

Objections Overruled!

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In our last issue of the **Journal**, we talked about the resurrection. We noted that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very *basis* of the Christian faith. . . no resurrection no Christianity. Any religious figure in history could be said to have been "resurrected" in some spiritual sense; only Christianity has the empty tomb! We looked at the evidence and the eyewitnesses to the event, and we concluded that there is much reason to have faith in the factual resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We also noted that there are those who *claim* to believe in the resurrection, yet deny the physical nature of the resurrection of Jesus. In other words, they say that Jesus was raised, but that His body was not raised. They say His person was resurrected, in a spirit form of some type, but not His physical body. Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's) come immediately to mind with their belief that the man Jesus forever ceased to exist at His death, but that He was raised as a mighty spirit person, Michael the Archangel. But the JW's certainly are not the only ones to hold such a "spirit resurrection" view. If the church as a whole continues to drift further and further away from its historical Biblical moorings and wades deeper and deeper into "feel good religion," we will see more and more challenges to the bedrock doctrines of the faith, with the average Christian being less and less able to respond or, perhaps, even unable to comprehend the seriousness of the issue. I am sad to report that I have been asked by churched Christians what difference it makes, anyhow, whether the body of Jesus was raised or not? We must emphatically state that to deny the bodily resurrection is to deny the resurrection. . . PERIOD.

Denial of the resurrection is certainly nothing new. We find it even in the New Testament, with skeptics questioning Paul's teaching by asking just what kind of body the dead

were to be raised IN. The Greeks believed in life after death, but they surely did not believe that the body that had died would be resurrected to new life. Paul calls such a skeptic a fool (fightin' words to be sure) and says that if the dead be not raised, our faith is in vain.

Much of the writings of the early church fathers were devoted to this issue as well. In reading through the early Christian writings we find even many of the exact arguments against the physical resurrection as we find today amongst JW's and liberals. In volume 1, p.294 of the *Ante Nicene Fathers*, under the subheading

"OBJECTIONS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH," Justin Martyr states, "They who maintain the *wrong opinion* (Poor Justin, shackled to the antiquated, intolerant Western idea that opinions can be right or wrong.) say that there is no resurrection of the flesh; giving as their reason that it is impossible that what is corrupted and dissolved should be restored to the same as it

had been." The argument that Justin is refuting is now close to 1800 years old, yet it is a favorite of rational skeptics even today, which only proves that there is nothing new under the sun.

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's 1988 publication *Insight On The Scriptures*, Volume 2, p.790 states, "But those whom Jehovah pleases to raise to an earthly resurrection, what body does he give them? *It could not be the same body*, of exactly the same atoms. If a man dies and is buried, *by process of decay, his body is reconverted into organic, chemicals that are absorbed by chemicals.*" Justin responds, "First then, in respect to those who say it is impossible for God to raise [the physical body], it seems to me that I should show that they are ignorant, professing as they do in word that they are believers, yet by their works proving



??WHY NOT BURN WITCHES??

By Bill Honsberger

The reality of the resurgence of witchcraft in modern times, so often ridiculed and dismissed as sheer fantasy, no longer can be ignored. It has become the pagan expression of choice to many; the darling of the feminist, the haven for the rebel and, most troubling, the object of fascination among many teenagers. There are many forms of this type of belief. Called Wicca, neo-paganism, goddess worship or, simply the craft, it may be practiced openly or held in secret. Centered around the focus of the divine nature of all things, this movement is coming out of the "broom closet," and it is quite vocal as to who is to blame for its problems and for those of the world.

Two years ago, the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago brought together a collection of religious leaders and laypeople from all around the world. One of the most popular groups at the Parliament were the Wiccans. Phyllis Curolt, head of one group called "The Covenant of the Goddess," talked about the rapid growth of their organization (from 20,000 in 1986 to 350,000 in 1993!) and about how witches and pagans of all sorts have been the victims of Christian prejudice and violence for generations.

She branded Christianity as immoral, based on two charges which have been echoed by many Wiccans with whom I have spoken. Her first charge is that Christianity is immoral because of its claim to be the only truth, the only way to know God. She did not attempt to establish the truth or falsity of Christianity's truth claims. Rather, she was insulted at what she considered the arrogance and prejudice of making such a claim. Secondly, she charges that Christians killed nine-million witches during the Medieval ages. Her conclusion was that Wicca was a far better option because it is loving and benign while Christianity, of course, is cruel and bloodthirsty.

What are we to make of these claims? Let's consider charge number one first. Is Christianity immoral because it claims to be exclusive? In our pluralistic culture "intolerance," newly defined as rejecting that all ideas are equally valid or true, is the only real sin. If intolerance, as defined this way, is immoral, certainly Christianity must plead "guilty" since, from its inception, it has made unabashed declarations of the exclusive nature of "the way to God" and of truth itself.

But is exclusivity immoral? If you think about it, our lives are full of exclusive claims. We do not consider such claims to be immoral, merely true or false. For example: (1) "Wheaton, Illinois is the capitol of the United States." Or, (2) "I am writing this article on a 'IBM clone computer.'" Or, (3) "My eyes are only brown." Now, all of these are exclusive claims. It is Wheaton, *and not some*

other town, IBM rather than any other type of computer, or brown and no other color, which I single out for my purposes. The really relevant question is whether or not these claims are true. It is quite clear that none of them are immoral merely on the face of them. Can the exclusive claim, as it relates to the color of my eyes, be perceived as immoral? Is it somehow unfair to blue eyes or green eyes that my eyes are brown? This seems like a silly argument no matter which way you look at it. It is truth itself that is exclusive. The claim about Wheaton is clearly false, but there *is* an exclusive truth regarding the capitol, one that rules out or *excludes* Wheaton! But let us suppose, for a moment, that exclusive claims are, in fact, immoral as Wiccans and other relativists claim. When a person says, "I am a Witch," isn't he or she *excluding* Buddhists, Hindus,

Christians, Jews, etc. from the category, thus making an exclusive claim of his or her own? So, if exclusivity is immoral, one can only conclude that witches are immoral as well. Of course, we as Christians don't want to confuse categories. We would prefer simply to question whether a given claim is true or false.

It also should be remembered that it is not the Christian who makes the exclusivity claim for his belief. It is Jesus, Himself, who makes the claim in John 14 that *He* is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Me." Christians are merely piggy-backing onto the claims of Jesus Christ. If *He* is wrong, then we are wrong. But if *He* is right, then the claim is not prejudicial or immoral, it is true.

The second charge is that Christians are immoral because they have killed nine-million witches since the Medieval ages. I want to respond to this in two ways: First, historically; and then, logically. Historically, it must be noted that the nine-million number comes from outer space; there is absolutely no evidence or scholarship to support any such claim. But the lack of evidence does not seem to bother the Wiccans. Gerald Gardner, a leading proponent of witchcraft, notes that witches are inventing their own history but believes that this is fine. "Victimhood" is the ticket to sympathy (and then acceptance) in our society, and larger numbers would produce greater amounts of sympathy.

But there are even larger historical problems with this claim. The two events used to bolster this claim are the Inquisition in Europe and the Salem Witch trials in New England. Let us take a closer look at these incidents and see if they actually have merit.

Let me say very clearly at the outset that if even *one* witch was killed by a Christian, then that was one too many. Murder is wrong. Whoever took part in the murder of witches or people accused of

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"What could be
wrong with burning,
hanging, stabbing,
shooting, or spitting
on whomever we
may please?"

themselves to be unbelieving, even more unbelieving than the unbelievers." He makes the argument that if the heathen believe that their gods can do all things (and we know that they are mere idols and devils), how much more ought we to believe in the power of our God (who is the true God) to do as He says He will do.

The fact of the physical resurrection is very plainly taught in the New Testament. When Thomas doubted the resurrection, what proof did he demand before he would believe? He wanted to see the wounds? Spirits don't have scars or wounds. Bodies have wounds. He wanted to touch the body with those wounds, to verify that Jesus had been raised. And we can be thankful today that Thomas reacted as he did, because proof of the bodily resurrection is just exactly what he and we got. Jesus did not rebuke Thomas, but offered His body with its wounds as proof. If He was merely a spirit, would He have done this? Was He trying to deceive Thomas? And us?

The Watchtower Society claims in the *Live Forever* book that Christ's appearance to Thomas does not mean that his body was raised. "Well then," they ask on p.144 of that book, "what happened to the fleshly body of Jesus?" Then they proceed to inform us that God removed the body from the tomb because, if He hadn't, "Jesus' disciples would not have understood that he had been raised from the dead, since at that time they did not fully appreciate spiritual things." What they are saying, then, is that God removed the body of Jesus from the tomb so that the disciples *would think* that Jesus had walked right out of the grave in that body? God merely deceived the disciples for their own good. Incredible!! In speaking of the beliefs of the disciples, the Society's founder, Charles Taze Russell, remarked in the Jan. 15, 1908 *Watchtower* that "the disciples evidently got the thought that [Jesus] referred to his earthly body as the Temple of God, and supposed that our Lord's prediction was fulfilled three days after his crucifixion. *But we cannot so view the matter.*" What a telling statement about the counterfeit nature of this belief system.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was raised in His body and still lives today in that very same body, yet those who would deny the resurrection today while still claiming to be Christians (such as Jehovah's Witnesses) do utilize certain Biblical passages to bolster the case they have made against the physical nature of the resurrection. How does one use the Bible to deny its own central message?

In an interview I heard after the OJ verdict, the judge in the trial of Susan Smith remarked that he was glad he had not

allowed cameras into his courtroom. So are we all, in hindsight. . . But let's let the cameras roll on this one and see if we, the jury, can bring in a verdict that all of us can agree on. Our own favorite spider, T. Ranchela, is the heretical attorney for the "spirit resurrection of Jesus" team. And now, from our courtroom. . .

Objection, your honor! Doesn't 1Peter 3:18 clearly teach that Jesus was crucified "in the flesh" or in bodily form but was resurrected as a spirit creature???

Overruled! The JW's *New World "Translation,"* reads that He was "made alive in the spirit" and, while some other translations such as the NASB agree with this rendering, other translations say He was "made alive *BY* the Spirit." However, in neither case does this passage state that Jesus *became* a spirit creature or was raised *as* a spirit. Biblically, the two terms "made alive" or "quickened" always refer to *bodies* and never to spirits.

This passage is teaching that Jesus' body was "made alive" or resurrected *by* the Holy Spirit. This is brought out very clearly in Rom. 8:11 where Paul states that the Holy Spirit is going to "give life to *our* mortal bodies" just as He raised Jesus.

Does the phrase "in the Spirit" mean that the person referred to is a spirit creature? Is the phrase, "in the Spirit," anywhere Biblically defined? Yes, in Rom. 8:9 it says that a person is "in the Spirit" *if the Spirit of God dwells in him*. So, obviously, Jesus was resurrected "in the Spirit" at the moment in time when the Spirit of God entered His dead, mortal body and "quickened" it or "made it alive."

What about other Biblical passages which refer to someone as being "in the spirit," such as Rev. 1:10 where John tells us that he was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day. . . was *he* (John)

then a spirit creature?

Objection #2: Doesn't 1Cor. 15:44 teach that natural bodies are raised as spiritual bodies? Isn't it true that a spiritual body is an invisible, immaterial body?

In his excellent book, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (which I highly recommend), Dr. Norman Geisler states, "To speak of an immaterial body or a 'spiritual corporeality' is a contradiction of terms. As Webster notes, a body is 'the material part of nature.' And the English word 'spirit', by definition, is something immaterial. Hence, an immaterial body would be an immaterial material, which is a contradiction in terms."

What does Paul mean when he speaks of a spiritual body then? We speak of spiritual people. Does this mean that they are invisible and immaterial? What about the spiritual

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. . . OVERRULED!!!



"AND ALONG CAME A SPIDER..."

The History of the Trinity: Will the Real Pagans Please Stand Up?

By Steve Berg

Part II

Much has been written on the influence of Greek philosophy on Christian theology. Even from its inception, Christianity has found many similar concepts in Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought. Having been immersed in Greek culture, such an influence is entirely understandable. But is it excusable? Should the whole of Christianity be thrown out because of this fact? Many would have us think so. Some, while not concluding that Christianity itself should be rejected, say that only the corrupted version of it should be. They maintain that true Christianity was unstained by philosophic speculations and interpretations.

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the governing body of the sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses, is one of these groups. Due to their rejection of many orthodox Christian doctrines they conclude that pure Christianity was lost some time shortly after the Apostles. By allowing the syncretization of Greek philosophy with Christianity, such doctrines like the Trinity and the immortality of the soul are purported to have arisen, despite the clear teachings of the Bible and the Apostles. On numerous occasions, the Watchtower has traced the supposed pagan and philosophical roots of Trinitarian theology, drawing the conclusion that it is not Biblical. They capitalize on the fact that the formalized doctrine of the Trinity was a later development and, hence, imply that *their* theology is the only true, orthodox, and historic Christian faith.

However, we never see anything more beyond these implications. The Watchtower has never provided a very detailed, positive analysis proving that the early Christians were the equivalent to the Jehovah's Witnesses today. They have never traced the development of their theology, as it has merely been assumed that it extends all the way back to the New Testament. Yet, is it true that Watchtower theology has been preserved from the influence of Greek philosophy? While the previous article illustrated the mere passive influence of Greek thought on Christian theology, this article will attempt to demonstrate the more direct evolution of pagan philosophy into current Watchtower theology.

While Greek philosophy may have played a part in helping us to understand what the Bible teaches about God, the Watchtower's theology actually is more consistent with it. In fact, the Greeks would have found the concept of a triune God to be a very strange one, whereas the unipersonal monad of current Watchtower theology would have been much more greatly accepted.

Neo-Platonism

In tracing the roots of current Watchtower theology regarding the nature of God and showing its connection with ancient pagan concepts, we must first begin with an overview of a pagan philosophy known as Neo-Platonism and one of its major proponents, Plotinus. Plotinus, quite independent from Christian theology, postulated an ultimately transcendent God.¹ This God is the One, who is beyond all thought and all being. He is utterly ineffable and incomprehensible. He also believed that this one God cannot be multiple or divided in any sense. God is the One, beyond all distinctions whatsoever. He cannot even distinguish Himself from Himself and so, is beyond self-consciousness.² Obviously, Plotinus would have flatly rejected the Trinity and would have been much more in line with the Arians, who refused to accept the notion of the coequal nature of the Son with the Father, had he a seat at the Nicene Council in 325 A.D.

In addition to this, Plotinus also held to the Neo-Platonic doctrine of emanations. He maintained that the world issues from God or proceeds from God by necessity.³ In other words, Plotinus believed in a great chain-of-beings that began from God and emanated down to the lowest form of created beings. We will see how this important concept influenced later precursors to the Watchtower's theology.

Origen

The next figure we must look at, in the evolution of Watchtower theology, is a brilliant thinker by the name of Origen. Origen, living during the third century, was a very significant figure in the history of both orthodox and unorthodox theologies. He was later condemned in the fifth century as a heretic. While it is true that Origen did play a major role in the eventual formulation of the Trinity, his influence on later Watchtower theology was heavy as well.⁴ However, as it will be demonstrated, it is the non-Biblical, purely philosophical components of Origen's thought that will more directly influence the precursors of the Watchtower's theology today. These precursors took one element of Origen's theology to one extreme, whereas the Trinitarians focused on a different aspect. This element, evident in Origen's conception of the Godhead, is the separate and subordinate nature of the Son to the Father.

Origen was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly Middle and Neo-Platonic thought. As previously mentioned, the Neo-Platonists believed there was a vast descending series of beings from God down to man.⁵ These

emanations provided the intermediary links between God and the world. The Logos, or reason of God, commonly was thought to be the highest of these emanations.⁶ Origen then adapted this concept into a Christian context.

His rather unique theology involved the pre-existence of souls, which illustrated this Neo-Platonic chain-of-being concept. He believed that the transcendent God generated a world of spirit beings who were given the free will to obey God or not. These spirit beings became too comfortable and satiated with God's love so that, through neglect, their love subsided and they fell into varying degrees of existences, forming a sort of hierarchy of being with the Logos (who, of course, never fell) at the top and angels and men coming underneath him. Christ is the pre-existent Logos, the Mediator between God and man and to whom it is proper to pray. Yet, while not being *another God* alongside the Father, Origen avoided polytheism by saying he is a *lesser* God, subordinate in nature to his Father, but at the same time uncreated and *eternally* begotten. Hence, out of this, we can see Origen's distinct doctrine of subordinationism developing from the Middle and Neo-Platonic conceptions of emanations.

Arius

The next link in our theological chain is a man named Arius, who often is referred to in Church history as an arch-heretic because, despite the fact that he acquired quite a following, his teachings were condemned by the early Church numerous times. Arius' connection to Origen can be seen in the latter's conception of subordinationism. Arius picked up on Origen's subordinationism and took it to even greater extremes by pushing God so far into transcendence that nothing could be said to share in his nature.⁷ Hence, everything else had to be utterly separate and created by him. Therefore, God created the Logos who in turn, created everything else. This Logos had a totally separate nature from God though, in some sense, could still be considered God (or even a god). As a result, Arius slightly distanced himself from Origen by rejecting the eternal generation concept of the Logos.⁸

Arius was also strongly motivated against both polytheism and modalism, yet could not accept Origen's conception of the relationships within the Godhead. To him, separate divine persons are distinct beings altogether. So, while Arius strayed radically away from Origen who, no doubt, would have disowned the Arians himself, his thought certainly was an outgrowth of Origen's theology. The ties between Middle Platonic emanations, to

fact, one author has said, "Consciously or not, Arius is a post-Platonian."

Thus, we actually see that Middle Platonic thought is very much intrinsic to Arianism while Trinitarianism merely utilized Greek philosophical language to explain a Biblical concept. In other words, without Middle Platonism, Arianism would not have arisen. Arian thought *hardly* grew independent of Greek philosophy. And whereas Trinitarianism uses Greek thought to *explain* Christian concepts, it seems as though Arianism takes Christian theology and *applies it to* Greek philosophy. Another church historian sees this connection fairly clear enough:

"Arius had, of course, discarded certain of Origen's ideas, notably his doctrine of eternal generation, and he had carried his subordinationism to radical lengths, reducing the Son to creaturely status. In doing so, he was following, despite his consciously Biblical starting-point, a path inevitably traced for him by the Middle Platonist preconceptions he had inherited."¹⁰

Watchtower Theology

How exactly does current Watchtower theology square with Arianism from the fourth century? Does the Watchtower, itself, currently link their own thought with the Arians? The Watchtower, though indirectly, definitely identifies itself with the Arians of the fourth century. For instance, in their recent polemic against the doctrine of the Trinity entitled, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, they attempt to trace the history of the development of the Trinity and, in so doing, link themselves positively to those who believed Jesus was created. This is an obvious reference to the Arians at the time of Nicaea.

In another recent work entitled, *Mankind's Search for God*, a more detailed discussion regarding the Council of Nicaea ensues with an even closer inference being made:

"Some favored the Biblically-supported viewpoint that Christ, the *Logos*, was created and therefore subordinate to the Father. . . Among these was Arius, a priest in Alexandria, Egypt."¹¹

By calling Arius' viewpoint the *Biblically* supported one, they obviously are trying to identify themselves along with him. Yet, in so doing, they are unwittingly linking themselves to Arius' theology. Interestingly enough, however, the Watchtower makes no mention of the fact that the Arians, the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses" of that time, believed in the full personality of the Holy Spirit. In fact, while Arius may not have held to a modern conception of the Trinity, he did have his own version of it; the main difference being the creation of the Second Person.¹² If the Jehovah's Witnesses of the fourth century believed that the Holy Spirit was a personal being and not just a magical force, why have the Jehovah's Witnesses of today *apostasized* from true Christianity?

In terms of Watchtower theology, the reminiscence of Arius is quite clear. Arius believed that the Logos (the Son) was a created being who, in turn, created everything else. This is exactly in line with what the Watchtower says about the Son. In their handy, mini-systematic, theology text called, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, under the heading of "Jesus Christ," they define Him as:

"The only begotten Son of God, the only Son produced by Jehovah alone. This Son is the

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"Origenic subordinationism, and to Arian subordinationism is not so much a difference in kind as it is in degree. In other words, we're not talking about the differences between apples and oranges here, but rather the difference between a big apple and a little one. In

food and spiritual drink spoken of in 1Cor. 10:3-4? Were they immaterial as well? To be "spiritual" means to be "of the Spirit" or empowered and motivated by the Spirit. That is exactly what the spiritual resurrection body will be.

Objection #3: 1Cor. 15:45 teaches that "the last Adam," Jesus Christ, became a spirit creature at His resurrection.

First of all, note that the word "became" inserted after the phrase "the last Adam" is not to be found in the Greek, so it could be stated that while Adam *became* a living-soul by *receiving* life. Jesus *is* the life-giving spirit! This verse shows not a comparison, but a *contrast* between the two Adams. The question now is not how Jesus is the *same* as Adam, but how is Jesus *different* from Adam. Jesus is able to impart life. . . Adam could only receive it. Did Jesus gain this ability to impart life at His resurrection? No, He was a life-giver from the first, being the Lord from Heaven (v.47). Adam, just a mortal person such as ourselves, could only impart life to us through the natural human way of reproduction. We inherit this life just by being conceived into the human race. We have no choice. This natural body we receive through Adam is dishonorable, perishable, and weak.

In *contrast*, Jesus has the ability to impart eternal life to us in a spiritual body which is glorified, imperishable and powerful. But it is, nevertheless, a body and quite material. We inherit this life through Christ's Spirit who indwells us by faith. It is our choice whether to accept Christ's Spirit or not. We were born into the "Adam family." We now have the opportunity to switch family heads, to be *born again* into the "Jesus family." Just as we did nothing to earn our entry into Adam's family, we can do nothing to earn our way into Jesus' family? It's a gift; we only need to accept it!

Objection #4: Jesus cannot possibly possess a material body in heaven because, according to 1Cor. 15:50, "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

First of all, we know that Paul, who penned these words, taught in 2Cor. 12:2 that "a man in Christ" (referring to himself) was "caught up into the third heaven." Paul claims that he *does not know* whether he was in his body or out of it when he made this excursion. Duane Magnani calls this passage a "Christian nugget" because it teaches two truths which are anathema to a JW. First, that it is indeed *possible* for a man to go to heaven with his body, even his mortal, perishable one. Second, this passage clearly teaches that a man could exist *outside of his body*! Jehovah's Witnesses believe, basically, that a man (a soul) is a combination of his body and his life force. The life force is much like electricity, carrying no personality traits, so when it leaves the dying body, the person who was ceases to exist. Obviously, Paul didn't think so.

1Cor. 15:50 seems to be a parallel passage to John 3:3 where Jesus taught Nicodemus that a person would not even see, much less inherit, the kingdom of God unless he was

born again. He went on to say "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." "Flesh and blood" (an unregenerate, Adamic man) cannot see or inherit the kingdom of God. We must be born again of the Spirit of God in order to attain to the resurrection of immortality and imperishability. In other words, this passage does not purport to teach that material bodies cannot enter heaven but, that to fit oneself for citizenship in the heavenly kingdom, one must first be born again by accepting Christ's Spirit and being indwelt by Him, then by having one's mortal, perishable body transformed by His Spirit at the resurrection into a glorified body for eternal life.

Another thing to consider is that Jesus told the disciples in Luke 24 that He had a flesh and *bone* body. Flesh and bone, but NO blood. The glorified resurrection body is not empowered by the blood, but by the Holy Spirit. That is why it is referred to as a spiritual body rather than a natural body.

Most important, since we know from this teaching that we will not enter the eternal state in our *mortal* bodies, but must be transformed by the Holy Spirit at our resurrection or at the Lord's return, just how are Jehovah's Witnesses, who are neither born again nor expecting to have their mortal bodies transformed into a spiritual resurrection body such as Christ possessed after His resurrection, going to see or inherit the kingdom? Both of these things shall be denied to them on the basis of their own refusal to accept them!

Objection #5: Luke 24:17-31; Luke 24:31; John 20:14; John 21:3-4. If Jesus was in the same body, as when he walked the earth only in glorified form, why did not his disciples recognize him???

JW's and others who deny the resurrection teach that Jesus was raised as a mighty spirit creature who merely took on bodies whenever He appeared to the disciples. One major way they defend this teaching is to point to several scriptures showing that Jesus was not always instantly recognized when He appeared to His followers.

In most cases, Jesus was recognized by the people to whom He appeared to but, in the passages listed above, the texts themselves give the reasons for the lack of immediate recognition.

Luke 24:16: "and their eyes were *prevented* from recognizing Him." Why would their eyes have had to have been prevented from recognizing Him if He were in a different body?

Luke 24:31: "and their eyes were *opened* and they recognized Him." Again, the lack of recognition had to do with *their eyes*, not the body of Jesus.

John 20:1: "Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still DARK". . .v.11. "Mary was weeping." It was dark, she was crying, she was turned away from Him, and she did not expect to see a miracle such as the one she witnessed.

John 21:4: "day was breaking". . .v.8. "they were not far from the land, about 100 yards away". . .Visibility from 100

yards away, at dawn, is not the greatest, which is probably why their eyes did not need to be prevented from recognizing Him.

It seems, from these texts, that Jesus had his own reasons for revealing Himself to His followers in the ways that He did. If He had wanted instant recognition, He certainly could have gotten that, but He appears to enjoy surprising them. Wouldn't you?

Objection #6: If Jesus had a body, we could see him.

Very true. The reason we can't see Him is because He is now in heaven. We cannot see into heaven, can we? He has promised to return, though, and at His ascension the angels promised that He would come in the same way as He left. In Acts 1:9-11, the disciples were not standing there gazing up at an invisible spirit creature (people do not gaze at invisible things), but at the risen Lord in His *body*. The text says that "a cloud received Him out of their sight." What did the cloud hide? His *body*!

Rev. 1:7: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him." What could be clearer?

The February, 1881 *Watchtower* tells us why the founder of the JW's came to the conclusion that Jesus is an invisible spirit creature and why He will *never* return to earth in visible form. This fascinating publication tells us that Jesus was expected to return in a visible, fleshly body in the fall of 1874, and He never showed up! What was wrong? It *couldn't* be that their dates were wrong!!? No, according to Russell, the dates were right, so it *must* be that He did in fact return, but He came in an invisible body, which explains why they didn't see Him. Incredible but true. . . Even more incredible, while they once held that Jesus came invisibly in the fall of 1874, *now* they dogmatically assert the He "came" in 1914? Invisibly, of course. . . So, how do we *know*, beyond a doubt, that Jesus is an invisible spirit creature? Well, you can't *see* Him, can you?

Yet we know that Jesus is with us, not as a creature with an intangible, incorporeal "spirit body" (whatever that may be), but by His Spirit. He said, "Lo I am with you always, even until the end of the age." Since His ascension, He has been ever with us by His Spirit. In fact, not only with us but *in* us! Can we understand this? No, but true Christians do not reject Biblical teachings because they cannot fully understand them. My point is, why would He have needed to "come invisibly" in 1914 or any other year when He stated that He would be with us all the time?

Objection #7: If Jesus had a body, how could he go through locked doors, etc.? Material bodies just can't do these things.

Begging the question, your honor? The text does *not* say that Jesus walked through either the locked door or the walls to get into that room. It offers us no explanation at all of how Jesus got into that room; it just tells us that the door was locked and He appeared among them.

But even if Jesus did walk through walls or doors, etc.,

scripturally, we are on solid ground when we maintain that Jesus could do impossible, miraculous things while in a material body. Did not Jesus, while in a material body (just a mortal body, not even a resurrected, immortal, glorified one) walk on water? In fact, the disciples supposed that He must have been a spirit person in order to accomplish this feat, but Jesus assured them that He was not (Mt. 14:26).

Also, was Peter in an immaterial body when he walked out of prison right in front of squadrons of soldiers *who never saw him leave* (Acts 12:1-19)? Also, in Acts 5:17-24, we have an account of the jailed Apostles. The text states that "the Lord opened the doors of the jail." Yet, to the guards, it probably *seemed* as if they had gone right through the doors (or walls) since their eyes were somehow prevented from seeing the doors open and seeing the Apostles walk through them. Material chains fall off of material hands, material men walk right through material doors under the watchful, material eyeballs of people who, somehow, never see them leave. Strange stuff, but true. (See also Acts 5:17-24.)

Objection #8: Luke 24:31 & 36. Did not Jesus appear and disappear at will? Doesn't this quality indicate that he is just an immaterial, spirit person?

The texts do not tell us *how* He left their sight, or *how* He suddenly appeared among them, only that He did. One thing this text *does* prove is that He certainly was *not* a spirit creature? When He appeared like that, the disciples made a rationalistic error and *thought* He was a spirit person. But He corrected them saying, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Touch me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have!" According to Jesus, the way to doubt the resurrection is to believe that He is only a spirit person, without flesh and bone.

Also, we certainly do not have to assume from these texts that Jesus became invisible. Just because the disciples ceased to see Him does not mean He was invisible and immaterial. We cannot see many things which are, nevertheless, quite visible, such as a speeding bullet. Speed can alter the perception ability of the onlooker, but does not alter the *actual* visibility of the object not seen. So, if the resurrection body is capable of great speed, which is quite possible in view of it's ability to travel between heaven and earth, that would certainly explain this phenomenon.

Then too, we have another Biblical case for this type of travel: What about Phillip's departure from the presence of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39)? Did Phillip become invisible or immaterial, or does the text more likely teach that he was snatched away very quickly and that is why the eunuch "saw him no more"?

Objection #9: It is obvious that bodies that are buried and decomposed cannot be raised up again. What about a body that had been torn apart by wild animals, perhaps eaten by several different animals and became part of

(Continued on page 8)

each of those animals? How could such a body be raised?

Paul likens the body in 1Cor. 15:36-38 to a seed which, at death, is planted into the ground. Ask yourself. . . when a peach falls to the ground and is "planted," what happens to it? It rots and is dissolved and goes its way, perhaps eaten by animals or worms and the like. Does that eating or dissolving prevent its "resurrection" as a peach tree? Not at all! One little part of it, its seed, is the only necessary bridge to the new life to come. We don't care what happens to the original peach that was sown, do we? Of course not! We don't expect that peach to be miraculously put back together, patched up and reassembled to jump out of the ground as a *peach*. Just a fractional speck within is transformed into the resurrection "body," the tree. And God does not re-create the new peach tree out of nothing, does He? No, there is physical continuity with the seed that was planted. The new life springs out of it. We would never plant a seed over here and expect the new plant to come up over there out of nothing!

That is the whole point of planting any seed; it *becomes* the new plant!!! And so it is with the resurrected human body. We don't expect the entire old human body to be re-assembled and pop out of the grave, but we know from Paul's illustration that some part of it, the "seed," will be acted upon by God and be transformed into the resurrection body, far more glorious than the body which was "planted" but with a definite physical connection to it. The name of the game is *transformation*, never *re-creation*.

Daniel 2:2 says that "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." What "dust" are these people sleeping in? At least, in part, the dust of their own mortal bodies. Yet, something of that mortal body, which Paul likens to a "seed," shall be transformed into the glorious, resurrection body for the redeemed or a vessel of contempt for the unbeliever.

Objection #10: After His crucifixion, the man Jesus was dead, forever dead. After three days, God "remembered" his Son, reactivated his "Life Pattern," and placed the "reactivated Life Pattern" into a newly created spirit body.

What an imaginative solution to the problem produced in denying both the bodily resurrection and the soul! Duane Magnani, of Witness Inc., has written an excellent book, *Another Jesus*, detailing the illogic of the Jehovah's Witnesses reasoning on this issue.

In short, this position is totally untenable from a logical standpoint, because there is no possible connection between the crucified Lord and risen Lord in JW theology. The so-called "Life Pattern" (or personality) did not die so, logically, it cannot be raised from death. Persons live and die; "personalities" cannot live or die. Your personality is not you: it is merely a set of characteristics which describe you. It is what you are *like*, never what you *are*. "What you are

like" cannot be resurrected from the dead; only YOU can be resurrected.

The JW theology maintains a truly bizarre "Xerox resurrection" wherein the deceased person is exactly "copied" and passed off as the "original" person. Yet, we all know that any copy is a separate and distinct entity from the thing copied. The copy never *becomes* the original.

This scenario won't wash Biblically either. Mark 15:46 states that Joseph of Arimathea took HIM down, wrapped HIM in the linen sheet, and laid HIM in a tomb. HIM who? If Jesus had ceased to exist, then the body of Jesus was no longer HIM! Picking up in Chapter 16:6, the angel said, "HE is risen." HE who? HE, Jesus, the one who had been laid in the tomb. Ω

Love to all,

Joy

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being witches, whether representing a church or involved in a mob action, disobeyed a direct command of the Lord that Christians are not to kill their enemies, but rather to love them. Having said that, what about the large number of victims claimed? The Medieval inquisitors generally kept records so that they would receive credit for their "work." In this sense, it was in their interest to inflate the number of people who had been put to the question so as to please the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Even with that, most historians place the total number of people killed during the Inquisition somewhere between 30,000 and 300,000, which included all sorts of people. Even using the higher number, it is an incredible leap to argue that nine-million witches were killed. But there is more.

It is important to understand the primary purpose and targets of the Inquisition so that one can see through this argument. The primary targets of the Inquisition, for most of its 600-year history, were pre-Reformation Protestants; followers of Wycliffe and Huss, Waldensees, Albigensians, and so on. The secondary targets of the Inquisition were the Jews. It was only in the late 15th century, after the publication of a book by some monks condemning witchcraft, that witches became a target. The most serious example of this is the death of 5,000 witches in one French community. If true, this would be a most heinous and terrible wrong, though far from the enormity that would be required to reach a total of nine-million killed. But, I think it can be shown that even these types of accounts are questionable at best. The issue is: Were these people really witches or was there something else going on? Let us proceed to the Salem trials in 1692 to exemplify this problem.

The trials in 1692 are considered by Wiccans to be a prime example of how Christians have historically treated witches. The public image of the trial is that these cruel, coldhearted Puritan ministers gleefully dragged these benign, earth-loving, proto-hippies to unjust trials and to the grave. This, of course, shows how evil the Puritans were and therefore can be seen as a grand indictment of all Christians. Nothing could be more non-historical than this perspective.

While there were a few Puritan ministers involved with the trials, the majority of the Puritan ministers were extremely opposed to the proceedings and berated the magistrates for allowing them to continue. Most of the ministers had been educated at places like Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard, and they thought the trials were wrong. They especially believed that the type of evidence used was seriously flawed. This evidence was known as "spectral" evidence. What this meant was that the accuser claimed they saw spirits and demons surrounding the accused. The fact that these specters were not visible to anyone else in the courtroom apparently did not bother the magistrates. The ministers, however, believed the introduction of this type of evidence to be against the law of Moses and against the laws of the land.

Sadly, for 20 people, the minister's rebuke and magistrate's cessation of the trials came too late. But, again, a knowledge of history is important because these 20 people almost assuredly were not witches! In a Monty-Pythonish sort of fashion, those accused of witchcraft merely would have been punished and released if they confessed to the crime of witchcraft. But, if someone pled innocent to the charge and subsequently was convicted, the penalty was death. For many people, the course to take seemed

obvious: Give the court the confession it wanted and save your life. But for 20, that would not do. They would not confess to the charge and were killed for it. Many of those executed prayed for their accusers before their executions, that God would forgive them, much as Jesus had prayed prior to his execution. The picture that the Wiccans present of these proceedings has little to do with historical reality.

The conclusion that one can draw responsibly from the Inquisition and the Witch trials in Salem is that Christians have indeed been immoral and bloodthirsty, but that had very little to do with witchcraft. Historically, it is true that some, in the name of Christ, had been prolific in murdering other Christians. It is also true that some witches, or those accused of practicing witchcraft, were indeed murdered, although the number does not add up to anywhere near the nine-million claimed. So, if witches want to attack the sins of the Church, please let me help. Our "dirty laundry" is out there for everyone to see, and I think it is incumbent upon Christians to admit the sins and foibles of our past and our present. This is not to the detriment of the Christian position, rather, it an admission of what both the Bible and our empirical senses tell us: We still struggle with sinful inclinations.

Let me suggest another way to respond to this murder charge. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that it is a true claim that Christians killed nine-million witches during the Medieval ages. Well, my question is, why not burn witches? What could be wrong with burning, hanging, stabbing, shooting or spitting on whomever we may please? This needs to be explained.

It is one of the central tenets of all the different versions of witchcraft and paganism that I have come across, that there is *no* absolute standard of right and wrong. People have the right to decide for themselves what is right and no one else can judge them. At the Parliament, I attended a meeting of witches who illustrated my point in this way. They went around the room taking turns explaining what it is that they believed. Each person, in turn stated, almost as if it were rehearsed, "Well, I cannot speak for anyone else but, for me, witchcraft means (fill in the blank)," and then the next person would make a similar disclaimer all around the circle. Phyllis Curolt used the example of the Christian's sexual monogamy to prove that Christianity was too stifling. Each person, she claims, has the right to sleep with whomever they chose and no one has the right to judge anyone else's choices. Since all are divine, then each "god" can make his or her own decisions concerning morality. This belief is not incidental to Wicca; it is primary.

Almost every time I have ever talked to pagans/witches and have asked what it is they believe, the relativity of ethics is one of the first things mentioned. Why is this important? Let me return to my question: Why not burn witches? If what witches say about morality is true, then why would it be wrong for me and a few of my Baptist friends to go up to Boulder some Friday night and kill a few witches for fun? After all, if we believe it is okay, no one would have the right to judge us, would they? And by this same reasoning, aren't all the Medieval inquisitors also justified, since they merely were doing what they believed was right and no one has the right to judge them or legislate their values? If there are no absolute standards in ethics, witch hunts would be valid. . . wouldn't they? But, of course, no witch wants that to be the case. They believe and argue that the killing of the witches was morally

(Continued on page 11)

TRINITY (Continued from page 5)

firstborn of all creation. By means of him all other things in heaven and on earth were created. He is the second-greatest personage in the universe."¹³

A famous motto adopted by the Arians would be something the Watchtower would have been proud to cite as well, "There was a time when the Son was not."¹⁴ This phrase clearly emphasized the Arian belief in Christ's finite nature and comes awfully close to the following Watchtower statement regarding Jesus' essence.

"The Bible is clear and consistent about the relationship of God to Jesus. Jehovah God alone is Almighty. He created the prehuman Jesus directly. Thus, Jesus had a beginning and could never be coequal with God in power or eternity."

Last of all, we see the two groups using the same passages of scripture to support their views. Associating the Logos with Wisdom, the Arians often appealed to Proverbs 8:22 to demonstrate his creation out of nothing. In addition, Colossians 1:15 speaks of Christ as the firstborn of all creation, which they suppose implies a series of created beings, the Son being the first. Needless to say, the Jehovah's Witnesses have not been shy in citing these references as well: "Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was the first-born of all creation (Colossians 1:15)."¹⁶ Therefore, the identification of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect today with the fourth-century Arians is easily established. Since the former view themselves as the only true Christians and they view the latter as the only true Christians of their day, this kinship is difficult to deny.

However, upon further examination of the historical evidence regarding Arius and his theology, this connection is not a fact the Watchtower would want to have exposed beyond the common belief in the Son's createdness. As we have seen, Arius himself was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. However, the Watchtower effectively has kept knowledge of Arius primarily hidden in obscurity. Why is it that we never hear them report on the beliefs of Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists? Why do they not delve further into Arius' background and mention the fact that not even he denied the personality of the Holy Spirit, as they themselves do? The fact is, the Watchtower fails to cite any advocates of their theology before the great apostasy. Is this a mere oversight? Or could it be due to the plain, historical fact that the whole of the Watchtower's distinctive theology has no basis in Church history whatsoever? They may find representatives who held certain beliefs in common, but none whose entire theology matched theirs.

Another point of oversight on the Watchtower's part is the fact that, despite Nicaea, Arianism rose to extreme prominence in the Roman empire soon after Constantine. It was his own son, Constantius (as well as another Arian Emperor, Valens, who often is referred to as a rabid Arian) who banished Athanasius and made Nicene theology illegal. Athanasius actually was exiled *five times* in his lifetime due to the injustices of the fourth century "Jehovah's Witness" politicians who controlled the empire at the time. Such opposition led to the famous saying of Athanasius, "Athanasius against the world" and "the world against Athanasius." Thus, if there was anyone who suffered persecution, it surely was *not* Arius. It took the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. to finally settle this issue once and for all.

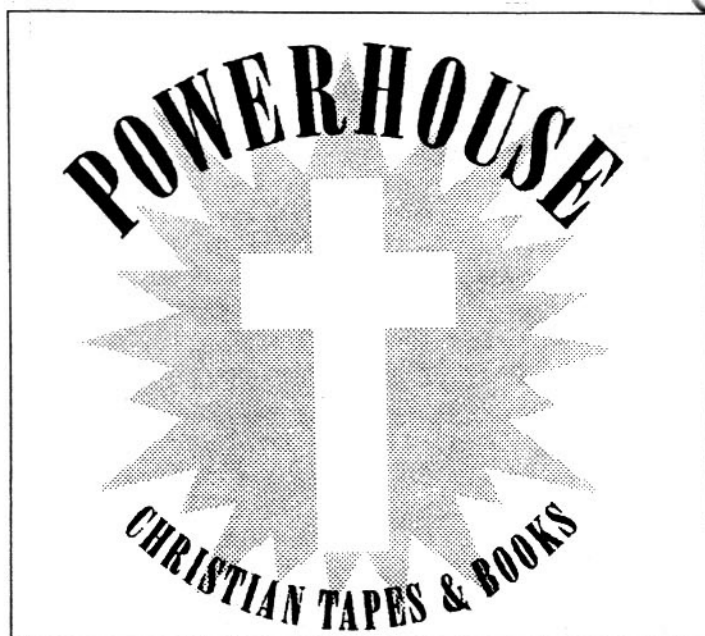
Conclusion

In summary, we can see that the Watchtower's reason for

rejecting orthodox Christianity because of its supposed syncretization with pagan Greek philosophy is totally invalid. If Christendom is guilty of such a charge then, so too, if not more so, is Watchtower theology. However, Trinitarianism is surely not the *result* of philosophy (see previous article). In fact, down through the history of philosophy and theology, the dominant contention has always been that the doctrine of the Trinity *could not* be the result of philosophical speculation, but could *only* be due to divine revelation. So while Arius' theology fits very nicely with purely pagan philosophical conceptions of God, *true Trinitarianism would be foreign to Plato and his later adherents*. In fact, two of the most influential proponents of Trinitarianism, Tertullian and Athanasius, spoke rather unfavorably toward Greek philosophy. The former of these two (who is even credited with *inventing* the term Trinity) hated it so much that he has become well-known for asking, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" It would appear then that, in the Watchtower's attempt to link orthodox Christianity with paganism and Greek philosophy, and to find a non-Trinitarian advocate during the early period of the Church, they actually have flown right into the arms of paganism themselves. Ω

Notes:

- 1.) Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. 1. New York: Doubleday, 1993, p. 464. 2.) *Ibid.*, p. 465. 3.) *Ibid.*, p. 466. 4.) Gamble, Richard C. *The Ancient Church 95 A.D. - 600 A.D.*. Recorded Lecture Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Outreach, Inc., 1989, Lecture VII. 5.) Copleston, p. 466. 6.) *Ibid* 7.) Gamble, Lecture VII. 8.) Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Church Doctrines*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1978, p. 228. 9.) Williams, Rowan. *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, Ltd., 1987, p. 224. 10) Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1989, pp. 7, 8 11.) Gwatkin, Henry Melvill. *The Arian Controversy*. New York: AMS Press, 1979, p. 7. 12.) Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. *Reasoning from the Scriptures*. 1985, p.209. 13.) *Ibid*. 14) Kelly, p. 228. 15) Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. *Should You ...?* p.16. 16.) *Ibid.*, p. 14.



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WITCHES (Continued from page 9)

wrong and that Christians are, therefore, culpable for these heinous acts. But how can this be so if each person decides what is right. Burn the witch - drown the witch - take the witch out for lunch, are all equally moral actions, depending upon the person making the choice.

So, I repeat the question: Why not burn witches? From the Christian perspective there is an answer. It is wrong to burn witches because God has said so. It is wrong today, it will be wrong tomorrow. It is wrong here, and it is wrong in France, New Guinea, and everywhere else. In order to say this, we must have a transcendent ethic which is not the cumulative collection of individual opinions but, rather, a standard by which all opinions must be judged. The god of nature cannot qualify. Let me illustrate.

I talked to a Theravada Buddhist at the Parliament. I asked him how he knew that mankind should practice non-violence, since he was an atheist. He responded that, "Nature teaches us non-violence."

I replied, "That is an interesting idea, but all one has to do is watch a David Attenborough video for about five minutes before figuring out that the sum total of nature is: Animals eating other animals, and making more little animals, which will eat other animals, and so on." I went on to say, "Nature has a lot of beautiful things in it, but the one thing one cannot say is that nature teaches

us non-violence."

He responded by yelling at me, "You just think we need a personal God or something to tell us what is right and wrong?"

I said, "Yes, that is exactly what we need."

You see, he did not want non-violence to be an option for some and not for others. He wanted it to be a binding absolute that all would honor. But in rejecting God, he had left himself with no way to justify a claim that would bind all of us!

The witches have the same problem. Phyllis Curolt is right about the immorality of those who killed witches, whether one- or nine-million. But she is wrong about the relativity of ethics. If she is right about ethics, then her claim is blown apart and, by her own standards, she might be accused of judging others which, of course, is not supposed to be done. If she is right about the immorality of murder, then her whole belief system built upon this foundation of relativism collapses into incoherent nonsense. In a way, you could say that her attack upon the Church is really an argument for Christianity, an appeal for justice based upon Christian moral standards. The *only* way her claim can be justified is if she is wrong and Christians are right! Why not burn witches? Because there is a God who has the right to set standards, and He has said it is wrong. Ω

Bill Honsberger is a missionary with Mission to the Americas. He is a missionary to the New Age and resides in Aurora, CO., with his wife Terri and four sons.

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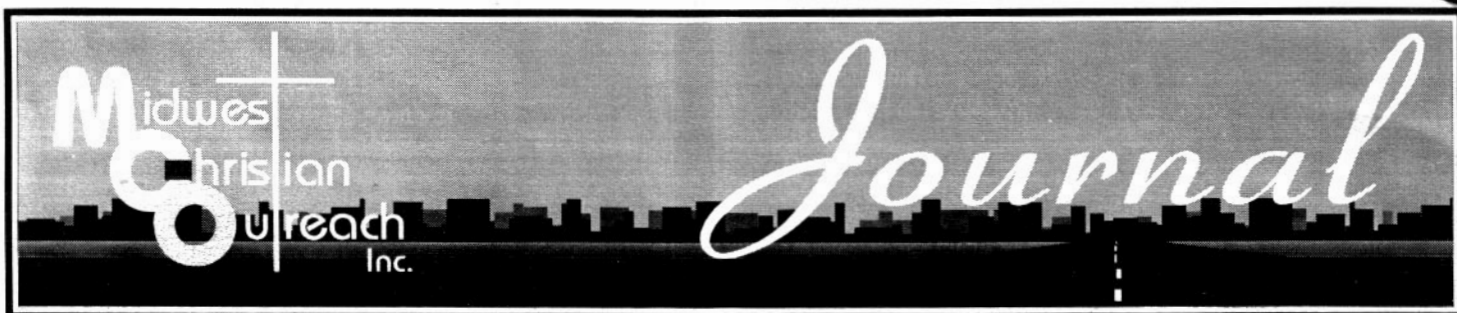
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