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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH



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Heresy for a Mere Donation

A Look at the Jehovah's Witnesses' Latest Attack on the Trinity

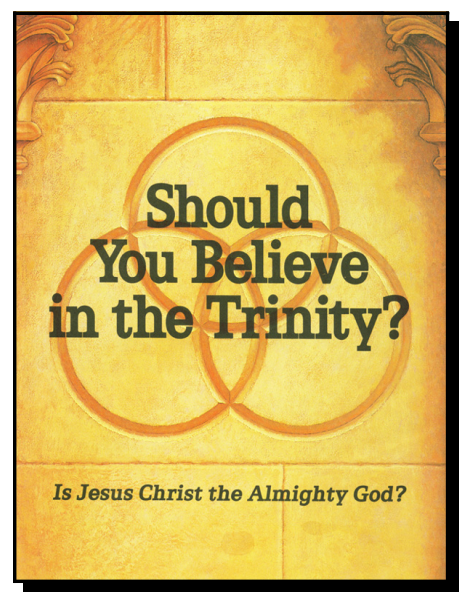
by M. Kurt Goedelman

During last summer's district conventions the Watchtower launched its heaviest attack ever on the doctrine of the triunity of God: a 32-page, Watchtower magazine-size, full-color publication titled, **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** Originally the brochure sold for thirty cents, however due to the Watchtower's recent sales policy change, it is now available in the United States for a mere donation.

For Jehovah's Witnesses, the answer to the question solicited in the title of the publication is "No."

Watchtower writers have amassed quotes and arguments in an effort to disprove "the central doctrine of the churches for centuries." Thus, to get to "the root of the Trinity controversy," secular and religious encyclopedias, and Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant works are cited. Some of the quotes have been used in previous Watchtower books. Others have not.

However, a look at the citations used in **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** will show that once again the Watchtower has practiced dishonest scholarship.



(This article will not make an exhaustive critique of Watchtower beliefs on this subject. A fuller treatment can be found in Robert M. Bowman, Jr.'s **Why You Should Believe in the Trinity**. Also a brief, yet effective treatment is found in **MacGregor Ministries New & Views**, April-June 1990, pp. 5-8.)

The reader might wonder why the Watchtower would appeal to Catholic,

Orthodox and Protestant writers in a work that purports to debunk the Trinity doctrine. The Watchtower says "lately even some of its [the Trinity doctrine's] supporters have added fuel to the controversy."

Watchtower scholars and writers apparently do not understand Church history. Down through the centuries, the vast majority of those who have attacked the Trinity doctrine have regarded themselves as being within the Church. These "attacks" have resulted in the formulation of the Church's creeds and the exposition and refinement of theology (or dogma) based upon a careful examination of the doctrine revealed in Scripture.

Anyone making even a superficial study of the Watchtower's treatment of the Trinity doctrine will learn that the thoughts of Christian writers cited in Watchtower publications usually have been wrested from their contexts and made to say the opposite of what the writers meant.

When the citations have been more honest and contextual, they have come from liberal Protestant and Catholic
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EDITORIALS

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN CHURCHES DISSOLVE UNION

Change is sweeping Maranatha Christian Churches (see PFO Newsletter, Vol. 5, No.1, Jan.-Mar. 1985, pg. 4). It has been announced through several Christian periodicals and television programs that as of last November, Maranatha Christian Churches Inc. has disbanded as an international federation of churches.

The central office in Gainesville, Fla., has been closed and all employees released. Each of the 45 churches in the United States and 25 churches abroad have become independent.

According to the March 1990 edition of **Charisma and Christian Life** magazine (pp. 22, 23), the Holy Spirit spoke to Bob Weiner, MCC founder, president and apostle, and proposed that: 1) the international office be phased out 2) the federation that legally held the churches together be disbanded 3) the churches be freed from the existing authority and structure 4) all spiritual and legal responsibilities be released to the local churches and 5) local churches be released from financial obligation to pay salaries of headquarters personnel, their secretaries' salaries and personnel travel expenses.

This article also says "the campus outreach, which operates separately from the federation of churches, will continue to train and evangelize students at colleges and universities around the world." (pg. 21)

On the heels of the change came the announcement that Weiner would extend a two-month sabbatical from leadership of the group for another twelve months.

Charisma said "at the suggestion of four close friends (who are Maranatha Elders), Weiner took a two-month

break in November and December 1989." The leave was taken so that Weiner could "evaluate his personal character." He stated "God has given me leadership abilities and an anointing. But for a long time I have been struggling with anger, unkindness, contentiousness and a tendency to control."

During the sabbatical Weiner spent time with friends and colleagues and decided to extend his leave.

It is telling that Weiner's admitted struggles are some of the very things singled out six years ago by cult researchers investigating MCC. Noted problems with MCC included authoritarianism, elitism and a lack of training of elders.

By examining the statements of several MCC leaders in three periodicals, one encounters the convoluted reasoning this group has used and the reluctance of authoritarian groups to admit error.

In the March 19, 1990, edition of **Christianity Today**, MCC representatives are quoted as saying that "the breakup of the federation of Churches had nothing to do with the problems cited in the 1984 report ... problems that for the most part had been solved (pg. 40). Yet in the March 1990 **Charisma and Christian Life**, on page 21 is found this statement: "At a July [1989] board meeting it was acknowledged that too much of a 'spirit of control' had entered the ministry. However, longtime MCC elder Walter Walker wrote in his newsletter, **Table Talk** (Nov. 1989), "To put it simply, the central organizational structure from the beginning has been very authoritarian." (pg. 3) Further, Rice Brooks (one of the Apostolic Team overseeing MCC) acknowledged, "We thought we had taken care of the extremes, but what it came down to was we really needed to completely restructure everything."

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NEWS UPDATE

MORMONS ALTER TEMPLE CEREMONY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) has cut its temple initiation ceremony by 30 minutes and removed sections long criticized by feminists and cult researchers.

Female Mormon initiates reportedly no longer are required to veil their faces when joining in the prayer circle in the temple. Recently an initiate disrupted a ceremony by refusing to wear the veil. More significant is the removal of the oath of obedience to their husbands that the Mormon women were required to take. This oath has been replaced with a vow merely to follow their husband.

Also gone is the portion where the Christian minister is depicted as working for Satan and the drawing of the hand across the throat, chest and abdomen as a symbol of the punishment for revealing the secrets of the initiation rite. That act was borrowed from Masonic initiation ceremonies.

Another Masonic-derived act gone is the "five points of fellowship" at the veil. The lecture at the veil, one of the most explicit statements of Mormon theology in the entire ceremony, has been reportedly removed, too.

Mormons also cut out the use of "Pay lay ale," said to mean "Oh Lord, Hear Us!" in the pure Adamic language.

These moves will blunt the impact of the film, **The God Makers**, which has been used effectively in steering people away from Mormonism. However, with these items no longer a part of the ceremony, presumably even the most devout Mormons should now be free to talk about these previously restricted portions of the ceremony.

—WPW



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

After once again being plagued with rumors that its company is involved in satanic practices, Proctor & Gamble has announced it will once more take to court the perpetrators of the unsubstantiated reports.

For nearly a decade, the Cincinnati-based corporation has been trying to squelch rumors that its company is lead by devil worshipers and that its trademark, a crescent moon with 13 stars, is a satanic symbol.

Kelly L. Gillespie, public relations director for Proctor & Gamble, stated that the company "filed lawsuits in 1982

and 1985 against a number of people who were intentionally spreading this lie, and will do so again if necessary."

—MKG



NOT SO ROSY

An internal struggle for control of the Rosicrucian Order may result in its being split in two.

Gary L. Stewart and Christian Bernard, both of whom claim to lead of the group, have taken their dispute to court. One possible solution to the conflict reportedly is a division of the order.

Stewart, the deposed leader of the group, has been banned from Rosicrucian headquarters in San Jose, Calif. Stewart claims his removal as head of the order was related to his detection of fellow officers embezzling money from the Rosicrucian treasury. He maintains that Bernard and others conspired to make it appear as though the group had incurred a financial deficit under his control. Bernard, a French citizen, is the Rosicrucians' acting leader.

The San Jose Rosicrucian Order claims 250,000 members worldwide and is the largest of the groups bearing the Rosicrucian name.

—MKG



PROPHET MISSES ARMAGEDDON, AGAIN

Elizabeth Clare Prophet, leader of the Church Universal and Triumphant, once again has misled her followers with doomsday predictions.

After consulting astrological charts that indicated grave danger in the months of March and April 1990, Prophet directed her followers to retreat to bomb shelters at a church-owned site in Montana.

The faithful waited. March and April passed and no Doomsday occurred. However, the cult did get in trouble with environmental authorities who detected a leak from a church-owned gasoline tank.

The woman whom the faithful followed was born Elizabeth (Betty) Clare Wulf in 1939 in Red Bank, N.J. From age 9 until 18 she attended a Christian Science church. She graduated from Boston University and went to work at Christian Science church headquarters in Boston.

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THE MORMON NICENE CREED

by John P. Juedes



The Mormon church has always claimed to be Christian. In its publicity, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stresses points that will most make it appear Christian. Mormons profess to accept central Christian beliefs such as the deity of Christ, His resurrection and salvation in Him.

Christians have professed for more than 1660 years the Nicene Creed, a statement of belief that was officially accepted by a council of church bishops and leaders at Nicea in 325 A.D. Christians still recite this creed regularly in public worship.

A Mormon who read this creed probably would agree to its content, but only after imposing interpretations on the terms it uses. Mormon beliefs differ from those expressed in the Nicene Creed.

Had Brigham Young and LDS bishops written the Nicene Creed, it would look much different from the original. What follows is what a "Mormon Nicene Creed" might look like, along with the real Church's Nicene Creed.

While this Mormon version was not written by a Mormon, it does represent LDS beliefs and is composed of concepts drawn from the book, **Mormon Doctrine** (second edition) by the late LDS authority and apostle Bruce R. McConkie. The reader may find it useful in sharing with Christians and Bible classes how different LDS beliefs are.

The Nicene Creed: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

The Mormon Nicene Creed: I believe in one God over this world, the Eternal

Father, or Elohim (pg. 224), and recognize there are millions of Gods over other worlds (pg. 577). My God, my Father, was once a man and now is mighty and progressing, and was head of the council of the Gods which made plans for creation of this Earth (pp. 163-164), but not for all things visible and invisible.

The Nicene Creed: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

The Mormon Nicene Creed: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the firstborn Son of God, begotten of His Father before this world, elder brother to Lucifer and all men (pg. 164), matured embryo-God of God, Light of Light, very God as was his Father God before Him, begotten in the Spirit of His Mother God (pg. 516), not made, having a different body of flesh and bones than the Father has, who made this world; who for us men and for the bodily resurrection, that is salvation, of even unbelievers (pg. 671) came down from the celestial kingdom and inherited mortality from Mary (pg. 64),

already being an exalted man; and was crucified also for our exaltation (pg. 62), under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and on the third day he rose again according to the Book of Mormon; and ascended beyond the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, and sits next to Elohim's right hand; and he shall come again to judge the living and the dead (pg. 402), having already preached to the dead, righteous spirits (pg. 755) that they might accept the Latter-day Saint gospel. His kingdom, as all Gods' kingdoms, shall have no end.

The Nicene Creed: And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

The Mormon Nicene Creed: And I believe in the Holy Ghost, who as the third God (pg. 319) is also a Giver of Life, who is one in purpose with the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped, having worked themselves into exaltation, who also spoke by the prophets both past and present; and in the Holy Spirit which, different from the Holy Ghost, is the impersonal influence which exerts God's power (pg. 753).

The Nicene Creed: And I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Mormon Nicene Creed: And I believe one revealed apostolic organization, the LDS church (pg. 136), I acknowledge six principles and many requirements to be fulfilled in order to be exalted into Godhood (pg. 321), I expect to teach the gospel to wicked spirits in prison when I die (pg. 762), and I look for the resurrection of the dead and my governing of my own (or serving in another God's) world to come (pg. 322). Amen.

The Latter-day Saint Church repeatedly utilizes Christian terminology in its attempt to appear to be in agreement with that of orthodox Christian belief. Nonetheless, it is not Christian. When the facts are carefully examined and terms defined, the Mormon quest to be Christian is exposed as nothing more than a facade. ❁

On a Hill Far Away...



The Message and Miracles of Medjugorje

by Edgar L. Havaich

Two young men and four young women from Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, claimed that since 1981, they have communicated with an apparition that identifies itself as Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ, the Queen of Peace.

The reports of these apparitions have drawn an estimated 15 million people to this town of about 400 families in central Yugoslavia. Some come hoping to get closer to God. Some come seeking healing. Some are curious. Some are skeptical.

Some leave claiming they have received healing. Others report renewed religious fervor. Others leave convinced the whole thing is a fraud.

The Medjugorje saga began on June 24, 1981. According to an article titled "A Call To Peace" (Fred Lilly, *New Covenant* magazine, Oct. 1984), the story goes as such:

"One afternoon in late June 1981, two teenage girls were walking together near the town of Medjugorje, in a rural section of Yugoslavia. Suddenly one of the girls, Ivanka Ivankovic [Elez], was startled by something she saw on a hillside nearby. It was a human figure

bathed in bright light. 'Look,' she shouted to her companion, Mirjana Dragicevic, 'the Madonna.'

'Why would the Madonna appear to us?' Mirjana replied, refusing to even look in the direction of the light.

Meanwhile, a friend named Vicka Ivankovic was walking on the same road, looking for Ivanka and Mirjana. As she came upon them she too saw the bright figure on the mountainside. 'Look at the Madonna,' she cried. Then, frightened, she ran back toward the village.

Thus began what are claimed to be appearances of the Virgin Mary to young members of St. James Parish in Medjugorje. Only the latest in a series of claimed apparitions in this century, the events in Medjugorje have attracted worldwide attention. Almost every day ... the town has been jammed with pilgrims, reporters, and the curious. Articles and books on the event have appeared in many countries, the name of Medjugorje is now known to hundreds of thousands of people around the world."

The article goes on to tell how the children returned to the hill the next

day along with other children and several adults. Again they saw the apparition and approached it. When they got within six feet of it, the children were thrown to the ground. Then the figure told them that June 25 is to be commemorated as the feast of Mary, the Queen of Peace.

The grandmother of one of the children suggested throwing holy water at the figure to determine if it was from the devil. The water was thrown but the figure remained, a sign that it was not demonic. Then the children asked the figure to identify itself. The figure said she was the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The apparitions continued. Each day people came to the hill. Some said they saw a light, but only the six children said they saw the figure.

The parish priest of Medjugorje, Rev. Jozo Zovko, did not believe the children at first. However, he said that one day while he was praying he felt God told him to protect the children. As he got up off his knees from praying and opened the door of the church, the children came running around the corner with the police in hot pursuit. The priest sent the children to his home and then misdirected the police to the village. This episode convinced Zovko that the children's story was true.

Zovko was jailed for 18 months for defending the children. During his term,
(continues on next page)

he was sent to work in a local furniture factory, where he suffered hearing damage. Some call him "the first martyr of Medjugorje."

Local authorities said people could no longer assemble on the hill. The apparitions then moved to St. James, the village church, where they have remained since.

The visions come in three phases. The youths begin by standing and reciting several "Our Fathers" (the Lord's Prayer), "Hail Marys" and "Glory Bes." Immediately upon the appearance of the Virgin the youths kneel. Phase one consists of contemplation or inaudible conversation with the apparition. Not all of the visionaries converse with the Virgin. The second phase includes prayer by all of the visionaries with the Virgin. During this phase the youths' voices are audible. The final phase is the return to contemplation or inaudible conversation with the apparition. The Virgin then departs and the vision is over.

THE MESSAGE

The message of Medjugorje is claimed to be a message for all faiths. Rev. Michael O'Conner, a Roman Catholic priest, says the Medjugorje message will harmonize Catholics and Protestants. Some Protestant reporters claim to have had supernatural experiences after coming to Medjugorje only with the intent of writing a report on the visions. One such reporter, Wayne A. Weible, now spreads the Medjugorje message full time.

The message can be summarized as "Peace, Conversion (some publications say commitment to God), Faith, Prayer, Penance and Fasting." The **Queen of Peace** newsletter (Vol. 1, No. 2) describes several of the above points:

PEACE: "Peace is the central message of Medjugorje. June 25th is to be dedicated to Mary as Queen of Peace. It is her peace that is to be the carrier and agent of reconciliation."

COMMITMENT TO GOD: "He is our Creator and Lord; hence we must accept Him as the undisputed Number

One in our lives. Accordingly we are to renounce our sinful ways and aim constantly at God's love and service. To this end Our Lady urges Catholics to go to Confession at least once a month."

FAITH: "It needs to be deep, strong, total, unhesitating, bighearted. Nothing pleases her more, the Madonna of Medjugorje has told us, than to hear us reciting her favorite prayers: the creed (that is, the formula of faith)."

PRAYER: "All of us are exhorted to pray more and better... And everyone (this applies especially to the priests) is recommended to say the rosary."

FASTING: "The mother of God reminds us that all penance and fortification is sanctifying and draws special favors from God. Fasting should be done twice a week and Wednesdays and Fridays are suggested. The best way to fast is on bread and water alone."

These messages generally conflict with biblical Christian teaching. The Bible never tells us to make God or Jesus No. 1 in our lives. Jesus Christ is simply to be our life (Colossians 3:4) with no room for No. 2 or No. 3. The Virgin's instruction on confession suggests her message is essentially to Roman Catholics.

Christians should be concerned with pleasing God, and no one else. The Bible urges us to pray without ceasing. This sounds like the Pharisees who thought they were heard for their multitudes of words. The instruction regarding the rosary again suggests the Roman Catholic emphasis.

The apparition's messages are shallow and unspecific. For example, she tells people to surrender themselves to God and pray that Satan will not carry them around like branches in the wind. She desires that people love all men with her love. She wants people to surrender to her so she can lead them to God.

Some of the messages attack a key aspect of Christianity: its claim to be the exclusive way of spiritual salvation. Devotees say the apparition told the visionaries that all faiths lead to God. Another message had to do with a

devout Moslem whom Mary said was close to sainthood. When Mary was questioned on the woman's religious views, Mary responded that this was for God to decide.

Rev. Paul Zanic, the Bishop of Mostar, the diocese in which St. James Parish is located, says "The message is a ho-hum message — yawn — six kiddies from 10 to 17 years say that they have seen Mary, the mother of Jesus. There are 117 ongoing apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary being examined now by the Vatican, so what's new? This message is not new; peace through prayer and penance." ("Miracles Of Medjugorje: Two Priests' View," **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**, Dec. 26, 1988, pg. 5D)

What then is the Medjugorje appeal? Judging from some testimonies, one appeal is the feeling of peace one gets at the site. Some people even report going through withdrawal after leaving.

THE SECRETS

There is another aspect to the Medjugorje appeal, a mystery that surrounds the events. According to Medjugorje lore, two of the six visionaries is to receive 10 secrets from Mary. The messages pertain to the Roman Catholic Church and the future of humanity. Two visionaries already have received their 10 secrets and no longer receive daily visitations. However, one of the two still has them on birthdays and other special occasions. The other has visits on the anniversary of the apparition. The remaining four visionaries have received nine secrets. (**The Apparitions of Medjugorje**, The Riehle Foundation; also see **Queen of Peace** newsletter, Vol. 1 No. 2.)

The visionaries already have revealed one of the secrets. It pertains to a sign on the hill where the apparition first appeared. This is going to be a visible sign, says the apparition. The apparition says: "This sign will be given for the atheists. You faithful already have signs and you have to become the sign for the atheists. You faithful must not wait for the sign before you convert; convert soon. This time is a time of grace for

you. You can never thank God enough for his grace. The time is for deepening your faith and for your conversion. When the sign comes, it will be too late for many." (**Miracle at Medjugorje**, pg. 2) The sign will be visible, permanent and will be used to convert many.

MARY THE PROPHET

Finally, there is a prophetic element to the Medjugorje message. "We believe that Our Lord is sending His Mother Mary to us as a prophet," says the Rev. John Vargas. "Like Elisha, Mary brings with her Our Lord's instructions for our cure." ("The Living Message," **The Mir Response**, pg. 9)

But no biblical prophet ever demanded the attention this apparition has sought. She has taken center stage. We are to be reconciled to her and spread her message. That contradicts Jesus' message. He told us to go into all the world and make disciples.

MEDJUGORJE'S CRITICS

Ever since that first sighting, Medjugorje has been a point of contention in the Roman Catholic Church. One priest, who was born there and knows the youths, has been labeled a traitor by fellow Franciscan priests because of his criticism of the Medjugorje events.

The Rev. Ivo Sivric calls the happenings "a pious initiative gone wrong, and now they don't know how to stop it." Sivric adds, "You get the impression from the children that the Blessed Virgin Mary is a wise woman, that Jesus Christ is angry all the time and that the Blessed Virgin Mary comes along and prevents this angry God from being an angry God all the time."

"That is not what Christianity teaches," Sivric says. He has written a book, **The Hidden Face of Medjugorje**, in which he tells his conclusions on the Medjugorje affair.

Sivric says his book deals with discrepancies in the visionaries reports of their visions. For example, the visionaries have all told about receiving 10 secrets. Originally there were only to be five secrets, the book says. On June 30, 1981, the children said the

Madonna would appear three more times. It is now 1990 and four of the six still report daily apparitions. Sivric sees the events at Medjugorje as a serious problem. He sees materialism sweeping the community. "They were tobacco and grape farmers, closely tied to the land, and now they are involved in a completely new life. The people don't go to Church; they wait on tourists. The neighboring villagers don't go. All of these stories about the people crawling on their knees to Medjugorje is simply folklore. The (Yugoslavian) people who are good Catholics are not going on pilgrimage." (**Post-Dispatch**, pg. 1D)

Sivric wrote another book on the peasants of the Medjugorje region. He tells of how they love to recite and create epic poetry, tales of heroes and romance — in short, myth.

He suggests that the young seers are carrying on a centuries-old tradition of myth-making. He said "It would be in keeping with the character of the peasants of the region for the children's tale to have started as a comedy, just as fun. Now it is impossible to stop it. Many people are asking me, if that is so, how can it keep going on for eight years? In my opinion, the visionaries are like hostages of the village with its new prosperity."

Bishop Zanic likewise takes a dim view of the events and does not think anything supernatural is happening at Medjugorje. At first he was enthusiastic about the visions. Today he calls them demonic. He says he thinks it is all a deception staged by the Franciscans. The bishop says all these people could have stayed home and prayed.

SIGNS AND WONDERS

Along with the reported apparitions there also comes the testimonies of those who say they have witnessed a "sign." The signs vary, some say their rosaries turned to gold. Others report healings. Some tell of a 15-ton stone cross that spun around until its beams disappeared.

The most talked-about is the "miracle of the sun." The sun is said to dance, spin, pulsate, even turn into a communion host. Some say they have seen Mary

standing on the sun. Others say it is Jesus.

In 1986, Sivric interviewed 200 people in Medjugorje and concluded that the purported miracles were the result of "atmospheric conditions in the mountainous region." He said the pilgrims have read so much, heard so much, that they are psychologically prepared for something to happen." (**Post-Dispatch** pg. 1D)

Some who have gone to Medjugorje have returned not with healing but with physical affliction. An article in the May issue of the **New England Journal of Medicine** cites doctors from Phoenix reporting two cases of eye damage suffered from the "miracle of the sun" at Medjugorje. A recent documentary, **Medjugorje: Its Miracles and Its Message**, said one caller from Florida reported being blinded by Medjugorje sun-staring and another losing sight for the same reason.

One last blow to the credibility of the Medjugorje visions is the story of Ivanka Elez's (formerly Ivankovic) request to see her dead mother. The apparition granted her wish and Ivanka was momentarily held by her mother, who then vanished. This is necromancy, a practice the Bible condemns (see Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 8:19; 1 Chronicles 10:13,14; and Luke 16:19-31, esp. vs. 27-29).

Christians don't need an apparition of the Virgin Mary to give them instruction. Neither do they need six youths to transmit those instructions.

The Bible tells us whom God sent to teach Christians. In John 14:26, Jesus says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Gospel has not changed in 2000 years. Messages from a hill in Yugoslavia cannot replace the message conveyed on that hill outside Jerusalem the day Jesus paid the price for all our sins.



So a major area of concern of the researchers in 1984 was authoritarianism. The federation of churches has been dissolved because of authoritarianism but the dissolution "had nothing to do with the problems cited in the report" because "those problems had for the most part been solved". However, if that problem had been solved, why would a leading elder maintain that the central organizational structure had been very authoritarian "from the beginning"? Add to this already labyrinthine reasoning the statement given to **Christianity Today** (March 19, 1990, pg. 40) by Weiner that "Ninety-nine percent of what we did was right. It was the one percent that got recorded," and the bounds of credibility are stretched to the utmost.

Such statements are typical of authoritarian groups that want to present another face to the public. When there is an apostle or prophet who receives direct binding revelation from the Lord, his authority becomes exaggerated. If the revelation is later discredited, then all manner of mental gymnastics are used to avoid admitting the error of the revelation.

One would hope that with the dissolution of the MCC and the unraveling of the Shepherding Movement, that authoritarian groups would be on the wane. However, as the "new move of God in Kansas City gains momentum, it appears that hope may be in vain.

—SFC



MORE LANDMINES

One of the most dangerous places a Christian can go to is a Christian bookstore. Hidden among the many edifying volumes are theological landmines: publications containing extrabiblical revelation and defective theology.

The newest mine in the field is the best-seller, **Joshua**, by Joseph F. Girzone. This book is called a "deeply inspiring book that is reaffirming the message of Christ." According to the March 1990 "Hotlist" of best-sellers from Spring Arbor Distributors, a leading broker of Christian publications, **Joshua** is No. 2 behind Frank Peretti's **This Present Darkness**. More than a half-million copies have been sold. Its sequel, **Joshua and the Children**, is No. 7.

Girzone has written what he calls a parable for today. In the foreword, Girzone says "The author does feel, however, that what takes place in this book could very easily happen in real life."

The first doubt about the book comes when one realizes that the Joshua of this book is supposed to be Jesus. Another comes when the reader discovers that this Joshua never initiates contact with people but waits for them to approach

him with questions.

Then there is Joshua's doctrine. He doesn't call sin sin. Joshua befriends an alcoholic priest but never confronts him about the drinking. Joshua is compassionate, merciful and friendly, except to clergymen. He relentlessly attacks them.

In the book, Joshua runs afoul of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and is brought before a Vatican council, where he is censured. During his hearing, Joshua blasts the Catholic position on divorce:

"And if a couple do not appear before you and divorce and marry again, you say they commit adultery if they know in their hearts their previous marriage was unhealthy and was destroying them?"

Here, Joshua comes into conflict with the real Jesus who said:

"But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32)

Joshua would allow divorce when people know in their hearts the marriage is unhealthy. Jesus condemns divorce except in the case of marital unfaithfulness.

The biblical Jesus came to fulfill the law. Girzone's Joshua appears to want everyone free any entanglements, including Christ's commandments. The only sin he confronts is the hypocrisy of the churchmen.

The biblical Jesus came to free man from sin, but at the cost of His death on the cross. Girzone's Joshua never hints at this. In fact, Joshua never mentions the need to be saved or how to be saved or anything about the Gospel.

So Girzone has created a Joshua in his own mind. This Joshua, however, bears little resemblance to the Jesus he is supposed to represent.

—JCV



There she met and married Dag Ytreberg, the first of her four husbands. At the same time Mark L. Prophet was starting a storefront church in Washington, D.C. He called it the Summit Lighthouse.

In 1961, Wulf heard Prophet at a Boston meeting. She later left Ytreberg and married Prophet and returned to his church in Washington. The church had little money and fewer than 100 members. However, the couple combined their talents and soon the church had enough money to move to Colorado Springs, Colo. Here the church quickly attracted followers from the counterculture movement of the

mid-60s. Among these new converts were Randall Kosp and Edward Francis.

According to Kosp, the Prophets had fierce quarrels over control of the church. In February 1973, Mark Prophet died of a stroke. Many people quit the church. Nine days after Prophet died, Elizabeth secretly married Kosp. Six months later, the marriage was made public and official in Idaho. However, Elizabeth retained the surname Prophet and requested that Kosp change his name to King.

King made some bad investments which spurred an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service. Fearing the loss of non-profit status, the church changed its name to The Church Universal and Triumphant and moved to California, where it bought a former Nazarene college in Pasadena in 1976. In 1978, the church moved to what Elizabeth called "Camelot," a 260-acre estate in the southern San Fernando Valley. Shortly after moving to the new site, Elizabeth charged King with infidelity, divorced him and had him excommunicated from the church.

In 1981, Elizabeth married her fourth and current husband, Ed Francis, whose wife had previously left the sect and divorced him. That same year, the church bought Malcolm Forbes' 12,000-acre ranch near Livingston, Mont. The church bought more land, bringing its holdings in the Livingston area to 30,000 acres. During the mid-80s, lawsuits from former members, which charged brainwashing, arose against the church. Elizabeth sold the "Camelot" property and moved her headquarters to the Montana ranch on the northern border of Yellowstone National Park.

The sect claims 150,000 members, who refer to Elizabeth as "Guru Ma" and consider her statements to be direct words of God. The New Age group adheres to a mixture of Western and Eastern theology. Reincarnation, karma, astrology and belief in power from crystals are among the church's beliefs. Prophet claims that in past lives she was Queen Guinevere, Marie Antoinette, and someone who sat at the feet of Jesus.

—MKG



WAY FOLLOWER, PHONE HOME

The Way International, the New Knoxville, Ohio-based cult founded by the late Victor Paul Wierwille, is now urging its members to "Tap in to the Root" through a "Dial-a-Sunday Night Service" for its fellowship assemblies around the country.

The Way promotes the service by claiming, "Your telephone can put you right in the center of The Word Over The World Auditorium and the dynamic, live teaching of God's Word at a Sunday night service." Members are required to reserve phone lines before the service and certify the caller as Way meeting leader.

The Way also has received a favorable tax ruling. On April 11, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that The Way is a church and therefore exempt from sales tax on the goods it buys. The Ohio tax department was seeking a \$156,990 tax assessment for purchases made by The Way between 1974 and 1976. The State of Ohio contended that The Way was a business and not eligible for tax exemption.

The court ruled in its finding that The Way "did not distribute any profit to its trustees, officers, or employees, but, instead, paid them modest salaries." According to a **Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch** report, "The Way's profits ... had grown from \$830,000 in 1973 to \$5.8 million in 1976." The court's decision, however, does not exempt the group from collection of sales tax on the material which it sells.

—MKG



SMITHSONIAN PURCHASES NAUVOO TEMPLE SUNSTONE

The Smithsonian Institute's Museum of American History recently bought a sunstone that once decorated the Mormon temple in Nauvoo, Ill. The acquisition was among the most expensive in the museum's history. It cost \$100,000.

Richard Ahlborn, curator in the museum's division of community life, said the Smithsonian sought the relic because "it is a central symbol of the heroic effort by the Mormon pioneers in their movement from upstate New York to Utah to maintain their belief system." He also said "The stone is symbolic of the most persistent religious movement in American history."

The 2.5-ton, carved limestone relic features a radiant-faced sun amid clouds. Two hand-held trumpets frame the top of the stone. Of the 30 sunstones that decorated the Nauvoo temple, only two complete ones remain. The Smithsonian bought its from the Historical Society of Quincy and Adams Counties in Illinois, where it had been displayed at the former governor's mansion in Quincy. The Historical Society decided to sell the stone early last year to raise money. The other intact sunstone is displayed in the Illinois State Park in Nauvoo, just a mile from where the temple once stood.

The Nauvoo Temple was officially completed in 1845, the year following the death of Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith Jr. It cost an estimated \$750,000-\$800,000 to build. However, in 1846 the Mormons began their exodus from Illinois to Utah under the direction of Brigham Young. In 1848, the abandoned temple burned in a fire and was later hit by a tornado. Much of the temple remains were used by later, non-Mormon settlers in Nauvoo for construction of homes and businesses.

—MKG

writers who challenge God's triunity. Still, in other instances, the Watchtower provides only partial quotes in its effort to convince the reader that the Trinity doctrine is a pagan notion.

MISQUOTATIONS AND HALF-QUOTES

The Watchtower writers waste little time in their new book misleading their readers. On page 4, it says, "**The Encyclopedia Americana** notes that the doctrine of the Trinity is considered to be 'beyond the grasp of human reason.'"

A look at that quote in full context conveys a different message. It says: "It is held that although the doctrine is beyond the grasp of human reason, it is, like many of the formulations of physical science, not contrary to reason, and may be apprehended (though it may not be comprehended) by the human mind." (**The Encyclopedia Americana**, Vol. 27, pg. 116)

The Watchtower's quote, when placed in context, is hard to dispute. A God who is comprehensible to a finite mind is a God who has been overtaken by his own creation.

What makes Watchtower reasoning all the more laughable is that Jehovah's Witnesses are told in other publications not to reject elements of God's nature merely because they are incomprehensible. The Watchtower's **Reasoning From The Scriptures** says on the subject, "Did God have a Beginning?": "Is that reasonable? Our minds cannot fully comprehend it. But that is not a sound reason for rejecting it. Consider these examples: (1) Time. No one can point to a certain moment as the beginning of time. And it is a fact that, even though our lives end, time does not. We do not reject the idea of time because there are aspects of it that we do not fully comprehend. Rather, we regulate our lives by it. (2) Space. Astronomers find no beginning or end to space. The farther they probe into the universe, the more there is. They do not reject what the evidence shows; many refer to space as being infinite. The same prin-

ciple applies to the existence of God." (pg. 148)

Watchtower writers also ignored a statement on the same page of the encyclopedia that disputes the idea that the Trinity doctrine is pagan. It says: "It is probably a mistake to assume that the doctrine resulted from the intrusion of Greek metaphysics or philosophy into Christian thought; for the data upon which the doctrine rests, and also its earliest attempts at formulation, are much older than the church's encounter with Greek philosophy." (**The Encyclopedia Americana**, Vol. 27, pg. 116)

The reader doesn't have to turn the page to find another example. This time, the writers cite **The Catholic Encyclopedia**, claiming it says the Trinity doctrine is "A dogma so mysterious [it] presupposes a Divine revelation."

When the quote is read in context, the same thing happens: A biblical, orthodox thought emerges. The encyclopedia, while stating "It is manifest that a dogma so mysterious presupposes a Divine revelation," goes on to say: "When the fact of revelation, understood in its full sense as the speech of God to man, is no longer admitted, the rejection of the doctrine follows as a necessary consequence. For this reason it has no place in the Liberal Protestantism of today. The writers of this school contend that the doctrine of the Trinity, as professed by the Church, is not contained in the New Testament, but that it was first formulated in the second century and received final approbation in the fourth, as a result of the Arian and Macedonian controversies." (**The Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. 15, pg. 47)

As noted by **The Catholic Encyclopedia**, many liberal Protestant scholars contend that the Trinity doctrine originated in the second century. That is a theory shared by the Watchtower. Yet, the encyclopedia rejects the idea, saying: "The Divinity of Christ is amply attested not merely by St. John, but by the Synoptists," and "The various elements of the Trinitarian doctrine are all expressly taught in the New Testament. The Divinity of the Three Persons is asserted or implied in passages too

numerous to count." These statements clearly summarize the biblical evidence presented by the encyclopedia in defense of the Trinity. (Vol. 15, pp. 47, 49)

On page 6 of **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** Watchtower writers misrepresent the thoughts of Jesuit Edmund J. Fortman in his book, **The Triune God**. The Watchtower says Fortman says "The New Testament writers ... give us no formal or formulated doctrine of the Trinity, no explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine persons."

However, the Watchtower surgeons have excised Fortman's next statement, which says the New Testament writers "do give us an elemental trinitarianism, the data from which such a formal doctrine of the Triune God may be formulated." (**The Triune God**, Introduction, pg. xvi) Further, they have ignored his discussions, based on Scripture, for the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Yet, Fortman's book cannot be regarded as totally orthodox. On page 9, he writes: "Although this spirit is often described in personal terms, it seems quite clear that the sacred writers never conceived or presented this spirit as a distinct person." **Should You Believe in the Trinity** cites that statement on page 21.

It should be noted that while the biblical authors may not have completely understood or comprehended some of that which they were inspired to write, a careful consideration of Scripture will demonstrate Fortman's conclusion that "Sacred [Old Testament] writers never conceived or presented this spirit as a distinct person" is in error.

While Fortman admitted that the Spirit is described in personal terms, He is also ascribed, as in the New Testament, with attributes which can only be applicable to a person or personality. 2 Samuel 23:2 tells of the Spirit's ability to speak; in Psalm 106:33 we are instructed that the Spirit can be rebelled against; Isaiah 63:10 informs us that the Spirit can be grieved; and in Nehemiah 9:30 we learn that the Israelites were

admonished by this same Spirit. These are some of the very capabilities which Fortman notes in the New Testament in his consideration of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian will find many areas of Roman Catholic doctrine and dogma that contradict the biblical faith. Nonetheless, Catholicism's stand for, and defense of, the doctrine of the Trinity is certainly not one of them.

The Watchtower also misrepresents, through misquotes and half-quotes, the writings of E. Washburn Hopkins, a Yale University professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology who died in 1932. On page 6 of its book, the Watchtower uses this statement from Hopkins' **Origin and Evolution of Religion**: "To Jesus and Paul the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; ... they say nothing about it."

Just before that quote, Hopkins had written: "The beginning of the doctrine of the trinity appears already in John (c. 100)." (pg. 336) The Watchtower left that out. (John's gospel would now be dated much earlier by most scholars.)

The Watchtower also leaves out these statements by Hopkins:

"The early Church declared that Christ was the Logos and that the Logos was God." (ibid.)

"Paul does not say that Christ is God, but he identifies Christ with the Holy Spirit and applies to him the Old Testament [verses] used of God: 'I am God and ... unto me every knee shall bow' (Is. 45:22,23; Phil. 2:10)." (ibid.)

While orthodox Christians would challenge many of Hopkins' premises, including his assertion that "Paul does not say that Christ is God" (see Titus 2:13, Colossians 2:9 and Philippians 2:6), Hopkins' observations differ greatly from the Watchtower's.

DISTINGUISHING DOGMA FROM DOCTRINE

When considering the statements of orthodox scholars, one must understand the distinction between dogma and

doctrine or theology and doctrine. The Watchtower does not and leads its readers to believe they all mean the same thing.

Doctrine refers to that which is expressed in Scripture. Dogma or theology is the settled opinion or belief that has been established by the doctrine expressed in Scripture. Catholics are more inclined to make use of the term "dogma"; Protestants prefer "theology."

Baker's Dictionary of Theology, under the subject "Doctrine," says: "It [doctrine] differs from dogma (q.v.) in that it does not connote an authoritative ecclesiastical affirmation but is rather the raw material of the word of God which councils use in formulating theological truth in definitive and sometimes polemical forms."

Academic works of orthodoxy sometimes make reference to the evolution, development or refinement of the dogma (or theology) of the Trinity. The Watchtower, in its use of these quotations, will misconstrue or erroneously imply these declarations to mean that it was at the various church councils where the doctrine of the Trinity was invented, evolved or developed. The truth is that the doctrine is revealed within the confines of scripture, while the refined or expressed beliefs pertaining to this doctrine have been set forth at the church councils.

While, the Watchtower does not wish to afford this development of theology to Christendom, it has itself adopted the practice. One only has to compare current Watchtower theology with that of Watchtower founder Charles Taze Russell. One need not even go back that far. Watchtower theology has changed noticeably in just the past few years. The changes are not always clarifications of theology, but often are turnabouts.

QUOTATIONS FROM NEO-ORTHODOX AND NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES

It is dishonest enough when Watchtower writers try to pass off liberal Protestant writers as representatives of orthodox Christianity, but they go a step

further and misquote and half-quote them, too.

As is the case with all citations in **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** no background information on the cited writer is provided, neither is there a volume and page number of the work cited. This hinders research by the reader and makes it difficult to put into context any of the cited statements.

Those who locate even a few of the quotes soon will realize why several "Christian theologians" are cited.

One example is Adolf Harnack, author of **Outlines of the History of Dogma**. The Watchtower cites Harnack to support its concept that Plato's "philosophies paved the way for [the Trinity doctrine]". On page 11 of **Should You Believe in The Trinity?** Harnack is cited and the reader told "church doctrine became 'firmly rooted in the soil of Hellenism [pagan Greek thought]. Thereby it became a mystery to the great majority of Christians."

Harnack is a liberal theologian who believes Christianity was a Hebrew-Oriental religion founded by Jesus Christ only to be polluted with Greek thought introduced by Paul. Harnack says in the same book cited by the Watchtower, "If the gnostics 'hellenized' Christianity, so had Paul." (**Outlines of the History of Dogma**, Introduction) He further says "Paul wrenched the Gospel from its native soil and gave it at the same time through his Christological speculation and his carrying out of the contrast of flesh and spirit, a characteristic stamp which was comprehensible to the Greeks, although they were illy prepared to accept his special manner of reconciling it with the Law." (ibid, pp. 21-22)

Further, the quotation refers to the whole of Christian doctrine, which Harnack believes has been defiled by pagan philosophy. Harnack's beliefs placed him outside the realm of orthodoxy. In fact, **The Catholic Encyclopedia** calls Harnack an example of one from "Liberal Protestantism" who claims "that the doctrine of the Trinity, as professed by the Church, is not contained in the New Testament, but

that it was first formulated in the second century and received final approbation in the fourth, as the result of the Arian and Macedonian controversies." (Vol. 15, pg. 47)

Harold O.J. Brown, in his work, **Heresies**, said "Harnack looks on Christian theology per se as a Hellenization of the simple Gospel in the spirit of Gnosticism. From our perspective, it would be more plausible to compare philosophical and religious speculation of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) or even the massive and urbane learning of Harnack himself with Gnosticism." (pg. 46)

This is likewise noted in the publication, **Adolf Von Harnack, Liberal Theology At Its Height**. Editor Martin Rumscheidt writes "Harnack became troubled by the fact that his relationship to the Church was so heavily overcast. He had always wanted to serve the Church but it did not even call upon him to sit on commissions to examine his own students for their fitness to serve the Church or their theological readiness. The Church, and for that matter some of his own colleagues, regarded him as someone who held an unbelieving theology." (pg. 21)

Thus in its context, Harnack's speculation not only was rejected by orthodoxy, but also should be rejected by the Watchtower.

The Watchtower gives the same treatment to the work of historian Will Durant, who emphasizes the same concept of a Church corrupted by paganism. **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** quotes an untitled Durant work on page 11: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it ... From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity."

The quotation used is on page 595 of Durant's 1944 work **Caesar and Christ**, from his series **The Story of Civilization**. The Watchtower has conveyed the truest sense of the idea expressed by Durant, namely that Christianity is the result of pagan influence.

The careful reader will note that the Watchtower citation uses the word "ideas." While Jehovah's Witnesses

would readily call pagan several beliefs that Durant does, they would disagree that others, such as belief in the Last Judgment and Christian monasticism, are pagan. The writers of **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** left those out.

The Watchtower writers also have to fudge on Durant's opinion that the Apostles John and Paul introduced paganism into Christianity. Durant's notion of a pagan-influenced Christian Church is expressed in his statements which include, "Fundamentalism is the triumph of Paul over Christ" and "It seems incredible that the Apocalypse [Revelation] and the Fourth Gospel should have come for the same hand, The Apocalypse is Jewish poetry, the Fourth Gospel is Greek philosophy." (pp. 592, 594)

Further he contends that "Perhaps the apostle [John] wrote Revelation in justifiable wrath after Nero's persecution, and the Gospel in the mellow metaphysics of his old age (A.D. 90?). His memories of the Master may by this time have faded a bit, so far as one could ever forget Jesus; and doubtless in the isles and cities of Ionia he had heard many an echo of Greek mysticism and philosophy." (pg. 594) The Jehovah's Witnesses, unlike Durant, believe that pagan element in Christianity was introduced much later.

Finally, while the Watchtower booklet indicates Durant to be a historian, it should be noted that he is an American historian. Further, **The Encyclopedia Americana** notes that Durant's "Critics recognize his knowledge of cultural history but complained of his sweeping, often outdated generalizations, his reliance on sometimes dubious secondary works, and his avoidance of controversial subjects." (Vol. x, pg. 486).

Another writing cited because of its "historical evidence" is Alvan Lamson's 19th-century work, **The Church of the First Three Centuries**. The Watchtower tries to use this work to buttress its claim that while the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are spoken of together, it is "not as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as Three in One, in any sense now admitted by Trinitarians." (pg. 7)

Should You Believe in the Trinity? further quotes Lamson as saying: "The doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation; ...it had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; ...it grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers." (pg. 11)

Lamson's book can be accurately quoted in context by the Watchtower. When Linda Hull, director of a West Virginia-based counter-cult ministry contacted the Watchtower in pursuit of documentation of its **Trinity** booklet, she received only photocopies of pages from this publication. But even with this book, the Watchtower had something to hide.

One edition of the book is distributed by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in London. This shows how far Watchtower writers must stretch to find a doctrinal ally, an ally they are not willing to readily admit. Hull's photocopies contained no reference to the Unitarian origin of Lamson's volume. However, the Unitarian source is clearly identified on the title page of other editions of the work.

This disclosure is reminiscent of the discovery in 1981 of the source of the Johannes Greber New Testament translation, which the Watchtower quoted in support of its rendering of John 1:1. The Greber New Testament was distributed by the Johannes Greber Foundation, which promoted occult activities such as communicating with the spirit world.

HISTORICAL FALLACIES

The Watchtower's answer to the question "How did the Trinity Doctrine Develop?" (pp. 7-12), reads this way: "For many years, there had been much opposition on biblical grounds to the developing idea that Jesus was God. To try to solve the dispute, Roman emperor Constantine summoned all bishops to Nicea." The conference of these bishops in the spring of 325 A.D. has come to be known as the Council of Nicea. Concerning this Council the Watchtower has cited the works of **The Encyclopedia Britannica**, Henry Chadwick's **The Early Church** and Bernhard

Lohse's **A Short History of Christian Doctrine**.

These works are used to support the Watchtower claim that Constantine's role at Nicea was crucial. "After two months of furious religious debate, this pagan politician intervened and decided in favor of those who said that Jesus was God. But why? Certainly not because of any Biblical conviction ... What he did understand was that religious division was a threat to his empire, and he wanted to solidify his domain." (pg. 8)

E. Calvin Beisner, in his work, **God in Three Persons**, disagrees. While Beisner would accept the idea that Constantine did not fully understand the issues, he stresses that Constantine:

"Did understand that this problem had caused a major division within Christianity; and as a Christian himself, he wished to see this brought to an end. He did all he could to restore unity without using political force, but to no avail... The role of the emperor in all this has long been the subject of great debate. It has been argued that his purpose was only political, the unification of a powerful force within the empire, namely the Christian Church... However, it seems highly questionable to see Constantine's involvement in the problem as purely political, or nearly so, as others have implied. The more likely view is that politics and religion were both important to Constantine, for it appears that he inherited from his father an early tendency toward Christianity, and certainly at his famous 'conversion' something more than an ingenious plan for military victory occurred to him." (pp. 108, 109)

Beisner further shows that the doctrine of the Trinity was not approved for political reasons. He notes that "The forty years immediately following the Council of Nicea were some of the darkest hours for the orthodox faith ...Constantine was won to the side of the Arians, and later received Eusebius of Nicomedia into his close confidence, being baptized by him on his deathbed. When Constantine turned his favor to the Arians, he recalled Arius from exile,

sent him again to Alexandria, and the Arians were back in power." (pp. 125, 126)

Thus it was the "Jehovah's Witnesses" of the fourth century who enjoyed political favor, not those of the orthodox faith.

Having examined some of the scholastic dishonesty of the Watchtower, we will now briefly turn our attention to a review of a few of the misinterpretations of Scripture found in the latter portion of the booklet.

THEOLOGICAL STRAWMEN

The Watchtower often misstates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and then quickly refutes it. In the beginning of **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** Catholic and Greek Orthodox sources are cited, providing an accurate definition of the Trinity doctrine. Then the Watchtower uses another dishonest technique: ignoring the explanation and refuting an erroneous one.

The Watchtower writers repeatedly apply the theology known as Sabellianism, modalism or "Jesus Only" to that of trinitarianism. The two are incompatible. The Church has denounced as heresy the belief that the one God is a single person or essence who has revealed himself in different roles or modes. (For more information on Modalism, see "The Oneness Doctrine: Full Gospel or Fool Gospel?," **The Quarterly Journal**, July-Sept, 1989, pp. 1, 9-11.)

Thus, when an erroneous definition or a faulty interpretation of a teaching is used, it is easy to argue against it.

Under the heading "Jesus Distinguished From God" (pg. 17), the Watchtower points to the words of Christ in John 17:3 as he prays that eternal life is knowing Thee [the Father] the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Jehovah's Witnesses, trying to denigrate Christ, miss the context of His words. Eternal life lies in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. The Apostle John repeatedly writes that eternal life is achieved through belief in the Son. Jesus is also addressed by John as the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

Here Watchtower logic causes problems for Jehovah's Witnesses. If the Father is alone the only true God, then Jesus, who is also referred to as God or "a god," must be a false God.

Beisner addresses Jesus' words in John 17:5 and the interpretation that the Father is "the only true God." He comments that to regard this verse as an undeification of Jesus is:

"A very simple mistake that every first semester logic student knows about. It is the simple mistake of denying the antecedent, is what it is called. Illustrated this way: All men are mortal, Fido is not a man, therefore Fido is not mortal. The parallel with it is: The Father is the only true God, Jesus is not the Father, therefore Jesus is not the only true God. That is not how it works. The only way you could get to that conclusion is if instead you put the word only, not before true God, but before Father. Only the Father is the true God, Jesus Christ is not the Father, therefore Jesus Christ is not God. Now that would be a logically valid argument." (Transcript from The John Ankerberg Show, "The United Pentecostal Church International")

A second Scripture citation on page 17, John 20:17, is appealed to in that the risen Savior instructs Mary Magdalene that He is to ascend "to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The Watchtower, through its misunderstanding of the Bible or by deliberate misrepresentation of Scripture, has arrived at this erroneous conclusion. The Bible is clear that Jesus is both God and man (see John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5-11). As the Savior walked upon the earth He made statements and actions both as God (see John 5:39; 8:58) and as man (see John 4:7; 11:35).

The Watchtower Society has repeatedly disregarded or changed scripture that stresses the deity of Christ and adhered to any passage that emphasizes the humanity of Christ. John 20:17 is a perfect example. The clear context of Jesus' words is shown to be spoken from His humanity. Jehovah's Witnesses fail to take note of the statement "go to my brethren and say to them ..." which

precedes his words that He is ascending to His Father and God. "Go to my brethren" provides one with the insight that as a man Jesus is to ascend to the Father.

The statement "Jesus further showed that he was a separate being from God by saying: 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone' (Mark 10:18 JB)" (pg. 17) places Jehovah's Witnesses in a peculiar position of denying the absolute goodness of Jesus. This is evident because they state, "So Jesus was saying that no one is as good as God is, not even Jesus himself. God is good in a way that separates him from Jesus."

First it should be noted that no degrees of goodness are expressed in this verse. This interpretation can only be achieved by reading it into the text. The Watchtower's interpretation and the words of Scripture found in Mark 10:17-18 serves as a classic example. Here, Jesus replied to the ruler who called him good: "no one is good except God alone." Thus the Watchtower concludes that since Jesus is not God, he cannot be addressed as good.

Dr. Randolph Yeager, in **The Renaissance New Testament**, writes "Our Lord decided to ask him [the ruler] for a definition of terms. Why call Jesus good, unless he had a perverted conception of goodness. How can one call any man good? If the man is good is he not also God? So, if the man really believed that Jesus was good he should have called Him God. If Jesus is not God then He is only a man like the rich young ruler. And if that is true He is not good. So why did the man call Him good? In order that he also could call himself good. Thus Jesus was saying 'Either worship me as God if you really think that I am good, or keep your compliments to yourself, since you are obviously insincere.'"

Jesus did not deny that He was good or that He is God. He merely questioned the ruler's intentions. In Luke 23:58, Joseph of Arimathea (a disciple of Jesus) is called "good," using the same Greek word **agathos** found in Mark 10:18. The same is said of Barnabas in Acts 11:24. Thus if one

applies the Watchtower logic and biblical interpretation Joseph and/or Barnabas can be made to be God.

The Watchtower's interpretation and forced meaning of Mark 10:17-18 is further shown futile by The Society's own New World Translation's rendering of Colossians 2:9. The NWT states "because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." No Jehovah's Witness could argue against the fact that a quality of God is his goodness. Therefore, Christ possesses that divine quality, in that he possesses "all the fullness of divine quality." When one accepts Paul's declaration (Colossians 2:9) the Watchtower's interpretation of the Mark 10 passage is shown to be in error and must be rejected. (An expose' of six additional Watchtower "proof texts" denying the deity of Jesus Christ are available in the pamphlet, "The Strawmen of the Watchtower Society," available from Personal Freedom Outreach.)

WATCHTOWER REBUTTAL OF TRINITY PROOF TEXTS

Under six subheadings in **Should You Believe in the Trinity?**, Watchtower writers respond to orthodox arguments for the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ. A look at two of the responses will show the error of Watchtower thinking on these subjects.

First, take the Watchtower treatment of Philippians 2:6. The Watchtower's booklet here notes that "the Catholic Douay Version (Dy) of 1609 says of Jesus: 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.'" (pg. 25)

The Watchtower uses a little verbal sleight of hand here to make its point. The booklet presents observations calling the reader's attention to the phrase "though it not robbery" (Greek: **harpa'zo**) and argues for translation of the Greek verb as "to seize," "to snatch violently" or "to grasp at" existing in God's form. (pg. 25)

Through the Watchtower's prolific discourse of the word **harpa'zo**, the reader's attention has been diverted from the proper focal point of Paul's declaration. **Harpa'zo** may certainly

and properly be translated as noted by the Watchtower. However, the Greek words that should have been considered are **huparchon** ("being") and **morphe** ("form").

Concerning the latter, **The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament** by James H. Moulton and George Milligan, comments that **morphe** "always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it." (pg. 417)

Further, in **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**, Joseph H. Thayer writes under the heading **morphe** that Philippians 2:6 "is to be explained as follows: who, although (formerly when he was logos **asarkos** [without flesh]) he bore the form (in which he appeared to the inhabitants of heaven) of God (the sovereign, opp. to **morphe doulos**), yet did not think that this equality with God was to be eagerly clung to or retained (see **harpa'zo**, 2), but emptied himself of it (see **kenoo**, 1) so as to assume the form of a servant, in that he became like unto men (for angels also are **doulos tou Theos** [slaves of God], Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8 sq.) and was found in fashion as a man." (pg. 418)

In reference to the former, **huparchon**, Ralph P. Martin in his work, **The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians**, says "Being in the form of God looks back to our Lord's pre-temporal existence as the Second Person of the Trinity. The verbal form translated being, **huparchon**, need not necessarily mean this, but it seems clear that this meaning is the only satisfactory one in the context." (pg. 96) It is also of interest to note that the Watchtower has cited Martin's publication (pg. 25) in presenting its argument for the translation of **harpa'zo**, yet completely ignores or disregards his commentary of the words **huparchon** and **morphe**.

Thus the meaning of Paul's statement is that Jesus Christ existed in the form of God, yet for the sake of mankind's redemption, thought the recognition of his divine stature not something to be retained or "seized." But limited Himself by His undertaking the "form of man." Quite simply, Paul's statement that he existed in the "form of God" (i.e., God) parallels his declaration in

verse 7 that He also existed in the "form of man" (i.e., man).

Finally, no writing about the Watchtower and the Trinity would be complete without comments on John 1:1. The prologue of John's gospel has always been a major problem for Watchtower theologians.

The Watchtower's booklet introduces the above verse from the **King James Version's** "and the Word was God." Following, although not quoted in full, are other versions which parallel (or can be misconstrued to fit) Watchtower theology. A few of the Watchtower's classical favorites which are referenced are: **The New Testament in an Improved Version; The Emphatic Diaglott** (a Christadelphian-influenced translation); **The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures** (the Watchtower's translation); along with the reliable **The Bible - An American Translation** (by J.M.P. Smith and E.J. Goodspeed). Also a few German translations are mentioned.

Concerning the "a god" translation of **The New Testament in an Improved Version** the Jehovah's Witnesses will many times lead one to believe that it is the work of Archbishop William Newcome (Archbishop of Armagh). However, this is not the case. In reality Thomas Belsham, a Unitarian, altered the original text of Newcome's translation. A footnote in Belsham's work cites Newcome as stating the Word "was God." Thus the version utilized by the Watchtower is one which was produced under a Unitarian bias.

Reputable scholars all agree, John 1:1 cannot be translated as "the word was a god." Bruce M. Metzger (Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary) stated that "if the Jehovah's Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists. In view of the additional light which is available during this age of Grace, such a representation is even more reprehensible than were the heathenish, polytheistic errors into which ancient Israel was so prone to fall. As a matter of solid fact, however, such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation." (**Theology Today**, April, 1953, pg. 75)

The late Dr. William Barclay, from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, wrote: "The deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translations. John 1:1 is translated: 'Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god,' a translation which is grammatically impossible. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest." (**The Expository Times**, October, 1953, pg. 32)

Dr. Harry A. Sturz, Chairman of the Language Department and Professor of Greek at Biola College, commented: "Therefore, the NWT (New World Translation) rendering: 'the Word was a god' is not a 'literal' but an ungrammatical and tendential translation.

A literal translation in English can be nothing other than: 'the Word was God.'" (**The Bible Collector**, July-September, 1971, pg. 12).

The co-author of **A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament**, the late Dr. Julius R. Mantey, labeled the Watchtower's translation of John 1:1 as being "shockingly mistranslated" and added that it is "A grossly misleading translation." (**Depth Explorations in the New Testament**, pg. 138).

Thus only through the use of obscure Bible translations and the use of unqualified scholars and translators can the "a god" rendering be made to stand. Those who have devoted themselves to a lifelong study of the biblical languages (and have the credentials to act as skilled translators) will have no part of the Watchtower's perversion of John 1:1.

In regards to the translation by J.M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (and similarly the translation by James Moffatt), stating that the Word (or Logos) "was divine" in no way undermines the deity of the Lord Jesus.

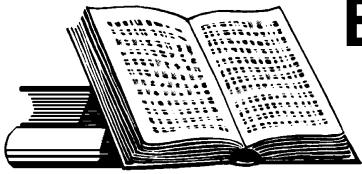
The Watchtower is of course, correct in stating that the "first theos [in John 1:1] is preceded by the word ton (the), a form of the Greek definite article that points to a distinct identity, in this case Almighty God ('and the Word was with [the] God'). On the other hand, there is

no article before the second theos at John 1:1." (pg. 27)

Again in the Watchtower's **Reasoning from the Scriptures** (pg. 212) a corresponding observation is presented: "The definite article (the) appears before the first occurrence of 'theos' (God) but not before the second" and that "The articular (when the article appears) construction of the noun points to an identity, a personality, whereas a singular anarthrous (without the article) predicate noun before the verb (as the sentence is constructed in Greek) points to a quality about someone." However, while the Watchtower is grammatically valid in its grammatical observations, nonetheless it has drawn incorrect conclusions from this data in order to justify its theology.

In reference to their erroneous conclusion, the Watchtower Society, for several years, deliberately misquoted H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey's **A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament** on this very point (see the 1969 edition of **The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures**, pg. 1158). Dana and Mantey point out that the absence of the definite article "the" places stress upon the qualitative aspect of the noun rather than its mere identity. This is the reasoning behind Moffatt and Smith and Goodspeed's rendering of "divine." If John's concluding phrase of John 1:1 would read "and the Word was the God" then it would be understood that all there is to God is the Word. However, as Dana and Mantey stated "As it stands, the other persons of the Trinity may be implied in 'Theos.' As expected, the above statement failed to make its way into the Watchtower's citation of Dana and Mantey's **Grammar**.

The Watchtower's **Should You Believe in the Trinity?** will be a major tool both now and in the years to come in persuading those who are scripturally illiterate to accept an unbiblical theology. As with the apostles and Church fathers, the Church must take the time to provide Christians with solid and scriptural responses to those who would challenge our faith and beliefs. (1 Peter 3:15) ❀



BOOKS IN REVIEW

SOOTHSAYERS OF THE SECOND ADVENT

by William M. Alnor
Power Books, 222 pages, \$7.95

This book is long overdue, highly recommended and well-written. William Alnor boldly names those who have been trying to identify the Antichrist and date the rapture and how they keep changing their dates and revising their scenarios.

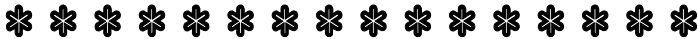
Alnor exposes the errors of people such as David Webber of Southwest Radio Church, Charles Taylor, Salem Kirban, Colin Deal, J.R. Church, Constance Cumbey, Edgar Whisenant and Mary Relfe.

Alnor describes their attempts to date Christ's second coming using astrology and on numerology based on the dimensions of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. He also tells how these people use questionable source material and cross-pollinate their ideas with one another's.

The book is comprehensive and well-documented and must be read by anyone interested in prophecy and cultic trends. Its one flaw is the lack of an index.

No other writer has gone to extent that Alnor has in showing that some who claim to be evangelical are actually basing their claims on occultic ideas.

—GRF



CHRISTIANITY AND THE SECRET TEACHINGS OF THE MASONIC LODGE

by John Ankerberg and John Weldon
John Ankerberg Evangelistic Assoc., 159 pages, \$5.95

This book aims to persuade Christians who are Masons to leave the Lodge. Its effect should be to make any honest Lodge member who is a Christian do just that.

Ankerberg and Weldon didn't skimp on research. They sent questionnaires to every Grand Lodge in the United States to determine which books were regarded as authentic and authoritative in their teachings of Masonic dogma. Half the lodges replied, which gave a good base from which to work.

The book leads readers through a series of quotations from these works and from Lodge manuals. The authors show through the Masons' own writings that Freemasonry is a religion that denies the basic tenets of Christianity.

The book shows how the Lodge reduces the Bible to a symbol, nothing more than a book on which Masons swear

loyalty to their society. It shows how Bible passages used in Lodge rituals are stripped of references to Jesus Christ, how titles ascribed to God are given to Lodge members and how Christian witnessing is forbidden in Lodge functions.

The book exposes the vile oaths Lodge members must take. For example, swearing upon the Bible, the Lodge candidate promises that "in failure of this my obligation, I consent to have my body opened perpendicularly ... that the venomous flies may eat my entrails." And the oath continues: "and I will always be ready to inflict the same punishment on those who shall disclose this degree and break this obligation."

It is pointed out that one leading Masonic authority claims these are only regarded as symbolic and that the candidate is saying that God should inflict these punishments. But no true Christian should ever ask to be tortured this way.

There are numerous scriptures cited in each chapter. Especially helpful is the reference to Leviticus 5:4-6, which says rash oaths made without full comprehension of what was vowed are not to be considered enforceable. Instead, they are to be considered sinful and repented from. The final chapter gives specific directions on how to resign from the Lodge.

—WPW



PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE WATCHTOWER

by Kevin R. Quick
Baker Book House, 103 pages, \$5.95

Kevin R. Quick, in his book, **Pilgrimage through the Watchtower**, tells how he went from experimenting with drugs and Transcendental Meditation to baptism into the Watchtower Society to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Quick's book tells how he began to have doubts about the Watchtower Society, then began to study the Bible alone. That and the witness of a brother who was a Christian led to his conversion to Christianity.

Quick tells of the pain he endured upon separation from the Watchtower Society. His departure and the ensuing shunning by the Jehovah's Witnesses cost him friends and any contact with another brother who was a Witness. Nevertheless, Quick's book shows no bitterness toward these people.

The book supplies plenty of Scripture references for people who are considering the claims of the Watchtower. This book can be read in one sitting and gives the reader inside information concerning the Watchtower Society.

—AMG



Editor's Note: The above publications are available from Personal Freedom Outreach - Missouri. Please add \$1.00 to the price listed to cover postage. These books are also available to those who help to financially support us this quarter. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.