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# The Jehovah's Witness Doctrine of "Theocratic Warfare".

How members of a Christian religious movement have come to view lying and misinformation as acceptable when spreading "the word of God".

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REPORT



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Theocratic warfare is a contentious theological doctrine of the Jehovah's Witness (JW) movement in Christianity.

Theocratic warfare, as a religious/evangelical doctrine, essentially entails the following; the JW movement permits its members to use manipulations and half truths to convert people to the JW religion. Theocratic warfare also allows members of the JW religion to lie in order to protect the JW religion. The doctrine essentially exists with the assumption from JW's that they need to save people in the eyes of God (Jehovah) by any means necessary. Therefore, manipulation of fact and half truth is acceptable in the eyes of many JW's as the divine mission (salvation of individuals' souls for Jehovah) is put before truth in the short term. Essentially, many JW's believe that they are morally able to tell half truths, lie, and manipulate facts so as to convert new members and "protect the faith".

*The previous paragraph would essentially summarise theocratic warfare doctrine if there was any consistency to the available evidence. However, the evidence is not consistent.*

**There has been a significant degree of controversy between ex JW's and current JW's as to whether theocratic warfare is a theological program commanded from the heights of the JW leadership (as asserted by many ex JW's) or whether the existence of theocratic warfare doctrine today is a mistake resulting from contemporary misinterpretation of JW doctrine dated back to World War II (the opinion of many current JW'S discussing the matter in online JW chatrooms as well as the opinion of one source I interviewed).**

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## So is theocratic warfare a doctrinal instrument of JW religious leaders, or the result of misinterpretation of doctrine by individuals? JW's?

Many ex members of the Jehovah's Witness argue that the doctrine of theocratic warfare is a tool utilised by the leadership of the Jehovah's Witness religion to spread their faith. Countless ex JW's regard theocratic warfare as a "top down" doctrinal instrument of the JW leadership, used to spread JW theology by any means necessary and co-ordinated from the highest levels of the religion.

"jwfacts.org", a site dedicated to uncovering and revealing lies, half truths, and manipulations by JW's, has collated a number of quotes from members of the JW hierarchy regarding the doctrine of theocratic warfare. As stated at the introduction of the "jwfacts.org" page on theocratic warfare;

*"Jehovah's Witnesses are told that they are in "theocratic warfare" or "spiritual warfare" with the world. This warfare includes the strategy that being misleading, or even lying, is acceptable in situations where such dishonesty furthers the organisation's interests."*

"jwfacts.org" then provides a number of instances wherein there is evidence that the JW hierarchy has lied, and encouraged lying, in its publications;

*"Sarai could say that she was Abram's sister because she really was his half sister. (Genesis 20:12) Furthermore, he was not under obligation to divulge information to people who were not entitled to it. (Matthew 7:6) Faithful servants of God in modern times heed the Bible's command to be honest. (Hebrews 13:18) They would never, for instance, lie under oath in a court of law. When the physical or spiritual lives of their brothers are at stake, such as*

*In times of persecution or civil distress, however, they heed Jesus' counsel to be "cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves."* – Watchtower 2001 Aug 15 p.20 (SOURCE CATEGORIES/JWINTERNET/US POLITICAL/CATEGORIES/US-POLITICS/ALCC

*"Of course, being truthful does not mean that we are obligated to divulge all information to anyone who asks it of us. Do not give what is holy to dogs, neither throw your pearls before swine, that they may never ... turn around and rip you open, warned Jesus, at Matthew 7:6. For example, individuals with wicked intent may have no right to know certain things. Christians understand that they are living in a hostile world. Thus, Jesus advised his disciples to be cautious as serpents while remaining innocent as doves. ( Matthew 10:16; John 15:19) Jesus did not always disclose the full truth, especially when revealing all the facts could have brought unnecessary harm to himself or his disciples. Still, even at such times, he did not lie. Instead, he chose either to say nothing or to divert the conversation in another direction."* – Awake! 2000 Feb 8 p.21 (sourced from "jwfacts.org").

These two cited examples are just some among many examples provided by "jwfacts.org" of the JW hierarchy permitting lying to further advance the aims of the JW organisation. However, these examples are both nearly fifteen years old, so the doctrine may not be as pervasive within the JW religion in 2016.

However, evidence of theocratic warfare being a tool of JW religious leaders is not only documentary, but also academic. Academic Jerry Bergman in "The Cultic Study Review" (2002, Volume 1, No. 2) asserted that theocratic warfare was a definitive and intrinsic part of JW teaching and JW practices in regards to religious conversion up to and circa 2002. According to Bergman, theocratic warfare was a doctrine taught and practiced by all members of the JW religion, from high ranking elders to individual "foot soldiers" around that time. Bergman's 2002 study asserted that theocratic warfare



allowed JW's to tell half truths to gain new religious converts, and also allowed JW's to lie in court to protect the interests of the JW religion.

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Evidence for the existence of the doctrine suggests that theocratic warfare was prevalent within JW teaching at least until 2002. Though the teaching may not be as dominant today, there is still evidence of its existence in JW circles in 2016.

Writing in an August 2015 opinion piece for "ABC News" (Australia), ex JW Paul Grundy asserts that theocratic warfare (or "spiritual warfare") is a definitive and real part of JW religious doctrine in the present day. As detailed in Paul Grundy's article, JW's cannot be trusted to tell the truth in situations such as a court of law. This is because the JW religion permits lying in situations where the JW religion is threatened e.g. potentially damaging legal cases such as the 2015 Australian Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse. As Grundy writes;

*"Unfortunately, it was also not always possible to trust what the (JW) elders told the (2015 Australian) Royal Commission (Into Child Sexual Abuse), and anyone watching them would have noticed their strenuous efforts to deflect the conversation and answer with irrelevant straw man arguments (although counsel assisting the commission, Angus Stewart, and Justice Peter McClellan were exceptional at keeping the answers on topic).*

*This approach by the elders may be part of what the teachings refer to as "theocratic or spiritual warfare", where Jehovah's Witnesses may, at least in some cases, be encouraged to withhold information order to protect the name of Jehovah and the organisation."*

Paul Grundy's interpretation of the actions of JW elders in courtroom situations suggests that contemporary JW's are willing to lie before a court of law when the reputation of the



JW religion is at stake. Such a willingness to lie becomes a very serious issue when lies are told to cover up very serious matters such as child sexual abuse.

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Documentary sources, academic sources, and media sources on the matter of theocratic warfare all suggest that JW's do frequently lie in the name of their religion. There is therefore significant evidence to suggest that theocratic warfare doctrine exists, and is used to protect the name and reputation of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

Theocratic warfare is demonstrated by academic, documentary, and significant online anecdotal evidence to definitively exist as a theocratic concept within the JW religion.

According to ex JW's writing online, as well as evidence from multiple other sources (academic and legal), theocratic warfare is a strategy of spiritual conversion and protection of the faith commanded by the JW hierarchy. According to these sources, theocratic warfare is coordinated globally by members of, and congregations within, the JW religious movement. These sources also claim that the strategy allows all JW's to lie when they can further the interest of the JW organisation or to protect the JW organisation. This is done so with the blessing of JW elders according to these diverse sources.

However, many current members of the JW religion assert that the strategy of theocratic warfare is only used in a contemporary context due to mis-interpretation of JW doctrine by some contemporary JW congregations. According to these current JW's, the doctrine of theocratic warfare originated in World War II (1939-1945), and was used by JW's during that time to protect themselves from Nazi and Stalinist persecution. The doctrine, created during WWII, allowed JW's to lie about their faith to authorities so that they were not sent to Nazi concentration camps or Communist gulags. These current JW's believe that individual JW's and individual JW congregations have misinterpreted the doctrine of theocratic warfare in the years since WWII, to the point that these individuals and groups now use what was once a very specific theological doctrine for unintended



purposes i.e. spreading the JW religion by manipulative means and protecting the JW religion by manipulative means.

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 On "Jehovahs-Witness.com", a Jehovah's Witness members forum, JW's chatting online have discussed the matter of theocratic warfare in conversations. In an interesting conversation I found on the website from eleven years ago, online members (all presumably JW's at the time) seemed to acknowledge that theocratic warfare existed and was a definite thing. However, there was some debate among these individual JW's as to the exact nature of theocratic warfare as a "theocratic thing". The debate on the site was interesting, as current and ex JW's debated the exact origins and nature of "theocratic warfare".

The chatroom conversation started with one member "Slimboyfat" (a JW at the time, apparently) asserting that; "*apostates (ex-JW's) make the whole thing (theocratic warfare) up!*"

The first comment in reply (from "Blondie", a JW at the time) asserted that theocratic warfare definitely existed, but that the doctrine was simply a result of JW's misinterpreting their faith. A seven page debate then commenced on the site, with both JW members and ex JW's arguing about the nature and extent of theocratic warfare doctrine. The general conclusion from the chatroom conversation was that theocratic warfare doctrine definitely existed, and was a strategy that had morphed from a strategy used by JW's in World War II to protect themselves from Nazis (and later, Communists).

However, ex JW's and JW's still had differences of opinion. Ex JW's generally regarded theocratic warfare as a strategy commanded by JW leadership, and current JW's generally regarded the doctrine as a result of congregational or individual misinterpretations of JW teachings.



What ever the case, the conversation on "jehovahs-witness.com" was enlightening as it did reveal that many JW's do themselves acknowledge the existence of theocratic warfare doctrine. However, JW's on "jehovahs-witness.com" categories/users only JW's I witnessed within the course of my research acknowledging that theocratic warfare existed.

"Opposers DisMythed", a blog run by members of the JW religion, acknowledges the existence of theocratic warfare doctrine. However, the "Opposers DisMythed" blog asserts that the extent of theocratic warfare doctrine is minimal within the JW religion. "Opposers DisMythed" asserts that the influence of theocratic warfare within the JW religion is not anywhere near the extent claimed by opponents of the religion. The blog also makes another interesting claim; "Opposers DisMythed" asserts that theocratic warfare doctrine only allows members of the JW religion to "hold their tongue", not lie.

One ex JW I consulted in my research also believes that the extent of the influence of theocratic warfare doctrine may not be necessarily that significant or pervasive within the religious movement. Alice (name changed), a friend of mine and an ex JW, personally believes that theocratic warfare is more likely to be the result of doctrinal mis-interpretation than deliberate plan or intent on behalf of the JW hierarchy. An ex JW currently aged seventeen whose family left the religion when she was fifteen, Alice believes that such malevolent and manipulative intent would not come from the JW hierarchy. As Alice stated to me in an interview last week;

*"I don't think people still in the Jehovah's Witness religion are bad people or that their intentions are bad. I do think they are people who believe that they are doing the right thing...that said I never really got into missioning (evangelizing) full time as I left when I was pretty young".*





Result of doctrinal mis-interpretation or ill intent is largely irrelevant because the end result (lying) is essentially unchanged.

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 Members of the JW religion globally need to seriously reconsider their perspective on the importance of total truth. Lying, even in the name of Jehovah, is not permissible or acceptable. Because eventually you will be caught red handed.

## General (/categories/general)

(/general/exposed-the-treatment-of-teachers-with-ill-health-in-secondary-education)  
 GENERAL (/CATEGORIES/GENERAL)  
 Mark L Burrow (@linden)

### Exposed: the treatment of teachers with ill-health in secondary education

Teachers are forced to leave because they have issues of ill-health. Fact.

(/general/exposed-the-treatment-of-teachers-with-ill-health-in-secondary-education)

(/general/gambia-leading-opposition-udp-leader-arrested-for-protesting-members-death-in-state-custody)  
 GENERAL (/CATEGORIES/GENERAL)  
 Alhagie Jobe (@jobenewshub)

### Gambia: Leading opposition UDP leader arrested for protesting member's death in state custody

(/general/gambia-leading-opposition-udp-leader-arrested-for-protesting-members-death-in-state-custody)

