

Bible Student History

How the Chicago Bible Students broke away from the Watch Tower Society

The Chicago Bible Students are one of the largest Bible Student congregations in America. The events surrounding their forming an ecclesia and being entirely independent of the Brooklyn Watch Tower organization is most interesting.

The following pages are a type written first-hand account of the events and circumstances in 1933. It was prepared by Irving Carl Foss. He was at the crucial meetings and is referred to in his own document as the Chicago “English class elder.” The document appears as a graphic scanned from the original pages. This is followed by a transcript of the record in Family Memoirs at: <http://familymemoirs.us>.

Irving Foss also anonymously referenced another person throughout the document simply as “GO”. This was Gene Orrell (Eugene Dallas Orrell). Following the Foss record is an account of Orrell’s role with Rutherford and the Brooklyn Watch Tower gleaned from a web site:

<http://jwemployees.bravehost.com/NewsReports/2034.html>.

Yes, it was about Aug. 1, 1933 that some of us left THE WATCH TOWER organization and started what is now THE CHICAGO BIBLE STUDENTS CLASS. Prior to this, some brethren (previously associated with Brother Russell) had left at different times and intervals for various reasons. The first was probably when Judge Rutherford refused to follow the instructions left by Brother Russell as to how the Watch Tower Society was to be operated in the event of Brother Russell's death. This was really the starting of the Pastoral Bible Society.

Then, gradually, the new Watch Tower Society (under Rutherford) changed many previously-held-to scriptural doctrines, one of which effected three parables having to do with the HARVEST PERIODS of three ages -- namely, the JEWISH AGE HARVEST, THE GOSPEL AGE HARVEST and the MILLENNIAL AGE HARVEST, respectively; the parable of the Wheat and the Chaff, applicable to the Jewish Harvest; the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, applicable to the Gospel Age Harvest; and then, finally, the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, applicable to the Millennial Age Harvest.

Somewhere around 1919, a Tower article under Rutherford's regime, made application of the SHEEP AND GOATS to around that current period, around 1918-1919, giving the WATCH TOWER ORGANIZATION the authority to decide that all who opposed and would not follow that organization were of the GOAT CLASS, whereas those who concurred with that organization were of the SHEEP. A number of brethren left on that account.

Of course, the JUDGE attempted gradually and positively to bring all BIBLE STUDENTS classes under his thumb, but it was difficult to get the CHICAGO CLASS fully under control.

SO IT SEEMED TO DAWN ON RUTHERFORD that officers in the United States Armed Forces had certain training to keep people subservient, and there apparently were certain ones that accepted the Watch Tower doctrines and theories. Possibly three or four such previous Armed Forces individuals were found and sent to Chicago to get them fully under HEADQUARTER BROOKLYN CONTROL. The first two didn't have the best success. Later, about 1920, the Pastoral Bible group seemed to have some success in getting some brethren to see the error of Rutherford's way, including a number in the Polish class. They had conventions in Chicago, largely fostered by the Polish brethren, and some of the English brethren attended some of those annual conventions -- not the entire English Chicago class, but some.

With this in mind, about 1930, the newly-appointed SERVICE DIRECTOR from Brooklyn Headquarters (a previous Armed Forces Major Officer) was sent to Chicago. By this time, there were, in addition to the Chicago English class, a black class, a Swedish class, a German class, etc., all quite satisfactorily under RUTHERFORD DOMINATION. This Armed Forces Service Director, whom I will refer to as "GO" was well accepted by these other-than-English classes, and measurably so by the English class.

"GO" evidently reported in great detail how the English class elders were doing many things not approved by Rutherford. Rutherford then replied to these charges. (It would appear no one else in Chicago ever knew of the charges.) Finally, in 1933, Rutherford wrote to "GO" giving instructions as to what to do -- namely, "TO WIT" this, and "TO WIT" that. "GO" informed the other-than-English classes of such reply by RUTHERFORD. Being fully in harmony with the RUTHERFORD ORGANIZATION, they were influenced completely thereby.

After the stage was all set, "GO" informed these other classes that they would do what RUTHERFORD wanted, and notified them all that, on a certain designated date, they would have a business meeting of all the Chicago classes at the English Class meeting place to bring the matter up with the idea in mind of getting all CHICAGO BROTHERS to indicate full support of the RUTHERFORD ORGANIZATION. On the date decided, such a business meeting was held, well attended.

This meeting proved to be the final break. "GO" chaired the meeting and, of course, had the six or seven classes (whatever number it was) other than the Chicago English Class pretty well with him and under his influence. Whatever "GO" said was taken for absolute Gospel truth. After suitable opening remarks, "GO" read the instructions from RUTHERFORD, which began approximately with words to this effect: -- "Replying to your letter re conditions in the Chicago Class, my reply is as follows -- etc., etc., TO WIT, etc."

After finishing with RUTHERFORD'S REPLY, one of the English Class elders asked "GO" if it wouldn't be fair and of interest to the English Chicago Class brethren to know exactly what the charges against their elders were that "GO" had sent to RUTHERFORD. This he said he couldn't do because he had no such letter, the impression being given that no such letter had ever been written. That same Chicago English Elder then asked would he just read the beginning of RUTHERFORD'S REPLY, and this same elder then said RUTHERFORD says "IN REPLY TO YOUR LETTER," and you say there never was such a LETTER.

Three or four of the CHICAGO ENGLISH CLASS ELDERS knew things were not right between the Class and RUTHERFORD, AND they had discussed it among themselves from time to time prior to this meeting, although they knew nothing about the nature of the meeting (beforehand?). So, while this meeting was going on, they left the meeting to look for a suitable place where they could call a meeting at some early future date for all who were unhappy at the turn and nature of this meeting. They returned shortly, possibly an hour or two, while the meeting was still in force, and they had found a suitable meeting place at 1016 N. Dearborn Street. While the meeting was still going on, the aforesaid English class elder got up and made an announcement that such a meeting would be held for all who were not in harmony with "GO's" method and objects. "GO," the chairman, said he wouldn't make such an announcement. The aforesaid English class elder (who had been more or less the spokesman for the opposition) said he did not request "GO" to make such an announcement, as he himself had already made the announcement.

The next Sunday, at the announced place, sixty brethren attended, and immediately they decided to start a separate class, and elected elders and officers. Possibly three or four who attended this meeting did go back to the "GO" organization the next Sunday, but gradually others who did not attend this first meeting became regular attendants at the newly-formed class, and later some of them were elected elders and officers. That first meeting, I believe, was August 1, 1933.



An Eye-Witness Account

by Br. Irving Carl Foss,
Elder of the Chicago Ecclesia in 1933

[Recorded for his granddaughter,
Alys Schneider, on 3/28/83]

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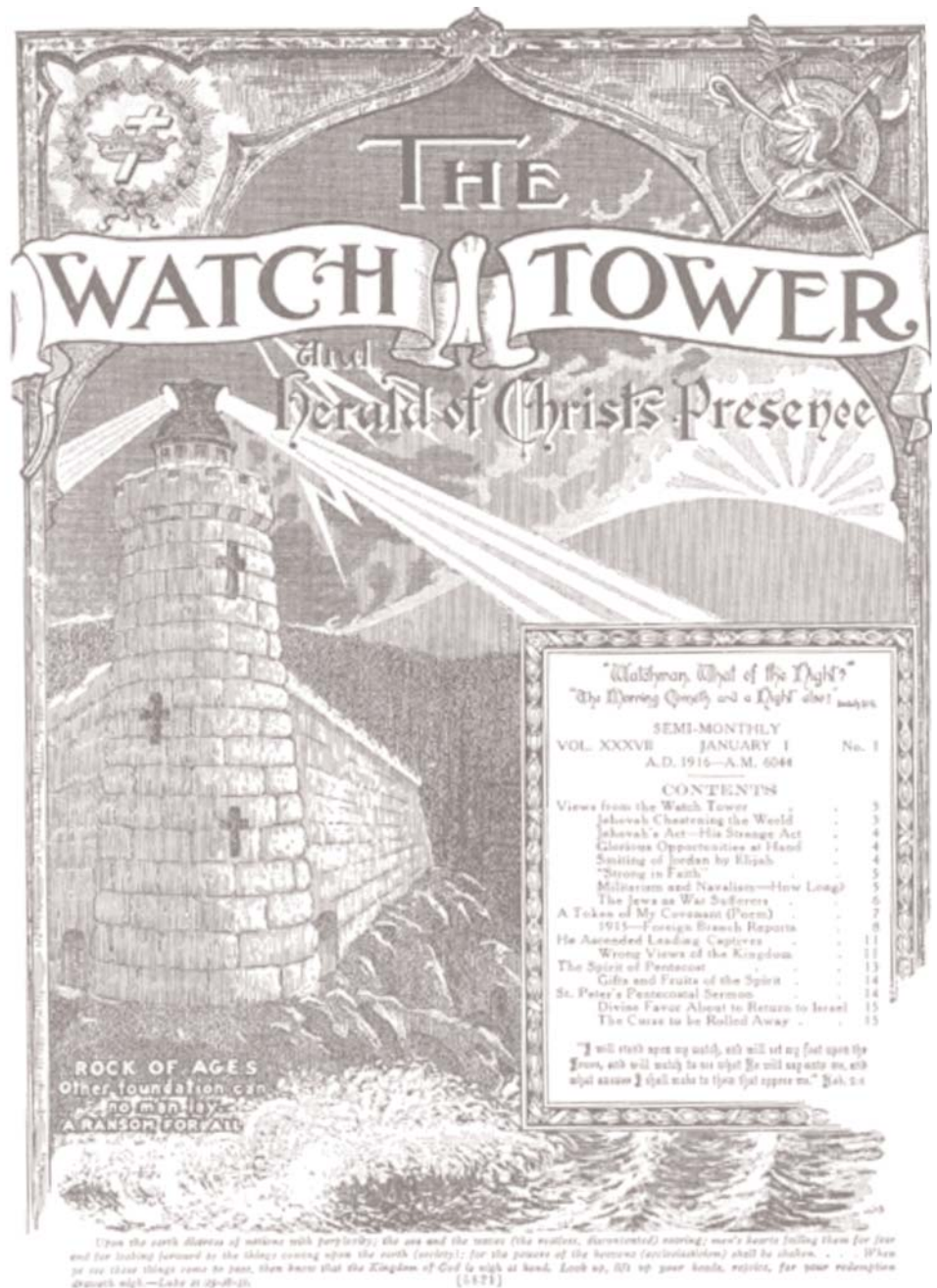
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Charles Taze Russell, 7th Messenger

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*Gene Orrell

NEW YORK v. ORRELL and **NORTH CAROLINA v. ORRELL** (times at least 3) were criminal court cases which involved a WatchTower Society "*Agitator*" named Eugene Dallas Orrell. Gene Orrell was a 29 year-old unmarried man when he became a "Jehovah's Witness" in 1921-- evidently while attending Georgia Tech, from which he graduated in 1922. By January 1923, Orrell had managed to sufficiently distinguish himself amongst JWs to get invited to work at WatchTower world headquarters, in Brooklyn, New York. There, Eugene Orrell quickly rose in the ranks all the way to serving as a traveling "*Pilgrim*" in the latter 1920s, and as "*Bethel Servant*" by only 1931-2. **During that 1931-2 period, Orrell's living quarters were in the room adjacent to Judge Rutherford's private office. Bonnie Boyd and her mother were the only other persons who lived in that Seventh Floor complex of offices and apartments. Orrell related that Rutherford and he were "very" good friends, and occasional drinking buddies, in addition to their having an excellent working relationship.**

In fact, although his name has all but been forgotten, Eugene D. Orrell was one of the most active WatchTower Society workers inside and outside Brooklyn headquarters from the late 1920s up until Judge Rutherford's death in 1942. In addition to being "*Bethel Servant*", Gene Orrell was used by Rutherford out in the field when and wherever a "loyal soldier" was needed to fight Rutherford's battles. Orrell lectured all over the United States, and even performed "special projects" in the cities of Chicago and Philadelphia. (*Orrell is well known by the various Russellite factions as Rutherford's henchman during the "Battle Of/For Chicago".*) By the late 1930s, at a time when there were many legal battles brewing, Orrell returned to his home state of North Carolina, where he served both Carolinas as a "*Servant To The Brethren*", or what would be a "District Overseer" today.

Eugene Orrell's resume also includes being one of the three WatchTower Society "headcrackers" who were "**miraculously**" **acquitted of felonious assault charges** alleged to have occurred in the riot which developed during the infamous Rutherford speech at Madison Square Garden in June 1939. WatchTower Attorney, Olin Moyle, was so certain that Orrell would be convicted that Moyle recommended that Orrell plead "*guilty*" rather than go to trial. **Interestingly, Orrell was so certain that he would win that he wanted to contest the charges, and he did plead "not guilty" despite Moyle's advice to the contrary. Rutherford agreed with Orrell, and arranged for Olin Moyle to have a non-JW co-counsel who actually tried most of the case. As it turned out, Orrell's assessment of the situation was better than Moyle's, who was an experienced trial attorney who had won before SCOTUS. The three JW headcrackers were all found "not guilty". These were part of the circumstances that led up to the Rutherford-Moyle blowup.**

In the summer of 1940, Gene Orrell was arrested at least three times in North Carolina (there were very likely many more). One of those court cases was especially interesting. Orrell, and some other JWs under his command, were arrested for distributing WatchTower literature without first securing a city permit, which cost only \$1.00 per day, or \$5.00 per year. This was before SCOTUS ruled that distributors of religious literature could not be required to obtain such permits. Thus, JWs all over the U.S. were testing such permit requirements, and were losing case after case in the local courts. **What makes the Orrell case so interesting is that the local Superior court "miraculously" overturned Orrell's initial conviction.** That local Judge ruled in Orrell's favor that the \$1.00 city license requirement was "unconstitutional". That same Judge told Orrell that Orrell still should have went ahead and paid the \$1.00 fee to obtain the city permit, even if such did violate Orrell's constitutional rights.

That local low level Judge showed more common sense than did "Judge Rutherford". That Judge explained to Orrell, *"I don't think that any true witness of Jehovah would make himself a nuisance. I do think they could advance their cause more graciously and effectively by complying with ordinances."*

Curiously, a different judge that handled Orrell's arraignment, when Orrell was initially arrested, later told a reporter that Orrell had told him that he was a Reserve Officer in the United States Army. It is not known whether Orrell stated this in open court, or whether this was something Orrell told the judge away from the proceedings, but in either case, that certainly gives one something to ponder.

In fact, Gene Orrell was a WWI Veteran who, as an A.E.F. infantry platoon leader during the capture and defense of Cantigny, France, in May 1918, was cited for his bravery and promoted from 2nd Lieutenant to 1st Lieutenant, and awarded the Silver Star, in June 1918.

Later, in August 1920, after his honorable discharge in December 1919, and shortly before he became a "Jehovah's Witness" in 1921, Orrell was awarded a second Silver Star for his courage at Cantigny, France.

Interestingly, the non-JW co-counsel who was hired for the MSG Riot trial was the same attorney that **Judge Rutherford had directed Olin Moyle to hire** as co-counsel for the Philadelphia lawsuits against the Catholic Church -- JOSEPH WHELESS. In addition to being a notorious "skeptic", "Major" Joseph Wheless was a noted military law expert, who had served as a Judge-Advocate in the U.S. Army during WW1 (*see WATCHTOWER v. CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE below*). Interestingly, after the United States entered WW2, then 74 year-old Joseph Wheless went back to work for the U.S. Government -- **in military intelligence**. Readers should be aware that the Watch Tower Society had long been under the eye of the United States Army Intelligence Service, which had raided WatchTower world headquarters in March 1918. One can't help but wonder whether "someone" had cut a deal with them to allow them ongoing access to the daily inner workings of the organization.

I have not been able to locate any info which would indicate that any of Orrell's immediate family were JWs. Interestingly, Gene Orrell stated that he first met Judge Rutherford in 1910 (shortly after Rutherford joined the WatchTower Society), presumably in North Carolina, when Orrell was merely 18 years old. But, again, Orrell did not join up until 1921??? It is also interesting that Orrell evidently never married. Orrell died in 1971, while living near Jacksonville, Florida.