

In Defense of the Trinity Doctrine

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1) Summary

“The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God, who exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three persons share the one divine nature. They are equal, co-eternal and omnipotent. They are distinct from one another: The Father has no source, the Son is born of the substance of the Father, the Spirit proceeds from the Father (or from the Father and the Son). Though distinct, the three persons cannot be divided from one another in being or in operation (*Oxford Dictionary of the Bible* [New York, Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005] 1207) (*Oxford*). With minor changes, the reformed Protestant churches have essentially adapted the Catholic teachings on the Trinity Doctrine (see section 12).

Central to the doctrine that God is three Persons in one nature is the premise that “Jesus is God,” a term which causes great confusion among the Jehovah’s Witnesses who unfortunately do not understand what is meant by this Trinitarian phrase or what the Trinity doctrine teaches. One of their more bizarre errors lies in believing that Christ is a created angel who became man and after the resurrection reverted back to being an angel.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses have published countless pages of criticism of Christian Trinitarianism, teaching that it is the work of Satan and utterly illogical. This relentless attack, however, is based upon certain misconceptions and falsehoods allowing them to capitalize on many unsuspecting individuals’ ignorance of accurate Trinity dogma. Three of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ false teachings are particularly misleading and form the core vehicle for the dissemination of gross distortions.

First, they do not understand that a "Person" is not a material human being like you or I. Persons of the Trinity are spirit. Secondly, they do not understand that God is "three" in one sense, and "one" in a completely different sense. And third, the Jehovah’s Witnesses are unwilling or unable to acknowledge or grasp the concept of the hypostatic union, the union that is the God-man Jesus, who is fully God the Son and fully man, a divine Person who assumed a human nature. Intertwined with this concept is the often ignored principle that the created humanity of Jesus is not God: “**The humanity of Christ is a creature, it is not God**” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 922). Accordingly, Jesus, the man in the God-man equation, could pray to His Father and acknowledge His Father’s superiority without committing any doctrinal contradictions. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, on the other hand, teach that the incarnate Jesus was nothing more or less than a man.

This treatise begins by shining a light on the worst of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ misunderstandings, and goes on to explain in greater detail what the Trinity doctrine actually teaches. From there, many of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity are disposed of in light of more accurate teaching, after which a further examination is made of scriptural support for the Trinity in the Bible.

A major section is then devoted to select Bible verses that prove that Jesus was, and is, God, followed by a brief summary of early Trinitarian theology which provides us with a better understanding of the doctrine's foundation. The concluding section is devoted to the issue of Jesus Christ being a created angel.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, whose religion is essentially 4th century Arian Subordinationism (see section 41) have said many things about the doctrine of the Trinity that are simply not true. Out of a sense of common decency and respect, those who propound and believe in the doctrine and people who seek to understand it better are entitled at a minimum to a fair hearing on the issues, which is the primary goal of this work.

But before you begin, it is very important to understand two simple concepts which lie at the heart of many of the Jehovah's Witnesses' errors; the difference between immanent Trinity and economic Trinity, and how they have commingled them, resulting in untold confusion even though it contravenes even their own teachings.

2) Immanent Trinity versus economic Trinity; God in Himself and God for us.

At the outset it is crucial to understand two key concepts. You must distinguish between immanent Trinity (theological Trinity) and economic trinity, and understand how they relate to each other. This is not difficult. While official Watchtower theology claims the "Word" was in the beginning created angel, as explained in detail below, many Jehovah's Witnesses fail to separate them and erroneously combine the two concepts. This error lies in part at the root of the Jehovah's Witnesses' harsh attacks on the Trinity and allows them to get away with distorting Trinitarian teaching. It is the means by which they are able to convince many people, who otherwise would know better, that the Trinity is utterly illogical and false when it is true and reasonable, even if certain aspects are grounded upon a measure of faith.

Immanent (theological) Trinitarianism, refers to the essence of God the Almighty, his hypostatic three-fold nature and his absolute and perfect being, before creation. It deals with the "infinite, blessed communion of the divine Persons among themselves, without reference to creation," (B. Brobrinsky, *The Mystery of the Trinity* [New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999], 2, 3) (*Mystery*). It is the triune God as he is in himself (J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* [Munich, Germany, SCM Press, Ltd., 1981], 151) (*Trinity and the Kingdom*).

This should not be confused with economic Trinitarianism (God for us), the concerted activity of the three Persons in creation as they "maintain and restore the created world to a state of well-being and communion with God" (*ibid.*, 2). "Economic" refers to "divine management of earthly affairs" (*The Encyclopedia of Religion* [New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987], 54) (*Encyclopedia of Religion*). "It is oriented to the concrete history of creation and redemption: God initiates a covenant with Israel, God speaks through the prophets, God takes on flesh in Christ, God dwells within as Spirit" (*ibid.*, 54). It is also called revelatory Trinity because the triune God reveals himself through his dispensation of salvation (*Trinity and the Kingdom*, 151).

Accordingly, much Trinitarian theological discussions about the "One God in three Persons" deals with immanent Trinity, not economic Trinity. The economic aspect of the Trinity includes the created humanity of Jesus, who was not God (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia* [Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1967], 943) (*Catholic Encyclopedia*) and not part of the immanent Trinity. But that is precisely where the Jehovah's Witnesses mistakenly inject him resulting in a great deal of

unnecessary confusion.

They argue, to take one illustration, that Jesus could not be God yet be with God; and he could not be the Father whom he prayed to (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* [New York, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989; <http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/index.htm>], Chapter 7) (*Should You Believe*). But this is a classic example of many Jehovah's Witnesses mixing apples and oranges. The man of the God-man Jesus, the created humanity who was not God (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 943), could rightfully pray to God the Father and did regard himself as inferior; this He performed in the context of economic Trinity.

The idea that the preexistent Word (God the Son) was with God stems from John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.

Even though John 1:1 speaks in the context of pre-creation immanent Trinity, many of the Jehovah's Witnesses routinely swap-out God the Son, the preexistent Word, with the created humanity of Jesus and teach that Jesus was in the beginning with God, even though the Watchtower Society itself claims the Word was not the created Jesus, but the angel Michael. Both of these views are not accurate Bible teachings and do not properly reflect the doctrine of the Trinity. John 1:1 does not claim to say that the created humanity of Jesus was God, or was with God in the beginning. And it most certainly does not stand for the proposition that the Word, or Logos, was a created angel.

If you keep this distinction in mind you will be in a much better position to navigate many of the Jehovah's Witnesses' maze of misleading tactics and come to a better understanding of what the Trinity doctrine actually means.

3) The three spiritual Persons or *hypostases* of the triune God are not to be confused with material human beings, persons like you or I.

The Jehovah's Witnesses erroneously think of "Person" as an individual self-conscious human person (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 57), and we humans don't engage in the kind of conduct the three Persons of the Trinity do, such as inner dialogue where people combined within a human person speak to each other. Or, they argue that the Holy Spirit cannot be a person because it appeared as a dove or flames of fire, never in the form of a human. And, it seems irrational to them that one such person can inhabit another person, so the Holy Person cannot be a person (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6). They write:

On one occasion the holy spirit appeared as a dove. On another occasion it appeared as tongues of fire - never as a person. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8).

[R]egarding Samson, Judges 14:6 relates: "The spirit of Yahweh seized on him and though he had no weapon in his hand he tore the lion in pieces." (JB) Did a divine person actually enter or seize Samson, manipulating his body to do what he did? No, it was really "the power of the LORD [that] made Samson strong. (TEV) (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6) (emphasis added).

A comparison of Bible texts that refer to the holy spirit shows that it is spoken of as 'filling' people; they can be 'baptized' with it; and they can be "anointed" with it ... None of these expressions would be appropriate if the holy spirit

were a person. (*Reasoning from the Scriptures* [New York, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1985], 380) (*Reasoning*)

First, the Jehovah's Witnesses fail to recognize that we are dealing with spirit, not flesh (the Holy Spirit is, after all, spirit), and the Bible is replete with examples of spirit persons entering individuals such as the spirit person Satan who entered Judas (Luke 22:3), and spirit demons who routinely inhabit people (Matthew 8:29-31). Furthermore, Jehovah is a spirit person and is the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Christian believer (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18 NWT), as does Christ (Romans 8:9-11; see also John 4:24). The Jehovah's Witnesses' objections in this regard are groundless.

And simply because the Holy Spirit took the form of a dove or tongues of fire and not a human person does not mean He is not a spirit person. After all, the Almighty is a spirit person though invisible (Colossians 1:15). Angels are spirit persons who took human form, but their mere appearance as humans does not mean they are angels, or that angels who never took human form are not spirit (Genesis 18).

Second, "Person" should be regarded as a contemporary misnomer, an imperfect expression because it connotes a separate rational and moral individual. It is a word erroneously derived from the Latin *persona* and misapplied in the English modern era, as the Jehovah's Witnesses have done.

Persona: A Latin word regularly used to refer to the three 'persons' of the Trinity and to the one 'person' of Christ. It therefore fulfills the role in Latin theology performed by *hypostasis* in Greek. The natural translation into 'person' in English is misleading. *Persona* originally meant a 'mask' and then a 'role.' It is used to indicate an individual in his or her external presentation, and does not convey the idea of self-consciousness or the internal psychological content suggested by the English word 'person' with its close link to the word 'personality.' (*Oxford*, 1210)

Third, as mentioned above, the hypostatic "Person" refers to a form in which the divine essence exists, not a created human, but three personal self-distinctions (*The New Bible Dictionary* [Grand Rapids, Michigan, W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962], 1300) (*New Bible Dictionary*).

In most formularies the doctrine is stated by saying that God is one in His essential being, but that in this being there are three Persons, yet so as not to form separate and distinct individuals. They are three modes or forms in which the divine essence exists. 'Person' is, however, an imperfect expression of the truth in as much as the term denotes to us a separate rational and moral individual. But in the being of God there are not three individuals, but only three personal self-distinctions within the one divine essence. (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1299, 1300)

Fourth, while each Person is self-conscious, He never acts independently.

[P]ersonality in man implies independence of will, actions, and feelings, leading to behavior peculiar to the person. This cannot be thought of in connection with the Trinity; each Person is self-conscious and self-directing, yet never acting independently or in opposition. (*ibid.*)

Fifth, The Jehovah's Witnesses argue, "Thousands of times throughout the Bible, God is spoken of as one person. When he speaks, it is as one undivided individual.... Why would all the God-inspired Bible writers speak of God as one person if he were actually three persons? ... What purpose would that serve except to mislead people?" (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6).

This line of argument illustrates their confusion. The triune God is not split into three. He is one undivided individual as just mentioned. His diversity manifests itself in operations and characteristics:

When we say that God is a unity we mean that though God is in Himself a threefold centre of life, His life is not split into three. He is one in essence, in personality, and in will. When we say that God is a Trinity in unity we mean that there is unity in diversity, and that diversity manifests itself in Persons, in characteristics, and in operations. (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1299, 1300)

We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the "consubstantial Trinity," (*Catholic Catechism*, 75). "[T]he Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal." Athanasian Creed; DS 75; ND16" (*Catholic Catechism*, 79).

Sixth, there is subordination of relation and order among the three Persons, but not in nature:

Moreover, the subsistence and operations of the three Persons are marked by a certain order involving a certain subordination in relation, though not in nature. The Father as the fount of deity is First: He is said to originate. The Son, eternally begotten of the Father, is Second: he is said to reveal. The Spirit, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, is Third: He is said to execute.

While this does not suggest priority in time or in dignity, since all three Persons are divine and eternal, it does suggest an order of precedence in operation and revelation. Thus we can say that creation is from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1299, 1300)

Seventh, the three Persons are permanent features of God's three distinct manners of His activity:

Trinitarian theology is par excellence the theology of relationship. Its fundamental principle is that God, who is self-communication and self-giving love for us, is from all eternity love perfectly given and received. The traditional formula "God is three persons in one nature" compactly expresses that there are permanent features of God's eternal being (the three persons) that are the ontological precondition for the three distinct manners of God's tripersonal activity in the world (as Father, Son and Spirit). (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 55)

Eighth, each Person has the divine nature, but each has it differently:

Whatever is other, distinct, plural, personal, and proper in the Godhead is exclusively a matter of relationship. Father, Son and Spirit do not differ as God, but in the way each is God with respect to the others. Each has and is the divine

nature, but each has it differently: the Father from Himself, the Son from the Father, the Spirit from both the Father and the Son. God, then, is one in substance, three in Person, and what is significant about this distinction, what makes it non-contradictory, is that what is personal in the Godhead is not something absolute, but something purely relative, (Council of Florence, 1442). (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 303)

Ninth, the doctrine also holds that the divine Persons exist in their relationships to one another:

The three divine Persons exist in their particular, unique natures as Father, Son and Spirit in their relationships to one another, and are determined through these relationships. It is in these relationships that they are Persons. Being a person in this respect means existing-in-relationship. (*Trinity and the Kingdom*, 172)

[T]he three divine Persons possess the same individual, indivisible and one divine nature, but they possess it in varying ways. The Father possesses it of himself; the Son and the Spirit have it from the Father (ibid., 172). The Trinitarian Persons *subsist* in the common divine nature; they *exist* in their relations to one another. (ibid., 173)

“A divine Person is a non-interchangeable existence of the divine nature.” By the word ‘existence’ - existential - [he] meant: existence, in the light of another” (ibid., 173).

4) Questions of “otherness”: How can God be one, yet three? How can the Word be God yet be with that God?

Ancient, medieval and modern theologians grappled with the problem of unity and otherness. How can God be one and also three? How can the Word be God, yet also be with God? Or, as the Jehovah's Witnesses put it, “As the Son of God, he could not be God himself” (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6). Or, “God could not be his own son” (ibid., Chapter 7).

Once again, the prologue to John’s gospel sums up the issue as it exemplifies this apparent contradiction:

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.
(John 1:1 Green’s Literal Translation)

First, John 1:1 pertains to divine Persons of the immanent Trinity, not the created humanity of Jesus, who was not God. Furthermore, the ancients were aware of conceptual difficulties with respect to God being one yet three, but they also understood that if John 1:1 is to be taken at face value, then God must be “one” in one sense, and “three” in a different sense (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 296). With time it became apparent that the conceptual obstacles were not insurmountable once it became clear that the answer lies not in comparisons to the material, vegetable or sensory worlds, but in the intellectual and psychological.

For instance, “Justin pictures the preexistent Word as the Father’s rational consciousness (1 Apol. 46; 2

Apol. 13), as emerging, therefore, from the interiority of the Godhead while never-the-less remaining inseparable from the Godhead” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 296).

Tertullian (d. 230 A.D.) displayed a good sense of the manner in which God is one, and the way in which he is at the same time three:

God is indeed three: in grade or order, in appearance or aspect, but with a realist connotation, and in manifestation; but in substance (granting an indecisiveness in Tertullian’s use of the term), in power, God is perfectly one. (ibid., 297)

The Word stands forth and is other than the Father though still within the Godhead in the manner suggested by human reflection, as internal discourse is in some sense another, a second in addition to oneself, though yet within oneself. (ibid., 296)

Irenaeus (d. 200 A.D.) saw the Son and Spirit’s roles as the two hands of the Father; and by the third century the three Persons were understood to be “distinct yet not divided, different yet not separate, and each with a particular yet complementary role to play in salvation” (*Oxford*, 1208).

Additionally, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 A.D.) elevated the psychological analogy to another level, drawing parallels with man’s understanding of self and the interior conceptualization of the intellect:

Men can and do think of their own minds; and when the human intellect reflects upon itself, understands itself, there comes forth within the intellect, in consequence of the act of understanding, the concept or interior conceptualization of the intellect itself so understood.

This, moreover, is the only type of generation or coming forth that is possible in the immaterial and infinite Godhead. As God understands Himself, there issues forth from God Understanding (the Father) God Understood (the Son).

In terms of this psychological analogy, then, the three Persons are both immanent to the undivided Godhead and yet distinct as Persons - as God understood in God Understanding, and as God Beloved (the Spirit, ch. 19) in God Loving (the Father and the Son as single source). (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 303)

There are other ways to look at this. For example, you have a spirit within you; it is with you yet it is you. Or, in terms of one person being with another person, an individual with multiple personalities is one individual composed of multiple individuals in his mind, each of which is that person yet with him and each other. Or, Scripture states that husband and wife are one flesh, not two (Genesis 2:24), yet we accept this illogical unity on a spiritual, abstract level as perfectly acceptable.

Accordingly, the idea that the Word was God and was with God and that each of the three Persons of the Trinity dwell in each other is entirely within the realm of logical abstract possibilities. As a matter of fact it is perfectly reasonable. Bear in mind, we are dealing with spirit, and the immanent preincarnate Word at John 1:1, not the created humanity of Jesus.

Finally, the Word’s relation to the Godhead, in the sense of being “with” God does not mean “mere company, but the most intimate communion” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New*

Testament Words Compiled and Expanded upon in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible [Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001], 152) (*Strong and Vine's*). This intimacy of the Word with God is a product of their mutual indwelling, among other things, the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father (John 17:21 NAB). Furthermore, the Word (*Logos*) is the personal manifestation, “not of a part of the divine nature, but of the whole deity” (*Strong and Vine's*, 152).

5) The Hypostatic Union: Jesus is fully God and fully man. This God-man is both divine and human, a divine Person who assumed a human nature.

The dual nature of Christ, that he was, and is, God and man, illustrates the Jehovah's Witnesses' confusion with respect to Christ's temptation by the devil. The Jehovah's Witnesses incorrectly teach that Trinitarians believe that Jesus was not human and did not have his own human will, stating:

The temptation of Jesus would make sense only if he was, not God, but a separate individual who had his own free will, one who could have been disloyal had he chosen to be, such as an angel or a human. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6)

This is completely false and misleading. First, by virtue of the hypostatic union, Jesus is a divine person with a human nature, God and man, and the man, Jesus, did have his own free will:

Just as there are two complete and perfect natures in Christ, one divine, the other human, there are two wills in Christ, one divine, the other human. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 947)

Trinitarianism teaches that Jesus was not only true God, but true man. “[I]n his body Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity.”

The Son of God ... worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he was truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [New York, Image-Doubleday, 1994], 132) (*Catholic Catechism*)

Though not infinite, and therefore not omnipotent, because His humanity is finite, [His theandric power] extends to effects that are beyond purely human or created causality. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 943)

It is important that you understand this.

Secondly, and more important, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that “The humanity of Christ is a creature, it is not God” (ibid., 922). Christ's full and complete humanity was a necessity, but a humanity that was without sin.

Third, “In Jesus humanity does not exist in itself, but it is the Son who exists as man through his human nature. Jesus gives back his whole divine self to the Father on the cross in and through his humanity (*Fundamentals of Christology*, 320).

With this in mind, the weaknesses in the Jehovah's Witnesses' arguments become clear. They falsely teach, implicitly and explicitly, that Trinitarians believe that the humanity of Christ the creature is God the Almighty, the Godhead. But nothing could be further from the truth. When they claim that Trinitarians believe that "Jesus is God" they don't disclose despite centuries of evidence, that "Jesus" in this Trinitarian context refers to the divine Person who assumed a human nature, not the created humanity of Jesus that is not God.

This particular distortion, and scant reference or explanation of the hypostatic union of Christ the God-man, has enabled the Jehovah's Witnesses to compose pages of unwarranted attacks on the Trinity by taking advantage of the readers' lack of understanding with regard to what the Trinity doctrine really means.

Fourth, Trinitarians are fully aware that the created humanity of Jesus was inferior to God, that He was not equal to God in every way. The created humanity of Jesus knew that the Father was his superior.

Existence and Nature of Human Will. Moreover, works of honor are attributed to Christ, such as prayer, obedience, merit, which cannot proceed from the divine will, since they are manifested to a superior. They can proceed only from a created will. In His Incarnation the son of God assumed a perfect human nature, at the same time retaining His perfect divine nature. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 948)

Thus, when the created humanity of Jesus prayed to his Father, he was not praying to himself as the Jehovah's Witnesses mistakenly claim. He was praying to the infinitely superior God, His Father.

The Holy Spirit is not considered inferior to the Father and the Son in the way in which the Son, because of the human nature which he has assumed, testifies that he is inferior to the Father and the Holy Spirit (Denz 527)... (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 96)

When you think of it, Christ's dual nature is not so far fetched; after all, a human is a material being endowed with a spirit, a union of the material and spiritual, yet considered one.

Fifth, with the above in mind, and considering the many proofs that follow, John 1:14 was not meant to be read literally. It states, "And the Word became flesh," but this does not mean that the Word made a complete transformation from a spirit angel to only flesh, which is a type of heretical modalism condemned by the church in the first centuries. Rather, the divine Person of Christ assumed a human nature. Jesus was a divine Person with a human nature. That is the only acceptable interpretation of John 1:14 because the divinity of Christ - that he was and is God - in an undeniable Biblical truth, and without His divinity redemption is not possible. It was necessary for Jesus to be a God-man for the sake of mankind's salvation. Therefore He could not be "mere flesh" under any circumstances.

Besides, since "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8 NWT) He cannot have been a preexistent angel who changed completely into mere flesh, and then reverted back to heaven as an angel. There is no such radical change in the Trinitarian Christian world where the Word was God the Son, remained God the Son during His sojourn, and continued as God the Son after His resurrection and ascension.

Sixth, the practical implications of the union is that "Jesus sometimes spoke as man, sometimes as God; sometimes as Godman" (M. O'Carroll, *Trinitas: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity* [Wilmington, Delaware, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987], 186) (*Trinitas*).

6) Further articulation of the Hypostatic Union - the nature of the God-man Jesus.

The divinity of Jesus and his two-fold nature raised numerous questions such as “How a divine Jesus could maintain his full humanity?” Over the years a series of church councils strove to articulate the God-man nature, usually in response to successions of false teachings.

In brief, church councils decreed “that Christ had a true human soul” (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 20), in Christ existed “two natures in one person [*prosopon*] or acting subject [*hypostasis*]” (ibid.). “This personal unity left the divine and human natures quite in tact and in no way confused or intermingled them with each other” (ibid.). Both natures were unaltered and undiminished (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 932). Christ not only had two wills “but also two intellects,” one divine, the other human (ibid., 924).

“If the pivotal assertion of the New Testament, “The Word was made flesh” (Jn 1.14), means anything, it signifies that two, the divine and the human, became somehow uniquely one in Jesus of Nazareth; that in Him was achieved a union, elsewhere unparalleled of God with man” (ibid., 918).

The Church believes that Jesus Christ is true God, Son of God made man, the Second person of the Trinity, who took unto Himself a human nature and so exists not only in the divine but also in a human nature: one divine Person in two natures. The man who in His earthly life was known as Jesus of Nazareth was not a human person made one, as Nestorius said, in a unique way of moral unity, with the Person of the Son of God. He was God, Son of the Father, made man for men’s salvation. (ibid., 932)

“His human nature, perfect and complete, was not a human person distinct from the Divine person of the Word ... it was the human nature of a Divine Person. This point of our faith enwraps the humanity of Christ in full mystery. ... His human life included true human knowledge and a human will distinct from the divine will” (ibid., 936).

Our faith in Christ, the God-man, supposes that his humanity is not a human person (the mystery). For if it were, and if there were a duality of persons in Christ, then the Divine Person would not really be man but only united with a man; Christ would not be what our faith says he is.” (ibid., 937)

“Christ is one Person, that of the Logos, in two complete and integral natures” (Council of Chalcedon in 451) (ibid., 921), but “U]nion of the human nature with the divine self in no way diminishes the human nature” (Constantinople III in 681) (ibid.,). “[T]he human nature of Christ had its foundation in the divine self, the Second person of the Blessed Trinity,” (794 AD, A synod at Frankfurt) (ibid.).

Not only did Christ have two natures, but he had two consciousnesses as well, although some contemporary theologians dispute this and believe Christ had only one conscience.

Christ is a Divine Person simultaneously existing in two natures, divine and human. Because each of the natures is complete in itself, each has its own proper will and intellect. And further, because consciousness is the inescapable concomitant of intellectual activity, it must be conceded that each of Christ’s natures possessed its own proper consciousness, its own proper awareness of self. Christ, therefore, had not one, but two, consciousnesses. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 927)

7) Preliminary response to the Jehovah's Witnesses' questions and objections

Equipped with a better grasp of what the Trinity doctrine does, and does not, stand for it should be much easier to respond to the many questions posed by the Jehovah's Witnesses in their publications "*Should You Believe in the Trinity*" and "*Reasoning from the Scriptures*," and "*Insight on the Scriptures*."

8) The equality of Christ and God - Is God superior because God is the head of Christ and sent Him on His mission?" - (1 Corinthians 11:3)

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that Jesus could not have been God's equal because Christ had a God above him and therefore God is superior in every way and Christ inferior, stating:

Not only is Almighty God, Jehovah, a personality separate from Jesus but he is at all times his superior. Jesus is always presented as separate and lesser, a humble servant of God. That is why the Bible plainly says that "the head of the Christ is God" in the same way that "the head of every man is the Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:3) (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7)

"Is not the sender superior to the one sent?" (ibid., Chapter 7)

First, as noted earlier, Trinitarians actually do believe that the created humanity of Jesus, who was not God, was a humble servant of God and inferior (see section 5).

Secondly, the Jehovah's Witnesses neglected to quote all of the relevant portions of verse 3, leaving out the reference to husband and wife which helps put these verses into proper context: "...the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." The Greek word for 'head' is *kephale* and in this passage it is used "metaphorically, of the authority or direction of God in relation to Christ, of Christ in relation to believing men, of the husband in relation to the wife, 1 Cor 11:3" (*Strong and Vine's*, 138). It is not intended to mean that one is inherently superior by nature to another as the Jehovah's Witnesses would have you believe.

Paul is referring to authority possessed and exercised and an ordering of their relationship, but as the Jehovah's Witnesses interpret verse 3, a husband would be inherently superior as a person to his wife the inferior being, but we know that not to be true. In that culture, and in some contemporary matrimonial roles, the wife voluntarily assumes a particular subservient role. But just because a husband sends his wife down to the corner market for some milk, or the husband has the final decision with respect to, say, financial matters, that does not make his wife inferior to him as a person any more than the President of the United States is superior, as a human being, to any citizen of the United States of America. Your employer is not a superior individual, either, but only exercises authority over you.

The divine person of Christ, even if sent by God the Father, and even if He voluntarily subjected Himself, did not in so doing become less equal to God with respect to His essential being, nature and essence. When the Word assumed a human nature he did not cease being God, but willingly assumed a different relationship; a different grade, order or manifestation as Tertullian theorized. His incarnation and obedience did not diminish the divine essence of His being or make Him less consubstantial. The

divine Person of Jesus was still fully God, who chose a veiled glory.

Christ possessed equality with God prior to His incarnation, and then for a time veiled that glory, being always God in all of the co-equal attributes, but in the incarnation never using His Godly powers to better Himself. He was fully God, fully man, God taking on the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), not a man adding Godliness. (*Strong and Vine's*, 42)

9) Could Jesus be God Almighty if he prayed to the Father and referred to God as His Father? If he was God's submissive servant? If He entrusted His spirit to God at death?

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that Jesus could not have been God because He worshipped God, called this God "Father," prayed to God, and "since Jesus had a God, his Father, he could not at the same time be that God (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7).

Once again, the Jehovah's Witnesses fail to understand the nature of the God-man Jesus; that He is fully God and fully man; and, that the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that "the humanity of Christ is a creature, it is not God" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 943). If Jesus the created human, the "man" in the God-man equation of the hypostatic union of Trinitarianism, were claiming to be that God Almighty the Father, the Jehovah's Witnesses' objections might be relevant, but that's not accurate dogma.

Therefore, it was entirely proper (and did not diminish Christ's divine nature) that the created humanity of Christ the man prayed to God the Father, was subordinate to the Father (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7), worshipped God, called Him Father (*ibid.*), could be regarded as God's submissive servant (*ibid.*), was seen as distinct from God (*ibid.*), was not as "good" as God (*ibid.*), and could function as a separate entity or witness about himself in addition to God (*ibid.*).

Jesus could also have a will separate from God (*ibid.*), received God's anointing to declare the good news (*ibid.*), taught what belonged to God (*ibid.*), and could rightfully claim that "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). It was this suffering man Jesus who could call out to His God from the cross (*ibid.*), and to whom he could entrust his spirit at death because the humanity of Christ is a creature, not God (*ibid.*). And because Jesus the man recognized his limitations he knew it was not for Him to grant seats at his right and left hand in His kingdom (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7).

Furthermore, since God Almighty is an invisible spirit person (Colossians 1:15), that is the God Jesus was referring to when he said at John 1:18 "No one has ever seen God." He was not referring to himself in his created human capacity, naturally, since He was visible to the human eye. And with respect to what that man saw, he saw God fully and completely due to Christ's beatific intuitive human knowledge as more fully explained in section 13(A) below.

Finally, because Jesus of the Bible is a miraculous product of the hypostatic union, it was the divine Person of Christ (the "God" in the God-man equation) that the prophet Habakkuk was including by definition in his reference to God when he stated "O my God, my Holy One, you do not die" (Habakkuk 1:12 NWT; "we shall not die" RSV).

The above are all "reasons" why the Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is not God, but their arguments are baseless and do not disprove the Trinitarian concept that "Jesus is God."

As a matter of fact, the view which the Jehovah's Witnesses ascribe to Trinitarians - the exaggerated

view of Noetus which identified “Christ with the Father,” was rejected by the church many centuries ago along with similar heretical distortions (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 296).

In its extreme form it may suggest that the whole of God was, for example, present in Jesus - that heaven was empty when Jesus walked on earth. In relation to the cross, it may imply that, because there is no distinction between Father and Son, the whole of God suffers equally as Jesus dies, and indeed God dies entirely on the cross (*Oxford*, 1211)

This and similar notions are precisely some of the “pitfalls” the “doctrine of the Trinity sets out to avoid ...” (*Oxford*, 1211). Any implications or explicit assertions by the Jehovah's Witnesses to the contrary are untrue - they are false accusations.

10) When God exalted the risen Jesus to His right hand it did not thereby make Jesus superior to God - (Philippians 2:9)

Another line of argument advanced by the Jehovah's Witnesses denies Christ's divine preincarnate status by incorrectly interpreting Philippians 2:9 to mean that under the doctrine of the Trinity the exalted Christ would have returned to a position in heaven superior to God. They write:

Speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, Peter and those with him told the Jewish Sanhedrin: “God exalted this one [Jesus] ... to his right hand.” (Acts 5:31) Paul said: “God exalted him to a superior position.” (Philippians 2:9) If Jesus had been God, how could Jesus have been exalted, that is raised to a higher position than he had previously enjoyed? He would already have been an exalted part of the Trinity. If, before his exaltation, Jesus had been equal to God, exalting him any further would have made him superior to God. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7).

This reflects a glaring misconception of what the Trinity doctrine teaches and the nature of the hypostatic union. It was not God the Son who was exalted with respect to His essential being, nature and power that defines him as God; conversely, it was not the divine nature of God the Son of the God-man equation that bled on the cross and died because God does not die; otherwise, and for many other reasons beyond this topic, He could not, for instance, have raised himself as he claimed he did. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that God cannot die. Philippians 2:7-11 puts verse 9 into better context, stating that the preexistent Word:

[E]mptied 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. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:7-11 RSV)

First, it is self-evident here that the risen Christ is exalted above all creation and every name in the universe, but not God Himself, as He is God the Son. This is indicated in these same verses where the Christian confessional states “Jesus is Lord” which means, among other things, that Jesus is God. (See

section 35 for a detailed explanation of this meaning of “Lord”).

Secondly, Philippians 2:9 does not say as the JW's claim that God the Son was “raised to a position higher than he had previously enjoyed.” God the Son, the Word, when He emptied Himself to take the form of a slave never ceased being fully God. It was his Glory that was veiled for a time being; he temporarily resigned his “status.”

Christ possessed equality with God prior to His incarnation, and then for a time veiled that glory, being always God in all of the co-equal attributes, but in the incarnation never using His Godly powers to better Himself. He was fully God, fully man, God taking on the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), not a man adding Godliness. (*Strong and Vine's*, 42)

[I]n the process of the Incarnation, he empties himself of his divine “status” ... (*Fundamentals of Christology*, 317).

The Word never ceased being God the Son when He emptied Himself. It was merely his status or role or relationship that changed. Accordingly, being fully God the Son, the God in the God-man equation was never elevated back or exalted to a position superior to God because He never ceased being God. Hence, he was not exalted to a position superior to God.

Third, the created humanity of Jesus could not have been “raised to a position higher than he had previously enjoyed” as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim because He was not God and there could not have been a position He previously enjoyed in heaven to be raised back to.

Fourth, the focus is on the humanity of Christ, although this humanity can never be viewed in isolation because, “In Jesus humanity does not exist in itself, but it is the Son who exists as man through his human nature. Jesus gives back his whole divine self to the Father on the cross in and through his humanity (*Fundamentals of Christology*, 320). He consummates his human experience in all these dimensions only in dying and rising to a new, definitive form of human existence (*ibid.*, 317).

Fifth, the exaltation also refers to the resurrected heavenly Jesus that died on the cross, who does not cease to be human (*ibid.*, 318), a glorified human yet still God the Son to whom every knee shall bow. And any exaltation that God the Son might have enjoyed was with respect to His grade, order, appearance, aspect or manifestation (Tertullian). It would be a change in order of precedence in operation, a change in the relationship, but it would not alter in any way the essential being, nature and power of God; that which defines the triune God as one.

11) Christian Trinitarians are monotheistic and do not worship three Gods as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim.

The Jehovah's Witnesses continue to imply that Trinitarian Christians worship three Gods, not one; that they are tritheistic, not monotheistic. The Jehovah's Witnesses draw parallels between the Trinity doctrine and triadic pagan worship which they claim is the ultimate source of the Christian Trinity, influenced by Babylonian gods who were worshipped in threes, the Egyptian three-fold gods of Osiris, Isis and Horus, Italian triune godheads, the Trinitarian Hindu group of Brahma, Siva and Visnu, and on and on (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 5).

But this is false and unfair. The Christian faith is completely monotheistic, and worship is directed to the only one true God Almighty who happens to have a threefold nature: “We do not confess three

Gods, but one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity,” (Catholic Catechism, 75). “[T]he Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.” Athanasian Creed; DS 75; ND16” (ibid., 79).

Tritheism, the worship of three Gods at the expense of the unity of God is yet another pitfall which the Trinity doctrine specifically seeks to avoid (Oxford, 1211). And simply because the Jehovah's Witnesses are unable to grasp the meaning of “*hypostases*” or “Persons” does not entitle them to ascribe to Christians beliefs they do not hold.

12) Not all Trinitarian theology was assimilated into the doctrine of the Trinity; much was left out. The reformed Protestant churches have assimilated the Catholic church's doctrine of the Trinity with very minor alterations.

To further erode the Trinity doctrine, the Jehovah's Witnesses argue that even early church Fathers, the 2d, 3rd and 4th century theologians, did not teach the Trinity or the true divinity of Christ; that they did not regard Father, Son and Holy Spirit as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as three in one (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 2). The problem is that the Jehovah's Witnesses are focused on the chaff, not the wheat, emphasizing what was never assimilated by the church into the Trinity doctrine rather than what was officially sanctioned over the centuries.

Because much of what the early thinkers thought and wrote was not accepted or ratified, those views carry little weight in rejecting the Trinity. They are useful, however, in terms of historical reflection and academic observation of evolving thought processes:

As elemental Trinitarianism of the NT period has to be distinguished carefully from the gradually emerging Trinitarian dogma, so must Trinitarian dogma (doctrine in the strictest sense) be distinguished carefully from Trinitarian theology. The dogma in its preparatory stages had been merely theology: efforts on the part of individuals and schools to interpret and understand revealed mystery. Then, as certain of these efforts became assimilated through authoritative decision into the teaching of the Church, some of what had heretofore been theology was from now on also dogma of faith. But note some; for much else - in Tertullian and Origen, Athanasius and the Cappadocians, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas - would never receive such ratification, never attain such clear-cut status as Christian doctrine. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 302)

Therefore, even if Justin Martyr said the prehuman Jesus was inferior to God, a created angel and is other than God (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 4), or Irenaeus believed the prehuman Jesus was inferior to and had an existence separate from God who was not his equal, or Clement of Alexandria called Jesus a creature not equal to God, or Tertullian taught that the Father is greater than the son (ibid.), or Hippolytus said that God had nothing of equal age with him - even if those ancients believed all of this, those opinions do not constitute the Trinity doctrine but only deep musings of early theologians. Accordingly, their relevance lies more with showing what the official doctrine does not stand for, not what the Trinity doctrine teaches.

Just to clarify one thing, though the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Justin Martyr believed, wrongly as it turned out, that the Word “is no less than something numerically other in relation to the Father ...” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 296), the Jehovah's Witnesses failed to mention that in those very same

passages he also stated that neither Word nor Spirit, the former more explicitly, are to be separated from the Father, from the being of the Godhead, since both Word and Spirit are God (ibid.).

Lastly, “Although a few distinct doctrinal changes were eventually made, the *Trinitarian* concept emerged relatively unchanged. “The Reformers,” states the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, “stood upon the ground of the Church catholic” in this matter. This meant, for many of the new-born Protestant groups, not only continued adherence to (and propagation of) the form of Trinitarianism advanced by the Athanasian Creed, but also - in many cases - actual approval and acceptance of the Catholic-spawned Creed itself” (*Concepts*, 14; in accord see the *New Bible Dictionary*, 1299-1300).

13) Christ’s Knowledge: How much did Jesus know? If he was God, why was some of His knowledge limited?

The Jehovah's Witnesses contend that Jesus could not be God because of his limited knowledge for Jesus “learned obedience” (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7), did not know the precise day and hour of the Last Day (ibid.), and was given a revelation by God (ibid.). Much of the Jehovah's Witnesses’ confusion here likewise stems from their inability to comprehend the hypostatic union of the God-man Jesus (i.e., it was the created human Jesus, who was not God, who learned obedience). Nor do they understand the nature of Jesus’ three-fold human knowledge.

Theologians are in general agreement that Jesus had a) the beatific, or intuitive, vision of God; b) infused knowledge, and c) acquired knowledge (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 930).

A) Vision/Intuitive or Beatific Knowledge

With respect to His vision knowledge it is taught that “Christ in His humanity, i.e., in His human intellect, from the very first instant of the incarnation, had the immediate vision of God, (ibid., 930). “[T]he two, hypostatic union and vision, of necessity go together.”

Christ’s self-awareness as a Divine Person in His human nature includes the beatific, or immediate, vision of God.

Christ’s vision of God, it is common teaching, was not comprehensive with regard to its primary object, the divine essence; it was limited because it was human. Nor does it extend, as to its secondary objects, to all that the divine knowledge comprehends, but only to what pertains to the object of God’s vision knowledge.... not to the object of the knowledge of simple understanding ...; and here it extends particularly, if not exclusively, to all that pertains to His mission and man’s salvation. (ibid.)

B) Infused Knowledge

Whereas “the vision is inexpressible in human concepts (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 930) and is a knowledge that ‘Christ derived from His contact with the Father,’ Christ’s infused knowledge is “expressible in human concepts and words” (ibid., 938). “The distinction may be explicit in Scripture (cf Jn 7.16; Mt 11.27). Infused knowledge is similar to angelic knowledge, “Because vision knowledge is incommunicable in human terms, and Christ’s mission entailed the communication to men of divine mysteries ...” i.e., salvation, “ ... a communicable knowledge of these mysteries was necessary” (ibid.). Infused knowledge was required because of Jesus’ mission.

Today theologians incline to explain the extension of Christ’s infused knowledge from the purpose and nature of His mission; this was a coming in

lowliness, not in glory, and did not require the knowledge of all human learning ... but only of all that pertains to men's salvation This was necessary and sufficient for Christ to discharge His mission." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 938)

C) Acquired Knowledge

"The fact of Christ's experiential, or acquired, knowledge is considered certain by theologians today," and like all of us was "limited and restricted." This knowledge "was perfect in keeping with the concrete circumstances of His time and place, age and mission, and His dealings with people for His redemptive and prophetic mission" (*ibid.*). Jesus "grew" in this knowledge (cf Luke 2.40, 52) through observation and experience and from other people (*ibid.*).

D) The Three Kinds of Human Knowledge were Distinct, but not Separate

"[The] three kinds of human knowledge in Christ, required by what Scripture and revelation say of the God-man, did not hinder or exclude but rather complemented one another. The three were required on different grounds and existed on different levels, while uniting in one human consciousness for the purpose of Christ's mission" (*ibid.*, 938, 939).

The three kinds of knowledge were the acts and possession of one human intellect and one human awareness; they were distinct, not separated. Their perfect harmony, however, remains mysterious; it is part of the very mystery of Christ." (*ibid.*, 939)

Some modernists place less emphasis on Christ's vision knowledge believing that it could lead to interference and the exclusion of genuine human experience (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 25).

14) Jesus' ignorance of the Last Day - Christ knew the Last Day in His vision knowledge which is inexpressible in human concepts, not His infused knowledge. But did the Holy Spirit know the day and hour of the Last Day?

At Mark 13:32 Jesus stated "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." "Son" in this context does not refer to the "God" of the God-man Jesus but the man and His human knowledge. St. Augustine offered a solution to the question of Christ's limited knowledge that today is universally accepted, namely, that "Christ had no communicable knowledge of the Last Day because it did not pertain to His mission to reveal it." "[One] could say that Christ knew the Last Day in His vision knowledge, not in His infused knowledge" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 939) (emphasis added).

Augustine said this in the context of the question about human infirmities taken on by Christ; his solution here too has prevailed: Christ took all of these infirmities, except ignorance, which is not only a consequence but also a principle of sin. (*ibid.*)

Roch A. Kereszty explains “The Word has known man and the fullness of human experience from all eternity through his divine knowledge. But in the process of the Incarnation, he empties himself of his divine “status,” renounces, it seems, the direct use of his divine consciousness and knowledge, and becomes aware of himself as man and learns as man gradually about God, himself, people and the world. He consummates his human experience in all these dimensions only in dying and rising to a new, definitive form of human existence (*Fundamentals of Christology*, 317).

There are also practical considerations regarding Christ’s limited knowledge of the Last Day. Not only was it not necessary in order to fulfill His mission, but mankind’s awareness of the exact day and hour has the propensity for unrepentant man, subject to death at any moment, to put off repentance and salvation until the last possible minute. This would countermand Christ’s command to be constantly vigilant (Matthew 25: 1-13).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses contend further that even if, “as some suggest, the Son was limited by his human nature from knowing, the question remains, Why did the Holy Spirit not know?” (*Reasoning*, 409). The answer is that the Holy Spirit did know because He is one of the *Hypostases* or Persons of the Holy Trinity. Remember, usually “Father is not a title for the first person of the Trinity but a synonym for God” (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 54). God is by nature triune and one of those Persons is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when Jesus stated that only the Father knows exactly when the Last Day shall be, his reference to the Father, the triune God, by definition included the Person of the Holy Spirit.

15) How much was the ransom? God’s justice did not require an exact equivalent man-for-man sacrifice between the First Adam and Jesus, the Second Adam. God’s gift required more.

Reducing Jesus Christ to a mere man and nothing more is, among other things, essential to the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ religious philosophy. They do this in part by arguing that God’s law requires a strictly equivalent human ransom (Jesus) to compensate for Adam’s sin of disobedience, restore the balance and reinstate the right to perfect human life on earth. Their rationale, however, is flawed for numerous reasons. The Jehovah’s Witnesses write:

One of the main reasons why Jesus came to earth also has a direct bearing on the Trinity. The Bible states: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

Jesus, no more and no less than a perfect human, became a ransom that compensated exactly for what Adam lost - the right to perfect human life on earth. So Jesus could rightly be called “the last Adam” by the apostle Paul, who said in the same context: “Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45) The perfect human life of Jesus was the “corresponding ransom” required by divine justice - no more, no less. A basic principle even of human justice is that the price paid should fit the wrong committed.

If Jesus, however, were part of a Godhead, the ransom price would have been infinitely higher than what God’s own law required. (Exodus 21:23-25;

Leviticus 24:19-21) It was only a perfect human, Adam, who sinned in Eden, not God. So the ransom, to be truly in line with God's justice, had to be strictly an equivalent - a perfect human, "the last Adam." (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6)

The Jehovah's Witnesses are greatly mistaken. First, a literal translation of 1 Timothy 2:6 states that Christ Jesus gave "...Himself a ransom on behalf of all" (Green's Literal Translation, NAB, RSV). There is no mention that this ransom was "corresponding" and the Jehovah's Witnesses' insertion of this word leaves an improper impression of exact equivalency - one human for another mirrored human, no more.

Secondly, the Jehovah's Witnesses erroneously teach that God's justice necessitates an exact human-for-human match, quoting Exodus 21:23-25 and Leviticus 24:19-21, the old Mosaic Law, a pre-Christian standard of justice requiring an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth as just punishment. But Christians are not subject to the Mosaic Law, and the Jehovah's Witnesses know this. Jesus nailed the Law to the cross and specifically rejected this "eye for an eye" standard of justice at Matthew 5:38, 39:

You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;...

Third, the Jehovah's Witnesses' underlying premise that one of Christ's purposes was to redeem man and provide a conditional right to perfect human life on earth is flawed in ways too numerous to list here. The idea that mankind's destiny is to return to a condition of naked semi-tropical bliss and ignorance in Gardens of Eden (a return to the status quo) where they will be ruled by the anointed 144,000 from heaven defies reason and Scripture. These issues, in particular the false theory that redeemed man will be ruled on earth by a heavenly class of 144,000, are exhaustively addressed in the accompanying treaties entitled '*Why the Jehovah's Witnesses are Wrong in Teaching that only 144,000 go to Heaven to Rule over Humans on earth.*'

Fourth, the condition of redeemed mankind shall be nothing like the condition that Adam and Eve experienced because they were not immortal and were always subject to death as a consequence of disobedience. By virtue of Christ's sacrifice, however, death is done away with for the saved, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54, 55); Christ abolished death (2 Timothy 1:10). The end result is a "new creation," as all things are ultimately made new (Revelation 21:5), including the resurrected glorified human body of the believer which shall resemble Christ's resurrected body (Philippians 3:20, 21), a body which is not the same as Adam's mortal fleshly body.

The "gift is not like the transgression but much more" (Romans 5:15 NAB). "God's grace in Christ will yet accomplish more than what Adam lost" (*Strong and Vines*, 77), whereas the ransom death of a mere man would be insufficient to attain the higher reward.

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:20, 21)

Fifth, the very idea that Christ was, and is, nothing more than a man, the equivalent of Adam, as the Jehovah's Witnesses falsely teach, ignores the divine Person of Jesus of the Bible, and His many

miracles, displays of power and all that Jesus said about himself. His ransom sacrifice was not an exact equivalent on par with Adam; it was not even close. The sacrifice was exceedingly greater.

Sixth, Man alone cannot redeem himself, as Psalm 49:7 in the vast majority of Bibles makes clear: "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him ..." (In accord see *NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV, ASV, DRV, DBT, ERV*, and *Young's Literal Translation*). To share in divinity and immortality requires the intercession of the divine, the God-man, Jesus, as Athanasius taught.

Christ came and freely took upon Himself the penalty of sin - death and suffering - and by so doing He made satisfaction for the sin of man. Being God and man, He could do what only God can do: have a hold on and restore the whole of human nature and race. (No single merely human individual could do so.; if Adam could so act for the worse, it was because he happened to be the head of the race).(*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 931)

The fact that a mere man, Adam, brought down mankind in a single act of disobedience by eating a piece of fruit does not mean a mere man (the Jehovah's Witnesses' Jesus) could restore the human race to God's good graces and enable man to attain immortality and much more. Put another way, just because you chop down a tree doesn't mean you can make it grow.

16) Did the resurrected Jesus continue in a subordinate, secondary position? - (1 Corinthians 15:24, 28; Revelation 1:1)

The Jehovah's Witnesses contend that, "In His prehuman existence, and also when he was on earth, Jesus was subordinate to God. After his resurrection, he continues to be in a subordinate, secondary position" (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7). Once again, this leads us back to the hypostatic union. Trinitarians don't have an argument with the Jehovah's Witnesses when it comes to the created humanity of Jesus on earth, who was not God, and who indeed was subordinate as explained in great detail above in section 5.

But as to the God in the God-man equation of the union, He never ceased being fully God in His essential nature, during the incarnation being "always God in all of the co-equal attributes" (*Strong and Vine's*, 42). To the extent that they disagree with this, they are simply wrong.

Any subordination of God the Son to God the Father was relational, a change in status or order of precedence, but not in His essential being as He remained fully God, albeit with a veiled Glory. God the Son's subordination is voluntary. It does not mean He is not equal to God in essence.

Because the risen Christ never ceased to be human in heaven (*Fundamentals of Christology*, 318) apt parallels can be drawn. Just as there was a visual (and conceptual) distinctiveness between the created humanity of Jesus on earth, some of those distinctions can be carried over into heaven (i.e., the resurrected human stood in God's presence). But just because the Lamb is "seen" as distinct from "God," that does not sever the divine Son from God; it does not make them completely independent and separate entities particularly when it is remembered that Jesus is the Almighty, and shares His throne, and is the Alpha and Omega as detailed in the following sections. Recall also that the resurrected created humanity is ultimately folded into the Trinity.

The Jehovah's Witnesses should be careful in relying too heavily on the symbolic visions of the Book of Revelation. After all, spirit is invisible to us, as is God the Almighty.

This brings us to 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28 which the Jehovah's Witnesses rely heavily on to show that the heavenly Jesus can't be God because in the everlasting future in heaven Jesus will remain subject to God, and therefore He can't be God (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7). But this refers to God the Son's voluntary subordination in the Trinitarian sense, subjection not as creatures are, but "as a Son voluntarily subordinate to, though co-equal with, the Father" (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 15:28). Just because you voluntarily take a job scrubbing floors doesn't mean you are less human than your employer, even if you feel that way. Remember, one must always ask, "equal in what sense?"

The one who subjected everything to him: the Father is the ultimate agent in the drama, and the final end of the process, to whom the Son and everything else is ordered (24, 28). That God may be all in all: his reign is a dynamic exercise of creative power, an outpouring of life and energy through the universe, with not further resistance. This is the supremely positive meaning of "subjection": that God may be fully God. (NAB notes 15,27b-28)

The Jehovah's Witness also find fault with Revelation 1:1 where it is said that God gave Jesus the revelation, and accordingly, Jesus can't be God, but this ignores a) that the human resurrected Jesus could receive knowledge from God in heaven just as He did on earth either through his vision or infused knowledge, and b) God is self-communicating within the Holy Trinity, illustrated by Him saying such things as "Let us create man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). This is perfectly logical, after all, man exchanges information with himself all the time when he speaks to himself, that inner dialogue one carries around throughout life. It is the same basic principle. So whether the revelation was transmitted to the resurrected human and/or God the Son, this in no way diminishes God the Son's equality with God in all of the necessary Trinitarian aspects.

17) The Trinity in the Bible: Elemental Trinitarianism is evident throughout the Bible

While the Jehovah's Witnesses are correct in stating that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, neither is the word "monotheism" so its absence has no bearing on whether the underlying basis for Trinitarianism exists in the Bible. Careful objective study of the Bible reveals strong scriptural support for recognizing by logical necessity the existence of a triune God - not three Gods, but one God Almighty existing in three *hypostasis* (Persons) who share the one divine essence. Jesus Christ was sent in part to reveal and explain this threefold nature of God.

Early theologians who strove for a deeper understanding of the doctrine, as well as those of the Middle Ages and modernists, whether Catholic, Protestant or independent, recognize in Scripture an elemental Trinitarianism (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 295).

It is clear on one side that the dogma of the Trinity in the stricter sense of the word was a late arrival, a product of centuries' reflection and debate, it is just as clear on the opposite side that confession of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and hence an elemental Trinitarianism - went back to the period of Christian origins. Contemporary studies on the ancient Christian creeds have done much to bring this out." (ibid., 300)

J.N.D. Kelly attests that "[s]trictly triadic formulas and the triadic frame of mind so clearly mark at least later NT compositions, that the exegete and the historian must recognize a quasi-independent

Trinitarianism coexisting with the purer and simpler forms of NT Christology” (ibid., 300). Among the earliest Christians there was “... consistent worship of God in a Trinitarian pattern and the practice of baptism into the threefold name of God” (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 54).

18) The Trinity in the Old Testament

While some downplay references to the Trinity in the Old Testament, many Bible scholars find implicit evidence and foreshadowing of God’s triune nature even if the early Israelites failed to pick up on it. The fact that such evidence is limited is immaterial because the triune God was subsequently and intentionally revealed to man by and through Christ, and better understood in the centuries that followed. This progressive revelation was the Almighty’s prerogative, and reasonable in light of the polytheistic pagan nations surrounding Israel at that time. It was necessary to contrast Israel’s polytheistic, many-god worshipping neighbors with a monotheistic God rather than a triune-natured God which could be confused with tritheism, the worship of three Gods. It was Jehovah’s intent to distinguish Himself from false pagan idols.

Though the doctrine is not developed in the Old Testament, it is implicit in the divine self-disclosure from the very beginning, ... in a very rudimentary form. This is found not only in isolated passages but interwoven in the entire organism of the Old Testament Revelation. (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1298)

The mystery of the Holy Trinity was not revealed to the Chosen People of the OT. On account of the polytheistic religions of Israel’s pagan neighbors it was necessary for the teachers of Israel to stress the oneness of God. In many places of the OT, however, expressions are used in which some of the Fathers of the Church saw references or foreshadowing of the Trinity. The personified use of such terms as the Word of God [Ps 32(33.6)] and the Spirit of God (Is 63.14) is merely by way of poetic license, though it shows that the minds of God’s people were being prepared for the concepts that would be involved in the forthcoming revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 306)

Early theologians saw semblances of the triune activities of God - wisdom, word and spirit - embryonic members of the Trinity, and disclosure of the Trinity in the appearance of the three men to Abraham (Genesis 18) (*Oxford*, 1207).

The earliest foreshadowing is contained in the narrative of the creation, where *Elohim* is seen to create by means of Word and Spirit (Gn. i. 3). Here we are for the first time introduced to the Word put forth as a personal creative power, and to the Spirit as the bringer of life and order to the creation. There is revealed thus early a threefold centre of activity. God as Creator thought out the universe, expressed His thought in a Word, and made His Spirit its animating principle, thus indicating that the universe was not to have a separate existence apart from God or opposed to Him.

It is thought that Gn. I. 26 (‘And God said, Let us make man in our image and after our likeness’) implies that a revelation of the Triune God had been given to man when first created, in as much as he was to be given the divine

fellowship, but that the consciousness was afterwards lost with the loss of his original righteousness. (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1298)

19) The Trinity in the New Testament

a) Matthew 28:19 -----

The most explicit reference to the Trinity in the Gospels is Christ's baptismal formula found at Matthew 28:19: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ..." (NAB). "This is perhaps the clearest expression in the New Testament of the Trinitarian belief" (NAB notes, Matthew 28:19).

Not surprisingly, the Jehovah's Witnesses don't see it that way, stating: "Do these verses say that God, Christ and the holy spirit constitute a Trinitarian godhead, that the three are equal in substance, power and eternity? No, they do not, no more than listing three people, such as Tom, Dick, and Harry, means that they are three in one" (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 9).

The Jehovah's Witnesses have missed the point entirely. No credible scholar claims that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one just because they are numerated like Tom, Dick and Harry. That's silly. The unity of the three Persons or *hypostases* - the oneness of the three and singleness of essence - is indicated by the singular use of "name" by which all three Persons are referred to, not their plural "names." If, for instance, the Son were merely a separate subordinate creature as the Jehovah's Witnesses falsely teach, Jesus would have them baptizing in the "names" of the Father and Son, at a minimum. But he did not. Having all the same "name" puts Father, Son and Holy Spirit on par, on an equal plane with all which this connotes.

"Name" (Greek *Onoma*), "... as a noun, is used in general of the "name" by which a person or thing is called ..." It also stands "for all that a "name" implies, of authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence, etc., of everything that a name covers" (*Strong and Vine's*, 178). The phrase "in the name" may represent the "authority of Christ" ... or "in the power of" ... or "in recognition of the authority of (MT 18:20; cf 28:19; ..." (ibid.).

Under either scenario a Trinitarian formula is patently obvious. If the "name" into which believers are to be baptized is that by which a person or thing is called then Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the same name, that of God, and all three are called by God's name; three Persons in unity sharing the divine essence, yet distinct. It equates the three Persons, and ascribes to them essence, power and eternity equally.

The Jehovah's Witnesses reject the conventional application of "name" at Matthew 28:19 and argue that "name" does not mean a personal name at all, that "God" is not a name like Jehovah, but means "power or authority" (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8). So, "baptism in the name of the holy spirit recognizes the authority of the spirit, that it is from God and functions by divine will" (ibid.).

Actually, "I AM" can't be considered a name in the conventional English sense either, but that is what Jehovah said His name is. A name can have wide application, as Isaiah attests about Jesus, whose name is "God."

And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NWT)

Another weakness in their approach is that baptism under the Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation would be into three separate and unequal powers and authorities, with the Son possessing less than the Father because they believe Father and Son are not equal, since their Jesus is nothing more than a man, always inferior (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7). This would conceivably require at least two separate baptisms but that would contravene Ephesians 4:5 which says that there is only "one baptism."

For the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Holy Spirit is only a power similar to electrical current flowing from God (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8). But if that were the case, baptizing into the names of God and the Holy Spirit would be redundant, ascribing the same authority twice; it ascribes an authority and power of the Holy Spirit distinct from God, but that's not what Jesus meant.

The expression "in the name of" (literally, 'into the name'), indicates a dedication or consecration to the one named. Thus Christian Baptism is a dedication or consecration to God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned here on a par with the Father, the passage clearly teaches that they are equally divine with the Father, who is obviously God. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 306)

"From the vocabulary and grammar of the Greek original, the intention of the hagiographer to communicate singleness of essence in three distinct Persons was easily derived" (ibid., 299).

b) 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 -----

Likewise, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 does not attempt to prove equality and unity simply by listing "Spirit," "Lord" and "God." Rather, the three are put on a par, thus indicating their divine nature, and consequently, their omnipotence, omniscience and eternal existence. In speaking of the spiritual gifts or charisms that are bestowed upon Christians, Paul says:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. (NAB)

This passage witnesses to the doctrine of the Trinity by ascribing the various charisms, viz, gifts, ministries, and workings, to the Spirit, the Lord (the Son), and God (the Father), respectively. Since all these charisms of their very nature demand a divine source, the three Persons are put on a par, thus clearly indicating their divine nature while at the same time maintaining the distinction of Persons (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 306).

The Spirit is the donor in each instance and each gift contributes to the corporate life of the body of Christ, the Church. The one Spirit, Lord or God, is at work in the body; the embryonic Trinitarian formula is to be noted," (C.S.C. Williams, *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* [London: Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1964], 961) (*Peake's Commentary*)

c) 2 Corinthians 13:13 (14) -----

2 Corinthians 13:13 (14) provides "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the charity (love) of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." "[This] is one of the clearest Trinitarian passages in the New Testament" (NAB notes 13, 11-13). What makes Paul's "use of these terms so significant is that they appear against a strictly monotheistic background" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 306).

This blessing is perhaps a quotation from the early Christian liturgy. The

grammatical usage in this blessing, especially the subjective genitives gives us a basis not only for the distinction of persons, but also for their equality in as much as all the benefits are to flow from the one Godhead.” (ibid.)

2 Corinthians 13:13(14) “not only sums up the apostolic teaching, but it interprets the deeper meaning of the Trinity in Christian experience, the saving grace of the Son as that which gives access to the love of the Father and the communion of the Spirit” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1299).

d) Romans 8:9-11-----

Romans 8:9-11 also makes a strong statement that the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ both dwell in the believer, and accordingly the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ since there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), an indwelling exemplified in a true Trinitarian fashion: God is in you, Christ is in you, and the Holy Spirit which proceeds from both (in the Latin Western tradition) is in you the true believer, all existing as one principle ultimately.

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. (Romans 9:8-11 RSV)

Jehovah is the spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17 NWT; “the Lord is the Spirit” RSV)

“[T]here are many other implicit references, for example at Jesus’ baptism, where the Father speaks from the cloud and the Spirit descends as a dove upon the Son (Matthew 3.16-17). In Paul’s letters there are many examples of Father, Son and Spirit being closely linked in their activity. [I]n Ephesians he speaks of ‘one Spirit ... one Lord ... one God and Father’ (4.4-6). In 2 Corinthians he speaks of God establishing us in Christ and giving us the Spirit as a first installment (1.21-2). He said to the Galatians that ‘God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ (4.6)” (*Oxford*, 1208).

20) Proof texts that Jesus was, and is, God

Scriptural support for the triune nature of God, and the gradual recognition that Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate (John 1:1), was and is God, can be found throughout the Bible. The evidence is abundant and unfolds like a flower, foreshadowed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. The evidence is explicit and implicit as the following discussion of some of the many supporting scriptural verses illustrates.

21) Phillip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father" - (John 14:8-10)

One of Christ’s most emphatic declarations that he was, and is, God, is found at John 14:8-10.

Phillip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me,

Phillip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?’

Any claim by the Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus thought of himself here as nothing more than a man is absurd. Of course, the Jehovah's Witnesses argue that Jesus could not have meant this because Jesus could be seen for God is an invisible spirit and no one has seen God at any time. Therefore Jesus could not be God. But again they fail to understand the two-fold nature of the divine person of Christ, the hypostatic union, and the indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity (see section 5). It is not the created humanity of Christ that is the Father. Jesus was referring to the divine person who assumed a human nature when He answered Phillip, and in this Person dwelt the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9).

22) Jesus Christ resurrected Himself - (John 2:19 - 22)

Jesus made it clear that he would resurrect himself from the dead. Referring to his body Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” (John 2:19-22). Acts 2:32 appears to contradict Jesus. It provides, “This Jesus God raised up” (see also Galatians 1:1). To resolve this inconsistency the Jehovah's Witnesses argue that John 2:19-22 does not really mean that Jesus would raise himself up, even though it says so, but that “Jesus himself was responsible for his resurrection” (*Reasoning*, 423,424). They rely on Luke 8:43-48 where the ill woman with the flow of blood was healed not because she healed herself but because she exercised faith in Christ’s power to heal (ibid., 423), and this exercise of faith made her responsible for the healing.

This analogy, however, is misplaced because John 10:17, 18 says that Christ’s power to resurrect himself was a command (NAB) or charge (RS) given to Jesus from the Father. Yes, he was responsible for his resurrection as the obedient servant on a mission, but he also exercised a power granted to Him to raise Himself from the dead, a power and command which the ill woman of Luke 8:43-48 was not given, and who was not the product of a hypostatic union of God and woman.

This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father. (John 10:17, 18 NAB)

Jesus was not talking about some abstract “responsibility” for his resurrection as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim (*Reasoning*, 424). The language is unambiguous. He had the “power,” and he exercised it.

Neither was Jesus claiming, as the Jehovah's Witnesses argue, that Jesus raised “himself from the dead independently of the Father as the active agent...” (ibid.) because it was not the dead created humanity of Christ - who was not God - who resurrected Jesus, but the divine second Person of the Trinity, God the Son who is fully God, and who never dies (Habakkuk 1:12 NWT). And it was He who was in a position to raise up the dead body of Christ. Recall that the three Persons of the Trinity never act independently of each other (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1299, 1300), so the act of the divine Jesus was the act of the Father. “All works of the triune God *ad extra* are indivisibly one (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 56).

This illustrates a fundamental flaw in the Jehovah's Witnesses’ analytical process, their inability to reconcile two “apparently” conflicting concepts which do not conflict at all. Galatians 1:1 states that

God raised up Jesus, but John 2:19-22 says that Jesus raised himself. Rather than reading both passages together, they discard one in favor of the other. Or ignore it. Or try to reason it away, or just change the Bible to accommodate their theology, but in so doing they violate their own often repeated admonition to read different verses pertaining to a particular topic together.

Looking at Scripture from their point of view, then, the Bible would be full of irreconcilable contradictions: both Jesus and God can't be Lord, but there is only one true Lord in the highest sense (Ephesians 4:5). Both Christ and God if separate entities can't be Savior granting eternal salvation, yet there is only one such Savior (Isaiah 43:11; Titus 1:4, 2:6). If Jesus is God and the Father is God and there can only be one God, there is no contradiction in the Trinitarian world, but not so with the Jehovah's Witnesses whose answer lies in reducing all of Jesus to the status of man and denying the divine unity, nothing more.

If Jesus is alone in "having immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16 Green's Literal Translation) it would mean, for the Jehovah's Witnesses, that the Almighty is not immortal, but we know that is not true (Isaiah 57:15). Similarly, all things were created and exist for God, but all things were created for Jesus as well (Colossians 1:16). And, Isaiah 44:24 states that God made all things, but at John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 it is the Word who made all things and all things were created through Him and for Him, to mention just a few of these examples.

And, if there is only one true God (John 17:3) and Jesus is the true God (1 John 5:20), is there really a conflict? Not if you believe in the triune God which supplies a very reasonable answer if you take the time to understand what the doctrine actually teaches. These apparently mutually exclusive concepts aren't exclusive at the expense of one or the other, but must be read together and combined which leads to only one conclusion - Jesus was, and is, God.

The Almighty would never inspire such blatant contradictions in His Bible, and He didn't. So if God raised up Jesus and the divine Person of Christ raised himself then Jesus must be God if one is to give weight and meaning to both passages within the Trinitarian context.

23) The heavenly resurrected Jesus is identified as Almighty God and the "First and the Last" because there can be only one "First and Last" and one "Alpha and Omega" and Jesus assumed both titles.

In the Book of Revelation Jesus can be identified as the Almighty and the "Alpha and the Omega," titles used to identify God. Even if the Jehovah's Witnesses were correct in stating that Jesus is never specifically called the Almighty, which they claim is a title reserved for God (*Reasoning*, 414), that title can readily be ascribed to Jesus by logically piecing together selected verses.

For instance, both Jesus at Revelation 1:17, 18 and God as the Alpha and Omega at Revelation 22:13 are referred to as "the First and the Last." Therefore, because Jesus and the Almighty are both "the First and the Last," Jesus must be the Almighty who is the Alpha and Omega.

Also, the Alpha and the Omega (God) of Revelation 1:8 is identified as the Almighty, and because Jesus is also the Alpha and the Omega, Jesus is the Almighty, a title identifying Jehovah (Yahweh) at Genesis 17:1. Jesus was, and is, God. The logical train of thought is illustrated by quoting the actual verses.

- a) Jesus is the First and the Last: "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of

Death and Hades.” (Revelation 1:17, 18)

b) The Alpha and the Omega (God) is also the First and the last: “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end.” (Revelation 22:12, 13)

c) Therefore, Jesus must also be the Alpha and Omega, God.

d) The Alpha and the Omega is the Almighty: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)

e) Therefore, not only is Jesus the Alpha and Omega but also the Almighty, all powerful, omnipotent.

This makes perfect sense in light of John 17:10 where Jesus in praying to His Father said, “everything of mine is yours, and everything of yours is mine.” “Everything” is very broad. It includes His disciples, words (truth), the Holy Spirit, and all power and authority as indicated by Christ’s statement at Matthew 28:18, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Christ claimed universal power (NAB notes 28, 19); He is omnipotent, all powerful, and accordingly Almighty and sovereign of which there can only be one in the Universe.

The Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to circumvent this logic by arguing that the mere fact that one title (First and Last) is applied to two separate individuals, Jesus and the Almighty, does not mean those individuals are the same person. By analogy they contend that the expression “apostle” is applied to Jesus and to certain ones of his followers, but that doesn’t prove that they are the same person or of equal rank (*Reasoning*, 413).

Their analogy, however, is not applicable to this situation. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is always secondary and inferior to God in everything at all times, in heaven and on earth, never first (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6). Thus, even by their own admission, there is only one who can be “the First and the Last.”

On the other hand, there have been many apostles, and if there are many such “First and Lasts” they might have a point, but there aren’t, there’s just one. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ analogy just isn’t valid. As there can only be one First and Last, and both Jesus and God are “the First and the Last,” Jesus must be God and Christ rightfully refers to Himself indirectly as the Almighty in the Book of Revelation. You could say it was the culmination of His gradual disclosure.

To put it another way, if there is only one person on planet earth and his title is King and name is Sherman, and if there is a person on earth whose name is Fred who also is called King, then Fred must be Sherman the King in the same sense that Christ must be God because there is only one “First and Last” of the universe, one King.

Furthermore, both God and Jesus are said to be “coming,” an obvious reference to the much anticipated Second Coming of Christ’s return (Rev 1:7, 8; 22:12, 13).

It is simply not logical that in the Book of Revelation the “First and Last” is a title reserved for the Almighty, the Alpha and Omega, but is also applied to a created angel who became man and reverted

back to being an angel, who is always regarded by the Jehovah's Witnesses as secondary to God in everything, a created being, always inferior. Their theory just doesn't make sense.

24) The Father and I are one - (John 10: 27-30)

This verse is often cited in support of the divinity of Christ, that Jesus was, and is, God. They are not two, but one. The Jehovah's Witnesses continue to argue that it only means they are one in purpose, nothing more. They reason that at John 17:21, 22:

Jesus prayed regarding his followers: "That they may all be one, and he added, "that they may be one even as we are one." He used the same Greek word (*hen*) for "one" in all these instances. Obviously, Jesus' disciples do not all become part of the Trinity. (*Reasoning*, 424)

Actually, they do.

First, His followers becoming collectively "one" is meant in the spiritual sense, similar to a husband and wife becoming one flesh (or a man and a prostitute), that is, one spirit, not two. "... Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body? For "The two," says he, "will be one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:16, 17).

Secondly, the glorified believer eventually does become folded into the Trinity, which is the only means by which he or she can attain heavenly immortality. Jurgen Moltmann (1926 -) explains it this way:

The unity of God is the communion of persons. The missions of the Son and the Spirit have brought creation within the Trinitarian process. At the end of time, all will be folded into the Trinity. The history of salvation is the story of the inclusion of creation into the perichoretic relationship (mutual indwelling) of the persons of the Trinity. (*Oxford*, 1213)

[T]he monarchy of the Father is perceived in the Trinity because everything in the history of salvation comes from him and strives towards him. To throw open the circulatory movement of the divine light and the divine relationships, and to take men and women, with the whole of creation, into the life-stream of the triune God: that is the meaning of creation, reconciliation and glorification. (*Trinity and the Kingdom*, 178)

25) There is only one Savior who grants eternal salvation, and both the divine Person of Christ and God are that Savior.

God states at Isaiah 43:11 that "Besides me there is no savior." Yet Jesus is also called our Savior at Titus 1:4, and again at Titus 3:6. Read together it is reasonable to conclude that since Jesus is a Christian's savior, yet there is no savior besides God, then Jesus must be God. The Jehovah's Witnesses counter that just because a judge in Israel by the name of Othniel is also called savior (or deliverer) (Judges 3:9) that similarity does not make Othniel Jehovah (*Reasoning*, 413).

Well, of course it doesn't, but the Jehovah's Witnesses are making the same mistake by failing to ask "What kind of savior?" The unique savior of Isaiah 43:11 and Titus 1:4, 3:6 is a savior on a much

grander scale, on an altogether higher spiritual and religious plane; a Savior who saves in supernatural ways unknown to men, who knows and predicts future events, (Isaiah 43:9), an only savior (Acts 4:10, 12) whose salvation is complete (Colossians 2:10), powerful (Jude 24, 25), authoritative (John 10:18) and universal (1 Timothy 4:10). This one-of-a-kind savior saves from wrath (Romans 5:9), sin (John 1:29) and death through the gift of eternal life (John 11:25, 26). Any parallels with Othniel are seriously misplaced. There is only one kind of “savior” at issue here, not secular saviors, deliverers, kings or judges who have made their mark on history.

The Jehovah's Witnesses counter with Jude 25 and reason that God is a savior only through Jesus Christ (*Reasoning*, 413). Jude 25, however, is a doxology, a hymn or words of praise directed to God the savior through Jesus Christ:

... to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty and might and authority, even now and forever, Amen. (Jude 25 Green's Literal Translation)

Jude is not saying that God is our only savior through Jesus as though he were some hollow tube. Christ offered up His life out of His own volition and he saves directly by Him, by His shed blood. Interestingly, a literal translation of Jude 25 makes no mention of Christ at all which lends credence to the argument that Jude 25 is a doxology directing praise to God, not a statement on Christ's role as savior, as some type of conduit. Acts 4:12 makes it very clear that “...there is salvation in no one else... (RSV, Green's Literal Translation, NKJV),” in Christ. Salvation in Christ and through Christ are not mutually exclusive terms.

26) Jesus is “master” and absolute ruler - (Despotes); a separate Christ and a separate God cannot both exercise this role - (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4)

That Christ is Almighty is also made evident by Peter and Jude's reference to Jesus as “master” or *despotes*, a Greek word meaning an absolute ruler, lord or owner. “Such master exercises an unrestricted power and domination, with no limitations or restraints” (*Strong and Vine's*, 64). Revelation 5:9 clarifies that the master (*despotes*) is Jesus.

But false prophets were also among the people, as also false teachers will be among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, and denying the Master (*despotes*) who has bought (*gragorazo*) them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. (2 Peter 2:1)

And they sing a new song, saying, worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because you were slain, and by your blood purchased (*gragorazo*) us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and made us kings and priests to our God (Revelation 5:9 Green's Literal Translation)

For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master (*despotes*) and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 4 RSV, NAB)

The inspired writer of Jude 4 condemns certain false teachers for denying “our only master (*despotes*)

and Lord, Jesus Christ” (NAB, RSV), as did Peter at 2 Peter 2:1 who refers to Christ as “the master (*despotes*) who bought (Greek *gragorazo*, NAB “ransomed”) them.

The word “master” (*despotes*) is also used of God at Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24 and Revelation 6:10 (*Insight*, 1008), who is the Almighty sovereign of the universe (Genesis 17:1; Exodus 6:3). Referring to both Jesus and God as master (*despotes*) creates a dilemma for the Jehovah's Witnesses who regard Jesus as less than all powerful, less than Almighty, a creature created by God exercising limited authority. But this false rendering ignores the clear intent of Peter and Jude’s designation and the unequivocal statement of Jesus himself who said that “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus, as *despotes*, is accordingly all powerful, Almighty and sovereign, and as there can be only one such Master, namely God, then Christ must be God. Remember, Jesus is “upholding the universe by his word of power” (Hebrews 1:3 RSV).

So while the Hebrew and Greek texts do not have a separate qualifying word for “sovereign,” the flavor is contained in the words ‘*Adhonai* and *despotes* when they are used in the scriptures as applying to Jehovah God,... (*Insight*, 1008)

But whereas the Jehovah’s Witnesses would apply *despotes* only to Jehovah God, it is quite obvious it is applied to Christ as well.

27) The eternal Christ was not created - (Isaiah 9:6)

In addition to Jesus Christ’s omnipotence, he is and always has been eternal, a Scriptural truth strongly denied by the Jehovah's Witnesses who teach, incorrectly, that Jesus is a created being granted immortality only after his resurrection. But even Isaiah 9:6 in the Jehovah's Witnesses’ New World Translation disproves that theory where Christ is referred to as “Eternal Father.”

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 on his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

The preexistent Christ’s eternal nature is not the result of a forward-looking grant of immortality as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach, but is a condition that has always been because “He is before all things” (Colossians 1:17), and he created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). There are only two options: He was created or He is eternal, but since He was before all things and created all things, He must be eternal.

To counter this, Colossians 1:15-17 in the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New World Translation (NWT) inserts the word [other] four times so that it reads:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; 16 because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. 17 Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist.

The Jehovah's Witnesses’ insertion of the word [other] does not change the clear language and meaning

of Paul's discourse. They reason:

(3) In harmony with everything else that the Bible says regarding the Son, NW assigns the same meaning to *pan'ta* at Colossians 1:16, 17 [similar to Luke 13:2] so that it reads, in part, "by means of him *all other things* were created ... *All other things* have been created through him and for him." Thus he is shown to be a created being, part of the creation, produced by God. (*Reasoning*, 408 - 409)

Such an arbitrary addition is based on a distorted reading of Luke 13:2 and the supposed over-all "context" of their Bible. They justify inserting "other" in four places here because the overall context of the Bible, in their opinion, requires it, and because some other Bibles insert "other" into Luke 13:2 where it had not existed before (*Reasoning* 408, 409). Luke 13:2 provides:

At that very season there were certain ones present that reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. So in reply he said to them: "Do you image that these Galileans were proved worse sinners than all other Galileans because they have suffered these things? No, indeed, I tell you; but, unless you repent, you will all likewise be destroyed." (NWT)

"The death of the Galileans at the hands of Pilate" were "timely reminders of the need for all to repent, for the victims of these tragedies should not be considered outstanding sinners who were singled out for punishment" (NAB notes 13, 1-5).

Equating Luke 13:1-3 with Colossians 1:15-17 is improper because inserting "other" into Luke 13:2 was not necessary and did not change the nature or status of the Galileans referred to. In the English language "other" might have helped clarify the object of the sentence but it could have been omitted. Leaving verse 2 as it was would still convey the same meaning - that of all Galileans, those killed by Pilate were not particularly worse sinners. Adding "other" here does not convert the Galileans into something entirely different; it does not turn them into Martians.

Inserting "other" into Colossians 1:15-17, on the other hand, fundamentally alters the object of those verses, Christ the Word, by downgrading Him from eternal God the Son to that of a creature; from God to not-god. Nothing could be more radical, theologically speaking, or heretical.

Furthermore, such unsubstantiated alteration of Scripture violates the context of verse 15, Hebrews 1:3, Philippians 2:6 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. Hebrews 1:3 states that Christ is "the express image of His essence (Green's Literal Translation). Here, image (Greek *charaktar*) denotes that the Son is "literally equal to" God, "of whose essence He is the imprint. It is the fact of complete similarity which this word stresses" (*Strong and Vines*, 269).

Philippians 2:6 says that the Word existed in the form (Greek *morphe*) of God prior to His incarnation. Here, form (*morphe*) means nature or essence, but not in the abstract, subsisting in the individual (*Strong and Vine's*, 167). "It includes the whole nature and essence of deity" (ibid.). And at 2 Corinthians 4:4, the "image of God" means that Christ is "essentially and absolutely the perfect expression of the Archtype, God the Father" (*Strong and Vine's*, 77).

[I]n Colossians 1:15, "the image of the invisible God "gives the additional thought suggested by the word "invisible," that Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of God to created beings; (5c) the likeness expressed in this manifestation is involved in the essential relations in the

Godhead and is therefore unique and perfect; “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” John 14:9. (ibid., 77)

As such, Luke 13:2 cannot serve as justification for altering the very nature and identity of Christ. Inserting “other” into Colossians 1:16, 17 in order to convert Christ to nothing more than a man or a created angel would obliterate all parallel contextual verses which show that the Word Christ was and is the exact imprint of deity, a perfect match, an exact equivalent with the divine essence. Inserting “other” would result in a “created” Christ being something far less than what He truly is.

When determining what context within which to assess the nature and identity of Christ it is best to start at the beginning and move forward in time, to reach back as far as possible. And in the beginning there was the Word (John 1:1) and the Word was before all things (Colossians 1:17) and all things were created by Him and through Him and for Him (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). This is the proper context within which to begin to analyze subsequent Scripture. You don’t end here.

By now it should be evident that the Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t conform to context, they create it.

It is understandable why the Jehovah's Witnesses altered the Bible to accommodate their idea of what they wish it said. Had the preexistent Word been a created being he could not have been “before all things,” nor could He have “created all things” (Colossians 1:16, 17) which would by necessity have included himself. But, since the Bible says that the Word was “before all things” and “without Him nothing came to be” (John 1:3) Christ the Word cannot have been created. It is absolutely impossible ... unless you change the Bible.

Lastly, as expounded on in section 19(A) the baptismal formula at Matthew 28:19 reflects in one sentence the Trinitarian doctrine of three Persons as one by virtue of the singular “name” into which Christian believers are to be baptized. By means of logical deduction Christ must be eternal in accordance with the baptismal formula.

For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses would have Christians baptized under three distinct and separate authorities which is scripturally unfounded. If they were right, and the Son is separate from the Father, the Holy Spirit must also be separate from the Father, but that in turn would imply that the Father was without His electrical current or authority and He is not all powerful. If, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father then neither can the Son be separate from the Father because Christ is the Spirit.

To illustrate further, Paul taught at Romans 8:9-11 that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ and 2 Corinthians 3:17 teaches that Jehovah God (or the Lord) is the Spirit (NWT; “the Lord is the Spirit” RSV). And, it is this Spirit, the Holy Spirit, that dwells within the Christian believer. Thus, there are not two separate Spirits that reside within, God’s and Christ’s, but one Spirit, according to Ephesians 4:4.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

(Romans 9:8-11 RSV)

Jehovah is the spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17 NWT; “the Lord is the Spirit” RSV)

However, if, as the Jehovah's Witnesses falsely teach, the preexistent Christ is a created creature only, then the Holy Spirit must also have been created and accordingly there would have been a time when there was no Holy Spirit and therefore God would have lacked power and authority and would not have been omnipotent, according to their theory. But, since the Holy Spirit is eternal, which the Jehovah's Witnesses must concede, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and this Spirit is the Holy Spirit, Christ the Word must be eternal.

Not surprisingly, the Jehovah's Witnesses changed Romans 8:10 by inserting the word “union,” so that Christ is not in the believer, but only in union with the believer, writing: “But if Christ is in union with you, the body indeed is dead on account of sin ...” NWT).

28) “Let us make man in our image” was not directed to Jesus the created master craftsman working beside the Creator, but was self-communication within the triune God - (Genesis 1:26)

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that Genesis 1:26 where God said “Let us make man in our image” proves that God was not alone in the beginning but had the Word by his side, a master craftsman, the created pre-human Jesus through whom all things exist. They believe it cannot refer to the Word as the Second Person of the Trinity because people cannot inhabit each other, cannot indwell in each other as the Trinity doctrine teaches (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6).

However, they overlook Isaiah 44:24 where God states that in the beginning there was no one else, no other individual. It was God alone who made all things.

Thus, says the Lord, your redeemer,
Who formed you from the womb:
I am the Lord, who made all things,
Who alone stretched out the heavens;
When I spread out the earth,
who was with me? (Isaiah 44:24 NAB)

God could not say this if a separate created pre-incarnate Jesus master craftsman was by his side doing the work, creating the heavens and earth, but he could do this as an Almighty triune God subsisting in three distinct self-communicating Persons. John 1:3 makes far more sense in a Trinitarian context where the Word created all things. That a triune God alone (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) created man is emphasized by Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image,” a poignant reference to the unity of the Persons when read in conjunction with Genesis 1:26. And to reiterate, because the preexistent Christ the Word is “before all things” (Colossians 1:17) He could not be a created being standing beside God creating Himself as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.

Furthermore, God also stated “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me” (Isaiah 43:10), which completely disproves the Jehovah's Witnesses' version of John 1:1, i.e., that “The Word was a god” created after God was formed. And, because Isaiah 43:11 continues “I, I am Jehovah; and there is no Savior besides me” the only reasonable conclusion, in light of all other supporting Scripture noted above, is that Jesus was, and is, God.

29) The fullness of the Godhead dwells inseparably in Jesus - (Colossians 2:9); He is the very imprint of God's being - (Hebrews 1:3)

Colossians 2:9 is convincing evidence of the divinity of Christ. It states of Christ that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Green’s Literal Translation). The Greek word for “Godhead” is *theotes* and means divinity. It “stresses deity, the state of being God (*Strong and Vine’s*, 115). It is to be distinguished from *theiotes* which refers to the attributes of God, his divine nature and properties and it is this definition which the Jehovah's Witnesses incorrectly attach to Col 2:9 when they claim that the Godhead there merely refers to His “divine qualities” (*Reasoning*, 420). This is manifestly incorrect according to *Strong and Vine’s*, and what the Jehovah's Witnesses are actually doing is swapping *theiotes* for *theotes*. Regarding the Godhead (*theotes*) at Colossians 2:9:

In Col 2:9, Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fullness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded him, lighting up His Person for a season and with a splendor not His own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the apostle uses *theotes* to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son. *Theotes* indicates the divine essence of Godhood, the personality of God; (*Strong and Vines*, 114). [*Theotes*] stresses deity, the state of being God. (*ibid*, 115).

(*Theiotes*, on the other hand), ... refers to the attributes of God, His divine nature and properties. (*Strong and Vine’s*, 114)

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that “[b]eing truly “divinity,” or of “divine nature,” does not make Jesus as the Son of God coequal and coeternal with the Father, any more than humans are coequal or all the same age just because they share humanity or human nature” (*Reasoning*, 421). But that is not necessarily true. If all persons share humanity it does make them all human, and they are all equally “human.” One person is not more or less human than another. So, if the inevitability of death is one aspect of humanity, then all humans die, all are mortal; they are equal in that regard. Similarly, if divinity inherently includes an eternal nature, and Jesus and God are divine, of the same essence (consubstantial), then both are eternal.

Actually, the Jehovah's Witnesses’ comparison of Jesus with all humans who share humanity is another flawed analogy because Jesus doesn’t share God at all like humans have a share in humanity. Jesus is fully God, and not somehow made God by virtue of the hypostatic union.

At Hebrews 1:3 Christ is said to be “the very imprint of His (God’s) being” (NAB) (“the very stamp of his nature” (RS) (“the express image of His substance” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 269). The Greek word used here for image, stamp or imprint is *charaktar* and means an exact copy or representation, and stresses complete, not partial, similarity of essence.

(2) In the NT it is used metaphorically in Heb 1:3, of the Son of God as “the express image of His substance.” The phrase expresses the fact that the Son “is both personally distinct from, and yet literally equal to, Him of whose essence He is the imprint. The Son of God is not merely his “image” (His character), He is the “image” or impress of His substance, or essence. It is the fact of complete similarity which this word stresses. (*Strong and Vine’s*, 269)

Accordingly, such equality applies to His eternal existence, omnipotence and omniscient nature, as God and the Word are literally equal to each other with respect to their essential being.

30) Prior to His incarnation Christ subsisted in the form (*morphe*) of God - (Philippians 2:6)

Philippians 2:6 is considered strong evidence that the Word was God. Verses 1-11 clarify that it is a plea for unity and humility, with Christ Jesus' "humbling of self and obedience to the point of death" as the exemplary attitude true believers should emulate (NAB notes 2,1-11).

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,
Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross. (Ephesians 2:5-8 NAB)

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that these verses are not grounds for equating the Word with God, and focus their analysis on the latter part of verse 6 which reads "...who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped (NAB; "gave no consideration for a seizure" NWT; "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" NKJV). They teach that "robbery" (Greek *harpagmos*) does not convey the idea of holding in possession or retention in the sense of holding on to equality, but that it means to seize or snatch violently (*Reasoning*, 420). Therefore, Christ was not holding on, or trying to hold on, to equality with God but thought it as something that could not or should not be attained or grasped or reached for, being only a man.

Strong and Vine's disagrees with their assessment and applies "robbery" (*harpagmos*) in a different way that comports more with the context of the entire sentence and accompanying verses. "At Philippians 2:6 "robbery" (*harpagmos*), "as a verb, means "to seize, carry off by force" (*Strong and Vine's*, 42). "The middle/passive sense gives meaning to the passage as the purpose of the passage is to set forth Christ as the supreme example to the Philippians (and us) of humility and self-renunciation: "Who though He was subsisting in the essential form of God, yet did not regard His being on an equality of glory and majesty with God as a prize and a treasure to be held fast, he would not feel as if He had been robbed to give up His shared glory" (ibid., 42). *Strong and Vine's* application of "robbery" (*harpagmos*) is diametrically opposed to the Jehovah's Witnesses' use of that same term.

In all fairness to the Jehovah's Witnesses it should be noted that there are at least two views on the matter, one of which agrees with the Jehovah's Witnesses. With reference to Philippians 2:6 the *Catholic New American Bible* (NAB) states that it is:

Either a reference to Christ's preexistence and those aspects of divinity that he was willing to give up in order to serve in human form, or to what the man Jesus refused to grasp at to attain divinity. Many see an allusion to the Genesis story: unlike Adam, Jesus, though ... in the form of God (Gn 1, 26-27), did not reach out for equality with God, in contrast with the first Adam in Gn 3, 5-6.

So, equality with God is something Christ was willing to relinquish, or as the Jehovah's Witnesses interpret verse 6, Christ gave no consideration to seizing or grasping for equality with God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, however, have utterly missed the point again by focusing on the wrong issue. Equality within the immanent Godhead is not established by the Word relinquishing it prior to His incarnation or grasping for it as a man after He became incarnate. Even though the latter part of verse 6 assumes His equality one way or the other, the first part establishes that assumed equality because the Word existed in the "form" of God. Focusing on "robbery" or "seizure" or "grasping" in order to determine the Word's equality with God detracts from the primary issue of Christ's subsisting in God's "form" (*morphe*).

That His existing in God's form equates Him with God is only emphasized by His stated "equality" (verse 6) regardless of whether it could be retained by God the Son or grasped for by the created humanity of Jesus.

"Form" (Greek *morphe*) denotes "the special or characteristic form or feature" of a person or thing; ... it is used with particular significance in the NT only of Christ ... in Phil 2:6, "being in the form of God," and ... 2:7 "taking the form of a servant" (*Strong and Vine's*, 167).

An excellent definition of the word is: *morphe* is therefore properly the nature or essence, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual, and retained as long as the individual itself exists (3a) Thus in the passage before us *morphe Theou* is the Divine nature actually and inseparably subsisting in the person of Christ (b) For the interpretation of 'the Form of God' it is sufficient to say that (3b1) it includes the whole nature and essence of Deity, and is inseparable from them, since they could have no actual existence without it; and (3b2) that it does not include in itself anything 'accidental' or separable, such as particular modes of manifestation, or conditions of glory and majesty, which may at one time be attached to the 'form,' at another separated from it

(4) The true meaning of *morphe* in the expression "form of God" is confirmed by its recurrence in the corresponding phrase "form of a servant." It is universally admitted that the two phrases are directly antithetical, and that "form" must therefore have the same sense in both. (*Strong and Vine's*, 167)

In other words, if the Word existed in the form of a servant He was that servant, and if the Word existed in the form of God He was that God. This complete similarity, the consubstantial existence, includes of necessity the divine person Christ's eternal existence and all other relevant characteristics of the immanent triune God - the "fullness" of the Godhead. Had the Word been created, the imprint or stamp (Hebrews 1:3) would have been far less than "complete," or "whole."

The Jehovah's Witnesses want you to believe that Jesus was not God because he did not consider seizing or acquiring equality with God, which would mean he was just a man, and therefore He could not be God. But at the expense of repetition, Trinitarians hold that the created humanity of Jesus is not God, and accordingly His grasping for equality has no bearing on whether God the Son, the preexistent Word, was divine, which is the primary issue. Conversely, if "robbery" or "seizure" or "grasping" refers to Christ hanging on to equality Christ would have to be equal because it says he was equal and because He was in the form of God. As such, the created Jesus' thoughts and actions would have been immaterial in proving or disproving His preexistent equality. Philippians 2:6 means in part:

Christ possessed equality with God prior to His incarnation, and then for a time

veiled that glory, being always God in all of the co-equal attributes, but in the incarnation never using His Godly powers to better Himself. He was fully God, fully man, God taking on the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), not a man adding Godliness. (*Strong and Vine's*, 42)

31) The Word, Christ, was the firstborn of all creation, but not in the sense of being created - (Colossians 1:15)

The Jehovah's Witnesses erroneously teach that “Having been created by God, Jesus is in a secondary position in time, power, and knowledge. Jesus, in his pre-human existence, was “the first-born of all creation (Col 1:15 NJB)” (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6), the first created thing.

They apply “first-born” (Greek *protokos*) narrowly and limit it to human procreation. Like a man fathering a son, Jesus, they claim, was the first creature born, or fathered, by God; a created subordinate being and therefore not eternal.

The Jehovah's Witnesses base this argument on prior usage of the phrase “first-born (of)” in the context of then-living creatures which they claim always belonged to a group of some kind, and therefore Jesus belonged to the group of all created things. They write:

(2) Before Colossians 1:15, the expression “the firstborn of” occurs upwards of 30 times in the Bible, and in each instance that it is applied to living creatures, the same meaning applies - the firstborn is part of the group. “The firstborn of Israel” is one of the sons of Israel; the “firstborn of Pharaoh” is one of Pharaoh’s family; the “firstborn of beast” are themselves animals. What then causes some to ascribe a different meaning to it at Colossians 1:15? (*Reasoning*, 408) (emphasis added)

The manner in which they phrase the issue assumes Christ the Word is a creature, writing: each time the expression “first born of” occurs, in each such instance that it is applied to creatures the same meaning applies, that the first born is part of a group.” But this is a mere play on words and begs the question whether Christ was a creature in the first place? The issue, rather, revolves around the definition of “first born” or “first born of” creation and how that is applied before its use at Colossians 1:15 and afterward, whether or not it was applied to creatures.

“First born of” is not limited to a group of creatures but is used in the Old Testament figuratively for disease or plague (NAB notes Job 18:13). The “first-born of death consumes his limbs” (NAB Job 18:13).

Isaiah 14:30 illustrates the figurative use of “the firstborn of.” It states: “And the firstborn of the poor shall eat; and the needy shall lie down in safety” (Green’s Literal Translation). These verses emphasize the poorest of the poor. It does not state, nor can it be implied, that only those people who were the procreative firstborn of each family who happened to be poor would eat, and their poor siblings would starve. It does not carve out one group of first-born poor from the rest of the poor, but it identifies those hungering poor in general, the neediest of the needy.

The term “first-born” (son) (Hebrew *bkowr*) was used at Exodus 4:22 to refer to all of Israel as a group, not part of a group, and that relationship was not the result of physical procreation because they already existed. Rather, it was a spiritual and religious relationship; Israel was God’s Son.

(7) Israel was God's "first-born"; it enjoyed a privileged position and blessings over all other nations (Ex 4:22; Jer 31:19). (*Strong and Vine's*, 39)

At Deuteronomy 21:16, 17 "first-born" (Hebrew *bkowr*) also has the meaning of superiority of position, not the first created male child.

[T]hen on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the first-born in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the first-born, but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the disliked, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first issue of his strength; the right of the first-born is his.

Here, the son of one wife who is not the mother of the actual first-born son should not be treated as such with respect to disposition of her husband's inheritance (*ibid.*).

As you can see, "first-born" or "first-born of" is not limited to a member of a group of creatures but has broad application. According to *Strong and Vine's*, "firstborn" (Greek *protokos*) with reference to the preexistent Christ is used "of His relationship to the Father, expressing His priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the first to be born. It is used of superiority of position (cf. Ex 4:22; Deut 21:16, 17)" (*ibid.*, 218).

(*Protokos*) Firstborn is used (1) of Christ as born of the Virgin Mary (Mt 1:25; Lk 2:7), (2) of His relationship to the Father, expressing His priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the first to be born. It is used of superiority of position (cf. Ex 4:22; Deut 21:16, 17). (3)

Chronologically, the four passages relating to Christ as firstborn, first begotten, may be set forth thusly: (3a) Col 1:15, where His eternal relationship with the Father is in view, and the clause means both that He was the firstborn before all creation and that He Himself produced creation (the genitive case being objective, as v. 16 makes clear); (3b) Col 1:18 and Rev 1:5, in reference to His resurrection; (3c) Rom 8:29, His being firstborn among those living by faith alone in God the Father; (3d) Heb 1:6, first begotten, stresses His superior position, His preeminence over all; His second advent in contrast to His first advent, at His birth, being implied. (*Strong and Vine's*, 218)

As such, the Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong in their interpretation of "first-born" at Colossians 1:15, 16, and Trinitarian Christians are correct in saying "that the 'first-born' here means prime, most excellent, most distinguished. Thus, Christ could be understood to be, not part of creation, but the most distinguished in relation to those whom he created," (*Reasoning*, 408). This is particularly true in light of the unequivocal language of Colossians 1:17 which says "He is before all things" (RSV).

32) The Word was "begotten," but not made, not created - (John 1:14)

In a similar vein, the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was "begotten" in the sense that he was created or born, which is not a Christian Trinitarian teaching. The Jehovah's Witnesses write:

Trinitarians claim that in the case of Jesus, "only-begotten" is not the same as the dictionary definition of "begetting," which is to "procreate as the father." (*Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*) They say that in Jesus' case it means

“the sense of unoriginated relationship,” a sort of only son relationship without the begetting. (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*) Does that sound logical to you? Can a man father a son without begetting him?

Furthermore, why does the Bible use the very same Greek word for “only-begotten” (as Vine admits without any explanation) to describe the relationship of Isaac to Abraham? Hebrews 11:17 speaks of Isaac as Abraham’s “only-begotten son.” There can be no question that in Isaac’s case, he was only-begotten in the normal sense, not equal in time or position to his father. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6)

Actually, *Strong and Vine’s* does in fact explain why the very same Greek word for “only-begotten” (*monogeneses*) is used to describe the relationship of Isaac to Abraham, and how “only-begotten” is used with respect to Isaac at Hebrews 11:17 as subsequently explained.

One major weakness in the Jehovah's Witnesses’ argument lies in the fact that Isaac was not an only-begotten son in the natural procreative sense since Abraham actually had another son, Ishmael, (and others after Ishmael) who was born before Isaac (Genesis 16:15), so the Jehovah's Witnesses’ reliance on that verse is unfounded. Because Abraham had no less than two sons, “only-begotten” cannot be applied to Isaac as an “only-begotten son,” in the procreative sense because he wasn’t. It applied to him in a religious, legalistic and figurative connotation as he was the only legitimate son; it refers to a non-biological relationship just as Trinitarians teach with respect to the Word.

It’s the same with the preexistent Christ where “only-begotten” lays stress on characteristics of Christ’s relationship. The phrase “the only-begotten of (from) the Father,” (John 1:14) indicates that as the Son of God He was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him,” compared to the original traditional rendering where the definite article is omitted (*Strong and Vine’s*, 67). *Strong and Vine’s* speaks of a unique relationship and stresses that “begotten” does not imply a beginning of Sonship nor generation as applied to offspring like Isaac, or that Christ became the only begotten son by incarnation.

Monogeneses is translated (1) “only” in (1a) Lk 7:12 of the widow of Nain’s son; (1b) Lk 8:42 of Jairus’ daughter; (2) “only-begotten” (2a) of Jesus in Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9; (2) of Isaac in Heb 11:17; and (3) “only child” in Lk 9:38 of the devil-possessed child.

(4) With reference to Christ, the phrase “the only begotten of (from) the Father,” Jn 1:14, indicates that as the Son of God He was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him. (4a) In the original the definite article is omitted both before “only begotten” and before “Father,” and its absence in each case serves to lay stress upon the characteristics referred to in the terms used.

(4b) The apostle’s object is to demonstrate what sort of glory it was that he and his fellow apostles had seen. (4c) That he is not merely making a comparison with earthly relationships is indicated by *para*, “from.” (4d) The glory was that of a unique relationship and the word “begotten” does not imply a beginning of His Sonship. (4e) It suggests relationship indeed, but must be distinguished

from generation as applied to man.

(5) We can only rightly understand the term “the only begotten” when used of the Son, in the sense of un-originated relationship. (5a) The begetting is not an event of time, however remote, but a fact irrespective of time. (5b) The Christ did not become, but necessarily and eternally is the Son. He, a Person, possesses every attribute of pure Godhood. (5c) This necessitates eternity, absolute being; in this respect He is not ‘after’ the Father;

(8) In Jn 3:16 the statement, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son” must not be taken to mean that Christ became the only begotten son by incarnation. (8a) The value and greatness of the gift lay in the Sonship of Him who was given. (8b) His Sonship was not the effect of His being given. (*Strong and Vine’s*, 167)

Hebrews 1:5 also argues against the Jehovah's Witnesses’ “procreation definition” because “begotten” is used with reference to the enthronement of the existing Christ; an Old Testament parallel to Psalm 2:6-8.

Lastly, even an English definition of “beget” as applied to Christ means to bring into a special relationship, and not by procreation.

(10) Beget in English means to bring into a special relationship. The “be” is intensive and “get” means to bring to one’s self. Jesus, as “the only-begotten of the Father” means that even though he had the unique and equal relationship within the Trinity in eternity past, He took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh, dwelt among men, was tempted in all ways, yet without sin, submitted to the death on the cross, was raised on the third day, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. He was always uniquely related to the Father, but even more so now as He is the only unique Son of God, the only sacrifice to remove sins and restore fallen man to God.

33) The Messiah of the Old Testament stems from eternity - (Micah 5:2; Proverbs 8:22)

The Messiah is described at Micah 5:2 as being from eternity (Hebrew *olam*), hence without beginning. *Green’s Literal Translation* of Micah 5:2 states:

And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, being least among the thousands of Judah, out of you he shall come forth to Me, to become ruler in Israel; and His goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.

“*Olam*” means “eternity; remotest time; perpetuity, i.e., the vanishing point; gen, time out of mind (past or future), always, ever, everlasting, perpetual” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 205).

Reference to Christ’s prior eternal existence is also found at Proverbs 8:22 where many commentators equate Wisdom with Christ.

Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way, from then, before His works I was set up from everlasting (Hebrew *olam*), from the beginning, before the

earth ever was (Proverbs 8:22 Green's Literal Translation).

“Wisdom is of divine origin. It is here represented as a being which existed before all things (22-26) and concurred with God when he planned and executed the creation of the universe, ...” (NAB notes 8,22-31).

The Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation*, and a few other Bibles, translate “possessed” as “created,” implying that Christ (Wisdom) had a beginning. But this misinterpretation ignores the middle of the sentence which states that Wisdom existed from everlasting (*olam*), that is, eternity. Christ (if indeed Wisdom) is eternal, from the beginning, of eternity, before God's work, not as the first product of God's works, just as Paul says at Col 1:17: “He is before all things.” He was not created but rather “set up” or “poured out” (Hebrew *Nacak*) as one pours out an existing libation, or casts existing metal or anoints an existing king (*Strong and Vine's*, 188).

The Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to minimize these verses with Revelation 3:14 which they interpret to mean that Christ was the “beginning” (Greek *arkhe*) of all creation, the first thing created.

And to the angel of the congregation in Laodicea write: These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God,... (NWT)

Trinitarians believe *arkhe* is properly interpreted as “source” or “active cause,” that the Word is the source of all creation.

Here, the Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation relies to a great extent on the fact that “Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon lists “beginning” as its first meaning of *arkhe* (*Oxford*, 1968, p. 252) (*Reasoning*, 409). Be that as it may, whereas “*arkhe*” can mean “a beginning” it also can mean “source” (NAB) or “active cause” (*Strong and Vine's*, 43). This harmonizes with John 1:3, that all things were created by Christ (“and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being” (Green's Literal Translation). As he could not have created Himself, and existed before He would have been created, He must be the source by and through which all things were created as the eternal Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Because the Word was before all things (Colossians 1:17) and he created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), it excludes His being created. He is the source of all creation, the active force.

34) The Almighty says of Jesus “Your throne, Oh God, is forever and ever” - (Hebrews 1:8, 9)

In accordance with the vast majority of translations, the inspired writer of Hebrews 1:8, 9 specifically referred to the Son as God. Chapter 1 is devoted to distinguishing Christ from angels and identifying Him as God the Son which should leave no doubt that Christ is not an angel as the Jehovah's Witnesses preach.

[B]ut as to the Son, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom; You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; because this God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above your companions.” (Hebrews 1: 8, 9 Green's Literal Translation)

According to the *Catholic New American Bible* “[T]he application of the name “God” to the Son derives from the preexistence mentioned in vv 2-3;...” (NAB notes 1:8-12).

...in these last days, he spoke to us through a Son,
whom he made heir of all things
and through whom he created the universe,
who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

When he had accomplished purification from sins,
he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ... (NAB)

First, at verse 3 a literal translation says that Christ is “the express image of His essence” (Green’s Literal Translation; “imprint of His being” NAB). Here, “image” (Greek *charaktar*) denotes that the Son is “literally equal to God,” of whose essence he is the imprint. It is the fact of complete similarity which this Word stresses” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 269). Clearly, Christ could not have been created and most certainly was not an angel because either way He would not be literally equal to God, but much less.

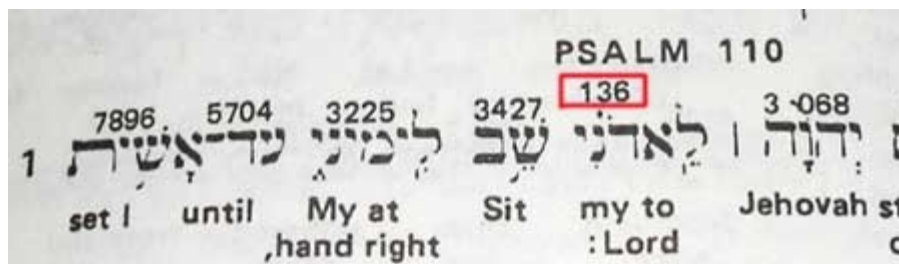
Secondly, verse 13 quotes Psalm 110:1 where Jehovah God is said to refer to Christ as *Adonai* (*adonay*) (Hebrew for Lord) which is a title used exclusively for God (*Strong and Vine’s*, 6), an interpretation even the Jehovah’s Witnesses concede (*Insight*, 1008). Hebrews 1:13 reads:

But to which of the angels did He ever say,
“ Sit at my right hand
until I place Your enemies as a
footstool of Your feet”? (Green’s Literal Translation)

This is a direct quote of Psalm 110:1, a psalm of David, which reads:

A statement of Jehovah to my Lord (*adonai*):
Sit at my right hand, until I place
Your enemies as Your footstool. (Green’s Literal Translation)

Adonai is identified with Interlinear Number 136 which cross-references to *Strong and Vine’s* entry for “*adonai*,” at page 6.



136. אֲדֹנָי [434x] 'Ādônāy, *ad-o-noy*'; an emphat. form of 113; the *Lord* (used as a proper name of God only):—(my) *Lord* (431x), *lord* (2x), *God* (1x). Syn.: See 113. See: TWOT—27b; BDB—10d.

In the form *adonay* the word means “Lord” par excellence or “Lord over all,” even as it sometimes does in the form *adon* (cf. Deut 10:17, where God is called the “God of gods, and Lord of lords”; Josh 3:11, where He is called the “Lord of all the earth”). The word *adonay* appears in Gen 15:2: “And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless,” This word frequently appears in Psalms (Ps 68:17; 86:3) and Isaiah (Isa. 29:13; 40:10).

Not only is the Son not an angel, but this supports the interpretation of verse 8 which refers to the Son as God.

Third, it is important to note that verses 10-12 also play a significant role in the interpretation of Hebrews 1:8 because that is an Old Testament passage directed to God Almighty but “redirected to Jesus” (NAB notes 1, 8-12). Of the Son, He said:

And, “You, Lord, at the beginning founded the earth, and the heavens are works of your hands. They will vanish away; but You will continue; and they will all become old like a garment, and You shall fold them up like a covering, and they shall be changed. But You are the same and Your years shall not fail.” (Hebrews 1:10-12 Green’s Literal Translation)

Fourth, Hebrews 1:8 is an Old Testament quote from Psalm 45:6,7 (7,8) which also says in part “Your throne, O god...” (NAB). Psalm 45 is a royal wedding song. Here, “god” refers to “the king” who “in courtly language is called “god,” i.e., more than human, representing God to the people. Heb 1,8-9 applies 7-8 to Christ” (NAB notes Psalm 45:7).

Since they deny that Jesus is God, the Jehovah's Witnesses invert Hebrews 1:8 and Psalm 45:6 (7) to read “God is thy throne.” They justify this in part by quoting B.F. Wescott who in 1889 wrote regarding Psalm 45:6 that “It is scarcely possible that [Elohim] (god) in the original can be addressed to the king” (*Reasoning*, 422). Therefore, if *elohim* (god) cannot refer to the secular king, then a traditional rendering “Thy throne, Oh god” in Psalm 45:6 or “Thy throne, Oh God” in Heb 1:8 is not possible.

Their expert’s reasoning, however, contradicts the Jehovah's Witnesses’ own statement in the previous paragraph where they state “Hebrews 1:8 quotes from Psalm 45:6, which originally was addressed to a human king of Israel” (*Reasoning*, 422). Such an obvious contradiction is perplexing, especially in light of the official definition of *elohim* which actually did apply to secular kings and magistrates in the Old Testament, i.e.,

... rulers; judges, either as divine, representatives, at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power, divine ones, superhuman beings including God and angels.” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 17)

A simple reading makes it quite obvious that Psalm 45 did in fact apply to a secular king, possibly Solomon. Psalm 45:6 also applied to Christ; it has a dual application as seen by reference to the throne lasting forever and ever. This cannot be said about that earthly Jewish king's Old Testament throne at Psalm 45:6, but can be said of Christ's throne.

Even though "throne" can refer to a seat (Matthew 23:22), heaven (Matthew 5:34), or grace (Hebrews 4:16) (*Strong and Vine's*, 117), the Jehovah's Witnesses use it here exclusively with reference to "power and authority." Thus, for them, "God is thy throne" only means God is the source of Christ's power, authority and kingship (*Reasoning*, 422).

While at first glance that might be true, a deeper look at the use and application of "throne" (Greek *thronos*) shows that God's throne is also Christ's throne and if it is also Christ's throne then it is illogical to say "God is your throne," in the exclusive sense that it is a separate power or authority apart from Christ. It wouldn't make sense.

For example, before the 1,000 year reign Revelation 3:21 refers to Christ sitting down with His Father on His throne, together. Christ is seen as being not only at the right hand of God's throne at Revelation 5:6 but at 7:17 the Lamb is in the midst of God's throne. And, at Revelation 22:3, after the millennial reign, the throne is "of God and of the Lamb;" it is both their throne, and "his servants shall worship Him" (NAB; "sacred service" NWT) which is a direct reference to the Lamb or the unity of God and the Lamb and an overt declaration that the Lamb shares the power and authority symbolized by the throne which implies equality.

Jesus illustrated the shared equality of power and authority with his "hand," a metaphor for the power of God (*Strong and Vine's*, 271).

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; 28 and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one. (John 10: 27-30)

Jesus is saying far more than the Father and He share a unity of purpose, as the Jehovah's Witnesses interpret these verses. Having the same purpose goes without saying. Verse 30 is "justification for v. 29; it asserts unity of power and reveals that the words and deeds of Jesus are the words and deeds God" (NAB notes 10, 30).

Out of the mutual recognition between Jesus and his own comes the gift of eternal life, and the ultimate security of believers, that is, of those who stand under the authority of Jesus (in his hand). This authority, and this security, are moreover the authority and security of God himself; say 'Jesus' and you have said 'God.' (C.K. Barrett, *Peake's Commentary*, 856)

Jesus is not simply acknowledging unity of power and authority with God. To be God is to have God's power and authority inherently. The illustration necessitates a unity of identity in the triune fashion because Jesus speaks of only one hand. If no one (including God) can take Christ's sheep out of his hand, and no one can take these same sheep out of God's hand (including Christ) there can only be one hand, the same hand. Thus, Jesus could rightfully claim that "The Father and I are one," not two as the Jehovah's Witnesses argue, but one, and the same. Hence, Hebrews 1:8, "Thy throne, Oh God, is forever and ever."

This is made all the more evident by Christ's own proclamation that he possesses all power and authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), and rightfully so because as mentioned in section 23 since there can only be one "First and Last" and since both the risen Jesus and God Almighty are "the First and the Last"; and, because "the First and the Last" (Jesus) is also the Alpha and the Omega, and furthermore, because at Revelation 21:5 the Alpha and the Omega sits on God's throne, the throne of power and authority is that of God and the Lamb ultimately, as one principle. The Jehovah's Witnesses don't realize it, but by interpreting Hebrews 1:8 to read "God is your throne," they inadvertently concede that Jesus is God.

Fifth, this "kingship" or throne of power and authority lasts forever and ever:

[B]ut as to the Son, "Your throne, O God,
is forever and ever.... (Hebrews 1:8 Green's Literal Translation)

Daniel 7:14, which the Jehovah's Witnesses cite in support of Christ's kingship and dominion, or rule and authority, also makes it very clear that it lasts forever and shall never be destroyed:

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Green's Literal Translation)

But even the Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe that. Their version of Jesus Christ, the angel, has a very limited, narrow role to play in salvation history and for all practical purposes He is dispensed with after the millennial reign. He is not regarded by them as the eternal king of an eternal kingdom, but reverts back to being an angel on the sidelines. They write:

Since sin and death are to be completely removed from earth's inhabitants, this also brings to an end the need for Jesus' serving as "a helper with the Father" in the sense of providing propitiation for the sins of imperfect humans. (1Jo 2:1, 2) That brings mankind back to the original status enjoyed when the perfect man Adam was in Eden. Adam, while perfect, needed no one to stand between him and God to make propitiation. So, too, at the termination of Jesus' Thousand Year Reign rule, earth's inhabitants will be both in position and under responsibility to answer for their course of action before Jehovah God as the Supreme Judge, without recourse to anyone as legal intermediary, or helper. (*Insight*, 170)

When God ... raised Jesus Christ from the dead to spirit life in heaven ... the heavenly Jerusalem received him into the midst of her organization of angelic sons in heaven, but as the Chief One among them, in the position of Archangel. (M. Alfs, *Concepts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit* [Minneapolis, Minnesota, Old Theology Book House, 1984], 71 n. 152) (*Concepts*)

The Jehovah's Witnesses should probably take a closer look at Hebrews 7:25: "Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" RSV). This refers to the "intercession of the exalted Jesus, not the sequel to His completed sacrifice but His eternal presence in heaven, cf. Romans 8:34 (NAB notes Hebrews 7,25).

Sixth, the Jehovah's Witnesses contend that someone other than God is speaking at Hebrews 1:8, reasoning that "God, thy God" must be someone other than God, "showing that the one addressed is

not the most high God but is a worshipper of that God,” and therefore presumably cannot be God speaking (*Reasoning*, 422). But this argument is weak because no mention there is made of any third party “worshipping” God the Son. It refers to what God was saying about the Son; it is not the Son or anyone else speaking, but God the Father speaking of the Son and emphasizing His divinity. Chapter 1 verses 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13 are obviously in reference to what God said, and it is no different at verses 8 and 9.

Seventh, the *Catholic New American Bible* at John 1:18 makes an emphatic declaration that the Son is God: “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him.”

The only Son, God: while the vast majority of later textual witnesses have another reading, “the Son, the only one” or “the only Son,” the translation above follows the best and earliest manuscripts, *monogenes theos*, but takes the first term to mean not just “Only One,” but to include a filial relationship with the Father, as at Lk 9, 38 (“only child”) or Heb 11, 17 (“only son”) and as translated at Jn 1, 14. The Logos is thus “only Son,” and God, but not Father/God. (NAB notes 1, 18)

35) Thomas called the resurrected Jesus “My Lord and my God” - (John 20:26 - 29)

The Jehovah's Witnesses also contend that even the apostles never thought that Jesus was God, but this ignores John 20:26-29 where Thomas, after witnessing the risen Christ, calls Jesus “My Lord and My God.”

The Jehovah's Witnesses reject this traditional Christian view and teach that Thomas thought of Jesus as no more than a special human occupying a “position far higher” than men and judges who were addressed as “gods” in the Old Testament (see John 10:34, 35 RSV; Ps 82:1-6) (*Reasoning*, 213). Thus, Jesus was “like a god” (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 9). They also suggest “that Thomas may simply have made an emotional exclamation of astonishment spoken to Jesus but directed to God” (*ibid.*).

First, this position ignores the common sense fact that Jesus had just appeared out of thin air, risen from the dead, and any Old Testament comparison to special god-like men are woefully misplaced.

Secondly, Thomas was engaged in a direct conversation with Jesus, not God in heaven, when he uttered those words. He answered Jesus who replied to him in return and nothing in those verses remotely suggests Thomas was speaking to the heavenly Father or referring to Him.

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:26-29 RSV)

Third, calling out “My God” in astonishment would have amounted to taking God’s name in vain and blasphemy in violation of Exodus 20:7 and Leviticus 24:16, crimes punishable by death.

Fourth, Thomas was fully cognizant of the many miracles Jesus performed, in addition to Christ’s implicit and explicit references to himself as God. It truly stretches credulity to think that Thomas

thought of Jesus as nothing more or less than a resurrected man. Casting all doubt aside, Thomas knew that Jesus was his Lord and his God. His answer to Christ “forms a literary inclusion with the first verse of the gospel: “and the Word was God” (NAB notes John 20, 28).

Fifth, highly significant is Thomas’ use of “Lord” and the manner in which “Lord” is tied directly to God. Here, Lord refers to God in the supreme sense because there can only be “one Lord” according to Paul at 1 Corinthians 8:6, 7 and Ephesians 4:5. Although Lord (Greek *kurios*) has a wide application and can apply to men as a title of honor, such a lower meaning of Lord was eventually superseded by the higher meaning after Christ’s resurrection, and this is the meaning employed by Doubting Thomas.

(11) His purpose did not become clear to the disciples until after His resurrection, and the revelation of His Deity consequent thereon. Thomas, when he realized the significance of the presence of a mortal wound in the body of a living man, immediately joined with it the absolute title of Deity, saying, “my Lord and my God,” Jn 20:28. Thereafter, except in Acts 10:4 and Rev. 7:14, there is no record that *kurios* was ever again used by believers in addressing any save God and the Lord Jesus; cf Acts 2:47 with 4:29, 30.

(12) How soon and how completely the lower meaning had been superseded is seen in Peter’s declaration in his first sermon after the resurrection, “God hath made Him - Lord,” Acts 2:36, and in the house of Cornelius, “He is Lord of all,” Acts 10:36, cf. Deut 10:14; Mt 11:25; Acts 17:24. (*Strong and Vine’s*, 147)

“The full significance of this association of Jesus with God under the one appellation, “Lord,” is seen when it is remembered that these men belonged to the only monotheistic race in the world. To associate with the Creator one known to be a creature, however exalted, though possible to Pagan philosophers, was quite impossible to a Jew” (ibid., 147, 148 (16).

Sixth, as we learned earlier, (see section 23) ascribing to both Jesus and God a role which can only be filled by one “Person” must lead one to conclude that Jesus is God. So, if Jesus alone is Lord in the highest sense, and God is Lord, then Jesus must be God. If both God and Jesus are sovereign Lord and master over all and eternal savior, and there can be only one such Lord over all, then consequently Jesus must be God. Similarly, God is Lord of heaven and earth, but Jesus also has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. These roles are not mutually exclusive as there can only be one such sovereign when read together. Therefore, Jesus was, and is, God.

Given the above, the Christian confession “Jesus is Lord” at Romans 10:9 takes on a heightened significance in that Jesus is acknowledged not as mere man, or angel, but God. “[K]urios is the NT representative of Heb. Jehovah (‘LORD’ in Eng. Versions), see Mt 4:7; Jas 5:11” (*Strong and Vines*, 147).

Seventh, Psalm 110:1 makes all of this abundantly clear. It says, “A statement of Jehovah to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as your footstool” (Green’s Literal Translation). The “Lord” of this verse refers specifically to Jesus, but this “Lord” in the Hebrew is adonay, which is “used as a proper name of God, only” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 6). “In the form *adonay* the word means “Lord par excellence or “Lord over all ...” (ibid.). It is “used exclusively as a divine name” (ibid., 4). Jesus, therefore, was, and is, God, because Jehovah called Him adonay, Lord over all, and Peter also referred to Him as Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

Eighth, one of Christ’s disciples, Stephen, when stoned to death, cried out “Lord, Jesus, receive my

spirit” (Acts 7:59). No doubt Stephen was familiar with Ecclesiastes 12:7 “...and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (RSV, Green’s Literal Translation). Stephen was not beseeching an angel to take back his spirit, but the Word who was, and is, God the Son, and who gave Stephen his spirit and to whom it would return.

Ninth, when Thomas said "My Lord and my God," he used the exact words that David used at Psalm 35:23 with reference to God, writing, "Awake, be vigilant in my defense, in my cause, My God and my Lord," (RSV, NAB, KJV and Green's Literal Translation). "Lord" here is translated from the Hebrew *adonai* used exclusively of God. Thomas would never have used these same words when addressing the risen Christ if he were just a man. The Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation changes verse 23 to read in part, "My God, even Jehovah."

36) Jesus refers to Himself as the “I AM,” which is God’s own self-designation - (John 8:58)

Jesus Christ’s express declarations that he was, and is, God, are found at John 8:24, 28, 58, and John 13:19. These are the famous I AM statements where Christ not only revealed God’s name I AM (John 17:6, 26) but stressed His own divinity. Christ also made God’s name manifest throughout his ministry in a larger sense beyond its common usage, for *onama* as a noun stands “for all that a “name” implies of authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence etc..., of everything that the name covers,” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 179).

The significance of the I AM statements can only be understood in the context of Exodus 3:13-15 where God made his name and what it signifies known to Moses during the incident of the burning bush where Moses was called upon to help lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

And Moses said to God, Behold, I shall come to the sons of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they will say to me, What is His name? What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, You shall say this to the sons of Israel, I AM sent me to you. And God said to Moses again, You shall say this to the sons of Israel, Jehovah the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is my title from generation to generation. (Exodus 3:13-15 Green’s Literal Translation)

Thus, God said His name is I AM THAT (or WHO) I AM (’Ehyeh -’Asher -’Ehyeh), or the shortened I AM. I AM THAT I AM is one of the most debated phrases with respect to the Hebrew verb *hayah*. A distinct minority of interpretations render it I-Will-Be-That-I-Will-Be, (R. Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: a Translation with Commentary* [New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004], 321) (*Books of Moses*).

The Jehovah's Witnesses prefer, “I shall prove to be who I shall prove to be,” arguing that *hayah* “means ‘become,’ or ‘prove to be.’” They claim that the reference here is not to God’s self-existence but to what he has in mind to become toward others (*Insight*, 12). But this is incorrect, at most a half truth.

Even scholars who prefer this minority view concede that “the common rendering of “I-AM-THAT-I-AM” cannot be excluded,” (Alter, *Books of Moses*, 321). Furthermore, “Since the tense system of

Biblical Hebrew by no means corresponds to that of modern English, it is also perfectly possible to construe this as “I AM HE WHO ENDURES” (ibid.).

I AM THAT I AM without a doubt represents the majority view, the traditional common rendering, and *hayah* in this context means “to exist,” “to be.” “The verb makes a strong statement about the being or presence of a person or thing” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 68 (1a)). “Ex 3:14 is more than a simple statement of identity: “I am that I am”... is a declaration of divine control of all things (cf Hos 1:9) (ibid., 68). Remember, Jesus said “All power and authority has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18).

The precise meaning of the divine name Yahweh, which stems from *hayah*, is likewise much debated, (ibid., 109). *Strong and Vine’s* defines Yhovah (Yahweh) as “(the) self-Existent or Eternal,” and illustrates how God explained the meaning of “I AM WHO I AM.”

The overall context of Jesus’ claim to be the I AM was His “identity.” In verses 25 and 53 the Jews ask Jesus outright “Who are you,” and “Whom do you make yourself?” And at verse 48 they accuse him of being a Samaritan. John 8:12-59 chronicles a heated debate between Jesus, the Pharisees and other Jews, the central issue being the true identity of Christ, but it should be noted that identity involves more than a name or label. Personal characteristics such as origin, destination, occupation or purpose, associations and age, among other things, combine to identify who a person is, and it was these kinds of attributes the Pharisees and other Jews were prying into and how Jesus responded.

Then the Jews answered and said to Him, Do we not say well that you are a Samaritan, and have a demon? Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. “But I do not seek my glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Truly, truly, I say to you, If anyone keeps my word, he will never ever see death.

Then the Jews said to Him, Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, and you say, If anyone keeps My word, he will never ever taste of death. Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died! Whom do you make yourself? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies me, whom you say is your God. And you have not known Him; but I know Him, and if I say I do not know Him, I shall be like you, a liar. But I know Him, and I keep His word. Your father Abraham leaped for joy that he should see My day, and he saw, and rejoiced. Then the Jews said to Him, You do not yet have fifty years, and have you seen Abraham?

Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I AM. Then they took up stones that they might throw them on Him. But Jesus was hidden, and went forth out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:48-59. Green’s Literal Translation)

Previously at verse 19 Jesus stated that the Jews did not know Him. At verse 12 he identifies himself metaphorically as “the Light of the world.” He tried to explain his origin, having come from heaven above to where he was returning (verse 23) and he stated as one of his purposes conveying to the world what he had heard from the Father (verse 26). He also alluded to his age, that he was preexistent (verse 56). It seems evident, then, that the controversy centered around who Jesus was, and it was in response to that series of inquires that he told them that he was the I AM, understood by the Jews as Yahweh’s

own self-designation (NAB notes 8, 24-28).

The Jehovah's Witnesses take an extremely narrow view and seem to think that Jesus was only referring to his preexistence at John 8:58, and not his identity, going so far as to change the Bible to read "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been" (NWT). But the problem there, of course, is that the Bible doesn't say that or come remotely close. Jesus said "I AM," nothing more (Green's Literal Translation). Their overly narrow view ignores the many repeated references to Christ's identity which the Jews sought to discover. Furthermore, the Jews weren't trying to stone Him to death for being old, but rather for his claim to divinity, to being God, which amounted to blasphemy under the Mosaic Law.

Granted, Jesus' claim to being the I AM did reflect on his age, but in a much larger, preexistent eternal sense. Being the eternal I AM he existed before Abraham by implication, that went without saying, but his preexistence was only one aspect of who he really was, one of His many attributes.

Jesus also referred to himself as the I AM at verses 24 and 25, saying "for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins." So they said to Him, "Who are you?" The Jehovah's Witnesses change this to read "I AM [he]."

At verse 28 Jesus stated prophetically that after they had "lifted up the Son of man, then they would realize that He was the "I AM." The Jehovah's Witnesses also change this to read "I AM [he]."

Highly instructive is the lack of noun or adjective complement with the I AM statements (C. K. Barrett, *Peake's Commentary*, 854). It does not say "I am he," but only "I AM," awkward, yes, but very telling. Even Greek translations of the same words in the Old Testament recognize that Jesus was employing the title I AM which Jehovah applied to himself ("that you may know and believe and understand that I AM") (Isaiah. 43:10).

The Jews contesting with Jesus knew exactly who he was claiming to be. I AM is "... an expression that late Jewish tradition understood as Yahweh's own self-designation (Is 43, 10) ... Jesus is here placed on a par with Yahweh" (NAB notes 8.24-28).

37) And the Word was God - (John 1:1)

The divinity of Christ the Son, that he was consubstantial or of the same essence as the Father, was formally acknowledged at Nicaea I in the 4th century. The decision was in great part a response to the flourishing heresy of Arianism which saw in Christ no more than a creature, a special god-like individual, subordinate to God Almighty in every way at all times. At the very core of Nicaea I was the council's belief in the inescapable Biblical conclusion that Christ the Word was, and is, God. Church doctrine evolved from, and revolved around, this fundamental Scriptural truth. And central to this thought was John 1:1 which in part states in plain language that "The Word was God" (Green's Literal Translation, NAB, RSV, NKJV).

The Jehovah's Witnesses and others, reflecting Arian Subordinationism, interpret John 1:1 differently. The Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation Bible reads: "and the Word was a god." A distinct minority of other translations conveying the same general idea read: "and the Word was divine" (*The Bible - An American Translation*, 1935), or "and godlike kind was the Logos" (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1978).

The Jehovah's Witnesses base their interpretation "the Word was a god" on **a**) rules of grammar, and **b**) the overall context of the Bible. Basically, they argue that even though a literal translation does not include the indefinite article "a" before God, it can and should be inserted, depending upon the context

(*Should You Believe*, Chapter 9), even though a literal Greek rendering is “and God was the Word” or in English “and the Word was God,” (ibid., Chapter 10; *Reasoning*, 416, 417).

Strong and Vine’s vehemently disagrees with this grammatical assessment.

(4) *Theos* is used (4a) with the definite article, (4b) without (i.e., as an anarthrous noun). (4c) The English may or may not have need of the article in translation. But that point cuts no figure in the Greek idiom. Thus in Acts 27:23 (“of [the] God whose I am,”) the article points out the special God whose Paul is and is to be preserved in English. In the very next verse (*ho theos*) we in English do not need the article, (4c) **John 1:1** As to this latter it is usual to employ the article with a proper name, when mentioned a second time. (4c) There are, of course, exceptions to this, as when the absence of the article serves to lay stress upon, or give precision to, the character or nature of what is expressed in the noun.

(4c1) A notable instance of this is in Jn 1:1, “and the Word was God”; here a double stress is on theos by the absence of the article and by the emphatic position. To translate it literally, “a god was the Word” is entirely misleading. Moreover, that “the Word” is the subject of the sentence, exemplifies the rule that the subject is to be determined by its having the article when the predicate is amorphous (without the article).

In other words, the absence of “a” in “a god” lays a double stress on and emphasizes *theos* so that it should read “God,” i.e., “and the Word was God.”

Interestingly, in time the church fathers’ overriding struggle was with the question of the humanity of Christ, i.e., how could God the Son be truly human, not His divinity. The Jehovah’s Witnesses take the opposite view, seeing Christ as only a man while assailing his divinity. Of course the real reason the Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the divinity of Christ and reduce Him to “a god” is the context of the entire Bible, or more precisely, their notion of their Bible’s context (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 9). One hears that quite often.

But after examining the weaknesses in the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ many arguments thus far, and the extreme degree to which they actually change the Bible to accommodate their preconceived notions, is that a reasonable conclusion? Does the context of Scripture require us to conclude that Jesus Christ was nothing more or less than a man as they deeply believe and preach?

John 17:3 plays a large role in their theory. There, Jesus, praying to the Father, referred to the Father as the “only true God.”

And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. (RSV)

The Jehovah’s Witnesses argue that since Jesus was praying to the Father he cannot be the Father, and more importantly, there can only be one “true God.” This would accordingly exclude Christ from being that God. However, as explained in detail above, it is the created humanity of Jesus (who was not God) who prayed to His Father. He was not denying His own divinity, that He was a divine Person who assumed a human nature. The God-man was praying as man to God the Father.

Furthermore, Christ is also referred to as the “true God” (1 John 5:20). And as there can only be one

true God, as the Jehovah's Witnesses insist, then Jesus was, and is, God.

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given to us an understanding that we might know the true One, and we are in the true One, in His son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and the life everlasting. (1 John 5:20 Green's Literal Translation)

38) The Holy Spirit is the divine third Person of the Holy Trinity

The Holy Spirit was joined with Father and Son as one God by Christian writers very early in the first millennium [St. Clement of Rome (c. 95); St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107)], but the Holy Spirit did not gain official recognition by the church as being divine and part of the Trinity until Constantinople I. Early Christian theologians in search of a deeper understanding of God's nature and the works of the Holy Spirit "gradually made more explicit that which was contained only implicitly" in Scripture (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 96).

As explained, the Jehovah's Witnesses reject the idea that the Holy Spirit is a Person or *hypostasis*, and teach that it is nothing more than God's active force, "likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations" (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8). This interpretation, however, is wrong.

First, it is true that in the Old Testament God's Spirit is primarily referred to as a power used to create and influence men's souls and minds like Moses, David or the prophets either temporarily or permanently (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 574). It would teach, guide and eventually affect a moral transformation of mankind under the future New Covenant (*ibid.*). "The OT clearly does not envisage God's spirit as a person, neither in the strictly philosophical sense, nor in the Semitic sense. God's spirit is simply God's power" (*ibid.*).

In the New Testament, however, the Spirit of God is both a power and a Person (*ibid.*, 575). The Jehovah's Witnesses regard the supporting verses as mutually exclusive - the Spirit must be either a power or a person, and since it can't be a person it must be a power. However, Scripture read together cannot accept one meaning at the expense of another, so, as indicated in *Strong and Vine's* the power is the "Power of the Holy Spirit" (at 162), which is the Spirit of God (Romans 9:8-11 RSV), and Jehovah (or Lord RSV) is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17 NWT). The Holy Spirit is not simply an inert unthinking electrical current flowing from Jehovah God. It is a powerful spirit Person.

"The revelation that the Spirit of God is a Person is gradual" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 575). The majority of NT texts reveal God's spirit as something, not someone... (*ibid.*), but "in the Synoptic Gospels [the Trinitarian formula in Mt. 28.19] clearly speaks of the person of the Holy Spirit." So even though in most cases "the phrase 'spirit of God' reflects the OT notion of 'the power of God,' as a result of the teaching of Christ, the definite personality of the Third Person of the Trinity is clear" (*ibid.*).

In the Acts of the Apostles the Spirit's personality is not overtly demonstrated in the texts although "[t]he statement in Acts 15.28, 'the Holy Spirit and we have decided,' alone seems to imply full personality" (*ibid.*, 575). Paul uses the [Greek word for spirit] 146 times. Sometimes it means man's natural spirit, but more often it signifies the divine sanctifying power (2 Cor 3.17-18; Gal 4.6; Phil 1.19). However, the Trinitarian formulas employed by St. Paul (e.g., 2 Cor 13.13), indicate a real personality" (*ibid.*, 575).

The personality of the Holy Spirit is very obvious in the theology of the apostle John and is "very rich

in meaning” (ibid.).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn 14.17; 15.26; 16.13; cf. 1 Jn 4.6; 5.6), and “another helper,” the “*paraclete*” (Jn 14.16). The Spirit is “another” helper because, after Christ’s Ascension, he takes Christ’s place in assisting the disciples, in teaching them all that Jesus himself had not yet told them, in revealing the future to them, in recalling to their minds that which Jesus had taught them, in giving testimony concerning Jesus, and in glorifying Him (14.26; 16.12-16; 15.26; 1 Jn 2.27; 5.6). (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 575)

The New Testament contains many additional references to attributes of the Holy Spirit that indicate personality such as “speaking, hindering, desiring [or] dwelling (Acts 8.29; 16.7; Rom 8.9)” (ibid., 575). Granted, taken in and of themselves one should not automatically identify them as personality traits because “the same expressions are used in regard to rhetorically personified things or abstract ideas (see Rom 8.6; 7.17).” However, in light of the above verses that clearly identify the Holy Spirit as a Person, other activities of a personal nature reinforce the fact that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not an impersonal “it” - and most certainly not an electrical current, or a mere “figure of speech.”

Thus, the Person of the Holy Spirit speaks (Acts 28:25), teaches (John 15:26), strives with sinners (Genesis 6:3), comforts (Acts 9:31), helps our infirmities (Rom 8:26), is grieved (Eph 4:30) and is resisted (Acts 7:51) (*Strong and Vine’s*, 95, Supplement).

Secondly, the Jehovah's Witnesses reason that “[t]he Holy Scriptures tell us the personal name of the Father - Jehovah. They inform us that the Son is Jesus Christ. But nowhere in the Scriptures is a personal name applied to the holy spirit” (*Reasoning*, 407). The weakness in this argument lies in the fact that Scripture does not disclose the personal name of the pre-incarnate Word either (John 1:1) and since Jesus is not an archangel, the Word’s name cannot be Michael as they claim (see section 46). In line with the Jehovah's Witnesses’ logic the Word was not a Spirit person either because we don’t know His name (based on their assumption that the Word is completely separate from God), but we know that to be untrue. Neither are we told all of the personal names of all angelic spirit and demonic forces but that does not establish their impersonal natures or prove they don’t exist.

Third, the Jehovah's Witnesses argue further that “Acts 7:55, 56 reports that Stephen was given a vision of heaven in which he saw “Jesus standing at God’s right hand.” But he made no mention of seeing the holy spirit (see also Revelation 7:10; 22:13)” (*Reasoning*, 407). But this ignores the fact that the Holy Spirit has manifested itself visibly as a dove and flames of fire in the past, and is spirit and unseen to the eye in the unaltered form. Just because we don’t see angels or the Almighty does not mean they don’t exist.

Also, the Jehovah's Witnesses claim, falsely, that the Second Coming of Christ, the *parousia*, occurred in 1914 A.D. and that Jesus is present among us today although invisible. According to their way of thinking then, Jesus is not a person either because he can’t be seen. Remember, God Almighty is an invisible spirit (Colossians 1:15) so the Jehovah's Witnesses should be careful in placing too much literal emphasis on Stephen’s “vision” of God in heaven, or the accompanying Spirit which, after all, is spirit.

Fourth, the personal nature of the Holy Spirit is further illustrated by Jesus’ reference to the Holy Spirit as a “helper” or “advocate” (Greek *paraclete*) who would teach, guide and speak (John 14:16, 26; 16:13). Even though Jesus used the masculine personal pronoun with reference to the Holy Spirit, the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus was referring to an “it” when He called the advocate “he” or

“him.” They write:

Jesus spoke of the holy spirit as a “helper,” and he said it would teach, guide, and speak. (John 14:16, 26; 16:13) The Greek word he used for helper (*para-kle-tos*) is in the masculine gender. So when Jesus referred to what the helper would do, he used masculine personal pronouns. (John 16:7, 8) On the other hand, when the neuter Greek word for spirit (pneumatic) is used, the neuter pronoun “it” is properly employed.

Most Trinitarian translators hide this fact, as the Catholic New American Bible admits regarding John 14:17: “The Greek word for ‘Spirit’ is neuter, and while we use personal pronouns in English (‘he,’ ‘his,’ ‘him’), most Greek MSS [manuscripts] employ ‘it.’”

So, when the Bible uses masculine personal pronouns in connection with *para-kle-tos* at John 16:7, 8, it is conforming to rules of grammar, not expressing a doctrine. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8)

It should first be noted that since the New American Bible “admits” the Greek word for Spirit is neuter they’re not hiding that fact at all. And what the current New American Bible actually states is that “While it has been customary to use masculine personal pronouns in English for the Advocate, the Greek word for “spirit” is neuter, and the Greek text and manuscript variants fluctuate between the masculine and neuter pronouns” (NAB notes John 14:17). Therefore, there is no grammatical prohibition against referring to the Holy Spirit as “he” or “him” versus “it.” It can be either/or.

A literal rendering of “he” at John 15:26 is “that one” (Greek *ekeinos*), and should not be translated as a gender-neutral “it.” According to *Strong and Vine’s*, “*ekeinos* denotes “that one, that person”; its use marks special distinction, favorable or unfavorable; this form of emphasis should always be noted;...” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 80). Thus, the Jehovah's Witnesses have it backwards. The “it” is a “he” or a “him,” a Person, not the other way around.

This is further illustrated by 1 John 2:1, which the Jehovah's Witnesses forgot to bring to your attention in their publication “*Should You Believe in the Trinity?*” There, John refers to Jesus as an advocate/helper or *paraclete* also. It provides in relevant part “And if anyone sins, we have an advocate (*paracletos*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (Green’s Literal Translation).

Thus, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are referred to as advocate/comforter/helper (*paraclete*) yet according to the Jehovah's Witnesses’ rules of grammar Jesus is not a person but a gender-neutral “it.” For that matter, Jehovah who can’t be proven to be male or female would also be an “it” although clearly personified as “Him” and “Father” throughout the Bible. That goes for angels as well who, though being gender-neutral are similarly regarded as spirit persons, not electrical currents. The Holy Spirit is the *paraclete*, the advocate, the counselor and comforter, and in the relevant context a “Person” (*hypostasis*); the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

Fifth, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11 illustrates a distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit compared to God (though not independent of God), and an intellectual ability to probe the thoughts of God, something a current of electricity is most likely not capable of doing.

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also

no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

39) Early Trinitarianism in the patristic times (2d - 4th centuries)

40) The Jehovah's Witnesses rejection of so-called "Satanic Trinitarianism" is based on mischaracterizations and a flawed understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity which developed in response to heretical Arianism in the 4th century.

"The doctrine of the Trinity emerged as theologians of the early church tried to reconcile the revelation of God in Jesus Christ with the conviction of the unity of God that dominates the Hebrew scriptures" (*Oxford*, 1207). The divinity of Christ is based on strong scriptural support and it is this fundamental truth which forms a cornerstone of the Trinity doctrine and Christian faith (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 932).

The notion of Christ's divinity met with considerable opposition by heretics before and after the church's official endorsement and acceptance at the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. (Nicaea I). The divinity of Christ was so patently obvious and logically inescapable the council could draw no other conclusion at Nicaea I, but not without a fight. They accepted the Bible for what it said explicitly and implicitly, fully aware of the role faith played, and humbly conceding that conceptual difficulties were part of the "mysteries of their religion" (1 Timothy 3:16 RSV).

41) The Arian Heresy - The Jehovah's Witnesses teach 4th century Arian Subordinationism, an early heresy condemned at Nicaea I.

Most Jehovah's Witnesses are unaware that their conception of Christ is an adaptation and resurrection of 4th century Arian Subordinationism and theories propounded by earlier Ebionite heretics (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 919). In 318, Arius, a priest of Baucalis, propounded the doctrine that Christ is not fully divine (*Oxford*, 1209; *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 54). "Arius asserted that the Son was a perfect creature, at most a kind of demigod subordinated to the Father" (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 20).

The Father alone, Arius argued, ... is ungenerate, source without source, self-existent. Therefore the Father alone is truly eternal.... (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 297)

"Jesus must be a creature, albeit one who was exalted and achieved union with God. ... Arius insisted 'there was when he was not.' Arius was simply fulfilling the Stoic-shaped logic of trinitarian reflection prior to Origen, for he assumed that the expressed word of God (the Son) was inferior to the inherent reason of God (the Father). (*Oxford*, 1209)

Subordinationism suggests "... that the Father is somehow prior to the Son and the Spirit. ... It was this tendency, pursued by Arius and others, which the Nicaene and Constantinopolitan creeds set out to avoid. (*Oxford*, 1211)

"Arius conceded that Christ was divine; but only in a translated figurative sense of the term. In other words, He is not literally divine at all. He is the most exalted of God's creatures, authorized by God to

be His agent in the work of creation, and adopted as His Son. The Word, then, was specifically different from the Father. He is a secondary deity, subordinate in nature to, not the equal of the Father From Arius' viewpoint, Christ's coming signifies nothing more noteworthy than the arrival of another creature, the decent of a demiurge into flesh" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 919).

Semi-Arianism taught that Jesus Christ is a god subordinate to the Father, which is precisely what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach as reflected in their translation of John 1:1, "And the Word was a god" (NWT), not the "God" of mainstream Christianity.

With minor modifications, the similarities between Arianism and the Jehovah's Witnesses' theory on the nature of Christ are striking. Their conception of Christ is not a unique revelation by the society's founder Charles Taze Russell but reaches back 1,600 years to the first centuries. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach:

Jesus, (was) no more and no less than a perfect human. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 6)

Jesus was a created spirit being Having been created by God, Jesus is in a secondary position in time, power, and knowledge. (ibid.)

(God) created the prehuman Jesus directly. Thus, Jesus had a beginning and could never be coequal with God in power and eternity. (ibid.)

Not only is Almighty God, Jehovah, a personality separate from Jesus but He is at all times his superior. Jesus is always presented as separate and lesser, (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 8).

In every period of his existence, whether in heaven or on earth, his speech and conduct reflect subordination to God. God is always the superior, Jesus the lesser one who was created by God. (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 7)

42) Early Trinitarian thought: Nicaea I proclaims Christ's divinity, coeternity and consubstantial nature; that he is of the same substance as God. Christ must be divine in order to bring about mankind's salvation.

In condemning Arius, Nicaea I proclaimed "Christ's unequivocal divinity" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 298). "... the Son is indeed begotten, but begotten, not made; he is of the substance of the Father, true God of true God; he is uncreated, eternal, nor was there ever when he was not" (ibid.).

"To preclude once and for all the Arian equivocation on the concept of true divinity they introduced a speculation, an explanatory device of their own. This was the famous "consubstantial": The Word is truly God in the sense that he is consubstantial, that he is of the same substance as the Father" (ibid.). Coeternity was unequivocally asserted, all manner of creature-hood definitely excluded and eternal generation of the Son was firmly established (ibid., 298). A difficulty, however, remained with the term "of the same substance."

Is "same" used here in the generic or numerical sense? Is the Word of the same substance as the Father in the way that John is of the same substance as Paul - as both belong to the same species? Or is He of the same substance as the

Father in the way that cannot be extended to John and Paul, or to any finite being, the way of simple identity? In terms of objective implication, of course, Nicaea I's "sharing the same substance" has to be the latter. The Godhead is not a species, nor a general class admitting distribution among individuals. Unless the son possessed the entire Godhead, the (quasi-) numerically and identically same Godhead as the Father, He could not be truly God and to define His unequivocally true divinity was precisely Nicaea I's purpose. (ibid., 298, 299)

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296 - 373) emerged as the arch defender of Nicaea I and for him the "issue was about salvation: the Son could only save if he was fully divine, for no creature could save" (Oxford, 1209).

43) The light gets brighter: formulation of the triune nature of God under Irenaeus, Tertullian and the Cappadocian fathers; how is God one and how is God three?

The early church fathers' recognition of the triune nature of God can be traced back to Irenaeus and further articulated by Tertullian who stated: "The divine unity is disposed [distributed] into Trinity" (Catholic Encyclopedia, 297). Tertullian introduced "persona" as the Latin rendering of *hypostasis* (Greek) to express the distinctiveness of the three persons (Oxford, 1208). "Substance conveys the reality shared by the three persons, which expresses the unity of the three persons" (ibid.).

Tertullian displayed a good sense of the manner in which God is one, and the way in which he is at the same time three:

God is indeed three: in grade or order, in appearance or aspect, but with a realist connotation, and in manifestation; but in substance (granting an indecisiveness in Tertullian's use of the term), in power, God is perfectly one. (Catholic Encyclopedia, 297)

The Word stands forth and is other than the Father though still within the Godhead in the manner suggested by human reflection, as internal discourse is in some sense another, a second in addition to oneself, though yet within oneself. (ibid., 296)

The Cappadocians defended the identity of substance but emphasized three distinct *hypostasis* or persons (ibid., 301). They "... made a clear distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia* (roughly equivalent to particular and universal) (Encyclopedia of Religion, 55).

44) The Holy Spirit is recognized as part of the Trinity and consubstantial. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in being, three *hypostasis*.

In 381 Constantinople I extended the concept of consubstantiation to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (Catholic Encyclopedia, 297) and enthroned Nicaea I's teaching (ibid, 299). "The faith that emerged from the council was a Cappadocian one - the three divine persons united in one divine substance" (Oxford, 1209). Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in being, three *hypostasis* (Catholic Encyclopedia, 299).

The tome of Constantinople I expressed in sufficiently clear and simple language what would forever afterward stand as the Trinitarian dogma. And what the formulation really amounted to was a solution to the problem of plurality within the unique, undivided Godhead.

After so long a reflection and contest, the sense in which God is one became fixed in the Christian consciousness: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial, one Godhead, one power, one substance, of equal dignity and majesty; but in three perfect *hypostasis* or Persons. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 299)

45) West/East - Latin/Greek Split

Unknown to many, there is to this day a significant theological split or divergence between the western (Latin) Roman Catholic church and eastern (Greek) Orthodox church with respect to at least one aspect of the Trinity. Generally speaking, whereas the eastern theological approach places more emphasis on the *hypostases* (three persons), ie. “Trinity in unity,” western Latin theology emphasizes the divine nature, or “unity in Trinity” (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 55). The Jehovah's Witnesses' theories vaguely resemble eastern Greek theology rather than the Latin west (though not in terms of the eternal nature of the three Persons and more).

The Greek approach can be represented by a line: Godhead originates with the Father, emanates toward the Son, and passes into the Holy Spirit who is the bridge to the world. Greek theology (following the New Testament and early Christian creeds) retains the “monarchy” of the father who as sole principle of divinity imparts Godhood to Son and Spirit. The Greek approach tends toward subordinationism (though hardly of an ontological kind) or, in some versions, to tritheism since in Greek theology each divine person fully possesses the divine substance.

The Latin approach can be represented by a circle or triangle. Because the emphasis is placed on what the divine persons share, Latin theology tends toward modalism (which obscures the distinctiveness of each person). (*ibid.*, 55)

Also, in the West the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son as one principle (*filioque*), but in the East it proceeds from the Father and passes through the Son.

Because “the three persons together and inseparably (though without mingling or confusion) bring about salvation and deification, and because the one God is worshipped as Father, Son, and Spirit, no divine person is inferior to any other person. Although undivided, God exists as the pure relationality of love given and received” (*ibid.*, 56). Furthermore:

... all works of the triune God ad extra are indivisibly one The decree of the Council of Florence (1442) that “everything in God is one except where there is opposition of relation” was regarded as a final answer to tritheism (belief in three gods), Arian subordinationism (ontological hierarchy of persons), Sabellian modelism (no real distinctions “in” God), and Macedonianism (denial

of the divinity of the Holy Spirit). (ibid., 56)

“Trinitarian theology is par excellence the theology of relationship. Its fundamental principle is that God, who is self-communication and self-giving love for us, is from all eternity love perfectly given and received. The traditional formula “God is three persons in one nature” compactly expresses that there are permanent features of God’s eternal being (and three persons) that are the ontological precondition for the three distinct manners of God’s tripersonal activity in the world (as Father, Son and Spirit)” (ibid., 55).

Whatever is other, distinct, plural, personal, and proper in the Godhead is exclusively a matter of relationship. Father, Son and Spirit do not differ as God, but in the way each is God with respect to the others. Each has and is the divine nature, but each has it differently: the Father from Himself, the son from the Father, the Spirit from both the Father and the Son. God, then, is one in substance, three in Person, and what is significant about this distinction, what makes it non-contradictory, is that what is personal in the Godhead is not something absolute, but something purely relative. (Council of Florence, 1442). (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 303)

46) Jesus Christ is not Michael the Archangel as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.

Little known to most people is that the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe and teach that Jesus Christ is an angel, Michael the Archangel to be precise (*Reasoning*, 218; *Insight*, 108, 156, 393-394). They base this on Daniel 10:13, 12:1; Jude 9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 12:7-12, 19:11-16; and John 12:31 (*Reasoning*, 218), but none of these verses come remotely close to overturning the context of Bible teaching or convert God the Son into an angel.

Understandably this little piece of information is downplayed, and for good reason. It’s truly mind-boggling and causes most Christians to pause and take a deep breath. Incredible as it may seem, their preincarnate Jesus was a created angel, then became nothing more than man, and after his resurrection and exaltation returned to being an angel, but a type of super angel, higher and more glorified than all the other angels (*Concepts*, 65-73). But they are wrong about this as well.

First, the strongest proof that Jesus was not an angel is found in the pages you just read. For all of the reasons that Jesus was, and is, God, those Scriptural truths automatically exclude Him from being an angel. To reiterate just a few, and without intentionally denigrating any angels who might be watching, the Word was eternal, but angels are created. The Word was before all things, but angels are created. The Word created all things, but that would have included Himself if He was an angel. The list is endless, and at some point, common sense must prevail here.

Secondly, and to repeat a point made earlier, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8 NWT). He cannot have been a preexistent angel who changed completely into mere flesh, and then reverted back to heaven as an angel. On the other hand, there is no such radical change in the Trinitarian Christian world where the preexistent Word was God the Son, remained God the Son during His earthly sojourn, and continued as God the Son after the resurrection and ascension. He never stopped being divine.

Third, when John fell down to worship at the feet of the angel at Revelation 22:8,9, the angel warned

him not to and told him to worship God instead. Since the act of worship must only be directed to God, and God at Hebrews 1:6 said with respect to the Son, “Let all the angels worship Him” (NAB), Jesus obviously must be God. There are several other examples of people worshipping Jesus, such as His disciples prior to His ascension (Matthew 28:17 NAB) and when He restored the blind man’s vision (John 9:38 NAB).

The Greek word used for “worship” is *proskuneo*, and can mean “to make obeisance, do reverence to” and “is the most frequent word rendered ‘to worship’” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 214). Since the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe that Jesus is God, they use “obeisance” or “homage” or “reverence” throughout the Bible when such conduct is directed to Christ. Granted, falling down to one’s knees alone might not equate to worship, and ultimately it is a matter of the heart, but who knows what the heart is feeling? With respect to New Testament worshipers, one can only determine that through circumstantial evidence and the context of the Bible.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Bible shows no one “worshipping” Christ; they do obeisance or pay homage, but after all that you have read thus far, do you really believe that? Can you honestly say that Jesus Christ was just an angel in light of everything He said about Himself, and other people’s testimony, and the many miracles that He performed? Of course not.

In the final analysis the Jehovah’s Witnesses have no legitimate scriptural “context” to rely on, no rational basis for their interpretation, and no justification for altering God’s word as they have done here and elsewhere. The angels were told to worship Jesus and they did, along with His disciples. And as for the blind man who regained his sight, he didn’t simply pay his respects, he dropped to the ground and worshipped Jesus as one would anticipate.

Fourth, verses 5-14 in the first chapter of Hebrews is devoted to clarifying with great specificity that the Son is not an angel, but God. Hebrews 1:1-14 (NAB) states in full:

CHAPTER 1

1 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through prophets; 2 in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,

3 who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.
When he had accomplished purification from sins,
He took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
4 far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

II THE SON HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS

Messianic Enthronement 5 For to which of the angels did God ever say:

“You are my son; this day I have begotten you”?

Or again:

“I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”?

6 And again, when he leads the first born into the world, he says:

“Let all the angels of God worship him,”

7 Of the angels he says:

“he makes his angels winds and his ministers a fiery flame”;

8 but of the Son:

“Your throne, Oh God, stands forever and ever;
And a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions”;

10 and:

“At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth,
And the heavens are the works of your hands.

11 They will perish, but you remain;
and they will all grow old like a garment.

12 You will roll them up like a cloak,
and like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same, and your years will have no end.

13 But to which of the angels has he ever said:

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Much of chapter 1 has been dealt with in previous sections and will only be summarized briefly here. The Christ is God the Son and not an angel for the following reasons, to mention a few:

a) At Hebrew 1:3 the Son is called “the very imprint of his being.” A literal translation says that Christ is “the express image of His essence” (Green’s Literal Translation). Here, “image” (Greek *charaktar*) denotes that the Son is “literally equal to God,” of whose essence he is the imprint. It is the fact of complete similarity which this Word stresses” (*Strong and Vine’s*, 269). Clearly, Christ could not have been created and most certainly was not an angel because either way He would not be literally equal to God, but much less (see section 28).

b) Hebrews 1:4 states that the Son is “far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” This means, among other things, that He is superior in the sense of not being an angel at all because he is in a class of His own (not created) and because at verse 6 we learn that God said, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” As explained above, it is God alone who must be worshipped.

c) This is supported by the famous verse 8 where God speaking of His Son said, “Your throne, Oh God, stands forever and ever;
And a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom”
(see section 34 for a detailed analysis).

d) Speaking to the Son in the third person (self-communication within the Trinity), verse 10 is an Old Testament passage directed to God Almighty but “redirected to Jesus” (NAB notes 1, 8-12):

At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth,
And the heavens are the works of your hands.
11 They will perish, but you remain;
and they will all grow old like a garment.
12 You will roll them up like a cloak,
and like a garment they will be changed.
But you are the same, and your years will have no end.

e) Verse 13 quotes Psalm 110:1 where Jehovah refers to Jesus as *adonay*, a title used exclusively for God.

As strong as this evidence is, the Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t read Hebrews 1:1-14 the same way, but believe that any implication of Christ’s superiority and distinction from the angels means only that he was higher than all the other angels, in a superior position vis-à-vis the angels, though still an angel himself; a super angel. They also teach that many of those speaking in chapter 1 were worshippers of God, not God himself. But the clear language speaks for itself.

Fifth, the Jehovah’s Witnesses attempt to shore up their reading of these verses by arguing that according to the verse following verse 4, the Son must be an angel because both angels and the Son are called Sons of God. If the Son is completely different from the angels, then angels are not Sons of God.

A Watchtower textbook, in commenting on the verse *following* Hebrews 1:4 (wherein the Son is distinguished from angels), says: “But the fact that Jesus Christ is here distinguished from the other angels does not mean that he is not also an angel of God; otherwise, the fact that Jesus Christ is here distinguished as the Son of God would mean that the other angels are not sons of God. Jesus Christ is here designated God’s Son, not in contrast with the angels, but in contrast with the previous prophets, by means of whom God used to speak to men. -- Heb. 1:1-3 (*Concepts*, 72)

As a preliminary matter, there is nothing in verses 1-3 that even remotely suggests that the inspired writer of Hebrews in chapter 1 was contrasting God the Son with Old Testament prophets. This is pure

fabrication. Read it carefully, and then take a close look at verse 4 which sets the stage for all of the “contrasting” verses that follow:

1 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through prophets; 2 in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,

3 who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.
When he had accomplished purification from sins,
He took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
4 far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The superior Son is contrasted with inferior angels in verse 4 and all following verses, not prophets.

Furthermore, their logic is unsustainable. It is illogical to say that because angels are called sons of God and Jesus is the Son of God then Jesus must be an angel. That is what they are arguing, but it ignores verse 5 which makes it very clear that Jesus the Son of God is completely different from angels who are called, figuratively, sons of God.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say:
“ You are my son;

This question in effect means that angels are not his sons in the same way Christ is His Son. Angels are not “His Son.”

Additionally, since the nation of Israel is also called God’s “son” at Hosea 11:1, that would make humans angelic beings as well according to the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ line of thought, but they aren’t. Humans (Israel) are lower than angels (Hebrews 2:7) though called sons of God yet in a completely different sense and class, just like angels are lower than Christ who is superior, who dwells in a non-angelic class of one, as God the Son, who was and is God.

47) Conclusion

The Jehovah’s Witnesses insist that the Trinity is a work of Satan the Devil (*Should You Believe*, Chapter 10) and is invalid because it is a mystery (ibid., Chapter 1). And, as God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33; ibid.) He would not permit such a confusing doctrine because it would prohibit the true worship of Him (ibid.)

First, their reliance on 1 Corinthians 14:33 is misplaced because the “confusion” there was in reference to order during church meetings, those speaking out of turn, and those speaking in tongues. Secondly, the mere fact that the Trinity doctrine is mysterious in some ways, as is God Himself for that matter, doesn’t invalidate the doctrine. After all, Paul is one of the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). He speaks to Timothy of the “mystery of the faith” (1 Timothy 3:9), and the “mystery of our religion” (1 Timothy 3:16). Even Peter referred to some of Paul’s writings as difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16) but that didn’t make Paul wrong.

As difficult as the Trinity might appear to some, remember that certain aspects like the hypostatic union

are taken on faith grounded in reason, but faith is not a bad thing, it is a good thing, “For by grace you were saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast” (2 Ephesians 2:9). If faith has no role in the Christian world, belief in the resurrection of Christ would be nonexistent and salvation impossible to achieve.

It is reasonable to have faith in the Trinity doctrine.

This inability to “know God entirely” (presumptuous in itself) did not hinder the ancients like Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Moses from worshiping Him before the Mosaic Law was handed down. The triune nature of God wasn’t more fully explained until Christ arrived, so even the Old Testament Jews didn’t “know God” as Christ revealed Him, but that did not prevent the Israelites from worshiping God. And just because wrapping your mind around the doctrine of the Trinity might challenge you, that in itself doesn’t mean it is a false teaching, because it’s not.

If you’re still convinced that the Jehovah’s Witnesses are God’s one and only true organization and that they disseminate the truth, please read the two accompanying papers entitled **1) *Why the Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong in teaching that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C. and that Jesus’ Second Coming occurred in 1914***, and **2) *Why the Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong in teaching that only 144,000 go to heaven to rule over humans on earth***.

Finally, whether the Jehovah’s Witnesses (those who devise their religious teachings) are genuinely confused or simply lack the ability to understand the Trinity doctrine, or whether something far more dark and sinister is at work here, is ultimately for the reader to determine.

Jesus is Lord!

Table of Contents to the Watchtower Society’s online publication Should You Believe in the Trinity

(*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* [New York, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989; <http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/index.htm>], Chapter __) (*Should You Believe*)

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