

## CHAPTER 4

### AN EXAMINATION AND REFUTATION OF THE WITNESSES' POSITION ON THE 1975 CHRONOLOGY

The Witness writers who stated that their chronology established that 6,000 years since Adam's creation would end in 1975, did not claim infallibility, but they did say that this calculation was "reasonably accurate."<sup>1</sup> In the mind of the average Witness there was little or no doubt that the date was correct. This conclusion was drawn by the writer from his conversations with individual Jehovah's Witnesses. The same impression was reported by Ruth Brandon in her article, "Jehovah 1975": "For the Witness, there's no question of 'if.' Armageddon *will* happen in 1975, if not earlier, and the only important thing in this life is what's going to happen then, in the next."<sup>2</sup>

Several important subjects are considered in this chapter: (1) the 6,000-year tradition, (2) the expressions of certainty concerning the Witnesses' current chronology and particulars which must be considered in connection with the establishment of a chronology, and (3) problems which require the rejection of the Witnesses' chronological system.

#### I. THE WITNESSES AND THE 6,000-YEAR TRADITION

The view that 6,000 years of human existence would be followed by God's intervention and the end of the present world system can be traced through "pagan, Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan theology."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXXIX (August 15, 1968), p. 499.

<sup>2</sup> *New Society* (August 7, 1969), p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold D. Ehlert, *A Bibliographic History of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 8. Ehlert credits D. T. Taylor "for citing a large part of the literature dealing with the six and seven thousand year tradition . . . in his book, *The Voice of the Church*."

The 6,000 year view can be found in a number of pagan sources. These include: Chaldean, Egyptian, Etruscan, Median and Persian writings, the Sibylline Oracles and the philosopher Zoroaster.<sup>4</sup>

"A Jewish tradition of the six thousand years, followed by the Sabbath millennium, dates at least from the second century B.C. . . ."<sup>5</sup> The view is found in the Midrash, the *Cespar Mishna* and *Gemarah*.<sup>6</sup>

Within Christianity the tradition is found at least as early as the *Epistle of Barnabas* (A.D. 70-79). Church Fathers who are quoted by Ehlert as they state the position include: Justin Martyr (c. 100-163/67), Irenaeus (c. 130-?), Hippolytus (3rd. cent.), Cyprian (c. 200-258), Lactantius (c. 260-340), Jerome (c. 349?-420), Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers (c. 300-367), Augustine (354-430), Andrew of Crete (died c. 699) and Ambrose Ansbert (8 cent.).<sup>7</sup> Other names of the old Fathers could be given.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that following the chronology of the Septuagint many early writers concluded that *they* were living in the end of the age.

Elliott in his *Horae Apocalypticæ*, lists the following dates for the close of the sixth millennium, and the ushering in of the seventh, as set by some of the ancients: Sibylline Oracles, c. A.D. 196 (the earliest); Cyprian, c. 243; Hippolytus, 500; Lactantius, c. 500; Constantius, c. 500; Hilarion, 500; Sulpitius Severus 581; and Augustine, 650.<sup>9</sup>

The 6,000 year tradition was taught quite extensively during the middle ages and afterwards into the eighteenth century. Writers who taught the view include, Joachim Abbas (?-1212?), Jean Pierre d'Olive (1248/49-1298), Melancthon (1487-1560), Joseph Mede (1586-1638), John Bunyan (1628-1688) and Robert Fleming (?-1716).<sup>10</sup>

A number of writers and movements propagated the six thousand year system during the nineteenth century. Among them were William Miller and the Second Adventists. Pastor Russell credited Bowen of England for first digging out the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. See Appendix B.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

correct 6,000 year chronology. This source is acknowledged in the *Watch Tower* of October/November 1881.

We do not here give the time arguments or proofs. They are familiar to many, and can be had in more convenient shape. We merely notice here that the Bible chronology, first dug from Scripture by Bowen of England, which shows clearly and positively that the 6,000 years from Adam ended in 1873, and consequently that there the morning of the Millennial day (the seventh thousand) began, in which a variety of things are due.<sup>11</sup>

That Russell borrowed from the Adventists is also evident.

I recalled certain arguments used by my friend Jonas Wendell and other Adventists to prove that 1873 would witness the burning of the world, etc.—the chronology of the world showing that the six thousand years from Adam ended with the beginning of 1873—and other arguments drawn from the Scriptures and supposed to coincide.<sup>12</sup>

Russell also explained how Second Adventist, N. H. Barbour, convinced him that the 1873 date for the end of the 6,000 years and the second presence of Christ in 1874 were correct.<sup>13</sup>

The 6,000 year chronology as "dug from Scripture" by Bowen, propagated by Second Adventists, and followed by Russell is still the basic chronology of the Jehovah's Witnesses today—with one major adjustment, the acceptance of the reading of "four hundred and eightieth year" at I Kings 6:1 instead of the emendation to "five hundred and eightieth year" accepted by Russell.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, I, p. 289. The reference to "Bowen of England" could be Thos. Bowen. Other writers of the nineteenth century placed the termination of the 6,000 years at different dates. R. C. Shimeall placed the end of the period at 1868 in his book *Our Bible Chronology* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Burr, 1859), p. 182. E. B. Elliott stated that Fynes Clinton's chronology had the 6,000 years since Adam end in 1862. Elliott ended the period in 1865, *Horae Apocalypticæ* (fourth ed.; London: Seeleys, 1851), IV, pp. 228, 235. Elliott also includes C. Bowen's chronology, that followed by Russell (p. 236).

<sup>12</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, IV (July 15, 1906), p. 3822.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Compare *Watch Tower Reprints*, III (May 15, 1896), p. 1980 and *The Time Is at Hand* (Allegheny, Pa.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1889), p. 53, with *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 150. Russell figured the period from Solomon's death to Zedekiah's overthrow as 393 years, but the present position finds only 390.

Russell, following Bowen's chronology and that of the Second Adventists with which he had contact, placed Adam's creation at 4128 B.C., with a period of two years spent in the Garden of Eden. Adam's innocence was ended by the fall in 4126 B.C. Current Watchtower chronology places the creation of Adam at 4026 B.C., but reduces the time in the Garden to "weeks or months," ("or years" was added in the October 1, 1975 *Watchtower*, p. 579).

Russell placed the acceptance of the 6,000 year prophetic scheme in proper perspective when he wrote:

And though *the Bible contains no direct statement* that the seventh thousand will be the epoch of Christ's reign, the great Sabbath Day of restitution to the world, yet the *venerable tradition* is not without reasonable foundation [italics mine].<sup>15</sup>

This statement, published in 1889, is just as accurate today as it was at that time. The admission that "the Bible contains no direct statement" that anything was to happen after 6,000 years and that the idea was based on "venerable tradition" should be pondered by anyone who claims that prophetic teaching must be based on the Bible.

## II. THE WITNESSES AND BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

*Confidence in a "correct" chronology.* To the uninformed or uncritical reader, the articles and other treatments which have dealt with chronology in recent Watchtower publications look impressive and exude confidence. The reader is informed that that which is presented is "reliable" and "trustworthy," the result of earnest and independent research of the Bible.<sup>16</sup> One Witness writer writes boldly:

One thing is absolutely certain, Bible chronology reinforced with fulfilled Bible prophecy shows that six thousand years of man's existence will soon be up, yes, within this generation! (Matt. 24:34)<sup>17</sup>

It is significant that Russell's chronology, which established the creation of Adam as 4128 B.C., rather than the current date of 4026, was also verified by elaborate "proofs" and viewed as trustworthy. Some illustrations of this follow.

In the book *Three Worlds*, published in 1877, the reader is informed that "the mass of evidence which synchronizes with the fact that the six thousand years are already ended, is absolutely startling, to one who will take the trouble to investi-

<sup>15</sup> *The Time Is at Hand*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Life Everlasting—in Freedom of the Sons of God* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1966), pp. 28, 29; *Awake!*, XLVII (October 8, 1966), p. 19; *The Watchtower*, XC (October 15, 1969), p. 622.

<sup>17</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXXIX (August 15, 1968), p. 500.

gate," and that "clear proof can be found that the six thousand years from Adam are ended."<sup>18</sup>

The November 15, 1904 *Zion's Watch Tower* contained four diagrams submitted by three supporters of Russell's chronology. Russell explained the significance of these studies:

Each has peculiarities of its own, yet all show *parallels* additional to those presented in DAWN, Vol. 2, and all serve the one purpose of confirming the chronology presented in that volume, as the only possible and consistent Bible chronology, on which alone all the various lines of prophecy are harmonizable . . . .

The lesson of the accompanying diagrams is that no such *parallels* would be possible were a single one of our prominent dates altered. For instance, the two years' difference between the end of the 6,000 years, 1872 A.D. and the beginning of the antitypical Jubilee period, 1874 A.D. . . .

Do not these dove-tailing figures prove (as nearly as faith could expect proof) that we are right respecting the chronology on which these matters are based . . . ?<sup>19</sup>

In the June 15, 1905 *Zion's Watch Tower* there is an extended article by J. Edgar entitled, "Remarkable Chronological Parallels." This article contains "Three charts of history, showing various parallels, all confirmatory of our chronological applications." At the end of the article there is yet another outline chart, this one prepared by U. G. Lee, which again demonstrates parallels which "prove" that the 6,000 years ran out in 1874.<sup>20</sup>

Many additional pages are given over to supposed reliability of the old chronology by Russell and such dates as 1874 and 1878.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1917 publication, *The Finished Mystery*, Pastor Russell's chronology is said to be further corroborated by the Great Pyramid of Egypt.

Morton Edgar, author of *Pyramid Passages*, has found foreshown in the Great Pyramid of Egypt abundant evidence of the accuracy of the Bible chronology of Pastor Russell and the supplements thereto sup-

<sup>18</sup> Barbour and Russell, *Three Worlds, and the Harvest of this World*, pp. 67, 186.

<sup>19</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, IV (November 15, 1904), pp. 3459, 3460. See Appendix C.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3579. See Appendix C.

<sup>21</sup> See *The Time Is at Hand*, Chapter VII, pp. 201-245.

plied by Dr. John Edgar, deceased. . . . Pastor Russell's chronology was written before he ever saw the pyramid . . . .

The chronology as it appears in the *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* is accurate. . . .<sup>22</sup>

The Society, still convinced of the accuracy of its chronology, published the following in 1922:

It is on the basis of such and so many correspondencies—in accordance with the soundest laws known to science—that we affirm that, *Scripturally, scientifically, and historically, present-truth chronology is correct beyond a doubt.* Its reliability has been abundantly confirmed by the dates and events of 1874, 1914, and 1918. Present-truth chronology is a secure basis on which the consecrated child of God may endeavor to search out things to come.

. . . Many years ago all these matters were deeply considered by Pastor Russell, and he declared, in an article that we will soon republish, that a change of one year would destroy the entire system of chronology.<sup>23</sup>

It is history that this chronology which was stated to be "*correct beyond a doubt*" was rejected for that which is presently accepted. It was in 1943, with the publication of *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, that a new creation chronology, replacing the old was published. A careful reading of the chapter entitled, "The Count of Time," reveals that there is absolutely no mention of the old time reckoning.<sup>24</sup>

*Chronology based on supposition and faith.* In an article in *Zion's Watch Tower* Russell cautioned his readers concerning Bible chronology. Under the subheading "Chronology Based Upon Faith" he stated:

. . . We have pointed out there that the chronology of the Bible is not stated with great clearness, that fractions of years are ignored and that there are certain breaks in it.

We have suggested that ordinarily the chronology would be *quite insufficient as evidence and that our acceptance of it is based on faith—on the supposition that God wished to give us a chronology,* wished that we might have some knowledge of the times and seasons,

<sup>22</sup> Clayton J. Woodworth and George H. Fisher (eds.) (1926 ed.; Brooklyn: Peoples Pulpit Association, 1917), pp. 60, 61. See Appendix A.

<sup>23</sup> *The Watch Tower*, XLIII (June 15, 1922), p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> Pp. 141-152.

and yet wished that it might be so obscure and indefinite as to *require faith* on the part of his people [*italics mine*].<sup>25</sup>

Under the title "Knowledge and Faith Regarding Chronology" a question from a reader of *Zion's Watch Tower* is presented and answered.

A dear Brother inquires, Can we feel absolutely sure that the Chronology set forth in the *DAWN-STUDIES* is correct?—that the harvest began in A.D. 1874 and will end in A.D. 1914 in a world-wide trouble which will overthrow all present institutions and be followed by the reign of righteousness of the King of Glory and his bride, the church?

. . . Our claim has always been that they [calculations] are based on *faith*. . . .

. . . Thus we sought to prove that chronology cannot be built on *facts*, but can be received only on *faith*. . . .<sup>26</sup>

In another article Russell wrote: "As stated in *DAWN*, Vol. II, the Bible Chronology presents a sufficiency of difficulties to require *faith that God meant to give us a time measurement.*"<sup>27</sup>

Two thoughts clearly emerge from Russell's quotations: (1) One must *assume* that God wished to give a creation and eschatological chronology in the Bible. (2) A chronology derived from the Bible must be accepted on the *basis of faith*. The emphases on supposition and faith are not found in the current publications of the Jehovah's Witnesses, although the basis for their chronology has not changed since Russell's time.

Most Bible scholars of the twentieth century reject the attempts at establishing a complete and meaningful chronology on the basis of information in the Bible. The following statement illustrates the point:

Still another difficulty arises from the using of the genealogies of the Bible as a basis for chronology. Many chronologies have been constructed upon the assumption that the genealogies might be so used. The careful scrutiny of the genealogies and the use made, or not made, of them in the Bible reveals that they may never be so used as a means of constructing a chronology.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, VI (May 1, 1914), p. 5450.

<sup>26</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, V (October 1, 1907), p. 4067.

<sup>27</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, IV (November 15, 1904), p. 3459.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Mack, "Chronology of the Old Testament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1939), I, p. 644A.

*Chronology and the creation date.* Pastor Russell and many others in the past have attempted to calculate the date of Adam's creation on the basis of the data in the Bible. Each felt that his particular scheme was correct. The same is true for the Watchtower Society today. Both Russell and the present Society acknowledged that other attempts had been made and these had failed. The Pastor referred to "between one and two hundred different systems"<sup>29</sup> and a recent *Watchtower* issue reported that

a hundred years ago when a count was taken, no less than 140 different timetables had been published by serious scholars. In such chronologies the calculations as to when Adam was created vary all the way from 3616 B.C.E. to 6174 B.C.E. with one wild guess set at 20,000 B.C.E.<sup>30</sup>

With so many studies "by serious scholars" with such diverse results, one might question whether a valid chronology was either possible or intended in Scripture. It also should be pointed out that the quotations above do not reflect the full measure of the problem as the statements which follow demonstrate.

Joseph Packard published the following in 1858:

The uncertainty of ancient chronology and the want of agreement among chronologists have passed into a proverb. Scaliger complains that no two systems could be found to agree, and that he rose from the study more doubtful than ever.

.....  
 . . . We are sorry to damp sanguine hopes of success in the attainment of certainty in this science; but when we remember that Sir Isaac Newton spent a great part of the last thirty years of his life in this study, and wrote over his system *sixteen* times [footnote: Whiston in his life says that Sir Isaac wrote out *eighteen* copies with his own hand, differing slightly from each other.] without settling the disputed points, and that this subject has exercised the great minds of Usher, Scaliger, and Playfair, without much success, we dare not hope that where they have failed, others will succeed. As long as we are deficient in historical and chronological data, so long the difficulty will remain.

. . . We have spoken of the want of agreement among chronologists. In proof of it we might mention that there are on record no less than *three hundred* different opinions as to the era of the creation, their greatest difference being no less than 3268 years.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Watch Tower Reprints*, I (December, 1883), p. 561.

<sup>30</sup> LXXXIX (August 15, 1968), pp. 494, 495.

<sup>31</sup> "Sacred Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, XV (April, 1858), pp. 289, 290.

In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* treatment on "Chronology" in the 1892 edition W. L. R. Cates wrote:

Des Vignoles, in the preface to his *Chronology of Sacred History*, asserts that he collected upwards of two hundred different calculations the shortest of which reckons only 3483 years between the creation of the world and the commencement of the vulgar era, and the longest 6984. The difference amounts to thirty-five centuries.<sup>32</sup>

In the article on "Chronology" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908) the writer J. A. Howlett referred to the confusion at that time:

In an article on Biblical chronology it is hardly necessary in these days to discuss the date of creation. At least 200 dates have been suggested, varying from 3483 to 6934 years B.C., all based on the supposition that the Bible enables us to settle the point. But it does nothing of the sort.<sup>33</sup>

The article on "Old Testament Chronology" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* reflects the problem:

The ancient Oriental world did not think epochally and so the epochal method of recording history has no place in their record. It is no wonder that the attempt to put an epoch into the Biblical record meets with such difficulty as that no two chronologists agree, and no two editions of the same chronology, while the author is still alive and able to revise his work.<sup>34</sup>

This writer has located scores of similar expressions as recorded above. These may be found by the reader in many of the standard Bible dictionaries and commentaries. Typical of the statements of contemporary authors on Bible chronology are the observations by E. R. Thiele:

The chronology of the Old Testament presents many complex and difficult problems. The data are not always adequate or clear, and at times are almost completely lacking. Because of insufficient data many of the problems are at present beyond solution. Even where the data are abundant the exact meaning is often not immediately apparent, leaving scope for considerable difference of opinion and giving rise to many variant chronological reconstructions. The chronological problem is thus one of the availability of evidence, of the correct evaluation and

<sup>32</sup> V, p. 713.

<sup>33</sup> III, p. 731.

<sup>34</sup> Mack, p. 644A.

interpretation of that evidence, and of its proper application. Only the most careful study of all the data, both Biblical and extra-Biblical, can hope to provide a satisfactory solution.

.....  
 Because of the difficulties involved, it must be admitted that the construction of an absolute chronology from Adam to Abraham is not now possible on the basis of the available data.<sup>35</sup>

In preparation for this book a number of publications were examined, many of which presented dates for the creation of Adam. The table which follows is a sampling of the dates proposed by various writers. It is interesting to note that the problem of Old Testament chronology and speculation as to the date of Adam's creation are still subjects of lively debate.

PROPOSED DATES FOR THE CREATION OF ADAM

Date B.C.	Author	Copyright or Publication Date of Source <sup>36</sup>
3958	Selwyn	1899
3983	Petavius, cited by Poole	1863
3996	Totten	1892
4000	Van Lennep, Davidson	1928, 1957
4003	Panin	-----
4046	Mauro	1922
4100	Armstrong	1971
4125	Waring	1935
4132	Shimeall	1859
4172	M'Clintock and Strong	1868
c. 4970	Whitelaw	1970
5100	Hartman	1971
5300	Auchincloss	1908
5361	Poole	1863
5394	A. Rutherford, cited by Smith	1957
5407	A. Rutherford	1971

<sup>35</sup> "Chronology, Old Testament" *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (second ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 166. See also: K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966), pp. 35-78.

<sup>36</sup> The copyright or publication dates do not in every case represent the year that date for the creation of Adam was first published.

5411	Hales, cited by Totten	1892
5421	Poole	1863
5426	Jackson, cited by Poole	1863
5546	Akers	1855
5556	Rehwinkle	1966
5654	Teachout	1971
5862	Rimmer	1929
11,013	H. Camping	1970

WATCHTOWER PROPOSED DATES FOR THE CREATION OF ADAM

Date B.C.	Watchtower Source	Copyright date
4129	<i>Watch Tower Reprints</i> , p. 1980	1896
4128	Russell, <i>The Time Is at Hand</i> , p. 53	1889
4028	<i>The Truth Shall Make You Free</i> , p. 152	1943
4026	<i>The Kingdom Is at Hand</i> , p. 171	1944
4025	<i>New Heavens and a New Earth</i> , p. 364	1953
4026	<i>All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial</i> , p. 286	1963

Can Adam's creation date be determined on the basis of Scripture as the Witnesses and others have claimed? An examination of the numerous systems and differing results of each would cause the informed and objective scholar to answer in the negative. This writer's sentiments are well expressed by Fred Kramer:

In our evaluation of the method of computing chronology on the basis of genealogy, as employed by Ussher and others, we have come to the conclusion that the method is wrong and unsupported by the Scripture itself. We cannot fail to note that the purpose of the genealogies in Scriptures is something far other than the computation of chronology.<sup>37</sup>

An invalid method of computing chronology cannot yield other than invalid and confusing conclusions.

*Adam's stay in the Garden.* Although the Watchtower Society leadership condemns speculation on the part of the individual Jehovah's Witness, it has been obvious, and will be

<sup>37</sup> "A Critical Evaluation of the Chronology of Ussher," *Rock Strata and the Bible Record*, ed. Paul A. Zimmerman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 62, 63.

more so, that speculation is a characteristic of Watchtower writers.<sup>38</sup> The question of Adam's length of stay in the Garden of Eden is important, because this time is not considered by the Witnesses as part of the "seventh day" and therefore must be subtracted from the 5996 years which they calculate have elapsed as of 1971. This would make the 6,000 years run out later.

The time Adam spent in the Garden after his creation, before the fall, is not stated in Scripture. Russell speculated that the time which elapsed was two years:

... Just how long we are not informed, but two years would not be an improbable estimate. . . .

Recalling all these circumstances, we can scarcely imagine that a shorter time than two years elapsed in that sinless condition . . .<sup>39</sup>

It is enlightening to read Witness writers who argue for contradictory positions on the basis of their current thinking. As an example, *The Watchtower* issue of February 1, 1955 argues (while not stating a definite period such as Russell's two years) that the 6,000 years would not run out exactly in keeping with the chronology

because Adam lived some time after his creation in the latter part of Jehovah's sixth creative period, before the seventh period, Jehovah's sabbath began.

Why, it must have taken Adam *quite some time to name all the animals*, as he was commissioned to do. Further, it appears from the *New World Translation* that, even while Adam was naming the animals, other family kinds of living creatures were being created for Adam to designate by name. (Gen. 2:19, footnote d, NW) It was not until after Adam completed this assignment of work that his helpmate Eve was created. . . [italics mine].

The very fact that, as part of Jehovah's secret, no one today is able to find out how much time Adam and later Eve lived during the closing days of the sixth creative period, so no one can now determine when six thousand years of Jehovah's present rest day come to an end.<sup>40</sup>

In *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1968, although Adam's

<sup>38</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXIII (February 1, 1952), pp. 80-82.

<sup>39</sup> *Thy Kingdom Come*, pp. 127, 128.

<sup>40</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXVI (February 1, 1955), p. 95.

time in the Garden of Eden is stated as an "unknown amount," it is shortened:

And yet the end of that sixth creative "day" could end within the same Gregorian calendar year of Adam's creation. *It may involve only a difference of weeks or months, not years.*

... So the lapse of time between Adam's creation and the end of the sixth creative day, *though unknown*, was a comparatively short period of time [italics mine].<sup>41</sup>

Whereas in the 1955 *Watchtower* the naming of the animals is stated to have taken "quite some time," the 1968 *Watchtower* interpretation speculates that "the naming of the animals by Adam, and his discovery that there was no complement for himself, required no great length of time." The earlier rendition which stated that the *New World Translation* showed that animals were created after Adam's creation is also rejected in the 1968 explanation: "This does not mean that the animals and birds were created after Adam was created. Genesis 1:20-28 shows it does not mean that."<sup>42</sup>

The estimate of two years by Russell, no definite number of years by the second Witness, and the recent conclusion of "weeks or months, not years" for Adam's stay in the Garden are *pure speculation*.

A very important question comes to mind. Why did it take God almost 7,000 years (according to the Witnesses' view of the creative "days") to create what came into existence on the sixth "day," and only take a matter of "weeks or months" for Adam's creation and the associated events? Is it not legitimate to see Adam's creation, work and presence in the Garden of Eden as something which could take *many years* on the basis of a 7,000-year "day"?

What makes a stay of "weeks or months" more reasonable than two, three, five, ten, twenty or more years for the period? Since it is admitted that there is *no place in the Bible* where one can learn how long Adam was in the Garden, any time set would be nothing more than guess work. If the Witnesses' dates in the future are based on such speculation, they too must be viewed as pure theory and not as fact.

<sup>41</sup> LXXXIX, pp. 499, 500.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

## III. THE WITNESSES AND BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

*The problem of sources.* The Witnesses have based their chronology of the Patriarchs on the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as recorded in the Hebrew text without giving value to other ancient texts. But as the accompanying Table shows, a comparison of the available sources displays some significant differences in the figures given for the patriarchs in these chapters. While the present writer is in agreement with the Witnesses and most Bible scholars today that the Masoretic text is superior to the *Septuagint* and Samaritan Pentateuch in accuracy, Thiele states that

an endeavor to assess the relative values of the three sources involved accomplishes little, for the indications are that none is altogether complete. Certainly the LXX had great weight in NT times, for in Luke's table of the ancestor's of Christ, there is listed a second Cainan, son of Arphaxad (Luke 3:36), in harmony with the LXX of Gen. 11:12, 13—a name not found in the MT.<sup>43</sup>

Theodore L. Handrich further reminds the reader

that one cannot entirely discount the Septuagint where it differs from the Masoretic Hebrew text. The inspired writers of the New Testament and even our Lord Jesus Himself raised the status of the Septuagint very much by frequently quoting from it as well as from the Hebrew Old Testament.<sup>44</sup>

An examination of the sources, then yields two problems: (1) which of the figures in the three sources should be used in the computation of a chronology?, and (2) are any of the sources actually complete? With these two problems confronting the Witnesses or any chronologer, an absolute chronology is impossible. The second of the problems is developed more fully below.

*The probability of abridged genealogies.* Until the middle of the nineteenth century Old Testament chronology was built almost entirely on the assumption that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 were complete and could be used for chronological purposes. But upon careful study, most scholars today agree that this is not so, because the genealogies have been abridged. An early, oft-quoted and extensive presentation of the

<sup>43</sup> Thiele, p. 166.

<sup>44</sup> *The Creation: Facts, Theories, and Faith* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 97.

EARLY PATRIARCHAL GENEALOGIES<sup>45</sup>

Name	Age at birth of successor			Balance of life			Total years		
	MT	LXX	Sam. P.	MT	LXX	Sam. P.	MT	LXX	Sam. P.
Adam	130	230	130	800	700	800	930	930	930
Seth	105	205	105	807	707	807	912	912	912
Enosh	90	190	90	815	715	815	905	905	905
Kenan	70	170	70	840	740	840	910	910	910
Mahalalel	65	165	65	830	730	830	895	895	895
Jared	162	162	62	800	800	785	962	962	847
Enoch	65	165	65	300	200	300	365	365	365
Methuselah	187	167	67	782	802	653	868	969	720
Lamech	182	188	53	595	565	600	777	753	653
Noah	500	500	500	450	450	450	950	950	950
Shem	100	100	100	500	500	500			600
Arpachshad	35	135	135	403	430	303			438
Kainan		130			330				
Shelah	30	130	130	403	330	303			433
Eber	34	134	134	430	370	270			404
Peleg	30	130	130	209	209	109			239
Reu	32	132	132	207	207	107			239
Serug	30	130	130	200	200	100			230
Nahor	29	79	79	119	129	69			148
Terah	70	70	70				205	205	145

view that abridgment has taken place in Genesis 5 and 11 is that by William H. Green. Green explains his treatment as one which presents

considerations which seem to me to justify the belief that the genealogies in Genesis v. and xi., were not intended to be used, and cannot properly be used, for the construction of a chronology.

It can scarcely be necessary to adduce proof to one who has even a superficial acquaintance with the genealogies of the Bible, that these are frequently abbreviated by the omission of unimportant names. In fact, *abridgment is the general rule . . .* [italics mine].<sup>46</sup>

A more recent comprehensive presentation of the abridgment

<sup>45</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), p. 150.

<sup>46</sup> "Primeval Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, XLVII (April, 1890), p. 286. It is



position is found in the *Genesis Flood*. Authors Whitcomb and Morris develop eight "important reasons for questioning the validity of the strict-chronology interpretation of Genesis 11."<sup>47</sup> Since these reasons are important and involved, they are presented in their entirety in Appendix D of the present study. At this point the summarization by Whitcomb and Morris should suffice:

In summarizing the arguments of this entire discussion, we may say that the lack of an overall total of years for the period from the Flood to Abraham, the absence of Cainan's name and years in the Hebrew text, the symmetrical form of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, the inclusion of data that are irrelevant to a strict chronology, the impossibility of all the post-diluvian patriarchs being contemporaries of Abraham, the Biblical indications of a great antiquity for the judgment of Babel, the fact that the Messianic links were seldom firstborn sons, and the analogy of "begat" being used in the ancestral sense allow the existence of gaps of an undetermined length in the patriarchal genealogy of Genesis 11.<sup>48</sup>

A survey of the other recent articles and books which deal with the subject of Bible chronology reveals that they are in near unanimous agreement that the genealogies of Genesis are not complete. Therefore, they cannot be used as the Witnesses have used them. Yet, from an examination of Watchtower publications, one would never learn that such a view even exists!<sup>49</sup> The Society writers may feel that it is best to avoid mention of the abridgment position, for if it is correct, as the evidence indicates, *any* attempt to calculate Adam's creation date on the basis of the Genesis genealogies could *never* be successful!

impossible in the space of this book to give the full arguments from the Bible that Green presents in confirming that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not complete. The reader is referred to the article which covers pages 285-303. Green stated his conclusion: "... We conclude that the Scriptures furnish no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham; and that the Mosaic records do not fix and were not intended to fix the precise date either of the Flood or of the creation of the world." (p. 303)

<sup>47</sup> John C. Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1961), p. 474.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483. See also: *Rock Strata and the Bible Record*, pp. 57-67; Frederick Gardner, "The Chronological Value of the Genealogy in Genesis V," *Bibliotheca Sacra* XXX (April 1873), pp. 323-333.

<sup>49</sup> See the extensive treatment on "Chronology" in *Aid to Bible Understanding* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1969), pp. 322-348.

*The "second Cainan" of Luke 3:36.* Luke, in Chapter 3 of his Gospel, mentions a name in his genealogy which is not found in Genesis 11, the name Cainan. As far as this writer has been able to determine, Russell never considered the problem of Cainan's appearance in this passage. The genealogies of Genesis 11 and Luke 3 at this point are as follows:

Genesis 11:10-18	Luke 3:35, 36 (in part)
Shem	Shem
Arpachshad	Arphaxad
	Cainan
Shelah	Shelah
Eber	Eber
Peleg	Peleg <sup>50</sup>

On the basis of the New Testament manuscripts it must be conceded that the Holy Spirit guided Luke in the recording of this genealogy which adds Cainan, for there is no positive proof of any interpolation in the text at this point.

The Witnesses have attempted to explain away the problem of a separate generation in the following ways: (1) It is stated that Cainan was a "surname of Arphaxad."<sup>51</sup> A footnote in the *New World Translation* on the verse explains that "the name may be a corruption of the word 'Chaldean,' so that the text may have read here: 'the son of the Chaldean Arphaxad.' See Genesis 10:22, 24; I Chronicles 1:17, 18."<sup>52</sup> (2) Or it is argued that "many believe that the name Cainan was not to be found in the original text of Luke's Gospel account."<sup>53</sup> As evidence of this omission, the absence of Cainan's name in the sixth century Cambridge Manuscript (Codex Bezae, designated D) is mentioned.<sup>54</sup>

In answer to the Witnesses' arguments for the deletion of Cainan as a separate generation, it may be remarked. (1) The contention that Cainan may be a corrupted surname and should read "the son of the Chaldean Arphaxad" does not fit the

<sup>50</sup> Follows the spellings in the *New World Translation*.

<sup>51</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXXVI (May 15, 1965), p. 293.

<sup>52</sup> 1963 edition, p. 2993.

<sup>53</sup> *The Watchtower*, LXXXVII (July 1, 1966), p. 416.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

pattern of the genealogy in this chapter of Luke.<sup>55</sup> (2) It is obvious that Cainan was found in the original Greek text of Luke. Nearly all of the Greek manuscripts of Luke 3:36 have this reading. Therefore, its omission in Codex Bezae is a weak reason for concluding that Cainan was not originally in the text. Its absence in this codex is not unusual, for as Bruce M. Metzger explains:

No known manuscript has so many and such remarkable variations from what is usually taken to be the normal New Testament text. Codex Bezae's special characteristic is the free addition (and occasionally omission) of words, sentences, and even incidents.<sup>56</sup>

Frederick G. Kenyon characterized Bezae as "undoubtedly the most curious, though certainly not the most trustworthy, manuscript of the New Testament known to us."<sup>57</sup> Moreover, all translations, including the Witnesses', have the reading "Cainan."

Thus, the fact remains that Cainan's name does appear in Luke 3:36, even in the Witnesses' own works; there simply is no solid evidence for its absence in the Greek text. Therefore, it must be allowed that there is *at least one* name omitted in the Masoretic Hebrew text of Genesis 11 and, according to the Septuagint, 130 years must be added to the chronology. This point alone would invalidate the 6,000 year tradition, for 6,000 years would have expired in 1845, rather than 1975!

#### IV. ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS WITH THE WITNESSES' CHRONOLOGY

Among other problems to be found in the Witnesses' chronology, three additional ones might be mentioned: (1) the dating

<sup>55</sup> Plummer points out that throughout the genealogical table the definite article belongs to the name in front of it, since Joseph, the first name has no article before it. Thus, every occurrence of the definite article "means 'who is of,' i.e., either 'the son of' or 'the heir of.'" Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, The International Critical Commentary (fifth ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1922), p. 105.

The interested reader should examine the way the *New World Translation* (1961 ed.) handles the genealogy (verses 23-38). An examination of the Greek text in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1969) also supports this author's contention.

<sup>56</sup> *The Text of the New Testament—Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 50.

<sup>57</sup> *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (fourth ed.; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1941), p. 144.

of the Babylonian Captivity, (2) the span of the period between the Divided Kingdom and the fall of Jerusalem, and (3) the date of the Genesis Flood.

*The Babylonian Captivity.* Figuring backward from the return of the Jews from exile in the autumn of 537 B.C., the Witnesses fit the seventy years of the captivity into the years 607-537 B.C.<sup>58</sup> As the previous chapter has explained, the Witnesses date the fall of Jerusalem 607 B.C. It has been shown that this date deviates from the correct date of 587/6 by twenty years.

*From the Dividing of the Kingdom to the Fall of Jerusalem.* While it is acknowledged that this period "is one of the more complex periods," the Witnesses find that "a helpful guide as to the overall length of this period of the kings is found in Ezekiel 4:1-7 in the mimic siege of Jerusalem . . ."<sup>59</sup> Ezekiel's symbolic action, when he was instructed to lie on his left side 390 days and on his right forty are understood by the Witnesses as giving the length of this period as 390 years. "From the division of the kingdom in 997 B.C.E. to the fall of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. was 390 years."<sup>60</sup> It may be answered that the starting point for the period is wrong because of the wrong date for the fall of Jerusalem. If the application of the 390 years is correct, the period would be dated 977/6-587/6.

There is a further problem in the use of the Ezekiel passage in as much as the reading "three hundred and ninety" in the Masoretic text is read "one hundred and ninety" in the Septuagint. Charles L. Feinberg remarks that many scholars believe that the latter reading is the correct one.<sup>61</sup> This conclusion is accepted by the translators of *The New English Bible* who place "one hundred and ninety" in the text.

That the period of the Kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah's fall was a period of 390 years is open to serious question. Thiele and others who have worked out the reigns of the kings of this period have arrived at a lesser total. As K. A. Kitchen explains:

For the 350 years from Rehoboam of Judah to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 or 586 B.C., some ninety-five per cent of the long series of reigns

<sup>58</sup> *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 339.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *The Prophecy of Ezekiel—The Glory of The Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 33.

and cross-datings in Kings and Chronicles have been brilliantly worked out by E. R. Thiele—and that not by arbitrary juggling but by full use of proper Ancient Near Eastern procedures, objectively documented.<sup>62</sup>

There are other problems beyond those mentioned herein which question the use and application the Witnesses have made of this passage.<sup>63</sup>

*The date of the Genesis Flood.* The Witnesses claim that there is “no solid or provable evidence to favor an earlier date than 2369 B.C.E. for the start of the post-Flood human society.”<sup>64</sup> This dates the flood, then, at 2370 B.C. By using strictly Bible genealogies (without allowing any gap), Kitchen estimated that the flood would have occurred about 2300 B.C., a date which he found impossible to reconcile with the evidence.

This date is excluded by the Mesopotamian evidence, because it would fall some 300 or 400 years *after* the period of Gilgamesh or Uruk for whom (in both Epic and Sumerian King List) the Flood was already an event of the distant past. Likewise, the appearing of earliest man (Adam) some 1,947 years or so before Abraham on the Hebrew figures, in about 4000 BC, would seem to clash rather badly with not just centuries but whole millennia of preliterate civilization throughout the Ancient Near East prior to the occurrence of the first written documents just before the First Dynasty in Egypt, c. 3000 BC, and rather earlier in Mesopotamia.<sup>65</sup>

As Whitcomb and Morris add:

One of the greatest objections to the concept of a geographically universal Deluge in the minds of some scholars today is the fact that there are no historical or archeological evidences for such a vast catastrophe during the third millennium B.C. . . . or even the fourth millennium B.C. . . . Near Eastern cultures apparently have a continuous archeological record (based upon occupation levels and pottery chronology) back to at least the fifth millennium B.C. . . .<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> P. 76. Thiele's dates for the period of Rehoboam to Zedekiah's fall are 931/30-586. Thiele, p. 169.

<sup>63</sup> See Feinberg, pp. 33, 34; Carl F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1950), pp. 71-78.

<sup>64</sup> *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 334.

<sup>65</sup> Pp. 36, 37. The reader who is interested in studying the background for Kitchen's statement will find ample material cited in the footnotes on these pages of his book.

<sup>66</sup> P. 474.

The above statements present a serious challenge to the proposed chronology of the Watchtower Society.

## V. CONCLUSION

A number of important points were considered in the examination and refutation of the Witnesses' 6,000-year chronology. It was found that the 6,000-year theory is not in the Bible, but, as Russell admitted, it is based upon “venerable tradition.” It was borrowed from the Second Adventists by Russell and channeled into the Society's thinking by him.

The claims of the Watchtower Society today to have a reliable and trustworthy chronology are extremely questionable—actually impossible, for a number of reasons: (1) The Society made similar claims concerning Russell's chronology, even after his death, and stated as fact that that calculation was “*scripturally, scientifically and historically*” verified as “*correct beyond a doubt.*” This chronology was subsequently rejected for that presently accepted. (2) Russell admitted correctly that his (or any other chronology) must be accepted on faith and the “supposition that God wished to give us a chronology.” This supposition is rejected by almost all Bible scholars today. (3) On the basis of the hundreds of systems and their various results with regard to the date of Adam's creation (3958 B.C.-11,013 B.C.), it is highly improbable that any date can be accepted as accurate. (4) Since the length of Adam's stay in the Garden is not revealed in the Bible, it was stated that any attempt by the Witnesses to set a time was speculation. Their attempt to set the time as “weeks or months” is just guess work and highly unlikely (if we might be allowed to speculate) in the light of their seven-thousand-year “day.” The length of Adam's time in Eden can yield no valid indication as to when the seventh “day” will reach its supposed 6,000 year conclusion. (5) At least three sources for the dating of the early Patriarchal period exist. Many scholars question their completeness and at times it is difficult to determine with assurance which figures are correct. (6) The presence of “second Cainan” in the genealogy of Luke 3:36 introduces another generation into the list of Genesis 11 and, according to the Septuagint reading, 130 extra years. It also opens the door to the possibility, and, as it was shown, the probability of other abridgment of the genealogies of Genesis chapters 5 and 11. (7) That the genealogies were abridged was

discussed and the interested reader was referred to Appendix D for actual proof. (8) Lastly, the chronology was called into question on the basis of the Witnesses' approach to the dating of the Babylonian Captivity and the period of the Divided Kingdom. The date for the Flood established by the chronology was shown to be far too late for successful reconciliation with the existing historical and archeological evidence.

An objective study must reject the Witnesses' chronology as scripturally, historically, archeologically and scientifically unsound.

*Author's Note*

For the Witnesses latest explanations, see pp. 96f.