

Watchtower Bible & Tract Society (aka Jehovah's Witnesses).

Part 1 of 2 Background + History.

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society Founder: Charles Taze Russell

Founded: 1879

Official Publications: The Watchtower and Awake! magazines are published semi-monthly. They also publish one to two doctrinal study books each year.

Organization Structure: Headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, the organization is lead by a president and a group of men known as The Governing Body. This group oversees every aspect of the organization including the material that is written for the periodicals and the study books.

Unique Terms: The local congregation is called a Kingdom Hall. The Watchtower sometimes refers to itself as a Theocratic Organization or an organization which is directed by God.

Other Names: Jehovah's Witnesses, Dawn Bible Students Association.

HISTORY

Born in 1852, Charles Taze Russell was a young man seeking spiritual enlightenment. He studied many Eastern religions but didn't find what he was looking for. His parents were Congregationalists, with very strong views of Hell in their teaching. But he didn't agree with their views, and found what he was looking for in the Seventh Day Adventist's teachings. Their logical systematic teachings left no room for mis-interpretation, there were no mysteries like the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, God being Spirit existing outside of eternity or anything illogical like that. The Adventists taught that Jesus was the Archangel Michael, Hell means destruction, and other such things. With a certain Nathan H. Barbour he wrote a book outlining how the Lord would return in 1874 called "The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return". The Lord didn't return it seems, so he changed the dates and republished it claiming his calculations were a bit off and the Lord would certainly return in 1875. He didn't!. This didn't stop Mr. Russell, who did an old Adventist trick and spiritualized his false prophecy to mean that Jesus returned spiritually and invisibly, to be crowned by Mr. Russell, the only person supposedly teaching the truth at the time. For poor old Nathan H. Barbour this was a bit too weird, and they parted company. C.T. Russell had about 80 followers at this time so he founded the Zion's Watch Tower in 1879 and later incorporated the group under the name Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society in 1884. Because of his rejection of the doctrine of Hell, he would go on to reject nearly every other Christian doctrine as well as add many physically and spiritually dangerous doctrines of his own making. Many of these unique and bizarre teachings were to be found in his six volume series titled, Studies in the Scriptures.

Beginning with only about 120 followers in the 1880's, Russell began to spread his message to the world. In 1893 the first "national assembly" was held in Chicago. It was attended by "about 360" followers of Russell's teachings. At the conclusion of the assembly, Russell explains, "The Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago very kindly granted us the use of their baptistery; and, in all, 70 symbolized their baptism into Christ's death by immersion into water" (Jehovah's Witnesses In The Divine Purpose, p. 33). It was from this first national assembly that the idea for local assemblies grew into today's practice.

Russell's career as a leader was studded with controversy, many times he ended up in the law courts. His telling lies in court while under oath exposed him to the media. He went on a world evangelistic crusade, probably because of the bad publicity he was getting in America. A reporter from the Eagle newspaper sailed on the same boat as Russell and gave the 'real' news of Mr. Russell's supposed triumphs!. Russell also ended up getting divorced in a law court because of his behaviour. The judge in summing up the case called C.T. Russell an animal and a pervert who wasn't fit to live in civilized society.

Russell died in a train carriage which was passing through Waco, Texas in 1916. He knew he was dying and insisted in being dressed like Caesar, in a makeshift Roman toga made from sheets. His grave is a nice pyramid that stands as a 'stone witness' to his false revelations based on "God's stone witness, the great pyramid". He was replaced by the second president, Joseph F. Rutherford. "A process of replacing Russell's writings with Rutherford's began in 1921 with the publication of Rutherford's Harp of God. Between 1921 and 1941, Rutherford was to write twenty books and numerous pamphlets, which would slowly revise the

doctrine and structure left him by Russell" (Encyclopedia of American Religions, G. Melton, Vol. 1, p. 485).

One of Rutherford's books that caused a great amount of controversy was the seventh volume of the Studies in the Scriptures. Apparently its writing was 'guided' by Russell from the other-side or spiritism, (a problem which raises its head again and again in the watchtower, even though the organization preaches that any form of spiritism is demonic). As a result of this replacing process, Rutherford had many critics. Some of the former followers of Russell's theology left the group and began their own organization. This was the beginning of groups such as the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, the Berean Bible Missions, The Colporteurs association and later the Dawn Bible Students Association. Because of the confusion being caused by these and other new groups, the name of the organization was officially changed in 1931 to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses In the Divine Purpose, p. 125-127).

It was under Rutherford's leadership that the organization began to experience its phenomenal growth. In 1928, the organization recorded 44,000 members and by his death in 1942, their membership had grown to over 115,000. Part of this growth can be attributed to Rutherford's insistence that the world was about to end and Armageddon was to happen any day. In 1920 his book "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" he revealed that the world would come to an end before the 'Anointed Class' or first 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses who were alive and aware of the events of 1914 would not pass away.

The Message of the Hour

Millions Now Living Will Never Die!

*You may
be one of
them!*

Do these things appeal to you? Unending human life, perpetual health; lasting and satisfying political adjustments; comprehensive economic arrangements; no more fear of the landlord, the doctor, the sheriff, the employer, of evil men and angels, of vicious animals, of dependent old age; no more blindness, lameness, deafness, dumbness; no more bald heads, glass eyes, false teeth, or wooden legs; no more sickness, disease, or pestilence; no more ignorance or superstition; no more sorrow, no more tears!

No, we are not trifling: these things and more are absolutely sure, because promised by the Word of God. The world has already ended, in the Bible and only proper sense of that term; and the antitypical jubilee, earth's times of restitution, its springtime, begins to count in 1926.

When that time comes, all the above blessings will not come instantaneously, but will come *speedily* on those who live through the next five or six years of trouble. Suppose nine of every ten people now living on earth should die of famine, pestilence, customary disease, and violence during the next five years (surely a much too extreme estimate), there would still be living 160,000,000 people to be the first human beneficiaries of the promise of Jesus "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die". — John 11:26.

This topic, in lecture form, has been recently treated by Judge Rutherford before gatherings in most of the large cities of the United States, Great Britain, Continental Europe, Egypt & Palestine. The attendances have been phenomenal and the interest profound.

Because of this great interest, and in response to repeated requests to have the lecture in print, Judge Rutherford has arranged it in amplified form, with elaborate substantiation, both from Scripture and from current events.

Now obtainable as a neatly bound, 128 pp. booklet at 25¢ a copy, postpaid.

International Bible Students Ass'n
Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.

In Canada: 270 Dundas St., W., Toronto, Ontario.

In Great Britain: 34 Craven Terrace, Lancaster Gate,
London, W. 2.



A Scanned advert for the book, spot the false prophecies!

This doctrine was believed right up until June 1995. Another of his prophecies said the great men of faith listed in Hebrews 12 would soon return to Earth to herald the coming battle of Armageddon.

He persuaded the organization to purchase a property called Beth Sarim (house of the princes) for the great men of faith when they came back. This property was quite a luxury house worth US\$1,000,000. For some unknown reason unknown these great men of faith didn't return, and Armageddon didn't happen.



The Staunch God-fearing No-Nonsense Judge enjoying some booze celebrating the end of prohibition!!

The next president, Nathan H. Knorr, streamlined the organization and began a worldwide outreach strategy that has survived into the 1990's. In 1943, he began the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. This was to be the forerunner of the Jehovah's Witnesses teaching methods of today. It was also under Knorr's leadership that the New World Translation was published. This translation, published in six volumes between 1950-1960, supports many Jehovah's Witnesses doctrines while ignoring accepted rules of language translation. At Knorr's death in 1977, the Watchtower had over 2.2 million members (Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1978, p. 30).

Under the leadership of Frederick W. Franz, fourth president, the Watchtower reached a total membership of over four million members. With Franz death in 1992, the current president, Milton G. Henschel, took the helm.

DOCTRINES

TRINITY: Joseph Rutherford made it quite clear that the Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. He stated, "The origin of the Trinity doctrine is traced back to the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians and other ancient mythologists. It will not be disputed by Jews and Christians that these ancient peoples worshipped demon gods and that God's typical nation of Israel was warned not to mingle with them because of this. It follows, then, that God was not the author of this doctrine. The obvious conclusion is, therefore, that Satan is the originator of the Trinity doctrine. Nevertheless, sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve him find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God. The clergy who inject such ideas will contradict themselves in the very next breath by stating that God made man in his own image; for certainly no one has ever seen a three-headed human creature" (Let God Be True, 2nd ed., pp. 101-102).

GOD THE FATHER: Known as Jehovah, the Watchtower considers Him to be the only true eternal God, the Almighty. They write, "There was, therefore, a time when Jehovah was all alone in universal space" (Let God Be True, p. 25). Being alone, the first creative act of Jehovah was to create his Son.

GOD THE SON: The Watchtower has consistently denied the deity of Christ. Under Knorr's leadership the Watchtower proclaimed, "Thus, for example, the Bible shows that there is only one God, the Most High, the Almighty. And that the Son, as the First-born, the Only-begotten and 'the creation by God,' had a beginning" (From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, p. 164). They further stated, "It proves that Michael

the archangel is no other than the only-begotten Son of God, now Jesus Christ. The very name Michael means 'Who is like God?' and indicates that Jehovah God is without like or equal and that Michael his archangel is his great Champion and Vindicator" (New Heavens and a New Earth, pp. 30-31).

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT: Similar to many other cults, Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of the Holy Spirit. They have written, "But the holy spirit has no personal name. The reason for this is that the holy spirit is not an intelligent person. It is the impersonal, invisible active force that finds its source and reservoir in Jehovah God and that he uses to accomplish his will even at great distances, over light years of space" (Let Your Name Be Sanctified, p. 269).

MAN'S DESTINY: According to Jehovah's Witness theology, a person has one of three possible destinies. The Anointed (144,000) will be in heaven to reign with Jehovah God. The rest of the faithful Jehovah's Witnesses (not of the 144,000) will live forever on a paradise Earth. Both of these classifications are determined to a great extent on membership in the Watchtower organization as well as going door-to-door spreading the message of the Watchtower. Those people who are not members of the Watchtower organization will be destroyed by Jehovah God and cease to exist. There is no concept of eternal punishment or hell in Watchtower theology (Let God Be True, pp. 90-95, 289).

Other Doctrines

Since the beginning, the Watchtower has made false prophecies about the end of the world. Predicting the end in one form or another for the years 1874, 1875, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975 and 1989 has caused its membership to maintain a steady upward trend.

Much of what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe regarding the Bible is based on CT Russell's studies in the Scriptures re-hashed in the Watchtower. They openly deny this and claim their only source of authority is the Bible, but the opposite is easily provable. During Russell's time, there was a movement which attempted to de-spiritualise or de-mythologise Scripture. It was called 'rationalism', and it has continued to this day in their teachings. They 'logically' reject the Trinity, The Holy Spirit and Christ's Deity. Explaining Jehovah being Spirit, inhabiting eternity has been a big problem to them, and they came to the logical conclusion that Jehovah lives on a planet called Alcoyne in the Pleiades nebulae and that he lives within the closed system of the universe. There is quite a lot of evidence they believe Jehovah has a body of flesh and bones as a spirit is nothing but a force to them.

Jehovah lives on a planet?!

God's Home Planet: Where does God live? "The constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades appears to be the crowning centre around which the known systems of the planets revolve even as our sun's planets obey the sun and travel in their respective orbits. It has been suggested, and with much weight, that one of the stars of that group is the dwelling-place of Jehovah and the place of the highest heavens."

"The constellation of the Pleiades is a small one compared with others which scientific instruments disclose to the wondering eyes of man. But the greatness in size of other stars or planets is small when compared with the Pleiades in importance, because the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God" (Reconciliation, p. 14). Here's the proof!

man sees that the earth occupies a place of great importance in God's plan and purposes and that in his due time every creature in heaven and in earth will be brought into one grand harmonious whole or unity. To this effect the inspired witness of Jehovah wrote: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."—Eph. 1:9, 10.

The constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades appears to be the crowning center around which the known systems of the planets revolve even as our sun's planets obey the sun and travel in their respective orbits. It has been suggested, and with much weight, that one of the stars of that group is the dwelling-place of Jehovah and the place of the highest heavens; that it is the place to which the inspired writer referred when he said: "Hear thou from thy dwellingplace, even from heaven" (2 Chron. 6:21); and that it is the place to which Job referred when under inspiration he wrote: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?"—Job 38:31.

The constellation of the Pleiades is a small one compared with others which scientific instruments disclose to the wondering eyes of man. But the greatness in size of other stars or planets is small when compared with the Pleiades in importance, because the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God. For a like reason the various groups of stars, greater in size than the planet earth, must in the eyes of

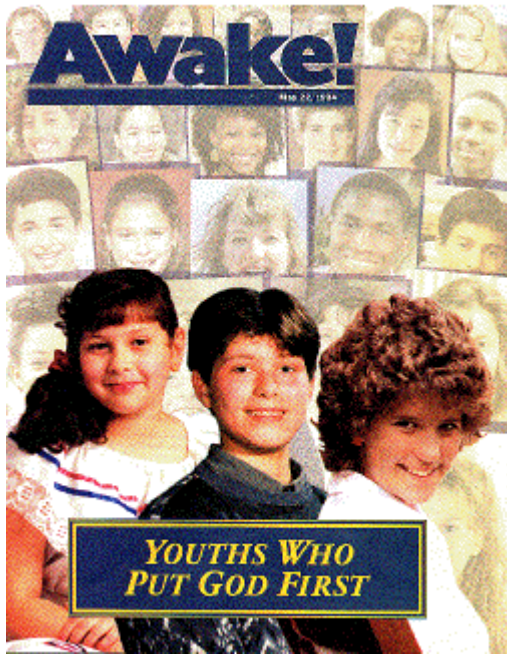
RECONCILIATION, page 14

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Rejecting the medical practices of vaccinations, organ transplants and blood transfusions, the Watchtower has caused the deaths of many of its members throughout its history. Interestingly, vaccinations and organ transplants have now been acknowledged by the Watchtower as acceptable practices, contradicting their previous doctrinal position. Unfortunately, they still won't allow blood transfusions, which has caused the deaths of many innocent babies, children and adults. The fear that they will lose their hope of eternity in paradise earth is what causes them to reject blood transfusions. Any member who has a blood transfusion is classed Apostate, and not allowed into the 'flock'. The Watchtower takes such pride in their members rejection of blood, even unto death that it boasts about it. Observe this SICK magazine cover:



Every child pictured on the cover died because they rejected blood transfusions, even fighting off and piercing the IV drips that were put in them.

The Watchtower has maintained a long standing policy of denying its members any involvement in political causes or service in the Armed Forces. It is for this reason they have become an "underground movement" in countries like Singapore, though there may be a change in this soon.

A source has informed me the new official stance is "Membership of armed forces is now a matter of conscience to each individual member". The Watchtower organization has used this same policy with blood transfusions, claiming "It is a matter of conscience". But taking in of blood is still apostasy, grounds for disfellowshipping and, and loss of salvation.

Believing many customs in traditional families to be pagan in nature, the Watchtower rejects the practices of celebrating personal birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Mothers' and Fathers' day as well as most other holidays.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

These responses are for your own benefit. They may be used to point out the falsehood of the Watchtower teachings, but most of these verses have been corrupted in their (per)version of the bible. Study these verses in your own N.I.V or whatever trustworthy Bible translation you may have.

God

1) While the Jehovah's Witnesses believe there is only one true God (Jehovah), they deny the biblical concept of the Trinity which teaches that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. One God: Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5-6, 18, 22; 1 Cor. 8:4. Father is God: 2 Peter 1:17; Phil. 2:11. Son is God: John 1:1; John 8:58; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6-9; Heb. 1:8. Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4.

2) Contrary to Watchtower theology, Jesus is not a created being or an angel, but rather is the Creator. John 1:2-3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 22:8-9.

3) The Holy Spirit is not only God but also clearly has personality according to the Bible. John 16:13-14; Acts 8:29, 13:2.

4) A person does not gain favour with God by being a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses and going door-to-door. Rather, salvation is dependent upon one's relationship with Jesus Christ. John 3:3, 16-20; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:24-26; 1 John 1:7-10.

5) The Bible is clear that everyone will exist eternally , either in a place known as heaven or in a place of eternal torment. Heaven: John 14:1-3; Rev. 6:9. Hell: Matt. 23:33, 25:41, 45; Rev. 20:14.

Helpful Christian Books for your further study:

Kingdom of the Cults, Walter Martin. This is the most well written and researched cult reference book in any Christian bookstore. I would personally recommend it to anyone. It deals extensively with the Watchtower Organization's history, doctrines (some not listed here for the sake of time), and gives very reasoned explanations for why we cannot accept the New World Translation of the Bible, or their doctrines. It deals with many other cults too.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Gospel of John. Robert Bowman Jr. Much the same Greek treatment, but a little easier for the non Greek scholar to read.

The Jehovah's Witnesses New Testament, An excellent book that carefully examines the Jehovah's Witnesses New Testament, and shows the deception of the New World Translators in their unique (or doctrinally biased) renderings of some key verses. Good for those who study Biblical Greek, but may be a bit difficult to those who don't. Examine it in the shop first.

The Four Major Cults A. Hokema. This book examines the Watchtowers history through the writings of the Watchtower themselves. The book further goes systematically through some of their literature to build up their theology. Then compares past doctrines with present doctrine and the Bible. Thorough study, written well though might be a bit dated and need of revision. This volume also examines Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventists and Mormonism.

Index of Watchtower Errors, David Reed, editor. This book is organized in a topical format, summarized what Jehovah's Witness leaders have taught on numerous topics from hundreds of sources..

Jehovah's Witnesses: Answered Verse by Verse, David Reed. After demonstrating how Jehovah's Witnesses twist the scriptures, this book helps Christians answer the Witnesses' unbiblical arguments with clear and concise scriptural responses.

Crisis of Conscience, Raymond Franz. Nephew to the fourth president of the Watchtower and former Governing Body member, Franz provides fascinating insights on the inner workings of the organization. A bit heavy going, for those who want to do a lot of psychological / historical study on the cult.

Why You Should Believe in the Trinity, Robert Bowman, Jr. Written largely as a response to the Watchtower's 32 page booklet, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, this much-needed reply gives helpful biblical and historical Christian defence of the Triune nature of God.

The Watchtower Files, Duane Magnani. This helpful book contains full-page reproductions of over 150 Watchtower publications. The accompanying dialogue provides suggested discussion formats for Christians witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Non Christian Materials

Past Issues Library CD (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society). If you can get your hands on this it will hopefully yield many other interesting insights into the Watchtower. I have seen this CD but was unable to obtain a copy for closer examination. Believed to contain scanned back issues dating right back to 1950.

Studies in the Scriptures (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society). These reprints are available by mail order from a group who broke away after the death of C.T. Russell, called The Berean Bible Students Assoc, Brooklyn. This six volume set is invaluable for showing the witness you are dealing with what is at the roots of their organization (Spiritism, Pyramidology, False Prophecy etc.)