



Although this story is obviously a work of fiction, it bears more than an element of Truth about the Watchtower Society's first two presidents: Charles Taze Russell and Joseph Rutherford. Those who know the history of the organization will most likely appreciate the humor. – Brenda Lee

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES –THE GHOST OF WATCHTOWER PAST

A holiday work of fiction by Terry W
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The night has come to Beth Sarim mansion as President Joe Rutherford (the "Judge") sits cleaning his pistol and sipping whiskey from a flask on the edge of his silk sheets at bedtime.

There is a knock at the bedroom door. "Come!" the Judge growls.

The finely polished door opens and into his bedchambers steps a newly resurrected Charles Taze Russell with full beard (minus mustache) and naked as a jaybird.

Rutherford glances up and spills his flask, dropping the pistol to the floor. The gun hits on the cocked hammer and a bullet whizzes through Russell's beard penetrating the oak door jam.



Actual Beth Sarim mansion that Rutherford resided in during The Great Depression

"Great Zion!, what's going on here", the Judge roars as he woozily tries to leap to his feet.

"Oh, stifle it Joe. I'm an Ancient Worthy returning to claim the mansion. I want you out now!" Russell scratches the hole in his beard and saunters over to the chest of drawers next to Rutherford's bed and begins opening drawers.

"Ahh, pajamas!" Russell grins.

"Stop! STOP! You..you maniac...I'll have you arrested!" the Judge screams and then suddenly pauses in mid breath to appraise the figure before him. It dawns on him quickly---the man really is Charley Russell! Immediately his legs lose strength and he falls back on the bed. The whiskey flask catapults into the air and clunks him on the forehead with a "ping".

"Oh, dear Lord...oh dear Lord..." this is terrible...just terrible.....

"What's terrible about me returning, Joe? You told everyone at the assemblies the Ancient Worthies would return."

"No, not that", Rutherford groans, "I spilled my whiskey all over the sheets. It was my last till the new shipment comes. Ohhhh...."

Russell begins putting the pajamas on.

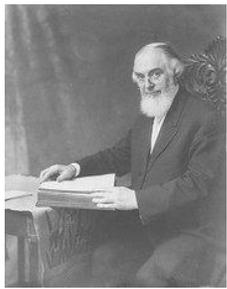
"What's so bad about that, Joe?"

"PROHIBITION, that's what's bad about it! Started 5 years ago. Those idiots made it illegal to buy or manufacture alcoholic beverages!!" Rutherford sits up and rubs the bump on his head, then, slyly grins at the sight of Charles Taze Russell wearing his polka dot silk pajamas.

"What's so funny, Joe?"

Out of the Cocoon

"Heh he he, you are one scrawny fellow! Always looked anemic to me." His smile fades. "Say, why don't you have a Perfect Body?"



Charles Taze Russell

Russell finds a chair near the bed and scoots it across the fine Turkish carpet and seats himself next to Rutherford's bed knee to knee. "Listen, Judge, there are more things in heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

"Huh?"

"Shakespeare....I think." Russell begins weaving the hairs of his beard into little braids and then unwinding them as he speaks.

"Joe Rutherford, listen to me. I speak in the name of our Lord as his Faithful and Wise Servant...."
The Judge interrupts.

"No no no. Now just hold on a second. That's not kosher anymore. We changed all that. You aren't the mouthpiece of Jah---I AM!"

Russell glares and stands up looking down on Rutherford's bald pate. He points a bony finger in his eye.

"You sir---are a THIEF...a common thief! You were NOT designated to take over the corporation. It was in my will!! You are not my APPOINTED successor. By what right do you make changes?" The old voice is shrill and raspy and the eyes bulging from their watery sockets.

Rutherford jumps to his feet and pushes the boney finger aside and walks past Russell to the doorway. He opens the door and points to the empty space in the hallway.

"Get out you greybeard looney!"

Russell doesn't budge. He smiles and sits down on the whiskey flask. Flinches, pulls it out of his behind and tosses it at Rutherford.

Rutherford closes the door calmly and sits in the chair where Russell had been sitting.

"Now look, Charley, what I did was LEGAL and pretty damned clever. I pulled a finesse. You know what a legal finesse is? (Russell is motionless). "I'll tell you what it is....it is an indication that I'm the one with the brains to get this religion into mainstream on a paying basis. We've pretty much used up your personal fortune. Now it is time for the brethren to give back. I've given them work to do that generates some real cash flow!"

Russell lies back on the cushy swan's down pillow and crosses his ankles staring up at the canopy over the bed. He purses his lips and then turns his head to Rutherford.

"Racketeer would be more accurate than thief. You are a racketeer, Joe. You want to take what was a beautiful idea and turn it into a racket; a---what did you call it? Ah yes, a 'mainstream" religious sect...or cult. Why? Why would you destroy my work like this? Just for money?"

Rutherford stands up and his eyes grow very large. He holds his index finger aloft and says, "Bingo!" He climbs up on the chair and reaches into the light fixture. Pulling out a small flask of whiskey he pulls the cork and chugs back a gulp.
"Ahhh."

"Now, what were you blathering about, Pastor Russell? I'm a what? A crook? A Racketeer? Pot calling the kettle black, if you ask me." He climbs down off the chair and takes another hit from the whiskey and replaces the cork.

"Follow me old man!" Rutherford leaves the bedroom without looking back.

Out of the Cocoon



The two men reach the bottom of the stairs and Rutherford gestures broadly to Russell.

"You see all this? It isn't for you as an Ancient Worthy. It is really for me. The boys at Bethel wanted to get me out of their hair. Why? Because I'm tough and foul-mouthed? No, because I don't put up with crap like YOU DID!"

Rutherford leads Russell throughout the mansion stopping now and again to point out the valuables, antiques, carpets, silverware and crystal as he speaks. Russell peers appraisingly each time and nods in appreciation.

"Pastor, you poured a King's Ransom into the Bible Students and what good did it do? No, don't answer--I'll tell you. You fed a lot of people a load of crap and nothing more. But, you did do one thing right. You got people busy. Busy Christians are valuable as an asset to the corporation".

They stroll into the garden area and the men pause in front over the various floral groups and hedges as they chat.

"Now Pastor, it doesn't really matter much that you got them all excited for nothing---I mean, Armageddon didn't come in 1874, did it? You thought it would and even promised God told you it would--don't deny it! Do you know what year it is now?"

Russell shrugs. "1916?"

"Ha ha ha ha ha. No, you bewhiskered old fool---it is 1925!!! You've been dead NINE years! And, guess what? There is STILL NO ARMAGEDDON! Ha."

Russell, truly bewildered, begins to weep but no water comes out of his eyes.

"That cannot be true, Joe. It cannot be true. I am alive! That means the resurrection has happened if I was dead. No Armageddon? How?"



Rutherford motions for him to sit on a concrete bench in front of a flowing fountain. The evening air is turning brisk in Southern California. The stars begin to show in a clear sky. Somewhere a dog begins yapping at a noisy (sic) neighbor.

"Sit here Charley. Here, have a snort of rye whiskey. It will put hair on your chest!" Russell turns his head disgustedly.

"Fine, more for me then." Rutherford takes a slug of rye and wipes his lips. "Here is how the cow eats the cabbage. Listen up and be quiet." Rutherford (sic) stands and begins giving a lecture as though he was in front of a jury of tired old businessmen.

"Your money is the only thing that carried you as far as you went, Charles. Or, Pastor Charles, if you like. That and your wife, Maria!"

Russell gives him a poisonous look and grunts in disgust.

"Stings you to hear it? Well, it is true. It was Maria who came up with the doctrine of Faithful and Wise Servant and she applied it to you. That made you a product, a Brand Name, if you will. You became the Mouthpiece of the Lord. Your money, your publishing company and your colporteurs advertised the Pyramid nonsense and made it work. Ya got people all stirred up and Millennial. Don't deny it."

Russell opens his mouth to protest, thinks the better of it and motions for Rutherford to finish.

"People love END TIMES. It is delicious and exciting. They get themselves all in a lather about the coming of the Lord. Ya know why? I'll tell you and you know in your heart it is true. People love to get worked up over the Armageddon business because it is the only damned thing that can make them feel like this Bible stuff IS REAL!!"



Russell leaps to his feet in a self-righteous zeal, "Stop that blasphemy you contemptible cur! Don't speak about our Lord's revealed word in such a venal tone! He will strike you dead on the spot!"

Rutherford makes a mocking face and smiles, "Okay, Strike me down now, Lord----if you are up there--out there, over there---umm, where exactly is the Lord this evening, Pastor?"

Russell pulls himself up to full height and tilts his head back in disdain. "The Lord is watching you and weighing every word that falls from your blasphemous lips. You have been weighed in the balance and found lacking!"
Judge Rutherford pulls back his smoking jacket and points to his cummerbund with the holster. "See this pistol, Pastor, that is the only word of the Lord that can speak around here."

Russell points to the empty holster.

"Oh." The Judge says quizzically. "I forgot I wounded your beard with it. Sorry about that. You startled me."

Russell beckons for the Judge to sit beside him in a gazebo near the center of the flowered walkway. The Pastor speaks quietly building up a head of steam as he goes.

"I sincerely believed every word I wrote or spoke in my lifetime. You wouldn't understand that, would you? No, you are a lawyer. A lawyer is all about getting a thing done regardless of it being right or wrong. A judge, in fact, is the one who decides what is right and wrong--does he not? You speak it---and it is now a legal truth. That has obviously become a habit in your thinking."

Rutherford burps.

"Judge, you are an ambitious and ruthless fellow who saw a good thing with certain potential and you found afor want of a better word..."legal" way of stealing it. Yes, I said STEALING. I specified in my will who should succeed me and you invalidated my wishes. The corporation was mine, bought with my money and hard work---and you have destroyed my life's creation."

Rutherford sneers at this. "Ho ho ho, I see you admit it is YOUR creation and none of the Lord's doing."

Russell turns defiantly. "The Lord used me as his instrument to prepare the way for his Kingdom. I prepared people and made certain their attention was on His coming. I pointed the way like John the Baptist did...."

"Ha!" Rutherford spits the words out of his mouth along with a sip of whiskey, "Ha! You published claptrap, nonsense and gobblety-gook. It was all puffery and nonsense. You were wrong about every thing you were CERTAIN you were right about. You kept having to change what you were sure about. If the Lord was working through you he was himself a bumbling fool."

Russell, aghast, can only shake his head. A chill flows through the garden and the gazebo begins to move slightly as a breeze catches the leaves and flowers. Rutherford continues.

"You bought and paid for the best and most convincing charlatans to produce a dog and pony show of charts, time lines, chronologies and such. I know why. Do you? You wanted your childhood indoctrination by your mother to have some truth in it. You knew her fanaticism was extreme and severe---so--you chose a kinder and gentler Jesus. Your father's haberdasher business taught you how to organize and get people to work for you. Mostly, it taught you how to make a business pay off. Am I wrong so far?"

Russell is shivering in the cold now. He sticks out his lower lip and reaches for Rutherford's whiskey bottle. The Judge passes it approvingly to the old Pastor and watches with a fatherly smile as the old man chokes down a warm glow of Prohibition Booze.



"You didn't know my mother, Joe. She was a pistol. All she talked about was Hell this and Hell that. She scared sweet Jesus out of me. Scottish hellfire is the worst."

Rutherford takes the bottle back and corks it. He pauses to gaze up at the night sky that looks now like spilled talcum powder on a black suit. Shaking his head to clear it, he continues in a moderate tone of assured confidence.

"You built a religion and a Jesus who didn't scare you and who offered a nice reward without hellfire. You had to convince yourself first--and you found people with a salesman's glib patter who could make it sound real. The invisible Jesus who rules now is a real twist of genius. But, you fumbled it badly, Charley, you really dropped the ball. You were too confident that your writings were the whispers of God. You didn't know any more than anybody else did what was going to happen, when or why. The Great Pyramid gave you a concrete (or should I say limestone?) example to convince others."

"Oh stifle, Judge. Just stifle."

"Ha! Maria figured you out pretty quick, didn't she? You were not a husband in the bedroom with her and she was willing to accept that until she caught you with that young girl--your ward--what was the name?"

"Shut up! You don't know what you are talking about! That was evil rumor and nothing more."

"Right, Pastor. Right. And I'm not a drunken Judge either. But, I digress.....through your mismanagement of Miracle Wheat and showing yourself to be a phoney (sic) scholar on the witness stand who could not read simple Greek sentences you blew your cachet of authenticity. But, the faithful few still regarded you as all they had to point their way to the Promise. Many stayed to see what you'd come up with next. But, you died. That was callous of you, Charley. You ripped their hearts out and left them alone with an Unfinished Mystery titled, ironically: The FINISHED MYSTERY. Ha!"



"Well," the Pastor began, "the Lord saw fit to take me unto him."

"Oh?" Rutherford looked mockingly quizzical. "Is this heaven and am I the Lord?"

"Well," the Pastor halted. "II just don't know."

Rutherford beamed brightly. "You never did, you old fool! You just THOUGHT you knew."

The two men slowly rose and walked back into the house out of the night air. They settle in at the vast kitchen area at the dining table. Rutherford pours them each a thick shot glass full of rye and they begin smoking long cigars from Cuba.

Thoughtfully, Russell muses..."Yes, I was convinced the Lord was speaking directly through me as his mouthpiece. You know what helped me believe that? Not the failed prophecies and the wrong dates, surely, but what really made me believe in myself was.....the look in the eyes of the brethren when I met with them and spoke to them face to face. They looked at me AS THOUGH the Lord were speaking through me. You know what that feels like to a man like me? IT IS EVERYTHING!" He cooed wonderingly.

Rutherford snorts dismissively, "Oh I saw that myself. I personally HATED IT. Those people are idiots. I'd rather do what Machievelli said. You know what he said? "I'd rather be feared and obeyed than loved." That is my motto. It works better than your method. I wear a pistol and I have bodyguards. I have a chauffeur and a flask of whiskey. I turn my death ray of words on all my enemies. You know who my enemies are? The big shots with all the fame, glory and money. I put myself right up there on their level...You know how? I put myself HIGHER MORALLY than they are. I condemn them! It works, Charley, it works. They fear me and hate me. I'm hot stuff as a result."

Russell shakes his head and tugs his beard causing the few braids to fall out. "It's all about you, then, Judge? The Lord is nowhere to be found?"



Rutherford looks straight into Pastor Russell's watery eyes, "It is all about POWER! I now have the power to keep people busy and spread the brand name around and make it worth some real cash. I'm working on a real brand name to top the current bestseller: CHRISTIAN. You have to have a brand name, you see, to advertise and promote your goods. I sell hope and protection against the most fearsome of all adversaries. No, not Satan, but Jehovah himself!! Jah can whoop Satan's ass in any barroom brawl and everybody knows it. I want people to fear the LORD HIMSELF. Then, I present myself as God's best friend and I'll put in a good word for them IF I approve of the work they are doing on my behalf."

"Disgusting", Russell frowns and closes his eyes in pain. He rubs his temples and heaves a long sigh.

"No, it works. My new brand name will be revealed eventually when I work out the kinks in the theology of it all. It will contain the divine name, though, I'm sure of that. A real attention getter. For now, I have to find ways of setting the new brand off from the competition. You see, our religion has to have not only a brand name, but, a different quality to it. Our brothers and sisters have to appear more devoted, faithful and righteous than mainstream Christianity. We'll get lots of publicity each time they don't salute a flag, don't say the pledge, don't celebrate a birthday, don't go for **Christmas** and Easter or serve in the armed forces. We'll get free publicity everywhere because.....you know why? Do you? Because people will HATE US for being so superior! Ha ha ha ha. Why, we'll even be willing to die for our faithful stand!"

Russell can stand no more. He gets up and pushes the dining chair back away from the table.

"You have to be stopped, Judge. You are dangerous. You've wrecked everything I ever stood for. I'm going to stop you."

Rutherford beckons for Russell to follow. They climb the stairs. Re-entering the bedroom, Rutherford reaches down on the floor and picks up his pistol. He checks the cylinder to determine how many bullets remain.

"Pastor Russell, I misjudged you. Which is ironic for a man called JUDGE, is it not?" Rutherford chuckles out loud having a good laugh, then continues.

"I buried you and your faithful and wise servant image. I've taken it upon myself and the other boys who do my bidding. We're in the process of scuttling the Great Pyramid teachings too. We are replacing your work with a real campaign of door to door work that will bring Christendom to its knees. I prefer the time-tested formula of CARROT AND STICK. Paradise and Heaven are the CARROT and Armageddon is the STICK. I'll play up one and balance it with the other over and over again. When the brethren get sluggish or backslide I'll pull out the stick you used inadvertent: DATE SETTING! That will bring the money flowing in. When the date comes and goes without anything happening---well, I'll do what you always did: I'll be humble and show how eager we were for Christ's promises to come now. I'll even turn it back on them if they get surly about it. A certain amount of turnover is to be expected in every business...uhm, I mean, Religion."

Russell, aghast, reaches for the telephone...but, Rutherford points the pistol at his face and shakes his head from side to side. "I wouldn't do that, Pastor. You only live once, you know."

Russell decides the Judge is bluffing and picks up the receiver anyway.

"Last chance, Pastor, I mean it. I don't know how you alone came back to life or why you are here, but, I can't let you stop my success from happening. I'm a mover and a shaker and things are starting to move. People will believe ANYTHING you tell them if you put fear behind it."

Russell turns to leave. "I can't listen to any more of this. You are obviously quite insane."

As Russell reaches the door, the sound of three loud blasts shake the windows and echo against the wood paneling. Russell's falls to the floor with a loud thump and groans once, then twice, and a death rattle brings only silence.

Rutherford watches impassively as the cordite smoke swirls in curlicues around him. He reaches for the tug cord & summons the help. Perhaps his chauffeur can lift this old man into a gunny sack and dump him in the Pacific Ocean before sunrise.

Rutherford takes another long swig on the bottle and lays down upon the bed to rest for a moment as the sound of footsteps



running up the stairs is heard.

"Sir? Sir? Judge, sir? You rang for me, sir?" The voice wakes Rutherford from a deep and troubled slumber.

"Huh, the hell you say?" Rutherford's eyes open like a kitten. "What are you blubbering about?".....

"Sir, you summoned me. Did you have another of your nightmare's sir? If I might caution you sir, that bootleg booze can be quite deadly, you know. Homemade booze has poisoned many people. It is in the papers. Really sir, you should be more careful. Wait for the shipment to come in from Canada."

Rutherford pushes the man away. "Remove the body, will you? Before sunrise?"

"What body, sir?"

--THE END--

Out of the Cocoon

At one time Jehovah's Witnesses celebrated Christmas. If those "brothers" and "sisters" from the early 1900s were living today, they would all be excommunicated and shunned by their Jehovah's Witness community. I wonder how many balked when asked to give up the holidays and were consequently excommunicated/disfellowshipped? Was it their "sin" of celebrating Christmas that constituted grounds for disfellowshipping them, or was the "sin" one of disobeying the Watchtower leaders?

