

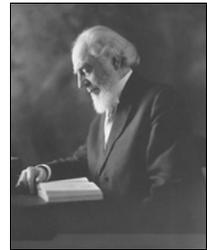
The Cults Exposed

Jehovah's Witnesses: Historical Background

Introduction: Etch-A-Sketch Eschatology & Door-to-Door Deception

I. Jehovah's Witnesses Leadership

Charles Taze Russell (1870-1916)



- 1852 - Born in Pittsburg, PA, strict Presbyterian parents, makes living as a habadasher
- 1862 - influenced by Adventist Christian Church, especially their rejection of the doctrine of eternal punishment, which he disliked.
- 1870 - organizes Bible class in Pittsburgh
- 1876 - elected "pastor" yet never ordained
- 1879 - marries Maria Ackley, one of his Bible students. They agreed not to consummate their marriage and to live as celibates.
- 1879 - Russell splits from Nelson Barbour (who falsely predicted the rapture in 1878). Russell became founder of *Zion's Watchtower* magazine. Following Barbour, he claimed that Christ has been spiritually present since 1874 and that there would be a climax in 1914 when the nations would be judged and the kingdom established.
- 1881 - incorporation of Zion's Watch Tower and Tract Society [Russell owned 99%].
- 1886 - first volume of *Scripture Studies* (six volumes total)
Upon completion of the volumes (1910) Russell made the astounding claim:

"The six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are practically the Bible, topically arranged with Bible proof texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes THE BIBLE IN AN ARRANGED FORM. That is to say, they are not mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself,...

Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years--if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures." (Cited in Martin, KC, 46.)

- 1893 - first National Convention in Chicago
- 1895 - Russell asks his wife for a separation (he disliked her control over him)
- 1896 - Maria published a tract critical of her husband
- 1903 - Maria files for legal separation on grounds of conceit, domination and improper sexual conduct toward their adopted daughter and their maid. They were divorced in 1906.
- 1909 - headquarters moved to Brooklyn, NY
- 1913 - *Russell v. Brooklyn Daily Eagle* ["Miracle Wheat" scandal]

Russell, in order to raise money to publish his sermons, advertised "Miracle Wheat" seed at \$1 per pound claiming it grew five times the ordinary crop. When the Daily Eagle lampooned this scheme Russell sued the paper for libel, asking \$100,000 in damages. Agricultural experts testified against Russell's claims... Russell lost the case.

Russell v. Rev. J. J. Ross [libel scandal]

Rev. J. J. Ross, a Baptist pastor in Ontario, published a tract, "Some Facts about the Self Styled 'Pastor' Charles Russell" (1912) which questioned Russell's credentials as a minister and his moral example: "*By thousands he is believed to be a religious fakir of the worst style, who goes about like Simon Magus enriching himself at the expense of the ignorant.*" Russell sued Ross for defamation. A five hour cross examination of Russell proved Russell to be a perjurer regarding his knowledge of the Greek language, his credentials as a pastor, and the award of alimony to his wife in his divorce. For example:

- Q: Do you know the Greek alphabet?
A: Oh yes.
Q: Can you tell the correct letters if you see them?
A: Some of them, I might make a mistake on some of them.
Q: Would you tell me the names of those on top of page 447?
A: Well, I don't know that I would be able to.
Q: You can't tell what those letters are?
A: My way... [interrupted]
Q: Are you familiar with the Greek language?
A: No.

1916 - Russell dies believing that WWI fulfilled the 1914 Armageddon prophecy. He was buried under a pyramid shaped headstone.

Contribution: Russell established the basic theology of the movement. He was claimed to have traveled over 1,000,000 miles, preached over 30,000 sermons and wrote over 50,000 pages.

Joseph F. "Judge" Rutherford (1916-1942)

Bkgd. - Baptist family, lawyer and substitute circuit judge in MO. Left the Baptists and joined JW's in 1906 after a woman brought him some literature to study. He served as legal counsel for the group.

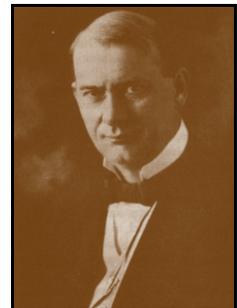
1916 - Preaches Russell's funeral, replaces Rutherford as president.

1917 - *The Finished Mystery* published replacing the beginning date of Christ presence (1874) with 1914 while denying WWI was Armageddon. 1925 is set for "the completion of all things."

1928 - Dawn Bible Students, a.k.a. "Russellites," split over Rutherford's rejection of Russell's teaching that the Great Pyramid's design provided a prophetic map of the future. Modern witnesses claim, without justification, independence from Russell.

1931 - group name is changed to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Note: Over the next few years JW's: reject vaccinations, refuse to pledge the flag, and refuse transfusions.



Contribution: Rutherford's life was even more scandalous than that of Russell including a broken marriage, persistent alcoholism and opulent living on a 200 acre estate. He too was a prolific writer, revising JW theology to better accommodate historical events. He introduced a mandatory witnessing program, autocratic government, extensive literature distribution, and a fervent anti-organized religion message.

Nathan H. Knorr (1942-1977)

Bkgd. - Born Bethlehem, PA, becomes JW at age 16, joins headquarters at age 18
1943 - Bible School of Gilead training center for missionaries established
1950 - *New World Translation* New Testament completed



Note: The *New World Translation* mistranslates key verses to accommodate their theology. There was a notable absence of trained language scholars on the *NWT* translation team. For example:

John 1:1 - "...*The Word was a god.*"

JWs translate this verse using "a god" rather than "God." This fits their theology which denies the deity of Jesus Christ. They claim that the absence of an article before the noun *theos* (God) supports their translation. However, this is in violation of Coldwell's Rule which is universally accepted by Greek scholars. [Note: **Coldwell's Rule** = *A definite predicate nominative ("God") never takes an article ("a") when it precedes the verb ("was").* The NT word order is: and God (theos) was the Word (o logos).] It also is inconsistent with their translation of the same phrase in other passages where an issue of doctrine is not involved.

Ephesians 2:8 - "... *you have been saved by the faith;*"

JWs add, without warrant, an article [in brackets] to their Greek text before the word translated faith. Thus they translate: "*the faith*" rather than "*faith*." This implies that salvation comes via a system of doctrine rather than through personal faith.

1961 - *New World Translation* (entire Bible) completed.

1966 - begin to teach that Armageddon may take place in 1975. As this year approached many members quit their jobs to become full-time witnesses.

1975 - JW begin to back off from 1975 date.

Contribution: Knorr avoided public appearances. He adopted a business-focused leadership style, placed governance in the hands of a Board of Directors, organized "Theocratic Ministry Schools," re-organized their missions program (JWs were in 185 countries by 1961), and introduced anonymous publications with doctrinal focus. JWs grew from 115,000 to 2,000,000 under Knorr.

Frederick W. Franz (1977-1992)

Bkgd. - became a JW in 1913, was well liked by witnesses. He had been spokesman for *NWT* committee. [Note: In court (1954) Franz testified that knew how to read Greek and Hebrew, yet he was unable to translate Genesis 2:4 when asked. -- This text is not difficult for even a first year Hebrew student to translate.]



1978 - Franz, following 1975's failed prediction of Armageddon, saw membership drop 40%. He purged nearly 30,000 apostate witnesses including his nephew, who was expelled for eating a meal with an ex-JW. His nephew's reaction: "Frankly I do not believe there is another organization more insistent on 100% conformity."

1992 - Franz dies at age 99.

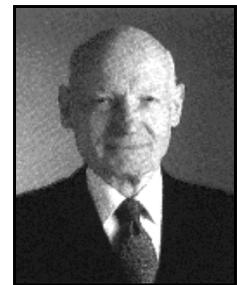
Contribution: Franz blends congeniality with rigid doctrinal conformity. After the debacle of 1975, he eliminated dissent which refocused the movement. He influenced JWs to express beliefs in more biblical and evangelical sounding language.

Milton G. Henschel (1992-2000)

1902 - born in Pomona, NJ. Became door-to-door witness at age 8 and full time at age 14

1992 - Henschel became president at age 72

2000 - Henschel steps down as Governing Board is replaced by Board of Directors. Don A. Adams (b. 1925) becomes President.



Uncertain Future of Jehovah's Witnesses:

Witnesses teach a two class system of believers:

- [1] **the Anointed Class** - 144,000 in number, this group was said to be completed in 1935 with no future additions. This generation, according to JW teaching, will not pass away prior to Armageddon. Their eternal destiny is heaven. They alone are "born again" and have the Holy Spirit. They alone may partake the annual memorial meal [the Lord's Supper]. Governing Board members are drawn from this group. Reorganization in 2000 moved leadership to the Board of Directors.
- [2] **the Great Crowd** - the rest of believers. Upon survival of Armageddon they will live forever in paradise on earth.

Problem:

The Anointed Class members are dying off rapidly. A 15 year old witness in 1935 is now 88 years old. In 1992 there were only 8,850 of the Anointed left. Without change their leadership face extinction.

Response: The reorganization of 2000 allowed a younger leadership to emerge.

There is also a redefinition of the 1914 generation. *Watchtower* magazine without fanfare changed its masthead in November 1995.

Old: “Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world **before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.**”

Now: “Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world **that is about to replace the present lawless system of things.**”

Over the years term “generation” has been lengthened in JW calculations first to 60 years, then to 75 years, to 80 years, and now to an “indefinite period.” Each recalculation was presented authoritatively in print.

In 1995 they dropped the requirement of the Lords return in the lifetime of the those alive at His heavenly return in 1914. In 1995 The Great Tribulation was described as “immanent,” now [2007] the time is said as “indeterminent.”

II Jehovah’s Witnesses Growth: Statistics:

Publications -	[1977]	<i>Awake</i> : over 10 million per issue; <i>Watchtower</i> : over 9 million per issue
Witnessing -	[1978]	307,272,262 hours recorded in this year alone!
Members -	[1992]	4 million witnesses; 60,000 congregations; 210 countries; 93 branch offices. [2007] 6.7 million witnesses (active).

Tactics: **“The Witness at Your Door”**

“Jehovah’s Witnesses thrive on the confusion they are able to create... The Watchtower leadership sensed that within the midst of Christendom there were millions of professing Christians who were not well grounded in the truths “once delivered to the saints,” and would be very easily pried loose from their churches and led into a new and revitalized Watchtower organization.” [Walter Martin, *KC*, 125.]

Seven Steps to Indoctrination: (Cited in van Baalen, *Chaos of the Cults*, 263.)

- 1- getting literature into the hands of the prospect
- 2- “back call” on the prospect
- 3- attendance at a Friday “book study”
- 4- attendance on Sunday at a Kingdom Hall
- 5- attendance of service meetings for training
- 6- involvement in distribution of literature
- 7- baptism
- 8- discipline (marking, reproof, disfellowship)

Conclusion: **Jeff’s Story – Tragedy Compounded**