

"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. □

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## ***The Horse Named "The 1914 Generation" Has Died!***

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The earliest copy of *Awake!* magazine that I have is dated January 8, 1947. It's editorial page contains a statement regarding the mission of *Awake!* This mission statement concludes with the declaration that it reflects a "sure hope for the establishment of a righteous New World." Beginning in 1964 that declaration was changed to read a "sure hope for the establishing of God's righteous new order *in this generation.*" (italics added) In 1975 it was changed once more to set forth confidence in "the Creator's promise of a new order of lasting peace and true security *within our generation.*" (italics added) This statement was made even more specific from 1982 forward when it was said to build "confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new order *before the generation that saw the events of 1914 c.£. passes Away.*" (italics added) So, from 1964 until 1995, more than thirty years, the *Awake!* has promised a new order "in this generation," "within our generation," and "the generation that saw the events of 1914." And for the last twenty years this has been said to be the "Creator's promise."

It must now come as something of a shock for Jehovah's Witnesses to see that as of the November 8, 1995 issue of *Awake!* that mission statement has been dramatically altered. There is no longer a strong assertion regarding the Creator's promise as regards the 1914 gen-

eration living to see a righteous new order. Now, the concluding sentence reads: "Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world *that is about to replace* the present wicked, lawless system of things." (italics added) Gone is any reference to a "generation"! Gone is any tie to the year 1914! Why this significant change? Some background material may prove helpful in providing an answer to this question.

There is considerable history behind the Witnesses interpretation of what constitutes the "last days", taking us back to the prophetic speculations first advanced by Charles T. Russell, founder of the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society. According to Mr. Russell, "the time of the end" began in 1799 and would conclude in 1914 with the destruction of the present world order. In 1886 Russell wrote: "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." -*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. II, 1910 ed., page 101.

Russell's expectations were not realized by the outworking of world events. The "great day of God Almighty" had not arrived as he imagined and "the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership" was not accom-

plished by 1914. These and others of his many time feature calculations all proved incorrect.

Unfortunately, the failure of Russell's elaborate time feature schemes did not end with his death in 1916. Instead, these failed dates were either re-interpreted or explained-away and eventually replaced with a new set of speculative dates. This took a period of fifteen years or more following 1914 to complete. In 1927 it was still being taught that "the time of the end" began in 1799 and that Jesus Christ returned in-visibly in 1874 to mark the start of the final phase of "the time of the end," namely, "the harvest." In 1927 Rutherford wrote: "There are two important dates here that we must not confuse, but clearly differentiate; namely, the beginning of 'the time of the end' and the beginning of the presence of the Lord. 'The time of the end' embraces a period from 1799 A.D. to the time of the complete overthrow of Satan's empire and the establishment of the kingdom of Messiah. The time of the Lord's second presence dates from 1874 and is during the latter part of the period known as 'the time of the end.'" -*Creation*, by J.F. Rutherford (1927), page 298. In 1929 it was still taught that "the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 A.D." -*Prophecy*, by J.F. Rutherford (1929) page 65. Gradually, however, the 1799 and 1874 dates faded into oblivion and 1914 began to be looked at as *the starting point* rather than *the ending point* of "end times" speculations.

The post-1914 period saw additional failed expectations as what was to happen in 1918, 1920 and 1925. Watchtower publications (including *The Finished Mystery*, published in 1917 and *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, published in 1920) document these expectations which history failed to validate as true, just as Russell's had failed. Until his death in 1942, Rutherford continued to set forth misinformation re-garding the outcome of world events. At the last convention he attended in 1941 in 51. Louis, Missouri he told his audience that the ancient Hebrew prophets would appear on earth in an early resurrection "any day now," and advised Witness youth not to marry because Armageddon was so close. In time, due to the accumulated failure of every Watchtower prognostication it became necessary to abandon all dates except one. The one fixed star in the Watchtower constellation has been 1914. Using a discredited second Adventist speculation regarding the length of the "Gentile times" ("Appointed times of the nations") as being 2,520 years (607 B.C. to 1914 A.D. it was decided that Jesus Christ returned *invisibly* at the close of the "appointed times of the nations," (Luke 21 :24) in October 1914 and began

judgment proceedings that would conclude within a generation. Mr. Russell had set October 1874 as the date for Jesus' *invisible* return.

Obviously, it is impossible to disprove something that can't be seen. However, a proposition can either be proven true or false by the outcome predicted and based upon the proposition. If events predicted come true then this adds credence to a certain premise-even an invisible one. The failure of Russell's predictions to materialize demonstrated that his time feature calculations were all wrong. The failure of the post-1914 expectations assigned to certain dates demonstrated that the date-fixing premise upon which those expectations were made was also false. The eventual outworking of history either validates or invalidates the schemes that men advance. In Russell's case it took nearly forty years for the outworking of world events to demonstrate that his calculations and conclusions were in error. In the interim he and his associates could boast about what they knew (or thought they knew) and how they were being used (or imagined they were being used) and denigrate all those who simply did not agree with them.

So, too, with the emerging of the 1914 date as marking the beginning of a generation that would see the end of the world. That theory has been in place for fifty years or more and it has taken all these years for the outworking of history to either affirm or discredit that theory. Now, the evidence is in; the generation of 1914 doctrine now stands discredited and disproved by the outworking of history. In the interim, however, a worldwide organization has been built up by people who accepted the theory as true. Not only that, but they have imagined that they were involved in some unique, God-ordained work that made them special. They have used this view of themselves as a basis for how they viewed and judged others. Those who haven't agreed with them or challenged their scriptural basis have been viewed as either religiously blind or wickedly motivated. The Watchtower movement is built up on a basic premise that has been discredited over and over again. Unfortunately, they have never learned anything by their failures. They persist in their insistence that they are special and accepting them and their message is essential for Jehovah's approval and salvation. There is nothing to substantiate such a 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 joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.' ... Similarly today, we have God's precious promise concerning life in

a new system of righteousness. We have heard his 'word' that the generation living in this 'time of the end' will be the generation that will experience the 'great tribulation.' (Matt. 24:34) We have heard his word of promise that we can enter into his 'rest' now, by faith, and that a great crowd of his servants will survive that tribulation to enter into the new order that follows. (Rev. 7:9-14) That 'word' is alive and has power to accomplish everything that Jehovah has purposed; it will not fail." -*The Watchtower*, July 15, 1976, page 439. Notice the strong, dogmatic assertion presented here. By putting matters as they do in the above they make *their word* as certain as *God's word!* Could anything be more presumptuous! Those strong assertions and specific predictions continued to be made in the years following 1976.

Now, as we draw to the close of 1995, the Witnesses . are forced to change their vocabulary once again as regards the "last days". The horse named "The 1914 Generation" has finally died; having been ridden to death over a period of many, many years. They must now find a fresh "horse" to ride in order to continue their "end times" speculations and their presumptuous claims about themselves. *The Watch-tower* is beginning to create that new "horse". Evidence of this is to be found in its issue of November 1, 1995. In an article titled: "Saved From A Wicked Generation," they go into considerable detail in the matter of identifying the specific generation Jesus had in mind when he spoke the words recorded at Matthew 24:34 which reads: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." -*New World Translation*. After several pages of discussion they sum up their conclusion as follows: "What, then, is the 'generation' so frequently referred to by Jesus in the presence of his disciples? What did they understand by his words: 'This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur'? Surely, Jesus was not departing from his established use of the term 'this generation,' which he consistently applied to *the contemporary masses* with their 'blind guides' who together made up the Jewish nation. (Matthew 15: 14) 'This generation' experienced all the distress foretold by Jesus and then passed away in an unequalled 'great tribulation' on Jerusalem.-Matthew 24:21,34." -*The Watchtower*, November 1, 1995, page 14. (italics added) Christians have known all along that Jesus was addressing his contemporary generation; the clear language he used-together with the outworking of Jewish history, establishes that. Furthermore, the Bible makes it plain that it was a time of judgment on the covenant

nation beginning with the ministry of John the baptist. What has muddied the waters of under-standing for the Witnesses (and continues to muddy those waters) has been the Society's insistence that the fulfillment on the Jewish nation was only a minor fulfillment that would undergo a major fulfillment toward a future generation at the end of the gospel age. How-ever, you'll note that *The Watchtower* quotation above cites Matthew 24:21 in relation to the "great tribulation" which befell that generation. The text reads in full: "for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." - *NW*.

According to Jesus that unprecedented "great tribulation" would never be repeated. How, then, can anyone speak of a future fulfillment? However, they continue to speak of a present generation that parallels that Jewish one that Jesus addressed. This is what they now say: "Those Jews who had paid attention to Jesus' prophetic words realized that their salvation depended, not on trying to calculate the length of a 'generation' or of some dated 'times or seasons,' but on keeping separate from the evil contemporary generation and zealously doing God's will. Though the final words of Jesus' prophecy apply to the major fulfillment in our day, first-century Jewish Christians also had to heed the admonition: 'Keep awake, then all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and standing before the Son of man.-Luke 21:32-36; Acts 1:6-8"-*The Watchtower*, November 1, 1995, page 15. It is apparent that the leadership must reprogram Witness thinking in such a way as to eliminate the concept of a generation in terms of a specific length. By telling . them that it is not important to calculate the length of a generation they are abandoning their earlier efforts, now discredited, of doing that very thing! They can continue to talk about the urgency of the times and how short the remaining time is without regard to time.

The concluding paragraph in this study summed the matter up: "Today, ' the great day of Jehovah .. is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much.' (Zephaniah 1: 14~18; Isaiah 13:9,13) Suddenly, at Je-hovah's own predetermined 'day and hour, his fury will be unleashed upon the world's religious, political and commercial elements, together with the wayward people who make up this contemporary 'wicked and adulterous generation.' (Matthew 12:39; 24:36 Revelation 7:1-3,9,14) How may you get saved out of 'the great tribulation'? Our next article will answer and tell of the grand hope for the future. " -*The*

Watch-tower, November 1, 1995, page 15. While they continue to speak of a contemporary wicked generation destined to experience a great tribulation no link is made with 1914. In effect, they will continue to use similar language but with different meanings. It is a good example of confused reasoning with a convoluted twist. What comes through loud and clear, however, is you had better listen to us or else!

While now saying that it is a waste of time to try and calculate the length of a generation, earlier attempts were made to do just that in relation to the generation of 1914. For example, *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1968 had this to say in underscoring how short the remaining time was before the world's final "great tribulation": "Further stressing the shortness of the time remaining, Jesus prophesied about a generation that would witness the fulfillment of the many featured 'sign' marking the conclusion of this system of things, such as global wars, followed by food shortages and earthquakes, and by the worldwide heralding of the good news of God's kingdom. Said he: 'This generation [witnessing these events] will by no means pass away until all these things occur.' -Matt. 24:34. You belong to a generation that has either seen those world developments or one that has been told about them by your parents. You have heard about the heralding of the Kingdom message by Je-hovah's witnesses throughout the earth, a work now shared in by more than a million Witnesses in 197 lands, a work that began almost fifty years ago and has continuously increased in intensity. Proof, all this, that the 'generation' spoken of by Jesus is now. close to passing away! The time is truly short!" -*The Watch-tower*, January 15, 1968, page 42 (bracketed words in original) .

Similarly, the *Awake!* magazine continually drew attention to how short the remaining time was in relation to the 1914 generation. "The fact that fifty-four years of the period called the 'last days' have already gone by is highly significant. It means that only a few years, at most, remain before the corrupt system of things dominating the earth is destroyed by God. How can we be so certain of this? One way is by noting what Jesus said when he gave his great prophecy about the 'last days.' After he listed the many events that would mark this period, he also stated: 'Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.' -Matt. 24:34. Jesus was obviously speaking about those who were old enough to witness *with understanding* what took place when the 'last days' began. Jesus was saying that some of those

persons who were alive at the appearance of the 'sign of the last days' would still be alive when God brought this system to its end. Even if we presume that youngsters 15 years of age would be perceptive enough to realize the import of what happened in 1914, it would still make the youngest of 'this generation' nearly 70 years old today. So the great majority of the generation to which Jesus was referring has already passed away in death. The remaining ones are approaching old age. And remember, Jesus said that the end of this wicked world would come *before* that generation passed away in death. This, of itself, tells us that the years left before the foretold end comes cannot be many." - *Awake!*, October 8, 1968, pages 13,14 (italics in original).

So, more than twenty-five years ago, they were pointing out that the youngest of the 1914 generation was nearly 70 years old and "close to passing away," which proved that "the years left ... cannot be many." For the record, the youngest of the 1914 generation would now be, in 1995, in their late 90s.

Such language served them well at that time. At the same time they were arguing how short the remaining time was due to the advanced age of the 1914 generation they were also touting the 7000-year creative-day theory. According to this theory each of the six days of creation were exactly 7000 years long. Marking the creation of Adam and Eve as ending the sixth creative day and the beginning of the seven day, they argued that 1975 would conclude 6000 years of human history and very probably 6000 years of God's seventh day of rest. This was significant. Why? They provided the answer: "How fitting it would be for God, following this pattern, to end man's misery after six thousand years of human rule and follow it with His glorious Kingdom rule of a thousand years!" -*Awake!*, October 8, 1968, page 14.

In this way the aging of the 1914 generation and the apparent con-elusion of 6000 years of God's rest day as due in 1975 were used to strengthen the shortness of time remaining for the 1914 generation and the world. Of course, 1975 produced nothing and speculation regarding God's rest day and the 7000-year creative-day theory went into limbo. Now, in 1995, it is time to put the "1914 generation" speculation to rest. It is no longer fashionable to speak of how long a generation is. Why? Because the 1914 generation has passed away~totally! Previous arguments simply have to be abandoned. Witnesses must now forget what they were previously taught. While still arguing for

1914 as the still of the "last days" they are making the end times more open-ended-unbounded by the length of the 1914 generation. This will muddy the thinking ability of the Witnesses who always seem more than eager to have a short memory as regards failed pre-dictions and specious arguments.

When one reviews the prophetic speculations advanced by the Watchtower movement from the days of Russell until now one thing becomes evident; and that is that *they have never been where they thought they were in the outworking of God's purposes*. Russell viewed himself as a special messenger for the "last days." His end times ran from 1799 A.D. to 1914 A.D. He believed Jesus returned invisibly in 1874 and began a final "harvest period" as regards his earthly church and the world. Those who did not accept his point of view were judged unworthy of God's approval. Only those who accepted Russell's time feature scheme and his unique role were approved by Jesus. Later, due to the total failure of Russell's timetable, 1914 was said to

be the year that Jesus returned invisibly to judge his church and the world. Now, in order to have God's approval one would have to accept that "truth." Accepting the new speculation became the touchstone for God's approval and sub-mitting to those promulgating this theory.

However, not one of the dates advanced by the Witnesses from Russell's time until now has proved true. Nothing they ever said God or Christ were doing or what would happen within a certain period or on a certain date has ever been established by the outworking of history-not one! Which means they have never been preaching the special message they imagined they were under Christ's direction. They have never held a unique and privileged position as they have always asserted that they held. This means that people have not been separated as 'sheep' or 'goats' based on accepting their message and their supposed elevated position. It has all been delusionary-the worst kind of delusion-self-delusion. □