

Trinity

Does the Bible Teach Trinitarianism?

The Bible doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible teaching, as we will see when we turn to the Scriptures, is distinctly monotheistic. That is to say, the Bible teaches that there is one God, not three. The three Persons who comprise our one God share the same essence and characteristics. The unity between them is so mysteriously close that it is true to say that they are one God. When we pray to the Father, we are praying to the Son and the Holy Spirit. When we pray to the Son or the Holy Spirit, we are praying to the other two Persons of the Deity. We could draw a circle on a blackboard and call the entire circle "the Godhead," or "the Deity." Then we could divide the circle into three parts and call the parts "the Father," "the Son," and "the Holy Spirit." By so doing we would be seriously misrepresenting the Bible doctrine of the Trinity. The Father is the full Deity, not a third of it. Likewise, the Son and the Holy Spirit are both the fullness of the Deity. Thus there are three fullnesses, but only one God. Each member of the Deity is the total Deity. The Persons are not separate and distinct in exactly the same way that human persons are. They are united in a mysterious bond so that all three together comprise the fullness of Deity, and any one of the three is also the fullness of Deity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal. There is no indication in Scripture that, as God, the Son and the Holy Spirit are inferior to the Father, or that there ever was a time when they did not exist in infinitely close union with the Father. Our one God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is our Creator and the Creator of our world and universe. To Him we owe complete allegiance because He gave us life and sustains our life.

Because this Bible teaching is so mysterious and, thereby, beyond the capacity of human beings to grasp completely, some Bible students react by saying that it is confusing, illogical, and unbiblical. As Robert M. Bowman has pointed out, among those religions whose members react in this way are "Unitarians, Mormons, New Thought, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Theosophy (which is one of the principal sources of the contemporary New Age movement), modern Spiritism (another major precursor to the New Age movement) and Jehovah's Witnesses."

Bowman adds: "The JWs will no doubt be offended to be included in such a list, and there are, of course, differences among these various religions. But all of them have in common, besides their time and place of origin, a firm belief inherited from the Enlightenment that the orthodox Christianity of the previous fifteen centuries was no longer acceptable. In particular, all of them reject the Trinity."

Bowman's book was written specifically to answer the antitrinitarianism of the Jehovah's Witnesses as presented in the pamphlet that they have widely distributed, *Should You Believe in the Trinity*. Bowman has effectively demonstrated that this Jehovah's Witness publication has seriously misrepresented the modern and early church sources it cites. The authors incorrectly represent the ante-Nicene Fathers as largely in support of their antitrinitarian concepts. Moreover, they cite modern theologians as rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. As Bowman has pointed out, the quotations provided by the Jehovah's Witnesses should be carefully examined in relation to their immediate contexts and to the overall contexts in the works from which they were taken.

WHAT DO THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRINITY?

What exactly do Jehovah's Witnesses teach on the subject of the Trinity? They write: "If people were to read the Bible from cover to cover without any preconceived idea of a Trinity, would they arrive at such a concept on their own? Not at all.

"What comes through very clearly to an impartial reader is that God alone is the Almighty, the Creator, separate and distinct from anyone else, and that Jesus, even in his prehuman existence, is also separate and distinct, a created being subordinate to God."

"Thus, Jesus had an existence in heaven before coming to the earth. But was it as one of the persons in an almighty, eternal triune Godhead? No, for the Bible plainly states that in his pre-human existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation."

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

"It was only a perfect human, Adam, who sinned in Eden, not God. So the ransom, to be truly in line with God's justice, had to be strictly an equivalent--a perfect human, 'the last Adam.'"

"Jesus never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way--not in power, not in knowledge, not in age.

"In every period of his existence, whether in heaven or on earth, his speech and conduct reflect subordination to God. God is always the superior, Jesus the lesser one who was created by God."

"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."

"There can be no compromise with God's truths. Hence, to worship God on his terms means to reject the Trinity doctrine. It contradicts what the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, and the early Christians believed and taught. It contradicts what God says about himself in his own inspired Word. Thus, he counsels: 'Acknowledge that I alone am God and that there is no one else like me.' - Isaiah 46:9."

Bruce M. Metzger has provided the following summary of Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching regarding Christ: "According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, Christ before his earthly life was a spirit-creature named Michael, the first of God's creation, through whom God made the other created things. As a consequence of his birth on earth, which was not an incarnation, Jesus became a perfect human being, the equal of Adam prior to the Fall. In his death Jesus' human nature, being sacrificed, was annihilated. As a reward for his sacrificial obedience God gave him a divine, spirit nature. Throughout his existence, therefore, Jesus Christ never was co-equal with God. He is not eternal, for there was a time when he was not. While he was on earth he was nothing more than a man, and therefore the atoning effect of his death can have no more significance than that of a perfect human being. Throughout there is an ill-concealed discontinuity between the pre-existent spirit creature, the earthly man Jesus, and the present spirit existence of Christ Jesus."

THE TEACHINGS OF ARIUS REGARDING CHRIST

The teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses concerning Christ are quite consistent with the teachings of Arius (c. 250 B.C. 336 A.D.), a presbyter in the church of Alexandria, who began to teach his distinctive views about the year AD 318. His fundamental idea was that only God the Father is absolutely unique and transcendent. He alone is eternal and the Source of all reality and existence. "Since it is unique, transcendent and indivisible, the being or essence (*ousia*) of the Godhead cannot be shared or communicated. For God to impart His substance to some other being, however exalted, would imply that He is divisible . . . and subject to change . . . which is inconceivable. Moreover, if any other being were to participate in the divine nature in any valid sense, there would result a duality of divine beings, whereas the Godhead is by definition unique. Therefore whatever else exists must have come into existence, not by any communication of God's being, but by an act of creation on His part, i.e. must have been called into existence out of nothing."

Arius drew four conclusions regarding Christ: (1) The Word, Christ, is a creature who, like other creatures, was formed by the Father out of nothing. (2) Christ, the Word must have had a beginning. Arius wrote: "We are persecuted because we say the Son has a beginning whereas God is without beginning." Arius and his followers liked to repeat their slogan, "There was when He was not." For Arius it was a contradiction of monotheism to say that Christ, like the Father, had eternity of existence. Hence, he taught that the Son was brought into existence by the Father back in the eternal ages before creation. (3) Because he is a creature, the Son has no direct knowledge of the Father or communion with him in any sense other than that possible to other creatures. (4) Unlike God, the Son's nature is subject to change and the possibility of sin. Arius argued that the titles God and Son of God were merely courtesy titles given to Christ.

As we study the Scriptures regarding the nature of God and the Deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we quickly discover that we are treading on very sacred ground. There are many mysteries not explained to us mere mortals. But to attempt a solution to those mysteries based on philosophical arguments, instead of accepting the clear teachings of the Word of God, is to arrive at error that will ultimately undermine our faith in Christ. It is inconceivable that finite mortals could define or explain the infinite God. A god who is explainable by human beings is certainly not the God of the Bible. To deny Bible teaching on the subject of the Godhead because it is beyond our understanding, confusing, and illogical is to attempt to bring God and His Word down to our limited intellectual and spiritual grasp.

What does the Bible teach regarding the eternity of Christ and the Holy Spirit and their relationship with the Father. Are there three Gods, one supreme and the other two inferior? Or is there only one God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

The Bible doctrine of the Trinity does not in any way compromise the Bible teaching that there is only one God. There can be no question that the Bible writers were all monotheists, that is, believers in the existence of only one God. But they did not arrive at their monotheism as Arius did and the Jehovah's Witnesses do, by insisting that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not supreme Deity. The Bible writers never attempted to explain the nature of God in philosophical terms, nor did they spell out a systematic doctrine of the Trinity. They simply recorded the truths the Lord revealed to them and faithfully accepted the fact that "the secret things belong to the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). The result was the clear teaching that the Deity is One in three Persons. We will begin by emphasizing the Bible's monotheistic teaching.

The Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 reads literally: "Jehovah [Yahweh] our God, Jehovah [is] One." Unlike the nations around them, who were polytheists, the Jews were monotheists, believing in only one true God. Moses reminded ancient Israel, "To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him" (Deut. 4:35).

Consistently God revealed Himself to the prophets as One. The Psalmist wrote: "Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord [Yahweh], are the Most High over all the earth" (Ps. 83:18). "For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God [*Elohim*]" (Ps. 86:10).

Isaiah declared that no God ever preceded the one true God, and no other has ever come into existence to share His glory. "You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour" (Isa. 43:10, 11). "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god" (Isa. 44:6).

Whatever we believe about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we must not contradict the Scripture teaching that there is only one God. Jesus, Paul, and James taught the same truth, and it was believed consistently by the early Christian Church. When one of the scribes asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the first of all?" He answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one [Deut. 6:4]; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'" (Mark 12:28-30).

The apostle Paul reiterated the monotheistic teaching of the Hebrew-Christian tradition by asserting: "We know that 'no idol in the world really exists,' and that 'there is no God but one'" (1 Cor. 8:4). "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5, 6).

James underlined the point: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe B and shudder" (James 2:19).

The doctrine of the Trinity taught in Scripture does not contradict the truth that there is only one God. This doctrine does not teach that there are three separate God's who are only morally and spiritually in perfect agreement. But what evidence is there that our one God is comprised of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

THERE IS ONLY ONE CREATOR: THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The creatorship of God is a prominent Scriptural truth. Our one God made man in His own image. The passages that speak of the Creator emphasize His oneness. Yet our one Creator comprises the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches that we have only one Creator. "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10). 1 Peter 4:19 speaks of "a faithful Creator."

This faithful Creator speaks of Himself in the plural: "Then God said, 'Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness'" (Gen. 1:26, italics supplied). After Adam and Eve fell into sin, they were driven from the Garden of Eden lest they should eat of the tree of life and become immortal sinners (Gen. 3:22-24). "Then the Lord God said, 'See, the man has become like one of *us*, knowing good and evil.'" (Gen. 3:22, italics supplied). When the tower of Babel was being built, God said, "'Come, let *us* go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen. 11:7, 8). Why did God speak of Himself in the

plural in these passages? To suggest that it was because He was speaking in counsel with the angels does not answer the question. God did not make mankind in the image of the angels, nor is there evidence that angels know good and evil as God does. God's depiction of Himself as One who is plural is only adequately explained by comparing the New Testament with the Old. Our one Creator in whose image mankind was made was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father's role in creation is described in many Bible passages. For example: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). "Know that the Lord [*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*] is God. It is he that made us, and we are his" (Ps. 100:3).

The Son is also described as the Creator. "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). "All things came into being through him [the Word, Christ], and without him not one thing came into being" (John 1:3). "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16, 17). "In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:2, 3).

Likewise the Holy Spirit is presented as the Creator. "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). "The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job. 33:4). "Thou doest send forth Thy Spirit, they are created" (Ps. 104:30).

The point is that the Creator who is one Deity, not three, comprises three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

LIKE THE FATHER, CHRIST IS SUPREME JEHOVAH (YAHWEH), ETERNAL GOD

There is no clearer teaching in Scripture than that Jesus Christ is the Deity, equal with the Father in authority and power, having exactly the same nature as well as eternity of existence.

Paul's statements in Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 establish conclusively that the full and complete nature of the Deity dwells in Christ. "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19). "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). The word "fullness" translates the Greek word *pleroma* that means "*sum total, fullness, even (super) abundance . . . of something*". Arndt and Gringrich translate Colossians 2:9: "*the full measure of deity.*" Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* comments: "Col. 1:19: It has pleased God that the whole fullness of essence should take up dwelling (aor.) in Christ. According to the context, in a combination of thoughts from 2 Cor. 5:19 and 8:9 etc., the reference is to the historical Jesus . . . and hence to the fullness of the essence of the God of love. In Col. 2:9 the whole fullness of Godhead, understood from the standpoint of power, is ascribed (pres.) to the exalted Lord; this belongs wholly and undividedly to Christ." The word "Godhead" (Col. 2:9) translates the Greek word that means Deity (*theotes*). Thus the total Deity dwells in Christ.

Jesus claimed equality with God. Because He had healed a man on the Sabbath day (John 5:1-16), the Jewish religious leaders objected and "started persecuting" (verse 16) Him. "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own,

but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise." (Verses 17-19).

The objection is sometimes raised that, because the Jews *interpreted* Jesus as "making himself equal to God," does not prove that He was intending them to interpret Him in that way. But neither Jesus nor John, the Gospel writer, in any way denied the interpretation that He was making Himself equal with God. It would have been very simple for Jesus to correct such a misapprehension. In fact, His following discourse simply underlined His claim to equality with God. "Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (verse 19). "Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father" (verses 21-23). If Jesus had been only a perfect human while He was on earth, as the Jehovah's witnesses claim, He never could have made statements like that. It was precisely because they thought He was a mere human making divine claims for Himself that the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

C. K. Barrett comments: "God is essentially and unchangeably creative . . . ; what God does Jesus also does (v. 19). . . . The Jews are not slow to see the implications of Jesus' argument, and are when they see them the more anxious to kill him. . . . Sabbath-breaking, though important, was a comparatively trivial offence. . . . Jesus had called God his *own* father . . . a form of speech which did not arise out of liturgical custom or the notion of Israel as God's child; and the assumption of a uniform activity common to Jesus and to God could only mean that Jesus was equal to God. This inference John of course himself admits, but rightly presents it as extremely provocative to the Jews."

In writing his Gospel, John could easily have corrected the Jews mistaken interpretation, if, indeed, it had been mistaken. He later corrected a misinterpretation of Jesus' words (John 21:22, 23). But on this occasion, He simply recorded Jesus' claim to the same honour and power possessed by the Father. We can only conclude that Jesus claimed equality with the Father.

This claim became more insistent in following discussions with the Jewish leaders. "Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.' So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple" (John 8:58, 59). Jehovah's Witnesses would have us believe that Jesus was claiming pre-existence, but not *eternal* pre-existence. It is questionable whether the Jewish leaders would have immediately taken up stones to take His life if He had not been identifying Himself with the Father. Obviously they recognized the name I AM as a title of Deity. And rightfully so. This was the name by which *Yahweh* identified Himself to Moses. "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you": This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.'"(Exod. 3:14, 15).

Similar "I am" statements occur in Isaiah referring to *Yahweh*. Bowman comments: "Most biblical scholars who have written extensively on the subject agree that these 'I am' sayings in Isaiah are even more relevant to John 8:58 than the words of God in Exodus 3:14. The NWT [New World Translation of the JWs] renders these sayings as 'I am the same' or 'I am the same one,' which further hides the parallel. In Hebrew they read literally 'I [am] he,' and in the Septuagint were translated *ego eimi*, 'I am' (Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; 52:6; see also 45:18)."

R. C. H. Lenski contrasts the tenses of the Greek verbs in Jesus statement of John 8:58, "Before Abraham was [aorist or past tense, *genesthai*], I am [present tense, *eimi*]." Lenski points out: "As the aorist [past tense] sets a point of beginning for the existence of

Abraham, so the present tense 'I am' predicates absolute existence for the person of Jesus, with no point of beginning at all. That is why Jesus does not use the imperfect . . . 'I was'; for this would say only that the existence of the person of Jesus antedates the time of Abraham and would leave open the question whether the person of Jesus also has a beginning like that of Abraham (only earlier) or not. What Jesus declares is that, although his earthly life covers less than fifty years, his existence as a person . . . is constant and independent of any beginning in time as was that of Abraham. For what Jesus here says about himself in comparison with Abraham is in the nature of the case true of him in comparison with any other man, no matter how far back the beginning of that man's existence lies. 'I am' = I exist. Thus with the simplest words Jesus testifies to the divine, eternal pre-existence of his person."

No wonder the Jews took up stones to stone Him. Because Jesus was claiming to be Yahweh, they regarded Him as a blasphemer worthy of death. The Jehovah's Witnesses and others react differently; they deny His claim by misinterpreting His words.

The eternal pre-existence of Christ is taught in other passages of Scripture. For example, in predicting the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem, Micah wrote: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2, NASB). The prophet was not predicting that the Messiah who would be born in Bethlehem had a beginning somewhere back *within* the days of eternity. He was emphasizing that *throughout* the days of eternity, the Messiah had continuing existence.

The same thought is expressed in Hebrews 7:2, 3. King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God to whom Abraham paid tithes when he returned from battle is likened to Christ, the Son of God. We are not told who Melchizedek was, but we are told that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever" (Heb. 7:3). Whatever the passage is intended to tell us about Melchizedek, it is clear that the writer's purpose is to say that the Son of God had "neither beginning of days nor end of life." Christ's eternity of existence is underlined.

In Revelation, chapter 1, the Father is spoken of as "Him who is and who was and who is to come" (verse 4). In verse 8, the Father is identified as "the Alpha and the Omega," "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." The Father's eternity of existence is clearly pinpointed. The Jehovah's Witnesses are correct in reminding us that the title "Alpha and Omega" is not claimed by Christ in verse 11. These words do not occur in the Greek text. But in Revelation 22:12-16, the title Alpha and Omega is claimed by Christ. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. . . . I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." The same designation of His eternity of existence claimed by Jehovah in Revelation 1 is claimed by Jesus in Revelation 22 (compare Isa. 44:6).

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, in His Person God came to be with mankind. Matthew interpreted Isaiah 7:14 as a messianic prophecy referring to Jesus. "All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet. 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:22, 23). Baby Jesus (the child and man He became) was not a mere perfect human. He was fully God and fully man. "Immanuel" in Isaiah 7:14, the passage that Matthew quotes in reference to Jesus, is speaking of Jehovah (*Yahweh*). Thus, according to Matthew, Jesus was "Jehovah with us."

Forecasting the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah spoke of Him as "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). This does not mean that the Father and the Son are the same Personality. It means that, though having a distinct personality, Jesus was, and still remains the "exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb. 1:3). As the Father is worshipped, so Christ was to be worshipped when He came to earth in human form: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Heb. 1:6). The Father addresses the Son as the Deity: "'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom'" (Heb. 1:8). The Father speaks of His Son as "Lord": "'In the beginning, Lord you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands'" (Heb. 1:10).

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews identifies Jesus as God. "Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)" (Heb. 3:3, 4) Jesus who is God is "the builder of the house" in which Moses was "a servant" (verse 5). We are Christ's house "if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope." (verse 6).

Two Jehovah's Witness ladies who were visiting my home refused to pray with me because I would pray directly to Jesus as Lord. They insisted that we should pray only to the Father. But if the angels are to worship Him (Heb. 1:6), why should not we? After His humiliation on this earth and terrible death on the cross, "God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9, 10). When

Stephen was being stoned "he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'" (Acts 7:59). Bruce Metzger comments: "It is obviously both foolish and sinful to pray to anyone except God. If therefore the opinion of the Jehovah's Witnesses be correct, namely, that Jesus is only a spirit creature, then Stephen was an idolater in praying to one who was not truly God."

Jesus identified Himself with the Father in a manner that established their equality as Deity and unity of essence. "'If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves'" (John 14:7-11; compare John 10:30-38).

The passage teaches: (1) Knowing Jesus is knowing the Father. No mere man could have made such a claim. (2) The Father and the Son dwell within one another. Here is a statement of unity within the Deity that is beyond human explanation. But the statement has enormous implications. To speak to One is to speak to the Other. To worship the One as only Deity is to worship the Other as only Deity. (3) The Father's works are Jesus' works, and Jesus' works are the Father's works. Therefore, the love manifest by Jesus is the love of the Father. Christ's healing ministry is the Father's healing ministry. Christ's words of compassion and forgiveness come from the compassionate, forgiving heart of the Father. No wonder the prophet predicted that the Messiah would be "the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

The Father did not become the Son; they are distinct Persons. But their essential unity is so infinitely close that they are one God. With Jesus as infinitely loving Lord and Saviour, we have the Father as infinitely loving Lord and Saviour.

Thomas had no doubt of this when, convinced of Jesus identity after His resurrection, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). To a Jew, a statement such as that was an unequivocal acknowledgement that Jesus was Jehovah God.

Titus 2:13 refers to "the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Second Peter 1:1 speaks of "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." "These passages follow exactly the same construction as is found in the expressions 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 'the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and 'the Lord and Saviour' (2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). This construction in Greek connects two nouns with the Greek word for *and* (*kaì*) and places a definite article "the" in front of the first noun but not in front of the second (e.g., 'the Lord and Saviour'). In fact every occurrence of this construction, when the nouns are singular and are common nouns describing persons (Father, Son, Lord, Saviour, brother, etc.), uses the two nouns to refer to the same person. Thus the construction used, and especially the way Peter uses it elsewhere, strongly supports the conclusion that in 2 Peter 1:1 [as also in Titus 2:13] Jesus is called 'God.'"

First John 5:20 identifies Jesus as God: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." The Son is the source of our eternal life (1 John 1:2; compare 5:11-13). We are in the Son Jesus Christ who "is the true God and eternal life."

Old Testament passages that refer to Jehovah (*Yahweh*) are sometimes applied to Jesus Christ in New Testament quotations. For example, Isaiah 40:3, "Prepare the way of the Lord [*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*]", is quoted in Matthew 3:3, "Prepare the way of the Lord [*kurios*, Christ]." Isaiah 8:13, 14 depicts the Lord (*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*) as "a stone of stumbling" and "a rock of offence." Peter quotes the passage and applies it to Christ. "Unto you therefore which believe he [Christ] is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Peter 2:7, 8. In Zechariah 12:10, Jehovah is spoken of as pierced (cf. verse 1): "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced". In speaking of Jesus' side being pierced with a spear as He hung upon the cross, John writes: "And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19:37, KJV; cf. verse 34). Once again, Jehovah is Christ. When Isaiah received a vision of Jehovah, he exclaimed: "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5). John refers to the passage (Isa. 6:1-10) and adds, "Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him" (John 12:41). It was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw. But, as recorded in Isaiah 6, Isaiah saw the glory of Jehovah. The apostle Paul wrote of Christ: "For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. . . . For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God'" (Rom. 14:9, 11). The Old Testament passage Paul quotes applies to Jehovah: "'To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear'" (Isa. 45:23; cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates *Yahweh* by *Kurios*, Lord. *Kurios* occurs 749 times in the New Testament. In the vast majority of cases it is applied to the Father or to Christ. Christ is spoken often in the New Testament as supreme Lord. "You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). But according to both Old and New Testaments there is only one Lord (Deut. 6:4; Zech. 14:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5). Christ is Lord or Jehovah.

Predicting the work of his son John the Baptist, Zechariah exclaimed: "And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways"(Luke 1:76). The Most High, the Lord for whom John the Baptist functioned as forerunner, was Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:10; Mal.3:1).

Jesus Christ is the Deity, one with the Father in essence, nature, authority, and power, possessing all of the characteristics and prerogatives of God. There never was a time when He did not exist. He was not brought into existence by the Father, but has eternity of pre-existence. The Christ who bore our sins on the cross is the King of the universe.

IS CHRIST SUBORDINATE TO THE FATHER?

Some New Testament passages refer to Christ's subordinate role when He was here on earth. As a God-man who had accepted the limitations of humanity, Jesus assumed a dependent role. For example, note His statement: "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). In the same chapter, Jesus stated the divine mystery, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (Verses 9, 10). Since there was a divine oneness between the Son and the Father, Christ remained God in the fullest sense. Yet He had adopted the position of a human being so that He might be our example in the battle with sin (1 Peter 2:21). In His dependent position during the incarnation, it was true to say that His Father was greater, not as God, but in terms of the role He was performing in the salvation of humanity.

A similar explanation may be given to such statements as the following: "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). In His role of Messiah, the God-man who had taken on the limitations of humanity had laid aside divine knowledge which, as God, He naturally possessed. He deliberately chose not to exercise some of the prerogatives and powers of Deity which were His by nature. Thus He placed Himself in a position to be our example in the battle with human existence and with sin.

Jesus Christ's subordinate role during His earthly existence is explained by the apostle Paul: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

The Jehovah's Witnesses mistranslate this passage as follows: "Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God." In fact, the verse is more accurately translated: "Who being in the form of God, did not consider it a prize [to be retained] to be equal with God." Since Christ was already in the form of God, "equal with God" (John 5:18), the "I AM" (John 8:58), there was no question of His wishing to seize or rob equality with the Deity. He was already God in the fullest sense. The word translated "robbery" in the King James Version (*harpagmos*) may also mean "prize," "booty." Christ did not consider His equality with the Deity a prize to which He should cling, but "emptied himself taking the form of a slave" (verse 7). If Christ had not already been equal with the Father, why was it necessary for Him to empty Himself? This does not mean that Christ ceased to be Deity; for the purpose of the incarnation, He laid aside some of His divine powers and prerogatives. Even so, He exercised His divine right to forgive people's sins (Mat. 9:6). Although during His earthly existence Jesus remained God in the fullest sense, He chose not to use those aspects of His divine power that would give Him an advantage over us in the battle with sin.

A few other passages in the epistles of Paul have been interpreted to mean that, since His return to heaven, Christ is subordinate to the Father. "And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor. 3:23). The Greek translates literally: "And you [are] of Christ, and Christ [is] of God." The passage is speaking about the unity of the church with its leaders. "So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God" (verses 21-23). Paul's point is that no leader should be exalted over another. The divisive commitments of the Corinthian believers to particular leaders (Paul, Apollos, Peter) were fragmenting the church. All the leaders belonged to the church members, and they were all to be one in Christ as Christ is one with God. Paul is not saying that "you are subordinate to Christ, as Christ is subordinate to God." Rather he is saying, "You are one with Christ, as Christ is one with God."

Another controversial passage is 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ." Giving this an extreme interpretation, it could be concluded that as Christ is the Lord and Master of every man, so a husband is to be lord and master over his wife, as God is Lord and Master over Christ. From this interpretation emanates the concept of the subordination of Christ to the Father. Certainly Christ's role as Saviour, High Priest, and Mediator is a separate role from that of the Father. And Christ's role is under the direction of the Deity to which He belongs. The Deity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) decided the distinctive roles of the three members of the Godhead in the salvation process. And the roles of the Son and the Holy Spirit are under the direction and protection of the Deity. Just so, every man is under the direction and protection of Christ, and every Christian wife, although equal with her husband under God (see verse 11), accepts his role as leader and protector. Among equals there is often a head. A committee of equals may have a chairman who has a distinctive role, even though he is not superior to the committee members.

A third difficult passage in the writings of Paul is 1 Corinthians 15:28: "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all." We have established that Christ is God, equal with the Father in authority and power. At the end of time, Christ's distinctive role as Saviour, High Priest, and Mediator will be complete. It will then be apparent that the Deity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is responsible for man's salvation. Our One God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) will subject the separate redemptive functions of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the one unified function of King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ALSO SUPREME JEHOVAH (YAHWEH), ETERNAL GOD

The Holy Spirit is not presented in the Bible merely as God's force or influence. Even though it is not possible for a human being to understand fully the nature of the Holy Spirit, enough is revealed so that we can be clear on two major points: (1) The Holy Spirit is a Person. (2) The Holy Spirit is Deity, equal with God the Father and God the Son in authority and power.

The Bible evidence is that, although the Holy Spirit does not possess a bodily form, He has the characteristics of personality. He is a Person who thinks, knows, feels, and communicates. The Holy Spirit has infinite intellect. He is a divine Teacher. In Old Testament times "you gave your good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. 9:20). Jesus promised, "The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say" (Luke 12:12). "The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

The name "Counsellor" or "Comforter" translates the Greek word *parakletos* (Paraclete). The title is composed of the preposition *para* meaning "beside" and the adjective *kletos* meaning "called" or "one called." Hence, the literal meaning of *parakletos* is "one called to the side of." The Latin translators often rendered it by *advocatus* (advocate). But the words Advocate and Comforter do not adequately describe the Holy Spirit's work. He is the "Helper," the One who is called to our aid, the One summoned to assist and sustain us.

Like the Gospel writers, Paul presents the Holy Spirit as the divine Teacher. "No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but *taught by the Spirit*, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

When Jesus predicted the Spirit's coming as the divine Teacher, He referred to Him as "He." "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Even though *pneuma*, the word translated Spirit, is neuter gender in Greek, it is immediately preceded by the masculine personal pronoun *ekeinos*, because the Spirit is a Person. The same is true in John 15:26, "When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he [*ekeinos*] will testify about me".

The Holy Spirit experiences emotion. Ancient Israel "rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10). We are counselled, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30). Only persons can be grieved. Such language indicates the personality of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is described in Scripture as exercising will. Writing of spiritual gifts, Paul identified their source: "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). Thus the Spirit wills to give spiritual gifts to each believer. When travelling through Asia Minor, Paul and his companions "went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16:6, 7). At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), the letter drafted by the apostles and other church leaders to be sent to the Gentile believers included the words, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials" (Acts 15:28).

The Holy Spirit has intellect, emotion, and will, the three marks of personality. No mere force could be said to think, teach, feel, and decide.

The activities of the Holy Spirit indicate personality. He hears (John 16:13). He speaks (Matt. 10:20; Acts 13:2; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 14:13). He convicts (John 16:8; Gen. 6:3; 1 Chron. 12:18; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 22:17). He imparts love (Rom. 5:5). He imparts special skills (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19). He encourages (Acts 9:31). He transforms (2 Cor. 3:18). He consecrates for special ministry (Acts 20:28; Num. 11:17, 25, 29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10). He leads (Eze 1:12, 20, 21; 3:12, 14; Matt. 4:1; Luke 2:27; Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19, 20; 13:2, 4; Rom. 8:14).

The characteristics of the Deity are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. He is eternal (Heb. 9:14). He is omnipotent: (1) He is the Creator (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30). (2) Mary conceived the incarnate Christ by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). (3) He empowered the ministry of Christ (Acts 10:38; Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18). (4) He raised Christ from the grave (Rom 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). (5) He is a miracle worker (Rom. 15:19). (6) He

gives eternal life (Gal. 6:8). (7) He gives spiritual power to God's servants (Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5).

The Holy Spirit is omniscient; He knows all things. (1) He shares the thoughts of the Father (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). (2) He teaches "all things" (John 14:26). (3) He gave God's messages to the prophets (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21; Zech. 7:12; 1 Cor. 2:4; Eph. 3:5).

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent; He is everywhere at once (Ps. 139:7-12).

The Holy Spirit is identified with *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel 23:2, 3 the "Spirit of the Lord" is "the God of Israel." In Eze 8:1, 3, the Lord God" is the "Spirit." "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16), "because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirits poke from God" (2 Peter 1:21).

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the Christian believer is the presence of the Father and the Son. David prayed, "Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). The presence of the Spirit is the presence of Jehovah. When promising the gift of the Spirit, Jesus said, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you" (John 14:18). In the same context, Jesus explained, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23). So when the Holy Spirit is living in our hearts, the Father and the Son have made their home with us. The Deity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the Creator of a billion galaxies condescends to take up His abode in the heart of every believer by the presence of His Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is identified as God. 2 Corinthians 3:18 is correctly translated: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." The Spirit is the Lord who progressively transforms our lives. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3); they lied to God (verse 4).

A FEW TEXTS USED INCORRECTLY BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

John 1:1. The text reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". The Jehovah's Witnesses insist on translating the last clause of this verse, "and the Word was a God." This translation is necessitated by their idea that Christ's divinity is inferior to that of the Father, since the Father created Him and made Him a subordinate god. The simple, undeniable truth is that the Greek of John 1:1 does not allow for the JW's translation of the text.

Bruce M. Metzger makes the following pertinent observations concerning the Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation of John 1:1: "In the New World Translation [used by Jehovah's Witnesses] the opening verse of the Gospel according to John is mistranslated as follows: 'Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God.' A footnote which is added to the first word, 'Originally,' reads 'Literally, "In (At) a beginning.'" By using here the indefinite article 'a' the translators have overlooked the well-known fact that in Greek grammar nouns may be definite for various reasons, whether or not the Greek definite article is present. A prepositional phrase, for example, where the definite article is not expressed, can be quite definite in Greek, as in fact it is in John 1:1.

"Far more pernicious in this same verse is the rendering, '. . . and the Word was a god,' with the following footnote: ' "A god." In contrast with "the God." 'It must be stated quite frankly that, if the Jehovah's Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists. In view of the additional light which is available during this age of Grace, such a

representation is even more reprehensible than were the heathenish, polytheistic errors into which ancient Israel was so prone to fall.

"As a matter of solid fact, however, such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation. It overlooks entirely an established rule of Greek grammar which necessitates the rendering, '. . . and the Word was God.' Some years ago Dr. Ernest Cadman Colwell of the University of Chicago pointed out in a study of the Greek definite article that, 'A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb. . . . The opening verse of John's Gospel contains one of the many passages where this rule suggests the translation of a predicate as a definite noun. The absence of the article [before *Theos*] does *not* make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John, for this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas [John 20:28, 'My Lord and my God'].'"

Robert W. Bowman comments: "Even Jehovah can be called 'a God' in the Bible, in passages using the exact same construction in Greek. . . . For example, in Luke 20:38 in the NWT we read that Jesus said, concerning Jehovah, 'He is a *God*, not of the dead, but of the living. . . .' Here 'a God' translates *theos* without the article and before the verb, just as in John 1:1. Thus, even if one wanted to translate *theos* in John 1:1 as 'a god,' that would not disprove that he is the true God." Bowman cites other New Testament passages in which "*theos* appears in the same context both with and without the definite article, yet with no change in meaning (John 3:2; 13:3; Rom. 1:21; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb.9:14; 1 Peter 4:10-11)."

Colossians 1:15-17. The Jehovah's Witnesses translate the passage: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation, because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth. . . . All other things have been created through him and for him. Also he is before all other things and by means of him all other things were made to exist." The four uses of the word 'other' in this translation are insertions by the translators. The word does not occur in the Greek text. The Jehovah's Witnesses interpret "the firstborn of all creation" (verse 15) to mean that Christ was the first being to be created by God. The Greek word used by Paul translated "firstborn" is *prototokos*. The same word is used in Revelation 1:5 which describes Christ as "the *firstborn* [*prototokos*] of the dead." But Jesus was not the first in point of time to be raised from the dead. Moses, Lazarus, the widow's son at Nain and others were raised from the dead before Jesus. "First born," or "first begotten" (*prototokos*) does not necessarily mean the first in point of time. It sometimes is used in a figurative sense meaning the strongest of its kind. Job 18:12, 13 speaks of a disease that was the "firstborn of death." It was the strongest of its kind. Isaiah 14:30 refers to the "firstborn of the poor," that is, the poorest of the poor. Sometimes in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) the "firstborn" (*prototokos*) denotes status of dignity or honour invested on a person who is not the first son to be born in a family. For example, David was the youngest son of Jesse, but the Lord said of him, "I will make him my firstborn [*prototokos*], higher than the kings of the earth" (Psa. 89:27; see Ps. 88 [89]). We are told of Shimri, "though he was not the firstborn [*prototokos*], yet his father made him the chief [archonta]" (1 Chron. 26:10, LXX). Jacob was slightly younger than his twin brother Esau, but the Lord called him "my firstborn [*prototokos*]" (Exod. 4:22, LXX). Manasseh was the firstborn son of Joseph, yet God called his brother Ephraim "my firstborn [*prototokos*]" (Jer. 31:9, LXX [38:9]).

The point is that Christ is the "firstborn of all creation" (Col.1:15) in the sense that He is the preeminent One over creation. He was the Creator (verse 16). As such He is supreme

over all creation. In Revelation 1:5, He is the preeminent One to be raised from the dead (cf. Col. 1:18), because His resurrection makes possible all other resurrections.

Revelation 3:14. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning [*arche*] of the creation of God" (KJV) The Greek word *arche* means "beginning," "origin," "first cause," "ruler," "authority," "rule." In Luke 12:11 the word refers to the

"rulers." In 1 Corinthians 15:24, *arche* means "ruler." Metzger's comment is very much to the point: "The New World Translation . . . makes the exalted Christ refer to himself as 'the beginning of the creation by God.' The Greek text of this verse . . . is far from saying that Christ was created by God, for the genitive case, *tou Theou*, means 'of God' and not 'by God' (which would require the preposition *upo*). Actually the word *arche* [beginning, origin, first cause, ruler, authority, rule], translated 'beginning,' carries with it the Pauline idea expressed in Col. 1:15-18, and signifies that Christ is the origin, or primary source, of God's creation (compare also John 1:3, 'Apart from him not even one thing came into existence')."

Proverbs 8:22. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old". Jehovah's Witnesses regard the Wisdom spoken of here as a figure of speech referring to Jesus who, they say, was a spirit creature before He came to earth. They translate the verse, "Jehovah himself produced me as the beginning of his way." Thus, they assert that Jesus was a created being. As Robert Bowman points out, the Hebrew word translated "produced" or "created" is *qanah*. It does not mean "to create"; it means "to get," "to acquire," "to possess," "to buy." "This word is used frequently in Proverbs, never with the meaning 'create,' but always 'get' or 'buy,' that is, get with money (Prov. 1:5; 4:5, 7; 8:22; 15:32; 16:16; 17:16; 18:15; 19:8; 20:14; 23:23). That is also its consistent meaning in the some seventy instances in which it is used elsewhere in the Old Testament."

Bowman also points out that "'wisdom' is personified, not only in Proverbs 8:22-31, but throughout Proverbs 1-9. Nothing in Proverbs 8:22-31 suggests that this is a different 'wisdom' than is spoken of in the preceding and following chapters. Therefore, if we take 8:22 to speak literally about Christ, we must also assume that Christ is a woman who cries in the streets (1:20-21), and who lives with someone named 'Prudence' (8:12) in a house with seven pillars (9:1)!"

The message of the text is that wisdom existed eternally with God. The next verse underlines the point. "From everlasting I was established. . . ." (Prov. 8:23). "The phrase *from everlasting* is the same phrase used of God in Psalm 90:2, where the JWs recognize that God is being described as having no beginning."

The Bible teaching is very clear that there is only one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. Orthodox Christians are trinitarian monotheists. Christ and the Holy Spirit are not inferior Beings. They are the Deity in the fullest sense. The Bible leaves us with the divine mystery unexplained that our one God comprises three distinct Persons. Only in the heavenly Kingdom will we understand more fully the nature of God.

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and God, as Thomas did? (John 20:28). Can you pray to Him as your supreme Lord, as Paul urged us to? (Phil. 2:10, 11).