

# A Pyramid Scheme

## How C.T. Russell's Great Pyramid Changed with the Times

by Eric Francke

In the late 19th Century, a number of Bible students became interested in the "mysteries" of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh. One such individual was Charles Taze Russell, founder of the group later known as the Jehovah's Witnesses. In his book "Thy Kingdom Come" vol. 3 (Originally published in 1890), Russell goes into great detail of the various measurements inside the pyramid, using "[pyramid inches](#)" (1) in effort to prove that the construction of the pyramid was inspired by God to stand as a corroborating witness to the Bible, as well as reveal the dates of Christ's Second Coming. Below is the diagram from the 1904 edition. (click [here](#) or on the image to enlarge)

Russell was very specific that all the data he utilizes as well as the diagrams were from a book by Prof. Piazzi Smyth, and English scholar and Egyptologist.<sup>2</sup> Included in "Thy Kingdom Come" is even a letter from Prof. Smyth approving of Russell's utilization of his research. Regarding the measurements of the Pyramid, Russell said this:

"So, then, if we measure backward down the "First Ascending Passage" to its junction with the "Entrance Passage," we shall have a fixed date to mark upon the downward passage. This measure is 1542 inches, and indicates the year BC 1542, as the date at that point. Then measuring down the "Entrance Passage" from that point, to find the distance to the entrance of the "Pit," representing the great trouble and destruction with which this age is to close, when evil will be overthrown from power, we find it to be **3416 inches, symbolizing 3416 years from the above date, BC 1542. This calculation shows AD. 1874 as marking the beginning of the period of trouble; for 1542 years BC plus 1874 years AD. equals 3416 years. Thus the Pyramid witnesses that the close of 1874** was the chronological beginning of the time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation -- no, nor ever shall be afterward. And thus it will be noted that this "Witness" fully corroborates the Bible testimony on this subject...

[3](#)

There is a small problem, however. If we look at Smyth's actual diagrams (See below, [Click to Enlarge](#)) we see that the distance of the "entrance passage" from the points that Russell is referencing is actually 3461 "inches", not 3416, as Russell has just cited. Whether he merely transposed those two numbers as an honest mistake, or by design, can't really be proven one way or another. It is suspicious, however, that the only things that Russell deleted from the diagram that he published was the entire distance of the entrance passage, thus, making it impossible for anyone who did not possess Smyth's actual data to refute him. So essentially, Russell "shrunk" the pyramid 45 "pyramid inches" to make the passageway fit with his chronologies.

Russell later revised his numbers. In the 1910 version, Russell says this:

"So, then, if we measure backward down the "First Ascending Passage" to

its junction with the "Entrance Passage," we shall have a fixed date to mark upon the downward passage. This measure is 1542 inches, and indicates the year BC 1542, as the date at that point. Then measuring down the "Entrance Passage" from that point, to find the distance to the entrance of the "Pit," representing the great trouble and destruction with which this age is to close, when evil will be overthrown from power, we find it to be **3457 inches, symbolizing 3457 years from the above date, BC 1542.**

**This calculation shows AD. 1915 as marking the beginning of the period of trouble; for 1542 years BC plus 1915 years AD. equals 3457 years. Thus the Pyramid witnesses that the close of 1914** will be the beginning of the time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation -- no, nor ever shall be afterward. And thus it will be noted that this

"Witness" fully corroborates the Bible testimony on this subject..." [4](#)

Since 1874 was fading as a memory, and had passed without significant incident, Russell was left with the very embarrassing prospect of having to explain why great tribulation didn't come upon the earth in the subsequent years. The chronologies that he had been publishing in the meantime, utilized the year 1914 AD as the fateful year when God was going to punish the apostate church and pour his wrath out upon the earth. Thus, Russell inserted into the "Pyramid Chronology" another arbitrary number, this time 3457 pyramid inches. He was still 4 inches short of the actual measurements he claimed he was citing, but at least he was able to get the Pyramid to predict the "Great War" which every figured at the time to be the "War to End all Wars". Thus, he grew the Great Pyramid 41 pyramid inches between revisions of his book.



Charles Taze Russell

Charles Taze Russell went to his grave believing that the Great Pyramid was the "Bible in Stone", built as witness to the chronologies he espoused. Regarding his shifting chronologies based on the Bible, most of us will grant that he had a change of opinion on certain verses, and adjusted his calculations based on his accumulated knowledge. The Great Pyramid, is a little different, however, since the stone passage ways do not generally grow or shrink at command. The only accounting of the changes one can give then, is that Russell was deliberately and knowingly fabricating numbers to support his theories.

In all fairness, he was not alone in the belief that the Great Pyramid was a witness by God to the truth of the Bible. A number of dispensationalist teachers, such as Clarence Larkin, were likewise committed to the idea. Larkin, however, who was a contemporary of Russell's and Smyth's, is quick to point out that if taken at face

value, the measurements of the Great Pyramid at best would tell us that this dispensation should now be over. Larkin thus concludes that the "pyramid inch" as a unit of measure must be faulty. [5](#)

Russell, however maintained the divine origin of the Great Pyramid, and taught it dogmatically. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, apparently endorsed the idea, even after Russell's death. There is perhaps no more telling a witness to this, than the following image, which is the monument to Russell at his grave that the Watchtower erected.



Today, there is very little mention of the Great Pyramid amongst the scholars of the Watchtower. Judge Rutherford, Russell's successor, made a point to distance himself from the teaching in 1928. Perhaps they realized the absurdity of Russell's shrinking and growing passageways. Or possibly, they realize the emphasis on Russell's pyramid teachings will raise the specter of his involvement with Freemasonry. Either way, it seems to be an issue they would like now to forget. (EWF)

#### NOTES:

1. "Pyramid Inches" one may notice is not considered a standard, according to the Bureau of Weights and Measures. Nor is there a yardstick somewhere in the Pyramid saying "Behold, a pyramid inch". The way a pyramid inch came to be was a) Smyth and others presumed that the "Entrance Passage" was created so that it would be pointing at Alpha Draconis at the completion of the pyramid. b) They presumed that the opening to the Grand Gallery represented the year 1 AD, measured back to the bottom of the Ascending Passage, turned up the Entrance Passage (why not down the entrance passage, no one knows), and found a notch on the wall at an arbitrary place. c) They presumed that the notch must have been made by the builders to mark the year of the completion of the pyramid, which coincided with the appearance of Alpha Draconi. d) Since Alpha Draconis appeared in 2170 BC, they just divided the length of their measure by 2170 and "viola!" the pyramid inch was born.
2. "The Great Pyramid", by C. Piazzzi Smyth. Originally published in 1880 as "Our Inheritance In the Great Pyramid", (4th edition).
3. Thy Kingdom Come, (Millennial Dawn, vol. 3); by Charles Taze Russell, copyright 1891, by The Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society. 1904 edition
4. Thy Kingdom Come, (Studies In The Scriptures, vol. 3); by Charles Taze Russell, copyright 1891, by The Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society. 1910 edition
5. "Dispensationalist Truth" by Clarence Larkin, copyright 1918. Pg. 169.

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