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C. J. Woodworth: The Demon Possessed Editor of *The Golden Age*

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I came directly under the influence of evil spirits, so much so that for three days I was as completely under demonical control as was Mrs. Eddy when she wrote "Science and Health." [1]

C. J. Woodworth was a major individual during the Rutherford period of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. He wrote the commentary on Revelation in the 1917 book *The Finished Mystery*. Rutherford made him editor of *The Golden Age* magazine (later called *Consolation*) from its inaugural edition in 1919 to 1946.



In *The Finished Mystery* Woodworth wrote the following strange comments:

Have you enjoyed this work so far? Are you convinced it is of the Lord-- prepared under His guidance? Have you carefully and prayerfully read the comments on Rev. 7:1? Then brace yourself for the truth that it is evidently God's purpose soon to allow the minds of many of His little ones to

become an open battle ground, upon which the fallen angels shall be judged, and the manner in which we meet the tests will prove our worthiness of crowns at the same time that it proves these disobedient spirits unworthy of life on any plane. This is something with which some but not many are yet familiar.... without actual experience it is quite impossible to conceive of the intensity of such struggles.... The base of the brain is seized as in a vise. Interpretations of Scripture, ingenious, but misleading beyond description, are projected into the mind as water might be projected through a hose. Visions may be tried, wonderful illuminations of the mind as by a soft but glorious greenish or yellowish haze. Seductive suggestions may be made, based on circumstances of the environment. Offers of inspiration may be made. The privilege of sleep may be taken away for days at a stretch. All this with the object of forcing the unfortunate into at least a temporary insanity.... the mind may be flooded with thoughts that are vile beyond description. THEN REMEMBER THE VOW. [2]

The comments on Rev. 7:1 he refers to contain quotations of Russell from 1911 and 1914 *Watch Towers*. In them Russell said the fallen angels that have been chained or restrained in darkness since the flood will be let loose soon and be judged by the church and by their actions. Russell said they will first attack his followers who he regarded as the "anointed" little flock. This would be part of the Time of Trouble culminating with Armageddon in 1914. One of these quotes from 1911 says:

There is only one way, so far as we can see, in which these fallen angels can have a trial, their trial consisting in having a fuller opportunity to sin, if they so desire, or an opportunity to show, if they wish, that they are sick of sin and desire to return to harmony with God.... we reach the conclusion that the trial of these fallen angels is in the near future&endash;perhaps to some already begun. [3]

C. J. Woodworth fulfilled this "prophecy" by Russell. In his comments quoted above from *The Finished Mystery* he appears to be speaking of personal experience. His description of demon possession is vivid: "The base of the brain is seized as in a vise. Interpretations of Scripture,... are projected into the mind as water might be projected through a hose. Visions may be tried,... as by a soft greenish or yellowish haze..." How did he know these things unless he is speaking from personal experience? He did say without personal experience it is impossible to grasp the intensity of the struggle one could have against demon possession.

That he personally had such battles with demons is documented by his own testimony of it at the 1913 Convention of the Bible Students in Asheville, North Carolina. A record of his statements is recorded in the 1913 convention report put out by the Society. His confession came during his talk on the Vow. He began by saying:

I WISH to speak to you of something that I certainly never intended mentioning at this convention. I presume you have all taken the vow, but perhaps some of you have not.

He said he didn't accept the Vow at first and thought it was something Russell "brought up himself" and that he wouldn't accept it unless he found it in Scripture. He then says:

Then began my troubles. I began to pray and to fight it in my own way with the Scriptures. After a few months the Scriptures apparently began to open up... demonstrating its unscripturalness. I thought that... Brother Russell was wrong...

After corresponding with Russell on the issue he said his non acceptance of the vow led him to eventual demon possession and even automatic writing:

There was a time for five consecutive nights when I never slept a wink; then came a time when the strain was too much; my mind became unbalanced, and I came directly under the influence of evil spirits, so much so that for three days I was as completely under demonical control as was Mrs. Eddy when she wrote "Science and Health."

Previous to this time I had prepared a 36-page book against the Vow, printed in double column, in which all scriptures which seemed to be directly or indirectly against the Vow were arranged. I know now that all these Scriptures were suggested to my mind by the evil spirits. One of the

suggestions was... (and this I believe was a truth, for these "lying spirits" do sometimes tell the truth) that in the fifteenth chapter of Numbers where it mentions the "Ribband of blue," it had reference, anti-typically, to the Vow. But then these lying spirits turned the truth into a lie by claiming that the Vow had been suggested to Brother Russell by the evil spirits. See how clever they were! [4]

He goes on to say that after Russell pointed out a "mistake" in his book he took all his copies and burned them. He then said:

Until this time I had never settled in my own mind that Brother Russell was "That Servant.".... I never settled the matter until I yielded and took the Vow which he advised all the Lord's saints to take.... I firmly believe that this "ribband in blue" is the Vow and inspired of God... [5]

Goodrich's Recollection and Comments

In 1969 Roy Goodrich commented on Woodworth's "confession" of demon possession in his booklet *Demonism and the Watchtower*. Goodrich was a respected JW during the Rutherford period who got into trouble and was finally disfellowshipped over continually complaining to Rutherford and others such as Woodworth that the ERA machine (the Oscilloclast) that JW's were using was nothing more than a Ouija board. He used Woodworth's confession (and the ERA machines) as evidence of "demonism" in the Watchtower Society.

Goodrich claimed to have been at the convention and heard him say these things which surprised him to say the least. He does not quote from the report of the convention in his *Demonism* booklet, but appears to write from his memory of it. In the booklet he wrote:

FURTHER SIDELIGHTS ON SOCIETY DEMONISM C. J. Woodworth's Confession and Bold Prophecy

It was our privilege to attend our second Truth convention in the summer of 1913, at Asheville, N. C..... It was at that convention, when Brother C. J. Woodworth, the man who was the continuous Editor of THE GOLDEN AGE from its first issue in 1919 to the last issue of CONSOLATION in July, 1946 made a remarkable, never-to-be- forgotten speech. We vividly recall it. It was confession publicly, by Brother Woodworth, to the effect that he had been very seriously under the control of demons for some time; that under their influence he had written a book contrary to the teachings of Pastor Russell; that his battle with these intelligences had been terrific; and that only by the greatest personal struggle, had he by the grace of God been able to throw off their influence sufficiently to burn the manuscript which he had written... [6]

He later added:

Four and one-half short years later, the winter of 1916 and 1917, found this brother so recently and confessedly under demon control, feverishly and secretly writing the Revelation portion of "The Seventh Volume," "THE FINISHED MYSTERY", which was completed and released for circulation in jig time the following July. [7]

But our point here is this: On pages 126 and 127 of that volume... Brother Woodworth sets down the following, evidently from his own personal experience he had so graphically described in Asheville, four and one-half years previously:... [8]

He then quotes excerpts from these pages. It seems that Goodrich here is implying that since *The Finished Mystery* was completed "in jig time" and was written only a couple years after Woodworth publicly confessed to being demon possessed and that the book itself seems to promote the idea that his type of struggles are to be expected almost as a test from God (both of the fallen angels and the Church), that Woodworth was probably still under their control.

One assumes that Woodworth believed his battles were over (he doesn't state in his "confession" that they were), but perhaps what he wrote in 1917 indicates a rationalization to justify struggles that continued. Being demon possessed was now, apparently, a mark of being a true consecrated child of God, one trusted to "try" the spirits and to judge the spirits by being possessed by them! What Woodworth wrote and published in the *Golden Age* doesn't indicate to me any end to demonic influences in his life. Perhaps my evangelical bias is showing through here, but they are filled with occult and demonic material.

The Golden Age

This spiritual or mental condition of Woodworth, if continued, could explain not only the contents of *The Finished Mystery*, but the occultism and "demonism" in *The Golden Age* magazine he edited. The previous journal documented one such occultic and demonically inspired item he endorsed & the automatic writing book *Angels and Women*. He believed the book was "dictated" to the author by a fallen angel who was "tired of sin" and wanted to repent. This fallen angel was "judged" by this high ranking, demon possessed member of God's organization as being honest and repentant (as opposed to the ones that communicated with him earlier that he judged as being wicked). The fallen angel shed some light on pre-flood conditions in the book he said. He thus promoted "new light" or Biblical interpretation and history from demons & as long as they were repentant and honest, not simply "lying spirits." As he said in his "confession": "these lying spirits do sometimes tell the truth" and when they did, he believed and promoted their ideas!

A good sized book or three could document and discuss many other examples of his publishing and endorsing material in the *Golden Age* that was of an occultic nature. A major area that had occultic or "demonic" associations are the numerous food, health, and medical items printed in *The Golden Age*. One of these, the "ERA" theory and devices of Dr. Albert Abrams is being documented in this journal as I believe it shows how these endorsements involved many in the JW movement, including prominent ones, in the occult (part one is in this issue).

I may decide to document others at some point. The point of the current series though is to document Rutherford's occultic and demonic involvement and why I believe he was a spirit medium. Rutherford himself claimed spirits projected Biblical interpretations into his mind and thus seems to have had similar channeling experiences to Woodworth. The difference being Rutherford firmly believed these spirits were not wicked but holy.

Rutherford's leadership involved others in the Bible Student/JW movement in the occult as well. I believe some of this should be documented to show the effects his leadership and example had on others. The placing of Woodworth as editor of the *Golden Age* did much to involve many in the Watchtower Society in the occult and thus demonic influence.

References and Footnotes:

1. *Thirteenth Souvenir Convention Report*, p. 274.
2. *The Finished Mystery*, 1917 pp. 126, 127.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
4. *Thirteenth Souvenir Convention Report*, p. 274.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 275.
6. Roy D. Goodrich, *Demonism and the Watchtower* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: The Bible Way Publications) 1969, p. 11.

7. Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

8. Ibid., p. 12.

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