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The Watchtower, Quack Science and Homicide

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The Watchtower Society is well known for their many forays into quack science. False cancer cures, blaming aluminum for causing all sorts of maladies, condemning vaccines, and concluding that the heart is the literal source of the mind, are some of their more infamous fiascoes. Indeed, they have in their history embraced one quackery after another. The blood transfusion prohibition is still a hold out--now rivaled only by vaccines in terms of the number of deaths it has caused (Bergman, 1994). They once argued that "vaccination is a direct violation of the everlasting covenant that God made with Noah after the flood" (*The Golden Age*, Feb. 4, 1931:293) and staunchly refused to change their rigid position on vaccination for years. Altering their stance only in the 1950s, now the Watchtower is laudatory about the wonders that vaccines have achieved in dealing with disease. In the 1930s they even claimed that much of the looseness in our day along sexual lines may be traceable to vaccination (*The Golden Age*, Feb. 4, 1931 p. 293). They have even published articles condemning the germ theory and medicine.

One of the more enigmatic quack science ideas that this author has stumbled upon was the Watchtower's seeming support of Hitlerian eugenics. Eugenics is the idea that humans evolved from apes, and are still evolving. The factors that produced our evolution can, if applied today, cause evolution to continue--and by this means we can cause humans to evolve as far as humans of today have evolved from the apes of the past. The key to this evolution is the application of natural selection to humans, a field called eugenics, a word that literally means well born.

It was once held by many non-theistic scientists that we could apply evolution to humans so as to produce a superior race. Its most direct application implies that we should prohibit those individuals who are judged by society as inferior from reproducing, and concurrently encourage those who are judged superior to have more children. Eugenics' most devastating effects resulted from its deadly application to humans by Nazi Germany during World War II. Actually, eugenics was the main driving force behind Hitler's efforts to produce a "superior race"-- and the conclusion that this race be produced by preventing inferior races from "polluting" the superior ones. In the case of Germany, those groups that they judged inferior included the Jews, Slavics, Negroes, and many other races. The frustration of enforcing the policy

prohibiting interbreeding eventually resulted in the establishment of ghettos, then concentration camps, and finally the "final solution" known as the holocaust.

The Watchtower Society, which claimed to be creationists at this time, and taught that all humans descended from Adam and Eve--making all races brothers--would seem to eschew any eugenics thinking. Creationists in general were then openly opposed to eugenics, and many atheistic evolutionists were generally supportive. Yet, the fact that the Watchtower delved into eugenics and at one time evidently supported the movement is a striking commentary on both their scientific and scriptural naivete.

For example, an article published in *The Golden Age* authored by a Mr. MacArthur, the secretary of The American Eugenics Society, was written at the Watchtower's request. The Watchtower expected that this article would meet "with hearty approval by many of our readers." It begins by noting that many social problems exist--and in spite of laudatory efforts to alleviate these, "we do not seem to be making very marked progress." The solution, the author concludes, is not because we are at the end of the system of things, an answer one might expect from a Watchtower publication, but because "modern science has put into our hands [the] means of preventing much of this suffering. The study of human heredity reveals the possibility of... eugenics, the science which deals with the conscious direction of human existence" (1930:80). The author concludes that we can take a lesson from domestic animals and the fact that "blood tells." All we have to do is identify the "families cursed with a hereditary of shiftlessness, lack of foresight, and indifference to the rights of others" and then do something (such as forced sterilization) to prevent these families from producing a "horde of inferior human beings" (1930:80).

The author then cites the case of the Jukes family which allegedly "cost the state of New York something over two million dollars," because "nearly all of its representatives have been drunkards, paupers, prostitutes, and criminals." Of course the "Jukes family" myth was exposed years ago--and obviously the eugenicist's enthusiasm for their program forced them to uncritically accept studies which were produced by researchers who were somewhat unabashedly endeavoring to find support for a theory that they already made their minds up was correct. The way to achieve "a golden age" the author recommends, was not Christ, but "eugenics." The author recommends various methods "of restricting less desirable human stocks" such as segregating them in colonies and surgical sterilization, so that society can rebuild a "kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy" by eugenics. A reason that Rutherford may have embraced the author's ideas was because he opposed the religious organizations that "believed that their best men and women should remain celibate as part of devotion to religious life," namely, the Roman Catholic Church. A 1931 article agreed with almost the entire article, but "two or three points" (Saddlemire, 1931:247).

Another *Golden Age* article (Nov. 12, 1930:116) noted with approval the fact that fifteen states had passed laws providing for the sterilization of feeble minded parents. They add that since the law was passed in 1909 "5,820 men and women have been dealt with" in California (p. 116). They conclude that "without doubt blood tells in men, good blood and bad blood. There are families in which criminal traits predominate, as there are others in which the traits of man's original nobility are clearly discerned as surviving."

Other articles periodically appeared in *The Golden Age* on eugenics--such as the one on Russia's allegedly spending \$51-million to "consider man from every angle, from genetics and eugenics through education and all its branches to the adult functioning of the human body" (*The Golden Age*, June 6, 1934:559). Many readers likely were appalled at these eugenics discussions and some evidently wrote protesting.

Admittedly they quote "the other side" such as an article from The Britannica which stated that there is little "scientific data... to establish on any firm basis our knowledge of the inheritance of mental stability" (*The Golden Age*, Nov. 12, 1930:116). It would seem that they should have taken this advice and been more objective in their articles that concluded eugenics could create a paradise on Earth. The Watchtower readers back then must have been more intelligent, as well as more vocal than the readers today. In response to this article, a Mr. West quoted Saddlemire who stated, "Surely the eugenists would not want some of their fellow men to attempt to deprive them of their own selves, of one of the inalienable rights

that God gave them" (*The Golden Age*, May 27, 1931:560). On the other hand, even this critic concluded, "Eugenics would surely help the race to more intelligently use the measure of life with which it is endowed" adding that eugenics cannot solve all human problems, but that "God has arranged for a kingdom on earth; and through it most assuredly the ideals of eugenicists will be more than realized" (p. 561).

The Watchtower eventually openly backed down on their support for eugenics--as they have had to over and over in so many areas (Shelton, 1931). One article first condemned doctors, then lambasted the "misnamed 'science of eugenics'" on the basis that it was based on medical science, which is demonism! (*Golden Age*, 1930. Feb. 5, p. 311).

West... defends a part of the eugenics program on the ground of necessity, the plea that has always served tyrants in abusing their subjects and robbing them of their rights and liberties. He compares enforced eugenics to the isolation of a case of so-called infectious disease which we submit to, "not because we enjoy it, but for the good of others." This is an apt comparison. We submit to quarantine, not for the good of others, but because superstition, brought down to us from remote antiquity, tells us that there are contagious diseases that we can "catch" from another. We will submit to compulsory eugenics for the same reason: because ignorance... [that] leads us to believe that there are hereditary diseases (Shelton, 1931:727).

They later noted the work of Dr. Huskins who concluded that if all the feeble minded persons were sterilized, this would decrease the proportion of the feeble minded in the population by only 11% in the first generation--and it would take many generations to decrease the number by 20%, and we could never decrease the rate any more than 50% "no matter what steps were taken" (1934:559).

By 1942 they had completely reversed their stand--partly because it became clear that, determining who should be sterilized or prevented from interbreeding was very difficult (*Consolation*, Oct. 28, 1942:12). They even admitted that the Nazi techniques were "very much like the breeding and raising of of livestock" (p. 12) and likely were appalled at this degradation of humans. When the Nazis began to sterilize women who had every imaginable problem--even color blindness--the Watchtower finally realized how anti-Biblical the philosophy advocated by many eugenicists was. They then realized that "demons, not men," pursued policies that they themselves once approved of! (*Consolation*, Oct. 28, 1942:13). The Watchtower also recognized how inconsistent even the German policy was--noting that the Germans allowed the "master race" to become "contaminated" with Polish blood in order to further the war machine. Ironically, they again in 1951 discussed eugenics (*Awake!*, Nov. 22, p. 21) partly reversing their stand--concluding that "couples desiring to marry, with other obstacles cleared, are not likely to let a few genes stand in the way." They concluded that eugenicists do not have an infallible cure for human ills--and some of their ideas are downright wrong.

Nonetheless, they did not stop dabbling into more new pseudoscience, even concluding that if the first woman, Eve, remained perfect, and only Adam sinned, "Adam could have fathered perfect children by a sin-spoiled Eve." This astonishing conclusion, they concluded, was "verified in the case of Jesus' perfect human birth from the imperfect virgin Mary" (*Awake!*, Nov. 22, 1951 p. 24). They then argued that this is true because males play a "more vital role" in reproduction in spite of the fact that half of the chromosomes are supplied by the female!

The basis for this wild generalization included several studies which discuss the influence of the X and Y chromosome on various human traits, such as the sex-linked traits. They then add the erroneous and irresponsible conclusion that "not all of the parental genes affect the offspring, but only the dominant ones." Since blue eyes are the result of recessive genes, brown eyes of dominant genes, they are thus implying that blue eyes are an imperfect trait, and brown eyes a perfect one. In fact, most genes are incompletely dominant--and most traits are determined by several genes, not by a simple pair of dominant or recessive ones. Partial dominance is extremely common, and often recessive genes are simply a non-working copy of a so-called dominant gene.

They then add the erroneous idea that "perfect genes would dominate imperfect specimens," erroneously concluding that if Adam's genes were perfect and Eve's were imperfect, their child would be perfect! While many cases exist that support the Watchtower's conclusion that disease is caused by recessive genes, many are caused by various combinations of dominant and recessive genes, and dominant genes alone can cause disease, such as neurofibromatosis (the elephant man disease) Williams syndrome, and Huntingtons chorea. The incredibly dangerous nature of the foolishness advocated by the Watchtower is best illustrated in the following quote:

Mr. West mentions so-called "syphilis." Why does he not prove that there is such a disease? He simply accepts the existence of the protean monster on faith.... We do well to bear in mind that among the drugs, serums, vaccines, surgical operations, etc., of the medical profession, there is nothing of value save an occasional surgical procedure. Their whole so-called "science" grew out of Egyptian black magic and has not lost its demonological character. By their own admission, more deaths are caused by their practice every year in this country than from any other cause. We shall be in a sad plight when we place the welfare of the race in their hands.

Readers of *The Golden Age* know the unpleasant truth about the clergy; they should also know the truth about the medical profession, which sprang from the same demon-worshipping shamans (doctor-priests) as did the "doctors of divinity." ... These readers know the truth about the politicians, who also descended from the same line of "children God" or "children of the Sun" as did the priests and medicine men. Hippocrates was the grandson of Apollo, and... medicine originated in demonology and spent its time until the last century and a half trying to exorcise demons. During the past half century it has tried to exorcise germs. Its methods are the same in both efforts at exorcism, and instead on injuring the demon or the germ, the injury is often to the patient (Shelton, 1931:727-728).

The use of primarily popular, non-scholarly references to write this article, such as those published in *Life* and *Pageant*, are further evidences of the naivete of Watchtower scholarship. It is truly amazing that so many inept articles have been published in the Society's literature, which, remember, are held as being quasi inspired "food from the faithful and discreet slave, dispensed in due season" by the faithful. This is not to say that evolutionists have not likewise expounded foolish ideas, as persons who reject God might be expected to. Those who accept the veracity of the Scriptures, though, and have a deep knowledge of science will be spared many such embarrassing discussions as contained in this Nov. 22, 1951 *Awake!*

The Watchtower scholars have neither much biblical history background or theological sophistication, nor in-depth scientific knowledge, and consequently they are guaranteed to make many extremely foolish and outright dangerous statements -- as they have with vaccines, organ transplants, and blood transfusions. Many commentators have argued that the Watchtower's evil is more because they are ignorant than evil. Nonetheless, the effect is the same. How appalling some of these ideas are becomes fully apparent only when we look back at those articles that are a decade or more old. Indeed, will not their stand on blood transfusions be seen as more foolish (although far more tragic) in the future than the effect of the articles discussed above?

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