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# Was Rutherford a Spirit Medium?

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<http://watchtower.observer.org/raines/medium.html>



The Watchtower Society's second president, "Judge" J. F. Rutherford, claimed angels enlightened him with God's interpretation of Scripture. He said invisible spirits transmitted the interpretations, as well as organization instructions, inaudibly into his mind. Rutherford stated that these claims were not spiritism. Was Rutherford contacted and informed by invisible spirit creatures, making fraudulent claims, or suffering from delusions? If his claims of angels transmitting Biblical interpretations into his mind were true and not the result of delusions or lying, Rutherford was a channel for the spirit world, that is, a spirit medium.

## Angels of the New Light

In 1986, Duane Magnani delivered his ground breaking lecture "Angels of the New Light" at the Witnesses Now for Jesus ex-JW convention in New Ringgold, Pennsylvania. He reviewed the Rutherford era of the Watchtower Society and Rutherford's claims and involvement in the occult. He discussed Rutherford's claim that what he wrote was not due to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 14;16-18; 16:7-8, 12-14, 16; 1 John 2:20, 27), but due to angels who transmitted the information telepathically into his mind.

Magnani reviewed some of his research into the Society's involvement in the occult and their occult beliefs such as their concept of Jehovah as an organism living in the Pleiades star cluster, salvation of "honest" demons, their endorsement of the automatic writing book, *Angels and Women*, and basic doctrines compared to Johannes Greber. The "point" of the lecture, he said, was that Rutherford was "a channel of communication for demons" and thus a "writing" and "inspirational" medium. He promised a book or books would be published documenting his research (we're still waiting Duane!).

I listened to a tape of this talk in 1987. I just about fell out of my chair. I couldn't believe such out-and-out occultism and "demonism" in the Society. I decided to check into it as best I could. I began to collect Watchtower material particularly from the Rutherford era to research this for myself. I read about three or four pages of Rutherford's comments and was convinced he was a spirit medium. I purchased a copy of Rutherford's 1933 book, *Preparation* (from Duane himself I believe) and checked Duane's quoting of pages 36 and 37 which I found accurate. I was aware of a few other statements as well by Rutherford to the same effect, so I was quickly convinced this was a basic claim of Rutherford and not an offhand remark. I decided to look at the book's index to look for other references to angels enlightening the remnant. I found a reference to page 64 where Rutherford stated:

**Enlightenment proceeds from Jehovah... and is given to the faithful anointed.... the remnant are instructed by the angels of the Lord. The remnant do not hear audible sounds, because such is not necessary. Jehovah has provided his own good way to convey thoughts to the minds of his anointed ones.**

This was all it took for me to conclude that Duane was correct in stating that Rutherford was a spirit medium. I realize others may require more evidence of demonic influences in Rutherford's life, so I have provided an overview of some of the evidence below that has been documented in these columns to date, and the conclusions I have reached based on them.

# Angels of light

**God uses angels to teach His people now on earth.**

*Golden Age*, November 8, 1933, p. 69.

As we have seen, Rutherford claimed that no one could understand the Bible or specific portions thereof until God's "due time" to reveal it. When the right time arrived, God revealed the "proper explanation" 1 or interpretation to the leadership class of JW's alone (the "remnant"). This is the reason Rutherford frequently stated what he wrote was not his opinion or interpretations of Scripture&endash; they were God's interpretation.

## Angelic channeling

Rutherford claimed that God used angels to teach the remnant, not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit stopped teaching the remnant, according to Rutherford, in 1918. Everything written by Rutherford from books and booklets to *The Watchtower* magazine, came from angels:

**These invisible ones the Lord uses to put in the hands of his "faithful servant" class, that is, the man clothed with linen, the fiery message from his Word, or judgments written, and which is to be used as directed. The resolutions adopted by conventions of God's anointed people, booklets, magazines, and books published by them, contain the message of God's truth and are from the Lord Jehovah, and provided by him through Christ Jesus and his underofficers.... The interpretation of prophecy, therefore, is not from man but is from Jehovah...[1]**

What Rutherford wrote was therefore not his interpretation, but God's interpretation given to him by angels.

## Angelic oracles?

Rutherford claimed to receive oracles or messages from angels. In discussing oracles he said:

**An oracle may be properly defined as "a speech or message proceeding or coming from an unseen power, given in answer to an inquiry".... It was from amongst the Jews that Jehovah selected all his prophets and to whom he spoke or delivered his messages... An oracle is therefore a speech or message that prompts and directs action of the creature. Satan is the mimic god, and hence attempts to counterfeit... To this end he has used and still uses wicked spirit creatures to deliver speech or messages to those who are willing to give heed thereto. Such has ever been a part of the practice of satanic religions. The priest of such satanic religions is said to receive a message from the unseen which he delivers to others, and thus the priest claims to be in communication with a god. However, these priests do not disclose that the god with whom they are in communication is the Devil or some of his invisible assistants. [2]**

If Rutherford was receiving information into his mind from angels, which kind were they, good or evil? [10] If these angels were lying spirits wouldn't this make Rutherford some kind of "priest" of a "satanic religion" if his above statements are correct?

# Spiritism



artwork: Ken Raines

**Since we do not practice spiritism, we are free of domination by demons.**

&endash; *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1992, p. 20, ¶12.

Perhaps because of questions raised by his claims, Rutherford denied that he was involved in spiritism:

**The Lord used The Watchtower to announce these truths. Doubtless he used his invisible deputies to have much to do with it. This is not what some may regard as "spiritism", by any means; but it**

**does mean that God can direct his people without any audible communication with them. [3]**

According to Rutherford's own statements, after 1918, the remnant were not enlightened by the Holy Spirit, but by angels, or, holy spirits. This is spiritism by definition. It is the same claim Johannes Greber made.

The manner in which invisible, angelic spirits communicated with Rutherford according to his claims, leave no other conclusion than that Rutherford was a spirit medium.

### **Spirits invade Rutherford's mind**

Rutherford claimed the Holy Spirit was "removed" or "taken away" from the remnant in 1918. Thereafter, angels began teaching the "remnant" the truth. They did this by inaudibly transmitting information and Biblical interpretations into the remnant's minds. Here again is a few of his statements on this:

**Surely the holy angels of Jehovah God,... are clothed with power to put questions in the minds of those on earth who are devoted to God. It is not necessary for us to know just how this is done, but there can be no doubt about the power of the deputies of the Lord. [4]**

**... the remnant are instructed by the angels of the Lord. The remnant do not hear audible sounds, because such is not necessary. Jehovah has provided his own good way to convey thoughts to the minds of his anointed ones.[5]**

**... Jehovah would employ his power through his angels to put in the minds of his servants to take the course that he would have them take.[6]**

**God put it into the minds of his people to declare what constitutes Satan's organization and to serve notice upon each branch thereof.... Jehovah directs his own work, though we hear no audible voices. [7]**

This, I submit, has exactly nothing to do with Christianity and everything to do with spiritism and the occult. Nowhere are Christians said to be, or would be, receiving telepathic messages from angels. This is what Satan and his demons do. As Rutherford said:

**As Satan, "that old Serpent" is the arch deceiver, also all his wicked angels are deceivers, and the undisputed evidence shows that they continue to deceive men. They operate by gaining control of the mind of man... [8]**

Angels have appeared to individuals throughout history according to the Bible. These appearances were always either visible appearances or a part of a special, God-given dream or vision (Luke 1:9-20, 26-38, etc.) I know of no instance where an angel transmitted interpretations of Scripture inaudibly into the mind of an Apostle or other Christian. The Bible does not indicate that Christians are to be enlightened by angelic spirits through thought transference.

The Bible repeatedly states that Christians are to be "born of" the Holy Spirit (John 1:13; 3:3-12; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 4:7), to "walk in" the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25), and are to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to the truth. (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-8, 12-14, 16; 1 John 2:20, 27; 1 Cor. 2:10-15, 12:3) Christians are to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), not by any other spirit. It is the Holy Spirit alone that produces Christlikeness in Christians. (Gal. 5: 22-23) Perhaps this explains Rutherford's vitriolic nature and temperament. He claimed himself that he wasn't walking in the Spirit, he "walked" under the direction of other spirits.

In contrast to what the Bible says about the important, in fact, vital ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's "walk," the Bible contains numerous warnings about listening to, or being taught by, "other" spirits. (2 Cor. 11:4) Rutherford claimed to have been taught by "other spirits." This is as serious as it gets.



Being possessed or indwelt by any spirit other than the Holy Spirit which affects the minds of the possessed is viewed in the Bible as demon possession or control, not the work of good spirits. (Matt. 4: 24; 8: 28-33, etc.) Demons teach false doctrines and Biblical interpretations. (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1) They do this, in Rutherford's own words, "by gaining control of the minds" of their subjects. Demons, not good angels, try to control a person's mind. An individual so controlled by an angelic spirit is a spirit medium.

## Writing and inspirational mediums

The spirit that communicated to the spiritist, Johannes Greber, speaking through a medium, described various kinds of mediums for the spirit world. His following description of "writing" and "inspirational" mediums seems to describe Rutherford's claimed methods of spiritual enlightenment:

**"Whenever messages from the spirit-world through writing are set down by a person, you speak of him as a 'writing medium'. The manner in which the writing is accomplished differs widely in the case of the various writing mediums. In one instance the thoughts may be inspired into the medium and written down by him; he is therefore sometimes known as an 'inspirational medium'. Another's hand may be guided at the same time that the words he writes are inspired into his mind. All the while he is fully conscious of his actions... " [9]**

Rutherford claimed to have been enlightened by angelic spirits that transmitted information inaudibly into his mind. He apparently was "fully conscious of his actions" while writing material under angelic direction. Elsewhere in his book, Greber gave examples of individuals who were becoming spirit mediums of the "writing" and "inspirational" variety. These examples illustrate how these mediums operate and how the spirits communicated with and through these kinds of mediums. Again, one can see clear parallels to Rutherford's claimed *modus operandi*. The following is the spirit's description of the boy at Greber's "Bible Study" at his parish becoming a writing and inspirational medium:

**"You have there at present two kinds of mediums undergoing a course of preparation at the hands of the spirit-world. One is a so-called 'inspirational medium' into whom certain thoughts, determined by the spirit, are instilled with such force, that the medium's own thoughts are completely expelled from him, leaving him wholly within the spirit's power. The medium not only receives all the thoughts from the spirit, but is compelled to write them down or utter them, retaining the full use of his faculties meanwhile... " [10]**

The following is Greber's description of one lady's experiences when she was becoming this kind of medium:

**"... she herself was compelled by an invisible power to take the pencil and write.... she knew what she was writing.... the thoughts to be written down were forcibly instilled into her. She was, therefore, an "inspirational medium", like the boy,... " [11]**

Sounds like Rutherford's claims. The Watchtower Society has condemned this sort of thing as forbidden by God. Here is a typical example:

### Wrong Channel

**"Channels," according to the Times, are "mediums... to communicate with the unseen 'spirit world'.... Moses warned Israel: "There should not be found in you anyone... who consults a spirit medium.... "Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah."&endash; Deuteronomy 18:10-12. [12]**

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Rutherford claimed that he and the rest of the remnant were "God's channel of communication" as does the current JW leadership. He claimed specifically to be a "channel" for invisible angelic spirits who transmitted Biblical interpretations into his mind. This is no different than what Greber's spirit described as a writing and inspirational

medium. Rutherford not only "consulted" a spirit medium for new light (J .G. Smith) but was apparently one himself!

## Seances

When most people think of "mediums" they think of seances where a spirit medium tries to contact the spirits of the dead, usually the dead relative of the one inquiring of the medium. The most famous example of this to the student of the Bible is Saul and the "witch of Endor." However, mediums claim to communicate with other spirits besides the dead. [13] Especially today, mediums or channelers claim to communicate with a whole menagerie of beings from angels to extraterrestrials.

Rutherford, to my knowledge, never claimed to hold seances at Watchtower headquarters or Beth-Sarim, nor did anyone consult him to "conjure up the dead." (Although for a while, he did claim to be under the direction of the dead Pastor Russell.) However, mediums can channel spirits by themselves alone and are not limited to communal seances. The spirit that communicated with Greber said the following about this:

**"Any individual may, by himself alone, devote a definite time,... to mental concentration.... He must begin with a brief prayer, read a passage from the Scriptures and reflect upon it.... If he is impelled to write down thoughts which are very insistently urged upon him, he should commit it to paper.... He may rest assured that from the first moment at which he seeks contact with the good spirit-world, it will begin its work on him and create all the conditions pre-requisite to such contact. In fact, this work will often be begun as soon as a person turns his thoughts seriously to this subject.... the spirits of the Beyond, of whom some are always hovering about you, immediately begin to exert their influence on such persons who, on account of their mediumistic tendencies, are highly susceptible to any odic action on the part of the spirit-world. But until a person knows at least something of the possibility of communicating with the spirit-world it would serve no purpose for the spirits about him to begin to work on him,... " [14]**

One of the things that interests me about Rutherford's claims is how it affected others in the Watchtower Society. How many, one wonders, came under the influence or control of spirits in the Watchtower Society because of Rutherford's example and his endorsement of angelic channeling? A spirit told Greber that "as soon as a person turns his thoughts seriously" to communicating with invisible spirits, the spirits will "begin to work on him" to turn him into a medium. If this is true, many in the Society were wide open to this given how seriously the average JW has viewed the pronouncements of the Society.

The spirit further claimed that a person needs to at least learn of the possibility of communicating with the spirit world before he could come into contact with them. Rutherford's statements that the remnant were being informed by angels transmitting thoughts into their minds certainly informed them of the possibility! It may have even given the rest of the "remnant" an expectation of such contact since he claimed it was a matter of course for the remnant.

## Rutherford's angels: lying spirits

As we saw in the last issue, if one takes Rutherford's claims of being enlightened by angelic spirits at face value and "tests" these spirits, one finds the information given to him was frequently found to be in error. [15]

In *The Finished Mystery*, published in 1917, they said that Armageddon would really break loose in 1918 with the destruction of "Christendom" and all the church members and by 1920 all kingdoms of the earth would pass away. [16] In 1918 the "little flock" would pass beyond the veil and 1921 would be the last year to make it to heaven and would see the death of all in the "great multitude" class. [17] *The Finished Mystery* claimed, as did other Watchtower material in 1917, that they were directed and supervised by the spirit of the dead "Pastor" Russell and others of the deceased "anointed" class. [18] This is necromancy, or communicating with the dead, which the Society has called

spiritism and demonism.

The next year, 1918, was claimed by Rutherford to be the year when the Holy Spirit was removed from the remnant and angels began teaching them the truth. Did the "light get brighter"? No. This new source of spiritual enlightenment was no better. In 1918 that Rutherford began to deliver his lecture, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" which he believed was the "gospel of the kingdom" that was to be preached to all the world for a witness and then the end was to come &ndash; in 1925. Given that Rutherford claimed angels were responsible for everything he published, the Apostle Paul's words to the churches in Galatia about other gospels from angels are relevant. (Galatians 1:6-9)

Rutherford preached a gospel other than the one Paul preached. Not only that, the "Millions" gospel and prophecy failed. The kingdom was not set-up in 1925 with the resurrection of Abraham and others. Bald heads, false teeth, and other things prophesied to take place in 1925 and shortly thereafter, did not occur. The angels, if responsible for this, were lying spirits by definition.

*The Golden Age* printed two news items that stated that "demons" had been recently telling the spiritist Conan Doyle that 1925 was to witness events paving the way for the Millennium. They said that demons apparently have advance warning of what is about to happen, thus they apparently believed these particular demons were "honest". Rutherford said he made an "ass" of himself over the failure of his 1925 prophecy. [19] If his claims were true that the information he published concerning 1925 came from angels, the angels made an "ass" of Rutherford which further identifies the nature of these angels. They are the same or similar to the "demons" the Society said communicated the same message to Conan Doyle through mediums.

Despite this failure, and being made an "ass" of by these angels, Rutherford continued to listen to them and publish what they transmitted into his mind. This included further false prophecies such as his WWII prophecy of Armageddon. I don't think I need to labor this point to death. The evidence is clear. If Rutherford was publishing material that was transmitted into his mind by angels, the "angels" were demons. This brings up the question of demon possession. Was Rutherford demon possessed? Was he demon oppressed? Was he delusional? Or was he simply making false claims knowingly?

### **Rutherford: liar, lunatic, or demon possessed?**

If Rutherford's claims of angelic thought transference are accepted as true, the evidence would lead to the conclusion that these angels were demons. Would this mean that he was demon oppressed or demon possessed? Demon oppression refers to demons that oppress and harass individuals from the outside by influencing and attacking a person's mind and circumstances. Demon possession refers to a demonic spirit possessing or inhabiting a person's body and directing and controlling the individual from the inside.

One could interpret Rutherford's claims and actions as the result of (or indicating) either demon oppression or demon possession. His actions and claims are consistent with what has been traditionally viewed as evidence of demon oppression and possession. [20] This includes both his claims of angels transmitting thoughts into his mind, false doctrines and prophecies promulgated at their direction, and his temperament and behavior. He was generally viewed and known as a power/control obsessed individual with a severe case of alcoholism and a vitriolic nature. He definitely didn't produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit such as kindness, gentleness, meekness and self-control! He didn't even claim to be guided or enlightened by the Holy Spirit saying "it" was removed from him in 1918 and replaced with mind-controlling spirits.

Another conclusion one could reach is that Rutherford was suffering from delusions. Perhaps triggered by his alcoholism, he may have been periodically visited by mental delusions of spirits transmitting thoughts into his mind. This would be similar to those who claim Venusians or Martians through telepathy, have transmitted vital information to them to give to the rest of mankind.[21]

A third possibility is that Rutherford simply made these claims knowing all the while that they were false. In this case



he was a spiritual charlatan. This is the hardest for me to reconcile with his life and actions. It is possible that he simply made these enormous claims to provide himself with a non questioning, faithful following, so that he could enjoy the "finer" things in life with the resultant proceeds— Beth-Sarim, Cadillacs, and the finest liquor Watchtower funds could provide. However, he seems to me to have been sincere. He apparently believed what he wrote. I have not seen or heard anything from those who knew and worked with him that it was all a profitable sham for him. Like most Watchtower Society leaders and members, he appeared to have been sincere in his beliefs.

The least plausible conclusion it appears to me is to say that Rutherford's claims were true, that he was enlightened by "holy" angels who delivered to him "new light" from Jehovah God. This can't possibly be true unless his "Jehovah" is a liar or a space and time bound pathetic prognosticator who changes his mind a lot. This would make his "Jehovah" more like Satan than the Omnipotent, Omniscient God of the Bible.

## References and notes:

- 1 Rutherford, J. F., *Vindication I*, 1931, p. 120; *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1938, p. 143.
2. *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1933, pp. 21, ¶9, 10.
3. Rutherford, J. F., *Light book I*, 1930, p. 64; *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1938, p. 158.
4. Rutherford, J. F., *Light book I*, 1930, p. 61, 62; *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1938, p. 157.
5. Rutherford, J. F., *Preparation*, 1933, p. 64; *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1933, pp. 247-8; *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1938, p. 286.
6. *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1937, p. 326, ¶14; *1938 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Daily Texts and Comments, February 15.
7. *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1935, p. 54, ¶16; *1935 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Daily Texts and Comments, November 22. See further, *Light, book I*, 1930, pp. 61-2, 120; *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1938, p. 157; *1931 Yearbook of the International Bible Students*, Daily Texts and Comments, February 17.
8. *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1937, p. 165, ¶11; *1938 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Daily Texts and Comments, May 8.
9. Greber, Johannes, *Communication With the Spirit World* (New York, N.Y.: John Felsberg, Inc.), 1932, p. 109.
10. Ibid., p. 36.
11. Ibid., p. 55.
12. *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1987, p. 30
13. Communicating with the dead is a specific form of spiritism called necromancy and should not be viewed as synonymous with spiritism.
14. *Communication With the Spirit World*, p. 136.
15. *JW Research*, vol. 2, #2, Spring, 1995, "Test the Spirits."
16. *The Finished Mystery*, 1917, pp. 179, 258, 280-285, 313, 334, 484-6, 542.

17. Ibid., p. 64.

18. Ibid., pp. 144, 256; *The Watch Tower*, November 1, 1917, p. 325.

19. *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1984, p. 24.

20. See for example, Enns, Paul, "Doctrine of Demons", *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 1989, pp. 295-298; "Obsession and Possession" in *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, 2nd ed., pp. 960-971.

21. See for example, Festinger, Leon, *When Prophecy Fails*, (New York: Harper & Row), 1964; *Venus Speaks*, (London & New York: Regency Press), n.d..(circa., 1955).

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