

**THE
SIGN**

OF THE

**LAST
DAYS**

**IS SUCH A SIGN
VISIBLE WORLWIDE
TO THIS
GENERATION?**

**WHAT THE
SURPRISING FACTS
OF HISTORY REVEAL
REGARDING
CLAIMED EVIDENCE
FOR OUR DAY.**

WHEN?

BY CARL OLOF JONSSON - WOLFGANG HERBST
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH EDITION

THE "SIGN" OF THE
LAST DAYS-WHEN?

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WOLFGANG HERBST

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Unless otherwise indicated, the Scripture quotations in this book are from the *Bible in French Courant*.

The abbreviations of the other biblical translations cited are :

JB *The Jerusalem Bible*

BDS *The Sower's Bible*

TOB *The Ecumenical Translation of the Bible*

CFB *La Bible en Français Courant*

LIENART *The Bible of Cardinal Liénart*

LSG *Louis Segond*

KUEN *Living Word Transcript by Kuen*

NW *the New World Translation*

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Take heed... do not be deceived; for many will come in my name and say to you, 'I am the Messiah! And again, "The time has come!" The time has come! "Do not follow these people!

Words of Jesus Christ contained in Luke 21:8, KUEN

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. *Preface*

**How many foreign wars and internecine wars! How many plagues!
How many famines! How many earthquakes have gripped the
century!**

- Tertulian, in *Ad Nationes*. Written in 197 AD.

THE VISIT of Jesus Christ on earth and the promise of His return have aroused great hopes in the hearts of men. In the nineteen centuries that followed there were few expectations that proved to be valid and solidly based on Scripture or on facts.

A common characteristic of each generation seems to have been the conviction that their time was unique. Though aware of the trials and calamities that were common to people in every age, they nevertheless concluded that their time was the worst - that unrest and danger were rapidly leading to the most extreme calamity that could bring the world to an end.

We often hear the expression, "the good old days." Nostalgia makes the past better and the present worse. This attitude reminds us of the biblical warning, "Do not say, 'How is it that the old times were better than these? Wisdom does not make you ask this question'" Ecclesiastes 7: 10, TOB.

Commenting on this text, one researcher said:

The supposition is a foolish reflection on God's providence in this world... One is so alien to the past and such an incompetent judge of the present, that one cannot expect a satisfactory answer in the search and therefore we 'do not search wisely'.¹

Perhaps because we are so 'foreign to the past' that we easily interpret in the events and circumstances of our time a distinction and an exceptional character which is so important to us.

¹ *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on Ecclesiastes 7: 10.

doesn't really exist.

In the minds of many believers is the conviction that the final war of Armageddon and the coming of Christ Jesus for the final judgment should occur in their time. It is hard for a person to admit that such an important event could not happen in their lifetime. There is an inner opposition to the thought of missing them and not having a 'personal rendezvous with history,' especially with divine history. This is no doubt why books that nourish and stimulate these expectations often enjoy great popularity. For example, Hal Lindsey's book, which has reached a circulation of over 18 million copies in a number of languages. People obviously want to believe that their times are unique and particularly chosen in biblical prophecy.

However, history shows that generation after generation, great hopes were placed on certain dates or predictions, only to be disappointed, many bringing only loss, bitterness and disillusionment when their expectations failed to materialize.

In contrast to such an attitude, the Bible exposes the simple reality of things relating to human life in general, saying:

What happened will happen again. What was done will happen again. Nothing new is happening down here. If there's something we say, "This is new! "...in reality it has existed long before us. But we forget what happened to our ancestors. Nor will the men who come after us leave no memory for those who come after them. - Ecclesiastes 1:9-11, BFC.

If in the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Age of Discovery, the Age of Industrialization, the Nuclear Age and the Space Age, events are essentially repetitions, variations, elaborations or extensions of the past and of life on earth, the general course of humanity, human nature itself and its relationships continue in almost the same way as in the past. What seems considerable, even surprising for one generation is not so for the next and rarely appears in the daily thoughts or concerns of people living in these seemingly last times. As spectacular as a landing on the moon may be, how many people today remember the name of the first man who set foot on the moon? The past fades away for human thoughts immersed in the present and the future.

clinging to the future.

The Scriptures, in reality, show that the only true change comes with the revelation of the Son of God, who alone can make all things truly new.

If there is a single lesson to be learned from history, there is none more important than the imprudence of "date calculation" for the end. Editorialist Noel Mason says:

The history of Jewish and Christian "date calculators" with their bitter disappointment and disenchantment has not diminished the desire of many Christians to calculate the end. Some groups continue to cling to their dates despite the embarrassment created by the continuation of history. Rather than acknowledging the falsity of their interpretations of Daniel and Revelation, many simply avoid the problem by reinterpreting its supposed 'fulfillment'.²

All these announcements of dates and writings of religious alarmists are only "very old news", repeated throughout the nineteen centuries of the Christian Era. Already in the first century we find the apostle Paul writing to his companions in Thessalonica :

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together with him, we ask you, brethren: do not let yourselves be so easily shaken in your good sense, nor be troubled by any revelation, message or letter attributed to us, which claims that the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one lead you astray in any way. - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, *The Sower's Bible*.

Despite this argument, conjectures and predictions did not end. In the third century, for example, we find the father of the Cyprian church portraying this threatening image to the Christians of his day:

Wars often continue to predominate, mortality and famine cause anxiety, health is threatened by raging diseases, the human race is devastated by plague. We know that this was predicted; these evils should diversify in the last days and these misfortunes should multiply. The time of judgment is now drawing near.³

In the sixth century, in a powerful and exciting sermon, Pope Gregory the Great proclaimed:

² *Good News Unlimited* magazine, September 1984, page 4.

³ Cyprianus Treaty 5, "A Letter to Demetrianus," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Eerdmans, 1978, Vol. V, page 459.

Of all the signs described by our Lord as foretelling the end of the world we see some already being fulfilled... For we now see nation standing against nation and weighing down the country in our time as never before in the annals of the past. Earthquakes are engulfing countless cities according to the news we receive from other parts of the world. We are being hit by the plague without interruption. It is true that we do not see signs in the sun, moon and stars, but they are not too far away to infer changes in the atmosphere. ⁴

History thus makes a long and dreary list of predictions and countless failures of the "prophets" of the end time. It is not really necessary to go into detail about all those proclamations of the last days which in our time have - through publications as well as radio and television - raised expectations exacerbated by sermons with their alarmist predictions of the end of the world.

Does that mean that having a sense of hope is wrong? In no way, because we are constantly exhorted by the Scriptures to remain "awake. "Stay awake" for *what*, then? Do the failures of past predictions necessarily mean that our generation may not be the exception, that our twentieth century may indeed not contain events that mark our time as the one with which Bible prophecy will reach final fulfillment? If the Bible really has a certain

A "sign" (perhaps composed of a number of individual "signs") that would allow us to identify this period as one that is now visible, it would be disastrous for us not to accept it, and we would be responsible for not letting it be known. On the other hand, if these proclamations are nothing more than the fruit of manipulations, and more seriously, of manipulation of the Scriptures, it would be equally disastrous and reprehensible for us to promote trust in them and to contribute to their propagation. Reprehensible, because it would mean disobeying the Word of God which asks us not to practice deception, deception which can not only be emotionally, materially and physically harmful, but can also cause the disastrous ruin of faith in God's authentic message.

This statement would have us see today that this or these "signs" identifying our generation as living in the end of the world era.

⁴ Cité dans *His Appearing and His Kingdom*, par T. Francis Glasson, M.A., D.O. Epworth Press, Londres, 1953, page 45.

Dans son best-seller, *Approaching Hoofbeats, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, le Dr Billy Graham explique :

We have to ask ourselves: is it the time of the 'end' that the Bible speaks of so clearly and in such detail in so many places? The Bible teaches that there will be a number of signs that will be easily visible as we approach the time of the end. All of these signs seem to be coming into place now. - Pages 126, 127.

Under the title "Watch for These Signs" in *The Promise* published in 1982, Hal Lindsey alludes to Jesus' words in Matthew chapter twenty-four. He lists these signs as wars, famine, tribulations, disorders and earthquakes. He compares these and other prophetic elements to pieces of a "He goes on to say that, following the establishment of the Jewish state in Israel in 1948, **"the whole prophetic scenario began to accelerate at a dizzying speed.**" Pages 197-199.

In *Good-bye Planet Earth*, a book that in many ways seems to be modeled on Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Seventh-day Adventist author Robert H. Pierson quotes the disciples' question about the coming of Jesus and goes on to say:

Read what Jesus answered - what He had to say about your time and mine - the latter part of the twentieth century...

Read these words in the light of current world events.

Then follows the subtitle:

The Phenomenal increase in the number of War, Crime, Violence and Fear Are All Signs of the Second Coming of Jesus! ⁵

Herbert W. Armstrong, now deceased, founder and head of the World Church of God, in a letter to subscribers of *Plain Truth* magazine, wrote:

... let me give you a brief glimpse of the world in which YOU live today and which YOU will come to know in the coming years of YOUR life and mine. We are living in a time of extreme DANGER !... Everything seems to indicate it, pollution, unprecedented crime and violence, the decomposition of family life, morality thrown into the nettles, terrorism, the

⁵ *Good-bye, Planet Earth*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1976, page 48. As we will see in Chapter 8, not all Seventh-day Adventist sources have the same position as author Pierson.

regional wars in Asia, the Middle East and South America. All these signs show in fact that we are living at THE TIME OF THE END of the present civilization!...

We are living through the most terrible days in world history - the TIME OF THE END, the END of this present wicked, unhappy, violent world - just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

While many sources claim that our age is indeed different from all others, considering the events and conditions marking our predicted end times, probably no one gives more voice to this proclamation than the international organization known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Their leadership, through its agency the Watch Tower Society, with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, has built up a worldwide publishing empire seldom equaled by the pure volume of production. The millions of members of the organization are constantly urged to be aware of the 'urgency of the times. Therefore, they must be at the doorstep of homes in every country where this activity is permitted. There they offer a publication which unquestionably states that the last days have begun in the second decade of this century and that some of the people alive then will still be there when the final conclusion comes.

In addition to this, their Central College makes us believe that this teaching is an element of faith, something indispensable to be accepted by God and Christ, and therefore necessary to obtain salvation. For this reason, any member who seriously questions the accuracy of this teaching - based on Scripture and fact - is liable to exclusion. Subsequently he will be considered, and completely rejected, as an "apostate" of the true faith.

For these reasons, and particularly because their claims about the "uniqueness" of our times often surpass

– Both in its boldness and in its breadth-that of other sources, this book can at times, through its comparison of Bible teachings and historical facts, focus a little more on the proclamations and predictions made by the Central College of Jehovah's Witnesses and their Watch Tower Society concerning the times in which we live.

However, the opinions of other sources are not lost sight of, as the same facts considered here are generally found in the proclamations and predictions made by them.

Whatever the source, the essential question is: Are these proclamations really accredited by the Scriptures? Have the events and conditions proved so radically proven to be a true biblical "sign"? Are they truly specific to our century and distinctive of our generation? What do the facts show?

We believe that the document prepared by the authors of this book will make the vast majority of us see how 'strangers to the past' we were and how easily we proved to be the 'incompetent judges of the present. The historical evidence from the authors' intensive research will no doubt be surprising to many, yet it is carefully and authentically documented. We are pleased to publish this work, hoping that it will clarify many particularly crucial issues.

The Publishers

CHAPTER 1

1 Our 20^e century - The Time of the End?

THE LAST years of the twentieth century are coming to an end. Our century has already seen many significant events and could see many more.

If we accept the proclamations made by a number of religious sources, this century is the scene of the last days. Books circulating throughout the world directly describe the events and circumstances of our time as visible evidence of the immediacy of the "conclusion". Their proclamations are made in earnest, often accompanied by impressive evidence of their accuracy. Some of these religious sources even allocate a specific starting point to the last days in the context of this century.

. 1914 - The Beginning of the Last Days?

Perhaps one of the most visible and publicly heard of these sources is the international religious movement of Jehovah's Witnesses. The year 1914 plays a central role in their public preaching. The circulation of millions of books by some authors on the time of the end is easily overshadowed by the hundreds of millions of copies of Watch Tower publications issued each year in hundreds of languages, all proclaiming the significance of the year 1914.

According to them, this year would correspond to that of the promised return of Jesus Christ to earth, thus beginning his *parousia* or "presence". We are told that in that year the kingdom of heaven was established and that the

"last days" have begun. This, according to the teaching of the Watch Tower, means that the generation that experienced 1914 *cannot*, in fact, disappear until the final conclusion has come. This is a proclamation presented, not as a mere possibility or even probability, but as an absolute certainty!

Yet people wonder, "How can 1914 have this meaning when no man has really seen Jesus or his

kingdom? »

Because Jesus came invisibly and his kingdom was transferred to God's invisible paradise, the Watch Tower Society answers.

If this is true, these proclamations are obviously of vital importance to all of us. What evidence supports this? In examining this alleged evidence, we will at the same time examine the opinions published by a number of other religious sources of our time, with their heightened expectations. For although they differ in some respects, the evidence they provide to establish the closeness of the conclusion is often remarkably similar.

The Watch Tower Society, the publishing agency of Jehovah's Witnesses, uses two lines of reasoning to support its claims:

1) the Biblical chronology and 2) what they describe as "signs" since 1914.

Briefly stated, according to the Watch Tower Society's understanding of the "times of the Gentiles" or as they prefer to translate it, "the appointed times of the nations" cited in Luke twenty-one, verse 24, is a period of 2,520 years that began in 607 BC and ended in 1914 AD. During this period it is understood that the nations would be allowed to reign without God's interference.

But again people ask, "How could it be that the times of the Gentile nations ended in 1914? "After all, nations still rule this planet just as they did before that date. The number of nations, in fact, has almost tripled since 1914! How, then, could their time have ended that year? For almost two-thirds of the nations existing today, their time began, not ended, in 1914.

Another major problem is that the starting point for this calculation - the year 607 B.C., proclaimed to be the date of the destruction of Jerusalem - conflicts with a long series of historical facts, as well as with a number of passages in the Bible. ¹

Rather than struggle with these chronological difficulties, the Watch Tower Society, then, prefers to focus on the "signs" since 1914. In this it is not alone, as famous writers from other religious organizations focus on the same signs such as

¹ For a full presentation of these facts, see Carl Olof Jonsson, *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, 2nd edition, Commentary Press. Atlanta, 1986.

being evidence of the proximity of the conclusion. What are these "Signs"?

. ***What sign did Jesus really give?***

A few days before his death, Jesus foretold the destruction that would come to the temple in Jerusalem. (Matthew 24:1, 2). Because of this prediction some of His disciples asked Him some questions:

Tell us when this will happen, and what sign will indicate the moment of your coming and the end of the world. - Matthew 24:3, BFC. ²

Before really answering these questions, Jesus gave several warnings to his disciples:

Make sure no one cheats on you. For many men will come using my name and say: "I am the Messiah! "And they shall deceive many. You will hear the sound of wars near and news of wars far away; do not be afraid: it must happen, but it will not yet be the end of this world. One people will fight against another people, and one kingdom will attack another kingdom; there will be famines and earthquakes in different regions. All these events will be like the first pains of childbirth. - Matthew 24:4-8, BFC.

In addition to wars, famines, and earthquakes, Jesus mentions in the following verses, persecutions, false prophets, and an increase in contempt for the law. Were all these occurrences to be understood as irrefutable signs identifying the return of Christ and the conclusion of the age? Or, on the contrary, did not Jesus rather advise His disciples not to be deceived by such events?

Prudent and wise Bible commentators have often shown that nowhere does Jesus identify these events as the "sign" of his coming, but rather seems to advise his followers not to draw such conclusions when disasters or catastrophes of this kind occur. From the beginning of his response, his

2 In *the Watch Tower Society's New World Translation* this text was rendered to support the idea that Christ is invisibly present: "Tell us : When will these things take place, and what will be the sign of ~~your presence and the~~ completion of the system of things?" However, although "presence" is the primary meaning of the Greek word *parousia*, it has also been used in a technical sense to mean "the visit of a ruler." Virtually all Greek scholars in the NT today agree that the word *parousia*, when used in relation to the Second Coming of Christ, is actually used in a technical rather than a primary sense. The context and manner of its use in this connection in the Bible itself is consistent with this view. This theme will be dealt with later in this publication. (See Appendix B.)

warning was: "do not be misled. Do not be terrified. Such things must happen, but the conclusion is not yet here." They also show that the Greek word for "sign" (to sēmeion) in Matthew 24, verse 3, is in the singular and therefore could hardly refer to several different events.

They further noticed that Jesus does not really describe His return until His words in verses 27 to 31, following His prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. Then, for the first time, he begins to speak of the sign of his coming, "the sign of the Son of Man" (verse 30), here again in the singular as in verse 3.

This "sign", according to Jesus' words, was to "appear in heaven," not on earth. The Watch Tower Society admits this. They are, therefore, forced to make a distinction between "the sign of the Son of Man... in heaven," appearing at His coming for the final judgment, and "the sign" of His coming (parousia), which they say they have seen in wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, et cetera, since 1914.³ In this way they not only get two different kinds of "signs" of Christ's coming - they also get two different adventures, one in 1914 and another at the "great tribulation. »

However, Jesus' introductory words should apparently be understood as a *warning* against wrong conclusions - "Be careful that no one deceives you... don't be worried." There would be wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes and other problems. His followers should also expect to be subjected to hatred and persecution, not just once, but many times in the future. They should endure them until the end. Before then the gospel of the kingdom preached by Jesus and His disciples would reach all the nations of the earth. After that the end would come, not before (Matthew 24:4-14). After giving this overview of future history, Jesus then began to answer the questions of the four disciples: their question about the destruction of the temple (verses 15-22) and their question about His return and the conclusion of the age (verses 27 and following).

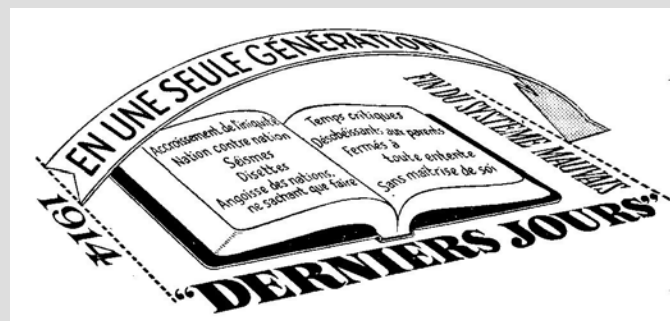
The announcers of the time of the end generally do not accept this natural understanding of Jesus' response. Many popular commentators of prophecy today are keen to

³ *God's Millennial Kingdom Approached* (1973), pp 326-328.

interpret Jesus' initial words about the difficulties ahead, not as a preliminary introduction, but as **the answer** to the question about the sign of his coming and the conclusion. The Watch Tower Society, for example, justifies the *singular* form of the Greek word "sign" by saying that the sign itself is composed of *a number of different characteristics*. They refer to the sign as a "*composite sign*." When all these events, wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes and other tribulations occur at the *same time*,

THE LAST DAYS AND THEIR SIGN

REPRESENTED BY A RELIGIOUS SOURCE



The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life page 95.



Jesus' words about wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, contempt for the law, et cetera, are understood by many commentators to be "the sign" of His coming. The Watch Tower Company claims that we have seen this "composite sign" on a scale not seen since 1914. If this theory is applied, it means that the parousia of Christ and the last days began this year and that Armageddon will come during the 1914 generation.

during the same generation, then we are able to discern the "sign" proving that Christ has returned and is present invisibly.

Against this interpretation one could counter this: has not every generation seen this "composite sign"?

Haven't we always had wars? Some historians show that in the last 5,600 years we have only had a total of 292 years without wars. Others believe that there may never be any years without war at all!

Has not every generation been afflicted by famine and pestilence?

As history shows, wars have typically had famines and plagues in their wake. The three scourges were almost always inseparable and as a result more people died from famine and plague than from war.

Hasn't each generation experienced a number of great earthquakes "in one place after another"? The lists of earthquakes drawn up by modern experts over the past two thousand years provide abundant proof of this.

The past history of mankind has also been marked by fluctuating periods of violence and an increase in contempt for the law, as well as persecutions of various Christian groups who preached the Gospel of the Kingdom.

So we ask: How can events such as wars, famines, plague, earthquake and so on, distinguish this twentieth century (or a period of it) when history shows that every generation since the time of Jesus has been struck by this so-called "composite sign"?

The response of most end time advertisers is the astonishing increase and intensification of these signs that make them a "sign" these days.

In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, for example, speaking of the disciples' questions for a sign reported in Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 3, Hal Lindsey explains :

In response Jesus gave many general signs involving world conditions that He called "the pains of childbirth" He said that these signs, such as religious apostasy, wars, revolutions, earthquakes, famine, etc., would increase in frequency and intensity like the pains before the birth of a child. - page 52.

While the Watch Tower Society argues that this increase and

While the intensification has been evident since 1914, Hal Lindsey argues that it has been happening since 1948, the starting point of his "generation" of the end time.

Robert Pierson, the Seventh-Day Adventist writer in *Good-bye Planet Earth*, while not setting specific dates, takes a similar position on the meaning of our time. When he speaks of the wars of this century, he refers to them as being "on a scale the world has never before witnessed" "elements of destruction that frighten the human imagination"; when he deals with natural disasters, he describes nature as now being "On the subject of famine, he cites predictions of "increased famine, pestilence, and slaughter" - all of which are presented as the indisputable proof that "Jesus will return soon. Jesus will return soon" - pages 8, 15, 19-21,23.

Dr. Billy Graham is a little more cautious in saying that these signs are 'currently attracting our attention' and will intensify in the near future. Commenting on the Four Horsemen of Revelation - symbols of war, famine, pestilence and death - he writes:

In the future - a time unknown to us - the terrible hooves of the four horsemen will finally trample on the scene of human history with unprecedented intensity, bringing in their wake deception, war, famine and death on a scale that staggers the imagination?

How close are these riders now? I don't know! All I can say for sure is that every sign tends towards one thing: the four horsemen are getting closer, seeming more and more deafening every day... May God open our ears to hear and our eyes to see their warning before it is too late! ⁴

In a rather more flamboyant style, the World Church of God's publication *Famine - Can We Survive It?* states on pages 89 and 90:

These situations of war, plagues and FAMINES were predicted long ago. They were predicted centuries ago by the greatest news-saver who ever lived - Jesus Christ. Christ told His disciples to watch for the signs of the times...

⁴ Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 1983, pp 74, 76. In this book the author argues that wars, famines, plagues, et cetera, in the early days were only "the forerunners of the horsemen," and now states that "the shadows of the four horsemen can... be seen galloping all over the world. " -pages 9, 77.

Jesus Christ, the world's greatest news bringer, told His disciples what would happen in OUR generation-the generation that would see these things come to pass (see [Matthew 24] verse 3). These fantastic predictions are now being fully REALIZED!

Faced with this evidence that each era has had its share of wars, famines, plagues, et cetera, these commentators thus argue, as does the Watch Tower Society, that it is the increase in these difficulties that is the sign of the conclusion.

But was it really this aspect of the listed events that Jesus focused on? Concerning wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes, he did not tell his disciples that they should seek an increase in these afflictions.⁵

Nevertheless, the commentators of the endtime, directly or implicitly, support the position that Jesus must have had in mind an increase in the plagues he mentions. Otherwise these "signs" would not be signs, having nothing distinctive about them. Many of these religious writers simply present their proclamations with usually very dramatic descriptions - of modern-day calamities and difficulties, without trying to defend their position in the face of evidence to the contrary. The Watch Tower Society, on the other hand, seems compelled to provide this defense and regularly attempts to "bolster" confidence in their proclamations. Consequently they are quick to argue in the face of any evidence to the contrary and do the impossible to prove that a single increase in the calamitous events actually occurred since 1914.⁶ Watch Tower Society publications are virtually replete with statements, quotes and figures supporting their proclamation that wars, famines, plagues and earthquakes before 1914 were mere trifles compared to their magnitude after that year. The Watchtower of^{1^{er}} February 1985 page 15, succinctly and explicitly states their position:

Certainly, there had been wars, food shortages, earthquakes and "plagues" between the beginning of our era and 1914 (Luke 21:11). However, these phenomena cannot be compared to those that have taken place since that memorable year when the Gentile era came to an end.

⁵ Although Jesus went on to speak of the increase in contempt for the law, he apparently did not refer to the world in general, which has always been lawless. Rather, he seems to be referring to what would happen in the Christian congregation. Obviously, it took some time for the predicted apostasy to reveal itself.

⁶ See *Your Survival on a New Earth* (1984). Pages 22,23.

A person seeking the truth, however, must ask himself: **What is the authenticity of the surprising image of our times presented by different religious sources when this image goes against the past history of humanity? Is the encrypted evidence they display sincerely faithful? Has the *whole* proof been proven, or have the opinions and interpretations of the writers influenced their choice of figures and quotations in a way that distorts the real facts?**

A careful examination of their quotations and figures may surprise millions of people who, upon reading these publications, believe that world conditions radically mark their time as "special", as a unique period foretold by biblical prophecy.

. *Is it necessary to make a conscientious examination of the so-called "sign"?*

Many maybe repulsed at the thought of doing such a critical investigation. Especially among the millions of Watch Tower affiliates, many may feel that to do so would be playing into the hands of the "mockers" defying the proclamations of Christ's "presence" announced by Jehovah's Witnesses. The Watchtower of July 15, 1979, page 13, categorizes those who refute its proclamations as lawless people and false prophets, relying on Peter's Second Letter, chapter three, verses 3 and 4. The Watchtower of 1^{er} August 1980, page 19, declared that "mockers" might be found "in the Christian congregation" and spoke of them as "disregarding the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the 'presence' of Christ. »

Similarly, after discussing what he presents as the signs of the final conclusion, the Adventist author Pierson in *Good-bye Planet Earth*, we find this subtitle : **Don't you believe it? Then You Are a Sign!** (page 51). He too quotes Peter's words about mockers in the last days.

This would mean that, anyone questioning these sources and their concepts of end times, must automatically be classified as Godless. Is this a fair and honest use of the text? Are "scoffers" described by the apostle Peter as people who firmly believe (as we, the writers, do) that "Jehovah's Day will indeed come as a thief" and

will mean the destruction of godless men and an evil system of things? Certainly not. Rather, as the context shows, the apostle describes people who have completely stopped believing in the eventual - and yet certain - coming of this day of divine judgment, *people who still doubt its coming*.

⁷ What we point out with the Bible and historical facts in connection with certain teachings on alleged evidence marking our time, in no way reflects the slightest doubt about the prophecies of the Bible concerning the "presence" of Christ. On the contrary, we have seriously considered some of the often neglected words in the great prophecy of Christ's *parousia*, which we also advise our readers to consider honestly. Jesus foretold that "Many" would mislead people on his behalf, claiming that "the **time is very near now**." True disciples should not be impressed, for Jesus added at the same time:

"never follow men like these." Luke 21:8.

Thus for every Christian, simply closing his eyes and passively clinging to the doctrines of religious authorities could be a serious and even fatal error. In an article entitled "Misconceptions Can Be Dangerous" the magazine *Wake Up!* dated February 22, 1971, dwelt on some of the erroneous reasoning in popular ideas of such things as frostbite and quicksand, and then went on to say :

Adding faith to false and inconsiderate religious ideas that contradict the Bible is even more dangerous. Indeed, to do so not only endangers present life, but eternal life. Truth and eternal life go hand in hand... The way to wisdom is to rid our minds of common misconceptions! - page 6.

⁷ A Jehovah's Witness reader might be impressed by the following quote from the Watch Tower Society's book *Choose the Best Way of Life* (1979), with which the present writers wholeheartedly agree: "In fulfillment of Peter's words, the voice of scoffers is still heard today. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) (2 Peter 3:3, 4) The mocking voice is still heard today. (2 Peter 3:3, 4). They actually say: "What reason is there to believe that the Son of God will destroy the ungodly and reward his disciples? Nothing ~~has changed since the~~ time of creation. The processes of life continue as they have from the beginning, and there is no indication that they will come to an abrupt end in the near future. Men marry, women are given in marriage, children are born, and humans continue to age and die." Thus, they imply that the Lord Jesus Christ will never come to execute His judgment or that this event will take place in such a distant future that it does not concern us at this time. "It is clear that such people expect to see something unusual, striking, and unprecedented in their time, as evidence that the foretold event would actually occur. Peter's words indicate that they would not see such a thing, and for this reason they would not exercise faith in the *certainty* of that day of judgment. In whatever age we live in, as mortals, we all ultimately face an eminently crucial conclusion - that of our lives. The quality of our personal relationship with God and his Son up to this moment should surpass all other concern and importance.

Indeed, "love of truth" is essential to salvation and may at times require us to research and learn. (Compare with the Second Letter to the Thessalonians 2:10.) If the reader does so, he must, of course, keep an open mind. "As the Watch Tower Society advises in the November 22, 1984, **issue** of *Awake, Wake Up*, **"an open mind means being receptive to new ideas. It means being willing to examine and judge information without prejudice.**"pages 3, 4.

In presenting this information and data on calamities throughout history, the authors of this book could not, for reasons of space, present all the information available. Neither are we extensive on all the biblical texts that we believe could improve the explanations presented. Nevertheless, we will continue our study and will seek and welcome constructive criticism, as well as other information relevant to the topics covered in this publication.

Now consider the evidence of famines, earthquakes, plagues and wars in this century compared to the past. We believe the reader will find that the facts are quite different, at times blatantly different, from what many people claim today.

CHAPTER 2

2 Famine - Is it worse today?

A very disturbing DESCRIPTION of the situation regarding food on earth comes to us through the many writings dealing with the end times. The authors understand Jesus' words "there will be famines," and the symbols in Revelation chapter six, as the prediction of a world famine of enormous and incomparable dimensions.

In 1982, best-selling author Hal Lindsey wrote in *The Promise* (page 198) :

Jesus foretold a great outbreak of world famine on a scale never before known to man. Today headlines in Time, Newsweek and daily newspapers proclaim devastating facts for millions of people dying directly from malnutrition at this time. And predictions estimate that millions more will die of starvation in the coming years...

In *Approaching Hoofbeats*, pages 151 and 153, Dr. Billy Graham explains: **Following the white and red horses, famine will prevail on earth. Millions of people will starve to death. Millions more will experience malnutrition... the black horse and its rider are God's warning of what humans will suffer if they refuse to obey His orders.**

The black horse and his rider are screaming in our direction. The warning rides are the cries of children dying of malnutrition and disease.

Seventh-Day Adventist writer Robert Pierson warns:

... in at least thirty-two countries today, ... according to some estimates, seven hundred million (more than three times the population of the United States of America) are facing malnutrition right now ... Speaking of the signs of His Second Coming Jesus said, 'There will be famines ... everywhere' ... another unmistakable sign of the times we live in. Jesus is coming back soon! - *Good-bye, Planet Earth* pages 22, 24.

A publication of the World Church of God, *The Black Horse Famine* (1976), at page 48, makes these remarkable proclamations:

There have always been famines, but there have never been any like the ones the world is experiencing now. Usually famines in the past occurred in conjunction with droughts, wars and other natural or man-made disasters. Today the global famine is being introduced into *the structure of society*. Famine is now a way of life for millions of people...

Today's famines differ both in nature and magnitude from those of the past. Never before have they caused so much suffering for hundreds of millions of people in all periods of history as they do today.

There is no doubt that, for certain regions of the world, the situation is truly worrying. It is equally indisputable that

The report states that "millions of people are currently dying directly from starvation", including millions of "children". The question is: is this situation specific to our time or to the twentieth century? Is it unusual and distinctive enough to signify a divine sign of impending disaster?

The authors cited above show that they see this as disturbing evidence of the prediction of a global famine, already there or imminent. The Watch Tower Society is just as explicit as the World Church of God, announcing several times in its publications that a time of famine unparalleled in human history has undoubtedly arrived. The proclamation is, in fact, that this time of incomparable famine for humanity has seen its dramatic fulfillment since the second decade of this century.

What's the truth about that?

. *How many people are really malnourished today?*

There seems to be considerable confusion as to how many people in the world are actually suffering from famine today. In the Watch Tower's publication *Happiness - How to Find It* (1980) a newspaper article is quoted as saying, "At least one resident of the earth affected by a form or other from malnutrition. "(Page 149) On the same page, however, another article is quoted as follows "more than a billion humans will not have

enough to eat this year. "1 That would be more than one in four people on earth. An earlier publication, *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Reconquered* (1958), quoted a United Nations food expert, Josue de Castro, as saying that in reality *two-thirds of humanity* is undernourished or, as the Watch Tower Society "uses" the phrase, "slowly dying of hunger. According to de Castro, another expert, W. Page Forrest, has put forward the figure of *85 percent of the world's population*. The Society's latest statements

Watch Tower have concluded that "Since 1914 famines or famine have dietary deficiencies have affected twice as many people as in the last 900 years," and "Until then, the entire earth had never been short of food. »2

What is the truth behind these contradictory statements? How many people are really suffering from hunger or "lack of food" today: "one in eight" (12.5 per cent), "more than a billion" (25 per cent), "two-thirds of humanity" (67 per cent), "85 per cent", or "the whole earth" (100 per cent)?

. ***Famine and malnutrition - two different things***

Discussing the different opinions among experts on the magnitude of the famine, Dr. Pandurang V. Sukhatme notes that: "**The first and fundamental difficulty arises from the lack of a precise definition of famine.**" »3 Up to the present day, famine and starvation have simply meant *starvation due to lack of food*. Thus *the Encyclopedia of the Humanities* defines famine as

"A state of extreme hunger suffered by the population of a region as a result of shortages in food reserves. »4

Modern science, however, has broadened the concept of "famine" to include what is called "hidden famine" or *malnutrition*, referring to *a lack of one or more of the more essential foods in the diet such as different kinds of amino acids, minerals and*

1 As presented in The Watch Tower of July 15, 1983, page 7, this statement is taken from the Vancouver Sun, which in turn claims that it is an estimate by the FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.) See also the Society Watch Tower book *Comment raisonner à partir des Écritures* (1985), page 235, where the same proclamation is repeated. The FAO, however, never said that a billion people were dying of hunger, which may be the impression the average reader would get from this carelessly worded report from the press.

2 *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Reconquered* (1958), pages 181, 182.

3 Pandurang V. Sukhatme, *Feeding India's Growing Millions* (London, 1965), page 1. Among the difficulties, says Sukhatme, are the lack of food standards and the limitations of available figures on food consumption. (page 2)

4 Franc A. Southard, Jr. in his article "Famine" in *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6 (New York, 1931), page 85.

vitamins. This "hidden famine" was little known in previous centuries due to the lack of knowledge of these essential foods, although this "hidden famine" was even more widespread in the past than it is today, as this study will show.

When modern food experts talk about hunger today, it is usually in this broader sense. Josué de Castro, quoted by the Watch Tower Society, states that two-thirds of the human race is malnourished, uses "hunger" in this sense, as Lord Boyd Orr, the first director of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), explains in the foreword to Castro's book *Geography of Hunger* :

The term 'famine' used by the author must be defined. In the past it has been used to describe the lack of food to satisfy the appetite and the number of starvation deaths limited to people who have lost weight, who have died from complete starvation like starvation. The author, however, uses it in the modern sense as the lack of one of the forty or so food constituents necessary for health. The absence of one of them causes premature death and not necessarily thinness due to a shortage of the various foods that can be eaten.

Showing the effect of this adjusted definition of hunger on world hunger estimates, he adds :

If hunger is used in this sense, according to the best pre-war estimates, two-thirds of the world's population is hungry. A recent American committee has estimated this figure at 85%.⁵

It is therefore necessary to clearly distinguish famine from hunger in the old (and still current) sense, from the modern concept of malnutrition.⁶ So how many people are *hungry* today and how many are *malnourished*?

5 Lord Boyd Orr in the preface to *Geography of Hunger* by Joshua de Castro (London, 1952), page 5,6. A revised and expanded edition of this book was published in 1973 and translated into English in 1977 by *The Geopolitics of Hunger*. This edition will be used in the following references.

6 M. K. Bennett, in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (written by David L. Sills 1968), points out: "Insufficiency of a particular vitamin or mineral in a population, with the serious consequence of scurvy, beriberi, pellagra, rickets or impaired vision, *is not starvation*, although in recent decades the term has been applied to such deficiencies. (Vol. 5, page 322) Strictly speaking, *famine* should also be distinguished from *undernourishment*, which is defined as "an insufficient number of calories in the diet" (Sukhatme, page 2). Famine, in turn, "should be distinguished from the more or less constant undernourishment of chronically poor districts". (Southard, page 85)

. ***The extent of famine and malnutrition today.***

More recent and in-depth surveys of the extent of hunger today have shown that the earlier pre-war estimate that two-thirds of humanity was malnourished was wrong. Dr. P.V. Sukhatme, for example, after a very thorough investigation of the extent of hunger in India, concluded that about 50 per cent of its population was undernourished or malnourished or both.⁷

If this is true of India, which until recently was one of the countries most affected by hunger, then the proportion of malnourished people worldwide must obviously be much lower, well below 50 per cent.

Probably the most conclusive survey of the extent of hunger today was published before the World Food Conference in Rome in 1974.⁸ The survey showed that between 460 and 900 million people in the world suffer from varying degrees of malnutrition or undernourishment, i.e. *12.5 to 25 percent of humanity*. Half of them are *children*, of whom about 10 million are estimated to suffer from *severe* undernourishment or *starvation*.

The same estimates that indicate that one billion people are malnourished or undernourished also show that of these, *no more than 40 million are actually starving*. That is *less than one percent of humanity*.⁹

The question is this: When Jesus in his introductory words of warning that in addition to wars and earthquakes, "there will be famines... in various places" (Matthew 24:7), did he then think of the usual and recurring meaning of catastrophic famines in various places? Or did he think of famine in the modern sense?

7 Sukhatme, page 75. Since Sukhatme's survey twenty years ago, the food situation in India has improved significantly.

8 The United Nations document *Assessment of the World Food Situation*, Article 8 of the Temporary Agenda (World Food Conference 1974), E/Conf, 65/3. More recently, FAO

9 Swedish food experts Lasse and Lisa Berg in *Mat och mala* ("Food and Power"), (Avesta, SWEDEN, 1978), pp 20-25. The magazine "Awake !" of 22 October 1984, indirectly endorsed these figures by quoting the *Unesco Courier* saying that "Chronic famine remains a problem for tens of millions of people" while "Almost 500 million human beings, stagnating in poverty, are under the daily threat of famine." (page 6) Thus *hundreds of millions* of people are *threatened* by famine (i.e. malnourished), but *tens of millions* are actually starving. Moreover, estimates of between 500 million and one billion malnourished/undernourished are serious exaggerations. They have recently been criticized by a number of leading food experts who would like to reduce this figure to 240 million or less. See the famous food expert D. Gale Johnson in *The Resourceful Earth*, edited by Julian L. Simon and Herman Kahn (London, 1984), pages 76,77).

i.e. chronic undernourishment or malnutrition due to insufficient calorie intake and lack of one or more essential nutrients in the diet?

The answer seems obvious. The Greek word translated as "famine", *limôs*, refers to famine in the ancient sense: famine due to a shortage of food. It is also remarkable that the word is used in the plural, *limoi* ("famines"). This does not indicate any chronic condition of undernourishment, but rather catastrophic episodes of famine "in different places".

The application of the biblical expression to the state of chronic undernourishment and malnutrition prevalent in some parts of the world today, as the Watch Tower Society does, as well as the limitation of this application to the period beginning in 1914, is not only in conflict with the natural understanding of Jesus' statement. It also conflicts with the fact that the greater part of humanity has obviously suffered from malnutrition and undernourishment since time immemorial as well as from those times when Jesus pronounced his prophecy.

Have we seen today an increase in famines more severe than ever before experienced by humanity? Are raw materials hungry - or indeed even "hidden hunger" - now eating away at essential parts of humanity as never before? In the following discussion a review of the history of famines in different parts of the world will answer these questions. Then we will take a closer look at malnutrition and especially child mortality resulting from malnutrition and undernourishment in comparison to this problem in the past.

. ***"The greatest famine in history" - before or after 1914?***

For decades the Watch Tower Society has proclaimed that the greatest famines and shortages in human history occurred shortly after the First World War:

After the First World War, humanity experienced food shortages like never before. - *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1976, page 250.

World War I was followed by the greatest famine in history. - *Let Your Kingdom Vienna*, 1981, page 122; see also *You Can Live Forever on a Paradise Earth*, 1982, page 150.

What famines or food shortages followed the First World War? *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1983, explains:

In 1921, famine caused the death of about 5 million people in the USSR. In 1929, famine caused about 3 million deaths in China. In the 1930s, 5 million people died of starvation in the USSR. (Page 5)

However, were they the worst famines in history? No. In the same edition of *The Watchtower* the author, who had obviously done some research on the subject, felt compelled to contradict the very first statements on the subject and to admit :

... it is true that history is full of famine stories as old as the days of Abraham and Joseph to the greatest recorded famine of all time, the one that struck China between 1878 and 1879. (Genesis 12:10; 41:54). Estimates of the number of Chinese who died during this famine range from 9 to 13 million. - *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1983 page 3.

This confession is all the more interesting since the publications of the Watch Tower Society had been proclaiming for years that the greatest famine *in China* occurred *after* the First World War! Alluding to the drought in northern China in 1920-1921 *the book Paradise Lost in Paradise Reconquered* (1958) said :

Shortly after the First World War, China experienced the "Great War".

the greatest famine of all time - with 15,000 deaths every day... and 30,000,000 people affected. "¹⁰ The 15,000 deaths per day may seem impressive at first glance - until it was learned that the situation was quickly improved by government and private philanthropic efforts. According to the best information available, half a million people died during this famine. "¹¹ Although this is a frightening figure, the number of deaths during the many other famines in China *before* 1914 was much higher, as will be shown later.

As a result, the "greatest famine" and "worst food shortages" *in* human history *did not* "follow World War I," as the Watch Tower Society had told its readers for decades in its publications. Neither was the "greatest famine" in China "shortly after World War I".

¹⁰ page 181. This statement has been repeated several times since then. See, for example, "*May Your Kingdom Vienna*" (1981), page 122 and "*You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into Paradise*" (1982), page 150.

¹¹ Ping-ti Ho, *Population Studies of China, 1368-1953* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), page 233; Walter H. Mallory, *China: The Land of Famine* (New York, 1926), page 2.

World War". The greatest famines, the greatest and worst shortages belong to past centuries - and still do.

However, even if real famines have not increased *in magnitude individually* since 1914, it could be argued that they have increased in *number* since then. This is indicated by the author of the same article in The Watchtower cited below:

Have we experienced more food shortages of this kind than generations before us? We cannot say so formally, because the figures we have are incomplete. However, this century has undoubtedly had its share of natural disasters. It has also suffered more from war than any other comparable period in history. That is why it is quite possible that there have indeed been more food shortages in our time than ever before. ¹²

In this statement the author of The Watchtower makes another surprising confession not found in the Society's older publications. He acknowledges that one cannot say for *sure* that famines have increased in number, *only* that this *may* be the case! If there is no definite proof of their increase in *extent* or *number* since 1914, how then can we say that they are the "sign" of something?

But the author, in spite of his caution, did not present the whole truth about past famines. Although it is true that the figures are incomplete, there is enough information preserved to show that the number of famines has *decreased* in this century compared to the older ones! This will become evident by having an overview of the famines produced in China, India, Europe and other parts of the world.

. *The Shortages and Famines Study*

Of the three calamities, wars, famines and plague, famines have been the least studied subject. As de Castro noted, there was very little written about famine until the end of World War II: **"For every study of famine there were a thousand publications on wars."**¹³

The reason the researchers seemed to avoid the subject was not that famine had been an insignificant problem in the past. Quite the contrary! The scale and destructive effect of famines may really have been too terrifying to invite researchers to take a closer look. The "loss of life from famine is

¹² The Watchtower, July 15, 1983, page 7.

¹³ Josué de Castro, *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York and London, 1977), page 50.

considerably greater than those produced by wars and epidemics combined. ¹⁴ It has rightly been said that history "will only be truly understood when a terrible book is written - the History of Famine. "If that book were written, observed E. Prentice, "a new light would be shed on the history ... of the whole world - because *from time immemorial and in all parts of the world, men have suffered from famine.*"¹⁵

A first careful investigation of famines was made by Cornelius Walford of the *Royal Historical Society* in England, who published two very long articles on the subject in the *Journal of the Statistical Society* in 1878 and 1879.¹⁶ In the first article Walford included a list of more than 350 major famines in different parts of the world from 6 B.C. to 1878 A.D.¹⁷

Since then other studies have appeared, usually limited to certain regions or countries covering different periods and eras. In 1892 Dr. Alwin Schultz published a table of famines in Germany during the years 1300-1499.¹⁸ A very long study of famines in Europe from 700 to 1317 A.D. was published by Fritz Curschmann in 1900.¹⁹ Léopold Delisle, for his part, published a list of famines in France in 1903, covering the period 1053-1414 A.D.²⁰ More recently, work has appeared on famines in China, India and other parts of the world, which has been consulted for the information presented in the following sections.

. ***China, "the land of famine"***

China, home to almost a quarter of the world's population, is - and seems to have been for the past 2,000 years - the most populous part of the world.

It was so often struck by devastating famines that it came to be known throughout the world as "the land of the

14 *ibid.*, page 50.

15 *ibid.* page 401 (quoting from E. Parmelee Prentice, *Hunger and History*, New York 1939). B. M. Bhatia, too, emphasizes the worldwide scale of famine in the past: "Before the industrial and commercial revolutions occurred in Europe, famine was a natural calamity for which no part of the world was completely spared." *Famines in India*, 2^e edition (London, 1967), page 1.

16 Cornelius Walford, «The Famines of the World : Past and present,» *Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. XLI, 1878, pages 433-534 and Vol. XLII, 1879, pages 79-275.

17 Walford (1878), pages 434-449. The list also includes some famines from the pre-Christian era. 18 Dr. Alwin Schultz, *Deutsches Leben im XIV, und XV. Jahrhundert*, (Vienna, 1892), pages 639-651. 19 Fritz Curschmann, "Hungersnöte im Mittelalter," *Leipziger Studien aus Democrate Gebiet der Geschichte*, written by Buchholz, Lamprecht, Marcks and Seeliger (Leipzig, 1900), pages 1-217. 20 Léopold Delisle, *Études sur la Condition de la Classe Agricole* (Paris, 1903), pages 627-648.

famine".²¹ As a study in the 1920s showed, the country had experienced almost *one famine per year* for the past 2,000 years:

The subject of food is ancient in China; from the earliest times famines have been a recurring scourge. A recent study by the Student Agricultural Society of the University of Nanjing made the surprising and significant revelation that between 108 B.C. and 1911 A.D. there had been 1828 famines, or one almost every year in one of the provinces. Millions died of starvation.²²

The most terrible of these famines were caused by periodic great droughts: **"in one thousand years, from 620 to 1620, 610 were years of drought in one or more provinces and 203 years of severe famine."**²³ At least fifteen of these famines were so severe that the Chinese resorted to cannibalism.²⁴ Most of these famines resulted in millions of deaths. Numbers, however, are usually partially or completely missing. For four years between 1333 and 1337, for example, Chinese records say that **"4,000,000 people died of starvation in the vicinity of Kiang alone"**: this indicates that millions died in other areas.²⁵

Better information has become available over the last few centuries. A number of very devastating famines have afflicted China during the last century. **"It is said that the four famines of 1810, 1811, 1846 and 1849 claimed a toll of no less than 45,000,000 lives."**²⁶ About them, "it is said that the 1849 famine is said to have cost almost 14 million lives."²⁷ Between 1854 and 1864

"it is believed that another 20 million people died..."²⁸ Then, around 1876-1879, came the great famine reported by the Watch Tower cited earlier as "the greatest known famine," in which between nine and thirteen million human beings perished.²⁹

However, this statement is not entirely accurate. Mallory wrote in

21 Ping-ti Ho, page 227: "Until the revolution of 1949," says de Castro, "this immense country was the famine region par excellence." (page 258)

22 Walter H. Mallory, *China: Land of Famine* (New York, 1926), page 1.

23 de Castro, pages 271, 272.

24 *ibid.*, page 272.

25 Ralph A. Graves, "The Frightening Famines of the Past," *The National Geographic Magazine*, July 1917, Washington D.C., page 89.

26 Graves, page 89.

27 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875* (Londres, 1975), page 133. Voir aussi Maurice Bruce, *The Shaping of the Modern World 1870-1939* (Londres, 1958, page 801.)

28 Hobsbawm, page 133.

29 The Watchtower of July 15, 1983, page 3. The situation in some areas was so desperate that cannibalism was announced "repeatedly". (Ping-ti Ho, page 231).

1926, describes it more correctly as "the worst that has happened in China in the memory of today's inhabitants".³⁰ Some older famines are known to have been even more deadly, for example in China in 1849 (with almost 14 million deaths), or the one that struck India in 1769-1770 (affecting tens of millions of lives).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, already tormented by famine, another severe famine occurred in China in the years 1892-1894, claiming about one million more victims.³¹

Thus, the nineteenth century was a time of disastrous famine for China, during which, according to Castro's estimate, **"some one hundred million people died of starvation"**.³²

How many people today who have read books with exciting titles and striking statements of the signs of the end time are aware of these harsh realities of history? As for the millions of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world, it is doubtful whether a handful of them are aware of the factual evidence on this subject.

What can be said about China in our twentieth century? Has there been an increase in the number or extent of famines (frequency)? Has the famine been greater since 1914 than before? The report shows a very interesting development.

30 Mallory, page 29.

31 Ping-ti Ho, page 233.

32 De Castro, page 53.

CANNIBALISM - A COMMON PRACTICE DURING THE GREAT FAMINE IN CHINA IN 1876-1879



BODIES LIE IN THE ROAD, AND THE SURVIVORS RUSH TO FEED ON THEIR FLESH...

Civilized man in normal times when he wants to eat cooked meat, he goes to the butcher shop and then to his kitchen; but in this year of famine, men eat each other. Letters from the country tell us that if a body is not buried, the hungry people surround it, ready to rush in with their knives and cut up flesh to feed themselves. These people died because they could not get food and the survivors now seek to prolong their lives by eating the dead. Should they have let themselves die instead? How far will starvation take men?

An illustration published in *The Famine in China* (China Famine Relief Fund Committee, London: approx. Kegan Paul and Co. , 1878). (Reissued by page R. Bohr. *Famine China and the Missionary*, Cambridge, 1972, after page 20).

As mentioned, the first serious famine in China after 1914 occurred in 1920-21. Although about half a million people died, it was not the largest famine in that country. Then there was the great famine of 1928-29 which killed more than three million people.³³ None of these came close to the extent of some of the great famines of the nineteenth century which we have talked about.

During the 1930s and 1940s, China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, tried to raise the standard of living of the Chinese people with the help of credits from the Western powers. Despite these efforts, the situation only really improved after the Communist revolution led by Mao Tse-tung in 1949. After that the new government took energetic measures to increase agricultural production and put an end to the famine. This struggle proved to be a remarkable success:

In the space of seven years, China almost doubled its cereal yield, making an average annual increase of about 8 percent to the astonishment of the whole world... This considerable increase in production and the lower costs resulting from better productivity, contributed to the improvement of food standards and freed the Chinese people from the clutches of famine... Thanks to organized and effective political action, the new China solved its biggest problem in ten years: to feed its 700 million inhabitants.³⁴

However, the victory was not complete. A series of particularly severe droughts in 1960 and 1961 - in the midst of the unfortunate economic experiment known as the "Great Leap Forward" - forced China to import large quantities of grain from Western countries. It has long been known that this crisis caused immense suffering and severe famine. But it was not until 1984, when China released the results of the 1964 census, that the real extent of the disaster could be estimated by population experts. Estimates of the number of deaths due to famine, malnutrition and infant mortality between 1958 and 1961 range from 8 to 30 million.³⁵

This famine, then, was completely comparable to some of the worst famines in the past. Yet it is a dark place in an otherwise bright or lightening picture. And, it may be noted, it still wouldn't make the food situation

³³ Ping-ti Ho, page 233; *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1983, page 5.

³⁴ de Castro, pages 298,306.

Chinese anywhere near as critical for the twentieth century as it was during the disastrous nineteenth century.

Apart from temporary setbacks, the food situation in China has continued to improve. In 1973, Castro's world expert wrote:

Since 1962, despite a population increase of about 2 percent per year, agriculture has grown at an annual rate of 4 percent and has been able to keep pace enough to ward off the spectre of famine.³⁶

Thus China, the former "famine country", no longer deserves this name. After having been struck almost every year by famines for thousands of years, this country has gradually achieved in this century, for the first time in its long history, a remarkable liberation from the scourge of famine. Its population has reached over one billion, but strong measures are now being taken to limit its growth. The claim that famines have increased since 1914 is clearly not true for this part of humanity. On the contrary, famine in this country has ceased to the point of practically disappearing in what was until recently the part of the world most tormented by this calamity!

35 *ibid.* pp 306-308 ; Lester Brown, *State of the World* (New York, 1984), page 188 ; *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 7, N° 1 (mars 1981), pp 85-97 ; Vol. 8, N° 2 (juin 1982), pages 277, 278 ; Vol. 10, No. 4 (December 1984), pp. 613-645 ; *Scientific American*. December 1985, page 194. The 1983 *Guinness Book of World Records* (Batan Books, 21^e American edition, page 465) wrongly dated the famine as 1969-71 instead of 1959-61. (Personal correspondence.) Note that estimates of the number of deaths (8 to 30 million) in this famine are not based on contemporary eyewitness reports, but are population estimates made more than 20 years after the disaster. These estimates are based on the Chinese censuses of 1953, 1964, and 1982, the first two of which (1953 and 1964) are of questionable or flawed quality and therefore "of limited use for demographic analysis." » (1).

D. Durand, "Historical Estimates of World Population", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1977, pages 254,255, 260-264 ; J. S. Aird, "Population Studies and Population Policy in China" *ibid.* Vol. 8, No. 2, pp 272-278 ; "Population Trends, Population Policy and Population Studies in China" *ibid.* Vol. 7, No. 1, page 91). While recent estimates of the number of deaths in the 1959-61 famine indicate the true scale of this disaster, it seems curious that a crisis of such severity could not only be overlooked by the current Chinese leadership, but also passed unnoticed by the Western observers who visited China during the disaster. Thus Marshal Montgomery, who stayed there for a long time in 1961 - and would have been at the height of the crisis - in an interview with *The Times* of London explained that "he saw no famine in China, the population seemed well fed and only certain products were rationed after an exceptionally bad year for agriculture." (de Castro, pages 306, 307).

36 De Castro, page 308. As de Castro wrote in 1973, progress has continued. Swedish nutrition experts Lasse and Lisa Berg, in 1978, wrote that in three decades China had "eradicated famine and probably also undernourishment." (*Mat och makt*. Avesta, Sweden, 1978, page 170).

. *Famines in India*

After China, India is the most populous country in the world. If Pakistan and Bangladesh, which until 1947 were part of India, were included, its current population would be close to 900 million, or about one-fifth of the world's population. Situated next to China, India has also experienced more severe famines than any other country.

India has suffered famines since time immemorial. Although there is a lack of detailed and comprehensive accounts of all the famines that occurred during the neo-British period of its history, available evidence suggests that in the past a large-scale famine occurred once every 50 years. ³⁷

Ancient records tell of devastating famines, sometimes accompanied by cannibalism among the starving victims. Entire provinces are said to have been decimated between 1022 and 1052 A.D. -

C. "In 1555 and again in 1596, a violent famine in northwest India resulted in scenes of cannibalism, according to contemporary chroniclers.

"³⁸ In 1630 a devastating drought

"affected Gujarat province and depopulated the main cities." ³⁹

Perhaps the greatest famine ever recorded was the disaster of 1769-1770, during which, according to some estimates, one third of the Indian population perished. In Bengal alone, as many as ten million and perhaps several tens of millions died throughout India. ⁴⁰

The frequency of famines in India seems to have increased at the beginning of British colonization in 1756. Between 1765 and 1858 the country experienced twelve famines and four severe shortages. Six other major famines occurred over a twenty-year period from 1860 to 1880. In the forty-nine years from 1860 to 1908, *twenty were years of famine or shortage*. ⁴¹ Several of these famines each claimed millions of lives. **"The famines of the early 1800s, according to Andre Philip, killed half of the inhabitants of Madras, Mysore and Hyderabad."** ⁴² The famine of 1865-66 took nearly three million

³⁷ B.M. Bhatia, *Famines in India*, second edition (London, 1967), page 1.

³⁸ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism between the 15^e and 18^e century: the Structures of Daily Life* (London, 1981) page 76. Referring to the ancient history of China and India, Braudel notes that "the Famines looked like the end of the world." (page 76)

³⁹ Graves, page 81.

⁴⁰ Walford (1878), page 442; Graves, page 88. *The 1983 Guinness Book of Records*, in a footnote accompanying its table (page 465) of the world's greatest disasters, says in passing that the great Indian famine of 1770 took *tens of millions of lives*. However, we have not been able to authenticate this statement.

⁴¹ Bhatia, pages 7, 8, 58; compare Walford (1878), pp 442-449.

⁴² De Castro, page 320.

lives and that of 1876-78 over five million. ⁴³ The ^{XIX} century ended with two of the most disastrous famines of the century: more than five million people died in the famine of 1896-98 and another 3.25 million in the years 1899-1900. ⁴⁴

What we are seeking to know is whether this twentieth century has seen an increase in the number of famines in India, particularly since 1914. The answer will certainly come as a surprise to some: **"There were no major famines in the country after 1908 until the disastrous Bengal tragedy of 1943,"** says Dr. Bhatia, a leading expert on Indian famines. ⁴⁵

Thus, for nearly three decades immediately following World War I - a period when the Watch Tower Society's "composite sign" would have demanded more famines - the vast peninsula of India, usually famine-stricken, did not contribute to a single famine of this "sign"! Why not? Bhatia explains:

The famine of 1907-08... proved to be a turning point in the long history of food and famine in India. From then on, drought ceased to be a serious concern. Instead, the focus has shifted to the price of food, employment and wages.

Explaining what this meant in terms of the famine in India, he said:

Famine no longer means widespread starvation due to lack of food; but as in other modern economies, an increase in the price of cereals not followed by a proportional increase in wages results in reduced consumption of cereals by the poor, resulting in a situation of near starvation. Famine has turned into the Food Problem that we now know. ⁴⁶

43 Bhatia, pages 68, 70, 74, 108.

44 Ibid, pp 242,261.

45 Ibid, page vi.

46 Ibid, page 270. The Watchtower of July 15, 1983, quotes George Borgstrom, a world authority on nutrition, at page 7, saying that food conditions in India have become "intolerable" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But as Dr. Bhatia, a leading authority on famines in India, shows, what is true for the nineteenth century is not true for the twentieth, since the situation had radically changed. Furthermore, Borgstrom's statement that only ten million people in India are "adequately fed" is also proof that he is wrong in view of Dr. Sukhatme's extensive investigation, which concluded that 50 percent of the population in India is well fed! (See the arguments cited on page 25 under the subheading "The Extent of Famine and Malnutrition Today. ") Borgstrom was one of those
The "apocalyptic prophets" of the 1960s who foretold the coming of a catastrophic famine. Some of them even predicted that many countries, led by India, would experience widespread famines in the 1970s - a prediction that completely failed (See, for example, W, and Paddock page, *Famine - 1975!*, London, 1967, pages 60, 61. This book was cited several times in Watch Tower publications prior to 1975; not since).

Therefore over a period of thirty-five years, from 1908 to 1942, "India has experienced a number of shortages, but not large-scale famine involving considerable loss of life."⁴⁷ Thus the Bengal famine of 1943 was a shock because India was not prepared for it. Before the situation was brought under control, one and a half million poor and destitute people had died of starvation.⁴⁸ Again in 1974, Bengal (then independent from India as was Bangladesh) experienced a famine in which several hundred thousand people died of starvation, a famine which, according to observers, was caused by political causes and could have been prevented.⁴⁹

On India itself within its present borders, Bhatia wrote in 1965: "In the last two decades we have managed to avoid death by starvation in all parts of the country."⁵⁰ This was made possible by massive grain imports and international aid.

Since 1966, Indian leaders have struggled to free their country from dependence on international aid and the situation has gradually improved. De Castro wrote in 1973:

As a result of technical and logistical measures, India's nutritional situation, among the worst in the world until 1966, began to show signs of a turning point. Over the past two years, agricultural production has increased by a miraculous 8 percent.

What about the situation today? India is still a very poor country, yet its economic development has continued. In 1985, *Time* magazine reported:

The greatest gains were made in food production. Fifteen years ago, India was heavily dependent on imported grain to feed its millions of hungry people, and drought was regularly a matter of life and death. The country is now self-sufficient in food. Since 1971, cereal production has increased by 40%, mainly due to the 'green revolution', the scientific programme of using high-yielding cereals and intensive irrigation.

47 Bhatia, page 309. In a footnote Bhatia adds: "Between 1910 and 1940 there were 18 shortages, but no loss of life due to starvation during this entire period." (page 309)

48 Ibid, page 310. One expert put the figure as high as 3.5 million deaths. (Bhatia, page 324)

49 Berg and Berg, page 112.

50 Bhatia, page 342.

51 De Castro, pp 341, 342.

which began in the mid-1960s.⁵²

As in China, the image of famine in India then shows a remarkable evolution. After having been prey to recurrent famines for most of its history, this vast and densely populated peninsula has made great progress in freeing itself from severe famines over the course of this twentieth century. Great efforts have been made to control population growth and to eliminate the eternal problem of poverty in India.

In short, malnutrition certainly exists in India. It is not new or unusual in its history. What is new and unusual is the fact that, instead of getting worse, the situation is much better in this century.

So far our survey has shown that the two most populous famine-stricken countries in the world, China and India, have shown a striking *decrease in* the extent and number of famines since 1914. This is exactly the opposite of the trend we should have seen if the remarkable allegations from various religious sources were correct! In both countries the famines of the 1800s were remarkably worse than those of the 1900s. Let us now turn our attention to another great populated place on earth today - the third in order: Europe.

. ***The history of the famine in Europe.***

Europe (its eastern border stretching as far as the Soviet Union) covers an area slightly larger than the Indian peninsula, but contains just over half the population, or 500 million people. For more than a century famines have been virtually unknown on the European continent. Its population today is usually well fed and often overfed. Malnutrition is only a very small problem in most European countries compared to other parts of the world. Most people live in a happy ignorance of the continent's appalling history of famine. Perhaps they would even welcome it if they knew about it.

This is in stark contrast to the present conditions, when famine was first and continuously raging on the European continent, often killing multitudes of people and partially or totally devastating large areas. The peak seems to have been reached in the Middle Ages. For 600 years, from the tenth to the sixteenth century, "About 400 widespread famines have struck the

⁵² *Time Magazine*, January 14, 1985, page 25. (Compare with *Science* magazine of August 3, 1984.)

Continent and the British Isles.⁵³ Many of them were so dreadful and had such demoralizing effects that even in these Christianized countries people resorted to cannibalism. Throughout these centuries, says Bhatia, "Great Britain and the countries of Western Europe ... were more often threatened by famine than any other part of the globe."⁵⁴

The situation improved somewhat from the seventeenth century onwards, but localized or widespread famines continued to cause considerable devastation from time to time until late in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

That Europe has been kept in an almost permanent state of famine during these centuries is confirmed by a closer look at the situation in different countries. The historian Fernand Braudel writes:

All the national archives show a sad reality. It is estimated that France, although a privileged country, experienced 10 *general* famines during the tenth century; 26 in the eleventh; 2 in the twelfth; 4 in the fourteenth; 7 in the fifteenth; 13 in the sixteenth; 11 in the seventeenth and 16 in the eighteenth. Although the accuracy of this calculation cannot be guaranteed in the eighteenth century, the only mistake would be that it is too optimistic, because it omits hundreds and one could say hundreds of *localized* famines ... as well as all the countries of Europe.⁵⁶

The number of victims is usually absent in the old sources, with the perpetrators confining themselves mainly to vague reports such as, "great mortality", "multitudes of dead", "villages emptied of their inhabitants", "the earth covered with death", et cetera. In several cases it is said that "one third of the population" of the country perished.⁵⁷ To give the reader an idea of the almost indescribable misery that prevailed in Europe during these food disasters, follows a list of a few examples from among the hundreds of famines that fell and ravaged the continent over the centuries.⁵⁸ This list is accompanied by comments taken from ancient texts:

53 De Castro, page 398.

54 Bhatia, page 2.

55 Southard, in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. VI, explains that 450 famines occurred in Europe between 1000 and 1855, (page 85).

56 Le grand historien Fernand Braudel dans *Civilization & Capitalism 15th-18th Century: The Structures of Everyday Life* (Londres, 1981), p, 74.

57 Fritz Curschmann, *Leipzig Studies from the Field of History* (Leipzig, 1900), pages 60-62.

<i>After Christ.</i>	<i>Comments</i>
192	<i>Ireland:</i> a general shortage, "so much so that countries and houses, territories and tribes, had been emptied of their inhabitants. »
310	<i>England:</i> 40,000 dead.
450	<i>Italy:</i> "when parents ate their children. »
695-700	<i>England, Ireland:</i> Famines and Epidemics, "Men ate each other among themselves."
836	<i>Wales:</i> "the land covered with the corpses of men and animals. »
879	<i>Universal</i> famine prevails.
936	<i>Scotland:</i> After the passage of a comet, famine strikes for four years, "before people started eating each other"
963-964	<i>Ireland:</i> an intolerable famine, "parents sold their children as food"
1004-1005	<i>England:</i> "Never before in living memory has a famine been so total. "This year was the biggest famine in England. "» ⁵⁹
1012	<i>England, Germany:</i> endless multitudes died of starvation.
1016	<i>Europe:</i> a dreadful famine all over Europe.
1069	<i>England:</i> Widespread famine, "while men, tormented by hunger in have come to eat human flesh, dogs and horses. »
1073	<i>England:</i> Famine, followed by mortality so ferocious that the survivors could not care for the sick, nor bury the dead.
1116	<i>Ireland:</i> "Great Famine" in which people even ate each other. the others. »
1239	<i>England:</i> Great famine, "people ate their children. »
1316	<i>Europe:</i> Universal scarcity and such high mortality, especially among the poor, that the living could hardly bury the dead.
1347	<i>Italy:</i> A terrible famine has left a large number of people starving. It is followed by the plague.
1437	<i>France and other countries:</i> For two years a great famine swept through France. and many other countries. "In big cities multitudes of people die and are piled up in manure piles. »
1586-1589	<i>Ireland:</i> A time of great famine, "when we eat each other for famine. »
1693	<i>France and neighbouring countries:</i> "An apocalyptic medieval-style shortage that killed millions of people in France and neighbouring countries. »
1696-1697	<i>Finland:</i> One of the most terrible famines in the history of Europe. A quarter to a third of the country's population perished.
1709	<i>France:</i> About a million people died of hunger.
1846	<i>Ireland:</i> The entire potato crop rotted. One million people died of starvation and more fled the country to escape the same fate. It was the last great famine in Europe.

Reading these descriptions, one can only consider oneself lucky to live in the XX^e century. Where today, in any part of Europe, do we read of millions, thousands or even hundreds of people dying from starvation? Where today, even in famine-stricken areas, do we read that people are "eating each other"?

58 Sources: Walford, pages 434-449; Graves, page 84; Braudel, page 74; E. Prentice, *Food, War and the Future* (New York, London 1944), page 14; E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Times of Feast. Times of Famine* (London, 1972), pages, 68, 70; Prof. Eino Jutikkala, "The Great Finnish Famine in 1696-1697", *The Scandinavian Economic Review*. III, 1955, pages, 48-63. Famines in the Roman Empire up to the time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.) were examined by Kenneth Sperber Gapp in his doctoral dissertation *A History of the Roman Famines to Time Trajan*, Princeton University, 1934. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a copy.

59 Some ancient chroniclers state that during the long period of famine from 1005 to 1016 half of the population of the largest island perished! (Graves, page 81.)

among themselves", "eat their children", or "sell their children for food"? It is true that some parts of the world are still affected by severe famine, but conditions have improved significantly. Advances in storage and communication methods have contributed greatly to this improvement, and international aid through the United Nations, the Red Cross, and many other charitable organizations can reach the affected areas quickly on a scale that was completely unthinkable a hundred years ago, provided of course that there are sufficient funds.

As Bhatia points out, famine "was almost banished from Europe after 1850".⁶⁰ The last great famine in this part of the world was the Irish disaster of 1846-47.⁶¹

It is true that famine conditions threatened certain regions of Europe during and after the Second World War, particularly in Poland and Holland, where tens of thousands were threatened with starvation, and many did indeed die of hunger or malnutrition.⁶² Relief measures were taken by the United States, which quickly changed the situation. Supported by the US Marshall Plan of 1947, **"the European economy recovered quickly and the cases of famine rapidly diminished throughout the region. Within a short time Europe returned to its pre-war nutritional level."**⁶³ Since then, the continent has enjoyed steadily increasing prosperity for almost a generation.

60 Bhatia, p. 2.

61 de Castro, pp. 400, 401.

62 Ibid, pp. 421-424.

63 Ibid, pp. 438-440.

THE LAST GREAT FAMINE IN EUROPE: IRELAND 1846-47



The Irish famine of 1846-47 reduced farmers to starvation, forcing them to beg at the gates of hospices. More than a million died of starvation and many more emigrated abroad. This was the last severe famine in Europe, which occurred almost 140 years ago. (Illustration from Collier's Encyclopedia, 1974 edition, Vol. 9, p. 553).

Our study of famines in the three largest population centres on earth, *more than half of humanity*, thus shows a most remarkable evolution: after being the regions

the world's most famine-affected people, our XX^e century has seen these countries gradually freed almost completely from the scourge of famine!

This phenomenal decrease in the number of famines in these countries is more than enough to show that their alleged increase in this century, or since 1914 in particular, is simply not supported by the facts. For the sake of completeness, however, a brief summary will also be given of the past and present food situation in the rest of the world. What can be said of Russia, Japan, Africa, America and other regions with regard to the so-called "food crisis"?
"sign of famine"?

. ***Famines in other parts of the world.***

Our search for the supposed increase in famines in this century has so far been unsuccessful, despite the fact that about half of humanity has been examined. Instead of an *increase* in famine, we have found a *considerable decrease*. Moving on to the other half of humanity, we are going to face the same trend: instead of increases we find decreases. Many large, densely populated areas are completely relieved from famines today. These include North America, the Soviet Union, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and most of Southwest Asia as far west as Afghanistan.

These regions, with a total population of about one billion people today, have been severely affected by numerous famines in past centuries.

In *Russia*, for example, famine has always played a crucial role.

"Imperial Russia... experienced famine almost every year."⁶⁴ It is true that the country was hit by some great famines in the two decades following the First World War, one in 1921 that killed between 1 and 3 million people, and another in 1932-33 that killed five million people.⁶⁵ However, these are only the latest in a long series of other great famines. **"Russia was ravaged eleven times by great famines between 1845 and 1922."**⁶⁶ Among the most serious in the country's history were those of 1891, 1906 and 1911, all of which were

⁶⁴ Southard, p. 86.

⁶⁵ Richard Robbins G., Jr., *Famine in Russia 1891-1892* (New York and London, 1975), p. 172. The statement on page 5 of *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1983 that famine killed "about 5 million people" in 1921 does not seem to be correct. "Reliable sources estimate that there were between 1 and 3 million victims of the disaster." (Robbins, Jr., p.172).

⁶⁶ Southard, p. 86.

produced *before* 1914.⁶⁷ Since the 1940s, advances in agriculture have gradually improved the food situation and famine has ceased to threaten the country.

As far as North America is concerned, with the exception of certain Amerindian communities, such as the Pueblo Indians, it seems that large-scale famines have been absent since the time of Christopher Columbus!

⁶⁸ In the United States, even the problems of malnutrition have been largely confined to certain isolated regions, mainly in the South. Food is abundant throughout the continent.

Japan is another country that has been affected in the past by recurrent famines.

Victory over famine began with the abolition of feudalism in the 1860s, followed by agrarian reforms and the introduction of scientific agricultural methods. Long before the Second World War, these advances **had "put an end to famines which periodically decimated the population and left the survivors with permanent signs of physical degeneration.**"⁶⁹ Not only did the famine disappear, but rising living standards and improved diets, especially since the 1950s, also freed Japan from malnutrition and undernourishment.⁷⁰

Southwest Asia is another region with a history of famine.

"The late 1860s and early 1870s saw an epidemic of famine throughout the region from India in the east to Spain in the west.

⁷¹ Persia alone "lost between 1.5 and 2 million of its inhabitants in the great famine of 1871-73."⁷² Malnutrition and undernutrition continue to prevail in many countries in the region, but with the exception of a severe famine in Afghanistan in the 1970s, the great famines that had affected this vast area have disappeared.⁷³

This does not mean that all serious famines are a thing of the past. Sometimes acute famine conditions develop in parts of the world, particularly in Africa, and in South America, regions where malnutrition and undernutrition are also

67 Graves, p. 89.

68 Graves, p. 90; Southard, p. 87.

69 de Castro, pp. 348-351.

70 *ibid.* pp. 365, 366.

71 Hobsbawm (1975), p. 133.

72 *Ibid.*, p 133.

73 *Wake up!* of February 8, 1973, p. 29. The number of victims is not available.

the most common. Of the two regions, Africa is the most affected. In the early 1980s, three or four years of widespread drought hit the continent with millions of people affected in 24 countries. Ethiopia was obviously the most spectacular case. Out of a population of nearly 40 million, the drought affected between 6 and 7 million people. By the end of 1985 experts estimated that about one million people had died of starvation. There were thousands more victims in Sudan, Mozambique and other countries. However, international efforts by United Nations agencies (UNDP and Unicef), the Red Cross and many other charitable organizations succeeded in preventing a much larger disaster. For example, it is estimated that food aid in Ethiopia in 1985 prevented an estimated five million people from starving to death. For most African countries, the crisis is now over, but aid is still needed in the coming years to prevent another disaster.

Nowadays famines are usually highly publicized. The main reason is that cases of famine have become increasingly rare for mankind. Public interest is now being sparked by the needs of remote areas, with many feeling compelled to give to charities and participate in relief efforts. In the past, newspapers could not match the visual impact of television reports on conditions in these faraway countries; inadequate means of communication severely hampered mass humanitarian aid. Unlike the famines of ancient times, the publicity given to the famines in Africa gave them a dimension of "humanitarian aid".

"official" known to the general public. This led some to believe that the recent famines are the worst ever experienced in Africa.

For example, a series of droughts hit Africa in the early 1970s, affecting Ethiopia and countries bordering the Sahara. The resulting famine killed an estimated 100,000 people.⁷⁴ *Wake Up!* of July 22, 1974, calling it **"the greatest natural disaster" in African history. "(Page 6)**. Such statements, which often appear in articles in various newspapers during disasters of all kinds, say more about the ignorance of the authors of these articles (and those who quote them) than about the history of the country.

⁷⁴The Watchtower, July 15, 1983, p. 6. Estimates vary, with some putting the figure at 200,000 or more deaths. John C. Caldwell, in his study of drought in the Sahel, concluded that the death toll was exaggerated. He stated that "the figures in the newspaper headlines are just fantasies of the imagination and that many apparently serious reports were no better. See *The Sahelian drought and its demographic implications* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, Overseas Liaison Committee Paper No. 8, 1975), p. 26.

Many of the famines that plagued Africa in the past were far greater than those that ravaged the continent in this century. Because of the current importance of the Ethiopian famine, it may be instructive to take a closer look at some of its past famines. In February 1984 representatives of several African countries met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to discuss the climatic situation and drought in that continent. At the conference, the Ethiopian delegation issued a paper on these subjects which included a table of drought and famine cases in their country, covering the period from 253 BC to 1982 AD.⁷⁵ Although the paper pointed out the absence of much information for the centuries before 1800, the table gives a terrifying picture of Ethiopia's past. Most of the famines cited concern not only Ethiopia, but also "Sudan, Egypt and [apparently] the rest of Africa and the Sahel region. (Page 14) Many of these famines undoubtedly cost millions of lives, but "Reports of human mortality are virtually non-existent for the droughts of the period before the famine" (Page 14). the first half of this century. "(Page 25) For the XIX^e century, The table reveals 9 major famines, five of which affected the whole of Ethiopia. For one of them, the famine of 1888-92, the table states: **"About one-third of the population perished.**" (Page 16) In contrast, the recent Ethiopian famine affected nearly 15 percent of the population, of which about 2.5 percent died, far less than the 33 percent who died in the famines of the nineteenth century. It should be borne in mind, of course, that the current population is much larger today than in the past. The seriousness of the present situation, as shown in the Ethiopian document, stems from the fact that the intervals between recurrent droughts tend to become shorter and shorter, and that soil erosion caused by human misuse (deforestation and overgrazing) further aggravates the situation.

Famine, then, is certainly a current and serious problem in Africa. That is the truth. What is not is to say that it is a characteristic of our time. Africa has suffered from famine. "since the earliest antiquity."⁷⁶ The best known are those of Egypt. A series of severe food shortages swept through X^e.

when the Muslims were running the country. The famine of 968 AD.

⁷⁵ A copy of the document was kindly forwarded to us by Anders Johansson, who was present at the Conference as Africa correspondent for Dagens Nyheter, Weden's largest morning paper. Johansson is currently the News Editor of this newspaper.

⁷⁶ De Castro, p. 367.

"swept through 600,000 people in the vicinity of Fustat. "⁷⁷ Another more widespread and disastrous famine occurred in 1025. An even more terrible famine began in 1064 and lasted seven years. Desperate people finally resorted to cannibalism and human flesh was sold on the open market. The same suffering and degradation was brought about by the terrible famine in the years 1201 and 1202, when "the tombs of Egypt were even looted for food. "⁷⁸ Severe famines also affected other countries in Africa. With the famines between 1861 and 1872 the Muslim population of Algeria "fell by more than 20 per cent. "Morocco lost three million people, nearly a third of its population in the famine of 1878-79. Numerous famines struck Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and other North African countries over the centuries, as studies by Dr. Charles Bois show.

⁷⁹

In this century, food conditions have really improved precisely in the countries of North Africa and South Africa. They are not affected by famine, although the nutritional problem is still serious in some regions.

⁸⁰

Similarly, in *Latin America*, a high percentage of the population suffers from undernourishment and malnutrition, with several countries having high child mortality. However, this situation is nothing new in that part of the world. **"It comes to us from the past,"** says de Castro, **"from the time of the first discovery of these lands. "Referring to Central America, he explains: "The deficient regime in Central America and the resulting chronic hunger are in a sense a legacy of pre-Columbian indigenous cultures, although in many ways the situation since then has been aggravated by the short-term methods of colonial exploitation"**, which began in the XVI^e century.⁸¹

Famine and hunger have struck Latin America "throughout history", with food shortages continuing to develop in different regions.⁸² Nothing seems to have fundamentally changed in this century.

Our review of world famines, past and present, is a major focus of this report.

⁷⁷ Graves, p. 75.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* pp. 75, 77, 79.

⁷⁹ Hobsbawn (1975), p. 133. *Revue pour l'Étude des Calamités*, No. 21 (January-December 1944.), Pages 3-26; No. 26-27 (January 1948-December 1949.), Pages 33-71; No. 28-29 (January 1950-December 1951.), Pages 47-62. (This journal was published in Geneva, Switzerland).

⁸⁰ de Castro, pp. 374-376, 388, 389.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 142, 199.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 139.

ends here. The evidence brought to light in the course of our investigation can lead to only one conclusion, namely, that on a global scale famines have *decreased*, and *very noticeably so*, in this twentieth century, including the period since 1914.

This evolution should not really surprise us. Famines in the past were mainly a consequence of ancient agricultural methods (which often led to poor harvests because they were more easily affected by changes in the weather) and a consequence of archaic means of communication, which often brought aid from inaccessible neighbouring areas. The industrial revolution led to better farming tools, more resistant varieties of cereals and improved communications. Then the food situation began to change:

Around 1800 A.D., an evolution began in Western Europe and North America that had virtually eliminated famines and epidemics and also lowered the normal level of mortality, so that the average lifespan increased from 30 years then to 75 years today.⁸³

Chronic malnutrition, however, remains the greatest problem of hunger, as Alfred Sauvy, the great European demographer and population expert, points out:

Although acute and catastrophic famines have almost disappeared, chronic malnutrition is still a problem in many parts of the world.⁸⁴

We are therefore faced with the question of whether malnutrition and undernourishment are indeed more widespread today than in the past.

. *Malnutrition and child mortality in the past and today.*

As mentioned earlier, about one percent of humanity is starving today, most likely the lowest proportion known in history. A much larger number, however, may-

⁸³ The Danish demographer PC Matthiessen in *Befolkningsurvecklingen-orsak och verkan*, second edition (Lund, Sweden, 1972), p. 35. (English translation of the Swedish edition).

⁸⁴ Jan Lenica and Alfred Sauvy, *Population Explosion, Abundance or Famine* (New York, 1962). The quotation is from the Swedish edition (*Befolkningsproblem*, Stockholm, 1965, p. 44).

up to 25 per cent, are malnourished or malnourished or both.⁸⁵ About half of them are children. The majority of those who die from malnutrition or illnesses indirectly caused by malnutrition or undernutrition are children under six years of age.

In reviewing the race of the Dark Horse of Revelation, symbolizing hunger, Dr. Graham draws attention to the plight of children, saying that **"gallops of warning are the cries of children dying of hunger and disease,"** and quotes a Mennonite Central Committee report estimating that **"twelve million infants die from the effects of malnutrition each year in developing countries."** (*Approaching Hoof beats*, pages 153, 154). The picture is certainly a heartbreaking one. There is no doubt about it. What can be rightly questioned, however, is whether this situation is unique to our times.

The Watch Tower Society is clearly trying to reinforce its "famine sign" with figures on child mortality, using these elements to counteract the unparalleled famines of the past :

According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund, 17 million children died of hunger and disease worldwide in 1981. This figure alone exceeds the number of victims of the terrible famine in China in 1878 and 1879.⁸⁶

But to compare *infant mortality in 1981 worldwide with the great famine in China in 1878-1879*, in order to distinguish our era as one eminently affected by famine, is at best a sign of ignorance, at worst a sign of dishonesty. Why is it so? Because, even if it is not as clearly identified as it is today, malnutrition, with the resulting mortality of children, coexisted well with famine in the past.⁸⁷ And like famine, malnutrition was obviously no less a problem in past centuries. The proof is that it was superior.

This is signalled by the undeniable fact that *mortality at all ages*,

⁸⁵As explained earlier (footnote 6), undernutrition refers to the quantity of food ingested, while malnutrition refers to the quality of food. About half of the malnourished, perhaps 10-15 percent of humanity, are also undernourished. Famine is an extreme form of undernutrition; starvation is a widespread food shortage.

⁸⁶The Watchtower, 15 July 1983, p. 7. Infant mortality seems to have decreased somewhat in 1982. The 1983 UNICEF Annual Report shows that nearly 15 million children (40,000 per day) died or remained disabled this year due to malnutrition and hunger-related diseases such as diarrhoea. (Page 3, 28)

⁸⁷The Watchtower, 15 July 1983, p. 7. Infant mortality seems to have decreased somewhat in 1982. Unicef's 1983 annual report shows that nearly 15 million children (40,000 per day) died or remained disabled as a result of related diseases such as diarrhoea. (Pages 3, 28)

and especially child mortality has been steadily declining throughout the twentieth century in virtually every country! ⁸⁸

The Swedish demographer, Professor Erland Hofsten, estimates that child mortality in previous centuries may have been as high as 40-50 per cent in many countries, perhaps even higher in some regions! ⁸⁹

In Sweden, where current statistics on infant mortality have been kept since 1749, the rate was between 20 and 25 per cent from 1749 to 1814, but then it began to decline. By 1985, it had been reduced to 0.7 percent! ⁹⁰ A similar trend has occurred in many other countries, particularly in Europe and North America.

Progress has been slow in developing countries, but here too there has been a marked improvement, especially since the end of the Second World War:

Virtually everywhere in poor countries, mortality has fallen sharply since the war... mortality has decreased at all ages. The decline in child mortality has been particularly marked. ⁹¹

It is true that a large number of children still die of malnutrition in many poor areas of the world. But child mortality in developing countries has declined this century from 40-50 percent to an average of only 9 percent in 1983, although in a few countries it is still as low as 20 percent.

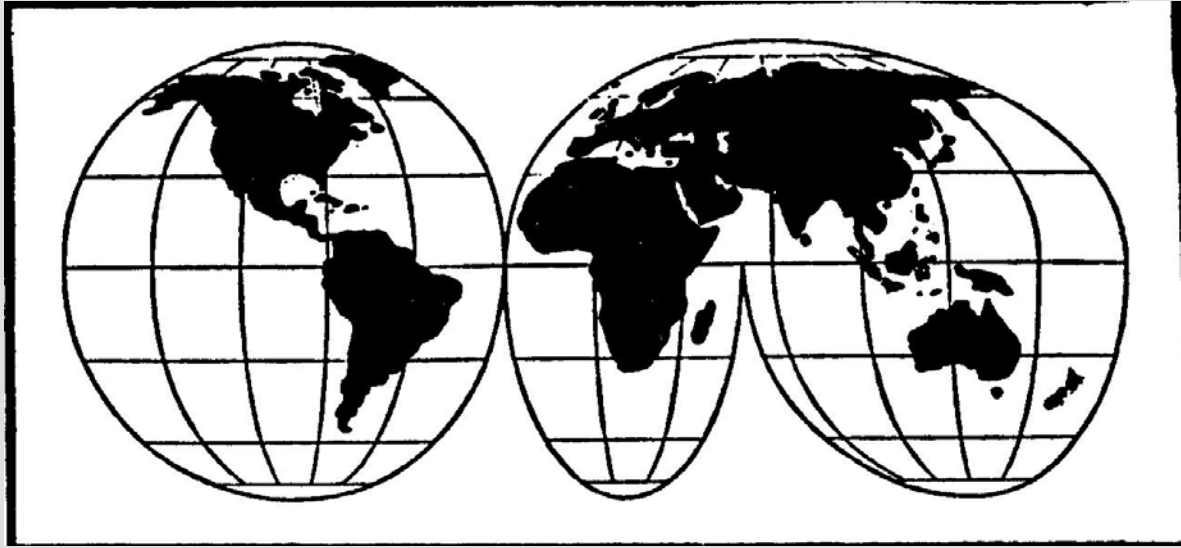
⁹² Modern medicines, better nutrition and better hygiene have reduced death and more than doubled life expectancy in the Western world, and a similar development is also taking place in developing countries, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. ⁹³

⁸⁸This is also, indirectly, admitted in the *Awaken!* of November 8, 1983, where the demographic "explosion" can be explained in *part* as follows: "To WHAT is the demographic explosion of the last part of our century due? To the decrease in the mortality rate resulting from improved medical care and socio-economic conditions. It has also led to lower infant mortality and longer life expectancy." »(p. 8)

⁸⁹Erland Hofsten, *Varldens befolkning* ("World Population", Upsala, Sweden, 1970), pp. 94-96.

⁹⁰According to information regularly disseminated by *Statistiska Centralbyrån* ("The Central Statistical Office") in Sweden.

⁹¹Erland Hofsten, *Demografins Grunder* ("Basics of Demography", Lund, Sweden, 1982), p. 139. ⁹²Hofsten, *Varldens befolkning*, p. 96; 1985 *World Population Data Sheet* published by the *Population Reference Bureau, Inc.*, Washington, D.C.



In 1900, *every nation on earth* had an infant mortality rate of more than 50 per 1,000 births.

By 1983, *84 nations* had reduced their infant mortality rate to less than 50 per 1,000 births.

The authorities consider the infant mortality rate to be the best indicator of social and overall economic well-being. When the rate falls to 5 per cent (= 50 deaths per 1,000 live births) or less, it indicates that the country "meets basic human needs, including food, shelter, clothing, clean water and sanitation. "The fact that in 1900 all nations had an infant mortality rate of more than 5 percent is a strong indicator of their lack of adequate nutrition at that time. The fact that by 1983, 84 nations had lowered this rate to below 5 percent is an excellent indicator that hunger within their borders had ceased to be a fundamental society-wide problem. (Roy L. Prosterman, *The Decline in Hunger- Related Deaths*, San Francisco 1984, pp. 1, 4; *Ending Hunger: An Idea Whose Time Has Come*, published by The Hunger Project, 1985, p. 384; *1985 World Population Data Sheet*, published by the Population Reference Bureau, Inc, Washington D.C., 1985).

93 In China, for example, infant mortality fell from 15 percent in 1950 to 3.8 percent in 1983 (Roy Prosterman, *The Decline in Hunger Related Deaths*, 1984, p. 16; *The World Population Report 1985*). *Unicef's 1983 Annual Report* states that "Between the mid-1940s and early 1970s, there was a 50 percent reduction in the infant mortality rate in many low-income countries," although the rate of progress has since slowed. (P. 7)

Therefore, those who use child mortality figures to try to "prove" that our generation has seen more famine and malnutrition than previous centuries can only do so by ignoring all evidence to the contrary. How many millions of children died each year in previous centuries because of malnutrition and hunger-related diseases? No one can say for sure because global estimates of the annual death rate have never been made. But considering that there were four times or even five times fewer cases of child mortality in many developing countries and up to twenty times fewer in many Western countries, it is easy to realize that in past centuries millions of children would die every year from hunger and hunger-related diseases, despite the fact that the world's population was much smaller at that time! No doubt this exceptional drop in infant and child mortality saved hundreds of millions of lives in developing countries alone. Professor D. Gale Johnson states:

Those of us who denounce the high rate of population growth in developing countries should not forget that the increase in these rates was entirely due to a reduction in the death rate and not to an increase in births. Although largely unrecognized, there has been a considerable reduction in the human suffering, pain and grief of hundreds of millions of parents through reduced infant and child mortality.⁹⁴

In a world where 99 per cent of humanity does not die of hunger, and even 75 per cent is not undernourished, it is not well understood that this situation is something new and unique in the history of humanity. In the past, poverty and daily necessities were so universal that most people saw them as common subjects, unavoidable conditions and therefore rarely questioned - or even mentioned. The book *Hunger and History* explains:

Holidays could be occasions for happy memories, but the poverty of everyday life was so little to say that in a world that regards hunger as an evil that no one in civilized countries should suffer finds it hard enough to understand that need and hunger were the enduring conditions in which previous generations lived ... It is difficult for people living with modern conditions to realize properly what life was like when people relied on the food supply at

94 D. Gale Johnson, *World Food Problems and Prospects* (Washington, D.C. 1975), p. 19.

at a time when poverty was universal.⁹⁵

. *Is a coming famine inevitable?*

In the face of strong evidence that famine and hunger were undeniably greater in past centuries than they are today, those who write texts intended to exacerbate a sense of impending catastrophe often resort to discussing not what has happened or is happening, but what *might* happen.

It is not difficult to find statements from prominent people indicating a likely future tragedy. In the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* (pages 101, 102), J. Bruce Giffing, Chairman of the Department of Genetics at Ohio State University, is quoted as saying that in 1969 **"Unless humanity acts immediately, there will be a global famine in 1985, and the extinction of the human species within the next 75 years."** Of course humanity 'acted' in time, since the year 1985 did not remotely resemble a global famine.

Similarly, *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1983, highlights the rapid increase in world population today, "which is putting a long-term strain on the world's food production capacity"; and quotes dietetic expert E.R. Duncan stating that "this situation is unique in human history. "However, does he conclude that the population will inevitably exceed its food production, causing large-scale famines in the coming decades? No, while acknowledging this possibility, he finds no reason to believe that it will necessarily come. **"Indeed, it could possibly happen, but recent history shows that while the situation is precarious, it is not disastrous, except in a few cases."**⁹⁶ In the long term, he believes that the population "will stabilize at a manageable level."⁹⁷

Many other authorities agree, pointing to the fact that the

95 E. P. Prentice, *Hunger and History*, pp. 10, 137. The French historian Fernand Braudel sums up the world's food situation in the past in this way: "Famine has been coming back with insistence for centuries that it has become an integral part of man's biological diet and daily life. Food shortage and scarcity were continuous and commonplace, even in Europe, despite its privileged position. ("Civilization and Capitalism from 15th to 18th century, p. 73) Like Prentice, Braudel points out that "chronic undernourishment" has prevailed throughout the world in the past. (P. 91) N.W. Pirie, one of England's best known scientists, agrees: "It seems likely that malnutrition, either permanently or at certain times of the year, was the usual condition of mankind and was considered normal. *Food Resources Conventional and Novel*, 1969 (from the Swedish edition, published in Stockholm, 1970, p. 32).

96 E. R. Duncan (édition), *World Food Problems* (Ames, Iowa, 1977), p. 3.

97 Ibid, p, xi.

The rapid population growth that began in the 1940s peaked in the 1960s with an annual growth rate of about 2.0 per cent and then declined. Today, the global growth rate is 1.7 percent, and vigorous efforts are being made in many countries to limit future growth.⁹⁸ If these efforts prove successful, the "population bomb" can be disarmed before it explodes into a global catastrophe.

Just as important as food production has so far kept pace with population growth. "At the global level, the period 1950-1971 saw a doubling of cereal production, while the population grew by only half," Duncan notes. And according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), there is still no shortage of food in the world. On the contrary, overall, there has been a growing surplus of food in recent years. Unicef's 1983 Annual Report states that "food production exceeded population growth in 1982, and, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, increased harvests were recorded for all developing regions." (Page 6). If this is so, why are we not now seeing tens of millions of hungry people and hundreds of millions, perhaps more than a billion, of malnourished or undernourished people?

As the current director of the FAO, Edouard Saouma, explained at the World Food Conference held in Rome in October 1983, these hundreds of millions of people are malnourished or hungry simply *because they are poor*. They cannot afford to buy the food that is actually available. And what is worse: this poverty in underdeveloped countries is kept in place by powerful economic and political interests in developed countries that are unwilling to share their abundance.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The fact is that leading experts now believe that the world population crisis is essentially over. "The demographic bomb is defused," says the August 9, 1984 issue of *New Scientist* magazine. "Passed almost unnoticed in the last 10 years, the annual growth of the world's population has dropped from 2 percent to 1.7 percent... The United Nations now projects that the world population, currently around 4.7 billion, will only reach 6.1 billion in 2000 (20 percent lower than some past estimates) and will stabilize at around 10 billion by the end of the next century." (p. 12) See also the *New Scientist* of 16 August 1984, p. 8, and *Awake!* of 8 April 1984, p. 29.

WHAT LEADING FAMINE EXPERTS SAY TODAY ABOUT THE PAST...

"For the first time, a society is possible in which poverty can be eradicated and with it, misery and hunger. The eradication of hunger is no longer a utopia, it is a perfectly attainable goal" - Josué de Castro in *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York, 1977), pages 447,448.

"In all times and in all countries people have been hungry... yet it seems that man, on average, has gradually achieved a better diet... certainly people today are, on average, a little better nourished than they were 100 years ago". - *The Biology of Human Starvation* by A. Keys, J. Bozek, A. Henschel, O. Michelsen and H. Longstreet Taylor (St. Paul, 1950), pp. 3, 12.

"A world that sees hunger as an evil... finds it somewhat difficult to understand that scarcity and hunger were enduring conditions in which previous generations lived... It is difficult for people living in modern conditions to realize even approximately what life was like during those long centuries when scarcity was universal. "» – E. Parmalee Prentice, *Hunger and History. The Influence of Hunger on Human History* (Caidwell, Idaho, 1951), pp. 10, 137.

"Famine over the centuries has been a frequent phenomenon and has tended to be regarded as a more or less normal calamity ... But all indications are that the frequency [in earlier times] was considerably higher than it is today in the inhabited areas of almost the whole world. "Bruce F. Johnston in his article on the Famine in *Colliers Encyclopedia*, Managing Editor Guillaume D. Halsey, vol. 9 (New York, 1979), pp. 552, 553.

"We might be inclined to infer from visual evidence of famine seen recently on television, in newspapers and magazines that the world is more prone to famine today than it was in the past. But the evidence is clearly to the contrary...there has been a fairly significant reduction in the incidence of famine over the past century. "Professor Gale Johnson, Food Expert, *World Food Problems and Prospects* (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 17.

"Per capita food consumption in the world has been on the rise for the past 30 years... The number of deaths from famine has been declining over the past century even in absolute terms, let alone relative to population. World food prices have followed a lower trend for decades and centuries... and there is strong reason to believe that this trend will continue. "-Julian L. Simon and Herman Kahn in *The Resourceful Earth* (London, 1984), p. 16.

99 As James P. Grant, the current Director of Unicef, explains on page 2 of the 1982 Unicef Annual Report, with only \$6.5 billion per year over the next 15 years, "it would be possible to eradicate hunger and malnutrition on a large scale. "Other new technologies developed in recent years" could reduce disability and death among children in most developing countries by at least half by the end of this century. "These techniques, says Grant, "are even cheaper than we thought. "(UNICEF Annual Report 1983, pp. 3, 4).

Neither population growth nor food production is therefore the real problem. It is a well known fact that the earth's resources could well feed a world population several times larger than that living on earth today. And what is more: For the first time in history humanity has the means to exploit these resources on this scale. As de Castro observes:

The knowledge that man now possesses, if used intelligently, would provide mankind with enough quality food to ensure its nutritional balance for years to come, even if the population were to double, quadruple or tenfold. ¹⁰⁰

Whether or not humanity uses its ability to end famine and malnutrition is of course unpredictable. Anything can happen in the coming decades, and we are not trying to speculate or prophesy. Fundamentally, the problem is one of love of neighbour. How can we as Christians respond by hearing and reading about the situation of these millions of poor and hungry people? If our interest in them is limited to the question: are there enough of them to constitute one of the characteristics of a supposedly "poor and hungry people"?

"composite sign" of the end - doesn't that mean that there is something fundamentally wrong with our

"Christianity"? If our interest in the hungry goes no further than that, we could run the risk of being placed among those to whom our Lord Jesus Christ will say on the "day of judgment": "I was hungry and you did not give me food"? - Matthew chapter twenty-five verse 42, [TOB].

It is no coincidence," said the *New Scientist* magazine of August 9, 1984, "that if it is in Africa, where agricultural methods are the least advanced, famine persists" (p. 15) Yet in many African countries it would be possible to increase food production considerably by using the current rudimentary methods. The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) states that "only half of the potential land in the world is cultivated today. "This includes many parts of Africa, with for example 11 countries "including Zaire, Zambia, Angola and Côte d'Ivoire, their population could, using the usual methods, feed five times their current population. Congo could feed 20 times its population and Gabon 100 times. Overall, Africa could feed 2.7 times its current population using traditional methods, FAO said. "(Ibid., p. 15)

3 Earthquakes and Historical Facts

WHAT ARE the facts about earthquakes in our time? Is our earth shaking more often and with greater intensity than ever before in human history?

As we saw in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey cited them as one of the signs marking the time for Christ to establish His Kingdom. (pages 52, 53) Again in *The Promise*, he states that Jesus "warned us that earthquakes would increase in frequency and intensity as if this ancient earth were preparing for its final cataclysm." (page 198). This piece from the prophetic "puzzle" is supposed to happen these days.

In his book *Good-bye Planet Earth* (1976), Seventh-Day Adventist author Robert H. Pierson develops the subtitle "**A Shaken and Trembling Planet**." He explains:

With an increase in frequency and intensity Mother Earth is being shaken and trembled. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives. Many thousands will then perish in greater spasms of the earth. Never since the days of Noah has the world been so devastated.

God is speaking to us again. He is trying to tell us that our time is short. His Son Jesus Christ will return soon. Nature's voice speaks through floods, storms and earthquakes. (pages 21, 22)

He then quotes the words of Jesus in Luke twenty-one, verse 11, as proof of this.

The most remarkable and detailed statements in this regard, however, are those made by the Central College of Jehovah's Witnesses and their Watch Tower Society. By maintaining that Christ's statement concerning "great earthquakes" (Luke 21:11) has only seen its true fulfillment since 1914, the Watch Tower Society proclaims that we have experienced a huge increase in earthquakes since that year:

The frequency of major earthquakes is 20 times higher than in the two thousand years before 1914. *Your Survival on a New Earth* (1984), page 23.

That's a fantastic statement. Is it really possible to prove

this statement? What do we know about earthquake activity in the past? Are there ancient records of earthquakes that are complete enough to make reliable comparisons with our century? And what is meant by a "great" earthquake? How is its 'greatness' determined?

In order to be able to accurately assess the Watch Tower Society's claims, we must first seek an answer to these questions.

. **Recording seismic activity.**

The Greek word for "tremor" (when applied to the earth) is *seismós*. The science of earthquakes is therefore called *seismology*.

Seismology is a very young branch of science. **"It wasn't until the early 1850s that the first real seismologist, as we understand it, appeared. It was the Irishman Robert Mallet."**¹ After him came *John Milne*, known as the "father of seismology".² In 1880 he invented the first suitable seismograph and by the end of the last century a fairly accurate recording of earthquakes was possible.³

As a result, seismologists are able to present a complete list of the great earthquakes that occurred from 1903 onwards.⁴ With the improvement of the seismograph there was an increase in the number of countries that adopted its use. But it was not until the late 1950s that this observation network became global in scope.⁵

Since then it has been possible to record and measure all earthquakes, both small and large, anywhere in the world.

It is not an easy subject to compare the *complete* list of major earthquakes recorded in our century by the

1 Peter Vemey, *Earthquake Manual*, New York and London 1979, page 47. There is no consensus on this. Professor N. N. Ambraseys, for example, considers John Michell (1724-93) to be 'the first true seismologist' (Ambraseys, *Engineering Seismology*, University of London, Inaugural Lecture, 18 November 1975, page 54).

2 Vemey, page 51. Others would call him the 'father of *English* seismology' although it must be recognised that contemporary scientists in other countries have also made important contributions to the early days of seismology. (See the discussion by Dr August Sieberg in *Geologische, physikalische un angewandte Erdbebenkunde*, Jena 1923, pp 2, 373).

3 Verney, pages 53, 54; B. Booth & F. Fitch, *Earthshock*, London 1979, page 89.

4 G. A. Eiby, *Earthquakes*, London 1968, page 191. This is true only of earthquakes measuring, and above, on the Richter scale.

5 Markus Båth, *Introduction to Seismology*, second edition, Basel, Boston, Stuttgart 1979, pp 27, 262-266.

modern seismologists with those of past centuries. This is because of the comparatively sparse and incomplete information available from the early centuries. Historical sources are becoming more and more sparse as we go back in time. Even from modern records, seismologist A. W. Lee wrote in 1939:

The archives are complete enough to give a fair representation of the distribution of earthquakes that are occurring now, but, as they cover less than half a century, they are insufficient to show whether there has been a significant change in frequency. ⁶

Another factor that greatly limits our knowledge of ancient earthquakes is that most of them occurred outside Europe, the source of most of our information for most of history from the first century to the "Age of Discovery" in the fifteenth century. The *Encyclopedia Americana* tells us that :

Roughly 80 percent of the world's seismic energy is released in a belt that runs across the Pacific Ocean. A secondary belt, beginning in the Mediterranean region and extending eastward across Asia, is the site of earthquakes accounting for more than 15 percent of the world's seismic energy. ⁷

"Western Europe," writes Verney, "could almost be considered a stable zone in comparison with the turbulent history of earthquakes in the Andes or elsewhere in the [Pacific Ocean] Ring of Fire. ⁸

Since the historical sources of past centuries are, with some important exceptions, limited in Europe and the Mediterranean region, it is easy to realize what this means. For example, how do we know about the activity of the

"earthquakes" in America before Christopher Columbus? John Milne shows: "the archives before the Christian Era and before the year 1700, are practically confined to events in southern Europe, China and Japan. "⁹ For our century, the majority of the most devastating earthquakes have occurred in regions outside Europe and in most cases in regions where no historical records are available for the study . The Watch Tower Company, by choice or otherwise, does not take into account any of these important factors in its statements.

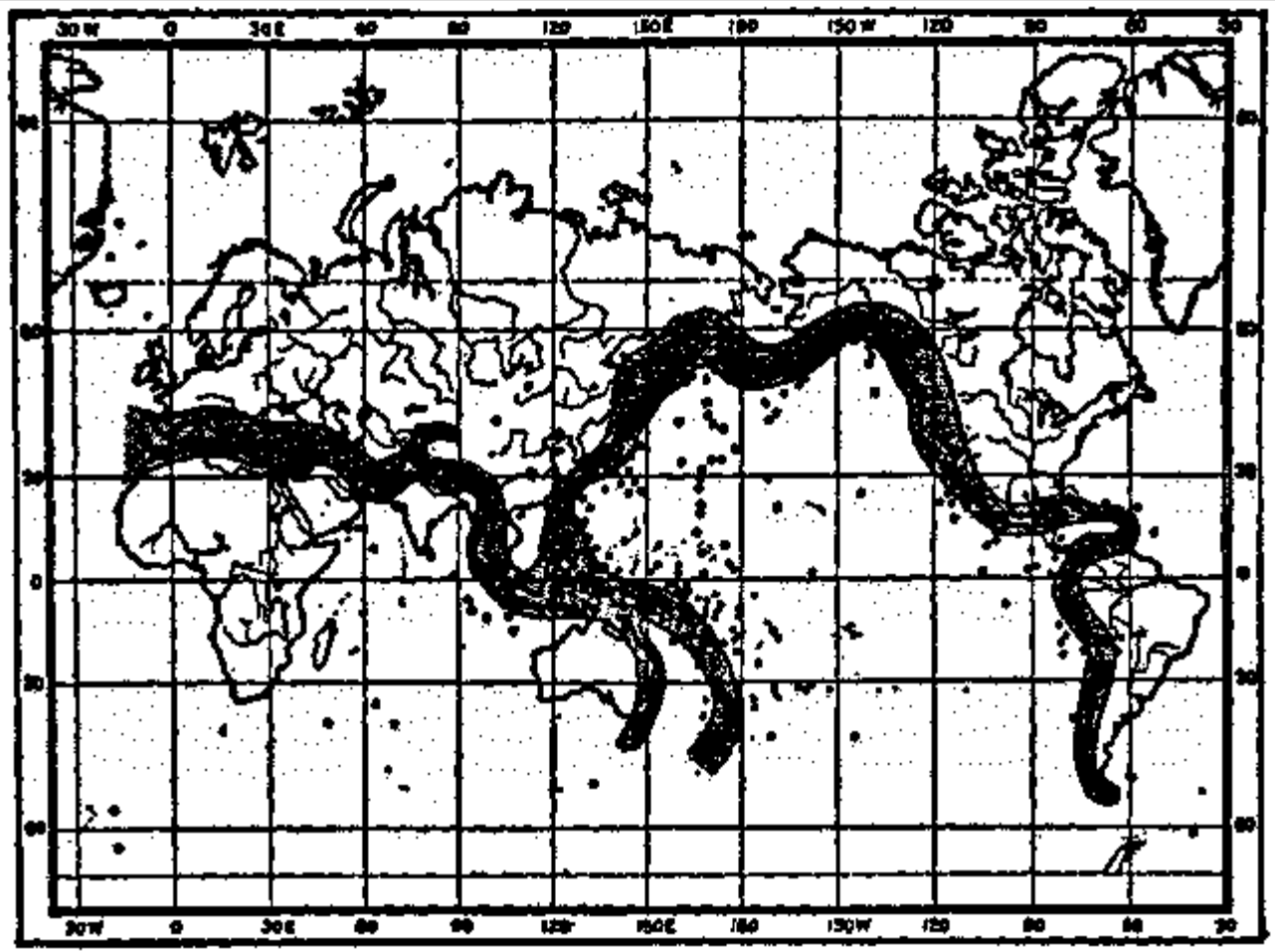
⁶ J. Milne & A. W Lee, *Earthquakes and Other Earth Movements*, Londres 1939, page 134, 135.

⁷ *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1966, under "Earthquake" on page 496.

⁸ Verney, page 75.

⁹ Report of the Eightieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Portsmouth: 31 August and 7 September 1911, (London 1912), page 649.

SEISMIC BELTS AROUND THE GLOBE



The seismic map showing the two earthquake belts of the world. (From R. A. Daly, *Our Mobile Earth*, New York & London 1926, page 6).

. **What's a "big" earthquake?**

According to Luke's translation of Jesus' words to his disciples there would be "great earthquakes." (Luke 21:11) What is meant by "great" earthquake?

Modern seismologists measure the size of an earthquake according to a standard. The one in use today is the *Richter scale*, designed by approx. F. Richter in 1935. This scale measures *the total amount of energy* released in the earth tremors during an earthquake. Earthquakes measuring 7.0 or more on the scale are called "large", while those measuring 7.0 or more on the scale are called "large".¹⁰ Note that the 'magnitude' of an earthquake on this scale is not necessarily related to the number of casualties:

¹⁰Booth & Fitch, page 90; approx. F. Richter, *Natural History*, December 1969, page 44.

There is usually no clear correlation between the magnitude of an earthquake and the number of people killed or destruction. An earthquake can be devastating, but not great. ¹¹

In the same way an earthquake can be big, but not deadly. The 1872 Owens Valley earthquake in California, for example, was the largest earthquake in the United States in the last 150 years, estimated to have had a magnitude of, on the Richter scale. Yet only 27 people were killed, as the area was very sparsely populated. ¹²

How many "large" earthquakes are measured by the Richter scale standard?

It has been estimated that each year there will be two earthquakes of magnitude 7.7 or greater; seventeen between 7.0 and 7.7; one hundred between 6.0 and 7.0; and not less than fifty thousand between 3.0 and 4.0. ¹³

The number of "major" earthquakes, then, is, according to these calculations, *about 19 to 20 per year*. Do we have any indication that "major" (7.0 and above) and "large" (8.0 and above) earthquakes have increased in number and magnitude over the period since they have been measurable by instruments, i.e. since the end of the last century?

If we were to believe a recent statement by the World Church of God, an increasingly vocal organization proclaiming the rapid end of time, the answer would be 'Yes'. On page 7 of his April 1986 monthly *The Good News of the World Tomorrow*, Norman L. Shoaf, a spokesman for the movement, confidently stated:

Did you know that between 1901 and 1944, for more than four decades, only three earthquakes reached 7 or more? Then, in just 10 years from 1945 to 1954, their number jumped to 21. From then on, the number of large earthquakes increased dramatically. From 1955 to 1964 in a single decade, 87 earthquakes reached 7 or + 136 from 1965 to 1974 and 133 from 1975 to 1984.

¹¹ Bâth, page 137.

¹² Vemey, page 96. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which killed about 700 people, also had a magnitude of 8.3 (The three New Madrid, Missouri earthquakes of 1911-12 were even larger, with estimated magnitudes of 8.6, and 8.7 respectively).

¹³ Verney, page 72. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1966 the author, under "Earthquake"; page 496, states this, "if all the smallest tremors are included, it is probable that the total may well be more than a million" the vast majority of these tremors are not, of course, noticed by man, being recorded only by instruments.

It would be an understatement to say that this statement is simply absurd. When confronted with this statement, Professor Seweryn J. Duda, a famous seismologist from the University of Hamburg, wrote that "In the period between 1901 and 1944 about 1,000 earthquakes with magnitude 7 or more occurred worldwide. "In fact, his letter to the authors of 7 July 1986 contradicts the entire statement of the World Church of God. See Appendix A for the full text of his letter.

The simple fact is that no such increase has been observed, since 1914 or at any other point later in this century. In fact, the evidence produced by modern seismologists indicates *otherwise*.

Charles F. Richter, the former president of the Seismological Society of America and the creator of the "Richter Scale" refers to this evidence in an article published in the December 1969 issue of *Natural History* magazine :

"It is rather amusing to see that some religious groups have chosen our rather unfortunate times to claim that earthquakes are on the rise.... It is interesting to note that the number of major earthquakes [i.e., 8.0 and above on the Richter scale] (about twenty-five) that occurred between 1896 and 1906 is higher than in any of the decades that followed."¹⁴

Parts of this statement were mentioned with disapproval on page 296 of *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1974 without the reader being informed that it came from an authority on seismology. Jesus was not talking about a "decade", said *The Watchtower*, but a whole "generation. »

Dr. Richter's statement, however, was in fact intended to show that *the* alleged *increase* in seismic activity in this century is not supported by *instrumentally* recorded seismological data, which covers the period from 1896, or more specifically from the beginning of 1903.

Finally, his declaration was made at the end of 1969. What then of this proclamation found on page 30 of Hal Lindsey's *Countdown to Armageddon* in the 1980's, by Hal Lindsey?

The 1970s saw the largest increase in the

¹⁴ *Natural History*, December 1969, page 44. In *Elementary Seismology* (San Francisco 1958, page 357) Richter similarly states, "There is no doubt that surface [i.e. near-surface] shaking was more frequent before 1918 than after. »

number of known earthquakes in history. In fact, the dramatic increase in earthquakes in 1976 led many scientists to deduce that we are entering a period of great seismic disturbance.

This statement is in fact no more grounded than those of the Watch Tower Society and the World Church of God. More recent figures published by other seismologists, who have carefully and objectively examined the subject, have not only confirmed the accuracy of Dr. Richter's statement, but have shown its veracity in the 1970s.

In 1965 the famous seismologist Seweryn J. Duda published a study of major earthquakes for the period 1897-1964. In 1979 this study was updated to cover the period 1965-1977 in an article written by the same author together with Professor Markus Båth, another world-renowned seismologist. Their very careful study shows that during this eighty year period (1897-1977) about twenty (19.94 to be exact) major earthquakes occurred annually. Any change in the number of earthquakes with a magnitude of 7.0 and above on the Richter scale could not be demonstrated for the period after 1914, compared to the period before that date. As for the *magnitude* of the earthquakes, on the other hand, their study revealed that the first twenty years of this century (1900-1920) had *released twice as much* energy per year as the first twenty years of this century (1900-1920).

than the entire next period until 1977! ¹⁵

The table on page 69, published in 1912 (for the years 1899 to 1909) gives an idea of the high seismicity recorded before 1914. For the period before the turn of the century reliable instrumental data are missing, as mentioned earlier.

What conclusion can be drawn from this very careful study of the period from which reliable instrumental recordings became available? This: No remarkable change in the *number of* major earthquakes can be demonstrated between 1897 and 1977. On the other hand, the study shows that the frequency of the *largest* earthquakes was considerably higher in the first twenty years of this period than in the following sixty years!

. **Attempts to Hide Evidence**

Needless to say, in the face of these figures, the Watch Tower Society is not happy about these seismological measurements. The Society's tendency was to reject them completely by making numerical comparisons

¹⁵ S.J. Duda, "Release of Secular Seismic Energy in the Circum-Pacific Belt", *Tectonophysics*, 2 (1965), pp 409-52; Markus Båth and S.J. Duda, "Some Aspects of Global Seismicity" *Tectonophysics*, 54 (1979), pp T1-T8. Newspapers often present grossly misleading earthquake data. Richter (1958, p. 5.) Points out that "the popular press" can be used "only with caution. "However, The Watchtower, May 15, 1984, p. 25, refers to an article published in *The New York Times* called 1983 "A Year of Earthquakes" because of an alleged "deadly wave of earthquakes" this year. To prove this *The Watchtower* reproduces a list of nine earthquakes over a 3-month period, all described as "large earthquakes on the Richter scale. "However, a closer look at the list shows that only 3 of the 9 earthquakes are considered "major" with a magnitude of 7.0 or greater. As Professor Markus Båth points out (personal letter, dated October 3, 1984), this is not above, but below normal..." The information from the *New York Times* is totally misleading. With 3 earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater over 3 months, the number of such tremors would be 12 in one year. This is significantly lower than the average of 20 earthquakes per year of magnitude 7 or greater. The statement in the newspaper highlights below-normal seismic activity! 1983 was no more "a year of earthquakes" in terms of the number of *victims*. According to information available from the *World Data Center A for Solid Earth Geophysics* (see note 19 below), only 2,328 people died in earthquakes during 1983, well below average. Even 1976 did not have the "dramatic increase in earthquakes" claimed by Hal Lindsey, despite the great earthquake in China that year. Professor Markus Båth, in his Introduction to Seismology, says: "The year 1976 deserves a special mention. Many earthquakes occurred throughout that year, with a maximum of casualties in China... On the other hand, from 1976 onwards and from a purely seismological point of view, there were no more earthquakes or stronger earthquakes this year than the average. "(p. 151) Commenting on the period after 1976, Professor of Bathing, in a private letter adds: "The years after 1976 until today [1985], at least, have shown a clear decrease in the seismic activity of the earth, both in the number of large earthquakes (magnitude greater than 7.0) and the number of victims. But this is, of course, just one example of an occasional variation that has always occurred. "(Båth's personal letter to Jonsson dated 21 August 1985).

on earthquake activity before and after 1914, providing instead a definition of their own crutches as to what is meant by a "great" earthquake. It reads:

When is an earthquake "big"? Is it not when its effects on lives and property are disastrous? However, today's seismologists tend to rate the magnitude of an earthquake on the Richter scale, which reveals the "magnitude or the energy released by it. ¹⁶

¹⁶ The Watchtower of May 15, 1974, page 296.

Mega Seismic Frequency

Between 1899 and 1909 the recorded number of very large earthquakes was no less than 976. Many of them were recorded by stations around the world, others throughout the Northern Hemisphere, affecting an area at least equal to that of Europe and Asia combined.

The figures recorded in the successive months were as follows:

Year	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1899	9	5	9	4	3	6	7	7	12	4	7	4	75
1900	7	3	3	2	3	4	2	4	5	6	5	3	47
1901	7	4	8	4	4	3	0	9	0	6	11	6	67
1902	12	7	9	8	4	2	4	11	8	3	6	3	77
1903	10	11	7	4	8	8	5	5	8	9	6	10	91
1904	4	2	8	9	5	8	6	8	7	6	5	6	74
1905	7	11	10	7	6	8	11	3	7	6	5	5	86
1906	14	18	20	11	4	9	5	22	12	10	8	7	140
1907	8	4	9	6	12	9	7	7	5	10	10	7	94
1908	4	6	11	5	8	4	4	32	9	8	13	6	90
1909	9	10	11	14	11	14	8	13	13	15	8	9	135
Total Monthly	91	81	103	74	68	75	59	100	92	83	84	66	976
Total per quarter	275			217			251			233			
Summer Month 508, Winter Month 468, Total 970													

Seismologist F. M. Walker in *Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, London 1912, pages 38 and 39. The term "very large" makes no reference to the Richter scale, which was not in use at the time.

Thus the Watch Tower Society prefers to measure the magnitude of an earthquake by the number of deaths caused. It explains:

The number of deaths caused by earthquakes is further proof that the generation after 1914 was exceptional in this respect.¹⁷

A little thought will soon reveal why the Watch Tower Society prefers this method for estimating the 'size' of earthquakes. It contains several flaws that most people are unaware of and the Society's claims depend on it to make them look authentic. When the false assumptions on which the Society bases its arguments are clearly identified, then the figure becomes less impressive. Consider this:

First of all, as has been pointed out, data concerning earthquakes and the number of deaths are much rarer for previous centuries due to fragmentary historical sources, which, moreover, before 1700, "are practically confined to events in southern Europe, China and Japan. "So the idea that an exact comparison can be made between modern times and historical data on the number of people killed by earthquakes is simply wrong.

Second, rapid population growth and urbanization in this century have reasonably increased the number of deaths in major earthquakes, especially when they have affected densely populated areas. An increase in the number of deaths then, would not be a valid indicator of the increase in the number of earthquakes.

"great earthquakes. "We can also rightly ask ourselves: Did Jesus, referring to the "great earthquakes", really speak of an increase, either in the number of earthquakes or in the number of victims? His statement was simply that in addition to war, famine and plague, "there will be great earthquakes. "Anything else is human hypothesis or a reading between the lines of what he actually meant.

Despite its choice of death toll in preference to seismological measurements when it suits its argument, the Watch Tower Society does not hesitate to quote statements on earthquakes that are based on the Richter scale - without telling its

¹⁷ The Watchtower of May 15, 1974, page 296.

readers. For example, the same edition of *The Watchtower* (May 15, 1974) cited above contains a long series of statements about earthquakes since 1914, statements presented as

"highly respected reference works" (although none are given):

China (1920), "one of the most terrible disasters in history". Japan (1923), "the greatest disaster in [Japan's] history". Pakistan (1935), "one of the greatest earthquakes in history". El Salvador (1951), "the most destructive earthquake in the history of El Salvador". Egypt (1955), "Egypt experienced the most devastating earthquake in its history". Afghanistan (1956), "considered the most catastrophic in the country's history". Chile (1960), "no earthquake in history has been of such magnitude". Alaska (1964), "the largest earthquake ever recorded in North America". Peru (1970), "the most terrible natural disaster ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere"¹⁸.

But the reader is not informed that expressions such as "the greatest", "the worst", "the greatest" and so on, in many cases do not refer to the number of victims, and that at least in some cases clearly refer to the Richter scale, whereas the same article considers that it should not be the means of measuring the "greatness" of an earthquake!

For example, the 1964 Alaska earthquake "the largest ever recorded in North America" killed only 114 people (some sources say 131), even though it had a magnitude of 8.5 on the Richter scale!¹⁹

The expression "the largest... ever **recorded**" further limits the time of comparison to the period when earthquakes were measured by *instrument*, i.e. from the end of the last century. Some earthquakes are by no means among the "greats", either on the Richter scale or in terms of the number of lives lost. The so-called "most destructive earthquake in the history of El Salvador" had a magnitude of only 6.5 and killed 400 people (1,000 according to another source), while the so-called "worst earthquake in [Egypt's] history" had a magnitude of 6.3 and killed 18 people!²⁰

¹⁸The Watchtower of May 15, 1974, page 298.

¹⁹Booth & Fitch, page 80 ; Robert A. Ganse et John B. Nelson, *Catalog of Significant Earthquakes 2000 B.C. – 1979*, Boulder, Colorado 1981, page 63 (le Rapport SE-27 du *World Data Center A for Solid Earth Geophysics*).

Many of the statements cited are certainly not scientific descriptions. Rather, they reflect tabloid headlines that appeared in the heat of the disaster. Although some of the earthquakes mentioned (China 1920, Japan 1923, Pakistan 1935, and Peru 1970) were indeed very large and claimed thousands of lives, most seismologists would certainly hesitate to describe any of them as "worst" or "largest" in the history of these countries.

Most recently the Watch Tower Society has come up with a new definition of a "big" earthquake. According to the magazine "*Awake!*" of October 22, 1984 page 9 now considers that its latest statistics only concern earthquakes that meet at least one of the following conditions:

- **Magnitude: 7.5 or higher on the Richter scale.**
- **Number of dead: 100 or more.**
- **Damage: at least the equivalent of 50 million French francs in material damage.**

These standards for measuring "greatness" are also used in the 1985 Society Watch Tower publication, *How to Reason from Scripture*, page 236.

Surprisingly, the Richter scale, previously rejected, is now being introduced and plays an important role in their statistics. A close look at their calculations soon reveals the reason for this. While seismologists correctly make comparisons on the Richter scale only for the period when earthquakes have been measured by *instrument*, i.e. by seismograph since the end of the last century, the Watch Tower Society chooses to include the *last 2000 years* in its comparisons! This gives a very distorted comparison. How so?

While seismologists have *estimated* the magnitude of many large past earthquakes, most of them were devastating before the 1900s, they are lacking.²¹ All of these devastating earthquakes clearly could not meet the first criterion established by the Watch Tower Society, and only a small number of them could meet the second criterion.

20 Ganse & Nelson, pages 56, 59. The 1956 earthquake in Afghanistan killed 220 people according to some tables, 2,000 according to others.

21 These existing estimates appear to have been generally included in the list produced by Ganse and Nelson. (See note 19 above.)

no matter how great their magnitude! ²² And if they do not meet at least one of the other two criteria, they are conveniently excluded from the calculations!

As for the second criterion, it has already been shown that the number of victims is often missing in old archives, especially if the losses amounted to only a few hundred or less. In fact, many violent earthquakes involving relatively few victims may have been completely ignored in the archives. This can only mean that innumerable past earthquakes

The Company's arbitrary comparison standards have excluded "admissible" claims!

The same applies to damages, the third criterion established by the Watch Tower Society. Damage is much better known for modern earthquakes than for older ones. ²³ In addition to this, given that there are nowadays more larger and more sophisticated buildings, a comparison of this kind carried out by the Watch Tower Society out of necessity clearly does injustice to any comparison with the past. This is underlined by N.

N. Ambraseys, Professor of Seismological Engineering at the *Imperial College of Science and Technology* in London. He states:

... the exact repetition of an old earthquake will differ today not only in the type of structure damaged, but also in the extent of the damage. In some cases, modern buildings will be more severely damaged than older buildings. A great earthquake ten centuries ago would have caused virtually no damage in Istanbul, Ankara or Jerusalem. The same earthquake today could cause damage to a large number of structures in these cities. ²⁴

Quite naturally, many earthquakes in ancient times, although involving significant damage, would not meet the Watch Tower Society's purely arbitrary criterion of "at least the equivalent of 50 million French francs in material damage. »

22 In this regard it should be noted that The Watchtower of 1^{er} February 1974, p. 72, states that "some of the earthquakes with the highest magnitudes occur under the oceans", and that these "have had practically no effect on mankind. "Speaking of "potentially dangerous earthquakes" (3,8 and more), the seismologist J.H. Latter, in *Advancement of Science* (June 1969, page 365) even states that "the overwhelming majority occur under the sea or far from inhabited areas. "Since these tremors in most cases went unnoticed before the use of instruments, it is clear that the Society's amplitude criterion could seriously distort the reality of the facts as to the frequency of earthquakes.

23 Although Ganse and Nelson have attempted to assess the destruction caused in their list, this damage for many earthquakes is indicated as "unknown".

24 N. N. Arnbraseys, « *Value of Historical Records of Earthquakes* » ; *Nature*, Vol. 232, 6 août 1971, p. 379.

Clearly the new criteria for "large earthquakes" proposed by the Watch Tower Society are designed to qualify as many as possible after 1914 and exclude the previous maximum this year. We are not at all surprised that the calculations based on directed and so biased reasoning seem to show a huge increase in "large" earthquakes for this century compared to previous eras. The article in *Wake Up!* quoted above gives the following conclusion:

Since 1914 the average annual number of reported earthquakes has exploded. On average, there are 11 times more each year than in the 1000 years before that date, and 20 times more than the annual average for the 2000 years before 1914.²⁵

The current global seismic situation does not in fact lend itself to statistical comparison with that of the last two millennia. This is because, as demonstrated above, available data on earthquakes in previous centuries are much scarcer. In fact, data for entire continents are completely absent for most of the last two millennia, especially before 1700. Similarly, it is only in this century that earthquakes occurring in ocean beds or uninhabited areas have been recorded. Yet it is in these regions that the vast majority of high magnitude tremors occur.

It should also be noted that the comparison method used in this calculation contains another fraudulent element that is difficult for the unsuspecting reader to detect. By extending the pre-1914 comparison period over thousands of years to include long periods with little information on earthquakes, the Watch Tower Society naturally obtains a very low *overall* annual average, even during the centuries when cases actually increased. This hides a large number of large known earthquakes in recent centuries, levelling them out with the centuries when little information was available. It is further concealed that this method does not refer to 1914, nor to any other date in the last 200 or 300 years.

²⁵ *Wake up!* of October 22, 1984, p. 6. Note the wording "reported earthquakes". It indicates that the company is well aware that old records of major earthquakes are incomplete. However, the unsuspecting reader is unlikely to notice this distinction. The Society obviously wants him to conclude that there has *indeed* been a *huge* increase in earthquakes since 1914. Thus the Society's *Survival on a New Earth* (1984) does not hesitate to state that the frequency of major earthquakes "has increased by about 20 times what it was on average during the two thousand years prior to 1914." » (p. 23)

years. The choice of 1914 as the seismological "turning point" is therefore totally arbitrary. It would also be possible to use an identical method and choose, for example, 1789, when the French Revolution began, or 1939, when the Second World War began, and obtain similar results. Whichever date in the last 200 or 300 years is taken as the turning point, one would get the full benefit of modern information, giving it a large apparent increase in the annual average.

It is easy to say that any scientist who would bias and manipulate statistical data in this way in a scientific journal would quickly be considered a fraudster. However, in a religious article read by millions of unsuspecting people who believe that questioning their leaders would be a sin, such calculations easily pass as if they were hard facts.

When he predicted "great earthquakes" Jesus obviously had no standards in mind, such as magnitudes on the Richter scale, a minimum number of deaths or damages calculated according to modern monetary standards. The Watch Tower Society's use of these standards does not invite us, as it should for Christians, to turn first to the Bible for clarification. Certainly, we find that a destructive earthquake hitting "one-tenth" of a city and killing "seven thousand people" is called a "catastrophic earthquake."

The "great" in Revelation chapter eleven, verse thirteen. However, the two earthquakes described as "great" in Matthew chapter twenty-eight, verse two, and in Acts chapter sixteen, verse twenty-six, are not described as having caused considerable damage, nor does it speak of loss of human life. Yet society sees them as evidence that there was a The first century "fulfillment in the first century of the words of Jesus" with regard to the great earthquakes! ²⁶

From the Scriptures themselves, it is therefore reasonable to conclude that Jesus was speaking of "great earthquakes" in general that affect people, property and the environment to a greater or lesser extent. He could not reasonably have had in mind the statistics of the average number of deaths per year before and after

²⁶The Watchtower of May 15, 1983, page 5. In *Wake Up!* of August 8, 1968, page 30, the Society pointed out that an earthquake in late June of that year "killing 16 people and injuring 100 others" had fulfilled the "prophecies of the Scriptures" although no estimates of magnitude or property value were considered. We agree that this earthquake fulfills the prophecy of Jesus, although the Society should reject it now in light of their latest criteria. There have been countless comparable earthquakes since Jesus' words about them.

certain dates! Nevertheless, as these figures play a very important role in the Company's calculations, we will now examine them more closely.

. ***How to "prove" with statistics***

In an article entitled "Can Statistics Fool You? "Wake Up!" magazine, January 22, 1984, states on page 25:

Numbers don't lie, they tell us. But beware. Honestly used, they can be very informative and useful. However, numbers can also be misrepresented.

The examples below will show that this warning has a relevance that its author probably did not realize.

According to *Wake Up!* of February 22, 1961, page 7, the estimated number of deaths per year in earthquakes before 1914 was 5,000.

But in 1974 the Watch Tower Society lowered that figure. The Watch Tower Guard from February of this year a quoted a
1^{er} declaration from

Nature/Science Annual of 1971, according to which "more than three million people (perhaps four million)" have died in earthquakes over the past 1,000 years. Estimating that at least 900,000 of them had died since 1914, the Society presented the following impressive figures (page 73):

Earthquake victims every year

Before 1914:	3 000
Since 1914:	15 000

These same statistics were published again in *Wake Up!* of January 8, 1977 (pages 15, 16). However, the book, *Le Bonheur Comment le trouver*, published in 1980, aimed at considerably "improving" the figures, is presented in the table on page 149 :

Earthquake Victims

Until 1914	1,800 per year
Since 1914	25,300 per year

That the number of deaths per year can be increased in four years (from 1974 to 1980) by such a proportion - from 15,000 to 25,000 - is relatively simple to explain :

In 1976, China was hit by the deadliest earthquake of this century. Western newspapers, misled by a premature report from Hong Kong, first brought the number of victims to 650,000 or more (some even said 800,000). If this figure is divided by the number of years since 1914 (62 years, from 1915 to 1976 inclusive), we get an average - with this earthquake alone - of nearly 10,500 deaths per year. So a single large earthquake can generate impressive statistics for a whole generation! If we were to take instead the great earthquake in China in 1556, which is considered to have claimed 830,000 victims, and then divide the number of victims by the same number of years (62), we would obtain an average of about 13,400 deaths per year from this earthquake alone. ²⁷(Adding more disastrous earthquakes from this century on would, of course, increase the annual death toll considerably during this sixteenth century).

The Watch Tower Society, however, by its use of statistics, not only increased the annual death rate after 1914 from 15,000 to 25,300, but also managed to reduce the annual deaths before 1914 from 3,000 per year (according to their 1974 statistics) to only 1,800 per year (according to their 1980 statistics)! This is puzzling. How did it arrive at this new figure?

The answer is that the latest (and lower) statistics were not based on the 3 to 4 million earthquake victims over the last millennium, as was the case with the Society's earlier statistics, but on a *much smaller figure*,

²⁷This earthquake is generally considered to have claimed more lives than any other earthquake in history. However, it may have been surpassed in this respect by the earthquake that struck Upper Egypt and/or Syria on 5 July 1201, which, according to some ancient documents, claimed about 1.1 million lives. If this figure were divided by a period of 62 years, the annual average would be 17,740. This would be a higher figure than the exact figure for the 20^e century of 15,700, as indicated in this paragraph. See S. Alsinawi and H. A. A. Ghalith, "Historical Seismicity of Iraq" Proceedings of the First Arab Seismological Seminar, Seismological Scientific Research Unit, Baghdad, Iraq, December 1978; see also Ganse and Nelson, p. 6.

1,973,000 victims over a period of 1,059 years.

What is extraordinary is that this new figure is not an estimate made by any modern seismologist - it is a figure that the Watch Tower Society itself created by adding up the number of deaths in just 24 major earthquakes, chosen from thousands of devastating earthquakes that occurred in the 1059 years prior to 1914!

The new figure first appeared in the magazine "*Awake!*" of the February 22, 1977, page 11. In relation to a list of 43 earthquakes from the period 1915-1976 onwards, he states:

Interestingly, for a period of 1,059 years (856 to 1914 AD), reliable sources list only 24 major earthquakes, with 1,972,952 victims. But compare this with the assorted partial list citing 43 examples of earthquakes in which 1,579,209 people died in the 62 years from 1915 to 1976 A.D. The dramatic increase in earthquake activity since 1914 helps to prove that we are now living in the time of Jesus' presence.

The statement that 'reliable sources list only 24 major earthquakes in the 1059 years between 856 and 1914' is so far from the truth that it is almost impossible to understand how someone with even a basic knowledge of the subject could make such a statement. *The fact is that reliable sources list literally thousands of devastating earthquakes during this period! (The evidence for this will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.)* And that is far from the end of the matter. The author of the article *Wake Up!* takes these 24 earthquakes before 1914 and seeks to compare them with those of the 62 years after 1914. But while the first 24 earthquakes were *all major* disasters, they are now compared with a modern list that covers both large *and small* disasters (some have casualty numbers of 52, 65, 115, 131, et cetera).

This uneven method of comparison is the result of pure negligence or deliberate bias and de facto manipulation. And, to later add to the distorted picture, the author describes his list after 1914 as "partial", thus suggesting that the 24 major earthquakes attributed to the 1,059 years *before* 1914 are a *complete* number! With this the statement becomes so foreign

by the way, for being almost comical²⁸

Yet it is on the basis of such absurd figures that the Watch Tower Society has accumulated its figures of average annual deaths before and after 1914 in its publications²⁹.

The trend is obvious. In the Watch Tower Society's figure, while the number of annual deaths *after 1914* was increased, the average number of annual deaths *before 1914* declined steadily, as follows:

Annual earthquake deaths before 1914

Statistics from the society for 1961 :	5,000 per an
Statistics from the society for 1974 :	3,000 per an
Statistics from the society for 1980 :	1,800 per an

If this trend were to continue at the same rate in about 20 years, the annual number of victims before 1914 would be reduced to zero in the Watch Tower Society figures!

How many people have actually died in earthquakes in past history? Due to incomplete source documentation no one can say for sure estimates vary. **"It is estimated that more than seven million people have lost their lives in earthquakes,"** writes Vemey.³⁰ Another source states that probably ten million have died in earthquakes since the time of Christ.³¹ An outstanding seismologist, Professor Båth, however, says:

²⁸The author of the Society's manual "You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into Paradise" (1982), clearly presents these 24 earthquakes as a complete list of significant earthquakes by saying that "From the year 856 A.D. to 1914, there were only 24 significant earthquakes." (page 151)

²⁹*Le Bonheur Comment Le trouver*, 1980, page 149; the same impressive figure was again published in *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1983, page 7, (on Map III).

It has been estimated that during the period of history, 50 to 80 (according to one estimate 74) million people have lost their lives in earthquakes or their immediate aftermath, such as fires, landslides, tsunamis, etc.³²

It is obvious, then, that estimates of annual deaths in past earthquakes will be as divergent as the assumptions of the total number of deaths on which they are based. Population growth is an important factor.

With about half of the world's population living in earthquake belts, it would not be surprising if the number of earthquake deaths has kept pace with population growth in these regions. This would not be evidence, however, that earthquakes have increased in quantity or severity.

The Watch Tower Society has published lists of earthquakes with their pre-1914 earthquake figures and their shifting casualty figures, with the number of victims from 1914 onwards. Interestingly, the casualty figures in these lists also seem to change from one to the other and differ with the reports allowed in several cases. A comparison between the last two published in *Awake!* of 22 February 1977, page 11 and in *The Watchtower* of 15 May 1983, page 7 gives the following result :

30 Vemey, page 7. Latest estimates by seismologist J. H., that "a minimum of five million people have died as a result of earthquakes and half a million as a result of volcanic eruptions since 1000 AD. ». But he adds: "it is likely that the maximum numbers are between two and three times higher than that", i.e. 10-15 million since 1000 AD. This would mean a maximum of 1.5 million per century on average. (*The Advancement of Science*, June 1969, page 36)

31 *New York Times*, August 20, 1950. Compare with *Wake Up!*, December 22, 1960, page 14. 32 Bath, page 137. *Time magazine* of 1st September 1975, similarly stated: "During the course of Historically, it is estimated that earthquakes, floods, fires and landslides have claimed at least 74 million lives. »

Earthquakes	Number of victims according to Awake ! of 22/02/1977	Number of victims according to The Watchtower of 15/05/1983
1920, China	180 000	200 000
1939 Turkey	23 000	30 000
1950, India	1 500	20 000
1962, Iran	10 000	12 230
1972, Nicaragua	6 000	10 000
1976, China	655 235	800 000
Total :	875 735	1 072 230

As can be seen, the number of victims was increased in the last list to almost 200,000! This does not mean that the figures were deliberately falsified. Lists of earthquake deaths, published in various books, often vary. But the Watch Tower Society's lists reveal a clear tendency to always choose *the highest, not the most reliable*, figures from these books, obviously in an attempt to present twentieth century earthquakes as "as big" as possible, while the tendency *to reduce* the number and size of pre-1914 earthquakes is also evident. This is not an honest, objective use of information.

In fact, the most authorized structures often have much lower figures than those given by the Watch Tower Society in

its two lists after 1914 indicated above. The 1920 earthquake in China, which the Society's lists present as having caused 180,000 or 200,000 deaths, according to the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, claimed about 100,000 victims.³³ Also the great earthquake in China in 1976, which the Society's latest list shows as having caused 800,000 deaths, actually claimed 242,000 victims according to the figures announced by the Chinese authorities!³⁴ This lower figure is generally considered by seismologists to be correct.³⁵ that the latest estimate of annual deaths in earthquakes since 1914 published by the Society is based on figures that cover a death toll of 650,000 for this earthquake, the correction mentioned here reduces the Society's actual death toll to as much as one third!³⁶

The varying figures to be found in different works clearly demonstrate the risk of making comparisons between earthquakes before and after 1914 based *on the number of victims*. It also demonstrates how easy it is to create a seemingly very impressive and convincing, but *completely misleading* statistical picture simply by choosing only the

33 *Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1966, "Earthquakes" page 498. Båth (page 14 1) gives the same figure, 100,000, in his list. The earthquake in Japan in 1923, which according to the Society's list took 143,000 lives, killed 95,000 according to the *Encyclopaedia Americana*. But as shown by env.F. Richter (*Elementary Seismology*, page 562), who gives the number of victims as 99,331, a further 43,476 were listed as missing. The total number of deaths, then, was probably about 143,000. In one case the *Encyclopaedia Americana* gives a considerably higher figure than The Watchtower. It was the 1939 earthquake in Turkey, which the encyclopedia claims claimed about 100,000 lives, while The Watchtower, like Bith, Ganse & Nelson and other seismologists, puts the death toll at 30,000.

34 A report from Hong Kong first gave an erroneous number of victims of 655,237, from which Western estimates of 650,000-800,000 were drawn. When finally the Chinese authorities, who initially kept all the information about the disaster secret, released information about the earthquake, they put the death toll at 242,000. ("The Report of Chinese Seismological Society on July 28, 1976 the Event," Dalian 1979 meeting the Xinhua News Agency. Compare Ganse & Nelson, pages 70, 148, regarding 61). *The Dallas Times Herald* of September 3, 1983, summarized the new information as follows: "Officials have now put the Tangshan death toll at 148,000 with another 81,000 seriously injured. In a murderous triangle anchored by Tangshan, Beijing and Tianjin, almost 100,000 more people have died, raising the official death toll to 242,000. Western estimates put the death toll as high as 800,000. »

35 Professor Båth, in a personal letter dated 3 October 1994, explains: "The recent example [of exaggerations] is the Chinese earthquake of 27 July 1976 (page 149 in my 'introduction'), for which Hong Kong was given a figure one much too high immediately after the earthquake. Much later (too late, in fact, to be covered in my book) an official Chinese report gave the death toll as **242,000, which is now considered the correct figure.** »

36 Professor Båth, in his letter of 3 October 1984, shows that the average annual death toll from earthquakes during the twentieth century was 15,700 (compared to the Society's 25,300).

figures that best support a preconceived view among the many different lists that have been published. To do so reflects, at best, a lack of research and irresponsible journalism; at worst, deliberate deception.

. *How to "prove" with quotes*

Seismic activity in the earth's crust is not entirely constant. The activity appears to have cycled variably for different periods in the past, with intermittent periods of greater and lesser activity. The evidence is, however, that over a longer period of time the activity has been stable. The above fluctuations, then, are only minor variations in the overall pattern. Some popular authors believe that the earth is now going through a period of increased seismic activity. "There are now indications that the earth is going through a period of increasing earthquake activity," writes Verney.³⁷

But it is doubtful that all seismologists would agree with this. It is true that in *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1983, seismologist Keiiti Aki "speaks of 'the apparent increase in the intensity and frequency of major earthquakes over the last hundred years,' although stating that the period from 1500 to 1700 was active" (page 6). It is difficult to see the usefulness of such a statement for the Watch Tower Society when it covers 'the last hundred years', as opposed to the much shorter period after 1914.

However, the real meaning of Professor Aki's statement was obviously slipped by the Watch Tower Society. In his letter to the Watch Tower Society, Professor Aki *did not* indicate that there has been a *real or current* increase in earthquake activity over the last hundred years. His full statement was:

The apparent increase in the intensity and frequency of major earthquakes over the last hundred years is, in all likelihood, **the result of improvements in the equipment**

³⁷ Verney, page 7. Wake up! Wake up! From April 8, 1981, also quote Robert I. Tilling, head of the U.S. Geological Survey Office of Geochemistry and Geophysics, stating that there are "some suggestions that both volcanoes and earthquakes are on the increase worldwide. "Professor Markus Bath, however, who is a leading authority on earthquake activity, notes that "Tilling's statement is incorrect. No increase in earthquake activity has occurred. "(Personal letter of October 3, 1984)

(Letter from Keiiti Aki to the Watch Tower Society, dated September 30, 1982. A copy of this letter is reproduced in Appendix A.)

From this letter it appears that the magazine *The Watchtower* abused the information provided to it. Professor Aki's letter to the Watch Tower Society shows that in referring to "the apparent increase in intensity and frequency of major earthquakes", he had clearly used the term "obvious" in the sense of an *apparent* rise, not what is obvious or visible. In the same sentence, he explained that such an "apparent" rise was "in all probability, the result of improved recording equipment and the increased vulnerability of human society to earthquake damage". "The Watch Tower Society has seen fit to ignore this passage, thus giving the phrase a meaning that it does not have.

Professor Aki's true point of view is that there has been no increase in earthquake activity in this century and that the seismicity of the earth has been stable for millennia. In a private letter to the authors, dated 5 September 1985 Professor Aki explains:

I strongly believe that seismic activity has been stationary for thousands of years. I was trying to convince Jehovah's Witnesses of seismic stability, using data obtained in China for the period 1500 to 1700, but they put little emphasis on the published statement. (For the full text of this letter, see Appendix A.)

Obviously, then, the *Watchtower* quoted Professor Aki in a way that conceals his true positions and opinions. As Professor Aki, being confronted with the Watch Tower Society's use of his letter, he replied, "It is clear that they only quoted the part they were interested in, **eliminating my main message**", namely that the seismicity has been essentially stable, **with** no increase. (Keiiti Aki's letter to the authors, dated 16 June 1986)

Unfortunately, it must be said that this method of "proving" is not an exceptional case in the publications of this movement, as the following examples demonstrate.

In September 1950 the *Scientific American* magazine published a brief information on earthquake activity. Some

passages have been cited in Watch Tower publications over and over again for about twenty years as *the main* evidence for their claim that large earthquakes have increased in number since 1914. The phrases quoted by the Watch Tower Society are:

Large earthquakes used to occur in groups, with each period of activity followed by a period of rest. But the periods of activity became progressively shorter and closer together. Since 1948 this pattern has entered a new phase with about one large earthquake per year. ³⁸

38 *Scientific American*, September 1950, page 48. The quotation can be found, for example, in *Awake!* of March 8, 1956, pages 7, 8; *Awake!* of December 22, 1960, pages 14, 15; *The Watchtower* of 1961, page 628; *Awake!* of October 8, 1965, page 16; and *Auxiliary for a Better Understanding of the Bible*, 1971, page 478. In each case, the quotation was the only evidence of an increase in earthquake activity since 1914!

The Earthquake Diagram

Will **SISMOLOGISTS** ever be able to predict earthquakes? Researchers at the *California Institute of Technology* seem to have taken a step in that direction. They have found evidence that earthquakes all over the world follow a rough pattern of recurrence and are linked to a global pressure system.

Researchers at the *Institute's Seismological Laboratory* have studied the 48 major earthquakes that have occurred around the world since 1904, when reliable instrumental observations began. The study was limited to shallow and extremely devastating earthquakes that occur less than 45 miles (72.42 km) below the Earth's surface. All of these earthquakes form a pattern "as orderly and regular as the teeth of a saw blade. »

Large earthquakes used to occur in groups, with each period of activity followed by a period of rest. Thus, there was violent activity between 1904 and 1907 and then calm for 10 years, except for the two earthquakes of 1911 and 1912. Four more active periods, separated by quiet intervals, occurred between 1917 and 1948. But the active periods became progressively shorter and closer together. Since 1948 the pattern has entered a new phase, with about one large earthquake per year. Instead of increasing over the years, the pressure in the earth's crust now seems to be releasing as quickly as it is produced.

The nature of the "global force" that drives this ordered pattern is unknown. One hypothesis would be that periodic increases in the speed of the Earth's rotation due to slight variations between the tidal forces of the sun and moon could expand to the earth, opening up sufficient breaches to release the accumulated pressures.

These sentences, taken out of context, give the strong impression that there has been an *increase in* the number of major earthquakes in this century and particularly since 1948. A careful examination

of the totality of the information, however, gives a different impression. For the benefit of the reader, we present all of the above information.

Does the new information actually indicate that the number of major earthquakes has increased since 1948? Are they saying that they have been more violent or devastating since then? No. They refer to a study of a special type of large earthquake, "**shallow and extremely devastating earthquakes** that occur less than 45 miles (72.42 km) below the earth's surface. "Forty-eight such earthquakes occurred between 1904 and 1950, an *average of about one such earthquake per year*. While they were more likely to occur in groups, followed by a rest period, the pattern entered a new phase in 1948, "**with about one large earthquake** [i.e., magnitude 8.0 or greater] **per year**. "Thus the *average* number of earthquakes was always the same.

To illustrate this point, if over a ten-year period a group of four large earthquakes occurs in the first year, another group of three in the sixth year and a third group of three in the tenth, spaced out by years of calm, the total number would be ten large earthquakes over a ten-year period. It would be the same as if there had been one major earthquake every year over ten years. The total number would be the same in all cases.

The information given by the *Scientific American* clearly shows *that no increase in the total number or magnitude of earthquakes had occurred*. By indicating only two or three sentences of the context it was possible to create the opposite impression.

According to the study by seismologists Båth and Duda, mentioned above, about 20 major earthquakes (7.0 or greater in magnitude) each year occurred from 1897 to 1977. No marked change in this pattern could be shown for the whole period, except that the frequency of the largest earthquakes was almost twice as high before 1920, compared to the whole period up to 1977. The "new phase" mentioned in the *Scientific American* of September 1950, then, must have been a relatively mundane episode in a larger pattern. ³⁹

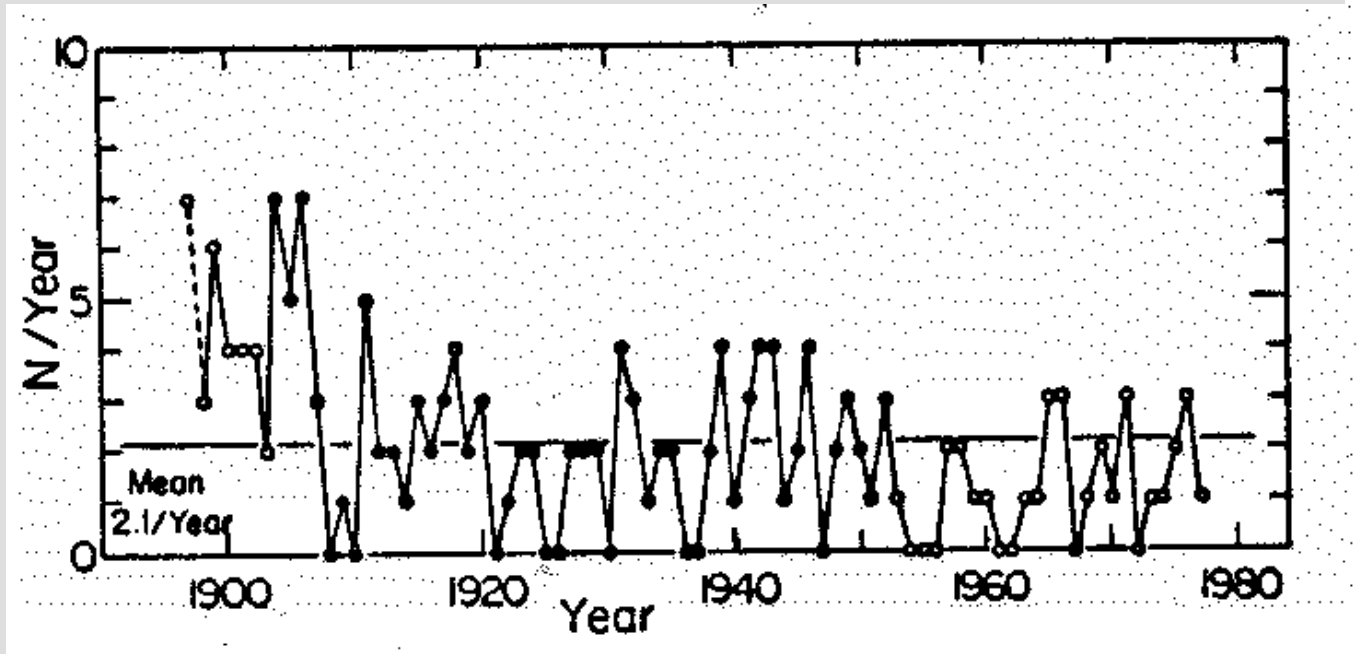
large.³⁹

Despite this, the phrases quoted out of context by the Watch Tower Society have been used, time and time again, in an attempt to It is "proving" that earthquake activity entered a new and *more violent* phase in 1948 and that it *has continued ever* since. In the long run, of course, the *Scientific American* article of September 1950 could not be dug up every time "proof" was needed.⁴⁰

33 It may also be noted that the publication of information on the "new phase" had appeared in most of ~~the three years from~~ 1948 to 1950. The information could not show, of course, whether the "new phase" would continue after 1950. Certainly, it would be a thin thread of evidence on which to build these surprising claims.

34 It is well known that the *Scientific American* article of 1950 was beginning to look somewhat outdated and needed to be renewed. The Watch Tower Society's Bible Dictionary *Aid to Bible Understanding*, published in 1971, took advantage of this quote in an unusual way, giving an additional false appearance, as shown in the following quote: "Jesus predicted earthquakes of great number and magnitude as a characteristic of the sign of his second presence. Since 1914 A.D., and **especially 1948, there has been an increase in the number of earthquakes, the most important ones. Before 1948, they occurred in groups, with a rest period in between, but since then there has been a major earthquake almost every year**, in addition to a large number of smaller ones. See the *Encyclopaedia Americana, Yearbooks 1965-1967*, under 'Earthquakes'. (Aid to Bible Reading, page 178.) The *Scientific American* sentences are almost literally repeated in this dictionary, but instead of referring to this magazine (about twenty years ago) as the source, the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, we refer to the 1965-1967 Yearbooks, obviously to give a more current look at this "evidence" and to indicate that the period 1948-50 was still valid. The problem is, however, that this encyclopaedia says nothing about a "new phase" from 1948 onwards, or an increase in earthquake activity in this century! The unsuspecting and faithful reader of Watch Tower publications takes the new source cited as confirming the statement of such an increase. It is extremely unlikely that he will check the source to learn that he has been misled. This way of justifying claims is far from honest, especially since the statements are presented as the only evidence of an alleged increase in earthquakes since 1914.

This graph shows the annual number of *large shallow earthquakes* from 1897-1979 measuring 7.8 or more on the Richter scale. These are usually the most devastating earthquakes, especially when they hit densely populated areas. The great earthquake that struck Mexico City on September 19, 1985, belongs to this category. On average, about 21 such earthquakes occur each year. No increase in the number of such earthquakes has been observed in this century. For those who would point to 1914 as a turning point, the fact is that their number was higher in the period before 1914! (K. Abe & H. Kanamori in *Tectonophysics*, Vol. 62, 1980, page 196).



A new "proof" put forward

In 1978 the *Scientific American* magazine statement had been used for about twenty years as *the main or only* neutral "evidence" from the Watch Tower Society regarding the alleged increase in earthquake activity since 1914. In 1978, however, another "evidence" began to emerge, one that has served virtually as the only "neutral" source of evidence since then. Further examination of the source and reliability of this new evidence will provide another interesting lesson in the Society's art of "proving" with citations.

The erroneous statement made in 1977 that "reliable sources list only 24 major earthquakes" from 856 to 1914 would soon become useful to the Watch Tower Society in a more unexpected way. The year following the publication of this statement, in the Italian magazine *Il Piccolo*, October 8, 1978, a writer, Geo Malagoli, presented the following opinions:

"As statistics show, our generation is living in a dangerous period of intense seismic activity. In fact, it is well documented that for 1,059 years (from 856 to 1914) there were only 24 major earthquakes that killed 1,973,000 people. But recent disasters are responsible for the death of 1,600,000 people in only 63 years, from 1915 to 1978, with 43 earthquakes. This phenomenal increase confirms another recognized fact: our generation is an unhappy generation in many ways." (From *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1983, page 6.)

By stating that the mortality figures indicate our "period of high seismic activity," Geo Malagoli reveals that he is, without a doubt, not a seismologist.⁴¹ He is clearly a reader of *Wake Up!* magazine nevertheless. A careful comparison will show that his statement is virtually a verbatim repetition of the same statement published by the Watch Tower Society one and a half years earlier. (See page 62.)

It is quite obvious that Malagoli's source of "information" was the magazine of *Awake!* of 22 February 1977, quoted earlier. The slight differences are easy to explain. He rounded the figures: 1,972,952 to 1,973,000 and 1,579,209 to 1,600,000. As one year had passed since the figures were first published in *Wake Up!* he also raised the age of 62 (from 1915 to 1977) to 63. But other than that, all the details are the same. And now Geo Malagoli began to appear in Watch Tower publications whenever the subject of earthquakes was raised to be considered a neutral and impartial seismic authority!

Malagoli's statement in *Il Piccolo* was first taken up and quoted under the title of "Regard sur l'actualité" in *The Watchtower of*^{1^{er}} October 1979 (page 11), without informing the reader that Malagoli had borrowed his information in turn from the magazine *Réveillez-vous!* The following year in 1980 Malagoli and his statement appeared again, this time in the book *Le Bonheur Comment Le trouver*, where he is cited on page 148 as *the only "evidence" of the alleged increase in earthquake activity since 1914.* A few months later, in the *Awaken!* of October 8, 1980, Malagoli is again cited as *the only source of proof:*

³⁵ High seismic activity does not necessarily translate into high casualties. As Bâth points out (quoted above, see footnote 11), "there is generally no clear correlation between the magnitude of an earthquake and the number of people killed or destroyed". Only if seismic activity occurs in densely populated areas can there be high mortality figures. Seismologists therefore measure seismic activity by instruments, not by fatality reports.

Has the frequency of earthquakes really increased? The Italian periodical *Il Piccolo* made this observation: "Statistics show that our generation is living in a dangerous period of great seismic activity." The newspaper then gave as proof the figures for the last hundred years. (page 191)

And of course they avoided mentioning the fact that the 'statistics presented' originally came from the Watch Tower Society itself.

In 1981 Malagoli was quoted in the Society's book "May Your Kingdom Vienna" on page 113, and in 1982 "his" figures were mentioned three times: in the *Awake!* of April 8, page 13, in *The Watchtower* of April 15, page 9, and in the new study book *You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into a Paradise*, page 151. Each time Malagoli's figures were the only "proof" given of the increase in seismic activity. In a special discussion of seismic activity published in *The Watchtower* on May 15, 1983, Malagoli was finally called as the main witness (apart from the misleading statistics of the Watch Tower Society) to the increase in seismic activity since 1914. Incredible as it may seem, this time his statement was used to "refute" what a true authority on seismicity, Keiiti Aki, states, namely that the period from 1500 to 1700 was as active as the last 100 years!

Thus we find that the Watch Tower Society's argument, yes, its only apparently "neutral" and "impartial" evidence that earthquake activity has increased since 1914 is that an Italian author, who undoubtedly borrowed in good faith his

"information" directly from *Wake Up!* magazine. These

"Information" about past seismic activity is, in turn, completely wrong and has nothing in common with actual historical evidence. The fact that the Society, time and time again, has presented this false information - apparently taken from a neutral source - in order to "prove" its interpretation of the sign since 1914, should make every honest reader of its publications wonder whether this Society really deserves its confidence in its remarkable claims.

Quotations taken out of context by giving a different and tortuous meaning, biased selections of figures and data, the use and even manufacture of statistics that are then presented

as coming from a neutral outside source - these are the methods used by Watch Tower publications to support the claim that the number of earthquakes and their victims have been on the rise since 1914. Why is it that people considered to be pious and respectable men resort to such methods?

An authoritative article entitled "Fraud in Science" published in the May 22, 1984 issue of *Awake!* showed that dedicated scientists such as Ptolemy, Galileo, Mendel, Newton, and others sometimes resorted to the manipulation of numbers, the selection of data, and even the fabrication of data to support their theories. The article goes on to say that, "**for all the honor and honesty a scientist or other man may display in a certain field, he may just as well become dogmatic, irrational and reckless, and use expediencies**" (page 6), and goes on to point out that "**science too has shameful secrets**":

Their accidental disclosure should make us realize that, although science and scientists often occupy a pedestal, their true place should be carefully reconsidered. (page 8)

We ask: When "shameful secrets" are also found in a religious organization, should this not lead to a similar reassessment of the high position that this organization claims for itself?

. *Earthquakes in the light of history*

What, then, are the real facts about earthquakes in the past? If, as seismologists clearly show, *thousands of* devastating earthquakes occurred during the period from 856 to 1914, how is it possible to state that "there were only 24 major earthquakes" during this period? One possibility would be if such a list had been found in the "Earthquake" entry of any reference work. Encyclopedias and other reference works often include tables with a brief selection of significant earthquakes from the past. *But in no case have we ever found a supposedly complete list.* On the contrary, one is usually informed in some way that the list presented is incomplete. Thus the seismologists Franck Press and Raymond Siever, on page 651 of their popular manual *Earth* (San Francisco 1974)

list 32 (note!) earthquakes from 856 to 1914 under the heading "**some of the world's worst earthquakes (in lives lost)**". "Clearly, only a writer grossly ignorant of the facts could honestly claim that pre-1914 history recognizes only 24 major earthquakes! Only such a writer could also write the following statement on page 18 of *Wake Up!* of May 8, 1974:

Moreover, the great earthquakes of the past were usually isolated events occurring years, even centuries apart. There were not many in a single generation.

In a remarkably similar statement, Hal Lindsey's book *The 1980's Countdown to Armageddon* (1981), déclare page 29 :

There have been many great earthquakes throughout history, but surprisingly well kept records show that they did not occur very often in the past. The 20th century, however, has seen an unprecedented increase in the frequency of these calamities. In fact, the number of earthquakes per decade has almost doubled in every ten-year period since 1950.

Although devoid of even the slightest foundation in fact, such statements could give the impression of having been obtained in haste by someone whose main, and perhaps the only, information on earthquakes in history has been a quick glance at tables containing partial selections of major earthquakes.

As has been shown, the carefully prepared earthquake catalogues by seismologists list a much larger number of major earthquakes for the period 856-1914. For this reason the Watch Tower Society felt the need to try to undermine confidence in these catalogues. The magazine, *Awake Up!* of May 8, 1974, stated:

Not all historical documents on "great" earthquakes inspire confidence in their reliability. That was the view of cataloguer John Milne." In these catalogs, we read in the 1939 edition of his book *Earthquakes and Other Earth Movements* (revised and rewritten by A. We Lee), "there are uncertainties in the dates, or even years, for many of the old earthquakes. There are many inaccurate or obscure references in the original writings. (Page 18)

With this quote, taken out of context, the Watch Tower company rejects all the catalogues of thousands of earthquakes in the past, carefully compiled by modern specialists. Was it really the view of John Milne and A. W. Lee that these catalogues could be ignored, because old documents often contained "inaccurate or obscure references", and because "there are uncertainties in the date, or even years", for most earthquakes? Milne's statement seen in context gives the reader a completely different impression:

The information available for examining the distribution of earthquakes in different parts of the world throughout historical time has been collected in many catalogues. Older catalogues, which have been prepared from reports found in the histories of various countries, are necessarily incomplete and do not give an accurate representation of the distribution of seismic phenomena around the globe. In these catalogues there are uncertainties in the dates, or even years, for many of the ancient earthquakes. There are many inaccurate or obscure references in the original writings, and dates are often given according to a little-known calculation system. Entries for old earthquakes refer, for the most part, to widespread disasters. ⁴²

Read in its entirety and in context, Milne's (and Lee's) estimate of the catalogues has a completely different meaning. What they actually point out is that, because the old catalogues are incomplete, the actual number of old earthquakes was actually greater and therefore these catalogues do not give a true picture of the whole situation with regard to the activity of previous earthquakes. Uncertainties about certain dates or years, they say, are due to the fact that dates are often given according to a calculation system that is little known today. This in no way means that the old sources were negligent and therefore unreliable in this regard, an impression created by the Watch Tower Society by taking the statement out of context and interrupting the quote in the middle of a sentence. The observation that descriptions of ancient earthquakes sometimes contain Nor does "inaccurate or obscure references" constitute a denial of the reality of these earthquakes.

36 John Milne and A.W. Lee, *Earthquakes and Other Earth Movements*, Seventh Edition, London 1939, p. 134.

By turning to one of the classical scholars of antiquity, we obtain an interesting illustration of this incompleteness of past earthquake catalogues. Shortly before his death in 65 B.C., the famous Roman writer Seneca claimed that frequent earthquakes had long been a feature of the ancient world:

How many times cities in Asia, how many times in Achaia, have been laid waste by a single earthquake! How many cities in Syria, how many in Macedonia, have been swallowed up! How many times has this kind of devastation brought Cyprus to ruin! How often has Paphos collapsed! It is not uncommon for news to come in of the total destruction of entire cities. (*Seneca Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, translated by Richard M. Gummere, volume 11, London and New York, 1920, p 437).

No existing earthquake catalogue would claim to embrace all the disastrous tremors presupposed by this statement. In fact, only a very small number of earthquakes before 65 AD have been specifically identified. But it would certainly be a mistake to infer that earthquake disasters "have not occurred very frequently" in the past, as author Lindsey and the Watch Tower's *Awake Up!* magazine suggest. Seneca's personal testimony is that, from the first century onwards, they occurred with notable frequency. That few or no details are known today about these destructive earthquakes certainly does not mean that they did not occur.

Several seismologists have noted that catalogues of modern earthquakes, far from exaggerating the number of earthquakes in the past, actually indicate only a small minority of them. In 1971, for example, the seismologist N.N. Ambraseys of the *Imperial College of Science and Technology* in London reported that he had identified about 2,200 "larger tremors" in the eastern Mediterranean alone between 10 and 1699 AD. After a further careful examination of recent archaeological sources and evidence of this zone of significant seismicity, he stated :

The total number of all earthquakes, large and small, identified to date for the period 10 to 699 AD is just over 3,000, about twenty times the number of actual earthquakes recorded for the same period in modern catalogues. ⁴³

43 N. N. Ambraseys in *Nature* of August 6, 1971, pp. 375, 376.

Professor Ambraseys has not yet published a documented study of these discoveries, but the series of catastrophic earthquakes that struck the Eastern Roman Empire in 447, the year of Attila's second invasion, is probably among the 2,200 largest shocks mentioned above. This is known to us from the historian E.A. Thompson, who states the following in his book *A History of Attila and the Huns* (Oxford, England, 1948), page 91:

As Hun's squadrons prepared to move, a catastrophe of the first magnitude struck the Romans. The series of earthquakes that struck the Eastern Empire for four months, beginning on January 26, 447, were, according to Evagrius, the worst in its history. Entire villages were swallowed up and countless disasters occurred on land and sea. Thrace, Hellespont and the Cyclades were affected. For three or four days after the earthquakes began, the rain poured down from the sky, we are told, like a continuous river. Mounds were razed. Countless buildings were overthrown at Constantinople, and worse, a section of the massive walls of Anthemius, of which no less than fifty-seven towers fell to the ground.

Yet these disastrous shocks of 447 AD *are not covered in any of the earthquake catalogues to which the authors of this book have had access.*

It is only since the middle of the last century that seismologists have intensively studied the records of past earthquakes. Robert Mallet, "the first true seismologist". Not only did he examine the old catalogues compiled by his predecessors, but he also searched libraries all over Europe for documents on ancient earthquakes. Finally, in the *Reports of the British Association* for the years 1852-54, he published a catalogue of nearly *seven thousand earthquakes, covering the period from 1606 BC to 1850 AD.* As Milne and Lee point out, these entries "relate, for the most part, to widespread disasters," that is, large and destructive earthquakes:

But that was just the beginning. When John Milne, "the father of seismology," arrived in Tokyo in 1875, "it was to find traces of more than two thousand earthquakes in the Japanese archives."⁴⁵ In

44 Milne/Lee, p. 2; Verney, p. 50. In his catalogue, Mallet has added a bibliography of approximately seven thousand books and pamphlets.

45 Verney, p. 76.

Japan, a list of destructive earthquakes has been preserved for over two thousand years! Soon similar documents were also discovered in China. The Chinese archives date back to 1100 BC, and "are quite complete from 780 BC, the period of the Chou Dynasty in northern China."⁴⁶

Within a short period of time, several seismologists began to develop detailed catalogues of earthquakes in different countries. Davison's *History of British Earthquakes*, for example, lists 1,191 shocks from 974 to 1924 in England alone, a country far removed from seismic zones.⁴⁷ The book also lists 1,191 shocks in the United Kingdom, a country far removed from seismic zones. In Italy, Mario Baratta, in his *I Terremoti d'Italia*, published in 1901, reports 1,364 earthquakes that shook Italy from 1 AD to 1898.⁴⁸ Similar catalogues list earthquakes in Austria, Russia, China, Japan, etc.⁴⁹

The greatest earthquake collector among modern seismologists, however, was a Frenchman, Count F. Montessus de Ballore. From 1885 to 1922, he devoted all his time to the study and cataloguing of earthquakes. **"His greatest work, however, has never been published: it is a monumental catalogue of earthquakes in all parts of the world since the earliest historical times, and contains information on 171,434 earthquakes!"** The manuscript is kept in the library of the Geographical Society in Paris, where it occupies 26 metres (over 84 feet) of shelves⁵⁰.

John Milne, too, has spent several years compiling his catalogue of earthquakes from around the world. Limiting his study to destructive earthquakes only, he lists 4151 earthquakes between 7-1899 AD.⁵¹ Entries prior to 1700, which "are virtually confined to occurrences in southern Europe, China and Japan," are, for logical reasons, more sparse.⁵² The pre-1700 entries, which "are virtually confined to occurrences in southern Europe, China and Japan," are, for logical reasons, more sparse. ⁵² Milne was admirably strict in the management of his sources. He states:

Not only have some small earthquakes been omitted, but whenever the information on which the

46 Milne/Lee, p. 135. Booth/Fitch, p. 76.

47 Milne/Lee, p. 135.

48 Milne (1911, see footnote 9 above), p. 655.

49 Milne (1911), pp. 655-658. Wong Wen-Hao's list for China, compiled from historical documents, includes 3,394 earthquakes from 1767 BC to 1896 AD! Geol. Congress Proceedings. Internatl. XIII, Belgium 1922, fasc. 2, Liège 1925, pp. 1161-1197.

50 Milne/Lee, pp. 137, 138.

51 Milne (1911), pp.649-740. Milne/Lee, p.138.

52 Milne (1911), p. 649.

accounts of the largest accounts were questionable, they were also rejected⁵³.

Milne indicated the intensity of the earthquakes he listed according to scales I, II and III, with III referring to the most destructive earthquakes, those that destroyed cities and devastated provinces, cracking walls, breaking up old buildings, etc. "at a distance of 100 miles (160 km) from the epicenter. In the course of the 19^e century alone, for the most complete records, approximately 370 Class III earthquakes are recorded. Compared to this documented evidence, the Watch Tower Society's reference with only 24 major earthquakes from 856 to 1914 becomes almost ridiculous.

In fact, the Watch Tower Society now recognizes this. In the summer of 1985, they issued a statement acknowledging that there had been 856 severe earthquakes in the 2000 years prior to 1914. (See *How to Reason from Scripture*, 1985, page 236.) While this is a step in the right direction, this figure is far from the current truth. Arguments based on this new figure are actually as misleading as those based on the previous figures. (See the box below.)

When it comes to the number of deaths in different earthquakes in the past, old documents are often silent or give very succinct information. The Awake! of July 8, 1982, on page 16, stated that "since Jesus gave his prophecy and up to 1914, history records five earthquakes that each took 100,000 or more lives" while "since 1914, at least four such super quakes have occurred.

⁵³ Milne (1911), p.651.

FROM 24 TO 856 EARTHQUAKES

In its book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (1982), the Watch Tower Society stated that "from the year 856 to 1914, there were only 24 major earthquakes. (Page 151)

Obviously, abandoning this claim, three years later, the manual *How to Reason from Scripture* (1985) gives a much higher number of earthquakes :

With data obtained from the *National Geophysical Data Center* in Boulder, Colorado, supplemented by a number of standard reference works, a table was produced in 1984 that included only earthquakes of 7.5 or greater on the Richter scale, or that resulted in the destruction of US\$5 million or more in property, or caused 100 or more deaths. It has been calculated that 856 of these earthquakes occurred in the 2,000 years prior to 1914. The same table showed that *in only 6.9 years* after 1914 there were 605 earthquakes of this type. This means that, compared to the previous 2000 years, the average per year has been 20 times higher since 1914.

Did the Boulder data center really support that statement? Seismologist Wilbur A. called it "a misuse of statistics. Rinehart of the *National Geophysical Data Center* in Boulder, Colorado, stated that "there has been no significant increase in the number of earthquakes in this or any other century. (For a complete response to our questions, see Appendix A).

What about the "20-fold increase"?

Writing about the area limited to the eastern Mediterranean basin, the renowned seismologist N. N. Ambraseys declared in 1971:

The total number of all earthquakes, large and small, identified so far for the period from 10 to 1699 A.D. is just over 3,000, about twenty times the number of authentic earthquakes recorded for the same period in modern catalogues. For the most important tremors, about 2,200 in total, the homogeneity of the material can be satisfactory for the whole period.

Nature magazine of 6 August 1971, pp. 375, 376.

These discoveries in themselves totally negate the Watch Tower Society's claims.

What leading seismologists are noticing:

The Watch Tower Society's statement about a 20-fold increase in earthquakes since 1914 has also been sent to a number of leading seismologists around the world. All of them rejected this statement and none of them thought that our century was unique in terms of the number of great earthquakes. A number of the replies received are reproduced in the annex.

Just to demonstrate how wrong such a statement is, the following table shows 24 "super-earthquakes" from the period from 532 à 1914. Maybe seven of them (he in there naturally uncertainties) took place in the 18th century alone.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Robert A. Gause and John B. Nelson, *Catalog of Significant Earthquakes 2000 B. C. 1979*, Boulder, Colorado, 1981, pp. 3-33. (Report SE-27 of World Data Center A for Solid Earth Geophysics). On the Messina / Reggio earthquake, see A. Imamura, *Theoretical and Applied Seismology*, Tokyo 1937, pp. 140, 202, 204, reporting that there were 83 000 deaths in Messina and 20 000 in Reggio. Other sources used are N. N. Ambraseys, *Revue pour l'étude des calamités*, No. 37, Geneva, December 1961, p. 18f, J. H. Latter, " *Natural Disasters* ", *Advancement of Science*, June 1969, pp. 363, 370; N. N. Ambraseys and approx. P. Melville, *A History of Persian Earthquakes*, Cambridge 1982; R. A. Daly, *Our Mobile Earth*, New York and London 1926; A. T. Wilson, "Earthquakes in Persia", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, London Institution, Vol. VI (1930-1932); Dr. A. Sieberg in *Handbuch der Geophysik* (Ed. Prof. B. Gutenberg), Vol. IV, Leipzig 1932; and James Comell, *The Great International Disaster Book*, New York 1979. Victim figures vary, and in several cases some sources give figures considerably higher than those shown in our table. For example, the new catalogue of *strong earthquakes in the USSR from antiquity to 1977* (Report SE-31 of World Data Centre A, July 1982) gives 200,000 to 300,000 deaths for the Gansana earthquake in Iran in 1139. Comell (in Comell, p.153) puts the *death* toll for the 1693 earthquake in Sicily at 153,000, and Sieberg (in Gutenberg, p.854) puts it at 150,000 for the Japanese earthquake in 1703. For the two earthquakes that struck Tabriz in Iran in 1721 and 1780, up to 250,000 and 205,000 respectively. (Ambraseys / Melville, pp. 54, 184, 186) Two other relatively recent earthquakes that may have been earthquakes are the earthquake in Japan in 1855, which may have caused 106,000 deaths (Sieberg in Gutenberg, p, and the earthquake in Kangra, India, in 1905, of which Comell (p.139) says that "Other reports claim that nearly 370,000 people were killed in central India when several villages were completely destroyed. None of these have been included in the table.

Date	Location	Killed
532 AD.	Syria	130 000
678	Syria	170 000
856	Iran: Qumis Damghan	200 000
893	India: Daipul	180 000
893	Iran: Ardabil	150 000
1138	Egypt, Syria	230 000
1139	Iran: Gansana	100 000
1201	Upper Egypt, Syria	1 100 000
1290	China: Chihli	100 000
1556	China	830 000
1641	Iran: Dehkwargan, Tabriz	300 000
1662	China	300 000
1669	Sicily (eruption of Etna)	100 000
1693	Sicily: Catania and Naples	100 000
1703	Japan (tsunami)	100 000
1721	Iran: Tabriz	100 000
1730	China: Chihli	100 000
1730	Japan: Hokkaido	137 000
1731	China: Beijing	100 000
1737	India: Calcutta	300 000

1780	Iran: Tabriz	100 000
1850	China	300-400
1876	Bay of Bengal (tsunami)	215 000
1908	Italy: Messina / Reggio	110 000

Comparing this information with the statement by the author of Awake! quoted earlier, it becomes painfully obvious how remarkably superficial the search for Watch Tower publications is, how irresponsible the assertions made are really.

In many cases, a large number of deaths have been caused by the results or consequences of seismic activity, such as tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, fires and similar factors. But this also applies to some of the "super-earthquakes" that occurred after 1914. The 100,000 deaths in the 1920 earthquake in China, for example, were killed mainly by a landslide caused by the earthquake. The earthquake in Japan in 1923 caused a fire storm that killed 38,000 of the 143,000 victims. It should also be added that the above table certainly does not claim to list all "super-earthquakes" before 1914.

Given the increase in population, it may seem reasonable to expect that more people have died in earthquakes this century than in previous centuries.⁵⁵ The number of earthquake fatalities in the past century has been increasing. ⁵⁵ The following challenge on page 19 of Wake Up! of May 8, 1974, therefore, seems rather easy:

In total, more than 900,000 people have died in earthquakes since 1914! Can a single "generation" equal this terrible record? Jesus' prophecies about earthquakes are now being fulfilled.

Although this number subsequently increased by a few hundred thousand in the years following this statement and published in Awake-

⁵⁵ Professor Bâth points out that "coastal areas are most often affected by earthquakes and that these areas have always been the most densely populated". Thus, The report states that "they cannot be compared with the total population on earth as an indication for previous periods" by estimating the total number of earthquake victims in the past. (Personal letter of 3 October 1984)

you! we will nevertheless take up the challenge set by the Watch Tower.

Since the pre-1700 historical elements "are virtually confined to events in Southern Europe, China and Japan" (Milne), we select the generation from 1714 onwards and compare it with the post-1914 generation. The table in *Wake Up!* of February 22, 1977, covering the period 1915-1976, has been updated to include the years up to 1983. A correction to the figure for the great earthquake in China in 1976 has been made at the bottom of the table, with a reference to a later statement in *Wake Up!* (See page 83.)

The results show that the total number of deaths in earthquakes from 1915 to 1983 was 1,210,597, an annual average of 1,210,597. 17 545.

The attached table (left) listing 43 major earthquakes from 1715 to 1783 shows a total of 1,373,845 deaths, or about 163,000 more, giving an annual average of 19,911!

Proving that 1914 was a real "turning point" The Watchtower of May 15, 1983 referred to 50 destructive earthquakes in the 68 years between 1914 and 1982 (page 7). We have therefore prepared a table for the 68 years preceding 1914 (1847-1914) showing a partial list of 50 destructive earthquakes compiled from reliable sources. It demonstrates very conclusively that 1914 cannot have been the obvious turning point claimed by the Watch Tower Society.

Of course, none of these paintings are complete. For a number of major earthquakes from the 18^e century onwards, there are no figures for fatalities, as contemporary documents simply give the information that they claimed "many" victims. Even if the fatality figures were to be added to the three tables by including more earthquakes from the three periods concerned, the comparison would only demonstrate that the 1914 generation is not unique with regard to earthquakes.⁵⁶ (See page 84.)

⁵⁶ Sources used for the table of earthquakes in the 18^e century include: the catalogue by Ganse and Nelson; Milne (1911), pages 686 to 698; Robert Giffen in the *Journal of the Statistical Society*. Vol. XLI, London 1878, pages 442-444; Charles Davison, *Great Earthquakes*, London 1936; Akitune Imamura, *Theoretical and Applied Seismology*. Tokyo 1937; Richter (1958); Bâth (1979), page 139; Booth & Fitch, p. 78; and *Encyclopedia Americana Annals*, 1965 - 67, page 498. If we take into account that the population on earth today is six times higher than that of the 18^e century (about 750 million in 1770), the ratio of earthquake victims as a proportion of the total population, the 18^e century far surpasses the 20^e!

COMPARISON OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

1715-1783			1915-1983 :	(See <i>Awake!</i> of 22 February 1977)	
Year	Location	Killed	Year	Location	Killed
1715	Algeria	20 000	1915	Italy	29 970
1717	Algeria	20 000	1920	China	180 000
1718	China	43 000	1923	Japan	143 000
1719	Minor Asia	1 000	1927	China	200 000
1721	Iran	100 000	1932	China	70 000
1724	Peru (tsunami)	18 000	1933	USA	115
1725	Peru	1500	1935	India (Pakistan)	60 000
1725	China	556	1939	Chile	30 000
1726	Italy	6 000	1939	Turkey	23 000
1727	Iran	77 000	1946	Turkey	1300
1730	Italy	200 000	1946	Japan	2 000
1730	China	100 000	1948	Japan	5131
1730	Japan	137 000	1949	Ecuador	6 000
1731	China	100 000	1950	India	1 500
1732	Italy	1 940	1953	Turkey	1 200
1736	China	260	1953	Greece	424
1737	India	300 000	1954	Algeria	1 657
1739	China	50 000	1956	Afghanistan	2 000

COMPARISON OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

1746	Peru	4 800	1957	Iran (North)	2 500
1749	Spain	5 000	1957	Iran (West)	2 000
1750	Greece	2 000	1960	Chile	5 700
1751	Japan	2 000	1960	Morocco	12 000
1751	China		9001962	Iran	10 000
1752	Syria	20 000	1963	Yugoslavia	1 100
1754	Egypt	40 000	1964	Alaska	131
1755	China	270	966	Turkey	2 259
1755	Iran	1 200	1969	Iran	11 588
1755	Portugal	60 000	1970	Turkey	1 086
1755	Morocco	12 000	1970	Peru	66 794
1757	Italy	10 000	1971	USA	65
1759	Syria	30 000	1972	Iran	5 057
1763	China	1 000	1972	Nicaragua	6 000
1765	China	43 466	1973	Mexico City (West)	52
1766	Japan	12 420	1973	Mexico City (Central)	700
1771	Japan (tsunami)	11 700	1974	Pakistan	5 200
1773	Guatemala	20 000	1975	China	200
1774	Newfoundland	300	975	Turkey	2 312

COMPARISON OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

1778	Iran (Kashan)	8 000	1976	Guatemala	23 000
1780	Iran (Tabriz)	100 000	1976	Italy	900
1780	Iran (Khurasan)	3000	1976	Bali	600
1783	Italy (Calabria)	60 000	1976	China *	242 000
1783	Italy (Palmi)	1 504	1976	Philippines	3 373
1783	Italy (Monteleone)	1191	1976	Turkey	3 790

1977-1983 addition + 44 623

Total 1715-1783 :	1 373 84 5	Total 1915-1983 :	1 210 597
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Annual average :	19 911	Annual average :	17 545
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*See page 65 footnote 34; compare with *Wake up!* July 8, 1982, page 13.

+ Gause and Nelson give the figure of 44,623 victims over that period.

. Did 1914 bring any real change?

Year	Location	Killed	Year	Location	Killed
1847	Japan	34 000	1882	Italy	2 313
1850	China	300 à 400 000	1883	Italy	1 990
1851	Iran	2 000	1883	Greece, Min or Asia	15 000
1851	Italy	14 000	1883	Java	36 400
1853	Iran (Shiraz)	12 000	1885	India	3 000

1853	Iran (Isfahan)	10 000	1887	France	1 000
1854	Japan	34 000	1887	China	2 000
1854	El Salvador	1 000	1891	Japan	7 283
1855	Japan	6 757	1893	Western Turkmenistan	18 000
1856	Java	3 000	1896	Japan	27 122
1857	Italy	10 000	1897	India (Assam)	1 542
1857	Italy	12 000	1902	Guatemala	2 000
1859	Ecuador	5 000	1902	Turkestan	4 562
1859	Turkey	15 000	1903	Turkey	6 000
1861	Argentina	7 000	1905	India (Kangra)	19 000
1863	Philippines	10 000	1905	Italy	2 500
1868	Peru	40 000	1906	Colombia	1 000
1868	Ecuador, Colombia	70 000	1906	Formosa	39 873
1872	Minor Asia	1 800	1906	Chile	20
1875	Venezuela, Colombia	16 000	1907	Jamaica	1 400
1876	Bay of Bengal	215 000	1907	Central Asia	12 000
1879	Iran		1908	Italy	110 000
1879	China	10 430	1909	Iran	6 à 8000
1880	Greece (Chios)	4 000	1910	Costa Rica	1 750

1881	Minor Asia	8 866	1912	Marmara Sea	1 958
Total of victim essurle 68 years prior to 1914:				1 148 973 à 1 250 973	
Annual average :				17 149 à 18 671	

SOURCES : Båth : Introduction to Seismology (1979) ; Richter : Elementary Seismology (1958) ; Imamura : Theoretical and Applied Seismology (1937) ; Ganse-Nelson : Catalog of Significant Earthquakes (1981) ; Ambraseys : Earth- quake Hazard and Vulnerability (1981) ; Ambraseys-Melville : A History of Persian Earthquakes (1982) ; Latter : Catastrophes naturelles (A History of Persian Earthquakes, juin 1969) ; Presse-Siever : Earth (1974) ; Handbuch Der Ceophysik (ed Prof. B Gutenberg), Band IV (Berlin 1932).

We have seen, one by one, the various claims of the Watch Tower Society demolished by the historical facts that the period 856-1914 saw only 24 major earthquakes, that the great earthquakes of the past occurred "for years, even centuries", that this history records only five "super-earthquakes" from the time of Christ until 1914, and that no generation prior to 1914 can match that of the following year in terms of earthquake victims. Is it really possible that the authors of the Watch Tower publications are so ignorant of past earthquakes? Or are they trying to hide the truth about them from their readers? We prefer to believe that they have mostly ignored the facts. But if this is the case, it is extremely remarkable that an organization claiming to have been authorized by Jesus Christ to interpret the signs of the times for people today seems so uninterested in verifying how its interpretations and statistics match historical reality.

Finally, what do the seismologists themselves say about the global vision? Have they found a marked difference in the frequency of earthquakes since 1914 compared to previous centuries? Seismologists J. Milne and A. W. Lee have stated that **"there is no evidence that seismic activity has increased or decreased significantly over historical time.** 57 And Professor Markus Båth agrees: **"For previous centuries, we do not have the same reliable statistics, but there is no evidence that seismic activity has increased or decreased significantly over historical time.**

57 Mitne/Lee, page 155.

indication of increased activity over time. ⁵⁸

As we go further back in time, as older documents become increasingly rare and incomplete, it is natural that we have more and better information from recent centuries than from previous ones. There is, however, one exception: Japan. As we have shown above, the Japanese have kept a record of the destructive earthquakes in that country (with its frequent seismic activity) going back long before the birth of Christ. According to Milne's catalogue, the number of *destructive* earthquakes in Japan recorded in each century between the ninth and nineteenth is :

<i>Century</i>	<i>Number of destructive earthquakes in Japan</i>
9 ^e	40
10 ^e	17
11 ^e	20
12 ^e	18
13 ^e	16
14 ^e	19
15 ^e	36
16 ^e	17
17 ^e	26
18 ^e	31
19 ^e	27

⁵⁸ Professor Båth, private letter dated 17 June 1983. See also Richter cited above, *Natural History*, December 1969, page 44, and Appendix A.

WHAT LEADING SEISMOLOGISTS SAY ABOUT EARTHQUAKES TODAY AND IN THE PAST

"There is no indication that seismic activity has increased or decreased significantly over history. "The seismologists J. Milne and A. W. Lee, *Earthquakes and Other Earth Movements, Seventh Edition* (London, 1939), page 155.

"Some religious groups have chosen this rather unfortunate moment to insist that the number of earthquakes is increasing and that they are partly misled by the growing number of small earthquakes catalogued and listed by the world's newest and most sensitive stations. It is worth noting that the number of large earthquakes from 1896 to 1906 was higher than in any other decade. "Professor Charles Richter in *National History*, December 1969, p. 44.

"For previous centuries we do not have the same reliable statistics, but there is no indication of any increase in activity over time. "Professor Markus Båth, private letter dated 17 June 1983.

"I certainly agree with Professors Båth and Richter in their assessment that there has been no significant increase in the number of earthquakes in this or any other century. "Wilbur A. Rinehart, seismologist at World Data Center A, Boulder, Colorado. Private letter dated August 8, 1985. Page one and page two.

An expert on seismicity in the Mediterranean region, one of the Earth's major seismic regions, says :

"It is true that seismic activity in the Mediterranean has not increased during this century, on the contrary, in the Eastern Mediterranean, the activity of this century has been abnormally low compared to that of the 10th -^{XII}" and 18th centuries. "Professor N. N. Ambraseys, private letter dated 9 August 1985.

"I strongly believe that seismicity has been stable for thousands of years... Excellent geological evidence of stability was obtained by Prof. Kerry Sieh of Caltech for the San Andreas Fault. " Seismologist Keiiti Aki, Professor, Department of Geological Sciences, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Private letter dated September 5, 1985.

"There are indications that global seismic activity if expressed in terms of earthquakes with a magnitude of 7 or greater has declined steadily over time from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. "Seweryn J. Duda, Professor of Geophysics, University of Hamburg. Private letter dated July 7, 1986.

(The private letters cited above are reproduced in full in the annex).

During this century, about 20 earthquakes of some significance had occurred in Japan up to 1983, indicating that

a final total of perhaps 2530 for the whole of this century. ⁵⁹ Assessing these figures, Milne and Lee reported that "the data support the conclusion that, over historical time, the amount of seismic activity has not changed much. "»⁶⁰

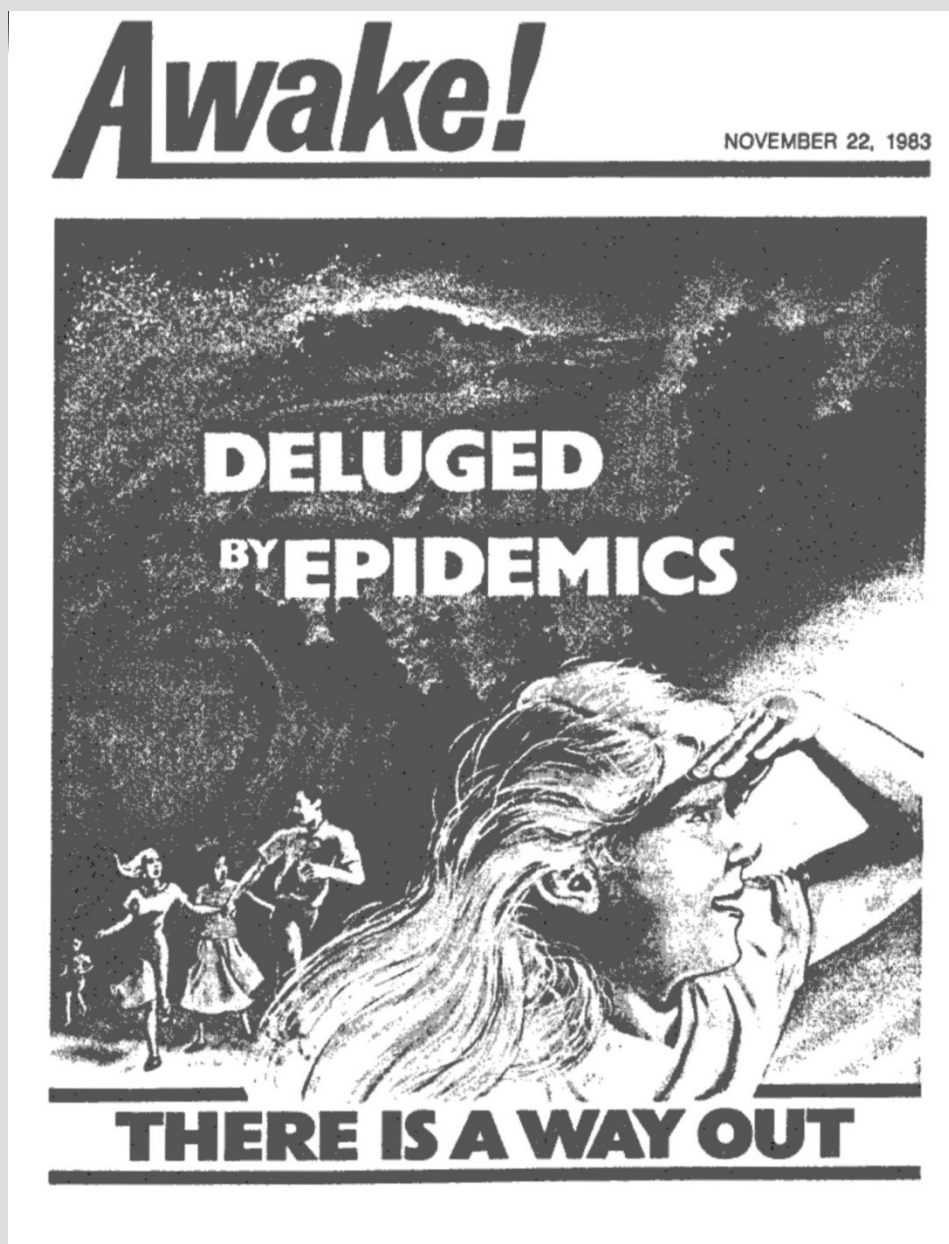
As a result, there is no evidence to support the assertion of various religious sources, including the World Adventist Church, a Seventh-Day Adventist author, and in particular the Watch Tower Society, that seismic activity is markedly different this century from previous ones. All available information indicates otherwise. The Watch Tower Society's shifting, twisted and uncoordinated claims and their manipulation of facts and figures to prove that an increase has occurred have been revealed above as fraudulent, not deliberate, but as a result of remarkably poor research, superficial analysis and wishful thinking.

59 Compare the painting by Milne / Lee (pages 232-235), Eiby (pages 191-195), Bâth (pages 114-117) and Verney's statements (page 77). Also Ganse and Nelson. 60
Milne/Lee, page 156.

4 Plagues - past and present

IMAGES often have a deeper impact on our minds than words. Unproven or misleading statements can seem more convincing and true if they are accompanied by dramatic and impressive illustrations.

The cover of the November 22, 1983 issue of Wake Up! magazine, for example, is a picture of people trying to escape a terrible wave that covers most of the page.



The bold words across the page proclaim that humanity today is overwhelmed by "A TORRENT OF EPIDEMICS. »

The illustration is a skillful presentation of the Watch Tower Society's claim that since 1914, humanity has experienced a dramatic increase in disease and epidemics. Is this true? Does the picture give a correct presentation of the real facts?

In the same vein, Hal Lindsey, another end-time commentator, states:

Jesus said that the *plagues would sweep the world away* before He returned. For years now, scientists have believed that the great plagues threatening mankind were practically under control. But in recent years, major epidemics have killed millions of people, and although vaccines are available against some of them, it is impossible to vaccinate the world's population en masse. ¹

Thus, while acknowledging that there has been a change in "the great scourges that threatened humanity", author Lindsey, who argues that since 1948 humanity has entered a divinely marked period, implies at the very least that there are now "plagues sweeping the world. "So we can ask ourselves what are the "great epidemics" of this century?

To what extent have they "overwhelmed" humanity or "swept the world" since 1914 or 1948 or any other "prophetically marked date" of our time?

The greatest scourge of our century was the famous Spanish flu that swept the world in the years 1918-1919, killing between 15 and 25 million people.

The Watch Tower Society, however, goes much further and claims that it was the greatest scourge, not only of this century, but of the entire history of mankind. The book *You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into Paradise* (1982), for example, says on page 151 :

Just after the First World War, more people died from the Spanish flu than from any other epidemic in human history. ²

To prove this claim, the Watch Tower Society has sometimes quoted from an American magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, dated September 26, 1959, in which the author stated that "**no plague of which**

1 The Promise (1932), page 193.

2 See also similar statements in *Awake!* of March 8, 1971, page 3 and in *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1982, page 9.

history before or after 1918-1919 has not had so many deaths. "³

Such a statement, however, only reveals that the journalist had done very little research on the great devastating scourges of the past.

We need only recall here the Black Death, the great scourge that swept through humanity from the XIV^e century onwards and which claimed between 25 and 40 million victims *in Europe alone* between December 1347 and December 1350. The Spanish flu of 1918-1919, for its part, claimed only 2-3 million victims in Europe, despite the fact that the population of Europe had quadrupled since 1347! ⁴

Several plagues in the past have had a more profound influence on the history of mankind than the Spanish flu, as we shall see in the discussion that follows.

What other pestilences have "overwhelmed" humanity since 1914?

Having mentioned the Spanish flu, the aforementioned Watch Tower Society manual goes on to say:

Yet epidemics and disease continue to rage. Millions of people die every year from heart disease and cancer. Venereal diseases spread rapidly. Other terrible diseases such as malaria, bilharzia and onchocerciasis occur in country after country, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America. ⁵

It is true that these diseases are widespread in some regions. What interests us, however, is: Is there anything new or different about this situation? Have these diseases increased in our twentieth century? Has humanity experienced *more* scourges in this century than in any other period in human history?

What about the other scourges that have killed millions of people in the past, such as smallpox, bubonic plague and cholera?

And what about heart problems and cancer? Are such diseases really "plagues" in the sense that the biblical writer Luke uses this word in Luke 21:11?

Of course, before looking more closely at the appalling history of pestilences, another question must be answered: what is the plague?

³ See The Watchtower of October 15, 1976, page 250.

⁴ Wake Up! 22 July 1956, p. 22-24; Wake Up! 8 March 1978, p. 18.

⁵ You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into Paradise (1982), p. 151.

. ***The meaning of the word "plague"***

In his gospel account Mark does not mention the plagues among the calamities Jesus spoke of, but Luke does (and maybe also Matthew, according to some manuscripts):

... there will be great earthquakes, and in various places there will be famines and pestilences.-Luke 21:11, asv.

The Greek word translated as "plagues" in this verse is *loimoí*, the plural of *loimós*. According to W. E. Vine, this word means "a plague, a deadly *infectious* disease."⁶ The word is used in another place in the New Testament, in chapter twenty-four of chapter 5, where the Jewish leaders accuse the Apostle Paul before Governor Felix, saying :

We have found this man to be a plague [*loimós* in Greek], and an insurgent among all the Jews throughout the world, and a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. (ASV)

Although the word *loimós* is used metaphorically in this text, it is clear that the allusion is not simply to any disease, but to an *infectious* disease, a plague. In the eyes of these Jewish leaders, Paul was a dangerous threat, a contagious subversive whose teachings spread throughout the Roman world like an epidemic, causing uprisings among the Jews throughout the world.

The famous Bible commentator, Albert Barnes, quoted in The Watchtower of 1^{er} August 1983 on page 3, also points out that *loimoí* in Luke 21:1, refers to the ravages caused by "serious and epidemic diseases"⁷.

The word *loimós* was therefore limited to deadly, epidemic diseases or plagues. Interestingly, the Watch Tower Society in its *Auxiliary Bible Dictionary* defines "plague" as "**any**

6 *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, complete edition, MacDonald Publishing Company (McLean, Virginia), p. 862. Therefore, *loimós* is commonly translated as "pestilence" (see King James version, version American-standard, new international version and Goodspeed), or "plague" (see The Jerusalem Bible and The New English Bible).

7 The Greek word *Thanatos* "dead" was also used for plague or pestilence, for example in Revelation 6:8. The name of the rider on the pale horse was *Thanatos* (commonly translated as "Death"). He was followed by Hades, the god of the lower world in Greek mythology. It is obviously used as a symbol of death or the grave. They were given "power over a quarter of the earth, with the right to kill with the sword and with famine, with plague (Greek: *Thanatos*) and wild beasts." (*The New English Bible*) These plagues refer to Ezekiel 14:21, where the Hebrew word for pestilence, *deber*, is translated as *Thanatos* in the Greek version of the Septuagint.

a rapidly spreading infectious disease capable of reaching epidemic proportions and causing death" (Page 1295). This definition gives an excellent meaning to *loimós*. When speaking of diseases more generally, the Greeks had other words, such as *nósos*. This term is used, for example, in Matthew 4:23, where it says that Jesus healed "all kinds of diseases" (*nósos*). The same verse also mentions "all kinds of diseases", which translates the Greek word *malakía*. A third term for sickness is *asthenia*, which means "weakness. "This word is used in connection with Lazarus' disease in John chapter eleven, verses 1-6.

The reason for this linguistic digression is that the Watch Tower Society, in its attempts to prove that plagues have been *on the* increase since 1914, counts *heart disease and cancer* among the plagues that are supposed to fulfill the words of Jesus in chapter twenty-one, verse 11. As the manual quoted above says: "Millions die each year of heart trouble and cancer. "In fact, the Society tends to count all types of diseases among the diseases of Luke 21:11, infectious or not, fatal or not.

An article in the August 1983 issue of 1^{er} of The Watchtower on page 4, for example, was entitled "Is Illness a Sign of the Last Days? "A table of diseases on page 7 of the same issue begins with cancer and ends with multiple sclerosis. With the exception of these and influenza and malaria, many of the other diseases listed in the table have little or no mortality today.⁸

Even if they are deadly, cancer and heart problems don't

8 Although onchocerciasis can cause blindness, it is not fatal. After a 10-year campaign, the WHO (World Health Organization) has succeeded in controlling onchocerciasis in West Africa, where it is the most widespread disease. (See *World Health* magazine, October 1985, pp. 6. 8. 19. 24.) Lupus and bilharzia fevers, when treated, rarely cause death. Not only is mortality from bilharzia negligible today compared to that of previous centuries, but the geographical extent has also been greatly reduced in many countries that were previously severely affected by the disease, such as China and Japan. The Philippines. Brazil. Venezuela, Puerto Rico. Egypt, Morocco, Sudan. Congo Malawi. Zimbabwe and Mali. (See *World Health* magazine, December 1984.) Chagas disease can lead to eventual death, but it is obviously no more prevalent today than in the past. And although perhaps 350 million people suffer from malaria today, this is actually a sharp decline in the disease since 1914. In previous centuries, more than a third of humanity suffered from it and several million people died from it every year. At the beginning of the First World War, 800 million people, or 45% of the world's population at that time, were still suffering from it. (Schrader, p. 184) Today (1986), despite a rapid increase in recent years, only about 7.5% suffer from it.

are not plagues in the biblical sense. They are not "epidemic diseases or *infectious diseases*," even though *the New York Times encyclopedic almanac of 1970* calls heart attacks a "pandemic. Although this was obviously said figuratively (because a pandemic actually refers to a widespread *infectious* disease), the Watchtower quickly grasped it and used it to support the alleged increase in plagues.⁹

However, when Luke, who was himself a doctor, chose the Greek word *loimós*, we can certainly believe that he did it on purpose. He knew that Jesus was not talking about ordinary diseases, (*nósos*), but about *infectious diseases, epidemics or plagues*. The fact that the Watch Tower Society includes cancer, heart disease and other types of non-infectious diseases among the diseases predicted by the Watch Tower Society is not limited to the definition given in its own biblical dictionary. It also indicates that its authors know that true plagues - plagues in the literal (and biblical) sense of the word - *have not* increased since 1914.

In his book *Approaching Hoof-beat*, Billy Graham correctly defines "plague" as "any infectious disease that is fatal" (page 186). Later, referring to Jesus' statement on plagues in Luke chapter 21, Graham uses the word "plague" as a synonym for plague and, strangely enough, now broadens its application to include plagues of insects, even referring to an event in Florida where "millions of toads invaded entire counties. "It includes "climate change" among the "plagues" of the present day. (Pages 192, 193) None of these things fit his definition of the plague. "Nor do toads and changing weather conditions fit the meaning of the words used by Luke and John in their account of Revelation.

. *Historians and Plagues*

The fact is that we live in an era in which epidemic diseases play a relatively minor role compared to their ravages of previous centuries. As a result, it is difficult to imagine the scale of the disasters that have plagued humanity in past generations. As Professor William H. McNeill, one of the most eminent historians in the United States, points out, the number of deaths in many of the great diseases of the past has been so high that many modern historians, judging only from their own experience, tend not to exaggerate ancient reports of the mass disappearance of many of the great plagues of the past.

⁹ See, for example, *The Watchtower* of 15 April 1976, p. 250.

massive disappearance of many of the great plagues of the past. He states:

Epidemics, when they became decisive in peace or war, were contrary to the attempt to make the past intelligible. Historians have therefore minimized these episodes. ¹⁰

But doctors and other researchers who, like McNeill, have studied the history of plagues, disagree with the attempt by some historians to reduce the enormity of the effect of these plagues in previous centuries. Professor Folke Henschen, for example, an internationally renowned pathologist, notes in his historical review of infectious diseases :

Infectious diseases have probably been the most dangerous enemies of humanity, far more so than wars and mass crimes. When we study the constant epidemics of the past and the diseases attributable to land and sea, we realize that the whole civilization could have succumbed and we are constantly surprised that humanity survived. ¹¹

Let us now review the different periods and ages of humanity since the time of Christ, so that we can then better assess the situation and circumstances of today as they relate to our topic. The following are just a few examples from the history of the plagues. We recommend that those who wish to delve deeper into the subject should read McNeill's book *Plagues and Peoples*, which is probably the best documented study of the plagues that have afflicted humanity over the past 2000 years. ¹²

. *Plagues during the Roman period*

A large number of widespread and deadly diseases struck the world during the Roman period. The following were among the most serious:

1. *In the year 165* Roman soldiers brought an epidemic (probably smallpox) from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean region. History shows that it spread throughout the Roman Empire and lasted about fifteen years. Mortality was enormous. A quarter to a third of the population in the affected areas died. The "plague" **inaugurated a process of continuous degradation of the population of the Mediterranean lands that has**

1 William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Anchor Press / Doubleday. Garden City. New York, 1976), complete edition, p. 4. See also pages 120, 135.

2 Folke Henschen, *The History of Diseases* (London : Longman. Green and Co. Ltd, 1966), p 21.

~~3 The book is also available in an abridged paperback edition in the Anchor Books series.~~

lasted, despite a few local revivals, for more than half a millennium".¹³

2. *From 251 to 266 AD*, another great plague ravaged the Roman world. This time, the death toll was even greater. At the height of the epidemic, 5,000 people a day died in Rome alone. Other calamities occurred during this century: civil wars, barbarian invasions and repeated periods of famine. The general devastation was such that one population expert, J. env. Russell, estimates that the population of the Roman Empire was reduced by 50% between Augustine's time and the year 543.¹⁴

3. *In the years 310-312*, China was hit by a plague that practically wiped out the population in the northwestern provinces, making up 98-99% of the population. Ten years later, in 322, it was followed by another epidemic that killed 20-30% of the population in a larger area of the country.¹⁵

4. *In the years 542-543*, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527-565), the so-called "Justinian plague" reached Europe. It originated in northeast India or Central Africa. We have good information about this plague, because a contemporary witness, the physician, historian and prefect Procopius, left a careful and detailed description of the distress of his time. Thanks to his description, it was possible to identify the plague as *pneumonic* and/or *bubonic*, the same scourge that swept the world in the^{XIV} century and was later called the Black Death.¹⁶ Before reaching Europe in 542, Constantinople, Procopius' birthplace, was severely affected :

In Constantinople, it killed 5,000 to 10,000 people a day. From Greece, it spread to Italy and, fifteen years later, it reached the Rhine. There it branched off and, on its return, crossed Constantinople again, without having lost any of its virulence. It is estimated that the Eastern Empire has lost half of its inhabitants. Many cities were destroyed.¹⁷

4 McNeill, p. 116. At about the same time, in 161-162, a similar plague broke out in China, killing 30 to 40 percent of the army serving on the northwestern border. (McNeill. P. 132) All citations in what follows are from the complete edition.

5 McNeill, pp. 116-118, 321. Contemporary authors say that the scourge of the year 251 has spread "over the entire known world. - Raymond Crawford. *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford, 1914).

15 McNeill, pp. 132, 135.

16 Procopius, *Persian Wars*, II, 22,6-39; McNeill, p. 322.

17 Swedish medical historian Mutts Bergmark, in his book *Erån pest till polio*, third edition (Stockholm, 1983), page 11.

In total, the "plague under Justinian" is estimated to have killed 100 million people. Both McNeill and Henschen point out that the plagues of the third and sixth centuries played a significant role in the decline of the Roman Empire. ¹⁹ The bubonic plague returned and raged periodically until 750 A.D. McNeill compares it to the *Black Death* in terms of its scope and mortality:

Historical evidence, in fact, suggests that the plagues of the sixth and seventh centuries had an importance for the Mediterranean peoples quite similar to that of the most famous black plague of the fourteenth century. The disease certainly caused the initial death of a large proportion of the urban dwellers in the affected regions, and it took centuries to restore the overall decline in population. ²⁰

The bubonic plague has also hit Asia in several deadly waves. It was first described in China in the year 610. In 642, it devastated the province of Kwantung. In 762, it broke out in the coastal provinces and "more than half the population of Shantung Province died". ²¹In 806, it killed more than half the population of Chekiang Province. ²²

During the same period, Japan experienced several very serious epidemics. Following a plague that broke out in the year 808 "more than half the population died" and similar cases were recorded for another disease that struck in 994-995. ²³

The plague continued to ravage many countries at short intervals. Anglo-Saxon sources mention no less than forty-nine epidemics between 526 and 1087. Arab sources mention more than fifty different waves of plagues in Egypt, Syria and Iraq between 632 and 1301. Chinese records mention 288 cases of plague from 37 to 1911 AD! As McNeill points out, the sources are, of course, far from complete. ²⁴

. ***The late Middle Ages, the time of the Black Death***

Towards the end of 1347, the dreadful pneumonic plague /

18 See The Watchtower of September 15, 1977, page 551.

19 McNeill, p. 120; Henschen, p. 78. Professor Henry E. Sigerist, in *Civilization and Disease* (Ithaca, New York, 1945), argues that the plague under Justinian put an end to the Roman Empire both in the east and in the west and concludes: a turning point in the history of the Mediterranean world and the great plague of Justinian appears as a dividing line between the two periods... The old world collapsed and a new civilization began to form on its ruins. "(Pp. 113-115)

20 McNeill, p. 127

21 Ibid, p. 134.

22 Ibid, pp. 134,135.

23 Ibid, pp. 140,141.

bubonic went to Europe again. By the time he arrived, he had already swept across Asia. As early as 1331, an epidemic broke out in the Hopei province in China, where it is reported to have killed nine out of ten people. In 1353 and 1354, it raged in eight different and widely scattered parts of China. Contemporary chronicles report that "two-thirds of the population" of these areas died.²⁵

Rumours that had reached Europe in 1346 spoke of the terrible plague epidemic that spread from China "through Tartaria (Central Asia) and Central Asia to India and Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and all of Asia Minor". As the historian Tutchman reports, there was talk of "a toll so devastating that the whole of India would be depopulated, entire territories covered with corpses, other regions lifeless."²⁶

The plague was brought westwards via caravan routes and reached the Crimea in 1346. From there it spread by boat throughout the Mediterranean region. Deaths (or mortality) were devastating. "About a third of the Egyptian population seems to have died during the first attack, 1347-1349."²⁷ Through Sicily, where half a million people died, the plague reached Italy, killing more than half of its population.²⁸

From Italy, the catastrophic infection spread westward and northward across the European continent. In France, at least one third of the population (by some estimates, three quarters) was wiped out. (Records of "taxe de séjour" are available for this period and clearly show that thousands of entire outbreaks were rapidly and completely destroyed by the plague. Monasteries and similar places where large numbers of people were in contact suffered particular damage, with residents moving from

24 Ibid. Pages 128, 334, 293-302. Egypt suffered constant plagues from 541 to XIX^e century. In the famine period of 1053-1060, at one point 10,000 people died in Cairo and in 1201, two-thirds of the Egyptian population died within a few months! "Syria also seems to have lost half of its population between the second and eighth centuries AD." » – T. H. Hollingsworth. *Historical Demography* (London and Southampton, 1969). Pp. 303, 309.

25 McNeill, p. 162.

26 Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror. The Calamitous 14th Century*, Londres : MacMillan London Limited, 1979, page 93. Voir aussi McNeill, page 190.

27 McNeill, p. 187. In Cairo, 20,000 people died in 1348 (Hollingsworth, p. 309). It is estimated that the Islamic world as a whole (Middle East and North Africa) suffered similar proportional losses: the world had been engulfed by the Black Death. About one-third of the general population and perhaps 40 to 50 percent of those living in cities died. "(Robert S. Gottfried. *The Black Death*, Tendon, 1983, p. 41).

28 This is the estimate of the nineteenth-century scholar, J. F. K. Hecker, whose figures are the most conservative. See George Deaux, *The Black Death 1347* (in the series *Turning Points In History*, edited by Sir Denis Brogan, London, 1969).p. 75.

a hundred to two or three.) J. F. K. Hecker, a scholar of the XIX^e century, estimated that Poland had lost three quarters of its population and, in Germany, his findings indicated that "200,000 small country towns ... were deprived of all their inhabitants. "»²⁹

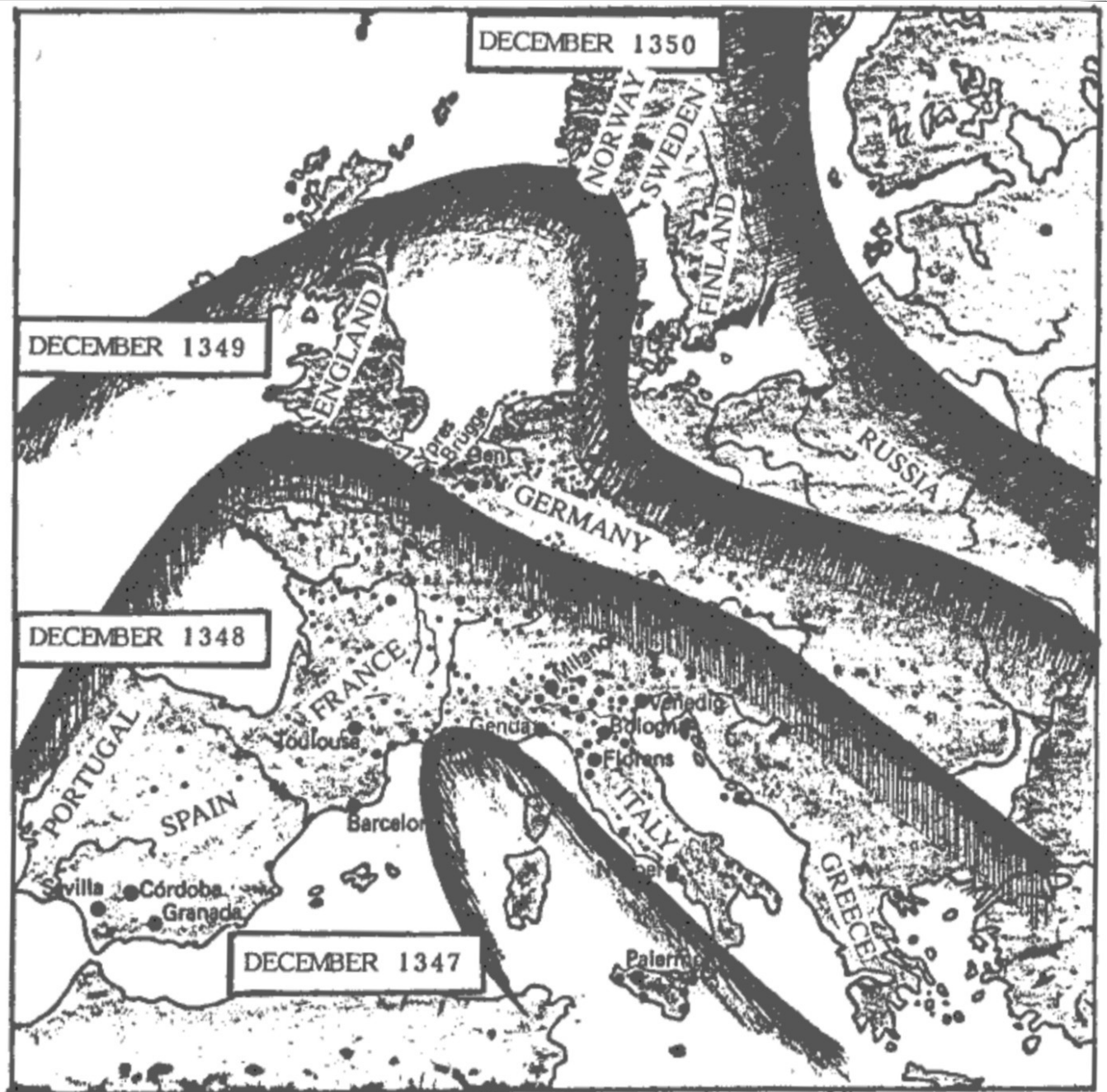
In August 1348, the plague had crossed the Channel to England. Within nine months, half the population had been wiped out. In the same autumn, an English ship brought the plague to Iceland and there too half the population died. In Norway, where the plague broke out in the summer of 1349, two thirds of the population died. In the same year, it invaded Denmark in some areas, completely depopulating up to 40 percent of the villages and reached Sweden in the spring of 1350. By the end of the year, one third of the Swedish population had died. ³⁰

²⁹ George Deaux, pp. 111-114; Bergmark, p. 52; Tuchman (1978), pp. 923.

³⁰ Bergmark, pp. 28-30; K. Lunden in Bra Böckers Världshistoria ("Good Books' World History"). Vol. 6 (Höganäs. Sweden, 1984), p. 26.

THE SPREAD OF THE BLACK PLAGUE IN EUROPE

December 1347 - December 1350



The Black Death has killed about a third of the population of Europe and probably the whole world. In Europe alone, 25 to 40 million people died between December 1347 and December 1350, and no disaster since has equalled this terrible catastrophe.

Europe should never forget this incredibly massive calamity of death. Contemporaries called it *Magna mortalitas* - The Great Death.³¹ Estimates of total mortality in Europe vary from one quarter to one half of the total population, which means that

25 to 40 million people were wiped out in the first plague attack in 1347-50.³² Some estimates range up to three-quarters of the European population, or 60 to 75 million, but these are probably overestimated.

The total figure for the world as a whole is, of course, difficult to estimate, especially since the figures for Asian countries are insufficient. The Watchtower of September 15, 1977, page 551, quotes *Science Digest* magazine as saying that the plague claimed 62 million lives worldwide. *The Guinness Book of Records of 1983* (page 465), for its part, puts the number at 75 million. Given the information available, for example for China, this figure is certainly not too high.

This could, in fact, even be an underestimate. Froissart, a columnist for XIV^e century, estimates that one third of the world's population is dead, as historian George Deaux has pointed out.

"It is widely accepted with Froissart's estimate."³³ This estimate would put the death toll well above 100 million.

And yet it wasn't the end.

The pneumonic and bubonic wounds came back, again and again, after the first violent attack in the years 1347-1350. People lived in fear of this for almost four centuries. From 1346 to 1720, when the last plague epidemic appeared in Europe, between 60 and 70 European epidemics were known. This means that the plague visited Europe on average every six years during this period.³⁴

In the XIV^e century alone, after its initial attack, six other epidemics occurred in Europe. Often, 30-50% of the affected towns have died in this new devastation.³⁵

31 The "Black Death" is a later term given to later outbreaks of the plague, although it is now generally used for the first attack of 1347-1350.

32 McNeill, p. 168. *Collier's Encyclopedia* (Vol. 4, 1974, p. 234) indicates that the total of 25 million victims in Europe" are J.F.K. Hecker's statistics, which are the lowest of all the authorities". The most recent studies tend to show that Hecker's estimate was too low. (K. Lunden, pp. 17-22) In 1931, Professor AM Campbell concluded that "the figures would seem ... to support estimates that half of the population loss suffered by Europe is almost equal to a quarter of the Black Death." (*The Black Death and Men of Learning*. New York New York, 1931, p. 145).

33 George Deaux, pp. 111, 144. An estimated 450 million people lived on Earth before the Black Death struck. (E. Hofsten, *Befolkningslära*, Lund, Sweden, 1982, p. 16)

34 Bergmark, p. 37.

35 According to the Swedish historian Michael Nordberg, the outcome of the epidemics was "at least as terrifying as in 1348-1350." He gives the following examples: " London lost the following points of its population through the plagues: 1563: 25-30 percent; 1593: approx.18 percent; 1603: 22-26 percent; 1625: approx.25 percent; 1636: almost 10 percent; 1665 (The Great Plague) approx.28 percent. Worse still are the losses suffered by many towns in northern Italy during the serious epidemic of 1630: Milan 40 %; Venice 35 %; Padua 44 %: Parma 50 per cent; Verona 59 per cent; Brescia 45 per cent; Cremona approx. 60 per cent and Mantova 69 per cent! ("*Den dynamiska medeltiden*". Stockholm, 1984, p. 32).

WHAT MAJOR AUTHORITIES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE BLACK PLAGUE

"Almost certainly the most terrible calamity to which mankind has ever been exposed. " - Professor Folke Henschen. *The History of Diseases* (London, 1966), page 79.

"The Black Death was an unprecedented catastrophe whose only parallels are the biblical story of the flood and the predictions of the 20^e century about the effects of total nuclear war. " - George Deaux. *The Black Death 1347* (London, 1969), pages 143, 144.

"Undoubtedly the worst catastrophe that has ever struck mankind. »
- Michael W. Dols. *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), page vii.

"The deadliest disaster in recorded history. "- Barbara Tuchman. *A Distant Mirror. The Calamitous 14th Century* (London, 1979), page xiii.

"[The] greatest of all the crises facing the human race. " - Isaac Asimov. *A Choice of Catastrophes* (London, 1980), page 242.

"The only possible comparison would be with the hypothetical results of modern nuclear or bacteriological warfare. "The famous French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian* (Brighton, Sussex, England, 1981), page 71.

"The impact of the Black Death, the greatest ecological upheaval, has been compared to that of the two world wars of the XX^e century. To some extent, this is true. The consequences of this natural and human disaster have profoundly changed Europe, perhaps more than any other series of events. For this reason, only the Black Death should be considered as the greatest biological and environmental event in history and one of the major turning points in Western civilisation. " - Robert S. Gottfried. *The Black Death* (London, 1983), page 163.

"The greatest disaster ever suffered by the world was the pandemic spread of the bubonic plague, which killed up to a third of the world's population before spreading across Europe and Asia in the XIV^e century. »
- James Cornell. *The Great International Disaster Book* (New York, 1979), page 70.

Europe's population continued to decline. By 1380 it had been reduced by about 40% and by the end of the century by almost 50%.³⁶ The lowest level was reached between 1440 and 1480.³⁷

The same trend can be observed in other parts of the world. In the year 1200, China's population was 123 million, and by 1393 it was only 65 million. Although historians generally attribute this decrease to the civil war that raged at the same time as the plague (the war caused by the Chinese reaction against Mongol domination and ending with the expulsion of the Mongols), McNeill is certainly more realistic when he gives greater responsibility for the drastic decrease because of the plague.³⁸

Again, at XVI^e century, the bubonic plague would have almost completely depopulated China.

Although this scourge virtually disappeared from Europe after 1720, it continued to rage in other parts of the world. Between 1906 and 1911, 7.5 million people were killed by the plague in India.³⁹

In view of all this, it is not difficult to understand why the authorities are making statements such as those in the attached boxed list, referring to the first attack in the XIV^e century.

Yet this pneumonic/ bubonic plague, which struck mankind repeatedly for hundreds of years after 1350, was not the only epidemic to ravage the world during those centuries, it had to be accompanied by a series of other devastating plagues, as we shall see now.

. ***Years 1500-1800: the era of syphilis and smallpox***

The transoceanic expeditions that began in 1492 ushered in a new era of pandemics with fatal consequences for the entire world.

At the end of XV^e century, syphilis arrived in Europe, perhaps imported

of America by the sailors of Columbus. **"In the years that followed, the disease spread throughout Europe, Africa and Asia, and everywhere it took a malignant turn."**⁴⁰ Despite all the talk about syphilis today, this is the sixteenth century, not the

36 Tuchman (1979), p. 119. Similar devastation has occurred in Africa and Asia. In 1380, for example, the plague killed 13 million people in China. (*Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, 1974, p. 234).

37 McNeill, p. 169.

38 Ibid., pp. 163. 190.

39 Wake Up! of July 22, 1956, pp. 22-24.

40 Bergmark, p. 59.

twentieth, which can be called "the century of syphilis". The disease was everywhere, in all classes of society, in homes, public baths, public places, among children and adults. The frequency of the disease was frightening and the organ damage very serious. Millions died from it. The offspring also inherited it and children were born blind, deaf and malformed.

From syphilis at XVI^e century has seen lower growth and less disastrous. Syphilis was considered incurable until the beginning of this century, but since then, various antibiotics have been developed against it. Today, mortality has decreased to a fraction of what it was before the First World War. Although still present, syphilis no longer kills millions as it did in the sixteenth century.⁴¹

Although syphilis was brought to the Old World of America by Christopher Columbus' sailors, as some researchers believe, this disease was not nearly as disastrous for Europeans as the plagues that the Native Americans received in exchange for the Europeans.

When the Europeans came to America, they brought with them epidemic diseases that had plagued the Old World for centuries and against which the Eurasian populations had developed some immunity.

The Native American populations, on the other hand, were totally defenceless against these new infectious diseases. The result was a complete disaster, the true scale of which only recently became apparent. The reason, as McNeill explains, is that historians prior to the Second World War had systematically underestimated the pre-Colombian populations of America, bringing the total to between eight and fourteen million.

Recent estimates, based on samples of tribal lists, missionary reports, and elaborate statistical arguments, have multiplied these earlier estimates tenfold, bringing the Amerindian population on the eve of the conquest to about one hundred million, twenty to thirty million of this total assignable to the Mexican and roughly equal to the Andean civilizations.⁴²

41 Bergmark, pp. 83, 87, 91. See also René Dubos, *Mirage of Health* (New York, 1959), chapter six, and *Awake*, 8 September 1984, page 3.

42 McNeill, pp. 203, 204. Compare also the discussion of the distinguished European historian Fernand Braudel in his book *Civilization and Capitalism, XV^e - Eighteenth Century: The Structure of Everyday Life* (London, 1981), pp. 35-38. Also Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Spirit and Method of the Historian* (Brighton. Sussex. England, 1981), pp. 72, 76, 77.

It was not soldiers but smallpox that conquered the Aztec kingdom in Mexico in 1520, and Cortés' soldiers brought with them the disease from Hispaniola (the island now occupied by the Republic of Dominica and Haiti), where it had arrived from Europe two years earlier. The smallpox epidemic that broke out in Mexico quickly spread to Guatemala and then to the south. In 1525 or 1526, it reached the domain of the Incas in South America, where it paved the way for the conquest of Pizarro as Cortés had conquered Mexico a few years earlier. Mortality was frightening. After the initial devastation, about a third of the population had died! ⁴³

Smallpox has been followed by other diseases. In 1530-1531, an epidemic of measles spread to Mexico and Peru, killing many people. It was followed fifteen years later by another epidemic, probably typhus. Then, in 1558-1559, a deadly flu epidemic ravaged America. This epidemic seems to have been worldwide. It had broken out in Europe in 1556 and lasted four years, with disastrous consequences. It is estimated that England lost 20% of its total population and that similar losses were recorded in other countries. Contemporary Japanese sources also mention this terrible flu, stating that "many died". ⁴⁴

The consequences of these and other epidemics for the Native American populations have been devastating. By 1568, fifty years after the conquest of Cortés, epidemics had reduced the population of Mexico from 25 to 30 million to less than three million. By 1605, it had dropped to one million. Similar declines occurred in other parts of America. ⁴⁵

By the middle of the seventeenth century, two other highly deadly diseases from Africa had been introduced into America: *malaria* and *yellow fever*. Both diseases were new to the Native Americans, so the results were extremely serious. Malaria "seems to have completed the destruction of the American Indians in the tropical lowlands, almost completely emptying the once densely populated areas. ⁴⁶And yellow fever, which had reached the Caribbean from West Africa in 1648, had a similarly devastating effect on Native American populations. Such as

43 McNeill, p. 209.

44 McNeill, p. 209. Although mortality figures are insufficient, it is quite possible that this influenza epidemic is comparable to the 1913-1919 influenza epidemic in Spain in terms of extent and mortality.

45 Braudel, p. 36; McNeill, pp. 204, 205.

46 McNeill, p. 213.

Since no immunity had developed (as was happening to some extent in Africa), it almost killed all the adults who contracted it without any harm.

⁴⁷

After all this devastation, what was the end result for the indigenous peoples of the Americas? McNeill sums it up:

Overall, the disaster for the Native American population has been on a scale that is hard to imagine, because we live in an era where epidemic diseases are not important. The ratios of 20:1 or even 25:1 between pre-Columbian populations and the end point of the Native American population curves seem more or less correct, despite wide local variations. Behind these frightening statistics lies an enormous and repeated human anguish as entire societies collapse, values crumble and old ways of life lose all meaning. ⁴⁸

In plain language, this means that the total decrease in the Native American populations in North, Central and South America was 95 or 96%, a decrease from about 100 million to 5 or 4 million!

The plagues that devastated America also ravaged Europe, although the consequences were not as severe. Smallpox appeared in Europe after the decline of the Roman Empire, but it did not spread to the rest of the world.

Generalized until XVI^e century. In 1614, a pandemic has spread from Asia over large parts of Europe and Africa. In the eighteenth century, smallpox killed sixty million people in Europe alone. Mortality was particularly high among children, 25-35% of those infected died and almost all children became infected! ⁴⁹ Millions of young people lost their homes to smallpox.

. *Nineteenth Century: Time of Cholera, Measles and Scarlet Fever - and Time for Change* .

The *cholera* était la great plague du XIX^e century. Il se transmits

mainly through water or food contaminated with feces of infected people. No plague has killed as fast as cholera and, until recently, the mortality rate was very high: 50 to 80 per cent.

Until 1817, this scourge was only known in India. In that year, it

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 215.

⁴⁹ Bergmark, pp. 114, 115.

began moving northwestward, reaching the Russian city of Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea in 1823. Another push in 1826 brought it back to Russia in 1829 and suddenly spread to Europe. America and the rest of the world have been spreading horror and death everywhere for the past seven years. Four more pandemics have swept the world over the next 60 years, the last one in 1883- 1896. The five epidemics are estimated to have killed about 100 million people worldwide.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Bergmark, pp. 191, 207-209; Herbert L. Schrader, *Und dennoch siegte das Leben* (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 64-67, 70, 71. Cholera is still prevalent in some parts of the world, particularly in Asia, where it is pandemic. But effective treatment measures (cash supplies) are being applied and the mortality rate is low today.

THE THIRD CHOLERA PANDEMIC, 1846-62



Woodcut by artist Alfred Rethel illustrating the tragic effect of the third cholera pandemic in 1846-62. (Republished by M. Bergnarlt, *Från pest till polio*, Stockholm 1983, p. 204).

Measles and *scarlet* fever also belonged to the nineteenth century more than any other century. Until 1840, measles was the most common cause of infant mortality. From 1840 to 1880, this role was taken over by scarlet fever, which was responsible for four to six percent of all deaths during this period, not only in children but in all age groups. From 1880 to 1915, measles once again took over as the biggest killer of children⁵¹. *Typhus* and *tuberculosis* were also the biggest killers of the last century, and *tuberculosis* still kills three million people a year.

Despite its catastrophic scourges, the nineteenth century was the turning point for most major epidemics. From the beginning of the century, large-scale inoculation and vaccination against smallpox began in country after country. After the discovery of micro

⁵¹ Dubos, chapter six.

The real causes of epidemic diseases began to be understood, leading to a series of dramatic medical discoveries, especially from the 1880s onward.

Since then, vaccines, antibiotics, other prophylactic measures and treatments have been developed against most plagues, for example against bubonic plague, cholera, yellow fever, syphilis, typhus, tuberculosis and malaria. In this century, smallpox has been virtually exterminated. The last known case was reported in Somalia in October 1977.

In fact, modern medical science has to control only one of the *great* scourges: *influenza*. Although cholera still occurs in some regions, particularly in Asia, improved sanitation and sewage disposal systems have reduced its incidence; effective treatment (including fluid intake) is now in place and mortality is now low. On the other hand, influenza is still producing occasional pandemics around the world.

Because this scourge caused the deaths of some 20 million people in the great pandemic of 1918-1919, the Watch Tower Society considers it to be its best evidence to support its claim that plagues have been increasing since 1914. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude this study of past centuries and their plagues with some observations on the Spanish flu of 1918-1919. Was this pandemic disease really unique in the history of diseases? Was it even unique in the history of *influenza* epidemics?

. ***Influenza - the last great plague***

In almost every era, most people seem to have thought that the problems and disasters of their time were so great that they must have been unprecedented in human history.⁵² The reason for this is that most people, though aware of the calamities of their times, such as wars, famines, crimes, earthquakes, and epidemics, generally know very little about the magnitude and frequency of such misfortunes.

Not surprisingly, therefore, today's problems seem unique to many. Even experts, who may know a great deal about hunger, disease and similar calamities in the

⁵² See the relevant observations of Dr. N. W. Pirie in his "Introduction" to his book entitled *Food Resources Conventional and Novel* (Londres, 1969).

The world, have rarely plunged into the extent of these problems in previous centuries.

For example, they may sometimes make sensational statements about the "uniqueness" of this or that disaster of our century - statements that are simply not true, although such views may be widely held and accepted. Some statements about the Spanish flu of 1918-1919, quoted in Watch Tower literature, clearly fall into this category. What then are the facts about the "Spanish Flu"?

According to the famous bacteriologist Edwin Oakes Jordan, the Spanish flu of 1918-1919 killed 21,642,283 people.

More than half of them, twelve and a half million, died in India.

Another two million died in Europe and about seven million in other parts of the world.⁵³

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Watch Tower Society, quoting an American magazine, argues that this flu was the greatest scourge in world history and that more people had died from it "than any other epidemic in human history. From the discussion already presented about the plagues of the past, it should be clear to all attentive readers that this assertion is in direct contradiction to the historical evidence. The assertion is completely false.

A number of major plagues in the past have taken more lives than the Spanish flu. As noted above, it is estimated that the "Justinian plague" in the sixth century claimed 100 million victims. The fourteenth century black plague probably killed as many as 75 million people.

The smallpox epidemic of the 1520s may have killed more than 30 million people - a third of the population.

Native American - in America only. And at XIX^e century, cholera has cost the lives of approximately 100 million people in five major pandemics. Some of these cholera pandemics each killed more than 20 million people and were therefore completely comparable to Spanish influenza. Clearly, the Spanish flu was not the "biggest" or "most serious" epidemic.

⁵³Dr. Edwin Oakes Jordan. *Epidemic Influenza* (1927); *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol. 12 (1969), p. 242; Wake Up! 8 March 1971, p. 6. An expert, quoted on page 29 of Awake Up! February 22, 1977, the total figure of 21 million deaths "probably" is "a gross underestimate", as this number could have died in India alone. If this could be sustained, the total number of *victims* would be about 30 million.

destructive" of the history of mankind.

Perhaps for this reason, the watchtower's claims about Spanish flu sometimes focus on its mortality rate, that is, it has killed a higher *percentage of* infected people than any other known disease. Thus, an article on the Spanish flu in *Wake Up!* magazine of March 8, 1971 was titled "The Most Deadly Killer of All Time. " On the third page, the article quoted an anonymous authority:

If the epidemic had continued at the same rate, humanity would have been broke within months⁵⁴

However, this statement is totally absurd. It is generally estimated that about 525 million people, more than a quarter of humanity, have contracted influenza. Of these, 15 to 25 million people have died and about 500 million have been cured. The average mortality was then about *four percent*.⁵⁵ What does that mean? It means that even if every person on earth had gotten sick with the flu, the vast majority of humanity - about 96 percent - would have survived. *Of course, civilization was never in danger!*

Influenza epidemics generally develop rapidly and spread to a high percentage of the population. Often 25-40% are affected. But mortality is generally low.

These characteristics were also shared by the epidemic of 1918-1919, although mortality was about 4% higher than normal.⁵⁶

The fact is, however, that most major plagues throughout history have had a higher mortality rate than the Spanish flu. Typhoid fever and dysentery, which have always been the result of wars in the past, have sometimes killed as many as 20 and 50% of the

⁵⁴The statement is repeated in the Watch Tower Society's new book on evolution, *Life: How Did It Begin? Evolution or Creation?* (1985), page 225, where the reference shows that the source was Joseph E. Persico, *Science Digest*, March 1977, page 79.

⁵⁵Bergmark, p. 260. According to Jordan and Henschen, about 50 percent of humanity (one billion) has fallen ill, reducing average mortality to two percent. Henschen puts it at 0.25 percent, which is too low. (*Encyclopaedia's Britannica*, Vol. 12. 1969, p. 242; Henschen, p. 52.) In most places, mortality was much lower than the overall figure of two percent proposed by Jordan and Henschen. In a few places it was considerably higher, in India 4 per cent of the population had died and in Western Samoa 20-25 per cent of the population, or 7,500 out of 38,000 (W. I. Beveridge, *Influenza: The last Great Plague*, London, 1977, p. 31; *The Watchtower*, 1^{er} August 1978, p. 29).

⁵⁶*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 12 (1969), page 242. However, the modality was not unique among influenza epidemics. Some of the older influenza epidemics had much higher mortality!

infected persons, respectively. Yellow fever had a mortality rate of 60% or more.⁵⁷ Cholera killed 50-80% of those affected. Mortality due to bubonic plague ranged from 30 to 90 percent, while pneumonic plague—the other type of infection during the Black Death pandemic of 1347-1350—had 100 percent mortality, with no known survivors!⁵⁸

Clearly, it would be far from correct to describe the Spanish flu, with an average mortality of 4%, as "the deadliest killer of all time", as the Watch Tower Society does. Compared to the other great scourges of history, it was, on the contrary, one of the least deadly!

. ***Fastest killer?***

A third assertion is that the Spanish flu claimed its share of victims faster than any other plague. "In all history, there has never been a stronger and faster calamity," said La Tour deGarde on June 15, 1977, on page 359, quoting Science Digest magazine. It went on to point out that while the Black Death killed 62 million people worldwide in three years, the Spanish flu killed 21 million people in just four months.

What the article does not point out to the reader is that the Spanish flu did not last only four months, it lasted about twelve months, from the early spring of 1918 to the spring of 1919.⁵⁹ It reached its peak in the autumn months of 1918, when mortality was highest. But comparing the peak period of the highest mortality of the Spanish flu with the total duration of the Black Death and other earlier plagues, such as Justinian's plague, will certainly give a distorted picture of mortality rates, because these early plagues also had their peaks of activity! To get a correct result, we need to "compare apples with apples" and not apples with pears. We must either compare the mortality rate during the peaks of Spanish flu and black plague, or the average mortality rate of both during all periods of their duration. For example, Spanish flu killed 21 million people in about one year, while the Black Death killed at least 62 million people in three years - which is also about 21 million a year!⁶⁰

This is a remarkable question for two reasons. First, because

57 Bergmark, pp. 141, 154, 232.

58 McNeill, p. 168.

59 Beveridge, pp. 21, 42, 43.

that the fastest means of transport at the time of the Black Death was by sailboat or ship. In contrast, during the time of the Spanish flu, cars, trains and steamboats allowed for faster travel. So viruses and bacteria that took weeks or months to spread from one continent to another can now cover the same distance in a matter of days.

Second, it is interesting to note that the world population at the time of the Black Death was only a quarter of what it was in 1918. In three years, the Black Death killed at least 14 percent (the most conservative estimate was 62 million out of 450 million) of the world's population, or about 5 percent per year, while the Spanish flu killed just over one percent of humanity in one year (21 million out of 1,800 million).⁶¹

The Black Death, therefore, much more than the Spanish flu, deserves to be called the most severe and rapid calamity in history.

. ***The most common killer?***

Finally, the Spanish flu was proclaimed "remarkable because it raged around the world".⁶² But many previous epidemics had also spread around the world, including some flu epidemics. These included the influenza epidemics of 1556-1559, 1580, 1732-1733, 1781-1782, 1830-1833, 1857-1858 and 1889-1890. All spread rapidly throughout the world and affected a high percentage of the population.⁶³

One of the most deadly influenza epidemics was the global pandemic of 1556-1559 which, as noted above, killed about one in five people in the general population of England and some other European countries. Also in 1580, an epidemic in Asia spread to Africa, Europe and America. Contemporary records report that "in the space of six weeks, almost every nation (Europe, for whom a

⁶⁰ If one objects that the Spanish flu may have killed more than 21 million people, perhaps 3 million or more, one has to remember that the Black Death probably killed more than 62 million people worldwide - perhaps 75 million or more.

⁶¹ Isaac Asimov, pointing out that the black plague "may have killed one third of the world's human population", compares it to the Spanish flu and concludes: "However, the flu epidemic has killed less than 2 percent of the world's population, so the black plague remains unparalleled." (A Choice of Disasters, London, 1980, pp. 241, 243).

⁶² The Watchtower, 1^{er} August 1978, p.

29. ⁶³ Beveridge, pp. 26-30; McNeill, p. 209.

one person in twenty barely escaped from the disease, and thus became an object of wonder").⁶⁴ In some areas, mortality was very high. In the city of Rome, 9,000 people died; some Spanish cities were said to have been "almost entirely depopulated by the disease."⁶⁵

The influenza pandemic of 1781-1782, which was reported in all European countries, China, India and North America, attacked up to two thirds and three quarters of the population in some places.⁶⁶ Some of these pandemics resulted in considerable mortality. In Great Britain, the "Great Influenza of 1847" has been compared to the ravages of cholera, "for there were more deaths from influenza than there were deaths from cholera during the great epidemic of that disease in 1832."⁶⁷

In summary, the Spanish flu of 1918-1919 was far from being the greatest scourge in the history of mankind. In terms of total loss of life, several other plagues killed more people than the 1918-1919 epidemic.

Nor was its mortality rate the highest of all the great scourges of the past. On the contrary, the mortality rate was low compared to many previous pestilences. In this respect, it would rank not as the deadliest, but among the deadliest in history.

The claim that the Spanish flu was the "fastest" killer of all time has also proven to be false, as this allegation is based on an erroneous use of statistics.

Finally, the global extent of influenza in 1918-1919 was not at all noteworthy, as many previous epidemics, including a number of influenza epidemics, also raged around the world.

How was the Spanish flu exceptional? Was it unique in all respects? It may have been unique in one respect, even if it is impossible to prove. The Spanish flu may have killed more people than any other flu epidemic. That seems to be the opinion of many experts. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "the 1918 epidemic was the most destructive flu epidemic in history."⁶⁸ In its study of influenza epidemics, the

64 Beveridge, p. 26.

65 Ibid, p. 26.

66 ibid. p. 23.

67 Ibid, p. 29; McNeill, p. 209.

68 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 12 (1969), p. 242.

Dr. Beveridge tends to agree, describing him primarily as "the greatest calamity [of influenza] ever to befall the human race." ⁶⁹ Yet he is far from convinced. Influenza epidemics have periodically visited mankind since ancient times, many of them global in scope and high in mortality. Historical data, however, are far from complete and mortality figures are generally lacking.

Beveridge, who briefly describes 16 major influenza epidemics in the 200 years immediately preceding the Spanish flu, concludes his discussion of the latter disease by saying :

The 1918-1919 pandemic was by far the most serious of recent times and we have come to regard it as quite exceptional. However, it may not be unique. Judging by historical accounts, some epidemics that once had the potential to be devastating were just as disastrous. ⁷⁰

Even in this respect, the Spanish flu may not have been unique.

. Have the plagues increased in this century?

For the modern picture to respond to the assertion that we are now living in a unique and prophetically marked period, there should be evidence of an increase in the plague in our time. While not specifically stating that this is happening, Dr. Graham, in his treatise on the Four Horsemen of Revelation, nevertheless writes "the lifeless forms of the 40,000 children who died of starvation and disease in the short time you have been sleeping" and adds: "Count the Third World victims of the plague and pestilence now sweeping through the famine and drought-ravaged towns and villages" (*Approaching Hoof-beats* page 184). Later, declaring that the Lord "warned us that there would be plagues," he goes on to say: "Scientists today warn us against bacteria, viruses and insects that are highly resistant to radiation, antibiotics or insecticides. Some believe that the change in nature has already been affected by modern chemicals." (Page 192)

What do we really find if we "count the Third World victims of plague and pestilence" - or even those from the rest of the world - in our time? Do we find the increase of many explicit warnings of the end time? Are there even

⁶⁹ Beveridge, p. 32.

⁷⁰ Beveridge, pp. 32, 33

substantial indications of prospects for darkening in the near future?

The answer that all qualified researchers, historians, doctors and others who have studied the subject, give to this question is unanimous: pestilences have not increased during this century. They have decreased. Consider these observations:

Professor Folke Henschen, pathologist:

Infectious diseases, which were the largest group in our morbidity and mortality statistics only a generation or two ago, have been pushed back by medical advances. ⁷¹

Matts Bergmark, medical historian:

... It is precisely infectious diseases that have decreased. ⁷²

Herbert L. Schrader, medical historian:

the plague fighters have won the greatest victory ever in six thousand years of world history: victory over an untimely death. ⁷³

Professor William H. McNeill, historian:

In most places, epidemic diseases have become unimportant and many types of infections have become rare where they were once common and serious. The net increase in human health and well-being is hard to exaggerate; indeed, it now takes an act of imagination to understand what infectious diseases once meant to mankind, or even to our own grandfathers. ⁷⁴

This considerable reduction in the ravages of plagues, which has been steadily increasing since the end of the last century, is a fact established by medical history, a fact that no one would deny. Although it marked the beginning of the generation of the end times in 1948, author Hal Lindsey acknowledges that "to this day in modern medical science, plagues seem to be a thing of the past", saying: "But there are new factors that make plagues a real possibility for the future!"⁷⁵

The Watch Tower Society, however, categorically refuses to accept

71 Henschen, p. 1.

72 Bergmark, p. 326.

73 Schrader, p. 278.

74 McNeill, p. 287.

the fact that epidemic diseases have declined in this century. He is forced to deny it because his widely spread prophetic interpretations and claims imply that plagues have not decreased but increased. Thus, he desperately clings to the list of infectious diseases that are still widespread in different parts of the world and constantly mentions them to support the idea that the "sign" has appeared on Earth since 1914.

An often cited example is malaria. The Watchtower of 1^{er} August 1983, for example, points out that the disease kills one million children under five in Africa every year and that "more than 150 million people worldwide now suffer from chills, fever attacks and other symptoms characteristic of malaria" (Page 7).

Readers are not told, however, that the extent of this disease has been greatly reduced in this century. As noted in a previous footnote, more than a third of humanity suffered from the disease in previous centuries and mortality from malaria in the past was much higher than today, when it was medically curable.⁷⁶ In previous centuries, malaria had a profound influence on human societies throughout the world:

In India, several centuries before the present time, it was called the "king of diseases" and he was also known in ancient China. As some historians claim, it was decisive in the fall of Greece and Rome and caused the mysterious depopulations that left massive ruins in Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka and Angkor-Wat, Democratic Kampuchea. But it is certain that malaria was one of the great scourges of mankind.⁷⁷

At the beginning of the First World War, 800 million people were still suffering from malaria. Since then, modern medicines have significantly reduced the mortality of the disease and, especially since the end of World War II, DDT and other insecticides have freed large geographical areas from the disease.

⁷⁵ Hal Lindsey, *The 1980 s Countdown to Armageddon*, (New York, 1981), p. 30 et 32. Les "New factors" - the number of malnourished people linked to overcrowding in the world's poorest regions and the resulting sanitation problems caused by drugs and doctors "are turning these poor areas into breeding grounds for disease," says Lindsey (page 32). But apart from overpopulation, none of the "new factors" are really new in these areas. These are age-old problems.

⁷⁶ See note 8 above.

⁷⁷ J. H. -G. Hempel in *World Health*, the WHO magazine, April 1982, p. 6. "It was neither the Vandals nor the Goths, but malaria was the last winner in Rome." (Bergmark, p. 223).

As one authority writes:

In geographical terms, malaria has been eliminated from all of Europe, most of the USSR, several countries in the Near East, the United States and most of the Caribbean, large areas of northern and southern South America, Australia and large parts of China. ⁷⁸

As a result, malaria cases have been reduced from 800 million to about 250 million in 1955 and some 150 million in the 1970s. Unfortunately, the number of cases has increased over the past decade due to the increased resistance of mosquitoes to insecticides in some areas. According to the latest World Health Organization census, the current number of cases (1985) is 365 million. (See *Wake Up!*, January 22, 1985, page 7.) This figure is still less than half the number of casualties from World War I. Prospects look promising with the development of new insecticides and antimalarial drugs; recent research suggests that a malaria vaccine may be available in the next few years. ⁷⁹

Perhaps even more remarkable is the progress made in reducing tuberculosis, which, according to the same issue of *The Watchtower* mentioned above (1^{er} August 1983, page 4), kills some 3 million people annually. Again, the reader is not told that the disease was at its greatest spread in the middle of the last century, when it relentlessly killed one-tenth of the population. At XIX^e century, tuberculosis was still "the plus the killer of all diseases in Europe". ⁸⁰ Since the discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882, various vaccines and medicines have been developed against this disease, leading to a steady decrease in mortality, particularly after the First World War. ⁸¹ (See graphs below).

As evidence of the "fourth horseman's race" in our time, Dr. Graham lists herpes simplex II and AIDS among the "noxious plagues" and "destructive diseases." ⁸²

⁷⁸Hempel, p. 9. In many places, progress has been dramatic: "In India, the number of malaria cases was estimated at 100 million a year in 1935, with one million *deaths*. Once the use of DDT began, reports of malaria declined sharply, and by 1965 there were only 100,000 cases without *casualties*." (ibid.)

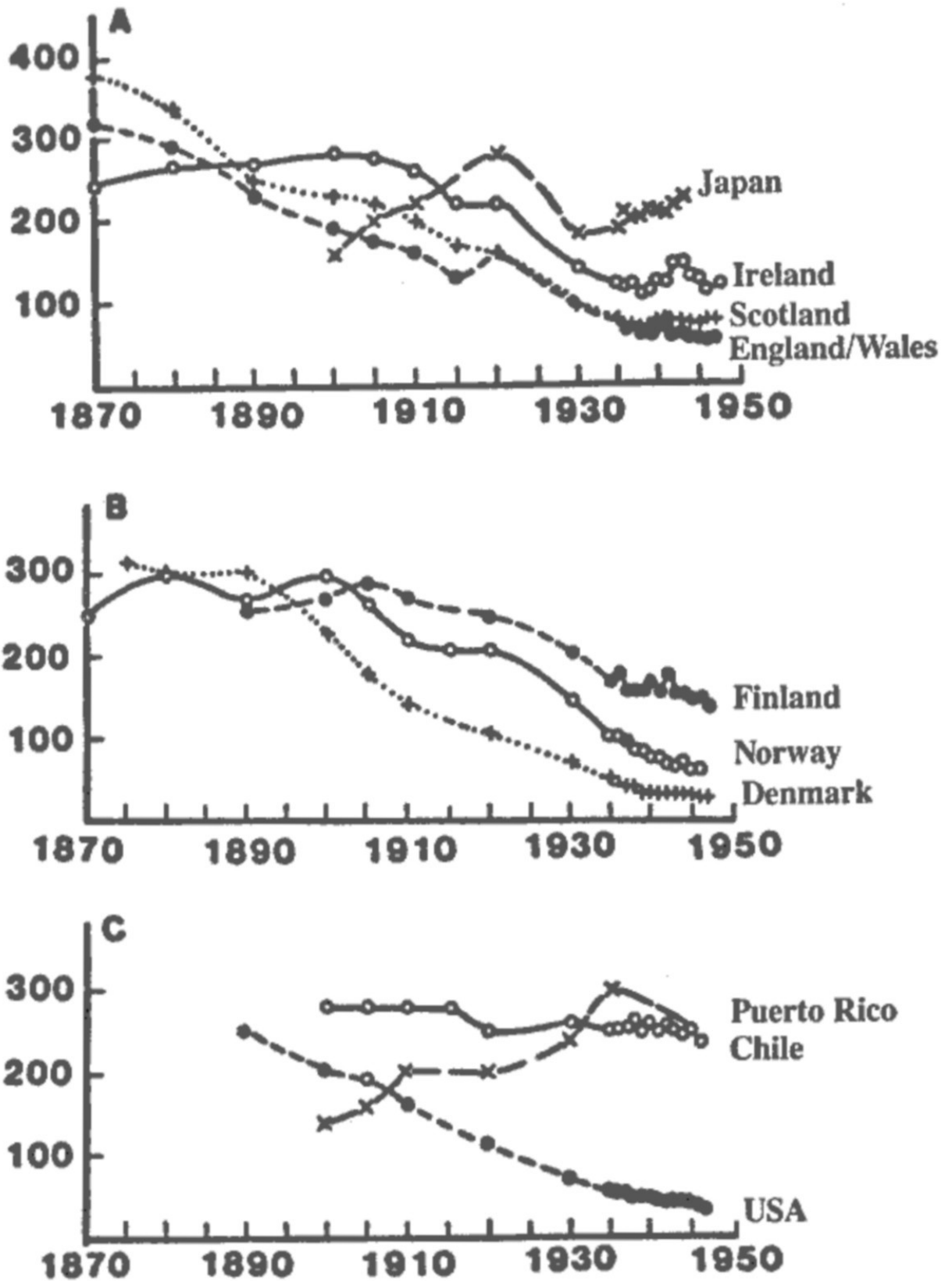
⁷⁹ *World Health*, September 1983, p. 30; *Science*, August 10, 1984, pages 607, 608; *Nature*, August 16 1984.

⁸⁰ Schrader, p. 213.

⁸¹ Schrader, pp. 241-246.

⁸² *Approaching Hoofbeats*, pp. 193, 194.

DECLINE IN TUBERCULOSIS MORTALITY, 1870-1950



Tuberculosis mortality per 100,000 inhabitants in different countries 1870-1950. At the beginning of this century, about one million people die every year from tuberculosis in Europe. In many underdeveloped countries tuberculosis remains high, but the world has seen a remarkable decline since the beginning of the century (Dr. Britt-Purger Puranen, *Tuberculosis*, Umeå, Sweden, 1984, pp. 115, 318, 348. (Republished by: R. & J. Dubos, 1953. Diagram C.)

The Watch Tower Society also regularly includes *venereal diseases*, especially syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes and, more recently, AIDS as part of its "sign of the last days."⁸³

Although painful, *herpes simplex* is certainly not a fatal disease and is by no means characterized by the biblical definition of plague.

Syphilis, as noted earlier, was very disastrous in the XVI^e century, when millions of people died from it. Although it has continued its devastation since then, it has decreased with mortality. Since 1909, remedies that partially control it (salvarsan in 1909, penicillin since 1943) have been available. The number of cases decreased for a few decades after the Second World War, but from the 1960s onwards it increased in several countries, although the mortality rate continues to fall.⁸⁴

Gonorrhea was also very common in the past. "It is one of the oldest diseases," says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and was familiar to the ancient Chinese, Arabs, Greeks, Hindus and Romans.⁸⁵ It is impossible to say whether gonorrhea is more widespread today than in the past, although it has increased worldwide since the mid-1950s after a period of decline. Like syphilis, it is treated with penicillin. It is true that gonococci have developed increasing resistance to penicillin, but at the same time they have changed in character, resulting in milder symptoms.

⁸⁶ Although complications can sometimes be severe, mortality from gonorrhea is negligible. This is also true for *chlamydia* (which resembles gonorrhea in some respects) and, as mentioned, herpes. Since the Greek word for "pestilence", *loimós*, is defined as "any *fatal* infectious disease", it seems difficult to count any of these three diseases among the diseases mentioned in Luke 21:11.

AIDS, on the other hand, has a high mortality rate, as evidenced by the fact that 80 per cent of patients died two years after diagnosis. But is AIDS an epidemic? A disease is epidemic when it is "widespread and spreading rapidly among

83 *Wake up!* December 8, 1984, pp. 3-10.

84 The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 22 (1969), p. 946; P. R. Cox, *Demography*, 5^e edition (Cambridge, 1976), p. 126. 127. In some countries, the number of cases has continued to decline. Sweden, for example, had only 176 cases of syphilis in 1984. (Statens Bakt. Lab, Sweden).

85 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 22 (1969), p. 949.

86 Bergmark, pp. 97. 93. In some countries it has continued to decline. Sweden had 34,624 cases in 1969, but only about 7,000 in 1984. (Stat. Bakt. Lab.)

many people in a community, as a disease contagious".⁸⁷ Can this be said of AIDS today?

The number of people *infected with* the AIDS virus (HTLV-III) is certainly high in some countries.⁸⁸ As far as is known, only a minority - between 5 and 20 per cent of members of high-risk groups who become infected - will actually develop the disease.⁸⁹ Moreover, since the virus is not transmitted by air or by common contact, but by sexual contact, including homosexual contact, transfusion of infected blood and blood products and intravenous drug injection, the risk of infection is low. Outside the direct "risk groups" (active homosexuals, haemophiliacs and intravenous drug users).

The proportion of AIDS cases in the United States outside the risk groups is not increasing, but has remained constant - about one percent - in recent years, and it is estimated that in the United States, the chances of people outside the risk groups contracting AIDS "are less than one in a million." (*Discover* magazine, December 1985, pp. 31, 49) As of June 1986, there were approximately 30,000 known AIDS cases worldwide, including more than 21,000 in the United States. About half of them had died. A few years ago, the doubling period for reported cases in the United States was six months, but since then it has lasted about 12 to 14 months (1986). This indicates that the rate of infection is slowing down. It also means that the disease is not spreading quickly, just like a general epidemic.

There is no doubt that AIDS is a very dangerous infection that could kill hundreds of thousands of people if left unchecked.⁹⁰ But it seems highly unlikely that it will reach proportions comparable to the major epidemics of the past. Professor Sten Iwarson, head of the infection department in Gothenburg, Sweden, and a leading authority in the fight against AIDS in that country, explains in an interview with *Goteborgs-Posten* on 2 June 1985 :

87 *Webster's New World Dictionary*, Edition Bureau compact (1963), p. 160.

88 Estimates of the number of people infected in the United States range from half a million to one million. In Central Africa, where the disease is believed to have originated, 6 to 10 percent of the population in major cities are thought to be infected.

89 The Swedish medical magazine *Läkartidningen* of 15 May 1985, p. 1849, 1868. Due to the long incubation period - up to five years, perhaps more, the exact figure is not known. Of the 0.5 to 1 million people infected in the United States, "more than 10% ... are likely to develop the disease within the next five years." (*Nature*, April 25, 1985, p. 659).

90 In April 1984, researchers announced that they had isolated the virus that causes AIDS, but a vaccine "is still several years away." (*Nature*, 25 April 1984, p. 659). It is estimated that about 300,000 people will have contracted AIDS by 1991.

AIDS is the most dangerous disease today, but as a disease it is limited to certain risk groups. AIDS cannot be compared to the Black Death or the Spanish flu in which millions of people died. The mode of transmission is different and society is different... AIDS is transmitted through sexual contact and blood transfusion and is limited to certain risk groups. Although fewer people outside the risk groups may also be affected, there is in fact no indication that it will develop into a widespread plague.

Only the future, of course, can tell what will become of this new infection. In any case, the mere possibility of a future epidemic cannot be used to prove that plagues have increased since 1914, nor has an examination of venereal diseases over the last seventy years reinforced this assertion.

In light of these facts, it is not at all surprising that the proponents of the end times, and in particular the Watch Tower Society, are trying to improve the "plague sign" by going beyond the boundaries of the real plague and introducing other non-infectious diseases as additional "evidence". Thus, discussing the "sign of the last days," The Watch Tower of 1^{er} August 1983, says on page 5:

...science has won great battles against disease. However, it has not yet defeated it, far from it. For example, heart disease is still the leading cause of premature death in the industrialized world.

While the statement itself is accurate, it actually proves very clearly that pestilences, in the truest sense of the word, have diminished in this century. In what way?

Because the main cause of premature death in previous centuries was not heart disease, mentioned by the Society, but precisely pestilential or infectious diseases. Showing the change that has happened, Professor Hofsten says:

Mortality around the world is now considerably lower than in the past. A more marked development towards a reduction in mortality began in northern and western Europe around 1800.

With regard to the situation in developed countries, Hofsten goes on to say:

If we look at the causes of death, we see that infectious diseases are almost no longer a part of them. In the past, these diseases affected people of all ages and were the most common cause of death.

the most important reason why mortality among children and young people was very high at that time.⁹¹

Before XIX^e century, the average lifespan was 20-30 years.⁹²

Today, on a global scale, this figure is more than double. In industrialized countries, life expectancy can be as high as 75 years or more, while in developing countries it has reached between 30 and 60 years.⁹³

Obviously, people die sooner or later. The causes are different. If death occurs late in life, the causes are usually degenerative or aging diseases. And cancer and heart disease are - first of all - diseases of aging.⁹⁴ Writing about ~~cancer~~, Bergmark states that "this dreaded disease is relatively rare in people under 50."⁹⁵ And of cancer and heart disease, Schrader states:

The two most common causes of death [in developed countries] at the turn of the last century were still tuberculosis and cholera. Today, they are heart and circulatory diseases and cancer, both of which can be the result of exposure of an old or premature body.⁹⁶

We must therefore distinguish between "deaths due to the ageing of the body (mainly heart and circulatory diseases and cancer) and deaths due to infections or accidents".⁹⁷ Plagues are infections. Heart disease and cancer are not. If, as can be seen, the latter are the main cause of death in developed countries, this proves that plague deaths have been significantly reduced in these countries.

Although heart disease and cancer are currently the leading causes of death in developed countries, does this automatically mean that these diseases are increasing in these countries? The Watch Tower Society argues that it does, saying in *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1985 on page 9 :

91 Erland Hofsten, *Världens befolkning*, second edition (Uppsala, 1970) pp. 90, 91. 92

Poul Chr. Mathiessen, *Befolkningsutvecklingen-arsalt och verkan*, (Lund, 1972), p. 34.

93 Mathiessen, pp. 36, 42. See also Roland Pressat, *Demographic Analysis* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 71-75.

94 This, of course, with the exception of lung cancer caused by smoking, in Sweden about 15% of all ~~cancer cases are caused~~ by smoking; in England the percentage is twice as high.

95 Bergmark, p. 327.

96 Schrader, pp. 273. 279. See also T. H. Hollingsworth. *Historical Demography* (London and Southampton, 1969), p. 23.

97 Press, p. 84.

In more developed countries, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, cirrhosis and mental imbalances are increasingly taking their toll.

When it comes to cancer, that is simply not true. In an interview for the Swedish newspaper Goteborgs-Posten (October 20, 1984), world-renowned cancer researcher Professor Richard Peto said: "The general public mistakenly believes that the number of cancer cases is increasing. But this is not true. When the incidence of the disease in the same age group is compared from one year to the next, we find instead a decrease, with the exception of lung cancer."

WHAT MAJOR AUTHORITIES SAY ABOUT PESTILENCES TODAY AND IN THE PAST

"The creation... of a "common market" of microbes, which went through a particularly intense, rapid and dramatic, one might say apocalyptic, phase during the period from about 1300 to 1600. The sacrifice of human life resulting from the global spread of pathogens over these three centuries had no parallel before or after. "Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, French historian *The Mind and Method of the Historian* (Brighton, Sussex, England, 1981), page 30.

"We who live in civilized countries where medicine has made such progress, and where hygiene is preached and practiced, know nothing of the scourges that swept across entire continents in the Middle Ages. "Leo Huberman, *Man's Worldly Goods, The Story of the Wealth of Nations* (New York and London, 1968), page 50.

"Infectious diseases, which were the largest group in our morbidity and mortality statistics only a generation or two ago, have been pushed back by medical advances. "Professor Folke Henschen, *The History of Diseases* (London, 1966), page 1.

"In many ways, the middle of the XX^e century can be seen as the end of one of the most important social revolutions in history - the virtual elimination of infectious diseases, an important factor in social life. "Sir MacFarlane Bumet, *Natural History of Infectious Disease* (Cambridge, 1962), Page 3.

"In most places, epidemic diseases have become unimportant and many types of infections have become rare where they were once common and serious. The net increase in human health and well-being is hard to exaggerate; indeed, it now takes an act of imagination to understand what infectious disease once meant to mankind, or even to our own grandfathers. "Professor William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York, 1976), page 287.

"The victors of the plagues won the greatest victory ever achieved in six thousand years of world history: victory over an untimely death. "
-Herbert L. Schrader, *Und dennoch siegte das Leben* (Stuttgart, 1954), page 278.

"The most remarkable achievement of the XX^e century could be the eradication of the great pandemics that have swept across entire nations - and continents - paralyzing, maiming, injuring and killing millions of people. " -James Cornell, *The Great International Disaster Book* (New York, 1979), page 182.

On the whole, the same is true for heart disease. Although heart attacks are increasing in some countries, such as Sweden, it is well known to researchers that they are now decreasing in most other industrialized countries, including the United States.⁹⁸

What happens then is that cancer and heart problems tend to show up later and later. The reason? Quite simply, in this day and age, people as a whole are enjoying better health and living longer.

Today, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, people continue to get sick and people continue to die. But only a small fraction die from the plague, less than ever before in known history. Despite the terrible forebodings and frightening scenes dramatically drawn by some authors and religious sources, the facts show that the health situation in this century is not worse, but much better for all mankind.

⁹³This was pointed out, for example, by the Swedish researcher Lars Willhelmsson, in the Swedish newspaper *Göteborgs-Tidningen*, 10 February 1985, p. 5. See also Dr. A. E. Harper, "Nutrition and Health in a Changing Environment", in *The Resourceful Earth*, edited by J. L. Simon and H. Kahn (Oxford and New York, 1984), pp. 490-507-511)

5 Some remarkable facts about wars

NO sensitive person would want to minimize the threat created by modern warfare. War has increased in destructive power over the last five hundred years thanks to a series of technical advances, which can be divided into three stages:

1) The introduction of *gunpowder* on the battlefield in the XIV^e century led to the replacement of bows and crossbows by gunpowder weapons in the XV^e century.

2) The next step came in the eighteenth century with the *revolution... industrial*.
Aucours du XIX^e century, from new weapons plus

The first deadly weapons were invented, such as revolvers, machine guns, hand grenades, minefields and underwater mines ("torpedoes"). All of these new technological means of warfare were used, for example, during the Civil War (1861-1865). This development has continued at an ever-increasing pace during this century. The most important new weapons before the Second World War were tanks, submarines and aircraft, all of which were used to some extent in the First World War, but were still at an experimental stage at that time.

3) The third and most important stage of development took place in 1945, when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and humanity suddenly entered the nuclear age. With this stage the human race for the first time in history was confronted with the spectre of global self-destruction.

However, does this situation imply, as some would argue, that our twentieth century is the most warlike period in human history? Does this serve to clearly identify our days as those marked in biblical prophecy of the "time of the end"?

In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, the author cites the state of modern warfare as evidence that Jesus' words in Matthew, chapter 24, find fulfillment in our time. "The frequency and intensity of warfare has greatly increased in this century," he says, and refers to the "continuing struggle over our

planet" since the Second World War. ¹

The Adventist writer Robert Pierson, noting that **"there have been wars in the last sixty-five years on a scale never before seen in the world,"** sees these signs as an end, with prophecy unfolding in a unique way. ²

Dr. Billy Graham, without focusing on specific dates, similarly expresses the conviction that Jesus' expression on wars is linked to a unique intensification and escalation of war. Speaking of the "signs that now seem to be taking shape," he says:

...one of the main signs he indicated was the increasing intensity of the war. Mankind has always had wars, but never on the scale that Jesus predicted in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. ³

The most precise, detailed and remarkable statements, however, are those of the Watch Tower Society, which attaches considerable importance to the war that broke out in Europe in 1914. They show that Christ returned and "the conclusion of the system of things" began that year. It is claimed that Jesus, in Matthew twenty-four, verse 7, predicted the First World War as the initial characteristic of the sign of an 'invisible presence' since 1914.

Was 1914 really the great "turning point" in history according to the Watch Tower Society?

What about other impressive statements in Watch Tower publications about the 1914-1918 conflict? Was this really the first World War in history?

Did it really break out quite unexpectedly, bringing a long period of peace to a sudden end? Is it true that this war was "seven times greater than all the 901 great wars of the previous 2,400 years?" ⁴ In other words, do the Watch Tower Society's statistics match the facts, or have the figures been "improved" to make 1914 stand out as much as possible?

1 Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 147.

2 Robert H. Pierson, *Goody-bye, Planet Earth*, pp. 8, 11-15.

3 Billy Graham. *Approaching Hoofbeats, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, pp. 127, 128.

4 This statement, quoted (obviously without first checking its accuracy) from a brief article in *Collier* magazine on September 29, 1945, has often been repeated in Watch Tower publications. See, for example, *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1975, page 633, also of April 15, 1982, page 8, and *You Can Live Forever on an Earth Transformed into Paradise* (1982), page 150.

. ***Did Jesus predict World War I?***

When Jesus, in Matthew twenty-four, verses 6, 7, predicted that there would be wars, did He then refer to world wars? Did His words contain a statement about wars that no generation before 1914 had experienced in the wars of its time?

The idea that Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 7, points to the First World War and the wars that followed is based on the expression "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom."⁵ The wording is believed to indicate that Jesus had a great war in mind, one in which many countries and nations would be involved : The First World War! It should be noted, however, that in the original Greek text, the words "nation" (*e'thnos*) and "kingdom" (*basilet'a*) are singular. Thus, the *Anchor Bible* (W.F. Albright and C. S. Mann, Matthew, 1971) says: "For one people shall rise up against another, one kingdom against another.

(See also the translation by J. B. Phillips, revised edition of 1972). This brings to mind wars in general, and not specifically the "world wars" or even necessarily major wars.

This is also confirmed by the fact that Jesus formulated his statement in terms borrowed from similar expressions found in the Hebrew Scriptures or in the Old Testament, for example in Isaiah chapter nineteen, verse 2 and second chapter fifteen, verse 6. None of these texts deal, of course, with world wars. The first of them even refers to a war in a single nation, a civil war:

And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they shall fight every man against his brother and against his neighbor; city against city, and

5 Earlier, the Watch Tower Society had stated that the "wars and war reports" mentioned in verse 6 refer to wars prior to World War I, while verse 7 describes World War I and other major wars since 1914. *Le Paradis reconquis*, 1958, pp. 178, 179). But the two verses cannot be separated in this way, because the word "for" (Greek *gar*) in verse 7 makes it clear that this verse is simply an explanation of the previous verse! The thought is: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but do not be afraid to believe that the end is coming. For there will be many wars and other troubles", etc., etc. The Society finally realized that both verses refer to the same types of wars. Thus, The Watchtower of 1^{er} January 1970 admits: "By continuing to say that this nation would rise up against the nation and the kingdom against the kingdom, Jesus explains why they would hear of wars and reports of wars. (Pp. 43 and 44) This view is still held in *The Watchtower* of 1^{er} April 1983, where it says on page 4 that Jesus, in verse 7, "explained" what he had just said in verse 6. - but the consequence for the Watch Tower Society is that it is forced to apply both verses abnormally to wars since 1914!

kingdom against kingdom. ⁶

That Jesus did not use the expression "nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom," especially of the world wars is also evident from the fact that this description included the war and revolts in the Roman Empire which preceded and culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 CE. Even the Watch Tower Society agrees, but considers the wars and other difficulties that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to be a prophetic prototype of the troubles on Earth since 1914.⁷ The Society therefore attempts to represent the period before A.D. 70, a particularly violent and disturbing period of war, revolt, famine and earthquake.

But the simple truth is that this period was no worse in this regard than many other periods in history. In fact, the first century A.D. was one of the most peaceful and undisturbed eras in history! It was part of the long and famous period of peace called *Pax Romana*, "the Roman Peace", which lasted from 29 BC to about 162 AD. Around this time, the *Pax Romana* era was perhaps the least significant period in military history," according to military historians R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy.⁸

The most important break in this peaceful period came from the aforementioned revolts within the Roman Empire, which in Judea caused the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 A.D.⁹

Therefore, neither in the words themselves nor in the subsequent events that have taken place, there is no indication that Jesus' statement on the wars to come in Matthew twenty-four, verses 6 and 7 makes any particular reference to the world wars and other major wars that have taken place since 1914. His words correspond to all the inter-state and civil wars that have taken place throughout the ages.

6 Isaiah 19:2, ASV. Isaiah's prophecy was obviously fulfilled in the last decades of the eighth century and the first decades of the seventh century B.C., when Egypt had divided into several "kingdoms" or smaller provinces, governed by local kings on several occasions. of the 25^e Dynasty eventually took control of the country.

7 See the book *God's Millennial Kingdom Approached* (1973), chapter 16. *The Watchtower* of 1st May 1975 admits that "Jesus' expression 'nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom' also had application in the first century. It is not limited to world wars." (page 274)

8 R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York, 1970), at page 122.

9 The Jewish revolt against Rome was part of a more widespread rebellion that spread throughout the Roman Empire and culminated the year after Nero's death, in 68-69 A.D., "when Servius Galba, consul with Titus Vinius as his colleague, began the year that brought death to both of them and almost meant the fall of Rome." (Tacitus *Historiae*. I, II)

of history, and these words were obviously uttered to warn his followers not to regard such calamities as a "sign" of his coming and the end of age.

What, then, of the impressive claims of a supposedly unique and important change in 1914, as the Watch Tower Society did?

. ***Did the First World War mark the turning point in history?***

When Jesus returns "with power and great glory", his intervention in human history will signify a *conclusion* of the present time. He comes to conclude it. His disciples knew this, and so they asked for the sign that would indicate *both* his arrival and the end of the age.¹⁰ Jesus' intervention to conclude this age will not be a delicate matter. In possession of "all authority... in heaven and on earth," he will quickly overthrow this whole system of things and thus compare his future intervention to the coming of the flood in the days of Noah, who suddenly overcame the unsuspecting people of the time and quickly brought the then existing age to an end. **"Thus will be the coming [Greek, *parousia*] of the Son of Man.** "(Matthew 24:37-39) Similarly, Jesus compared his arrival to the sudden and swift destruction of the city of Sodom in the days of Lot, and added;

"In like manner shall be the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed. "(Luke 17:28-30) The verb "to reveal" (*apokalupto*) is clearly used here as a parallel to the "coming" (*parousia*) in Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 39. Both words refer to the same event: the coming of Christ to end the present age.

The coming of Christ and the end of the present age will indeed be a *great turning point* in the history of humanity. When the Watch Tower Society dates the coming of Christ and the beginning of the "conclusion of the age" from 1914, it is not only obliged to extend this "conclusion" to a whole lifetime (from 1914 to Armageddon, which is supposed to happen soon), which makes it a very long event compared to Jesus' own statements. It is also obliged to make *the year 1914 the great turning point in history*. As proof, the Society often quotes what some historians, newspaper editors and politicians have said about the First World War and 1914.

"Many historians rightly point to this year as a pivotal one for humanity," says *La Tour de*

¹⁰ Matthew 24:3 The Greek expression *synteletia tou aiōnos* in this verse literally means "the conclusion of age. "See the [interlinear translation of the Kingdom of the Society](#), page

Guard of October 15, 1980, page 14. Is this true?

Certainly not. This is a blatant distortion of what these historians have actually said. None of them said that 1914 was the pivotal year for mankind. The historians quoted by the Watch Tower Society say that 1914 was "one of the" turning points in history, "*the* turning point of *our era*" and so on. None of them claimed that 1914 was the turning point in history. In its quotes, the Society consistently fails to include the fact that historians report many turning points in history, of *which 1914 is only one*. This method of citing only those parties who appear to support their argument can be seriously misleading, as the following examples show.

The Watch Tower publication "*Let Your Kingdom Vienna*" (1981) quotes, among others, historian Barbara W. Tuchman in her book *The Guns of August* (1962): "**The First World War was one of the great convulsions of history.**"¹¹ In reviewing Tuchman's statement, however, we find that the Society chose not to include a significant portion of it. His full statement is that

"Like the French Revolution, the First World War was one of the great convulsions of history".¹² Why did the Watch Tower Society pass the words "like the French Revolution"? Obviously because the unique claims of 1914 would have been weakened by a quote that placed the French Revolution on an equal footing with the 1914-1918 conflict. Indeed, historians consider the French Revolution to have been an even more important turning point in history than the First World War!

On the same page of "Let Thy Kingdom Vienna", the Watch Tower Society also quotes from The Economist magazine of August 4, 1979, in which the publisher stated: "In 1914, the world lost a coherence that it has not been able to regain..." But the reader is unaware that the editor of this article compares the period after 1914 with the period from 1789 to 1848, which was as unstable, filled with war, disorder and violence as it is today, and suggests that History follows a cyclical pattern: **"TWO generations of upheaval and violence, followed by two generations of consolidation and calm, followed by ...?"** (page 10) So, what did the publisher *really* say to

11 « Let Your Kingdom Come ». Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1981, p. 115.

12 Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August—August 1914*, the Four Square Edition, 1964 (it 1965). The quotation is found under "Sources » at the end of the book.

about the period since 1914? Only that it seems to follow the general cyclical pattern of history in the past!

There have been many "turns" and convulsions in history, and it would be easy to fill many pages with quotes from historians. A few examples may suffice.

On the decline of the Roman Empire in the V^e century:

This period was one of the great moments in world history. ¹³

On the industrial revolution that began around the 1780s:

It was *probably the most important event in world history, at least since the invention of agriculture and cities.* ¹⁴

On the French Revolution of 1789-1799:

The French Revolution is the most important event in the life of modern Europe. It deserves to be classified with the Reformation and the rise of Christianity because, like them, it destroyed the landmarks of the world in which generations of men had spent their lives. ¹⁵

Even today, in the middle of the twentieth century, in spite of all that has happened in the lives of men who are not yet old, and even here in America or in any other world where European countries no longer enjoy their former position, it is still possible to say that the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century was the great turning point of modern civilization. ¹⁶

On the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905:

Psychologically and politically, Japan's victory in the war marked a turning point in world history. ¹⁷

On the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945:

A new era in warfare and a new era in history manifested itself in the final days of this period: the nuclear age, ushered in by the first fall of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. ¹⁸

13 Dupuy & Dupuy (1970), p. 166.

14 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1962), p. 29.

15 *Cambridge Modern History*, Cambridge University Press, 1904, Vol. 8.

~~16 The noted historian R. R. Palmer in the preface to George Lefebvre's *The Coming of the French Revolution* (New York : Vintage, 1947), p. v.~~

17 Dupuy & Dupuy, pp. 926, 1014.

18 *Ibid.*

That the World War of 1914-1918 was one of the many turning points in world history no one would try to deny. But the question is: was it the turning point that the Watch Tower wants to pass? Was this the kind of turning point that the disciples had in mind when they asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and the end of the world? Such a conclusion cannot be drawn from the answer Jesus gave to the disciples' question, nor from the statements of historians.

. *Did the war of 1914-1918 suddenly take away "peace on earth"?*

Peace and security was suddenly and unexpectedly taken from the earth in 1914, quoting Revelation chapter 6, verse 4, about the rider on the horse in the colors of fire who "was allowed to take peace from the earth so that they might kill one another" (NW) since the Society maintains that this rider began his murderous race on earth in 1914, She tries to show that peace reigned on earth before that year, a peace that was suddenly and unexpectedly "taken away" by the outbreak of war.

To prove this, the Society cites, not historians, but two elderly statesmen and two Jehovah's Witnesses! The two statesmen, Konrad Adenauer and Harold Macmillan, were often mentioned in Watch Tower publications as remembering their youth as a time of peace, security, and optimism, which "suddenly and unexpectedly" disappeared in 1914.¹⁹

Wake Up! magazine also quotes Ewart Chitty, who was 16 at the beginning of the war, and George Hannan, who was 15 at the time. Mr. Harman says, "No one expected the First World War... People said the world had become too civilized for war. But World War came out of nowhere, like thunder."²⁰

Does this image of the pre-war period correspond to historical reality or does it simply reflect the habit of many older people to idealize the "good old days"? Where is it more likely that we can learn the real facts about the pre-war era: the childhood memories of an elderly person or historian who has

¹⁹The Watchtower, 1^{er} May 1982, p. 14.

²⁰Wake Up, May 8, 1981, p. 6. Both Chitty and Hannan are long-time Jehovah's Witnesses. See The Watchtower, February 15, 1963, pp. 118-120, and The Watchtower, January 15, 1970, pp. 56-61.

studied the time well?

Chitty and Harman are both Jehovah's Witnesses, something that "Wake up! " fails to mention. It is therefore unlikely that their image of the pre-1914 period matches that of the Watch Tower Society. Hannan's statement that

"No one expected the First World War," should be compared to what the Society's first president, C. T. Russell, said 22 years before the war began. In 1892, referring to the fear and turmoil in the world, Russell explained :

... Daily, weekly and monthly newspapers, religious and lay, continually discuss the prospects of war in Europe. They note the grievances and ambitions of the different nations and predict that war is not inevitable today, that it may begin at any time between some of the great powers, and that the prospects are that it will eventually involve all of them. ²¹

The truth is that the Great War of 1914 came as no surprise. It was awaited by virtually everyone! The world had been preparing for war for decades and nations were armed to the teeth. Everyone was waiting for the "spark to ignite". In their book *A History of the Modern World since 1815*, historians R. R. Palmer and J. Colton say:

Never before had the European states maintained such large armies in peacetime as at the beginning of the XX^e century... Few people wanted war; except for a few sensational writers, they preferred peace in Europe, but all of them took it for granted that war would come one day. In the last years before 1914, the idea that war would come sooner or later probably prompted some statesmen in some countries to liberate them. ²²

In recent years, Pastor Russell and his supporters to some extent have shared these expectations. But in 1887, Russell, commenting on widespread fear and the arms race in Europe, wrote in the February issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* :

Everything seems to indicate that next summer will see a war looming that could engage all the nations in Europe. (Page 2)

When this did not happen, Russell was more cautious about the prospects for war. "We do not share them," he wrote in

²¹ *The Watch Tower*, January 15, 1892, pp. 19-21. Reprints, p. 1354.

²² R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World Since 1815*, cinquième édition (New York, 1978), pp. 654, 655.

1892, "we do not believe that the prospects for a general European war are as marked as is generally believed". Such a war did not fit the pastor's prophetic scheme. Russell, who instead envisioned future world anarchy. If a general European war were to break out, it would have to come long before 1914. Thus, Russell said:

Even if a war or revolution broke out in Europe earlier than in 1905, we could not consider this as part of the serious problems foreseen. At most it could be a precursor, a mere "skirmish" over what is to come. ²³

Believing that world anarchy and the destruction of all human government would be accomplished before 1914-when the culmination of Armageddon would have arrived and the kingdom of God would be established on earth-Russell and his associates thus estimated that the generally expected war in Europe would come long before that date, probably "around 1905," Russell said. ²⁴

Was what is now called the First World War preceded by a long period of peace and security? It is certainly true that the period from 1848 to 1914 was somewhat quieter than the convulsions that preceded and succeeded that period, sometimes referred to as a "belle époque". But this name is misleading. Barbara W. Tuchman, an internationally renowned historian, has made a special study of the decades leading up to the First World War. In the foreword to her study, which covers the period 1890-1914, she says:

This is not the book I intended to write when I started. The preconceptions fell out one by one as I investigated. The period was not a golden age or a good time, except for a thin privileged class... We were deceived by the

²³The Watchtower, January 15, 1892, pp. 19-21. Reprints, p. 1354.

²⁴Pretending that Russell's predictions were coming true, the Watch Tower Society often quoted the *World Magazine* of August 30, 1914. (Most recently quoted in *Wake Up!* of April 1984, p. 5,6). all the kingdoms in 1914" in that magazine, it was stated that "the terrible epidemic of war in Europe has fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy. "Then Pastor Russell's publications are quoted extensively, giving the reader the impression that Russell foresaw the war. The intimate knowledge of Pastor Russell's many publications and the ability to select appropriate statements indicate, however, that the author of the article was either a close collaborator of Russell's or his author. It would be virtually impossible for an ordinary neutral journalist to be so well versed in Pastor Russell's publications. In fact, Russell's predictions quoted in the article referred to "big issues", the It is the "battle of Armageddon," the "end of all kingdoms," and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. None of these events came to pass in 1914 as Russell predicted. However, what did happen, the World War, could not be found among Russell's prophecies.

people of the time themselves who, remembering the pre-war period, saw earlier that part of their lives enveloped by the halo of a beautiful sunset of peace and security. It didn't seem so golden when they were there. Their memories and nostalgia have conditioned our view of the pre-war period, but I can offer the reader a rule based on adequate research: all statements made by contemporary people about the beauty of the time were made after 1914.²⁵

²⁵ Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower. A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914* (New York, 1966 [première impression, 1962]), pp, xiii, xiv.

END OF ALL KINGDOMS IN 1914

"Millennial Dawners" 25 Year Prophecy



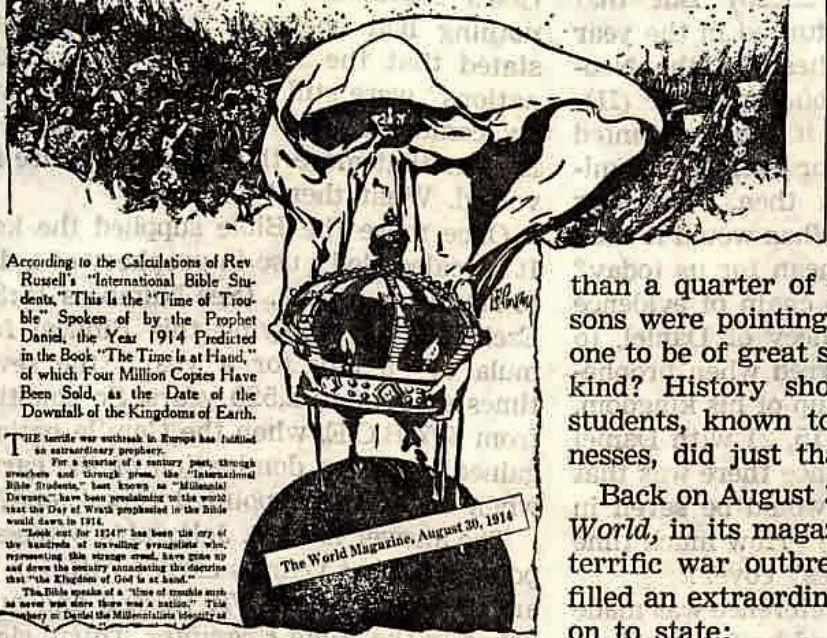
According to the Calculations of Rev. Russell's "International Bible Students," This is the "Time of Trouble" Spoken of by the Prophet Daniel, the Year 1914 Predicted in the Book "The Time is at Hand," of which Four Million Copies Have Been Sold, as the Date of the Downfall of the Kingdoms of Earth.

THE terrific war outbreak in Europe has fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy. For a quarter of a century past, through preachers and through press, the "International Bible Students," best known as "Millennial Dawners," have been proclaiming to the world that the Day of Wrath prophesied in the Bible would dawn in 1914. "Look out for 1914!" has been the cry of the hundreds of travelling evangelists who, representing this strange creed, have gone up and down the country enunciating the doctrine that "the Kingdom of God is at hand." The Bible speaks of a "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." This prophecy of Daniel the Millennialist identifies as...

... as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. And they do not pass one another; every one on his beaten track do they go forward; and they pass through between warlike weapons, and change not their purpose. Into the city they hasten forward; they shall run upon the wall; they shall climb into the houses; through the windows they make their entrances like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark and the stars shall withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?" (Joel 2: 11)

This, these Bible students have been claiming since 1896, is a Scriptural description of the army which was to overrun the earth in 1914. But where was there such an army? In the same book Rev. Russell speculated on the subject and reached two very definite conclusions. First, this description did not apply to any undisciplined mob. Second, there was so little time for the prophecy to be fulfilled that the army must,...

"Millennial Dawners" 25 Year Prophecy



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The World Magazine, August 30, 1914

Fleming, "The Origins and Legacies of World War I."

The Turning Point Foreseen—by Whom?

But did you know that, long before 1914—in fact, more

than a quarter of a century before—persons were pointing ahead to that year as one to be of great significance for all mankind? History shows that sincere Bible students, known today as Jehovah's witnesses, did just that. Note this:

Back on August 30, 1914, the New York World, in its magazine section, said, "The terrific war outbreak in Europe has fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy." It went on to state:

"For a quarter of a century past, through preachers and through press, the 'International Bible Students' [Jehovah's witnesses] . . . have been proclaiming to the world that the Day of Wrath prophesied in the Bible would dawn in 1914.

clear that the outbreak of the First World War meant the end of an age."—"The Norton History of Modern Europe."

"World War I was a significant milestone on the highway of world events. It marked the end of one epoch and the beginning of

As shown in the *New York World Magazine* of August 30, 1914, Watch Tower founder C. T. Russell expected the Kingdom of Christ to end all earthly kingdoms in 1914. The prediction obviously failed. The nations not only survived, they have since tripled in number. However, as the *World Magazine*, at the beginning of the war, erroneously claimed that "the terrible epidemic of war in Europe had fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy," Watch Tower publications repeatedly referred to this article. However, when they finally printed a photo of the article in *Wake Up*, the embarrassing headline, "END OF ALL KINGDOMS IN 1914," was cut off. It wasn't until 11 years later that the full picture, with the title restored, appears in *The Watchtower* from 1^e April 1984.

The organization had not predicted the arrival of the First World War and what it had predicted, the end of all human government. 1914, turned out to be wrong. Yet the article was still presented as supportive of their claims for 1914, claiming that today they are almost totally different from what they were before 1914.

It is true that Europe had one of its longest periods of peace before 1914. The Watch Tower Society quotes an anonymous European historian from August 1914: "In the early days of that fateful month, one of the most peaceful periods on our continent, the experience came to an end."²⁶ But this was only true for Europe, and it is worth noting that the same continent has experienced a period of peace of approximately the same duration since 1945!

The most striking fact is that, as far as the rest of the world is concerned, frequent wars raged almost everywhere before 1914. As the Austrian scientist Otto Koenig says:

However, if someone starts talking about the good old days, the long period of peace from 1871 to 1914, they should just open the closed pages of the history book: the Boer War in South Africa, the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Russo-Japanese War, the Illyrian Rebellion in Macedonia, the Balkan Wars and the occupation of Bosnia, the war between Italy and Abyssinia, the Mahdi rebellion, the Herero rebellion in South West Africa, the French in Algeria, the wars in Indochina, the revolutions in South America - and this is only a selection of the war events during this long period of time "time of peace".²⁷

²⁶ *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1984, p. 5.

²⁷ Otto Koenig, *The Parodies before our Tar* (Vienna, Munchen, Zurich, 1971), p. 391.

Millions of people have been killed in these wars. It was certainly not a peaceful time. Even the so-called "peace" in Europe was only peace between the great powers. Other wars were taking place in Europe, for example the two Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, involving Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, Turkey and Romania. Moreover, "European peace" was by no means a peace with security. On the contrary, it was a peace in fear - the fear of war everyone knew was coming.

Historians generally refer to this period of European peace as the "era of armed peace".²⁸

The pre-war situation was therefore very much like the situation on Earth since 1945: a generation of relative peace in Europe, with many limited wars in many other parts of the world. The claim that the First World War ended a long period of peace and security in the world is therefore a false claim. The pre-1914 era was filled with fear, insecurity, violence and war, as were most periods of history.

. ***The first "world war"?***

"No generation prior to 1914 has ever known a world war, let alone two," declared the Watchtower on July 15, 1983 (page 7). "Historians are in broad agreement that the First World War was the first world war," said Wake Up! s' magazine of May 8, 1981 (page 8). Is this true?

No, you certainly don't. Historians do not "broadly agree" on this claim. What we now call the First World War does not mean that it was, in fact, the first world war in history. Although many may not realize it today, those who lived through the 1914-1918 conflict simply called it the "Great War. It was when another world war broke out in 1939 that the terms "Great War" and "Great War" were coined.

Use "first" and "second" to distinguish one conflict from the other. But other wars before 1914 had also been "world wars" in the same way as the First World War!

²⁸Field Marshal Montgomery, Viscount of Alamein, in *A History of Warfare*. Collins (London, 1968), page 443, states: "The years 1870 to 1914 were years of armed peace in Europe and frequent small wars in the rest of the world. "According to the Swedish historian Anton Nyström, "a state of half-war" prevailed in Europe between 1870 and 1914. (Fare, sous och efter 1914, Stockholm, 1915, p. 141).

The era of world war really began at the beginning of the 18th century.²⁹ In eighty years, three world wars had taken place, and by the end of this century, the fourth had begun! These facts are underlined by many historians. Consider:

1. The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), in which France, Great Britain, Holland and Austria played an important role, with the conflict extending as far as North America, according to Palmer and Colton, "the first that can be called a 'world war' because it involved overseas countries with the great powers of Europe."³⁰

2. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was the Second World War of the eighteenth century: "The Seven Years' War was more than the War of Austrian Succession [1740-1748] a world war."³¹ The worldwide extension of this conflict is underlined by all: "It came to embrace all four continents of the world and all the great oceans."³² Prussia, Austria, Great Britain, France, Russia, Sweden, Spain and most of the German states of the Holy Roman Empire engaged in the struggle. Issues included control of North America and India. It was this war that enabled Britain to become the world's leading imperial power, thanks in large part to its famous statesman and leader, William Pitt. Pitt, who came to power in 1756, the same year the war broke out, won a series of victories around the world thanks to his brilliant strategy. Montgomery, therefore, called him "a world war strategist".³³ Some historians consider him to be even greater than

29 Montgomery, p. 315.

30 R. R. Palmer & Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World to 1815*. Fifth edition (New York, 1978), p. 184. With respect to the War of the Spanish Succession, the *New Cambridge Modern History* (Vol. VI, Cambridge, 1970) also mentions the Great Northern War (1700-1721), which took place at the same time, and concludes: "The conflicts that ushered in the eighteenth century gave rise to a veritable world war." (Page 410) See also *The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1984, vol. 23, p. 86.

31 The much-loved *Världshistoria* (World History), edited by Sven Unberg and S. E. Bring, Norstedt & Söner, Vol. 10 (Stockholm 1930), p. 182. If, as this book indicates, the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) must also be called a "world war," the Seven Years' War was in fact World War III! Eirik Homborg, another historian who describes the War of the Austrian Succession as a "World War", points out that it was fought "in Europe, America, the West African coast, India and the world". *Viirdshistorien*, Stockholm, 1962, p. 224).

32 Stig Boberg, *historia 1700 - pebbles* (Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm: Scandinavian university books), p. 31. *Wake up!* of December 8, 1970, page 21, admits that the "Seven Year War" involved almost all the nations of Europe and took place all over the world, in India, North America, Germany and on the seas. »

33 Montgomery, pp. 317. 320.

Churchill in this regard.

3. The American War of Independence (1775-1783) was the third war of the same century, described as a "world war" by historians: "The War of Independence was marked by several wars in one. It was, among other things, a war for national independence, a civil war and, ultimately, a world war."³⁴ It was the British defeat at Saratoga in 1778 that turned the war into a world war. "The defeat at Saratoga ... marked the beginning of a general war fought all over the world," explains historian Piers Mackesy.³⁵ The second part of his work on the war is therefore subtitled : The World War of 1778.³⁶ Viscount Montgomery also emphasizes this change in 1778:

"The war was now another world war."³⁷ A historical biographer describes the war in this way:

...what started as an American revolution against England had degenerated into a world war. French and Spanish fleets fought the British in the English Channel, the West Indies and Gibraltar. The Spaniards captured West Florida. Russia, Denmark, Sweden and Prussia joined England's blockade against France and Spain. Holland too operated naval stores in France and supplied America so abundantly from the West Indies that England declared war on it. Their two navies were stationed in the North Sea. England's line of ships and men was now very thin to sail around the world.³⁸

4. The Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815), a multinational conflict that followed the French Revolution, marked the beginning of the Fourth World War in the 18th century. Historians Palmer and Colton explain:

The fighting from 1792 to 1814 should be considered as a "World War", as it was, affecting not only all of Europe, but places as far away as Spanish America, where the wars of independence began, or the interior of the North. America, where the United States bought Louisiana in 1803 and attempted a conquest of Canada in 1812.³⁹

Other historians have agreed that the wars

34 *The United States, A Companion to American Studies*; Edité par Dennis Welland (Londres, 1974), p. 158.

35 Piers Mackesy, *The War for America 1775-1783* (Londres, 1964), p. 147.

36 Mackesy, p. 121. Comparer la page xvi.

37 Montgomery, p. 321.

38 Irving Stone, *Those Who Love* (New York : Doubleday & Company, 1965), pp. 311, 312.

Napoleonic as a world war. The famous Norwegian historian and statesman Halvdan Koht calls this conflict "a world war lasting more than twenty years, fought on every continent."⁴⁰ And Cyril Falls, a professor of war history, mentions the great wars that followed the Napoleonic Wars and comments:

None of these wars, however, was a war of the kind of those of the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century [the Napoleonic Wars of 1801-1815] which had involved not only all of Europe, but to a lesser extent all the continents of the globe.⁴¹

Therefore, the Watch Tower Society's assertion that the First World War was "the first world war" is patently false, as is the assertion that "no generation prior to 1914 experienced a world war. Historians do not "broadly agree" with such erroneous assertions, as they are generally better informed than this. On the contrary, they know that the "era of world war" began in the eighteenth century, which saw three major world wars in eighty years (in one "generation" as defined by the Society); with a fourth world war breaking out before the end of the same century!

But maybe World War I was larger, more "global" than the world wars that preceded it? This is alleged in the Watchtower of 1^{er} May 1984:

The First World War was by far the largest and most destructive human conflict. (Page 4)

Unfortunately, this statement is not true either. Unlike some previous world conflicts, the First World War was essentially limited to Europe. General Montgomery, who fought in both World Wars and played an important role in each, explains :

On the whole, however, it can be said that the war in theatres outside Europe was of minor strategic importance. The war of 1914-1918 was essentially a European war. It was later called a "world war" because

³⁹Palmer & Colton, *A History of the Modern World to 1815*, Fifth Edition (New York, 1978), pp. 382, 383. Winston Churchill, having described both the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence as "world wars," calls the Napoleonic Wars "the longer of the two world wars" (*A History of the English-speaking Peoples*, vol. III, London, 1957, p. 312 [cf. vol. 11, London, 1956, pp. 123, 163]).

⁴⁰Halvdan Koht, *Folkets Tidsdlder*, Stockholm 1982, p. 7.

⁴¹Cyril Falls, *A Hundred Years of War* (Londres, 1953), p. 161.

that contingents from many parts of the British Empire served in Europe and that the United States joined the Allied Powers in 1917. It was less of a "world war" than some earlier conflicts such as the Seven Years' War.⁴²

Comparing the First World War with the Second World War, Montgomery adds:

While the war of 1914-1918 could hardly be described as a world conflict, one cannot think of the war provoked by Hitler in 1939.⁴³

Such balanced and informed judgments by an experienced and knowledgeable historian and a world-renowned military general would have to be weighed against the enormous and unique claims that the Watch Tower Society attaches to the 1914-1918 war.

. *The first "total war"?*

But isn't it true that the First World War was the first total war? This is another statement often put forward in Watch Tower publications. For example, the Society's new book *Reasoning from Scripture* (1985) states, on page 235, that "for the first time, all the great powers were at war. The magazine of May 8, 1981, can even quote *The World Book Encyclopedia* stating :

During the First World War, for the first time in history, mankind experienced total war. (Page 6)

What readers do not know, however, is that most historians obviously do not agree with this statement.

What is an "all-out war"? Generally, a "total war" is defined as a war in which not only the army, but also the economy and industry of a nation are mobilized for war.⁴⁴

The total war thus defined did not begin with the First World War. Military historians R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy state that the American Civil War (1861-1865) was the first total war in this sense :

42 Montgomery, p. 470.

43 Ibid, p. 497.

44 Dupuy & Dupuy, pp. 916, 1016. G. Graninger and S. Tagil point out that "no war in history has been total in the sense that all the great nations, perhaps all the nations, have been involved in the conflict." (*Historia i centrum och periferi*, part 3, Land, 1973, p. 164).

With the national economies of both sides fully integrated into their respective war efforts, the American Civil War was truly the first modern war and the first "total" war in the modern sense. ⁴⁵

Despite this, it seems that historians generally identify the earlier Napoleonic Wars as the First Total War. Montgomery, who admits that the American Civil War was indeed "an example of total war being waged ruthlessly," claims that total war was introduced in 1793, when the French announced, by their law of August 23, 1793, total war. ⁴⁶ And E. J. Hobsbawm, in describing the crisis that followed the French Revolution, explains :

During its crisis, the young French Republic discovered or invented total war; the total mobilization of a nation's resources through conscription, rationing and a rigorously controlled war economy, and the virtual abolition, locally or abroad, of the distinction between soldiers and civilians. ⁴⁷

History teacher Cyril Falls also traces the origins of the Total War back to the Napoleonic Wars. In *One Hundred Years of War*, speaking of the Second World War, he says:

Politically, the war saw a new advance towards "totality", a process that can be said to have begun during the Napoleonic Wars. ⁴⁸

Thus, the so-called First World War cannot be characterized as being markedly different from a number of previous world conflicts. It was preceded by several other world wars and total wars. But, the Watch Tower Society insists, it was much larger than all previous wars, even seven times larger than all the major wars of the previous 2,400 years. Is this correct?

. *How "great" was "the Great War"?*

The need to mark the date of 1914 prompted the Watch Tower Society to mark World War I in a way that was completely absurd in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses. What about the statement, for example, that this war was "seven times

45 Dupuy & Dupuy, p. 820.

46 Montgomery, pp. 332, 550.

47 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, Europe 1789-1848*. (Londres, 1962), p. 67.

48 Cyril Falls, p. 350.

greater than all the 901 great wars of the previous 2,400 years"?

There is not the slightest truth in this statement, as will soon become evident.

Statements about the scale of the war, the number of people involved, the number of casualties, etc., often vary considerably. It is not difficult to select the most horrific figures given by certain writers, columnists and politicians in various books and newspaper columns, and thus create an image of a war that bears no resemblance to reality. This is exactly what the Society did with the First World War.

Churchill acknowledges that: "For the first time in history, all the human strength and resources of a state have been mustered for an all-out war." (Churchill, vol. 111, p. 229).

In order to have as clear a picture as possible of the First World War and the other wars that preceded it, we must turn to historians and other researchers who have conducted a scientific and thorough study of wars throughout history. A scientific study of wars has been underway since the 1930s and the two pioneers of these studies are Lewis Richardson and Quincy Wright. In recent years, their work has been taken up by other authors such as J. David Singer, Melvin Small and Francis A. Beer. The following information is drawn primarily from their work, along with other reliable historical sources.

How many nations participated in the 1914-1918 conflict? The Watch Tower's publication, *The Bohemian How to Find Him* (1980), quotes a newspaper columnist as saying that the countries involved in the First World War comprised "more than 90 percent of the world's population" (page 146). However, it does not explain how many of these countries were or, more importantly, how they were "involved" in the war. Similarly, the Watchtower, October 15, 1980, on page 15, states that the First World War

"has affected almost every country in the world" - but no explanation is given as to how these countries have been "affected".

As General Montgomery pointed out, the First World War was "essentially a European war" and therefore "essentially an international war.

"less of a world war than some previous conflicts". While it is true that the total number of nations participating directly or indirectly at this stage was about 33% of the existing nations were ten. The fact is that most of them have

played a very insignificant role in the war.

Thus, we see that the allied forces consisted of 10 nations and 4 world powers, making a total of 14 nations. ⁴⁹ Francis Beer lists only 12 contending parties, explaining in a footnote that "this list excludes non-European belligerents such as China, Japan, Thailand, Latin American countries and some smaller European belligerents such as Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal, which played a relatively minor role in the war.

⁵⁰ Singer and Small, which provide very precise data, show that the number of independent belligerents was fifteen. ⁵¹

In its scope, the First World War was certainly not - and certainly not seven times as large as all previous major wars combined over two thousand years. Its scope was not even greater than the The eighteenth century "world wars" described above.

These earlier multinational wars extended beyond a single continent, such as Europe, in a very real sense.

The most frightening aspect of the First World War was the death toll. If, as is claimed, it was worse than previous wars, it would appear that it was the death toll. How bad was the First World War in this regard compared to some of the great wars of the past?

. *First World War dead compared to those before 1914.*

By far the most serious aspect of the war is obviously murder. "Victims give wars their importance. It is the aspect of war that is most reminiscent of disease. "»⁵²

How many were killed in World War I? 37,508,686 people advertised in Awake! magazine on February 22, 1961, pages 6 and 7. It refers to the 1946 *World Almanac* as the source of this information.

The magazine Awake! should have mentioned, however, that this figure does not refer to deaths due directly to the battles, but includes the millions who died from other causes.

⁴⁹ Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, abridged edition (Chicago, 1969), p. 58; Dupuy & Dupuy, p. 990.

⁵⁰ Beer, p. 37.

⁵¹ J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War 1816-1965. A Statistical Handbok* (New York, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1972), pp. 116, 117.

⁵² Beer, p. 34.

than war, such as famine and Spanish flu!

Thus, the magazine *Awake!* of October 8, 1983, page 12, almost halves the above-mentioned figure to about 21 million (9 million soldiers and 12 million civilians). But this figure is also too high. A previous issue of *Wake Up!* (October 8, 1971, page 16), speaks of 14 million dead (9 million soldiers and 5 million civilians). Even this figure is probably misleading.

The most accurate tables show that between 8 and 8.5 million soldiers were killed during the war.⁵³ The number of civilian deaths varies greatly. Dupuy and Dupuy give the following figures: 6,642,633, but they explicitly state that this number includes deaths due to epidemic diseases and malnutrition, and not deaths due directly to military action.⁵⁴

Francis A's table. Beer gives 1,374,000 civilian deaths, but notes that figures are missing for some countries.⁵⁵

The total number of those killed as a direct result of the war - soldiers and civilians - was therefore, according to the most reliable estimates, between 10 and 12 million, perhaps a little more. Millions more people died from other causes during the war, such as malnutrition and epidemic diseases, especially the Spanish flu in 1918.

What then of the wars that took place before 1914? How do they compare in terms of the casualties of the First World War? If, as the *Watch Tower* publications claim, the First World War was "seven times more deadly" than all the major wars of the previous 2,400 years, it would seem that this is the first aspect on which the comparison should be made. This would mean that the 901 major wars prior to 1914 accounted for only one-seventh of the 10 to 12 million deaths in World War I, or about 1.5 million people in total! Or, if we include other war-related causes such as famine and disease and take the much higher figure from the 1946 *World Almanac*: 37,508,686 killed in World War I, it would still limit the total number of people to about 5 million. Does the available evidence support this view?

⁵³ Dupuy and Dupuy, p. 990.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Francis A. Beer, *Peace Against War* (San Francisco, 1981), p. 37. Beer says: "More than 8 million soldiers and 1 million civilians were killed in the First World War" (p. 36). This would make a total of more than 9 million soldiers and civilians, which is probably an underestimate.

Losses in past wars are, for obvious reasons, difficult to estimate. Gaston Bodart, who has carefully studied them in the wars of the last three hundred years, observed:

Scrupulously compiled records of the actual losses of armies are not found in the archives of most military powers until after the War of the Spanish Succession, i.e. after 1714. Even after that date, reliable data is limited to the largest battles, combats and sieges. Total losses for each war were not compiled until after 1848.⁵⁶

As for civilian deaths, the situation is even more difficult:

Official records of this population have been kept by the various governments only more recently, not before the second half of XIX^e century, and even in the archives

after 1850, there are large gaps. Statistical reports or tables should therefore be limited to army losses.⁵⁷

There is no reason to believe, however, that the percentage of civilian deaths as a proportion of total casualties was lower in previous wars than in the First World War. On the contrary, it was often much higher, for example, in the Huguenot Wars, the German Peasants' War (1524-1525) and the Thirty Years' War.⁵⁸

Is it only possible that 5 million people were killed as a result of the 901 great wars of the 2,400 years before 1914? This shows just how absurd such an idea is, and few examples of wars in the centuries before 1914 are given below, each of which cost more than a million lives, and in some cases several million.

1. It is estimated that the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), an international conflict with a dozen nations involved, killed an estimated 2 to 3 million soldiers. Civilian casualties, however, were much more frightening, especially because of the famines and diseases caused by the war.⁵⁹ Today, most experts estimate that 30 to 40 percent of the total German population, or 7 to 8 million people, were killed in the war.

⁵⁶ Gaston Bodart, L.L.D., *Losses of Life in Modern Wars* (Londres, New York, 1916), p. 12.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 12.

⁵⁸ The Watchtower of 1st April 1983 quotes Professor Wright as saying that civilian casualties were exceptionally high during the Second World War. (Page 6) What they fail to mention is that Wright adds that "up until this war, civilian casualties have tended to decline since the seventeenth century" (Wright, p. 60). !

civilians, died because of the war! ⁶⁰This is a staggering figure, far exceeding the civilian mortality of World War I for this country. Historian R. R. Palmer observes that "even World War II, in the midst of depopulation, was not as devastating for Germany as the Thirty Years' War. It is entirely possible that human beings could die like flies without the benefit of scientific destruction. The horrors of modern warfare are not entirely different from the horrors experienced by men and women in the past. ⁶¹

2. The Manchurian-Chinese war. In 1644, China was invaded by the Manchus (from Manchuria), who began to conquer the country in a long war that would have cost the lives of 25 million people, about twice as many as in the First World War! ⁶² The Manchus then ruled China until 1912.

3. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), a war involving 10 European nations plus European colonies in other parts of the world, caused "more than a million" casualties (dead and wounded) in armies, of which at least 400,000 people gave their lives. ⁶³ But civilian casualties must have been much higher.

"In no other war were there as many sieges as in the War of the Spanish Succession," Bodart explains. "The losses in the sieges were much heavier on both sides than in the battles... The deaths among the inhabitants of the besieged cities, those caused by diseases carried by the armies, those of the Camisards and finally the famine that followed this duel to the death must have reached an enormous figure. The statistics on these points, unfortunately, are totally inadequate. "⁶⁴ Even a conservative estimate would put the total number of deaths at over one million.

⁵⁹ It was once estimated that 25 million, or three-quarters of the total German population, died during the Thirty Years' War, but this figure has been revised by modern historians. See Wake Up, April 22, 1972, page 13; compare with Beer, page 48.

⁶⁰ Swedish historian Göran Rystadin *Dd drat ditt namn...*, *Sveriges Radios fbrlag* (Uddevalla, 1966), p. 63.

⁶¹ R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (New York, 1952), p. 133.

⁶² E. L. Jones, *The European Miracle* (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 36. The conquests of Genghis Khan, more than four hundred years earlier, probably surpassed the First World War, as measured by death figures. Historian Harold Lamb says of him that "when he was gone, wolves and ravens were often the only living creatures in once-populated lands. This destruction of human life destroys the modern imagination, enriched by the concepts of the last European war. "(Harold Lamb, *Genghis Khan - The Emperor of All Men* (London, 1929), pp. 11, 12.) Genghis Khan's conquest of northern China, for example, in 1211-1218, would have cost the lives of 18 million Chinese! (The Swedish encyclopedia *Nordisk Familjebok*, vol. 5, Malmb 1951, p. 795).

⁶³ Bodart, pp. 30, 96.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* pp. 96, 97.

4. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763), fought all over the world, probably cost the lives of more than a million people. France lost about 350,000 soldiers and Austrian casualties were about 400,000 (dead and wounded). Prussian losses were "probably heavier!"⁶⁵ Hundreds of thousands more died in the armies of other nations and among civilians.

5. The Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815) involved about the same number of nations as the First World War. The Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815) involved about the same number of nations as the First World War. Half of the nations in these wars were lost in the period of the First Empire, 1805-1815.⁶⁶ In the last eleven years, an estimated 2 million soldiers have died in the conflict.⁶⁷ The total number of deaths for the 23 years from 1792 to 1815 is set at 5 or 6 million!⁶⁸

6. The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), "perhaps the most destructive war of the entire 19th century!"⁶⁹ It was a civil war in China that would have cost between 20 and 30 million lives.⁷⁰ In the context of this war, the magazine *Awake Up!* apparently neglected its earlier claim that World War I had surpassed all previous wars in a destructive manner. An article in its March 22, 1982 issue, which attempted to highlight the involvement of religion in the war, stated that the number of casualties could be as high as 40 million, almost four times as many as in World War I!⁷¹ This war alone demonstrates that the First World War was not "the bloodiest war in history," as has sometimes been said. The reason why some historians claim that it is unfounded is, as E. Hobsbawm explains, that the Taiping Rebellion "was ignored by Eurocentric historians."⁷²

65 *ibid.* pp. 36, 100.

66 *ibid.* p. 156.

67 *ibid.* p. 133.

68 *ibid.* pp. 181, 182; *Wake Up*, 22 February 1961, p. 7. The losses are obviously difficult to estimate. Estimates of losses in Napoleon's armies range between 400,000 and 2,500,000. See Beer, page 330, note 18.

69 Dupuy & Dupuy, page 864.

70 Palmer & Colton, *A History of the Modern World Since 1815* (1978), p. 632.

71 *Wake up!* March 22, 1982, page 7. The new *Encyclopedia Britannica* agrees: "A contemporary estimate of 20,000,000 to 30,000,000 victims is certainly much lower than the actual number" (*Macropaedia*, Vol. 4, 15th ed. 1980, p. 361). The Swedish historian Gunnar Hagglof (who was ambassador to China for several years) stated in his book *China as I saw it* (Stockholm, 1978) that "the Taiping Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century shook the Chinese state on its foundations, cost the lives of more than 40 million people and marked the beginning of the end of the Chinese empire." (page 62)

72 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848—1875* (London, 1975), p. 127

7. The War of Lopez (1864-1870), in which Paraguay fought Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, claimed the lives of more than 2 million people. The war "reduced the Paraguayan population from about 1,400,000 to 221,000", or 84%! The other three countries have "lost about 1,000,000 men." ⁷³

Compare the deaths in these seven wars, as shown in this graph, with those in World War I:

Conflict	Estimated Victims
The Thirty Years' War	9-11 million
The Manchurian-Chinese War	25 million
The war of Spanish Succession	approx. 1 million
The Seven Years' War	1-2 million
The Napoleonic Wars	5-6 million
The Taiping Rebellion	20-40 million
The Lopez War	2 million
Total estimated victims	63-87 million
Estimate of victims of the first world war	37.5 million

It can be seen that mortality in these seven wars is about double the figure of 37,500,000 war-related deaths cited above. And it is many times higher than the 10 to 12 million *casualties* caused directly by the First World War. It should be noted that these major wars of the three centuries immediately preceding 1914 are only a few of the most important examples; the list of previous wars causing one million or more deaths could be considerably expanded. ⁷⁴ These few examples are sufficient, however, to show how little is known about the fact that only 5 million (or, worse, 1.5 million) people died in the great wars of the 2,400 years preceding 1914. The

⁷³ Dupuy & Dupuy, p. 911.

The simple truth is that hundreds of millions of people died in wars during this period!

In summary, the conflict of 1914-1918 (First World War) was primarily a European war, in which some fifteen, or about a quarter of the existing nations of the world, actively participated. Its scope was no greater than that of several previous wars and, in fact, was less than several of them, such as the Napoleonic Wars, which lasted 23 years and in which half of the existing nations on earth were actively participating.

Approximately 90% of the 10 to 12 million direct victims of the 1914-1918 war were Europeans. Other earlier conflicts, such as the Thirty Years' War, had comparable death figures. The Manchu-China War doubled this death toll and the Taiping Rebellion about three times as many.

The war was fought mainly with conventional weapons. Tanks, submarines and aircraft (apparently used for the first time in the First Balkan War, 1912-1913) were still at the experimental stage and played an insignificant role in the war. The machine gun - a weapon developed in the previous century and used in several earlier wars (e.g. the American Civil War) - was responsible for 80-90% of casualties. Overland transport was still mainly done by horses, as in previous wars.

The conflict of 1914-1918 was not the first total war in history, nor was it the First World War. In fact, according to Marshal Montgomery, because it was essentially a European war, it is doubtful whether it even deserves to be called a world conflict.

No matter how the war of 1914-1918 is measured - by its scale, duration, number of nations involved, combatants or casualties - the claim that it was seven times larger than all the great wars of the previous 2400 years combined stands out as pure fiction.

⁷⁴ Many other wars fought in the same three centuries cost hundreds of thousands of lives, for example the Spanish War between France and Spain (1635-59), the Great Turkish War (1683-1699), the Augsburg League War (1688-97), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the Crimean War (1854-1856), the American Civil War (1861-1865), the German War (1870-1871), the Russian-Turkish War (1877-1878) and, at the beginning of our century, the Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). According to Hobsbawm, 600,000 people died in the Crimean War and more than 630,000 died in the American Civil War. (Hobsbawm, *The Age of the Capital 1848-1875*, London, 1975, pp. 76, 78)

It is so far from the truth that it is unbelievable that anyone, if they have done a careful review of the historical data, would have seriously or honestly made such a claim.

. ***Is our century the most warlike in history?***

There is no doubt that World War II was much larger than World War I and ended with the use of nuclear weapons. However, this period was followed by a period of forty years during which no use of these weapons was repeated. Other wars have taken place, but they have not been exceptional compared to many of the major wars of past generations.

It is true that the threat of a war that could exterminate the greater part of humanity clearly exists today. However, the mere threat or possibility of such a war does not in itself fulfill a so-called prophecy concerning the wars of our twentieth century, or more precisely of the generation of 1914. What really happened?

From 1816 to 1965, the number of independent nations on the planet increased fivefold, from 23 in 1816 to 124 in 1965.⁷⁵ This development, of course, multiplied the prospects for an increase in the number of international and civil wars, especially since the world's population quadrupled over the same period. What do the facts reveal? Have we seen a significant increase in the number of wars in this century?

Those who proclaim that a "sign" clearly marks our twentieth century express the idea that the world today is immensely more warlike than it was in the past. The End of the Great Planet Earth states (page 147) that "the frequency and intensity of warfare has increased dramatically in this century". The author quotes the US News and World Report of December 25, 1967, in which he stated:

Since the Second World War, there have been 12 limited wars in the world, 39 political assassinations, 48 personal revolts, 74 independence revolts, 162 social revolutions, whether political, economic, racial or religious.

Like Hal Lindsey, the Watch Tower Society believes that the frequency of war has increased dramatically in this century. The

⁷⁴Singer & Small, pp. 24-28.

Watchtower of^{1st} April 1983, page 3, quotes newspaper columnist James Reston, stating that our century has seen 59 interstate wars and 64 civil wars, 123 wars in total.

Later in the same issue, however, it is stated that "Over 130 international and civil wars have taken place since the end of the Second World War" (page 7).

Two years earlier, in Wake Up! of May 8, 1981, it was declared that no less than 150 wars had taken place since the end of the Second World War. (Page 8)

But this record was almost doubled by the 1985 publication, *Reasoning from Scripture*, which quoted retired Admiral Gene La Rocque, declaring that 270 wars had taken place since the end of World War II! (Page 235)

. ***Surely it is appropriate to ask: What is the truth?***

To find an answer to this question, one must first answer another: What is war? Is every armed conflict between two or more nations a war, no matter how small, and with few casualties? Is every armed riot in a country a civil war? Obviously, the number of wars in a certain period of time depends on the definition of war.

In order to make a meaningful comparison between today's wars and those of the past, war researchers have had to define war. Quincy Wright defined war as a conflict involving at least 50,000 combatants.⁷⁶ He found that at least 284 such wars took place between 1480 and 1964, an average of about 60 wars per century.⁷⁷ It is very interesting to note, however, that only 30 such wars were fought between the twentieth century and 1964. According to the quoted definition, the number of wars clearly has not increased in this century compared to previous centuries; the indication is for a decrease.⁷⁸

Wright also points out that although wars have become increasingly destructive in this century, they have not only decreased in number but also in duration.⁷⁹

Other war historians confirm this trend.

76 Beer, p. 22.

77 Quincy Wright, p. 11.

78 Wright, p. 11.

79 *ibid.* 55, 89.

Singer and Small, which confine themselves to international wars (i.e., wars between nations and civil wars), define such a war as a conflict in which at least one of the participating nations must be an independent nation and which claims at least 1,000 combat deaths.⁸⁰ In the 150 years between 1816 and 1965, Singer and Small recorded 93 of these international wars. Of these, 35 occurred during the first 50-year period (1816-1864), 33 during the second (1864-1913), and 25 during the third 50-year period (1914-1965). Once again, a clear downward trend!⁸¹ This downward trend in the frequency of war is still perceptible, even if one takes into account the major civil or domestic wars of this period, as Beer observes.⁸²

This downward trend in the frequency of war is particularly evident in Europe, which has seen less than half of the world's wars take place. of wars XIX^e and XX^e centuries parrapportaux centuries precedents.⁸³ Since the end of the Second World War, Europe has experienced a whole generation of peace, one of the longest periods of peace in its history!

. Does war play a more important and destructive role in human life today than in the past?

No doubt most people today would answer this question without hesitation in the affirmative. But war historians are not so sure. Some, such as war analyst Wright, assert that "war has become increasingly destructive and disruptive" in the course of this century, and editorialist James Reston describes our century as "the bloodiest century in the history of the human race," although the figures he gives do not prove it.⁸⁴ It must be borne in mind, however, that such statements always refer to war casualties in absolute, not relative, numbers. That is to say, they do not take into account the

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80 Singer & Small, pp. 30-37.

81 *ibid.* p. 38.

82 Beer, pp. 42, 43. Singer & Small (page 201) tend to think that civil wars are on the rise. But if both types of war - civil and international - are considered at the same time, as Beer does, the total number of wars decreases.

83 Beer, p. 43. As historian Michael Nordberg (*Den dynamisko medeltiden. Stockholm, 1984, p. 12*) has pointed out, "there were wars almost constantly in Europe from the sixteenth century to 1815, most of them as devastating as the Hundred Years' War. "1337-1453. 84 *The Watchtower*, 1^{er} April 1983, page 3. Reston mentions 59 wars between nations with more than 29 million combat deaths and 64 civil wars with nearly 6 million casualties. But the Taiping Rebellion alone in the last century may have cost nearly seven times as many lives....

than all those 64 civil wars combined!

has repeatedly doubled the number of people and the number of nations over the last three centuries.

Faced with this, the real question is: have wars and war victims increased in this century in proportion to the growing number of nations and peoples on earth? Is war playing a more important role in the life of humanity in general today? Has the number of people killed increased as a percentage of the total population?

The role played by wars in human history has been far more important than most people imagine.

"According to calculations by the Norwegian Academy of Sciences in 1969, the world has known only 292 years of peace since 3600 B.C., while 14,531 wars have been fought," said *The Watchtower* on ^{1st} April 1983 (page 3).

For some reason, the scariest number in the calculation has been left out. According to the same report, more than 3.6 billion (3,640,000,000) people were killed in those 14,531 wars! The calculation referred to was not, however, made by the Norwegian Academy of Sciences. It comes from Norman Cousins, Chairman of the Editorial Board of *Saturday Review*, who published it in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* of December 13, 1953. Although he explicitly stated that his calculation was speculative, it has often been quoted as a scientific report.⁸⁵ But it should not be far from the truth.

Recently, Francis Beer tried to verify Cousins' numbers. On the whole, his study confirms Cousins' estimates. Beer concludes that "there have been more than 14,000 major and minor wars and 3,500 major wars in the world since 3600 BC." "With respect to casualties, he states: "Our evidence therefore suggests that less than one billion people have been killed directly in the major world wars since 3600. B.C."⁸⁶ To this number must be added civilian deaths, including indirectly those caused by wars, which would probably triple the figure to about 3.3 billion.⁸⁷

This testifies to the truth that the history of the human race as a whole, of all times, has been marked by war

⁸⁵ Brownlee Haydon, *The Great Hoax Statistics of War* (Santa Monica, 1962). (This is a document of only 8 pages.) See also Singer & Small, pages 10, 11 and Beer, page 20.

⁸⁶ Francis Beer, *How Much War in History : Definitions, Estimates. Extrapolations and Trends* (Beverly Hills, 1974), pp. 28, 30. Comparer avec Beer, *Peace Against War* (San Francisco, 1981), pp. 37-40, 48, 49.

The conflict is caused by the almost constant flow of human blood in one area or another and by a generally continuous stream of human blood shed during such conflicts.

Nevertheless, *The Watchtower* of 1st April 1983, page 7, states that "Historians recorded years of peace before 1914" but "there hasn't been any since". The purpose of the declaration is, of course, to The "proof" that peace was taken from *the earth* in 1914, according to Revelation chapter six, verse 4.⁸⁸

The problem is that this statement does not have the support of war historians.

Beer's research shows that there were only 52 years of peace from 1480 to 1965, a little over 9 years for every 100 years. Eight of those 52 years of peace fell within the half-century period after 1914.

As Beer points out, "The general trend towards the spread of peace and the concentration of war implies more peace and fewer wars today, less peace and more wars yesterday."⁸⁹

In a century that has seen two destructive "world wars", that has seen technical development explode into a series of new, more deadly weapons of extermination, and in this period of terrible arms warfare, it may be hard to believe that war and its real effect on humankind remains essentially the same as in past centuries. The balance sheet of wars in this century is certainly terrifying.⁹⁰ But this was also the case in the past. The real question is: can it really be said that a higher percentage of the population died in the wars of this century than in previous centuries?

War researchers recognize that it is impossible to prove that war or war-related mortality has actually increased.

87 In the *Watchtower* of 1st April 1983, Quincy Wright is quoted as saying: "At least 10% of deaths in modern civilization can be directly or indirectly attributed to war" (page 6). But the reader is not told that Wright, in the same passage, asserts that three-quarters of these deaths can be attributed to indirect causes, such as famine and disease, and that it is likely that "the proportion of these losses outside and within Europe in previous centuries has been greater" (Wright, p. 61).

88 The book *Reasoning from Scripture* (1985), for example, says, "As foretold in Revelation 6:4, 'peace was taken from the earth'. Thus, the world has continued to be turned upside down since 1914" (Page 235).

89 Beer, pp. 34, 48. Since Beer defines "years of peace" as years "without great wars" - which he estimates at 600 since 3,600 B.C., the actual number of years of peace in ancient times could have been even smaller. "Perhaps even a number approaching zero. »

90 The number of deaths during the Second World War is difficult to determine. The best sources show that about 15 million soldiers were killed. The figures provided for civilian casualties range from 20 to 35 million. (Dupuy & Dupuy, p. 1198; Singer & Small, pp. 52, 48)

in this century. Even scholars who tend to believe this are forced to admit that such a conclusion is an unproven hypothesis. Francis Beer, who, despite his earlier statements, believes that there is an upward trend in this century, writes:

We have to be careful not to forget that this hypothesis has not really been confirmed and that there may be no trend at all. As unlikely as it may seem, the incidence of peace and war and the number of victims of violence may not have changed much over time. Peace and war may occur about as often and last as ever, and the victims may also be very similar to what they have always been.

⁹¹

Probably the most precise and careful examination of this issue is the one published by Singer and Small. They summarize their conclusion as follows:

Is war on the increase, as many scholars and lay people of our generation think? The answer would seem to be an unequivocal negative. Whether in terms of the number of wars, their severity or scale, there has been no significant upward or downward trend over the past 150 years. Even if we look at their intensity, we find that subsequent wars are generally no different from those of previous periods. ⁹²

Whatever claims or counter-declarations are made, one thing should be made clear: Jesus' declaration on wars has been fulfilled, but not only in the XX^e century, not since 1914, not since 1948. It has been fulfilled from generation to generation since its beginning and up to the present day.

He said nothing about the "intensity", "escalation" or "threat" of a global holocaust. His simple statement was that there would be wars and rumours of wars, with the nation rising up against the nation and the kingdom against the kingdom. This has happened several times in human history. To add another factor or to give another meaning to his words is nothing more than speculation or human fabrication.

All attempts to limit Jesus' statements about wars as applying only to this XX^e century are therefore doomed to failure, for these assertions are contradicted by the overwhelming written evidence of history from his time to ours.

⁹¹ Beer, pp. 46, 47.

⁹² Singer & Small, p. 201.

WHAT HISTORIANS SAY ABOUT WARS TODAY AND IN THE PAST

"Many believe that the World War of 1914-1918 reached a new peak by bringing disaster and misery to the areas of Europe where fighting took place. But the wars of that period were even more devastating - probably nothing as terrible as the Thirty Years' War in Germany (1618-1648). "Leo Huberman, *Man's Worldly Goods* (New York and London, 1968), p. 100.

"Even the Second World War, in the midst of depopulation, was not as devastating for Germany as the Thirty Years' War. "Historian R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (New York, 1952), p. 133.

"The war of 1914-18 was essentially a European war. It was later called a "World War" because contingents from many parts of the British Empire were serving in Europe and because the United States joined the Allied Powers in 1917. In reality, however, because the role of the sea power was mainly passive, it was less of a "world war" than some previous conflicts, such as the Seven Years' War. "Marshal Montgomery, Viscount d'Alamein, *A History of Warfare* (London, 1968), p. 470.

On Genghis Khan: "When he walked with his horde, it was beyond many miles of latitude and longitude: the cities in his path were often obliterated and the rivers diverted from their course; fugitives and the dying populated the deserts, and after his passage, wolves and ravens were often the only living creatures in once-populated lands.

This destruction of human lives goes beyond the modern imagination, enriched by the concepts of the last European war". - Harold Lamb, *Genghis Khan, The Emperor of All Men* (London, 1929), pp. 11, 12.

"As unlikely as it may seem, there may have been no further significant change in peace and war and in the number of victims of violence. "Francis Beer, *Peace Against War* (San Francisco, 1981), pp. 46, 47.

"Is the war ~~increasing~~, as many scholars and lay people of our generation have been inclined to believe? The answer would seem to be very clearly no. Whether in terms of the number of wars, their severity or ~~scale~~, there has been no significant upward or downward trend over the past 150 years." J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War 1816-1965. A Statistical Handbook* (New York, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1972), p. 201.

"Even today, in the middle of the XX^e century, in spite of everything that has happened in the lives of men who are not yet old... It is still possible to say that the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century was the great turning point of modern civilization. "The historian R. R. Palmer in the preface to *The Coming of the French Revolution* by George Lefebvre (Princeton, 1947), p. v.

6 Is the disregard for the law observable today unprecedented?

NEVER BEFORE in the course of history have so many reports and information been circulated as since the beginning of the 20th century. The various media such as television, radio, press (and since the 21st century internet) seem to be interested only in bad news. Every day our minds are flooded with a concentration of the latest miseries and evils in different parts of the world.

"After absorbing today's news," said renowned historian Barbara Tuchman, "one expects to face a world under constant attack, crime, breaks in the food chain, broken water mains, public transit breakdowns, school closures, assailants, drug addicts, neo-Nazis and rapists... This led me to formulate Tuchman's Law, as follows: "the announcement effect multiplies the apparent increase by 5 or even 10." "¹

No doubt "Tuchman's Law" at least partially explains the feeling felt by many people today of a world that is worse than before, as humanity faces an unprecedented increase in contempt for the law worldwide. The increase in crime is still graphically described as evidence of the last days by some prophecy heralds. In *Good-bye, Planet Earth*, the author of Adventist Pierson says:

...we are witnessing the worst epidemic of disorder the human race has ever known. Our cities are besieged by rape, murder, riots, looting and arson. (Page 3)

Later in the same publication (page 50) the author quotes a statement by a former Adventist leader, Ellen G. White's Testimonies, who is deceased:

Current world conditions show that troubled times are right upon us. Bold flights are becoming frequent. Attacks are widespread. Robbery and murder are commonplace. Men possessed by demons are taking the lives of men, women and small children. Men have become friends with vice and evil predominates under

¹ Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (London, 1978), p, xviii.

all its forms. (Vol.9, p. 11)

The interesting factor here is that Ellen White wrote these words more than 75 years ago, and the picture she paints of crime then (1910) is certainly as bleak as the picture painted by the present protagonists of the endtime statements. The crime is frequently dealt with in the publications of the Watch Tower Society, which tries to give it the greatest possible dimensions, referring to Jesus' words of a "future increase in contempt for the law. "(Matthew 24:12, NW) She sees this as a description of the feature of the "presumed composite sign", the fulfillment of which would only be visible from 1914 onwards. Thus *The Watchtower* of 1^{er} September 1983, pages 5 to 7, states that after World War I "all the conditions were ripe for an increase in contempt for the law such as the world had never known," and that humanity since 1914 has seen "the greatest increase in contempt for the law that mankind has ever known. "Of course, the Watch Tower Society hopes that the reader will have no difficulty accepting its statements, because there are no statistics on lawlessness in the past, nor are historians, criminologists, or other authorities cited to support such a claim. The Society seems to take it for granted that contempt for the law in the past was unremarkable in comparison to our times. *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1983, for example, indicates that incidents combining robbery with murder are almost unique features of our century :

There was a time when burglars only went after valuables. Now, however, they are also sowing death in their wake. (Page 5)

Such a statement, of course, is simply a reflection of an idealized past that is intended to accentuate contempt for the law that prevails today. In fact, robbery accompanied by murder has always existed and was particularly endemic in times of famine and pestilence. When syphilis plagued Europe in the sixteenth century, contempt for the law and immorality increased dramatically everywhere. In Rome, for example, murder and robbery were quite common. ² "Similarly, the generation that survived the Black Death in the fourteenth century saw a real upsurge in contempt for law and violence:

A striking feature of the mid-fourteenth-century² is the increase in contempt for the law that occurred at the same time as

² Matts Bergmark, *Från Pest till polio*, 3^e ed (Stockholm, 1983), p 74.

movements against the authorities, both popular and intellectual³

The truth is that violence, both collective and individual, has always been an integral part of human history. In his book *Violence in America*, the American sociology professor Charles Tilly demonstrates that "collective violence, in all its forms, has always been present in Western civilization,"⁴ in the period following the French Revolution, for example, he says :

The history of Western nations since 1800 has often been violent, with revolutions, followed by civil wars, and smaller-scale conflicts following one another. Strangely enough, we seem to forget this very quickly.⁵

What about today? Most experts seem to agree that for a number of years serious crime has risen sharply in many countries. But does this circumstance really represent something new and unique in our time? Is it not the result of a misleading impression or of our propensity to forget, of our ignorance of the facts of the past?

. ***Industrialization, urbanization and crime***

The industrial revolution that comes towards the end of 18^e century has changed

deeply rooted in Western society. New machinery and the use of mass production techniques have brought increasing prosperity to many countries. One consequence of this has been a rapid growth of the urban population (urbanization). Many people in the 19^e century, whether sociologists, lawyers, judges, etc., have feared that these changes will break down the traditional moral and social uses of human behaviour, causing an increase in disregard for the law in society. A widespread opinion in the 19^e century, therefore, considered that industrialization and urbanization were responsible for the increase in crime.

To justify its thesis of an incomparable increase in contempt for the law, the Watch Tower Society plays extensively on this alleged relationship between industrialization, urbanization and crime.

³ A. M. Campbell, *The Black Death and Men of Learning* (New York, 1931), p. 129.

⁴ *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. A staff report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, edited by H. D. Graham & T. R. Gurr, Vol. 1, Washington D.C. C. 1969, p 5. This book will be referred to as VIA from now on.

⁵ VIA, Flight I, p. 7

on the other hand. Assuming, of course, that this idea is an established truth, The Watchtower of 1^{er} September 1983, on page 5, states that "the Industrial Revolution and the growing cities" paved "the way for our 20^e century's increase in contempt for the law", and even states that **"These new phenomena, peculiar to our times, have fostered the greatest increase in contempt for the law that mankind has ever known. »**

The facts, however, do not support this explanation. In spite of the impression and conviction, it is being undermined by recent critical studies.

In the 19^e century, the two most important industrial countries were Great Britain and France. In order to evaluate the theory that industrialization and urbanization are responsible for an increase in lawlessness, the crime rates of these two countries in the 19^e century have been carefully studied. In 1973 criminological historians A. Q. Lodhi and approx. Tilly published their study on crime and violence in France in the 19^e century. Their investigation clearly showed that the growing industrialization and urbanization of this country did not lead to an increase in crime. In fact, some types of crime even declined during the period! The authors conclude:

The relationship that may exist between crime, violence and disregard for the law on the one hand and urban growth on the other has to be based on no solid factually verified foundation. It is more a matter of popular belief. ⁶

Crime rate studies at 19^e century in Great Britain,

The most advanced industrial society of this period show similar results. "The British data are quite clear about the declines in official crime rates over the last half of the nineteenth century," reports Canadian sociologist Lynn McDonald in her summary of these studies. ⁷

History professor Roger Lane, in his study of criminal violence during the 19^e century in Massachusetts, has clearly demonstrated that the spread of urban and industrial life does not automatically correlate with crime. On the contrary, all evidence shows that crime tends to decrease with increasing industrialization and

6 A. Q. Lodhi et env. Tilly «Urbanization, Crime, and Collective Violence in 19th-century France,» American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 79, 1973, p 296.

7 Lynn McDonald, «Theory and evidence of rising crime in the nineteenth century» The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 33, 1982, p. 406.

urbanization. Lane explains:

There is evidence of a long-term decline in criminal activity that may be associated with urbanization. But the process was not complete without the accompaniment of rapid industrial development. It was this that gave the immigrants, who were not very well educated, the opportunity to immerse themselves in a 'system' that socialized them and allowed them to adapt to more cooperative lifestyles. ⁸

Thus the claim that increasing industrialization and urbanization in the 19^e century paved the way for an unprecedented increase in lawlessness in the 20^e century is disproved by the real facts. The assertion is based on a theory that, on closer examination, turns out to be nothing more than a myth of the 19^e century.

. *This "crime wave"*

History shows the fluctuating nature of crime waves, they rise and fall, then rise and fall again. The graph representing crime is rarely constant across all countries. In a number of nations, crime has unquestionably increased over the past two or three decades. ⁹ In Italy, serious crime has risen steadily since 1965 and in France since 1970. West Germany has seen smaller increases since 1965, while in Wales and England crime has increased since the Second World War. Other industrialized countries, such as Japan, Switzerland and Norway, still have relatively low crime rates¹⁰.

Is there anything new about the increase in crime? Is it as exceptional, unique as some proclaimers of the end time portray it?

In order to prove a clear increase in crime in our time, The Watchtower of 1^{er} September 1983, on page 7, quotes the words of British criminologist Sir Leon Radzinowics :

8 Roger Lane, "Urbanization, Crime, and Collective Violence in 19th-century Massachusetts: Massachusetts as test case" VIA, Vol 2, p. 366. Thus, as Lane shows, "long-term urbanization has had the effect of civilizing, literally, an involved population." (ibid., p. 359.).

9 Gwynn Nettler, Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta, Canada, gives the following total picture: "Serious crime has increased over the past decade or two in both rich and poor, 'developing' countries ... Meanwhile, crime has probably declined or remained stable among two different categories of countries: (1) those recently subjected to totalitarian laws (2) those that have been able to channel 'Western influence' in such a way that control of large groups is maintained. - Explaining Crime", 2^e ed. (New York, 1978), p. 20.

10 Nettler, pages 20, 21.

What is striking about the global study of crime," wrote the eminent criminologist Leon Radzinowicz in his book *Rising Crime*, "is that it is spreading and growing everywhere. The few remaining exceptions are increasingly isolated, and they are likely to be overwhelmed by the rising tide any day now.»

It is true, this author, writing in 1977, argues that crime has actually increased in many countries over the past two or three decades. He does not, however, say that this increase is unprecedented in history. In fact, some criminologists theorize that there is no more violence than before, but that we are much more sensitive to violence than our less civilized ancestors were,' the authors also admit:

The comparison does not pose a problem if it takes a fair look into the past... A better reflection on the Middle Ages, or even on the 18th century, might well give more substance to the theory. Despite today's criminality, our society is entirely safer, less violent, than in the past... The mere fact that cities had to be surrounded by walls, that castles had to provide shelter for the surrounding villagers and their belongings, that travellers had to ensure their own protection, is a testament to the constant threat of brigands and the risk of war. The consequences of these dangers were often difficult to distinguish¹¹

The end-time proclaimers we have quoted in this book reside in the United States. Their opinion of the world is, no doubt, influenced by the situation. The United States, however, is not a typical representation of the world. Perhaps these end-time proclamations will come true, or perhaps not, but few countries today are comparable in terms of violent crime to the United States.

¹¹ Sir Leon Radzinowicz and Joan King, *The Growth of Crime* (London, 1977), pp. 10, 11. The American criminologist J. S. Cockburn, writing in the same year, comments on the present "crime wave" in a similar vein: "Crime has become a commonplace for our generation. Conditioned by a bombardment of 'crime statistics,' we tend to take the rising crime rate and associated discussions of policing for granted, capital punishment and armed surveillance as a special obligation, and to some extent the natural price to pay, for living in our modern, industrialized society. Viewed in a broader historical perspective, however, our concern with crime seems less original. Most nineteenth-century Englishmen were convinced that crime had increased as never before; eighteenth-century commentators were equally concerned about what they saw as a rising tide, violent crime; and complaints about the impending depreciation of public order in the Middle Ages. "In discussing the rise of crime and lawlessness in many countries at the end of the sixteenth century, Cockburn notes that "the trends were apparently universal. "(*Crime in England 1500-1800* Princeton, New Jersey, 1977, p. 49.)

the United States:

In terms of the number of political assassinations, riots, politically motivated attacks by armed groups, demonstrations, the United States since 1948 has been among the half-dozen most tumultuous nations in the world. ¹²

In an article on homicide, the December 1984 issue of Science magazine noted that the U.S. murder statistic is higher than most other countries. Firearm homicide in the U.S., for example, is "50 times higher" than in England, Germany, Denmark and Japan! ¹³ It is not surprising that those who wish to see their religious expectations of the end time fulfilled focus primarily on crime in the United States.

In 1970 Hal Lindsey, for example, saw the rise in American crime as an important sign for his time. In his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, pages 100, 101, he wrote:

Recently we saw a graph in a news magazine that showed the progression of serious crime in the United States from 1960 to 1968. If you had been an ant walking on that page you would have faced a very steep staircase to climb each of those eight years. While the number of crimes in America increased by 122 percent, the population grew by only 11 percent. A lot of people stopped talking about the "crime rate. They're now referring to the crime epidemic.

Likewise, in the publications of the Watch Tower Society, crime in the USA occupies a central place. It is, in fact, the only country for which the Society has published crime statistics covering a decade or more. ¹⁴

Few proclaimers, however, honestly tell their readers that crime figures - as well as those for many others - are not as accurate as they should be.

¹² VIA, Vol. II, p. 628.

¹³ Science, December 1984, pages 43, 46. Two-thirds of all homicides (assassinations and massacres) in the United States are committed with firearms, with "Americans owning more firearms per capita than in the rest of the world. "(Ibid., p. 46)

¹⁴ While these show terrifying increases, they are also a little disconcerting. For the decade 1960-1970 the Wake Up! of April 8, 1970, states on page 9 that serious crime in the United States increased 88 percent. The Watchtower of October 15, 1972, however, raised the figure for the period to 148 percent (page 614). Even more impressive are the tables presented in The Watchtower's September 1983 article at ^{1*}, which states that "The total number of serious crime complaints increased by more than 1,000 percent in the United States between 1935 and 1980" (page 6). Most of this stated increase must have occurred since 1960, since the figures reported by the Watch Tower Society show an increase of only 77 percent up to this year!

things - about the United States are not representative of the world at large. But even taken in isolation, is such an increase in crime in that country real? On what evidence is such a claim made?

. ***The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting System...***

It is said that most of the figures and curves published by the Watch Tower Society are based on the **FBI's Uniform Crime Reports**. *The Late Great Planet Earth* magazine quotes the *US News and World Report* on crime, which drew its figures from the same source. (See footnote 3, for Chapter 9, of the book mentioned.) These FBI reports have been published annually since 1933 and include statistics on "serious crimes", namely, murder, forced rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft and auto theft, with arson added in 1979.

This would seem to be an ideal, unimpeachable source for the basis of crime statistics in the USA. It is therefore surprising to learn that many authorities consider them, not without embarrassment, as unreliable FBI reports.

In fact, the FBI reports - for the three decades after 1933 - are far from trustworthy. Until 1967 sociologists and criminologists frequently demystified them, showing many flaws in the methods used to collect the data.

Thornstein Sellin, "the dean of American statisticians," described the quality of crime statistics in the United States as "the worst of any major country in the Western world," while Harvard criminology expert Lloyd E. Ohlin described the statistical data as "almost worthless-but that's not all. Are the statistics that bad? What result does the lack of confidence in them-or the loss of confidence-produce on graphs and comparisons with crime in earlier periods?

"The greatest source of error," observes the famous sociologist Charles E. Silberman, **"comes from the fact that standardized crime reports cover only those crimes that are**

15 VIA, Vol. II p. 372. Sophia M. Robinson of the *Columbia School of Social Work* has even stated that "FBI statistics are not worth the paper they are printed on." (ibid. p. 372.)

...announced to the police and that the police, in turn, record and transfer to the FBI." ¹⁶ The problem is that the majority of crimes are never reported to the police. In addition, police officers often did not report all crimes known to them to the FBI. Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. Attorney General, explains how this can explain the manipulation of evidence and mislead:

Most crimes are never reported to the police. And many crimes are reported inaccurately. Mistaken crime statistics are often used to give the impression that the new chief is doing a good job, or to support a request for new police officers. Frequently, an apparent increase in crime reflects a more effective policing or reporting of crime. ¹⁷

Changing crime reports may leave the impression of a statistical increase in crime that does not correspond to the actual fact. As an example, in Portland, Oregon, in 1973 and 1974 twice as many burglaries were reported to the police as in 1971 and 1972. This would constitute a sharp increase in burglaries over the period. One survey, however, revealed that burglaries actually decreased during those years! ¹⁸ Many other similar cases could be cited. ¹⁹

¹⁶ Charles E. Silberman, *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice* (New York, 1978), p. 448.

¹⁷ Ramsey Clark, *Crime in America* (Cassell & London, 1971), p. 45

¹⁸ Nettler, pages 70, 71. The increase in willingness to report the crime explains at least in part the increase in rape statistics in recent years. The women's liberation movement is supposed to have played an important role in this. (Nettler, p. 56; Silberman, p. 452.) Although a significant number of rapes are still unreported, there is evidence to show that in many respects many rape reports are invalid. Of all the rapes reported in 1968, for example, 18 per cent were, after investigation, found to be unfounded! (Clark, p. 46)

¹⁹ The example of the NYPD reports became almost classic: "The FBI thought that crime was relatively low. In checking it found that in 1950, for example, the number of property crimes reported by the police was half the number reported privately by insurance companies... Following a survey by police expert Bruce Smith, a new central recording system was installed... A year after the change, the increase in assaults jumped 200 per cent, the increase in robberies 400 per cent, and burglaries 1,300 per cent over 1948 figures. Bruce Smith concludes: 'Such surprising increases ... do not represent an increase in crime, but rather an improvement in crime reporting.' "(Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1960 pp 138, 139.) Similar improvements in the reporting system resulted in increased reporting, for example, in Philadelphia between 1951 and 1953 and in Chicago in 1960. (Bell, p. 138; Silberman, p. 449.) A new type of crime also increased artificially. The theft of property worth more than fifty dollars increased for several years because of inflation. Many items worth less than \$50 exceeded this limit and found themselves included in the statistics. (Clark, p. 53.) It was not until 1973 that this type of crime was redefined.

Because of the constant criticism of its statistics, the FBI made periodic revisions and refined its system.²⁰ The result has been a greater willingness on the part of police officers to take better notes of crimes and to report all crimes to the FBI.

– which explains the increase in the number of minutes included in the statistics.²¹ Thus the FBI statistics have become progressively more reliable. Especially as from 1967 the US government began to fund a number of nationwide criminal investigations in order to prove the independence of FBI statistics, the attitude towards standardized crime reporting changed. Criminologists now generally agree that, despite all the inaccuracies, the overall trends presented in the Uniform Crime Reports over the past 25 to 30 years are in principle correct and that the increase in serious crime since the 1960s is very real.²² If this is so, how should previous statistics that appear to be seriously unreliable be interpreted? Is there not a problem with using American statistics for the proclamation of the last few days?

The problem lies in comparing crime statistics from the years after 1960 with those from the years before 1960. It is a clumsy deception to fail to recognize, or to conceal from readers, that the statistics for these two periods are unequal in their development. In the Watch Tower publications the FBI's National Crime Reports were repeatedly presented or cited without any special remarks, without a single word calling for caution. The statistic was even improved or "adapted" - in The Watch Tower of^{1st} September 1983 - to show that "The total number of serious crime complaints increased by more than *1,000 percent* in the United States between 1935 and 1980" (page 6). This statement, and the table on the same page to prove it, conceals another extremely important fact: before the increase in the 1960s, crime rates in the United States had been constant or even decreasing for a quarter of a century! This

20 In 1958, for example, the statistical system was completely overhauled so that the Bureau "could no longer consider pre-1958 and post-1958 statistics as interchangeable!" (VIA, Vol. II, p. 376).

21 VIA, Vol. II pp 380, 381; Silberman, p. 449.

22 V/A, Vol. II, pages 381-385; Silberman, p. 449. Yet there are still great contradictions between FBI reports and national criminal investigations, which are difficult to explain (See L. E. Cohen & K. env. L and, Discrepancies Between Crime Reports and Crime Surveys, Criminology: Vol. 22 No. 4 November 1984 of 499529).

period is, in fact, unique in American criminal history. As criminal authority Silberman writes:

For a quarter of a century, the United States experienced, perhaps for the first time in its history, a period in which crime rates were stable or even declining and in which the fear of crime was relatively low. The homicide death rate fell by 50 percent between 1933 and the early 1940s; despite the FBI's armed battles against John Dillinger and other criminals, the rate of other serious crimes (rape, robbery, assault, and burglary) declined by one-third. ²³

As clear evidence of this decline, we can take a closer look at homicides, the most serious of serious crimes. "Homicide is, in fact, the only crime for which long-term national statistics exist independently of FBI statistics. Carefully developed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, these statistics are considered "reasonably accurate," at least from the early 1930s.²⁴

In 1933, as statistics show, the murder rate in the United States had reached 97 per 100,000 population. Then it began to decline, until it reached a level of only 45 per 100,000 in late 1950.²⁵ Since then, the number of homicides has increased to over 20,000 annually, or to, per 100,000 in the early 1980s. A significant increase in media coverage, but almost too good to be true since it represented almost exactly the same rate as in 1933! Although very high, this current murder rate, American, is not unique, but represents a return to a previous level. ²⁶

The weakness of the statistics presented by the proclaimers of the near end is obvious. Yet crime is clearly significant in many countries. Does this make the ²⁰ century so special? Is it possible that such high crime rates in the period before (or after 1948, according to Hal Lindsey) have no

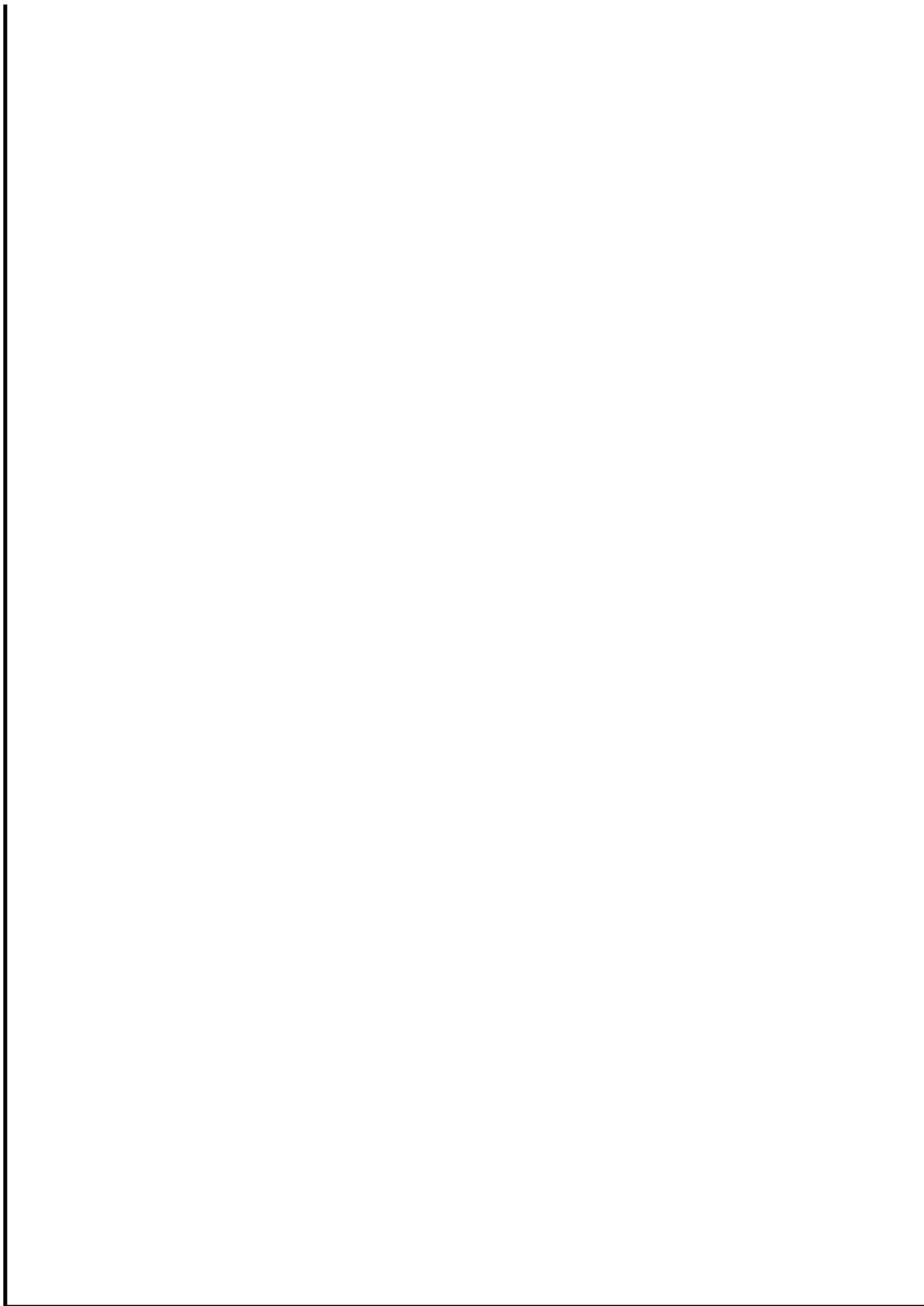
²³ Silberman, p. 30

²⁴ Silberman, p. 28; VIA, Vol. II, p. 375.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Criminal homicides in the US rose to 20,000 by 1974. Since that was twice the number of murders in 1965, Wake up! March 8, 1976, states that: "There will be more than 40,000 murders per year in the early 1980s. "(Page 3.) Nothing of the sort has happened. The murder rate in the early 1980s was still roughly the same as in 1974. Since then it's gone down!

parallel in the previous centuries?



. *Crime in Historical Perspective*

While crime today takes up a lot of space in Watch Tower publications, there is no reference to crimes committed in the past. The same is true for most proclaimers whose writings tend to create a feeling in the minds of readers that the current crime situation is by far the worst of all time. The fact that crime reached high levels in a number of countries in the 1920s-1930s and again in the 1960s-1970s does not prove that the 20th century has seen more contempt for the law than in the early centuries. In fact, there is ample evidence that crime was more prevalent, very often, in the past than it is today.

As popular author Colin Wilson observed, "the history of mankind since about 2500 B.C.E. has been nothing less than a continuous series of murders, bloodshed and violence. "Thus he concludes that "human history has been fundamentally a history of crime. ²⁷ "This conclusion is not only corroborated by a study of past crimes, but also by the work of historians who have delved into the subject, concluding that there are probably fewer crimes today than in the past. Professor John Bellamy of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, even states:

In most modern western countries the level of crime has decreased so much that the few misdeeds committed provide the ordinary citizen with more of a distraction than a sense of fear. ²⁸

Victims of crime, or people now living in areas affected by crime, feel a sense of fear of crime. But the fact is that the actual percentage of the population affected is no longer as high as it was in an earlier era of

²⁷ Colin Wilson, *A Criminal History of Mankind* (London, 1985), pages 4, 6. It is true that Wilson also stated, with respect to the outbreak of the Second World War, that the world at that time "has plunged into an unparalleled era of murder, cruelty and violence" (page 5). This statement does not refer to ordinary social crime, however, but essentially to bloodshed as a consequence of war. As the chapter on wars showed, the number of deaths during the Second World War was disproportionately high, but not on the same scale in proportion to the entire population.

²⁸ John Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Londres et Toronto, 1973), p. 1. Ver 21 mai 2012.

human history. Disregard for the law was the most problematic crime in the past, as Bellamy's study of crime in England from 1290 to 1485 makes clear:

In medieval England the maintenance of law and order was very often the greatest problem facing the king... Neither before nor after that time did respect for law and order become so important in the history of England. ²⁹

In the past, crime and disregard for the law seem to have been periodically, more or less, out of control in many countries. It was during the growth of industrialization in the 19th century that the situation began to improve in Western countries:

In the first half of the nineteenth century, all cities were dangerous in both Europe and the United States. In the second half, London, Paris, and other European cities began to keep lawlessness and crime under control, while American cities seemed to fail to do so - or occasionally, according to contemporary observers. ³⁰

By the middle of the twentieth century the situation in American cities was improving. In 1960, criminological researcher Daniel Bell, for example, judged that: **"A sober look at the problem shows that there is probably less crime in the United States today than there was a hundred, or fifty, or even twenty-five years ago, and that today the United States is a safer and more law-abiding country than popular opinion imagines."** ³¹ This statement was written, it is true, before the most recent wave of crime began in the early 1960s. But in 1978, Silberman still states that **"crime, violence, and disorder have been recurring themes in American history and concludes that 'the country was more dangerous in the past than it is now."** ³² Recent long-term studies of crime trends confirm this conclusion.

29 Ibid, p. 1

30 Silberman, p. 23

31 Bell, pages 137, 155.

32 Silberman, pages 21, 22.

. ***The evidence of long-term studies: The United States***

As criminologists often point out, there are probably fewer crimes today than in the 19^e century, yet few long-term, conscientious studies seem to have been done to know trends over longer periods of time. ³³ Current trends, however, provide a very interesting picture of criminal activity.

There appears to have been no long-term, nationwide study in the USA prior to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. But a number of reliable local studies have been done on cities, individuals and states. None of these indicate that the number of crimes today has surpassed the level reached in the 19^e century.

No complete statistics were collected until 1933, but individual studies for some cities were done and they show that crime follows a pattern with typical ups and downs, rather than following population growth in a straight line. James Q. Wilson, a criminology expert at Harvard, said the early studies 'are only appropriate for the period after the Civil War when the rate of violent crime in large cities was higher than at any time in our history. ³⁴

The most recent studies even indicate a sharp decline in a few places:

None of them show a clear proportional increase in serious crime in particular cities. The most recent ones, on the contrary, suggest remarkable decreases. ³⁵

The crime statistics of the 19^e century are, of course, often very flawed, but there are important exceptions. One example is Massachusetts, where court records from the 19^e century "are probably better kept than elsewhere. "³⁶ The conclusions reached about them are as follows:

While one can question the crime statistics, the same cannot be said of the Massachusetts crime statistics which

³³ Historical criminology is a new discipline. The first conference on the subject was held in February 1972. (*Nordisk Tidskrift for Kriminalvidenskab*, Vol. 61, Hefte 3 4, 1973, p. 285).

³⁴ Lawyer Fred P. Graham in VIA, Vol. II, pages 374, 375.

³⁵ History Professor Roger Lane in VIA, Vol. II, pages 359, 360. ³⁶ Ibid, p. 360.

can be exposed with confidence: serious crime in metropolitan Boston declined sharply between the mid 19th century and the mid 20th century.³⁷

It is not in the minds of the authors to make a detailed analysis of the weight of crime in the USA in the 19th century, however, as an indication, here are some remarks concerning certain cities:

Washington D.C., just before the Civil War:

Riots and bloodshed occur daily, innocent people are shot, stabbed and mistreated in despicable ways and quite often the offender is not even arrested.³⁸

New York, during the 1850s:

A stone's throw from Broadway, in the 1850s in New York City was the "*Five Points*", the most infamous place in the city. 'Police officers only went to the *Five Points* in pairs and never disarmed. Respectable New Yorkers avoided the area even during the day... It was a den of murderers, thieves, prostitutes, and fences.'³⁹

Chicago, the 1860s to 1890s:

In the 20 years following the Civil War, the murder rate quadrupled, far exceeding population growth, and assaults were common; in 1893, one in 11 Chicago residents was arrested for one crime or another.⁴⁰

Los Angeles in the 1850s:

In 15 months during the 1850s, there were a total of 44 murders in Los Angeles, for a small community of about 8,000 people - a percentage of murders about forty or fifty times higher than the current rate for that city.⁴¹

San Francisco and Barbary Coast, 1860-1880:

The Annals of San Francisco, a compilation of contemporary archives from the 1860s, states that on the downtown waterfront 'no decent man was safe walking down a street at night; his property was not safe to walk on'.

37 Ibid, p. 360. The most comprehensive study; "covering the years 1849 to 1951, shows a decrease of almost two-thirds in the crimes that the FBI considers 'significant'" (p. 360.).

38 Silberman, p. 22. Excerpts from a report of a U.S. Senate committee investigating crime in the city.

39 Bell, p. 155.

40 Silberman, p. 23.

which could be burglarized or burned by arson at any time of the day or night.' Between 1860 and 1880, not a night went by without at least one murder and numerous robberies on the Barbary Coast.

42

Long-term studies, as well as the examples cited above, clearly show that the current crime rate in the United States is not unique in American crime history. As Silberman explains, many Americans have come to believe that our era is unique in terms of crime because the current rate was preceded by periods of unusually low crime rates, unique in that sense, in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s:

Since domestic tranquility seemed to be the norm, Americans who came of age in the 1940s and 1950s were unaware that in fact violence and crime had always reigned in the United States. Although they continued to idealize violence in crime novels and Westerns, a generation became accustomed to living in peace on a daily basis. The rise in crime and violence that began in the 1960s must have been an aberration to Americans rather than a return to a harsh reality. ⁴³

Admittedly, in most countries the increase in crime has not been as dramatic as in the USA in recent decades. Such a high level of criminal activity in the USA is probably not unprecedented, the 19^e century has probably surpassed the 20^e century, we could expect to find lower crime rates in many countries than in the 19^e century. Do long-term studies corroborate this idea?

. *The evidence of long-term studies: the case of France*

We probably don't find statistics as reliable for the 19^e century as those concerning France:

41 Silberman, p. 23. That's an annual murder rate of 440 per 100,000 people! Today, the average murder rate in the United States is about 7.9, with Detroit having the highest rate at 39 per 100,000. This rate, the highest in the world, has earned Detroit the title of "murder capital of the world." (Nettler, p. 24.) Yet this is well below the rate of many cities and places in the past. From 1680 to 1720, for example, in Corsica there were 900 homicides per for a population of 120,000 inhabitants, an annual rate of 750 per 100,000 inhabitants! (P. Arrighi, *Histoire de la Corse*, Toulouse, 1971, p. 275.) In some states, in the 19^e century, America had a murder rate that surpassed that of Detroit today. Barry A. Crouch, in his study of murders in Texas from mid-1865 to mid-1868, shows that the annual murder rate in Texas was at least 40 per 100,000 population. (*Journal of Social History*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Winterr 1984, pages 218, 219, 229).

42 Bell, p. 156.

43 Silberman, p. 31. Compare also page 19.

The available data on urbanization, crime and collective violence in France during this period are exceptionally rich and uniform, compared to data available for any part of the world today or in the past.⁴⁴

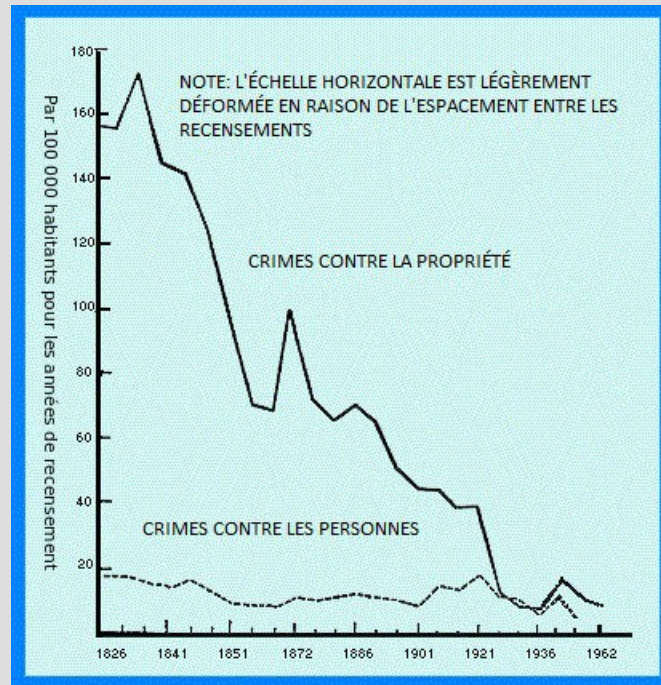
The results of a careful study - presented in 1973 by Abdul Qaiyum Lodhi of the University of Waterloo and Charles Tilly of the University of Michigan - on the criminal trend in France over a long period, from 1826 to 1962, cannot be easily dismissed. And their conclusions over this 136-year period are surprising:

Property offences, robberies and burglaries declined significantly in terms of frequency during this long observable period; crimes against the person (murder, assault and rape) fluctuated without any clear trend, while collective violence changed sharply from one year to the next.⁴⁵

44 Lodhi et Tilly, « *Urbanization, Crime and Collective Violence in 19th-century France* » *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, 1973, p. 297.

45 Lodhi and Tilly p 296.

CRIME IN FRANCE, 1862-1962



Persons Accused of Crimes Against Persons and Property: France 1826-1962 (A. Q. Lodhi and approx. Tilly, "Urbanization, Crime and Collective Violence", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 79, 1973, p. 301. Graph used with the kind permission of The University of Chicago Press).

While the number of violent crimes has remained virtually stable for a period of 136 years, property crime has declined dramatically. As shown in the graph on the previous page, the number of people charged with property crimes has dropped considerably, from 174 per 100,000 population in 1836 to less than 10 per 100,000 in 1962! ⁴⁶

Although long-term studies, covering both ¹⁹ and ²⁰ century, are lacking for most countries, however, it is not impossible to think that the trend noted in France is not unique. However, trends have varied, not only from one country to another, but also from one type of crime to another. In a few countries some types of crime have increased over the long term, while others have decreased. ⁴⁷

Countries such as Japan and China with low crime rates have experienced more disregard for the law in the past, although long-term studies to establish this are lacking. China, the most populous nation on earth, has seen a decline in lawlessness since 1949. ⁴⁸ Over the course of the ¹⁹ century, the disorder in that country worsened due to the "gang looting" that often ravaged some of the provinces. Their activities intensified greatly during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). ⁴⁹

46 Lodhi and Tilly, p. 301. Since 1970, serious crime has increased again. (Nettler, p. 20)

47 In Sweden, serious crime increased sharply after 1950. The careful study by Hans von Hofer, published in 1984 covering the period from 1750 to 1980, reveals that theft exceeded the 1850 level in 1950 and then increased sharply over the next two decades. Murder and manslaughter have also increased in Sweden since the Second World War, but are still much lower than they were for a few years in the ¹⁹ century.

Assaults are down significantly compared to ¹⁹.

(See Hanns von Hofer,

Brott och straff SCB, Sverige, SCB, Stockholm, 1984, pages 5:6 and Diagram 3:3 and 5:5). The increase in the number of thefts may be explained by the increase in the number of reports. Hofer shows that by the time the all-household insurance, which was offered in the 1950s, was put on the market, most Swedish households had taken out insurance (91% in 1978). Since insurance companies only pay for thefts reported to the police, the number of reported thefts has certainly increased sharply since the 1950s. On the other hand, Hofer notes that there are many more thefts today than in the past. Half of the 515,000 reported thefts in Sweden in 1981 involved motor vehicles, bicycles and shoplifting. (von Hofer, pages 3:2, 9f) Recent studies indicate that violent crime usually declines as economic levels improve, while property crime tends to increase (The Development and Change magazine, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 1982, pages 447-462; *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1985, pages 96, 97.

48 The increase that began in the late 1970s has since been halted by the application of tougher Wake Up! measures. November 8, 1974, pages 5, 9 and June 8, 1984, pages 29, 30.

49 Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia, ¹⁵ edition, 1980, Vol. 4, p. 360.

. ***The impact of "Tuchman's Law"***

As has been clearly demonstrated, crime has its ups and downs. The "recent crime wave" is no exception. In a few countries, crime is on a downward trend, having peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s. In the US, the crime rate has declined, particularly for violent crime, sharply since 1980.⁵⁰ Often people seem to take it for granted that crime is steadily increasing, even when it is not. As Canadian criminologist Lynn MacDonald has shown, even leading scholars have supported this crime theory, showing that they are not taking the evidence into account. Speaking of his own research on crime rates in Canada, Macdonald states :

I don't know, personally, how long it took me to conclude that post-war crime rates in Canada were not rising (except for minor offences); I kept redrawing the graphs and recalculating the slopes, thinking I had made a mistake!⁵¹

Why do people seem to take it for granted that the crime rate is going up even when it is not? Perhaps the sensational press coverage is largely responsible for this. Looking at the press headlines on street violence, terrorism, rape, etc. in Sweden, Johannes Knutsson of the Swedish Crime Prevention Council has described

"Newspapers distort reality and politicians, deliberately or not, help them to do so. Stressing that a number of types of crime have declined in recent times, Knutsson said that society once was **"a society that had a lot of crime.**

"used to experience a lot more violence on a daily basis... Criminal violence was also more prevalent, for example in Sweden at the end of the 19th century, when alcoholism was more prevalent."⁵²

Newspaper reports of escalating crime can be extremely misleading and may not be indicative of the true rate of crime.

⁵⁰ Time magazine, April 8, 1985, pages 35, 37. In Sweden the serious crime curve began to show a downward trend around 1970. (Von Hofer, page 5:6 and Diagram 5:5).

⁵¹ Lynn McDonald, p. 417. There was an increase in 1966. (Nettler, p. 26.)

⁵² News & Views (a newsletter for immigrants in Sweden), n° 28, 14 September 1984, p. 1.

crime in the ^{20^e} century. The correctness of "Tuchman's Law" - cited at the beginning of this chapter - was recently highlighted in a study by sociologists Jason Ditton and James Duffy. They found that newspapers overemphasized violent crime, particularly sex crimes. ⁵³ Moreover, there is strong evidence that people's growing concern about crime is not proportional to increases in crime itself," and that "fear of crime is currently unrealistic. ⁵⁴" To illustrate their point, they **alluded** to another study that found that **"Over a period when the incidence of violent crime declined by 2.4 percent, press coverage of violent crime increased by 11.1 percent!"** ⁵⁵ Contempt for the law often increases only in newspapers and, it may be added, especially some religious magazines and publications seeking to create an overexcited state of mind regarding the alleged fulfillment of a prophetic "sign.

There is no evidence to support the claim that the ^{20^e} century is witnessing an increase in lawlessness around the world.

"like never before." On the contrary, historical studies, covering long-term studies of crime rates in specific cities, states and countries, indicate that there has often been greater disorder in the past than there is today in many places. This is likely to have occurred on a global scale since crime usually increases during times of famine, plague and war.

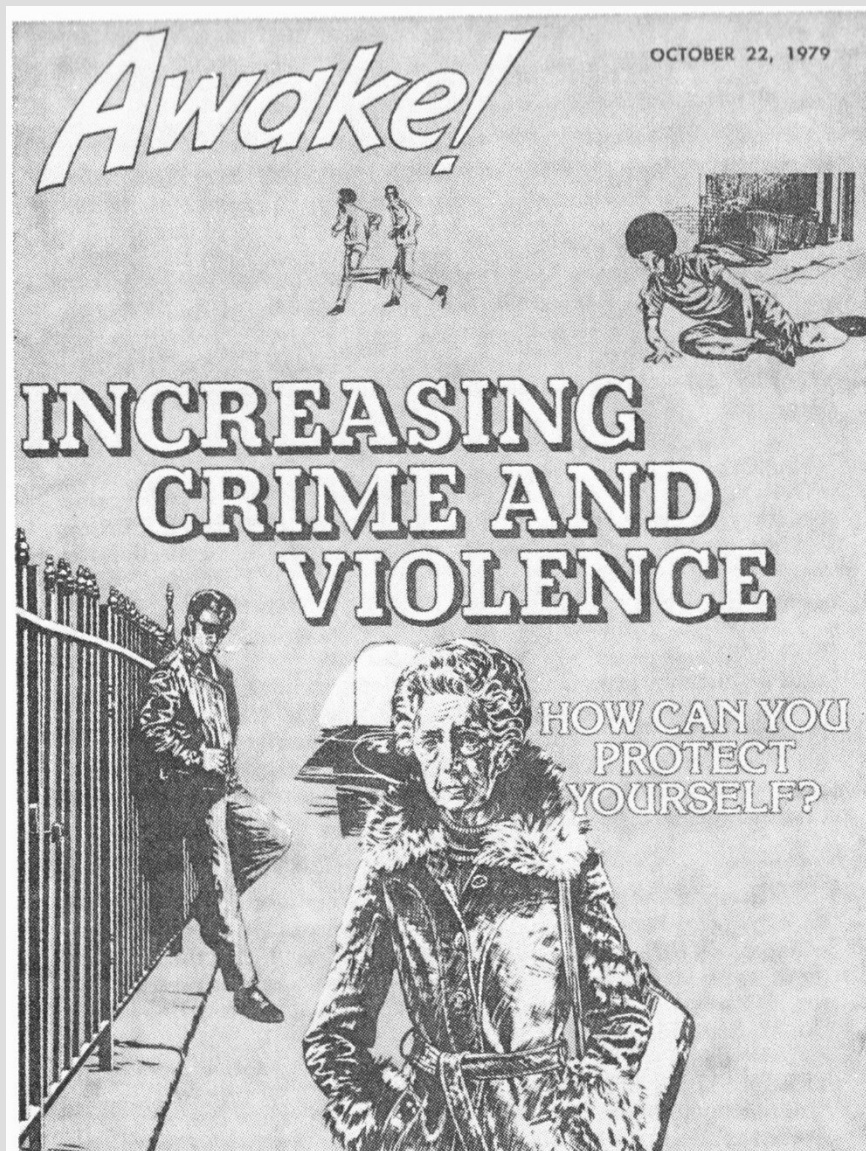
Moreover, there is a strong reason to understand that Jesus' words about the increasing contempt for the law (in Matthew chapter 24) as well as its application, do not refer to the world in general where crime has always been widespread, but to the conditions prevailing among the declared servants of God, since those of the first established Christian congregation. His earlier words indicate this, for he describes what will happen to his followers because of persecution and continues to say that **"many will turn away from the faith and betray and hate one another, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many.**" It is in such a religious context that he then says, **"Because of the increase in cruelty [contempt for the law], the love of most will grow cold,**

⁵³ Ditton et Duffy, «*Bias in the newspapers reporting on crime news : »* *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 23, n°2, avril 1983, p. 162.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 164.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 164.

but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. "(Matthew 24:9-13, *New International Version*) Jesus, in fact, used the expression "contempt for the law" not in reference to criminals, but in reference to the hypocritical, dishonest conduct of religious people. (Matthew 7:23; 23:28) In his parable of the wheat and the weed he compared those who cause contempt of the law disorder to the spreading weed and said that in the day of judgment his angels "... will gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and those that commit unlawfulness." (Matthew 13:38-41, *New World Translation*.)



Sensational newspaper reports create a fear of crime out of all proportion. "Images like those on the cover of Wake Up! of October 22, 1979, promotes the idea that the whole world is infested with crime as it is on certain streets in New York City or other major U.S. cities.

The writings of the apostles of Jesus bear ample witness to the growth

of cruelty and contempt for the law which developed among the declared Christians in the last years of the apostolic period. (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Peter 2 :1-3, 10-14, 17-21) When Paul spoke of a revelation coming "from the man who despises the law," he was not speaking of a source committing common criminal activity such as trespassing on property, or acts of physical violence such as murder, but of the utter contempt of most associated with religious deception, the usurpation of the place and authority that rightly belongs to the one Supreme Sovereign, God. Paul also warned his contemporaries that "the secret power of wickedness is already at work" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-11, BFC). The writings of the apostle John show in a special way that such an increase in contempt for the law in the congregation in the first century really took place as the love of many grew colder; John ardently showing the need to love his brother. - 1 John 2:9-11; 3:4, 10-18.

The understanding of Jesus' previous words is at least in harmony with the known facts, confirmed by the biblical accounts themselves. The same cannot be said of the assertions made by those who claim that we see today a biblically predicted increase in unprecedented crimes. The known facts prove the contrary.

What the authorities say about disregard for the law now and in the past.

UNITED STATES :

"Crime, violence and disregard for the law have been recurring themes throughout American history...the country was more dangerous in the past than it is today. " - Charles E. Silberman, *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice*, New York, 1978, pages 21, 22.

"All of the evidence considered demonstrates a long-term decline in criminal activity naturally associated with urbanization. "Roger Lane in *Violence in America* (ed. By H. D. Graham & T. R. Gurr), Washington, D. C., 1969 p. 366.

FRANCE :

"Over the long term [1826-1962], harm to others appears to have declined significantly in frequency, homicides have fluctuated slowly with no noticeable trend and mob violence fluctuating sharply from year to year. "« A. Q. Lodhi & env. *Tilly American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 79, 1973, p. 296.

FINLAND:

"Are we seeing a significant increase in crime these days? The answer to this question lies in the future. But it should be noted that in Finland the population has experienced more difficult times. " - Vaino Rantio, Commissioner of the Criminal Investigation Department in Helsingfors; in *Nordisk Kriminalkrönika* 1982 (Scandinavian Crime Chronicle 1982), Göteborg, 1982, p. 21.

SWEDEN:

"What we very often forget is that society was used to violence on a daily basis... Criminal violence was more widespread at the end of the 19th century, when alcoholism was more widespread. "Criminologist Johannes Knutsson in *News & Views* (a newsletter for immigrants in Sweden) No. 28, September 14, 1984, p. 1.

WESTERN:

"In most Western countries the level of crime has decreased so much that minor misdeeds are considered by the ordinary citizen as entertainment and do not instil a sense of fear. "John Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London and Toronto, 1973), p. 1.

WORLD:

Comparing our modern society with those of the Middle Ages and the 18th century, British criminologists Sir Leon Radzinowics and Joan King state: "Despite all the crimes it experiences, **our society is safer and less violent than that of the Middle Ages and the 18th century.** *The Growth of Crime.* London, 1977, p. 11.

7 The "Composite Sign" Myth

TILL now we have considered on an individual basis those aspects of human life and conditions that end times proclamations regularly accentuate: wars, famines, plague and earthquake. Taken one by one, it is obvious that none of them sincerely distinguish our century from past centuries, if we consider these aspects since 1914, 1948 or any other date of this century.

Earthquakes are no more frequent or larger in size than in previous centuries. Even war, despite its very destructive potential, does not apparently affect a larger proportion of the population than in the past. Despite all claims to the contrary, the number of actual wars - has actually decreased in this century. And famine and plague have not only decreased, but have declined sharply since the second decade of this century. The decrease is even more dramatic compared to past centuries.

We cannot fail to note that the legitimate key to judging the increase particularly in the last three aspects - is the percentage of the population affected. In a village of 1,000 inhabitants, if 600 of them were in a state of starvation we would describe the village as starving, badly so. That would mean that six out of every ten people would starve to death. But in a town of 100,000 inhabitants even if 10,000 people were in a state of starvation, this figure, while so much greater than the 600 previously mentioned, would mean that only *one* of every ten people would die of starvation in this way. The large city would, on average, have a much lower incidence of starvation than the village. It would, from this point of view, be the best place to live.

That is what we find in the consideration of the world stage. The population of the world has become enormously well during this century and so, whatever disastrous condition may be considered, it is only reasonable that more people would be involved than several centuries, or even just a century. In a time when commercial flights were rare and limited to a few a day, five accidents could within a year rightly indicate a low degree of safety, could excuse the conclusion that the

stealing was a pretty random way to get around. Today, when thousands of flights occur every day in just one country, such as the USA, tripling even this number of accidents would still not change the fact that airplane travel has become one of the most reasonable modes of transportation in modern times. Likewise the principle applies correctly in estimating the global effect of the aforementioned aspects of war, famine and plague, as well as the number of people affected by the earthquake. Ignoring this factor, deliberately or simply because of superficial thinking, is to distort reality and distort the truth.

Those who would have us believe that we have visible evidence before us identifying our generation as remarkably marked by prophecy - because of being afflicted by supposition by such misfortunes in some way may special say that their assertion is not based on these aspects taken one by one. They may say that it is based on the combination of them all appearing together during a single period.

Thus, the religious author Hal Lindsey has compared these disastrous aspects to the multiple pieces of a puzzle that are now said to be 'falling quickly into place' since 1948. Evangelist Billy Graham hears in today's events that the threatening beating of the combined hoof beats of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The Watch Tower Society presents these aspects as individual elements of a "composite sign. "The "sign", they say, is not just any one of the aspects in isolation but the combination of them appears worldwide in one generation, a composite sign by assumption unique to the living generation of and after 1914.

So while forced by the facts to recognize that none of these aspects individually has seen the unprecedented impact in this century, the assertion could be made, "It's just, maybe some century in the past has seen more famine than ours, another century may have seen more or the greatest earthquake, yet another century the most disastrous plague, yet another has been just as or more ravaged by war than our own. But it is none of these things individually, but rather the total of all of them occurring together in this century, our twentieth century, that distinguishes this time as being, unquestionably, the last days that the global fore judgment appears. »

There's a correctness to that reasoning?

. ***The plague syndrome***

Most proclaimers of the end times simply leave out the discussion of the past and the majority of their readers are unlikely to know what this recording shows in order to be able to compare conditions. The Watch Tower Society, however, sometimes seeks to thwart the evidence of the past and deny its importance. This indicates that they recognize that there are problems with at least some of the characteristics of their "composite sign" and that none of the afflictions are new to humanity. "None of these things are unique to this century," said the Watchtower on April 15, 1984, on page 5. How, then, could such things be used to identify the end of the period beginning in 1914? In the same issue of the Watchtower it is stated that

"they should have somehow differed from similar conditions of previous times," explaining:

First of all, each characteristic of the sign should be observed by one generation...

Second, the effects of the sign are expected to be felt worldwide. Third, the combined conditions or symptoms are expected to gradually worsen over this period.

Fourth, the occurrence of all these things would be accompanied by a change in people's attitudes and actions. Jesus warned: "The love of the many will grow cold. »¹

Thus, they impose norms for judging the fulfillment of Jesus' words that are at least in part norms that they themselves have established. Yet this fourfold attempt to save the

The "composite sign" of the collapse is remarkably weak. Have famines and plagues, for example, become progressively worse since 1914? Are they "globally" more important today than ever before? The truth is that the scope and mortality of both of these scourges have been progressively reduced over the course of this century! Neither have earthquakes become progressively worse since 1914 nor have they been felt more globally than before that date. As far as wars are concerned, it is true that their potential danger has gradually increased during this century. However, the remarkable fact is that wars

¹ *The same reasoning is repeated in the book *Life - How did it come about?* published by the Watch Tower Society in 1985, page 226.*

claimed more victims in the first three decades after 1914 than in the forty years since 1945! And although it is sometimes pointed out that wars in those four decades after 1945 claimed the lives of 30 million people, this figure is lower than the number of victims of wars in the corresponding period of the last century (1845-1885).

. ***A single generation?***

What about the argument that "each generation of the sign should be observed by one generation"? Does this distinguish the generation of 1914 - or a generation of this century - as unique in this respect? In no way. Anyone who undertakes an honest and thorough investigation of the subject will soon discover that it is virtually impossible to find a generation over the past 2,000 years that has not observed the combined characteristics of the so-called "composite sign"! And this should not really surprise us, because most of the plagues mentioned by Jesus are interdependent and therefore usually go hand in hand. This is especially true for wars, famines and plagues. In *Hunger and History*, E. P. Prentice notes:

Famine, war and plague - the world knows these three well, and knows that they do not come alone, one by one. Where there is misery, Pestilence takes hold and war is not far away.²

Further emphasizing this commonality and simultaneity, Ralph A. Graves explains :

A study of the past shows that war, plague and famine have always been linked, with one and sometimes the other being the cause and the other two the effect. Where one member of the trio occurred, the others, sometimes alone but usually together, followed.

True trinity of evil, the three are a single scourge, equal in their devastating power and sinister universality.³

This "trinity of evil" was even more intimately linked than it is today, when improved communications and modern medical measures have greatly reduced the role of famine and epidemics in wartime.

2 E. Parmalee Prentice, *Hunger and History* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1951), p. 137.

3 Ralph A. Graves, "Fearful Famines of the Past," Le magazine *National Geographic*, juillet 1917, p. 69. 69 Walford similarly expressed himself: "Thus the sword, pestilence, and famine are now, as they always have been, the three mortal enemies associated with the human race." » C. Walford, « *The Famines of the World: Past and Present*, » *Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. XLII. (London, 1879) pp. 79, 80.

In times of war, famine and plague, it is also quite normal to see crime and violence increase. History is replete with examples of the demoralizing effects of these scourges on the human mind and behaviour. Professor Sergius Morgulis, in his presentation on famines, said:

Famine not only destroys health and the physical, it further disturbs morality and character. In the bitter struggle to maintain life, all scruples are defeated, the neighbour is against the neighbour and the strong are ruthless to the weak. ⁴

The story of famines is therefore also a story of demoralization, violence, banditry, murder and cannibalism, a story of times when anarchy grows and love grows cold. And exactly the same kind of degeneration occurs during plagues. Plague times are always times when the beastly and diabolical side of human nature takes over," noted B. "Plague times are always times when the beastly and diabolical side of human nature takes over. G. Niebuhr. ⁵ This interrelation between periods of war, famine, plagues or other disasters and an increase in crime has also been noted. The Swedish criminologist Hanns von Hofer, for example, in his in-depth study of crime in Sweden from 1750 to 1982, notes that the historical development of violence and robbery

"This coincides with particular historical events, such as years of famine, alcohol restrictions and wars. »⁶

The adage that "woes never come alone" clearly applies to most of the miseries to which Jesus refers in his prophetic study of the future course of world history. Wars, famines, epidemics and crimes are all related and usually go hand in hand. Their "composite" appearance is therefore quite natural and understandable and is nothing new for this century. On the contrary, this plague syndrome has been part of human history for centuries and has been experienced by all generations since the time of Christ.

. *The fourteenth century, a "faraway mirror."*

The history of mankind is to a remarkable degree a history of

4 Quoted by Prentice, p. 139. Some horrific examples are given by Graves, pp. 75-79.

5 Quoted by Philip Ziegler in *The Black Death* (London, 1969). p. 259. See also pages 83, 108, 109, 160, 192, 271 and 272 of the same book.

6 Hanns von Hofer. *Brott och straff i Sverige. Historisk kriminalstatistik 1750-1982*, Statistiska centralbyran (Stockholm, 1984), p. 3:4 and diagram 1:3.

crises and disasters. Although the Watch Tower Society admits it, unlike other proclaimers of the end of time, it tries to downplay these past calamities, claiming that our century has experienced them on a much larger scale.

Thus, in *The Watchtower of July 15, 1983* (page 7), this statement appears:

It is true that previous generations have known calamity. The XIV^e century was the time of the Black Death when people all over Europe feared plague, famine and war. But let us simply compare the scale of things in this century.⁷

According to this, the Watch Tower Society believes that the crises of XIV^e can in no way be compared to those of our century.

Is it true? Is your life or the lives of people in general more difficult than it was in the XIV^e century? If we had a choice, would we then choose conditions - in terms of wars, famines, plagues and earthquakes - as preferable to those of this century? It was the historian Barbara Tuchman who compared the XIV^e century to a "distant mirror". A closer look at the various characteristics of this period will reveal how little or no truth there is in the Watch Tower Society's claim.

. *The time of war*

History reveals that the medieval world is a "world of war".⁸ Numerous long bloody wars have taken place in different parts of the world. In 1337, Western Europe marked the beginning of the longest war in history, the so-called Hundred Years' War between England and France, a war that lasted 116 years and which, according to the historian Tuchman, destroyed medieval unity.⁹

Other endless wars and civil wars have taken place in Europe, for example the wars between the principalities of Germany and the wars between the merchant cities and the principalities of Italy.

Western Europe is not the only one involved in the war.

7 *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1983, p. 7. *The Watchtower of 1st February 1985* declared even more forcefully: "Certainly there had been wars, food shortages, earthquakes and plagues in the centuries from our common era until 1914 (Luke 21:11). (Luke 21:11) Nevertheless, there was nothing comparable to what had taken place since the days of the Gentiles ended in that memorable year." »(p. 15)

8 *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, 1974, p. 234.

9 See "Epilogue" in B.W. Tuchman's *A Faraway Mirror*.

Eastern Europe and practically the entire Asian continent were dominated by the fierce Mongols, who had conquered these regions during the previous century.¹⁰

From 1200 to 1400 AD, the historians R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy say:

For most of these two centuries (13^e and 14^e), the political and military history of humanity was dominated by a single power. The Mongols or their Tartar vassals conquered or ravaged all the great regions of the known world, with the exception of Western Europe.¹¹

In the XIV^e century, this vast empire gradually collapsed.

Bloody civil wars raged for decades in the western and eastern parts of the huge Mongolian empire. In China, foreign rulers were finally overthrown in the 1360s after a long civil war that cost millions of lives.

¹² In the same century, the Turkish Empire came to the fore, having conquered Asia Minor and then most of the Balkan Peninsula.

Then, around 1370, one of the world's most ruthless conquerors appeared. He was Tamerlan (or Timur Lenk), the impressive "Führer" of XIV^e century. After making Samarkand in Turkestan

In 1370, he left from there to conquer the rest of Asia. The countries of Khwarazm, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Mongolestan, Russia, Western Siberia, Persia, Iraq, India, Syria and Anatolia were all conquered over the next three decades in a wave of incredibly cruel and bloody triumphs that cost millions of lives.

¹⁰ On the Mongolian conquests under Genghis Khan and his followers, see for example E. D. Phillips, *The Mongols* (1969), R. Grousset, *The Conqueror of the World* (1967), and J. A. Boyle, *The Mongol World Empire 1206-1370* (1977). The wars of Genghis Khan and his followers cost millions of lives, far more than the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War, because of the vast massacres perpetrated by the civilian populations of cities and countries. For example, as noted earlier in ~~Chapter Five, footnote 62~~, the conquest of northern China in 1211-1218 is estimated to have cost the lives of 18 million Chinese. And during the campaign in the west 1218-1224, many cities in Persia were completely destroyed and the population often completely murdered. Whole countries were ravaged and depopulated. Afghanistan, for example, was turned into a desert.

¹¹ R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York and Evanston, 1970), p. 330.

¹² As noted above, historians generally attribute the decline of the Chinese population from 123 million in about 1200 AD to 65 million in 1393 to the wars with the Mongols. However, as suggested by McNeill (*Wounds and People*, New York, 1976, p. 163), the Black Death "certainly played a significant role in halving the Chinese figures. »

Like Genghis Khan in the previous century, Tamerlan mercilessly massacred entire populations - men, women and children - in any city or area that resisted him. The entire country of Khwarazm with its capital Urgentsj in Central Asia was thus completely wiped off the map. Many populous cities, including Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, Esfahan in Persia, Baghdad in Iraq and Damascus in Syria, were devastated and looted and their populations wiped out. During the conquests in India in 1398, it is estimated that a million people lost their lives in the space of a few weeks. Tamerlan finally died in his campaign against China in 1405, after having conquered most of Asia from Europe in the west to the Chinese border in the east.¹³

The characteristic of war - in all parts of the known world - was certainly not missing in the XIV^e century.

. ***Time of famine***

The XIV^e century opened with a change in climate, causing

cold weather for a number of years: storms, rains, floods then droughts and poor harvests. The result was a number of very severe famines. Apparently, the worst of these was the universal famine of 1315-1317 (in some areas it lasted until 1319), a famine "which struck all the lands from the Pyrenees to the plains of Russia and from Scotland to Italy".¹⁴ The consequences were very serious. The poor ate almost everything, "dogs, cats, doves' excrement and even their own children".¹⁵ Reports from Livonia and Estonia point out that "hungry mothers ate their children" and that "hungry men often died on graves digging up bodies for food".¹⁶ Chroniclers report similar conditions in other countries. In Ireland,¹⁷ In Slavic countries, such as Poland and Silesia, the "agony lasted until 1318 and was particularly severe, as people dug up the bodies in cemeteries and used them for food, and parents even ate their children.

¹³ *Timur, Verhangnis eines Erdteils, by Herbert Melzig* (Zurich & New York, 1940) is an excellent work on Tamerlan and his conquests. To frighten the conquered regions, Tamerlane used to build enormous pyramids and minarets, using heads of the slaughtered population as building material, as well as mortar. Many such pyramids and minarets were built throughout Asia.

¹⁴ Henry S. Lucas, «*The Great European Famine of 1315, 1316, and 1317,*» *Speculum*, Octobre 1930, p. 343. (Publié par la Medieval Academy of America)

¹⁵ Lucas, p. 355.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 364.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 376.

Famine was still common in 1319 and reports say that parents "killed their children and children killed their parents, and the bodies of the executed criminals were hastily torn from their gallows. "¹⁸ With the famine came a plague that took a great number of people. ¹⁹

Other great famines followed in the 1330s and 1340s. The Black Death was preceded by a very serious famine that would have affected one-fifth of humanity. In Italy, for example, it "wiped out a large number of people through absolute famine. ²⁰ For the rest of the century, repeated famines struck the countries of Europe and other parts of the world, and in between, "universal misery" prevailed, as discussed in Chapter Two above. There is every reason to believe that the fourteenth century was plagued by famine and malnutrition far more than our twentieth century.

. ***The time of pestilence***

There is no need to repeat a description of the black plague of the XIV^e century. We saw in chapter four that this scourge in every sense far exceeded the Spanish flu of our century. In addition, it visited Europe several times before the end of the century, as well as many other parts of the world. Dysentery and anthrax were other plagues that decimated mankind during the same period; several major epidemics of the disease known as the St. Vitus Dance broke out towards the end of the century.

²¹ (Although not contagious or fatal, leprosy reached its peak in Europe in the decades before the Black Death).

The scourges of the XIV^e century had a far more disastrous impact on the human race than the epidemics of our time, and many historians have pointed to 1348, the initial year of the Black Death, as one of the most important turning points in history. A. L. Maycock goes so far as to say that "the year 1348 marks the approach of a

18 Ibid, p. 376.

19 Contemporary chroniclers often report that a third of the population has died in some areas. Even conservative estimates show that the consequences of the famine were enormous. For example, Dr Henry Lucas estimates that one person in ten in Europe north of the Alps and Pyrenees died. (Lucas, pp. 369, 377)

20 ~~Walford, p. 439~~ Compare Ziegler, p. 44. The Swedish historian Michael Nordberg, after referring to the great famine of 1315-18 and other famine years in the 1320s, states that "the years 1335-52 signified an almost continuous period of poor harvests throughout most of Europe due to the unfortunate combination of dry summers and very wet autumns. "(Den dynamiska medeltiden, Stockholm, 1984, p. 35).

21 Janken Myrdal, Digerdoden (Stockholm, 1975), pp. 19, 22. St. Vitus's dance attacked the nervous system, causing either death or disability

a definitive break in the continuity of history. "»²²

. **Earthquake Time**

In ancient times, it was generally believed that earthquakes, as well as celestial phenomena such as eclipses, meteors and especially comets, were portents of great calamities, especially wars, famines and plagues.

²³ These sinister reports therefore generally caused great fear. This is probably the reason why, in discussing what he said, could deceive his disciples into believing that the end was near, Jesus added earthquakes and, according to Luke chapter 21, verse 11 (The Jerusalem Bible), Thucydides, Diodorus Siculus, Titus Livius and many other ancient writers claimed that earthquakes were a harbinger of plague, and the Roman philosopher Seneca, a contemporary of the apostles, explicitly stated that "after great earthquakes, it is common for plague to occur. "²⁴ No wonder, then, that the great earthquakes that precede and accompany the plague black of XIV^e century have been interpreted as omens of the

plague by contemporary chroniclers.

In China, the years leading up to the outbreak of the plague were marked by an impressive series of disasters: droughts, floods, locust swarms, famines and earthquakes. Even before the outbreak of the plague in 1337, the death toll must have been enormous:

In 1334, Houdouang and Honan experienced a drought followed by swarms of locusts, famines and plagues. An earthquake in the mountains of Ki-Ming-Chan formed a lake more than one hundred leagues in circumference. In Tché, the death toll is estimated at more than five million. Earthquakes and floods continued from 1337 to 1345; locusts had never been so destructive. There was "underground thunder" in Canton. ²⁵

Europe also seems to be have summer struck by a series from

22 A. L. Maycock, "A Note on the Black Death," in the *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XCVII, London, January-June 1925, pp. 456-464. (Quoted by Campbell, p. 5.)

23 Fritz Curschmann, *Hunger Note in the Middle Ages (Leipzig Studies from the Field of History)* (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 12-17.

24 Raymond Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford, 1914), p. 65.

25 Ziegler, p. 13. Graves (p. 89) adds that "according to Chinese reports, 4,000,000 people starved to death in Kiang alone," and climatologist HH Lamb says that the Chinese famine caused by the huge rains and river floods of 1332 "claimed 7 million lives. "*(Climate, Present, Past and Future, Vol. 2, London and New York, 1977, p. 456).*

Unusual calamities, including disastrous earthquakes, in the years before and during the plague, accompanied by terrible manifestations in heaven and on earth:

For years and years, there were signs in the sky, on the earth, in the air, which all indicated, men thought, a terrible event to come. In 1337, a great comet appeared in the heavens, its very long tail sowing deep terror in the minds of the ignorant masses... In 1348, an earthquake of such terrible violence that many men thought it was an omen of the end of the world. Its devastation was widespread. Cyprus, Greece and Italy were terribly struck and [the earthquake] spread through the Alpine valleys.²⁶

"Europe was shaken from southern Italy to Bosnia and from Hungary to Alsace," says geologist Haroun Tazieff. The earthquake destroyed many towns and villages, including the city of Villach in Carinthia, Austria. Quoting eighteenth-century author Elie Bertrand, Tazieff says that :

The earthquake destroyed thirty-six towns or castles in Hungary, Styria, Carinthia, Bavaria and Swabia. The ground opened up in various places. It was thought that the stinking exhalations that this earthquake produced were the cause of plague that spread throughout the world, which lasted for three years and was calculated to kill one third of the human race.²⁷

Tazieff, claiming that "the destructive earthquakes had hit XIV^e century", gives another example of the great earthquake.

of land that devastated the Swiss city of Basel in 1356:

On October 18, 1356 at ten o'clock in the evening the city of Basel and the towns and villages for 17 miles (about 27 km) around it were destroyed by a terrible earthquake whose aftershocks lasted for more than a year .

Eighty cakes , so queles cities and villagesqui depended on it, were ruined.²⁸

As Tazieff notes, the fourteenth century seems to have been visited by

²⁶ Charles Morris, Historical Tales : The Romance of Reality. Lippincott 1893, p. 162 f. The famous 14th-century writer Petrarch, dwelling in Verona, Italy, at the time of the shock, wrote of it as follows : « Our Alps, scarcely accustomed to moving, as Virgil says, began to tremble on the evening of 25 January. At this same moment a great part of Italy and of Germany was so violently shaken that people who were not forewarned and for whom the thing was entirely new and unheard-of thought that the end of the world had come. » (Haroun Tazieff, When the Earth Trembles, London, 1964, p. 155)

²⁷ Tazieff, pp. 154. 155.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 155, 156.

an unusually high number of destructive earthquakes. Milne's catalogue, although very incomplete for this period and "virtually confined to occurrences in Southern Europe, China and Japan", nevertheless lists 143 earthquakes of

destructive land for XIV^e century.²⁹ Generally, the number of

victims are missing, of course, but there is no reason to believe that major earthquakes have been less frequent or fewer destroyers of human life at XIV^e century than today. At best,

the available evidence points in the opposite direction.

. ***A time of crime and a time of fear...***

As demonstrated earlier, great calamities such as war, famine and plague usually lead to a significant increase in crime and immorality. A. Campbell noted that endemic crime was "a striking feature of the

second half of XIV^e century".³⁰ The historian

Tuchman, in his

famous study (*A Distant Mirror*, page 119), even claims that banditry reached such proportions that it contributed to the continuous decline of the world population at the end of the XIV^e century! Crime and murder also spread during the great famine of 1315-1317 :

Because of these conditions there was a great increase in crime. People who normally led a decent and respectable life were forced to engage in irregularities in their behaviour that made them criminals. Brigands and vagrants seem to have infested the English countryside and were guilty of all kinds of violence. Murders became very frequent in Ireland. Robbery with assault was common; in fact, all sorts of things that could be used for food were stolen....., all things of value were easily taken.³¹

Piracy or theft on the high seas, which has occurred in previous centuries and which has often been organized and accompanied by many manslaughter, has also increased at XIV^e century.³² It is

29 See the information presented in chapter three of this book.

30 A. M. Campbell, *The Black Death and Men of Learning* (New York, 1931), p. 129.

31 Lucas, pp. 359, 360.

32 The extent of this form of criminality in the past is today little known, although it has practically disappeared. Saracen pirates, for example, for long periods more or less dominated the entire Mediterranean region; they waged a sea war that lasted more than a thousand years (from the 8th to the 19th century), ransacked and devastated not only coastal towns but also cities in central Europe. Countless people were killed during these devastating expeditions. (Erik-Dahlberg, Sjorovare, Stockholm 1980, pp. 49-63).

clear that this era had its share of flourishing crime - and fear - as well as other periods, including our own.

Materialism, pessimism, anguish and fear of the end of the world have characterized the XIV^e century as much as our century, if not more. Today's problems are, to a far greater extent than is commonly believed, essentially a repetition of the past. Ziegler quotes historian James Westfall Thompson, who compared the aftermath of the Black Death and the First World War and found that in both cases the complaints of contemporaries were the same: "economic chaos, social unrest, high prices, profiteering, depravity of morals, lack of production, industrial indolence, frenzied gaiety, savage spending, luxury, debauchery, social and religious hysteria, greed, avarice, maladministration, degradation of morals." »³³

Can it be said that the calamities experienced by modern man are worse than those suffered by medieval man? Ziegler, commenting on Thompson's comparison, concludes:

The two experiences are quite comparable, but the comparison can only show how the Black Death was more devastating for its victims than the Great War [1914-1918] was for their descendants. ³⁴

Barbara Tuchman, who also cites Thompson's comparison, agrees. She describes the fourteenth century as "a violent, tormented, misguided, suffering, and disintegrating age, an age, as many thought, of a triumphant Satan," and adds:

If our assumptions over the past two decades have been a period of unusual discomfort, it is reassuring to know that the human species has seen worse before. ³⁵

Therefore, any claim that this century has seen the calamities of wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, etc., on a much larger scale than the XIV^e century is not supported by historical evidence. It shows the opposite to be true. Taken as a whole, the supposed "composite sign" was certainly more palpable in the XIV^e century than it is today. The hoof sounds of the horsemen of the Apocalypse

³³ Ziegler, p. 277.

³⁴ Ziegler, p. 278.

³⁵ Tuchman, page xiii.

sounded as loud as they do nowadays.³⁶

. ***The testimony of the "demographic bomb"***

Perhaps no other factor testifies to the fictitious nature of the calamitous claims about our century, just as the growth of the world's population is fictitious. Although end-time proclaimers often use it to support such claims, it refutes them in a remarkable way.

It is therefore not surprising that Watch Tower publications have been reluctant to tell the whole truth about this factor.

Wake up! magazine of August 8, 1983, explained the current population growth as follows:

The root of the problem lies in the way the population is growing. It does not increase by simple consecutive addition (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.), but by growth or multiplication. exponential (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc.),)³⁷

Does this rule explain the population growth from the past to the present? Does it explain why it took millennia for humanity to reach one billion in about 1850, then double to two billion in the 1930s, and again to four billion in 1975? Let us look at that.

Currently, the population is doubling in 35 years, which corresponds to an annual growth of 2%.³⁸ If the population had indeed grown exponentially at constant 35-year doubling intervals, it would have taken less than 100 years for its population to grow from two individuals to 4.8 billion!³⁹ Even if we allowed an annual growth rate of only 1%, which corresponds to a doubling in 69.7 years, exponential growth would lead to astronomical figures in just a few thousand years. As Professor Alfred Sauvy, the great

36 Similar comparisons could be made with other periods in the past, for example in the VI^e century, when the "Justinian plague" ravaged the world. As noted in Chapter Four, historians believe that the invasions of the third and sixth centuries contributed to the decline of the Roman Empire in both its western and eastern parts. Famine played a similar role. 37 Exponential growth, also described in terms of geometric growth, means a doubling of numbers at certain intervals. But it is essential that these intervals be constant, otherwise growth is not exponential. See Professor Erland's discussion Hofsten in *Demography and Development* (Stockholm, 1977), pp. 15-19.

38 This is the average annual growth over the last 35 years. But the rate of growth is declining. In the last few years it was 1.8% and, according to the latest report, it has now fallen to 1.7%. The United Nations estimates that if this trend continues, the population will stabilize at around 10 billion by the end of the next century - *New Scientist*, August 9, 1984, p. 12.

39 H. Hyrenius, *Sa mycket folk* ("So many People") (Stockholm, 1970), pp. 9-11.

European demographer :

If, for example, China's population, estimated at 70,000,000 at the time of Jesus Christ, had grown by 1% per year since then, it would have grown from the recently estimated 680,000,000 [over one billion in 1984] to 21 million billion! Spread over the world, this population would give about 120 Chinese per square meter.⁴⁰

It is clear that exponential growth is not the correct explanation for the development of population on the planet. For some reason, the doubling intervals in the past were much longer. How long was given on page 4 of *Awake!* of September 8, 1967:

It was not until the first century to the seventeenth century that the world's population doubled from 250 million to 500 million. Then, in a little over two hundred years, at XIX^e. century, the population a in double the size , reaching approximately one billion (1,000,000,000). But after a hundred years, it has doubled again in the XX^e century. And now? At rate from current growth , the population would double in only thirty-five years!

This pattern of greatly reduced doubling intervals, from 1,600 years to 35 years now, shows that something in the past prevented exponential growth, which has been gradually eliminated over the last two years. One hundred years. As the English economist Thomas Malthus, who often (wrongly) is said to have originated the theory of exponential (or geometric) growth, wrote in 1798: "Population, when uncontrolled, increases in a geometric ratio."⁴¹

We might then ask ourselves: why has the world's population not increased exponentially over the past centuries? What factor or factors have controlled population growth in the past? The answer is completely devastating for the "composite sign" theory since 1914 or 1948 or for any claim that our century is "the worst in the world" in terms of calamitous conditions.

The very slow increase in population in past centuries is precisely due to the fact that humanity then suffered much more than today from wars, famines and plagues. All experts in demography (demographers) now agree. These

⁴⁰Jan Lenica et Alfred Sauvy, *Population Explosion, Abundance of Famine* (New York. 1962).
Quotations from the Swedish edition, *Befolkningsproblemet* (Stockholm, 1965), p.

⁴¹Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published anonymously in 1798.
Quoted by Hofsten (1977), p. 114.

factors resulted in mortality so high that population growth was effectively controlled.

Often the high mortality even resulted in a population decline, for example through pestilence, as was shown earlier. "Until modern times epidemics and famines regularly reduced any population increase," says historian Fernand Braudel.⁴² Demographer Alfred Sauvy, talking of the high « mortality factor » in the past, expounds the causes as follows :

This mortality factor was active in the past through three extraordinarily deadly fatal sisters : Famine, Disease and War. Due to its immediate effects Famine certainly occupied the first place in this terrifying trinity, closely followed by its near relative Disease.⁴³

This mortality factor has been substantially reduced in recent times :

Of the three demographic fatal sisters only war has continued working unabatedly. We refer here to war in the strict sense of the word, because other forms of violence resulting from it have been considerably reduced... Diseases still exist, but epidemics of the kind that earlier would decimate whole nations do not rage any longer. Famine and malnutrition still exist but acute and hopeless starvation has been eliminated, mainly owing to better means of transport.⁴⁴

These are facts firmly established today, known not only among experts but found even within school textbooks. As an example, the following statement concludes a discussion of the population explosion in a civics textbook widely used in Swedish senior high schools :

In conclusion it can be said that we have arrived at a development that is unique to mankind. For thousands of years famine, disease and war have effectively put a check on all tendencies towards an accelerated population growth. But after the breakthrough of technics and medicine the earlier balance between the constructive and destructive forces of life has been upset, resulting in the population explosion.⁴⁵

As a result, wars and especially devastating plagues and famines have played a decisive role in controlling the Earth's population in the past. Medical and technical advances have combined to curb the ravages of plagues, increase food resources and improve means of transportation. It has

⁴² Fernand Braudel, *Civilization & Capitalism 15th-18th Century : The Structures of Everyday Life* (Londres, 1981), p. 35.

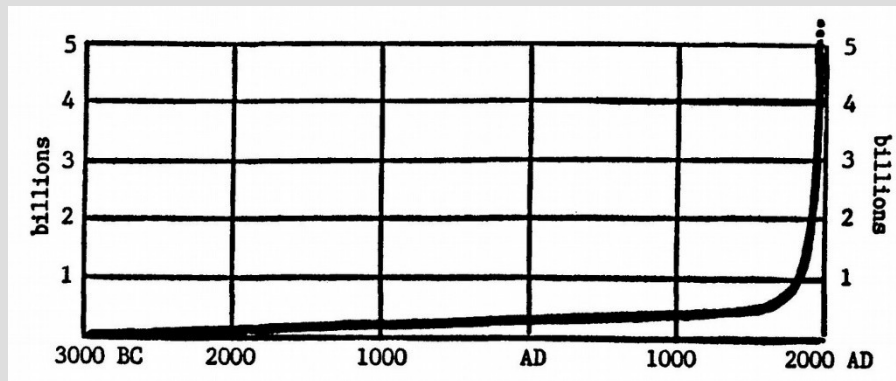
⁴³ Lenica & Sauvy (1965), p. 12.

⁴⁴ Lenica & Sauvy, pp. 20, 26.

⁴⁵ Bjork, Altersten, Hanselid & Liljequist, *Varlden, Sverige och vi* (Uppsala, 1975), p. 31.

has resulted in a sharp decline in mortality, particularly infant mortality. This is the real cause of the population explosion. ⁴⁶

. *The common population curve*



Let's take a closer look at the population curve, as commonly represented in various publications (see illustration above).

As we shall see later, this idealized curve does not present the whole picture. To get a more accurate picture, we must first consider the real causes of the population explosion of this century. The long, almost horizontal line on the map shows the long centuries in which famines, plagues and devastating wars led to very slow population growth. The sharp curve on the right indicates a considerable reduction in the effect of the first two of these scourges in recent times. ⁴⁷ The curve in the graph is merely schematic and does not tell the whole truth about this phenomenal growth.

As Professor Erland Hofsten points out:

⁴⁶ the Watch Tower Society is not entirely unaware of these links. *Wake Up!* of August 8, 1983, for example, began an article on the subject by stating that the current population explosion "is due in part to a worldwide decline in mortality rates resulting from improved medical care and economic and social conditions", but then quickly elaborated on exponential growth as a cause. A much older article published in *Awake!* of 8 September 1967 was simpler: "progress in disease control has greatly reduced the death rate in most countries" and that "massive control of infectious diseases has led to a dramatic reduction in the death rate of infants and children." (Pages 4 and 5) The disastrous consequences of this "mass control of infectious diseases" for the idea of The "composite sign" was of course not emphasized by the Watch Tower Society.

⁴⁷ E. P. Prentic, focusing on the impact of famine on mankind, states that "the flat horizon represents the long level of misery that man has known so well for many eras". "Around 1850, abundance came, and it is abundance that causes the curve to rise so sharply from a horizon that until then had shown no possibility of such a change. *Progress: An Episode in the History of Hunger?* (New York, 1950), pp. Xx, Xxi.

...the usual picture of population change is false. According to it, the Earth's population has been growing at a steady rate, first slowly and then at an ever-increasing rate, until we have what is commonly known as the the "population explosion". But things didn't happen so simply. Clearly, there were many periods when the population was stationary or even declining, alternating with periods of rapid growth.⁴⁸

Thus, the population of China was about the same in the year 1500 as it was in the time of Christ. The population of the Indian peninsula had increased from 46 million in the time of Christ to 40 million in the year 1000. And the population of Southwest Asia had grown from 47 million in the time of Christ to 38 million in 1900.⁴⁹

According to the French demographer Jean-Noël Biraben, the total population on earth was about the same in the year 1000 as in the time of Christ, having experienced ups and downs during these centuries because of devastating famines, plagues and wars.⁵⁰ This non-increase bears witness to the death of thousands of millions of people, including children and infants, in these calamities over the centuries. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, famines, civil wars, epidemics and infanticide kept the Japanese population practically motionless for four centuries.⁵¹ Many other examples could be given. The British demographer T. H. Hollingsworth stated that "the population must have fallen as often (or almost as often) as it rose."⁵²

Modern demographers therefore present population curves that reflect these fluctuations. The example shown in the illustration is based on a curve established by Biraben, which shows the evolution of the

48 Erland Hofsten, *Befolkningslära* (Lund, 1982), p. 14.

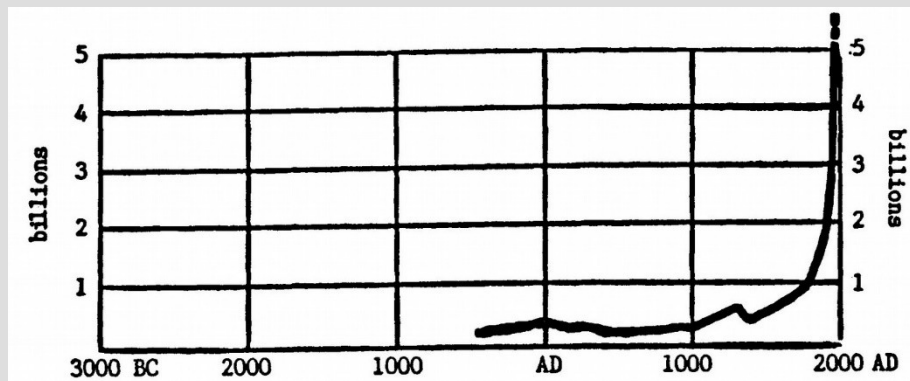
49 These figures are from the French demographer Jean-Noël Biraben quoted by Hofsten (*Befolkningslära*, p. 17.)

50 Hofsten, *Befolkningslära*, p. 15.

51 Josue de Castro, *Geography of Hunger* (London, 1952), pp. 162, 163. Infanticide, "the deliberate destruction of newborns by abandonment, starvation, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning or the use of a deadly weapon," was the main means of birth control before contraceptive use and legalized abortion became widespread. The infanticide of the XX^e century was practised on a large scale, not only in Japan and China, but also throughout the world, including Europe, claiming several million victims each year. This method has been replaced by abortion, which, although considered unacceptable by many, including the perpetrators, from a Christian point of view, nevertheless clearly represents a development in a more humane direction. See William L. Langer, "Infanticide: A Historical Survey," *History of Childhood Quarterly*, Winter 1974, vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 353-365; also Ping-ti Ho, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), pp. 58-61. (Infanticide is still present in parts of Africa and South America. See Barbara Burke, 'Infanticide', *Science magazine*, May 1984, pp. 26-31).

52 T. H. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography* (Londres et Southampton, 1969), p. 331.

This shows that the population was the same in 1000 AD as it was in Christ's time, as well as the impact of the Black Death on the world population from 1348 to about 1550 AD.



Revised population curve

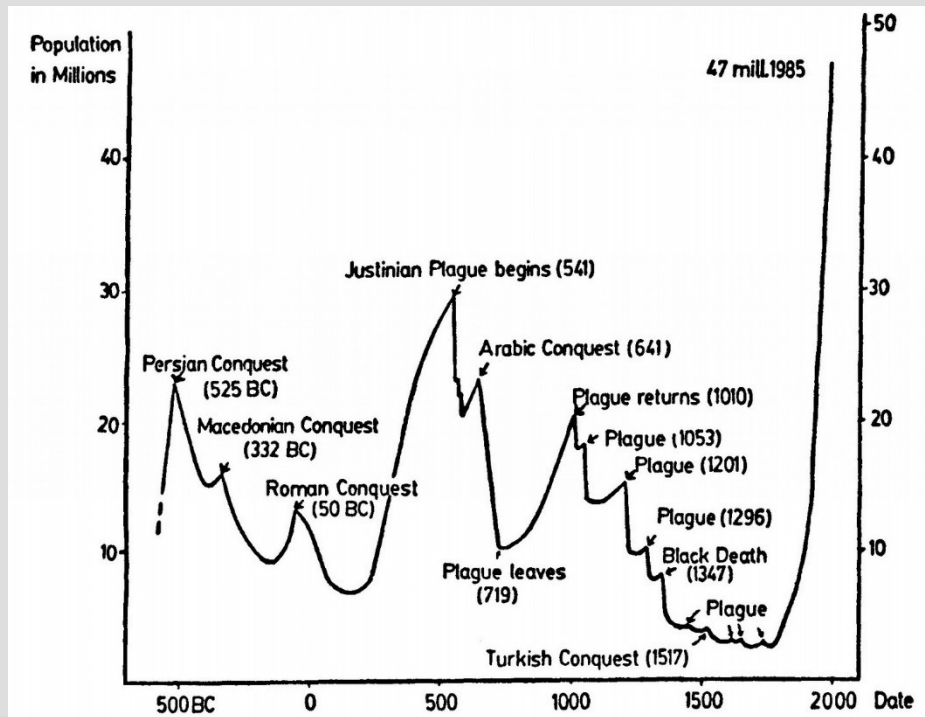
When we look at the curves established for each country, the impression is even more revealing. The curve shown in the following illustration, for example, is for Egypt and is based on the figures and curve established by Hollingsworth.⁵⁴ The dramatic changes between increases and decreases are by no means unique. The curves for many other countries show similar oscillations. The curve for Egypt shows very large population declines due to wars and plagues, but it should be remembered that wars and plagues were usually accompanied by severe famines which contributed greatly to these declines.

The modern population explosion then reveals, by contrast, a terrible story about man's past, a story of famines, scourges and other calamities of unparalleled magnitude, if considered as a whole. Its testimony is within everyone's reach and it is impossible to refute it. And, very significantly, it deals a fatal blow to the idea that we have seen a "composite sign" that could serve as an infallible indicator of Christ's parousia since 1914, or of the beginning of an exceptional 40-year period since 1948, or of any other similar event or claim.

⁵³ Hofsten, *Befolkningslära*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Hollingsworth, p. 311. The curve was redesigned and updated by a learned friend of ours. Fred Serensen, who also contributed much to other parts of this work.

POPULATION OF EGYPT, from 664 BC to 1985 AD.



Population curve for Egypt from 664 BC to 1985 (based on information and curve established by T. H. Hollingsworth in Demography Historical, London and Southampton, 1969, page 331).

. **Possibilities in the face of realities**

It goes without saying that the world situation is always subject to change, sometimes very suddenly. It is easy to construct an imaginary scenario of what might happen in the final years of this declining twentieth century. It is not difficult to find the factors on which to build such an assumed situation. The growing world population could lead to famines of unprecedented size and mortality. Since seismologists have predicted for some time that Japan and California would face major earthquakes, such earthquakes could be expected to occur and, if they hit densely populated areas such as Tokyo, San Francisco and Los Angeles, cause the death of tens of thousands of people. In times of famine and other major disasters, epidemics can spread much faster. So, one could add such proportions

spectre of nuclear war could become part of the scenario because, if it were to happen, it could undeniably cause the deaths of millions, if not hundreds of millions of people.

The problem with using such a scenario of horrible disasters as the basis for claims about our century and specific periods since 1914 and 1948 is that all these things are still only possibilities. They are not realities. They could happen, but they did not. Therefore, they cannot be used as evidence with respect to 1914, 1948 or any other period of this century. Even if such an imaginary scenario were in fact to develop, for example, in the 1990s, would it prove for 1914 or 1948? The Watch Tower Society, for example, would still have to explain why the first seventy years since 1914 - the period in which the "composite sign" was supposed to appear as proof of Christ's "invisible presence" - saw no increase in the respective characteristics of this supposed "sign". Hal Lindsey's predictions of a forty-year period beginning in 1948 with the establishment of the Jewish state in Israel would still be a puzzle without any further element prior to a development as possible, as speculative as possible. Dr. Billy Graham's statements about the clatter of the hooves of the four horsemen "coming closer, sounding louder and louder", should then be considered as evidence of a prophetic hearing, a hearing of amplified sounds yet to come, since today the facts show that none of the symbolic

The "four horsemen" is not as prominent in our time as it was in previous centuries.

Just because something might happen does not necessarily mean it will. Even before the development of the atomic bomb, countries had developed poison gas and germ warfare with frightening potential. Nevertheless, although poison gas was used with horrific consequences during the First World War, since then, even during the Second World War, nations have refrained from any known use of poison gas and have never resorted to deploying their dreaded weapons. deadly germ warfare. It should also be remembered that the last time an atomic weapon was used

55 In an effort to emphasize plague or disease as a notable feature today, *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1984, quoted Dr. William Foege of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta: "I anticipate with certainty that we may see another influenza strain that is as deadly as 1918." »(P. 6)

against humans dates back to 1945, forty years ago now. Predictions about the future based on human reasoning and assumptions remain a guessing game, unrelated to the work of divine prophecy.

Simply put, leaving aside conjecture and imaginary circumstances, the reality is that our generation is no more plagued by famine, plague, earthquakes, war, crime or fear than other generations of the past and in some respects it is less so.

8 "What Will Be the Sign of Your Coming? »

When talking about the "sign of the last days" people commonly think of a term referring to the period immediately before the coming of Jesus Christ to fulfill the divine judgment. Their belief is that this distinctive period will be an indicator of the nearness of that coming and the fulfillment of the judgment it implies. The Scriptures speak, of course, of "the last few days." But do they support this concept? Should there be such an indicator, a way for people to know that this day is about to come?

In every age, generation after generation has found a reason to identify their time as the "last days." Their predictions and expectations have always ended in failure, resulting in disenchantment. There is obviously a major error attached to all these disappointed expectations and misrepresentations.

The proof is that they understood and applied Jesus' words concerning wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes and other similar events in exactly the opposite way to what had been given.

In the first chapter of this book, it was shown that wise Bible commentators do not consider the "woes" enumerated by Jesus at the beginning of his discourse as corresponding to the sign requested by the disciples. On the contrary, Jesus warned his disciples not to be misled by such disasters. The following chapters have presented evidence that completely confirms this conclusion. Since every century has had its share of wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes - often on a larger scale than our own century - it would be very disconcerting to present these things as the sign of Christ's *parousía*. As the Catholic scholar Brunec rightly points out:

"Putting up such signs is simply creating a psychological state of perpetual eschatological delirium."

Before answering the questions that were put to him, Jesus began

1 From a translation of Brunec's article from Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21, published in Latin in the successive issues of Volumes 30 (1952) and 31 (of 1953) of the periodical *Verbum Domini* published in Rome.

by listing things that he thought might *mislead his followers*. The very first words of his reply indicate this. He began with this warning:

Be careful that no one cheats you - Matthew 24:4, BFC.

By what means could they be misled as to the claims concerning his coming? He listed a number of things, beginning with false leaders, false Messiahs:

For many men will come using my name and will say: "I am the Messiah! "And they shall deceive many. - Matthew 24:5, BFC.

Christ's *parousía* or coming, "with power and great glory" accompanied by "all the angels" will not resemble that of a human being who appears proclaiming to be God's anointed one, perhaps winning some disciples. Although there is no record of anyone who *directly* took the title of Christ or Messiah (both terms meaning the Anointed One) from the time of Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem, there were nevertheless those who, like Theudas and Judas the Galilean, presented themselves as leaders and implicitly as anointed by God for a mission. (Acts 5:35, 37; compare Acts 21:38.) Later history recognizes more than 50 false Messiahs among the Jews alone, from Bar Kochba in the second century to Sabbatai Zebhi in the seventeenth century, as well as many false Christs also appearing among Christians.²

In addition to false Christs, according to the parallel text in the chapter of Luke twenty-one, verse 8, Jesus warns about all those who would come and proclaim that "the time is at hand. "This again indicates that Jesus regarded his coming as something *distant* in time, being preceded by *many false statements about its nearness*.

This does not mean, of course, that a Christian would be wrong to live in expectation of the coming of Christ, hoping for it soon and behaving accordingly. On the contrary, true Christians must passionately await the return of Christ from heaven itself.

"waiting and hastening [footnote: seriously in

2 Professor J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 1858, page 348. (Reprinted 1980 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.) A number of false prophets, false teachers, and fanatical impostors were known from 70 A.D. onward, such as Simon Magus, Elymas, Theudas, Judas the Gaudonite, Dositheus, Menander, and Cerinthus. The Jewish historian Josephus (*Ant.* XX, viii, 5,6) also says that Judea, during the reign of Emperor Nero, "was full of robbers and impostors, who deceived the multitude. »

desiring] the coming of the day of God. "(Philippians 3:20; 2 Peter 3:12, RSV) But it is not the same to rely on chronological calculations or date announcements, or interpretations of the signs of the time and claim to *know* and announce to others that "the time is near. "Later in his discourse Jesus several times and emphatically excluded the possibility of such advance knowledge by stating that "the hour", "the day" and "the time" of his coming would be completely unknown *even to his own disciples*:

Therefore be ready also yourselves, for the Son of Man will come in an hour when you think nothing of it. - Matthew 24:44, LSG.

So watch ye, since ye know not what day your Lord will come. - Matthew 24:42, LSG.

Be vigilant, keep your guard up, since you don't know when the time will come. - Mark 13:33, BDS.

So be on the alert! For you do not know when the master of the house must return: will it be late? at midnight? at the crowing of the cock? or in the morning? - Mark 13:35, BDS.

In fact, the central theme of the whole section of Matthew twenty-four, verse 35, to chapter twenty-five, verse 13, is the need for preparation because of the suddenness and unpredictability of the coming of Christ and the impossibility of knowing anything in advance of the time! ³

Further on in his response to his disciples Jesus actually alluded to a "sign" of his coming. Was it, however, a sign that would tell attentive Christians that "the time is near" by offering some period of opportunity to prepare for it? No, of course not. In its one and only specific reference to a "sign", Jesus described certain celestial phenomena and then said:

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. Then all the peoples [literally, "tribes"] on earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. Matthew 24:30, BDS.

With these words he indicates that this sign will be followed so closely by the advent itself that it will then be too late to begin new preparations. This is also the lesson of the parable of the ten virgins. (Matthew 25: 1-13) An attentive Christian, therefore, is one who is

3 In order to soften this simple teaching of Jesus, the Watch Tower Society used the statement contained in Amos 3:7: "For the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will do nothing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets" (NW) See the comments of this text in The Watch Tower of 1st July 1984, page 7 and especially the one of 1st July 1974 page

387. Yet, Amos 3:7 does not imply that Jehovah will reveal to his servants "the times or times" of the kingdom and the *parousia*. Acts 1:7 indicates that such knowledge "does not belong to them. But he has revealed to them his "confidential matter" that is, his "plan" (Amos 3:7) or "purpose" (LIENART). He tells them *what* he is going to do, but not necessarily *when*. Another text, Matthew 24:34, led some to conclude that Jesus wanted to give an indication of the time of his *parousia*: "Verily I say unto you, this generation (in Greek, *geneá*) shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled. "Yet it seems strange at first to declare that the advent would come in a certain generation and then immediately add that the time of the advent is completely unknown, even to the Son of Man. (Compare with Mark 13:32) As *geneá* not only means

If we consider that Jesus was talking about "generation", but also "race", and even "epoch" (see "geneá" in TDNT, Vol I), the subject becomes clear if we consider that Jesus was talking about the Jewish race, or perhaps about the *present* epoch: "This Jewish race (or, this epoch) will not pass away until all these things happen. "On the other hand, many scholars point to the similarity of the statement in Matthew 23:36, where the contemporary Jewish *generation* that would see the destruction of the temple is clearly targeted. They then took Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:34 as an earlier reference to Matthew 24:3, answering the disciples' question, "When will these things (the destruction of the temple he had just spoken of) happen? "See the excellent discussion of these lines by Dr. F. F. Bruce in *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, 1983, pp 225-230 from Downers Groves, Illinois. Another point to note is that the word "this" (*haútē*) of "this generation" shows us that Jesus was talking about the *geneá that was contemporary to him*, because *haútē* always alludes to something close or present. He could not have meant a generation that would appear about 1900 years later, as the Society claims. He spoke of the *contemporary geneá*, so he was addressing the "generation" (or, perhaps, the "race" or "epoch") *then existing*.

always prepared, whenever his Lord may come. In none of the words of Jesus or his apostles did we encourage ourselves to be attentive to means of chronological speculation or to try to produce particular interpretations of world events. Rather, it is by leading a life in such a way that we will be approved by our Master when He comes. For that day comes suddenly, out of the blue, like a trap that suddenly closes. - Luke 21:34-36; Romans 13:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13.

It could also be noted that the true sign described by Jesus himself makes it immediately and clearly understood that the coming is directly upon them. There will be no need for "experts" of the "signs of the times" to explain to others what this sign means. As Jesus said when comparing it to the leaves of the fig tree and others trees: **"As soon as they grow leaves, you see it and the**

know yourself that summer is now near." (Luke 21:30,

NASB) No one needs experts to tell him that the budding leaves indicate the nearness of the warm season.⁴ Likewise, the meaning of the sign that truly and sincerely precedes the coming of Christ will be evident to all, without the need for further explanation.

This helps us to understand why Jesus gave this warning about people who would come, claiming to *know* - perhaps on the basis of a chronological formula or because they believe themselves capable of interpreting the current "signs of the times" - and who announce with confidence and excitement that "the time is at hand!" (Luke 21:8) Despite Jesus' warnings and in fulfillment of his prediction, there has rarely been a period in Christian history that has not seen the appearance of groups or individuals who claim to *know*, by means of their chronological calculations or interpretations of the "signs of the times" that "the time is at hand" often predicting the exact year of Christ's coming, the expiration of the "times of the Gentiles", the beginning of the millennium or other events of the end time. The total failure of the predictions of *all* these countless "prophets" and prophetic movements throughout the centuries proves that Jesus' advice added to His warning was appropriate: "DO NOT GO AHEAD!" (Luke 21:8)

⁴ One might think that Jesus was referring to "spring" rather than "summer" in this text. Yet the Jews in Palestine spoke of only two seasons, summer and winter, one season essentially hot and dry, and one cold and rainy. References to "In texts such as Deuteronomy 11:14 in Hebrew, we literally read "the first rains" and "the last rains" in texts such as Deuteronomy 11:14. "So the appearance of the leaves on the trees was a sure and easy to read sign that the warm season was about to replace the cold and rainy season.

was appropriate: "DON'T GO AHEAD OF THEM! "(Luke 21:8) They all proved to be misleading guides and following them always ended in disappointment. ⁵

The ultimate effect of their repetitive, unfounded predictions is detrimental. All too often it has led people to doubt the integrity of God's Word. Yet the proclamation of being in "secrecy" can give rise to a false sense of security, even of sufficient trust, from one who feels that he or she is well informed about what to expect. This can contribute to an excessive attitude towards others, those who are "in the dark"; and serve as a breeding ground for fanaticism. People who put their trust in these unfounded predictions may make unwise decisions in their lives, decisions that will affect their health, their marriage, their decision whether or not to have children, their home, education, employment and security. They may or may not recover in time and allow these imprudent decisions to heal - or find themselves living the rest of their lives unnecessarily burdened by the now irrevocable consequences of imprudent decisions based on false claims. Jesus' warning, "Don't follow them" is really good advice. ⁶

In some cases, not recognizing the unpredictability and immediacy of the time of the Master's return produces a perspective that allows people, religious persons not excepted, to behave in an implacable manner towards others, showing that they feel they possess a certain sense of impunity regarding the approaching day of divine judgment. Thus, they are no different from the slave whose master did not come according to the schedule he had estimated. In this parable it is notable, that only the wicked slave seems to have some ideas about the time of his master's return. Speaking

5 The *Wake Up!* of October 8, 1968, admitted on page 23 that groups "announcing a specific date" in past times "were guilty of false prophecy" since the predicted conclusion "had not come. »

6 The Watchtower of 1^{er} April 1985, explained that Christian vigilance means paying attention to two things, namely, 1) "the time factor" and, 2) "the complex sign. "But the record of this movement, with more than 100 years of missed dates and wrong predictions, shows that it cannot be this kind of vigilance recommended by Jesus. Yet, instead of deploring and disapproving this kind of prediction and date announcement, the Watch Tower Society, in the same article, tries to elevate it to a Christian virtue by saying: "It is true that some of the hopes that seemed to be based on the Bible's chronology did not come true at the time foreseen. But isn't it far better to make a few mistakes out of excess?

eagerness, because one waits too eagerly for the fulfilment of God's purposes, rather than falling asleep spiritually to the point of no longer being conscious of the fulfilment biblical prophecies? "(pages 27, 30) Yet, Jesus warned us to BEWARE OF

"spiritual slumber" than bold predictions. *Both things are bad.* Instead Jesus advocated a vigilance that governs his way of life at *all times*, since the time of his *parousia* could not be identified in advance.

to others he may have said otherwise, but in "him" in his heart he considered his master's return as "delayed". On the contrary, it is not said that the faithful slave sought a pretext to know or tried to find out whether this arrival was near or far - he simply continued faithfully doing the will of his master by caring fairly for his fellow slaves, believing that his Lord would return in time. (Matthew 24:48-50; compare with 1 Peter 4:7-10.) He did not 'rule over others,' but provided for their needs as a collaborator, just as the apostle expressed in his own attitude:

It's not that we intend to regiment your faith. No, we contribute to your joy; for by faith you stand fast. - 2 Corinthians 1:24, JB.

. Other "non-signs" to be aware of

There is no reason to limit Jesus' introductory warning to not be misled only by false Christs and false prophets. In Matthew twenty-four, verse 6, he continued with other things that could easily lead his disciples to wrong conclusions. He says:

You will also hear of wars and rumors of wars; see, do not be alarmed: for it must happen, but it is not yet the end [*telos*]. - The Jerusalem Bible.

The disciples had asked for the sign of the *conclusion* (Greek, *sunteleia*) of the time. Jesus said that "wars and rumours of wars" would not be an indication of the conclusion. Some, trying to avoid this simple statement, claim that the "conclusion" (*telos*) of the time is not the same as the "conclusion" (*sunteleia*) of the time. Thus, in agreeing that *telos* refers here to Christ's intervention in the final judgment, the Watch Tower Society holds that *sunteleia* refers to a longer period, a period that now spans more than seventy years and began in 1914.

This distinction, however, is entirely artificial. *Sunteleia* and *telos* are often used interchangeably. In the LXX (the Septuagint Version), which was contemporary to the time of Jesus, both words sometimes translate the same Hebrew word *qets* for

"conclusion".⁷ It should also be emphasized that in his reply Jesus does not use *sunteleia* at all, but apparently *telos* as a synonym rather. As Dr. Brunec explains in the article quoted earlier (see footnote 1), "the word *télos* with here an article cannot have any other meaning than *hē suntéleia tou aiōnos* ['the conclusion of the age'] or *parousía*. The word *télos* is in fact a synonym of the word *sunteleia*".⁸

The disciples of Jesus were not to 'worry' when they heard about wars. The 'worry' here does not seem to refer to a natural worry about the dangers of military battles. The word used in Matthew's account is the same Greek word used by Paul when he wrote to the Thessalonians and exhorted them:

**Do not be easily shaken or troubled [excited, RSV; provoked, AT] by a prophecy, report or letter supposedly from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Do not allow anyone to deceive you in any way.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 3, NIV.**

Rather than emanating from a natural fear of war, the anxiety that Jesus warns us against is an excitement and restlessness arising from the false conclusion that a war constitutes a "sign" of the conclusion.

Explaining why "wars and rumours of wars" should not be taken as signs of conclusion, Jesus goes on to say:

For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in different places Matthew 24:7, RSV.

Reading in connection with the previous verse (verse 6), the meaning of this explanation can only be: "Whereas wars,

7 For example, 2 Samuel 15:7 and 2 Kings 8:3 (*qets=tilos*) can be compared with Daniel 12:4, 13 (*qits=sunteleia*). In the latter verse LXX (the Septuagint Version), *qets* is translated twice as *sunteleia*: "but go your way to the conclusion (*suntileia*); for you shall rest and stand in your lot at the conclusion (*sunte'leia*) of the days.

8 The fact that *sunte'leia* does not denote a long period for the "last days" as the Watch Tower Society claims, is also proven by the way the word is used in Matthew 28:20. Here Jesus promised to help His disciples "until the conclusion (*sunte'leia*) of the system of things." (NW) If the "conclusion" began in 1914, then Christ's help in preaching the Kingdom would have been until that date and then would have reached its conclusion, ending at that time. That this "conclusion" refers rather to the final conclusion and not to a period of life beginning in 1914 and continuing for decades is so obvious that The Watchtower of 1^{er} August 1977, had to admit it: "Now the end of the present system announced by Jesus has not yet taken place. The commandment to make disciples is therefore still valid." (page 464) In this sense the "conclusion of the system of things" in Matthew 28:20 finds a very close equivalent to the "conclusion" (*telos*) of Matthew 24:14!

famines, earthquakes and other disasters will regularly characterize the history of mankind in the future (as they have in the past), such things should not be understood as signs of my advent and the conclusion of the age. "As was shown earlier, this is how authorized Bible commentators usually understand Jesus' words:

Professor Carl F. Keil:

Jesus' answer begins with the second question, concerning the signs that might concern parousía, warning the disciples not to be misled by such events. (*Commentar über das Evangelium des Matthäus*, Leipzig 1877, page 458).

Dr. B. approx. Butler:

Matthew xxiv, 5-14 gives a direct anticipation of all future history (with reference to the question about the conclusion of the age), warning the disciples that secular catastrophes should not be understood as signs of the imminent conclusion of history. (*The Originality of St. Matthew*, 1951, page 80).

It is of great interest to note that this is exactly how the first president of the Watch Tower Society, Charles Taze Russell, understood Matthew 24:6-8. In his *Scripture Studies* (Vol. 4, 1916 edition, page 566) Russell says:

Thus briefly our Lord summarizes the secular story and teaches the disciples not to expect His second coming and that of His glorious kingdom very soon. And how rightly: surely the history of the world is just that, a tale of wars, intrigues, famines and plagues - nothing else.

It is regrettable that the Watch Tower Society did not apply this explanation given by its first president, but apparently under the influence of the turmoil of the First World War and the Spanish flu - it was abandoned in 1920, allowing itself to be deceived precisely in spite of Jesus' warning in the introduction of his speech.⁹

According to Seventh-Day Adventist sources, there are two quite different opinions. As we have seen in the quotations from his book *Good-bye, Planet Earth*, Adventist Robert Pierson presents Jesus' statements about wars, famines and earthquakes as signs intended to indicate the

⁹ See the book *Millions of Men Living Now Will Never Die*, 1920, pages 17-19.

Near his coming, signs so clearly evident today that those who would doubt it should be catalogued among the mockers described by the apostle Peter. In support of his presentation, he quotes Ellen G. White (whose position among the Adventists is comparable to that of Charles Taze Russell among the Watch Tower adherents), referring to her as "an author whom thousands believe to be inspired. "In part, he quotes her:

We live in the time of the end. The signs of the rapidly unfolding times show that the coming of Christ is near... Disasters on land and sea, the uncertain state of society and worries about wars are grim. They predict events of the greatest importance...

The condition of things in the world shows that troubled times are right upon us. Daily newspapers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future. Bold robberies are frequent. Attacks are commonplace. Robberies and murders are committed from all sides.

¹⁰

In stark contrast to the opinion advanced in *Good-bye, Planet Earth*, the famous Adventist author Mervyn Maxwell cites the words of Jesus in Matthew twenty-four, verses 6 to 8, and states that Christ here advised His disciples not to be "disoriented by a muddle of unsigned. "In the subtitle "*Signs that are not*" he writes:

Christ's message was that disasters, defeats, wars and famines are not 'signs' of the coming end, of Jerusalem or of the world. For our sin-filled planet, sadly, these afflictions are commonplace. ¹¹

Since Maxwell wrote these lyrics in 1985, they may represent a more current Adventist position than the one written by Pierson in 1976. Otherwise the Adventists find themselves faced with two diametrically opposed presentations.

There may be a particular reason why Jesus warned his disciples to consider wars, famines, earthquakes, plagues, etc. as signs of the imminence of his *parousia*. In the Jewish apocalyptic scriptures of that time identical things were often mentioned as portents of the coming of the Messiah and the near end of that time. ¹² They said that before

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, page 11. Quoted in *Good-bye. Planet Earth*, page 50.

¹¹ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Care*, s985, Vol. 2, pages 20, 21.

¹² Here are some examples: 1 Enoch 80:2-8; 99: Jubilees 23:13-25; the Assumption of Moses 8:1 and 10:5. See further, D. S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, 1964, pages 271-276.

At the glorious appearance of the Messiah leading Israel to freedom, there would be great disasters, which they called the "woes of the Messiah. »

Illustrating these Jewish apocalyptic opinions are passages from the so-called "Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch. "Regarded as a compilation of scriptures revised and combined by the Orthodox Jews of the last half of the first century, its contents are as follows

" provide an archive of Jewish doctrines and convictions from this period. "Let us consider their predictions about the tribulations that would constitute the "sign" of the Messiah's reign on earth:

You will be preserved until that time until the sign that the Most High will work for the inhabitants of the earth at the end of the days. So that will be the sign. When a stupor will seize the inhabitants of the earth and they will fall into many tribulations and again when they fall into great torments.

In the first part there will be the beginning of concussions. And in the second part (there will be) the assassinations of the greats. And in the third part the fall of many by death. And in the fourth part the coming of the sword. And in the fifth part there will be famine and the delay of the rains. And in the sixth part, there will be earthquakes and terrors...

And He replied and said to me: 'What is to come to pass then (will come to pass) on the whole earth, so that all who live will know them. For in that time I will protect only those who will find in those days in this land. And it will come to pass when all things are fulfilled, that what was to come to pass in those parts which the Messiah will then begin will be revealed. ¹³

So the disciples may have had these traditional views and predicted calamities in mind when they inquired about a "sign". Obviously, Jesus did not share the views of these Jewish apocalyptic writers. Instead of being signs of the end or conclusion of the age, he explained that these woes were only the beginning of the troubles that were to come:

**But all these things are just the beginning of the pains of childbirth.
- Matthew 24:8, NASB.**

The pains of childbirth" (the Greek, *ōdínēs*) was sometimes taken as another reference to the opinions of contemporary Jewish rabbis and apocalyptic writers, who sometimes spoke of "the pains of childbirth" (the Greek, *ōdínēs*).

13 2 Baruch 25:1-4; 27:2-8; 29:1-4.

misfortunes which they thought preceded the coming of the Messiah as "the pains of the Messiah's childbirth," from which the new Messianic age was to be born. The Greek word *odin*, however, does not refer exclusively to *the pains of childbirth*. It was often used metaphorically to refer to "all kinds of pains and anxieties" (Liddell and Scott), without any kind of implicit link to birth. Thus Acts chapter 2, verse 24 speaks of the "anguish (*ōdínes*) of death" that Christ knew.¹⁴

Jesus' use of the plural form ("the pains of childbirth") shows that He knew the period until His coming and that the end of this period would be filled with many troubles, including those just mentioned - wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes being only the beginning.¹⁵ In saying this, he was indicating that the future would bring many other evils, even worse, in store. Thus, Dr. Brunec concluded:

Here, wars, sedition, plagues, famines and earthquakes are not presented as signs of the end or parousia, but as the beginning and a foretaste of a long series of particular sorrows.¹⁶

Corroborating this understanding, Jesus continued to describe additional plagues which would come and have an immediate and unique effect on the disciples themselves.

14 In the Old Testament, too, "the pains of childbirth" are often used metaphorically for all kinds of anxieties and tribulations, for example in Exodus 15:14; Psalm 48:6; 73:4; Isaiah 26:17; Jeremiah 13:21; 22:23; 49:24; Hosea 13:13 and Micah 4:9,10.

15 It is quite possible that Jesus' use of the term "the pains of childbirth" did not reflect Rabbinical usage at all. The earliest known Rabbinic use of the term is that of Rabbi Elieser (c. 90 AD). In addition, Jewish rabbis always spoke of the Messiah's "pains of childbirth" in the singular, while Jesus used the plural. See the commentary to Matthew 24:8 in H. L. Strack's Commentary and Billerbeck page. Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus dem Talmud und Midrasch, Vol. 1, Munich 1922-28.

16 Dr. David Hill of Matthew 24:6-8 admirably summarizes the above discussion: "Wars, rumors of wars and assorted disasters have been seen as signs of the near end in apocalyptic Jewry. To reduce excited anticipations, Matthew II likens two important points: first, these anxious events must happen according to God's design (cf. Dan. 2) and, since history is under God's control, believers can and should remain calm; and, second, these events will only be *the beginning of suffering*, ignited. The "pains of childbirth", almost a technical term for the tribulations leading up to the end of life, which must be endured by the community of the chosen one. Known disasters are not just a prelude and feverish apocalyptic thinking is irrelevant. "(*The Gospel of Matthew*. Eerdmans, 1981). As for the expression "the pains of childbirth," the apostle Paul, too, uses it as a symbol in his reference to "the day of the Lord" in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. But it should be noted that he equates these "pains of childbirth" (singular!) with *the sudden destruction itself*, not with any "signs" preceding it.

. *Tribulations of the Disciples*

Having given an overview of the disasters which should not be understood as signs of the conclusion of the age, but which were to mark the entire future history of the world in general, Jesus then turns to the turmoil which his own disciples in particular were to encounter and endure in the future:

Then they shall deliver you into tribulation and kill you, and you shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And at that time many shall break away and deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise up and mislead many. And because contempt for the law will increase, the love of most people will become cold. But he who endures to the end, that one will be saved.-Matthew 24:9-13, NASB.

The word "tribulation" in this section translates from the Greek word *thlipsis*. It is the same word used for the "great tribulation" in verse 21, where it refers to the pain brought upon the Jewish nation in 66-70 AD. The Greek word has the meaning of "distress," "agitation," even of "persecution." The term "persecution" is often used in the NT to denote the suffering endured by Christians. The apostle John, for example, writes of him as "the participant in the tribulation [thlipsis] and the kingdom and perseverance that are in Jesus." (Revelation 1:9) The Apostle Paul, in chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, verses 4-10, shows that Christians should endure such tribulation or suffering directly until the revelation of their Lord Jesus. At that time God "will reward with pain [thlipsis] those who afflict you and... give help to you who are afflicted and to us also when the Lord is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. "Thus the word thlipsis could be used 1) of the "great tribulation" that was brought upon the Jewish nation in the years 66-70 A.D., 2) the sufferings and persecutions that Christ's followers must endure in this world until the coming of Christ, and 3) the destruction inflicted upon the enemies of God's people at the coming of Christ. -2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.¹⁷

The followers of Christ were to be hated, Jesus said, not only by "all nations" but also by some who claimed to be their own believers. This turned out to be

¹⁷As texts such as John 16:33, Acts 14:22 and 1 Thessalonians 3:23 show, these sufferings are inevitable for the Christians of this world. The book of Revelation, written at a time of great tribulation for the Christian church, repeatedly focuses on these sufferings (1:9; 2:9, 10; 3:10; 6:9-11; 12:17; 13:7), and points to the time when Christians victoriously "come out" of this "great tribulation" and enjoy the reward for their endurance. (Rev. 7:9-17)

This was particularly true in the centuries following the organization of the Church into a hierarchical system governed by a central religious body that claimed divinely appointed authority. In later centuries, dissenting Christians, such as the Waldenses and Wycliffites, were persecuted as apostates, defamed, excommunicated or banished, and even killed by their own alleged Christian brethren. Why? Because they believed that "the Bible is the only source of religious truth" and that, therefore, "ministries or church hierarchies were to be tested against the word of God."¹⁸ Although the Roman Catholic Church has long since changed its policy toward such dissenters, many other religious organizations have emerged and closely followed the same pattern with regard to dissenters within their own ranks.

. ***"The good news must first be proclaimed to all nations."***

In addition to such hatred and persecution, Jesus pointed to false prophets, misleading teachings, and ever-increasing iniquity and lack of love as further evidence of the spiritual decadence which He foresaw would occur among the growing number of practicing followers in the future. None of these things, however, were to be understood as signs of the imminence of his parousia and the end of the age. First of all, there was another world-wide work to be done:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness for all nations, and then shall the end come. - Matthew 24:14, RSV.

Certainly, already in the time of the apostles, one could say that the gospel or the

¹⁸The Watchtower, 1^{er} August 1981, p. 14; Wake up! March 8, 1982, p. 8. It is remarkable how often religious organizations adopt the same attitude toward dissidents within their own ranks, whom they constantly condemn in other denominations. For example, the Watch Tower Society, while strongly condemning the way the Roman Catholic Church has treated its dissidents over the past centuries and regularly praising them as Christian heroes, treats its own dissidents with the utmost religious cruelty: excommunicating them and cutting them off from all contact with former Christian brothers, friends and relatives, often for the sole reason that such dissidents as the Waldenses, Wycliffites and early reformers believe that the Bible is the "only source of religion the truth? against which all ideas, interpretations, and claims of religious authority must be tested. It is also true that the Watch Tower Society, like the Roman Catholic Church, regards its own organization as a separate divine authority along with the Bible. Thus, "if we are not in contact with this channel of communication that God uses, we will not progress along the path of life, no matter how much Bible reading we do. "(The Watchtower, 1^{er} December 1981), p. 27).

The good news had borne fruit "throughout the whole world" and had been preached "in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:6, 23), as the gospel at that time (c. AD 60) had been brought to many parts of the Roman world, and probably also to places outside the Roman borders. Over the centuries, the good news was spread to many other parts of the world and reached hundreds of millions of people. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, published in 1982, the number of practising Christians today stands at nearly 1.5 billion worldwide, or 32.8% of the world's population, and the current increase is about 25 million a year. (Of course, part of this increase is due to births among Christians). Although these figures are impressive, Christianity is also characterized to a very large extent by the spiritual decadence predicted by Jesus: hatred, injustice and bloodshed; iniquity and without love. This is also indicated by the fact that, according to the aforementioned Encyclopedia, the number of sects and denominations within Christendom is 20,800! ¹⁹

The large number of practising Christians in the world today does not necessarily allow us to say conclusively that the Good News has now been preached "throughout the world" and that a profound witness has now been given to

"all nations, "so that we may proclaim that the end must come "any day now. No one can say how much more we will proclaim the good news. All we know is that the lengthening of time shows that there is still, from God's point of view, work to be done and that this lengthening of time gives us more possibilities to share our Christian hope.

¹⁹The Watch Tower organization seems to reject almost all of the preaching of the Gospel done in all these centuries since the death of the apostles and claims to be the only one among these 20,800 denominations that preaches the true gospel today! So what is the most important difference between the Gospel of the Witnesses and that of other Christians? The Watchtower, August 1st, 1981, explains on pages 17-18: "Let the honest reader compare the way the religious systems of ~~Christianity have preached~~ the gospel over the centuries with the way Jehovah's Witnesses have been preaching it since 1918. These are two very different ways. What Jehovah's Witnesses preach is truly a "gospel," that is, "good news," as when they proclaim that God's Kingdom has been established in heaven at the enthronement of Jesus Christ at the end of the Gentile age in 1914." However, if that 1914 enthronement, which is shown in this book as an illusion, is the most distinctive feature of their gospel, its worldwide preaching can hardly have anything to do with Jesus' prediction. Moreover, when Jesus spoke of "this" gospel of the kingdom, he could only refer to the gospel which he and his apostles were preaching at that time. Compare Matthew 26:13, where the expression 'this gospel' also occurs. By claiming that Matthew 24:14 was fulfilled on a small scale before 70, the Watch Tower Society admits this. So Jesus did not have a surprising new gospel in mind to introduce into this 20th century. Galatians 1:6-8 actually condemns the "new" gospels that obscure or violate the true "good news" preached in the first century.

with others - 2 Peter 3:9.

. ***The destruction of Jerusalem***

In his study of the calamities and troubles that would mark the future history of the world and the church, Jesus made it clear that such things should not be interpreted as visible signs of the end. Having first shown the erroneous views against which he was wary, Jesus now answered the disciples' questions.

They had asked two things: 1) the time and (according to the versions of Mark and Luke) the sign of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and 2) the sign of Jesus' parousia and the end of the age.

Jesus has now begun to answer the first of these two questions, describing events that would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and at the same time adding appropriate instructions and warnings for his disciples to observe during this period. It is not necessary for us to discuss in detail this section, the destruction of Jerusalem, which is found in verses 15 to 22.

Everything was accomplished to the letter in the first century, the wars of Josephus' Jews being in fact the best commentary and confirmation of Jesus' prediction. There is therefore no valid reason to assume the double fulfillment of this prophecy, as some did, one in the first century and the other at the end of time. This theory has no support in the context of prophecy, nor is it necessary under any other circumstances. A few comments on certain passages will suffice for our present purpose.

Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, was "the city of the great king" (Matthew 5:35). The common Jewish belief was that the Messiah, in beginning his reign, would do so in Jerusalem, Judea. They anticipated that the coming of the Messiah would bring literal and physical deliverance from the city. (Compare with Luke 2:38.) As Jerusalem was actually facing destruction, this was another dangerous misconception that Jesus warned His disciples against. In pointing out what would be evidence of the imminent destruction of the temple, Jesus referred to Daniel the prophet: Then when ye see standing in the holy place "the abomination that causeth desolation", the prophet Daniel said, "Let the reader discern - while they that are in Judea flee unto the

mountains. - Matthew 24:15, 16, NIV.²⁰

Luke, who often paraphrases to explain to his non-Jewish readers the Jewish terms and Old Testament allusions used by Jesus and reported by the other synoptics, clearly shows what would be "this abomination of desolation" by saying:

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the city go away, and let those who are in the land not enter.

- Luke 21:20, 21, RSV.

In May 66, Jewish revolts broke out in Caesarea and Jerusalem. This led the Roman armies under Cestius Gallus to lay siege to Jerusalem in November of the same year. When Gallus suddenly withdrew, the Christians of Jerusalem and Judea were given the opportunity to "run away to the mountains," which they obviously did.²¹ This sudden and unexpected withdrawal of the Roman troops from Jerusalem and Judea could be regarded as Jesus' fulfillment of "the prediction that these days had been shortened ... for the sake of the elect," giving them the opportunity to flee and thus save their lives. (Matthew 24:22, NASB).

By fleeing, they escaped the "great distress on earth" that began when General Vespasian's Roman forces returned a few months later to subdue the rebellious Jews. (Luke 21:23) From the spring to fall of 67, Galilee was conquered and in the spring of 68, Peraea and western Judea were subdued. In 69, Vespasian, proclaimed emperor by his troops, gave command to his son Titus. In April 70, Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, and in September the Romans took the city and destroyed it with its temple. According to Josephus, an eyewitness to the destruction and who published a detailed description of it about five years later, 1,100,000 Jews were killed in this catastrophe, and about 97,000 survived. (It may be said, however, that most scholars consider these figures to be highly exaggerated). In harmony with Jesus' statement that this tribulation on the Jews must have been worse than any other "from the beginning of the world to

²⁰ The reference is probably to Daniel 9:27, where LXX has the same expression as Matthew 24:15: to *bdélygma tés ereméseo 's* ("the abomination of desolation").

²¹ Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* III, v, 3), who may have obtained information from the second century writer Hegesippus, says that the Christians of Jerusalem fled to Pella in Peraea, the modern Tabaka 't Fahil. Although this place lies in the Jordan Valley (actually below sea level), the path led through mountain hills. The story of Eusebius concerns only the Christians of Jerusalem. Other Christians in Judea were able to flee to other places in the mountains.

Now," Josephus says, "no other city has ever suffered such misery, and no age has ever produced a more fruitful generation of wickedness in the world. - Matthew 24:21.²²

Those who try to make a double application of this prophecy have often indulged in the most fanciful speculations, in order to be able to point to a so-called "greater fulfillment" in today's events. For example, some believe that Herod's temple will soon be restored in Jerusalem and that an idol or image of the Antichrist will be placed there to fulfill the prediction concerning the "abomination of desolation."²³

The Watch Tower Society identifies the "abomination of desolation" with the United Nations, which they predict will soon desolate Christianity, the claimed counterpart of ancient Jerusalem. All these applications are totally unjustified and have no support in the text itself. Luke's account shows that this "abomination of desolation" referred to the armies that would surround Jerusalem in order to destroy it, and that Josephus, probably totally unaware of Jesus' prophecy, shows how all the details of the prediction were fulfilled between 66 and 70 AD. The idea of a further fulfillment in our own time is therefore not only foreign to the biblical context; it proves completely superfluous in the light of the complete and detailed realisation of the first century.

. *The visibility of the parousia*

Proponents of what could be called a "two-stage coming", a first invisible coming and a presence followed later by a revelation with visible effects, try to find support for believing the word found in Matthew's account, namely the Greek word *parousía*. They focus on the accepted fact that the primary meaning of the term is "presence". However, it is also established that, in biblical times, this term had become the equivalent of "coming" or "coming".

²² Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, x, 5. Some suggest that the phrase "as it was not and never will be" may have been used to emphasize, and perhaps should not be taken literally (Matt. 24:21; Dan. (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1; compare, for example, Ex. 10:14 and Joel 2:2.) It is also possible that the phrase "as it was not" (Matt. 24:21) does not refer to the degree of severity of the "great tribulation" but to its uniqueness: its meaning and consequences are nothing else in God's relationship with His people (compare Jer. 30:7: "Alas?! the day is beautiful, there is none like it? and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved. "[NASBD]). On the other hand, it is possible that no city in history has suffered as intensely as Jerusalem in AD 66-70.

²³ Oral Roberts, How to prepare personally for the Second Coming of Christ, page 38.

"This is particularly true in connection with a royal or imperial visit, a visit often accompanied by acts of judgement. A simple comparison of accounts of the coming of Christ will show that the term *parousía* is used almost interchangeably with the Greek words for "revelation" (*apoklypsia*),

"manifestation" (*epiphaneia*) and "future". (Compare Matthew 24:39 [*parousia*] with Luke 17:30 [*apoklypsis*] 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 [*parusiah*] with 2 Timothy 4:8 [*epiphaneiah*];

Matthew 24:3 [*parousía*.] with Luke 21:7 [*eusleusis*, in Codex Bezae Cantabrigensis (D)]. All these terms concern facets of the same event, the royal visit of a sovereign, King Christ Jesus. For a full discussion of this topic, the reader may wish to consider the detailed material presented in Appendix B. As the evidence shows, the "two-stage Christ" theory was first developed by an English banker in the 1820s. Later that century, many millenarians adopted it, some of whom, including Pastor Russell and his associates, used it as a convenient way to salvage failed predictions based on chronological conjecture, seeking to explain their failure.

What, then, do the Scriptures reveal about the visibility or invisibility of the *parousia* promised by Jesus?

In times of great crises, interest in the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world always increases. The great Jewish crisis of 66-74 would logically not be an exception. Obviously, because of this, after his prediction of the Jewish catastrophe, Jesus saw fit to repeat his previous warning against being misled by false Christs and false prophets:

So if someone says to you, "Behold, is Christ here?" or "He is here!", then it is Christ! Don't believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will rise up and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

Here, I told you before. So if they say to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go there; if they say, He is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For as lightning comes from the east and shines to the west, so shall it be to the Son of Man. Matthew 24:23-27, RSV.

The word then (Greek, *head*) in verse 23 connects the warning Jesus proceeds to give with his earlier discussion of the great tribulation over Jerusalem. Josephus, in describing the burning of the temple by the Romans, says that there was then a large number of false

prophets suborned by tyrants to impose on the people who denounced them that they should wait for God's deliverance and that the wretched people were persuaded by these deceivers. (Wars of the Jews, VI, v, 2,3) Whatever the circumstances, the disciples of Jesus were not to be misled by any prediction of the appearance of the Messiah at that time; they were not to be led to go to Jerusalem or even to Judea, and if they were already there, they were to leave, fleeing to the mountains. The warning against these false prophets and false Messiahs would also apply to all future times.

The false prophets to come would "show great signs and wonders". This could of course relate to miracles. But it is more likely a reference to false prophecy. The Greek word translated "to show" really means "to give" and does not necessarily imply the performance of something. As Bible commentator Henry Barclay Swete and others have pointed out, the words are based on Deuteronomy chapter thirteen, verses 1 to 3, where giving signs and wonders refers to giving predictions and not to performing miracles.²⁴ Therefore, include all those who, over the centuries, have devoted themselves to false prophecy concerning the second coming of Christ, paying undue attention to the "time element," setting dates for events that authoritatively interpret what they refer to as the "signs of the times."

There is another lesson to be learned from this passage, a lesson related to how Christ came. A human being who falsely claims to be Christ would not be easily accepted or recognized as such. His followers would have to tell others where he is and who he is, saying, "Here is Christ" or "There he is. "He is in the desert" or "He is in the inner chambers. "But Jesus warned against pretenders who should be reported in this way: "Do not believe him. "

His coming won't be like this. When he comes, his identity or where he lives will not be a problem. On the contrary, his parousia will be instantly obvious to everyone. To underline this, Jesus compared his arrival to lightning, which "comes from the east and shines to the west". A lightning bolt that illuminates the heavens is immediately seen by all from the eastern horizon to the western horizon. It is not necessary for anyone to tell others where or what it is, and

²⁴ HB Swete, Commentary on Marc, 1977 reprint of the 1913 edition, published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, page 310. Professor Alexander Jones also comments: "To show: to proclaim, to prophesy (cf. Deut 13:1-3)), not to "fulfill". "(The Gospel of St. Mark, London-Dublin 1963, 1965, p. 197).

no one needs to "run" after him. (Luke 17:23, NEB) Likewise, Christ's parousia will manifest itself instantly and directly to every individual on earth. This, of course, excludes all ideas about a secret, the unnoticed coming, and all explanations that a certain "biblical chronology" and/or certain "signs" show that He came and was "invisibly present" in a certain year. Such an understanding of the parousia is quite opposite to Jesus' own description of it as a very notable event. ²⁵

To further emphasize to his disciples that his coming would not be found or limited to a particular geographical place on earth, Jesus, speaking proverbially, added :

Wherever the body is, the eagles will be gathered. - Matthew 24:28, RSV.

Because the Romans carried eagles on their standards, many commentators conclude that Jesus' statement alludes to his earlier discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem. The idea would then be that the Jewish nation would become like an inanimate corpse ready for judgment, attracting to itself the "scavenging eagles" of Rome. But to abruptly introduce such an idea with regard to the parousia seems not only unjustified; the text parallel to the chapter of Luke seventeen, verses 34 to 37, shows that it is erroneous. According to Luke's account, Jesus' statement of the eagles and the corpse was preceded by a description of the judgment that would occur during the parousia; "On that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other forsaken. There will be two women who will grind together; one will be taken and the other abandoned. "This prompted the disciples to ask, "Where Lord?" Jesus answered, "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered.

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²⁵The present authors do not claim that Christ, upon His arrival, will be observed as a literal figure sitting or standing on a literal cloud in the sky, as some seem to believe, taking a text such as Revelation 1:7 literally. We emphasize that the Bible presents Christ's parousia, His glorious appearance, as an event that will be both considered and understood by all mankind as a divine and supernatural intervention in inhuman affairs. It is therefore not necessary to decide whether or not this event will include the vision of a literal figure on a literal cloud. In support of the idea that Christ's parousia is invisible to humanity, the Watch Tower Society refers to Jesus' statement in John 14:19: "A little while longer and the world will not see me. Paradise on Earth, 1982, p. 142). Giving the expression "more" (Greek, *oukéti*) an absolute meaning, "never again", they assert that Christ will be invisible even in his future "appearance" is unsustainable in view of what Jesus said to John 16:16: "A little while, and you will not see me (*oukéti*) ? a little while longer, and you will see me. "Here, to see "no more" means to see only for a little while, but not in the absolute sense of "never again". The "more" in John 14:19 could therefore have been used in a similar, limited sense, referring to the period of Christ's absence until His parousia.

What in fact provoked the proverbial declaration of the eagles and the corpse was the disciples' question as to the judgment, i.e. the separation of the righteous from the unjust that was to come. According to the common opinion of contemporary Jews, the Messiah at his coming would have his seat in Jerusalem, some even saying on the pinnacle of the temple, and from there he would exercise his functions as judge.²⁶ But if, as Jesus had just explained, this temple were to be destroyed, then the judgment could not come from there. Perhaps the disciples had this in mind when they asked, "Where Lord?" In any case, Jesus by his proverbial statement made it clear that the judgment would not come from a particular geographical location, but "wherever" sinners on earth were located at his coming, they would be found by his avenging forces, just as eagles flying around a body wherever it might be. In saying this, Jesus again rejected the idea that at His coming He would appear in a particular place on earth, for example in the desert, in Jerusalem or, as many today believe, on the Mount of Olives. Contrary to these ideas Jesus describes his parousia as a manifestation of divine power and glory that will be immediately seen and felt by everyone everywhere on earth.

Having answered the question of the sign of the destruction of the temple, his discussion of the manner of its coming forms a natural transition to the next question of his followers, in which they inquire what sign there would be at its coming and at the conclusion of the age.

. ***"The sign of the Son of Man."***

In terms of Old Testament texts about divine judgments in the past, Jesus presents his future coming as accompanied by terrifying cosmic upheavals:

And immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. - Matthew 24:39, 30, Darby.

The first problem we face in this text is

²⁶ Brunec, *ad loc.* Brunec, in turn, refers to the study of the French researcher J. page Bonsirven.

the expression "And at once" (in Greek, *euthéōs*). If "tribulation
Εὐθέως

of those days" alludes to the "great tribulation" of verse 21, it would at first glance seem as if Jesus placed (at least according to Matthew's version; both Mark and Luke omit the adverb *euthéōs*) his parousia immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. If this is the case, we would be forced to conclude that he was mistaken or that his parousia really occurred in 70 AD. In the latter case we would have to assume an invisible and essentially unnoticed advent, similar to what the Watch Tower Society claims about 1914.²⁷

That the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was a "punishment" from God is certainly true. In the parable of the wedding banquet, Christ describes the disinterest shown by the guests whom the king had invited in the parable and the mistreatment and even murder of some of the messengers he had sent to them. He declares that, as a result, "the king was furious and sent his troops, slaying these murderers and burning down their city. "Later he sent his servants to invite other people "from the corners of the street" to the banquet for his son's wedding. (Matthew 22: 1-10) Since the king here represents God, the Father of Jesus Christ, what was going on in Jerusalem could, in some respects, be called a royal visit by God, so, in that sense, a parousia. But even if what happened in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is to be considered a parousia, there are many problems in considering it as the parousia, the promise of Jesus Christ, the parousia mentioned in Matthew chapter twenty-four and the parallel texts.

Such a conclusion is difficult to reconcile with a number of points in Jesus' earlier discourse. A major difficulty is that if the parousia really took place in 70 A.D., the first resurrection and the change of living Christians to unite with Christ must also have taken place at that time. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52). The sudden disappearance of thousands of Christians from hundreds of congregations throughout the Roman Empire would certainly have left traces in the extra-biblical Christian writings preserved from the first two or three Christian centuries. Any such evidence, however, is totally absent.

²⁷ In fact, there are a number of commentators who argue that the parousia took place in 70 AD. A more complete presentation of this idea is by J. Stuart Russell in *The parousie* first published in 1878. See also Max R. King, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Warren, Ohio, 1971 (2^e 1981 edition). From this point of view the parousia is identical with the Jewish tribulation which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Although it was certainly a "divine punishment" and judgment, Christ himself said that His coming would come "after the tribulation of those days." (Matt. 24:29).

On the contrary, we find that after 70 A.D., even in Christian writings close to the event, such as the letters of Clement and Barnabas and the writings of the martyr Justin, the coming of Christ and the resurrection are still awaited.

It is generally believed that the writing of the book of Revelation by John, as well as the writing of his three epistles, was done towards the end of the first century, towards the end of Domitian's reign. John's death is thought to have occurred towards the end of the century under the reign of Domitian's successor, Trajan. It seems hard to believe that if Christ's parousia had occurred after the events of 70 AD, John would not have at least referred to it in his writings. Of course, if it had occurred at that time (70 AD), one would have to assume that John then ceased his earthly life, and then shared heavenly life with the Son of God. This would mean that John wrote Revelation and its three letters some thirty years earlier (i.e., earlier than the existing evidence proves), i.e., before the age of 70, as some scholars claim. (See John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London 1976, pp. 221-311).

Finally, Christ's presentation of His parousia as an event as visible as lightning, in contrast to the coming of some of the false Christs (who should sometimes be represented as being in hidden places, "in the desert" or "chambers") also seems to weigh against this theory. What other explanation is there, then, for using the term "And immediately" in this passage?

Some commentators point out that Matthew may have used the translated word "And immediately" (euthéōs) in a different sense than usual. It is widely acknowledged that Mark in his gospel very often uses the almost identical adverb euthús, not in the ordinary sense of "directly, immediately," but in a "weakened" sense.²⁸ As Dr. David Tabachovitz points out in his careful study of Mark's use of euthus, his purpose was often to draw the reader's attention to something new, and the best translation in such a case would therefore be: "Behold, ."²⁹ in his commentary on Matthew, chapter twenty-four, verse 29 suggests that "And immediately" (Greek - euthéōs) might have a weakened meaning

²⁸ The two adverbs are practically identical, both being formed from the adjective *euthús* and used in exactly the same way. (See Liddell & Scott)

²⁹ David Tabachovitz, *Die Septuaginta und das Neue Testament*, Lund 1956, pp. 29-35. As Tabachovitz shows, ancient Greek translations of the Old Testament, such as the translation of LXX and Symmech, sometimes render the Hebrew word "see" by *euthús* instead of *idou* ("to see"). *Euthús* and *idou* are sometimes used interchangeably in the synoptics. (Compare Mark 7:25 with Matthew 15:22 and Mark 14:43 with Matthew 26:47 and Luke 22:47).

(euthysis), as was often the case in Mark.³⁰

Similarly, Dr. Brunec notes that the Greek term has one of its meanings of "in sequence" and that, although it is generally used to emphasize the short time interval between one event and the next, it can also be used to indicate the absence of any intervening event. Thus, he states, stating that "after event x comes immediately" comes event y, can mean one of two things: or, secondly, that event y occurs after event x without intervening or intervening events - without emphasizing the time that may elapse.³¹ In the latter case, Jesus would say that in the course of foretold events (the events which the disciples considered), after the destruction of Jerusalem, there would have been no other such prophesied event before the heavenly phenomena he described were unleashed. After this Jewish catastrophe, the next thing in order, then, would be the foretold "sign of the Son of Man". This would mean that whatever things might happen in the centuries between that event and its coming were not to be regarded as part of the divinely foretold events of messianic import or interpreted as constituting a sign given by God. In fact, history has demonstrated the absence of such intermediate events.

Although this understanding is entirely in harmony with the grammatical and biblical usage of this translated Greek term

The word "immediately" is certainly not the only possible meaning of Jesus' statement. Another possible and relatively simple solution to the problem is worth considering.

When Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," did he have in mind the tribulation of the Jews only in the years 66-70? It should be remembered that this was not the only tribulation of which he spoke in his prophecy. In fact, all the talk before the mention of the distress of the Jews had been nothing more than an enumeration of tribulations of various kinds, namely, wars, famines, pestilences, etc., which he called "the beginning of work" (verse 8), and hatred, persecution and other troubles - called "the beginning of the work" (verse 9).

The "tribulations" (thlipsis) in verse 9-which would affect his disciples in the future. Furthermore, the "great tribulation" foreseen on the Jews may not have ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. This is

30 *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, edited by D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971, p. 845.

31 Brunec, ad loc.

indicated by Luke's parallel account. While both Matthew and Mark quote the statement about the "great tribulation" from Daniel chapter twelve, verse 1, Luke gives his non-Jewish readers a more detailed explanation of the prediction: judgment upon this people. They shall fall by the edge of the sword; they shall be carried into captivity into all countries; and Jerusalem shall be trampled under foot by strangers until their day is fulfilled. - Luke 21:23, 24, NEB.

Thus, Luke's parallel account seems to show that the tribulations on the Jews would not end immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Captivity in foreign countries would follow (as was the case with the Jews who survived the destruction) and the city of Jerusalem would be trampled on or controlled by foreigners for an indefinite period of time, "until their day is fulfilled."³²

It is therefore possible that Jesus, by saying that his coming would occur He, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," did not think of the tribulation ending with the destruction of Jerusalem alone, but thought of the whole period of tribulation, which was to follow not only the Jews, but also his own disciples.³³ The coming of Christ will quite naturally put an end to this period of tribulation or affliction or "cut it off."³⁴ (Matthew 24:22) It is said that the tribulation is "for the sake of the elect. If the tribulation is understood as something that would continue until the parousia, the statement "in view of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened the days" is quite understandable, for an important purpose of Christ's coming is repeated for the deliverance of his elect from their distress. - Mark 13:20, 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18, 1 Peter 4:12, 13.

According to this point of view, then, Christ would literally come The "immediately after" the tribulation, for his coming will indeed be short or end the tribulation.

³² Those who maintain that the parousia took place in 70 CE are forced to identify this period of Jerusalem's trampling until the end of the Gentile period with the five months that the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem or with the actual destruction of the city and the temple. But it seems strange to say that the Romans "trampled" Jerusalem when they were outside the city. Furthermore, it seems clear that Luke says that the Jewish captivity in foreign countries would be parallel to the time when the Gentiles trampled on Jerusalem, thus indicating that these "gentile time" would be a long period of time.

³³ Dr. Basil F. C. Atkinson, for example, says in the *New Bible Commentary* (2^e ed., London 1954, page 800): "The" tribulation "did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem. According to the present author, this includes the next Christian age.

³⁴ It is a mistake to conclude that the "shortening" of the tribulation implies that it would necessarily be of short duration. The Greek word *koloboō* means "to mow, reduce, amputate," and so on, and says nothing about the length of time until it was cut off, only that it would have been longer without shortening it.

In any case, the sign of the imminence of this will to come, despite its terrifying aspects, inspires hope in faithful Christians, for they will remember the words of Jesus: "When all this happens, hold your head high, for your release is near. "(Luke 21:28, NEB) What will this deliverance mean for Christ's faithful followers? As many passages in the New Testament show, it can only mean their gathering together in Christ, to be with Him forever after that moment. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2:1; John 14:3; Philippians 3:20) It was obviously this event that Jesus had in mind when He said that when He arrived, "Immediately after the tribulations of those days, "He will send forth his angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. "³⁵ Further on in his discourse, Jesus pointed out that at that time "two men (must) be in the field; one is taken and one is left; two women will grind at the mill; one is taken and one is left. "(Verse 40, 41) At that time also Jesus will bless his "faithful and discreet" servants, appointing them "out of all his goods," but will assign to the wicked servants their portion with the hypocrites. ³⁶ (Matthew 24:45-51) So then, while the coming signified liberation and exaltation for Christ's faithful servants, it will also signify judgment and punishment for his unfaithful servants.

. ***The "last days" - what are they?***

As noted above, the popular idea of the "last days" is that they refer to a period of time before the

³⁵ Although the Watch Tower Society since 1973 considers that the coming "on the clouds of heaven" in Matthew 24:30 is yet to come, it claims that the "gathering" of the chosen ones mentioned in the following verse (v. 31) has been taking place since 1919 through the preaching work of the movement! (The Kingdom of God of a Thousand Years Approached, 1973, pp. 327-329) But this reversal of Jesus' order of events is made impossible by Mark's parallel text which, with the word "then", definitively fixes the gathering of the elect at the time of the coming of the clouds, and not at the time before them. (Mark 13:27) The Watch Tower Society believes that its preaching work since 1919 is the "harvest" mentioned in the parable of the weeds and that the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) falls to the ground when it is realized that the separation of the "weeds" from the "wheat" and the separation of the good "fish" from the bad in the parable of the net (Matt. 13:47-52) is related to the judgment that will take place of the future coming of Christ "in the clouds" with all His angels. In the parable of the register, the preaching of Christ's followers is illustrated by a net set in the sea, gathering together "all kinds of fish". The fact is that the separation of the good fish from the bad does not take place for as long as the net still collects fish from the sea (even though the separation of wheat and weeds does not take place while they are growing but at the time of harvest). Also, the collection of good fish from the vessels and the discarding of bad fish is done by "angels", not by humans (as is also the case with wheat and weeds). Logically, Christians cannot participate in this work of separation, because they are the ones who are separated.

Christ's coming for judgment and serves as an indicator that this event is imminent, about to happen. Although popular, is this really what is taught in the Scriptures?

Jesus himself never used the phrase "the last days" in any of his discussions about what the future would bring. He was referring to the "last day" (singular), but it was in describing what he would do after his arrival and the beginning of the final judgment. (Compare John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 7:37; 11:24; 12:48.) Furthermore, all his counsel to his disciples explicitly states that there will be nothing in the course of human events that is so remarkable, so different and unique, that would allow them to know from such conditions that his coming was about to occur. In reality, the very ordinary nature, similarity and repetition of human events and conditions would present the danger of becoming spiritually drowsy, complacent - as opposed to a period of very unusual conditions and amazing events, producing a nervous restlessness of expectation. - Matthew 24:43, 44; 25:1-6, 13; Luke 12 : 35-40 ; 17 : 26-30 ; 21 : 34-36.

With regard to the writings of his apostles and disciples, what do we find? Peter, Paul, James and Jude all referred to the "last days". First we find Peter talking about the

The "last days" are the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Speaking to the gathered crowd, he told them that what they had witnessed - the disciples filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in different tongues - was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, and then he said :

God said, "It will happen in the last days: I will pour it out on each one. a part from my spirit; ettesfils and your girls

³⁶Based on the opinion that the parousia of Christ began in 1914, the Watch Tower Society considers that Christ (the "Lord" in the parable) in his inspection of the Christians professing at that time found only the anointed members of the "household" to be "faithful and discreet", having given the members of the "household" their spiritual nourishment "at the proper time". Thus, in 1919, he is believed to have appointed them "out of all his possessions". A Thousand Years Approached, 1973, pp. 349-357) This opinion is used to justify the movement's claim to the divine authority of its members: since 1973, the Society has unwittingly undermined the theological basis of its own authority. In that year, the parable (vv. 45-51) was an extension of verses 42-44 and related to the same event, namely "Then, in 1973, the Society postponed the "coming" mentioned in verses 42-44 into the future "great tribulation" (Kingdom of God..., pp. 336, 337). However, in the context, there is no way to separate the "coming" of verses 42-44 from the following verses (45-51). Therefore, if the "coming" in verses 42-44 is future, the "coming" of the master in verses 45-51 is also future, as is his appointment as "the faithful and discreet slave in all his affairs. Therefore, Watch Tower publications since 1973 have indicated that the elevation of the slave is still to come and may even have individual application. (Our Future World Government - Kingdom of God, 1977, p. 158f.

will prophesy; your young men will see visions and your old men will dream. Yes, I will even support my slaves, men and women, with a part of my spirit, and they will prophesy. And I will show signs in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire, and smoke derived from it. And the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and bright day, the day of the Lord, comes. And then all those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. "Acts 2:17-21, NEB.

Peter therefore applied the "last days" as being in effect at that time. In an effort to circumvent this fact, some claim that he used the expression only in reference to the last days of the nation of Israel, leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.³⁷ But Peter does not say this and who are we to put words in his mouth or assume a meaning that is nowhere indicated. The fact is that Peter clearly uses the term in a context that includes the coming of the "day of the Lord" and the salvation that this day brings. He does not limit the "last days" he spoke of to only 70 AD, but apparently extends them to the day of God's judgment through Christ.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, after advising him about the difficult circumstances and problems he would face in serving his Christian brethren, Paul then declared:

**But understand this, in the last few days, there will be moments of stress. For men will be selfish, friends of money, proud, arrogant, violent, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, debauched, ferocious, those who hate well, traitors, swollen with pride, friends of pleasures rather than friends of God, having a form of religion but denying its power. Avoid these people.
- 2 Timothy 3: 1-5, RSV.**

Was Paul talking about conditions that were to prevail only in the distant past, perhaps here in our twentieth century? His own writings indicate otherwise. In his letter to the Romans, he describes how people were right to behave themselves and describes them in the same terms, namely:

...filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, lust, malice. Filled with jealousy, murder, conflict, deceit, malignity, they are gossipers, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, Though they

³⁷ This is the standard explanation offered in modern Watch Tower publications.

know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, not only do they do them, but they approve of those who do them. - Romans 1:29-32, RSV.

What is the difference between the two descriptions? They are obviously equal in terms of degree of extremes and immoderation. This being so, we can understand why Paul, writing to Timothy about the conditions of the "last days" (or, as the New English Bible says, "the final age of this world"), might say

– in the present tense - that Timothy should "avoid these people". In harmony with this, Paul's next words concern people among "those people" who were even infecting the Christian fellowship, and are still doing so in *the present tense*. (2 Timothy 3:6-9) According to Paul's own expressions elsewhere and according to the context of his letter to Timothy, his reference to the "last days" already corresponded to a current period in which Timothy was living and was connected with the conditions, attitudes and types of people that Timothy was already facing in his ministry and would have to face. Efforts to find a way around this obvious fact are once again reflected in a meaning that is not in Paul's words, inserted in an effort to support a preconceived idea and a meaning that does not fit the context.

James, in his letter, addresses these rich people who have "deposited treasures for the last days". (James 5:1-3, RSV) This expression allows for different renderings. Thus, some translations speak of their wealth of hoarding "in the last days" (NIV; NW), "in these last days" (Phillips; TEV), "in a near age" (NEB). The Greek preposition used (*en*) literally means "in". Whatever choice one may make, this statement certainly does not provide a solid basis on which to build a concept of the "last days", that is, an identifiable period immediately preceding the coming of Christ. The scope and content of its context are very close to those found in the earlier statements of Peter and Paul.

Both Peter and John warn of scoffers who "will come in the last days," questioning the certainty of God's judgment day. (2 Peter 3:4; Jude 17:18) Again, however, these two writers indicate that such mockery would occur during the lifetime of those to whom they write; they present their mockery as an attitude they already have to face and, as Jude says, such unspiritual and selfish people had, at that time, to preserve themselves "from men who divide you. Jude 19, NIV.

Peter shows that it is the very fact that the overall structure of human life and human conditions remains essentially the same that allows these people to express such disbelief. He does not say that they see extraordinary conditions, never seen before, and then refuse to recognize them as a "sign". Rather, he compares their unfaithful attitude to that which caused the destruction of the people in the flood. As Jesus had said, the people of that time were not warned by certain unusual conditions; they lived in what was for them a moment of normality, "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage", with nothing to make them believe in the destruction that was coming upon them quickly, without warning. (Matthew 24:38, 39) Such unbelief and the mocking viewpoint it engenders has existed throughout the centuries until the present day. It is not unique to our time.

There is reason to believe, therefore, that the apostles and disciples of Christ Jesus applied the expression "the last days" to this period of human history from the appearance, death and resurrection of the Messiah to the final judgment. Thus, the Letter to the Hebrews begins with the following statement:

In many and various ways God has spoken to our fathers through the prophets; but in these last days [NEB, last age] He has spoken to us through a Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom He created the world. - Hebrews 1:1, 2, RSV.

The long panorama of human history, from its very beginnings, could therefore be compared to a drama in three acts. In such a drama, the first and second acts lead to the finale, and when the curtain rises for the third act, we know that the drama has entered its final part and that when the curtain falls, the drama will end. According to the biblical evidence, the drama of human history has entered its final phase, its "third act", with the coming of the Messiah and his death and resurrection. These final events paved the way and marked the beginning of the final age of this world, its last days.

. *The true sign and its meaning*

Jesus declared that humanity, all humanity, would see a sign in connection with his coming. What is this sign that announces his coming judgment and the eagerly awaited liberation of the faithful Christians? (1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10) It is obviously the

Cosmic concussion described in Matthew, chapter twenty-four, verses 29 and 30. At the approach of the Son of Man, clothed in divine power and glory, nature trembles and the sky darkens. Luke's parallel text has additional details that are interesting to note:

And there shall be signs [Greek, *Semeiah*, the plural of *Seme'on*] in the sun and the moon and the stars, and in the great dismay of the earth among the nations, in perplexity at the noise of the sea and the waves, men shall faint for fear and expectation of the things that are coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then we shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.-Luke 21:25-27, NASB.

When these things begin to happen, Jesus said, "Your release is at hand at the gates. This cosmic restlessness is therefore the sign that the disciples asked for. It is interesting to note that Luke directly mentions the signs of the sun, the moon and the stars, while Matthew speaks of the darkening of these heavenly bodies and adds that "then shall appear the sign (*semeon*) of the Son of Man in heaven...". It is clear from this comparison that the "sign of the Son of Man" is this cosmic upheaval, the "signs of the sun and the moon and the stars", the trembling of the "powers of heaven" accompanied by the "roar of the sea and the waves" and so on. ³⁸

As stated earlier, the language used here reflects the language used in many Old Testament prophecies dealing with divine judgments of the past. It is clear that the language of these ancient prophets was highly symbolic and used physical phenomena to describe catastrophic changes in the social and spiritual world, such as the upheaval of dynasties and the destruction of nations hostile to Israel. For example, Isaiah's prophecy about the fall of ancient Babylon includes the prediction that "the stars of the heavens and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going out, and the moon shall not shine in its coming in. (Isaiah 13:10) The ancient prophets foretold the destruction of Idumea and Egypt in similar terms. (Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7,8) The "roaring of the sea and the waves" is also a common feature of Old Testament texts concerning divine interventions in

³⁸That Matthew 24:29, 30 contains the answer to the disciples' question about the sign of Christ's coming is the conclusion of many Bible commentators. Dr. JC Fenton, for example, observes: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven is a Matthean addition, and answers the question in v 3, what shall be the sign of your coming? - *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (Penguin Books).

the man's world. (Isaiah 51:15; Habakkuk 3:8; Haggai 2:6; Psalm 77:17-19)³⁹ In considering the cosmic upheavals associated with the coming of Christ, such parallels are often alluded to - and rightly so - as warnings not to take the description too literally.⁴⁰

On the other hand, there is also the danger of spiritualizing parousia to mean only great changes in the religious or political world. Other texts, such as 2 Peter chapter three, verses 4 to 13, are not easily explained as mere symbols of such upheavals.⁴¹ There is no doubt that our century has seen great social and political emotions, including two world wars. But have these things caused men to "faint with fear and expect things to happen to the world? (Luke 21:26) The authors do not deny that there is much fear in the world today. The Watch Tower Society in particular asserts that this fear is something new and uniquely fulfills the prophecy of Jesus.⁴² As this book makes clear, however, there have been other periods in the past that have also been characterized by widespread fear, such as the time of the black plague at XIV^e century. In fact, Pastor Russell, the founder of the

Watch Tower Society, felt that the predicted "fear" was clearly evident at the end of the XIX^e century!⁴³

Today, you just have to look around you, at your neighbors, at the people...

39 This way of describing nature as trembling at the "sight" of divine forces or powerful conquerors is also common in the extra-biblical literature of the ancient East. The Assyrian kings, for example, boasted that the world "trembled" in their attacks. Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.E.) asserted that "at his mighty assault in battle, the ends of the world are uneasy, the mountains tremble" and Sargon II (721-705 B.C.E.) said that "the mountains and the sea bend" (Samuel E. Loew-enstamm, "The Trembling of Nature during Theophany", in *Comparative Studies of Early Biblical and Oriental Literature*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980, p. 183).

40 The coming of Christ "in" or "with" the clouds, Luke 21:27 and Revelation 1 : 7) does not denote invisibility, as the Watch Tower Society maintains (*The Watch Tower*, December 15, 1974, p. 751), but the presence of divine power and glory. In the Old Testament, only God himself, apart from the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13, is described as coming in or on the clouds. (Jer. 19:1; Ps. 104:3) (See the discussion of Gustaf Dalmanin, *The Words of Jesus*, Edinburgh 1902, pp. 241-243).

41 The apostle Peter clearly contrasts "the present heavens and the earth" with those that existed before the flood and which had been formed by God in the second and third days of creation" (2 Peter 3:5,7; Gen. 1:8,10). Those who date from the Parousia to 70 AD even conclude that "the present heavens and the earth" mentioned by Peter refer to the nation of Israel which was destroyed and dissolved in A.D. 70. (J.S. Russell, *The Parousia*, p. 320) But Peter makes it clear that "the heavens and the earth" replaced those existing before the flood. It is reasonable to ask how could this ancient world be replaced by the nation of Israel in Palestine alone? It seems obvious that the judgment and destruction described by Peter will be universal in scope and encompass all mankind.

42 *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1983, pp. 4-7.

43 *Wake up!* Reprinted, pp. 26, 253.

on the street, people at work, in their daily business and at leisure, and ask how many of them are witnessing a frightening agitation? In fact, despite atomic and hydrogen bombs, despite spectacular space activities and moon travel, despite political or economic upheaval, the vast majority of people continue as they have in the past, preoccupied with their daily concerns and plans for the future.⁴⁴ Fear of crime, war, disease, or any other calamity rarely produces more than a vague sense of unease, not the extreme agitation described in the prophecy, and these fears are usually suppressed by everyday interests. And Jesus foretold that it would be no different when, with the speed of lightning, the "snare" closes when divine judgment arrives, bringing about truly terrifying circumstances. - Matthew 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-30; 21:34-36.

Whatever fear is felt in the past and present will be overshadowed by the universal panic that will truly fulfill prophecy. Jesus did not speak of the fear of what might happen, but of what men understand will happen because of the shaking of the "Powers of Heaven." (Luke 21:26) This clearly refers to the time when "the sign of the Son of Man" is seen, when, according to the parallel text of Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 30, "all the peoples of the earth shall beat their breasts [lamenting]. (NEB) This situation is not presented as having anything to do with the internal affairs of mankind, such as the periodic fear of people. Rather, it will be caused by cosmic upheavals of such magnitude that men will die of dread of what is happening on earth. (NAB)⁴⁵ Whatever the cosmic phenomena introducing parousia, one thing seems clear in the context. As an unmistakable sign of parousia, they will certainly refer to acts that everyone will clearly and undeniably see as being of divine origin, and thus totally distinct from the ancient and common human experiences with war, famine, plague and earthquakes.

⁴⁴ Dr. Peter Bourne, President of Global Water, Incorporated, reviewing a book on diseases in the past, notes that the constant threat of these uncontrollable and often widespread disasters has created far more fear than the threat of nuclear war. He says:

"The book reminds us of something we forget all too easily, namely the terrifying threat that epidemic diseases have consistently posed to people throughout history until recent years. Burdening everyone, regardless of social level, income or power, was the constant fear of sudden and irrational death. In our time, only the threat of nuclear war comes close to what this

Fear must have been. "A Shift in the Wind, No. 18, May 1984, p. 8 (an article published by The Hunger Project, P. O. Box 789, San Francisco, California 94101, USA).

Being of this nature, Christ's followers will recognize the cosmic upheavals as the sign of a decisive turning point in human history: the coming of Christ to put an end forever to the present wicked age with its wars, famines, plagues and many other troubles, and to bring about a new era, "the age to come", of which he will be Lord. (Mark 10:30) May we be considered worthy of reaching that age of being blessed by His Lord with life, peace, happiness and freedom forever! (Luke 20:35) Until the coming of this age, we must live each day of our lives in a way that demonstrates that we always keep in mind the urgent call with which, according to Mark's version, Jesus concluded his speech:

Take heed, be watchful; for you know not when the hour is appointed.

It is like a man, on a journey, who, leaving his house and charging his slaves, assigning each one his task, also ordered the guard to remain vigilant.

So be vigilant, for you do not know when the master of the house arrives, whether it be in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the cock, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all of you, "Be vigilant!" Mark 13:33-37, NASB.

45 On the terror caused by the alarming cosmic signs, see further Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (12^e edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979), pp. 537-540. By using the oikoumene word, "the inhabited earth, the world," Luke included the whole earth in the coming judgment. Sometimes, for example, in Luke 2:1, oikomene was used to refer to the Roman Empire "which, by misuse of language, was commonly used in reference to emperors, was equal to the whole world. (Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 561) Some earlier scholars, focusing on Luke 2:1 and Acts 11:28, 29, argued that oikomene was sometimes used only in Palestine. This view is not currently supported by modern scholarship. Thus, the "great famine" mentioned in Acts 11:28,29 is now documented as well as other parts of the Roman Empire outside Palestine. (K. R. Gapp, "The Universal Famine under Claudius," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 28, 1935, pp. 258-265). Similarly, the census mentioned in Luke 2:1 was not unique in Palestine, for similar censuses are known to have been conducted in many other provinces during the time of Augustus (See the discussion in I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978. pp. 98-104).

9 ANNEX A

. *Correspondence with Seismologists*

Is there at least one seismologist who specializes in historical seismicity who agrees with the preachers of today's end times, including the Watch Tower Society, that this century has seen a great number of destructive earthquakes?

The authors have written to a number of world-renowned seismologists to find out. The responses received have been remarkably unanimous. In fact, we have not found one seismologist who claims that the number of earthquakes has increased dramatically in this century.

More than a hundred years of research on historical seismicity seem to have established a general consensus among authorities that the earth's seismicity is not very different from what it has been for thousands of years.

Due to lack of space, we can only publish a selection of the letters we receive, but those that are not published send the same message. In general, we explained the nature of our investigation and asked a few questions. The following are the most typical:

- 1) Do you think there has been a considerable increase in major earthquakes in this century compared to previous centuries?
- 2) Do you think the seismic activity of this century is unique?
- 3) Do you know another seismologist who believes that our era has seen an abnormally high number of earthquakes?

The first letter published here by Professor Båth refers to an article by Howard D. Burbank entitled "There will be earthquakes". This article was published in the *Adventist Review* of December 1977. It contained a graph intended to show that the number of earthquakes had exploded, especially in our twentieth century. We asked Professor Båth to

commenting on Burbank's statements, which he does in his response:

SEISMOLOGICAL
SECTION BOX 12019
S-750 12
UPPSALA SWEDEN

Uppsala, June 17, 1983

Mr Carl Olof
Jonsson Box 281
433 25 Partial

Thank you for your letter of June 6, which concludes the attached article entitled "There will be earthquakes" by Howard D. Burbank. - It is very clear that you are quite correct in your objection to this article, the author making the catastrophic mistake of counting only the number of earthquakes. Instead, he should have tried to track the Richter magnitude and therefore the energy released. The result would have been quite different.

As you quite rightly pointed out, it is only recently that we have been able to have a better network of seismographic stations and therefore better observation. In fact, reliable instrumental data only go back to about 1900. However, we can make a statistical estimate of the period since then.

For this purpose, I enclose a document - Tectonophysics, 54 (1979) T1-T5 - in which Fig. 2 shows the energy release and the number of earthquakes of magnitude 7.0 or greater. The first 20 years (up to about 1920) had about twice as much energy released per year in the following period. The number of earthquakes of magnitude 7.0 or greater also did not allow for a significant increase in subsequent years,

In previous centuries, we do not have the same reliable statistics, but there is no evidence of an increase in activity over time. - Without the slightest hesitation, the article (from Burbank) must be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Markus Bath

in our twentieth century. We asked Professor Båth to comment on Burbank's statements, which he does in his reply:

SEISMOLOGICAL SECTION
BOX 12019
S-750 12 UPPSALA
SWEDEN

Uppsala, 17th June 1983

Mr. Carl Olof Jonason
Box 281
433 25 Partille

Heartly thanks for your letter of June 6 and the attached article "There shall be earthquakes" by Howard D. Burbank. - It is very clear that you are completely right in your objections to this article. The author makes the catastrophic mistake of counting only the number of quakes. Instead he should have tried to go by Richter magnitudes and thus by the released energy. The result would then have been quite different.

As you very correctly point out, it is only in recent times that we have got a better network of seismograph stations and thereby a better observation. Actually, reliable instrumental data extend back only to about 1900. But we can make a statistical examination of the period since then.

For this I enclose a paper - Tectonophysics, 54 (1979) T1-T8 - in which Fig. 2 shows energy release and the number of quakes with magnitudes of 7.0 or more. The first 20 years (until about 1920) had about twice as great an energy release per year as the whole period thereafter. The number of quakes with magnitudes of 7.0 or more does not show any marked increase toward later years either.

For earlier centuries we do not have the same reliable statistics, but there are no indications at all of any increase in the activity in the course of time. - Without the slightest hesitation the article (by Burbank) must be rejected.

With kind regards,



Markus Båth

The following quite detailed letter was received from Wilbur A. Rinehart of the World Data Center A in Boulder, Colorado:

The following letter, quite detailed, was received from Wilbur A. Rinehart of the *World Data Center A* in Boulder, Colorado:

WORLD DATA CENTER A
CENTRES DE BOULDER
National Geophysical Data Centre National Oceanic
and Atmospheric Administration 325 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80803 U. S. A.
TELEX: 45897 SOLTERWARN-BDR

August 8, 1985 Mr.

Wolfgang Herbst & Co.
Carl O. Jonsson
Box 14037
S-14037
S-400 20 Gothenburg, Sweden

Dear Mr Herbst and Mr Jonsson:

Mr. Ganse left the data centre about three years ago and I was asked to respond to the questions you asked in your letter of July 7, 1985.

Instrumental seismology began around the turn of the century. Before then, large and small earthquakes had been reported by the general population, a small scientific community and the media. Large earthquakes occurring in sparsely populated areas went unnoticed and were rarely catalogued.

The systematic locations of earthquakes were established by Herben Hall Turner in 1913 by the International Seismological Survey in England, following the example of John Milne, considered to be the father of English seismology. Their work was continued by many others, including Miss Ethel Bellamy and Sir

Harold Jefferys, who have continued to publish annual and five-year summaries of earthquakes located by ISS since 1918. They have used instrumental data to determine the location of these earthquakes. At that time, there were fewer than 200 seismological observatories around the world, and the instruments all had low gain, in the range of 100 to 200. Even with this major contribution to observational seismology, the instruments were too insensitive for large earthquakes in remote areas of the world.

The real breakthrough in seismology came in the early 1960s, when the U.S. *Coast and Geodetic Survey* installed a network of 111 exactly identical sets of instruments in the "free" world, primarily to detect the underground detonation of nuclear bombs. The response of all these instruments was the same; their gain varied with the background noise at the site. At that time, the detection threshold for all large and significant earthquakes was reached and probably all were detected worldwide.

The misuse of the statistics you quote in your letter is common to anyone who wants to prove a point. We know that the occurrence of earthquakes is not uniform over time, but no one knows for sure what the temporal distribution is. Our statistical period for large earthquakes is simply too short to know the recurrence rates or to suggest that a given period causes more shocks than another period. Looking at a specific area, there seem to be groups of large earthquakes in time and no other in the area appears in the record. A perfect example is the 1811-1812 group of earthquakes of magnitude 8+ or greater in the New Madrid area of the central United States. Even our famous San Andreas Fault has been locked since 1906, but there were larger shocks in 1838, 1857 and 1866.

In response to your questions, I would disagree with the use of the earthquake numbers mentioned in the "Catalogue of Significant Earthquakes from 2000 BC to 1979" to prove any rate of earthquake occurrence or recurrence. The authors would surely agree that the completeness of the catalogues varies with time, being poorer in the years preceding instrumental seismology. I know of no competent seismologist or statistician who would use the figure quoted in the way the Watchtower Society used them. I certainly agree with the

Professors Båth and Richter to say that there has been no significant increase in the number of earthquakes in this or any other century. And I would conclude with Mark Twain's famous quote:

"There are three types of lies: lies, damn lies and statistics. »

Sincerely,

Wilbur A. Rinehart

Seismologist



WORLD DATA CENTER A

BOULDER CENTERS

SOLAR-TERRRESTRIAL PHYSICS
(800) 487-6554
SOLAR EARTH GEOPHYSICS
(800) 487-6551

National Geophysical Data Center
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
325 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80303 U.S.A.
TELEX: 66897 SOLTERWARN-BDR

MARINE GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS
(800) 487-6487
GLACIOLOGY (SNOW AND ICE)
(800) 488-8171

August 8, 1985

Dr. Wolfgang Herbst &
Carl O. Jonsson
Box 14037
S-14037
S-400 20 Goteborg, Sweden

Dear Drs. Herbst and Jonsson:

Dr. Ganse left the Data Center about three years ago and I have been asked to respond to the questions you posed in your letter of July 7, 1985.

Instrumental seismology began around the turn of the century. Prior to that, the reporting of both large and small earthquakes fell on a general populace, a small scientific community and the media. Large earthquakes occurring in sparsely populated areas went unnoticed and were seldom cataloged.

Systematic locations of earthquakes began by the International Seismological Survey in England in 1913 by Herbert Hall Turner, following the lead set by John Milne who was regarded as the father of English seismology. Their work was continued by many others, including Miss Ethel Bellamy, and Sir Harold Jefferys who continued publishing annual and five year summaries of earthquakes located by ISS since 1918. They used instrumental data to determine the locations of these earthquakes. At the time, there were less than two hundred seismological observatories in the world and the instruments were all of low gain, in the order of 100 to 200. Even with this major contribution to observational seismology, the instruments were too insensitive to determine even some large earthquakes in remote areas of the world.

Seismology did not really receive an instrumental break-through until the early 1960's when the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey installed a network of 111 exact duplicate sets of instruments throughout the 'free' world, primarily for the purpose of detecting the detonation of underground nuclear bombs. The response of all these instruments were the same; their gain varied depending on the ground noise at the site. At that time, the threshold for

detecting all large and significant earthquakes was achieved and probably none go undetected in the world.

The misuse of the statistics which you quote in your letter is common for anyone wishing to prove a point. The occurrence of earthquakes is known not to be uniform in time, but no one knows for sure what is the temporal distribution. Our statistical time period for large earthquakes is just too small to know reoccurrence rates or to suggest that for any one time period, there are more shocks than in another time period. Looking at specific areas, there seems to be clusters of large earthquakes in time and then no others in the area appear in the record. A perfect example of this is the 1811-1812 group of possibly magnitude 8+ earthquakes in the New Madrid area in central United States. Even our famous San Andreas fault has been locked since 1906, yet there were large shocks in 1838, 1857, and 1866.

In answer to your questions, I would not agree with the use of the numbers of earthquakes as reported in the 'Catalog of Significant Earthquakes 2000 BC - 1979' to prove any occurrence or reoccurrence rates of earthquakes. The authors would surely agree that the catalogs completeness varies with time, being poorer in the years before instrumental seismology. I know of no competent seismologists or statisticians who would use the numbers quoted in the way the Watchtower Society used them. I certainly would agree with both Professors Bath and Richter in their assessment that there has been no significant increase in the numbers of earthquakes during this or any other century. And I would conclude with Mark Twain's famous quotes

"There are three kinds of lies - lies, damned lies, and statistics."

Sincerely yours,


 Wilbur A. Rinehart
 Seismologist

Since the Watch Tower Society, in its publication The Watch Tower of the May 15, 1983, page 6, expressly referred to the opinion of Professor Keiiti Aki of the Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Southern California, the following correspondence is doubly important. After receiving a letter from Professor Aki, we received a kind letter dated September 22, 1985, addressed to the Watch Tower Society requesting a copy of Aki's complete statement. Unsurprisingly, they were not willing to provide such a copy. We are therefore obliged to conclude that they do not wish others to know the precise content of the statement to which they referred in their magazine.

Nevertheless, we present here a copy of Professor Aki's letter to the Watch Tower Society, kindly transmitted by Professor Aki

himself. This letter is followed by another correspondence between Professor Aki and the authors of this book. (For more details on how Professor Aki's opinion has been distorted in Watch Tower Society publications, see Chapter 3, 37.)

September 30,

1982

Watchtower Society
25 Columbia Heights
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to your request concerning earthquakes [EC: ESH of September 24, 1982]. The apparent increase in the intensity and frequency of major earthquakes over the past 100 years is probably due to improvements in earthquake recording and the increased vulnerability of human society to earthquake damage. The main reason is the well-established plate tectonics, which indicate a very constant fault pattern over the last few million years.

The Richter scale is a more objective measure of seismic force than the disaster. In general, it is difficult to attribute the Richter Scale to earthquakes more than 100 years ago. However, an attempt has been made in China, where historical records are better preserved than in other regions. The attached figure shows the Richter Scale (M) of earthquakes in China over a period of about 2000 years. While the last 100 years have been active, there have been similarly active periods, e.g. from 1500 to 1700.

Yours sincerely,

Keiiti, Aki

30 September 1982

Watchtower Society
25 Columbia Heights
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Sir:

This is in response to your inquiry about earthquakes [EC:ESI/ September 24, 1982]. The apparent surge in intensity and frequency of major earthquakes during the last one hundred years is, in all probability, due to the improved recording of earthquakes and the increased vulnerability of human society to earthquake damage. The main reason is the well established plate tectonics which indicates a very steady fault motion over the past many millions of years.

A measure of earthquake strength more objective than casualty is the Richter scale. It is in general difficult to assign the Richter scale to earthquakes more than 100 years ago. An attempt, however, has been made in China, where historical records are kept in better shape than in other regions. Enclosed figure shows the Richter scale (M) of earthquakes in China during the period of about 2000 years. The past 100 years are certainly active, but there have been periods as active as that, for example, from 1500 to 1700.

Sincerely yours,

Keiiti Aki

KA:jnb

encl.

The Watchtower Society's use of a selected portion of the above letter in its magazine The Watchtower resulted in an exchange of correspondence between the authors of this current work and Professor Aki. The following correspondence is presented here:

GEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

TELEPHONE (213) 743-2717

September 5, 1985

Mr. W. Herbst & C. O. Jonsson Box
14037
S-400 20 Gothenburg
SWEDEN

Dear Mr. Herbst and Mr. Jonsson,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding my Jehovah's Witnesses statement. I am convinced that activity has been stationary for thousands of years. I was trying to convince Jehovah's Witnesses of the stationarity of seismicity using data obtained in China for the period from 1500 to 1700, but they put little emphasis on the published statement. Professor Kerry Sieh of Caltech, for the San Andrea Fault, obtained excellent geological evidence of stationarity.

Sincerely, Keiiti

Aki

19 April 1986

Dear Sirs,

Thank you very much for your valuable letter of September 5, in response to our request for information regarding the Watchtower Society's statement on the frequency of major earthquakes.

We wanted to know the extent to which the Watchtower Society had

distorted your professional opinion. That is why I, Wolfgang Herbst, have written to Watchtower headquarters in Brooklyn requesting a photocopy of your full statement.

Strangely enough, instead of sending us the desired information, they sent it to their branch office in Sweden, which in turn passed it on to a former witness in Gothenburg, Börje Silfverberg. This local representative wrote to me and wanted to meet me in one of their Kingdom halls, where I would be shown the information I had requested. As was possible at the time, I suggested that he simply send a copy of their correspondence with you, pointing out that "when I wrote to Professor Aki, he did not propose an awkward meeting", but sent the information I requested quickly.

However, Mr. Silfverberg, acting in consultation with the Watchtower office, was still not sending the information. He wrote that, since I had information from you, it was no longer necessary to "show the correspondence in question" and that he was therefore returning it to the branch.

Naturally, we see this strange procedure as an indication that they realise they have misused your statement and are now trying to cover up the whole issue. The Watchtower Society claims, even in its latest publications, that the frequency of severe earthquakes has increased twenty-fold since 1914!

As we try to present the real facts in our next book on the calamities of human history, we would like to know if you still have copies of the correspondence you had with the Watchtower Society and if we could get photocopies from you? As you may know, the Watchtower Society does not want to help. Among other things, we would like to know what you meant when you wrote to them about "the apparent increase in the intensity and frequency of major earthquakes over the last hundred years" - if you wrote anything like that. If you did, did you use the word "apparent" in the sense of "seeming" (not real); or in the sense of "obvious, palpable", as the Watchtower Society says, and even more unambiguously in translations into its other languages. The Swedish Watchtower, for example, uses a word meaning "perceptible".

We already have statements from your colleagues, the Bath doctors,

Ambraseys, Person, Kanamori and others, which are consistent with what you have already written to us. But the Watchtower Society's misuse of your statements gives your opinion a special meaning. If you can help us once again, we will be happy to send you a copy of our book when it is published in Atlanta, Georgia, later this year.

Sincerely yours,

Wolfgang Herbst

Carl Olof Jonsson

GEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

TELEPHONE (213) 743-2717

16 June 1986

Wolfgang. Herbst

Carl Olof Jonsson

Box 14037

S-400 20

Gothenburg

SWEDEN

Dear Gentlemen:

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to the Watchtower Society. Although the first paragraph is somewhat incomplete (the main reason why I believe seismic activity is constant is abbreviated to "The main reason"), it is clear that they quoted the part they wanted, thus eliminating my main message.

Sincerely, Keiiti

Aki

DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES
TELEPHONE (213) 743-2717



5 September 1985

Messrs. W. Herbst & C. O. Jonsson
Box 14037
S-400 20 Goteborg
SWEDEN

Dear Messrs. Herbst and Jonsson:

Thank you for your inquiry re my statement in Jehovah's Witnesses. I feel strongly that the seismicity has been stationary for thousands of years. I was trying to convince Jehovah's Witnesses about the stationarity of seismicity using the data obtained in China for the period 1500 through 1700, but they put only weak emphasis in the published statement. Excellent geological evidence for the stationarity has been obtained by Prof. Kerry Sieh of Caltech, for the San Andreas fault.

Sincerely yours,

Keiti Aki

Keiti Aki

:jl

Professor Keiti Aki
Department of Geological Sciences
University of Southern California
University Park
LOS ANGELES
California 90089-0741
U.S.A.

Wolfgang Herbst and
Carl Olof Jonsson
Box 14037
S-400 20 Goteborg
Sweden

April 19, 1986

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your valuable letter of September 5, in answer to our inquiry about the statement on the frequency of major earthquakes as quoted by the Watchtower Society.

We wanted to find out to what extent the Watchtower Society had misrepresented your professional opinion, so I, Wolfgang Herbst, wrote to the Watchtower headquarters in Brooklyn asking for a photocopy of your full statement to them.

Strangely, instead of sending the desired information to us they sent it to their brunch office in Sweden, which in turn sent it to a local Witness elder in Goteborg named Börje Silverberg. This local representative wrote to me and wanted to meet with me in one of their Kingdom Halls, where I would be shown the information I had asked for. As this was not possible at the time I suggested that he just send a copy of their correspondence with you, pointing out that "when I wrote to Professor Aki he did not propose an inconvenient meeting" but "promptly sent the information I asked him for."

However, Mr Silfverberg, acting in consultation with the Watchtower office, still would not send the information. Twisting matters he wrote that since I had information from you there was no longer any need "to show the correspondence in question" and that he therefore was sending the information back to the branch office.

Naturally we take this strange mode of procedure on their part as indicating that they realize they have misused your statement and that they now are trying to conceal the whole matter. The Watchtower Society claims, even in its latest publications, that the frequency of severe earthquakes has increased twentyfold since 1914!

As we attempt to present the true facts on the matter in our coming book on calamities in human history, we would like to know if you still possess copies of the correspondence you had with the Watchtower Society and if it would be possible for us to get xerox copies of it from you? As you may appreciate the Watchtower Society does not want to give any help. Among other things we would like to determine what you meant when you wrote to them about "the apparent surge in intensity and frequency of major earthquakes during the last one hundred years" - if you wrote anything like that at all. If you did, did you use the word "apparent" in the sense of "seeming" (not real), or in the sense of "evident, palpable", as the Watchtower Society indicates, and even more unambiguously in translations into other languages. The Swedish Watchtower, for instance, uses a word meaning "noticeable".

We already have statements from your colleagues, doctors Bath, Ambraseys, Person, Kanamori and others concurring with what you already have written to us. But the Watchtower Society's misuse of your statements to them makes your opinion significant in a special way. If you can help us once more we will be happy to send you a copy of our book when published in Atlanta, Georgia, later this year.

Yours sincerely,

Wolfgang Herbst
Wolfgang Herbst
Carl Olof Jonason

DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES
TELEPHONE: (213) 743-2717



16 June 1986

Wolfgang Herbst
Carl Olof Jonason
Box 14037
S-40020 Goteborn
SWEDEN

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed please find a copy of my letter to Watchtower Society. Although the first paragraph is somewhat incomplete (the main reason why I believe that the earthquake activity is constant is shortened to "The main reason"), it is clear that they quoted the part they wanted, eliminating my main message.

Sincerely yours,

Keiti Aki
Keiti Aki

Since the Mediterranean region is one of the major seismic regions of the world, the following letter from Professor N. N. Ambraseys of the Imperial College of Science and Technology in London, England, discussing seismicity in this region is of particular interest:

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

August 9, 1985

Dear Mr. Herbst and Mr. Jonsson,

Thank you for your letter of August 5. My general response to your questions is that most of the answers are detailed in my book with C. Melville; entitled "A History of Persian Earthquakes", Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Certainly, seismic activity in the Mediterranean has not increased during this century. On the contrary, in the Eastern Mediterranean, the activity of this century has been abnormally low compared to that of the 10^e, 12^e and 18^e centuries. I do not think that we have missed any important events in this region over the last 24 centuries.

I am enclosing some publications that may help you prepare your book.

Sincerely

N. N. Ambraseys



IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

N.N. Ambraseys
DSc(Eng) FGS FRGS FICB
Professor of Engineering Seismology

Department of Civil Engineering
Imperial College Road
London SW7 2BU
Telephone 01-389 5111 Ext.4718
Telex 261503

9th August 1985

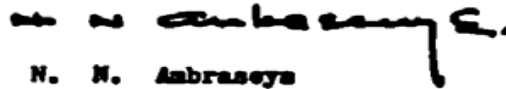
Dear Messrs Herbst and Jonsson,

Thank you for your letter of 5th August. My general response to your queries is that much of the answers are to be found in some detail in my book with C. Melville, entitled "A history of Persian earthquakes", Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Most certainly, there has been no increase in the seismic activity of the Mediterranean during this century. Quite the contrary, in the Eastern Mediterranean the activity of this century has been abnormally low when compared with that of the 10th-12th and 18th centuries. I do not think that we have missed out any large event in that region during the last 24 centuries.

I enclose some publications that you may find of some help in the preparation of your book,

Yours sincerely


N. N. Ambraseys

cve/RNA

In its issue of June 8, 1984, page 29, under the heading *Earthquakes* "The Watch Tower Society's Wake Up! magazine refers to the geophysicist Waverly Person of the United States Geological Survey. Here is the response to our survey from Dr. Person, head of the National Earthquake Information Service in Denver, Colorado :

United States Department of the Interior
GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION
BOX 25046 M.S. 967
FEDERAL CENTER OF DENVER
DENVER, COLORADO 80225

Centre newsworld the trembling digs
up, seismology and geomagnetism

October 8, 1985

Dr. Carl Olof Jonsson

Box 14037

S-400 20

Gothenburg, Sweden

Dear Dr. Jonsson,

Your letter to Dr. Frank Press, concerning a significant increase in major earthquakes in this century, has been sent to me for reply.

I'm not sure how you classify large earthquakes, but for us, the most important ones are those with a magnitude of 8.0 or greater.

Our records show no significant increase in large earthquakes. Attached is a list of all recorded earthquakes of magnitude 8.0 or greater.

If we can be of service to you, please contact us again. We look forward to hearing from you,

Waverly J. Person

Head of the National Earthquake Information

Service enclosed letter



United States Department of the Interior

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
BOX 25046 M.S. 967
DENVER FEDERAL CENTER
DENVER, COLORADO 80225

Branch of Global Seismology & Geomagnetism
National Earthquake Information Center

IN REPLY
REFER TO:

October 8, 1985

Dr. Carl Olof Jonsson
Box 14037
S-400 20
Goteborg, Sweden

Dear Dr. Jonsson:

Your letter to Dr. Frank Press, concerning a significant increase in great earthquakes during this century has been referred to me for an answer.

I am not sure of your classification of great earthquakes, but to us great earthquakes are ones having magnitudes of 8.0 or greater.

Our records do not show any significant increase in great earthquakes. Enclosed is a list of all magnitude 8.0 or greater earthquakes we have on file.

If we may be of further service to you, please contact us again.

Sincerely yours,

Waverly J. Person
Chief, National Earthquake
Information Service

Enclosures

Along with his letter, Dr. Person sent a complete list of "large earthquakes," that is, "all earthquakes of magnitude 8.0 or greater", which were on file with him. This list covers all "great earthquakes" from 1897 onwards, as well as seven scattered earthquakes prior to that time.

date. ¹ In fact, the list shows an increasing number of large earthquakes in this century, with the highest number proportionally larger in the period before 1914. This is consistent with the findings of other leading seismologists, as shown in our chapter on earthquakes. ²

The list provided by Dr. Person is summarized below in 17-year intervals:

17-year period	Number of major earthquakes	Annual average
1897-1913	49	2.9
1914-1930	28	1,6
1931-1947	28	1,6
1948-1964	14	0,8
1965-1981	10	0,6

From 1982 to 1985 inclusive, there was only one "great" earthquake, that of the September 19, 1985 in Mexico City. Naturally, this gradual decrease in the number of major earthquakes during this century represents simply a normal long-term variation. The trend can therefore quickly shift to the opposite trend at any time, in accordance with the cyclical nature of earthquakes.

Because the publication of God's World Church, *The Good News of Tomorrow's World*, surprisingly stated that from

- 1 The choice of 1897 as a starting point is not accidental. It was in the 1890s that seismographs capable of recording distant earthquakes were used. Thus, a fairly complete record of large earthquakes from all parts of the earth is only available from 1897 onwards.
- 2 Seismologist Seweryn J. Duda, in his comprehensive study of the period 1897-1964, concludes : "Thus, the annual release of seismic energy in the world clearly indicates a decrease in the interval 1897-1964 ... The annual release of seismic energy has decreased considerably in the 68 years since 1897, in both circum-pacific and non-peaceful regions. "(*Tectonophysics*, Vol. 2, 1965, p. 424) Of these 68 years, those of 1905-1907 experienced the greatest number of earthquakes. Geologist Haroun Tazieff explains: 'The period 1905-1907 was the most troubled of modern times, a period marked by eleven shocks of magnitude 8 or greater; and in 1906 alone, the world experienced these successive earthquakes: Honshu, Japan, magnitude 8...; Colombia's border with Ecuador, magnitude 8.6; San Francisco, 8.2; Aleutians, 8; Valparaiso, Chile, 8.4; New Guinea, 8.1; Sinkiang, China, magnitude 8. According to Gutenberg and Richter, the energy released by the 1906 earthquakes was much greater than that of the 1906 earthquakes. to the average of XX^e century, based on the years 1904-1952. "(*When the Earth Trembles*, London 1964, p. 134)

1901 to 1944 "only three earthquakes had a magnitude greater than or equal to 7", a letter was written to Dr. Seweryn J. Duda, Professor of Geophysics at the University of Hamburg asking for his comments. Professor Duda's response is presented here:

UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG
INSTITUTE OF GEOPHYSICS

Mr Wolfgang Herbst
Carl Olof Jonnson
Box 14037
s-400 20 Gothenburg
Sweden

July 7, 1986

Dear Mr Wolfgang Herbst,
dear Mr Carl Olof
Jonsson,

This refers to Mr Wolfgang Herbst's letter of 7 June 1986. You may answer your questions as follows:

- 1) Between 1901 and 1944, approximately 1,000 (one thousand) earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater occurred worldwide.
- 2) There is no justification for claiming that major earthquakes have increased significantly from the mid-1950s to the present day. It would appear that global seismic activity - if expressed in terms of earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater - has steadily decreased since the beginning of 20^e century until now. However, it would be speculative to extrapolate this pattern in any way into the future.
- 3) There is no indication that 20^e century is radically different from the previous centuries with respect to global seismic activity.

What differs, however, is the higher population density (in earthquake-prone areas) and hence the risk of loss of life in the event of an earthquake, although this is generally offset by a higher level of housing construction. In addition, better communication increases awareness of the calamities incurred in the event of natural disasters.

Thanking you for asking my opinion on the above issues.

Yours sincerely,

Seweryn J. Duda
Professor of Geophysics

UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG

INSTITUT FÜR GEOPHYSIK

Institut für Geophysik
Bismarckstraße 31, D-2000 Hamburg 11

Mr. Wolfgang Herbst
Carl Olof Jonsson
Box 14037
S-400 20 Göteborg
Sweden

Postfach (040) 41 33 - 4918 }
Telefonnummer: 9.38. (. .) }
Tele-Nr.: 214733 unibhd

Datum und Zeichen des Schreibens

Abmessen (bei Antwort bitte angeben)

Datum

SJD/ro

7 July 1986

Betreff

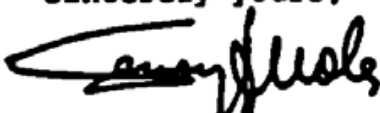
Dear Mr. Wolfgang Herbst,
dear Mr. Carl Olof Jonsson,

this is with reference to the letter of Mr. Wolfgang Herbst dated
7 June 1986. Your questions can be answered as follows:

- ad 1) In the time 1901-1944 about 1000 (one thousand) earthquakes with
magnitude 7 or over have taken place worldwide.
- ad 2) It is not justified to claim that large earthquakes have increased
dramatically from the mid-fifties to the present. There are
indications that worldwide seismic activity - if expressed in
terms of earthquakes with magnitude 7 or over - has decreased
steadily in the time from the beginning of the 20-th century
until now. It would be however speculative to extrapolate the
pattern in any way into the future.
- ad 3) There are no indications that the twentieth century is radically
different from earlier centuries, as far as the global seismic
activity is concerned.
What is different though is the higher density of population
(in earthquake-prone areas, and thus the higher potential loss
of human life in case of an earthquake, compensated however in
general by a better standard of house-construction. Also, the
better communication increases the awariness of the calamities
incurred in case of a natural disaster.

Thanking you for having asked my opinion on the above problems, I am

Sincerely yours,



Seweryn J. Duda
Professor of Geophysics

All these letters from reputable earthquake authorities thus contrast with the extreme, often irresponsible claims made by various commentators today.

10 ANNEX B

. **"Coming" or "Presence" - what do the facts reveal?**

IN THE question asked in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 3: "What will be the sign of your coming", the word "coming" translates from the Greek word "coming".

parousia", "*parousia*" meaning above all "presence", but it is well established today that in the time of Jesus it was also used in a different sense. Despite this, the Watch Tower Society insists on "presence" as the only correct biblical meaning of the term. In this they have a clear "interest" in it.

Their assertion that Christ's *parousia* began in 1914 and that since that year we have seen the sign of it in world events implies that the disciples of Jesus would have asked for a sign indicating that Christ had come invisibly, and not a sign that would precede his own, thus indicating his imminence. Consequently, the Society's new world translation of the Scriptures translates the question in Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, as follows:

Tell us, when will these things take place and what will be the sign of your presence and the conclusion of the system of things?

The idea underlying this translation is that the second coming of Christ consists of two stages, the first being an invisible presence until the second stage, that of the final revelation of this presence to the world at the battle of Armageddon. This idea does not come from the Watch Tower Society. It dates back to the 1820s, when it was first suggested by the London banker and biblical commentator Henry Drummond, who later became one of the founders of Edward Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church. The theory of the "visible presence" or "two-stage", better known today as the "secret abduction" theory, was soon taken up by other prophetic writers. It was adopted not only by the Irvingians, but also by the followers of John Nelson Darby, the Plymouth brothers, through whom it spread widely in England, the United States and other countries. It has become very popular, especially among millenarians, Christians who believe in a

literal millennium and future on earth. ¹

For many advocates of the concept of a "two-stage approach", the Greek word "*parousia*" became a crucial point of discussion. It was commonly accepted that this word referred to the first stage of Christ's coming, his invisible presence "in heaven". The Greek words "*epiphania*", "apparition", and *apokalypsis*,

"Revelation", on the other hand, was generally understood to apply to the second stage of the coming, Christ's intervention in the world events of the Battle of Armageddon. Changing the *parousia* translation of "coming" into "presence" radically changes the meaning, not only of the disciples' question, but also of Jesus' response. This is illustrated by the arguments put forward in 1866 by the Reverend Robert Govett, the most important British champion of the idea of secret rapture in the last century:

If we say, 'What is the sign or Thy coming? (Matt, xxiv. 3) then... we are looking for a sign or the Saviour's future displacement from the highest heaven. If we say, "What is the sign or Your presence?" we are looking for a proof or *the secret existence of Jesus in heaven*, after His movement to earth has temporarily stopped.

The disciples ask themselves: "What will be the sign or your presence?" (verse three). So this assures us that they imagined Jesus would be present in secret. We don't need any sign of what is openly exposed. ²

These arguments from 1866 were echoed by many other commentators, including Charles Taze Russell. In 1876, under the influence of the Adventist Nelson H. Barbour and his associates, Russell had adopted "presence" as the only acceptable meaning of *parousia* to explain how Christ could have come in 1874 (as Barbour had predicted) without being noticed by anyone. The adoption of this viewpoint was therefore the result of their failed prediction about 1874. This explanation was held by Russell's followers until the early 1930s, when it was suddenly "discovered" that the "invisible presence" of Christ had begun in

¹ For a detailed study of the origin and development of the idea of "invisible presence" and its adoption by Russell and his followers, see C. O. Jonsson, "*The Theory of Christ's Parousia As An 'Invisible Presence'*," *The Bible Examiner*, vol. 2, No. 9, 1982 and vol. 3, No. 1, 1983, Box 81, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada TIJ-3Y3.

² The British millennial newspaper *The Rainbow*, June 1866, p. 265 and July 1866, p. 302. The *Rainbow*, more than any other millennialist newspaper in England, gave way to the idea of secret kidnapping, and Govett published many articles. Govett's main work on the subject was his 357-page book, *The Saints' Rapture to the Presence of the Lord Jesus*, published in 1852. The whole discussion throughout the book is based on the fact that Govett changed the word "coming" to "presence"!

1914 instead of 1874!

However, such insistence on "presence" as the only correct biblical meaning of *parousia* seems to find very little support among Bible translators. In fact, almost all Bible translators prefer "coming" interpretations,

(b) "Advent", "arrival" or similar terms, instead of "advent", "arrival" or similar terms

"presence". William J. Chamberlin of Clawson, a biblical scholar and witness from Michigan in the United States, carefully verified the manner in which *Parousia* is rendered in Matthew chapter twenty-four, verses 3, 27, 37 and 39, in hundreds of different Bible translations from William Tyndale's New Testament of 1534 to the translations published since 1980, and he prepared exhaustive lists of renderings of 137 translations from this period, which yielded very interesting results.

. **"Parousia" in Bible translations**

Before the middle of the XIX^e century, apparently few Bible translators were inclined to render *parousia* by "presence". Among the English translations of Tyndale's New Testament at XVI^e.

to Robert Young in 1862, Chamberlin found only one translator, Wakefield, who in his New Testament (1795) used "presence" as a translation of *parousia* in Matthew chapter 24, verse 39. But Wakefield still preferred to render it by "coming" in verses 3, 27 and 37 of the same chapter. In addition, Daniel Scott, in his translation of Matthew published in 1741 (New Version of the Gospel of St. Matthew), uses "presence" in the notes, while retaining the term "coming" in the current text.

Lepremier translator at XIX^e century à *parousia* by translate

The "presence" in Matthew chapter twenty-four was probably Dr. Robert Young in his *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (1862), the reason being, as its title indicates, that he attempted to present the strictly literal meanings of the Greek words instead of the meanings of the modern idiom. Two years later, Benjamin Wilson, one of the first leaders of a small religious group now known as the *Church of God General Conference*, published his book *The Emphatic Diaglott* (1864), which also renders *parousia* by "presence" in the 24 occurrences of the New Testament. ³

³ See the book *Historical Waymarks of Church of God*, published by the movement's headquarters in Oregon, Illinois 61061, in 1976. The group holds views similar to those of the Christadelphians and Jehovah's Witnesses on such doctrines as the trinity, the soul, and hell fire.

Then, in 1868-1872, Joseph B. Rotherham published *The Emphasized New Testament*. But it was not until the third revised edition, published in 1897, that Rotherham changed his translation from *parousia* "arrival" to "presence. Why did he change it? The reason he quotes in the appendix to the third edition indicates that he had come, at least in part, to the idea of

"came in two stages". He explains that the *parousia* of Christ may not only be an event, but also "a more or less extended period during which certain things must happen. "No doubt Rotherham was influenced in his thinking on this subject by his close friendship with some of the contributors to *The Rainbow* magazine, of which Rotherham himself became editor in the last three years of its existence. ⁴

Other translators in the last century who used the "presence" for *parousia* in Matthew's chapter twenty-four were W. B. Crickener (*The Greek Testament Englished*, 1881), J. W. Hanson (*The New Covenant*, 1884), and Ferrar Fenton, who began publishing the first parts of his translation, *The Bible in Modern English*, in the 1880s.

In our century, the translations that make the *parousia* "presence" in Matthew chapter twenty-four are *A Concordant Version* (1926)

EI Knoch, *Bible Numerics* (2^e edition, 1935) of Ivan Panin, The

Translation of the New World by the Watch Tower Society (1950), *The New Testament* by James L. Tomanek (1958), *The Restoration of Original Holy Name Bible* (1968), Donald Klingensmith's *Today's English New Testament* (1972) and Dr. Dymond's *New Testament* (1972; in manuscript form only). ⁵Other translations give "presence" from time to time as a literal meaning of *parousia* in the notes, but prefer "coming", "arrival" (or similar) in the main text.

Thus, with a few exceptions, translators, both ancient and modern, have preferred to render *parousia* as "coming",

The term "advent", "arrival" or a similar term instead of "presence" in texts dealing with the second coming of Christ. They do so despite the fact that they all agree that "presence" is the primary meaning of the word. Why is this? Is it logical to believe that so many experts on the original language of the New Testament do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of the word "presence"?

⁴ See previous footnote 2. Rotherham was editor of *The Rainbow* from 1885 to 1887. See also *Reminiscences of Rotherham*, written by his son J. George Rotherham (London, shortly after 1906), pp. 76-79.

⁵ Dymond's translation in Matthew 24:3 illustrates that some of these translators were influenced by their adherence to the doctrine of "invisible presence": "But in the meantime tell us what other events will indicate that you have returned to earth to be invisibly present. »

managed to grasp the true meaning of this Greek word?

What about the early versions of the New Testament, the Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Gothic versions, which were produced while the original Greek koine of the New Testament was still a living language? What do they reveal about how these ancient translators understood the word *parousia*?

. "Parousia" in the early versions of the New Testament

As is well known, the Latin version Vulgate was produced by the great scholar Hieronymus of IV^e century, better known today as the

of St. Jerome. He carried out his translation work towards the end of the fourth century, beginning with the Gospels in 383 AD. Interestingly, in 20 of the 24 instances of *parousia* in the New Testament, Jerome chooses the Latin word "*adventus*" for

"advent". The four exceptions are found in Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:12 and 2 Peter 1:16. In these cases the Vulgate uses the Latin word *praesentia* "presence". It should be noted that only the last of these four texts deals with the *parousia* of Christ. In the other sixteen cases where the *parousia* refers to the coming of Christ, Jerome preferred the Latin word *adventus*. Why did he prefer the Latin word *adventus*? Clearly, he felt that in the texts dealing with the *parousia* of Jesus Christ, the word meant "coming" rather than "presence". Was he wrong in this understanding?

Actually, the Latin Vulgate was not the first Latin version of the Bible. It was preceded by many other Latin translations, some of which were produced as early as II^e

was in fact not a translation but a revision of these earlier Latin versions (although compared to the original texts in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), a revision produced with the aim of creating an authoritative Latin version from the diversity of earlier versions. These older versions have a common name called the Old Latin Bible or *Vetus Latina* (in Latin). Like the *Vulgate*, they also render *parousia* by *adventus*. The five exceptions (2 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Peter 3:4, 12) include only two passages dealing with Christ's *parousia*. Thus, like the *Vulgate*, the ancient Latin versions prefer to render *parousia* with the word *adventus*, which is the case in 15 of the 17 texts dealing with Christ's *parousia*.⁶ (see table below).

⁶ See D. Petri Sabatier, *Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinae Versiones Antiquae*, originally published in 1743. The facsimile printed in Munich in 1974 was consulted for this discussion.

The Latin word *adventus* literally means "a coming to", although it can also sometimes be used in the sense of "presence". In the above-mentioned Latin versions, however, *adventus* is clearly used in the sense of "coming". "Unlike *praesentia*, the Latin word for "presence. »

The Syriac *Peshitta* version was produced in the fifth century, but like the Latin Vulgate, it was preceded by older versions, for example, the Curetonian and Sinaitic Syriac manuscripts.⁷ If, as is often said, the mother tongue of Jesus and his apostles was Aramaic, these Syriac versions may in fact reflect the words used by Jesus and the apostles themselves, including the Syriac word for parousia in Matthew chapter twenty-four, *me'thithá!*⁸ Like the Latin word *adventus*, *me'thithá* literally means "to come," derived from a verb meaning "come."

The Gothic version was produced by Wulfila in the middle of IV^e. century, which is a little earlier than the Latin translation Vulgate. This version translated parousia by the gothic name *cums*, a word related to the English "come". It means, quite naturally, 'to come'.⁹

The remarkable conclusion is therefore that the early versions of the New Testament produced when the Greek koine was still a living language and by translators, some of whom knew the language perfectly well from childhood, preferred to render the Greek word parousia with words meaning "to come" rather than "presence".

"in passages relating to the Second Coming of Christ. They did this despite the fact that parousia means above all "presence" and has been translated in this way in other places. The question is: Why did they make the word "coming" in reference to the parousia of Jesus Christ, but "presence" in reference to the parousia of, for example, the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:1)?

12) ?

7 See the extensive discussions of Bruce M. Metzger in *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, Oxford 1977, pp. 3-82, and of Matthew Black in *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments*, K. Aland, editor, Berlin, New York, 1972, pp. 120-159.

8 Pieter Leendert Schoonheim, *Een Semasiologisch onderzoek van Parousie tot het betrekking gebruik in Mattheus 24* ("A Semasiological Research in Parousia with Special Reference to its Use in Matthew 24"), Aalten, The Netherlands, 1953, pp 20-22, 259. It is generally thought that the Curetonian manuscript is an earlier version of the Syriac text from Sinai, which was in turn written in Antioch in northern Syria. Since the Syriac of these manuscripts is thus an Aramaic dialect, it is probably very close to the Palestinian Aramaic dialect used by Jesus and his apostles.

9 The early Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian versions have not been studied.

PAROUSIA IN THE OLDEST LATIN TRANSLATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

<i>Texts using parousia :</i>	<i>Vulgate 1^{er} century)</i>	<i>Old Latin 2^e century)</i>	<i>Fathers of the Church (1^{er} - 5^e centuries)</i>
Matthew 24 :3	adventus	adventus	several none
24 :27	adventus	adventus	several none
24 :37	adventus	adventus	several none
24 :39	adventus	adventus	several Victorinus, d. 303
I Cor. 15 :23	praesentia	adventus	several Augustinus, d. 430
16 :17	adventus	adventus	aucun ? Ambrosiaster, 5 ^e century, and
2 Cor. 7 :6	adventus	adventus	Ambrosiaster <i>al</i> none
7 :7	praesentia	praesentia	Ambrosiaster none aucun ?
10 :10	adventus	adventus	Ambrosiaster
Phil. 1 :26	praesentia	praesentia	Ambrosiaster any aucun ?
2 :12	adventus	adventus	Ambrosiaster none
I Thess. 2 :19	adventus	adventus	Tertullian d. after 220 none
3 :13	adventus	adventus	Ambrosiaster Tertullian none
4 :15	adventus	adventus	Ambrosius, d. 397
5 :23	adventus	adventus	Ambrosiaster several none
2 Thess. 2 :1	adventus	adventus	Irenaeus, Tertullian, to d. after 190a Tertullian place, several places
2 :8	adventus	adventus	<i>et al</i> Tertullian none
2 :9	adventus	praesentia	Tertullian Irenaeus
Jacques 5 :7	praesentia	adventus	us Ambrosiaster Hilarius, d. 367
5 :8	adventus	adventus	<i>et al</i> <i>et al</i>
2 Peter 1 :16	adventus	(missing)	several Augustinus
3 :4	adventus	praesentia	none none
3 :12	adventus	praesentia	none none
I John2 :28	adventus	adventus	none none

(The variants of the Fathers of the Church are taken from the notes of Sabatier).

For centuries, this remained a bit of a mystery until, at the dawn of our own discoveries of XX^e century, modern experts from the Greek of the New Testament find the answer to this riddle.

. The technical use of parousia

During the last century, excavations on the sites of former colonies of the Greco-Roman world have brought to light hundreds of thousands of stone and metal inscriptions and texts on

papyrus, parchment and shards.

These new discoveries revolutionized the study of the original Greek language of the New Testament. It was discovered that New Testament Greek was neither "biblical Greek" as some believed, nor the archaic literary Greek used by contemporary writers, but was largely colored by the Greek vernacular used by ordinary people at home and elsewhere, the common language of everyday life, the spoken form of the Greek koine.

The consequences of this discovery for the understanding of the original Greek language of the Bible were first explored in detail by Adolf Deissmann, a future professor at the University of Heidelberg (later still at the University of Berlin), who began publishing his findings in 1895. Other scholars, who understood the importance of the discovery, soon joined in the examination of the newly discovered texts. A new light was shed on how many Greek words were used and understood at the time the New Testament was written.

One of the words, whose meaning has been clarified by the new texts, was the word *parousia*. Professor Deissmann summarized his new ideas in 1908 in his now classic book, *Licht vom Osten* (The Light of the East). His multi-page discussion of the word *parousia* begins with the following explanation:

Yet another of the central ideas of the oldest Christian cult is receiving light from the new texts, namely *παρουσία* [parousia], "coming, coming", a word expressing the most ardent hopes of a Saint Paul. We can now say that the best interpretation of the early Christian hope of the parousia is the ancient Advent text: "Behold, your king comes to you". (Matthew 21:5) From the Ptolemaic period to II^e century, we can trace the word In the East as a technical expression of the arrival or visit of the king or emperor. ¹⁰

Professor Deissmann then gives numerous examples of this use of the term. On the occasion of such an official and royal visit, as when the Roman emperor made a *parousia* in the eastern provinces, "the roads were repaired, crowds flocked to pay their respects, there were processions of his white-robed subjects, trumpet blasts, cheers, speeches, petitions,

1 Quoted in the English translation by L. R. M. Strachan of the 4^e edition, *Light from the Ancient East*, reproduced by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978, p. 368.

gifts and parties. "¹¹The parousia of the king or emperor was often regarded as a new era and coins were minted to commemorate it. During the visit or parousia of Emperor Nero, for example, during his reign, Paul wrote his letters to Corinth, and the cities of Corinth and Patras minted "the Advent coins". These coins bore the inscription *Adventus Aug (usti) Cor (inthi)*, demonstrating that the Latin *adventus* was used as an equivalent of the Greek word *parousia* on these occasions. ¹²

Since then, further research by many researchers, such as Professors George Milligan, James Hope Moulton and others, has confirmed Deissmann's conclusions, who for the first time demonstrated this technical use of *parousia*. ¹³ This use of the term clearly explained why early versions of the New Testament translated it as "coming" in texts dealing with the parousia of Jesus Christ. Greek lexicons and dictionaries today all emphasize this meaning of the word in addition to its original meaning ("presence"), and there is a general consensus among modern scholars that parousia in the New Testament, when used from the Second Coming of Christ, is used in its technical sense of royal visitation. ¹⁴

Will his coming be "a visit from a king?" Certainly it will. The Bible repeatedly presents Christ's parousia as a coming "with power and great glory," when he will sit "on the throne of his glory" and be accompanied by "all his angels. (Matthew 24:30; 25:31) A mighty archangel's "voice", "a great trumpet sound" and other obvious signs also contribute to the description of Christ's parousia as an official and royal visit, noticed by all and causing "all the tribes of the earth" to "mourn and mourn" at His sight. His coming is by no means presented as an invisible and secret presence ignored by the vast majority of humanity. - Matthew 24:27, 29-31; 1

2 B. M. Nolan, "Some Observations on Parousia", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. XXXVI, Maynooth 1969, p. 288.

3 Deissmann, p. 371. Notably, the Greek word *epiphaneia*, "appearing", generally used for the second stage of Christ's coming by followers of the concept of secret rapture, was also sometimes used on Greek "advent coins" as the Latin equivalent of *adventus*! (Deissmann, p. 373).

4 The most comprehensive linguistic study of the term parousia is by Pieter Leenden Schooheim, born in 1953 in Aalten, the Netherlands. The book has about 300 pages, including a 33-page summary in English.

5 See, for example, Kittel / Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. V, pp. 858-871, and the long article in the *Dictionnaire français de la Bible*, supplement, ed. by L. Pirot, A. Robert and H. Cazelles, Paris-VI, 1960, pp. 1332-1420. Another interesting study is that of J. T. Néllis in *Bibel-Lexikon*, Tübingen 1968, pp. 1304-1312.

Thessalonians 4: 15, 16; Revelation 1:7.

. ***The so-called specialist support***

In support of its insistence on "presence" as the only acceptable meaning of *parousia* in the Bible, the Watch Tower Society sometimes quotes a few Bible translations and an occasional Greek scholar. It is significant, however, that most of these references are obsolete and date back to a time when the technical use of the term was still unknown.

Thus, the most recent discussion of the word *parousia*, published in 1984 in the Revised New World of Holy Scripture translation with references, pages 1576 and 1577 (Appendix 5b), begins by citing four translations of the Bible which make *parousia* a presence in Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 3, three of which (Wilson's *The Emphatic Diaglott*, Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible* and Fenton's *The Holy Bible in Modern English*) were produced before the discovery of Deissmann and his colleagues. The fourth is the 1950 *New World Translation of the Greek Christian Scriptures* by the Watch Tower Society. The following article is entirely dominated by a quotation from Dr. Israel P. Warren's *The Parousia*, which defends "presence" as the correct biblical meaning of *parousia*. Unfortunately, Dr. Warren's work dates back to 1879! ¹⁵

However, the article also refers to three modern Greek lexicons. Note that Scott and Liddell's *Greek-English Lexicon* and Kittel / Friedrich's TDNT (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) both render *parousia* by "presence". But why are readers not told that these two lexicons then explain that *parousia* was also used in the technical sense of "the visit of a king"? Why are they not told that these same lexicons point out that this is the word used in the New Testament when referring to the *parousia* of Jesus Christ? The last of the two lexicons, the TDNT, actually devotes only a few sentences to the primary meaning of "presence". "The rest of the article, covering 14 pages in total, is a discussion of the technical use of the term, demonstrating that this is how the word is used in New Testament texts dealing with the *parousia* of Jesus Christ! The reader of the Watch Tower publication will never know this and would probably not have the means to find out. The argument that deems it necessary to resort to such an obvious use

6 Israel P. Warren, D. D., *The Parousia*, Portland, Maine, 1879, pp. 12-15.

biased evidence certainly doesn't have much to recommend.

Finally, Bauer's lexicon is said to have stated that "*parousia*" has become the official term for a high-ranking person, especially kings and emperors visiting a province. Curiously, this statement is quoted as providing further support for the claim that the Bible uses *parousia* only in the sense of "presence," whereas Bauer's lexicon gives the technical use, the official visit of a king or emperor (or a high-ranking person).

However, there is a modern Greek-English dictionary that seems to support the Watch Tower Society's understanding of Christ's *parousia* as a period of "invisible presence", to be followed by a final "revelation" of this presence at the Battle of Armageddon. This is the New Testament dictionary of words from

W. E. Vine, who defines the term *parousie* as follows:

When used for the return of Christ, it means not only His momentary coming for His saints, but His presence with them from that moment until His revelation and manifestation to the world.

This description of *parousia* is very similar to that of the Watch Tower Society. Not surprisingly, the definition of the word *vine* is quoted at length on page 1335 of the Society's Bible Help Dictionary. It may come as a surprise to some, however, to learn that the *vine* has been one of the most assiduous advocates of the doctrine of "secret rapture" in this century. This has apparently led him to define the word "*parousia*" in a way that supports his theological views. However, this only brought him into conflict with the results of modern research.

As mentioned earlier, the idea of "secret rapture" found its most zealous champions among the followers of John Nelson Darby, called the Brethren. In 1847, a schism between Darby and George Müller, leader of a group of brothers in Bristol, England, divided the movement into two: the "exclusive" brothers, led by Darby, and the "open" brothers, who sided with Müller. Although Müller himself rejected the concept of "secret kidnapping," the "open" brethren movement remained faithful to the idea and continued to preach it.

W. E. Vine, born in 1873, was associated with the "open" brothers and seems to have been so from his youth. He was a great scholar and his dictionary is a valuable manual for the study of the New Testament.

However, his definition of the word *parousia* was clearly influenced by his adherence to the doctrine of "secret rapture", a doctrine that was perhaps dear to him from the beginning. He defended it in several books written in collaboration with a fellow believer, MFC Hogg, such as *The Epistles of Paul and the Apostle to the Thessalonians* (1914), *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (1919) and *The Church and the Tribulation* (1938). The latter book was published as a response to the opinion of the Reverend Alexander Reese against the idea of

"The Approaching Advent of Christ, published the previous year (1937). Professor F. F. Bruce, a well-known exegete and commentator on the Bible, although belonging to the same religious context as M. Vine, makes the following critical comments on Vine and Hogg's use of the word *parousia* in their eschatological system:

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of *Touching the Coming* was their treatment of the word *parousia*. They insisted on the primordial meaning of "presence" and understood that the word in the "eschatological" sense meant the presence of Christ with the Rapture of His Church in the interval before His manifestation in glory .

One wonders whether this interpretation of *parousia* does not do justice to the meaning of the word in Hellenistic Greek. The writers did indeed appeal to Cremer's lexicon to support their views; but Cremer wrote a long time before the study of the vernacular papyrus revolutionized our knowledge of ordinary Hellenistic discourse.¹⁶

The Watch Tower Society's reference to Dr. Vine's definition of *parousia* therefore carries little weight. On closer inspection, it turns out to be essentially as obsolete as their other references.

. *What does the biblical context show?*

When a word has more than one meaning, the context must always be taken into account to determine how it should be understood. Does the context of Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, indicate that Matthew was using *parousia* in its technical sense or in its primary meaning? The Watch Tower Society asserts that the latter meaning, "presence," is indicated by the context. The Watch Tower of 1^{er} July 1949, at page 197 :

The fact that the arrival or visit of a king or emperor was one of the most important

16 F. F. Bruce in Percy O. Ruoff, W. E. Vine, *His Life and Ministry*, Londres 1951, pp. 75, 76.

of the technical meanings of parousia does not deny or contradict the fact that, in the Holy Scriptures, it has the meaning of presence in relation to Jesus Christ. To show the meaning of the word, the scriptural context is more powerful than any external papyrus usage of the word in a technical sense.

Okay, the biblical context is more powerful in such circumstances. The question is: Does the context of Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, really show that the disciples asked for a sign that would indicate Christ's presence and not a sign that He was coming? Is there any reason to believe that they really thought of Christ's coming as an "invisible presence" that could only be recognized by a visible sign?

When this question was put to the Watch Tower Society, they had to admit that the disciples "did not know that He [Christ] would rule as a glorious spirit from heaven and therefore did not know that His second presence would be invisible".¹⁷ If the disciples did not know that Christ would come invisibly in the future, how could they have asked for a sign of an equally invisible presence? This alone shows that Matthew could not have used *parousia* in the sense of "presence". Obviously, they asked Jesus to give them a sign that Christ's coming or promised arrival was imminent. They wanted a sign, not to announce something that would already be in effect, but a sign that would inform them in advance that the desired event was about to take place was indeed imminent. Their language, the words they used to express their question, would be in harmony with that desire.

The manner in which Marc recorded his question clearly confirms that this interpretation is correct. In Mark's version, the question of a "sign" refers to the destruction of the temple only. It is certainly impossible to think that they needed a "sign" to convince them that the temple had been destroyed or that its destruction was taking place. They wanted an advance indication of this event!¹⁸

The way Jesus answered their question fully confirms this. After reviewing future events that included

¹⁷The Watchtower, September 15, 1964, p. 576. The same conclusion was drawn in The Watchtower, January 15, 1974, page 50: "When they asked Jesus: 'What will be the sign of your presence?' they did not know that his future presence would be invisible.

¹⁸This refutes the argument sometimes used by the Watch Tower Society that "it would not be necessary to make a sign if the parousia was visible and tangible". See Wake up! December 8, 1967, p. 27

Jesus, in verses 29 and 30, describes the sign that will accompany his future coming "in the clouds" and adds:

Now learn this from the fig tree for illustration: as soon as its young branch becomes tender and produces leaves, you know that summer is near. Likewise, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the gates. - Matthew 24:32, 33, NW.

It should be noted that Jesus did not say that when they would see the young branch of the fig tree growing and coming out of the leaves, they would know that

"summer is present". These signs precede summer and prove that it is near. Likewise, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man would prove that "he is at the gates", but not invisible. The comparison is between summer as being near and Christ as being near. It is clear that Jesus told his disciples to look for a sign that would precede his arrival or 'royal visit', not a sign that would follow his coming and show him his invisible presence. From the context of Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 3, it is therefore very clear that the disciples asked for a sign of Christ's imminent coming, not a sign of his presence, which strongly supports the conclusion that Matthew used the word *parousia* in its technical sense, to signify the arrival or visit of a king or high dignitary.¹⁹

It is also remarkable that, among the four authors of the Gospel, Matthew alone uses the word *parousia*, and this only in chapter twenty-four. The four verses containing the term (3, 27, 37 and 39) have parallels in Luke, but instead of *parousia*, Luke usually uses "day" or "days". "When Jesus compares his coming to lightning, he immediately illuminates in a flash of lightning all the sky visible from east to west and adds, according to Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 27," thus will be the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man", Luke rather has, in chapter seventeen, verse 24," thus will be the Son of Man in his time. "Thus, the *parousia* of Christ and the day of Christ (*hemera*) are used interchangeably for the time of Christ's appearance or revelation. This appears even more clearly in the

¹⁹In the book *The Kingdom of God for a Thousand Years is Near* (1973), the Watch Tower Society attempts, on page 169, to adapt the technical use of *parousia* to its doctrine of the "invisible presence" by stating that "A 'visit' includes more than an 'arrival' It includes a 'presence'. That's certainly true. But they're trying to hide the obvious difference between the two uses of *parousia*. During a royal visit, the arrival of the king or emperor was the most spectacular phase of the visit and attracted everyone's attention. If the disciples, as evidenced by the testimonies, asked for the sign of Christ's official, royal and visible visit, they must have had something in mind that would precede such a visit. It would be useless to ask for a sign showing that the king had already arrived.

Christ's comparison between His coming and the coming of the flood in the days of Noah, when men "knew not that the flood was coming; so shall be the parousia of the Son of Man. "(Matthew 24:37, 39) Luke's version adds the destruction of Sodom in Lot's time and says, "In like manner shall be the day when the Son of man shall be revealed. "Luke 17:26- 30

It is obvious that Jesus does not compare the parousia here with the periods before the Flood and the destruction of Sodom. This is how the Watch Tower Society explains it, referring to the expression "the days of the Son of Man" in Luke chapter seventeen, verse 26. On the contrary, Jesus clearly compares his future with that of the Flood and the sudden destruction of Sodom. Like these two events, his parousia will be a revolutionary event, a divine intervention that will immediately change the situation of all mankind in the most perceptible way. The comparison between Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 39, and Luke chapter seventeen, verse 30, shows that *parousia* indicates "the day when the Son of Man is revealed. "The connection between" the days of Noah "and" the days of the Son of Man" in Luke chapter 17, verse 26, therefore simply means that, just as the men of Noah's time were suddenly caught off guard in the midst of their daily occupations, so it will be in the time when the Son of Man is to be revealed. His sudden intervention will come without anything to alert people in advance, shocking them with the reality of the situation.

At first glance, one might conclude that the phrase "What will be the sign of your coming (*parousia*)" in Matthew chapter twenty-four, verse 3, has no clear parallel in Luke's gospel. The disciples' question as reproduced in Luke chapter 21, verse 7, seems to be related to the destruction of the temple only: "What will be the sign when these things [the destruction of the temple, verses 5 and 6] are about to happen? " However, one of the most important witness manuscripts of the first text of the Gospels, Codex D (*Bezae Cantabrigensis*), formulates the question differently, thus bringing it in line with the reading of Matthew 24:3, with one exception.²⁰

²⁰ Although the manuscript only dates from V^e or VI^e century AD, its textual variants are often supported by the Fathers' versions of II^e century and Ancient Latin and Syriac.

Some scholars even consider him a more faithful representative of the original text than *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*. As A. J. Wensinck, it is coloured more often than *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* by Aramaic constructions and idioms, according to Dr. Matthew Black, and thus more faithfully represents the Aramaic background of the synoptic tradition than non-Western manuscripts. "-Manhew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 2^e ed., 1954, pp. 26-34, 212, 213. Matthew 24:3: "What shall be the sign of thy *parousia*?" Luke 21:7: "What will be the sign of your coming [*eleuseos*]?" »

As indicated, the only difference is that Luke according to this manuscript does not use *parousia* but *eleusis*, the common Greek word for "coming." " Dr. Schoonheim, after a careful examination of these parallels, even concludes that" Luke 21:7, according to D, presents a more original tradition, "being a translation of Syriac or even Aramaic me 'thitha'").²¹

The biblical context does not, therefore, give any support to the statement that *parousia* is to be translated as "presence" in the chapter of Matthew 24. The fact that the disciples did not imagine Christ's coming as an "invisible presence", the way Jesus answered their question, and the parallel texts in Luke's Gospel show that this translation is untenable. In Luke, the *parousia* of Christ is spoken of as the "day of Christ" or even "the day when the Son of Man is revealed. "And, as Codex D shows, the word *parousia* could also be exchanged with the common Greek noun meaning "coming", *eleusis*. Similar parallels can be found in other texts dealing with the *parousia* of Christ, in which the terms relating to the manifestation of Jesus Thus, the apostle John, in 1 John 2:28, exhorts Christians to "abide in him, that if he is manifested [Greek *phanerdo*], we may be bold and not be ashamed before him at his coming [*parousia*]. Similar parallels can be found in other texts dealing with the *parousia* of Christ, in which terms relating to the manifestation or revelation of Jesus are used. For example, the apostle John, in 1 John 2:28, exhorts Christians to "abide in him; that if he manifests himself [Greek *phanerdo*], we may be bold and not be ashamed when he comes [*parousia*]. "Here John clearly parallels Christ's *parousia* with the day of his appearance or manifestation. Likewise, the apostle Paul prays that the Christians of Thessalonica may see their hearts established "blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming [of the *parousia*] of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. "(1 Thessalonians 3:13) This coming of the Lord with all His saints or angels is also mentioned in Jude verse 14 and Matthew chapter sixteen, verses 27, 28, but instead of *parousia*, both Jude and Matthew use forms of *erchomai*, the most common verb for "coming" and related to the noun *eleusis*. All three texts refer to one and the same occasion, the coming of the Lord with all his saints to execute the judgment and to translate

²¹Schoonheim, pp. 16-28, 259, 260. This would refute the assertion in the New Revised World Translation of 1984, page 1577, that "the words *parousia* and *eleusis* are not used interchangeably.

parousia by "presence" in 1 Thessalonians chapter three, verse 13, as the WatchTower Society does, ignores this interrelation with other parallel passages.

In these parables in which Jesus stressed the need for his servants to be watchful and vigilant, we can note that he presents his judgment in the same way as the one that follows the return of a master to his house. The master comes, or arrives, is what he describes and not an "invisible presence". It is not as if the master sneaks in and invisibly begins to judge what his servants are doing, only later revealing himself to them. On the contrary, the master's return, though perhaps unexpected, is quickly evident to all his servants, faithful and unfaithful, manifest from the beginning, and his judgment is not based on an invisible hiding place, but in the most open manner possible. - Compare Matthew 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12 : 35-48 ; 19 : 12-27.

Evidence from the earliest translations, as well as modern translations and lexicons of the Greek language, and in particular from the context and related passages, shows that the use of parousia in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 3, cannot refer to a

They refer to the "invisible presence" of a "two-stage coming", but refer to Christ's future arrival and judgment as King, "with power and great glory" and accompanied by His holy angels.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

WAR, THE FAMINE and the plague also appear in the book of Revelation as three horsemen riding respectively a red horse, a black horse and a pale (literally, green-yellowish) horse, led by a fourth horseman, an archer, sitting on a white horse. - Revelation 6: 1-8.

The main question here is whether the vision involving these four riders represents a description of the end of time that applies to a period prior to the last day of judgment and is therefore a sign of proximity to that day.

A reading of the narrative itself reveals nothing that attributes the conduct of these riders to a given period. It is true that the vision of these horsemen is part of a series of "seals" that were opened, seven in all, and that after the opening of the sixth seal, facing a great earthquake, men sought to hide, recognizing that "the great day of God's wrath has come. (Revelation 6:12-17) But this alone does not give any solid basis for saying that the "seals" that preceded all of them all correspond to a particular period of time preceding that day of judgment. There is no indication that these seals are part of a "sign" designed to alert people to the nearness of God's judgment. War, famine, and pestilence have, as we have already seen, been part of the scene of mankind in all ages. They are no more so in our time than in previous generations.

In trying to attribute the race of these riders to a specific period, the Watch Tower Society focuses attention on the rider sitting on the white horse. It asserts that he represents Christ Jesus and his description "receiving a crown" sets the time of prophecy at the period beginning in 1914, according to the Watch Tower doctrine, Jesus Christ was enthroned into heaven and began to exercise royal power over all the earth. How valid is this teaching?

. *Who's the rider on the white horse?*

Riders do not represent literal people, of course. They are symbols, as are their horses and the

colour of their coat.¹ Three of them are easily identified. There is a general consensus among commentators that the second horseman, brandishing a large sword, is a symbol of war, most often civil war, appropriately illustrated by the red colour of his horse reminiscent of bloodshed² The third horseman is a symbol of famine, and this affliction is also well represented by the colour of his horse, black being the colour of the crops in the rust blackened fields. The fourth rider symbolizes death by plague and the pale or yellowish green colour of his horse denotes the colour of a person who is sick and afflicted with the plague. These identifications are all also confirmed by the missions entrusted to each of them. But who is the archer on the white horse?

Here the problems begin and various suggestions have been made by different commentators. Some believe that this rider is a symbol of Christianity or of the triumphal progress of the Christian gospel. Others think that it represents military conquest, unlike the latter, which, according to this interpretation, symbolizes a civil or internal war. Dr. Graham presents his argument suggesting that the horseman symbolizes deception, having only the appearance of a false veneer, avidly seeking conquest.³ Still others, including the Watch Tower Society,

1 As noted by most commentators, these symbols are parallel to those found in Zechariah 6:1-8, although some details differ. The colors obviously have different meanings in the two visions. In Zechariah's vision, the four groups of horses with different colors are interpreted by the angel as "the four winds of heaven coming forth from the Lord of the whole earth". (Verse 5, ASV) These winds, in turn, apparently represented the wrath of God sent against the enemies of God's people at the time of Zechariah. - Compare Isaiah 66:15; Jeremiah 4:13; 23:19; 30:23; 49:36.

2 To the rider of the red horse it "was given to take [literally] the peace of the earth and to kill each other." (ASV) Has there ever been universal peace on earth? As we saw in Chapter Five, there has been virtually no year of total peace on earth throughout history. Yet, at the time John wrote his visions, there was in fact a kind of "peace". It was the famous *Pax Romana*, the "Roman peace", a period of peace and stability within the Roman borders from 29 B.C. to about 162 A.D. There were constant wars on the borders of the vast empire, with the Teutons (Germans) to the north, and especially with the Parthians to the east, the Parthian kingdom being the only great power that remained outside Rome. It is true that there were constant wars on the borders of the vast empire, with the Teutons (Germans) in the north and especially with the Parthians in the east, the Parthian kingdom being the only great power outside Rome. But these border wars were not considered a threat to the peace that reigned within the Roman borders. Thus, when the recipients of John's letters read that the rider on the red horse was appointed to "take peace from the earth", this *Pax Romana* might naturally come to mind. Furthermore, the commentary of J.

M. Ford on Revelation (The Anchor Bible, vol. 38, New York, 1975, p. 106) 11 stated that "the phrase *allelous sphaxousin*, 'killing one another', indicates civil strife. Civil wars within Roman borders, of course, "would take the peace of the land," with "land" being understood as a reference to the Roman Empire. Whatever the precise application, it goes without saying that civil strife and conflict throughout the world, often accompanied by bloodshed, destroyed peace throughout the centuries of the Christian era.

3 *Approaching Hoofbeats*, pp. 78-81.

identify him with Jesus Christ himself. Since the Watch Tower Society sees the vision as a whole as a parallel to the divine punishments described by Jesus in Matthew, chapter twenty-four, verses 6 to 8, and since they proclaim that these verses apply as early as 1914, they claim that the four horsemen began their devastating gallop on earth that year. Particularly strong evidence of this would be found in the crown given to the first horseman:

The rider of this fast means of transportation meant a newly installed king, for he had been given a royal crown... Inevitably, the rider of the white horse riding victoriously must be Jesus Christ at his coronation in heaven at the end of the Gentile age in 1914.⁴

However, this interpretation cannot be correct, as it is based on a serious linguistic error. The Greek language had two different words for "crown". One is *stephanos*, the other is *diadema*. It is *diadema* which means "royal crown". It is used, for example, among the many crowns that Jesus wore in Revelation chapter nineteen, verse 12:

And his eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many tiaras [*diademata*].

These numerous tiaras obviously symbolize Christ's royal authority over all other kings, underlined also by the name written on his garment and on his thigh, according to verse 16, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS".

This meaning of the word *diadema* is revealed in all Greek dictionaries. Thus, for example, *Vine's Expository Dictionary* says on page 260 :

DIADEMA... is never used as *stephanos*: it is always the symbol of royal or imperial dignity and is translated as "tiara" instead of "crown" in the R.V., of the Dragon's claims. Rev 12:3; 13:1; 19:12.

But the "crown" given to the rider of the white horse in Revelation chapter six, verse 2, was not a *diadema*. It was a *stephanos*. What, then, does this word mean, since it was not used in the same way as a *diadema*? *Vine's* explains further on the same page:

***stephanos*... means (a) the winner's crown, the symbol of triumph in games or wrestling; here, by metonymy, an award or prize; (b) a public token of honour for the**

⁴ The Watchtower, May 15, 1983, pages 18,19.

distinguished service, military prowess, etc., or nuptial joy, or festive joy, especially during the parousia of kings.

A *stephanos*, then, usually denoted the crown of victory and this is true in the New Testament, where it is used in relation to the figure of athletic wrestling. (Compare 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 2:5.) It is this kind of crown that Christians receive as their divine reward from God through His king Christ Jesus, even when individuals were honored by the awarding of a *stephanos* during the royal visit or parousia of a king or emperor. - 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12.

Interestingly, *stephanos* was not only awarded as a prize after a victory. As in the case of the archer on the white horse, it was also given to the warriors before the battle as a promise of victory. This is how the Spartans crowned themselves with a *stephanos* when they went into battle as a sign of promised victory. It was the same for the Roman generals. The crown or garland was supposed to influence the outcome of the battle. Among both the Greeks and the Romans, the *stephanos* was the symbol of victory, and Nike, the goddess of victory, was described as coming with a victory crown in her hand.⁵

When the rider of the white horse receives a *stephanos*, he does not receive, as the Watch Tower Society claims, a "royal crown". The scene does not describe any crowning ceremony in the sky, and there is certainly no reason to compare the crown to the mounted archer of the year 1914. The vision depicts an armed warrior going into battle, and as a promise of victory in that battle, he is awarded a crown, not a royal crown, but a victor's crown. The words "and he came out a conqueror and a victor" immediately explain the purpose of the crown that was given to him. Like the second horseman who was given a large sword as a symbol of his mission - to take peace from the earth - this first horseman was given a victor's crown to symbolize his mission: to conquer. The archer can therefore symbolize or represent a victorious conquest. And this would be in harmony with the colour of his horse. How does this work?

It is certain that white is often seen as a symbol of

⁵ Kittel/Friedrich. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Vol. VII, pages 620, 621. The Watch Tower Society knows, of course, that *stephanos* means a crown of victory and admits this when dealing with texts other than Revelation 6:2. In commenting on James 1:12, *The Watch Tower* of 1^{er} July 1979, page 30, states that the word *stephanos* "comes from a root meaning 'encircle' and is therefore used to designate a crown, prize or award that is given to the winner of a race. »

purity and virtue, as in Revelation chapter nineteen, the verse 8. But this is not automatically the case. In the chapter Zechariah six, verses 1-8, where we find chariots drawn by four groups of horses, three of them having identical colors with their counterparts in Revelation, there is no particular virtue assigned to the chariot drawn by the white horses. On the contrary, it is from the chariot drawn by the black horses that it is said that they "gave my Spirit rest in the north country." Zechariah 6:6, 8.

White was also an ancient symbol of triumph and victory.

"When a Roman general celebrated his triumph," says Bible commentator William Barclay, "when he marched through the streets of Rome with his armies, his captives, and his booty after a great victory. His chariot was drawn by white horses, for they were the symbol of victory."⁶ In Revelation chapter six of verse 2, the white color of the horse may well symbolize victory and military triumph, in accordance with the mission entrusted to its rider.

It could be argued that, even if the horseman is a symbol of victorious conquest, it could still be a symbol of Jesus Christ, especially since Christ is also represented as a rider on a white horse in Revelation chapter nineteen, verses 11ff. It should be noted, however, that the two visions are totally different and that the two riders also differ. In chapter nineteen, the rider wields a sword rather than a bow; he wears many *diadems* or royal crowns (*diademata*), not a *stephanos* or a victory crown. As has sometimes been pointed out, "the two horsemen have nothing in common except the white horse".⁷

Even more significantly, the other three horsemen in Revelation chapter six are all symbols of *calamities* or *plagues* (war, famine, plague), not real individuals. It would therefore be logical and consistent to consider the first horseman in the same way, as suggested, perhaps by imagining the concept of military conquest. This is in fact also the conclusion of the majority of known commentators. Dr. Otto Michel, for example, explains the first two horsemen as follows:

The white horse represents the conqueror who comes from the outside.

⁶ Guillaume Barclay, *The Revelation of John* Vol. 2, 2^e edition, Philadelphia 1960, page 4. H. B.

Swete, too, in his *Commentary on Revelation* (1977, reprint of 1911, 3^e edition, Great Rapids, Michigan, page 86) confirms that "white was the color of victory," giving several examples from ancient Roman sources.

⁷ Swete, page 86. _____

with a foreign host and oppresses the kingdom. He is followed by the fiery red horse that takes away peace and unleashes civil strife.

⁸

We lack the space to examine this vision in more detail.

The information presented above, however, makes it clear that the Watch Tower Society's attempt to link this vision to its 1914 date finds no support in the text itself. Basing its interpretation on an erroneous translation of the word *stephanos*, it attempts to transform the handing over of a garland to the archer into a crowning ceremony, an idea totally foreign to the context. Applied to Jesus, the most reasonable would be that he receive a *stephanos*, or crown of victory and conquest, at the time of his resurrection, the moment when he would have achieved his greatest victories, having overcome the world, sin, death, and the devil on his faithful journey and not some nineteen centuries later. (Compare John 16:33; Revelation 3:21; 5:5.) (Compare John 16:33; Revelation 3:21; 5:5.) The symbolic language of the vision of the horsemen is taken from various Old Testament texts, such as Zechariah 6: 1-8; Ezekiel 5: 12-17; 14:21; and Jeremiah 49:36, 37, texts dealing with divine judgments about Israel's enemies in ancient times. For our purposes, it is not necessary to explain when and how the judgments symbolically described in Revelation chapter six would fall upon the oppressive powers in John's visions. We only need to realize that we cannot show that the four horsemen have more to do with 1914, or indeed with this twentieth century, than any other period of history.

⁸ Otto Michel in TDNT, Vol. III, page 338. In a footnote he adds: "We misunderstand the destructive activity of the horsemen if we identify the former with the avenging or warring Messiah of 19: U-16, or with the Gospel when he came into the world (Mark 13:10). »

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The authors

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WHAT SOME VOICES SAY ABOUT OUR TIMES:

Le Docteur Billy Graham dans *Approaching Hoofbeats – The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* :

"The Bible teaches us that there will be many easily discernible signs that we are approaching the end of the age. All of these signs seem to be coming into play now. Jesus said in Matthew 24 that there would be famines, plagues and earthquakes in different parts of the world. One of the main signs He indicated was an increase in the intensity of wars. »

Hal Lindsey dans *The Late Great Planet Earth* :

"Jesus Christ also defined exactly the general time of His return when His disciples asked Him... 'What will be the sign of the end of the age?' In His answer Jesus gave many general signs involving the conditions of the world... He said that these signs, such as religious apostasy, wars, famines, etc., would increase in frequency and intensity like the torments of birth before a child is born. »

Jehovah's Witnesses in *The Watchtower*, 1st February 1985:

"There were wars, famines, earthquakes and plagues between the beginning of our era and 1914 (Luke 21:11). However, these phenomena cannot be compared to those that have taken place since that memorable year.

Seventh-day Adventist author Robert H. Pierson in a subtitle of his book *Good-bye, Planet Earth*:

"The Phenomenal Increase of Wars, Crime, Violence and Fear Are All Signs of the Second Coming of Jesus! »

The World Church of God in a letter to subscribers of *Plain Truth* magazine:

"All signs indicate that we are living in the TIME OF THE END of this present civilization! »

ARE THESE SOURCES RIGHT?

DID JESUS TELL HIS DISCIPLES TO WATCH FOR AN INCREASE IN THESE SIGNS?

HAS OUR TWENTIETH CENTURY WITNESSED THESE DISASTERS WITH GREATER INTENSITY THAN EVER BEFORE?

EVIDENCE SOLIDLY DOCUMENTED IN THIS UNIQUE BOOK PROVIDES SURPRISING ANSWERS TO THESE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS. THESE ANSWERS CAN MAKE A CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY WE VIEW OUR TIMES, IN THE CHOICES WE MAKE TO DECIDE OUR FUTURE.