

Traditional Christianity's Answer to The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's "Should You Believe in the Trinity?"

By Dan Lemburg

The following is a page by page commentary on, and rebuttal to, the claims of the above-referenced booklet. Although this response will probably feel confrontational, it is not intended in that spirit. I realize that Jehovah's Witnesses are dedicated, God-fearing people who genuinely believe their doctrine. But truth is imperative in understanding God, and I hope that the reader will keep an open mind in examining what is presented. All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard (NASB) translation of the Bible:

Pg. 3 **The Watchtower states, "others...say that the Trinity doctrine is false."** Wouldn't it be more realistic to say that *Jehovah's Witnesses say* it is false? Here they imply that there are many who hold their position when in reality a minuscule percentage of those who claim to be Christians actually share this view.

Pg. 3 The triune God is an orthodox belief shared by some two billion Christians; it always has been and always will be. This truth has been rooted in the belief system of the Church from the very beginning of Christianity. Are we to believe, then, that it is not true simply because Jehovah's Witnesses, recently founded in the 19th century, believe otherwise?

Pg. 4 It seems a bit surprising that The Watchtower would attempt to persuade people that the orthodox belief in a triune God should be considered false because it is "**beyond the grasp of human reason,**" especially in light of what God says about himself in Isaiah 55: 8,9:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isn't it a bit presumptuous to think that everything about such an amazing God can be fully understood by the human mind?

Pg. 4 Further, **The Watchtower's quote that the Lord is "not a God of confusion"** is entirely correct. However, this does not help their argument. Rather, the truth that He "is not a God of confusion" is confirmed by the fact that the entire record of the New Testament consistently directs us to the person of Jesus Christ, revealing his identity as the only begotten the Son of God. In the Watchtower mind, this means some sort of lesser "god." But the Gospel record proves that the Jews absolutely recognized the consequence of such a claim—none other than Jesus shares the essence of the Godhead itself.

Pg. 5 **The Watchtower's use of John 17:3 presupposes that God and Jesus are separate entities simply because it states: "...the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."** But why would Jesus state that eternal life results from knowing *both*? If The Watchtower is correct, doesn't it make sense that

Jesus would have directed people solely to the Father as Almighty God, and not further confuse the issue by directing people to himself for eternal life as well?

John 17:3 actually does reveal the true nature of God, i.e. Jesus Christ shares the essence of the Godhead and therefore has a legitimate claim to the offer of eternal life through knowing both the Father and himself. It is absolutely consistent with the entire record of the New Testament in that it focuses attention on the person of Jesus Christ as well as his Father.

Pg. 5 It is interesting that **The Watchtower notes Luke 24:27 in saying that since Jesus used Scripture to verify truth, we are to do the same.** After all, who does Jesus say these Old Testament Scriptures talk about? *Himself!* Jesus says in John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.” Why does he not clarify things by telling them that his main purpose is to explain the Father, Jehovah God, to them instead of himself?

Pg. 5 **The Watchtower correctly states that the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible.** But this does not mean that it does not accurately reflect the truth of the Godhead as revealed in Scripture. The word “Trinity” is simply a term used to describe the nature of the triune God as revealed over and over again in the New Testament. And the fact that this term is used by Theophilus and Tertullian as early as the 2nd century contradicts The Watchtower’s claim that those in the 4th century, the era of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, invented the concept of Christ the Son sharing the same substance, or essence, with the Father.

Williston Walker, in *A History of the Christian Church*, which has been used for over a half century as a standard textbook, writes “He [Tertullian] defines the Godhead in terms which almost anticipate the Nicene result of more than a century later.” In his chief work, *Against Praxeas*, written to argue against heretical teachings, Tertullian says, ‘All are of one, by unity of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded which distributes the unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...’”

“He describes these distinctions of the Godhead as ‘persons,’ meaning by the word not our usage in the sense of personalities, but objective modes of being” (p.66). While the exact relationship of the persons of the Godhead in Tertullian’s mind were still mysterious, as they are today, he clearly understood to be true about the Godhead what the apostolic teachings had said all along.

Pg. 6 While the concept of a triune God is not clearly spelled out in the Old Testament, the idea of the Son of God is put forth numerous times. This person was expected by the Jews to appear as Messiah as the Son of God. They were going to stone Jesus when he claimed God as his Father because they understood that in so doing he was actually claiming equality with his Father, “...calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” (John 5:18). If this were not true, wouldn’t his reply to them be something like, “No, no! You don’t understand. I am not claiming equality with God, but rather I am merely his son, his servant.” Why, given the gravity of this issue, would Jesus not state more clearly the nature of his being? The fact is that he *did* state it clearly—in no uncertain terms which the Jews clearly understood—as evidenced by their response.

Let's take the case of the prophetic vision of Daniel 7:13, 14, which clearly shows the great esteem the Jews accorded the Son. Matthew 26:63-65 records the Jewish high priest commanding Jesus to, "tell us whether you are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God." Quoting Daniel Jesus replied, "You have said it yourself, nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest's response? "He has blasphemed!" The Sanhedrin clearly understood the implication of Jesus' statement. They knew he was claiming equality with God by applying the prophetic vision of Daniel 7 to himself.

The Jews knew who Messiah would be. Isaiah clearly told them that, "His name will be called ...Mighty God, Eternal Father..." (Isaiah 9:6). Also of note is that God said, "Let us make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness," Genesis 1:26. Should there be any confusion as to who *We* ("*Our*") are, Genesis 1:27 plainly states that "*God* created man in *His* own image, in the image of *God He* created him."(Italics added). This could only mean that "Our image" in v.26 is at least two persons in the Godhead.

- Pg. 6 **The Watchtower's assertion (bolstered by several quotes) that the concept of "the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter"** is very misleading. Actually, a wealth of information presenting the opposite view exists, yet is ignored by them in their publication.

The claim in their summation that the concept of the Trinity is not taught in either the Old Testament or New Testament is patently false. The concept of God being expressed in more than one Person is presented over and over again should one honestly search for this evidence in Scripture—not the word "Trinity" itself, but rather the reality of this truth is clearly revealed.

- Pg. 7 **The Watchtower's quotations by the Ante-Nicene fathers** are interesting in that they merely present part of the of the story. It has been said that a half-truth is no different than a lie. This is certainly the case here. I have no reason to challenge the authenticity of the quotes. But the fact that no references are supplied opens the door for a quotation being taken out of context.

Some of those quoted resided in Alexandria and were a part of what is commonly called the Alexandrian School. Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, was a hotbed of Greek philosophy. Students of Church history know that the Church in Alexandria was greatly influenced by Greek thought and also by Gnosticism, a heretical religion with roots in Greek philosophy. Gnosticism borrowed ideas from new religions and philosophies and eagerly attached itself to Christianity. Alexandria was the birthplace of what is known as Gnostic Christianity.

Clement and Origen, both teachers of the catechetical school of Alexandria, were without doubt influenced by these philosophies. Origen, one of the most prolific writers of the early church, developed an entire system of Christian theology. On many points he was right, but on many others he was dead wrong. Christians today would never accept all he taught as truth. The nature of the person of Jesus Christ was simply one area he was wrong. His teachings were condemned as heretical at a synod held in his own home city in 399 c.e.

Justin Martyr, who resided in Rome, was an adherent of Greek philosophy as well as being a Christian leader. It is not hard to see how his ideas could be easily influenced by the philosophies of the world around him. The views of Tertullian have been discussed above.

What has been dubbed the Ante-Nicene Fathers means those who antedated (lived prior to) the Council of Nicaea. While it is true that many of these men held the view that Jesus, as well as the Holy Spirit, was in reality something different than being of the same substance or essence as the Father, the whole truth is that there were even a greater number of church fathers (many rooted in the strong apostolic churches of Asia Minor) who carried on the orthodox teachings handed down by the Apostles. Ignatius of Antioch, a first century church father who was martyred about 115 c.e. describes Christ's sacrifice as "the blood of God." And in a letter to the Romans greets them in the name of "Jesus Christ our God." His writings predate any of the Ante-Nicene Fathers mentioned above.

And then there is the New Testament itself. While its writings were not organized into a body of work recognized as the Canon of Scripture until later, Christians accepted them as authoritative, and the fact that they were preserved and widely disseminated attests to the fact of their importance. These books unquestionably portray Jesus Christ on equal footing with God the Father. Jehovah's Witnesses, because they believe Scripture to be authoritative, go to great lengths to explain away the many references to Christ's divine nature—even mistranslating passages in their New World Translation in an attempt to bring legitimacy to their views.

There is no doubt that post-apostolic church writings were often influenced by Greek philosophy, and therefore often skewed. The main thing to keep in mind when looking at the teachings of the various early church leaders is that ideas of the mind of man often yield strange results. This is why the bedrock of Scripture is so important. It alone contains the whole truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6). While men may vacillate in their opinions over time, the truth will always come to the surface and dominate. So it is with the truth of nature of God. The Church, in God's wisdom and timing, has been able to sift through man's speculation to establish as doctrine what has always been revealed as the truth in Scripture: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of one essence expressed in three distinct Persons.

One might ask why so many Christian denominations, with such a diversity of beliefs, exist among the two billion people who identify with Christianity, since all base their beliefs on the Bible. It is quizzical that so many differences of opinion can come out of belief in the same foundational text. This is probably due to the fact that the ideas of man, as already discussed, can yield all kinds of different opinions. But what defines Christianity—i.e. belief in the fundamental tenets of the faith, chief of which is the incarnation—is what is really important. And the fact is that all these denominations do! Not so with those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ. For them the incarnation is an impossibility. Jesus Christ could not be God taking on a human nature since they presuppose he was not God to begin with. And this is why The Watchtower adamantly claims that they are the only true Christians, while all of Christendom is not. Actually the opposite is true.

Finally, I wonder if The Watchtower thought that the lengthy quote from Alvan Lamson's *The Church of the First Three Centuries* would simply go unchecked. What is the problem with it? Lamson is a Unitarian theologian! Since Unitarians deny all the major tenets of orthodox Christianity, including both the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, of course he would portray the subject in the worst possible light. Does The Watchtower then accept all other tenets of Unitarian theology? Hardly! Why then make such a stretch as to posit his assertions as fact?

- Pg. 7 While it is true that the subject of the Trinity was not a point of discussion at the Council of Nicaea—since the doctrine of the Holy Spirit sharing substance with the Father and the Son was added to the creed later—The Watchtower is missing the point. The point is this: the Council determined that the historical orthodox tenet of the apostolic Church is that Christ the Son shares the same substance with the Father. “We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...” While admittedly the issue of The Watchtower's booklet is the Trinity, it is senseless to gloss over the Council's conclusion regarding the nature of the Person of Christ in the process. The deity of Christ is the very core of this discussion.
- Pg. 8 Here **The Watchtower claims that “Constantine was not a Christian.”** Their proof is that Constantine was not baptized until on his deathbed. But they completely ignore several things: 1) The reason for his late baptism was most likely due to the mistaken belief of the day that baptism washed away one's sins, and was not repeatable. Therefore, Christians very often waited until the last moment in life to be baptized, hoping that it would take care of most, if not all, of their sins. 2) Shortly after being proclaimed emperor by his troops, he marched on Rome in an attempt to defeat his rival for the empire. As he approached Rome, God gave him a vision of a brilliant cross and said, “Conquer by this.” This was most likely the moment of his conversion and he went on to conquer the rest of the empire through the help and confidence God gave him. 3) All he did for the church after his conversion is nothing short of spectacular. While he did not attempt to eradicate paganism, he gave the Church freedom equal to all others in the pursuit of its faith and did many works to support and build the Church. While he retained the rank bestowed on Roman emperors, that of being regarded as gods, he most likely did this for political purposes. But his acts in support of the Church leave little doubt about where his true allegiance lay.
- Pg. 8 Indeed Constantine did convene the Council of Niceae, which was attended by some 300 bishops. The Watchtower claims that by a heavy hand Constantine directed the outcome of the council because “religious division was a threat to his empire, and he wanted to solidify his domain.” They also maintain that the vast majority of the bishops did not consider Christ to be divine. However, the Council confirmed Christ's divinity (only two dissented). So, if Constantine's motives were purely political, wouldn't it be more reasonable for him to simply side with the majority? If so few believed that Jesus was God, as The Watchtower claims, why would he have attempted to impose the will of the minority on the majority who did not, rather than the other way around? In fact, he *would have, and did*, use the opinion of the majority who believed Christ to be divine. So, even if Constantine's motive was political, the compelling force that drove the final decision was no different than if the Council had made it without any manipulation. Thus it seems apparent that Constantine's motive was purely to facilitate the Church in their attempt to overcome heresy in their midst.

- Pg. 8 The Holy Spirit was included in the Nicene Creed as equal to the Father and Jesus later in the fourth century. And it is only right that he should be considered so since the Bible clearly portrays him not as the active force of God, as The Watchtower claims, but as a person. The ideas of Arius, the leader of those opposed to the deity of Christ, while gaining favor for a time, died out completely not long after the 4th century. The truth always rises to the surface and dominates because the truth is rooted in the apostolic writings in the Bible. While heresy may raise its ugly head from time to time and draw away those who are susceptible to it, the vast majority have remained secure in apostolic truth over the centuries. It is important to note that Jehovah's Witness doctrine, as it relates to the Person of Jesus Christ, is merely a rebirth of the Arian heresy of the fourth century.
- Pg. 9 Here the Athanasian Creed, according to The Watchtower, says, "We worship one God in trinity... The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three gods, but one God." While Athanasius may not have authored the creed that bears his name, this does not detract from the fact that the content of the Creed was widely accepted by the Church. Nor does it negate the fact that Athanasius was the Church's most staunch defender of the truths found in the Creed in his time. And it is interesting that Athanasius was banished to southern France—where some believe the Creed had its origin—during the brief rebirth of the Arian heresy.
- Pg. 9 **What is disreputable is not the history of the Trinity, as The Watchtower claims here, but their own adoption of the Arian heresy as their fundamental tenet.** Paul was right to warn the Church concerning apostasy, fierce wolves, travesty of the truth, etc. But these scriptures do not apply to what **The Watchtower describes as the Church's "lawless clergy class."** It does, in fact, apply to the leadership of The Watchtower itself! May the readers of this rebuttal take heed of the very warnings listed in The Watchtower's publication. Do not be deceived by the misrepresentations and half-truths of this booklet. Search for the truth in the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit will reveal it to you. "...the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13), and "He shall glorify Me [the Lord Jesus]..." (John 16:14).
- Pg. 11 Here **The Watchtower states that the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes was common in the ancient world.** All the religions discussed here are polytheistic. There are so many gods involved in these religions that it is not surprising to find some groupings of three. This, however, has no bearing on the subject at hand. Judaism, in which Christianity is rooted, stood in stark contrast to other religions from the very beginning. The Jews believed in one God. Should we assume then that polytheistic religions had a major influence in determining the doctrine of the Trinity? Of course not! Christians would as a matter of course base their beliefs in a monotheistic system. Anything smacking of polytheism would be anathema to them.

The doctrine of the Trinity espouses *one* God who expresses himself in three distinct persons. One God! As already discussed, there is no doubt that Greek philosophy influenced the ideas of early Church leaders. But it was always a negative influence in regard to Trinitarian thinking, not the other way around. The early Church had to vigilantly guard against Gnostic and Hellenic thought which, in maintaining that Jesus Christ was merely a man, continually attempted to undermine the true nature of his relationship to the Father.

A good example of the New Testament's validation of the Trinity lies in passages of Scripture which deal with the question: Who raised Jesus from the dead? The Watchtower, of course believes that Jesus was never physically raised from the dead, but merely returned to heaven as a spiritual being. Nowhere in the Bible is this taught, but the Bible does repeat the theme of his bodily resurrection over and over again. It is one of the foundational tenets of Christianity. And in telling us *who* raised Jesus from the dead, the Bible reveals a very interesting fact.

First, in John 2:19-22, Jesus claims that *he* will raise *himself* from the dead. Second, in dozens of passages God is identified as the one who resurrected Jesus from the dead. Finally, in Romans 8:11, Paul tells us that it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. Well, which one was it? In fact it was all three acting as one God, for the three are inseparable—not three Gods, but one God expressed as three Persons. It is no wonder that the Church has defined the truth of the Trinity as foundational to its beliefs.

Pg. 12 While **The Watchtower's booklet is aimed at discrediting the doctrine of the Trinity**, the bulk of this material (pages 12-30) actually has to do with discrediting the divinity of Jesus Christ. They start with a quote by L.L.Paine claiming that the Bible is "strictly monotheistic." On this point you will get no argument from me! But the disagreement comes from determining what the nature of this monotheistic God actually is. Paine claims that Jesus could not *be* God since Jesus clearly makes reference *to* God time and again.

But who is L.L. Paine, "professor of ecclesiastical history?" What does he believe about the authority of Scripture? Here is what he says about Scripture: "[The Bible's] presuppositions of a divine miraculous origin and character, differentiating the Bible from all other religious literature, can no longer be admitted. Historically considered, the Bible is simply a literary product of the Hebrew and Jewish nation." (A Critical History Of The Evolution Of Trinitarianism, 1900, p.269)

Clearly The Watchtower is grasping at straws by using such a source to bolster their argument against the divinity of Christ. They themselves revere Scripture as authoritative and claim to use it alone in determining their doctrine. So why use a source with whom they would disagree on such a foundational issue as the veracity of Scripture? Because, as in its use of Unitarian Alvan Lamson's material, The Watchtower *must* use such sources to present their argument, and thus their doctrine, in a more favorable light. Simply no other authoritative sources are available.

The following is a point by point rebuttal to The Watchtower's claim that Jesus Christ does not share the divine essence of the Godhead:

Pg. 13 Jesus' prayer that men would know God "the only true God" (John 17:3) is followed by "and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." Why would Jesus include himself in this prayer of knowing "the only true God" if he were directing attention to the Father only? One would think that he would not want to muddy the water by referring to himself if he wanted to direct attention to the Father alone. **The Watchtower would have a good argument in claiming that only Jehovah is called "Almighty" in Scripture if it were not for the fact that Scripture never**

claims that Jesus is some sort of separate God from the Father. Christians do not claim that Jesus is a God unto himself but that he shares the essence of the Godhead with the Father, as well as does the Holy Spirit. There is one God, Jehovah (a name derived from the more ancient “Yahweh”) who is expressed in three persons as revealed in Scripture. And just because the term “Elo-him,” another name most often translated as “God,” is sometimes used in a plural form (“gods”) does mean Christians believe this denotes a Trinity, as The Watchtower seems to think they do. I have never known anyone who holds this position.

Pg. 14 The Watchtower’s claim, taken from the NJB, that Jesus was a created being because he was “the beginning of God’s creation” (Colossians 1:15) is erroneous. The term used in most translations (including The Watchtower’s New World Translation) is “first-born” of “all” creation. The use of the term “first-born” is not to be interpreted as “first-creation.” Rather it is used as a term of preeminence. In Exodus 4:22, God states that “Israel is My son, My first-born.” While one might argue that Israel took the position of first-born from his brother Esau, he was not actually the first-born of Isaac. This is a term used by God for preeminence in this passage, denoting the position of favor Israel enjoyed in God’s eyes. If that is not enough proof for the interpretation of this term, look at Psalm 89:27 where God says of David, “I will make him my first-born,” clearly a term of preeminence since, as the youngest son of Jesse, he could not possibly have enjoyed that position. Jesus was in fact preeminent over all creation. The Watchtower’s claim that this verse should be interpreted to mean he was created simply does not hold water.

And their argument that the term “Wisdom” found in Proverbs actually means “Jesus” proves nothing. Wisdom is not a metaphor for Jesus, but simply what it says, “Wisdom,” used in beautifully poetical form. Next, the context of 1 Corinthians 8:6 says that there are not many gods, but one God. It seems curious that Paul would muddy the water by including Jesus with the Father in his argument that there are not many gods but only one if he did not intend depict the two as one. He would certainly have made every attempt to separate the two if he did not believe in the divinity of Christ. The context of his argument would have demanded it. The next passage, “Let Us make Man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26), has already been discussed on page 3.

As to The Watchtower’s claim that it would be impossible for Jesus to be tempted if he were truly God, it appears obvious that they do not have a good grasp of the doctrine of the incarnation—a doctrine fundamental to the beliefs of the Christian Church. Philippians 2:6-7 says, “...although [Christ Jesus] existed in the form of God, [He] 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.” Christians believe that Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man, and that he willingly laid down the rights he enjoyed as God when he came to earth as a human being. He did this in order to take the sins of all men upon himself, so that ultimately those who received his gift of forgiveness would be reconciled to God, sharing everlasting life in relationship with him.

In order to satisfy everything needed for such a comprehensive forgiveness, Jesus experienced all sorts of temptation, just as mankind does. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin” and

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:17-18)

How Christ could be fully God while laying down his rights as God to become fully man is one of the many mysteries of God. We do not have to fully comprehend how this is possible for it to be a reality.

Pg. 15 The quote from 1 Timothy 2: 5,6 must be taken from The Watchtower’s New World translation, because its “who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all” is actually translated in all major translations much as it is in the *NASB* as, “who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.” This is simply one more example of either poor scholarship or a blatant attempt to cast Scripture into a mold that supports Watchtower theology. It is erroneous and therefore the argument based on this error has no substance. In truth, the ransom needed for mankind’s sin was staggering. The Bible testifies that, in his infinite love and mercy, God sent his only begotten Son to die in the form of human flesh to pay that ransom, *indeed* a sacrifice commensurate with the *magnitude* of the problem.

As for being made “lower than the angels,” The Watchtower conveniently omits “...Him who made *for a little while* lower than the angels.” (Hebrews 2:9). This is absolutely consistent with the doctrine that Christ laid down his rights as God to become fully man—for a little while—before returning to his former glory.

Pg. 15-16 There is no doubt that the New Testament writers deemed it extremely important to distinguish Jesus as the only begotten Son. In using the Greek word *monogenes*, they were emphasizing this distinction, since *monogenes* is taken from the root words *mono* (only) and *genos* (stock), (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D.*). When the word *only* is not used with *begotten*, the word *gennao* is used, meaning generation or offspring. In either case it means being from the same stock (genetics, if you will). Jesus is of the same makeup, the same substance as the Father, not created by but born of God.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, says it best: “What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man.” [This holds true for anything begetting another: a frog begets frogs, a daisy begets daisies—they simply do not beget anything but of their own nature.] “What God creates is not God; just as what man creates is not man. That is why men are not Sons of God in the sense Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of the same kind.”

The Jews immediately recognized the implications of Jesus’ claim. The very fact that Jesus called God his Father distinguished him accurately in their minds. “For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because He was not only breaking the Sabbath, but also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” (John 5:18). Now, The Watchtower might say that the Jews were simply mistaken in believing that Jesus’ statement carried the implication of equality with God. But that does not negate the fact that there was no doubt in their minds as to what this meant. So, why did Jesus not attempt to clarify his status to them, if in fact he were not claiming equality with the Father? Why would

he simply let them go on believing such a falsehood about him? One would have to think that, by letting them go on thinking he considered himself equal with God, Jesus would be demeaning the Person of God. He simply would not do this.

As to the time element in Jesus having become the only begotten Son of God, it is absolutely critical to realize that there *is* no time with God. He is eternal and thus exists in a state outside the boundaries of time. Time is in fact his creation, having come into existence with the creation of Nature itself. This is a tough one because with our finite minds we really cannot begin to comprehend the true meaning of such a reality. But we also cannot allow ourselves the luxury of limiting God simply because we cannot fully understand him. The fact remains that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God—not created, but of the Father’s same substance—and that he has existed as God in that state eternally. This is what the Bible teaches.

The Watchtower’s claim that, “...nobody in the first century ever thought of him as being God the Son. Even the demons...,” is totally erroneous. Actually, everyone who encountered Jesus knew that his claim to being the Son of God meant that he was equal with God. This is plainly seen in 1) those attempting to stone him, 2) those plotting to arrest and kill him and 3) the high priest who accused him of blasphemy worthy of death when he clearly stated his true identity as “the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:64 & John 19:7). And for The Watchtower to say that the demons did not believe him to be God the Son simply because they addressed him as the Son of God is a real stretch. They too knew the implications of his title, as well as the authority that accompanied it.

It is interesting to note that even when Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man” he was invoking his rightful position as God the Son. You will find that nearly every time he made this statement, the context concerned his power and majesty—rightfully so considering the passage of Old Testament Scripture wherein Daniel saw him as coming “with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man.” (Daniel 7:13-14). The Jews knew that Messiah was to come as a man who was truly God’s Son, but mistakenly failed to recognize him because he did not appear in the glorified state they expected. The evidence in Scripture clearly shows that they fully understood the implications of his claim to being both the Son of God and the Son of Man—that he was indeed God the Son.

When 1 Timothy 2:5 states, “For there is One God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” it refers to the God-man, Jesus Christ, who willingly laid aside his rights as God to become fully man for the distinct purpose of reconciling men to God. There is no inconsistency here with what the Bible clearly teaches about the true nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son.

Pgs. 16-20 **The Watchtower asks, “Is God always superior to Jesus?”** They then go on to cite various passages wherein Jesus: 1) indicates his Father as being God, 2) he implies that that he and his Father are two distinct personages, 3) that he was sent from God as God’s servant (*KJV*)—in other versions *bond-servant*, 4) that he had limited knowledge, and 5) that he was in a subordinate position to the Father. In each of these instances, **The Watchtower concludes that Jesus could not be God but merely a created being.** They mistakenly assume that, if Jesus were truly an equal part of a Trinity as God the Son, he could not possibly be lacking or

subservient in any way, since his divine nature would always put him on the same par as the Father—i.e. enjoying and demonstrating the power and privileges held only by Almighty God. But they fail to understand that Jesus, while being fully God, had to lay aside certain aspects of his divine nature in order to become fully man. Sent from the Father for this purpose, he did so willingly.

This may be redundant to what was explained earlier, but it bears repeating. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:6-8 that, “[Jesus], although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped [utilized or asserted], 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.” Jesus had to become fully man in order to become that faithful high priest so clearly described in Hebrews 2:17: “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” He simply could not hold on to the power and privileges of his divine nature while performing this function. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus’ subordinate position to the Father has to do with established lines of authority within the Godhead. This is simply the way Father, Son and Holy Spirit operate together. No one can explain it. Nor would this be expected given the all-knowing nature of God compared to the limited comprehension of man. Nevertheless, this truth can easily be deduced from Scripture. When we take into account the entirety of Scripture in attempting to discern the meaning of isolated verses, we can much more easily understand passages that pose even the most seemingly conflicting truths about the nature of God.

Jehovah’s witnesses will tell you that that Jesus could not possibly be God if he said, “...for the Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28). But Jesus never said that the Father was *better* than himself. Greater here refers to the authority within the Godhead just discussed. It is completely consistent with the rest of Scripture which explains both the humble state Jesus took upon himself in becoming fully human and his subordinate position to his Father under the established authority in the Godhead.

As to the quotes from the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, there will never be a shortage of those whose liberal bias and agenda serves to detract from the divinity of Jesus Christ. But taken with the overwhelming body of opinion to the contrary in the traditional Church, these statements are inconsequential.

What does Jesus claim about himself? Here are a few of his own statements:

“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:58). By using the phrase “I am,” Jesus communicated something much more than merely his pre-human existence—God told Moses, “I am that I am.” Why would the Jews attempt to stone him for saying this? And if they simply misunderstood his meaning, why would Jesus not clarify what he meant by such an audacious statement? The Watchtower’s argument on page 26 completely fails to address this.

“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30). Here again the Jews attempted to stone him for such a daring statement. Did Jesus simply mean that he and his Father

were in complete agreement, as Jehovah's Witnesses assert? Again, why wouldn't Jesus clarify his meaning if he were not actually claiming oneness of substance with the Father? He goes on in John 10:38 to try to get them to see that, "the Father is in me, and I in the Father" in response to their allegation, "You are blaspheming, because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'" The Jews clearly believed that by claiming this oneness with the Father, Jesus was claiming to be God: "...because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God." (John 10:33). Jesus replied with this argument: if men were such an exalted creation of God that they themselves could be called gods, how in the world could they take issue with Jesus—the exalted one, the only begotten Son of God—claiming the status of divinity?

In expanding on his claim of oneness with the Father, Jesus claimed, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in the One who sent Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me." (John 12:45). And in addressing Phillip's request, "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus said to him, '...he who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, "show us the Father?"'" (John 14:8-9).

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." (John 12:32). Why would Jesus claim that men would be drawn to him instead of God, if in fact he were not God? Surely he would have said that all men would be drawn to God the Father if this were not so. But Jesus is God and can, therefore, comfortably make such a claim.

Jesus never claimed to be God? How can the Watchtower make such a claim when Jesus says in Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, "who was and is and who is to come, the Almighty." If there is any doubt as to who is speaking here, Jesus again identifies himself in Revelation 22: 13 & 16: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify of these things to the churches. I am the root and the descendent of David, the bright morning star." Jesus plainly states here that he is Jehovah God Almighty. How could there be any doubt as to his true identity.

And what do others say about his divinity?

In John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" He clearly understood who Jesus was when personally encountered by the resurrected Christ.

Paul says in Colossians 1:19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." Fullness here means *fullness of Deity*. He clarifies this in Colossians 2:9: "For in Him all the *fullness of Deity* dwells in bodily form." (Emphasis added).

And, of course, we cannot leave out what is one of the most revealing scriptures of all when it comes to true identity of Jesus Christ, John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." **Here Jehovah's Witnesses always say that this means he is "a god," as in an "exalted one."** In fact, their New World Translation of the Bible conveniently adds the indefinite article "a" before the word "god," purposely not capitalizing *God* for

in order to define Jesus as someone less than actually being God Almighty. This, by the way, is just one of many mistranslations of Scripture by The Watchtower, all of which serve to bolster their misguided doctrine. More knowledgeable Jehovah's Witnesses admit that the indefinite article "a" is not actually in the original Greek. The Greek text states: "the Word was God." This is a very real problem for The Watchtower's doctrine. Their lengthy explanation on pages 27-29 leaves out the fact that all major translations of the Bible accurately state what the Greek text says: "the Word was God." They then quote several obscure translations, hoping these will lend substance to their argument.

The Watchtower goes on to say that, since the Bible says "The Word was *with* God," the Word cannot also *be* God. They seem to be forgetting that the persons of the Godhead would naturally coexist in this very way if they are in fact a triune God.

Let's go on to the issue of worship.

When the Apostle John fell at an angel's feet to worship him, he was soundly rebuked being told, "Do not do that... Worship God." (Revelation 19:10). This command is consistent with what is found throughout Scripture: only God is worthy of worship. The testimony of the Bible is that Jesus accepted and received such worship.

John 10 tells the story of Jesus healing the man born blind. It ends with this interaction between the man and Jesus in John 10:35-38, "...Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "you both have seen Him and He is the one who is talking to you." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him. Nowhere in this passage does it imply that Jesus did not accept this worship. If Jesus were not God, wouldn't he have told the man not to worship him, but to worship God only? And John, who also wrote the Book of Revelation where this command regarding worship of God is found, would certainly not have wanted to give the impression in his Gospel that Jesus was worthy of worship if in fact he did not believe Jesus to actually be God.

In describing the person of Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews says this, "For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee?' And again, 'I will be a Father to Him, and He a Son to Me?' And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him'...But of the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever...' (Hebrews 1:5, 6 & 8). Apparently he is deemed worthy of worship by the angels, which God the Father himself commanded.

This same writer describes Jesus this way: "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His Nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..." (Hebrews 1:3). *Exact representation (express image in the KJV)* is translated from the Greek *charakter tes hupostaseos autou*—"the exact image of His [God's] essence. Whatever the divine essence is, Jesus is said to be its perfect expression" (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D.*).

You can personally know the truth of all that is being said here regarding the Person of Jesus Christ. He said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall

make you free.” (John 8:32). Simply ask him to reveal himself to you. Come humbly to him, asking that he forgive all your sins—even those of unbelief. Be willing to put aside all your preconceived notions about Jesus and ask him to come into your life in a new way. He will be faithful to do just that, and cause you to be born again. (John 1:12-13, 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

The following is a rebuttal to the Watchtower’s claim that the Holy Spirit is not a Person who shares the divine essence of the Godhead

Pgs. 20-22 The main thrust of **The Watchtower’s argument here is that the Holy Spirit is not presented as a person in Scripture.** And if he is not a person, how then can he be a member as a person of a triune God? He is, as they state, simply God’s active force—the power of God as it is demonstrated in lives and situations. But is this really true? If the Holy Spirit is not a person, why would Jesus so often refer to *him* (never *it*) as what could logically only be a person. Here is what Jesus says:

“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper [Comforter or Counselor in other versions; the literal meaning from the Greek *Paracletos* is *one called alongside to help*], that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17).

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all I said to you.” (John 14:26).

“When the Helper comes, who I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.” (John 15:26).

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:7-8).

“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and disclose it to you.” (John 16:13-14).

Can there be any doubt, given the repetition of the personal pronoun *He*—not *it* or *that one* as The New world Translation improperly translates—in these verses, that the Holy Spirit is regarded as anything other than a person? And telling as to the divinity of Christ is the fact that the Holy Spirit’s role is to glorify Jesus (v.14). Why wouldn’t Jesus clarify things by saying that the Holy Spirit would come to glorify God Almighty—instead of himself—if in fact Jesus were not God himself.

At the very core of the problem of Jehovah’s Witness doctrine is a misconception of what it means to be a person. They seem to believe that a person would, by definition of the term, be one who is seen or experienced by others as exhibiting

some sort of human characteristics. Thus Jesus can easily be seen as a person, since he came into this world in human form. And God the Father is often thought of as a wise old man; in Daniel 7 he is seen as the *Ancient of Days*—“His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool.”

But how could God Almighty be someone who actually possesses characteristics somewhat like a human individual when he indeed encompasses the entirety of the physical universe? He is everywhere! While the universe is finite, He is infinite. “...Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee...” (1 Kings 8:27). In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1). Is God just a big guy who is capable of all this, or is he someone much more?

Obviously God is someone much more than we could ever imagine with our finite minds. God always reveals himself to us as a *person*. But the misconception by some of God’s true nature stems from the manner in which he chooses to reveal himself to mankind, which sometimes is in somewhat human form. The Bible tells us that we were created in his image, so it is easy for us to assume that he might share some of our physical characteristics, even though Scripture plainly tells us that he is *spirit*, not a physical being (John 4:24).

So, then, if God is much more than man-like, but is always referred to as a person, what are the characteristics of a person as it pertains to him? One is not a person unless he possesses certain attributes, the mind being the chief among them. One might say that the chief attribute of God as a person is that he is a spirit. But even though he is spirit, a thinking mind is still the chief attribute of his nature as a *person*. “In the beginning was the Word...,” as John 1:1 tells us. *The Word* is translated from the Greek word *Logos*. *Logos* means: “Intelligence, word as the expression of that intelligence”(Zodhiates). When God, *the Word*, brought all things into being, he did so according to a plan that was the ultimate expression of his intelligence. And when he created man in his own image, he constructed him in such a way that he would be a reflection of God’s own personal reality—a person: a highly sophisticated, intelligent being.

This is why the early Church fathers, as they studied the Scripture, realized that God possessed three distinct personalities, which they identified as persons. All three fulfilled the function of “God,” and yet they were distinctly separate persons within the Godhead. The Holy Spirit could clearly be seen as one of those persons because he was revealed in Scripture in such a way that he met the criteria of being God and yet functioned as a person, though he was different from, but complimentary to, the Father and the Son. This is why apostolic teaching saw him as the person of God the Holy Spirit, and the Creeds of the traditional Church ultimately included the him as being an equal member of the Godhead.

When The Watchtower says that the Holy Spirit was never presented as a person in Scripture, they are entirely wrong. Just because manifestations such as “as a dove” or “tongues as of fire” accompanied his presence does not mean that he is something less than a person. It merely means that he chose these things as visible symbols as he manifested himself.

When The Watchtower goes on to claim, “Various sources acknowledge that the Bible does not support the idea that the holy spirit is the third person of a

Trinity,” they make two glaring errors. First, they cite The Catholic Encyclopedia as saying, “Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find as not having any clear indication of a Third Person.” Doesn’t the Bible say that Christ himself is “the mystery that has been hidden from past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints,” (Colossians 1:26)? Shouldn’t we then think that the person of the Holy Spirit may also have been shrouded in such mystery? Secondly, since Catholics are obviously Trinitarian, I suspect the missing context of the quotes—which here make them appear to contradict the Church’s traditional belief in the Trinity—would bring a lot of clarity to the issue.

In conclusion, given the tremendous importance of the issue of the nature of God to each and every believer’s relationship with Him, it certainly seems prudent that we seriously pursue the truth. “But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:13). Now, whether you believe that the Holy Spirit brings truth as a person or as the active force of God, it is still God Almighty who promises this; we can depend on him to keep his promise. Each one of us need to diligently pursue the truth of God with an open mind.

It has been said that God gives us enough light to find our way and be saved, but leaves enough darkness for one to stumble around and be lost forever. May Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians be our own prayer: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.” (Ephesians 1:18-19a).

I realize there is a very high price to be paid when any member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses does not conform to Watchtower doctrine. Indeed, even examining this rebuttal may bring heavy criticism on one brave enough tackle the questions it raises. And should one decide to change his mind on the matter, he subjects himself to the barbaric practice of shunning—the ultimate tool for subjecting members in any control oriented organization. Even biological families are torn apart indefinitely when one member decides to believe contrary to Jehovah’s Witness doctrine. The loss of these relationships is a heavy burden indeed. I pray that you will be able to withstand the pressure. Possession of the truth is well worth it!

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