

## A Day In Court

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**W**ith the interminable OJ circus and the swift but emotional Susan Smith trial, 1995 will be a year to remember for public courtroom drama. Not since Perry Mason retired have we had so much interest in whodunit and why they did it. Folks I have talked to are divided about how they feel about these high profile media events. Should they have had so much news coverage? To what extent might the public nature of these trials actually influence the outcome? Which of Marcia Clark's hairdos is the most flattering and professional? (*I frankly prefer the one Chuck gave me! See cartoon below...*) But what is not arguable is the fact that these trials have been avidly followed by Americans.

The emotional aspect of both of these trials oftentimes was very compelling, showing both the trauma and the grief of the victim's families, as well as the pain of the loved ones of the accused. The pain is very real and very sad. But justice cannot be served by deciding which "side" has suffered the most, thus determining guilt or innocence based on some "pain quotient." Nor can guilt or innocence be determined by factors such as the defendant's public persona, his background of childhood abuse, seeming remorse, or his or her ability to play football. No matter how anyone feels about the accused or the victim, the most important consideration as far as justice goes is; **WHAT IS TRUE?** What are the facts of the case? What does the evidence show? Do the gloves fit? How reliable is DNA testing?

As we touch on the subject of the resurrection we must ask ourselves; Do we accept the resurrection merely on our feelings or is there evidence for the resurrection that makes it credible; an actual historical event, beyond a reasonable doubt? Do we merely believe in the resurrection because it is what we have been taught as Christians, or are we Christians because of the truth of the resurrection? Did Jesus really come up out of that grave? Will we someday do the same?

John Dominic Crossan, a professor at DePaul University here in Chicago, has authored several books on the subject of Jesus and rejects the idea of an actual physical resurrection. In fact, he believes that Jesus was probably buried in a pauper's grave and eaten by dogs. What evidence does he offer for such a claim? NONE. This claim is based upon empirical evidence at all, but on the blind faith of a skeptic in his skepticism.

My dictionary defines "empirical" as "guided by practical experience, and not theory." We are all familiar with the presentation of this type of evidence. How do we evaluate the blood stained gloves? Have the defendant put them on and we'll SEE if they fit. Let's test

the blood found in the Bronco to SEE if it belongs to the victims. We'll reenact the murder scene so the jury can SEE what the victims would have suffered as the water streamed into the car. SEE my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; TOUCH ME and SEE, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you SEE that I have. (Luke 24:39) EXAMINE the wounds, Thomas, and SEE whether or not I am the man that died on that cross. (John 20:27)

In a court of law, the testimony of eyewitnesses carries a tremendous amount of weight. In the New Testament we have numerous eye witnesses testifying to the resurrection. In I Cor. 15:5-9, Paul enumerates the eyewitnesses, "...He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, then to all of the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also."

Paul states, and the gospels confirm that the apostles claimed that Jesus Christ appeared bodily to them after the resurrection. Were they deceiving everyone? The apostle Peter wrote in his 2nd letter, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Can it be proved that the writers were committing perjury? Would the apostles have died for a lie?

Well, we know that sometimes people DO die for a lie. Does the word Guyana ring a bell? What about Waco? Seventy or 80 people died there...for a lie. Many Jehovah's Witnesses die every year for lack of a blood transfusion, feeling that God has forbidden them to take one. But... it's a lie...

So why should we put stock in the martyrdom of the eyewitness apostles as proving the resurrection?? The difference is this...the apostles would have been dying for a lie that they KNEW was a lie!!! You might die for a lie that you thought was the truth, but would anyone die for a known lie??? I don't think so... Don't forget...the disciples would have been the very people foisting this hoax off onto the world. Eleven of the twelve were martyred. We have no record of any of the eyewitnesses recanting, and as we have seen there were in excess of 500 of them.

How long do you suppose OJ would remain behind bars if F Lee Bailey could produce 500 witnesses willing to testify to OJ's presence elsewhere at the time of the murders of which he stands accused? Wouldn't Marcia love to have even 5 eyewitnesses, let



"Move Over, Marcia Clark!"

# Questions and Reflections From **CYBERSPACE**

*The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, Jehovah's Witnesses "motherly" organization, appears to be revising its history again. The following is an open letter from M. James Penton, Professor Emeritus at The University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, to the Awake! magazine of Aug. 22, 1995. This Open Letter recently has been posted on the World Wide Web, America Online, and CompuServe and is reprinted here by permission of Professor M. James Penton. We will begin with the quote from the Awake! of Aug. 22, 1995:*

***"Yet, even before the death camps were set up, a voice was proclaiming the dangers of Nazism, through Awake!, the magazine you hold in your hands. It was first known as 'The Golden Age' and was renamed 'Consolation' in 1937. Beginning in 1929, these magazines, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, boldly warned of the perils of Nazism, living up to the proclamation on the cover 'A Journal of Fact, Hope and Courage.' - Awake! Aug. 22 1995***

August 11, 1995

Milton G. Henschel, President  
Watchtower Bible & Tract Society  
25 Columbia Heights  
Brooklyn, New York  
U.S.A. 11201

## AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Mr. Henschel:

Yesterday, I obtained a copy of the August 22 *Awake!* magazine with its articles on "The Holocaust: Who Spoke Out?." On reading the articles in that issue of *Awake!*, I was thoroughly shocked and disgusted.

The Watchtower Society has long attempted a cover-up of the most dishonest sort. While your organization properly censures other religious communities for their compromises with and support of Nazism, it tries to claim that Jehovah's Witnesses, and Jehovah's Witnesses alone, never were guilty of such compromise. Yet history tells a dif-

ferent story. The "Erklärung" or "Declaration" published by the Watchtower Society at the Berlin Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in June 1933 is, in itself, clear evidence that the Society's president, Judge J. F. Rutherford, as accompanied by N. H. Knorr, manifested anti-Semitism, hostility to Great Britain and the United States, and to the League of Nations. Furthermore, the "Erklärung" clearly states that Jehovah's Witnesses supported the aims of the Third Reich.

In addition to the "Erklärung," there is the evidence of the Society's letter to Hitler sent on or immediately following June 25, 1933 and the public statements made about the Berlin convention by Konrad Franke in lectures throughout Germany some years ago. All of this I have made public in my book *Apocalypse Delayed* (1985) which I know has been read at Watchtower headquarters both from court documents and inside reports and in the spring 1990 issue of *The Christian Quest*. So it is impossible for responsible members of our organization not to know the facts. Thus, the August 22 *Awake!* is nothing short of a historical abomination.

I am aware of the feeble attempt of the 1974 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses to exculpate Judge Rutherford and the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn by claiming that the Society's German branch overseer, Paul Balzereit, "weakened" the "Erklärung." But the "Erklärung" or "Declaration" was published in both the German and English versions of the 1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses as an official statement of the Watchtower Society. So it is impossible to believe it was not sanctioned by Rutherford and the man who succeeded him as the Society's president, N. H. Knorr. Therefore, the leadership of Jehovah's Witnesses of that time attempted to commit what amounted to spiritual whoredom with the Third Reich in the fashion of the two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah of Ezekiel 23, according to the Society's own teachings.

Although I do not expect an answer from you, nor do I want one, to make certain that you, personally, are aware of the facts, I am sending you the following

materials:

- (1) A photocopy of the original "Erklärung";
- (2) A photocopy of the "Erklärung" as it appeared in the German edition of the 1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses;
- (3) A photocopy of the "Declaration" as it appears in the English edition of the 1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses;
- (4) A photocopy of the Hitler letter, plus an English translation thereof;
- (5) A copy of the Spring 1990 issue of *The Christian Quest*.

Since I am well aware that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, of which you are a senior member, is carrying on what amounts to a "Big Lie" campaign (1) to make Jehovah's Witnesses appear to be God's faithful and discreet slave class on earth and (2) to discredit other religions, as a former Jehovah's Witness, a professional historian, and as a Christian who believes that God has no need of our lie, I feel forced to expose the facts to the general public. Hence, I am sending copies of this letter, plus the above listed documentation, to both religious and secular publications throughout the United States and Canada. I will, of course, also make them available to persons in other lands so they may be made known wherever possible.

In closing, Mr. Henschel, I would beg the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, who carry heavy responsibility before God and humankind, to come clean and admit the facts. Hypocrisy and falsifying the historical record are serious sins, as I am sure you are aware.

Sincerely yours,

M. James Penton, PhD  
Professor Emeritus

*Editors note: Scanned facsimiles of the letter to Hitler (with English translation) and the Yearbook of 1934 may be found at: -<http://www.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/~zerbst/jw/hitler/hitler.html>  
<http://www.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/~zerbst/jw/hitler/yb1934w.html>*



## ■ Court *continued from page 1*

alone 500, who could place him at the scene of the crime and swear to his guilt?

Why is it that non-Christians want to deny the resurrection, anyway? The why is easy...no resurrection, no judgment. Remember the John Lennon song, "Imagine"? "Imagine there's no heaven..." he croons seductively. Why would someone want to imagine there is no heaven??? Simple.. it is the only way to imagine away hell... So many people today have bought into the atheistic or secularly popular notion that this life is all there is. Their slogan...you only go around once... They do not believe human beings have a soul or inner man that survives death. Mankind is merely an advanced animal. When we die, our candle goes out...

What other ways do people have of denying the resurrection? Many people, while holding to a belief in a life hereafter, nevertheless deny the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the believer. For example, New Agers do not claim to hold to a belief in the Christian resurrection, preferring instead to believe in reincarnation. They DO believe a person possesses a soul or inner man, but they believe this soul leaves the body at death and is reborn into other bodies to live countless lives. We don't die; we recycle!

Rather than only going around once, New Agers believe you go around and around till you get it "right." Of course, it is a logical impossibility for a New Ager to ever get it right, since the very concept of "right" is rejected by that philosophy, isn't it? "Right" suggests ABSOLUTES, doesn't it? Yet to a New Ager, what is "right" for me may not be "right" for you. There is no truth, so how could a person align themselves with it, in one lifetime or a thousand? How could a person EVER know when they finally got it right? There IS no right.

New Agers like the idea of reincarnation because they believe it solves the problem of evil. Why is there injustice, disease, and all manner of unfairness in life? Why do the innocent suffer? If nothing done in this life can account for why one person must suffer more



**It's not my fault man; I was abused as a larva.**

than others, it must be that the misfortunate one is paying for evil deeds done in past lives... But can this karmic view of "past life sins cause this life's misery" really hold water? Not hardly. No matter how many lives a person has lived, there logically had to be a first one. So, did our cosmic wayfarer suffer in that first life? If so, why? Supposing that prior to becoming a man he was a bug, as is quite possible according to Hindu tradition. What did he do "right" to progress from bughood to manhood? Conversely, what did Mr. Bug do wrong to cause his suffering as a man? What possible moral lapses could a bug commit? It is rather unsettling to entertain the notion that you or I actually may be suffering today because of the original sins of a reprobate bug.

Far from offering a sensible solution to the problem of evil, reincarnation actually just adds MORE evil to the world because this belief system does not foster the ethic that to relieve suffering is a good thing. Why, you could be upsetting a person's karmic appercept if you alleviate his or her atoning suffering...thus interrupting his or her upward evolution!! This is the evil impetus behind India's caste system, which has caused untold misery to innocent people caught in its web. It also has had devastating consequences in Western civilizations wherever the concept historically has gotten a foothold. Most people do not know Hitler and his henchmen believed in karma and reincarnation and believed it was the Jew's karma to suffer and die as they did!! The "superior Aryan" idea that was responsible for

the evils of the holocaust came straight out of India's caste system.

Back to the resurrection...we have said that atheists and the secular man deny any life after death, and New Agers, while believing wholeheartedly in an afterlife, deny the Christian concept of resurrection.

Some people though, while claiming to believe and teach the doctrine of Christian resurrection, really do not hold to it at all. What do they believe? My dear Jehovah's Witnesses, while adamantly insisting they hold to Biblical resurrection, believe Jesus was not really resurrected at all, but ceased to exist and was recreated! He was recreated as a spirit creature, an angel to be exact. They SAY they believe in the resurrection...Isn't that good enough???

No. When Jesus appeared to His disciples in Luke chapter 24 and they believed He was a spirit creature, He asked them, "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" To doubt the physicality of Jesus' resurrection body is to doubt the resurrection itself. To believe Jesus was raised a spirit creature is to doubt the resurrection.

This is not a new heresy. It is as old as the resurrection itself. Paul wrote I Cor. 15 in response to this heresy. Justin Martyr, one of the early Church Fathers who wrote in the second century, addressed this very view in his work *On The Resurrection*. He says, "And there are some who maintain Jesus Himself appeared only as spiritual, and not in flesh, but presented merely the appearance of flesh..." What was his opinion of that view? "...these men seek to rob the flesh of the promise" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers, T&T Clark-Eerdmans, volume 1, page 295*). Justin even went so far as to say that the so-called believer who doubted the physicality of the resurrection is a WORSE unbeliever than an unbeliever.

So what is the one thing that would cause you or me or even the apostle Paul to abandon the faith? Someone would have to produce the BODY of Jesus! Our faith rests on the fact of the empty tomb (*I Cor. 15:12-19*). If the body of Jesus did not come out of that tomb we may as well chuck the whole thing.

So ask the atheist...what happened to the body of Jesus??? What answers might he give you? Well of course there is the swow theory: Jesus never died. He just fainted on the cross and the stupid executioner just thought He was dead, and so after everybody went to bed Jesus just dragged His tortured, beaten, nailed, speared, practically bloodless body up, rolled away the two-ton stone, snuck out past the Roman guard (who all faced the death penalty if the body disappeared), and showed Himself to His gullible followers to "prove" he had resurrected Himself as he said He would!! Sure...sounds plausible.

Then there is the "disciples stole the body" conspiracy. According to this theory, Jesus actually did die and was laid in the tomb. But the disciples weren't satisfied with the fact that they had already thrown away a great deal of their lives following a man whom they now had to believe was a false Messiah, so they threw the rest of their lives away as well. This demoralized, fearful band of fishermen and other uneducated types cooked up a plan to snatch the body of Jesus from right under the noses of an armed Roman guard! Sure they did! Then they hid it and made up a brand new religion about how God was incarnated and died for all of us, and because He was resurrected, so His followers will be.

Of course this theory is harder to swallow than any miracle that Jesus performed, including rising from the dead. The necessary motivation wasn't there and, in fact, all but one of these men died a horrible death for this new false religion they had supposedly created. As we stated before, they were really fools because they died for a lie they KNEW was a lie.

The enemies of Jesus, ie. the Pharisees and Sadducees, stole the body... Really dumb... What possible motivation would they have

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# Debbie's Story

**M**y daddy always told me, "The squeaky wheel gets the oil." Little did I know how powerful that saying is with the Lord.

I grew up a Catholic. I really did love God, but I didn't really know Him; I just knew things about Him. Looking back, I guess I would say I really knew the Almighty Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit about as well as I really knew the priest at my church or my fellow Catholics...not at all! Oh, I was a "good Catholic." I went to church every Sunday, was friendly to everyone there, listened to the "gospel," took Communion, and, in general, did all the proper "church things" I believed a person needed to do to go to heaven. Too bad I missed His power, too bad I missed complete fulfillment in God...and too bad I didn't realize that eternal life was granted on the basis of knowing God personally, not knowing things about God, nor doing things, no matter how good the things might seem.

At the ripe old age of 18, I fell in love - I mean adoration. I went to Western Illinois University to become a teacher and to be near the focus of my love and adoration. By the way, don't ever marry a person you put on a pedestal - a person that has taken the place of God in your life. That was my big mistake. Well, I was divorced, and the marriage was annulled after 5 years because my "god," my husband told me he didn't ever really love me. He had an affair. He decided he never wanted to have children and made life so nerve wrangling I ended up leaving him. I ended up in 2 years of counseling trying to overcome my Cinderella Syndrome.

Throughout all of this, I was still going to the Catholic Church but I had never asked God to take my life and do with it what He wanted. I never knew the "squeaky wheel" principle with God; that He wants us to turn to Him when we are in need, and wants to have a real personal relationship with Him. I felt that I loved God, but I didn't know His Word, the Bible. I was a Catholic, and even had attended Catholic school for 8 years, but I wasn't grounded in His Word! This ignorance of the Bible was to come back to haunt me later...

Eventually I remarried, had two children and bought a house. Making and spending money became the focus of my life. It just seemed like we needed so much! I was a teacher, and I loved teaching, but I hated what the educational system had become. I went back to school for a master's degree in order to make even more money. To supplement my income even further, I became a Mary Kay consultant. But in chasing after the good life, I did not find happiness. In fact, I was miserable. I missed my kids, my

husband, my life, my peace of mind (sales really involves all of your time). I had a nervous breakdown in 1992.

It was then I realized I needed to get on the right path, on the Lord's path. Even though I was still going to church, my church experience just was not bringing me the satisfaction of truly knowing God, and I felt a great need for a deeper spiritual experience. It was then that a wonderful couple, Ed & Sharon, began coming regularly to my door with their Watchtower magazines. They seemed to have a real knowledge of God's Word that I lacked, and they really seemed to care about me, and I cared about them, too. I was sure they were going to get me on "the right path." I recalled hearing, as a child, in church we were supposed to spread the Good News to others, yet we never did that as Catholics. I used to think, "How and when will I do that? Why isn't my family doing that?" I put it out of my mind at the time, yet this came back to me when the Witnesses came into my life, and it impressed me they must be the true Christians, since they were trying their best to spread the Good News.

So I studied with my Jehovah's Witness "friends" for almost two years. I believed that God would now be pleased with me and save me since I now had "the truth." I went home and talked to my parents about the Witnesses and the Bible and fought with my mother. I wasn't even a Witness yet, but we had such a bad argument that my mother ended up slapping me, and I slapped her back! The fact that she could not "answer" my arguments convinced me even more that I was the one who had "the truth," but we agreed to never speak about religion or the Bible again to have peace in the family. Even though this incident really hurt me, Ed and Sharon had prepared me for this type of "persecution." They pointed out that Jesus had warned, "Indeed, a man's enemies will be persons of his own household. He that has greater affection for father or mother than for me, is not worthy of me..." (Matt. 10:36-37). I believed this verse meant that we should be willing to give up our families for "the truth," which I thought to be my new religion, not realizing that the Bible teaches "the truth" is Jesus Himself, according to John 14:6.

During this time, things went from bad to worse at school. This particular class of students really had quite a reputation: no parental cooperation, no parental supervision, no morals, no respect for authority. Many had police records. Not only did I not get the office support, but one of the school board member's wives leaked information to the community that I had previously had a nervous breakdown. There was also a false

rumor circulating that I had been in a mental institution. A counselor at the school, who was a friend of mine, advised me to call my union and see a lawyer. In total confidence she told me she knew they wanted me out. I was under tremendous pressure financially and could not afford to quit my job, but emotionally, I was at the end of my rope! I did not know how I was going to get out of this dilemma!

In desperation, I finally "squeaked" and asked the Lord to save me from this desperate situation...and He did!!! My union arranged for a generous monetary settlement for my resignation, and happily I opted out, rather than pursue a nasty court battle, though I did have a good case. I felt like I had been the recipient of a great miracle from God, and I truly felt God's love in a personal way for the first time. You know, it's one thing to believe intellectually that God loves the world, but it's another thing entirely to suddenly know God loves YOU PERSONALLY. Well, the Witnesses were convinced I was saved by Jehovah, because I was studying with them. But I knew in my heart that my Jesus had come to my rescue just because I had cried out to Him for help. My heart felt God's pure grace, and I started on a new path with God, that I had so often longed for, the path of friendship with God.

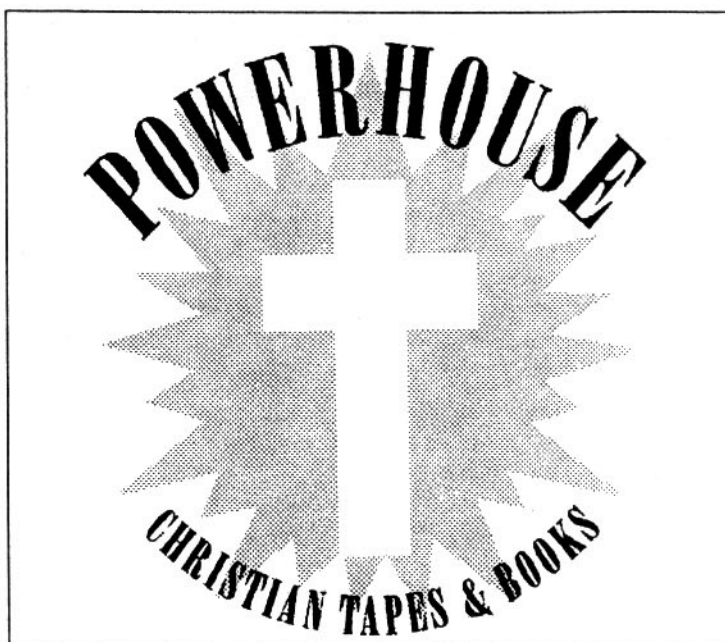
Besides my new understanding of God's graciousness to me, I also feel I was protected from long term involvement with the Witnesses through my steadfast belief in the Trinity. No matter what Ed and Sharon told me about Jesus being Michael the Archangel, I knew in my heart that Jesus was God. I had many questions and was quite confused doctrinally by this time, and I kept meeting with my JW "friends." I liked the Witnesses very much as people (and still do!). I would have served my Jesus and my God wholeheartedly with them, but I could not accept that Jesus was not God. As far as my becoming a JW is concerned, God didn't shut a door and open a window for me. He shut the door and opened the world to me!!

Jesus performed another miracle for me. I knew I needed help, so I went to see one of my neighbors, John Sale, who pastored Keeneyville Bible Church. I had become disillusioned about the Roman Catholic Church and I badly needed guidance and Biblical answers to the issues the JW's had raised in my mind. My priest was unwilling to help and John immediately took me into his home for a 2-3 hour discussion. I was in awe of his love, his humility, and his dedication. I called home and told my husband, "This man is truly inspired by God's Holy Spirit." I could see a difference in John and the Jehovah's Witness elder, Ed.

Pastor John recommended I contact Don and Joy at Midwest Christian Outreach, for added encouragement. They are helping me find the Biblical answers to my questions, and now they are assisting me in reaching out to Ed and Sharon, the Witnesses I have come to love. I attend the Monday night Apologetics meetings, and find that to be very interesting. I'm really studying the Bible at my new church, and I'm spending time getting to really KNOW God. What a difference there is in having a relationship with God, rather than merely going through "religious motions." No church can save, nor can any organization claiming to represent God. Only God saves, and He saves anyone who will call upon Him for salvation. Rom 10:13.

I am in the process of trying to help my Witness and Catholic friends to know the one and only TRUE "truth," Jesus Christ. And last but not least, I am determined to find a way to witness to my family in a loving and humble way and show them we CAN discuss religion without fireworks. I now am reborn in Christ! The squeaky wheel truly gets the oil! I never have been happier.

Debbie Keefe



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# And Along Came A Spider...

## The History of the Trinity: What the Watchtower Doesn't Want You to Know

By Steve Berg

### Part I

One of the major reasons the Jehovah's Witnesses are considered to be outside the realm of orthodox Christianity is because of their outright denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has made it very clear how much they detest this doctrine held so dear by Christians throughout the centuries. Not only do they attempt to disprove the Trinity Biblically, but they go to great lengths to impugn the integrity of its development, by making it appear that the early Church threw open the door to pagan philosophies and completely apostasized from the faith within the first few centuries after the death of the apostles. The Watchtower Society devotes much space in its publications to their false version of the Trinity's history.

Since the word "Trinity" never appears in the Bible, and was not made an official doctrine until the 4th century, and since it utilized terms borrowed from Greek philosophy, the Watchtower has concluded that the doctrine of the Trinity is the invention of man and is certainly not Biblical. In their famous booklet, "Should You Believe in the Trinity?" they expend great effort to link Christianity with paganism and Greek philosophy in an attempt to prove the Trinity is the result of anti-Christian sources. Consider the following quote:

*Throughout the ancient world, as far back as Babylonia, the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was common. That influence was also prevalent in Egypt, Greece, and Rome in the centuries before, during, and after Christ. And after the death of the apostles, such pagan beliefs began to invade Christianity. . . . While [Plato] did not teach the Trinity in its present form, his philosophies paved the way for it. Later, philosophical movements that included triadic beliefs sprang up, and these were influenced by Plato's ideas of God and nature. (Should You Believe in the Trinity? p. 11)*

The Watchtower's argument can be summed up as follows:

- 1) The Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible.
- 2) Ancient pagan religions believed in "Triads" or "Trinities."
- 3) The Trinity did not develop until four centuries after Christ.
- 4) Greek (Platonic) philosophy heavily influenced the Trinity.

Therefore, the Trinity is the unbiblical, pagan invention of man.

On the surface, the Society's argument looks convincing. But the question we have to ask is, "Is it fair, or are there other factors to consider, which the Watchtower has failed to mention?" In other words, are there missing pieces to this argument that would provide us with a better understanding of the origin of the Trinity? Even a cursory reading of Church history will reveal that the Watchtower's portrayal of the events surrounding the development of the Trinity is incomplete and slanted. It readily has been proven that despite the Watchtower's allegations, the theologians of the first few centuries

(known as the early Church Fathers) long before the doctrine was made official, virtually all accepted the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were each God.<sup>2</sup> Also, despite the Watchtower's charge that the Trinity is like other pagan conceptions of God, it is actually one of the major distinctives of the Christian faith, making it unique among all other religions of the world. While many religions may attempt to imitate the Trinity in some form or another, they are easily identified as counterfeits. Just because other religions may worship "triads of gods," none legitimately can be called a "Trinity." Such a point also is irrelevant, since it contributes nothing to the validity of the Trinity. Are we justified in calling the Jehovah's Witnesses Muslims because they, too, worship a unipersonal God?

However, due to its complex nature, the divine trinity has been a long debated issue. Since the infinite God of the universe is so transcendent to our puny little existences on this puny little planet, it only makes sense we would not be able to fully comprehend His nature. This is a stumbling block the Watchtower just can't seem to overcome. While it would be absurd to adhere to an actual contradiction (such as saying that God is one person at the same time that He is three persons, or He is one God at the same time that He is three Gods), we can take what we know and explain it the best way we can. If the Bible is true and if it teaches that God is somehow both one and three at the same time, such an apparent contradiction cannot be an actual one. It may be a paradox, but not a contradiction. This is exactly what the ancient Church had to deal with.

Even though Jehovah's Witnesses may dispute the Biblical evidence supporting the Trinity, the fact is that the original formulators of the doctrine back in the 4th century did believe it was Biblical. And it was for this reason they developed the formal doctrine of the Trinity, not because they were apostates, deliberately trying to fuse Christianity with pagan philosophy.<sup>3</sup> All the reliable literature on Church history affirms this, even those sources cited by the



Watchtower. Yet, this fact is something conveniently left out of their publications since it would demolish their theory that "apostate Christendom" had more evil intentions. The truth is, since the early theologians were convinced that the Bible teaches that somehow the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all fully divine and yet teach that somehow there is only one God, they wanted to find an adequate way to reconcile this apparent contradiction. What follows after this is a gradual development of the Trinity that grew clearer in conception, yet was forever to remain a mystery.

As the early Church saw it, God made a radical revelation to us regarding Himself with the addition of the New Testament Scriptures. This new concept of God as portrayed in the Bible presented the early theologians with a unique challenge, that is, how to describe a God who is somehow both one and three at once. In addition, various other interpretations cropped up that were deemed unbiblical, such as Sabellianism (which held that God is only one person who is sometimes called the Father, sometimes called the Son, and sometimes called the Holy Spirit) and Arianism (the belief that only God the Father is God and that the Son is a created being; a belief identical to Watchtower theology today). Because of such heresies these theologians wanted to be more precise in their explanation of God's nature in order to make it clear that these other interpretations were unorthodox. If these heresies had never developed, a formalized doctrine of God's nature may never have developed either, since it probably would not have been necessary. Thus, while some form of a triune God was already accepted prior to the 4th century, there was no formalized doctrine to explain it. The Watchtower would have us believe that the Nicene Council, where the deity of Christ was first officially affirmed, was nothing but a political ploy designed to incorporate paganism into Christianity. In reality, however, it was a meeting designed to spell out more precisely what the church had already believed for centuries but had never clearly defined, since there had not been a need until these heresies developed around it. Contrary to the Watchtower's teaching, Arianism (the 4th century counterpart to Watchtower theology) was a relatively new theology. In fact, it can be said that Arian/Watchtower theology is actually younger than Trinitarian theology, another fact conveniently left out of Watchtower literature.<sup>4</sup>

In one sense, the Watchtower is right. The Trinity was influenced by Greek philosophy. But is it fair to assume that 1) philosophy is by nature evil and that 2) philosophy produced the doctrine of the Trinity?

The situation is a little more complex than the Watchtower would have us believe. Christianity sprang onto the scene right in the midst of Greek culture and thought. Hence, it is not surprising to see how extensively the Greeks influenced Christianity. Without their language and philosophy, our understanding of God's nature would probably be vastly limited and confused. Moreover, it would be absurd to think that Greek philosophy would have had no effect on Christian theology whatsoever, as it was so immersed in that culture. In fact, the Greeks played a major role in our very understanding of God as infinite, transcendent, unchanging, supreme Love, and absolute Truth. We see this clearly in St. Augustine's expression of God whose language, though thoroughly Greek, the Watchtower would find nothing to disagree with:

*"For the essence of God, whereby He is, has nothing changeable, neither in eternity, nor in truth nor in will: because there the truth is eternal, love is eternal; there the love is true; and there eternity is loved, truth is loved (De Trinitate, 4)."*

The only way to reconcile the apparent contradictory evidence in the Bible was to use the language of the day, which happened to be heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Many of the New Testament writers themselves used Greek philosophical terms like the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:9 as well as the apostle John in the

first chapter of his Gospel clearly shows. (The term logos or "Word" in reference to Jesus, was originally a Neo-Platonic concept.) Thus, the Watchtower's disregard for philosophy seems to be more of a superstitious fear than a valid concern. Just because Greek was used in explaining the three in one nature of God is really irrelevant to the discussion of whether God truly is three in one.

Secondly, the Platonic philosophers of the day would have been appalled by the conception of the Trinity. Saying that "the logos was God" would have made no sense to them. This only serves to further illustrate the fact that the Trinity was not an outgrowth of philosophy.

Therefore, although Greek philosophy played a major role in explaining Christian doctrine, it cannot be said that the former conceived the latter. Greek philosophy was only able to help us understand the infinite God. Yet it was Christianity that added the concepts of personality and plurality. Contrary to the Watchtower, instead of Christians syncretizing pagan beliefs into their faith and manufacturing an artificial doctrine, the Trinity did not add any new information to the Biblical text. Rather, it merely synthesized the Scriptural data of God's nature into a convenient framework in which to explain it. In fact, if we wanted to, we could throw out all the philosophy and not discuss "the Trinity" at all. Instead, we could just discuss the deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as taught in the Bible.

With this new information left out by the Watchtower, we can now add the following statements to our earlier syllogism:

5) The Early Church Fathers believed in the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

6) The formulators of the Trinity sincerely believed it was Biblical.

7) Philosophy played a passive yet vital role in the development of the Trinity by merely providing us with the language necessary to explain it.

With the addition of these premises, the Watchtower's original conclusion is no longer justified since it is inconsistent with the facts. A more logical conclusion, but one the Society couldn't accept is:

"Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is not the invention of pagan philosophy, but is the elucidation of the paradoxical nature of God as presented in the Bible."

#### Footnotes

1 Note: This article is not a defense of the Trinity, but is rather a response to the Watchtower's claim that the Trinity is pagan in origin.

2: See Robert Finnerty's *Jehovah's Witnesses on Trial*

3: An interesting note on this point is that the canon of Scriptural books was not officially decided upon until the fourth century either. And yet the Jehovah's Witnesses accept as inspired the same books of the Bible that "Christendom" does. Thus, if the Trinity is the product of an apostate Church, then so is the selection of books in the Bible.

4: The next article in this series will expand on the Watchtower's hypocritical portrayal of Church history, showing precisely the origin of their theology and Arius' own heavy reliance upon philosophy.

**Steve Berg was raised as a Jehovah's Witness and left when the Bible got in the way of their theology. He currently is working on his MA at Trinity International University.**



## ■ Court *continued from page 3*

had? If they could have produced the body of Jesus and stopped this new religion in its tracks, they would have!

New Agers also cannot afford to believe that Jesus' body was raised, because the bodily resurrection destroys the whole basis of reincarnation. For that matter, if they just could believe Jesus died for their sins, they would not need karma anymore either. They could be FORGIVEN and not have to continue to pay and pay and pay for sins they cannot even remember.

The Jehovah's Witnesses do not know what happened to the body. At one time they taught that God dissolved the body into gases. Later, they taught that God hid the body. Now they say they don't know.

Funny thing about dead bodies though...they stay where you put them. It was the same 2,000 years ago as it is today. The last place anyone had seen the body of Jesus DEAD was in that tomb, but it is no longer there. It is a fact that MUST be reckoned with, a mystery that must be looked into because of the implications it holds for us all. What happened to the body???

The vast volume of eyewitness testimony, the fact of the empty tomb, plus the inability of the opposition to produce the body or a credible explanation of its disap-

pearance offer us today the evidence we need to make a reasoned commitment to Christ. I do believe many people will go on imagining their fears of the afterlife away, and many others will make a leap of faith to accept as fact the theories of such scholarly personages as John Dominic Crossan or other skeptics. But I hope everyone reading this will look at the evidence and come to their own conclusion. If Jesus never came out of that tomb, we may as well eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. And dead we shall stay. But if the resurrection is true, it matters very much what we do with Jesus Christ. To ignore the resurrection and refuse to reach a verdict would be the most foolish option of all. Eternity hangs in the balance.

Next issue I will be discussing the various BIBLICAL objections people raise against the bodily resurrection and offer Biblical Christian answers.

Love to all,

*Joy*

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# Statement of Faith

1. The 66 books of the Holy Bible are the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. They are our supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. This, our statement of faith, is always subject to the Scriptures.
2. God created the entire universe ex nihilo ("out of nothing") and man from the dust of the earth to be a special creature bearing His image.
3. In the unity of the Deity there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity (the three persons are of the same essence but of different functions) God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
4. We believe in the virgin birth, sinless life, miraculous works, and substitutionary atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate (in the flesh). We believe He arose from the dead in essentially the same physical body in which He died. In it's resurrection, His body was glorified. This glorious resurrection is a sign of the defeat of death by the victorious Christ.
5. We confess our own and every human being's desperate need for salvation. Every person outside of Christ's redemption is utterly guilty and corrupt before a Holy God. The new birth (regeneration) absolutely is essential for salvation.
6. Salvation is by God's loving free grace in Christ. It is received by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone. Good works give evidence of true faith but cannot merit God's saving grace.
7. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is given to and indwells each true Christian as the "earnest" of his or her inheritance.
8. On a day known to no man, the Lord Jesus Christ will return bodily to earth in glory. This event will be manifest to all mankind.
9. There will be a general bodily resurrection and final judgment by God of every person who has ever lived, which will result in everlasting bliss for His elect and everlasting torment in the lake of fire for the impenitent, those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
10. The Church Universal, or Body of Christ, consists of all those united to Jesus Christ, their only Head, by His Spirit and by faith. Such also are united to one another. This organic unit is neither established nor obstructed by human organization and it is not destroyed by disagreement among church members on doctrines secondary to these essentials.
11. Congregations or associations of congregations abandoning all or some of these essentials, but which formerly held to them, are churches tending to apostasy. A cult is typically a religious organization, the tenets of which are substitutes for all or some of these essentials, and it confessionally opposes them. Cults typically view salvation (however they define salvation) as inseparably connected to cult membership.
12. There is a personal, malevolent being called Satan. We acknowledge the existence of demons and of God's holy angels.

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**September 9, 1995 . . . . . Interministry planning meeting**  
11:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Village Bible Church, Carol Stream, IL

**September 17, 1995 . . . . . Support group meeting**  
2:00 PM-5:00 PM @  
Bethel Community Church  
7601 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL 60656  
For directions call Darlene: 312/774-1356

**September 21-23 . . . . . "The Culting of America" conference**  
Sponsored by EMNR & Home Missions  
Board of the Southern Baptist Convention  
New Hope Baptist Church  
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Call 404/942-0046 for further information

**October 4, 1995 . . . . . Intersivarsity**  
1:00 P.M. Topic: Chicago Church of Christ  
Joliet Junior College, 1215 Houbolt Rd., Joliet, IL  
For directions call Jeff Pelz: 708/665-1122

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