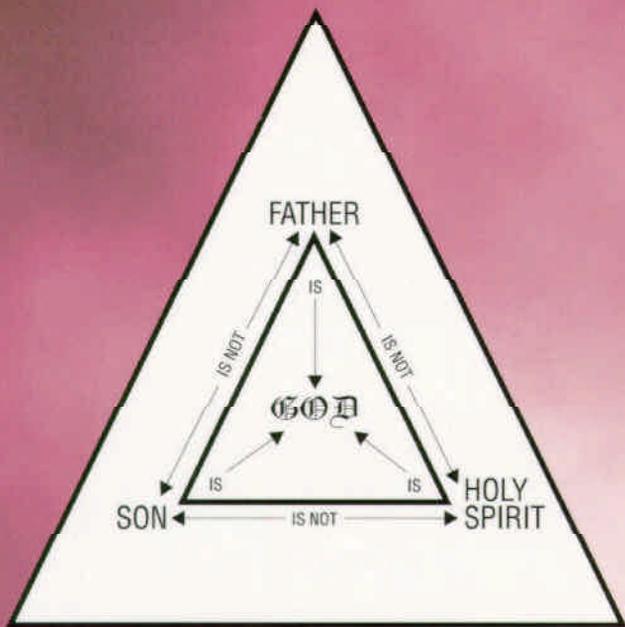


THE TRUTH ABOUT  
*JESUS*  
AND THE  
*TRINITY*



**PETER BARNES**

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by

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“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

—John 4:23–24 (*NASB*)

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

—Revelation 5:13–14 (*NASB*)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to those who helped to produce the revised and, I think, improved format for this second edition. I also wish to acknowledge Mark Shreves for his excellent new cover design. A special word of thanks is due David Costantino for his extensive and invaluable assistance in producing the final product.

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## **THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS AND THE TRINITY**

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Printed in the United States of America

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Peter Barnes was born in England. At the age of 20 and a nominal member of the Church of England, but having little knowledge of the Bible, he was looking for some answers to life's questions. The Jehovah's Witnesses called at his home, offering to conduct a "free" Bible study with him. He became a member of this small, highly exclusive religious group, moving rapidly from a Ministerial Servant to Congregation Overseer. Eventually he was appointed as Circuit Overseer responsible for 16 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

While deeply involved in teaching Watchtower theology, he commenced a careful study of the Bible without using the Watchtower textbooks. Gradually he began to see serious errors in the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses. In May 1978, Peter received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Soon afterwards, his wife Ada came to recognize the Deity of Christ and in December of 1978, together they renounced their membership in the Witness organization. After 30 years in a false religion they now rejoice in knowing Jesus Christ.

In 1982, Peter was ordained as a minister of the Gospel with the General Conference of Baptist Churches and preaches extensively cross-denominationally in the churches in Southern California. In May of 1994, Peter was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Linda Vista Baptist Bible College and Seminary (now Southern California Bible College and Seminary) located in El Cajon, California.

Peter serves as Director of Out of Darkness Ministries, a countercult mission that is part of Vision 2000 at Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California.

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# INTRODUCTION

This book is an analytical critique of a primary false teaching of the Watchtower cult; it is an examination and a refutation of the attack by Jehovah's Witnesses upon the Deity of Christ (the unique Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh).

As a former Jehovah's Witness, I spent 30 years serving the Watchtower Society. This included four years in a position of considerable responsibility as a Circuit Overseer. During my years of service in that capacity, I taught no less than 50 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. I have personally experienced the remarkable degree of brainwashing that has been perpetrated upon the rank and file Witnesses, especially concerning the subject of who God is, the nature of God, and the identity of Jesus Christ.

Now, as a Christian minister engaged full-time in exposing and countering the heresies of the Watchtower Society, I realize how important it is to provide Christians with a thorough refutation of the false teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and to endeavor to rescue lost souls from entrapment in the Watchtower organization.

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# Chapter 1

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## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES INSIST THAT JESUS CHRIST IS NOT GOD

Of all the false teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, one of the most sinister is their teaching that Jesus Christ is not God. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus is the first of God's (Jehovah's) creations, the first "thing" Jehovah ever brought into existence. The Watchtower identifies Christ as the Archangel Michael, who's name appears only five times in the entire Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Without any Scriptural support whatsoever, the Watchtower teaches that the life of Michael the Archangel was somehow transferred to the womb of Mary, was born as a human to be the man, Jesus, and then when Christ returned to heaven at the end of His earthly ministry, He became Michael again, but in a more exalted position. This is pure speculation because in fact the New Testament writers never refer to Jesus as Michael.

It is very important for Christians to realize that if Jehovah's Witnesses could prove their contention that Jesus is Michael, they would prove that Jesus is not God and that the Trinity doctrine is false. However, just a brief examination of their proof texts, namely, Daniel 12:1,

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Bible, Daniel 10:13; 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7.

1Thessalonians 4:16 and Revelation 12:7–10<sup>2</sup> will reveal that the Witnesses are making huge assumptions in trying to identify Jesus as Michael. There is absolutely no direct evidence in Scripture to prove their assumption. Christians should be very emphatic in bringing this to the attention of Jehovah’s Witnesses who call at their homes.

## **HOW TO DEAL WITH JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES**

When the Witnesses come to your door, they will try to dominate the conversation, so you will need an effective method of reversing this situation.

There are three things you must do: (1) Take control of the conversation as quickly as possible. (2) You must determine the subject for discussion. (3) After taking control, KEEP control of the conversation.

Usually when Jehovah’s Witnesses come to your door they will not identify themselves right away; they will just launch right into their message, so there is no reason why you shouldn’t interrupt them. Kindly but firmly, interrupt them by asking, “Which church do you represent?” They will tell you that they come from the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is your opportunity to take over the conversation, so say to them something like, “I appreciate the zeal and dedication that you people have, but if you feel that you are teaching the truth of the Bible, then you have a problem.”

The Witnesses will react to this statement immediately and ask you, “What problem?” Thus they will pass the initiative into your hands. Now that you have taken over the conversation, you can then proceed to present Scriptural proof that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed God. If you examine orthodox Christianity today, you will find this is

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<sup>2</sup> As we explore the Watchtower doctrine that Jesus is not God, we will be quoting Scriptures throughout from the official Watchtower version of the Bible, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, unless otherwise noted.

the cutting edge of all doctrine. This doctrine concerning the identity of Christ separates the false religions, the imitation Christian groups, from genuine Christianity.

Remember though, that Jehovah's Witnesses know a lot of Scriptures and they are going to be very anxious to lead you into their favorite passages, moving quickly from one verse to another. Slow them down. Suggest to them, "instead of jumping around from verse to verse, let's make sure that we thoroughly discuss each passage before we go on to the next one."

Continuing now with the subject of your discussion with the Witnesses and taking control of the conversation. I suggested that you say to them, "If you believe you are teaching the truth then you have a problem," and I mentioned that they would react by asking you, "What problem?" When they do that, don't tell them right out what the problem is; just ask them the following question: "How do you account for the fact that Jesus was the God of the apostles?" This is going to touch a sensitive point with the Witnesses, because they believe that the teachings of modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses are identical to the teachings and practices of the apostles, yet you are suggesting that the apostles believed something that today's Witnesses do not believe. So immediately the Witnesses are going to demand, "Where does it say that in the Bible?" In response to their demand, point them to John 20:28.

The context of this verse shows that Christ had been resurrected and before ascending to heaven He appeared to His disciples on a number of occasions. At His first appearance, Thomas was not with his fellow apostles and didn't get to see the resurrected Jesus. He was very skeptical and in essence said, "Unless I see Him for myself, then I am not going to believe." So Jesus appeared and proved the resurrection to Thomas. In verse 28 Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God."

## HOW TO REFUTE FALSE EXPLANATIONS

Jehovah's Witnesses are not very happy with that verse; they are quite reluctant to discuss it. However, they have tried to come up with some answers to the problem, and I am going to explain these right now so you can know how to refute them if they use them. The first thing that they might say is, "Thomas looked at Jesus and said, 'My Lord,' and then looked up to heaven and said, 'My God.'" What is wrong with that? Are they entitled to put such a construction on that verse? The answer is no! What you must do is make them look closely at the actual wording of the verse, which reads, "Thomas said to HIM..." Point out to the Witnesses that the word "HIM" refers to Christ, and so Thomas said to **Jesus**, "My Lord and my God." Notice also there is the conjunction, "and," in the middle of that sentence. It cannot be broken into two different parts. The ENTIRE statement was obviously made to Jesus. Jesus, according to Thomas, was "his Lord and **his** God."

The alternative excuse the Witnesses might use is as follows: "You must remember that Thomas was all shaken up because of his encounter with the resurrected Christ, and he did what a lot of people today do when they get shaken up over something. He said, 'My God!'" However, that would be blasphemy, wouldn't it?, using God's title in vain. So, explain to the Witnesses that Thomas was a devout Jew. He would have been trained all his life in the teachings of the Old Testament and the Jewish religion, and wasn't about to make a mistake about who God is. Even if he had made that mistake and in error had referred to Jesus as his God, if Jesus was not God, then Jesus would have been obligated to correct Thomas. He would have had to rebuke Thomas for such a serious error. Look at the surrounding context and you will see there is no rebuke by Jesus. Obviously, Christ was acknowledging the truth of what Thomas said.

By the way, we have a Scriptural reason for accepting

the literal meaning of the words of Thomas at John 20:28 which we mentioned earlier. John the Apostle had already told us at John 1:1, "...the Word was God." Therefore, it was God that became flesh. John provides us with an interesting conversation between Jesus and the Jews at John 2:18–22:

**Verse 18:** The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show us, seeing that you do these things?"

**Verse 19:** Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days **I** will raise it up." (Our emphasis)

**Verse 20:** The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple and will **you** raise it up in three days?" (Our emphasis)

**Verse 21:** But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

**Verse 22:** When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this, and they believed the **Scripture** and the **word which Jesus had spoken**. (Our emphasis)  
*NASB*

It is important to notice that the sign Jesus gave the Pharisees was the sign of the resurrection. He told them that if they were to destroy the temple of His body, **HE** would raise it up again. The Pharisees naturally thought He was talking about the temple in Jerusalem, and they replied sarcastically, "It took 46 years to build the temple and you think you can build it again in three days?" (Paraphrased)

However, verse 21 tells us very emphatically that Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body, and we know very well that means His literal body, because it was His body

that was “destroyed” in death, and it was His literal body that came out of the grave three days after He was killed. Here is the point I want you to notice: verse 22 says, “When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples (including Thomas) remembered that He said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” This means that when the disciples encountered Jesus after His resurrection, they remembered Christ’s words to the Pharisees, “Destroy this temple, and in three days **I** will raise it up.” (Our emphasis.) Who was going to raise the body of Christ? Jesus said, “...I will raise it up.” So when Thomas was faced with the proof of the resurrection of Christ, and he remembered Christ’s words, he would also realize that no man can raise himself from the dead. But what man cannot do, God can do. So, as Jesus is God, (God in Jesus who never died because He is not subject to death) He was capable of raising the **humanity** of Jesus from death. Therefore, Thomas could say with perfect truth to Jesus, “My Lord and my God.”

The Witnesses want to get away from John 20:28 as quickly as possible. So they will try to get your attention diverted to some other Scripture. You can control the conversation by saying, “I am sure the verse you want to show me is very important, but we really haven’t finished the subject of the deity of Christ yet, so why don’t we continue with the Scriptures that show clearly Christ’s deity and we will look at your verses later on.” Then continue, and say to them, “Not only did Thomas believe that Jesus was God, but so did the Apostle Matthew at chapter 1 verse 23.” Here the Apostle is commenting about the birth of Jesus in fulfillment of prophecy. Verse 23 says, “Look! The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which means, when translated, ‘With us is God.’” (*NWT*) Notice, Matthew didn’t say that the name Emmanuel means, when translated, “with us is Michael the Archangel.” Also, all

versions of the Bible translate “god” with the initial cap form, a capital “G” for God, including the *New World Translation*!

We know that Jesus was never literally called Emmanuel during His time on earth. When the Jewish people in His day saw Him walking along the street they never said, “Oh, here comes Emmanuel.” They always referred to Him as Jesus, or Jesus of Nazareth, or Jesus the son of David, and so on. Nor did God require them to call Him Emmanuel, because the whole secret of the word “Emmanuel” was to convey an idea, a great truth, namely, that when Jesus was born He would be “God with us,” not “Michael the Archangel with us,” or some “unknown spirit with us,” but literally “God with us.”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses have a rather pathetic argument to help themselves avoid the obvious implication of Matthew 1:23. They point out that many Old Testament prophets were given names that highlighted God’s name, such as “Elijah,” which means “my God is Jehovah.” But that did not mean Elijah was God. So by the same token, the Witness will tell us, Jesus, being called “Emmanuel” does not mean Jesus is God; it merely indicated that God was helping people through the work of Jesus. It should be pointed out to Jehovah’s Witnesses that “Elijah” was the prophet’s given name. That is what His contemporaries called Him. The given name of the Son of God is Jesus, and that is what His contemporaries called Him. The name “Emmanuel” was never used as a name for Christ in His day. The word “Emmanuel” was included in the prophetic Scriptures to provide the Jews with a powerful clue to the real identity of their Messiah.

Show the Witnesses that the Apostle John also believed that Jesus is God. Ask them to turn to John 1:1. When you ask a Jehovah’s Witness to turn to John 1:1, he will think you are going to play right into his hands. The reason is because their Bible reads very differently from most Bibles

on this subject. In the *New American Standard Bible*, for example, John 1:1 reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The “Word” in this verse is Jesus, as shown by John 1:14. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, the Watchtower Society’s own “translation,” the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ official Bible, reads, “In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” (Our emphasis added)

Not only is the indefinite article, “a,” inserted into the text, but the word “God” is spelled with a lower case “g.” So you can see that the Watchtower has actually changed the meaning of that particular verse. Jesus is no longer God, He is just “a god,” or a “mighty one,” as they will explain. What can Christians say about this? It is a good idea to bring the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ attention to what leading Bible scholars and translators have said about their *New World Translation*.

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## Chapter 2

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### EXPOSING THE WATCHTOWER BIBLE

First of all, it needs to be emphasized right away that the *New World Translation* of John 1:1 is dreadful. It is very bad scholarship. The attitude and the knowledge of the Watchtower leaders who translated that verse is terrible. There are quite a number of scholars in the Christian world who have gone on record totally condemning the Watchtower translators for their treatment of John 1:1. For example, Dr. Julius R. Mantey, who together with Professor Dana produced the famous Dana and Mantey *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. Both these men were considered to be leading authorities on the meaning of Greek grammar. Dr. Mantey was asked about the *New World Translation*, and he said, “It is a shocking mistranslation, obsolete and incorrect. It is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 ‘the Word was a god.’” (Our emphasis). This quote is from his indignant letter to the Watchtower threatening a lawsuit because they had misused his *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* on pages 774–775 of the original 1950 edition of the *New World Translation*.<sup>3</sup>

Another example is that of Dr. Bruce N. Metzger of Princeton, Professor of New Testament Language and

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<sup>3</sup> CARIS publication, *The Scholastic Dishonesty of the Watchtower*, by Michael Van Buskirk. CARIS, P.O. Box 1659, Milwaukee, W153201.

Literature. He says about the *New World Translation* of that verse, “A frightful mistranslation, erroneous and pernicious. If the Jehovah’s Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists.” Also, Dr. William Barclay, one of Britain’s leading translators, from the University of Glasgow in Scotland, says, “The deliberate distortion of truth by this sect (meaning Jehovah’s Witnesses) is seen in their New Testament translations. John 1:1 is translated ‘the Word was a god,’ a translation which is **grammatically impossible**. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is **intellectually dishonest**” (Our emphasis).

Finally we have Dr. F.F. Bruce of the University of Manchester in England, another leading authority. He says, “Much is made by Arian amateur grammarians of the omission of the definite article with ‘God’ in the phrase ‘and the word was God.’ Such an omission is common with nouns in a predicative construction. ‘a god’ would be totally indefensible.”<sup>4</sup>

Jehovah’s Witnesses really need to face up to these facts instead of just blindly assuming that their translation is the most accurate and most authoritative in the world.

When one tries to find out who translated their Bible, one cannot find out. The Watchtower leaders refuse to reveal the names and credentials of their translation committee! Fortunately, however, we know persons who worked in the Watchtower headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, who were in close contact with all the members of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and they know the men who produced that translation. There were five members of the Governing Body involved,<sup>5</sup> and it is a

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<sup>4</sup> Greek Translators comments: Help Jesus tract by Maurice Coveney, Box 2212 STN “R,” Kolowna, Canada.

<sup>5</sup> The names of Governing Body members who produced the New World Translation: Fred Franz, Nathan Knorr, Albert Schroeder,

well-known fact that none of these men have any real academic credentials. If they know the Greek language, then they were largely self-taught. You can be self-taught and possibly develop a reasonably good working knowledge of the language, but you cannot learn enough to become a leading world authority on the subject. This is what would be needed in order to produce the most accurate and authoritative translation. Certainly those men were not equipped to do that. Again I say, Jehovah's Witnesses have got to face the facts!

Jehovah's Witnesses tried to boost their translation by saying that other translations agreed with theirs at John 1:1. For example, in their booklet *The Word: Who is He According to John?*, on pages 4 and 5, they refer to translations which they claim support theirs. They mention *The New Testament in an Improved Version*, which was published in 1808 and based on a manuscript translated by Archbishop Newcome of the Church of England.

Another is Benjamin Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*. The third one they mention is *The New Testament, a New Translation Based on the Oldest Manuscripts*, by Johannes Greber.

*The New Testament in an Improved Version*, based on Archbishop Newcome's manuscript was not published until years after Newcome's death, when his original text came into the possession of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue—**Unitarian**." Unitarians are the same as Jehovah's Witnesses in that they refuse to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. Those Unitarian publishers produced an "edited version" of Newcome's manuscript!

If we look at the *Emphatic Diaglott* and check Benjamin Wilson's translation of John 1:1, we will note that in the interlinear section (which shows each Greek

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Milton Henschel, George Gangas. *Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses Who Love the Truth*, by William I. Cetnar, page 68.

word with its corresponding English word underneath), Wilson has written under the Greek word “θεο” (deity, God), “a god,” but when we examine Wilson’s finalized translation (his preferred rendering), we find that he does not say “the word was a god,” but “the Word **was God.**” Therefore his translation does not provide adequate support for the *New World Translation*.

Special note should be taken of their so-called “supporting” translation by Johannes Greber, which was published in 1937. Greber, who was a one-time Catholic priest, says he was aided by the “spirits” who clarified certain passages of the Bible and cleared up what he called “doctrinal” errors of Christianity. Greber’s wife was herself a spirit medium, and she was instrumental in making this translation. Greber published a companion text for his New Testament translation entitled *Communication with the Spirit World of God*.<sup>6</sup> This book recounts the events that led him to become interested in spiritism and outlines his doctrine on how the spirit world works and how God and spirits relate to and communicate with men. Greber actually claimed the spirits (really demons) working through his wife, the spirit medium, helped him with his translation! No wonder he was able to translate John 1:1 “...the Word was a god”!

Recently, in 1985, the Watchtower Society issued a revised version of its *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*. In the appendix, at 2A, page 1139, they have dredged up one more obscure English translation which appears to support theirs, *The Monotessaron; or the Gospel History According to the Four Evangelists*, by John S. Thompson, of Baltimore, published in 1829. However, the *American Quarterly Review*, volume 8, Sept/Dec 1830, published an article on Thompson’s work clearly revealing that he too was guided by demonic influence in his

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<sup>6</sup> Johannes Greber Memorial Foundation, 139 Hillside Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666.

translation!

Tactfully suggest to the Jehovah's Witness: "If I were a member of a translation committee working to produce the most accurate and most authoritative translation of the New Testament that had ever been made, and when I finished, I found that the only other English translations that agreed with mine were produced by Unitarians and demonized spiritists in communication with the spirit world, I would be very worried about my translation!"

## **HOW TO QUESTION JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

However, most Witnesses will insist despite the evidence of the experts and scholars, that their *New World Translation* of John 1:1 is the most accurate and authoritative. In view of this, why not use the following approach and say to them, "Let's assume, just for the sake of argument, that your translators are right and they have John 1:1 correctly translated. Look at it in your Bible again, and let me ask you this question, How many gods do you have in that verse?" This question is going to make the Witnesses feel a little uneasy. A Witness doesn't like to talk about two gods because he knows that there is only one true God. So he is going to say, "There is only one Almighty God. Jesus is just a 'mighty one,' or 'a god.'"

The Witness is trying to sidestep your question, so re-emphasize it, "But how many gods of any kind do you have in that verse? It doesn't matter if they are big or little or 'almighty' or just 'mighty.' How many gods of any kind do you have in that verse?" Offer to count them and go over the verse and say, "'In (the) beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God...' Okay, this is god number one, what is the identity of this god?" The Witness will tell you that the first god referred to in John 1:1 is Jehovah, and He is the Almighty God. You make a note of that, and continue reading, "'...and the Word was a god.' That's god number two, isn't it?" Very reluctantly the Witness will admit that

there are two gods in that verse. Then you ask, “What kind of gods are these two?” Proceed to explain that the Bible tells us that there are many gods. The Witness will agree. You then point out that a study of God’s Word shows that although there are many gods mentioned in the Bible, they all divide off into just two basic kinds, either false or true. Give examples of false gods, e.g., 2 Corinthians 4:4, which shows Satan is “god” of this world. Satan is obviously a false god.<sup>7</sup> The Philistines also had a god, named Dagon; what kind of a god was he? A false god. The Witness will catch on quickly. Show also that the Canaanites had a god called Baal; he was a false god, too, and the Witness will agree.

Since publishing the first edition of this book, it has been brought to the attention of the author that there are a few passages of Scripture that appear to use the word “god” in a purely metaphorical sense, for example: Exodus 4:16 *NASB*, where Moses is told that he will be like God to Pharaoh. Another possible example is found at Psalm 82, quoted below in connection with John 10:35. However, Christians should realize that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not view Jesus as “god” in any metaphorical sense. They believe that Christ is a real, literal “god” in his own right, so the test of “true” or “false” can validly be applied to Him.

What does the Bible say about true gods? To illustrate, I am going to quote from the Watchtower’s own *New World Translation*. Quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter four:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Some Witnesses will even try to argue that Satan is a true god! They say the word “god” means a mighty one, and Satan is a mighty spirit creature. However, any comprehensive dictionary will show that a “god” is “an object of worship” and Satan is a false god because people offer him false worship.

<sup>8</sup> 1971 and later editions of *New World Translation*. See also John 5:44.

**Verse 35:** “You have been shown so as to know that Jehovah is the [true] God and there is no other beside Him...”

**Verse 39:** “And you well know today and you must call back to your heart that Jehovah is the [true] God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. There is no other.”

The Bible agrees from beginning to end with that concept of the one and only true God, all other gods being false gods. Jehovah’s Witnesses will try to avoid that issue. They will argue that men are called “gods” sometimes in Scripture. They usually refer to Jesus’ words in John 10:31–35 when He was replying to the Pharisees who accused Him of making Himself equal to God, “It is written in the law, I said you are gods...” Jesus was actually quoting from the 82nd Psalm, and we need to note carefully how He applied the verse, and also the context of Psalm 82. John 10:35 says (NWT), “If he called ‘gods’ those **against** [Our emphasis] whom the Word of God came....” When the Word of God comes against somebody, you can be sure that the Word is coming in judgment and condemnation against them. An examination of Psalm 82 reveals that certain judges of Israel, who were men, even though they were called “gods” in recognition of their positions of great authority, are identified as being sinful, crooked, and perverse, rendering false judgments and perverting justice. God is warning them that they are going to die like any man, so we must never make the mistake of thinking of those men as standing in any kind of “true God” category.

This being so, into which category of “god” are Jehovah’s Witnesses going to put Jesus? If they call Him “a god” they have a real problem, because no Jehovah’s Witness really wants to label Jesus as a false god, which means they have to label Him as a true god, thus

proclaiming two “true” Gods. Now we should be able to see one reason why reputable translations read at John 1:1, “...and the Word was God.” These are correct translations because they avoid that problem of having two true gods, or putting Jesus in the category of being a false god.

Finally, you say to the Witness, “Let’s apply the rule of True or False to the two gods that you have in your Bible at John 1:1. ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God...’ You Witnesses say that God is Jehovah. What kind of god is He?” And they will affirm that Jehovah is the true God. You continue, “‘...and the Word was a god.’ What kind of god is He?” Jehovah’s Witnesses will never say that Jesus is a false god, so what alternative will that leave them? They will have to admit that Jesus is a true God also. In conclusion you say, “You really do have a problem because you have TWO True Gods in your Bible, and how are you going to account for Isaiah 43:10 and 44:67” These verses clearly show that the God of the Holy Bible is the ONLY God, so the *New World Translation* is contradicting itself!<sup>9</sup>

### **AN ALTERNATIVE RENDERING OF JOHN 1:1**

One other thing should be said on the subject of Bible translations. Although the vast majority of English Bibles do read, “...the Word was God,” at John 1:1, there are a few reliable translations which read, “...the Word was divine,” or words to that effect. Jehovah’s Witnesses will try to use these to support their “a god” translation. Some Jehovah’s Witnesses will tell you they accept that Jesus is divine. Once again, though, we are up against their failure to understand the meaning of important Bible words. To them, for Jesus to be divine means merely that He is a spirit with divine nature or that He has a godly character. The usual Greek word translated “divine” is “θεῖο” and refers only

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<sup>9</sup> For a concise outline of this dialogue, see Appendix.

to the unique the one-and-only, nature of God Himself. Men are not divine, angels are not divine, and certainly demons are not divine. Only God is divine, according to the Bible (Isaiah 46:9, *NWT*). Jehovah's Witnesses try to get around that problem by referring to 2 Peter 1:4, which says, "...you may become partakers of the divine nature." (*NASB*) That is true, but that verse is **not** saying that we **are divine**, or that we will become divine. When we become true Christians and we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit comes and actually dwells in us, and thus we become partakers of the divine nature.

This does not, however, turn our human natures into divine natures and make us into "little Gods." But, please note, Jesus, in contrast with men and angels, is divine. That is why some translators use this word to describe Him at John 1:1 (for example, see *The Bible—An American Translation*, by Smith and Goodspeed.)

When we face up to that great truth and accept it, the truth about the true deity of Jesus Christ, it automatically begins to help us understand other Scriptures in the Bible which are clear references to Jesus being God.

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## Chapter 3

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### JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES SPREAD MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE TRINITY DOCTRINE

The Watchtower leaders have used a lot of misinformation on the subject of the Trinity, and in doing so they have confused the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses terribly. So there is a real need to address these problems and see whether we can straighten them out. Let's start with a typical example of Watchtower "thinking." Their book, *Let God Be True*, (1952, p. 100) states, concerning the Trinity, "the doctrine, in brief, is that there are three gods in one." (See also *Watchtower*, April 1, 1970, p. 210.)

It is very common, when talking with Jehovah's Witnesses, to hear them say, "How can you have three gods in one? It is an impossibility. The Trinity doctrine teaches that there are three gods in one, and you can't even visualize it." The Jehovah's Witnesses, based on Watchtower comments, have said something that is completely wrong. The Trinity doctrine does not teach that there are three gods in one; it has never taught that, and it will never teach that! Let's examine in some detail what the Trinity doctrine really does say, as quoted in the Watchtower Society's book, *Make Sure of All Things* (1965 edition, p. 484):

"The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central

doctrine of the Christian religion.... in the Unity of the Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct from one another .... ‘the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet **there are not three Gods** but one God.’” (Emphasis added by this author.)

Please note that last point, these three Persons, although one in the Godhead, are truly distinct from one another. We are talking about three individually identifiable Persons. The Father can be identified distinctly, the Son is also distinct, and the Holy Spirit is distinct.

The definition goes on to say, “We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.” What does that mean? The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all of the same unique substance of God, and yet we do not confound the Persons by mixing them up with one another and foolishly and ignorantly saying that the Father is the Son or the Son is the Father. Nor is the Father the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit the Son. These are three distinct persons in their own right and identity, but they all function within the being of the one true God because they share equally the unique divine nature of God. That is what the Trinity is really all about.

The extreme confusion of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and their lack of understanding of the Trinity doctrine is clearly demonstrated in their booklet *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* where, on page 19, under the heading “Jesus Continues Subordinate” they say:

“Paul also said that Christ entered ‘heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf.’ (Hebrews 9:24, *JB*) If you appear in someone else’s presence, how can you be that person? You

cannot. You must be different and separate.”

And again on page 27, in the shaded block, there appears, “Someone who is ‘with’ another person cannot also be that other person.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses are thus fraudulently accusing Trinitarians of believing that the Father is the Son and the Son is the Father, that they are one and the same person. Yet at the same time, as noted above, their textbook *Make Sure of All Things—Hold Fast to What is Fine* contained the correct explanation of the Trinity, namely that the three persons of God were not each other and there are not three Gods, but one God. It’s just that the Witnesses have never paid proper attention to the doctrine.

It should be noted in passing, that a few religious organizations teach modalism, which is the idea that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all one person, but orthodox, fundamentalist Christians regard modalism as heresy.

Sometimes when dealing with Jehovah’s Witnesses, conceptualizing helps, endeavoring to develop some kind of mental picture that will help them understand the Trinity. To illustrate, suppose we take three candles and stand them on a table and light each of the candles. Clearly we have three flames; each flame is distinct from the others (and in this illustration, separate). We pick up the two outer candles and blend them together with the candle flame in the middle. The three flames come together and merge into one. This is not a conjuring trick, neither is it an optical illusion. The three flames can be separated again and made to blend together again. Now, what is it about flame that permits that blending of three into one? It cannot be done with human bodies because of our particular substance and nature. However, flame is of a different substance. It is of a different nature and possesses properties that enable flames to blend and merge together and yet keep their own identity

when you separate them.

What does the Bible tell us about the substance and nature of God? In John, chapter 4, verse 24, we are told that God is **spirit**. That is what His substance is. It should not be too difficult for Jehovah's Witnesses to understand that the true God exists in the form of three divine spirit persons, each one blending with the other two, yet retaining their individual identity. Therefore, if it was God's purpose for one of these divine spirit Persons at a certain time in world history to transfer His center of intelligence and identity from the heavenly realms, and actually come down to this earth and dwell in the form of a man, why should the Jehovah's Witnesses assume such a thing to be an impossibility?

### **“KEY” BIBLE WORDS<sup>10</sup>**

Part of the problem for many Jehovah's Witnesses is not only the misinformation they have been given and the false concepts that have been taught them, but also they have never had the basic meaning of words explained to them. Let's take a close look at the meaning of the word, “person.” What is a “person?” Jehovah's Witnesses tend to make a very limited application of this word; they will say, “You are a person and I am a person, but animals and birds are not persons; neither are inanimate objects persons.” This is correct as far as it goes, but they seem to have the idea that the word “person” is limited to humans. However, the word “person” does not describe a head, legs, arms, feet and teeth; the word actually pertains to all things which have personality. Personality obviously refers to the characteristics of someone. If I am going to describe a particular individual's characteristics, I might say that he is easy going, he is generous, he is a bit slow on the up-take, he is very patient. You can define “person” as any being (or

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<sup>10</sup> “Key” words in the Bible are those the correct meaning of which will greatly clarify the meaning of Scripture.

creature) that possesses intelligence, self-awareness, will, and personality characteristics: that is a person.

This definition can be applied not only to humans, but also to angels. Are angels persons? Do they possess intelligence, will, characteristics of personality? Of course they do, and so therefore the angels are spirit persons. Satan is a person. He has intelligence, will, personality, self-awareness. Therefore, Satan and his demons are spirit persons. Almighty God is a personal God, He possesses those qualities of personality, and it just so happens that the God who created the universe is tri-personal. He has three centers of will; He has three centers of intelligence; and He has three centers of personality. These are identified in Scripture as the Person of the Father, and the Person of the Son, and the Person of the Holy Spirit. This should not be too difficult for people to understand.

Now let us turn our attention to the fact that one of these divine spirit Persons who constitute the Trinity, was chosen to come down to this earth and to take on manhood. When that divine Person came down to this earth and became human, He did not lose His deity. We should be able to realize the self-evident truth that if He was God, then whatever took place, He could not lose His “God” nature. God cannot lose His Godship and change completely into something else. On becoming a man, then, He would have two natures. He would already possess the nature of God, that which we would call the divine nature, and He would create for Himself a human nature. The two natures would combine together in some way in the person who walked this earth, Jesus. This truth can be clearly discerned from John’s Gospel by comparing chapter 1, verse 1 with verse 14, thus:

**John 1:1** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” (Our emphasis added)

**John 1:14** “And the Word became flesh and resided among us and we had a view of his glory, the glory that belongs to an only begotten son from a father.”

## **WHAT ABOUT VERSES THAT IDENTIFY JESUS AS “SEPARATE” FROM GOD?<sup>11</sup>**

If you, as a Christian, decide to have an “in depth” dialogue with Jehovah’s Witnesses, you will need to spend some time addressing the question of separation of identity between God the Father and God the Son. When Jesus was on earth He was always talking about His Father in heaven and how He depended on His Father, and prayed to His Father. Why was it that way if Jesus and His Father were both the one true God? Philippians 2:5–8, I believe, provides the answer to this question:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (*NASB*)

The Scripture says concerning Jesus, “...He existed in the form of God.” The Greek word for “form” is “*morfhē*” This word is rarely used in the New Testament, and then only of Jesus, no one else. We must not confuse this word with “image,” translated from the Greek “*eikōn*,” used, for example, at 1 Corinthians 11:7, where man is spoken of as

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<sup>11</sup> By “separation verses” we mean Scriptures that describe Jesus as someone separate from God, apparently some other being than God. These verses are all referring to Christ’s human identity (e.g. John 20:17).

“God’s image.”

“The definition of “*morfhi*” refers to the nature or essence of someone, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual and retained as long as the individual itself exists. Thus in this passage at Philippians, chapter 2, “*morphe*” is the divine nature actually and inseparably subsisting in the person of Christ:” (see *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 463). So, for Jesus to be existing in the “form” of God is the same as saying that He is God. Philippians 2:6 goes on to say, “...[He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped...” This is in the sense of His not wanting to **hold onto** His equality with God, but instead He was willing to empty himself and take the form of a bond-servant and be made in the likeness of men.

Notice the use of the word, “form,” once again; it is again the Greek word “*morfhi*” Was Jesus in the form of a bond-servant when He appeared on earth? Was He essentially human or was He just in some imitation “form” of man? The answer is, He became truly man, and He really did have the “form” (*morfhi*) of a human “bondservant,” or “slave.” Jesus was the real thing. Therefore, when verse 6 says, “...He was in the form of God,” it means He had the same nature as God.

The Jesus who walked this earth two thousand years ago had two natures, divine nature and human nature. This truth is revealed in Scripture by the use of the two special titles. Jesus has many titles, but two of them are used prominently in the Gospels. One of them is “the Son of man,” and the other is “the Son of God.” All the titles applied to Jesus have a special significance, so let us examine the significance of these two titles. First of all notice, please, He was not called “a Son of man,” He was called very specifically, “THE Son of man.” Why did Christ have that title? The Watchtower leaders would tell you that was His legal title. Jesus was legally being defined

and identified in Scripture as genuine man. He was not an imitation man, or an angel who had merely materialized so that people could see Him. He was a genuine member of the human family.

With regard to the other title, please notice that He is not called a Son of God, He is called THE Son of God, which also is a very specific and very unique title. What does that tell us about Jesus?

Just as the title, “Son of man” was given to identify His human nature, so His title, “the Son of God” was given to identify His genuine God-nature, His divine nature. The divine nature, is unique and is possessed by the true God only. It naturally follows, then, that Jesus has to be the True God. If we trace these two titles all the way through the Gospels and the books comprising the New Testament, we will see how Christ’s human nature and His God nature are brought to the fore when each title is used.

It is important for us to understand that even though Jesus had the divine nature, His divine nature had to take a “back seat,” as it were. It would not be appropriate for the divine nature of Jesus to always be overwhelmingly manifested in His life because His human nature had to be able to grow and mature and function as a genuine man. Also, those around Him would have been continually overwhelmed by such divine manifestation of the infinite, all-powerful God.

Jesus demonstrated to mankind what it means to be a man. One of the most important lessons any human can learn is that we are totally dependent on God who created us, and that our entire lives must be lived in dependency on Him. This explains why Jesus was always praying to the Father in heaven, to demonstrate humanity’s need of God. That is why He said, “I do not do anything of My own initiative. I only do what the Father in heaven tells me to.” (John 5:19, 30, paraphrased) When Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to His Father we glimpse

the human Jesus praying to the divine Father in heaven while the deity of Christ took a “back seat.” All the “separation” verses can be accounted for in that way.

You need to thoroughly absorb the above information if you wish to share effectively with the Jehovah’s Witness and successfully correct his thinking on this subject of the true identity of Jesus Christ.

Continuing with our subject, we see from Scripture that occasionally, Christ’s divine nature showed through. For example, when Jesus would forgive sins, as in the case of the paralyzed man mentioned in Matthew 9:2, to whom He said, “Take courage, my child, your sins are forgiven.” Jehovah’s Witnesses try to get around that by saying that Jesus was given the authority by God, just as later He informed the disciples that they, too, would receive authority to forgive sins (John 20:23). However, the context of this verse indicates this was given in connection with their forthcoming commission to preach the gospel in all the world. In Luke 24:47 Jesus said, “On the basis of his name repentance for forgiveness of sins would be preached in all the nations.” (*NWT*) Anyone who accepted their message would receive forgiveness of sins; any who rejected the message, their sins would remain.

In contrast, Jesus forgave third-party sins! Just imagine if, as a Christian today, you said to yourself, “I am like the Apostles and I am a Christian, so I can forgive sins.” You see a young criminal being taken to jail by the police, so you approach him and say, “Your sins are forgiven.” You would probably be viewed as a religious fanatic. We do not have the authority to forgive sins that way. Only Jesus had the divine authority to forgive whomever He wished, for the simple reason that He was God and possessed that divine prerogative.

Another argument the Jehovah’s Witnesses use is based on the Scripture, 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ

Jesus.” (NASB) They will say, “Jesus is not God; He is mediator between God and man, so Jesus has to be separate from God.” You must point out to them that they fail to notice that the verse says, “...there is one God and one mediator between God and man [who is] the **man** Christ Jesus.” (Our emphasis) It is by virtue of His human nature that Jesus can function as the mediator. Yet He still possesses divine nature, too.

### **A KEY MISTAKE OF JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES**

One of the terrible mistakes Jehovah’s Witnesses make in their teaching about Christ is that at His resurrection He gave up His humanity forever. They believe when Jesus died and His human body went into the tomb it was dissolved by Almighty God.<sup>12</sup> Needless to say, the Bible mentions no such thing, but the Jehovah’s Witnesses have to stick to that foolish explanation because, according to their belief, Jesus had to rise from the dead as a spirit in order to become Michael the Archangel once again! The resurrection doctrine is concerning the “body.” That is what the word *resurrection* is all about: it refers to the restoring to life of the human body with its human nature. So the real Jesus who rose from the dead was not only divine but also human. That is why the Bible says that we have a mediator who is a man.

When Paul wrote his letter to Timothy it was many years after Jesus had died and had been resurrected and had gone back to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Yet Paul writes in the **present tense**, “There **is** one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.” So Paul clearly indicates that Jesus retained His humanity at His resurrection and took it with Him to heaven.

A further point raised by the Jehovah’s Witnesses concerns Stephen’s vision, as recorded in Acts 7:55, where

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<sup>12</sup> Watchtower book *Things in Which It is Impossible For God to Lie*, page 354.

he saw “...Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses will use this to confirm Jesus’ complete separateness from God. Jehovah’s Witnesses fail to realize that the divine Spirit of Christ now inhabits a glorified human body, so any vision of the heavenly realm now will show Christ’s glorified humanity separately and distinctly from God the Father, who Himself remains purely Spirit.

### **HOW COULD MEN SEE JESUS AND YET NOT SEE GOD?**

One further example should be given of their inadequate reasoning. This is based on the biblical statement that no man can see God (John 1:18). The Jehovah’s Witnesses will point out that men saw Jesus. If Jesus was God, how could it be said that no man has seen God? What does the Bible actually mean when it says no man can see God? Interestingly, in the Old Testament we find a number of references to people who claimed that they saw God. For example, in Isaiah 6:1–5 Isaiah gives testimony of having seen God and he is worded because he knew the Old Testament concept that no man can see God and live, a truth that God had stated to Moses at Exodus 33:20. The answer to the apparent problem is simply that Isaiah saw God in a vision. Humans would surely die if they saw God openly displayed in all His infinite power and glory. It would be as if you or I were to stand a few inches away from the sun of our solar system. We would be instantly consumed and turned into a puff of smoke (see Hebrews 12:29).

But God can appear to man, either by vision or by concealing Himself in human form. A careful examination of Genesis 18 and Judges 13 should make this truth abundantly clear. This also explains why Jesus Himself could insist, in John 6:46, that no man had ever seen God the Father, yet at John 14:9 He could inform Philip, “...He

who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (NASB) So, share these Scriptures and explanations with your Jehovah’s Witness opponent.

The Witnesses are going to be very anxious to get away from these particular verses and to get on to the passages of Scripture they are fond of, the ones they think really prove their ideas about who Jesus is. Now, as Christians we do have to give them the opportunity to show us those particular parts of the Bible and therefore we need to know how to refute their false arguments. That is what we are going to do in the following chapter. We will first itemize the Witnesses’ main arguments and basic passages of Scripture, then look at them very closely to see what they say about those particular verses.

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# Chapter 4

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## EXAMINING AND REFUTING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' PROOF TEXTS

In their attack on the deity, or Godship, of Christ, the Witnesses have two basic arguments that they use:

- (A) Jesus cannot be God because Jesus had a beginning; He was created, and obviously God Himself is, by definition, uncreated. As it is stated in Psalm 90:2c, "...from everlasting to ever lasting Thou art God." (NASB)
- (B) Jesus cannot be God because the Bible shows that He is inferior to God and obviously, by definition, God could not be inferior to Himself.

In support of their two arguments, they have eight primary passages of Scripture. Three of those verses are used to try to prove that Jesus was created, and the other five try to prove that Jesus is inferior to God.

### **ARGUMENT (A)—JESUS WAS CREATED**

Of those which are supposed to prove that Jesus had a beginning, one is in the Old Testament, Proverbs 8:20–30, and the other two are in the New Testament, Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 3:14.

Let me emphasize this point: These are the only

passages of Scripture in the entire Bible that the Witnesses themselves feel can be used to prove that Jesus had a beginning! We are going to take a close look at these passages now and see what to make of them. I am going to quote the *New World Translation* of each passage, and you can make a comparison with these verses in your Bible.

### **PROVERBS 8:22–30**

Let us start with Proverbs 8. You will notice that in most translations verse 22 says, “The Lord Himself possessed me...” However, in the *New World Translation* this verse reads, “Jehovah himself **produced me...**” Producing suggests the idea of bringing something into existence or starting something. Starting what, though? In Proverbs 8, God’s wisdom is described. But isn’t God’s wisdom eternal and uncreated? If God is eternal, then surely His attribute of divine wisdom is eternal. There could never have been a time when God was without wisdom. So “possessed” is a more accurate translation than “produced.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses point out that Proverbs 8 personifies wisdom, and they assume that the Scripture must be describing Jesus in His pre-human state. However, this is an unproven assumption. Having mistranslated verse 22, they go on to emphasize verse 30, where wisdom speaks: “...And then I came to be beside him [that is, beside Jehovah] as a master worker, and I came to be the one that he was fond of.” So they create the idea of Jesus under the figure of wisdom, being brought into existence as the first of Jehovah’s creative work, and then walking alongside His Father like a master worker.

The important thing to do here is to bring their attention to what it says in Proverbs 8:1–2: “Does not wisdom call out and discernment lift up **her** voice? On the top of the heights by the way **she** has stationed **herself**.” Although wisdom is personified, it is in the feminine gender; wisdom

here is pictured as a woman. The same thing occurs in Proverbs 9:1: “True wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars.” I suggest to you that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is not going to be typified or represented in the Old Testament under the figure of a woman. Most likely the writer of Proverbs was using figurative language, describing God’s attribute of wisdom in the form of a “handmaid” to the Lord, ever present to carry out His will.

This use of the feminine gender was such an irritant to the *New World Translation* committee that they changed it! Their Bible at Proverbs 8:1–2 reads, “Does not wisdom keep calling out and discernment keep giving forth **its** voice? On top of the heights by the crossing of the roadways **it** has stationed **itself**.” They eliminated the feminine gender and replaced it with the neuter gender. So wisdom is no longer personified as a woman: Interestingly, the Jehovah’s Witness leaders themselves have admitted that the original Hebrew is in the feminine gender. In their book entitled *God’s Eternal Purpose Now Triumphant for Man’s Good*, page 28 we read,

“Our thinking here reminds us of what is said in the 8th chapter of the Book of Proverbs, where divine wisdom is depicted as a person who talks about himself. Of course in the original Hebrew text of Proverbs, the word wisdom is in the **feminine** and speaks of itself as a **female** person. Divine wisdom does not have any separate existence apart from God. Wisdom always existed in Him, and so was not created. For this reason it is interesting to hear how wisdom speaks of herself as a feminine person.”

So there, without any real explanation of why they did so, they have admitted that they have changed that portion of Scripture from feminine to neuter without any

satisfactory reason for doing so.<sup>13</sup>

## **COLOSSIANS 1:15**

Let us consider now Jehovah's Witnesses' second verse, the New Testament passage at Colossians 1:15, which refers to Jesus. In the *NWT* it says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." The Witnesses interpret this statement to mean that Jesus was the first thing that God created. This is a good example of how easy it is to misunderstand the key words that are used in the Bible, and Jehovah's Witnesses are doing just that. The key word in this case is "firstborn." The Witnesses are assuming that the word "firstborn" is equal to "first created." The word "firstborn" DOES NOT mean "first created"; they are two different words. There is a Greek word for "firstborn" and there is a Greek word for "first created." The Apostle Paul, who was writing under inspiration, could have used the word for "first created" if he had wished to do so, but he chose to use the word "firstborn." (prwtotoko").

So what does the expression "firstborn" really mean? In Scripture it refers to the first child to be born in the family (see Luke 2:7). There is also another meaning for "firstborn," namely "primacy," or "pre-eminence." The word "primacy" comes from the word "prime," which means "first." Please note it doesn't mean first in time; it means, rather, first in position. For example, in Britain today there is a Prime Minister. Britain's Prime Minister is not that country's "First"-ever Minister, but its chief Minister, the one who has the position of primacy over all other ministers in the British Government. That is the sense in which "firstborn" is being used in Colossians 1:15. A

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<sup>13</sup> It should be mentioned that Hebrew has only masculine and feminine genders. So feminine nouns would, at times, be given neuter pronouns by the translators. However, Proverbs 7:4-5 indicates clearly that the writer of Proverbs intended Wisdom to be presented as a woman.

good cross reference to use for this is Psalm 89:20, 27. Verse 27 is talking about King David. God says, “I myself shall place him as firstborn, the most high of the kings of the earth.” Notice that God is going to place David as firstborn. Anybody who knows the background of King David knows that he was the eighth son of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:9–13). Yet God says that He is going to make David, the eighth-born, His firstborn. How does He do it? Verse 27 says, “I will make him the most high of the kings of the earth.” David will have the primacy as one over all the kings of the earth. This same use of the word “firstborn” can be applied to Jesus in Colossians 1:15, thus Jesus is not the first created, but the chief over all. He has the position of primacy, or leadership, over all creation.

I think it is worthwhile to include an additional point of information on this passage at Colossians 1:15–16. Please compare it with the *NWT* given below:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 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.”

The *New World Translation* introduced an extra word into the text, the word “other,” which completely alters the force and meaning of that verse. It allows the Witnesses to claim that Jesus could be created and then He Himself proceed to create “other” things.

Is the word “other” in the Greek text? The answer is emphatically NO! Other translations, however, read, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities, all things have been created by Him

and for Him.” (NASB) When you look at that verse you will see that Christ is being referred to as the creator of everything; nothing is left out. He created all things, regardless of whether they were things in the heavens or the things on the earth, whether they were visible things or invisible things. If Jesus created each and every one of them, then we have proved that Christ could not have had a beginning. He Himself is not a created thing, but He is **author of all creation.**

The special Watchtower New Testament known as *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* contains a copy of the Greek text. It’s a good idea to get the Witnesses to show you that translation and then ask them to turn to Colossians 1:16 and look at the Greek text, with the literal English words underneath. Let them see for themselves that the *New World Translation* committee has added the word “other” to their translation. It is also a good idea to cross reference this verse with John 1:3. So if the Witnesses insist that the word “other” must appear in Colossians 1:16, then that verse contradicts what it says in their own Bible at John 1:3!

### **REVELATION 3:14**

Now let us consider Revelation 3:14, the last of the three passages used by the Witnesses in their attack on Christ’s deity. Here the *NWT* reads, “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...” Jehovah’s Witnesses will interpret this statement to mean that Jesus was the first thing that God created. This again is a clear example of the Witnesses misunderstanding the meaning of Bible words. They look at the word “beginning” in that verse, and assume that it means the first part of something or the start of something. As for example, if I say to you, “I am going to Los Angeles at the beginning of next week,” you will

automatically assume that I am going at the first part of the week. But the beginning in the Bible has another meaning as well. It means the source or the origin of something. So, in Revelation 3:14, Jesus is the **source** of God's creation.

The Apostle John, when using the Greek word for "beginning" (ἀρχή), always uses it in the same way in the book of Revelation. For example, as a cross reference you can use Revelation 21:5–7, which, according to the *NWT* reads:

“And the One seated on the throne said, ‘Look! I am making all things new.’ Also, he says: ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true.’ And he said to me: ‘They have come to pass! I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the beginning** and the end. To anyone thirsting I will give from the fountain of the water of life free. Anyone conquering will inherit these things, and I shall be his God and he will be my son...’”

When you read that passage with a Witness, ask him, “Who is the Alpha and the Omega?” He will reply, “Jehovah God Almighty.” Now point out that Jehovah tells us He is the beginning. In what sense is Jehovah or Almighty God the “beginning” of anything? Is He the first part of His own creation? Obviously not, but He is the origin, or source, of His creation.

At this point we should be able to see that the three passages of Scripture which the Jehovah's Witnesses use in order to try to prove that Christ was created, or that He had a beginning, very clearly do not support the Witnesses' arguments.

Let us go on now to consider the second argument raised by the Witnesses in their attempts to disprove the deity of Christ, namely, that Jesus cannot be God because the Bible shows that He is inferior to God, and of course, God, by definition, cannot be inferior to Himself. They use

primarily five passages of Scripture in order to prove their position. They have other passages, but if we concentrate on just these five, interpreting them in their context and noting the principles involved, then we will also be equipped to explain the other verses that the Witnesses try to use. The relevant passages are John 14:28; 20:17; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:28 and 8:6.

## **ARGUMENT (B)—JESUS IS INFERIOR TO GOD**

Jehovah's Witnesses are convinced that they can prove Jesus Christ to be an inferior being to God the Father. And as God cannot be inferior to Himself, it logically follows that Jesus simply cannot be God.

### **JOHN 14:28**

Quoting from the *NWT*, commencing with John 14:28: "You heard that I said to You, I am going away and I am coming [back] to You. If You loved me, You would rejoice that I am going my way to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am."

Because Jesus said "...the Father is greater than I am," the Jehovah's Witnesses will say Jesus is inferior to His Father. Was that really what Christ meant? We should be careful how we think of key words in the Bible.

The key expression here is "greater." In what sense is the Father greater than Jesus? To illustrate, it would be true to say that the President of the United States is greater than I am, but is he necessarily better? No. He is "greater" than I am by virtue of his special office as Chief Executive of the United States Government. Does this make him "better" in his person? No. He is a member of the human family just as I am, and we both have equal status when it comes to our possession of human nature. Jesus wasn't saying that His Father was really superior to Him by nature, only that His Father's **office** was greater.

It is important to remember what Christ had to do in

order to become a man on earth, as described in Philippians, chapter 2, which gives an inspired explanation of what happened when Christ left His exalted position in heaven to come down to earth to be a man. Verse 6 says that Christ was existing in heaven in the form of God, and verse 7 tells us He emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. What did Jesus do in order to come to be in the likeness of man? He emptied Himself. He divested Himself of His glory as God; He divested Himself of His prerogatives as God and placed Himself voluntarily under the tremendous restriction and limitation of being a man on this earth, carrying out the roles of mediator and messiah. Therefore, while on earth in those roles, He would obviously be dependent on His Father in heaven.

However, Jesus was not inferior to His Father, because Jesus still possessed His God-nature, and so was equal with His Father by nature, even as I am by nature equal with the President of the United States.

### **JOHN 20:17**

Our next verse for consideration is John 20:17. The context sets this in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus appeared to Mary after His resurrection. The verse reads, "Jesus said to her: 'Stop clinging to me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father. But be on your way to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and Your Father and to my God and Your God.'" The Jehovah's Witnesses are going to point out that this is the resurrected Christ, not Jesus as a man ministering on earth, but the resurrected Christ saying, "I must ascend to my God." (Paraphrased) Could Jesus make such a statement if He Himself were God? This verse reveals perhaps one of the most important features of the great doctrine of the person of Christ.

Jesus Christ, when He walked this earth, was

combining together in Himself two natures. In the person of Christ can be seen the divine nature, on the one hand, which is the nature of God, and the human nature, or the nature of man, on the other hand. Jesus was both God and man at one and the same time.

An interesting exercise to undertake is to go through the Gospels and note carefully the sayings and the activity of Christ and see how at times the divinity of Christ is revealed, then at other times, the humanity of Christ is revealed. For example, at John 4, Jesus was sitting at the well talking with the Samaritan woman because He was tired out from His journey. Only a man gets tired; God does not get weary nor need a rest. An outstanding example of the humanity of Christ was seen when He was hanging on the cross. He was dying and He was saying His final prayers to His Father. Of course, when Christ died, it was the **humanity** of Jesus that died, not the **divinity** of Christ, because the divine Jesus, the God in Jesus, could never die. Therefore, when Christ was resurrected from the dead, it was the humanity of Christ, the human Jesus, that rose from the dead.

To illustrate the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus, one can refer again to the use of two special titles applied to Christ throughout the Gospels, namely, “Son of Man,” and “Son of God.” Jesus Himself used those two titles on one occasion in one passage of Scripture, John 5:25–28. The *NWT* reads (Jesus speaking),

“Most truly I say to You, the hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the **Son of God** and those who have given heed will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted also to the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to do judging, because **Son of man** he is. Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice...”

“Son of God” is the title showing the divinity of Christ, so notice the action which accompanies it! Those who hear the voice of that divine one, the Son of God, will live. Only God can grant eternal life! On the other hand, when we look at verses 27 and 28, we see that God has given Christ authority to do judging because “Son of man” He is. We see that the divine Christ is the one who performs the miracle of giving you eternal life; the human Jesus is the one who is associated with the judging of mankind. (Please remember though, we don’t have two Jesus Christs, just one Christ, who gives evidence of possessing and exercising two natures.)

This also explains the Apostle’s speech in Acts 17:30–31,

“True, God has overlooked the times of such ignorance, yet now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent. Because he has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead.”

Note the key phrases: “...by a **man**...he has resurrected...” That’s the man, Christ Jesus. Christ’s divine nature will judge through the human Jesus and Christ’s human nature will be associated with the divine nature in the future judgment of mankind. So at John 20:17 Jesus was emphasizing the human aspect of His identity, identifying Himself with His disciples as their “brother.”

### **1 CORINTHIANS 11:3**

The third Scripture for consideration is 1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God.” The principles of headship

and subjection are under review in this verse. Please note: this verse has no bearing on the intrinsic equality of persons. If we examine the central clause of this verse, "...the head of a woman is the man..." we will see that it refers to the exercise of headship among those who are by nature equals. Is there any Christian in this day and age who imagines that men are by nature superior beings to women? I can assure you the Jehovah's Witness women don't think that about their husbands. Therefore, if the Witnesses insist that this verse proves Christ's natural superiority to man and God's natural superiority to Christ, then this verse also proves man's natural superiority to woman (this last conclusion being one that the Witnesses refuse to accept, thus demonstrating their inconsistency in interpreting Scripture).

### **1 CORINTHIANS 15:28**

The same things can be said about the next passage in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 28, "But when all things will have been subjected to him, then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone." (Note: in most other translations the last words are "...that God may be all in all.") The Witnesses say the Son being in subjection to the Father again shows He must be inferior to His Father, or inferior to God. But in reality it is the same principle of headship that exists between persons. Even within the persons of the triune God this principle can be seen in operation. For example, we know from Scripture that the Father sends the Son and the Father sends the Holy Spirit. The Son is also spoken of as sending the Holy Spirit. But we never read of the Holy Spirit sending the Father or the Son. This principle of headship pertains to every activity throughout all creation where intelligent persons are involved together in work projects or combined activity. It is evident in the family, and you find it existing in

companies. Take a boardroom of company directors, for instance. Here is one who is designated as the Chairman of the Board; he is the “Top Banana,” as they say. But does that mean because a man becomes a Chairman of the Board of Directors that he can put his thumbs behind his suspenders and go around sticking his chest out and saying, “I am a superior form of life” to the rest of the members of the board and all those working in the company? Of course not! It is merely a principle of headship which exercises good order and purpose.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 8:6**

Now let’s consider 1 Corinthians 8:6. The Apostle is saying, “...there is actually to us one God the Father, out of whom all things are, and we for him; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and we through him.” Jehovah’s Witnesses believe this verse contains a definitive statement of who God is. To us Christians there is actually one God, who is the Father, Jesus is merely described as “Lord.” Therefore, there is only one God and He is the Father.

Are the Witnesses correct in their evaluation of this passage? Let us examine the surrounding context. What the Apostle Paul is doing here is to contrast the polytheistic worship of the pagan nations (Gentiles); their worship of many gods, with the monotheistic worship of Christians, the worship of one God. Starting in verse 4, Paul says, “Now concerning the eating of foods offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one.” (Vs. 5) “For even though there are those who are called ‘gods,’ whether in heaven or on earth, just as there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’...”

History is replete with examples of pagan gods, “so-called gods,” both man-made gods and real demons that have been called gods by people. In fact, the planets of our solar system are named after some of those ancient pagan

heavenly gods: Mars, the god of war; Venus, the goddess of love, and so on. The pagans also had earthly gods. Pharaohs, kings of Egypt, were worshipped by their subjects as gods. Also in the days of the Apostle Paul, the Imperial Caesar of Rome was worshipped by the pagan Romans as a god. The Apostle categorized the many idols of the pagans (“...whether in heaven or on earth....”) as gods. He continued, and linked the terms “gods” and “lords” in order to tell us that all those pagan “deities,” both “heavenly” and “earthly,” could be classified synonymously as “gods” and “lords.” The two terms are interchangeable. When the pagans referred to their deities, they called them either gods and/or lords. So the Apostle using the same language in writing to this once-pagan congregation, speaks about the one deity recognized by Christians as God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, so, both titles, God and/or Lord, apply to God the Father and Jesus Christ interchangeably, synonymously.

It is important to realize when interpreting this verse that the terms “God” and “Lord” are NOT mutually exclusive. If they were, then only God the Father could be called “God” and only Jesus Christ could be called “Lord.” However, even in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* there are places where Jehovah (to Jehovah’s Witnesses “Jehovah” is God the Father) is called “Lord.” A good example of the word “Lord” being applied to God the Father is found at Acts 17:24, where the Apostle says, “The God that made the world and all the things in it, being, as this One is, Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples...” Another example can be found at Revelation 11:15, “...The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule...”

Are the two titles used synonymously for Jesus? Yes. He is called “Lord” many times in the Scriptures. But is He called “God?” Yes, again. At John 20:28, as we have dis-

cussed earlier, the words of Thomas to Jesus at finally being confronted by the risen Christ are, “My Lord and my God.” Also, at Matthew 1:23, again as discussed above, the Apostle tells us that the Hebrew name “Emmanuel,” translated into Greek and applied to Christ is “with us is God.” And again, at John 1:1, “...the Word was God.” At Isaiah 9:6 the prophet prophesies to the world, “For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” So the Witnesses cannot use 1 Corinthians 8:6 to try and show that Jesus is not God, or that only the Father is God.

Having taken a close look at eight passages of Scripture which Jehovah’s Witnesses use in their attack on the deity of Christ, we see they have made a number of mistakes in their exegesis of those passages. They misunderstand the meaning of key words, they interpret Scriptures out of context, and so on. When we look at these passages in their proper contexts, when we get the correct understanding of these vital words, we see that those verses do not support the Witnesses’ idea that Jesus either had a beginning or that by nature He is inferior to His Father.

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# Chapter 5

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## GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT

We turn now to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In their book *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, page 380, Jehovah's Witnesses make the following statement:

“The Hebrew word Ruach, and the Greek pneuma, which are often translated ‘spirit,’ have a number of meanings. All of them refer to that which is invisible to human sight and which gives evidence of force in motion. 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 (Luke 1:41; Math 3:11; Acts 10:38). None of these expressions would be appropriate if the holy spirit were a person.”

### “AN ACTIVE FORCE”

From the above quotation we learn that the Witnesses believe the Holy Spirit to be nothing more than an impersonal, invisible, active force. In fact, in other publications of theirs, they have likened the Spirit to electricity.<sup>14</sup> The Watchtower booklet *Should you Believe in the Trinity?* contains the following statement on page 20:

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<sup>14</sup> *This Means Everlasting Life*, page 166. Published by the Watchtower Society, 1950.

“The Bible’s use of ‘holy spirit’ indicates that it is a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish a variety of his purposes. To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.”

### “NOT A PERSON”

On page 21 of their booklet we find:

“In the Scriptures it is not unusual for something to be personified. Wisdom is said to have children. (Luke 7:35) Sin and death are called kings. (Romans 5: 14, 21) At Genesis 4:7 The *New English Bible (NE)* says: ‘Sin is a demon crouching at the door,’ personifying sin as a wicked spirit crouching at Cain’s door. But, of course, sin is not a spirit person; nor does personifying the holy spirit make it a spirit person.”

**It is vitally important to understand that the purely abstract attribute of wisdom is personified only once in the entire New Testament. Also, sin is personified just five times, and death six times. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is personified in excess of one hundred times. There is positively no valid parallel between the way in which the New Testament writers spoke of the Holy Spirit and their sporadic personification of utterly abstract things.**

An extremely misleading assertion is again presented on page 22 of the *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* booklet under the heading, “The Helper”:

“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 (paraklhto”) 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 (pneuma) is used, the neuter pronoun ‘it’ is properly employed.”

This only serves to trick the reader into naively concluding that the New Testament writers always used the neuter pronoun “it” in connection with the neuter noun (pneuma) Spirit, simply because the Greek rules of grammar required it.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. The apostles themselves, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, at times ignored the grammatical rule! For example, in the very chapter to which the Watchtower article makes reference, namely John 16:13–14, there are three strikingly clear instances where the masculine personal pronoun is used in connection with the neuter word “Spirit.” (See *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* published by the Watchtower Society.)

It is, therefore, quite interesting, to encounter in the Society’s own *New World Translation (NWT)* no less than eight examples of masculine personal pronouns used in describing the activity of the Holy Spirit (pneuma) in John 16:13–15. The translators have, for example, taken the various references to the Holy Spirit’s actions and translated them from Greek into English as “he will guide,” “he hears,” “he will speak.” Acts 10:20 and 13:2 serve as additional examples of where the *NWT* plainly uses personal pronouns for the Holy Spirit.

It is true that the Holy Spirit is ‘invisible’ and is a ‘force,’ but that does not prevent Him from having intelligence, self awareness, will and other personality characteristics, things which no impersonal force such as electricity could possess. Angels are also invisible forces (Hebrews 1:7). Yet Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe that they are impersonal; they view them as spirit persons. For example: on page 361 of their *Reasoning from the*

*Scriptures* book they refer to Satan (whom they believe is a fallen angel) as a spirit person. Let's consider the scriptural evidence for the personality of the Holy Spirit, using the J.W.'s own *New World Translation*.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCRIBED BY MASCULINE PERSONAL PRONOUNS

John 16:13–15:

“However, when that one arrives, the spirit of truth [Jehovah’s Witnesses acknowledge that the ‘spirit of truth’ is the Holy Spirit] **he** will guide you into all the truth, for **he** will not speak of **his** own impulse, but what things **he** hears **he** will speak, and he will declare to you the things coming. That one will glorify me, because **he** will receive from what is mine and will declare it to you. All the things that the Father has are mine. That is why I said **he** receives from what is mine and declares it to you.”

The translators of the Watchtower Bible have used the masculine personal pronoun for the Holy Spirit no less than eight times in this passage of Scripture. Keep in mind that the Greek work for “Spirit” (pneuma) is a neuter noun and, according to the rules of Greek grammar, should be accompanied by a neuter pronoun (i.e. “it”), but the New Testament writers themselves, at times, went against those rules in order to reveal the Holy Spirit’s **personalness**.

Did you also notice in this passage from John’s Gospel in the *NWT* that the Holy Spirit is twice referred to as “that one” (see verses 13 and 14). The Greek word translated “that one” (ἐκεῖνο) literally means “that male person.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For information on demonstrative pronouns, see pages 47 and 48 of *Essentials of New Testament Greek* by Ray Summers, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT PERSONALLY DIRECTS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH**

Acts 13:2: “As they were publicly ministering to Jehovah and fasting, the holy spirit said, ‘Of all persons set Barnabas and Saul apart for **me** for the work to which I have called them.’” (*NWT*)

With all due respect to Jehovah’s Witnesses who believe that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than an impersonal force such as electricity, electricity doesn’t talk like that. This Scripture gives clear evidence, not only of the Holy Spirit being a person, but also shows Him to be in charge of the work of the early Christian Church.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CAPABLE OF “KNOWING”**

1 Corinthians 2:11: “For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man that is in him? So, too, no one has come to know the things of god, except the spirit of god.” (*NWT*)

Electricity can be used to convey information but electricity itself doesn’t “know” anything, only living entities with intelligence and awareness can “know” things.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS “EMOTIONS”**

Ephesians 4:30: “Also, do not be grieving God’s holy spirit, with which you have been sealed for a day of releasing by ransom.” (*NWT*) Notice that wrong conduct by Christians can “grieve” the Holy Spirit. Again, I would point out that electricity doesn’t grieve. To grieve means to feel deep sorrow. The Holy Spirit’s ability to feel sorrow is proof of His being a person.

The following is an interesting list of all the personal characteristics displayed by the Holy Spirit, which prove His personal nature.

## **IS THE HOLY SPIRIT A PERSON?**

The reader is here invited and encouraged to make his

own analysis of the following Bible verses to determine whether or not the Holy Spirit can will, think, feel, hear, speak, etc.

**Has Will**

Forbids and Permits  
Appoints leaders

**Has Mind**

Knows  
Thinks

**Has Feelings**

Outraged  
Saddened  
Love

**Has Ability To Hear**

**Has Speech**

Spirit of Jehovah spoke  
Thus says the Holy Spirit  
The Holy Spirit aptly spoke  
What the Spirit says to the congregations

**Has self-consciousness** (Calls Himself I )

The Spirit said...I...  
The Holy Spirit said...I...

**Personally Directs The Preaching Work**

I have called them.  
Sent out by the Holy Spirit.  
The Spirit told me to go...  
The Spirit said...Approach...  
...you are not the ones speaking,  
but the Holy Spirit is.

**Treated As A Person** (or mistreated )

Lied to  
Tempted  
Blasphemed  
Spoken against

**1 Corinthians 12:11, wills**

Acts 16:6 7  
Acts 20:28

**Romans 8:27, minds**

1 Corinthians 2:11  
Acts 15:28

**Isaiah 63:10, feel hurt**

Hebrews 10:29  
Ephesians 4:30  
Romans 15:30 (cf.  
Romans 12:1)

**John 16:13, hears**

**1 Timothy 4:1, says explicitly**

2 Samuel 23:2  
Acts 21:11  
Acts 28:25  
Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29;  
3:6, 13, 22

Acts 10:19, 20

Acts 13:2

Acts 13:2

Acts 13:4

Acts 11:12

Acts 8:29

Mark 13:11

Acts 5:3

Acts 5:9

Matthew 12:31

Matthew 12:32

Is the Holy Spirit a person? One must emphatically conclude **YES!**

The Watchtower booklet *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* also contains a notable example of how the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses use questionable methods in support of their false doctrines. Page 7 of their booklet, under the heading "What the Ante-Nicene Fathers Taught" presents deliberately brief and obscure quotations from the early church fathers, supposedly denying the deity of Christ. We will examine their deceptive practices in our final chapter.

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# Chapter 6

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## ANTE-NICENE FATHERS

At their 1989 District Convention, the Watchtower Society released its latest publication attacking the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and deity of Christ. Five million copies of a 32 page, magazine-sized booklet entitled *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* with the subtitle *Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?* are now being widely circulated.

A particularly noticeable feature in this Watchtower document is the publisher's use of no less than 130 quotations from the writings of orthodox Christian leaders and theologians (not Jehovah's Witnesses) in an attempt to strengthen their assault on the Trinity.

Deserving equal attention is the Society's **habitual quoting of authorities out of context** in an effort to manufacture notions entirely different to that which the authority intended. For example, page 7 of the Watchtower booklet contains no less than 6 flagrant violations. The following is a quote from page 7:

### **“WHAT THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS TAUGHT”**

“The ante-Nicene Fathers were acknowledged to have been leading religious teachers in the early centuries after Christ's birth. What they taught is of interest.

**Justin Martyr**, who died about 165 C.E., called the

prehuman Jesus a created angel who is ‘other than the God who made all things.’ He said that Jesus was inferior to God and ‘never did anything except what the Creator...willed him to do and say.’

**Irenaeus**, who died about 200 C.E., said that the prehuman Jesus had a separate existence from God and was inferior to him. He showed that Jesus is not equal to the ‘One true and only God,’ who is ‘supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other.’

**Clement of Alexandria**, who died about 215 C.E., called Jesus in his prehuman existence ‘a creature’ but called God ‘the uncreated and imperishable and only true God.’ He said that the Son ‘is next to the only omnipotent Father’ but not equal to him.

**Tertullian**, who died about 230 C.E., taught the supremacy of God. He observed: ‘The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent.’ He also said, ‘There was a time when the Son was not Before all things, God was alone.’

**Hippolytus**, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is ‘the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all,’ who ‘had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him...But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before, ‘such as the created pre-human Jesus.

**Origen**, who died about 250 C.E., said that ‘the Father and Son are two substances...two things as to their essence,’ and that ‘compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light.’

Summing up the historical evidence, Alvan Lamson says in *The Church of the First Three Centuries*, ‘The modern popular doctrine of the Trinity...derives no support from the language of Justin [Martyr]: and this observation may be extended to all the ante-Nicene Fathers; that is, to all Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of

Christ. It is true, they speak of the Father, Son and...holy Spirit, but not as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as Three in One, in any sense now admitted by Trinitarians. The very reverse is the fact.'

Thus, the testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout biblical times and for several centuries thereafter."

A patently obvious barrier prevents the reader from verifying the Watchtower Society's quoting accuracy: there are virtually no references given to their sources! One wishing to investigate these writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers needs to know the modern day publisher who prints the English translation of their works, which volume of the series, which page number, etc. Without such references, an exorbitant number of hours of research would be required to locate the quotations and examine precisely what these early church leaders truly said and believed, and in context.

When the JW leaders deliberately fail to include in their publications the appropriate references, they are thwarting the very deed they claim all sincere Bible students must do, namely, "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." 1 Thess. 5:21 (NWT)

Having reexamined the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, the following quotations sprang from their works as positive and indisputable proof of what these early Christian leaders actually believed about Jesus. All quotes are from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, published by W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## **JUSTIN MARTYR**

Trypho accuses Justin, "Some of it appears to me to be paradoxical and wholly incapable of proof. For when you [Justin Martyr] say that this **Christ existed as God** before the ages, then that He submitted to be born and became man, yet that he is not man of man, this appears to me to be not merely paradoxical, but also foolish." (*Dialogue with*

*Trypho*—Vol. 1, pg. 219)

“For Christ is **King, and Priest, and God and Lord**, and angel and man, and captain, and stone, and a son born and first made subject to suffering, then returning to heaven, and again coming with glory, and He is preached as having the everlasting kingdom: so I prove from all the Scriptures.” (*Dialogue with Trypho*—Vol. 1, pg. 211)

## IRENÆUS

In reference to John 1:1, Irenaeus writes, “This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without him nothing was made. For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord who in the last times was made man.” (*Irenaeus Against Heresies*—Vol. 1, pg. 546)

“‘In the beginning was the Word’ for He [God] was in the Son, ‘and the **Word was God.**’ Of course, for **that which is begotten of God is God.**” (*Irenaeus Against Heresies*—Vol. 1, pg. 328)

“In order that to **Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God**, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess to Him.’” (*Irenaeus Against Heresies*—Vol. 1, pg. 330)

## CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

“Inasmuch as the Word was from the first, He was and is the divine source of all things, but inasmuch as He has now assumed the name ‘Christ’ consecrated of old, worthy of power, he has been called by me the ‘New Song.’ This Word then, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for He was in God) and our well being. This very Word has now appeared as man, He alone being both, **both God and man.**”

“The Word, who in the beginning bestowed on us life

as Creator when He formed us, taught us to live well, when He appeared as our teacher that **as God** He might afterwards conduct us to the life which never ends.” (*Exhortation to the Heathen*—Vol. 2, pg. 173)

### **TERTULLIAN**

“Is that Word of God then a void, empty thing, which is called the **Son who himself is designated God**? ‘The Word was with God and **the Word was God**.’ This for certain is **He who being in the form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” (*Against Praxeas*—Vol. 3, pg. 602)

“The Word, therefore, is both always in the Father as he says, ‘I am in the Father’ and is always with God according to what is written. ‘And the Word was with God’ and never separate from the Father, or other than the Father, **I and the Father are one**.’ This will be the prolation (extension of God’s Being) taught by the truth.” (*Against Praxeas*—Vol. 3, pg. 603)

“But all the rest of the created things did He in like manner make, who made the former ones—I mean the Word of God, through whom all things were made. Now if **He too is God** according to John who says ‘**The Word was God**’ then you have two beings—one that commands that the thing be made, and the other that executes the order and creates. In what sense however, you ought to understand Him (the Word) to be another, I have clearly explained on the ground of personality not of substance in the way of distinction not division.” (*Against Praxeas*—Vol. 3, pg. 607)

### **HIPPOLYTUS**

“These things then, brethren, are declared by the Scriptures. And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges **this Word as God**, when he says, ‘In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**' If, then, the Word was with God, and **was also God**, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit. The Father decrees, the Word executes, and the Son is manifested, through whom the Father is believed on. The economy of harmony is led back to one God; for God is One. It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit who gives understanding, the Father who is above all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. (*Against the Heresy of One Noetus*—Vol. 5, pg. 228).

## ORIGEN

“Accordingly, if Celcus was to ask us how we think we know God, and how we shall be saved by Him, we would answer that the ‘Word of God’ which entered into those who seek Him or who accept Him when He appears, is able to make known and reveal the Father, who was not seen before the appearance of the Word. And who else is able to save and conduct the soul of man to the God of all things, save ‘**God the Word**’ who ‘being in the beginning with God’ became flesh that He might be received by those who could not behold Him, inasmuch as He was the Word and was with God and **was God.**” (*Against Celcus*—Vol. 4, pg. 604)

**Please note that very detailed references have been provided so you may easily investigate the sources of all quotations.**

In view of the substantial evidence quoted above from the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, one cannot avoid

the undeniable conclusion that the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses have either completely failed to understand these writings or they have intentionally quoted them out of context.

## **ADVICE TO ALL WHO READ WATCHTOWER LITERATURE**

In view of the information just presented, I must candidly ask all who read the Society's booklet on the Trinity, and for that matter, any of their other publications, **can you really have any confidence in their literature as a reliable guide to truth?** People need to be warned that the Watchtower writings can and will seriously mislead them through misinformation. See 2 Peter 3:15–16.

One thing all readers of Watchtower literature should do is demand that Jehovah's Witnesses supply fully detailed references for all their sources, so that all the readers can appropriately check their claims and thus comply with the counsel God gives to all of us: "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thess. 5:21, *NWT*)

## **ADVICE TO CHRISTIANS & EX-JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

Now let me offer a word of advice for ex-Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as Christians. Many Jehovah's Witnesses have left the JW organization because they have become disillusioned with the Watchtower. Usually it is because of the bad conduct that they have seen among the Jehovah's Witnesses and a great deal of hypocrisy. Or they have come out because they have seen the failure of the prophecies of the Watchtower leaders, and now they realize they have been misled. But the sad thing is, it is difficult to get these ex-Jehovah's Witnesses to realize and understand they have also **been brainwashed with false doctrines.**

They have been victimized in more ways than one.

Most persons, when first contacted by the Jehovah's Witnesses, have very little knowledge of the Bible, and because of this they are "sitting ducks" for Jehovah's Witnesses when they come with their pat little explanations of what the Bible is all about and what various individual verses mean. When first studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses, most persons would not realize that they were interpreting the verses out of context. If the Watchtower interpretation seemed to make sense it would readily be accepted. If people would only realize that their ignorance makes them vulnerable and there is, therefore, a need for them to be extremely cautious.

If someone is really well grounded in the Bible when the Jehovah's Witnesses first contact them, the Witnesses never get anywhere, because these individuals are armed with sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to see through what the J.W.'s are saying. But when we are lacking knowledge and are ignorant, we cannot see the deception.

I appeal to the ex-Jehovah's Witnesses: Do not have your mind full of Watchtower clutter. Go back and start from square one with a clean slate, and examine the Bible all over again with an unprejudiced mind. I appeal equally to the Christians: Study your Bible diligently to master the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, so that you will not be "sitting ducks" for the Jehovah's Witnesses (or any other cult). More than that, by arming yourselves with biblical truth, you may have the privilege of being used by the Lord to bring some lost soul out of the darkness of cultism into the light of Christ!

Up till now, it has so often been the case when Christians have debated with Witnesses that the Witnesses have taken Christians by surprise by coming from left field with a verse that the Christians have never thought of before, or with an explanation that they have never encountered before, and thus have left their Christian

contenders glassy-eyed and wondering what to do.

With the information available in this booklet, Christians will now, hopefully, be able to successfully defend their faith to Jehovah's Witnesses in accordance with the Apostle's counsel at 1 Peter 3:15, "But sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect." (*NWT*)

# APPENDIX

## DIALOGUE WITH A JW ON CHRIST'S DEITY

Christian: I respect your sincerity and dedication, but if you claim to be preaching the “truth,” you have a problem.

JW: What problem is that?

Christian: Let me ask you a question. Is Jesus your God?

JW: No, Jehovah is my God.

Christian: Then how do you account for the fact that Jesus was the God of the Apostles?

JW: Where does it say that in the Bible?

Christian: Would you turn to John 20:28 in your *New World Translation* and read it please.

Christian: As you know, Thomas was an Apostle and he obviously acknowledged Jesus as his God. (The J.W. has a choice of two responses here, A or B).

JW A: Well what happened there was that Thomas looked at Jesus and said, “My Lord” and then lifted his eyes to heaven and said, “My God”.

Christian: Please take a closer look at that Scripture, it says. “Thomas said to Him (that’s Jesus), ‘My Lord and my God.’” Thomas was clearly acknowledging Jesus to be both his Lord and God.

JW B: You have to remember that Thomas had just seen the resurrected Jesus and was so shaken up, that he involuntarily blurted out “my God!” just as people today do when they are shaken up.

Christian: You should remember that Thomas was a devout Jew and certainly would not resort to such a blasphemous exclamation. And even if he did, Jesus would have had to

rebuke him. but the surrounding verses show no such rebuke.

So Thomas definitely referred to Jesus as God, and by the way, so did the apostle John in John 1:1. Would you turn to that verse and read it?

JW: (reads John 1:1 in *NWT*, “and the Word was a god.”). Oh, John isn’t saying that Jesus is Almighty God, he merely describes him as “a god” which means “mighty one” and we believe Jesus is a god.

Christian: My Bible doesn’t say that. It reads, “and the Word was God.”

JW: Well, our Bible is the most accurate and authoritative.

Christian: O.K. Let’s assume that your Bible is right and all the other translations are wrong. Let me ask you. how many gods do you have in John 1:1 in your Bible?

JW: There’s only one Almighty God, Jesus is only “a god.”

Christian: That wasn’t my question. What I mean is, how many gods of any kind do you have in that verse, regardless of whether they are Almighty or just mighty or big Or little. (Help the JW count them The J.W. will eventually acknowledge two gods.)

Christian: Now, what kind of gods are these two?

JW: What do you mean?

Christian: Well, you know that the Bible refers to many gods, but they all fall into two categories, true or false. For example, Satan is a god, obviously a false one. Dagon is another false god, Baal would be another, and so on. Now then, which type are the two gods in your version of John 1:1 ? (read the verse with the J.W.)

Christian: The first God, isn’t that Jehovah? What type of God is He, true or false?

JW: True.

Christian: This second god which you say is Jesus, what type is he?

JW: True. (No JW would claim that Jesus is a false god.)

Christian: You see, you do have a problem, because notice what your Bible says about God at Isaiah 44:6–8.

"The Watchtower Society has produced a publication entitled *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* The authors of this booklet have presented fallacious information, distorted Greek rules of grammar and utilized obscure unrecognized Bible translations to support their theories. Jehovah's Witnesses use this publication in their training and proselytization program. Peter Barnes has effectively dismantled their arguments and false premises in his booklet *The Truth about Jesus and the Trinity*. Author Barnes clearly and powerfully defends the traditional position of the Christian Church in this absorbing publication. I heartily recommend this booklet to Christians who desire to effectively counter this cardinal doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses."

Leonard A. Chretien  
Director, Good News Defenders, Inc.  
Author and Producer, "Witnesses of Jehovah"

"I highly recommend the ministry of Peter Barnes for equipping the saints to be better prepared in the evangelizing of new religions and cults and in the knowledge of the Word of God. I have personally witnessed his great effectiveness in dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses and would recommend he be considered for teaching in other areas as well. There is no mistaking the harmful influence of the new religions and cults on the Body of Christ and upon our culture in general. Peter Barnes is part of the antidote."

Dr. John Weldon, Co-Author  
Ankerberg Series of Books and Booklets



Dr. Peter Barnes was a Jehovah's Witness for 30 years and served as a Circuit Overseer of 16 Kingdom Halls. He received Christ as Lord and Savior in May 1978 and has developed a successful Christian Ministry to counter the work of this cult. Peter is able to provide Christians with an in-depth insight into the thinking of this group together with a comprehensive view of its methods and practices.