hardships can be borne. Peter told fellow believers: "Beloved ones, do not be surprised at the burning among you, which is happening to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were befalling you. On the contrary, rejoice as though you were being borne into a holy place by the Spirit."—1 Pet. 4:13; 5:11. Something else also occurred. Men manifesting the marks of an "evil slave" came forward and figuratively began "beating" their fellow slaves. Jesus Christ had foretold how such ones would be dealt with. At the same time he showed that a "faithful and discreet slave" class would be in evidence, dispensing spiritual food.—Matt. 24:45-51.

The identity of the "faithful and discreet slave," or "faithful and wise servant" (King James Version), was a matter of some concern back in those years. Much earlier, in 1881, C. T. Russell wrote: "We believe that every member of this body of Christ is engaged in the blessed work, either directly or indirectly, of giving meat in due season to the household of faith. We then call faithful and wise servants whom his Lord hath made rulers over his household, to give them meat in due season. Is it not that little flock of consecrated servants who are faithfully carrying out their consecration vows—the body of Christ—and not the whole body individually and collectively, giving the meat in due season to the household of faith—the great company of believers?"

So it was understood that the "servant" God used to dispense spiritual food was a class. With the passing of time, however, there arose the question of who was that C. T. Russell himself was the "faithful and wise servant." This led some into the snare of creature worship. They felt that all the truth God saw fit to reveal to his people had been presented through Brother Russell, that nothing more could be brought forth. Annie Poggensee writes: "This caused a great sitting out of those who chose to stay with Russell's works." In February 1927 this erroneous thought that Russell himself was the "faithful and wise servant" was cleared up.

Shortly after Brother Rutherford became president of the Watch Tower Society, a real conspiracy developed. The seed of rebellion was planted and then the trouble spread, as explained below.

C. T. Russell had the position to send someone from headquarters to Britain to strengthen the Bible Students there after the outbreak of World War I.

He intended to send Paul S. L. Johnson, a Jew who forsok Judaism and became a Lutheran minister, before coming to a knowledge of God's truth. Johnson had served as one of the Society's travelling speakers and was well known for his ability. Out of respect for Russell's wish, the executive committee that served for a short time before Rutherford's election as president sent Johnson to England, giving him certain papers that would facilitate his entry into that country. But he was to learn all he could about the work in England and then make a full report to the Society, but he was to make no personnel changes at the British headquarters. However, his reception in England during November 1916 seemed to warp his judgment and finally his reason, "until," as A. H. Macmillan stated, "he came to the ridiculous conclusion that he was the 'steward' of Jesus' parable of the penny. He later thought he was the world's high priest." In discourses to Bible Students throughout England, Johnson characterized himself as Russell's successor, contending that the mantle of Pastor Russell had fallen upon him just as Elijah's cloak ("official garment") fell upon Elisha.—2 Kt. 2:11-14.

Evidently, Johnson's aspirations had developed even earlier, for Edythe Kessler recalls: "In 1915 I left Bethel and, before starting for Arizona, I visited a couple of old friends I had known for years, and while I was there they entertained a pilgrim, P. S. L. Johnson by name. Satan was already showing his ugly handicapped methods to gain control, no matter how. Johnson said, 'I'd like to talk with you. Let's sit in the living room,' which we did. He commenced by saying: 'Sister, we know that it is possible for Brother Russell to pass on at any time, but the friends need not be fearful when that happens. I can step into his place and take right over without any stopping of the work.'"

While in England, Johnson endeavored to take complete control of the British field of activity, even trying, without authority, to dismiss certain members of the London headquarters staff. So much confusion resulted that no branch complained to Brother Rutherford. In turn, Rutherford appointed a commission of several brothers in London who were not members of the headquarters staff. They met, heard and weighed the facts and reminded that Johnson be recalled. Rutherford told Johnson to return. Instead of doing so, Johnson sent letters and cablegrams charging the committee with bias, and also trying to justify his course. Seeking to make the case, he improperly used the documents furnished him by the Society and impounded its funds in the