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The Watch Tower Society and the End of the Cold War: Interpretations of the End-Times, Superpower Conflict, and the Changing Geo-Political Order

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Abstract

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania professes to be politically neutral, concerned not with secular affairs, political ideology or worldly authority, but only with Jehovah's divine plan. This article examines one explicitly political state of affairs that featured prominently in the literature produced by the Society from 1946 until 1991: the Cold War. During the Cold War years, the dominant narrative of superpower relations was of the two kings in the Book of Daniel. According to the Society, their historic rivalry would only end with the onset of Armageddon. The demise of Soviet Communism necessitated an entirely new interpretation of the rival kings. The subsequent attempt to reconcile the spiritual and the secular in the modern world indicates that the organization is adept at recasting (and resurrecting) failed narratives and adapting contemporary events to reaffirm Charles Taze Russell's interpretations of biblical chronology, first expounded in the 1880s.

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