

The Society says that God told Michael the archangel to "sit at my right hand" but the writer of Hebrews contradicts this by saying: "God has never said to any angel: 'Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies a footstool for you.' The truth is they are all spirits whose work: is service, sent to help those who will be heirs of salvation." -Hebrews 1: 13, 14 *Jerusalem Bible*.

Consider also the fact that Michael, the archangel, was in existence when the prophecy recorded at Psalms 110:14 was given. If God had Michael in mind at the time he inspired David to write this psalm he was saying these things about an angel-Michael! But the writer of the letter of Hebrews specifically says that God never spoke these words to an angel!

There is a uniqueness about the Word made flesh which separates him from creation. We are told that "by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were, created by him and for him." -Cot 1: 16 *MV*. The *New World Translation* inserts the word [other] four times in verses 16 and 17 but the word other is not found in the Greek: text. In their passion to be different the directors of the Watchtower Society seem compelled to conjure up radical concepts to put themselves at odds with all other Christian teachers. In their quest to be different they have often fallen victim of sectarianism, the very thing they condemn in others. Such teachings unnecessarily divides the body of Christ .□

Millions Now Living will Never Die

(Number 9. Originally published January 24, 1985)

The January 22, 1985 *Awake!* contains the personal story of Dr. Salvador Gonzalez, a Spanish pathologist, under the caption: "Seeking The Causes of Death, I Found Life. " He begins this way: "'I have the hope of never dying,' my friend said. I smiled ironically at this, yet at the same time it provoked an intense curiosity in me." Several pages later he concludes:

"Thus, like my friend in the introduction to my story, I, too, now entertain the hope of never having to die!" (Pages 24,27).

The "hope of never having to die," is held out to Dr. Gonzalez and millions of other Jehovah's Witnesses by the Watchtower Society. A typical presentation of this 'hope' can be found in *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1983 in two articles:

"Millions Now Alive Will Never Die Off Our Earth" and "Millions Get Ready For Uninterrupted Life On Earth. " Concerning these assertions the magazine says:

"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. Jehovah God, the Source of all life, does not decide vital matters on such a basis as this! This was not the case during the Flood that brought the world of Noah's day to an end. Consistently it is not so today! There are cogent Scriptural grounds for expecting 'millions now alive' to survive." (Page 16, par. 11).

You will note that the basis of this hope is presented as coming directly from God-not "mere human mathematical calculation." The fact is, however, that it does lie on a "mere human mathematical calculation." That calculation is that the "appointed times of the nations" ended in October 1914. (Luke 21:24, *NW*.) This calculation was given to Charles T. Russell by Nelson H. Barbour early in 1876 and although it has undergone radical changes in its interpretation since then (due to consistent failures of expected events), it still represents the basis for the Watchtower's different 'good news' along with its "hope of never having to die." But how "cogent" are the "Scriptural grounds" for building confidence (hope) in people that they will never grow old and die? "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 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." (Page 97, Italics added).

The year 1925 came and passed with none of the above predicted events haven taken place. It proved to be a false hope as had 1878, 1914, 1918 and 1920 when other earth-shaking events were predicted to occur. Even when specific dates were not set forth the pattern adopted by the Watchtower Society throughout

its history has been to insist that the end is at hand-imminent! This has had the effect of keeping Jehovah's Witnesses in a constant state of anxiety and fervid activity-convinced that the end of the world was immediately ahead. Here are but a few samples of the rhetoric found in virtually all of the Society's publications:

"Upon the earth there are now, according to the best statistics obtainable, approximately 1,700,000,000 persons who have a measure of life. The proof cited herein shows that the old world (the Devil's organization) ended and began to pass away in 1914, and that this will be completed *in a few years* and righteousness fully established." -*Harp of God*, 1928, page 339. (Italics added)

"The Lord Jehovah's judgments against Satan's great Babylonian organization are now being declared, *just before they* must be executed. The unhindered operation of organized wickedness and of oppression *is swiftly speeding to its close.*" -*The Kingdom Is At Hand*, 1944, page 366. (Italics added)

"In the light of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, it is becoming clear that *the war of Armageddon is nearing its breaking-out point.*" -*You May Survive Armageddon Into God's New World*, 1955, page 332. (Italics added)

"The meaning of these evidences is unmistakable:

Deliverance is at hand! This betokens for God's 'chosen ones' and the 'great crowd' of their fellow worshippers survival of the 'great tribulation' *just tribulation* is to be 'cut short' for the sake of Jehovah's elect ones, his called and chosen ones. (Matthew 24:21,22) This means that a remnant of them are to survive the tribulation and be eyewitnesses of Jehovah's strange act by which he will vindicate his sovereignty over heaven and earth." (Isaiah 28: 21) (Page 16, par. 13)

The notion that members of Christ's body would survive on earth following Armageddon prompted this question in *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1976: "If some anointed Christians survive into the New Order, will they grow old and die, or how will their earthly life end?" The magazine answered: "Frankly, the Bible does not say. In whatever way it is to occur, the earthly life of these spirit anointed Christians will have to come to an end so that they may receive their reward of life in heaven." After citing what they call

"biblical patterns" to argue for such survival they proceed to suggest that members of the "anointed" may remain on earth long enough to do some teaching of the resurrected ones. They then start the concluding paragraph with this expression: "Consequently, we must trust God. There is no point in speculating as to details. " *First, they speculate* that "anointed. ones" will survive on earth, then *they speculate* that this may be as long as to do some teaching to resurrected ones and, then when asked how the "anointed ones" get off the earth, finally, they answer: "there is no point in speculating" (?) They can be truly amazing in their arguments. (Pages 383,384) Italics added

While the Watchtower Society doesn't know how the "chosen ones" get off the earth the Bible is quite clear on the matter. Moreover, there is not the slightest suggestion that they remain on earth following the end of the: present world. Explaining matters, Paul wrote: "Or else, brothers, put it this way: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: and the perishable cannot inherit what lasts forever. I will tell you something that has been secret: that we are not all going to die, but we shall all be changed. This will be instantaneous, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds. It will sound, and the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we shall be changed as well, because our present perishable nature must put on imperishability and this mortal nature must put on immortality." - **1** Corinthians 15 :50-53 *Jerusalem Bible*. "For this is what we tell you by Jehovah's word, that we the living who survive to the presence of the Lord shall in no way precede those who have fallen asleep (in death); because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward we the living who are surviving will together with them ("at the same *time*"-*NW Interlinear*), be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Consequently, keep comforting one another with these words." -1 Thess. 4: 15-18, *NW*.

The Watchtower says: "The spiritual resurrection of the 'dead in Christ' in the spring of 1918, three and a half years from the enthronement of Christ at the end of the Gentile Times in autumn of 1914, would parallel Jesus' own resurrection on Nisan 16,33 C.E." -*The Watchtower*, June 15, 1.979 page 29, par. 10. If this is true how is it that the living members of Christ's body are still alive on earth 67 years later (in 1984)? Does

that not contradict what the Scriptures say about the living Christians being "caught away" *"together with them"*, namely, the resurrected members? Surely, it does.

When Paul says: "we shall not all fall asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51, NW) he obviously used "fall asleep" as a metaphor for dying. Jesus used the same metaphor at John 11: 11-14. In other words, the living disciples would not experience death as had those who died before them. Rather, they would experience a sudden, instantaneous change in nature, without the ordinary process of dying, and be caught away to join those resurrected from the dead. (see also *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words: Asleep, Sleep*)

To better appreciate why the Watchtower Society has adopted its error in this matter we need to consider a little of their history. Russell taught that Christ returned in autumn 1874 and the dead in Christ were resurrected three and a half years later in the spring of 1878. The expectation was naturally created that the remaining living members of those in Christ would experience their "change" at the same time, as Paul clearly taught. When that "change" did not happen many of Russell's followers were confused and disappointed. Some explanation became necessary. According to the Watchtower Society this disappointment led Russell to reexamine Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 15:51 with the following result: true significance of the apostle's words was that those who were to be of Christ's body and who were alive at his presence or after his return would *not lie unconscious in the grave* as had those who preceded Christ's return. Instead, they would be changed *instantaneously at death* to be present with him." -*Jehovah's Witnesses In the Divine Purpose*, pages 19,20. (Italics added).

This novel interpretation of Paul's words helped explain-away the failure of the living members being changed in nature in the spring of 1878 and salvaged Russell's erroneous teaching regarding Christ's return. This "reexamination" of scripture illustrates the length the Society's leadership is willing to twist the Scriptures in order to retain their novel doctrines. Rather than admit an error Russell preferred to reinterpret the text to fit his conclusion. In other words, his 1874-1878 calculation wasn't wrong; the scriptures simply didn't mean what they said.

Later, when the Watchtower Society jettisoned

Russell's teaching that Christ returned in autumn 1874 and set autumn 1914 as the new date for his return they moved the resurrection forward 3 1/2 years from autumn 1914 to spring 1918. And, because none of the so-called "remnant" of Christ's body members were glorified in the spring of 1918, Russell's teaching continued to be convenient. It is still believed and taught to the present day.

The change that Paul writes about as taking place "during the last trumpet, " was to be instantaneous-"in the twinkling of an eye." The Greek word translated "twinkling" is *RHIPE*, akin to *RHIPTO*, meaning "to hurl," was used for any rapid movement, e.g., the throw of a javelin, the rush of wind or flame; in 1 Carin. 15:52 of the twinkling of an eye." -according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

In view of the Scriptural evidence, it would appear that Jesus' words about the living never dying at all would more appropriately apply towards those who, at his return, are instantaneously changed from flesh to spirit. They do not experience death in the ordinary sense because their change is as fast as the winking of an eye. There would be no interruption of conscious life in such an experience. (John 11 :26)

The scenario of Christians surviving into a cleansed earth has appeal. Watchtower artist's drawings of moving resurrection scenes where families are reunited with resurrected loved ones also tug at one's heart. Through the pages of Watchtower publications great detail is provided as to the educational programs that will be in place during the millennium and how all will be gradually uplifted to human perfection. Then, at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ, all must face yet another test of obedience before God pronounces them worthy of life when Satan is released to terrorize everyone on earth. Several generations of Jehovah's Witnesses have been taught that they would experience these things without ever having to die. Hence, Dr. Salvador Gonzalez's testimony: "I, too, now entertain the hope of never having to die!"

Understandably, this "hope" has provided strong motivation to promulgate the Society's teachings and to cause people to submit to them. Basically, one must do these things to have any hope at all of realizing the Society's promises because acknowledging them as God's channel of communication is essential for life. But is it true? Are there clear teachings in the Bible to support all of this or is it rather constructed out of

perceptions originating with men where the Bible is merely used to appear to support such perceptions? Strong assertions and dogmatic rhetoric prove nothing.

Assertions about "invisible" returns (1874, 1914) do not require observable evidence; one either believes it or one doesn't. But every observable prediction-one that require empirical evidence-has fallen to the ground unfulfilled. It is in this realm of observable events that the outworking of history has consistently been repeatedly refuted. The failure of observable predicted events to take place strongly suggests that those things said to occur in heaven did not take place as well. Russell asserted that when the world ended in

1914 all of his prognostications would prove to be vindicated. 1914 did not fulfill even one of his assertions.

Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses will continue to believe the delusion that they will never die. However, . men cannot deliver on such a promise. Keep in mind that when that promise first began to be preached in 1918 and later put in written form in 1920 in the publication, "*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*," it was addressed to those NOW LIVING! Are there, today, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses who were alive back there in 1918-1920? Hardly. The vast majority of Witnesses living today hadn't even been born then! □