

Jehovah's Witnesses

by Sebastian R. Fama

Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be "God's Visible Organization." They also claim to be "His prophet." They say that Jesus inspected their organization in 1919 and found a "faithful and discreet slave class, dispensing fine spiritual food to true believers" (*Yearbook 1975*, page 88). So, what type of spiritual food have they been dispensing? In "*The Finished Mystery*" published in 1917, they claimed that in 1918 God would destroy the churches and church members by the millions, and Christendom would go down into oblivion. They also predicted that there would be worldwide anarchy in the fall of 1920. In 1920 they claimed that the Bible foretold the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other faithful ones of old. It was written that they would arrive in 1925 (*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, page 81). They have predicted that the world would end in 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, and 1975. Obviously, none of their predictions have come true. Are we to believe that this is "fine spiritual food?"

They believe that Jesus and Michael the Archangel are one and the same. They do not vote in elections, and they will not salute the flag or serve in the armed forces. They teach that it is wrong to celebrate birthdays, Christmas, and Easter. And they believe that the Bible prohibits blood transfusions. Ricarda Bradford was seriously injured in an automobile accident. She was in desperate need of a blood transfusion. Her father, a devout Jehovah's Witness, refused to allow it and as a result Ricarda died on her sixth birthday.

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the Church's doctrine on the Trinity is false. However, even their version of the Bible supports it. In Genesis 1:26 God says, "Let **us** make man in **our** image." In the next verse we read that "God proceeded to make man in **His** image." So, God alone created man, and yet more than one person was involved. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. It is true that in some places the Scriptures speak of Jesus as being subordinate to the Father, but this is perfectly natural and necessary to the Christian view. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. In His human nature He is subject to the Father. In His divine nature He is equal to the Father. By taking on a human nature Jesus lowered himself to our level. As we are told in the book of Hebrews: For a little while, Jesus "was made lower than the angels ..." (2:9) and: "He had to be made like his brethren in every respect ..." (2:17). That would include being subordinate to the Father.

The apostle Paul is even more explicit. He said: "Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus' divinity, and thus His equality with the Father, is illustrated in John 2:18-21, where we read, "Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to Him, 'What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things?' In answer **Jesus said to them, 'Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'** Therefore, the Jews said, 'This temple was built in forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?' **But He was talking about the temple of His body.**" Acts 5:30 tells us that "The **God** of our forefathers **raised up Jesus.**" So, the Bible tells us that Jesus raised His own dead body. It also tells us that the one who raised Him was God. Therefore, Jesus is God.

Isaiah 9:6 predicts the birth of Jesus. Note what it calls Him: "For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us, and the princely rule will come to be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Eternal Father**, Prince of Peace.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the Holy Spirit is not a person but God's active force. He is likened to "electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations." But this is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible not only tells us that the Holy Spirit is a person, but a divine one as well. In Acts 13:2 we read, "As they were ministering to Jehovah and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, 'Of all persons **set Barnabas and Saul apart for me** for the work to which **I have called them.**'" And again, "**The Holy Spirit aptly spoke** through Isaiah the prophet" (Acts 28:25). If the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force, how is it that it can speak and refer to itself in a personal way? The divinity of the Holy Spirit is also revealed in Acts 5:3-4: "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan emboldened you to **play false to the Holy Spirit... You have played false not to men, but to God.**'"

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the doctrine of the Trinity derives no support from any Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of Christ (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* page 7). Among the early writers mentioned are Tertullian, Origen, and Theophilus of Antioch. However, Tertullian wrote, "And at the same time the mystery of the oikonomia is safeguarded, for the unity is distributed in a **trinity**. Placed in order, the three are **the Father, the Son, and the Spirit**" (*Against Praxeas 2:1*, 213 A.D.).

Origen wrote, "For we do not hold that which the heretics imagine, that some part of the substance of God was converted into the Son, or that the Son was procreated by the Father from non-existent substances, that is, from a substance outside Himself, so that there was a time when He [the Son] did not exist...For it is **the Trinity** alone which exceeds every sense in which not only temporal but even eternal may be understood. It is all other things, indeed, which are outside **the Trinity**, which are to be measured by time and ages" (*On First Principles 4:4:1*, 220 A.D.). Finally, Theophilus of Antioch: "The three days before the luminaries were created are types of **the Trinity, God, His Word, and His Wisdom**" (*To Autolytus 2:15*, 181 A.D.).

Jehovah's Witness theology concerning hell is also problematic. They teach that the Biblical terms used to describe hell are merely symbolic; that after death the damned will no longer exist. The idea of eternal torment is flatly rejected. But the Scriptures teach otherwise. In Matthew 25:41 we read, "Then He will say, in turn, to those on his left, 'Be on your way from me, you who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.'" Notice how the everlasting fire is a place that was prepared. If it were not an actual place, no preparation would be needed. Further evidence is found in Revelation 21:8: "But as for the cowards and those without faith, and those who are disgusting in their filth, and murderers and fornicators, and those practicing Spiritism and idolaters, and all the liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This means the second death." There could only be a second death if those in question were still in existence after the first one.

Hell-fire cannot be symbolic of non-existence, as it would defeat the purpose of symbolism. The purpose of symbolism is to teach by way of illustration. Whenever symbolic language is used, there is always a parallel principle involved. For instance, if I said that I had an ocean of water in my basement, would you think that it was flooded or bone dry? Most people would think that it was flooded. An ocean is a large body of water, so it would symbolize an excessive amount of water. It would never be used to describe an absence of water. Similarly, hell-fire would never be used to describe non-existence. There are no two concepts more radically opposed. Non-existence is a total absence of reality, while fiery torture is the most vivid form of reality. How could one symbolize the other?

Consider what Jesus said about Judas in Matthew 26:24: "Woe to that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been finer for him to have never been born." Why would it have been finer for him to have never been born? If he were never born, he would be non-existent. If he died unrepentant and went to a symbolic hell, he would be equally non-existent. If such were the case, Jesus' statement would be foolish. It would only make sense if Judas went to a hell of eternal punishment.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit. But the Bible disagrees. Luke 24:38-39 records the following: "So He [Jesus] said to them, **'A spirit does not have flesh and bones just as you behold that I have.'**" In response, we are told that Jesus materialized a body for Himself. But that cannot be true. Once again, we appeal to John 2:18-21 where Jesus says that He will raise His then present body. He says nothing about creating a new one.

As we have seen, the Jehovah's Witnesses have a history of false claims and faulty theology. When they are shown Bible verses that contradict their theology, their responses generally imply that the Bible does not really mean what it says. This hardly qualifies them to be "God's visible organization," let alone "His Prophet."