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# Undoing the Judge:

## "Jehovah's Organization" or Joe's Organization?

by Randall Watters

<http://www.freeminds.org/history/rutherfd.htm>

Though Charles Taze Russell founded the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in 1879, the spirit of the modern-day organization could more aptly be attributed to its second president, Joseph Franklin Rutherford.

The "Judge," as Joe was often called, was born in near-poverty in Missouri on Nov. 8, 1869. Rutherford studied law under an apprentice system and passed his bar exams in 1892, later serving on occasion as a substitute judge, from which occasions his nickname was derived. What was the "Judge" like? Watchtower historian M. James Penton writes of Rutherford,

"Rutherford was a big man, who, by his very presence, could demand respect. He had a loud, booming voice, and looked every inch like a southern or border-state American senator. In relating to friends he could be despotic; in dealing with enemies, ruthless... He was moody and sometimes blunt to the point of rudeness with an explosive temper that could occasionally excite him to physical violence. He also had a streak of self-righteousness which caused him to regard anyone who opposed him as of the Devil. But most curious was the fact that while in some ways he was a Puritan of Puritans, in others he was thoroughly dissolute. He used vulgar language, suffered from alcoholism, and was once publicly accused by one of his closest associates of attending a nude burlesque show with two fellow elders..." (*Apocalypse Delayed*, University of Toronto Press, 1985, p. 47-48)

Though many attached themselves to the Watchtower movement in its early years due to the pleasant and kind personality of its founder C. T. Russell, it is also true that many joined themselves to the Watchtower in later years due to the commanding and authoritarian personality of Rutherford. Not surprisingly, the dominant personality of Witnesses during the twenties through the forties closely resembled that of Rutherford. Witnesses were bold and often rude, stopping at nothing to preach their message, and quick to "shake the dust off their feet" if no favorable response was met. Sound cars paraded up and down the streets of Catholic communities condemning the pope and his lackeys, and preaching a judgment of fire on the rest of the religious and political world. Portable phonographs were taken door-to-door, and the householder was blasted by one of Joe's railings against the politicians or the Catholic Church. During WWII it was not uncommon for JW's to be literally kicked off the stairs of irate patriots or Catholics, their phonographs tumbling down with them.

### Claimed Source of Truth

Russell had believed that he was the Seventh Messenger of Revelation 10:7, God's sole instrument of truth on the

earth in his day. He was the "faithful and wise servant," (later coined "faithful and discreet slave"), by his own admission to his friends. Even after his death in 1916, Rutherford wrote of him,

The Scriptures indicate that Russell was chosen of the Lord from his birth. The two most prominent messengers were Paul and Pastor Russell. Russell is the servant of Matthew 24:45-47. (WT 11/1/17, p. 6159)

When asked who the faithful and wise servant was, Russell would reply, "Some say I am while others say the Society is"; both are true, since Russell was in fact the Society. (WT 3/1/1923, p. 68)

With Rutherford however, this soon became a thorn in his side: Many of Russell's followers claimed Rutherford had merely "muscled into town" to take over the affairs of the Watchtower after Russell's death, an opportunist in storm boots.

As far as Rutherford was concerned, teachings were prone to change. The next 25 years of Joe's absolute control over the Watchtower's teachings and practices confirms that as a fact.

By 1927, Rutherford not only changed the teaching of the "servant," but even lied about what they had previously said about Russell:

"That Faithful and Wise Servant" does not apply to one individual and not to brother Russell. Russell never made that claim himself. (WT 2/15/1927, p.56)

Hogwash. The trail of lies began.

### How Joe Got His Light

Joe engineered a transition of the attention given to Russell towards himself as the "servant." *New Light*, as it was later called. Soon discovering that feigned modesty was more effective than telling what he believed to be the truth, Rutherford began claiming the SOCIETY was the "Faithful and Wise Servant," a collective class of believers who had been chosen to reign with Christ in heaven. God somehow revealed truth to them via angels:

These angels are invisible to human eyes and are there to carry out the orders of the Lord. No doubt they first hear the instruction which the Lord issues to his remnant and then these invisible messengers pass such instruction on to the remnant. The facts show that the angels of the Lord with him at his temple have been thus rendering sacred service unto the remnant since 1919. (*Vindication*, 1932, vol.3, p.250)

It was supposedly a secret how the "anointed" (Joe, in reality) obtained new or revised doctrines :

The remnant do not hear audible sounds, because such is not necessary. Jehovah has provided his own good way to convey thoughts to the minds of his anointed ones. To all on the outside of the organization of Jehovah his is a secret organization. (*Preparation*, 1933, p.64)

Yet to those inside the organization, how "truth" came to be was no secret at all. It was common knowledge that Joe wrote virtually all of the *Watchtower* articles and books during his presidency, and inside sources indicate that the rest of the "remnant" were never consulted. For example, the *1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (p. 151) quotes A.H. Macmillan on the invention of the name Jehovah's witnesses:

Brother Rutherford told me himself that he woke up one night when he was preparing for that convention and he said, 'What in the world did I suggest an international convention for when I have no special speech or message for them? Why bring them all here? And then he began to think about it, and Isaiah 43 came to his mind. He got up at two o'clock in the morning and wrote in shorthand, at his own desk, an outline of the discourse he was going to give about the Kingdom, the hope of the world, and about the new name. And all that was uttered by him at that time was prepared that night, or that morning at two o'clock. And [there is] no doubt in my mind not then nor now that the Lord guided him in that, and that is the name Jehovah wants us to bear and we're very happy and very glad to have it.

Virtually all of the myriads of books and booklets published during Joe's reign (1916-1942) had imprinted on the inside title page,

Author: J.F. RUTHERFORD

## "Disseminated" the Spirit

Rutherford soon claimed that the "holy spirit" was no longer needed as a Helper to the church, since Christ was now invisibly present and would direct the organization in person through his angels! Note:

By his spirit, the holy spirit, Jehovah God guides or leads his people up to a certain point of time, and thus he did until the time when "the comforter" was taken away, which would necessarily occur when Jesus, the Head of his organization, came to the temple and gathered unto himself those whom he found faithful when he, as the great Judge, began his judgment, in 1918. (*Preservation*, 1932, p.193-194)

With the coming of the Lord to his temple and the gathering together unto himself of the chosen ones (2 Thes. 2:1) the holy spirit would there cease to function as a paraclete or advocate for the church. (*ibid.*, p. 46)

Rather than an inanimate "holy spirit" directing things from afar, Rutherford taught that the angels, or *ministering spirits*, were now communicating directly with the organization:

Jehovah has made the necessary arrangements within his organization to instruct his people, and all recognize that for some years *The Watchtower* has been the means of communicating information to God's people. That does not mean that those who prepare the manuscript for *The Watchtower* are inspired, but rather it means that the Lord through his angels sees to it that the information is given to his people in due time, and he brings to pass the events in fulfillment of his prophecy and then invites those devoted to him to see the same. (*Riches*, 1936, p.316)

Note the denial that either Rutherford or *The Watchtower* were inspired. The claim, as clarified in the following quote, is that Jehovah and Christ Jesus do all the interpreting of the Bible, and this interpretation is passed on by angels to the Society through those who prepare *The Watchtower*:

This does not signify that the faithful remnant or society of Jehovah's anointed witnesses are an earthly tribunal of interpretation, delegated to interpret the Scriptures and its prophecies. No; Christ Jesus the King has not entrusted that office to them. THE SUPREME COURT STILL INTERPRETS, thank God; and Christ Jesus, the Court's official mouthpiece of interpretation, reserves to himself that office as Head of Jehovah's "faithful and wise servant" class. He merely uses the "servant" class to publish the interpretation after the Supreme Court by Christ Jesus reveals it. (*Watchtower*, 7/1/43 p.203)

How did these angelic spirits communicate this "interpretation" to Rutherford, so he could publish it?

These angels are invisible to human eyes and are there to carry out the orders of the Lord. No doubt they first hear the instruction which the Lord issues to his remnant and then these invisible messengers pass such instruction on to the remnant. The facts show that the angels of the Lord with him at his temple have been thus rendering service unto the remnant since 1919. (*Vindication*, 1932, vol.3, p. 250)

Certain duties and kingdom interests have been committed by the Lord to his angels, which include the transmission of information to God's anointed people on the earth for their aid and comfort. Even though we cannot understand how the angels transmit this information, we know that they do it; and the Scriptures and the facts show that it is done. (*Preparation*, 1933, p.36, 37)

## Familiar Spirit Returns

Rutherford died in 1942 and was succeeded by N.H. Knorr, a more subtle autocrat with a heart of steel and a countenance to match. With Joe gone (and Knorr being the no-nonsense man that he was), the emphasis on angels was dropped, and the one "holy spirit" was reemphasized.

Knorr was not especially good at authoring books, so he often enlisted the help of the organization's resident seer, Frederick W. Franz, long-time student of the Bible. With a voice like an old-time Baptist preacher and a keen mind, Franz was often looked to as the source of "new light." One could be sure that if he were to lecture at large assemblies of Witnesses, new teachings would be outlined, to the thrill of the audience. With every new convention came a set of new books, each often revising older Watchtower teachings.

Knorr and Franz *were* the "faithful and discreet slave," at least up until the mid 70's. Their technique was to draw attention to the organization, "God's Organization." Knorr coined the term, "New World Society" in reference to the Witnesses, fully believing that these would be the ones who survived into the new heavens and new earth spoken of in Rev. 21:1. The emphasis on exclusivity remained, as this quote from *The Watchtower* of 7/1/73 reveals:

Consider, too, the fact that Jehovah's organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God's holy spirit or active force. (Zech. 4:6) Only this organization functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone God's Sacred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book.... How very much true Christians appreciate associating with the only organization on earth that understands the "deep things of God" ! (p.402)

Thus there was a complete about-face from Rutherford's teaching that the "holy spirit" had ceased to operate as their Advocate after 1918.

*HOLY SPIRIT--The Force Behind the Coming New Order!* was the title of a publication released in 1976. After tracing the work of the "holy spirit" from Pentecost on through the book of Acts, the book attempts to prove that this "holy spirit" energized the eight ruling members of the Watchtower organization who were in jail in 1919, to begin a work of preaching "the good news of God's established kingdom." The book states:

It was for such worldwide Kingdom preaching that "spirit of life from God" had entered into the suppressed witnesses in 1919 C.E. (p.146)

The *Holy Spirit* book continued to emphasize that the purpose for the spirit being given the "anointed remnant" was to prophesy the truth about Christ and the Bible to the world. Since one who prophesies is a *prophet*, and the channel of these prophecies claimed to be inspired by this "holy spirit," one must conclude that this "holy spirit" was speaking through them:

The holy spirit, which Jehovah prophesied that he would pour out in the last days, has not ceased to operate, for the remnant are still baptizing disciples of Christ in the name of that spirit....The announced purpose behind God's pouring out of his spirit upon all sorts of flesh was that the recipients thereof might prophesy. The facts substantiate that the remnant of Christ's anointed disciples have been doing that prophesying to all the nations for a witness in favor of God's kingdom. Logically, then, they must be the ones upon whom God's spirit has actually been poured out. That spirit is behind their worldwide preaching. Why argue about it? (*Holy Spirit*, p.148)

## Two's Company, Three's A Crowd

The monopoly on inventing new truths soon ended for Knorr and Franz, starting with the publication of their Bible dictionary/encyclopedia, *Aid to Bible Understanding* in 1971. After some consideration, a new "body of elders" arrangement had been instituted in the local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses (now numbering about 27,000 worldwide, with 1.5 million active Witnesses). Other members of the token "Governing Body" of Jehovah's Witnesses residing at WT headquarters decided that they deserved a piece of the prophetic pie and some, including the current President Milton Henschel, even became vocal about it during closed sessions of the "Bethel elders meetings," attended by about 300 elders. 1 Much to the chagrin of both Franz and Knorr, who preferred the old arrangement and their absolute control over the affairs of the Society, they relented and allowed a "rotating Governing Body" arrangement (which later stopped rotating) to go into effect. Knorr died shortly thereafter, and Franz was appointed as the "token" President, but in effect had little or no say in organization affairs from this point until his death. Milton G. Henschel, vice-president, succeeded Franz.

Aside from covering up several of F.W. ("Freddy") Franz's doctrinal blunders, as well as his well-known expectations

regarding 1975 as the date for the end of the world, this newly empower-ed Governing Body (ranging from 11 to 18 men) had to come up with some fancy explanations for Rutherford's *and* Russell's failed prophecies.

After a major shakeup involving the failure of the date 1975, much opposition, some quite vocal, began appearing at their door as well as in the media worldwide. "False prophets!" Murderers! Charlatans!" were some of the accusations, most of which were based in reality. The response of the Governing Body was to either ignore the hecklers or call them names, hoping they would be shamed or embarrassed and go away. They knew that to address the concerns of their opposers would do more damage than good, as many loyal Witnesses would be shocked to learn of their inner secrets and methodologies. When pushed into a corner, they resorted to name calling: "Liars!" "Worms!" "Leeches!" "APOSTATES!"

However, after being repeatedly confronted with their prophetic failures, a new explanation regarding how they arrive at "truth" was published in the December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* (p.27):

However, it may have seemed to some as though that path has not always gone straight forward. At times explanations given by Jehovah's visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case. This might be compared to what is known in navi-gational circles as "tacking." By maneuvering the sails the sailors can cause a ship to go from right to left, back and forth, but all the time making progress toward their destination in spite of contrary winds.

While they have on occasion gone back to previous views, more often than not, as we have seen, the Watchtower leaders have chosen entirely *new* views, sometimes the exact opposite as before! Even if they were honest in this matter and were to admit their complete failure, one cannot but question why this "holy spirit" would not tell them outright what is doctrinally correct. Nor would it excuse them from fitting the Biblical pattern of a false prophet. (Deut. 18: 20-22) In 1972 they told us to review the record of these self-styled prophets:

Who is this prophet?... Today they are known as Jehovah's Witnesses.... Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a "prophet" of God. It is another thing to prove it. The only way that this can be done is to review the record. What does it show? (*Watchtower*, 4/1/72, p.197)

Time has revealed enough to demonstrate that the Watchtower has a *worse* prophetic record than most spirit mediums and soothsayers! After dozens of failed dates, expectations and changes in teachings, as well as their life-dishonoring and grossly hypocritical stand on blood transfusions, they can no longer sing this song! Alas! Time for more new explanations!

## 1914 Generation Change Demands New Light

The recent rejection of their concept of the end of the world occurring within a generation of 1914 has prompted much alarm among the Witnesses as a whole, though in public conversation they deny it being that significant of a change. Even if a small percentage did not believe in certain prophesied dates given for the end of the world, they ALL expected the end of the world within their lifetime, their generation." Since the mid-40's, the Watchtower had taught that some of those alive during 1914 (WWI) would not pass away before the end of the world and the establishment of a "new earth of righteousness." Now running out of time for this prophecy, they had to change it to save face.

History changed (i.e., was rewritten) with the release of the November 1, 1995 *Watchtower* magazine.

According to *Newsweek* magazine of December 18, 1995, Watchtower leaders deny yielding to pressure to change their doctrine regarding the generation:

"`The end is still close," says Witness spokesman Bob Pevy. `We just can't put numbers on Jesus' words.'" (p.59)

Yet the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses have prepared for the worst, and are sending out a form letter in response to inquiries regarding their shifting doctrines. (See next page.)



The interesting thing is that if you remove the letterhead and signature, and weren't aware of the history of the Watchtower organization and its leaders, the explanation given would closely resemble that of any modern-day church denomination, at least with regards to deciding on matters of policy and their source of inspiration, approval and correction. The difference, of course (aside from their even knowing who or what the Holy Spirit really is), lies in how they carry out their policies, and how they treat those who don't agree with them.

## Softening Joe's Organization

Big changes are in the works for the Watchtower Society. No doubt some in leadership positions are quietly biding their time until some of the older, more hard-line members of the Watchtower staff (including the Governing Body) pass away. Efforts of the old-timers to search out and destroy such ones will ultimately not succeed, for a new life and a new spirit are needed within the Watchtower organization. It has reached its growth peak in many parts of the world, and in order to survive must compromise and go mainstream in order to maintain its assets, or "go for broke" and become more radical than ever. Since the latter scheme is only typical of failing religious sects, as a last ditch attempt to survive and maintain the authority and position of its leadership, my guess is that the Watchtower will seek to survive and maintain its assets, currently in the billions of dollars. Its assets also include an active following of over 5 million, with a total "believership" of about 11 million. No small change, by any standards!

Legal issues appear to have influenced this direction already. In recent months, articles have come out allowing school sports to Witness youths, allowing for college education, and even the article, "Giving, Is It Expected?" in *The Watchtower* of 12/15/95 (p.3-7) discusses birthdays, holidays and Christmas WITHOUT the ever-so-typical blasting of them for their "pagan" origins. Could the next step be to allow these celebrations under certain conditions?

Other doctrines of a more serious nature still must be dealt with to stop their corporate bloodguilt, such as their complete hypocrisy on the blood issue (See article on page 10). Many Jehovah's Witnesses are still needlessly dying, due only to the fear of backlash by members of the Governing Body whose very lives could be in danger were they to admit they have been wrong. (The emotions of some Witnesses who have lost love ones over this issue could easily explode.)

Perhaps the changes are a test, not only for the Jehovah's Witnesses, but for their critics as well. Some will not accept the changes as sincere, as they have been victimized by Joe's organization. It is also true there is no sign as yet of a true spiritual reformation, as has happened recently within the Worldwide Church of God (and which has split that church as well). Current changes are merely driven by necessity and legal issues, hardly matters of the heart.

One thing is for sure, however:

*Joe's image* is fading from the Watchtower organization.

## Differences Between Russell's Views and Rutherford's

(sample selection)

## Prohibitions on Jehovah's Witnesses

### Russell:

Russell celebrated birthdays and Christmas, tolerated his followers who were in the Army, did not consider Acts 15:20 a permanent prohibition against eating blood, allowed his followers to attend other churches, and believed in the historic cross of Christ. Russell also believed in worshipping Christ, though he rejected his Deity. The American flag could be displayed.

**Rutherford:** Rutherford banned the celebration of birthdays and holidays as pagan, disfellowshipped those who joined

the military or attended other churches, banned the use of blood, and rejected the cross as a pagan symbol, saying that Christ died on an upright stake. Rutherford taught that Jesus Christ was Michael the Archangel, and could not be worshiped. The American flag was not to be displayed or saluted. (*Index of Watchtower Errors*, David A. Reed, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.)

## The Name Jehovah's Witnesses

### Russell:

We always refuse to be called by any other name than that of our Head- Christians- continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word. (WT Reprints, March 1883, p. 458.) And so by whatsoever names men may call us, it matters not to us; we acknowledge none other name than the only name given under heaven and among men" - Jesus Christ. We call ourselves simply CHRISTIANS and we raise no fence to separate from us any who believe in the foundation stone of our building mentioned by Paul: `That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and those for whom this is not broad enough have no right to the name Christian." (*Watchtower*, Feb. 1884, p. 2.)

### Rutherford:

Brother Rutherford told me himself that he woke up one night when he was preparing for that convention and he said, `What in the world did I suggest an international convention for when I have no special speech or message for them? Why bring them all here? And then he began to think about it, and Isaiah 43 came to his mind. He got up at two oclock in the morning and wrote in short-hand, at his own desk, an outline of the discourse he was going to give about the Kingdom, the hope of the world, and about the new name. And all that was uttered by him at that time was prepared that night, or that morning at two oclock. And [there is] no doubt in my mind - not then nor now - that the Lord guided him in that, and that is the name Jehovah wants us to bear and were very happy and very glad to have it. (*1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, quoting A.H. Macmillan on the invention of the name Jehovah's witnesses, p. 151)

By giving his people a new name Jehovah has branded his people so that there can be no mistake as to their identity. These will henceforth stand out separate and distinct from all professed followers of Christ Jesus... We have been waiting for something of this kind, so that we could be clearly discerned from those who claim to be servants of God. (*The Watch Tower*, 9/15/31, p. 279)

## Faithful & Discreet Slave Class

### Russell:

Though he would not admit it publicly, Russell privately admitted to being the slave of Matthew 24:45. No other identity for the slave was given or allowed.

### Rutherford:

The faithful slave was a class of believers, specifically those 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7 & 14. These would be all those who would rule with Christ in heaven. Though Russell could allow that these were scattered about in different churches in his early writings, Rutherford demanded that they must now be a part of Gods organization: All who have taken their stand on the side of Jehovah must abide in his organization under Christ, if they would live. There is no exception to this rule.

The name `Jehovah's witnesses applies specifically to God's anointed ones who have been taken out of the world and made witnesses for Jehovah, and these alone bear the new name... The official organization on earth consists of his anointed remnant, and the Jonadabs who walk with the anointed are to be taught, but not to be leaders. (WT 8/15/34, p. 249)

Note: While Rutherford developed the doctrine that the Watchtower Society (meaning the 144,000) was God's channel of communication, he apparently never believed it, as he was said to have written all of the Watchtower articles and books during his presidency, and no one else was consulted in the process.

## God's Organization

### Russell:

We always refuse to be called by any other name than that of our Head- Christians continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word. (*WT Reprints*, March 1883, p. 458)

For the same reason that Jesus did not organize congregations while present with his disciples in the Jewish harvest, we do not consider expedient or necessary organizations even simple and unsectarian as those established by the apostles. (*WT Reprints*, Oct. 1883, p. 536)

### Rutherford:

Some claiming to be fully devoted to Jehovah find it difficult to learn to be obedient to organization instructions... If you find it difficult to be in harmony with the organization instructions, that is sufficient reason for a careful self-examination to see what is your standing before the Lord... angels are delegated by the Lord to convey his instructions to the members of his organization on earth. Just how this is done is not necessary for us to understand. (*WT*, 12/1/33, p. 364)

All who have taken their stand on the side of Jehovah must abide in his organization under Christ, if they would live. There is no exception to this rule. (*WT* 8/15/34, p. 249)

## The Earthly Hope

### Russell:

The Great Company (Great Crowd of Rev. 7:9) is a secondary heavenly class, not as dedicated as the 144,000. They will be in heaven but as companions of the Bride (servants of the 144,000), and there will be a very great difference in the degrees of glory. (*WT Reprints*, March 1883, p. 458)

Russell taught that the Great Multitude were half-hearted Christians:

It is because they fear the reproaches of Christ that they shirk present privileges and opportunities for walking with him in white... [and] must be treated like the hypocrites and pass through the great tribulation in order to their purification. (*WT Reprints*, June 1, 1897, p. 2161)

### Rutherford:

Rutherford claimed that Christ returned to his temple in 1918 (establishing the identity of the faithful and wise servant), and that he cleansed the temple in 1932 (allowing him to understand the identity of the Great Multitude in a new way). These are not less-faithful ones as Russell taught, but they are fully faithful to Jehovah. However, they are now understood to have the altogether different hope of living on a paradise earth. (*The Watchtower*, August 1 & 15, 1935, pgs. 233-252)

## Prophetic Dates

### Russell:

1799 was beginning of time of the end, 1874 was the invisible return of Christ, and 1914 would be the end of the



world. (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 4, 1897, p. 621; *Zion's Watch Tower*, Jan. 15, 1892, p. 21-23)

**Rutherford:** Rejection of significance of 1799 and 1874, and 1914 changed to be the invisible return of Christ. 1925 would bring the new order, the millennial reign of Christ, and the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the earth.

1940: Armageddon is just ahead... the great climax has been reached. Tribulation has fallen upon those who stand by the Lord. (*The Messenger*, 9/1/40, p. 6)

1941: [We are] in the remaining months before Armageddon. (*The Watchtower*, 9/15/41, p. 288)

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