

WATCHTOWER ANNOUNCES ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

A major restructuring of the Jehovah's Witness organization was announced at the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's meeting last October. The extent of the change, which included the resignation of President Milton Henschel and six other board members, is unprecedented in the Watchtower's 116-year history.

The Society announced other changes, too, including the appointment of seven new directors and the establishing of three new nonprofit corporations in the United States. According to a news release from the Public Affairs Office of Jehovah's Witnesses, the changes to the legal structure of the group "will allow them to keep pace with their growth."

Before the restructuring, the Jehovah's Witnesses were strictly ruled by the group's Governing Body. In keeping with the changes, administrative responsibilities will be handled by one of the new corporations. Public affairs director James Pellechia said the changes will enable the Governing Body to "concentrate more on the ministry of the Word." "The reason for the changes was both theological and practical," he further said.

According to an Associated Press report, "Don Adams, a 50-year veteran of the organization, has been named president and seven lower-ranking members will make up the new board. Henschel will remain a member of the Governing Body, which will have a rotating chairman rather than a permanent leader."

The newly formed corporations include the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, which will direct the sect's religious and education aspects; the Religious Order of Jehovah's Witnesses, which will supervise full-time ministry workers; and the Kingdom Support Services, which will administer certain organizational assets, including the design and engineering of society buildings.

The changes do not come as a big surprise to many who monitor the organization. A more significant shift in Jehovah's Witness policy is one shrouded within the announced changes. The Watchtower now says its principal offices, including president and vice president, no longer have to be held by "anointed" members of its faith.

According to Watchtower teaching, "anointed" Christians are a select body of 144,000 persons consisting of believers from the first century up until the present day.

Jehovah's Witnesses maintain the total number of this group, which is interpreted from Revelation 7:14, was fulfilled in the 1930s. According to the Society's figures, fewer than 9,000 of the elite are presently alive on the earth. Most members of this remnant are aged and the shrinking number posed challenges in selecting Watchtower officers under its previous criterion.

—MKG

LETTING HER PEOPLE GO

The ministry of best-selling author and weight-loss guru Gwen Shamblin recently reached an impasse with many of the evangelical churches that once actively promoted her highly successful Weigh Down Diet program. Shamblin experienced another setback when her publisher, Thomas Nelson, announced plans to cancel her book contract. The publisher said it was immediately stopping publication of her new book, *Out of Egypt*, which had been scheduled to be shipped to bookstores within days of the September announcement.

Shamblin's woes began late last summer when apologist L.L. "Don" Veinot, of Midwest Christian Outreach, received several calls expressing uncertainty about Shamblin, including some from her employees. Veinot took a closer look at the doctrine and practice of Shamblin. His investigation uncovered her anti-Trinitarian theology, Church of Christ roots, and an exclusive notion in which she claims to be restoring New Testament Christianity.

In January 1999, Shamblin, along with her husband, founded the Remnant Fellowship, a Nashville-based church. The fellowship has about 80 members, mostly employees of Shamblin's organization, and currently meets in a warehouse. It was stated in a *Christianity Today* report that, "At least 40 employees have been either fired or resigned since Jan. 1," apparently because of their refusal to align with Shamblin's elitist fellowship. The article, appearing on the magazine's web site, attributed knowledge of the dismissals to "an anonymous source inside Weigh Down."

A Baptist Press article paralleled the *CT* report saying "that at least 35 employees were pressured into resigning from the ministry because they would not join Shamblin's church and two others were fired." The BP report stated its information came from a "former high-ranking executive at Weigh Down" who also stated that, "On many occasions, Gwen had spoken to the employees during devotionals and strongly suggested that we all come and share in their worship service. The last week of

(continues on page 22)

heresies" from men and women who distort the truth (2 Peter 2:1). Apart from Scripture, we will all too easily believe and tolerate false and unorthodox teachings. The Church needs Bereans who "examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so." We must commit ourselves to a lifelong and daily study of Scripture in order to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God. We must not allow ourselves to become weary in our passion for the Word. We should be like the Psalmist whose very being was consumed with a longing for God's Word in his life (Psalm 119:20). We must never become bored with the Scriptures so that we search for truth apart from the Bible. Regrettably, for many Christians, they're looking for truth in all the wrong places.

The Church does not need modern-day prophets, like Kenyon, Copeland or Meyer, to uncover for us principles of God's redemption for man, that have been missed down through the centuries. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, who would "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Whether knowingly or unknowingly, Meyer, with her call to "spirit revelation," is supplanting the work of the Holy Spirit.

The current wave of self-proclaimed prophets and esoteric teachers only pretends to enhance biblical truth. In employing their mystical repertoire, they try to usurp the authority of Scripture. Despite claims to the opposite, these men and women are really linked to liberalism. Their doctrine and practice draw one away from the Bible and dilute Scripture. PFO, as believers in Christ and under the authority of the Scripture, will strive to stand up for the truth and be witnesses for the truth when error is being propagated.

British author, Peter Jeffery wrote: "The doctrinal health of the church is of paramount importance in the New Testament. False teachers may be lovely, kind, charming men but their doctrine is poison."

Indeed, it is *not* a lot to say about nothing.

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

my being there, it became more of a 'you need to be there and support what we are doing or don't take a paycheck from me.'"

One employee, Anita Pillow, told the Baptist news service, "I was told that because the direction the company was moving towards, my position was being replaced by someone who attended her Remnant Fellowship church." Pillow added, "[Shamblin] thanked me for my hard work but said my services were no longer needed. Because I was not a member of the Remnant

Fellowship, I was being replaced." Pillow is a member of Park Avenue Baptist Church.

Amid the revelations of her heretical theology, Shamblin sought to play down her unorthodoxy. "A few people have been on a witch hunt in the last month," she told *CT*. "People don't care about this. They don't care about the Trinity. This is going to pass. What the women want is weight loss. They care about their bodies being a temple and their lives turned over to the Lord. That's what my ministry is about," she said.

Shamblin says that despite the disclosure of her beliefs, she continues to receive the support of "many ministers," from Baptists to Episcopalians.

In less than a decade, Shamblin's diet program went from her garage to a multimillion-dollar business. Her 1997 volume, *The Weigh Down Diet* sold more than 1 million copies and at its apex, the ministry had 30,000 locations, including thousands of evangelical churches, which hosted weekly meetings of her Weigh Down Workshops.

—MKG

ARMSTRONG FURTHER SILENCED WITH AID OF COURT

The Philadelphia Church of God, a religious group based in Edmond, Okla., which strictly adheres to the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, had its efforts to publish and distribute the last written work of the late religious leader quashed by a federal appellate court in September.

A year before his death in 1986, Armstrong, at the age of 92, completed a 315-page book, *Mystery of the Ages*. Armstrong taught "the Bible was a coded book, not to be understood until our day" and that his *Mystery of the Ages* enabled the Bible to be "clearly understood." The book's copyright was bequeathed to the Worldwide Church of God, the church founded by Armstrong in 1934. Over 9 million copies of the book were distributed free of charge by the WCG.

In the months following Armstrong's death, the Pasadena, Calif.-based WCG began a radical and protracted departure from the doctrine and practices of its late founder. This deviation led to the founding of the PCG in 1989 by two former WCG ministers in order to advocate the undistorted teachings of Armstrong.

While the WCG ceased distribution of the *Mystery of the Ages* in 1987, the PCG continued distributing existing copies of the book. In 1997, the supply was exhausted and the PCG began reproducing the book without permission of the WCG. Later that year, the WCG sued in federal court for copyright infringement. When a federal district court ruled in favor of the PCG, stating