

WATCHTOWER MAY SELL BROOKLYN BUILDING

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society may be placing a "For Sale" sign on one of its prime waterfront properties in Brooklyn. The 1 million-square-foot building is a principal shipping point for Watchtower literature. The 12-story warehouse is at 360 Furman St., a few blocks from the organization's world headquarters.

Ongoing complaints by local residents about noise and air pollution from trucks entering and leaving the building have prompted the Watchtower to relocate the shipping facility to its Wallkill, N.Y., factory operations, known as the Watchtower Farms, and to sites outside the United States. Wallkill is about 100 miles northwest of Brooklyn. With the planned move, Watchtower spokesman Daniel Rice said the Furman Street building no longer would be needed.

According to the *New York Daily News*, the building could be sold for as much as \$120 million. Others offer a low-end estimate of \$50 million. Once sold, the structure could be converted to 400-500 condominium apartments. Some units at the top of the building would have a 180-degree view of the Manhattan skyline and might sell for as much as \$5 million each.

The structure was built in 1928. The Watchtower bought it in 1983.

—MKG

CASHING IN ON MAJOR ASSETS

The Worldwide Church of God has announced a plan to keep the denomination solvent for decades. It involves moving its headquarters from Pasadena, Calif., and selling its 55-acre Ambassador College campus to make way for 1,500 new homes. The college, which once had nearly 1,200 students, was closed in 1990.

The parcel is prime Pasadena real estate and contains elegant mansions, along with the church's Ambassador Auditorium and headquarters. While church officials would not disclose details of the transaction, *Christianity Today* magazine reported, "taking into account current home values, the sale price could exceed \$750 million."

Following the 1986 death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, the church began a turning into what some

would call an evangelical denomination. Joseph Tkach, Jr. is the leader of the church. He took the reigns of the church from his father, Joseph Tkach, Sr., who died in 1995. Armstrong's death and doctrinal revisions by the elder Tkach cost the WCG both members and money. *CT* has stated the current membership is 67,000, down from 150,000 during the Armstrong era, and its annual income has fallen from \$170 million to \$25 million. The nearly vacant property in Pasadena costs the church about \$2 million annually in maintenance.

Not everyone favors the plan. The West Pasadena Neighborhood Association represents a delegation of 400 neighbors and is opposing the church's campaign. They and others say the project allows for too many homes, which would cause traffic congestion and blemish the neighborhood. Former members also are balking. "They say Tkach and company now stand to profit from the tithes of Armstrong's followers," *CT* reported.

Even if the Worldwide Church of God fails to keep solvent, it is succeeding in its historical revision. Church leaders say their migration toward Orthodoxy was the result of abandoning peculiar, non-essential doctrines. *CT* has helped in this regard, labeling the teachings as "fringe beliefs" and citing as examples the adherence of Old Testament dietary laws and festivals, Sabbath (Saturday) worship, and compulsory tithing (of up to 30% of one's income). However, the nucleus of Armstrong's doctrine went far beyond those "fringe beliefs" and included a denunciation of the Trinity, the denial of the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the teaching that believers are not born again until the resurrection, when they will achieve godhood.

—MKG

REBECCA IN FANTASYLAND

Self-proclaimed occult expert Dr. Rebecca Brown continues her defamation of Personal Freedom Outreach. For more than a decade, PFO has documented from medical officials, legal authorities, court papers, and other sources Brown's deceptive ministry (see, *Drugs, Demons and Delusions*, available from PFO). Brown has not once legitimately refuted these findings.

Brown got her start with the help of Jack Chick and Chick Publications, publisher of evangelistic tracts and comic books. At that time, Brown was associated with
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