

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

TALK NUMBER ONE

AFTER JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES - WHAT?

BY

JOHN FRANCIS COFFEY

INTRODUCTION

AFTER JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES - WHAT? was developed from a talk given in November 1988. It has since been revised and enlarged, and is available on audio cassette. Except for a few minor revisions this printed version is identical to the text of the audio version.

This series of cassettes deals with subjects so sensitive that it is almost impossible to discuss them calmly and dispassionately. The issues are highly emotional and fueled by centuries of hostility and ill-will; and even now, we are still no nearer to agreement than we were when the matters were first raised.

But, I present them here - perhaps for the first time on a teaching cassette - for the purpose of re-opening discussions on these vital issues, and, offering a challenge to Christians everywhere, who have never heard a presentation of these Catholic teachings, to listen carefully to what I have to say - and then make their decision.

Part of the problem I face, and I will discuss it more fully a little later, is that talks such as this inevitability reach a larger audience than was actually intended. What happens then is that arguments I use to counter Jehovah's Witnesses are seen by other Christians as constituting a personal attack on their particular denomination.

As I will declare again and again during the course of these cassettes, it is not my purpose or intention to include other Christians in my presentation. As I try to point out in these talks, many of the arguments Jehovah's Witnesses use to deny Catholic teachings are identical to those used by mainline Protestants who have serious reservations with many doctrines that seem to be exclusively Catholic in character. When I attempt to answer Jehovah's Witnesses' objections, I am, in effect, including certain Protestant groups in my

argumentation. This is unavoidable, and all I can say is that it is not intended.

The questions are addressed primarily to Jehovah's Witnesses, but they are more far-reaching than that, for they are very much alive in Catholic/Protestant debates, where they seem to bring out the worst in us.

The doctrines are fiercely controversial and emotional, but I am not presenting them in a spirit of controversy. As I mention later in these talks, I am not seeking to re-open old wounds, but to clear the air by clarifying points of doctrine, and to give a concise exposition of the Catholic teachings I am discussing. I would like to leave the way open for more serious dialogue, where certain points could be examined further.

I am not a spokesman for the Catholic Church, nor do I have any standing in the Catholic Church. I speak as an ordinary Catholic with very personal views. I endeavor to present Catholic doctrines in an orderly and orthodox manner, that are totally in conformity with current Catholic teachings.

The challenge I make, is that a person listening to this presentation might approach it with an open mind and be prepared to give it a fair hearing. At the end of the tape I give my name, address, and telephone number, for anyone wishing further information, or for criticism, suggestions, or comments.

Shalom.

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FOREWORD.

Testimony of faith and a brief explanation of why and how I became interested in Jehovah's Witnesses.

Greetings! Before I start my talk, I would like to take the opportunity to say a few words as to why and how I became interested in Jehovah's Witnesses, and why I am now giving this series of talks on the Witnesses and the Catholic Church.

It was in 1956, the year I was married, that the Witnesses first came to my attention. I had heard of them prior to that, for every now and then they made the news because of some incident that had sparked public interest. It was only a decade after the Second World War, and they were still very much remembered for their pacifistic views.

I was born and raised a Catholic. My future wife, Nancy, had only recently converted to Catholicism, and in mid-1956 we were preparing for our wedding which was set for September of that year. It was planned that her brother, Frank, would be best man at the wedding - this had been agreed to for months.

Shortly before the wedding took place, my future father-in-law mentioned in passing that his son had "gone religious," an expression that seemed to imply something sinister.

The word was that Frank had been listening to a friend at work, and had somehow come under his influence. Frank wasn't talking too much, and it was not until much later that I understood why. Until a prospective Witness was hooked on Watchtower doctrine, they were encouraged not to be too open in proclaiming their new-found faith.

Just a few weeks before the wedding was to take place,

Frank came out and said quite openly that he no longer wished to be best man at the wedding. He still failed to explain the change of mind, and I was too naive in matters of religion to ask why.

It was not until a month or two after the wedding that he visited us, and for the first time he explained the change that had taken place within him. He told us how Christianity had fallen into apostasy soon after the death of the last apostle, and how it was not until the late 19th century that true Christianity had re-emerged in what was to become Jehovah's Witnesses.

Over the next few years he continued to witness to the Watchtower's teachings, and never tired of trying to show me where "Christendom," as he called it, had distorted the true Word of God.

Our talks were not all one-sided. Without knowing it, I was being brought to carry out the words of the apostle, Peter, when he urged us to be always ready to give an account of the hope that is in us. (1 Pet 3:15) I realized that my understanding of the faith delivered to the saints, (Jude 3) had not advanced with my age. I began to look for answers to the constant barrage of questions, and in obtaining these answers, I was brought to a deeper understanding of my own beliefs.

I gradually got away from polemics - the endless wrangling over doctrine - and reached a much more mature outlook on Christian teachings. That's not to say I no longer entered into debates with Jehovah's Witnesses and others who have come

my way. Religion is the most important reality in my life. Everything I do, and everything I say is influenced by what I believe. I try to consider all my actions beforehand, and to keep a curb on my tongue, so that nothing I do or say will dishonor Christ. This is not to say that I am always successful, but, with the help of God, I am able to partly obtain my goal.

By the late 1960's my growth in understanding of the Christian faith, and my on-going study in the teachings of the Watchtower, had led me to keep notes on what I was learning, and I began to collect these notes into some sort of order. By 1970, they had expanded into chapters, and I was already thinking of them in terms of a book.

My original intention was to build the book around major Christian doctrines, as this was the manner in which my discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses had developed. I had become very interested in the Witnesses. I attended their Kingdom Halls and their conventions, and I had continuous, sometimes fruitful discussions with them on all points of doctrine.

The Jesuit scholar, the late Reverend John Phillips, whose own association with the Witnesses went back to the mid-1930's when he was a young priest in England, was kind enough to look over my manuscript and offer helpful suggestions to improve it and prepare it for publication.

The title of the book: **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES** was based on the text from Galatians 1:6, which speaks of those who go after a different Gospel. I applied this to Jehovah's Witnesses, who had indeed gone after a different Gospel which has no relation to any doctrines ever

taught at any time by the Christian Church.

The book appeared in 1979, and in the Preface I indicated that the book had been shortened by some 30,000 words. This was partly due to limitations on size, but also it was to give the book a wider appeal. Three full chapters that dealt with purely Catholic doctrines were deleted, and the Witnesses' teachings on WAR and the BLOOD TRANSFUSION issues were drastically condensed into a small Appendix.

In this way, what we finished up with, was a book that answered the Witnesses' objections, and at the same time, became a powerful statement on essential Christianity.

I'll have a bit more to say on the deleted portions of my manuscript in Tape Five of this series of talks, as they form the basis for the **THREE DOCTRINES** I discuss in that particular talk.

And now, to the subject of this talk. The overall title to this series of talks is **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**. It is not a comparison exercise between Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholicism. Nor is it purely a defense for Catholicism. I prefer to see it in the sense in which the 2nd century apologists presented the Christian faith to non-Christians. They were not **apologizing** for Christianity in the way in which we use the word today. They were presenting a **case** for Christianity the same way in which the apostle Paul spoke out to the Athenians in the Acts of the Apostles, (Acts 17:22) when he delivered a reasoned recommendation for the Christian way of life as against the pagan practices that had grown up in their midst.

During the course of this series of talks I will have need to quote from these 2nd and 3rd century apologists quite frequently, so the names Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Irenaeus and others will become very familiar. So my **apology** for Catholicism is an attempt to present Catholicism as an alternative, not only to that of Jehovah's Witnesses, but also to other forms of Christianity that are flourishing today. I will insist that what I am saying is not to be seen as an attack on individuals, or on what they believe. What I want to do is to show that Catholicism stands out in contrast to other forms of Christianity in that its beliefs and practices can be traced back all the way to Christ and his apostles, and as such, need to be given **serious** consideration before they are condemned out of hand.

So even if you only continue to listen to this talk in order to criticize it, then by all means do so. At the end of the talk I give my name and address in order to receive criticism and comments, and I will be only too pleased to answer any objections to what I have to say.

While these talks are predominately directed to ex-Jehovah's Witnesses, or to those who may be on the way out of the Watchtower empire, or to those who may still be loyal to the Watchtower but at the same time feel that all is not quite right in the Watchtower Society, they are an open invitation for other Christians to hear the case for Catholicism, presented to them, perhaps for the first time, so that they may see that it is not the bogey they have been led to believe, but more akin to the beautiful description given in the Letter to the Hebrews, where we read:

You have not drawn near to an untouchable mountain and a blazing fire, nor gloomy darkness and storm and trumpet blast, nor a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that they be not addressed to them, for they could not bear to hear the command . . . No, you have drawn near to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels in festal gathering, to the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks more eloquently than that of Abel. (Heb 12:18-24)

This is the Church I am speaking about - the Catholic Church - not some vague, impersonal, or nebulous "Christian Church" which is sometimes spoken of in the sense of a universal church embracing all those who glory in the name of Jesus. Such an image is not the Church of Christ. The Church Christ founded was never meant to be split into hundreds of conflicting sects, each going its own way and doing its own thing.

Jesus told his apostles: "You are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Where is the witness to Christ in Christianity today? Where is the oneness - the unity which Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper? (Jn 17:21)

This was a unity so unique and profound that he asked the Father to let it be like the oneness that existed between himself and the Father. So how can we speak of an idealistic community of believers as pleasing to God when they cannot even agree on some of the most basic of beliefs?

There are some who would argue that because we are more united than divided, the peripheral differences are not all that important. But this is not unity. It is certainly not the unity Jesus prayed for. And when a person leaves the Witnesses, or any one of the many other cults that are thriving today, these differences stand out like beacons, and the ex-Witness is faced with the daunting question: "Which church?"

In the Preface to my book **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**, I stated that I had not hesitated to speak of the "Christian Church" and the "Christian Faith" when comparing the doctrinal differences that exist between them and the Jehovah's Witnesses, and that because there is but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," (Eph 4:5) then to a greater or lesser extent, all who are truly baptized must belong to that one Church founded by Christ. But I also said that if they are in the House of God, then they must continue to strive for that unity of mind and heart that brothers and sisters in Christ should have. (Eph 4:3, 13)

When one leaves the Witnesses, one becomes interested in specifics, and the question: "Which church?" takes on a whole new meaning.

Are we talking about the "Christian church," which is a generalized way of lumping together all the churches that claim to follow Christ? Or the Protestant Church, which embraces so much diversity? Or the Catholic Church, which somehow manages to stand apart from other churches and resists all efforts to make it conform to a set of general principles?

There are so many claimants to the Church Christ

founded, that the resulting confusion is one of the major causes why people fall easy prey to Jehovah's Witnesses and other door-knocking religions.

We are told in First Corinthians 14:33 that God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Disunity among the churches is not the answer to Christ's prayer; (Jn 17:20-26) nor has his prayer failed to be answered.

I would like to show that Christ's prayer has been answered. That it was answered in the First Century, the Second Century, the Third Century, and the Twentieth Century. That it has been answered in **every** century since the time of Christ and his apostles, and is still being answered today.

This is not bragging, nor is it thumbing one's nose at other churches and adopting a contemptuous attitude of righteousness. It is an attempt to show that the claims of the Catholic Church, which is the subject of this particular talk, and which I believe is the Church founded by Christ nearly two thousand years ago, are not unreasonable, nor arrogant. Nor has the Catholic Church anything to fear from honest examination. With nearly two thousand years of history behind it, it is not hard to find quite a few skeletons in the closet, and scandals that have rocked the Church to its very foundations.

But, the Church is still standing, and still growing, despite the prophecies of doom from its critics. In this series of talks I hope to show the reasons for its continued growth, and, at the same time, answer some of the charges that are leveled against the Church from all sides.

All too often the charge of autocracy is leveled against the Catholic Church, and sometimes, not without reason. But the fact is, that in no other area is the Church so misunderstood, not only by its critics, but even by its own members.

When one looks at a history of salvation in the Catholic Church, it is not hard to see how such an impression has developed. But what I have to do is to put this understanding in perspective, to show how it was understood in the past, and what the Church teaches today.

The first thing I have to say that it is not the Church's teaching that has changed, but rather our own understanding and outlook. There is much less of a defensive attitude than there was in the past; and as recently as forty or fifty years ago, the **general opinion** was that no one outside the Catholic Church could be saved. I say "general opinion," as I not speaking of the Church's **official** teaching, but rather an ingrained belief in the minds of many Catholics that this **was** the official teaching.

One hundred years ago a popular source of informative learning for Catholics was a one volume book called **THE TREASURY OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**, which was published in the U.S.A. in 1897. One of the articles covered the "Grounds of the Catholic Doctrine," contained in the Profession of Faith of Pope Pius IV. A question was asked: "May not persons be saved in any religion?" The Pope's answer was (and I quote selectively):

No, certainly; St Paul tells us (Heb 2:6) that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.' St Peter assures us, (Acts 4:12) that 'there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we may be saved, but by the name of Jesus . . . So that it

is manifest from the Holy Scripture, that true faith is necessary to salvation. Now true faith, in order to please God and save our souls must be entire. That is to say, we must believe without exception all such articles as are revealed by God and proposed by his Church to be believed; and he who voluntarily and obstinately disbelieveth any one of these articles, is no less void of true saving faith than he who disbelieves them all. (p. 203)

Another question sought an opinion on "those whose conscience persuaded them that they were [already] in the true Church." The Pope's answer was one that became a catchword in the following years, and even today, is still used by many Catholics to answer this question:

If this error proceeds from **invincible ignorance**, they may be excused from the sin of heresy; provided that, in the sincere disposition of their hearts, they would gladly embrace the truth, if they could find it out. (p. 203)

Some forty years later, another pope, Pope Pius XII wrote his famous Encyclical Letter on the **MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST**, in which he explained that the "true Church of Christ" was the "Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church," and further on, he wrote: "It is therefore a dangerous error to hold that one can adhere to Christ as head of the Church without loyal allegiance to his Vicar on earth." (Para. 39)

Eight years later the same pope wrote in another encyclical letter, **CONCERNING MODERN ERRORS**, that "The Mystical

Body of Christ and the Catholic Church in communion with Rome are one and the same thing, and is a doctrine based on revealed truth." (Para. 27)

It is with these pronouncements in mind that certain Catholic **traditionalists** still cling to the past, and are more concerned with keeping alive the sense of the exclusiveness of the Catholic Church than they are in seeking to discover what Christ is saying in the Church today.

And what Christ is saying today is that while he has established his Church to be the **ordinary** means for salvation, he does not reject any good that is found in other churches.

Now this is not a contradiction in the Church's teaching, but a deeper insight into the mercy of God and his Plan of Salvation for all mankind. And this unique development had its beginning with an announcement of Pope John XXIII, in 1959, that he intended to convene an Ecumenical Council. On October 11, 1962, an event began which was to cause a tremendous upheaval in the Catholic Church. That date marked the start of the Second Vatican Council, the 21st Ecumenical or General Council of the Church. From that time on, the Catholic Church would never be the same again.

In convening the Council, Pope John stated that the windows were to be opened so that a breath of fresh air could revitalize the Church and usher in a new Pentecost.

Pope John's vision of the Council has been fulfilled far beyond what he ever dreamed, and the Catholic Church has been transformed in such a way that many of its members no longer believe it is the same Church.

What was once so staid and comfortable to the masses, became a bewildering kaleidoscope of change that shook the Church to its very foundations. And even today, some thirty years

later, the changes are still taking place as the Holy Spirit continues the work of renewal begun by the Council Fathers.

The Second Vatican Council had much to say on the Church as the means of salvation, and in the document called **THE DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH**, the Council statement revealed a tremendous development in the Church's self-understanding, and in the way in which it viewed non-Christian religions. The document states, in part:

Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God, and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.

Nor does Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those, who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace.

Whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She regards such qualities as given by him who enlightens all that they may finally have life. (para. 16)

This development also embraces all non-Catholic Christian churches, and again and again the Council Fathers

focused on these "sister churches."

No matter what individual Catholics or groups of Catholics may seek to deny, the fact remains that Vatican Two clearly teaches that "all men" - that is all people, the whole human race - "are called to one and the same goal, namely, God himself." (**CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH**, para. 24)

Just a year before the Second Vatican Council concluded on December 8, 1965, Pope Pius VI wrote his first Encyclical Letter on **THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD**, and stated quite clearly that:

The Church does not regard God's mercy as an exclusive privilege, nor does the greatness of the privilege it enjoys make it feel unconcerned for those who do not share it. On the contrary, it finds its own salvation an argument for showing more concern and more love for those who live close at hand, or to whom it can go in its endeavor to make all alike share the blessing of salvation. (Para. 63)

There are Catholics today who reject this approach and seek a return to the exclusiveness of the past where everyone outside the Church was regarded as being on the losing side. However, since Vatican Two, there is no losing side. The Council Fathers specifically mentioned the followers of non-Christian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and stated that they were not without a means of attaining salvation. Speaking on these religions, the Council declared:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high

regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines, which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims, and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. . . . The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussions with members of other religions. (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, para. 2)

When it comes to the followers of non-Catholic Christian religions, the Council Fathers also had much to say. In the decree on Ecumenism, the Fathers urged "All the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to participate skillfully in the work of ecumenism." (Para. 4)

Participating in the "work of ecumenism" is the same as working for unity, and the Fathers were acutely conscious of their role in this regard.

Unity is far from a reality, and may not be achieved in our own lifetime. But there must be signs that we are striving for it. And, as the Council document declares:

The result will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, **dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose**, and we hope that it will continue to

increase until the end of time. (Para. 4)

The wording of the document states that the unique unity between Christ and his Church already "dwells" or "subsists" in the Catholic Church as something which can never be lost; and with this one statement we are immediately thrown back into that pre-Vatican Two period which highlighted the emphasis that Catholics were accustomed to put on the "oneness" that stood their Church apart from all other churches.

From the Council's wording, it would appear that the unity of Christ and his Church which is embodied in the Catholic Church always remains intact, and that other churches which are not in communion with the Catholic Church are in schism **from** it.

Although these other churches may lack the fullness of grace and truth which exists in the Catholic Church, they are not to be regarded as of no importance in God's Plan of Salvation. The Decree on Ecumenism also states that non-Catholics today are not to be blamed for schisms that occurred centuries ago. As the document reveals, men of "both sides were to blame." The Decree goes on to say:

One cannot impute the sin of separation to those who at present are born into these communities and are instilled therein with Christ's faith. The Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers. For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.

And even more forcefully, the same paragraph continues:

Undoubtedly, the differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church - whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church - do indeed create many and sometimes serious obstacles to full ecclesiastical communion. These the ecumenical movement is striving to overcome. Nevertheless, all those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be honored by the title of Christian, and are properly regarded as brothers in the Lord by the sons of the Catholic Church. (Para. 3)

To emphasize again what I said a little earlier, the Catholic Church does not regard other churches as second-class institutions; or see itself as superior to them in God's Plan of Salvation. Whatever was said in the past; whatever was done in the past, should be permitted to be buried in the past, as the Church sincerely strives to correct past mistakes and heal old wounds. But no matter what course of action it takes; no matter how sincere its efforts to bridge the barriers that still stand between the churches, there will always be some who will believe that there is some **ulterior motive** behind any Catholic attempt at re-approachment.

There are many who honestly believe that there is nothing good to be found in the Catholic Church, and that it should be shunned by all true believers in Christ. Against this form of invincible ignorance there is no defense. The Catholic Church has got nothing in common with the image of Catholicism that ill-informed persons outside the Church prefer

to present to the world as the Catholic religion. And yet, this caricature is never seen for what it really is. There is no desire to find the truth, and people in this situation prefer to believe the distorted images that the enemies of the Church present to them.

All that can be said of this attitude is to liken it to the words of Jesus in his parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The Rich Man implored Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead to warn the members of his family who were still alive to mend their ways. Abraham reminded him that they had Moses and the prophets to guide them. And Abraham concluded that they "would not be convinced, even if one should rise from the dead." (Lk 16:19-31)

It is this same obstinacy that prevents so many Christians from accepting anything positive about the Catholic Church.

One of the most vocal critics is the Jehovah's Witnesses, and strangely enough, most of their criticisms are not unlike those of Protestantism's. So from time to time it will be noted that I have drawn from Protestant sources to show a **similarity of thinking** when it comes to attacking the Catholic Church.

I repeat again, that these criticisms come mainly from the more extreme forms of Protestantism; and my remarks, while answering the Watchtower's accusations, are also directed to Fundamentalist forms of Protestantism which insist on keeping alive the spirit of the Reformation.

I am not attacking individuals, nor are these talks

meant to be an attack on any particular denomination. I am not implying or saying that a particular denomination is in error, or that it is to be equated with the Watchtower. I am put into the unenviable position of seeking to answer the Watchtower's errors and false accusations, and in doing so, I find it necessary to show that it is not only the Watchtower that denies a particular doctrine, but also some of the more orthodox forms of Christianity.

To illustrate my point, I need only mention such doctrines as the Eucharist, Purgatory, or Papal Infallibility, and one can immediately see that these teachings are as much disputed by the majority of Protestants as they are by Jehovah's Witnesses. And when one begins to look at the objections to these doctrines, it is not hard to see the similarity in the arguments that both groups use to justify their denial of these teachings.

Under these circumstances, I am forced to answer certain objections on a double front, and that is where the animosity begins to creep in, when people regard my remarks as being too personal, and imagine that I am attacking their beliefs under the guise of refuting the Witnesses.

However, this is not my way, and it is not my style, and it is certainly not my intention. As I mentioned in the Introduction to this talk, it is not my intention to include other Christians in this presentation. I try to have charity to all, and if my remarks are offensive to other Christians who see themselves as the object of my criticism, all I can ask is that they follow what I have to say with a little more attention. I have made every effort to point out that my remarks are directed **solely** at the Watchtower, and that other remarks pertaining to Protestantism are simply comparisons I have used

to highlight a point I am making.

This particular talk is titled, AFTER JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES - WHAT?, and it was from this question that this whole series of talks developed.

It has been pointed out that the Witnesses appear to be losing ground. Their numbers are growing; but, as one ex-Witness remarked, what we are looking at is a revolving door. The numbers going in might be increasing, but so too are the numbers of those coming out. While the latter may fall far short of tipping the balance, the signs still point to the fact that all is not well in Watchtower-land.

Questions are being asked, and are not receiving satisfactory answers. Witnesses are looking closely at Watchtower doctrines and are having difficulty in reconciling them with the Scriptures. This leads to some of them seeking to find these answers outside of the Watchtower, and that is the first step in breaking the chains that have held some of them captive for twenty, thirty, or even forty years and more.

Another ex-Witness stated that leaving the Watchtower was one of the most difficult decisions he ever had to make. For after all, what can one do when almost the whole of one's life has been dedicated to disseminating Watchtower literature? Schooling was minimal, and there was never any time to learn a trade. Spreading Watchtower doctrine had become a full-time occupation, and when it was finally realized that the Watchtower was not the "Faithful and Wise Servant" of the Scriptures, (Mt 24:45) all that was left was a void that could not be filled.

Witnesses who have left the Watchtower's influence

usually look for something to take its place, for the Watchtower had been the center of their lives. It had dominated their thinking, their hopes, their ambitions, and even their relationships. For many Witnesses it had been their life, and it never occurred to them that it could ever be wrong. For some Witnesses, the shock of discovering that the organization to which they had dedicated their lives was false, is too much for them and they end up as agnostics; or worse, as atheists - their faith in God, and in men is shattered.

After a period of re-adjustment, other ex-Witnesses once again begin to look for God. For some of them, traditional Christianity is seen in a new light, and the way is open for the Gospel message to be received.

I have always found the Witnesses to be very sincere. They could hardly be otherwise, for few religions make so many demands upon their members. They are sincere in their beliefs, and they are sincere in their hopes. It could be said that they live in hope, and that it is this hope that keeps them going. Outsiders may see it as a deceptive hope, but it has been powerful enough to sustain the Witnesses for over one hundred years.

But sincerity is not enough. The willingness to devote countless hours each week in door to door evangelizing; the readiness to suffer persecution for commitment to one's beliefs; and even, as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, to accepting the possible death of a loved one as an alternative to permitting a blood transfusion, for example, is not unique to the Witnesses. Their total dedication to their religious beliefs is often matched and even far surpassed by people who are not even Christian at all. There are countless non-Christian people who are dedicated to their beliefs to the point of fanaticism,

and are quite prepared to sacrifice their whole family to achieve their goals.

So sincerity is not a guide to the truth or otherwise of a person's beliefs. There must be other criteria for judging the truth of a particular religion, and the method of judgment must be trustworthy and reliable.

Christianity stands out among the world's religions because it is a revealed, not an invented, religion. This revelation was first conveyed to the people of Old Testament times through the patriarchs and the prophets. In later times, God gave us his final revelation in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This revelation of God is definitive. It has not been given to us to reform it or correct it to what we think it might be saying; nor are we free to alter it to suit our own whims or fancies. However, God's Word is living and active, and through the agency of the Scriptures and Tradition, there is a body that can and does authoritatively interpret this Word to make it more meaningful to our lives.

Being definitive, God's revelation had to be given to us in a way that precluded any doubt or uncertainty. The revelation had to be safeguarded from those who would alter it or destroy it; and at the same time there had to be a means for truth-seeking people to be able to find it. So the guardian and defender of this revelation must be a visible sign to everyone. And this visible sign is Christ's Church, which he - not human beings - established as the "pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Tim 3:15)

The Church is in the world. It was founded by Christ and built on him, so it still exists today. What we have to do is find it. We have to be able to distinguish it from the

countless claimants which have been set up as the true Church.

When I first began preparing for this series of talks I had already listened to over 130 testimonies of former Witnesses who had left the Watchtower and found new freedom in a Christian church. But listening to these testimonies, I was dismayed to hear how some of these ex-Witnesses had chosen a particular church in which to put their trust.

So many of them based their conversion on a religious experience and then simply drove around their neighborhoods Sunday after Sunday, listening to, and observing the way in which the Gospel message was presented. And when they found a church in which they were "comfortable," they made it their own. In so many of these testimonies, there was never a mention of doctrine; never a mention of history; never a mention of apostolic succession - of tracing the roots of a particular Church back to Christ and his apostles. Never a mention of sacraments, whereby a Christian who is properly disposed, receives and shares in the divine life of Christ. Never a mention of so many things that Christians in the early Church took for granted. As long as there was prominence given to the Bible, and the preaching sounded right, then it was accepted. But this process of selection and elimination is a most unreliable guide, and there needs to be much more care and thought given to this most important decision.

The majority of Witnesses, at least in the Western world, were nominally Christian before they came under the Watchtower's influence. The Watchtower offered them that elusive "something" that had not been found in their own churches, and when the spell of the Watchtower was broken, and they realized that that "something" was not to be found in the Watchtower Society, there was the need to replace it with what was regarded

as more normative Christianity.

In my discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses, I always let them know at the outset that I am a Catholic, and then wait to see what line of attack they will follow. Nowadays, of course, this line of attack is set out for them in the 1985 handbook, **REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES**, and it is interesting to see just how closely they follow the guide-lines presented in this book, and other recommendations the Watchtower has suggested in the past.

During the course of one conversation I informed my visitors that I was in the habit of attending church every day. One of them rather threw me off balance when he replied that he had been a former Catholic and that he too had attended church daily.

I found it rather difficult to accept that anyone so committed could be so easily influenced by the Watchtower's teachings. But probing further, I learnt that "daily" should rather have been "regularly"; and still further probing revealed that "regularly" would have been better expressed as "weekly," or, "nearly every week." There was no conscious attempt to deceive me. I feel that the Jehovah's Witness was reaching back into his past and had a remembrance of "regular" attendance at church, but was somewhat hazy as to the actual frequency.

I think it is difficult, if not impossible, for a

non-Witness to appreciate the trauma a person coming out of the Watchtower has to face. They are in the unenviable position of being ostracized by the Watchtower Society; they are shunned by former so-called friends in their Watchtower congregation; and they suffer the humiliation of having to deny everything that was once so dear to them.

They had proclaimed to the world, by witnessing to all and sundry, that they had the "truth." Their's was utter conviction that the years they had spent in Watchtower activities was preparing them for their place in the earthly paradise that was soon to be established. In spite of opposition from all quarters, they cast off all family ties. They suffered ridicule, loss of friends and relatives. They sacrificed job promotion, they even renounced allegiance to their country, and staked their life on Watchtower promises. And now, after years of testifying to their convictions, they have to do a complete about-face and justify not only to themselves, but to their families and their friends, their relatives and their acquaintances, that what they had previously professed as inalienable truth, is, in fact, false.

No matter what course they may take in years to come; no matter if they **do** find the truth, passing it on will always be that much more difficult.

Sincerity will never be enough. There will always be that lack of credibility. Like the apostle Paul, as recorded in Acts 9, they will find that their efforts to spread the Good News among their former acquaintances will be looked upon with suspicion. How does one go about convincing one's family and friends that they **now** have the truth. All the arguments they use, they have used before, and with much more effect. Now they have to start all over again. But then, in the words of

Jesus, preaching the Gospel was never intended to be easy. He tells us that if we are persecuted in one town we are to flee to another. (Mt 10:23)

We now come back to the question I used as the title to this talk: **AFTER JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES - WHAT?** I mentioned that an ex-Witness who was sincere in seeking the truth as a **Witness**, will endeavor to fill the void left by their departure from the Watchtower Society. Their world has been turned upside down. There **is** truth out there somewhere, but how does one go about finding it?

They have been burnt once. They staked everything they had on promises that failed to find fulfillment. They had sought the truth, and had found a lie. This time they will be more wary. They can still be persuaded to accept the first thing that comes along, or, they can step back and carefully examine all the claims of each denomination that presents itself to their scrutiny. Perhaps the last thing they would do would be to examine the claims of the Catholic Church. And it is not hard to see why.

When we look at Watchtower publications no other church has received such condemnation from the Witnesses. In their **PUBLICATIONS INDEX** for the years 1930 - 1985, 13 pages are needed to cover the topic of the Catholic Church. This is equal to the number of pages needed to cover the references to Jehovah's Witnesses themselves. Only 8 pages are required to cover the name Jesus, and another 8 pages for the name Jehovah.

From its very beginning, the Watchtower Society has vehemently denounced the Catholic Church in so many ways that

it is almost impossible to even begin to list them.

More than one hundred years ago, the Watchtower founder, Charles Taze Russell, described the Roman Church as "Antichrist." In fact, he depicted it as:

The chief and greatest of these systems is the great 'Mystery of Iniquity,' the Church of Rome, whose head is the Pope. Its 'lying wonders' have truly deceived many, and out of this system have sprung the various minor systems, each claiming to be **the** church, **the** body of Christ, and each acknowledging and following others than the true Head, Christ Jesus, though all assume his name. (**ZION'S WATCHTOWER**, June, 1885, p. 7)

An ex-Witness has thus inherited an ingrained hatred and suspicion of everything even remotely related to the Catholic Church. From the time a person is first introduced to the teachings of the Watchtower, Catholicism has been presented as the arch-villain of Christendom; the epitome of all that is evil. It is not to be trusted, and it is to be avoided at all cost.

Is it any wonder, then, that an ex-Witness will look everywhere else **but** the Catholic Church? And, when they look at other denominations, they get the same reaction. For many of them, Catholicism is a dirty word, and scarcely rates being called, or even considered a part of the Christian Church. In fact, for more than a few denominations, it is as anti-Christian as the Witnesses themselves.

It is viewed with suspicion, fear, and distrust, and it is still believed by many to be pursuing its ultimate goal

of world domination. And yet, this is the Church that I am now asking the ex-Witness to examine.

I don't intend to launch into a full-scale defense of the Catholic Church. Nor do I intend to try and answer all the objections that Jehovah's Witnesses have raised in the 55 year span of their **PUBLICATIONS INDEX**. What I want to do is to show those Jehovah's Witnesses who have cast off their Watchtower shackles that they have nothing to fear from the Catholic Church. This is the Church in which I was born. This is the Church in which I live. And this is the Church in which I hope to die.

There is nothing in the Catholic Church that God-seeking ex-Witnesses need to be alarmed or frightened of. It is not the monstrosity painted by the Watchtower; nor is it the grasping mercenary or power-hungry institution that is so often depicted in the pages of anti-Catholic literature. I believe it is the Church founded on Christ and his apostles. Claims that I would like to examine carefully over this series of talks.

So by all means, look at the claims of other denominations; but also include in your list the claims of the Catholic Church. Don't dismiss it out of hand without even examining its credentials. Don't rely on Watchtower or Protestant sources to reach an understanding of the Church's claims, but give it the same careful and prayerful scrutiny you give to the other denominations.

Look past its buildings, its hierarchical structure,

its pomp and ceremonial splendor, and see its basic underlying foundations. The other things are all the result of its long history. They are not the Church, but accretions - the necessary trappings that have attached themselves to the Church and have become part and parcel of an organization that has lived among kings and kingdoms, emperors and empires, for nearly two thousand years. But they do not change the Church, and they are not the Church.

But, you might argue, the Church Christ founded was simple and accessible, whereas the Catholic Church is so full of ritualistic splendor and ceremony, that it is daunting to the outsider, and repels, rather than attracts the truly interested inquirer.

It is unfortunate that the attempts of earlier generations to make the liturgy more meaningful to the ordinary person, should become so foreign to a later generation. But this happens in every walk of life. Look at the ceremony which surrounds the crowning of a monarch. The basic, underlying purpose is to install the heir as king or queen, but the ceremony itself has become surrounded with pomp and splendor, that has survived centuries of turmoil and conflict.

The Catholic Church is aware that much of its ritual becomes outmoded with the passage of time, and this was one of the reasons for calling the Second Vatican Council in 1962. Every phase of its ritual was put under the microscope to see if it was meaningful to the people. And when it was found that its liturgy no longer conveyed a message, steps were taken to remedy the situation. The Conciliar Fathers also examined the Church's attitude to the Bible, to Ecumenism, to the Apostolate of the Laity, and to a whole host of other pressing subjects that needed to be seen against the backdrop of a rapidly changing

world.

Wheels were set in motion, and this self-examination has now become an on-going process, that has certainly opened the door for the ordinary person to obtain a deeper understanding of their religion.

However, apart from the pomp and ceremony which surrounds Catholic worship and practice, the question Jehovah's Witnesses and others keep asking, is how the Catholic Church, in the face of all this splendor, can continue to identify itself with the early Church?

The question is really two-fold. By "early," one assumes that they are referring to the apostolic Church of the First and Second Centuries. And here, one encounters the myth of modern times, that the expression "early Church," somehow implies that its members were some kind of "Bible-based" Christians who met regularly without the restraints of an organized hierarchical structure.

In the book, **WHAT HAS RELIGION DONE FOR MANKIND**, Jehovah's Witnesses ascribe to this view by speaking of the "virgin congregation" of the First Century, and of the simplicity of the original Christian faith.

According to the Witnesses, this early Church failed to maintain its integrity. In the August 1, 1980 **WATCHTOWER**, they listed a series of Scriptural quotes to show that a falling-away from the truth had been foretold in the Bible. And in such books as **GOD'S KINGDOM OF A THOUSAND YEARS HAS APPROACHED**, and, **LET YOUR KINGDOM COME**, they promote the falsehood of a Great Apostasy soon after the death of the last apostle.

But what of the early Church? What is the fascination with these formative years? Not only among Jehovah's Witnesses, but even among churches within the ranks of more normative

Christianity, there is this belief that the early Church of the post-apostolic period was the last and **only** time the Church truly mirrored the teachings of Jesus Christ.

And for those non-Jehovah's Witnesses who also hold this view, even if there was no great "falling away," at the very least, the Virgin Bride of Christ failed to preserve her virginity, and permitted falsities to insinuate themselves into the Christian congregation.

What we have here, is an attempt to prove that the early Church fell into error.

Now for the Watchtower, it is absolutely essential that this illusion of a great apostasy is established in the minds of its members, in order that its anti-Christian teachings can be accepted. But what can one say to professing Christians who also hold to this fallacy of a great apostasy? Even if they do not accept it to the extent of the Watchtower, to admit that Christ permitted his Church to fall into error, betrays a lamentable lack of faith and trust in Jesus and his Word.

Jesus told us that he would establish his Church, and that the "gates of hell" would not overcome it. (Mt 16:18-19) That his word was to be taught to all the nations, and that he would be with his Church always. (Mt 28:19-20) That the Holy Spirit would guide them into the whole truth. (Jn 16:13) And, that this same Spirit would remain with the Church forever. (Jn 14:16)

Anyone who subscribes to the falsehood of a great apostasy, must deny these words of Jesus. So as a little test, ask yourself these questions. Answer them with a straight "Yes" or "No."

One: Did Christ establish a Church?

- Two: Did the "gates of hell" - the powers of darkness, overcome this Church?
- Three: Is Christ with his Church always?
- Four: Has the Holy Spirit always kept the Church in the truth?
- Five: Has the Holy Spirit remained with the Church since Pentecost?

Unless one is willing to say "No" to these questions, or unless one is prepared to re-interpret them in order to avoid their implications, that person is forced to deny that any so-called "great apostasy" ever took place. For if any such apostasy did take place within the early Church, then we could never know for sure if we now have the truth.

The fact is, the story of a "great apostasy" is a myth. The Watchtower has used it as a smoke-screen to hide the heresies it has resurrected and presented as ancient and authentic Christian teachings. It is forced into this position by the need to deny the cardinal truths of Christianity: The Trinity; the Deity of Christ and the Incarnation; the Resurrection of Jesus; the doctrines of the Atonement, the Ascension, and the Second Coming; the Afterlife, and all the other great **truths** of the Christian Church that were already well past the seminal stage by the end of the First Century.

By the middle of the Second Century, the earliest Christian writers were setting forth these truths with an assurance that they were the authentic teachings of Jesus Christ. The Third and Fourth Centuries saw the formulation of these teachings into the doctrines as we have them today.

The pattern, as it emerges here, is that these teachings have the weight of apostolic authority behind them.

The Apostolic Church was acutely conscious of its birth from Christ, and those who governed it were disciples of Christ. They spoke with authority, conscious that what they taught was the authentic teaching of their risen Lord.

What I would like to do in the time remaining is to list a few of the more common objections to the Catholic Church and try and allay some of the fear and suspicion that arises whenever Catholicism is mentioned.

For many Christians, the subject of Catholicism acts as a catalyst. They regard the Catholic Church as overbearing. They object to its authoritative attitude, and totally reject its claims to apostolic succession.

I hope to develop many of these and other points more fully under their individual headings later in this series of talks, so my treatment of them here will not go into any great detail. However, I will try and show that the objections are not unanswerable. Anyone seeking further information on a particular topic or point I raise here is referred to the relevant subject matter in the later talks.

I would like to emphasize that the following objections are not new. In many cases, they have been around in one form or another for centuries, and it is only because of the likes of the Watchtower, that they still need to be answered.

For an ex-Jehovah's Witness, they still present a formidable barrier to any serious appraisal of the Catholic Church. Like objections to the Christian cross, and to blood transfusions, they are just one more lingering doubt from their Watchtower past that can never be entirely dismissed.

Indeed, for some ex-Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watchtower's indoctrination has been so thorough that their deprogramming and rehabilitation never fully overcomes the influence the Watchtower once exerted over their lives. Even years after their repudiation of the Watchtower and its errors, many ex-Witnesses still have difficulty in looking at a Christian cross or crucifix without some feeling of guilt. There is always that lingering doubt that some of the Watchtower's teachings may have had elements of truth, and for this reason there is a tendency to retain a subconscious aversion to any form of blood transfusion.

At the same time, some of the Witnesses objections to the Catholic Church are still held by certain Christian individuals and groups who are helping Jehovah's Witnesses and others out of the grip of the cults, so it is important that they are answered in as friendly a manner as possible so as they are not seen as refueling past fires.

Any Christian who feels that he or she has become the subject of a personal attack can rest assured that such is not the case. I certainly have no desire to open old wounds. Indeed, I would wish that it might not be necessary to even speak of these objections at all; but, because they exist, and, because they are still very real in the minds of so many sincere people, I feel compelled to make some attempt to correct the misconceptions they have caused, and to answer them to the best of my ability.

The formulation or defining of these teachings was not something new, but merely a declaration of what had always

been the Church's constant belief. The Church of today knows now, as it knew then, that these teachings are authentic Christian doctrine, for the unbroken tradition that links the Church of today with the Church of the First Century is all part of the self-identification that gives the Church its authority to speak in the name of Jesus.

Now, it is certain that Jehovah's Witnesses do not have this assurance; this link with the apostolic Church. This is their main reason for trying to prove that this connection is not necessary.

When one is unable to prove the unprovable, then one is forced to adopt another line: in this case, the "Great Apostasy," in an endeavor to prove that no one else has any link with the early Church.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, even some professing Christians deny that the Church maintained its integrity after the apostolic age. Any doctrines that are unpalatable are conveniently explained away as additional accretions that attached themselves to the later building, but which were never a part of the original foundation.

Lumped together in this category are the doctrines of Catholicism that the Protestant reformers of the Sixteenth Century discarded as "un-Scriptural." The doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, purgatory, the papacy, sacramental Confession or the forgiveness of sins, the intercession of the saints, devotion to Mary the Mother of God, are all part of this rejection that began over four hundred years ago, and it is still very much alive today.

For many Bible Christians, the problem is not that the Catholic Church is "un-Scriptural," but that it exists at all. The seeds that were sown at the time of the Reformation

are still bearing fruit, and Bible-based Christians, however much they may claim to be identifying themselves with the apostolic Church, still betray their Reformation heritage by denying **only** the same doctrines as the Protestant reformers, even though all come from the same source.

The denial of these doctrines can be seen to be not so much religious or theological as emotional and social. There is no attempt to even examine these doctrines from a theological or historical perspective, but simply because they are "Catholic," they are rejected out of hand.

As I said, their denial is based **solely** on the word of the reformers of the Sixteenth Century. There is no study, no dialogue, no attempt to understand the doctrines. The fact that they are "Catholic" is sufficient to condemn them. One example here should suffice.

More than twenty years ago, I read the late Walter Martin's books on the various cults. I took exception to some of the comments he made in passing on Catholicism and its doctrines, but let them pass as minor blemishes in what were otherwise well-written studies.

However, in one of his books, **THE MAZE OF MORMONISM**, Dr. Martin spoke of Mormonism's original teaching on Mary as the Mother of God. He denounced the Mormon travesty of this doctrine, but equated them with Catholics because of the supposed similarity of doctrine.

I wrote a long letter, dated August 22, 1967, to the Christian Research Institute, which Dr. Martin had founded, and I expressed my disappointment that he had thought it necessary to make such loose remarks.

I received a very courteous reply to my letter from the Institute, but not from Walter Martin personally, in which

the writer assured me that it had never been Dr. Martin's intention to make disparaging remarks against the Catholic Church. The letter then went on to answer my objections to Dr. Martin's restricted use of the pronouncements of the ancient Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, when they could strengthen his arguments, but to ignore them when they spoke on other doctrines that are now denied by non-Catholic Christians: in this case, the teaching on Mary as the Mother of God.

The writer answered my objections by stating that the position against the "Mother of God" concept:

. . . is based primarily upon the use Catholicism has made of it. The concept enunciated by Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:43) is quite theologically plausible when understood as referring to motherhood of the form of flesh God took when entering this world. The problem arises in the Catholic view that since 'Christ is God, and Mary is the mother of Christ - she is therefore the Mother of God.' One becomes apprehensive, in context, of the potential here for elevating Mary to the level of Deity - since, in time, the mother precedes the child.

Notice the argument used here in those closing remarks. Mary cannot be given this title for it would tend to elevate her to the level of Deity, whereas, in time, a mother precedes the child.

In his book, **JEHOVAH OF THE WATCHTOWER**, Dr. Martin had taken the Witnesses to task for using nonsensical arguments in their denial of the Trinity, such as, If Christ was God,

that is, part of the Trinity, then ". . . who ran the universe for the three days Jesus was dead and in the grave?"

What he is saying here, in answering the Witnesses, is that their reasoning is false. He wanted the Witnesses to admit that the doctrine of the Trinity does not teach that there are three Gods, but three **Persons** in **one** God. Christ the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man. Because of his indivisible nature, he did not cease to be God.

Yet, in the letter I received, a similar argument is used against the Mother of God doctrine. Quoting further from the same letter, we read:

The breakdown of such syllogistic reasoning is apparent, however. God exists as in indivisible **essence**. God is also a Trinity. Thus, if Mary is the mother of God, she is the mother of the Trinity.

This is precisely the type of erroneous reasoning that Dr. Martin condemns in his books on the cults. To use one's own understanding of another person's beliefs and to argue a point from a false premise is hardly the hallmark of sound scholarship.

The second point in my letter to the Christian Research Institute, was that it was wrong to quote from pronouncements of Ecumenical Councils when they agreed with your position, but to condemn them or ignore them when they did not. This is a favorite ploy of the Watchtower, only it goes much further than this by using **opposing** sources for the same purposes.

The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 A.D., is famous for a number of reasons.

It was the first Ecumenical or General Council, where

leaders of the Christian churches in all countries were invited to attend to discuss problems that demanded an official ruling; in this case, the heresy of a certain Arius, a priest of Alexandria, who was teaching that the Father alone was God, and that the Word or **Logos**, was on a slightly lower plane. In other words, that the Son was something less than God.

The outcome, of course, resulted in the condemnation of Arius, and a statement of belief that later became the Nicene Creed, and in which the truths of the Christian Church were spelled out for all time. Or were they?

Just one hundred years after the Council of Nicaea, the leaders of the Church were again called together, this time at Ephesus, to combat another heresy which had sprung from the teaching of one Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was teaching that the Virgin Mary should not be called "Mother of God" (**Theotokos**), for she was only the mother of the man in which the Word had become incarnate. Nestorius proposed that Mary should properly be called **Christotokos**, the "Christ-bearer," or "Mother of Christ."

The Fourth General Council convened at Ephesus on June 7, 431 A.D. But because of the late arrival of the Bishop of Antioch and his party, the first session was delayed until June 22, 431 A.D. Even then, the bishop failed to attend the opening session, and did not arrive until June 24th. The creed of the earlier council of Nicaea was read to the assembly, as were the charges against Nestorius. Each of the 125 bishops present made their profession of the Nicene faith, and, in a mass vote, they denounced Nestorius and his supporters and condemned his teachings. The Ephesian council proclaimed its accord on the great truths:

(1). That there is in Christ a union of two natures in

one Lord.

- (2) That the Blessed Virgin is properly to be called the Mother of God.

And all this took place more than fifteen and a half centuries ago.

In a round-about way, I have returned to the point I was making. I have laid the groundwork, as it were, for an understanding behind Catholicism's "Mary the Mother of God" teaching. It did not come out of a vacuum. Nor was it something that suddenly emerged in the Fifth Century.

It had been the Church's teaching since the beginning, and, like the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, it was only when it was attacked by heretics that it became necessary to be spelled out and defined for all time.

Now what I am leading to, is that, as a "Catholic" doctrine, the teaching has been rejected. In concluding the reply to my letter to the Christian Research Institute, the writer stated quite candidly:

I am not personally aware of the intellectual intent at Ephesus; but it is against the above type of thinking that one must guard. That Mary is the greatest, most blessed woman who ever lived - I joyously affirm. That Elizabeth's declaration was ever intended to infer **more** than this, I most earnestly deny. For among other things, from this point one moves into doctrines of Mary's being sinless, etc.

The writer is admitting an ignorance of the purpose of the Ephesian Council, but is adamant that it cannot be teaching any such idea of Mary as the Mother of God - and the

reason? Because it smacks too much of Catholicism. And, to repeat again what I said at the start of this example: There is no study, no dialogue; no attempt to understand the doctrines. The fact that they are "Catholic" is sufficient to condemn them.

And this is only one doctrine. What we are talking about is a whole system of doctrines that go to make up the belief of the Catholic Church.

If this rejection of the testimony of history is the attitude of many non-Catholics, it is certainly the attitude of the Watchtower.

History, for the Watchtower Society is there to be manipulated in any way possible, so as to present Watchtower teachings as authentic Christian doctrine that links it with early Christianity.

Jehovah's Witnesses are constantly being told that in all the world, they alone come closest to the teachings of early Christianity. At the conclusion of a special issue of the **AWAKE** magazine of April 22, 1962, dealing with "Early Christianity and Modern Day Religion," the Watchtower stated:

What are the facts, then? That in regard to beliefs, conduct, manner of worship, separateness from the world, preaching message and zeal, none other than Jehovah's Witnesses measure up to the Christianity of the early Christians.

The same message is constantly being highlighted in Watchtower publications to this day. In issue after issue of the **WATCHTOWER** and **AWAKE** magazines, Witnesses are told that early Christians did not celebrate Jesus' birth; that they shunned the use of the cross in worship; that they maintained

neutrality in face of fierce opposition; that they refused to compromise; that they did not teach the doctrine of the Trinity; that they did not practice tithing; that there was no clergy/laity distinction; that they did not have temples, sacrifices, oracles, priesthood; and that these and a whole host of other early Christian practices observed by today's Jehovah's Witnesses is what distinguishes them from the false religions of so-called Christendom.

But are these the facts?

For the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses, history is a closed book. And apart from a largely stylized account, even their own century-plus history is hidden from them and remains virtually a mystery to all but a handful. As far as the Watchtower is concerned, history is there to be manipulated so as to give whatever backing is required to support its teachings.

This manipulation has been well documented, and even if it wasn't, it is a simple matter to peruse almost any Watchtower publication to see how the Witnesses quote from scholarly opinions and literature which seem to support some current facet of teaching, and then ridicule and ignore these same sources when they dare to step out of line. This picking and choosing is even more evident when they reach back to Christianity's earliest beginnings.

With absolutely nothing in common with the early Church - apart from their possible identification with the heretics of that period - the Witnesses are forced to take every comment out of context and completely ignore other statements that say the exact opposite to what they are claiming a particular passage means.

When the Jews challenged Jesus because of a cure he

performed on the Sabbath, he revealed that authority had been given to him by his Father to do such things. He pointed to their use of the Scriptures in the oft-quoted passage: "You search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them, even they testify on my behalf." (Jn 5:39) And this is what the Witnesses do. They have the audacity to misquote early Church Fathers in an attempt to refute such basic Christian truths as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and his ascension into heaven, when the context **clearly** shows that ". . . even they testify on Jesus' behalf."

On page 25 of my book, **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**, I mentioned, in passing, one such misuse of patristic writing.

Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, who lived in the latter half of the Second Century, is actually quoted by the Witnesses in support of their denial of the divinity of Christ.

In a copy of **AWAKE** magazine for April 22, 1962, page 4, the Witnesses wrote:

Despite heathen pressure to worship many gods, the early Christians stoutly refused to worship more than the one true God, Jehovah. They followed the example of Jesus, who said: 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.' (Mt. 4:10) Irenaeus argued in support of their view when he said: 'It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein . . . and to demonstrate that there is nothing

either above him or after him; nor that, influenced by anyone, but by his own free will, he created all things, since he is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, and the only Father, alone containing all things.

The same article then continues a little further on:

Although the corrupting of the early Christian organization eventually caused to be adopted the erroneous belief that Christ is actually God and part of a triune Godhead, early Christians clung to the Scriptural fact that Christ is not equal with the Father and co-eternal with him.

Now, having seen fit to quote from Irenaeus to defend their denial of the divinity of Christ, the Witnesses must be prepared to let him speak for himself on this all-important Christian teaching. From his most famous work, **AGAINST HERESIES** - and the Watchtower's teachings are certainly the embodiment of all those ancient heresies - Irenaeus has more than a little to say on the divinity of Jesus.

From Henry Bettenson's translation of **THE EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS**, come the following selection of statements from Irenaeus. These should certainly show the true beliefs of this early Christian writer:

The Son always co-exists with the Father, and has revealed the Father from of old, from the beginning. (Book 2: 30, 9)

The name of God or Lord is given only to him who is God and Lord of all; who said to Moses, 'My name is I AM. And you shall say to the Israelites, HE WHO IS has sent me to you.' The name of God and Lord is given also to his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes men the sons of God if they believe in his name. And the Son says to Moses, 'I have come down to remove this people.' For it is the Son who descended and ascended for the salvation of men. Thus through the Son who is in the Father, and has the Father in himself, HE WHO IS has been revealed. (Book 4: 6, 2)

God makes all things in measure and order, and with him nothing is without proportion. He was right who said that the immeasurable Father is measured in the Son; for the Son is the measure of the Father, since he **contains** the Father. (Book 4: 4, 2)

God became man, and it is the Lord himself who saved us. (Book 3: 21, 1)

There are many more statements by Irenaeus on Christ and his relationship with the Father, but enough has been said to satisfy anyone on the orthodoxy of his position. There is simply no room in the examples I have quoted to leave any doubt in any honest person's mind that any attempt to use Irenaeus to defend the Watchtower's anti-Christian views, is doomed to failure.

History is important. It is our link with the past. If it is so important in regard to one's country, how much more

so in regard to one's links with Jesus and his apostles. But when it is so clearly evident that Jehovah's Witnesses distort history to suit their own purposes, then one is justified in examining their other credentials.

Now the Catholic Church has the Scriptures, and it has the testimony of history to support its teachings. And this is not just a history of a hundred years ago. This is a history that had its beginnings with Christ and his apostles. Try as they might, the Witnesses are unable to counter this claim.

In such publications as the 1959 book, **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN THE DIVINE PURPOSE**, and in the 1981 book, **LET YOUR KINGDOM COME**, the Witnesses encourage their view that Catholicism had its beginnings with the Roman Emperor, Constantine, in the Fourth Century. This absurd claim, which I will discuss in detail in a later talk, is put forward again and again in the pages of Watchtower literature. And the sad thing is, Witnesses will accept it on the word of the Watchtower without ever attempting to find out if it is true.

It is enough that the Watchtower has said it, so there is nothing more to say.

So an ex-Witness already has an inbuilt prejudice against the Catholic Church through his or her association with the Watchtower. Is it any wonder, then, that having struggled clear of the Watchtower organization, that they would even bother looking at the claims of Catholicism?

As I said at the start of this talk, there is opposition to Catholicism on a double front. And the ex-Witness

will have little hesitation in looking elsewhere when seeking answers to the question: **WHICH CHURCH?**

But again, I say to this person, don't dismiss it without a hearing. If you have shown the courage to shake off the Watchtower's shackles, and if you are genuinely seeking the truth, then you owe it to yourself to examine **all** the claimants to the "truth that leads to eternal life."

Now you may have difficulty in reconciling Catholic doctrines with the Scriptures. You may have a thousand doubts and objections to the Catholic Church - perhaps even more if you have spent any length of time in the Watchtower organization; and I certainly cannot hope to answer all these doubts here. But I can tell you that there **are** answers to your questions - if you really want them.

Some of the more common objections will be answered in this series of talks on the Witnesses and the Catholic Church. In the companion tapes I will be speaking on the Apostolic Church; Peter the Rock, and the Papacy; The Catholic Church and the Bible; the Eucharist; Purgatory; Mary the Mother of God; and, if I get enough feedback from those who hear these tapes, I hope also to include a questions and answers tape on various problems that non-Catholic Christians encounter when they set out to examine the claims of the Catholic Church.

If I do not examine your specific questions in these talks, and if you are unable to find satisfactory answers elsewhere, then I am available to answer it personally. I give my address at the end of each talk for that purpose. And, if your particular question is so urgent or important to you that you require an immediate answer, then I also include my telephone number.

The Catholic Church is there. Despite the prophecies of doom, which the Watchtower has been issuing for more than one hundred years, it won't go away. It is a fact of life; a reality. Many regard it as an anachronism - as having outlived its usefulness. They want it to go away, but it won't. It can't. It was given a mission by Christ to "make disciples of all nations," and to "teach them everything" as he has commanded. It cannot do otherwise.

I believe the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, and I have developed this series of talks on this belief. It may be a claim that many people will find offensive and presumptuous, but it is my sincere conviction, based on overwhelming evidence from all available sources that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ in the world today.

I could certainly water down my remarks and weaken my statements so as to "win friends and influence people," but that would be less than honest. And, to use the words of the apostle Paul: "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal 4:16)

Catholic teachings, whether "convenient or inconvenient," may not always be palatable, but they are consistent and unchanging - much more than can be said for the chameleon-like teachings of the Watchtower. It certainly deserves to be taken seriously, and any ex-Witness, any Christian or non-Christian, is urged to examine carefully, the claims of the Catholic Church, which Paul, in his First Letter to Timothy, called, "the pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Tim 3:15)