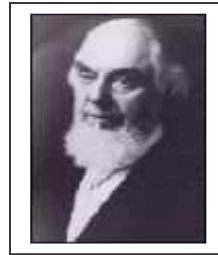


The Facts on Charles T. Russell



Charles T. Russell (1852 - 1916) founded the JW movement. As a teenager he rejected his Presbyterian roots, joined a more liberal Congregational Church, and then left this group as well (2). He denied the deity of Christ and the biblical teachings on hell and eternal punishment. Russell had no formal Bible training, but borrowed and built upon various teachings that were popular at the time. For example, Adventism influenced his denial of hell, and a splinter Adventist group led by N.H. Barbour aroused his interest in end time prophecies. From Barbour he borrowed the belief that Christ returned invisibly to the world in 1874, and that 1914 was the year the world would be destroyed and the Millennium would begin. In 1879 Russell started his own magazine, *Zion's Watchtower* and *Herald of Christ's Presence* (now known as *The Watchtower*), to promote his doctrines. People were drawn to Russell's sensational end time predictions, and the organization grew.

In spite of his lack of formal training in theology or biblical languages, Russell claimed to be the only one with the truth, and he vigorously condemned all other Christian religions. As a result, ministers of various denominations began exposing Russell's false teachings and questionable character. Rev. J.J. Ross published a pamphlet that exposed Russell's false claims and doctrines. He revealed that Russell "never attended the higher schools of learning; knows comparatively nothing of philosophy, systematic or historical theology; and is totally ignorant of the [biblical] languages [i.e. Hebrew and Greek]". (3) Ross concluded that Russell's teaching was "anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-Biblical, [and] anti-Christian." (4) Russell unsuccessfully tried to stop circulation of this damaging information by suing Rev. Ross for defamatory libel.

However, he not only lost the suit, but in the process perjured himself in court when he lied under oath about his knowledge of the Greek language. In the end Russell admitted the statements about him in the pamphlet were true. (5) In 1906 Russell's wife successfully sued for divorce because of "his conceit, egotism, domination and improper conduct in relation to other women," and won a settlement of \$6,036. (6) The court severely censured Russell and called his conduct "insulting," "domineering" and "overbearing" to a degree which made life intolerable to a sensitive Christian woman.

(7) In 1913, Russell unsuccessfully sued *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for libel when that paper exposed his fraudulent attempts to sell ordinary wheat at the exorbitant price of \$60 a bushel, claiming it was "Miracle Wheat." (8) Despite these setbacks, Russell continued to attract people with his fantastic prophetic interpretations and dramatic warning that Armageddon would strike in 1914. When 1914 came and went, he changed the date to 1915.