



THE WATCHTOWER CASH COW



Jehovah's Witnesses often brag to outsiders (non-Jehovah's Witnesses) that they do not pass a collection plate during services (like the churches do). Many Jehovah's Witnesses are under the assumption that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, parent organization to their religious group, is extremely poor. This perception

comes from the Elders (leaders) in the congregations who regularly talk about how the organization is run on a shoe string.

Indeed, thousands of members work in Brooklyn, New York, every year and volunteer their time and resources, receiving a pittance for their nearly-free labor (they receive a small monthly stipend of around \$20). Once they leave headquarters, and especially if they stop subscribing to the tenants of the organization, they receive no pension, positive job referral or career assistance.

Still, most members do not realize how wealthy the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society really is.

In September 2001, Newsday.com reported that the Watchtower was worth \$951 million. It was listed in the top 40 of New York City corporations!

<http://www.watchtowernews.org/Top40NYCorps.htm>

In addition, many of the multi-million-dollar properties have been sold over the years to make way for purchase of more expensive real estate.

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Hot properties



105 WILLOW ST.
■ Four-story, plus basement and cellar, 5,968-square-foot brownstone built in mid-1800s
■ Estimated market value:
\$6 million



34 ORANGE ST.
■ Four-story, plus cellar, 3,840-square-foot brick house built in late 1800s
■ Estimated market value:
\$5 million

169 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
■ 12-story, 74,393-square-foot building built in 1903
■ 128 apartments
■ Estimated market value:
\$35 million

Watchtower Bible and Tract is selling six of its Brooklyn Heights buildings, including these properties, managed by Richard Devine (right):



Photos by Katie Orinaky

Development Du Jour: One Brooklyn Bridge Park

Wednesday, June 7, 2006, by Lockhart



On Monday, we [glimpsed new views](#) of the Brooklyn Bridge Park courtesy of the [new website](#) of new development **One Brooklyn Bridge Park**. Today, let's take a peek at the development itself. Formerly known as 360 Furman when it was owned by **Jehovah's Witnesses**, the building [changed hands](#) for **\$200 million** in summer 2004. What makes the development particularly interesting, besides

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its site smack in the middle of the forthcoming parkland, are the variety of units being offered: two-to-five bedroom duplex townhouses fronting the harbor; lofty apartment spaces; penthouses..



Wouldn't you love to live here? Holy Brooklyn, New York, I wish I was that *poor*!

I attended a Jehovah's Witness assembly (religious convention) a few years back where tens of thousands had gathered over a three-day period, and one thing that really stood out to me were the 3-ft high by approximately 2-foot wide cardboard boxes positioned strategically at each exit in the stadium, labeled "Worldwide Work" (I guess you had to pay to leave). The speaker mentioned the boxes several times during the last talk of the day, noting that there was one at each exit. Now, maybe I am being a little naïve, but if they weren't bringing in that much money, wouldn't it make sense that the boxes would be just a few inches in circumference? I mean, checks and dollar bills aren't that big, right? **Maybe the reason they don't pass a collection plate is because the collection plate is simply too small?**



One thing that has me very curious is, why do they continue to invest in real estate and resell it for ungodly amounts if Armageddon is coming any day now? Wouldn't it make more sense to donate at least a portion of that wealth to the truly poor folks around the world through some charitable organization? (See my blog entitled "Is the Watchtower a Charitable Organization?" for more information about that.)


About two years ago I asked my father how much money he, as a poor, struggling farmer, had given to the Watchtower in New York over the years. He took offense at my question and as expected (well-programmed) he defended them, commenting that they didn't have that much money. (I had heard this repeatedly during the nine years I was a Jehovah's Witness from various JW's.) I pressed on and he acknowledged that he had probably donated at least \$50,000 to the Watchtower over the last 35 years. Then I asked him, "Dad, if you have donated that much money as a poor farmer, how much money do you think the Watchtower has taken in over just the last few years with over 6 million members?" He turned silent; didn't know what to say. My dad is, after all, a logical man, even when heavily indoctrinated and coached.

I was shocked a few years ago to learn that the Watchtower even solicits estate donations in their book entitled, "Charitable Planning." But they aren't talking about donating to charitable organizations. They are referring to donations to the Kingdom Service World-Wide, a catchy phrase for "Watchtower" donations. Here is one page that talks about *cash* donations:

Gifts of Money
Outright gifts of money are the simplest and most common way of making contributions. Such an unrestricted gift provides an immediate resource that the Society can use in its many theocratic endeavors. Gifts of money may be made in any amount and at any time. You may send these gifts directly to the Society. *Please follow the directions on page 29.*

Gifts of money are tax deductible up to 50 percent of your adjusted gross income. If you cannot deduct the entire gift in one year, you may carry the unused portion of the tax deduction forward for up to five additional years.

Outright Gift



Readers of this may argue that other religions regularly benefit from their members' contributions so why am I "picking" on the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society in New York?

I'm not saying that they don't have a right to support from their members, just like other tax-free churches in this world. My concern is that there is no accountability for the money, as evidenced by the fact that the members are kept in the dark about what their financial status is (in fact, most Jehovah's Witnesses would emphatically state that this Charitable Planning book doesn't exist). In my nine years as a Jehovah's Witness, I don't recall seeing one financial statement from headquarters.

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Additionally, what does the Watchtower do to support other “worldly” institutions or people who assist the poor and needy? Have you ever seen a Watchtower soup kitchen?

In fact, I bet if I showed up at New York headquarters tomorrow and asked for even \$10,000 of my father’s \$50,000 back, citing that he could use it now that he’s retired, they would laugh me all the way back to Colorado.

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