



Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses

M. James Penton

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Since 1876, Jehovah's Witnesses have believed that they are living in the last days of the present world. Charles T. Russell, their founder, advised his followers that members of Christ's church would be raptured in 1878, and by 1914 Christ would destroy the nations and establish his kingdom on earth. The first prophecy was not fulfilled, but the outbreak of the First World War lent some credibility to the second. Ever since that time, Jehovah's Witnesses have been predicting that the world would end 'shortly.' Their numbers have grown to many millions in over two hundred countries. They distribute a billion pieces of literature annually, and continue to anticipate the end of the world.

Apocalypticism is the key issue in this detailed history, but there are others. As a long-time member of the sect, now expelled, Penton offers a comprehensive overview of a remarkable religious movement. His book is divided into three parts, each presenting the Witnesses' story in a different context: historical, doctrinal, and sociological. Some of the issues he discusses are known to the general public, such as the sect's opposition to military service and blood transfusions. Others involve internal controversies, including political control of the organization and the handling of dissent within the ranks.

Penton has combined the special insight of an insider with the critical analysis of an observer now at a distance from his subject. From them he has created a penetrating study of a spreading world phenomenon.

In this second edition, an afterword by the author brings us up to date on events since *Apocalypse Delayed* was first published in 1985. Penton considers changes in doctrine, practice, and governance on issues such as medical treatment, higher education, apostates, and the apocalypse. This edition features a revised and expanded bibliography.

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