

King Jesus Christ in the 'heavenly Jerusalem' .. How the departure of this spiritual remnant will be brought about is not now known from the Scriptures." -*God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached, 1973*, page 411 (italics added)

Did you read anything in the above quotation that would suggest that they were only 'modestly suggesting' that some of the remnant 'might' survive on Earth after Armageddon or were they quite specific about it? What conclusion would readers of that 1973 book understand the 'truth' to be on this subject? Would they not logically conclude that some of the remnant (those alive on earth when the 'great tribulation' hits) will survive on the earth and be taken to heaven later on? What other conclusion could they draw? It is quite remarkable the way they can use their own historical writings to argue different ways at different times--depending on the current objective. What does this say about their fundamental ethics? Why not simply say that they are no longer certain that some of the heavenly class will survive on earth following Armageddon? Why pretend that they have only presented the matter as a mere possibility? It represents just another example of *calculated* deception. If they have no respect for the intelligence of Jehovah's Witnesses--many of whom know the Society has been dogmatic about this teaching for decades--have they no fear of Jehovah God? Do they think He doesn't hear what they say in His name? Do they think they are fooling Him?

Do they think He would be a party to such dishonesty?

The Watchtower Society lays claim to the highest form of Christian ethics. Jehovah's Witnesses are led to believe that the Society would never deliberately misrepresent their history or use quotations in a less-than-honest manner. In an instruction book published by the Society detailing how material for argumentation ought to be developed they wrote: "Be very careful to be accurate in all statements you make; Use evidence honestly. In quotations, do not twist the meaning of a writer or speaker or .use only partial quotations to give a different thought than the person intended." -*Qualified to be Ministers*, revised ed. 1967, page 199.

Has the Society used the evidence honestly in the *Questions From Readers* discussed in this issue of *The Christian Respondent*? How can an article in a 1928 issue of *The Watch Tower* be used to 'prove' one thing and in another presentation be used to 'prove' something else? How many Witnesses even bother to read those quotations in their original context? Or for that matter even have access to the publications quoted--especially the older ones? How can an honest presentation of a position held be made when the bulk of the evidence is totally ignored? It is extremely unfortunate that the Society discourages critical analysis of its own writings. And it is extremely unfortunate that the Witnesses are content to have it so. □

“Peace and Security”-Repeated Predictions of Fulfillment

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Most readers of *The Christian Respondent* are familiar with the writings of Carl Olof Jonsson. His book *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* is a scholarly presentation that refutes the Watch Tower Society's cardinal time feature prophecy "The Gentile Times." First published in 1983 (English Edition) it was followed by a supplementary booklet that responded to Watch Tower Society criticism of his initial publication. It should be noted that Jonsson sent a copy of his research for *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1977 at which time he was still associated with the Witness community. Jonsson was a Jehovah's Witness for more than 25 years and was pioneering at the time he was challenged by a man with whom he was having a Bible study regarding the starting point of the time feature as beginning in 607 B. C. That challenge led him to his intensive study on the debated starting point of the time feature as well as the time feature itself. In the end he was forced to abandon his personal conviction regard-

ing the accuracy of this doctrine so central to all of the Society's eschatological date-settings. Another fine book co-authored by Jonsson and Wolfgang Herbst is *The Sign of the Last Days- When?* Published in its English edition in 1987 by Commentary Press, Atlanta, Georgia. This book documents the use and abuse of statistical data to "prove" (via wars, earthquakes, famines, disease, etc.) that the end of the world has approached. This methodology used by the Watch Tower Society and other groups rests on faulty biblical exegesis as well as misleading statistical data. Those who have not yet done so are urged to read both *The Sign of the Last Days--When?* and *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*. They will find that Jonsson focuses on facts which allow the reader to make informed judgments on these matters.

A short time ago I was sent a copy of a treatise written by Carl Olaf Jonsson titled: *The Prophecy of "Peace and Security"* -based on the comments made by the

apostle Paul at 1 Thessalonians 5 :2,3. Because I am convinced that readers of *The Christian Respon-dent*

would be interested in this treatise and benefit from it, I am reproducing it here with his permission.

The Prophecy of "Peace and Security" by Carl Olof Jonsson

To apocalyptic movements the "end" has always been at hand. Without doubt this has been the key to their success. How many people wouldn't like our world of endless problems to disappear and be re-placed by a better one? Any movement that is able to keep such expectations alive has a guaranteed increase.

War and Peace as "Signs of the Times"

Such expectations are created by interpreting different world events as prophetic "signs", which indicate that the end is close. There are always scriptures which, by the aid of a little imagination, can be applied to the current world situation. In times of war Jesus' words about "nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. 24:7) are quoted. And during more peaceful periods attention is drawn to other biblical statements. At such times the Watch Tower Society has commonly referred to the words of the apostle Paul at 1 Thessalonians 5:3. This text says, according to the *New World Translation*:

"Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." The Society interprets this text as follows, according to *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1984, page 6: "This prophecy makes it clear that, just prior to the end of this system of things, 'peace and security' will be declared in some exceptional way, whether by the United Nations or independently by political and religious leaders. What will follow that declaration? Paul said: 'Then sudden destruction will be *instantly* upon them.'" -1 Thessalonians 5 :2,3." (italics in original)

An "Unmistakable Sign"?

Seventy-six years have now passed since 1914, when, according to the Society, the "last generation" began. That the present peace efforts have heightened the expectations among the Jehovah's Witnesses is, therefore, nothing to wonder at. Thanks to Gorbachev's "glasnost" policy a new period of relaxation between the great powers has developed. A number of protracted wars have ended, the dictatorships in Eastern Europe are falling, and important steps have been taken in the negotiations on peace and disarmament. Will this develop-

ment result in a proclamation of "Peace and Security" around the world? This is, at least, what Jehovah's Witnesses are now being told to look for.

According to the Society, such a proclamation will be "the signal for God to move into action", yes, "an unmistakable signal that world destruction is imminent." - *Awake!*, April 8, 1988, page 14; Also *True Peace and Security-How Can You Find It?* (1986), page 85.

But how "unmistakable," really, is the "signal" the Witnesses have been told to look for? Most of them are completely unaware of the fact that the Society repeatedly during its past history has proclaimed that the period of "peace and security" is immediately at hand, or even that this period already has begun. Each time, however, the "unmistakable signal" has turned out to be a mistake!

"Peace and Security" In the Period 1899-1914

Towards the end of his life Charles Taze Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, arrived at the conclusion that 1 Thessalonians 5:3 was fulfilled in the period 1899-1914. When, during a question and answer session at a convention in 1915, he was asked how this text should be understood, he answered: "We think that this saying of 'peace! peace!' has been going on for some years. The Church systems and everybody have been claiming, ever since the first Peace Conference at The Hague (in 1899), that war had to come to an end, that we were having the time of peace that the Bible tells us about." According to Russell's interpretation, this period of "peace and security" was cut off in 1914 by the "great tribulation", which was to culminate in the predicted world destruction. (See the book: *What Pastor Russell Said* (written by L. W. Jones, a close associate of Pastor Russell), page 529.

"Peace and Security" In 1918

Russell's interpretation turned out to be short-lived. In 1917, when world developments indicated that the war, instead of culminating in world destruction, would soon come to an end, Russell's interpretation was changed by the new president, J. F. Rutherford. The war would end, he wrote, and be followed by "a short period of peace," when the people would say "Peace" in accor-

dance with 1 Thess. 5:3. Soon after that the end would come. -*The Watch Tower*, Jan. 1, 1917, pp .4-5; Dec. 1, 1917, p. 358.

"Peace and Security" in the 1930's

The "sudden destruction" expected to follow quickly upon the peace that commenced in 1918 turned out to be long in coming. In the middle of the 1930's, therefore, the time was due for a new application of the "peace prophecy". Thus, in 1936, Rutherford, in the booklet *Choosing Riches or Ruin?*, wrote that they "now" were in the period when the prophetic words in 1 Thess. 5:3 would be fulfilled. But prior to this imminent peace period, Rutherford predicted, the nations on earth, headed by religious leaders, would silence the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses. Thereafter they would proclaim "Peace and security" worldwide. -See also pages 291-294 of the book *Enemies*, published in 1937. On page 293 of the latter book Rutherford wrote: "The old 'whore' [Roman Catholic Church] sitting upon the back of the beast may soon be expected to say: 'Peace and safety; we have silenced all opponents.' Then Jehovah's 'strange act' will begin, and sudden destruction comes upon her 'as travail upon a woman with child.'"

"Peace and Security" after 1945

In 1939, however, World War II broke out without having been preceded by the predicted world peace. Once again, therefore, Rutherford had to postpone the peace period. In 1940 he foretold that the war would soon be interrupted by a brief peace period, immediately followed by God's war, Armageddon. - *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1940, page 246 and September 1, 1940, pp. 259, 260, 265, 266. Early in 1942, in the middle of the war, Rutherford died. His successor, N. H. Knorr, stuck to this latest interpretation. In the booklet *Peace-Can It Last?*, published in 1942, Knorr explained that the peace period soon to come "will be very short-lived", as it would quickly be followed by the battle of Armageddon. (Page 26)

But the peace period that began after the end of the war in 1945 was not to become as "short-lived" as the Watch Tower Society had predicted. We are, in fact, still living in that peace period! Historians now point out that such a long era of peace between the great powers is unique in history! Historian Robert Jarvis, for instance, wrote in 1988 that, "such a long period of peace between the mightiest states is without precedence." (*International Security*, Vol.13, 1988, p.

80) And two years earlier K. J. Holsti noted that, "By historical standards a forty-one year period without an intra-Great Power war is unprecedented." (*International Studies Quarterly*, 30 December 1986, p.369) This peace period has now lasted for over 45 years!

"Peace and Security" in the 1970's

During the greater part of the peace period after 1945 the relations between the great powers have been strained, a situation that has often been described as "the cold war." The "peace prophecy" at 1 Thess. 5:3, therefore, was generally pushed in the background. But early in the 1970's a relaxation, a detente, of the strained relations occurred. This was greeted in the Watchtower publications as an important "sign", especially as the Society for a number of years had been stressing that 6,000 years since the creation of Adam would expire in 1975. "Strange events are taking place in our time," said the *Awake!* magazine of October 8, 1972, on page 4. This special issue on the theme "World Peace Coming- Will it Last?" contained a series of articles discussing the peace efforts. On page 9 the magazine referred to the prophecy about "Peace and security" at 1 Thessalonians 5: 3 and stated: "This prophecy seems to be rapidly nearing its fulfillment. "

Two books, both published in 1973, added more fuel to the expectations. *True Peace and Security-From What Source?* clearly related the detente in the world to the prophecy at 1 Thess.5:3. And the other book, *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, said on page 364: "The current world events appear to be flowing toward the situation when men in control of affairs will jubilantly cry out in a self-congratulating way: 'Peace and security!'" Similar statements appeared repeatedly in the Watchtower publications during the next two years.

1986: "The International Year of Peace"

Despite all the predictions and expectations for the 1970's, the decade passed without either world peace or world destruction. And when also the relaxation and peace talks between the great powers broke down, the Watchtower finally had to admit that "none of these efforts fit the description at 1 Thessalonians 5 :2,3." (*The Watchtower*, November 15, 1981, p.14)

But towards the end of 1985 the speculations got a new start. On October 24, 1985, the United Nations, on its 40th anniversary, declared 1986 as "the Interna-

tional Year of Peace". The *Watchtower* of October 1, 1985, stated that Jehovah's Witnesses "'watch the event with interest", but "cannot say in advance whether this will prove to be the fulfillment of Paul's words quoted above." (page 18) For safety's sake, however, the Society dusted off one of the books from 1973, *True Peace and Security-From What Source?*, and published it again in a new, revised edition during the peace year 1986 (renamed as *True Peace and Security-How Can You Find It?*). Referring to the United Nations declaration of 1986 as the "Year of Peace", the book quoted the prophecy at 1 Thess. 5:3 and stated that "this, no doubt, is a step toward the fulfillment of Paul's above quoted words." (page 85)

Like all the earlier predictions and expectations, presumptuous claim. To the contrary, there is a mountain of evidence to dismiss it.

As previously noted, at least since 1964, *Awake!* has tied in the realization of a righteous new order within the lifetime of "this generation." In itself such a statement was nebulous as there are always several generations alive at any given time. However, Jehovah's Witnesses were taught (and continue to be taught) that 1914 marked the beginning of the "last days" of the present system of things. The generation alive at that time and witnessing the dramatic events in relation to the start of World War I would live to see (or at least some of them would live to see) the final destruction of the present world and the beginning of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. So, when Jehovah's Witnesses read "this generation" they would automatically associate it with the 1914 generation.

Millions of pieces of literature in more than a hundred languages in the form of books, booklets, tracts and magazines have been distributed around the world for decades boldly declaring this as the Creator's promise—that Jehovah God was revealing this truth through his earthly organization. Understandably, a number of generations of Witnesses have placed their undying trust in this promise given them by their governing body as coming from Jehovah God. They have not only believed this themselves but they have systematically preached it and taught it to millions of people. It has been an attractive doctrine. Who would not want to see an end to unrighteousness and the beginning of God's rule over earth? But, because something sounds good and is desirable does not, in itself, validate it as true—even though millions of people may come to believe it is true.

Remember the promise given was that " before the generation that saw the events of 1914 C.E. passes away" there would be in place "a peaceful and secure new order" under the kingdom by Christ. A child born in 1914 could hardly be included among those said to have *seen* the events of 1914. The Watchtower Society has long argued that only those old enough to *intellectually comprehend matters* could rightly be included in the generation under discussion. Surely, when Jesus was talking to his contemporaries and said " this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened," (Matt. 24:34) he was not speaking to infants or small children; he was addressing responsible adults, many of whom could live to see the destruction of Jerusalem that took place about 37 years later. Watchtower publications have endlessly argued that what happened in Jesus' generation was only an *initial* fulfillment of his words. According to their view of matters, a future generation that would see the wrap-up of earthly affairs would experience the *final* fulfillment of his prophetic words. Accordingly, there was to be a future *parallel* involving "this generation". And, as has been established, the final fulfillment was to occur within the 1914 generation.

It has been evident for at least twenty years or more that no such parallel existed. As mentioned, the generation that Jesus identified as "this generation," (Matt. 24:34) saw the fulfillment of his dire warning about 37 years after he uttered his prophecy. According to Watchtower chronology Jesus said what he did in about the year 33 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman legions in 70 A.D. That "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) came, just as Jesus said it would, within his generation.

In typical Watchtower fashion it has been insisted that the 1914 generation would see the end of the present world just as surely as the Jewish generation saw its destructive end. In 1976, the year following the 1975 disappointment *The Watchtower* published study articles that obliquely addressed this disappointment. Basically, the study articles blamed the Witnesses for taking their leaders seriously about what could be expected to happen in the year 1975. While no mention was made of the year 1975 the whole association of Witnesses knew that it was the failure of 1975 to realize Watchtower-generated expectations that prompted these studies.

In the first study titled, "Keeping A Balanced View Of Time", they said: "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 fulfillments 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 (italics added). Could anything be presented in more emphatic language?

In the second study article titled: "A Solid Basis For Confidence" they added more assurances for "this generation." They said: "It was in this connection that the apostle Paul wrote the familiar words recorded at Hebrews 4: 12: 'The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of things, when people feel safe and secure. It was because of this absence of any "signs" or "signals" that Jesus urged his disciples to "keep awake" and "ready" and "sober". (Matt. 24:42,44; Luke 21:34,-36) Paul repeated these exhortations. (1 Thess. 5:6-8) To "keep awake" would not mean to keep looking for any "final signal", but to "keep our senses and have on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation". (1 Thess. 5:8) The one clothed in that armor would not be taken by surprise by the "Lord's day". He would be ready, whenever it came.

The Watch Tower Society has changed the sense of Paul's words to mean exactly the reverse. They have made the predicted absence of "signs" and "signals", which Paul expressed with the words "Peace and safety" (*NW*: "Peace and security") to the "final signal" that world destruction is imminent!

"Peace, Peace; When There Is No Peace"

The Greek word used by Paul of "peace" is *eirene*. This word is used in the New Testament as an equivalent of the Hebrew word *shalom*, which often occurs in the Old Testament. *Shalom* did not merely refer to "peace" in the political sense, but also, and primarily, to God's good will toward men, "God's peace". Paul's use of the expression "Peace (*eirene*) and safety" is commonly supposed to be an allusion to Jeremiah's words about the Jews of his time at Jer. 6: 14 and 8: 11 (*AS V*) : "They have healed also the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." There was no political peace at that time. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar was involved in a campaign of conquests aimed at subduing the whole Middle East, and Judah, too, was threatened. But the people felt safe, imagining that they had God's protec-

tion, His "peace". They expected "no evil" to "come upon" them. (Jer. 23:17) The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 587 B.C., therefore came as a shocking surprise.

This, too, indicates that Paul's words about "Peace and safety" should not be understood as a political proclamation of world peace, interpreted as the "final signal" of "world destruction" □

FOOTNOTE: Those who are looking for a thorough and enlightening examination of 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11 are recommended to read Joseph Plevnik's article, 1 Thess. 5: 1-11: Its Authenticity, Intention and Message," published in *Biblica*, Vol. 60, 1979. pp.71-90.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS: As this issue of *The Christian Respondent* was being prepared for publication the war in the Persian Gulf came to an end. While the war was still in progress, American President George Bush spoke of a "new world order" to follow the conflict. There will be increased and intensified efforts to resolve some of the long standing Middle East political problems, including the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate. To what extent these efforts succeed or fail remains to be seen. However, those who believe that Israel is the focal point of end-time prophecy will be attentive to those events that effect that nation and its Arab neighbors. The Witnesses, since the time of Rutherford, have discarded Israel's role in this regard but will also be paying close attention to the unfolding events because talk of a "new world order" sounds like a precursor to a proclamation of "Peace and security".

What makes the matter even more intense for Jehovah's Witnesses is that their "last generation" scheme has run its course. Every issue of the *Awake!* magazine contains "Why Awake! is published" which concludes with the sentence: "Most important, this magazine builds confidence in *the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 pass away.*" (italics added) According to Bob Carlson, M.D., and O. J. Seiden, M.D., in their book *Health Walk* (Fulcrum, 1985), today the average American male can expect to live to age 73; the average woman to 78. These figures parallel those offered by The National Institute on Health Statistics which, in 1988, set the average lifespan at about 72 years for men and 78 years for women. Those persons born in 1914 are now, in 1991, 77 years old! What about those who were teenagers in 1914? The youngest of these would be 90 years old! The older, adult members of that generation-those who

"saw the events of 1914" in any meaningful way-have already passed away. Yet the Watch Tower Society continues to teach that the end must come before the generation of 1914 passes away!

In view of the time element as perceived by Jehovah's Witnesses it is little wonder that they are in a growth cycle. In the few years that preceded 1975 there was a surge of activity and growth due to the expectation that 1975 would usher in the peaceful new world order. The same kind of expectancy is at work today. Even the biblical time frame of 80 years for man's life expectancy is only three years away! (Psalm 90: 10) So we can expect the next few years to be very active ones for Jehovah's Witnesses. There will no doubt be continued growth in numbers as a result of this activity. Such growth will be heralded by the Society as evidence of Jehovah's blessing on their organization-a proof that they are right. The same thinking was in place in the first half of the 1970s. The growth in that period was real but based on wrong expectations-expectations that were never realized. The same

is true now.

In February of this year the *Brooklyn Heights Press* ran a feature story on the current growth and expansion of the Society. According to an interview with Max Larson, Vice President of the Watchtower Society, he "said that 1990's 300,000-person membership increase was the biggest ever. " The paper further said: "Troubled times, says Watchtower Bible and Tract Society Vice President Max Larson, mean that more people look to the Bible for answers and to the Jehovah's Witnesses for what he called 'the facts'". *Brooklyn Heights Press* February 6, 1991, page 1,2

The Society and Jehovah's Witnesses would like to have people believe that such growth is unique among religious groups, but it is not. According to the *Christian Institute for Mormon Studies* "Mormonism is one of the fastest growing religions in North America with 300,000 converts world wide in 1989 *alone!*"- *Christianity Today*, February 11, 1991, special advertising section. □