the 19 months that followed. The persuasively argued compositions within the encyclopedic **Insight on the Scriptures** became old light, trash for all practical purposes.

¹ Articles: Destruction, Repentance, Sodom, Gomorrah, and Judgment Day.

Resurrection? NO!	Dates	Resurrection? YES!
<p>“Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. <u>It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction.</u>” Watchtower, June 1, 1988, p. 31</p> <p>“Will such terribly wicked persons be resurrected during Judgment Day? The Scriptures indicate that apparently they will not. ... Yes, for their excessive immorality <u>the people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected.</u>”—2 Peter 2:4-6, 9, 10a. You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth[Newly revised], Chap. 21, p. 179</p>	<p>1988 Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun July Aug Sep • • • Oct Nov Dec 1990 Jan Feb Mar</p>	<p>“This is also illustrated by what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their inhabitants. Jude indicated that these cities were everlastingly destroyed. (Jude 7; compare 2Pe 2:6.) However, Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 10:15 show that <u>at least some of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection.</u>” Insight on the Scriptures, p 616, Destruction [It should be noted that this is a new article within Insight, not a copy from its predecessor, the Aid book.]</p>

While those three positions within less than 1 ½ years may appear strange, it is not the whole story of the Society’s flip-flops on this single topic. Perhaps a series of signal lights will help illustrate the entire bizarre sequence:



“At times explanations given by Jehovah’s visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case.”
The Watchtower, 1981, 12/1 p. 27

The changed teaching would, in a sense, be a silent flip-flop many times over. While that statement may sound harsh, you will find supporting contextual quotations beginning on page 8.

Why the Silence?

Based on known facts, the Society wasn't aware about it till it was too late. It is apparent that the writers of the *Insight on the Scriptures* book and those of *The Watchtower* had not been on the same page. Consider the following 3 items of interest.

Foreign Language Editions

It wasn't as if they hadn't discovered that gross oversight. By the time the foreign language editions of *Insight* made their way onto the distribution chain, those 5 articles that taught resurrection for the ancient Sodomites had already been modified. As to the German release, the first of four, sources tell me that oversight was fixed.

Date	Language
November 1990	German
December 1990	Italian
February 1991	Portuguese
November 1991	Spanish

Was Corrective Action Ever Taken?

With the exception of the foreign language volumes, no. The English-reading members (by far, the majority) of the Society's flock were left hanging. The publishing world's standard practice of issuing an *errata*¹ was neglected – either by ignorance, embarrassment, or dishonesty. It's not as if they hadn't ever used that adjustment technique.

They did it recently with the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*

“Listed below are the key adjustments to the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* which was published in 1988. This list does not include, for example, certain statistical adjustments, which can be found in the latest *Yearbook* and in other publications. ...” Kingdom Ministry, September, 2006, pp. 3-6 [some 4 KM pages itemize certain changes to 28 of that book's chapters.]

They did it with the 1982 publication, *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*.

“Some adjustments will be made in future printings of the Live Forever book. The only significant change is with regard to the Sodomites, on pages 178 and 179. This change appeared in the Revelation book, page 273, and in

¹ Sheet of corrections printed after a publication has already been published and sent to those who purchased the publication so errors can be corrected.

www.ben.edu/library/help/glossary.htm

The Watchtower of June 1, 1988, pages 30 and 31. You may wish to note it in earlier printings that you have on hand.” Kingdom Ministry, December, 1989, p. 7

Look closely at that last one and you will see the *adjustment* had to do with our topic, the ancient Sodomites. However, the *adjustment* was only made to some 7-year-old publication (**Revelation**), not to this flagship of Jehovah’s Witness research, **Insight on the Scriptures**, which was less than 2 years old at the time. Even 19 years later it continues to be their premium research tool.

“For those who wish to do extra Bible study and research, we recommend that they explore *Insight on the Scriptures*, ...” Kingdom Ministry, September, 2007, p. 3

Hearsay

Inside sources – let’s call it the grapevine – who wish to remain anonymous, paint the following picture. Compare what they say with the facts.

1. The Grapevine says: The *Insight* volumes, a physically large publication pair, were already sitting on pallets awaiting release when the June 1, *Watchtower* was conceived.

The Facts say: That is pure speculation on the part of wishful apologists who say they heard what some Circuit Overseer said or what some *help desk* person told them on the telephone.

Note that the *Watchtower* magazine also has a considerable lag time where Bethel members get to read their copies some two months in advance of the cover date.

2. The Grapevine says: *Insight’s* 5 articles on the controversial subject had been simply copied from its encyclopedic predecessor, *Aid to Bible Understanding*, a release from 17 years earlier.

The Facts say: Partly true. Four of the five *Insight* articles were *mostly*, but, not *entirely* copied. In a separate document you may check for yourself, beginning on page 11, exactly how close the “copies” are from the older *Aid* book. You will see that all four articles have been subject to human editorial handling.

In addition, the article **Destruction** was entirely unique to the newer *Insight* book. Where did that writer get the *resurrection* position he established in that article?

Obviously not from the writer of the June 1, *Watchtower*. Was each located in some office? Does that matter if one is directed by Holy Spirit?

It is evident that those writers are no more immune to the lack of communication problem than that which plagues other business corporations.

3. The Grapevine says: The Society regrets they didn’t catch the as-copied errors in time for the 1988 publication.

The Facts say: I can agree with that.

4. The Grapevine says: While it’s true that the publication timelines imply a

major oversight, their thinking and their intent was correct at the time.

The Facts say: See response to number 1.

5. The Grapevine says: When the June 1, *Watchtower* was released, its new position taught a no resurrection position.

The Facts say: That is correct. And when *Insight* appeared on June 17, it taught an opposite yes resurrection position. That's a contradictory position – what this is all about.

6. The Grapevine says: When the *Insight* volumes were released beginning June 17, its yes resurrection position was already obsolete.

The Facts say: Not true. The only evidence of a published date is that date which the publisher chooses to tell its readership^[iv p 34]. It's that simple. Again, see response to number 1.

Published Date	Conflicting Pubs
June 1, 1988	The Watchtower
June 17, 1988	Insight Book

Summary: To be fair, I doubt the Society uses *grapevine* or *secret society* methods to keep its flock informed. I also doubt it would rely on word of mouth between a privileged few, hoping that few would somehow get its message out. I've seen no evidence that it dispenses information other than the way it has always done it -- by using platform discourses at meetings along with the printed page. I find it puzzling, however, that the Society has never addressed this controversy to its membership of some 7,000,000¹. That flock deserves better than such breakdown in communication.

¹ 2007 Service Year Report: 6,957,854

In Watchtower's Own Words

Within the following table you'll find contextual Watchtower publication quotations followed by each cited source for those above-illustrated reversal dates^[v p 34]. **Highlighting** for clarity is mine. With the exception of the first from **Zion's Watch Tower** of 1879^[vi p 34], they can all be found on the Watchtower Library CD.

Date	Resurrection – Yes or No ?
1879	<p>← “Surely if we find their restitution mentioned you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity to obtain eternal life as well as you or the Jew? They were not wicked in the proper sense, for they did not have law or much knowledge. True, they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. Christ's own words shall tell us that they are not as guilty in His sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: "Woe unto thee Capernaum, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained unto this day." Thus Christ's own words teach us that they had not had their full opportunity. "Remember," Christ says of the Sodomites, that "God rained down fire and destroyed them all." <u>So, if their restoration is spoken of, it implies their resurrection.</u>” <i>Zion's Watch Tower</i>, July 1, 1879 p. 8 [in the nearly 65 years until 1944, no less than 33 Watchtower articles taught this same position^[See p 16] For those counting, Watchtower has addressed this topic in no less than 56 articles over a span of 126 years.</p>
1952	<p>← “Not only is this final destruction made sure by God's use of the expression “exterminate” and Jesus' use of “destroyed”, but also 2 Peter 2:5-9 (NW) establishes it: “He did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people; and by reducing the cities Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them, setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come, and he delivered righteous Lot, who was greatly distressed by the indulgence of the law-defying people in loose conduct—for that righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds —Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off.” Peter cited these ancient examples of cutting-off to show the fate of false prophets and false teachers in the Christian congregation, who brought in destructive sects and disowned Christ, and who thereby were “bringing speedy destruction upon themselves”. Who will contend that the destruction of such defilers of the Christian congregation is not final? <u>The ancient destructions upon Noah's contemporaries and Sodom and Gomorrah must be just as final</u>, else how could they illustrate the one Peter was discussing?”—2 Pet. 2:1-4, NW. <i>The Watchtower</i>, June 1, 1952, p. 335 ^[See p 23][see also WT, 1/1/44, p 13; WT, 1/1/65, p 25; 4/1/55, p 200; 11/15/55, p 676; 1/15/60, p 53]</p>
	<p>“Jesus said that many will be resurrected: “The hour is coming in which all those</p>

<p>1965</p>	<p>in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28, 29) He tells us that even the people of such wicked cities as Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh, and the Jewish cities that did not like Jesus’ preaching, namely, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, will come back for the great Judgment Day.” The Watchtower, Feb 1, 1965, pp. 87-88 [see also WT, 1/1/65, p 25; 3/1/65, pp. 138-139; 8/1/65, p 479; Awake!, 10/8/74, p 20; Is This Life All There Is?, p. 185; Awake!, 10/22/75, p 13; WT, 8/15/82, p 26; 1/15/87, p 25]</p>
<p>1988 Mar Apr May Jun July Aug Sep</p>	<p>“There is an interesting similarity in phraseology between this description and what Jude said occurred in the case of Sodom. Furthermore, Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 19:11-21 indicate that “the goats” cut off in the coming war of God will experience “everlasting cutting-off” in “the lake of fire,” which symbolizes permanent annihilation.—Revelation 20:10, 14. Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction.” The Watchtower, June 1, 1988, p. 31</p>
<p>1988 Mar Apr May Jun July Aug Sep</p>	<p>“This is also illustrated by what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their inhabitants. Jude indicated that these cities were everlastingly destroyed. (Jude 7; compare 2Pe 2:6.) However, Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 10:15 show that at least some of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection.” Insight on the Scriptures, p 616, Destruction [It should be noted that this is a new article within Insight, not a copy from its predecessor, the Aid book. See also Insight p 137; Insight, p 775-776; Insight, p 984; Insight, p 985;]</p>
<p>1989</p>	<p>“Will such terribly wicked persons be resurrected during Judgment Day? The Scriptures indicate that apparently they will not. For example, one of Jesus’ inspired disciples, Jude, wrote first about the angels that forsook their place in heaven to have relations with the daughters of men. Then he added: “So too Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, after they in the same manner as the foregoing ones had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use, are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.” (Jude 6, 7; Genesis 6:1, 2) Yes, for their excessive immorality the people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected.”—2 Peter 2:4-6, 9, 10a. You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth (1982 book but corrected in 1989), Chap. 21, p. 179 [see also WT 7/15/05, p 31]</p>
<p>2005</p>	<p>"See pages 30-1 of the June 1, 1988, issue of The Watchtower." The Watchtower, 2005,7/15 p. 31 (Questions From Readers)[^{vii} p 34] [Note that for reference purposes the Society, these days, bypasses the position established within Insight on the Scriptures, 1988 (June 17), going directly to the earlier June 1 issue of The Watchtower]</p>

Aid vs. Insight Word-by-Word Comparison

Below is a comparison of certain articles found in the older [1971] *Aid to Bible Understanding* and its successor, *Insight on the Scriptures*. The *Insight* articles are thought to have been simply copied from the equivalent *Aid* articles.

Please note that each scanned image of the *Aid* book section is on a separate page. Below the image you will find its **corresponding text** from the *Insight* book (Watchtower Library CD) article, pasted to the table.

You will see that although four of the five *Insight* articles were *mostly* copied, they all had human editorial handling. Changes are **highlighted**. A fifth *Insight* article, **Destruction**, is nowhere to be found in the *Aid* book. It is entirely unique within the pages of the *Insight* book.

<i>Insight</i> , Vol. 1 p. 616 (Destruction)	Changes from <i>Aid</i> Book
<p>The Bible indicates that not all destruction is eternal. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Hebrew word 'avad-dohn' (destruction) is used twice to parallel "Sheol." (Job 26:6; Pr 15:11) The prophet Zephaniah spoke of the destruction of Assyria, whereas Ezekiel said that the Assyrians would go down to Sheol. (Zep 2:13; Eze 32:21, 22) When speaking of the destruction of the rebels Dathan and Abiram, Moses wrote that they went down "alive into Sheol." (Nu 16:31, 33) Since Sheol in the Bible denotes the common grave of mankind from which there will be a resurrection, it is evident that not all destruction—not even all destruction at the hand of God—is necessarily eternal.</p> <p>This is also illustrated by what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their inhabitants. Jude indicated that these cities were everlastingly destroyed. (Jude 7; compare 2Pe 2:6.) <u>However, Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 10:15 show that at least some of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection.</u></p>	<p>There is no article in the <i>Aid</i> book with title, Destruction.</p> <p>It should appear obvious that the article Destruction in <i>Insight</i> was created new for its publication – not a copy from the <i>Aid</i> book.</p>

Jehovah, you dictators of Sodom. Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.”—Isa. 1: 1, 10; Jer. 23:14.

The apostle Peter said that by reducing Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes God condemned them, “setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come.” (2 Pet. 2:6) This mention by Peter and references by Jesus Christ and Jude prove that Jesus and his disciples acknowledged these cities of the District as actually having existed, and that they accepted the Biblical account of them as true. Though the *cities* underwent “the judicial punishment of everlasting fire” (Jude 7), Jesus indicated that people of Sodom and Gomorrah would experience a resurrection to stand for judgment. He contrasted them with a city that rejected his disciples in their preaching of the Kingdom good news, saying: “It will be more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city.”—Matt. 10:7, 14, 15.

GOODNESS. The quality or state of being good; moral excellence; virtue. Goodness is solid through and through, with no badness or rottenness. It is

Insight, Vol. 1 p. 985 (Gomorrah)

Changes from Aid Book

The apostle Peter said that by reducing Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, God condemned them, “setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come.” (2Pe 2:6) This mention by Peter and references by Jesus Christ and Jude prove that Jesus and his disciples acknowledged that these cities of the District had actually existed and that they accepted the Biblical account of them as true. Though the cities underwent “the judicial punishment of everlasting fire” (Jude 7), **Jesus indicated that people of Sodom and Gomorrah would experience a resurrection to stand for judgment.** He contrasted them with a city that rejected his disciples in their preaching of the Kingdom good news, saying: “It will be more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city.”—Mt 10:7, 14, 15;

There are 5 general changes. While certain replacements (2 Pet. repl. by 2Pe) can be automated, word and phrase additions (had actually existed) are unlikely. Human editorial intervention is apparent.

When using the expression Judgment Day, Jesus brought into the picture a resurrection of the dead. He mentioned that a city might reject the apostles and their message, and said: "It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city." (Matt. 10:15) This projected the matter into the future and naturally suggested that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah would then be alive by means of resurrection. (Compare Matthew 11:21-24; Luke 10:13-15.) Even clearer are Jesus' statements that the "men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment" and "the queen of the south will be raised up in the judgment." (Matt. 12:41, 42; Luke 11:31, 32) The Biblical statements about Jesus' judging "the living and the dead" can be viewed in the light of the fact that resurrection is involved in Judgment Day.—Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1.

***Insight*, Vol. 2 p. 137 (Judgment Day)**

When using the expression "Judgment Day," Jesus brought into the picture a resurrection of the dead. He mentioned that a city might reject the apostles and their message, and said: "It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city." (Mt 10:15) **This projected the matter into the future and naturally suggested that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah would then be alive by means of resurrection.** (Compare Mt 11:21-24; Lu 10:13-15.) Even clearer are Jesus' statements that the "men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment" and "the queen of the south will be raised up in the judgment." (Mt 12:41, 42; Lu 11:31, 32) The Biblical statements about Jesus' judging "the living and the dead" can be viewed in the light of the fact that resurrection is involved in Judgment Day.

Changes from Aid Book

There are 7 general changes. While certain replacements (Matt. repl. by Mt) can be automated, machine addition of quotes (") to certain words or phrases is unlikely. Human editorial intervention is apparent.

**RESURRECTION TO OPPORTUNITY
FOR REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION**

By contrast, the people of Sodom, Gomorrah and those of Canaanite Tyre and Sidon are spoken of by Jesus as finding "Judgment Day" more endurable than the people of certain Jewish cities. (Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:20-24) Those of pagan Nineveh are similarly spoken of. (Matt. 12:41) This of itself implies that people from all such places, including the Jewish cities mentioned, will be resurrected and have opportunity to manifest humble repentance and "turn around" in conversion to God through Christ. Those failing to do so receive everlasting destruction. (Compare Revelation 20:11-15; see JUDGMENT DAY.) Those, however, following a course like many scribes and Pharisees, who willfully and knowingly fought the manifestation of God's spirit through Christ, would receive no resurrection, thereby to "flee from the judgment of Gehenna."—Matt. 23:13, 33; Mark 3:22-30.

<i>Insight</i> , Vol. 2 p. 775 (Repentance)	Changes from <i>Aid Book</i>
<p>By contrast, the people of Sodom and <u>Gomorrah as well as</u> those of Canaanite Tyre and Sidon are spoken of by Jesus as finding "Judgment Day" more endurable than <u>would</u> the people of certain Jewish cities. (<u>Mt</u> 10:14, 15; 11:20-24) Those of pagan Nineveh are similarly spoken of. (<u>Mt</u> 12:41) <u>This of itself implies that people from all such places, including the Jewish cities mentioned, will be resurrected and have opportunity to manifest humble repentance and "turn around" in conversion to God through Christ.</u> Those failing to do so will receive everlasting destruction. (Compare <u>Re</u> 20:11-15; see <u>JUDGMENT DAY</u>.) Those, however, <u>who follow</u> a course like many scribes and Pharisees, who willfully and knowingly fought the manifestation of God's spirit through Christ, <u>will</u> receive no resurrection, <u>and so they cannot</u> "flee from the judgment of Gehenna."</p>	<p>There are 9 general changes. While certain replacements (Matt. repl. by <u>Mt</u>) can be automated, word and phrase additions (<u>would, who follow, etc.</u>) are unlikely. Human editorial intervention is apparent.</p>

Scan of 1971 *Aid To Bible Understanding*, p 1519, (Sodom)

9:29) and of extreme wickedness.—Deut. 32:32; Isa. 1:10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:46-56; see GOMORRAH. Jude mentions that “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.” This would not conflict with Jesus’ statement about a Jewish city that should reject the good news: “It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city.” Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as *cities*, but this would not preclude a resurrection for *people* of those cities.—Jude 7; Matt. 10:15; compare Luke 11:32; 2 Peter 2:6.

Insight, Vol. 2 p. 984 (Sodom)

Jude mentions that “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.” This would not conflict with Jesus’ statement about a Jewish city that would reject the good news: “It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city.” Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as *cities*, but this would not preclude a resurrection for *people* of those *cities*.

Changes from *Aid Book*

There is 1 general change as *should* is replaced by would. Human editorial intervention is apparent.

Early Watchtower Positions

The following 3 tables cite quotations from *Watchtower* magazines that were published during the early years, those prior to 1950^[viii p 35]. I may have even missed a few which belong in this group as the string search task presented technical challenges for my modest PDF viewing software.

Search for each occurrence of the text string *Sodom* – then examine the context. Did the context speak of the destiny of those ancients who had died by the God-induced rain of fire? Next, did it speak of a resurrection for judgment purposes or did it speak of their being left in “the lake of fire”, a state of “everlasting cutting-off”?

My objective wasn’t to establish a precise count. More than that, it was to take an overall glimpse of a doctrinal teaching position, which in recent Watchtower history has become controversial. The contextual snippets are organized in date sequence.

The Watchtower, as it is called today, was actually launched in July, 1879. It was then called *Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence* and was edited by Charles Taze Russell from its beginning. He passed away on October 31, 1916. Produced once a month when it began, it became a semi-monthly periodical in 1892. In 1909 it was renamed to *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*.

Presidential succession and editorial responsibility followed with that of Joseph F. Rutherford on January 6, 1917 until he died on January 8, 1942. He was immediately succeeded by Nathan H. Knorr who preferred to delegate editorial duties to others.

The first table lists 29 quotation snippets from *Watchtower* magazines¹ during that religion’s earliest 37 years. I call that table “**The Russell Years**”.

It should be noted that the Russell-established *Watchtower* position – resurrection to an opportunity the ancient Sodomites never had – was voiced in its very first issue. I find it interesting that he never wavered in teaching that belief up to and including the November 1, 1915 issue – only a year before his death.

The second table contains those quotations from what I call “**The Rutherford Years**”. His writings about the destiny of the Sodomites were sparse in comparison with Russell’s – I could find only 4. However, where he addressed the issue, there was concurrence with his predecessor, Russell.

¹ Available from <http://www.watchtowerdocuments.com/> it is a sizeable download at some 74 Mbytes. Under heading, **LINKS TO DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE**, click on link [1879-1916_Watch_Tower_Journals.pdf](#)

The third, and final, table I call “**The Knorr Years**”. You will probably detect from its solitary quotation that the tide had shifted.

The Russell Years	
1	<p>Let me give you an illustration that will be forcible: The Sodomites. Surely if we find their restitution mentioned you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity to obtain eternal life as well as you or the Jew? They were not wicked in the proper sense, for they did not have law or much knowledge. True, they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. Christ's own words shall tell us that they are not as guilty in His sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: "Woe unto thee Capernium, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained unto this day." Thus Christ's own words teach us that they had not had their full opportunity. "Remember," Christ says of the Sodomites, that "God rained down fire and destroyed them all." So, if their restoration is spoken of, it implies their resurrection. July 1, 1879, p 8</p>
2	<p>But will they receive no punishment for misdeeds of the present life? They will receive punishment, "stripes, &c.," in proportion as they had light and lived contrary to it. As our Master explained: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom, &c.," in the day of judgment (in the age of trial) than for the Jews, to whom He spoke, because the Sodomites had less light. (Matt. 2:24.) There will be many or few "stripes," in proportion to the amount of light they have had and the use made of it. February 1, 1880, p 8</p>
3	<p>It will readily be seen, that this sin to this last mentioned extent-- punishable with the second death--could not possibly have been committed prior to the gospel age, since not until Pentecost did the Holy Ghost come as a teacher to guide the church into the truth. (John 16:13.) It had in past time been active through holy men of old as they "spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," but it moved them to write but not to understand. It came upon the Prophets as servants to communicate; it comes to us as a seal of sonship and to enable us as sons to understand our Father's will, (Rom. 8:14.) consequently in previous ages none ever "tasted of the good word of God," or "became partakers of the Holy Ghost, etc., and consequently none who lived in past ages could sin away forever all hope of a future life.</p> <p>The millions of past ages never have been recovered from the first death (Adamic) in any sense and must be so recovered before it will be possible for them to commit the "sin unto death." (Heb. 6:4-6). That Israelites, Sodomites, Egyptians and others have not fully lived up to the knowledge they possessed we doubt not, and they will doubtless therefore have "stripes" in the coming age for sins not pardoned by Jesus' ransom. March 1, 1881, p 3</p>
4	<p>THE SODOMITES.</p> <p>Surely, if we find their restitution foretold you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity to reach perfection? True they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. Jesus' own words shall tell us that they are not as guilty in his sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: "Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee</p>

	had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day." Thus Jesus teaches us that they had not had their full opportunity. "Remember," Jesus says of the Sodomites, that "God rained down fire and destroyed them all." So if their restoration is spoken of in Scripture it implies their resurrection. September 1, 1881, p 45
5	During this reign of the Christ, all will have been brought to a knowledge of the truth, (1 Tim. 2:4) the true light will have enlightened every man, ever born into the world. (Jno. 1:9.) All will have been brought to a recognition of Christ; those in heaven, (angels) those on earth (living men) and those under the earth, (those now in their graves who must be brought to life). All will have been brought to recognize the power of Jehovah's anointed; and unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. (Phil. 2:10,11.) And all nations that God ever made (Sodomites and all) shall come and worship before him. (Rev. 15:4.) All people shall be blessed by having an opportunity to reach human perfection, and consequent perfect happiness, and life ever-lasting. This kingdom over earth, after subduing all evil, will cease by being delivered up to God, even the Father (Jehovah), as Paul tells us: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: [in subjection] The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." [The destruction of death implies the raising of mankind out of it, to perfection of humanity: abolishing death and all of its incipient stages of sickness, pain, etc. This will be a gradual process, requiring all of "the times (1,000 years) of restitution" for its complete accomplishment.] March 1, 1882, p 7
6	We can come to no other conclusion from these scriptures referred to, than that the nations of earth, including Sodom, are to live again, and that when restored will profit by past experience, and be ashamed of it; that it is the design of our Heavenly Father to restore, through Christ, all that was lost in Adam; that hence "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust," Acts 24:15; that this is the age of generation, and that the one to follow is the age of regeneration:--Matt. 19:28--that this generation all die on account of Adam's sin, but will all live again on account of Christ's righteousness. May 1, 1882, p 5
7	But how few can sing this song of restitution, declaring that all nations shall yet come from death, and shall worship their Lord and Redeemer, when brought to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4.) Even Sodom, a nation long since destroyed, shall come and worship. (Ezek. 16:48-63.) September 1, 1882, p 6
8	WHEN we announce, as a part of God's plan of salvation, now due to be understood, that the Sodomites (Ezek. 16:48-63) and all men who have never yet come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) are to be saved out of Adamic-death, brought to life again by reason of Jesus' ransom; and that they may then be made acquainted with the truth and have an opportunity by obedience to that knowledge, to reach perfection as men, and live forever, it seems as strange to those who hear it, as did the announcement of the apostles in the end of the Jewish age, that from that time God would call and accept of Gentiles as his spiritual sons--Gentiles who but shortly before, had been treated as strangers and aliens and children of wrath. October/November, 1882, p 7
9	We will select what is usually regarded as the most marked illustration of Divine wrath, viz.: the Sodomites. Now, if we can show from the plain statements of

	<p>God's Word that these people are to come back to life, in order that they may have an opportunity of having it testified to them that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all, of believing this testimony if they will, and of receiving the benefits of belief, viz.: justification: if we make this plain, then we think the case of the others will appear, at least, very hopeful. But, first, let us learn from the Great Teacher, who "knew what was in man," what he thought of these Sodomites. February, 1883, p 6</p>
10	<p>Even Sodom, a nation long since destroyed, shall come and worship. (Ezek. 16:48-63.) June 1, 1883, p 7</p>
11	<p>But are we sure that God intends these blessings for any but the "people whom he foreknew"--the Jews? Yes. He mentions other nations also by name and speaks of their restitution. Let me give you an illustration that will be forcible--the Sodomites. Surely, if I find their restitution mentioned you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity as well as you, or the Jew, to obtain eternal life? True, they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. October 1, 1883, p 6</p>
12	<p>We will select what is usually regarded as the most marked illustration of Divine wrath, viz.: the Sodomites. Now, if we can show from the plain statements of God's Word that these people are to come back to life, in order that they may have an opportunity of having it testified to them that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all, of believing this testimony if they will, and of receiving the benefits of belief, viz.: justification: if we make this plain, then we think the case of the others will appear, at least, very hopeful. But, first, let us learn from the Great Teacher, who "knew what was in man," what he thought of these Sodomites. September 1, 1884, p 1</p>
13	<p>Of Sodom it is declared that the sin thereof was great, and God "took them away as he saw good." (Ezek. 16:50 .) His way was good for two reasons: first, in that it made an example of them for the restraint of those who should afterward live ungodly (contrary to God's will--in sin-- Jude 7 ; 2 Pet. 2:6); and secondly, because God's "due time" for bringing them to a knowledge of his gracious provision for them and for all under the New Covenant (sealed, or made of force, by the precious blood of Christ) had not yet come. Besides, in his due time, during the Millennium, they shall be awakened, when they and all shall be under the restraints of Christ's Kingdom, and have a full opportunity for attaining life everlasting. See Ezek. 16:48-50,53-55,60-63 . December 1, 1890, p 4</p>
14	<p>If some think they have reason still to doubt the restitution of wicked Israel, the first-fruits, and of the wicked world (whom they represented in type) back to divine favor and life and to the possession of the earth for an everlasting inheritance, let them turn to Ezek. 16:46-63 and see how God promises to restore even the wicked Sodomites; and let them remember also the word of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 10:15), that in that day of judgment when he is governor over the nations "it will be more tolerable for Sodom" than for Israel ... February 15, 1892, p 63</p>
15	<p>When the Lord thus declares his purposes, and that in full view and statement of all the circumstances, and signs his name to the document, there is no room left for cavil or doubt. Wicked Sodom and Samaria and Israel and all the families of the</p>

	earth shall be brought back from the captivity of death --the only captivity which could possibly be referred to here; for this was spoken long after Sodom was laid in ashes. February 1, 1894, p 46
16	In the future judgment, our Lord declares that the Sodomites will have a better standing and be more likely to pass satisfactorily the divine inspection, than the Capernaumites. That judgment day, as we have elsewhere seen,* will be the Millennial day or age, in which all the families of the earth will be judged (tried for eternal life) by the Christ, Head and body, the "little flock," the Kingdom class. Feb 15, 1898, p 60
17	We may assume, therefore, that during the Millennial age disciplines such people as those of Tyre and Sidon and those of Sodom, who had never known God to any degree, who had never known his laws, will be in a condition of heart much more readily amenable to the influences and requirements of that time than will be some others--the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, who having known more respecting God had misused the opportunities of the present life--who broke down their characters instead of building them. May 1, 1900, p. 135
18	Our Lord's declaration is that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for the cities of Galilee in that Millennial time. What can this mean? It means that under that blessed arrangement conditions will be favorable or tolerable even for those people who witnessed the Lord's miracles and yet were not moved by them to repentance and discipleship; and it will be still more tolerable for the heathen peoples of Tyre and Sidon--yes, for the degraded ones of Sodom, who never heard of the grace of God, who never tasted of the divine favors, or witnessed divine healings, or had opportunities of being taught of the Lord, or being accepted as disciples of Christ. April 1, 1904, p 109
19	To be as Sodom and Gomorrah, therefore, does not signify to be in an utterly hopeless condition as respects the future, though it would have implied hopelessness as respected the Kingdom opportunities of the Jewish and Gospel ages; because even to the Sodomites a blessing shall yet come through the glorified Christ Jesus, the Head, and the remnant Church, the little flock, his body. Our Lord mentioned this future hope of the Sodomites in one of his discourses, and the Prophet Ezekiel has stated it further in considerable detail, showing that as natural Israel will be reclaimed in due time from her cast-off condition and be dealt with by the great Messiah during the Millennial age, so also will the Sodomites come back to their "former estate," and if obedient they as well as others may yet return to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed, bought back, by the precious blood of Christ.-- Ezek. 16:48-63; Matt. 10:15. November 1, 1904, p 329
20	That our Lord had these very people of Sodom in his mind is evidenced by his own words, "fire came down from God out of heaven and destroyed them all." They had a day of judgment and now met their doom and were made an example of, illustrating God's indignation against all unrighteousness, and his will that all evil-doers shall be destroyed. What then did our Lord mean by referring to a day of judgment future? Will they be judged again? We answer, Yes. They will be judged again, not in the sense of punishing them a second time for their evil deeds-- they have already suffered for those. The promised day of judgment means a fresh time of trial pending. Feb 15, 1907, p 62

21	<p>The Sodomites were wickedly immoral; yet, in the Master's estimation, less wicked than those who, after hearing the Gospel, rejected it. This principle applies to many people and many cities of our day, as well as to Capernaum. The Master assures us that when the great Millennial Age, otherwise called the Day of Judgment, shall furnish opportunity for the whole world to be on trial for everlasting life or everlasting death, it will be more tolerable for the Sodomites than for many others. In proportion as anyone has come to a knowledge of Christ he has become responsible. The death of Christ secures for Adam and all of his race one full opportunity for salvation and no more. The majority have died in heathenish darkness without any opportunity; and many in Christian lands have disregarded their opportunity, as did the people of Capernaum. All must be brought to a full knowledge of their privileges in Christ and then all rejectors will be destroyed. April 1, 1910, p 120</p>
22	<p>Not only the Sodomites, but many of the heathen who have thus far enjoyed little or nothing of God's grace, will be in a more favorable condition as respects the prospects of the future than some who are now richly favored but are neglecting their privileges. Our Lord intimates that the Judgment or trial of the Millennium will be tolerable, not intolerable, for the people of Capernaum and more tolerable for the people of Sodom. How much more reasonable this is than the unscriptural nonsense that was once taught us by our well-meaning, deluded forefathers, who made the various sectarian creeds that are now causing trouble, and who then burned each other at the stake because of differences of opinion respecting these creeds and claimed that in so doing they were copying God, who was torturing the people of Tyre and Sidon and Capernaum and Sodom and hundreds of millions of others, heathen and civilized! April 15, 1910, p 133</p>
23	<p>In the cases of the Sodomites, Ninevites and Amalekites, Divine Justice decreed that their iniquity had come to the full, and that for them to live longer would be unwise, and for them to be cut off in death would not only hinder them from further degradation, but also furnish to mankind a general lesson, to the effect that there is a limit to the Divine permission of evil. The fact that these people were thus condemned and overthrown did not signify that they had ever enjoyed salvation, or even an offer of salvation. Like all of Adam's children, these people were under the sentence of death, "Dying thou shalt die"; "As all in Adam die." They were merely cut off from further life under present conditions. Their opportunity for future life by resurrection from the dead was not interfered with. March 15, 1911, p 88</p>
24	<p>The world's blessing will consist of an awakening from the tomb, and there will be an opportunity to the Sodomites, as well as the people in Jesus' day, to rise out of their sinful and fallen condition, and, if they will, to return to full harmony with God and have everlasting life. In that glorious Judgment Day of a thousand years (2 Pet. 37,8) the Sodomites will find it easier to make progress than will those who repudiated the message of Jesus and the Apostles. August 1, 1912, p 248</p>
25	<p>After the Church's trial, or judgment, shall have been finished and the overcomers shall have been found worthy, then, in that time of the world's judgment, the Sodomites will have an opportunity as had the Jews who heard Jesus at the first advent. And it will be much more tolerable then for the people of Tyre and Sidon</p>

	and Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, etc.; for the latter had had opportunities of knowledge, against which they had sinned; they therefore had more wilfulness in the matter than did the Sodomites. August 15, 1912, p 260
26	This shows us clearly that the eternal fate of the Sodomites is not sealed. When we turn to the Word of the Lord through Ezekiel the Prophet, 16:46-63, we have abundant testimony that the Sodomites will not only be awakened from the sleep of death, but when awakened will be brought to a knowledge of God and to an opportunity of obtaining everlasting life, through The Messiah, by willing obedience. February 1, 1913, p 45
27	In a word, God's proposal is that Messiah's Kingdom, the members of which are now being selected from the world--the Church, the Bride--will for a thousand years, with the Redeemer, bless and uplift and restore all the nations of earth--from sin, degradation, death, the tomb. Jesus explains that the Sodomites will be of this class to be restored by resurrection processes, and so also will, with those Canaanites, be subjects of Restitution. September 15, 1913 p 282
28	As the Sodomites experienced no knowledge nor blessing through Jesus, so Achan had none. As the Sodomites, redeemed by the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, will be awakened from the sleep of death during the Messianic Age, and their experiences will be more tolerable than those of the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida, so it will surely be with Achan. November 15, 1913, p 345
29	In the cases of the Sodomites, the Ninevites and the Amalekites, Divine Justice decreed that their iniquity had come to the full; that for them to live longer would be unwise; and that for them to be cut off in death would not only hinder them from further degradation, but also furnish to mankind a general lesson, to the effect that there is a limit to the Divine permission of evil. The fact that these people were thus condemned and overthrown did not signify that they had ever enjoyed salvation or even an offer of salvation. Like all Adam's children, these people were under the sentence of death-- "Dying, thou shalt die." They were merely cut off from further life under present conditions. Their opportunity for future life by resurrection was not interfered with, for neither they nor others had yet been redeemed. November 1, 1915, p 332

The Rutherford Years

1	<p>The Sodomites were wickedly immoral; yet, in the Master's estimation, less wicked than those who, after hearing the Gospel, reject it. This principle applies to many people and many cities of our day, as well as Capernaum. The Master assures us that when the great Millennial age, otherwise called the day of judgment, shall furnish opportunity for the whole world to be on trial for everlasting life or everlasting death, it will be more tolerable for the Sodomites than for many others. In proportion as anyone has come to knowledge of Christ he has become responsible. The death of Christ secures for Adam and all of his race one full opportunity for salvation and no more. The majority have died in heathenish darkness without any opportunity; and many in Christian lands have disregarded their opportunity, as did the people of Capernaum. All must be brought to a full knowledge of their privileges in Christ and then all rejecters will be destroyed.--Acts 3:23; 1 Timothy 2:4; Matthew 20:28.</p> <p>It is for us to be followers of Jesus and the apostles, to walk in their steps of devotion and thus to make our calling and our election sure to a share with Messiah in his kingdom, which, (during the Millennium, will bless Israel and all the families of the earth under a system of rewards and punishments, called Judgments. The Scriptures distinctly tell us that the Israelites and the Sodomites will be sharers in that work of restoration, restitution. October 15, 1920, p 316</p>
2	<p>That the hope of life by restitution will be extended by the Lord to all the nations, even to such an adulterous people as Sodom and Samaria, is proven by the words of God's prophet Ezekiel: "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." (Ezek. 16:60) The elder sister of the Jews was Samaria, and the younger sister here mentioned was Sodom: "When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate." August 15, 1929, p 247</p>
3	<p>Unlike the wars of men, the death of the Egyptians, the Sodomites, and those who perished in the flood was quickly accomplished, and there were no millions of maimed and wounded, and war-gassed living wrecks to suffer on for years in agony untold. In mercy he put them all to sleep until such time as he would awaken them to life again and they could profit by their experiences. December 15, 1929, p 379</p>
4	<p>In that judgment the Jews will have a harder time than the people of Sodom, and the people of "Christendom" will have a harder time than either the Jews or the Sodomites. This is proved by the words of Jesus: "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. 11: 22-24) In the resurrection those of "Christendom" who have died as captives to Satan's organization will find, when awakened from death, that Satan's organization is</p>

	<p>gone, and there will be no more opportunity for spiritual fornication therewith. (Ezek. 16: 58,59) In the full light of the truth they will be ashamed, except those who have been willfully wicked and who will not live again.</p> <p>The heathen, such as Sodom, must return, if at all, in order to learn that the name of God has been vindicated. All then must have and will have opportunity to know and obey God's law. Then all must see that they are not deserving of everlasting life, but that what God has done for them in providing the means of everlasting life is because of his great love and for his own name's sake.</p> <p>January 1, 1939, p 13</p>
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The Knorr Years	
1	<p>In the patriarch Abraham's day Jehovah God brought fire and brimstone from heaven upon the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah, and such was an evil upon them. (Genesis 19) In destroying them, however, Jehovah's action was right, for like reasons as the above stated. <u>It will not do to say that the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they were already coronets and under the condemnation of death as descendants of Adam.</u> They were not under sentence of death, for the reason that they had never been tried and sentenced. They were all born in sin by reason of the fact that they were offspring of Adam, who was sentenced to death in Eden. They were under condemnation because disapproved; but if for that reason they were executed, then we should expect Jehovah God to execute every one of the human race, because every child is born in sin. (Rom. 5: 12) However, in the case of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Sodomites and Gomorrhans the question of mere imperfection was <u>not involved. Those people had turned away from Jehovah God and worshiped the Devil. They opposed God's servants and chosen people,</u> and brought great reproach upon his holy name; and for the good of all creation God slew them.</p> <p>January 1, 1944, p 13</p>

Other Flip-flops Not So Silent

The eating-meat-on-Fridays fiasco for the Catholic Church was, in the opinion of many observers, a flip-flop. In those days the Church had modified its prohibition of eating meat on Fridays and that became, to many JWs, the essence of how gullible people could be -- following some religion that could simply change a **NO** to a conditional **YES**. One Friday it's not allowed and the next Friday it is. This reversal by a large mainstream church, however, was not so silent. The secular press¹ reported it and both **Watchtower** and **Awake!** magazines jumped on the bandwagon of commentary^[ix p 35].

I'd first heard of doctrinal flip-flops as a relatively new member of Jehovah's Witnesses. There were some JWs, including myself, who exploited that well-known reversal during encounters in our door-to-door meetings with Catholics -- "what now happens to those already dead and who are in *purgatory* for having eaten meat on Fridays -- does God suddenly release them because of some change in Church teaching?" This question was intended to stimulate the householder into thinking how unreasonable that church teaching must be -- a criticism of their claim that its leadership could simply, and from all appearances, change some doctrine at will.

The weeks following those WT articles about the Catholic Church, and its modified reversal, brought to my mind two strange memories that began to haunt me.

The first was an incident that happened in the early 1960's when most of the local JW congregation members were attentively tuned in to a call-in radio talk show. There, the Circuit Overseer -- they called him Circuit Servant in those years -- was sitting in the hot seat as the station's moderator took the phone calls.

One caller, whom I shall never forget, challenged this zealous and uncharacteristically youthful brother Valenzuela², -- he was not yet 30 -- by saying that "Jehovah's Witnesses once believed exactly the opposite of what they do today. How can they be directed by Holy Spirit when they flip-flop on their doctrines?"

"No", brother Valenzuela, quickly retorted. "We've always believed that the superior authorities are Jehovah God and Christ Jesus."

That heated exchange kept thrashing inside my head. Our brother was certainly sincere -- but that caller sounded sincere as well. Was it possible that there was some truth to what the caller was claiming? I placed it on my brain's *back burner*.



¹ **TIME**, Nov. 25, 1966: " ... one of the most anachronistic of Catholic spiritual customs: compulsory abstinence from meat on Friday."

² I think the young Circuit Servant's first name was Paul.

The second incident followed the first by only a year or so. It was 1962 and the Watchtower threw its readers a bombshell. The superior authorities of Romans 13 had now transformed from being Jehovah God and Christ Jesus (*JGJC*) to becoming the conglomerate of worldly rulers (*Caesar*) – exactly the position that caller from the radio talk show had argued.

The following table summarizes the Watchtower positions that I had learned so far.

But, wait. While it's true that *Caesar* was the caller's position, that's not what bothered me. Recall, he said that they "... **once believed exactly the opposite** of what they do today." That implied we had a position earlier than 1960¹, one which was not equal to *JGJC*.




c. Date	Doctrine
1960	
1962	

The Marshalltown, Iowa, Kingdom Hall had a small library of older books and booklets alongside magazines within their binders. Not many weeks passed before I was compelled to browse those shelves during some spare moments just before one of our regular meetings. I had a helpless feeling as I began this task, like someone looking for that proverbial needle in a haystack. I also knew, since these were older publications, I would need to look for the older Bible expression, *higher powers*, instead of the recently adopted *superior authorities* by the NWT².

To my surprise it didn't take long as I scrutinized several tables of content. One book boasted a 1920's publishing date. The contents of that book's chapter totally legitimized the sincerity of that talk show caller. Yes, the *higher powers* were indeed believed to be represented by modern-day *Caesar*, the earthly governments. Our 1960 belief, contemporary with that radio program, was that the *superior authorities* were the creator and his Son. This, in fact, was a flip-flop from earlier days.

To update our table, the positions of the Watchtower would look as follows:

The Society had not only flip-flopped, it went beyond that. During that period between 1929 and 1962³ they had taught the belief of three opposing positions toward a single doctrine.

Dates	Doctrine
1886-1929	
1929-1962	
1962 - Now	

¹ **Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, p. 147:** "In The Watch Towers of June 1 and June 15, 1929, ... it seemed to the Bible Students that 'the higher powers' must be Jehovah God and Jesus Christ."

² **The Watchtower, 1950, 9/15, p. 315:** "... the president announced to these eight fellow directors the existence of a "New World Bible Translation Committee" and that it had completed a translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures."

³ **Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, p. 147:** "Years later, a careful reanalysis of the scripture was made, along with its context and its meaning in the light of all the rest of the Bible. As a result, in 1962 it was acknowledged that 'the superior authorities' are the secular rulers ..."

My heart immediately went out to that youthful Circuit Servant who had, in essence, been *thrown to the wolves* in front of an audience of perhaps thousands in the Marshalltown community. How could he have been expected to know of a flip-flop that occurred before he was born?

My heart shifted to all Catholics who had been unfairly censured by so many of my (albeit sincere) brothers for their leadership's flip-flopping. I felt bad for participating.

There's no doubt that over the years since 1962 the Society and its membership have received much criticism over their intermediate thirty-three year position of *JGJC*, one that they finally reversed to its original stance. Not long ago they must have felt the need to re-address that issue by way of further reasoning.

"Looking back [1929-1962], it must be said that this view of things, exalting as it did the supremacy of Jehovah and his Christ, helped God's people to maintain an uncompromisingly neutral stand throughout this difficult period [World War II, the Cold War]." The Watchtower, 1996, 5/1 p. 14

Shocked? The Society knows better than to suggest that. It's as if they were saying, *"truth [Caesar] would not have been enough to guide the flock through this difficult wartime period. Spirit-direction, therefore, granted us the authority to temporarily bend Bible truth."* I leave it to the reader – honest or dishonest?

See Watchtower publication quotations below.

Date	Superior Authorities – Caesar or JGJC?
1886	<p>← "As early as 1886, Charles Taze Russell ... correctly identified 'the higher powers,' or 'the superior authorities,' mentioned by the apostle Paul, as human governmental authorities." The Watchtower, 1996, 5/1, p. 13</p>
1929	<p>← "In The Watch Towers of June 1 and June 15, 1929, ... it seemed to the Bible Students that 'the higher powers' must be Jehovah God and Jesus Christ." Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, p. 147</p>
1962	<p>← "Years later, a careful reanalysis of the scripture was made, along with its context and its meaning in the light of all the rest of the Bible. As a result, in 1962 it was acknowledged that 'the superior authorities' are the secular rulers ..." Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, p. 147</p>

Transplanting Human Body Parts

When the transplanting of human body parts came into focus by the Watchtower Society's leadership in 1961, they felt it necessary to take a decisive stance. For a leadership that boasts that they've never reverted to *previous points of view*^[x p 35], a record of three opposing positions and two flip-flops with respect to organ transplants, and within a period of less than 19 years, defies that claim.


The catch-22 was that for a period of some 12 years many individuals (there's no way now of counting the victims) with misguided faith, who could have been aided by some health or live-saving transplant, felt they had to refuse such treatment or face disfellowshipping at the hands of an overzealous legislative organization. That group was, in fact, placing the health and lives of these members in jeopardy, all under the premise of its *spirit-directed*^{1 p 34]} claim.

For these victims, it was a *live and be punished* predicament.

See Watchtower publication quotations below.


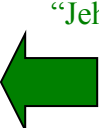


Date	Transplant Human Body Parts – Yes or No?
1961	<p>“The question of placing one’s body or parts of one’s body at the disposal of men of science or doctors at one’s death for purposes of scientific experimentation or replacement in others is frowned upon by certain religious bodies. However, it does not seem that any Scriptural principle or law is involved. It therefore is something that each individual must decide for himself. If he is satisfied in his own mind and conscience that this is a proper thing to do, then he can make such provision, and no one else should criticize him for doing so. On the other hand, no one should be criticized for refusing to enter into any such agreement.” The Watchtower, 1961, 8/1 p. 480</p>
1967	<p>“When there is a diseased or defective organ, the usual way health is restored is by taking in nutrients. The body uses the food eaten to repair or heal the organ, gradually replacing the cells. When men of science conclude that this normal process will no longer work and they suggest removing the organ and replacing it directly with an organ from another human, this is simply a shortcut. Those who submit to such operations are thus living off the flesh of another human. That is cannibalistic. However, in allowing man to eat animal flesh Jehovah God did not grant permission for humans to try to perpetuate their lives by cannibalistically taking into their bodies human flesh, whether chewed or in the form of whole organs or body parts taken from others.”</p>

¹ The Watchtower, 1985, 6/1 p. 30: "Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?"

	The Watchtower, 1967, 11/15, p. 702
1980	 <p>“For this reason, each individual faced with making a decision on this matter should carefully and prayerfully weigh matters and then decide conscientiously what he or she could or could not do before God. It is a matter for personal decision. (Gal. 6:5) <u>The congregation judicial committee would not take disciplinary action if someone accepted an organ transplant.</u>” The Watchtower, 1980, 3/15, p. 31</p>

Al'pha and the O·me'ga -- Its Identity

The identity of the Al'pha and the O·me'ga of Revelation 22:12 has been yet another source of confusion within the Society's writings. See the table of reversals below.

Date	<p style="text-align: center;">The Alpha and the Omega [Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Al'pha and the O·me'ga, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Revelation 22:12-13] Jehovah or Jesus?</p>
1955	 <p>“Jesus associated his return with the rewarding of his followers. Said he: ‘... Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is.’” <i>The Watchtower</i>, 1955, 7/1, p. 387</p>
1967	 <p>“Jehovah God himself next speaks to John, revealing the critical situation, the extreme danger if any one of God’s anointed ones becomes lax in the least way toward righteousness. Jehovah says: ‘Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is.’” <i>The Watchtower</i>, 1967, 11/15, p. 680</p>
1978	 <p>“Also, in his final revelation concerning “the things that must shortly take place,” Jesus again stresses the suddenness with which he comes: “I am coming to you quickly ... I am coming quickly. Keep on holding fast what you have.”—Rev. 2:16; 3:11. “Look! I am coming quickly. ... Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me. ... Yes; I am coming quickly.” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20) <i>The Watchtower</i>, 1978, 10/1, p. 15</p>
1988	 <p>“Jehovah, the King of eternity, now addresses readers of Revelation for the last time in the prophecy, saying: “Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”” <i>Revelation – Its Grand Climax At Hand!</i>, 1988, p. 316</p>

Summary

The Society is well-aware that it has made doctrinal changes, but apparently is not willing to concede that it's made *backward* doctrinal changes.

At times explanations given by Jehovah's visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case. The Watchtower, 1981, 12/1 p. 27

That is a contradictory^[xi p 35] statement which you must attribute to either ignorance or dishonesty. The record is crystal clear within its own writings that Watchtower doctrinal teachings have gone to *previous points of view* 7 times on the *resurrection* issue alone. The Society even goes so far as to liken such changes to those of a tacking sailing ship where, in reality, tacking can never go beyond some 45 degrees – a minor deviation when compared to the needed 180 degrees for a complete turnaround¹. The Bible perfectly describes this type of verbal maneuvering as being *carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching*^[xii p 35].

The Society has, without a doubt, gone to *previous points of view* pertaining to

- the Superior Authorities 2 times – 3 actual positions
- the Transplanting of Human Body Parts 2 times – 3 actual positions
- the identity of the Alpha and the Omega 3 times – 4 actual positions
- the resurrection of Sodomites 5 times – 6 actual positions
- other doctrines

There are some who may discount such doctrinal changes as trivial. To Jehovah's Witnesses, however, believing and teaching all that is currently taught is of utmost importance because of that organization's perceived need for unity. Unity at all costs -- even if that cost is based on fiction. Even if that cost results in excommunication of certain adherents who don't wish to believe and teach one of its doctrines to others.

This was brought to the attention of the general public during the renowned 1954 court case, "Douglas Walsh vs. The Right Honorable James Latham Clyde, M. P. C., etc." which was held in the country of Scotland. Watchtower Society principals that came under cross examination included then Vice-President Fred W. Franz² and Hayden C. Covington³, former Vice-President and then legal counsel for the Watchtower Society.

Classic Testimony

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tack_\(sailing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tack_(sailing)): Tacking ... allows the vessel to advance against the wind direction. Commonly the closest angle a yacht can sail to the wind is around 35 to 45 degrees.

² Franz was President during the years from 1977 to 1992 when he passed away.

³ Upon Rutherford's death in 1942, Covington was elected Vice President and a director of the Watch Tower Society, succeeding the newly elected President, Nathan H. Knorr. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayden_C._Covington

To illustrate their perceived need for organization unity in contrast with truth, the following Watchtower courtroom testimony¹ should help. [A = Covington]

Q. Is it not vital to speak the truth on religious matters?

A. It certainly is.

Q. You have promulgated - forgive the word - false prophecy?

A. We have. I do not think we have promulgated false prophecy, there have been statements that were erroneous, that is the way I put it, and mistaken.

Q. It was promulgated as a matter which must be believed by all members of Jehovah's witnesses that the Lord's Second Coming took place in 1874?

(A short discussion of evidence given by Fred W Franz about 1874 takes place here.)

Q. That was the publication of false prophecy?

A. That was the publication of a false prophecy, it was a false statement or an erroneous statement in fulfilment of a prophecy that was false or erroneous.

Q. And that had to be believed by the whole of Jehovah's Witnesses?

A. Yes, because you must understand, we must have unity, we cannot have disunity with a lot of people going every way, an army is supposed to march in step.

Q. Back to the point now, a false prophecy was promulgated?

A. I agree to that.

Q. It had to be accepted by Jehovah's witnesses?

A. That is correct.

Q. If a member of Jehovah's witnesses took the view himself that that prophecy was wrong, and said so, would he be disfellowshipped?

A. Yes, if he said so, and kept on persisting in creating trouble, because if the whole organisation believes one thing, even though it be erroneous, and somebody else starts on his own trying to put his ideas across, then there is a disunity and trouble, there cannot be harmony, there cannot be marching Our purpose is to have unity.

Q. Unity at all costs?

A. Unity at all costs, because we believe and are sure that Jehovah God is using our organisation, the governing body of our organisation, to direct it, even though mistakes are made from time to time.

Q. A unity based on an enforced acceptance of false prophecy?

A. That is conceded to be true.

¹ Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1973, p. 133: "The whole of the evidence took seven days to present and covered 762 pages of manuscript." That entire transcript is now available as a free file for downloading (though large at 99,115 KB) at several internet sites. One of them follows:
<http://www.lulu.com/content/762879>

Q. And the person who expresses his view, as you say, that it was wrong, and was disfellowshipped, would be in breach of the covenant, if he was baptised?

A. That is correct.

Q. And as you said yesterday expressly, would he be worthy of death?

A. I think....

Q. Would you say yes or no?

A. I will answer yes, unhesitatingly.

Q. Do you call that religion?

A. It certainly is.

Q. Do you call that Christianity?

A. I certainly do.

What does that have to do with flip-flops? Consider that *unity at all costs* means there will be *costs* in the form of disfellowshipped^[xiii p 35] members – members who simply can't refuse to accept some doctrine because its leadership decides to change it at whim.

It's evident that during certain years members could have been disfellowshipped for teaching that the ancient people who died at Sodom and Gomorrah would not be recipients of a resurrection. It's possible that during other years (including today) – members could have been disfellowshipped for teaching the very opposite, that Sodomites qualified for a merciful resurrection. Remember, *unity at all costs*.

Conclusion

Careful examination of Watchtower flip-flops tells us that they share the following characteristics:

- they are contradictory
- they are health and life-threatening at times
- they are inherently dishonest
- there is punishment to those not demonstrating *unity at all costs*

They each beg the question – can such history support the Society's claim of Holy *Spirit-directed* leadership? For the sake of its flock, I can only hope that their record of flip-flops reveals the opposite of that claim. May that record remain silent no longer.

Leonard R. Miller, 6/7/08

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ⁱ The word flip-flop is a modern one, its use as a "complete reversal of direction", dates from 1900. Modern Watchtower publications (re Watchtower Library 2005 CD) use it only once, that instance with reference to the Catholic Church: **The Watchtower, 1974, 6/1, p. 341**: "All of this represents quite a flip-flop from a quarter of a century ago when Pius XII decreed excommunication for all "atheistic Communists." Like apostate Israel of old, the Vatican is now casting out "feelers" in many directions in a vain hope of finding security."

ⁱⁱ **The Watchtower, 1989 3/15 p. 10, 11; Kingdom Ministry, October 1988, p. 7**: Those newly-released encyclopedic works represented their effort "... to bring the material in this publication up-to-date with what has been published in The Watchtower in recent years ... a wealth of truly valuable information ... What a beautifully illustrated publication! How it will unite us in researching Bible subjects so that we may speak in agreement on the real meaning of the Scriptures!"

ⁱⁱⁱ The Society justifies the change from a prior teaching with an expression called *new light*. It secures this *new light* principle on a single Bible verse, Proverbs 4:18: *The path of the righteous one is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.*

The Society elaborates: **The Watchtower, 1955, 5/15 p. 315**: "... the congregation of Christ must today follow its first-century pattern by receiving progressive understandings of Bible prophecies which unfold further majestic purposes of the Living God and which **new light** of truth must be published impartially the world over by God's prophetlike organization. Only the remnant of Jehovah's anointed witnesses and their companions "do not treat prophesyings with contempt" but publish their fulfillments as they become clear, in their Bible publications."

^{iv} Verify the exact release date (and day of week) by using the following two WT quotations:
Releases began at the "Divine Justice" conventions, beginning June 16-19, 1988. "June 16-19: AMARILLO, TX, ..." **The Watchtower, 1988, 2/15, p 29**: "The "Divine Justice" District Conventions" [The first day, June 16, 1988 was on Thursday]. You may verify that day of week with any free online date calculator such as <http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/index.html?year=1988&country=1>
"The second day [Friday] of the convention ... came to a climax when the Olympic Stadium was tied in by telephone with many other cities in Canada and the United States. The two-part symposium was highlighted by the release of the two-volume publication Insight on the Scriptures ..." **The Watchtower, 1989, 1/15 p 27, 28**

^v Reversal dates shown and the articles quoted may not reflect their precise *pivotal* date. Only extensive research within a large amount of WT literature could bear that out. For example, 1952 is correctly positioned as a **NO** yet it was not the pivotal date. There is a 1944 Watchtower article that taught the same position. The date 1952 however, affords the convenient use of the WT Library on CD since that currently goes back in history no earlier than 1950. The bottom line? Whether it's 1944 or 1952 is irrelevant. Its position of **NO** stands in contrast to the **YES** positions before and after.

^{vi} **The Watchtower, 1952, 2/1 p. 78**: "... then called 'Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence', and in the first issue, July 1879, its announced purpose was to provide 'meat in due season' to the 'little flock'".

Jehovah's Witnesses -- Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, 1993, p 621: "As Jehovah's Witnesses today review the work that he did, the things he taught, his reason for teaching them, and the outcome, they have no doubt that Charles Taze Russell was, indeed, used by God in a special way and at a significant time."

Using this basis of encouragement to review things Russell taught logically gives the modern day Witness license to read what he wrote. This 1879 quotation is only the first of the 33 Russell quotations contained herein.

^{vii} Next time you have the chance, ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses the following question: "Will the ancient Sodomites be resurrected?"

[As you've seen here, Watchtower has been dealing with this question since 1879. It's apparently a common one when you consider that the Sodomites are looked at by some as a model of how wicked a group of people can become.]

Chances are good that you will get an answer that reflects the statement found in the 2005 issue of The Watchtower: "Of course, only after "all those in the memorial tombs" are raised will we know for a certainty who has been favored with a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) So **rather than be dogmatic about the resurrection of any particular individual of old, we wait, trusting in Jehovah's perfect decision.**" WT, 2005, 7/15, p 31

The discrepancy? Yes, the Watchtower says that in the final paragraph, but it's not what they currently teach about the ancient Sodomites only 3 paragraphs earlier.

"The Scriptures speak of only two possibilities for the dead—the temporary state of nonexistence and the state of eternal death. **Those who are judged unworthy of a resurrection are pitched into "Gehenna,"** or "the lake of

fire.” (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:47, 48; Revelation 20:14) **Among these would be** the first human pair, Adam and Eve, the betrayer Judas Iscariot, and certain ones who died when God executed judgment upon them, such as the people in Noah’s day and **the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.**”

^{viii} After that period, digitized copies of *The Watchtower* along with many of their other publications onto a single CD, has made research far easier. Such annual issues of *Watchtower Library CD* can be purchased by Jehovah’s Witnesses. For those interested, the annual and official exit* of some 70,000 disgruntled members has made ownership by non-members possible through yard and garage sales and at on-line auction sites such as eBay. *Membership is usually terminated by disfellowshipping or letter of resignation.

^{ix} **The Watchtower, 1977, 6/1 p. 327:** Many of them reason as follows: ‘I have faithfully followed Catholic traditions all my life because my priest told me that these things were necessary in order to have God’s approval. Now he tells me such things as meatless Fridays are no longer necessary. For me it is one thing or the other. Either the Church has been wrong all along, in which case I have been deceived all my life, or the Church is going astray today.’

The Watchtower, 1970, 6/15 p. 357: "Church members took it for granted that such ideas as abstaining from meat on Fridays ... were rooted and grounded in the Holy Scriptures." References to that Church’s flip-flop can be found in WT publications some 22 years following that historic event of 1966.

Awake!, 1970, 4/22 p. 3-8: "The Catholic Church especially has been swept by the winds of change ... and changes have occurred in connection with the ... eating of meat on Friday." It then reminds its readers how horrific the prior teaching was. "A publication that bears the Catholic imprimatur, indicating approval, states: 'The Catholic Church says that it is a mortal sin for a Catholic to eat meat on Friday knowingly and wilfully, without a sufficiently grave and excusing reason.' It adds: The 'Church says that if a man dies in unrepented mortal sin, he will go to hell.' --Radio Replies, Rumble and Carty (1938)."

^x **The Watchtower, 1981, 12/1 p. 27:** “However, it may have seemed to some as though that path has not always gone straight forward. At times explanations given by Jehovah’s visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case. This might be compared to what is known in navigational circles as “tacking.” By maneuvering the sails the sailors can cause a ship to go from right to left, back and forth, but all the time making progress toward their destination in spite of contrary winds.”

^{xi} **The Watchtower, 2005, 7/1 p. 5:** “By comparing our beliefs with God’s Word, we imitate the people of ancient Beroea, who made sure that Paul’s teachings harmonized with the Scriptures. Rather than criticize the Beroeans, Luke commended them for their attitude. They “received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind,” he wrote, “carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) In view of the contradictory religious and moral teachings that abound today, it is important that we imitate the example of the noble-minded Beroeans.”

The Watchtower, 2005, 11/15 p. 5: “Many religious teachings about God are contradictory and confusing. Whose purpose do you think this serves? Contradictory teachings cannot all be true. Is it not possible, then, that many religious teachings are expressly designed and used by Satan to misguide people? In fact, the Bible refers to him as “the god of this system of things,” who has blinded people’s minds.—2 Corinthians 4:4.”

The Watchtower, 1976, 5/15, p. 298: “It is a serious matter to represent God and Christ in one way, then find that our understanding of the major teachings and fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures was in error, and then after that, to go back to the very doctrines that, by years of study, we had thoroughly determined to be in error. Christians cannot be vacillating—‘wishy-washy’—about such fundamental teachings. What confidence can one put in the sincerity or judgment of such persons?”

Blatant contradictions further repudiate the Society’s own words as found in **You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth, 1989, p. 195:** "The men of that governing body, like the apostles and older men in Jerusalem, have many years of experience in God’s service. But they do not rely on human wisdom in making decisions. No, being governed theocratically, they follow the example of the early governing body in Jerusalem, whose decisions were based on God’s Word and were made under the direction of holy spirit."

^{xii} **Ephesians 4:14** “...in order that we should no longer be babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error.”

^{xiii} Disfellowshipping can be extremely punitive. If a person has properly followed the Society’s advice by severing friendship ties with all non-JWs – schoolmates, workmates, even family – any remaining friendships are completely inside the JW community. Subsequently, by a public announcement, the JW community is admonished to cease association with that *evil* person. The punished victim is now socially isolated. The punishment goes so far as to include hatred of such disfellowshipped persons – not just their behavior. **The Watchtower, 1993, 10/1 p. 19:** "... a Christian must hate (in the Biblical sense of the word) those who have inseparably attached themselves to the badness. ... they "feel a loathing" toward

those who have made themselves God's enemies ..." Can you, for one moment, imagine yourself being asked to hate your child, parent, sibling, or any person whom you've been close to for your entire life?