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### 1975: 'THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR GOD TO ACT'

*It is not for you to know the times or dates  
the Father has set by his own authority.  
—Acts 1:7, New International Version.*

**D**URING the second half of Rutherford's presidency most of the older time prophecies so strenuously argued for in the first half were gradually dropped or relocated.

The start of the "last days" was moved up from 1799 to 1914.

The 1874 presence of Christ was also moved up to 1914 (as had already been done in 1922 with the 1878 official start of Christ's active Kingdom rule).

The beginning of the resurrection was moved from 1878 to 1918.

For a time it was even claimed that 1914 had indeed brought the "end of the world" in the sense that God had 'legally' terminated the worldly nations' lease of power on the earth. This, too, was dropped and the "end" in that sense is now held to be future.

All of the things claimed being *invisible*, the acceptance of them obviously depended entirely upon one's faith in the interpretations offered. After one session in which these time prophecies and changes came up for discussion, Governing Body member Bill Jackson smilingly said to me, "We used to say, you just take the date from this shoulder and put it on the other shoulder."

It was not until after Rutherford's death in 1942 that a change was made regarding the year 606 B.C.E. as the starting point for the 2,520 years. Strangely, the fact that 2,520 years from 606 B.C.E. actually leads to 1915 C.E., and not 1914 C.E., was not acknowledged or dealt with for over 60 years.

Then, quietly, the starting point was moved back one year to 607 B.C.E., allowing for the retention of the year 1914 C.E. as the ending point for the 2,520 years. No historical evidence had come forward to indicate that the destruction of Jerusalem had occurred a year earlier than believed. The organization's desire to retain 1914 as a marked date pointed to by them for so many years (something they had not done with 1915) dictated moving Jerusalem's destruction back one year, a simple thing to do—on paper.

By the mid-1940s it had been decided that the chronology used during Russell's and Rutherford's presidencies was off some 100 years as regards the count of time back to Adam's creation. In 1966, the organization said that, instead of coming in 1874 as previously taught, the end of six thousand years of human history would arrive in 1975.

This was published in the summer of 1966 in a book written by Fred Franz, titled *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*. In its first chapter, the book drew upon the Jubilee arrangement, which had also featured prominently in the predictions relating to 1925, and it argued (as had also been done back then) in favor of belief in six "days" of a thousand years each, during which mankind was to experience imperfection, to be followed by a seventh "day" of a thousand years in which perfection would be restored in a grand Jubilee of liberation from slavery to sin, sickness and death. The book said on pages 28 and 29:

<sup>41</sup> Since the time of Ussher intensive study of Bible chronology has been carried on. In this twentieth century an independent study has been carried on that does not blindly follow some traditional chronological calculations of Christendom, and the published timetable resulting from this independent study gives the date of man's creation as 4026 B.C.E.† According to this trustworthy Bible chronology six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 C.E.

<sup>42</sup> So six thousand years of man's existence on earth will soon be up, yes, within this generation. Jehovah God is timeless, as it is written in Psalm 90:1, 2: "O Jehovah, you yourself have proved to be a real dwelling for us during generation after generation. Before the mountains themselves were born, or you proceeded to bring forth as with labor pains the earth and the productive land, even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God." So from the standpoint of Jehovah

God these passing six thousand years of man's existence are but as six days of twenty-four hours, for this same psalm (verses 3, 4) goes on to say: "You make mortal man go back to crushed matter, and you say: 'Go back, you sons of men.' For a thousand years are in your eyes but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch during the night." So in not many years within our own generation we are reaching what Jehovah God could view as the seventh day of man's existence.

What would be the significance of this? The book goes on to make this application of the points developed:

30 LIFE EVERLASTING—IN FREEDOM OF THE SONS OF GOD

**<sup>43</sup> How appropriate it would be for Jehovah God to make of this coming seventh period of a thousand years a sabbath period of rest and release, a great Jubilee sabbath for the proclaiming of liberty throughout the earth to all its inhabitants! This would be most timely for mankind. It would also be most fitting on God's part, for, remember, mankind has yet ahead of it what the last book of the Holy Bible speaks of as the reign of Jesus Christ over earth for a thousand years, the millennial reign of Christ. Prophetically Jesus Christ, when on earth nineteen centuries ago, said concerning himself: "For Lord of the sabbath is what the Son of man is." (Matthew 12:8) It would not be by mere chance or accident but would be according to the loving purpose of Jehovah God for the reign of Jesus Christ, the "Lord of the sabbath," to run parallel with the seventh millennium of man's existence.**

Had the organization said "flat out" that 1975 would mark the start of the millennium? No. But the above paragraph was the climax to which all of the involved, carefully constructed argumentation of that chapter had been building.

No outright, unqualified prediction was made about 1975. But the writer had been willing to declare it to be "appropriate" and "most fitting on God's part" if God would start the millennium at that particular time. It would seem reasonable that for an imperfect man to say what is or what is not "fitting" for the Almighty God to do would call for quite a measure of certainty, surely not the mere 'expression of an opinion.' *Discretion* would require, rather, would *demand* that. Even stronger is the subsequent statement that "it would

be according to the loving purpose of Jehovah God for the reign of Jesus Christ, the ‘Lord of the sabbath,’ to run parallel with the seventh millennium of man’s existence,” which seventh millennium had already been stated as due to begin in 1975.

Once again, the Watch Tower’s recent history book, *Jehovah’s Witnesses—Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom* had an opportunity to demonstrate the objectivity and candor its foreword promises. In a very brief presentation of the matter, it said this (on page 104), focusing on the 1966 convention at which Fred Franz presented the new book which introduced the information about 1975:

At the convention held in Baltimore, Maryland, F. W. Franz gave the concluding talk. He began by saying: “Just before I got on the platform a young man came to me and said, ‘Say, what does this 1975 mean?’” Brother Franz then referred to the many questions that had arisen as to whether the material in the new book meant that by 1975 Armageddon would be finished, and Satan would be bound. He stated, in essence: ‘It could. But we are not saying. All things are possible with God. But we are not saying. And don’t any of you be specific in saying anything that is going to happen between now and 1975. But the big point of it all is this, dear friends: Time is short. Time is running out, no question about that.’

In the years following 1966, many of Jehovah’s Witnesses acted in harmony with the spirit of that counsel. However, other statements were published on this subject, and some were likely more definite than advisable. This was acknowledged in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1980 (page 17). But Jehovah’s Witnesses were also cautioned to concentrate mainly on doing Jehovah’s will and not to be swept up by dates and expectations of an early salvation.

Typically, the material quotes the one cautionary statement made at this time. It acknowledges that “other statements were published on this subject, and some were likely more definite than advisable.”<sup>1</sup> Approximately two-thirds of the present organizational membership has entered since 1975 and therefore did not have the experience of knowing what followed. They have no knowledge

1 The Watch Tower’s history book, in a footnote, cites as evidence of other cautionary material certain publications. Only one of them appeared in the 1960s. (the May 1, 1968, *Watchtower*), and, as was true in the case of other cautionary statements involving earlier predictions, the two others were published as 1975 was already *imminent* or *present* (the June 15, 1974, and May 1, 1975, issues of the *Watchtower*). The footnote then goes back *before* the release of the book announcing 1975 and quotes from the 1963 book *All Scripture Is Inspired and Beneficial*, which states: “It does no good to use Bible chronology for speculating on dates that are still future in the stream of time.—Matt. 24:36.” It does not explain why the author of the book pointing to 1975 in connection with the start of the millennium so obviously failed to follow the principle set out three years before.

of the *extent* and *intensity* of the emphasis given to the date of 1975 and the significance attached to it. But the members of the Governing Body do know this. At least some of those on the Writing Committee must have read and approved what appears in the 1993 history book. They had to have known what an incomplete and watered down picture it offers. What actually happened?

That same year of 1966, the October 8 issue of *Awake!*, the companion magazine to the *Watchtower*, carried an article titled "How Much Longer Will It Be?" and under the subheading "6,000 Years Completed in 1975," it too reasoned that the millennium would be the last 1000 years of a 7000-year rest day of God. It went on to say (pages 19, 20):

**Hence, the fact that we are nearing the end of the first 6,000 years of man's existence is of great significance.**

**Does God's rest day parallel the time man has been on earth since his creation? Apparently so. From the most reliable investigations of Bible chronology, harmonizing with many accepted dates of secular history, we find that Adam was created in the autumn of the year 4026 B.C.E. Sometime in that same year Eve could well have been created, directly after which God's rest day commenced. In what year, then, would the first 6,000 years of man's existence and also the first 6,000 years of God's rest day come to an end? The year 1975.\* This is worthy of notice, particularly in view of the fact that the "last days" began in 1914, and that the physical facts of our day in fulfillment of prophecy mark this as the last generation of this wicked world. So we can expect the immediate future to be filled with thrilling events for those who rest their faith in God and his promises. It means that within relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the "time of the end."**

The May 1, 1968, *Watchtower* is cited in the Society's 1993 history book as an example of caution given on the subject. In actuality, it helped continue this stimulation of anticipation. Using much the same argument as the *Awake!* article last mentioned, it then said (pages 272, 273):

<sup>7</sup> The immediate future is certain to be filled with climactic events, for this old system is nearing its complete end. Within a few years at most the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these "last days" will undergo fulfillment, resulting in the liberation of surviving mankind into Christ's glorious 1,000-year reign. What difficult days, but, at the same time, what grand days are just ahead!

<sup>8</sup> Does this mean that the year 1975 will bring the battle of Armageddon? No one can say with cer-

tainty what any particular year will bring. Jesus said: "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows." (Mark 13: 32) Sufficient is it for God's servants to know for a certainty that, for this system under Satan, time is running out rapidly. How foolish a person would be not to be awake and alert to the limited time remaining, to the earth-shaking events soon to take place, and to the need to work out one's salvation!

The paragraphs above appeared in columns bordering each side of a large chart of dates, beginning with the year 4026 B.C.E, listed as the date for the "Creation of Adam (in early autumn)." The chart ended in this way:

1975	6000	End of 6th 1,000-year day of man's existence (in early autumn)
2975	7000	End of 7th 1,000-year day of man's existence (in early autumn)

In that context, how "cautionary" would be the effect of references to "the *immediate* future," to "a few years *at most*," and the "*certainty*" of these bringing the fulfillment of the final parts of last-days

prophecies? What rational, normal thinking person would view this as having any other intent than that of exciting expectations and hopes centered around a date, 1975?

In an article titled "What Will the 1970s Bring?" the October 8, 1968, *Awake!* again emphasized the shortness of the remaining time, saying at the start (page 13):

**THE fact that fifty-four years of the period called the "last days" have already gone by is highly significant. It means that only a few years, at most, remain before the corrupt system of things dominating the earth is destroyed by God. How can we be so certain of this?**

Later, drawing on the year 1975 as the close of six thousand years of human history, the article said (page 14):

***6,000 Years Nearing Completion***

**There is another way that helps confirm the fact that we are living in the final few years of this "time of the end." (Dan. 12:9) The Bible shows that we are nearing the end of a full 6,000 years of human history.**

Again and again the Watch Tower publications quoted statements made by people of prominence or "experts" in any field who made some reference to 1975, for example, the statement made in 1960 by former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who said:

I know enough of what is going on to assure you that, in 15 years from today [hence, by 1975], this world is going to be too dangerous to live in.

The book *Famine—1975!*, published in 1967 by two food experts, was quoted repeatedly, particularly these statements, in many ways reminiscent of Russell's predictions regarding 1914:

By 1975 a disaster of unprecedented magnitude will face the world. Famines, greater than any in history, will ravage the undeveloped nations.

I forecast a specific date, 1975, when the new crisis will be upon us in all its awesome importance.

By 1975 civil disorder, anarchy, military dictatorships, runaway inflation, transportation breakdowns and chaotic unrest will be the order of the day in many of the hungry nations.

Three years after the original focusing on 1975 in the book *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, the author, Fred Franz, wrote another publication titled *The Approaching Peace of a Thousand Years*.<sup>2</sup> If anything, the language in it was even more definite and specific than in the previous publication. Released in 1969, it contained these statements on pages 25, 26:

**More recently earnest researchers of the Holy Bible have made a recheck of its chronology. According to their calculations the ~~six~~ millenniums of mankind's life on earth would end in the mid-seventies. Thus the seventh millennium from man's creation by Jehovah God would begin within less than ten years.**

**In order for the Lord Jesus Christ to be "Lord even of the sabbath day," his thousand-year reign would have to be the seventh in a series of thousand-year periods or millenniums. (Matthew 12:8, AV) Thus it would be a sabbatic reign.**

The argumentation here is quite clear and direct: As the sabbath was the seventh period following six periods of toil, so the thousand-year reign of Christ would be a sabbatical seventh millennium following those six millenniums of toil and suffering. The presentation is in no sense indefinite or ambiguous.

Even as it had been determined what would be "appropriate" and "fitting" for God to do, so also a requirement is now set out for Jesus Christ. For him to be what he says he will be, 'Lord of the sabbath day,' then his reign "would *have to be*" the seventh millennium in a series of millenniums. Human reasoning imposes this requirement upon God's Son. Six thousand years would end in 1975; Christ's rule, according to the argument, "would have to be the seventh" period of a thousand years following the previous six. The "faithful and discreet slave" had, in effect, outlined the program he expected his Master to adhere to if he was to be true to his own word.

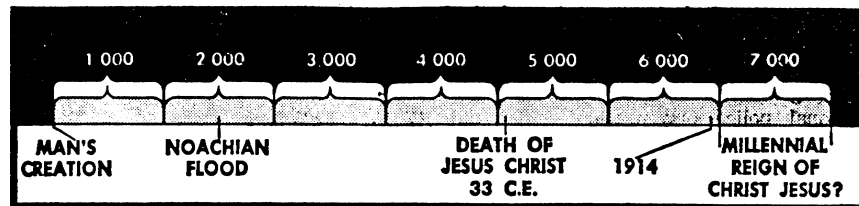
Though the writing is more polished, the expressions more refined, this material in essence is remarkably like that set forth in Judge

2 This same material also appeared in the October 15, 1969, *Watchtower*. The 1930-1985 Index to Watch Tower Publications, however, does not list it under the heading "1975" simply ignoring it despite its strong focus on that date.



Rutherford's booklet *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, in which he admittedly made foolish claims. Aside from the specific date being publicized, it was as if the clock had now been turned back about a half a century to the pre-1925 days. The difference was that the things said then were now being said of 1975.<sup>3</sup>

When the 1970s arrived, the buildup of expectation kept on. The October 8, 1971, *Awake!*, spoke yet again of six periods of toil and labor followed by a seventh (sabbath) period of rest and then presented the following chart:



As we near the end of 6,000 years of human history in the mid-1970's there is the thrilling hope of a grand relief

All this steady flow of information was clearly designed to foment and build up hope, anticipation. It was not designed to calm or defuse a spirit of excited expectation. True, most statements were accompanied by some qualifying statement to the effect that 'we are not saying positively' or are not 'pointing to a specific date,' and that 'we do not know the day and the hour.' But it must be remembered that the organization was not a novice in this field. Its whole history from its very inception was one of building up people's hope in certain dates only to have those dates pass with the hope unrealized. In past cases the publications of the Society subsequently sought to place the responsibility for any disillusionment on the receivers, not the givers, of the information, as inclined to expect too much. Surely, then, the responsible men of the organization should have realized the danger, realized what human nature is, realized how easily great hopes can be excited.

Yet, while carefully avoiding any *explicit* prediction that a *specific* date would see the start of the millennium, those responsible men approved the use of the phrases, "within relatively few years," "the immediate future," "within a few years at most," "only a few years,

3 It is true that (on page 25 of the booklet) the less specific phrase "the mid-seventies" is used, but the year 1975 had already been presented as a Biblically marked date and that date was now firmly imprinted on the minds of all of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide.

at most,” “the final few years,” all used in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines with reference to the beginning of the millennial reign and *all in a context that included the date 1975*. Do such words mean anything? Or were they used loosely, carelessly? Are people’s hopes and plans and feelings something to be toyed with? To fail to be concerned about those factors would be both irresponsible and insensitive. Yet the *Watchtower* of August 15, 1968, even implied that one should be careful about putting too much weight on Jesus Christ’s own cautionary words.

**“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) This is, therefore, no time to be indifferent and complacent. This is not the time to be toying with the words of Jesus that “concerning that day and hour *nobody* knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matt. 24:36) To the contrary, it is a time when one should be keenly aware that the end of this system of things is rapidly coming to its violent end. Make no mistake, it is sufficient that the Father himself *knows* both the “day and hour”!**

How could a “faithful and discreet slave” possibly say this—in effect, say that, “True, my master said thus and so, but don’t make too much of that; to the contrary, realize that what *I* am telling you should be the guiding force in your life”?

Some of the most direct statements came from the Brooklyn Service Department which produces a monthly paper called “Kingdom Ministry,” a paper which goes only to Witnesses and not to the public. The March, 1968, issue of the U.S. edition urged getting into full-time preaching activity (“pioneer service”) saying:

**In view of the short period of time left, we want to do this as often as circumstances permit. Just think, brothers, there are only about ninety months left before 6,000 years of man’s existence on earth is completed.**

The May, 1974, issue of *Kingdom Ministry*, having referred to the “short time left,” said:

Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end.—1 John 2:17.

Quite a number of Witnesses did just that. Some sold their businesses, gave up jobs, sold homes, farms and moved with their wives and children to other areas to ‘serve where the need was greater,’ counting on having sufficient funds to carry them through 1975.

Others, including some older persons, cashed in insurance policies or other valuable certificates. Some put off surgical operations in the hope that the millennium’s entrance would eliminate the need for these.

When 1975 passed and their funds ran out or their health worsened seriously, they now had to try to cope with the hard realities and rebuild as best they could.

What was the thinking within the Governing Body during this time?

Some of the older men on the Body had personally experienced the failed expectations of 1914, 1925, as well as the hopes excited in the early 1940s. The majority, from my observation, took a ‘wait and see’ attitude. They were reluctant to call for restraint. Big increases were taking place. Consider the record of baptisms for the period from 1960 on up to 1975:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number Baptized</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number Baptized</i>
1960	69,027	1968	82,842
1961	63,070	1969	120,805
1962	69,649	1970	164,193
1963	62,798	1971	149,808
1964	68,236	1972	163,123
1965	64,393	1973	193,990
1966	58,904	1974	297,872
1967	74,981	1975	295,073

From 1960 up until 1966, the rate of increase had diminished to a near standstill. But following 1966, when 1975 was highlighted, there came a phenomenal period of growth, as the chart reveals.

During the years 1971 to 1974 while I was serving on the Governing Body I do not recall hearing any strong expressions of concern from

Body members about the excited expectations that had been generated. I would not pretend that I did not initially feel stirred myself in 1966 when the book *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* came out with its glowing picture of the nearness of a millennial jubilee. Nor would I claim to have had no part whatsoever in the early part of the campaign to focus attention on the target date of 1975. But each passing year from 1966 on made the idea seem more and more unreal. The more I read the Scriptures the more the whole concept seemed out of line; it did not square with the statements of Jesus Christ himself, statements such as:

Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.

Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of Man is coming.

Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is.

It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>

As part of a headquarters organization that was flushed with joy because of riding a crest of remarkable growth, there was not much that could be done, however. Some articles on the subject that came to me for editing I tried to moderate but that was about all. In my personal activity I did try to draw attention to the scriptures just mentioned, both in private conversations and in public talks.

One Sunday evening in 1974, after my wife and I had returned from a speaking engagement in another part of the country, my uncle, then vice president, came over to our room. (His eyesight being extremely poor, we usually read the *Watchtower* study material out loud to him each week.) My wife mentioned to him that in my talk that weekend I had cautioned the brothers about becoming unduly excited over 1975. His quick response was, “And why *shouldn't* they get excited? It's something to be excited about.”

There is no question in my mind that, of all the Governing Body members, the vice president was most convinced of the rightness of what he had written, and on which writing others had built. On another evening in the summer of 1975, an elderly Greek brother

4 Quoted from Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; Mark 13:33; Acts 1:7.

named Peterson (originally Papagyropoulos) joined us in our room for our reading, as was his custom. After the reading, my uncle said to Peterson, "You know, it was very much like this in 1914. Right up into the summer months everything was quiet. Then all of a sudden things began to happen and the war broke out."

Earlier, toward the start of 1975, President Knorr had made a trip around the world, taking Vice President Franz with him. The vice president's speeches in all countries visited centered on 1975. Upon their return, the other members of the Governing Body, having heard reports from many countries of the stirring effect of the vice president's talk, asked to hear a tape recording of it, made in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

In his talk, the vice president spoke of 1975 as a "year of great possibilities, tremendous probabilities." He told his audience that, according to the Hebrew calendar, they were "already in the fifth lunar month of 1975," with less than seven lunar months remaining. He emphasized several times that the Hebrew year would close with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, on September 5, 1975.

Acknowledging that much would have to happen in that short time if the final windup was to come by then, he went on to talk about the possibility of a year or so difference due to some lapse of time between Adam's creation and Eve's creation. He made reference to the failure of expectations in 1914 and 1925 and quoted Rutherford's remark, "I made an ass of myself." He said that the organization had learned not to make "very bold, extreme predictions." Toward the close, he urged his listeners not to take an improper view, however, and assume that the coming destruction could be "years away," and focus their attention on other matters, such as getting married and raising families, building up a fine business venture or spending years at college in some engineering course.

After hearing the tape, a few of the Governing Body members expressed concern that if indeed no "very bold, extreme predictions" were being made, some subtle predictions were, and the effect was palpably evident in the excitement generated.

This was the first time that concern was expressed in the Governing Body discussions. But no action was taken, no policy decided upon.

The vice president repeated many of the points of the same talk on March 2, 1975, at the following Gilead School graduation.<sup>6</sup>

5 This was in the session of February 19, 1975.

6 See the *Watchtower*, May 1, 1975.

1975 passed—as had 1881, 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925 and the 1940s. Much publicity was given by other sources as to the failure of the organization’s expectations surrounding 1975. There was considerable talk among Jehovah’s Witnesses themselves. In my own mind, most of what was said did not touch upon the major point of the matter.

I felt that the real issue went far beyond that of some individual’s accuracy or inaccuracy or even an organization’s reliability or untrustworthiness or its members’ sensibleness or gullibility. It seemed to me that the really important factor is how such predictions ultimately reflect on God and on his Word. When men make such forecasts and say that they are doing it on the basis of the Bible, build up arguments for these from the Bible, assert that they are God’s “channel” of communication—what is the effect when their forecasts prove false? Does it honor God or build up faith in Him and in the reliability of his Word? Or is the opposite the result? Does it not give added inducement for some to feel justified in placing little importance upon the Bible’s message and teachings? Those Witnesses who made major changes in their lives in most cases could, and did, pick up the pieces and go on living in spite of being disillusioned. Not all could. Whatever the case, however, serious damage had been done in more ways than one.

In 1976, a year after the passing of that widely publicized date, a few members of the Governing Body began urging that some statement should be made acknowledging that the organization had been in error, had stimulated false expectations. Others said they did not think we should, that it would “just give ammunition to opposers.” Milton Henschel recommended that the wise course would be simply not to bring the matter up and that in time the brothers would stop talking about it. There was clearly not enough support for a motion, favoring a statement, to carry. That year, an article in the July 15 *Watchtower* did refer to the failed expectations but the article had to conform to the prevailing sentiment within the Governing Body and no clear acknowledgement of the organization’s responsibility was possible.

In 1977, the subject again surfaced in a session. Though the same objections were raised, a motion passed that a statement should be included in a convention talk that Lloyd Barry was assigned to prepare. I understand that afterward Governing Body members Ted Jaracz and Milton Henschel talked with Lloyd about their feelings on the matter. Whatever the case, when the talk was prepared, no mention of 1975

was included. I recall asking Lloyd about this and his reply was that he had just not been able to make it fit in with his subject. Almost two years went by and then in 1979 the Governing Body again considered the matter. By then everything indicated that 1975 had produced a serious “credibility gap.”

A number of members of the headquarters staff expressed themselves in that vein. One described 1975 as an “albatross” hanging around our necks. Robert Wallen, a Governing Body secretary, wrote as follows:

I have been associated as a baptized Witness well over 39 years and with Jehovah’s help I will continue to be a loyal servant. But to say I am not disappointed would be untruthful, for, when I know my feelings regarding 1975 were fostered because of what I read in various publications, and then I am told in effect that I reached false conclusions on my own, that, I feel, is not being fair or honest. Knowing that we are not working with infallibility, to me it is but proper that when errors are made by imperfect, but God-fearing men, then corrections will be made when errors are found.

Raymond Richardson of the Writing Department said:

Are not persons drawn to humility, and more willing to place confidence where there is *candor*? The Bible itself is the greatest example of candor. This is one of the most outstanding reasons why we believe it to be truthful.

Fred Rusk, also of the Writing Department, wrote:

Despite any qualifying statements that might have been made along the way to admonish the brothers not to say that Armageddon would come in 1975, the fact is there were a number of articles in the magazines and other publications that more than hinted that the old system would be replaced by Jehovah’s new system in the mid-1970s.

Merton Campbell of the Service Department wrote:

A sister called the other day on the phone from Massachusetts. She was at work. Both the sister and her husband are working to pay up bills that have accumulated because of sickness. She expressed herself as feeling so confident that 1975 would bring the end that they both were having trouble facing up to the burdens of this system. This example is typical of many of the brothers we meet.

Harold Jackson, also of the Service Department, said:

What is needed now is not a statement to the effect that we were wrong about 1975 but rather a statement as to why the whole matter has been ignored so long in view of the fact that so many lives have been affected. Now it is a credibility gap we are faced with and that can prove to be disastrous. If we are going to say something at all, let us speak straightforwardly and be open and honest with the brothers.

Howard Zenke, of the same department, wrote:

We certainly do not want the brothers to read something or listen to something and then say in their own mind that the approach that we have taken amounts to a “Watergate.”

Others made similar comments. Ironically, some who now spoke the strongest criticism had themselves been among the most vocal before 1975 in stressing that date and the extreme “urgency” it called for, had even written some of the articles earlier quoted, had approved of the *Kingdom Ministry* statement commending those who were selling homes and property as 1975 drew near. Many of the most dogmatic statements about 1975 were made by traveling representatives (Circuit and District Overseers) all of whom were under the direct supervision of the Service Department.

In the March 6, 1979, session of the Governing Body, the same arguments against publishing anything were advanced—that it would lay the organization open to further criticism from opposers, that at this late date there was no need to make an apology, that nothing really would be accomplished by it. However, even those so arguing were less adamant than in previous sessions. This was because of one factor in particular: the worldwide figures had registered serious drops for two years.

The yearly reports reveal the following:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Number Reporting Activity</i>	<i>% Increase Over Previous Year</i>
1970	1,384,782	10.2
1971	1,510,245	9.1
1972	1,596,442	5.7
1973	1,656,673	3.8
1974	1,880,713	13.5
1975	2,062,449	9.7
1976	2,138,537	3.7
1977	2,117,194	-1.0
1978	2,086,698	-1.4



This drop, more than any other factor, seemed to carry weight with the Governing Body members. There was a vote of 15 to 3 in favor of a statement making at least some acknowledgement of the organization's share in the responsibility for the error. This was published in the March 15, 1980, *Watchtower*.

It had taken nearly four years for the organization through its administration finally to admit it had been wrong, had, for an entire decade, built up false hopes. Not that a statement so candid, though true, could be made. Whatever was written had to be acceptable to the Body as a whole for publishing. I know, because I was assigned to write the statement and, as in similar cases before, I had to be governed by—not what I would have liked to say or even what I thought the brothers needed to hear—but by what could be said that would have some hope of approval by two-thirds of the Governing Body when submitted to them.

Today, all the decade-long buildup of hopes centered on 1975 is discounted as to being of any particular importance. The essence of Russell's word in 1916 is once again expressed by the organization: It "certainly did have a very stimulating and sanctifying effect upon thousands, all of whom can praise the Lord—even for the mistake."