

tion of tracts, pamphlets, papers and other religious documents, and by the use of all other lawful means.... “*Qualified to be Ministers*, p. 304.

1886 saw the first volume of his proposed 7 volume series of doctrinal studies. The series was called *Millennial Dawn*, and later changed to *Studies in the Scriptures*. The first volume was titled *The Divine Plan of the Ages*.

The seventh volume was published after his death. None of them are considered authoritative by the Witnesses today.

By 1889 congregations were being organized in other areas of the world. There are several reasons for the rapid growth in just nineteen years.

(1) Many disillusioned Second Adventists were attracted to this new type of Adventism.

(2) Russell threw his money into the work, and he was quite independently wealthy.

(3) He was a prolific writer, traveling extensively speaking on his doctrines. He had a great personal magnetism and was quite adept at speaking to large crowds.

(4) He headed a tight, active organization.

In 1889 the Society purchased a building in Allegheny, Pennsylvania and it was to be their headquarters for twenty years. In 1908 J.F. Rutherford, then legal counsel of the Society, purchased property in Brooklyn, New York. The new headquarters was known as “The Brooklyn Tabernacle,” later “Bethel.”

Russell had considerable trouble in his personal and public life. His marriage went

from bad to worse, and his wife left him. Several years later she sued for legal separation, the case being tried in 1906. She had to sue again to get her allotted alimony, when Russell had all his property transferred to the Society. In June 1912, J. J. Ross of the James Street Baptist Church of Hamilton, Ontario, published a pamphlet titled, *Some Facts About the Self-Styled “Pastor” Charles T. Russell*. Russell sued Ross for libel, but lost the case in court, exposing himself as a fraud and perjurer.

Russell died in his sleep aboard a train near Pampa, Texas on October 31, 1916. He was returning from a California speaking trip. The Witnesses claim that during his life he traveled more than a million miles, delivered over 30,000 sermons, and wrote over 50,000 pages in his various books.

“The funeral oration was delivered by ‘ex-judge’ J. F. Rutherford, who proved himself worthy of the occasion. While the other mortals, according to Russellite doctrine sleep in death until the resurrection, Rutherford prophesied about the great ‘Pastor’: ‘Our dear brother sleeps not in death, but was instantly changed from the human to the Divine nature, and is now forever with the Lord.’” J. K. Van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults*. p. 222.

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

Pamphlet 061

Charles Taze Russell

(1852-1916)

Founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses

The roots of the Jehovah’s Witnesses go back before Russell was born. “Second Adventism” burst on the scene of this country under the leadership of one William Miller. He and his followers adhered to six distinguishing doctrines:

1. No hell, or punishment, for the wicked.
2. No conscious existence after death.
3. The destiny of man is everlasting life on earth. The end of the world is nearly here.
4. After Jesus came he would judge the world, resurrect those in the grave, and renovate the earth to sinless perfection.
5. His second coming would be about April 18, 1844 at the latest.

This last met with bitter disappointment. Many went into atheism, but others simply did some shuffling of their beliefs. They were divided into two groups. The first insisted that Miller had been correct about the time, but wrong about the event. Jesus had come on the date appointed but in a spiritual sense. Some said it would be 3½ years after, or 1847, that he would come and that the intervening time was the “time of the end.” This group became the present day Seventh Day Adventists, and they continue to believe that 1844 marks the beginning of the great Judgment Day of God, a day of long duration. A second group believed that Miller had been wrong about the time, as well as the manner of His coming. Many of

these thought 1874 would be the date of Christ's appearing.

Charles T. Russell was born in Allegheny, now part of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 16, 1852. His parents were Scotch-Irish, and Presbyterians in religion. His father owned a chain of Men's clothing stores, in which Russell became a partner by the age of fifteen. Also by that time he had joined the Congregational Church. Troubled about the doctrines of Predestination and eternal punishment, he became a skeptic by the age of seventeen. One day in 1868 he dropped into a dingy basement hall near his store and came into contact with the second group, mentioned above, of Miller's followers. These believed in the return of Christ in 1874. Russell records that time:

"Seemingly by accident, one evening I dropped into a dusty dingy hall in Allegheny, Pa., where I heard that religious services were held, to see if the handful who met there had anything more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches. There for the first time, I heard something of the views of Second Adventism, by Jonas Wendell...

Though his Scripture exposition was not entirely clear, and though it was very far from what we now rejoice in, it was sufficient, under God, to reestablish my wavering faith in the Divine inspiration of the Bible, and to show that the records of the Apostles and the Prophets are indissolubly linked." *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 14.

Russell studied diligently, and in 1870 formed a Bible study group of six members, who later elected him their "Pastor." They met from 1870 to 1875 in Pittsburgh. In 1876 Russell met N.H. Barbour of Rochester, New York, who was an Adventist of like persuasion, and the two Bible Study groups joined. One of Barbour's class members had previously discovered The Emphatic Diaglott, a "translation" by Benjamin Wilson, a Christadelphian. (It has been a favorite of the Witnesses as it seemingly supports many of their cherished doctrines. It forms the basis of the *New World Translation of the Watchtower Society*). Using the Diaglott they arrived at the date of 1874.

Barbour had been publishing a paper, *The Herald of the Morning*. From this time on, he and Russell worked on it jointly. In 1877 they published a 194 page book, *Three Worlds or Plan of Redemption*.

"This book set forth their belief that Christ's second presence began invisibly in the fall of 1874 and thereby commenced a forty-year harvest period. Then, remarkably accurately, they set forth the year 1914 as the end of the Gentile times..." *Qualified to be Ministers*, p. 300.

In 1877 Russell advertised a great meeting and invited all the ministers of Pittsburgh and Alleghany to attend, during which he invited them to join with him in preaching the "new light" to the world. The ministers came, but turned down his offer. Russell never forgave those ministers for rejecting his offer and beliefs. (His religious posterity has continued to lash out with

vehement attacks on those who do not accept their doctrines). From that time on, the "fat was in the fire," and Russell began a bitter campaign against "organized religion."

Barbour thought that the final end would come 3½ years after October 1874, i.e., the Spring of 1878. It was to fall on the 14th of Nisan, the Jewish Passover. It was another great disappointment and Barbour lost his faith, finally drifting into modernism. He and Russell parted.

Russell started a new paper, the first edition coming out July 1, 1879. It was entitled *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. The first issue of his paper had a circulation of 6,000, and with it came the birth of his Bible Students organization. This severed all connection with the Adventists. Russell, the same year, sold his business interests to throw his time and money behind the new organization. Also the same year, he married Maria Ackley, one of the members of his Study group.

By 1880 there were thirty congregations in seven states. In 1881 Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society was established. On December 13, 1884, the Society was granted a legal charter and became a corporation. This may be recognized as the official beginning date of the movement now known as the Jehovah's Witnesses. (In 1896 the Society changed its name to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania). Article II of its charter states the purpose of the organization:

"...the dissemination of Bible truths in various languages by means of the publica-