

the following is an excerpt from the book, [*Thus Saith Jehovah's Witnesses*](#) by Randall Watters

Watchtower Presidential Era Summaries

Charles T. Russell Era (1879-1916)

Date: late 1800's. Okay, July 1879 if you want to be picky.

Current Religious Views: many apocalyptic leanings, prompting the origin of several major eclectic religious groups claiming that God had rejected the mainstream Christian Churches for their apostasy in the fourth century, and that He has now chosen a new prophet, a spokesman, a faithful messenger to re-educate the world as to the truths of the Bible, long-lost and unattainable by any normal human being. To gain eternal life, man must listen to the new gospel of this messenger(s). This century sees the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Adventism and its various offshoots (including Jehovah's Witnesses), Christian Science, Christadelphians and other smaller groups, each one claiming a modern-day prophet and new or once-forgotten revelations to the populace, many of whom we find shopping for new ideas, yet disenchanted with the churches.

Scenario: A young man who can't understand theology from a historical development point of view begins to feel that he is the "Seventh Messenger" (Rev. 3:14) given to the Body of Christ, which he believes (as did most every generation of Christians before him since the time of Christ) is living in the "last days" of man's dominion over the earth. Borrowing from many current theological ideas around him, including an "invisible" return of Christ (a la Adventists), the prophetic nature of the Great Pyramid in Egypt and other occult symbolism (i.e., Masonry, astrology, numerology, etc.), and a variation of the "Gentile Times" theory (a la George Storrs and others), he also denies the historical interpretations of Scripture such as the Trinity, hell as a place of punishment, and the existence of the soul apart from the body. Not finding much sympathy for his views in other religions, he starts his own. *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* becomes its mouthpiece, first printed in July, 1879.

Peculiar Opening Beliefs: The time of the end began in 1799, Christ returned invisibly in 1874, 40-year harvest period ending in 1914 with the complete overthrow of man's rule (Armageddon) replaced by God's rule, and numerous minor oddities regarding intelligence, black men, miracle wheat, numerology, and the size of men's brains. Perhaps nothing unique to the day except some of his particular prophetic dates.

Things Russell Would Currently be Disfellowshipped (excommunicated) For: Anti-organizational teachings, celebrating birthdays, Christmas and holiday observance, military involvement tolerated, not draining blood from food, considering self to be the "faithful and discreet slave," selling "Miracle Wheat," dabbling in the occult and signing his own books.

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

Date: 1916, death of C.T. Russell.

Developing Religious Views: Russell is still the "Seventh Messenger," but let's not get too carried away with that! In fact, let's take down his pictures, re-examine his dates, wear loud clothes, drink a lot, and basically be obnoxious iconoclasts that invite retribution. Let's separate ourselves from those Bible Students who remain loyal to Russell, and don't like our new bombastic style. We'll do that by scorning the cross, changing our name to Jehovah's witnesses, eliminating "pagan" influences like the pyramid and numerology, slamming the churches, and broadcasting hate messages against the Catholic Church and League of/United Nations door-to-door and by radio. Let's make Prohibition our enemy, refuse to fight for our country, and court Hitler's favor.

Scenario: Russell dies in 1916, with express wishes as to how his work would be continued. Rutherford attempts a hostile takeover of the Watchtower presidency, using his knowledge of legal procedure to buffalo his way into power,

successfully. The "standfasters" remain loyal to Russell and thus several breakaway groups are formed, such as the Dawn Bible Students, etc. who still hold to Russell and his beliefs. (Several of these groups are still in existence today). Rutherford has an identity crisis (people were not prone to worship him), and begins a slow, political process of eradicating all traces of Russell-worship. He even goes so far as to change the basic message of the Bible from the simple gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of Christ) to that of "Jehovah's Sovereignty." (*Imagine Rutherford saying: `You see, God has this court case going, and, like, the devil says he's trying to pull one over on mankind, and since there are so many angels in the audience, it's kind of embarrassing to him to be accused like that... I can relate, of course... so God's got to let it all hang out and prove to everyone He's not so bad after all... Kind of like my own situation!`*) So God's on the hot seat, and so is Rutherford for taking over this organization. That's the REAL universal issue!

Peculiar Opening Beliefs: *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (at least, up until the Judge's death), Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (oh, yeah, and Moses, too) will appear at our conventions soon and since we *certainly* don't want them at Bethel, we'll put them all up three thousand miles away in California in my own mansion there. Just so no one gets suspicious about the house, I'll put their names in the deed to the house, but they'll have to prove to us who they really are before they get MY room!

Things Rutherford Would Currently be Disfellowshipped For: Signing his own books, beer parties at Bethel, aggravating everyone in sight.

Nathan H. Knorr Era (1942-1977)

Date: 1942, death of the "Judge."

Developing Religious Views: No blood transfusions for Witnesses or their parakeets, everything is satanic including crosses, religious jewelry and gifts from worldly relatives. You can practically get disfellowshipped for *looking* at a church. Smoking banned in 1973, but it's still okay to be an alcoholic elder. Fred Franz becomes the *resident seer* at Bethel, enticing the brothers in the steam rooms at Bethel with his Bible topics and fascinating all who listen to his absurd sermons. Franz was largely responsible for the 1975 fever, which practically had people being disfellowshipped for NOT believing 1975 was going to be the end!

Scenario: Charming or charismatic leaders are *out*, android presidents are *in*. Knorr, about as lovable as *pea soup*, is voted in and makes up for his lack of charm by expanding the business of **organization**. Birth of the NEW WORLD SOCIETY: "God's Organization." Gilead Missionary School sends out students all over the world, Knorr gives them a one-way ticket to ride, leading to depression and suicide for a few who wish to return. Bethel (Watchtower headquarters) slowly envelopes Brooklyn Heights, greatly aggravating the residents there, who are quite unappreciative of all the *howdy-doodie clones* swarming the neighborhood (please, at least the muggers are for *real!*) The Watchtower becomes big business, with billions in property. Profit margins on publications rise as high as 500 percent, which "only covers the cost of printing."

This is the age of "discovery" in the Watchtower, where a spirit of free thinking allowed many within to re-examine the foundation for their beliefs. This age later "ended" with the Franz Incident of 1979-1980, where the Governing Body reached the point where their only recourse to those digging up the skeletons in the closet was to NUKE the closet! No one would ever discover the faulty foundation of Watchtower chronology if they could not TALK about it without fear of being disfellowshipped, or so they thought.

Peculiar Beliefs: Sodomites will/won't/will/won't be resurrected, the early Christians had a rotating Governing Body (sounds kinky), blood is an "organ," thus no organ transplants, either. Rape is only excusable if the victim screams LOUD, you can't/can divorce your husband if he's gay (depending on what he does, exactly), oral sex WILL get you disfellowshipped, at least for awhile, but in the final analysis we really don't want to know (well, we do, but we must pretend we don't).

Things Knorr Would Currently be Disfellowshipped For: Nothing, I think he's still in charge!

Frederick W. ("Freddy") Franz Era (1977-1992)

Date: 1977, loss of his buddy, Knorr, who dies of cancer. Franz eludes actual leadership out of choice and "posterity."

Developing Religious Views: "Doubt" is practically the antichrist! Lobotomies are in, loyalty and spying will upgrade you from poor publisher/bad reputation to *most-favored* status. Witnesses must report all infractions of other Witnesses, even if it means stealing hospital records of secret abortions, etc... even if it means losing your job or getting sued! Troubled by our incessant changes in doctrine? Get a hobby to keep your mind off apostasy. 1975 was *your* fault, not ours. WE NEVER SAID THAT! (about any date).

Scenario: Homosexuals infiltrate the Governing Body and let go but not disfellowshipped. Ray Franz disgraces himself and the rest of the Governing Body by denying their collective infallibility, is dismissed and set up for disfellowshipping. Spying Watchtower goons follow him down south and can catch him in nothing, so finally disfellowship him *for having dinner with his boss*, an ex-Jehovah's Witness! Ray Franz writes his self-apologizing *Crisis of Conscience* in 1983, and the entire Christian world holds their breath waiting for him to accept the Trinity, which he never does.

Governing Body fears getting busted for not paying sales tax when *Jimmy Swaggart VS. State of California* goes to court, so God wants them to offer their literature free of charge (but with a time-delay sales pitch for contributions). But God only wants them to do this in *certain countries*, because He doesn't like to pay sales tax there.

Even the Governing Body finally tires of Fred Franz, exiles him, yet in the end was the only GB member who knew exactly what he was doing. Dies in exile.

Peculiar Beliefs: Anything taught by Freddy.

Things Franz Would Currently be Disfellowshipped For: Listening to secret motivational cassette tapes that he never let out of his sight. Otherwise, he was too smart to be disfellowshipped. Besides, he *invented* disfellowshipping.

Milton G. Henschel Era (1993 - 2000)

Date: 1992, upgraded from vice to President at the death of Fred Franz.

Developing Religious Views: The Governing Body, no longer driven by a single personality, begins to show more conservative stance on certain matters, primarily public relations issues and legal implications. Increased legal pressure to appear "normal" in their views of college education, school sports and personal hobbies begins to affect how articles and books are written. Holidays not blasted for being pagan as before, psychiatrists allowed, college education not blasted, kids can actually engage in school sports if it "doesn't go to their head." DOUBT is still the *antichrist*, however.

Scenario: The most money, property and followers they've ever had, but also showing signs of reaching their final peak. Appear to be at the top of the cycle, with a roller-coaster ride ahead, according to the pattern of other similar sects. Growth slowed down to 1-2% in the U.S. in the last couple of years, though booming in countries which are as yet naive as to their history and tactics, such as eastern Europe and Asia. Finally throw out their "1914 generation" teaching with the October 15 and November 1st, 1995 issues of *The Watchtower*, which was one of their main playing cards. But Simon says, "*It's no thang*," while older Witnesses know better. Many may leave (on crutches!). Dozens of breakaway groups begin to form in 1996.

Peculiar Beliefs: That they really *are* "God's organization," after all of this!

Things Milton Would Currently Disfellowship For: Dissension at Bethel, shortly to come. Why? A loss of respect for the leadership.

Typical Pattern of Exclusive Sects:

Stage 1: Charismatic leader develops a following of those disenchanted with mainstream religion. Followers suck up religious fervor and exclusivism like a drug, get heady with pride and a sense of meaning (for once in their lives). Tremendous energy for evangelism and growth.

Stage 2: Change in leadership or internal scandal, leading to a degree of disenchantment among some in the organization. The Watchtower has survived this "cleansing" several times, but due to their place in the wash cycle, the stains may not come out this time.

Stage 3: Physical growth in size, followers and bank account dictates a more conservative stance in order to gain respectability and more acceptable forms of power and control - transforming them from a radical, apocalyptic group into a familiar religion that causes people to say, "I didn't think they were a *cult*." It is at this point they achieve their greatest unity and power.

Stage 4: The "collective consciousness" of the rank-and-file members reaches the point where they "know too much," and the leadership cannot use the same heavy-handed techniques and motivations they previously used for fear of losing control, and so feign honesty and a spirit of "openness" regarding their past methodologies. (*Proclaimers*, anyone?) Generally, this happens when they have played all their cards, so-to-speak. No more excitement can be generated.

Stage 5: For lack of unifying causes and the organization's inability to goad the crowd once more, they get bored and restless, looking inward. Without a demonic enemy that must be opposed at every step, they become like normal people outside, and are no longer afraid to speak negatively of their leaders, whom they no longer respect. Dissension, division and fragmentation are not far off.

Updated list of Watch Tower Society officers

Governing body members (current as of 1/22/04)

John Barr
Carey Barber
Samuel Herd
Theodore Jaracz
Steven Lett
Gerrit Lösch
Guy Pierce
Albert Schroeder
David Splane
Daniel Sydlik

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (Incorporated 1884)

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Vice Presidents Robert W. Wallen, William F. Malenfant
Secretary/Treasurer Richard E. Abrahamson
Directors Danny L. Bland, Philip D. Wilcox, John N. Wischuk

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. (Incorporated 1909)

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Vice Presidents George M. Couch, Lonnie R. Schilling
Secretary/Treasurer Gerald F. Simonis
Directors Gerald D. Grizzle, David G. Sinclair, Robert M. Pevy

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Religious Order of Jehovah's Witnesses (Incorporated 2000)

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