

Why do people allow themselves to accept these rationalizations? What allows men to brazenly set forth these dishonest expressions all the while they present themselves as lovers of truth and servants of God and Christ? Do they think God is blind? Do they think he is deaf? The Watch Tower Society has a history of exposing the religious errors of others. It has, in effect, built itself up by tearing others down. But it glosses over its own errors and even sanctifies them. Whatever spirit this represents it is not the spirit of God which is the spirit of truth. (John 15:26)

Radical movements have an appeal to some people.

Human nature being what it is it is easy to arouse expectations and offer deliverance from an otherwise meaningless life. There is always enough terror and uncertainty in the world from which one wishes to flee. The Watch Tower Society purports to have all the answers and offers the promise of immediate *deliverance-without even having to die-into* a cleansed new world. Who would not want to believe such a promise? The Society paints a glowing picture of paradise which is always just ahead-tantalizingly close. So close you can nearly touch it but not quite. This has been the fuel that has nourished the flame of hope in the breasts of Jehovah's Witnesses from the days of Russell until now. That the promises never materialize seems to matter little. The myth, or belief in the myth, is almost as good as the real thing. The Society's rhetoric has not been moderated even though it has been stripped of all its time features but one. They

continue to speak in the same dogmatic, arrogant manner that has characterized their literature for over a hundred years. Typical of this is the following: "We also know that the 1914 generation is well into the evening of its existence, thus allowing only little time for this prophecy yet to be fulfilled. But we also know for this we have Jesus' own promise-that 'this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen.'" -*The Watchtower*, May 1, 1985, page 7. Does that sound like mere supposition-simply an opinion, or is it a positive statement of belief supposedly backed up by Jesus himself?

It is not "Jesus' own promise" that the generation of 1914 "will by no means pass away until all these things happen." It is the word of the Watch Tower Society that is making that promise. It is their speculative interpretation of Jesus' words that forms the real basis for this dogmatic prediction. It is their time schedule-Not the Lord's. The one whom they claim to serve and speak for has told them: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons ["times or appointed times," *NW Interlinear*] which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction. "

(Acts 1:7) In time, unless the Lord's real return has taken place, the Society will be forced to explain-away yet another failed prophecy. Based on past performances they will probably say something like this: "it was a natural mistake to fall into, but it certainly did have a stimulating and sanctifying effect upon millions who can praise the Lord even for the mistake." Some things never change. □

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## ***The Watchtower Society and Neo-Pharisaism***

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"The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses. Therefore all the things they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform. They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger." -Matthew 23:2-4 *New World Translation*

The cardinal sin of the Pharisees was their presumptuousness. These men "seated *themselves* in the seat of Moses," but failed to practice what they preached. It was not by divine appointment that they took such a position in the state of Israel. When they directed one to the Law it would be safe to "do and observe" these things, but when it came to following

their example Jesus said: "do not do according to their deeds. " It had been calculated by teachers in the nation of Israel that the Mosaic Law consisted of 613 specific laws; 248 positive and 365 negative. The Pharisees were not content to limit themselves to these hundreds of laws but decided that an additional 'hedge' had to be built around these laws by adding hundreds of auxiliary laws and rules. For example, the Law commanded that the seventh day of the week be set aside as a sacred day of rest. This commandment was supplemented by "thirty-nine principal species of prohibited acts on the Sabbath." -*The New Bible Dictionary*, edited by J.Douglas, page 982

In their zeal to uphold the Law and protect their fellow Israelites from inadvertently violating the Law

they simply went too far and took themselves too seriously as custodians of divine truth. The confrontations between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees over these many man-made regulations are well documented in the Bible. (Matt. 12: 1-7) The Lord did not acquiesce to these men out of respect for their religious sensitivities in these matters but used those occasions of confrontation to drive home powerful points of truth. As regards the sabbath Jesus pointed out to these religious zealots: "The sabbath came into existence for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of the Sabbath." -Mark 2:27 NW The weekly Sabbath followed six days of laborious activity. It was designed to refresh and restore the hard working Israelite as well as alien residents and domestic animals. But the Pharisees had added so many prohibitions to the observance that it had become burdensome rather than refreshing. In retrospect we may find it easy to dislike the Pharisees but it would be a mistake to view them as just an association of mean-spirited men. That there were honorable men among them is attested to by the fact that many of their number later became disciples of the Lord-not the least of whom was Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 15:5, 23 :6) The Pharisees recognized the real danger of the nation drifting away from obedience to the Law and succumbing to the influence of Hellenistic philosophy. But in their zeal to step into the breach, so to speak, and prevent this calamity they presumptuously pushed ahead of Jehovah God and fell into the trap of self-exaltation. They viewed themselves as the custodians and defenders of the Law but, ironically, they placed themselves in direct opposition to God's Son, Jesus Christ.

In a number of ways the leadership of the Watch Tower Society displays the spirit of the Pharisees. It has seated itself in the seat of the one who is greater than Moses-Jesus Christ-and presume the right to manage his affairs on earth. In the process they have established endless rules and 'counsel' on virtually every conceivable situation. It is as though the Scriptures are not specific enough and they feel compelled to build a hedge around Jehovah's Witnesses lest they ignorantly transgress some divine ordinance. They presume to have the right to overrule individual Christian conscience. And in the process they burden the Witnesses with a regimen of organizational activity which is not discretionary but obligatory if one wants to have Jehovah God's approval. Instead of the organization being for the man; the man is for the organization. The individual Witness can hardly make a

move without first determining what the Society's policy is in a certain matter or situation. It becomes rather easy to offend the organization and come under censure. For many this results in a burdensome load put there, not by the one they are committed to serve but, rather, from men who presume to speak for the one who said: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you! Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light." --Matthew 11 :28-30 NW

As in the case of the ancient sect of the Pharisees not all of the advice given by the Watch Tower Society is bad. Much of it is worthy of putting into practice. An example of this is to be found in *The Watchtower*, June I, 1985 in the article: "Walk by faith." The writer draws on the apostle Paul's words found at 2 Corinthians 5:7 and makes the point that appearances can be deceiving saying: "If we take everything at face value and depend only on outward appearances, there is the danger of being deceived to our own harm." (page 10) This is certainly true and we should all take it to heart-including Jehovah's witnesses. Because a religion claims to speak for God does that claim prove it is true? No! If a religious corporation acts as though it is divinely placed in the seat of the "greater Moses" - Jesus Christ-does that prove it is? No! If they get some people to believe them and they prosper from the labor and financial donations of these people so they can build impressive printing facilities and acquire extensive land holdings; does this prove that it is right? No! None of the kingship-all divinely appointed-were more often than not the virus of apostasy rather than its preventative. If anything, the national example of Israel demonstrates that men-even divinely appointed men cannot be trusted to administer God's interests on earth. Those who trusted these men and looked to the temple of Jehovah as their refuge were herded into adverse judgments from the very God they professed to worship! Using the divine name did not prevent this.

The same article goes on to say: "Since 'it does not belong to man to direct his step,' we should be grateful for Jehovah's leadership." (page 19, par.13) If, indeed, a man is not capable, in himself, to direct his step how in the world would a man or a group of men direct the steps of others? Yet, by the way the Society presents matters they are always putting themselves over others-directing them! Of the Pharisees, Jesus said: "They say but do not perform. " There was a breakdown between the counsel they dispensed and

their conformance to that counsel. When they were on solid Scriptural ground they were worthy of being listened to for advice, but their course of action contradicted their own counsel. The same is often true of the Watch Tower Society. They say all should look to Jehovah for leadership but they do not follow their own advice because they demand that everyone follow them. Principles are borrowed from the Bible and misapplied to put faith in an organization of men. They are preaching themselves, Their directives are always laced with dark warnings for those who fail to listen and follow them. They threaten the Witnesses of the dire consequences that will follow if anyone questions them or fails to submit to them. The following is an example of this:

"Often coupled with disregard for lordship is an independent and rebellious spirit that ignores the fact that Jehovah is directing his organization. This spirit had dire consequences for Korah and others who challenged the God-given authority of Moses and Aaron. (Numbers 16: 1-35) But what a contrast we find in David! Content to wait on God to rectify wrongs, David would not slay his wicked enemy Saul because he was 'the anointed of Jehovah.' (1 Samuel 24:2-7) Yes, Jehovah anointed Moses, Aaron, Saul, David, Jesus Christ, and others. Similarly, in God's organization today, service appointments are made in harmony with Scriptural requirements and under the direction of Jehovah's holy spirit." (pages 18,19, par. 12)

This argumentation is seriously flawed. Those persons named in the foregoing quotation did not *assume* they were divinely appointed; they *were* divinely appointed and clearly identified in sacred history. The Society's linking of themselves to these men rests on nothing more substantial than the claim itself! Their history of failed predictions clearly demonstrates that they do not possess the necessary credentials of a true prophet of God. (Deut.18:20-22) It takes a great deal of presumptuousness to make the claim that the Watch Tower Society makes. It takes an equal measure of credulity to accept such a claim. They make a quantum leap from the first century to now by saying: "Similarly, in God's organization today ... " The Society argues that there has been a divinely appointed "faithful and discreet slave" class of Christians on earth since A.D.33; and that this class has had a Governing Body of divinely appointed men in place all through the more than 19 hundred years since then. (see treatise: *The Faithful and Discreet Slave*). If this were the case then God's organization was in place

when Charles T. Russell started his little study group in the 1870s.

By enforcing the consequences of the Society's argument in this matter we are forced to conclude that Russell and his little band of followers must have broken away from God's organization. If it is argued that a corrupted form of Christianity was what Russell broke away from does that not conflict with their position that one must be "content to wait on God to rectify wrongs?" If Russell and his followers realized that something was wrong in 'Christendom,' then, like David, they should have refrained from taking matters into their own hands by rebelling against it. Russell should have waited on Jehovah! The Society tries to get around this inconsistency by saying that 'Christendom' never did represent true Christianity because it was always apostate. They say that when God's ancient nation was faithful it pictured them; but when it was unfaithful it pictured 'Christendom,' i.e., *every religion other than their own*. This is nonsense. The nation of Israel was always God's people whether they were faithful or not. They did not change identity according to whether they were faithful or not. If your son, Johnny, is a good boy today and a bad boy tomorrow he is your son on either day. The Society's argument has no basis in fact but is fabricated to consolidate their authoritarian control over Jehovah's Witnesses.

And when the Society points to David as setting a good example of patient endurance they do so to squelch any talk or action on the part of the Witnesses that would call attention to errors and inconsistencies committed by the organization. But here, too, they misrepresent the facts. It is true that David never tried to kill Saul; but is it true that he remained silent? No, he did not. David spoke out against the murderous actions of the king and part of what he had to say is preserved for us in the Bible itself! The 59th Psalm has the superscription: "To the director. 'Do not bring to ruin.' Of David. Mik'tam. When Saul sent, and they kept watching the house, to put him to death. '" The first four verses of the Psalm read as follows, according to the *New World Translation*:

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; From those rising up against me may you protect me. Deliver me from the practitioners of what is hurtful, And from blood guilty men save me. For, Look! they have lain in wait for my soul; Strong ones make an attack upon me, For no revolt on my part, nor any sin on my part, O Jehovah. Though there is no error, they run and get

themselves ready. Do rouse yourself at my calling and see." (compare also Psalms 52,54,142) David cried out against the unjust treatment he was getting from Saul and appealed to Jehovah for justice.

David's example is no exception to the rule. Many of the Hebrew prophets-most of them-spoke out against things taking place in the nation; but they did not separate themselves from it to form a separate nation. As for the Christian age, Jesus Christ has been content to allow the "wheat and the weeds" to grow together. He is the head of the body, his congregation or church, and is depicted as being in the midst of the congregations despite apostate and heretical beliefs and practices by some within those congregations. In Revelation chapters 1 through 3 he speaks to the 7 congregations in Asia Minor and reproves as well as commends them. Nowhere does he tell the faithful ones to withdraw from the others. Are not the attempts of men to separate the "wheat and weeds" a 'running ahead' of the greater Moses-Jesus Christ? By what authority can any organization claiming to be Christian presume to do what can only be done when Christ returns with his angels? By what authority can any religious group say that there are no approved Christians outside of their group and judge all those outside as wicked and condemned? Yet, the Watch Tower Society does these very things. The prerogatives they exercise are all assumed prerogatives. In an effort to substantiate their claims to spiritual authority they even misrepresent their own history.

Concerning the work of Russell in the 19th century they say: "Then, however, like 'a voice crying in the wilderness,' came the announcement: 'The Kingdom is at hand!' (Compare Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:3-6; Matthew 10:7) In the latter part of the 19th century, Jehovah again asserted his leadership and began calling his genuine worshipers out of this wicked world and its Babylonish religious systems. (Revelation 18: 1-5) By means of his written Word and the holy spirit, God revealed to his modern-day servants that the year 1914 marked the end of the uninterrupted rule by Gentile nations and also the heavenly enthronement of the glorified Jesus Christ, God's choice as King over all mankind. -Luke 21:24; see 1975 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 34-37." *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1985, Page 17, Par.7

To compare what the Russellites were preaching in the 19th century to the God-ordained ministry of John the Baptist which fulfilled the prophecy at Isaiah chapter 40: 3-5 by introducing the nation of Israel to

its Messiah dishonors God and trivializes the prophetic Word. The Bible Students were teaching that the "time of the end" (Daniel 8: 17) began in 1799 and would end in 1914. They preached that Christ had returned (invisibly) in 1874 and assumed his kingly power in 1878. Based on this false premise Russell wrote: "Be not surprised, then when in subsequent chapters we present proofs that *the setting up of the Kingdom of God is already come*, that it is pointed out in prophecy as *due to begin the exercise of power in A.D. 1878*, and that the 'battle of the great day of God Almighty' (Rev. 16: 14), which *will end in A.D. 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced*. The gathering of the armies is plainly visible from the standpoint of God's Word. ""

. -*The Time Is At Hand*, page 101 (1911 ed. Italics added. )

A little further on in the same book he added: "In the preceding chapter we presented evidence showing that the 'times of the Gentiles,' or their lease of domination, will run fully out with the year A.D.1914, and that *by that time they will all be overturned and Christ's Kingdom fully established*. That the Lord must be present and set up his Kingdom, and exercise his great power so as to dash the nations to pieces as a potter's vessel, *before A.D. 1914, is then clearly fixed*; for it is 'in the days of these kings' -before their overthrow-Le., *before A.D.1914-that the God of heaven shall set up his Kingdom.*" -*The Time Is At Hand*, page 170 (1911 ed. Italics added.)

What is presented in the current Watchtower regarding what the Russellites were preaching prior to 1914 is a blatant misrepresentation of the facts. They were not teaching that 1914 would "mark the end of uninterrupted rule by Gentile nations." They taught that that rule was interrupted prior to 1914 and would completely end in 1914. The enthronement was not to be in 1914 but before that time-in 1878! The interpretation of what the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 would bring as now presented is post-1914; set forth to explain-away the failures of the pre-1914 prophecies. one is made to wonder which is more reprehensible in the eyes of God; to prophesy falsely in the first place or to deny you did it afterwards? Unfortunately, Jehovah's Witnesses know very little about the pre-1914 period and as can be discerned from how that period is now presented to them they are kept ignorant of the truth. Coupled with this ignorance is the fear the Society instills in the minds of

Jehovah's Witnesses to read of such facts presented to them by others. All such material is labeled: "demonized-do not touch. " It has proven to be a very effective weapon to prevent Witnesses from knowing the full record.

A concluding article in the current magazine considers: "Subjecting ourselves to Jehovah by Dedication. " In this article a significant change is set forth in the vows made by baptismal candidates. Previously, the following two questions were put to such ones: (1) "Have you repented of your sins and turned around, recognizing yourself before Jehovah God as a condemned sinner who needs salvation and have you acknowledged to him that this salvation proceeds from him, the Father, through his son Jesus Christ? " (2) "On the basis of this faith in God and in his provision for salvation, have you dedicated yourself unreservedly to God to do his will henceforth as he reveals it to you through Jesus Christ and through the

Bible under the enlightening power of the holy spirit?" -*The Watchtower*, May 1, 1973, Page 280.

The new questions are: (1) "On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?" (2) "Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?" - *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1985, Page 30.

While neither set of questions finds a precedent in the Bible the former set was less organizationally distinct. The latter set appears as just another of the endless tightening of doctrinal cords used by the Society to bind people to the organization. If anyone has wondered which direction the Society would take in organizational control it seems clear that the answer is now in. □