

considers how they boast of their scholarship and objectivity. The facts argue otherwise.

Coming back to the "hope" that the Society offers the "great crowd;" they are being told that they will never die as humans but will live through the "great tribulation" just ahead and continue to live forever on the earth. This is the constant theme that fires the imagination and the zeal of the Witnesses. It matters little to them that such a promise was offered to other 'millions' 65 year ago with the publication of the booklet, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die." (1920) Its opening paragraph read: "The emphatic announcement that millions now living on earth will never die must seem presumptuous to many people; but when the evidence is carefully considered I believe that almost every fair mind will concede that the conclusion is a reasonable one." -Page 5. Regardless of what those of "fair mind" concluded from reading this booklet the facts are that it was in complete error.

The resurrection of ancient 'worthies' in 1925 did not materialize nor did 'the restitution' that was supposed to begin that year occur.

Still, many of the devotees of the Watchtower Society did believe it and zealously spread the message by word of mouth and printed page. As a result of this zeal there were sizable increases in numbers in those years preceding 1925. It is much the same today.

Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses are being told that the generation of 1914, or at least a part of it, must see the end of the world. This puts the "great tribulation" at the door with deliverance into a cleansed earth just beyond. It is this 'hope' founded on Watchtower calculations and speculations that fires Jehovah's Witnesses. The longer it is delayed the greater the anticipation and the more feverish the activity. Present numerical increases reflect this phenomenon. In the end it will matter little, to the Watchtower Society, if this prediction also falls to the ground unfulfilled. It will have served, in their eyes, a noble purpose. It will have kept Jehovah's Witnesses busy and loyal to the organization. It is unfortunate that the hope of life is bound up with the promises of men who have no control over such matters.

Jesus reminded his disciples that the timing of the execution of God's promises was not something they could know. They could only live in expectation of and hope for these things. (Acts 1:7) It was sufficient for faith and incentive to live a godly life while awaiting the full realizations of God's purposes. (Mark 13:35-37) The uninspired utterances of men may promise much but the end is always disappointment. It is an even greater tragedy when those misled have also been denied being declared righteous for life by their religious mentors. This lack of spiritual security makes ultimate disappointments even more bitter. □

Reasoning From The Scriptures: False Prophets

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Those familiar with the history of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society are aware that they have made numerous false prophecies regarding the "last days" and related subjects. These prophecies span a hundred years and are documented in tens of millions of books, booklets and magazines published by the Society. Excerpts from a few of these publications will serve to confirm the correctness of the these allegations: *The "Time of the End:" 1799 to 1914:* "The 'Time of the end,' a period of one hundred and fifteen (115) years, from A.D.1799 to A.D.1914, is particularly marked in the Scriptures." -*Thy Kingdom Come*, 1891, page 23 (1917 ed.) "The careful student will have observed that the period designated 'The Time of the End' is very appropriately named, since not only does the Gospel are close in it, but in it, also all prophecies relating to the close of this age terminate, reaching their fulfillments. The same class of readers will have noticed, too, the special importance of the last 40 of

those 115 years (1874-1914), called 'The End' or 'Harvest.'" -*Thy Kingdom Come*, 1891, page 121 (1917 ed.) *Destruction of Churches and Church members in 1918:* "Also, in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by the millions, it shall be that any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell to learn the meaning of the downfall of 'Christianity.'" -*The Finished Mystery*, 1917, page 485 (1917 ed.) *Every kingdom of earth to be destroyed in 1920:*

"Even the republics will disappear in the fall of 1920 ... Every kingdom of earth will pass away, be swallowed up in anarchy." -*The Finished Mystery*, 1917, page 258 (1917 ed.) "As the fleshly-minded apostates from Christianity, siding with the radicals and revolutionaries, will rejoice at the inheritance of desolation that will be Christendom's after 1918, so will God do to the successful revolutionary movement; it

shall be utterly desolated, 'even all of it.' Not one vestige of it shall survive the ravages of world-wide all-embracing anarchy, in the fall of 1920." ~*The Finished Mystery*, 1917, page 542 (1917 ed.) *The sleeping saints were resurrected in 1878 and the remaining members of the church would be glorified in 1918*: "This confirms the hope of the Church's glorification forty years (a year for a day) after the awakening of the sleeping saints in the Spring of 1878 ... Our proposition is that the glorification of the Little Flock in the Spring of 1918 A.D. will be half way (three and one-half years each way) between the close of the Gentile Times and the close of the Heavenly Way, A.D. 1921." -*The Finished Mystery*, 1917, page 64 (1917 ed.) *Resurrection of ancient Hebrew prophets and start of earthly reconstruction in 1925*: "Based upon the argument heretofore set forth, then, that the old order of things, the old world, is ending and is therefore passing away, and that the new order is coming in, and that 1925 shall mark the resurrection of the faithful worthies of old and the beginning of reconstruction, it is reasonable to conclude that millions of people now on the earth will be still on the earth in 1925. Then, based upon the promises set forth in the divine Word, we must reach the positive and indisputable conclusion that millions now living will never die." -*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 1920, page 97.

The foregoing examples are by no means exhaustive. Many others could be cited but these few are sufficient to establish the point being made. As history has had opportunity to bear witness regarding the accuracy of Watch Tower prognostications it has always rendered the same verdict: GUILTY OF FALSE PROPHECIES! In some cases this verdict was held up for many years due to the nature of the prophecy involved. For example, Russell's contention that Jesus returned 'invisibly' in 1874 was preached for more than 50 years (1877-1929). The book *Prophecy* (1929) said: "The Scriptural proof is that the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 A.D." -Page 65. In fact, the evolutionary nature of Watch Tower predictions has been due to failed expectations. It has become necessary for them to continually 'adjust' their thinking in these matters to compensate and explain-away why things didn't happen when and how they were predicted to happen. It is for this reason that the year 1914-once viewed as the *end* of the "time of the end" -must now be viewed as the *start* of the "time of the end": "Furthermore, in our own generation, it has been sixty-one years since the start of the 'time of the end' in the year 1914 C.E." -*The Watchtower*,

December 15, 1975, pages 749,750. So the start was moved up 115 years from the starting point Russell gave it which was 17991

Already, the Society has had to 'adjust' its thinking as to how long the "generation of 1914" really is as the expectations regarding it continue to be postponed. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the Society from continuing its dogmatic declarations regarding this 'generation': "Just as surely as the generation living and hearing Jesus' warning in the first century was the generation that experienced a fulfillment of his words, just as surely will this generation-the generation seeing the major fulfillment of his 'sign' identifying the last days of this system of things-be the generation to experience the global tribulation due to come." -*The Watchtower*, July 15, 1976, page 435.

As in the past, the Society, today, is making grandiose promises in relation to what the immediate future holds for Jehovah's witnesses. The Society has resurrected the old "millions now living will never die," slogan they coined back in the 1918-25 period and given it a new twist. A study article appearing in *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1983 was titled: "Millions Now Alive Will Never Die Off Our Earth," had this to say: "The eyebrow-raising declaration 'Millions now alive will never die off our earth' is not based upon a mere human mathematical calculation, such as one survivor for every 1,000 of the present population of the earth ... There are cogent Scriptural grounds for expecting 'millions now alive' to survive." (Page 16). Of course, these promises are always presented as coming from God and not "mere human. mathematical calculation." Jehovah God is always presented as the source of these predictions and prophecies-not human reasoning. Jehovah's witnesses fail to consider that God cannot lie or ever be in error. To attach his name to mere human speculations and claim to be speaking for him is a very serious matter. (Jer.23:21) Despite the fact that the record shows that the Watch Tower Society is guilty of being an on-going false prophet they deny that they are guilty.

Any 'in-house' historical review of their organization is highly biased to make it appear that any mistakes they may have made were relatively minor in seriousness. A recent book published by the Society: *Reasoning from the Scriptures* takes this position. Published in 1985, this handbook is supposed to equip Jehovah's witnesses to reason from the Scriptures on a number of topics. one of the subjects considered is "False Prophets." (pages 132-137) It is

of interest to consider how they present this topic because it becomes obvious in the reading of the material that it is slanted to explain-away their many foibles in this area and ease them of any culpability. However, in so doing, they reveal their vulnerability as well as their unwillingness to come to grips with the seriousness of their transgressions.

The handbook, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, defines "False Prophets" as "Individuals and organizations proclaiming messages that they attribute to a superhuman source but do not originate with the true God and are not in harmony with his revealed will." (page 132) This definition is followed by six subheadings which partition their arguments: (1) "True prophets make known their faith in Jesus, but more is required than claiming to preach in his name." (1 John 4:1-3; Matt.7:21-23) (2) "True prophets speaking the name of God, but merely claiming to represent him is not enough." (Deut.18:18-20; Jer.14:14; 28:11,15; John 5:43;7: 18;8:28) (3) "Ability to perform 'great signs,' or 'miracles,' is not necessarily proof of a true prophet." (Matt.24:24; 2 Thess.2:9, 10; Ex.4: 1-9; Acts 2:22) (4) "What true prophets foretell comes to pass, but they may not understand just when or how it will be." (Dan. 12:9; 1 Pet.1:10,II;1 Cor.13:9,10; Prov.4:18; Luke 19:11; John 21:22,23; Acts 1:6,7; 1 Chron.17: 1-4,15) (5) "The pronouncements of a true prophet promote true worship and are in harmony with God's revealed will." (Deut. 13: 1-4; James 4:4; 1 John 2: 15-17; Ezek.38:23; Acts 15: 14; Matt.6:9,10; Ps.146:3-6; Rev.16: 13,14) (6) "True prophets and the false can be recognized by the fruitage manifest in their lives and the lives of those who follow them." (Matt.7:15-20; GaI.5:19,23; 2 Peter 2:1-3)

As one reviews these various aspects of true and false prophets highlighted in the above headings there is not one that does not suggest a negative judgment regarding the Watch Tower organization to those familiar with its history. One might be prompted to respond to each of these propositions as follows: (1) You claim to have faith in Jesus, but that does not sanctify as true what you preach unless it is true. (2) You speak in Jehovah's name but that, in itself, proves nothing unless what you prophesy comes true. (Deut.18:20-22) *Note:* It is more than a little significant that *Reasoning from the Scriptures* stops its quotation of Deuteronomy chapter 18 at verse 20 because the last 2 verses of that chapter provide condemnatory testimony against their many failed prophesies: "And in case you should say in your heart: 'How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not

spoken?' when the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it. You must not get frightened at him." -Deut. 18:20-22 *New World Translation* (3) You point to your worldwide unity and growth as a proof that God is blessing you (a "sign") but other groups have unity and growth such as the Mormons and The Worldwide Church of God (Armstrong). This could be a "lying sign." (4) Are you saying that a true prophet can predict something at a certain time have it not happen and still be a true prophet of God? Have you not claimed to not only know what was to happen but also when and how it would happen? How can you compare your failures to any true prophet of God recorded in the Bible? (5) Can it be in harmony with "God's revealed will" to mislead people with wrong expectations? is it in harmony with his will to build faith on false promises that lead to disappointments and shattered faith? (6) Is it good "fruit" to create divisions by means of your presumptuous claim as God's "prophet" and label all other Christians as "counterfeit Christians" and "apostates" because they point out your errors? Is it good "fruit" to create animosity between yourselves and other Christians and "beat" these slaves of God? Does this not further divide the body of Christ rather than bring unity?

On page 136 under the heading: "Have not Jehovah's Witnesses made errors in their teachings?" they attempt to demonstrate that other servants of God held similar wrong views but still remained in God's favor. They say: "Like the apostles of Jesus Christ, they have at times had some wrong expectations." They cite Luke 19: 11 and Acts 1:6 to illustrate this. Those scriptures read as follows: "While they were listening to these things he spoke in addition an illustration, because he was near Jerusalem and they were imagining that the kingdom of God was going to display itself instantly." -Luke 19: 11 *NW*. "When, now, they had assembled, they went asking him: 'Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?'" -Acts 1:6 *NW*.

In all fairness, do either of these scriptures offer a parallel to what the Society is guilty of? To suggest that dogmatically preaching error for 30,40, 50 or 60 years and using every means available to publicize those errors is comparable to the disciples of the Lord "*imagining* that the kingdom of God was going to display itself instantly," is ridiculous. The disciples were corrected within minutes by the Lord because he

knew what they were imagining. They never *preached* that they imagined! But the Watch Tower Society has had Jehovah's witnesses devote millions of hours systematically indoctrinating people in these matters. Also, the scripture at Acts 1:6 merely tells us that the disciples asked the question: "are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" Again, the Lord set them straight immediately. They never *preached* this. That the Society would select these references to demonstrate how others have done the same as they have done is proof, in itself, of how Scripturally untenable their position is.

And, as regards the matter put to Jesus at Acts 1:6 it is important to consider how Jesus answered this inquiry. He said: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times and seasons (*appointed times, NW Interlinear*) which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction; but you will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." -Acts 1: 7,8 NW. While it is true that the disciples were very much interested in knowing the 'end time' things it is clear that they were made to know that this remained within the providence of God the Father and outside their ability to know. From that time onward it was not appropriate to teach that we can know the "times and seasons" and go so far as to set dates and make dogmatic declarations that contradict both the Lord and reality. It is not being spiritually 'watchful' to set dates or select a certain 'generation' in which certain predicted things must happen. Jesus said to "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know what day your Lord is coming." -Matt.24:42 It was because of *not knowing the time* that made being spiritually watchful so important and necessary because there would always be the danger of becoming drowsy due to the passage of time. In that sense the Society is not "watching" because they insist he is present and about to manifest himself in judgment. One hardly needs to "Keep on the watch" if you know the end is at hand.

The same subheading goes on to say: "Matters on which corrections of viewpoint have been needed have been relatively minor compared with the vital Bible truths that they have discerned and publicized." If those samples presented on page 1 of this *Respondent* can be viewed as *minor* what would it take to be considered a *major* mistake? They argue that they have taught some things that are true and these outweigh any errors they may have taught. They do not use that same reasoning when they judge other

religions, however. The question is: "Has the Watch Tower organization acted as a false prophet as that is defined in the Bible? (Deut.18:20-22) The answer to that question is, Yes! Are they still acting as a false prophet? Are they not teaching that the generation of 1914 must see the end of the world? Yes, they are!

Based on what Jesus said about knowing the *times and the seasons* that are placed in God's jurisdiction is it possible for the Watch Tower Society to know the *times and seasons*? The answer would have to be, No! And concerning those "vital Bible truths" they speak of that they have taught; the fact is they have used their time feature calculations to *rescind* certain vital Bible truths as the previous two issues of *The Christian Respondent* indicated.

As stated earlier, it often takes 50 years or more for a false prophecy to be demonstrated as false. In the interim, while the 'jury is out,' so to speak, all kinds of assertions can be made and publicized. The passing of the years allows for the teaching of these assertions as "truth." Some people become convinced that these things are true and they devote themselves to indoctrinating still others. New generations grow up never questioning or doubting these "truths" and may even come to view them as truth simply because they are uniquely identified with their group. Constant repetition of certain concepts and phrases or slogans reinforces total acceptance to the point where not to accept the published view is like questioning God himself. Congregations are formed, buildings built and certain persons become prominent in a sectarian structure. Before long organizational growth is looked upon as "proof" that God is blessing them and confirming that they are right. But it is all an illusion. The results are tangible but the premise is mythical.

The final section in this presentation from *Reasoning from the Scriptures* offers suggestions of how to deal with questions on the subject that might come up in their door-to-door work. If someone said that their minister told them that Jehovah's Witnesses were false prophets they might inquire if the minister showed them anything from the Bible to demonstrate the charge. Another reply had to do with whether anything specific was pointed to with "some claimed prediction." It is interesting that the publishers would speak of "some claimed prediction that did not come to pass." It is apparent that the Society is counting on a lack of specific knowledge of the Society's history in this matter. Few witnesses appreciate the scope of the Society's guilt in this area. The last suggested response

is to get permission from the householder to go to the table to explain the Watch Tower position. As the Society is urging the Witnesses to use the arguments presented in *Reasoning from the Scriptures* it follows that the line of reasoning presented in the matter of "False Prophets" will be followed by them. It is unfortunate that a lack of knowledge on the part of both the Witness and the general public, as a rule, to understand the truth in this regard which, in turn, permits the Society to bluff its way through such questions. And even if someone did have documented evidence it is doubtful that the Witness would even look at it.

To be sure, the Watch Tower Society is not the only religious organization guilty of predicting things that did not come to pass or are currently making certain predictions. Nor are they the only religious group to have corrupted the good news by creating another one out of their own imagination. There is no shortage of

this sort of thing in the religious world. Their published claim that they, and they alone, rightfully speak for God today simply makes them more reprehensible. No individual Christian or group of Christians has perfect complete) knowledge and understanding. (1 Cor. 13:9-13) There are uncertain areas where a subject is not fully developed which, in turn, may allow for a number of possibilities. But such things should be taught as possibilities-not truths. Care needs to be taken in presenting these views. It is one thing to qualify a conviction by saying: "I believe this" or "I think this" and quite another thing to say:

"I have God's spirit on this and you must believe it, too, or be condemned!" Where God's Word is dogmatic we can afford to be dogmatic but where it is less certain we can afford to be charitable. We should not say a particular teaching is essential for salvation unless the Bible puts it that way. To do otherwise is to run ahead of God. □

Misapplication of John 6:53-57

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