## The Deity of Christ

One of the central doctrines of the Christian Faith is the claim that Jesus Christ is God. During His earthly ministry, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” (Mk 8:27). The disciples responded, “John the Baptist; and others {say} Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” Jesus then asked, “But who do you say that I am?”

Just as the Lord asked His disciples of that time, He inquires of us as well, “Who do you say that I am?” Our goal in this chapter is to find a proper response to that question, in particular, regarding His deity. Throughout Church history, the devil has attempted to introduce false teachings about the nature of Jesus Christ. Wrong understandings of Him still find acceptance today.

### А. Biblical Analysis and the Intertestamental Period

**1. Old Testament**

Even though the name of Jesus is not mentioned in the Old Testament, many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Him. The fulfillment of these prophecies confirms His deity, since the Old Testament speaks of Messiah as God. We will investigate both messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus, and the Old Testament testimony of Messiah’s deity.

Daniel chapter 9 gives a precise indication of when Messiah was to come. Daniel 9:24-26 relates that Messiah would die 490 years after the order to rebuild Jerusalem, issued by King Artaxerxes in 444 B.C. Taking into consideration that the Hebrew calendar contains 360 days, and not 365, the date of Messiah’s death would be in the early 30’s A.D., the time of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Isaiah predicted that Messiah would be born from a virgin (Isa 7:14), which was fulfilled in Jesus’ birth by Mary (Matt 1). The Old Testament states that Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham (Gen 12:3), Judah (Gen 49:10; Isa 65:9), and David (2 Sam 7). Jesus’ genealogy meets these criteria (Matt 1; Lk 2). In the book of Micah, we discover that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), which was the birthplace of our Lord (Matt 2:1).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Furthermore, Isaiah predicted that the Holy Spirit would descend on Messiah (Isa 11:2), which occurred during Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan (Matt 3:16). It was prophesied that Messiah’s coming would be preceded by the coming of Elijah the prophet (Isa 40:3; Mal 4:5), and Elijah appeared figuratively in the person of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ (Matt 3:1-2; Jn 3:28).

The Old Testament foresaw Messiah’s miracle ministry (Isa 35:5-6), and miracles were not lacking in the ministry of Jesus (Matt 9:35). According to Psalm 78:2, Messiah would speak in parables, which abounded in Jesus’ teaching ministry (Matt 13:34). Malachi spoke of Messiah cleansing the temple (Mal 3:1), which Jesus did prior to His Passion (Matt 21:12). The Old Testament predicts Messiah’s rejection (Ps 118:22; Isa 53:3), which Jesus experienced in His earthly career (1 Pet 2:7; Jn 1:10-11).[[2]](#footnote-2)

According to the Scriptures, Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Ps 41:9; Zech 11:12), which was fulfilled when Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord to the Jewish leaders (Matt 10:4; 26:15). Jesus experienced other features of Messiah’s sufferings, like beating (Isa 50:6), mocking (Ps 22:7-8), crucifixion (Ps 22:16), and His silence before His accusers (Isa 53:7) (see Matt 26:67-27:31; Lk 23:33). Two thieves were crucified beside Jesus (Matt 27:38) as Isaiah foretold (Isa 53:12). Jesus prayed from the cross (Lk 23:34) as Isaiah also foresaw (Isa 53:12). On the cross, He thirsted (Jn 19:28) and was pierced (Jn 19:34), then later was laid in a rich man’s tomb (Matt 27:57), just as the Old Testament had predicted (Ps 69:21; Zech 12:10; Isa 53:9). Soldiers cast lots for His clothing (Jn 19:24; cf. Ps 22:19). Jesus arose, as predicted of Messiah in Psalm 16:10 under the figure of David.[[3]](#footnote-3)

It is also significant that during Jesus’ lifetime, many confessed Him to be Messiah: angels from heaven (Lk 1:32; 2:11), Simeon (Lk 2:25-30), Andrew (Jn 1:41), Phillip (Jn 1:45), Martha (Jn 11:27), Peter (Matt 16:13-17), and Jesus Himself (Mk 14:61-62; Jn 4:25-26). Even Pilate acknowledged Him to be the King of the Jews (Jn 19:19-22). In addition, others spoke of Him as the Son of God, not only in the sense of Messiah (Jn 1:49), but also in the sense of divine being (Mk 1:1; 15:39; Lk 1:35; Jn 1:34). Jesus Himself confirmed those claims (Lk 20:13; 22:70; Jn 10:36). John the Baptist also spoke of His origins in eternity (Jn 1:15).

One cannot be but impressed by the testimony of these fulfilled prophecies. Jesus rightly claimed, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (Jn 5:39). These events could not have occurred by chance. Jesus could not have purposely fulfilled all that was written about Messiah, since many of these predictions lay beyond a person’s control, such as place of birth, genealogy, method of execution, betrayal by a friend, and others.

Even if we were able to concede that all this could have happened by chance, we must nevertheless consider that God would not allow a false Messiah to appear with such convincing credentials. Finally, we note that Jesus was an honest and upright man, who would not falsify His identity and deliberately deceive His disciples.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Having established that Jesus is the Messiah, we can on that basis claim that He is God. The following passages demonstrate the divine status Messiah enjoys. He is the eternal priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4), the shepherd of God’s flock and His associate (Zech 13:7), sent by God the Father (Isa 48:16), and filled with God’s Spirit (Isa 42:1; 61:1). He is the Son of God (Ps 2:7; Ps 89:20-28).

The following texts speak directly of Messiah’s deity:[[5]](#footnote-5)

- For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, *Mighty God*, *Eternal Father*, Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6).

- Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows (Ps 45:6-7).

- Yahweh says to *my Lord*: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet (Ps 110:1).

- Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift {it} up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “*Here is your God!*” (Isa 40:9).

- Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name *Immanuel* (Isa 7:14, сf. Matt 1:23).

- I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, *with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man* was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and {men of every} language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14; сf. Matt 26:64).

- 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* (Mic 5:2; сf. Matt 2:1).

- “Behold, {the} days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘*Yahweh our righteousness*’” (Jer 23:5-6).[[6]](#footnote-6)

- “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And *the Lord*, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says Yahweh of hosts (Mal 3:1).

It is also interesting to note that in the Gospels, Jesus is compared with other Old Testament heroes and found superior to them all. He is greater that Abraham (Jn 8:56), David (Matt 22:42-45), Solomon (Matt 12:42), Isaiah (Jn 12:41), Moses and Elijah (Mk 9:4-7).

**2. Intertestamental Period**

Although the intertestamental literature does not speak of Messiah’s deity, we will nonetheless devote attention to the development of the messianic expectations of that time.[[7]](#footnote-7)

For the most part, people of that day expected a single Messiah – a king from the house of David. Evidence also exists, though, that some expected two or even three Messiahs along with a new appearance of Moses and Elijah.[[8]](#footnote-8) Based on Numbers 25:10-13, one Messiah was to be a priest (see *Sirach*, 45.23-26; *Testament of Reuben*, 6.7-8; *Testament of Judah*, 21.1-5). In two manuscripts from Qumran, we learn of a third Messiah – Messiah a prophet (*1QS* 9.11; *4QTestimonia*).

The following passage from the Psalms of Solomon is of special interest, since it ascribes to Messiah certain divine qualities:

For he will smite the earth with the word of his mouth for ever. He will bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness, and he himself (will be) pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people. He will rebuke rulers, and remove sinners by the might of his word (*Ps. Sol.*, 17.39-41).

Nonetheless, Julias relates, “By the time of Jesus the majority of the common people thought of the coming Messiah primarily as a political, military king who would deal with the external crises faced by the nation.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Concerning the “Son of Man,” he is frequently mentioned in the intertestamental literature, especially in the book of *1 Enoch*. He will be the deliverer of Israel and the eschatological judge. At times, he is identified as Yahweh’s “Suffering Servant” (see *1 Enoch,* 37-71; *Wisdom of Solomon,* 2, 5), but he is not Messiah.

Concerning Yahweh’s “Suffering Servant” (see Isa 40-53), many opinions exists for his identity. Many feel that he is Israel. Some identify him as a certain second century B.C. teacher of the Law. One of the scholars of Qumran thought himself to be that figure. Several Targums attribute some of these prophecies of the Suffering Servant to Messiah, including some concerning his sufferings. We cite the following examples.

In the Targum of Isaiah 52:13, we read: “Behold my servant, the Anointed One, shall prosper,” and in the Targum of Isaiah 53:11, “They shall look upon the kingdom of their Anointed One.”[[10]](#footnote-10) These passages are in the classic context speaking of the Servant’s suffering (52:13-53:12). In addition, in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, the latter does not challenge the idea that Messiah will suffer, but doubts that He will be crucified (chps. 89-90). Although the idea was accepted that a righteous person could suffer on behalf of another,[[11]](#footnote-11) there is no mention of Messiah’s redemptive sufferings in the intertestamental literature.

In the intertestamental period Messiah was given various names, such as “Word,” “Wisdom,” “Righteous One,” “Branch,” “Chosen One,” “Son of God,” “Son of David,” and “The Coming One.”

Another Messianic figure, who is frequently mentioned in Rabbinic literature dating back to 200 B.C. (Qumran manuscript 4Q372), is Messiah ben Joseph. He is also called a “second Joshua.”[[12]](#footnote-12) David Mitchell summarizes how he is described in this literature:

Messiah ben Joseph gathers scattered Israel. He rules over them in Jerusalem and rebuilds the temple. Then his kingdom is attacked by foreign foes who vex his people and overcome and slay him. Upon his death all Israel are exiled. But when Messiah ben David appears, Ben Joseph is raised from death to honour.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The death and resurrection of Messiah ben Joseph recalls the history of the patriarch Joseph of Genesis 37-50. Joseph’s history, in fact, includes other aspects that typify the Messiah Jesus.[[14]](#footnote-14) Joseph was the favored son of his father, predicted his future glory, was hated by his brothers, essentially “died” and “rose again,” became lord of the land, forgave the sins of his brothers, and brought salvation to “the earth” (Gen 41:57).

Joseph’s story occupies a climactic position in the book of Genesis, a book that unfolds the drama of the coming “seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15) who would bring deliverance to humankind. Joseph is therefore the closest typological representation in Genesis of this coming “seed.” However, his death recorded in the final verse of Genesis clues the reader that the true “seed” is yet to come.

Also of interest is that Jesus of Nazareth’s stepfather was named Joseph, making Him Messiah ben Joseph in a literal sense. Also remarkable is that Jesus’ stepfather, Joseph, was a son of Jacob (Matt 1:16)!

**3. New Testament**

**а. Jesus’ Testimony**

The New Testament records many instances when Jesus Himself, either directly or indirectly, claimed to be God.[[15]](#footnote-15) He often claimed to do things that only God could do. For example, according to Old Testament teaching, only God could forgive sins. Yet, Jesus claimed to have that authority as well. When He healed the lame man in Mark chapter 2, He announced to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2:5). The scribes, understanding the significance of what He did, objected, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mk 2:6-7). Jesus then confirmed that He had that authority by healing the lame man, “so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mk 2:10).

Moreover, Jesus claimed to have authority to raise the dead, which, again, only God can do. In 1 Samuel 2:6, we read, “Yahweh kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up” (сf. Deut 32:39). Yet, Jesus asserted, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes” (Jn 5:21), and, “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (Jn 5:25).[[16]](#footnote-16) During His earthly ministry, Christ displayed His authority over death by raising several people from the dead (Lk 7:11-16; 8:49-55; Jn 11:1-44).

Jesus also stated that He will judge the world, which only God has the prerogative to do. God says in Psalm 75, “When I select an appointed time, it is I who judge with equity” (v. 2), and we also read, “God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another” (v. 7). According to 1 Chronicles 16:33, “He (i.e., Yahweh) is coming to judge the earth.” Yet, Jesus announced, “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son… and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (Jn 5:22). Jesus, being Himself God, does things that only God can do: forgive sins, raise the dead, and judge the world.

Jesus indicated His deity in still other ways. He taught people to believe in Him and honor Him, just as they believe in and honor the Father: “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me” (Jn 14:1), and, “…so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:23).

The Gospels also relate that Jesus allowed people to worship Him.[[17]](#footnote-17) The Greek verb that denotes worship is προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*)*.* It consists of two parts: προς (*pros*), i.е., “to,” and κυνέω(*kuneo*)*,* i.е., “to kiss.” In ancient Greece, this word depicted a person falling facedown to kiss the feet or clothing of a king or other object of worship. It was only used when reverence was paid to someone or something considered divine. Later, the word adopted a broader range of meaning and could indicate simply showing love or respect to another person.

In the Septuagint, προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) translates a Hebrew word meaning “bow,” “kiss,” “serve,” or “worship.” In was usually employed in reference to God, but also applied to angels, righteous people, rulers, or prophets. When used as a sign of respect for people, it usually implied that that person had a special relationship with the Lord. Therefore, in the Septuagint the term προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) applied to God either directly or indirectly.

The New Testament writers also employed προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) for the worship of God. Satan sought this act of worship as well (Matt 4:9). Προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*), however, could also be shown to people. For example, in Matthew 18:26 a slave fell at the feet of his master to plead for mercy. In Revelation 3:9, the enemies of the Church will bow in honor before the saints. On the other hand, in Acts 10:26 Peter refused to accept an act of worship (προσκυνέω): “Stand up; I too am {just} a man.” An angel also refused to allow the apostle John to worship (προσκυνέω) him (Rev 19:10).[[18]](#footnote-18)

Since προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) can mean both respect and worship, we must clarify in what sense Jesus allowed this act in reference to Himself. In some cases, it is clear that people were just showing Him respect as a man of God (Matt 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20). It is unlikely that the leper, the Gentile woman, or the mother of James and John were recognizing Him as God.

Yet, after His resurrection, people were more likely to address Jesus as divine. When the women met Him at the tomb, “they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him” (Matt 28:9). Similarly, when the disciples met the risen Christ in Galilee, “they worshiped {Him}” (Matt 28:17). In Luke 24:51-52, the disciples also worshipped the risen Lord.

Nonetheless, even before His resurrection, several incidents seem to indicate that προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) meant something more than just mere respect. The magi visited the boy Jesus and “worshipped Him” (Matt 2:11). After Jesus walked on the water, his disciples “worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God's Son!’” (Matt 14:33). After receiving healing from the Lord, the blind man believed in Jesus and “worshipped Him” (Jn 9:38). It is also remarkable, that, although Peter in Acts 10, and John in Revelation 19, refused worship, Jesus never did, confirming our assertion that He considered Himself to be worthy of it.

In John’s Gospel, it is clear that Jesus was conscious of His deity. He claims that He was with the Father before the world was (Jn 17:5, 24), was sent by Him to the earth (Jn 7:28-29; 8:42), came down from heaven (Jn 3:13; 6:50; 8:23; 13:3), personally knows the Father (Jn 8:55; 10:15; 17:25), always pleases Him (Jn 8:29, 49, 55), and has continual fellowship with Him (Jn 16:32).

John 20:28-29 is a key verse to reveal Jesus self-consciousness. Here, Thomas addressed Him with the acclamation “my Lord and my God,” and Jesus showed no hesitation in accepting it: “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed {are} they who did not see, and {yet} believed.” In addition, at the time of His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Jesus also welcomed praise from the people (see Lk 19:39-40; Matt 21:15-16).

Moreover, Jesus taught people to pray to the Father in His name, making Him a mediator between God and people.[[19]](#footnote-19) In John 16:23-24, we read, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.” In John 14:14, Christ even invites His disciples to pray to Him directly and promises to answer: “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do {it}.” In the Greek text, the pronoun “I” is emphasized. We may fairly translate, “I Myself will do it.”

Furthermore, Jesus claimed to possess what only God possesses. He directs His own angels: “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness” (Matt 13:41). This verse also reveals that Christ has His own kingdom.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Additional support for Jesus’ deity is found in His claims to say what only God can say. He dared to alter the Law God had given to Moses. Six times in His Sermon on the Mount, referring to the Law of Moses, He declared, “You have heard that it was said… but I say to you…” He considered His teaching more authoritative than that of Moses. In addition, He allowed His disciples to do work on the Sabbath. When challenged on this, Jesus replied, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mk 2:28). His manner of teaching also reflected divine authority: “He was teaching them as {one} having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mk 1:22; сf. Lk 4:31-32).

Christ not only introduced changes in the Law, He also required His disciples to keep His commandments: “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me” (Jn 14:21). Besides this, Jesus also considered His word eternal: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matt 24:35). They will serve as the basis for the final judgment (Matt 7:24-26; Jn 12:48). An ordinary person would not have the audacity to make such claims. Clearly, Jesus considered Himself to be God.

Along with these claims to deity, Jesus assigned to Himself divine titles. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd, a title for God in the Old Testament (сf. Jn 10:11 with Ps 23:1). He is the Light of the world (сf. Jn 8:12 with Isa 60:19 and Ps 27:1). Jesus is the bridegroom of God’s people, a role God filled in the Old Testament (сf. Matt 9:14-15; 25:1 with Isa 62:5 and Hos 2:16). He is the first and the last (Rev 1:17). In Isaiah 44:6, such words characterized Yahweh.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The following passages contain direct claims of our Lord to be God Himself: John 5:17-18; John 8:19; John 14:8-9; Mark 14:61-64; John 10:29-30; and John 8:58.[[22]](#footnote-22) In John 10:29-30, we read, “My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” The numeral “one” is in the Greek neuter gender, which may denote Christ and the Father sharing a common nature. At the same time, the Father and the Son remain separate individuals. They have a common nature, but each is a Divine Person in Himself.

Some may object that Jesus meant here that He and the Father merely share a common goal or will. In other words, Jesus seeks to do the Father’s will, demonstrating a unity of will, but not of nature. Yet, in verse 28, He explains: “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” Note that in verse 29, He said, “No one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand.” Jesus thus equates His power (i.e., “hand”) with the power of the Father. They are united not only in will, but in power and nature as well.

When the Lord announced that He and the Father were one, His hearers understood His meaning perfectly: “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out {to be} God’” (Jn 10:31-33). In Jn 5:17-18, we see a similar reaction from some unbelieving Jews to similar words by Christ.

We note in Mark 14:61-62 that Jesus responded to the question, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed {One?}” by saying, ἐγω εἰμι (*ego eimi*), i.е., “I am.” In Exodus 3:14-15, God revealed His name to Moses to be “I Am Who I Am.” In the same context, Christ identified Himself with the heavenly king described in Daniel chapter 7, which resulted in the high priest accusing Him of blasphemy.

John 8:19 reveals that the relationship between Christ and the Father is so close that the former could claim that anyone knows Him also knows the Father. He again claims to possess divine nature with the words: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9; сf. 12:45), “He who receives Me receives Him who sent Me,” (Jn 13:20), and “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me” (Jn 12:44). On the reverse side, Christ claims, “He who hates Me hates My Father also” (Jn 15:23; cf. Jn 16:3; 1 Jn 2:22-23).

Our final example is the most straightforward claim that our Lord made to His deity. In John 8:58, Jesus claimed not only that He existed before Abraham, but also that He was God. When Jesus said, “I Am,” He was quoting Exodus 3:14, where God announced His name to Moses: “God said to Moses, ‘I Am Who I Am’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “I Am has sent me to you.”’” After Jesus assigned the Divine Name to Himself, the Jews gathered rocks to stone Him (Jn 8:59). Clearly, they understood who He was claiming to be.

Jesus employed the formula ἐγω εἰμι (*ego eimi*), “I Am,” in relation to Himself in other contexts as well. The first three of those listed below are invitations to believe in Him. The final instance was accompanied by a manifestation of supernatural power, which confirmed the truth of His claim.

- Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins (Jn 8:24).

- When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (Jn 8:28).

- From now on I am telling you before {it} comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am (Jn 13:19).

- (Jesus) said to them, “I am.”… So when He said to them, “I am,” they drew back and fell to the ground (Jn 18:5-6).

Another seven times Jesus employed the phrase ἐγω εἰμι, i.е., “I Am,” in reference to Himself in connection with one of His messianic or divine roles:

- I am the bread of life (Jn 6:35, 48, 51)

- I am the Light of the world (Jn 8:12; 9:5)

- I am the door of the sheep (Jn 10:7, 9)

- I am the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14)

- I am the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25)

- I am the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6)

- I am the true vine (Jn 15:1, 5)

How may we interpret Christ’s claims to deity? Several logical options exist. First, is the history of Christ a legend or exaggeration? This is unlikely due to the abundance of ancient manuscripts that testify of Jesus life and preserve His words.[[23]](#footnote-23) Second, possibly Jesus Himself knew that He was not God, but deliberately deceived His disciples into thinking so. On the other hand, by every indication Jesus appeared to be a morally upright, honest individual. Third, was Jesus a madman, deceived Himself by His claims? This is again unlikely, since the Gospel narrative depicts Him as not only psychologically normal, but as one possessing great wisdom. Fourth, maybe Jesus claimed to be God because, in fact, He is God. As fantastic as it may seem, this is the most reasonable variant. C. S. Lewis masterfully makes this point:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing non-sense about His being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.[[24]](#footnote-24)

**b. The Father’s Testimony**

By various means, God the Father confirmed the divine claims made by the Son. Jesus Himself appealed to the Father’s testimony in defense of His claims to deity (see Jn 8:17-18; 5:31-32, 36-38). First of all, the Father confirmed the ministry of His Son with great signs, wonders, and miracles. Jesus said, “The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish – the very works that I do – testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me” (Jn 5:36).[[25]](#footnote-25) Likewise, Peter preached, “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

Although God confirmed the ministry of His prophets with signs and wonders as well, Christ’s ministry differed from theirs in that He claimed to be God. The Father would certainly not have supported the work of a false claimant to deity. In addition, sometimes the ability and authority Jesus displayed are ascribed to Him, not to the Father (see Matt 8:27; 9:4; Mk 1:23-24; Jn 1:47-50; 2:11; 2:24-25).

Additionally, the Father directly affirmed His Son’s special status. He spoke three times from heaven concerning Jesus, twice calling Him His Son. During Christ’s Transfiguration, the Father announced: “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” (Mk 9:7). Also significant is that during His Transfiguration, Jesus displayed His divine glory: “His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mk 9:3). When Jesus was being baptized, the Father’s voice from heaven declared, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (Mk 1:11). Finally, prior to His sufferings, the Father publically assured Him, “I have both glorified it (i.e., “My name”), and will glorify it again” (Jn 12:28).

The most powerful confirming proof of Christ’s deity is His resurrection from the dead. Paul writes in Romans 1:4 that Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.” If Jesus was truly guilty of blasphemy, as the unbelieving Jews thought, God would not have raised Him from the dead and thereby confirmed His alleged false claims. The resurrection confirms that Jesus was not blaspheming when He claimed equality with the Father.

**c. Titles of Christ**

**1) Son of God**

The title given to and employed by Jesus, “Son of God,” may also endorse His claim to deity. The ancient Greeks understood this title in two ways. First, they believed in many gods, that is, a pantheon. These gods could give birth to other gods. Hence, the title “Son of God” was sometimes taken in a literal sense as a descendant of a god. Second, the Greeks held to the concept of a “heavenly man.” This designation could apply to one having extraordinary abilities, such as government leaders or philosophers. Nonetheless, such individuals were considered extraordinary people, but not divine.

Such a conception of the “Son of God,” however, hardly corresponds to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is neither the physical descendant of a god, nor simply a very talented individual. For the Greek, the biblical revelation of the Son as the incarnate Absolute would have been totally incomprehensible. Consequently, Christianity did not borrow this conception from the Greeks.

In the Old Testament, the expression “Son of God” had several connotations. First, Israel itself was considered Yahweh’s “son”: “When Israel {was} a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son” (Hos 11:1). In the book of Job, angels were sons of God: “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:6-7).

Kings of Israel enjoyed this designation as well. God thus spoke of David’s descendant, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me” (2 Sam 7:14). Some feel that Psalm 2 commemorates the crowning of a new king: “I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You’” (Ps 2:7). So then, the Old Testament understanding of “son of God” was an individual (angel or man) who had a special relationship with the Most High.

In Jesus’ day, the Messiah was also considered to be the Son of God. The Qumran manuscripts yield an interpretation of Psalm 2:7 ascribing the Sonship to Messiah. The Gospels also confirm this understanding among first-century Jews. Nathanael said to Jesus, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (Jn 1:49). Mary, the sister of Lazarus, addressed Jesus likewise, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God” (Jn 11:27). Peter also confirms, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Finally, the Jewish leaders spoke of Messiah as the son of God (see Matt 26:63).

Although Jews of Jesus’ time ascribed this title to Messiah, they certainly did not deem the Messiah to be divine, even though indications of that truth could be found in the Old Testament (see examples above). For them, Messiah was no more than a mere mortal who was in a special relationship with Yahweh.

In summary, the Greeks thought that a son of God was a literal descendant of a god or a gifted human individual. The Jews deemed him to be a person specially appointed by God, especially in the case of the Messiah. In this light, it is informative to see Pilate’s reaction and the reaction of the Jewish leaders to Jesus’ claim of Sonship.

At Jesus’ trial before Pilate, the Jews objected to Him calling Himself God’s Son (John 19:7). Along with that, in verse 12, they objected to His claim to be king. This is consistent with the Jewish understanding of Messiah as son of God and king of Israel. Pilate’s reaction, though, was totally different. Jesus’ claim frightened him. Being a Gentile, Pilate believed in sons of God as literally descendants of gods. As a result, he “made efforts to release Him” (Jn 19:8-12).

It is important to note that Jesus did not define Himself as the Son of God by either the Greek or Jewish understandings. We affirm that Jesus categorically rejected pagan pantheism. As the Old Testament taught, Jesus affirmed that God is one. Jesus’ understanding, then, was closer to, but not identical with, the Jewish view. It is true that God’s Son has a special relationship with the Yahweh, but Jesus specified, as we shall see in the following material, that He as the Son was Himself God, Thus, He introduced a new and true understanding of that title when it referred to Himself.

In Mark 14:36, Jesus called God “Abba.” This Aramaic term expresses an intimate relationship between father and child, such as “Daddy.” The Jews addressed their rabbis with this term, but never God. Therefore, in using this word Jesus revealed His intimate connection with the Father. We earlier noted as well Jesus’ claim to possess what God possesses: “All things that the Father has are Mine” (Jn 16:15; сf. Jn 17:10). The Father “loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (Jn 3:35). Additionally, along with the Father, the Son is the source of eternal life (Jn 17:3).

Jesus also claimed to have enjoyed the glory of God before the world was made (Jn 17:1, 5). In addition, He asserts to know the Father better than anyone and to have received revelation from Him: “…nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal {Him}” (Matt 11:27). He is one with God (Jn 17:22) to the degree that He can say, “You, Father, {are} in Me and I in You” (Jn 17:21). We also recall that Jesus called Himself μονογενής (*monogenes*), i.е., “only begotten,” thereby underscoring His unique relationship with the Father (Jn 3:16, 18).

Furthermore, Jesus showed that His relationship with the Father differed from that of other Jews, even claiming that the father of some of them was the devil (Jn 8:41-44). His relationship with the Father differed from that of His disciples as well. After His resurrection, He instructed Mary: “Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’” (Jn 20:17). Note that he said, “My Father and your Father, and My God and your God,” and not, “our Father and our God.” The disciples also had God as their Father, but not in the same sense that Jesus did.

Christ is μονογενής (*monogenes*), i.е., the only begotten, eternal Son of God. Only He came down from heaven, where He abode with the Father in heavenly glory. Only He possesses what God possesses. He is God Himself in the flesh. Clearly, his opponents understood that Jesus’ claim to sonship made Him equal with God. They understood that He did not consider Himself merely the Son of God in the sense of Messiah. They perceived His pretension of deity. Consequently, they sought to kill Him as a blasphemer (Jn 10:24-33; Jn 5:18).

**2) Son of Man**

The expression, “Son of Man,” was uncommon both in the world of the Greeks, and in the Old Testament. For the Greeks, the title simply referred to a man. Similarly, in the Old Testament, “son of man” is first encountered in Numbers 23:19 in parallel with the word “man”: “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent.” Here, the reference is to humanity. The same can be said for Psalm 8:4: “What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?”

The book of Ezekiel yields another usage of this phrase – it becomes a personal name for Ezekiel. God typically referred to him as “son of man,” underscoring the glory of God in comparison with the humble status of the prophet. Therefore, by employing the expression “son of man,” Yahweh emphasizes the weakness and lowly position of humanity in comparison with His own glory.

Finally, the Old Testament testifies of a heavenly Son of Man who was to become a great king (Dan 7:13-14; Ps 80:17). In addition, the intertestamental books of *Enoch* and *4 Ezra* speak of a supernatural Son of Man, whom people in the time of Jesus expected to appear.

Let us examine how our Lord applied this title to Himself. At times, His usage seems to parallel the usage in Ezekiel as a personal name. In Matthew 5:11, we read, “Blessed are you when {people} insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me,” while Luke 6:22 reads, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.” In Mark 8:27, Jesus asks, “Who do people say that I am?,” but in Matthew 16:13, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Finally, we consider Luke 12:8: “Everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God.”

This title also emphasizes Jesus’ human nature, as seen in Matthew 8:20: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air {have} nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head,” and Matthew 11:19: “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard.’”

Finally, Jesus showed no hesitation in identifying Himself with the heavenly Son of Man who was to become the great coming King:

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed {One?}” And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” (Mk 14:61-64).

Liberals, holding that Jesus is not God, but a mere human, claim that He never spoke of Himself as this heavenly king, but that the Early Church invented this dialogue. However, we rarely see the title “Son of Man” outside of the Gospels: only in Acts 7:56, Rev 1:13, and Rev 14:14. In the Gospels, it appears 85 times, usually as the words of Jesus. Therefore, little evidence exists that the Early Church used this title in reference to Jesus Christ, otherwise it would have appeared in the epistles as well. This self-designation originated with the Lord Himself, who did indeed consider Himself the fulfillment of Daniel’s vision.

A fourth application of the title appears when Jesus spoke of His sufferings. For example, after Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah, our Lord referred to Himself as the Son of Man, the suffering Savior (Lk 9:22; сf. Mk 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45; 14:21, 41). Thus, the Lord revealed a totally new connotation for this title. Before the Son of Man would enter His glory, He must undergo suffering.

So then, the title “Son of Man” has multiple connotations and applications in regard to our Lord. It can serve as His personal name, emphasize His humanity, point to His future glorious reign, and reveal His role as the suffering Savior.

**3) Lord**

The Greeks employed the term κύριος (*kurios*), i.e., “lord,” as a title of respect for the emperor. Since they considered the Roman emperor to be divine, the term began to carry a divine undertone. In addition, the word κύριος (*kurios*) applied to gods in the pagan pantheon.

The title “lord” also translates the Hebrew word אְַדֹנַי (*adonai*). It served as an expression of respect to both God and the king. An example of the latter is 1 Kings 20:9: “So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, ‘Tell my lord (אְַדֹנַי) the king…’” In connection with this title, we need mention the personal name of God, which He made known to Moses in Exodus 3:15, i.е., יהוה (*Yahweh*), which is improperly translated in most translations as “Lord” or “LORD.” A correct translation reads, “God, furthermore, said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.’”

About the time the Second Temple was built, the Jews decided that the name יהוה, i.е., Yahweh, was too holy to pronounce. When they came across that name in the biblical text, they would read אְַדֹנַי (*adonai*) instead. In the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, κύριος (*kurios*) came to translate both אְַדֹנַי (*adonai*) and יהוה (Yahweh). Therefore, κύριος (*kurios*) can refer to either designation. Our English translations follow the same pattern.

When people called Jesus κύριος (*kurios*), were they just showing Him respect or acknowledging Him as God? Clearly, in many cases the first meaning was meant. For example, Matthew 8:2 recounts, “And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’” The leper was certainly not acknowledging Jesus’ deity. A better translation according to the sense would be “sir.” A similar case is in Matthew 8:5-6: “A centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home.’” Another individual appealed to Jesus in a similar way, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father” (Matt 8:21).

During His earthly sojourn, the disciples often referred to Jesus as κύριος (*kurios*). It is highly unlikely that at this early stage of their discipleship they were ready to acknowledge Him as the Lord God. They used it, rather, as an expression of respect. In John 13:13, in fact, Jesus drew a parallel between the titles “Lord” and “Teacher”: “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for {so} I am.”

However, after Jesus’ resurrection we observe a change in the biblical text – the word κύριος (*kurios*) is preceded by the definite article, i.e., “the Lord.” This may possibly indicate an escalation in the disciples view of Christ. He was no longer just “Master” or “Teacher,” but the Lord God Himself. The primary passage of Scripture indicating the disciples’ changing views is John 20:28, where Thomas declares, “My Lord and my God.” This is a definite recognition of Christ’s deity, and κύριος (*kurios*) here can be equated with Yahweh of the Old Testament. In this passage, κύριος (*kurios*) is again preceded by the definite article (also see Jn 21:7; Lk 24:34).

In the Gospel of Luke, the article preceds κύριος (*kurios*) even before the resurrection. However, the most likely explanation here is that Luke wrote his narrative from the perspective that he already knows that Jesus is “Lord” in the divine sense. We support this conclusion by observing that when Luke records people in the narrative saying “Lord,” the title lacks the definite article. When Luke himself calls Him “Lord,” though, the definite article stands.

Therefore, we may conclude that before the resurrection, Jesus’ disciples called Him “Lord” in the sense of “Master” or “Teacher.” After the resurrection, though, they employed it in the divine sense, acknowledging Jesus as the Lord God.

Finally, the Early Church, in employing the word κύριος (*kurios*), was confessing Jesus as God. In Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, we encounter a quotation of Joel 2:32. The New Testament version reads, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved,” while Joel wrote, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh will be delivered.” The Early Church applied κύριος (*kurios*) to Jesus in the divine sense of “Yahweh.”

**4) Savior**

For the Greeks, the term “savior” applied to some superhuman figure who delivered others from illness or danger. It always referred to some god or a son of a god. It also designated the emperor, whom they considered divine.

The Hebrew term for “savior” is מוֹשִׁיעַ (*moshia*), which comes from the verb יָשַׁע (*yasha*), or “to save.” This term sometimes referred to people who saved Israel from its enemies. More often, though, it referred to Yahweh, the Savior of His people. In the later chapters of Isaiah, the term is so used seven times. The Old Testament, in general, speaks of God being the exclusive deliverer of Israel: “I, even I, am Yahweh, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isa 43:11), and, “Yet I {have been} Yahweh your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me” (Hos 13:4).

Even when a person accomplished deliverance for God’s people, it was with the Lord’s support (Judg 3:9, 15). For example, Gideon asked the Lord, “If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken…” (Judg 6:36). The typical deliverance in the Old Testament was from physical danger. Sometimes, though, a spiritual salvation is in view. For example, Yahweh saves from sin (Isa 44:22; Ezek 36:29), His salvation is accompanied by righteousness (Isa 45:8), and lasts forever (Isa 45:17).

Comparing the names “Jesus” and “Joshua” yields an interesting observation. The latter’s name in Hebrew is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (*yehoshua*), which translates, “Yahweh saves.” During the Babylonian exile, the name Joshua was condensed to יֵשׁוּעַ(*yeshua*) as seen in Ezra 2:36, 40. The name יֵשׁוּעַ(*yeshua*) is similar in form to the verb יָשַׁע (*yasha*), “to save,” in the third person, singular number, and masculine gender. Jesus’ name would then mean, “He saves.” This corresponds to the announcement of the angel at Jesus’ birth, “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). Therefore, in the Old Testament, God saves through a person, such as Joshua, but in the New Testament, He Himself saves in the Person of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to note that in the early New Testament books, the title “Savior” is associated with Christ’s work of redemption. We cite the following: “He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31), and, “From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). In later New Testament books, though, this title not only refers to the work of salvation, but also became part of an official designation for Jesus: “Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:18; Tit 1:4). This designation expresses well both the person and work of Jesus Christ. The title “Lord” highlights his deity and authority, while “Savior” underscores His mercy and gift of salvation.

**5) Yahweh**

Finally, a number of New Testament passages ascribe Old Testaments texts about Yahweh (יהוה) to Jesus Christ. Note the following.[[26]](#footnote-26)

- Ps 23:1 = Jn 10:1-14; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25

- Ps 68:18 = Eph 4:8

- Ps 102:12, 25-27 = Heb 1:10-12

- Isa 6:5 = Jn 12:41

- Isa 8:13 = 1 Pet 2:8

- Isa 40:3, 9-11 = Jn 1:23; Rev 22:12

- Isa 44:6 = Rev 1:17-18; 22:13

- Isa 45:22-23 = Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10

- Isa 62:11-12 = Rev 22:12

- Jer 17:10; 20:12 = Rev 2:23

- Joel 2:32 = Rom 10:13

- Zech 12:10 = Jn 19:37

**d. The Disciples’ Testimony**

The disciples of Jesus who became New Testament authors wrote often of His deity. The most well known and often provocative passage is John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

First, we note the direct assertion, “the Word was God” (θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος). According to John 1:14, the “Word” is Jesus Christ. An important feature of our passage is that the noun θεός (*theos*), i.e., “God,” has no definite article. In the Greek language, as in English, the definite article points to something concrete or definite. Consequently, those who deny Jesus’ full divinity claim that the absence of the definite article forces the translation, “a God.” The Word, then, is not God in the full sense of the word, but a “secondary” God. In other words, the Word is not the God of the Old Testament, but some type of other God.

However, here we must take into consideration a well-accepted principle of the Greek language called “Colwell’s Rule.” Is states, “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article… a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a ‘qualitative’ noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun.”[[27]](#footnote-27) This is the type of construction we have in John 1:1.

If the definite article stands before both the subject and the predicate, this indicates that they are identical. Yet, John did not want to imply that the Word and God the Father are one Person. In fact, the statement, “And the Word was with God,” draws a distinction between them. Therefore, John is revealing that, although the Word is God, He is nonetheless distinct from God the Father.

A more specific treatment of Colewell’s Rule states, “An anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite.”[[28]](#footnote-28) According to this rule, it is unlikely that the Word is an indefinite, “secondary” God. Most likely, John 1:1 teaches that either the Word possesses the divine nature, or that He is specifically the God of the Old Testament. In either case, the Word is a Divine Being, possessing God’s attributes. A more detailed treatment of this verse is found in Appendix B.

Furthermore, in the phrase, “And the Word was with God,” the Greek verb ἦν (*en*), i.е., “was,” is a form of the verb “to be” in the Greek imperfect tense. This tense indicates a process that occurred in the past. By using this form, John implies that the Word existed from the beginning and had no beginning.

Additionally, the Septuagint of Genesis 1:1 is clearly reflected in John 1:1. Both verses start with the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ (*en arche*), i.e., “In the beginning.” In this way, John associates the Son with the Creator of Genesis 1. John begins his first epistle in a similar way: “What was from the beginning… the eternal life, which was with the Father” (1 Jn 1:1-2). Later in chapter 1 of his Gospel, John directly affirms Christ’s role as Creator: “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3).

We can draw several other parallels between John chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 1. In the account of creation, Yahweh created the light and separated it from the darkness. John makes a spiritual application of this account in relation to Christ. Jesus is the “true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” Later, Jesus Himself states, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (Jn 3:19-21). The coming of Christ separates the children of light from the children of darkness.

John 1:18 also confirms the deity of Jesus Christ: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him}.” Some manuscripts replace “only begotten God“ with “only begotten Son,” but only one early document, dating from the fifth century, has that variant (Codex Alexandrius). Superior documents support the variant “only begotten God,“ including two third century papyri (*P*66, *P*75), two fourth century documents (א, В), and another from the fifth century (С). Also, it is more likely that a scribe would change the reading from “only begotten God“ to “only begotten Son,“ which is found other places in John’s Gospel, than doing the reverse. The idea of an “only begotten God“ likely puzzled him, and he attempted to “correct” what he incorrectly perceived as an error.

Colossians 1:15-19 has several features pointing to Christ’s deity. Christ, as God, created all things: “…{both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.” The fact that the Son created “all things,” rules out the idea that He Himself is a part of creation. He is not a created being, but the Creator of all created beings.

Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4 state that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.” The term “image” is from the Greek εἰκών (*eikon*), which can indicate an exact copy or representation of something. For example, in Mark 12:16 it was used to describe the image of Caesar on a coin, while in Romans 1:23 it referred to idols made in the image of various animals. In virtue of His being the image of God, Jesus could say of Himself, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

However, we must concede that the term εἰκών (*eikon*) does not necessarily always refer to an exact representation. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11:7 it describes the similarities between God and humans, and in Romans 8:29 – between Christ and believers in Him. Although an exact representation is not always implied, the term can still nonetheless carry that connotation. Therefore, even though the use of εἰκών (*eikon*) is not definitive evidence for Christ’s deity, it is certainly consistent with that claim.

Colossians 2:9 states, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” This text unmistakably affirms the full deity of the Son. First, the word “fullness,” i.е., πλήρωμα (*pleroma*), denotes “completeness.”[[29]](#footnote-29) The apostle, though, intensifies its meaning by adding the modifier “all.” This addition is actually unnecessary, since πλήρωμα (*pleroma*) already means “completeness.”[[30]](#footnote-30) So then, all that belongs to the θεότης (*theotes*), i.e., “Godhead,” belongs to Jesus Christ without exception. The term θεότης (*theotes*) refers to the “nature and essence of deity,” or “that which constitutes deity.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

Paul relates that this fullness dwells in Christ “bodily.” Douglas Moo sees in this an allusion to the Old Testament temple, where Yahweh “dwelt” in a physical building.[[32]](#footnote-32) Now, He dwells in His fullness not in a structure, but in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Another text unquestionably asserting Christ’s deity is Philippians 2:6-7, where we encounter some key phrases like, “image of God,” “equality with God,” and “a thing to be grasped,” We will examine each in turn. Unlike Colossians 1:15, the term for image here is μορφή (*morphe*). Scholars differ about its meaning. One idea is that of «external similarity” as in Mark 16:12, where after His resurrection, Jesus “appeared in a different form,” i.е., μορφή (*morphe*). Yet, because of the way Greeks often understood the word, it could also mean external similarity reflecting the inner condition. Louw and Nida define μορφή (*morphe*)as “the nature or character of something, with emphasis upon both the internal and external form.”[[33]](#footnote-33) If we apply that meaning to Philippians 2:6, we see that μορφή (*morphe*) can refer to the divine nature of the Son of God.

A key term for our study is the Greek adjective ἵσος (*isos*) in the phrase “equality (ἵσος) with God,” meaning, “being equivalent in number, size, quality.”[[34]](#footnote-34) The meaning “equivalent in number” appears in Luke 6:34: “Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same (ἵσος).” In Philippians 2:6, we have an example of equivalence in quality. Jesus is equal to God the Father in the quality of divinity.

Jews in Jesus’ time understood the significance of such a claim. In John 5:18, the unbelieving Jews “were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal (ἵσος) with God.” They considered such a claim blasphemous, perceiving that “equal to God” meant being God Himself.

Next, we look at the phrase “a thing to be grasped.” The word here is ἁρπαγμός (*harpagmos*). The term can mean: 1) robbery, or 2) “something to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping, something claimed.”[[35]](#footnote-35) The first meaning would indicate that Jesus did not consider equality with God “robbery,” that is, something that did not already belong to Him. The second meaning would imply that He did not consider the glories connected to His divine position as something to grasp onto or retain.

Although we affirm the truth of the first option, the second option is preferred in light of the following verse, which reveals that “He emptied Himself” by becoming human, thereby relinquishing His divine glory. This option also provides a contrast with the first part of verse 6: “Although He was in the image of God, He did not consider equality with God a thing to be retained.”

It is important to qualify as well that, although the Son possesses “equality with God” in every respect, the aspect that He chose not to “retain” was the position of glory He had with the Father from eternity past (see Jn 17:5). In light of our discussion and rejection of kenotism (see below), we cannot conclude that the Son renounced His deity in any other sense.

Philippians 2:10-11 declares, “so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow… and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Paul here quotes Isaiah 45:23, where it states that all will bow to Yahweh. In Philippians 2, however, Paul ascribes this honor to Jesus.

The first chapter of Hebrews offers more evidence of Jesus’ deity. In verse 3, He is “the radiance of (God’s) glory and the exact representation of (God’s) nature.” The term “representation” translates the Greek χαρακτήρ (*character*), which is found in the New Testament only here. In the Septuagint, we find it only in Leviticus 13:28: “But if the bright spot remains in its place and has not spread in the skin, but is dim, it is the swelling from the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is {only} the scar (χαρακτήρ) of the burn.” This word describes the “mark” left by some type of instrument or event. Correspondingly, Jesus is the “mark” of the Father.

The word “nature” is also valuable to study. Behind it stands the Greek word ὑποστασις (*hypostasis*), which means “essence” or “basic nature.”[[36]](#footnote-36) So then, Jesus is the “exact representation” of the “essence” of the Father. He shares with the Father not some external similarities, but the divine nature itself. At the same time, the Son differs from the Father in Person, just as a stamp differs from the mark it leaves.

In Hebrews 1:8-9, the author quotes Psalm 45:7: “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.” In the original context, the psalm concerns the king of Israel. It is felt that this psalm celebrated the marriage of the king. The Jews also considered this a messianic psalm. The word “God” translates the Hebrew אְֶלֹהִים (*elohim*), i.e., the God of Israel, and is attributed to Messiah.

It is true that other Old Testament texts call leaders of Israel אְֶלֹהִים (*elohim*) (see Ex 21:6; 22:8, and Psalm 82). Nonetheless, the context of Hebrews 1 makes clear that the author of Hebrews understood the significance of this psalm. He perceived that in relation to earthly kings of Israel, אְֶלֹהִים (*elohim*) in Psalm 45 referred to the special status of Israel’s leaders. Yet, in relation to Messiah, אְֶלֹהִים (*elohim*) carries a divine sense.

Note Hebrews 1:10-12, where we have a citation from Psalm 102:25-27:

You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle you will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end."

In the original Old Testament context, these words described the eternal nature of Yahweh (יהוה). The author of Hebrews, though, ascribes these verses to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first chapter of Hebrews abounds with still more Christological references. In verse 3, Christ “upholds all things by the word of His power.” Beginning at verse 5, the author demonstrates the He is greater than the angels, and that they worship Him. Christ is also worshipped in the book of Revelation (5:8, 12-14).

The next text for our study is Titus 2:13: “…looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” We have in the Greek: τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The question arises, “Does the verse speak of two individuals – God the Father and the Savior, Christ Jesus, or only of the latter?” The deciding factor is the presence of the definite article τοῦ (*tou*) at the beginning of the verse. The definite article in this position combines the two nouns, “God” and “Savior,” indicating one Person. Therefore, in this verse the “Savior, Christ Jesus” is “our great God.”

Titus 2:13 is an example of the Granville Sharp Rule of Greek grammar. It states that when two nouns are joined by one definite article appearing before the first item, then the two nouns refer to the same object. This rule holds, however, only under the following conditions. First, both nouns must be in the singular. Second, both nouns must describe an animate object. Third, neither noun may be a personal name.[[37]](#footnote-37) Titus 2:13 meets all these requirements. Therefore, this verse declares our Savior, Jesus Christ, to be God.

Other arguments further solidify our interpretation of this verse. In the New Testament, the word “appearing” always refers to the Lord Jesus. In addition, the following verse begins with a singular relative pronoun, ὁς (*hos*), or “who,” which can apply to only one Person.[[38]](#footnote-38) Moreover, when Paul mentions the Father and Son together in his epistles, he always clearly distinguishes them from one another.[[39]](#footnote-39)

We include in our analysis 2 Peter 1:1, where we again encounter the phrase “God and Savior Jesus Christ” (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This is the same grammatical construction we saw in Titus 2:13, namely the definite article standing before two nouns indicating their identity. Therefore, Peter joins Paul in affirming Christ’s deity. We also observe that three times in this epistle, Peter writes “Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Пет 1:11; 2:20; 3:18), a parallel expression to “God and Savior Jesus Christ.” If the former phrase refers to one Person, likely the latter one does as well.

In the very next verse, Peter clearly demarcates the Father and the Son: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Placing the title “Lord” after the name of Jesus makes clear that two separate Persons are in view. In addition, Peter even more certainly distinguishes them by placing the definite article before both nouns: “God” and “Lord.” Yet, in verse 1, Peter does not exercise such caution. Instead, he employs a construction that unquestionably affirms that Jesus is God.

In his first epistle, Peter does not neglect to speak of Christ’s deity as well: “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Pet 3:15). Here, Peter quotes Isaiah 8:13, which speaks of sanctifying יהוה (*Яхве*). A textual variant of 1 Peter 3:15 – “God” instead of “Christ” – does exist, but is supported by inferior manuscripts. In changing the Isaiah quotation, Peter is adapting it to New Testament realities as well as affirming Christ’s deity.

Romans 9:5 provides us with still another indication of Jesus’ divine status: “…whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.” The relative phrase, “who is over all, God blessed forever,” refers to Christ.

In the epistles, we frequently see instances where the Father and Son are mentioned together as sources of blessing for the believer. For example, grace and peace come from both the Father and the Son.[[40]](#footnote-40) Both grant peace, love, and faith (Eph 6:23). Both summon us to obedience (1 Tim 1:1), and, correspondingly, Paul summons Timothy to diligence in ministry before both God the Father and Christ Jesus (2 Tim 4:1). We are called to the “knowledge” of both (2 Pet 1:2). James calls himself a “bond-servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jam 1:1). The day of wrath involves the participation of both the Father and the Lamb (Rev 6:16).

According to Scripture, Jesus occupies an exalted status. He was glorified by God the Father (Acts 7:52-56), and is above all power and authority (Eph 1:21). He has the name above all other names (Phil 2:9), and all is subject to Him (1 Pet 3:22). James speaks of Him as the “Lord of glory” (Jam 2:1).

Our final text is 1 Timothy 3:16: “He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” Here, we see described the entire career of Jesus Christ: His descent from heaven, His earthly pilgrimage, and His return to heavenly glory. Some manuscripts of later date and inferior quality of this verse begin, “God was revealed in the flesh…” This variant arose by a confusion of the relative pronoun ὅς (*hos*) with the abbreviation for θεός (*theos*), i.e., “God” (ΘΣ instead of ΟΣ).[[41]](#footnote-41) Yet, even without the divine title in this verse, we nevertheless have a clear testimony of Christ’s preexistence and deity.

**e. Christ’s Sinlessness**

The sinless life of Jesus also supports our claim of His divine status. As a partaker of the divine nature, He conducted His life in perfect obedience to the Father. We can demonstrate this by the following proofs.

First, Jesus Himself claimed to perfectly observe God’s commandments (see Jn 8:29; 15:10). Second, those who lived in close proximity to Him and observed His life also testify of His sinlessness. The apostle John wrote of Him, “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn 2:1), and, “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin” (1 Jn 3:5). Peter said, “…knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, {the blood} of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19), and, “who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth” (1 Pet 2:22).

Third, other New Testament writers add their inspired testimony. Paul writes of Christ, “He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21). The author of Hebrews echoes this thought, “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” (Heb 4:15), and, “For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:26).

Fourth, even unbelievers and enemies of Jesus were not able to convict Him of sin. Jesus challenged them, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” (Jn 8:46). During His trial before the Sanhedrin, no one succeeded in making any accusation stick: “Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent” (Mk 14:55-56). Pilate issued the following verdict, “I find no guilt in this man” (Lk 23:4). Finally, during His crucifixion, one of the robbers crucified with Him asserted, “This man has done nothing wrong” (Lk 23:41). The centurion who stood near the cross also felt, “Certainly this man was innocent” (Lk 23:47).

Knowing that Jesus never sinned, the question arises whether or not He could have sinned. Disagreements exist in this regard. Since Jesus was both God and man, it seems both options are possible. As a human, sin may have been a possibility for Jesus since Adam and Eve, being originally sinless, nevertheless disobeyed. On the other hand, Jesus being God, it appears He could not sin since “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). So then, as God, He could not sin. As man, He could sin, but not *necessarily* so. God *cannot* sin, but humans can sin or *not* sin. The logically consistent resolution to this tension is to conclude that Jesus would never sin.

Even if we hold the view that Jesus would never sin, this is no way implies that He did not experience real temptation. He had typical human needs and desires, the same as any person. When, for example, the devil tempted Him to change stones into bread (Matt 4:3), He experienced the weight of that temptation. When Jesus contemplated going to the cross, He soul was “deeply grieved, to the point of death” (Matt 26:38), so that “His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Lk 22:44). The author of Hebrews comments, “Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Heb 2:18). Therefore, we see that Jesus did experience real temptation.

We may even assert that the Lord experienced temptation to a greater degree than anyone else ever has. Since everyone eventually gives in to one temptation or another, no one has ever experienced the full weight of pressure that temptation can bring to bear on a soul. Only the one who has never sinned has experienced this. Compare what is written about Jesus in Luke 22:44, “His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground,” with what is written about believers in Him: “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin” (Heb 12:4).

Jesus not only experienced the full weight of temptation, He also went through every type of temptation. We recall the words in Hebrews 4:15 that He was “tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin.” We do not interpret this verse to say that the Lord went through every *possible* temptation. For example, He was never tempted to be unfaithful to his wife, never having married. He experienced, rather, every *type* of temptation.

According to 1 John 2:16, there are three types of temptation: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. All temptations derive from these three. When Eve was tempted to eat from the forbidden tree, she saw “that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make {one} wise” (Gen 3:6). Therefore, Eve was tempted in all three areas of human weakness. The “lust of the flesh” corresponds to the tree being “good for food.” The “lust of the eyes” corresponds to the tree being “a delight to the eyes.” The “boastful pride of life” corresponds to the tree being “desirable to make {one} wise.”

Interestingly, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the very same three ways (Matt 4; Lk 4). The temptation to change stones to bread appealed to the lust of the flesh. The temptation to possess the kingdoms of the world appealed to the lust of the eyes. The temptation to jump from the wing of the temple appealed to pride. So then, Jesus was indeed tempted “in all things as {we are}.”

### B. Rejection of Christ’s Deity

**1. Arianism**

In the history of the Church, heresies have arisen and continue to appear that deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Among the most threatening has been Arianism. Arius was a well-known pastor in the city of Alexandria and nearly became bishop of that region. He accused Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria at that time, with the heresy of Sabellius. Arius himself began to teach the existence of one true God, excluding all others from that status, including the Son and the Spirit. Arius felt that God does not share His attributes with another. If the Son also possesses the divine nature, then monotheistic faith would be in jeopardy. Therefore, according to Arius, the Son must be inferior to the Father in divinity.

Arius’ teaching had affinities with the teaching of Origen, the influential second-third century Alexandrian theologian, who also taught the subordination of the Son to the Father. Arius took this idea one step farther, though, and, unlike Origen, denied that the Son was eternal, but rather was created by God. In virtue of the Son’s “creation,” God became “Father.” The Son is still considered God, but in a lesser sense than the Father.

The doctrine of Arius shook the Early Church to its foundations. Bishop Alexander summoned Arius and the other pastors in his regions for consultations. The result was to acknowledge that the Son was indeed eternal and possesses the self-same divine nature as the Father. Arius refused to recant his views and was excommunicated from the Church. Nevertheless, he continued to conduct his ministry and gathered a large following.

With the unity of the Roman Empire at risk, the Emperor Constantine ordered the first Church Council in Nicaea in 325. At the Council, Arius and his followers explained and defended their teaching, but a young minister from Alexandria, Athanasius by name, opposed Arius’ position. He defended from Scripture that the Son possessed the divine nature in equal measure to God the Father. The Council approved Athanasius’ position and rejected the teaching of Arius.

Some attendees at the Council proposed that the Son has a nature similar to the Father, but not identical. Their position is coined by the Greek term ὁμοιοῦσιος (*homoiousios*), which means “similar nature.” The Council, however, rejected this definition and approved the term ὁμοοῦσιος (*homoousios*), denoting the “self-same nature.” It is often commented that the Council of Nicaea was debated over one Greek letter: the letter *iota*. Yet, this one letter determined whether or not the Son was equal to the Father in deity.

As a result of the Council’s decision, Constantine exiled Arius from the Roman Empire. However, Constantine’s sister, a convert to Arianism, convinced her brother to restore him. Arius attempted to return to Alexandria, but the new bishop, Athanasius, prevented him. The presence of Arius’ supporters in Alexandria, however, led to an uprising in the city. As a result, Constantine expelled Athanasius from the city. The other pastors in Alexandria, however, refused to acknowledge Arius. Constantine reacted by ordering the entire Church to embrace Arianism, but the day before the order was to go into effect, Arius died. On the subsequent Church Council in Constantinople, Arius’ teaching was again condemned as heretical.

Nevertheless, Arius’ doctrine resurfaced in the 19th century in the teaching of Charles Russell. Russell also rejected the deity of Jesus Christ and taught that He was created by the one God. Russell’s teaching and his movement, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, are discussed and refuted in Appendix B.

**2. Dynamic Incarnation**

We can group a number of similar Christological heresies under the rubric “dynamic incarnation.” According to these views, Jesus was a mere human, indwelt by the Spirit of God. Thus, God did not become incarnate, but indwelt the man Jesus of Nazareth.

**a. Teaching of Cerinthus**

The first century figure Cerinthus taught that “Christ” abode in the man “Jesus.” According to Cerinthus, the Spirit “Christ” descended on the man Jesus during his water baptism and departed from him just before his death. Cerinthus had a highly negative view of the material world due to the influence of Plato’s philosophy, which taught the superiority of the invisible world of “forms.” Thus, he could not embrace the doctrine of God becoming flesh. Aristotle’s philosophy also had an effect on Cerinthus, which asserted that God cannot change. This also prevented Cerinthus from accepting the doctrine of God’s incarnation in Christ. Cerinthus’ views have more affinities, in fact, with Gnosticism than with orthodox Christianity.

The apostle John was familiar with Cerinthus’ teaching and may possibly have referred to it in his epistles. For example, whenever John writes that Jesus is the Son of God, he mentions only the name “Jesus” (1 Jn 4:15; 5:5). This contradicts Cerinthus’ teaching that not Jesus, but Christ is the Son of God. When John states that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, he employs the entire name, Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:1-3; 4:2), which again contradicts Cerinthus, who would deny “Christ” coming in the flesh. In addition, twice John directly states, “Jesus is the Christ” (1 Jn 2:22; 5:1).

Another key passage in refutation of Cerinthus is 1 John 5:6. John writes that Jesus Christ came “by water and blood.” This indicates that Jesus Christ was one individual both during His water baptism and through His sacrificial death. The word “water” symbolized water baptism, while “blood” represents His crucifixion. So then, the Spirit “Christ” did not abandon Jesus at His death, since Jesus Christ is one united Person.

**b. Adoptionism (Dynamic Monarchism)**

Adoptionism, or Dynamic Monarchism, arose in the second century. Its founder was Theodore of Mopsuestia, and its doctrines were propagated by Paul of Samosata. Theodore taught that God, being eternal, cannot be born, suffer, or die. Thus, Theodore concluded that Jesus was not God, but only a man. He taught that the two natures of Christ were actually two individuals: the man Jesus and the indwelling “Logos,” who descended on him from heaven.

According to Theodore, Jesus’ connection with the Logos was closer than that of the Old Testament prophets. The Logos manifested Himself through Jesus, and Jesus submitted himself to the Logos to such a degree that they became a unity, yet not in essence, but only in will. Jesus entered into a “moral union” with the Logos, that is, a union of wills or total surrender. This union was forged when Jesus rose from the dead. At that time, He received a promotion of his status to that of “son of God,” yet He was not divine in the sense that the Father is divine.

Paul of Samosata also taught that Jesus was not God, but became God’s son by virtue of His devotion to God. Paul of Samosata’s teaching differed from Theodore’s not so much in content, as in motive. Paul sought to defend God’s oneness, while Theodore could not acknowledge that God could be born. In addition, Paul denied the existence of the Trinity, believing that the one God was indwelling Jesus. Theodore, however, acknowledged the Trinity, but believed that the second Person of the Trinity was not Jesus, but the indwelling Logos.[[42]](#footnote-42)

This teaching is refuted by the same arguments advanced against Nestorianism below.

**c. Nestorianism**

Nestorius (5th century) was born in Asia Minor and studied under Theodore of Mopsuestia. He served as a monk until being appointed bishop of Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius II. After his appointment, Nestorius began spreading his Christological views. He invited a certain Anastasius to preach in Constantinople against the appellation to Mary the title *Theotokos*, which means, “bearer of God.” Nestorius considered that designation inappropriate for Mary, since it implied that God could be born. He preferred the title *Christotokos*, or “bearer of Christ.” Similar to his teacher Theodore, Nestorius also believed that the two natures of Christ, His deity and His humanity, were in reality two separate individuals.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The main opponent to Nestorius was Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria. Embracing Alexandrian Christology, Cyril objected that Nestorius’ views distorted the unity of Christ’s person. The Roman Church supported Cyril in his objections.

After a lengthy debate between Nestorius and his opponents, the Roman Emperor summoned a Church Council, which took place in Ephesus in 431. Cyril arrived on time at the council, but the representative from Rome and Nestorius’ supporters from Syria arrived late. Nonetheless, Cyril opened the Council without them. Those in attendance condemned Nestorius’ teaching, excommunicated him from the Church, and confirmed the use of *Theotokos* for Mary. Nestorius refused to attend the Council, but after his supporters arrived, he opened his own council, which excommunicated Cyril.

The Roman delegation, however, supported Cyril’s council, and the Emperor consequently exiled Nestorius to Egypt, where he died. His teaching, however, continued to spread in the East, travelingeven to China. The Assyrian Church in Syria, Iraq, and Iran continues to hold to Nestorian Christology to this day.

On the other hand, Cyril’s view did not prevail as well. Working off Athanasius’ formula, μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη (one nature of God the Word incarnate), He asserted that Christ has only one nature – a divine one. In time, Cyril did agree to a compromise with the Antiochian school, which brought his view closer to the two natures view – divine and human. The Antiochian theologians, in turn, agreed to reject Nestorianism.[[44]](#footnote-44)

The following arguments supposedly support the position of Theodore and Nestorius. First, the Bible says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor 5:19). Here, it seems that God, i.e., the Logos, dwelt in the man Jesus. In addition, on the basis of Romans 1:3-4 and Acts 13:32-33, Nestorius taught that Christ became the Son of God at the time of his resurrection.

Romans 1:3-4 reads, “…concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.” In Acts 13:32-33, the apostle Paul, citing the second Psalm, allegedly equates Christ’s resurrection with His adoption by God the Father: “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this {promise} to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you.’”

The following Scripture passages ascribe deity to Jesus Himself and serve as a refutation of Nestorianism. Paul charged the elders of Ephesus: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Note that God purchased the Church with *His* *own* blood. Additionally: “They would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8). They did not crucify a mere man, but the Lord of glory. In addition: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (1 Jn 1:1). The apostles claimed to have touched the Logos, the Word of Life.

Furthermore, Mary bore not merely a human child, but “the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). Consequently, Mary is called “the mother of the Lord” (Lk 1:43). We do not deny that God was in Christ or that the Holy Spirit manifest Himself through Jesus. Yet, the fact that God worked through Christ does not necessarily mean that Jesus Himself did not possess divine nature. He voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father and yielded to the Spirit as an example for us.

Another key text is 1 Timothy 3:16: “By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” This description does not coincide with the idea that God was merely living in a human and manifesting Himself through Him. What is described here is God Himself descending to the earth, becoming human, living as a man, and returning to heaven. Jesus Christ is the unified God-man.

The same can be said about Philippians 2:6-11. There, we read that Jesus is the image of God who emptied Himself, died, and was exalted. All must now confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Again, not two individuals are in view, but one Lord Jesus Christ.

**3. Liberal Theology**

Liberal theology also rejects the deity of Christ. According to classical liberal theology, we must view the Bible not as the inspired Word of God, but as a typical document from antiquity. Methods of interpretation are applied to the Bible that disregard its inspired status. For example, narratives about God’s supernatural acts, including the miracles of Jesus and His bodily resurrection, are regarded as myth or legend. The Early Church supposedly created these stories to glorify their Teacher, Jesus of Nazareth.

Liberals also believe that the Early Church fabricated the claims by Jesus to His deity. Having rejected the historicity of the Gospels, they embarked on a “quest for the historical Jesus,” i.e., an attempt to recover the “true” history of Jesus of Nazareth. For liberals, this became the primary aim of theological study. The typical conclusion was that Jesus was a good man and teacher who showed people how to live righteously.

Liberals make a distinction between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith.” The first is the actual man Jesus who lived in the first century. Nonetheless, His true character is shrouded in myth and legend, created by the Early Church. The “Christ of faith” is the picture of Jesus we receive in the New Testament. He is not an actual character, though, but a creation of the Early Church.

Among the initial proponents of liberal theology was Johann Selmer (1725-1791). He wrote the famous tract, *Treatise of the Free Investigation of the Canon*. He declared that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, but a human production. Selmer is thus considered the father of the historical-critical method for the interpretation of Scripture.

Other scholars joined Selmer in his view of Scripture, namely Johann Gabler, Georg Bauer, and Ferdinand Christian Baur. They popularized his theories. Ferdinand Christian Baur was a professor at the University of Tübingen, which became known as the center for liberal theology and exercised a marked influence on theology throughout Europe.

Well-known liberal theologians in more recent times include Adolf Harnack, Albert Schweitzer, and Rudolf Bultmann. Harnack (1850-1930) believed that the Gospel version of Jesus is mythological. In particular, he rejected the supernatural acts attributed to Him. He explained these instances as follows: (1) in Jesus’ time, people were unsophisticated and could consider anything a miracle, and (2) miracles are commonly ascribed to famous historical figures after their deaths. Harnack also objected that we are able to explain phenomena in nature by the actions of natural laws. Even if something seems to defy natural explanation, we deem that an extraordinary event, but not a miracle.

Harnack’s view of Jesus was that He was a preacher: (1) of the coming kingdom of God, (2) of the fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul, and (3) of righteousness and love. Jesus is not God, but a good man and able teacher, who predicted the coming of God’s kingdom. Following Jesus means keeping His commands about righteousness and love.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) labored not only as a theologian, but also as a medical doctor, missionary, musician, and historian. He opened a hospital in Africa and served there many years. As a theologian, he was engaged in the “quest for the historical Jesus.” He was a liberal in his basic theology, but differed from other liberals in that he thought that Jesus actually believed that He was a great man of God and would introduce God’s kingdom to the world.

In Schweitzer’s opinion, Jesus not only taught people how to live righteously, but also expected the end of the world to come in His lifetime. He cited the following texts in support: Matthew 10:23, Matthew16:28, and John 22:20-22. According to Schweitzer, Jesus was mistaken, since the kingdom did not come. On the cross, Jesus realized this and cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” So then, Jesus died without seeing the fulfillment of His expectations.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) advanced a new understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. He was an adherent of existential philosophy, which held that truth is not discovered by rational thought (as in rationalism) or by objective observation (as in empiricism), but through personal experience. The best path to discover truth was reflection on one’s personal experience. The main thing is not what occurs in history, but how one perceives those events.

Like other liberals, Bultmann rejected the supernatural in the Bible. Unlike many liberals, though, Bultmann saw little value in seeking the “historical Jesus.” As an adherent of existentialism, Bultmann advanced the idea that we must study not what Jesus actually said and did, but how the disciples existentially perceived Him. The disciples expressed their impression of Jesus in the form of the “myths” that appear in the New Testament. The Bible student must study these myths to discover the inner feelings that inspired the disciples to create them. This is the true value of Bible study.

One other liberal thinker is important to mention here – Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).[[45]](#footnote-45) He felt that Jesus was not the incarnate Son of God, but a man with a highly developed God-consciousness. He was born without sin and lived in close fellowship with God. Sykes writes about Schleiermacher, “Schleiermacher has a conception of Christ as organically human and like all men in virtue of this humanity; yet wholly superior to humanity in possessing an unclouded awareness of God.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Christ is able to communicate His God-consciousness to us in order to enhance our relationship with God. So then, salvation is not something accomplished in history through the death and resurrection of the Savior, but an existential phenomenon which occurs in the human consciousness.

For a refutation of the liberal view in general, we refer the reader to chapter 13 of the second volume of this series. Nonetheless, we will touch on two items here: the liberal understanding of the Christological title “Lord” and the Christological title “Savior.” Unlike the biblical witness, liberals teach that the first disciples never referred to Jesus as Lord in a divine sense. In their opinion, Jews, who were strict monotheists, would never ascribe deity to a human. They assert that Greek believers, especially under the apostle Paul’s influence, who were accustomed also to use “lord” in relation to the emperor, attributed this title to Jesus.

We respond that, first of all, Jesus Himself considered Himself “Lord” in a divine sense. We recall His words to His disciples, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied {there} and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord (i.е., ὁ κύριος) has need of them’” (Matt 21:2-3). Here, Jesus calls Himself “Lord” in a divine sense. Also, in Mark 5:19 we read, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord (i.е., ὁ κύριος) has done for you.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Aside from this, Jesus said that He, as the “Lord”: (1) has authority over the Sabbath (Mk 2:28), (2) will judge the world (Matt 7:22-23), (3) requires obedience (Lk 6:46), and (4) is greater than David (Mk 12:36-37).

Second, proponents of liberal theology fail to appreciate that the apostle Paul was raised as a Jew, not a Greek. In Acts 22:3, he explains, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city (i.e., Jerusalem), educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.” Paul wrote his theology from a monotheistic Hebrew worldview, not a Greek one.

Third, evidence exists that even before Paul’s ministry, the Early Church preached Jesus as Lord. At the day of Pentecost, Peter announced, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). In addition, scholars feel that Philippians 2:6-11 was an early Christian hymn that Paul incorporated into his epistle. In this text, we discover that “Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Fourth, if only Greek believers regarded Jesus as divine, calling Him “Lord,” one would expect a strong negative reaction from the Jewish believers of that day. Yet, Church history does not record any objection by Jewish believers or a debate on this account with Gentile Christians.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 16:22 is very insightful in this regard: “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.” The term “maranatha” is not Greek, but Aramaic, and means, “Our Lord comes.” Clearly, this catchword arose and was used in Aramaic-speaking congregations in Palestine. So then, not only Greek Christians called Jesus “Lord,” but Jewish ones as well.

Concerning the term “Savior,” some liberals observe that this title appears mostly in the later New Testament books, namely in 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Peter, Jude, and 1 John. These books employ this title for Jesus 17 times, while it occurs only 7 times in the remainder of the New Testament. Therefore, liberals conclude that Greek believers attributed this title to Jesus, but the earliest disciples had no such conception of Him. According to liberal thought, in the earliest Church Jesus was not “Savior.”

In defense of their view, liberals also note that in the New Testament, the title “Savior” is sometimes accompanied by the word ἐπιφανία (*epiphania*), which translates, “appearing” (see 2 Tim 1:10; Tit 2:13). This combination, “appearing of the Savior” is often found in Greek literature. Therefore, they conclude that Christians borrowed the conception of Jesus as Savior from the Greeks and that it was never an original designation for Jesus Christ.

In response, we note that the term “Savior” has a Jewish origin as well as a Greek one (see 1 Chr 16:35; Ps 65:5; 79:9; 85:4). In addition, although the term in more common in later New Testament books, it appears in earlier ones as well (see Lk 2:11; Matt 1:21; Acts 5:31; 13:23). Already from His birth, the angels called Him “Savior.” Moreover, in the books of 1 Timothy, Titus, and Jude, we encounter the phrase, “God our Saviог.” This expression comes from the Old Testament, not from Greek literature. Therefore, when the New Testament writers speak of Jesus as the Savior, they have in view the Old Testament meaning and understanding of that title.

**4. Kenosis**

Kenosis is the teaching that the Son of God emptied Himself of His deity before He came to earth and was incarnated. The key passage for this theory is Philippians 2:6-7: “Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, {and} being made in the likeness of men.” The Greek word translated “emptied” is κενόω (*kenoo*), which is faithfully translated in this verse.[[48]](#footnote-48) It also appears in Romans 4:14; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:15; and 2 Corinthians 9:3.

According to the Kenosis doctrine, the Son laid aside such divine attributes as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. He retained only His moral qualities, such as holiness, love, righteousness, etc.[[49]](#footnote-49) The problem, though, is that if Jesus laid aside some of this divine attributes, then He would cease being God. Consequently, Kenosis denies the full deity of Jesus Christ.

The following arguments are used to support Kenosis.[[50]](#footnote-50) Christ “became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). He laid aside His glory (Jn 17:5), which He received back again at His exaltation (Phil 2:9-11). During His earthly ministry, Jesus did not know everything (Mk 13:32; 9:20-21; Matt 26:39). He grew in wisdom (Lk 2:52). He endured genuine temptation (Heb 2:10; 5:8-9).

Moreover, proponents of this teaching theorize that the Son’s self-emptying was not a necessary step for Him, but done voluntarily so that He could serve as an example for us. His miracles were actually accomplished through Him by the Holy Spirit.[[51]](#footnote-51) Since the other two Persons of the Trinity retained all their divine attributes, they could maintain order in the universe without the Son’s participation during His earthly sojourn.

We object to the Kenosis teaching on the following grounds.[[52]](#footnote-52) Even though at times it appeared that Jesus did not know something, at other times He displayed supernatural knowledge.[[53]](#footnote-53) Boyd offers the following explanation: “The divine mind always had access to the contents of the human mind, but not vica versa.”[[54]](#footnote-54) Jesus also demonstrated supernatural power (Jn 2:11, 19).

Let us examine Philippians 2:6-7 more closely as well. The Son did not “empty Himself” in the sense of laying aside divine attributes, but in taking upon Himself a human nature while retaining at the same time His divine nature. Verse 7 states, “(He) emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.” The Greek participle often expresses “means,” which would yield the translation, “He emptied Himself *by means of* taking the form of a bond-servant.” Therefore, the “emptying” of the Son consisted in His accepting the limitations of humanity, not in divesting Himself of divinity.

However, Evangelical scholars differ on the question of whether Jesus was able to utilize all of His divine attributes after His incarnation. Some claim He could, while other deny that possibility. We recall that at times Jesus lacked certain knowledge and did miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also hard to image how He could retain omnipresence while being in a body (but see discussion in chapter 4, section B). On the other hand, even though the Synoptic Gospels stress the activity of the Spirit in Jesus ministry, the apostle John appears to ascribe supernatural powers to Christ Himself (see Jn 1:47-50; 2:11; 2:24-25; also see Matt 8:27; 9:4; Mk 1:23-24).

In considering this question, one must not surrender the position that Jesus, being God, does indeed possess all the divine qualities. If and how they were manifest remains an open question for Evangelical theology.

**5. Teaching of the Ebionites**

In conclusion, we will briefly we will make mention of an early Christological heresy which appeared among a group named the Ebionites. The Ebionites were so-called “Christian Jews,” who attempted to retain the idea of God’s oneness. They were willing to concede that Jesus was Messiah, but refused to recognize Him as God.[[55]](#footnote-55) However, in the light of the biblical witness to Christ’s deity presented above, we find this view unconvincing.

### C. Conclusions

Jesus challenged His early disciples with the question, “Who do people say that I am?” In light of our biblical survey and examination of Scriptural evidence, we are ready to respond. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the Messiah of Israel, He fulfilled all that was predicted of Him by the prophets. He redefined the Christological titles in a way to reflect His deity. His claims to deity were confirmed by works the Father gave Him to do, as well as through His resurrection from the dead. His apostles, in their epistles to the churches, did not hesitate to ascribe to Him divine status. We affirm their testimony to the full deity of Jesus Christ.

## Jehovah’s Witnesses on the Deity of Christ

### А. Introduction

At the present time, the group that most openly denounces the deity of Jesus Christ is the Jehovah’s Witnesses.[[56]](#footnote-56) The movement’s founder, Charles Russell (1852-1916), was a successful American businessman. In 1872, he opened a group for the study of Scripture and seven years later began issuing the journal *The Watchtower*. He followed this with a book named *Food for Thinking Christians*. The essence of his teachings is contained in a six volume series named *Studies in the Scriptures*. A seventh volume exists, but its authorship is disputed. Russell also travelled extensively, planting new congregations.

After Russell’s death, Joseph Rutherford (1869-1942), a former Baptist and lawyer, led the movement. He organized those congregations that followed Russell’s teaching into the Jehovah’s Witnesses. He added about 100 publications of his own. Following Rutherford, Nathan Knorr took over leadership. Under his direction, the movement grew from 115,000 to 2 million adherents.

The standard Bible translation used by the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the New World Translation (abbr. NWT), which differs greatly from standard translations.

### B. The Deity of Jesus Christ

What do the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe about Jesus Christ?[[57]](#footnote-57) According to their teachings, He is not the eternal Son of God, but was created by God, whom they call Jehovah. This is why Christ is called the “Son of God” and the “Firstborn.” He is also named “Only Begotten” since He is the only one that Jehovah created directly. The Son, in turn, created all else. Jesus is considered to be “god,” but in a secondary sense – not of the same divine nature as Jehovah. He is also identified with Michael the Archangel.

When the Son became human, He laid aside His divine nature to “be made like His brethren in all things” (Heb 2:17). He was born of the virgin Mary as a perfect human. All that remained of His sub-divine nature was a “vital power.” Only at the time of His water baptism did He begin to remember His earlier heavenly existence. During His earthly ministry, Jesus preached the kingdom of God, performed miracles, and revealed to people the nature of Jehovah.

Jesus was crucified – not on a cross, but on a stake. His death involved the complete destruction of His human nature. In this way, He became a “sacrifice” for sin. He rose again, not physically, but spiritually, thus recapturing His original spiritual nature.

In this appendix, we will discuss Scripture texts that appear in the debate between Jehovah’s Witnesses and conservative Christians in an effort to give clarity to the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ.

**John 1:1**

The most hotly debated passage of Scripture about Christ’s deity is the initial verse of John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). In the New World Translation, the verse is rendered, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” Jehovah’s Witnesses refer to the Word as divine in a secondary sense, as a “god.” They deny that Jesus Christ shares the same divine nature as the Father (Jehovah).

The original Greek text reads as follows:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

The Watchtower’s interpretation of this verse derives from the lack of the Greek article before the final appearance of θεὸς (*theos*), “God,” in the sentence. The Greek article indicates a specific or well-known object or person. A noun without the definite article is not specifically defined. Therefore, the Word is not “the God,” but something less definite – “a god.”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses support their view by appealing to other translations similar to their own:[[58]](#footnote-58)

- The Logos [Word] was divine (A New Translation of the Bible)

- The Word was a god (The New Testament in an Improved Version)

- The Word was with God and shared his nature (The Translator’s New Testament)

The issue with this verse is how to correctly translate a predicate nominative that precedes the verbal component. In our case, the compound predicate is θεὸς ἦν (*theos ein*), i.e., “was God.” In such an instance, is the predicate nominative (θεὸς) definite of indefinite? A third option also exists – the lack of the Greek article can infer quality (that is, “divine”).

E. C. Colwell, in his groundbreaking article *A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament*,[[59]](#footnote-59) found that if the predicate nominative is deemed definite by context, it lacks the article in 87% of cases where it precedes the verbal component. He discovered only 15 examples where such a noun had the article. When a definite predicate nominative follows the verbal component, is has the article in 90% of cases.[[60]](#footnote-60) A study of the Septuagint and Church Fathers yields similar results. Colwell concluded, “A predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a ‘qualitative’ noun solely because of the absence of the article.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

This research resulted in the issuing of the famous “Colwell’s Rule”: “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Colwell produced several interesting examples of his rule. John 1:49, for example, reads, ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ· ῥαββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” He observed that the predicate nominative βασιλεὺς (*basileus*), “king,” precedes the verb and is definite without having the definite article.

Note also in this verse that the definite predicate nominative ὁ υἱὸς (*ho huios*), “son,” follows the verb and has the definite article. In fact, the predicate nominative “Son of God” follows the verb 30 times in the New Testament and always takes the Greek article.[[63]](#footnote-63) On the other hand, in 9 of 10 cases where is precedes the verb, it lacks the article.[[64]](#footnote-64) The same phenomenon is observed with the predicate nominative “Son of Man” (see Matt 13:37; Jn 5:27).

In another example, the same definite predicate nominative either has the article or lacks it depending on its position in the sentence. We read in John 19:21: μὴ γράφε· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἀλλʼ ὅτι ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν· βασιλεύς εἰμι τῶν Ἰουδαίων, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’”[[65]](#footnote-65)

We may also mention observance of this rule with predicate nominatives such as “Light of the world,” (Jn 8:12; 9:5; Matt 5:14), “My mother,” (Matt 12:48; 12:50), and “greatest” (Matt 18:1, 4). Especially remarkable is Matthew 13:37-39, where five times the article stands before a definite predicate nominative that follows the verb and twice the article is absent when a definite predicate nominative precedes the verb.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Colwell notes occurrences where variant readings of a text also reflect this rule. In other words, one variant has the article before a definite predicate nominative that follows the verb, while another variant of that same text removes the article when the definite predicate nominative is placed before the verb (see Jn 1:49; Matt 23:10; Jam 2:19).

Forty years later, Phillip Harner researched this phenomenon even more closely in the Gospels of Mark and John.[[67]](#footnote-67) In particular, he investigated over 50 cases in John’s Gospel where a predicate nominative preceded the verb without the article. In 40 of those cases, he determined that the noun reflected “quality” without commenting on whether the noun should be considered definite or indefinite. An example is John 8:31: ἀληθῶς μαθηταί μού ἐστε, “You are truly disciples of Mine.” The quality of “discipline” is in focus. In John 9:24, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλός ἐστιν, “This man is a sinner,” the idea of quality of character is again in focus. Therefore, Harner asserts that in John 1:1, we should translate θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος as “the Word was divine,” that is, has the quality of God.

We must qualify Harder’s findings, though, by saying that he recognized that the categories of “quality” and “definiteness” are not mutually exclusive. A predicate nominative preceding the verb can reflect both factors. We see this is several examples. In Mark 2:28, Jesus has the “quality” of being “Lord” of the Sabbath. Yet, He has that quality by virtue of the fact that He Himself is the Lord. Mark 12:35 is another example – Jesus has the “quality” of being the Son of David, i.e., the “right to rule.” Yet again, He has that quality by virtue of the fact that He indeed is the Son of David. Similarly, if John 1:1 is taken to mean that Jesus has the quality of divinity, He has that quality by virtue of the fact that He Himself is God.

Another valuable contribution by Harner is his listing of the five possible ways the apostle John could have completed John 1:1:

- ὁ λόγος ἧν ὁ θεός

- θεός ἧν ὁ λόγος (Jn 1:1)

- ὁ λόγος θεός ἧν

- ὁ λόγος ἧν θεός

- ὁ λόγος ἧν θεῖος (θεῖος = divine, see Acts 17:29; 2 Pet 1:3-4).[[68]](#footnote-68)

However, John could not have used the first option because the article before both nouns renders them identical. Yet, the Word and the Father are not the same Person as indicated in the phrase ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ”The Word was with God”. Therefore, John needed a way to express both that the Word was God (in His nature), yet was distinct from Father (in His Person).

If John wanted to specifically indicate that Jesus was God in a lesser sense than the Father, i.e., a “god,” he could have employed variant № 4 or № 5 since, “an anarthrous predicate nominative that *follows* the verb will usually be either qualitative or *in*definite.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Yet, he did not do that. In order to communicate that the Word was fully God, yet differed from God the Father, the only two options John had open to him were variants № 2 and № 3. The second option is preferable since such a construction emphasizes that the Word possesses God’s qualities.

Jehovah’s Witnesses recognize that placing the Greek article before both “Word” and “God” would make them identical, but nonetheless they insist that the article’s absence before θεός (*theos*) shows that the Word “is not the same god as the God with whom the Word is said to be.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Yet, this view fails to appreciate the difference between being identified with the Father as one Person and sharing with Him the same nature. Christians agree that the Word “is not the same god as the God with whom the Word is said to be” in His *Person*. Nonetheless, the Son is equal to the Father in quality and dignity. He is also θεός (*theos*). The grammatical construction used in John 1:1 “stresses that, although the person of Christ is not the person of the Father, their essence is identical.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

Another researcher who devoted serious attention to the interpretation of John 1:1 is Daniel Wallace. He summarizes the above discussion by stating the rule, “*An anarthrous pre-verbal PN is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite.*”[[72]](#footnote-72) Wallace went on to show that in verbless clauses, the same rule applies – an anarthrous predicate nominative before the subject was associated with quality or definiteness.[[73]](#footnote-73)

We must also mention that the Greek article is often omitted before proper names. Since θεός (*theos*), “God,” is practically a proper name, the article is usually not used, even though the noun is definite. We note 282 instances where the article is omitted before θεός (*theos*).[[74]](#footnote-74)

It is also important examine the context of John 1:1 since in it divine qualities and activities are ascribed to Christ. He is the Light (v. 8), Life (v. 4), and Creator (v. 2-3). Concerning the last feature, John clearly draws a parallel between the first chapter of his Gospel and Genesis chapter 1, where creation is ascribed to God. The Old Testament in general makes God the exclusive agent in creation (see Isa 44:24; 48:13; 40:28; Neh 9:6).[[75]](#footnote-75)

Moreover, Wallace compares the verbal form describing the eternal nature of God’s Son in verse 1 – Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος – with the verbal form describing His incarnation in verse 14 – ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. The verb ἦν (*ein*), i.e., “was (God),” is in the Greek imperfect tense, indicating continuous action in the past and, in this case, the eternal nature of the Word. The verb ἐγένετο (*egeneto*), “became (flesh),” is in the Greek aorist tense, which typically indicates a single past action. So then, Christ “was” God eternally and “became” human in time.[[76]](#footnote-76)

So then, in the light of our discussion above, the only appropriate translations of John 1:1 are: “The Word was God (the definite θεός – *theos*) or “The Word was Divine” (θεός – *theos* as quality). The translation “The Word was a god (indefinite θεός – *theos*) corresponds poorly both to the usage of this construction in New Testament Greek and to the context of John chapter 1.

If θεός (*theos*) in John 1:1 refers to the “quality of God,” this does not imply that Jesus is inferior to the Father in quality or dignity. Christians affirm that the “divinity” of Jesus means that He is one in nature and equal in dignity to God the Father. Our conclusion finds further support in the surrounding context and in other passages of Scripture affirming Christ’s deity (see chapter 9). We also add that the word θεός (*theos*) can reasonably be taken as a definite predicate nominative, and not simply reflect divine quality.

**John 1:18**

Later in John’s first chapter, he writes about Jesus, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him}.” As before, the New World Translators again call Jesus a god: “No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten god who is at the Father’s side is the one who has explained Him.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses note two points. First, it is written, “No one has seen God at any time.” Yet, people have seen Jesus. Therefore, He cannot be God.[[77]](#footnote-77) Second, Jesus is the “only begotten.” Does not this mean that the Father created Him?

To the first objection, we respond that no one has seen God in His non-incarnate form. In His incarnate form, of course, He can be seen. In the Old Testament, select people saw God in the form of a “theophany,” that is, in a partial, visible manifestation (see Isa 6:1; Ezek 1:26-28; Num 12:8; Ex 33:23 etc.). John is referring to the fact that no one has ever seen God in *all His glory*.

Our interpretation finds confirmation in verse 14 of this chapter, where we read, “We saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father.” Since no one can see God in all His glory, a more “muted” (incarnate) manifestation of God was necessary and accomplished in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is why the Son came to “reveal” the Father. Consider Moses’ experience (Ex 33:23). He also could not behold Yahweh in all His glory. We also recall Paul’s words, “…who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16). Again, it is clear that no one has seen God in the full display of His glory (i.e., unapproachable light).

Concerning the depiction “only begotten,” we note that John did not write that the Father “created” the Son, but that the latter was “begotten.” The Nicene Creed insists that the Son was “begotten, not made.” This phenomenon is discussed in chapter 8 of this volume on the Trinity.

**John 5:18**

In the fifth chapter of His Gospel, John narrates, “For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (Jn 5:18). The Watchtower adherents explain this by claiming that these Jews did not properly understand Jesus. He was simply referring to God as His father, not making a claim to deity Himself.[[78]](#footnote-78)

However, in the following discussion Jesus does not correct their supposed misunderstanding in order to escape their threatenings. Just the opposite – He insisted even more strongly on His deity: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (v. 21-23).

**John 8:58**

One of the clearest self-declarations of Christ deity is John 8:58, where Jesus claims to be the same God who spoke with Moses in the wilderness, the “I Am” (see discussion of this passage in chapter 9).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses offer various rebuttals. The New World Translation renders the verse, “Jesus said to them: “Most truly I say to you, before Abraham came into existence, I have been.” However, the verb εἰμί (*eimi*), “I Am,” is in the present tense, not the past. The Jehovah’s Witnesses respond that translation in the past tense is appropriate because the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμί, “I Am,” follows a construction with an infinitive πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθα, “before Abraham was.”[[79]](#footnote-79) However, in Greek there is no such rule that after a clause with an infinitive one must translate a present tense verb in the past tense.

Furthermore, Watchtower adherents object that Jesus’ words, ἐγὼ εἰμί, (“I Am”) do not correspond to Exodus 3:14, where we read not ἐγὼ εἰμί, but ὁ ὣν (“The Existing One”).[[80]](#footnote-80) They error, though, in appealing to the Septuagint instead of the more reliable Hebrew text, which reads אֶהְיֶה, “I Am.”

They also object that Jesus is not referring here to His divine status, but to his age. In other words, He is older than Abraham, but not the Eternal God.[[81]](#footnote-81) Yet, Jesus’ words do not confirm this interpretation. He did not say that He was born or came into existence before Abraham, but claimed, “I Am.”

Finally, again we note that these Jews responded to Jesus’ claim by attempting to stone Him.[[82]](#footnote-82) Clearly, they understood perfectly that He was attributing Exodus 3:14 to Himself. These Jews were not reacting here to Jesus’ earlier statement that they were “children of the devil.” He had said this much earlier (in v. 44) and spoke to them in this way in other instances without provoking such a reaction (see Matt 12:34; 23:33). These Jews gathered stones immediately upon His statement ἐγὼ εἰμί, “I Am,” and did so not only in this case, but in similar instances when He made a claim to divinity (see Jn 10:33).[[83]](#footnote-83)

**John 10:30**

Jesus said, “I and the Father are One.” Does this mean that Christ is equal in nature to the Father? The Jehovah Witnesses teach that Jesus and the Father enjoy only a unity of will and purpose, not a unity of divine nature. It is the same kind of unity that Jesus desired among His disciples: “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one” (Jn 17:21-22).[[84]](#footnote-84)

However, the context of John 10:30 reveals that Jesus had something more in mind than a harmonious interrelationship. Immediately before these words, He claimed equality with the Father by saying, “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand” (Jn 10:28-29). Notice in this context that Christ Himself gives eternal life – something that only God can do. Furthermore, Jesus claims equality with the Father in power – no one can snatch the sheep out of His hand, just as no one can do so out of the Father’s hand.

Finally, along with the unity of nature between the Father and the Son, they enjoy a unity of will and purpose as well. This is what Jesus is referring to in John 17:21-22 when He is urging His disciples to follow His and His Father’s example. In John 10:30, though, the point is a unity of nature between the Father and the Son, not simply a unity of purpose. The Jews of Jesus’ time, who were better interpreters of these words than the Jehovah’s Witnesses are, understood perfectly Christ’s meaning and attempted to stone Him for blasphemy.[[85]](#footnote-85)

**John 10:34-36**

In John 10:34-36, Jesus is responding to objections to His claim of equality with God (see v. 30-31). He states, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’”

Jehovah’s Witnesses correctly observe that when Jesus says, “you are gods,” He was using the word אְֶלֹהִים, (*elohim*) in the sense of the leaders of Israel (cf. Ps 82:6; Ex 21:6; 22:8). Yet, they are mistaken when claiming that Jesus considered Himself “god” only in this lesser sense.[[86]](#footnote-86) In fact, the Jehovah’s Witnesses themselves do not regard Jesus as simply a human leader, but a divine being, yet inferior to Jehovah.

Warfield handles this verse quite well.[[87]](#footnote-87) Having already established that He is equal to the Father (see Jn 10:30-33), Jesus’ goal is disputing with the Pharisees was not to assert His deity again, but to answer their charge of blasphemy. He shows that the title *Elohim* is appropriate for those who qualify for it. In the Old Testament, it applied to the judges of Israel. Therefore, the Pharisees cannot object if Jesus applies it to Himself since He is greater than Israel’s judges – He is the One “whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world” (Jn 10:36).

**John 14:1-11**

In John chapter 14, we see many examples where Christ is distinguished from God the Father: “Believe in God, believe also in Me” (v. 1), “Lord, show us the Father” (v. 8), etc. Is Christ denying His deity here?[[88]](#footnote-88) No, but just the opposite. In this chapter, Jesus stresses in unequivocal terms His close relationship with the Father and perfect representation of Him. He said, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (v. 7), “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (v. 9), and, “I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me” (v. 10). In addition, Jesus calls His disciples to believe not only in the Father, but in Him as well (v. 1). Of course, Christ is not identical to the Father – they differ as Persons. Still, this context unmistakably asserts the divine nature of the Second Person of the Trinity.

**John 14:28**

Jesus said, “The Father is greater than I.” The Watchtower feels that this verse unequivocally proves the superiority of Jehovah to Christ and excludes the possibility that the latter is fully divine.[[89]](#footnote-89)

In addition, Jehovah’s Witnesses cite other passages leading to the same conclusion.[[90]](#footnote-90) The Father is the “God” of Jesus Christ (Jn 20;17; 1 Pet 1:3; Mk 15:34; Rev 3:12). Jesus considered Himself a representative of the Father (Jn 10:36; 5:37; 8:17-18; 14:1, 6, 9). Christ submits Himself to the Father (Jn 13:16; 8:42; 5:19; Lk 22:41-42), even after His ascension (1 Cor 11:3; Matt 20:23; 1 Cor 15:27-28). Only the Father knows the time of Christ’s Second Coming (Matt 24:36). The Father prepares a kingdom for the Son (Matt 20:20-23). Jesus came to bring revelation from the Father (Jn 7:16) and fulfill His will (Jn 6:38). Jesus prays to the Father (Lk 6:12). The Father exalted Christ (Phil 2:9) and gave Him authority (Matt 28:18).

In defense of Christ’s full divinity, we respond that these verses describe the Son’s voluntary submission to the Father. They in no way reflect on some inferiority of nature. Christ’s voluntary subordination to God the Father is plainly shown in Philippians 2:6-8: “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied *Himself*” and “humbled *Himself*.”

We also consider that these things are said from the vantage point of Jesus’ humanity. He is not only fully God, but also fully human. Therefore, one may expect that as a human, Jesus would occupy a place of submission to the Father and dependence on Him to the point that He would call the Father His “God.” The above-mentioned indications of Jesus’ true humanity must be interpreted in light of His claims to be God – passages we discussed in chapter 9. The nature of Christ must be understood in the light of all these passages. In such a way, we form a proper appreciation of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Donald Carson views John 14:28 from another angle. He notes that the conjunction beginning the verse, i.e., “for,” requires us to interpret this verse in the light of what was stated prior: “You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

Up to this time, the disciples were thinking only of themselves – what will happen to them after Jesus leaves. Jesus directs their attention, then, to what His departure will mean for Himself. He is returning to the Father to receive again the glory that He enjoyed with Him from eternity past (Jn 17:5). If the disciples “loved Him,” they would think of what awaited Jesus in heaven. Therefore, the words, “The Father is greater than I,” refer to the greater glory the Father enjoyed at that time. Christ’s return to the Father, though, would remedy that discrepancy and restore to Him His pre-incarnate glory.

Some commentators explain Christ’s words, “The Father is greater than I,” by appealing to the theory of the “eternal generation of the Son.” According to this theory, the Son by some unexplainable mechanism is eternally being “begotten” by the Father. This is no way, however, diminishes His deity or dignity as God. In this way, then, the Father is greater than the Son in the sense that the Father is Son’s “source.” Although this theory, which traces back to Origen, is acknowledged by the Church, it nonetheless can lead to the false conclusion that Christ is somehow inferior to the Father. In fact, Arius formed his false teaching of Christ’s creation by the Father from Origen’s view.

**John 17:3**

Furthermore, in the Gospel of John we encounter the following prayer of Jesus to the Father: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (Jn 17:3).[[92]](#footnote-92) According to Watchtower teaching, these words convincingly show the uniqueness of Jehovah as the only true God.[[93]](#footnote-93)

A closer look at the context, though, revels that people receive eternal life not only from the Father, but from the Son as well (Jn 17:2-3). In addition, before His incarnation Jesus shared heavenly glory with the Father (Jn 17:5). The Son of God, who enjoys heavenly glory along with the Father and grants eternal life, is certainly more than some sort of “secondary god.”

Another key feature of this verse is the phrase “true God.” John uses this expression in 1 John 5:20: “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. This is the true God and eternal life.”[[94]](#footnote-94)

We note a striking parallel between John 17:3 and 1 John 5:20. In both cases, certain features are highlighted: the idea of the “true God,” the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the reception of eternal life. It is vital to note that we receive eternal life in connection with “Him who is true,” and we are “in Him who is true” only by virtue of being “in His Son.” In this way, Jesus’ words in John 17:3 are made clear – eternal life comes through the agency of both the only true God and the Sent One, Jesus Christ. So then, again we see a description of the relationship between the Father and Son that exceeds what we would expect between the Creator and one of His creatures.

The following verse is also significant: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1 Jn 5:21). The contrast between “idols” and “Him who is true” reveals that John is concerned that his readers do not follow after false gods, whether that be pagan gods, or gods of their own imagination. Therefore, the “One who is true” is not being contrasted with the Son, but with idols, who differ both from the Father and the Son. In a similar way, when Jesus calls the Father the “only true God” in John 17:3, He is contrasting the Father not with Himself, but with false gods.[[95]](#footnote-95)

**John 20:28**

The final verse from John’s Gospel that we will examine is John 20:28, where Thomas says after seeing the risen Christ, “My Lord and my God,” i.e., Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. Here, Thomas (along with the author John), plainly acknowledges Jesus’ deity.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses respond that other Scripture passages speak of Jehovah as the only true God (Jn 17:3; 20:17) and that John calls Jesus not “God,” but the “Son of God” (Jn 20:31). Therefore, John could not have meant that Jesus is God. Thomas is only acknowledging here that Jesus is “god.”[[96]](#footnote-96) However, the Greek article stands before both terms κύριος (*куриос*), “Lord,” and θεός (*теос*), “God.” Therefore, is in incorrect and actually impossible to translate the verse with the word “god.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

Others explain that Thomas words were addressed to the Father, not to Jesus. Thomas was simply expressing his amazement at seeing the risen Jesus. On the other hand, the text is clear that Thomas was speaking to Jesus and that Jesus accepted his acknowledgement and worship: “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed {are} they who did not see, and {yet} believed” (Jn 20:29).

Finally, John could not have been referring to Jesus as a lesser “god.” The idea of some sort of “secondary god” would have been totally foreign and incomprehensible to the Jewish mind of that time.

**Worship**

The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that since Jesus taught people to worship only God, He Himself could not be God (see Matt 4:10; Jn 20:17; 4:23-24).[[98]](#footnote-98) They continue that Jesus received “worship” only as a sign of respect, and that only Jehovah is worthy of worship with “a particular attitude of heart” that He is God.[[99]](#footnote-99)

However, our discussion of “worship” in chapter 9 of this volume demonstrated that, in some instances, Jesus did receive worship as God. In addition, Morey writes that in Psalm 2:12, the nations are called to worship the Son.[[100]](#footnote-100) Schnell shows that in Revelation 5:12-13, both the Father and the Son receive worship.[[101]](#footnote-101)

**Miracles**

The Jehovah’s Witnesses point out that Jesus Himself did not perform miracles, but they were done by God the Father or the Holy Spirit.[[102]](#footnote-102) God did so to confirm Jesus’ appointment as Messiah.[[103]](#footnote-103) The following passages are cited in support: Matthew 12:18; Luke 4:1, 14, 17-21; John 5:19, 30.

It is true that Jesus did attribute His miracles to the Father and the Spirit. Yet, that does not force the conclusion that He has no supernatural power Himself. In most cases, Jesus relied on the Spirit as an example for His disciples. At the same time, some passages seem to indicate that Jesus Himself did at times demonstrate supernatural knowledge or power: John 2:11, 19; John 1:47-50; 2:23; 13:18-19; Matthew 9:4; 8:8-9, 27; Mark 1:23-24.

Additionally, although God the Father also confirmed the ministry of other prophets with miracles, Jesus’ ministry differed in that He claimed to be God. It is highly unlikely that the Father would have supernaturally confirmed Jesus’ divine claims if they were false.

**Immanuel**

In Matthew 1:23, the angel Gabriel predicted of Jesus, “’Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’” Watchtower adherents respond that other biblical characters had similar names. For example, Jehu means “He is Yahweh,” but Jehu was certainly not Yahweh. Moreover, the angel did not say that Jesus would be “God,” but the “Son of God.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Another explanation is offered – Immanuel does not mean that “God” became incarnate, but that “god” became incarnate.[[105]](#footnote-105)

On the other hand, Matthew 1:23 is a quotation from Isaiah 7:14, which predicts the virgin birth of Jesus. This indicates that we are not dealing with just any biblical character, but with a unique individual – “God with us.” In addition, the idea that some sort of “secondary god” was to be born would have been totally foreign and incomprehensible to the Jewish mind of that time. When they read Isaiah’s proclamation of a coming Immanuel, they would have associated Him with אְֶלֹהִים, “*Elohim”*, the God of Israel.

**Firstborn**

A very special designation for Jesus Christ is “firstborn,” or in Greek, πρωτότοκος (*prototokos*). In the New Testament, this word usually refers to the first child in a family. For example, it applies to Mary’s firstborn child in Luke 2:7: “And she gave birth to her firstborn son (πρωτότοκος).” Also see Hebrews 11:28: “By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) would not touch them.”

Jesus is so named in Romans 8:29; Revelation 1:5; Colossians 1:15, 18; and Hebrews 1:6. In what sense is Jesus the “firstborn?” First, in Revelation 1:5 and Colossians 1:18, He is the firstborn from the dead – the first to be resurrected in a glorified body. This resonates with Revelation 3:14, where He is termed “the Beginning of the creation of God” in the sense of the beginning of God’s *new* creation. This also coincides with the description of our Lord in Romans 8:29 – Jesus as the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος) of many brethren.” So then, Jesus is the first, but not the last, to enter God’s new creation through resurrection from the dead. All believers, that is “Jesus’ brethren,” will experience the same.

Second, uncovering the Old Testament understanding of “firstborn” will prove enlightening. At that time, the firstborn son held the place of primacy among his siblings. He was the heir of the main share of his father’s estate. The right of the firstborn is described in Genesis 25:5-6; 27:35-36; 43:33 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17.

In regard to Jesus Christ, Colossians 1:15 states that He is the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, i.e., the “firstborn of all creation.” Upon examination of the context, we discover that Paul means that Christ is the heir (πρωτότοκος) of all creation. In the following verse, we read, “For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Note that all things were created for Him. He is the πρωτότοκος (*прототокос*) or “heir” of all creation.

Also of note is the use of the genitive case in the phrase πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, i.e., the “firstborn of all creation.” The Greek genitive can denote “submission to,” a meaning which fits our context well. Creation is under the authority of the firstborn/heir, Jesus Christ. In this sense, He is the “firstborn *over* all creation.” Other instances of such a use for the Greek genitive are found in Ephesians 6:12 and Acts 4:8.

Hebrews 1:6 also speaks of Jesus as firstborn in the sense of heir: “And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him.’”[[106]](#footnote-106) The context confirms that Jesus is portrayed as firstborn/heir in this passage. In verse 2, we read that the Father “appointed (Him) heir of all things.” Verse 4 affirms that Christ is “much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” Verse 8 mentions the kingdom that He inherits: “But of the Son {He says,} ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,’” and, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet” (v. 13). Finally, in Psalm 89:27 we read about Messiah: “I also shall make him {My} firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” Jesus is “firstborn” in the sense that He is King and heir of all things.

**Acts 2:36**

Some may misunderstand the meaning of Acts 2:36, where it is written, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.” It seems here that Jesus “became” Lord at His ascension, but was not so beforehand. Yet, we must consider that in the previous verse, Peter cites Psalm 110:1, where the coronation of a king is described. In this light, we conclude that Peter did not mean that Jesus received divine status at His ascension, but officially began to occupy the office of Messiah, i.e., the king of Israel. In this sense, God made Him “Lord and Christ.”

**Psalm 2:7**

In Psalm 2:7, we read, “I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.” Does this mean that God the Father “gave birth” to the Son? First, we must keep in mind that in its Old Testament context, this verse describes the coronation of Messiah. The expression “I have begotten You” is a figure of speech when Jesus, according to Acts 2:36, officially began to occupy the office of Messiah. We recall that the title “Son of God” can refer to Messiah. When Jesus began to function in His messianic office, He “became” the Son of God in the sense of Messiah. Therefore, we may paraphrase the text as such: “You are Messiah. Today I have appointed You king.”

Second in Acts 13:32-33, Paul applies Psalm 2:7 in a different way – in relation to Jesus’ resurrection. Paul announced, “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this {promise} to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You.’” According to Colossians 1:18, as a result of His resurrection, Jesus became the “firstborn from the dead.”

So then, at His resurrection Jesus began to occupy another new position – firstborn from the dead. He became “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29), that is, the first individual to experience resurrection in a glorified body and the first to participate in God’s new creation.

Romans 1:3 confirms that Jesus was the Son of God before His resurrection. Paul did not write there that through His resurrection Jesus “became” God’s Son, but “was declared the Son of God with power.” By means of the resurrection, Jesus’ divine Sonship was made manifest to all.

**1 Corinthians 8:4-6**

Paul wrote the following words to the church at Corinth:

Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is {but} one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we {exist} for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we {exist} through Him.

Followers of the Watchtower point out that Christ is mentioned separately from the Father and therefore is not equal to Him.[[107]](#footnote-107)

When we examine verse 6, though, we note an obvious poetic structure. Here, we are dealing with some sort of creed or liturgical reading used in the Early Church[[108]](#footnote-108):

ἀλλʼ ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ

ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν,

καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς

διʼ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς διʼ αὐτοῦ.

Donald Carson compares this verse with the Jewish *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one!” (Deut 6:4). In both passages we encounter words “Lord” (or “Yahweh”), “God,” and “one.” Carson reasons that Paul, writing in a context discussing pagan religion, is alluding to the *Shema*, adapting it to Christians by including a reference to Christ.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Consequently, here we have not a refutation of Jesus’ deity, but a strong confirmation of it. Paul incorporates “Christ the Lord into the very definition of the God of Israel.”[[110]](#footnote-110) He “thus simultaneously reaffirms strict Jewish monotheism and the highest possible Christology imaginable. Christ finds his identity within the very definition of that one God/Lord of Israel.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

**Isaiah 43:10**

Christians claim that Isaiah 43:10 removes the possibility that Jehovah created another god: “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that pagan nations cannot create another god, but that Jehovah can.[[112]](#footnote-112) Yet, the passage neither makes, nor implies such a qualification.

**Alpha and Omega**

The expression “Alpha and Omega” appears in Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13. In the first instance, it refers to God the Father since it is associated with the phrase, “Who is and was and is to come,” which is used of the Father in Revelation 1:4.[[113]](#footnote-113) The Father is again the “Alpha and Omega” in Revelation 21:6.

On the other hand, in Revelation 22:13 the “Alpha and Omega” is Jesus Christ. This is evident by the accompanying phrase, “I am coming quickly” in verse 12. In addition, in Revelation 22:13 the “Alpha and Omega” is also “the first and the last, the beginning and the end,” words that refer to Jesus in Revelation 1:17 and 2:8. Applying the formula “Alpha and Omega” both to the Father and the Son confirms not only the eternal nature of the Son, but also His unity of nature with the Father.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses say that using this phrase for both Jesus and Jehovah does not indicate a unity of nature. They compare this with the title “apostle,” which applies both to Jesus and to others.[[114]](#footnote-114) Yet, this objection carries little weight. The term “apostle,” that is, “messenger,” can refer to various people in various roles. The formula “Alpha and Omega,” though, is appropriate only for an eternal, divine being. Therefore, it equates the Father and Son as possessors of the same nature.

**Almighty**

According to the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, only God the Father (Jehovah) is called “Almighty.” The terms in question are the Hebrew אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*) and the Greek παντοκράτωρ (*pantokrator*). This supposedly distinguishes Jehovah from the Son of God, who is called only “the Mighty God” (Isa 9:6).[[115]](#footnote-115) If only Jehovah is “Almighty,” then He is superior to the Son.[[116]](#footnote-116)

We acknowledge that the title παντοκράτωρ (*pantokrator*) is used only in reference to the Father. With the exception of 2 Corinthians 6:18, it is found only in the book of Revelation,[[117]](#footnote-117) which is an important consideration here. In Revelation, the Father is ascribed this title to emphasize His sovereignty over all things. The Son, however, is represented as the Lamb of God (26 times). This does not reflect a qualitative difference between the Father and the Son, but rather reflects the author’s goal – each Person of the Triune God has a role to play in the end-time drama. God the Father rules over history, directing it to His intended goal, while the Son saves God’s people by His sacrifice.

It is also vital to consider that, as shown earlier, the formula “Alpha and Omega” applies to both Father and Son. Yet, in contexts speaking of the Father as “Alpha and Omega,” He is also spoken of as παντοκράτωρ (*pantokrator*), i.е., “Almighty” (Rev 1:8). If the Son shares with the Father His eternal nature (Alpha and Omega), then what prevents us from ascribing to Christ omnipotence (παντοκράτωρ) as well?

Concerning the Old Testament usage of אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*), it is incorrect to claim that is applies only to God the Father. The Old Testament does not make a consistent distinction between these two Persons of the Trinity. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the phrase אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*) may refer to the Godhead in general, that is, to all Persons of the Trinity.

Commentators also note that in the Old Testament, God is not only אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*), but alsoיהוה גִּבּוֹר (*Yahweh gibor*) and אֵל גִּבּוֹר (*el gibor*), that is, the “mighty God” (Isa 10:21; Ps 24:8; Deut 10:17).[[118]](#footnote-118) This is the same designation given to Messiah in Isaiah 9:6. Therefore, the supposed differences in titles between the Father and Son are not consistent. The Jehovah’s Witnesses cannot challenge this by noting that in Isaiah 9:6 the expression אֵל גִּבּוֹר (*el gibor*) lacks the definite article and therefore indicates a lesser “mighty god.”[[119]](#footnote-119) The definite article is also missing in Isaiah 10:21, where Yahweh is called the “mighty God.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

**Hebrews 1:8-12**

In Hebrews 1:8-9, the author cites Psalm 45:6-7: “Your throne, O God (אְֶלֹהִים), is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.” Here, the author of Hebrews ascribes to the Son the title אְֶלֹהִים, “*Elohim*.” Adherents of the Watchtower suggests a different translation of verse 6: “God is your throne forever and ever, and the scepter of your Kingdom is the scepter of uprightness.” They claim support for this rendering from 1 Chronicles 29:23, where we read of the “throne of Yahweh”: “Then Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh.”[[121]](#footnote-121)

Greek grammar allows both translations: ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος.[[122]](#footnote-122) However, several factors favor the conventional version. First is the absence of the verb εἰμί (*eimi*), “to be.” The text does not say, “God is (εἰμί) your throne.” Although Greek grammar does not require this verb, its presence would specifically confirm the alternate translations. Second, presenting God as a “throne” demeans His dignity.[[123]](#footnote-123) Third, God is nowhere else in Scripture called a “throne.” 1 Chronicles 29:23, rather, speaks of the “throne of Yahweh.”[[124]](#footnote-124) Fourth, the author’s goal in this passage is to demonstrate the Son’s superiority to the angels, which is consistent with calling Him *Elohim*. Finally, we note the quotation of Psalm 102:25-27 in Hebrews 1:8-12:

But of the Son {He says,}… You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.

In the original Old Testament context, these words are addressed to Yahweh (יהוה) and describe His eternal nature. Yet, the author of Hebrews ascribes these words to the Son, attributing to Him the Divine Name יהוה (*Yahweh*) as well.

The Watchtower responds that Hebrews names Jesus יהוה (*Yahweh*) because He is God’s agent of creation.[[125]](#footnote-125) However, it is unimaginable that God would share His name with one of His creatures.

**Acts 20:28**

The passage in Acts 20:28 often enters the discussion of Jesus’ deity: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Therefore, God (that is, Jesus) purchased the Church with His own blood.

The Watchtower movement objects that the phrase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου, “with His own blood,” is really an abbreviation of the phrase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου ὑιοῦ, “with the blood of His own Son.” They assume that during the process of transmission of the text, a scribe accidentally omitted the word ὑιοῦ (*huiou*), “Son,” after the similar word ἰδίου (*idiou*), “own.” This would render the translation, then, not “His own blood,” but “the blood of His own Son” which better corresponds to how the New Testament usually speaks of redemption. Possibly, it is claimed, the expression τοῦ ἰδίου (*tou* *idiou*), “His own,” may be an idiomatic expression for “His own Son.” Such a phenomenon, that is, abbreviation of a phrase, occurs in Greek papyri.[[126]](#footnote-126)

However, the Jehovah’s Witnesses base their claims solely on presumption: either that the word ὑιοῦ (*huiou*), “Son,” accidentally dropped out of text, or that the word in question is implied. No textual evidence exists to support this thesis. No ancient manuscript contains the word ὑιοῦ (*huiou*), “Son.” So then, the conventional translation, “The church of God which He purchased with His own blood,” is preferred.

**Romans 9:5**

Another well-discussed text is Romans 9:5: “…whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” The Greek text reads, ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν. The New World Translation renders it: “To them the forefathers belong, and from them the Christ descended according to the flesh. God, who is over all, be praised forever. Amen.”

At first glance, it seems unclear who Paul is referring to with the definite article and participle ὁ ὢν (*ho on*), i.e., “who,” – to Christ, or to the Father. In other words, is the second half of this verse, introduced by these words, a conditional sentence referring back to Christ, or a new sentence invoking praise to God the Father? Since the original text lacks punctuation, we cannot decide the question on those grounds.

In their defense, the adherents of the Watchtower note that in 2 Corinthians 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3, the adjective εὐλογητὸς (*eulogetos*), “blessed/praised,” is used in reference to God the Father.[[127]](#footnote-127) Therefore, they feel that the second clause should stand alone: “God, who is over all, be praised forever. Amen”

Other arguments, however, support the translation referring to Christ as God.[[128]](#footnote-128) First, the usual word order in Greek places the participle after the noun to which it is referring.[[129]](#footnote-129) In our case, the second clause introduced by “who,” then, would refer back to Christ. In fact, Paul usually follows this word order in his epistles in general.[[130]](#footnote-130) For example, in 2 Corinthians 11:31, the same phrase ὁ ὢν (*ho on*) refers to a noun preceding it, i.e. θεὸς (*theos*), “God”:

ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Second, when blessings are invoked, the predicate nominative usually precedes the subject (see 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3; Lk 1:68).[[131]](#footnote-131) Yet, in Romans 9:5, it follows the subject: θεὸς εὐλογητὸς. Therefore, it is problematic to translate the final clause as an invocation to bless God, as in the New World Translation: “God… be praised forever.” As far as which version fits the context better, opinions vary.[[132]](#footnote-132)

All things considered, the bulk of grammatical evidence favors the translation that speaks of Christ as God.

**Philippians 2:6**

Philippians 2:6 provides clear evidence that Jesus Christ is truly God. We read, “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses interpret the phrase “in the form of God” to mean that Christ “was a spirit person, just as ‘God is a Spirit.’”[[133]](#footnote-133)

However, in another passage of Christ being God’s image, Paul refers not to Jesus’ “spiritual state,” but to His glory: “…the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4). Therefore, Christ is “in the form of God” in the sense that He shares the Father’s glory.

The verse continues, “(He) did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” The phrase “a thing to be grasped” translates the Greek term ἁρπαγμός (*harpagmos*). The basic meaning here “robbery,” yet for the sake of context it is usually rendered as the gain of robbery, or “booty.”[[134]](#footnote-134) Therefore, a literal translation would read “(He) did not regard equality with God to be booty.”

The New World Translation, however, gives the verse a different shade of meaning: “(He) did not even consider the idea of trying to be equal to God.” The Greek, though, does not speak of Jesus thinking or not thinking of *doing* something, but what He considered Himself to be. He did not consider equality with God something He had to “steal by robbery,” but something that was already inherent to Him by nature.

The following verse confirms our conclusion. If Jesus was simply refusing to aspire to deity, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses suggest, then verse 7 would read that Jesus simply remained in His subordinate position before the Father. Instead, we discover that He “emptied Himself” of certain divine privileges by becoming human in order to fulfill God’s salvation plan.

Furthermore, Jehovah’s Witnesses voice the objection that God’s exalting Jesus (v. 9) indicates that Jesus occupies a lower position in respect to divinity than Jehovah does.[[135]](#footnote-135) A closer investigation, though, reveals that the Father was merely restoring to the Son the glory He emptied Himself of through His incarnation and death. Jesus Himself speaks of this in John 17:5: “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

Finally, since the main thrust of the context is imitating Jesus’ example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses inquire, “How can the Christian imitate Christ’s example of relinquishing divine glory?”[[136]](#footnote-136) We respond that our acts of humility are, of course, going to differ from the ones that Christ made. Still, the *principle* of humility is the same. Additionally, Paul employs here the “greater-lesser” argument. If Jesus displayed greater humility in divesting Himself of divine glory, then the believer, in imitation of the Savior, can forfeit lesser rights for the sake of others.

**Colossians 2:9**

Colossians 2:9 reads, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” Disciples of the Watchtower deny that this verse ascribes full deity to Christ. They note that in the parallel verse, Colossians 1:19, we read, “It was the {Father's} good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.” Therefore, they conclude that the Son received this “fullness” from the Father.[[137]](#footnote-137)

On the other hand, certain features of Colossians 2:9 convincingly demonstrate that Jesus is indeed God. First, the word “fullness,” i.е., πλήρωμα (*pleroma*), means “completeness.”[[138]](#footnote-138) Paul intensifies this meaning by repeating the same sense by adding the adjective “*all* the fullness.”[[139]](#footnote-139) This denotes that all that belongs to θεότης (*theotes*), that is, “Deity,” belongs to Christ with no exception. The term θεότης (*theotes*) is defined as the “nature or essence of deity, that which constitutes deity.”[[140]](#footnote-140)

It is also significant that Paul speaks of the “dwelling” of this fullness “bodily.” Douglas Moo sees in this a reference to the Old Testament temple, where God “dwelt” in a physical space.[[141]](#footnote-141) Now, though, He dwells in all His fullness in the person of Jesus Christ rather than in a building.

Examining the Greek original of Colossians 1:19, the parallel verse to Colossians 2:9, will prove insightful: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι. This differs from the rendering of the New World Translation: “…because God was pleased to have all fullness to dwell in him.” In the original, we note the absence of the word θεός (*theos*), i.e, “God.” If the phrase πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα, “all the fullness,” is in the nominative case, then it is the subject of the sentence. The translation would then be, “It was the good pleasure of all the fullness to dwell in Him.”

However, if the phrase πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα, “all the fullness,” is in the accusative case (identical in form to the nominative), it would serve as the subject for the infinitive κατοικῆσαι (*katoikesai*), i.e, “to dwell.” The translation would then be, “It was the good pleasure (of the Father) that all the fullness should dwell in Him. Certain features indicate that “God” is indeed the implied subject of the verb εὐδόκησεν (*eudokesen*), i.e., “was the good pleasure.” First, the verb εὐδόκησεν (*eudokesen*) is often used in the Old Testament in relation to God.[[142]](#footnote-142) Second, the implied subject for the verbs in the next verse (“reconcile” and “made peace”), which is a continuation of the same sentence, is the Father.

In an attempt to give equal weight to the terms “God” and “all the fullness,” some translators render the verse as follows: “The fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Him,” or, “It was well pleasing that God, in His fullness, should dwell in Him.[[143]](#footnote-143) Neither of these translations contradict the claim of Christ’s full deity.

**Titus 2:13**

A key text in the study of Jesus’ deity is Titus 2:13, where we read, ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “…looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” According to this translation, our “great God and Savior” is the person of Jesus Christ. The New World Translation, however, renders it differently: “…while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” They claim that two individuals are in view: God the Father and Jesus the Savior.

The Jehovah’s Witness support this contention by citing two other texts containing a similar grammatical construction, where two individuals are clearly indicated:[[144]](#footnote-144)

- Tit 1:4 – χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

- 2 Thes 1:12 –κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “…the grace of our God and {the} Lord Jesus Christ.”

To properly translate our passage, we must appeal to a well-accepted rule of Greek grammar, the “Granville Sharp Rule.” It states that when two nouns are connected by the conjunction καί (*kai*), i.e., “and,” and only the first noun has the definite article, then both nouns refer to the same object or person. In line with this rule, the phrase τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν (“our great God and Savoir”) refers to one Person – Jesus Christ.

This rule holds, however, only under the following conditions. Frist, both nouns must describe an animate object. Second, both nouns must be in the singular person. Third, neither noun can be a personal name.[[145]](#footnote-145) Titus 2:13 meets all these requirements. Therefore, the verse teaches that Jesus Christ is God.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Other arguments support this thesis. In the New Testament, the word ἐπιφάνεια (*epiphaneia*), “appearing,” is always used in connection with Jesus.[[147]](#footnote-147) In addition, the next verse begins with the singular relative pronoun ὁς (*hos*), i.e., “who,” which refers to one individual – “our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”[[148]](#footnote-148) Moreover, when Paul refers to the Father and Son together in one verse, he is always careful to distinguish them from one another.[[149]](#footnote-149)

Titus 1:4, cited by the Jehovah’s Witnesses above, does not meet the criteria for the Granville Sharp Rule. First, the second element in a personal name – Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (“Christ Jesus”). Second, the article is absent before the first element, i.e. θεοῦ (“God”). Furthermore, placing the title “Savior” with the Greek article after the name “Christ Jesus” unmistakably distinguishes Him from God the Father. Two individuals are clearly in view.

The passage in 2 Thessalonians 1:12 is more problematic. The verse meets all the conditions of the Granville Sharp Rule, but the text is usually understood to refer to God the Father and Jesus Christ separately. Wanamaker explains this as an exception.[[150]](#footnote-150) In the writings of Paul, we often encounter the phrase ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ, “the grace of God.” This is a standard formula for Paul.[[151]](#footnote-151) Furthermore, Paul often uses the formula κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “the Lord Jesus Christ” as well without the article before the word κυρίου (“Lord”).[[152]](#footnote-152) It is assumed that when Paul created this sentence, he combined these formulas together without considering that omitting the second article creates the impression that only one Person is in view.

**Son of Man**

Is it true that Jesus’ designation as the “Son of Man” excludes Him from being God?[[153]](#footnote-153) We will briefly review the material covered in chapter 9 in this regard.

The Old Testament testifies of a heavenly Son of Man who was to become a great king (Dan 7:13-14; Ps 80:17). In addition, the intertestamental books of *Enoch* and *4 Ezra* speak of a supernatural Son of Man, whom people in the time of Jesus expected to appear.

Jesus showed no hesitation in identifying Himself with the heavenly Son of Man who was to become the great coming King:

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed {One?}” And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” (Mk 14:61-64).

Liberals, holding that Jesus is not God, but a mere human, claim that He never spoke of Himself as this heavenly king, but that the Early Church invented this dialogue. It is important to note that in the Gospels, this title appears 85 times, usually as the words of Jesus. However, we rarely see the title “Son of Man” outside of the Gospels: only in Acts 7:56, Rev 1:13, and Rev 14:14.[[154]](#footnote-154) Therefore, little evidence exists that the Early Church used this title in reference to Jesus Christ, otherwise it would have appeared in the epistles as well. This self-designation originated with the Lord Himself, who did indeed consider Himself the heavenly king of Daniel’s vision.

**Colossians 1:16**

The New World Translation gives Colossians 1:16 a unique rendering: “…because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible” (Col 1:16). By inserting the word “other,” the Jehovah’s Witnesses hope to demonstrate that God’s Son was created first, then all “other” things were created. However, the word “other” is absent in the original Greek text: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. The Jehovah’s Witnesses seek to justify this insertion by comparison with the following texts where the word “other” is implied from context:[[155]](#footnote-155)

- In reply he said to them: “Do you think that those Gal·i·leʹans were worse sinners than all other Gal·i·leʹans because they have suffered these things?” (Lk 13:2 – NWT).

- With that he told them an illustration: “Notice the fig tree and all the other trees (Lk 21:29 - NWT).

- For all the others are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:21 - NWT).

However, in the above-cited examples, the idea of “other” is clearly implied by context and introduces no novelty into the text. In Colossians 1:16, though, the context does not force this assumption, and this insertion introduces a totally new idea into the context – that the Son created only “other things,” an idea which is lacking in other passages about the Son’s participation in creation (see Jn 1:1-3, 10; Heb 1:2). The Jehovah’s Witnesses purposely changed the text in order to support their doctrine.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses also object that this text does not say that the Son created all things, but that all things were created “through” Him.[[156]](#footnote-156) The Bible usually does, in fact, so describe the Son’s participation in creation (see Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16b). The beginning of Colossians 1:16, however, reads ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα (“all things were crated by/in Him”). The phrase ἐν αὐτῷ (*en auto*) could be translated “by Him” or “in Him.” In addition, seeing that the Old Testament ascribes creation exclusively to God (see Isa 44:24; 48:13; 40:28; Neh 9:6), it follows that the Son’s participation in the creative act confirms his divine status.

**Proverbs 8:22**

Some equate God’s wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8 with Christ the Lord. In Proverbs 8:22, we read about Wisdom: “Yahweh possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.” The word “possessed” in the Septuagint is the term κτίξω (*ktidzo*), which means “to create.” If God’s wisdom is identified with Jesus, then did the Father create Him?

On the other hand, can we with full confidence apply all aspects of God’s wisdom described in Proverbs chapter 8 to the person of Christ when other passages clearly declare His full deity? We need also consider that the Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew text, and that the latter is generally considered more reliable. The Hebrew has the verb קָנָן (*kanan*), which simply means, “to obtain.”[[157]](#footnote-157)

**Son of God**

Some interpret the title “Son of God” as a denial of Christ’s full deity. The idea of His “sonship” suggests an inferior status to the Father. The Scriptures call Him the “Son of God,” not “God the Son” (e.g. Matt 16:16-17; Lk 1:35; Jn 3:16; etc.).[[158]](#footnote-158) Not only is Jesus called the Son of God, but angels (Job 1:6) and Adam (Lk 3:38) bear that title as well.[[159]](#footnote-159)

These claims are refuted by the clear evidence we presented in chapter 9 on the deity of Jesus Christ. There, we demonstrated that Jesus employed the title “Son of God” in relation to Himself in a divine sense. Let us review the instances when Jesus gave a precise definition of this title.

In Mark 14:36, Jesus called God “Abba.” This Aramaic term expresses an intimate relationship between father and child, such as “Daddy.” The Jews addressed their rabbis with this term, but never God. Therefore, in using this word Jesus revealed His intimate connection with the Father. We noted earlier that Jesus’ claim to possess what God possesses: “All things that the Father has are Mine” (Jn 16:15; сf. Jn 17:10). The Father “loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (Jn 3:35). Additionally, along with the Father, the Son is the source of eternal life (Jn 17:3).

Jesus also claimed to have enjoyed the glory of God before the world was made (Jn 17:1, 5). In addition, He asserts to know the Father better than anyone and to have received revelation from Him: “…nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal {Him}” (Matt 11:27). He is one with God (Jn 17:22) to the degree that He can say, “You, Father, {are} in Me and I in You” (Jn 17:21). We also recall that Jesus called Himself μονογενής (*monogenes*), i.е., “only begotten,” thereby underscoring His unique relationship with the Father (Jn 3:16, 18).

Furthermore, Jesus showed that His relationship with God differed from that of other Jews, even claiming that the father of some of them was the devil (Jn 8:41-44). His relationship with the Father differed from that of His disciples as well. After His resurrection, He instructed Mary: “Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’” (Jn 20:17). Note that he said, “My Father and your Father, and My God and your God,” and not, “our Father and our God.” The disciples also had God as their Father, but not in the same sense that Jesus did.

Christ is μονογενής (*monogenes*), i.е., the only begotten, eternal Son of God. Only He came down from heaven, where He abode with the Father in heavenly glory. Only He possesses what God possesses. He is God Himself in the flesh. Clearly, his opponents understood that Jesus’ claim to Sonship made Him equal with God. They understood that He did not consider Himself merely the Son of God in the sense of Messiah. They perceived His pretension of deity. Consequently, they sought to kill Him as a blasphemer (Jn 10:24-33; Jn 5:18).

**1 Corinthians 11:3**

In this verse, Paul describes a hierarchical system established by God: “Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” Since God is the “head” of Christ, is the latter somehow inferior to the former?

Earlier we have shown that the Son voluntarily submits Himself to the Father. This principle applies to this text as well. The headship of the Father in no way minimizes the divine character of the Son or justifies the pretension that Christ is a “second-class” god. Duncan correctly points out that the headship of the husband over the wife does not suggest that the wife is not also a human being. She is a full-fledged human who voluntarily submits to her husband. The same idea applies to Jesus Christ. He is fully God and voluntarily submits to the Father’s will.[[160]](#footnote-160)

**Hebrews 2:9**

In Hebrews 2:9, we read that Jesus “was made a little lower than the angels” (NIV). Does this contradict His claim to deity? God is not lower than angels.[[161]](#footnote-161) We respond that the text is referring to the incarnation of Son of God (see v. 10-18). In His human condition, He could occupy that lower place. At the same time, as God He is higher than the angels and is worthy of their worship (chp. 1). In addition, it is written that he “was *made* a little lower than the angels.” This implies that before His incarnation, He occupied a position higher than the angels, namely, the place of Deity.

**1 Timothy 2:5**

According to 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God, {and} one mediator also between God and men, {the} man Christ Jesus.” Does this mean that Jesus Christ is merely a man, and not God?[[162]](#footnote-162)

This verse does not deny the deity of Christ. In fact, if Jesus can serve as a mediator between God and humans, this implies that He has commonality with both sides. As the “God-man,” He makes the perfect mediator. Lea and Griffin concur, “As the God-Man, Christ is uniquely qualified to serve as a go-between who can bring sinful people into God’s family.”[[163]](#footnote-163)

Why, then, does this verse speak of Jesus only as a man, and not also as God? First, in many of his epistles Paul emphasizes Jesus in the role of the “Second Adam” (see Rom chp. 5, 1 Cor 15:22). In so doing, he stresses the Son’s role in people’s redemption (сf. 1 Tim 2:4). For this purpose, Paul focuses on Christ’s humanity.[[164]](#footnote-164) Knight writes, “The humanity of the mediator is specified to emphasize his identity with those whom he represents as mediator.”[[165]](#footnote-165)

Accordingly, as Mounce notes, the word ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*), i.e., “man,” is anarthrous, which indicates that Christ shares the “quality” of humanity. In addition, Mounce comments that the word ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*) is repeated five times in this context. In this way, Paul again emphasized Jesus’ role in the plan of salvation to save ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*), i.e., “people.”[[166]](#footnote-166)

We recognize that the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not object to calling Jesus the “god-man,” since they acknowledge Him as “god” in a lesser sense than Jehovah. Yet, this passage does not comment on how Christ became the “God-man.” It nowhere indicates that Jesus was not God from the beginning, or that He “became” god. Therefore, one cannot use 1 Timothy 2:5 as proof for the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ position.

**God’s Eternal Nature**

Followers of the Watchtower claim that only Jehovah is eternal. Only He exists “from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps 90:2; сf. Jer 10:10; Isa 40:28; 1 Tim 1:17).[[167]](#footnote-167) On the other hand, Hebrews 13:8 teaches, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.” He existed “in the beginning” (Jn 1:1; 1 Jn 1:1) and “before all things (Col 1:17). Jesus is the “Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 22:13). Finally, according to Hebrews 7:3, the Son of God has “neither beginning of days nor end of life.”[[168]](#footnote-168)

**Mark 10:18**

In response to a person calling Him “good,” Jesus said, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mk 10:18, parallel in Lk 18:19). Yet, here Jesus did not deny neither that He is good, nor that He is God. He simply stated that only God was good. Other passages of Scripture confirm that Jesus was indeed good.[[169]](#footnote-169) Thus, in this saying Jesus was covertly affirming His deity.

**Christ as an Archangel**

Finally, Jehovah’s Witnesses claim, “The Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God.”[[170]](#footnote-170) They advance the following points in support.[[171]](#footnote-171)

First, the word “archangel” is always in the singular number, which shows that there is only one of them. Second, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, we read about Jesus, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel and with the trumpet of God.” It is observed that the Lord descends “with the voice of {the} archangel.” Supposedly, His voice is the voice of the archangel. Third, the Archangel Michael arises at the time of the Great Tribulation (Dan 12:1), which allegedly corresponds to the Second Coming of Christ (Matt 24:30-31). Furthermore, Michael and Jesus are linked in that they both direct the armies of heaven, that is, other angels (see Rev 12:7; Matt 13:41). In addition, both Michael and Jesus are called “princes” (Dan 10:13; Isa 9:6) and both fight against the Devil (Rev 12:7-8; 1 Jn 3:8).

A closer study of Scripture, however, defeats these arguments.[[172]](#footnote-172) First, Michael is “one of the chief princes” (Dan 10:13), which means he is not the only one in his position. Second, Hebrews chapter 1 clearly teaches that Jesus is superior to all the angels, and that they worship Him. If Jesus is only an angel, it is forbidden to worship Him (see Rev 22:8-9). In addition, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 does not say that the “voice of the archangel” belongs to the Son of God, only that the archangel’s voice accompanies His Second Coming. Matthew 24:31 testifies that angels will accompany Christ at His return: “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” This verse also mentions the “great trumpet,” which further connects it with 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

1. Geisler N. L. Christian Apologetics. –Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976. – P. 336ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., p. 340, 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., p. 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. From Morey R. A. How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness. – Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1980. – P. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Julias S. J. Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament. –Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 309-318; Nickelsburg W.E. Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins. – Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003. – P. 19-20, 97-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See *1 Macc.,* 14.41; *Testimony of Levi,* 8.14-15; Philo, *Special Laws*, 1.11; *4QTest*; *1QS* 9.11; *Sirach,* 48.1-11; *Dialogue with Trypho*, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Julias, p. 311. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., p. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For example, the “sacrifice” of Isaac and the martyrdom of the seven brothers in 4 Maccabees supposedly have redemptive value (noted in Moeller H. R. The Legacy of Zion. –Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977. – P. 205). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mitchell D. C. The Naked Bible podcast 386 – (https://nakedbiblepodcast.com) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mitchell D. C. A Dying and Rising Josephite Messiah in 4Q372 // Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Vol 18.3. 2009. P. 199-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Suggested by Nathal Riehl. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Erickson M. J. Christian Theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983. – V. 2 – P. 684ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In Acts 3:15, Christ is the “Prince of life.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Geisler, p. 333-334. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. McDowell J. Evidence That Demands a Verdict. – Rev. ed. – San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1979. – P. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Geisler, p. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid., p. 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. McDowell, p. 89-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. This idea is defended in chapter 13 of volume 2 in this series. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Lewis C. S. Mere Christianity. – New York: MacMillan, 1952. – P. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. It is significant that in the Gospel of John, Jesus miracles are often called “sings,” because they served as indicators of His messianic and divine status (see Jn 2:11; 3:1-2; 10:25; 10:37-38; 14:11). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. From Morey R. A. How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness. – Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1980. – P.95. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Wallace D. B. Greek Grammar beyond the Basics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. – P. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid., p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Dunn J. D. G. The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text // New International Greek Testament Commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996. – P. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Moo D. J. The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon // The Pillar New Testament Commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008. – P. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Dunn, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Moo, p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Louw J. P., Nida E. A. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains. – 2nd ed. – New York: United Bible Societies, 1989. – P. 586. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 480-481. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., p. 133-134. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., p. 847. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Wallace, p. 270-273. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Knight G. W. The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text // New International Greek Testament Commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992. – P. 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Philemon 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 2:16; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 1:2; Phileom 3; Rom 1:7; Eph 1:2; 2 Jn 1, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Metzger B. M. A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. – London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994. – P. 573-574. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. McGrath A. E. Christian Theology: An Introduction. – 4th ed. – Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011. – P. 287-289. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Some feel that Nestorius’ opponents exaggerated His position. Nestorius once wrote, “Christ is indivisible in that he is Christ, but he is twofold in that which takes and that which is taken…. For we do not acknowledge two Christs or two sons or ‘only-begottens’ or Lords; not one son and another son, not a first ‘only-begotten’ and a new ‘only-begotten,’ not a first and second Christ, but one and the same (Noted in McGrath A. E. Historical Theology. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. – P. 57). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Lane, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Sykes S. Friedrich Schleiermacher / Nineham D. E. Robertson E. H. Makers of Contemporary Theology. – Richmond VA: John Knox, 1965. – P. 34-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid., p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. We cannot rule out that in these verses, Jesus was not talking about Himself, but about the Father. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. BDAG, p. 539-540. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Some say that the Son did not empty Himself of His divine attributes, but simply did not employ them. This view is closer to the traditional view (see Boyd G. A., Eddy P. R. Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. – P. 110). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Noted in Boyd, p. 102-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Matt 12:18; Lk 4:1, 14, 17-21; Jn 5:19, 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Boyd, p. 103-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See Jn 1:47-50; 2:24-25; 13:18-19; Matt 9:4; Lk 22:31-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Boyd, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Jacob W. Christianity through Jewish Eyes. – Hebrew Union College Press, 1974. – P. 191-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. History taken from Martin W. R., Klann N. H. Jehovah of the Watch Tower. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953. – P. 11-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See Reasoning from the Scriptures. – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989. – P. 209-211; Make Sure of All Things, Hold Fast to What is Fine. – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1965. P. 254-255; Duncan H. Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Deity of Christ. – Lubbock, TX: Missionary Crusade. P. 17; McKinney G. D. The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962. – 125 p.; What Does the Bible Really Teach? – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005. – P. 220-224; http://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/wp20110401/jesus-where-he-came-from; http://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings; Schnell W. J. Into the Light of Christianity: The Basic Doctrines of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Light of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1962. P. 155, 165, 174-175; Rutherfield J. F. Millions Now Living Will Never Die. – Brooklyn, NY: International Bible Students Association, 1920. – P. 73; Martin W. R., Klann N. H. Jehovah of the Watch Tower. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953. – P. 29, 88-92; The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived. – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1991. – P. 10, 42-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Colwell E. C. A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament // Journal of Biblical Literature. 1933. 52. P. 12-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Colwell excluded instances in conditional sentences, proper names, and simple sentences such as “God is love.” [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Wallace D. B. Greek Grammar beyond the Basics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. – P. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See Matt 16:16; 26:63; Mk 3:11; 15:39; Lk 4:11; 22:70; Jn 1:39, 49; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20; 1 Jn 4:15; 5:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See Matt 4:3, 6; 14:33; 27:40, 54; Lk 4:3, 9; Mk 15:39; Jn 10:36. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. In the following passages, the predicate nominative ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, “the King of the Jews,” follows the verb and has the article: Matt 27:11, 37; Mk 15:2; Lk 23:3, 37; Jn 18:33. In Мatthew 27:42, the predicate nominative “King of Israel” precedes the verb and lacks the article: βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ ἐστιν, “He is the King of Israel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Similar features in Matthew 23:8-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Harner P. B. Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1. // Journal of Biblical Literature. 92. 1973. P. 75–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. In Acts 17:27 and Titus 1:9, this word is found only in a textual variant (Arndt W., Gingrich F. W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979. – P. 446). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Wallace, p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1971. – P. 1362. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Wallace, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Wallace, p. 262. Wallace could only locate four specific examples of an indefinite predicate nominative in that position: 1 Tim 6:10; Jn 6:70: 4:19; Didache 11:8 (p. 265-267). The Jehovah’s Witnesses propose other instances, but they do not qualify: John 6:70; 9:24-25:12:6 better fit in the category of “quality,” and John 10:33 does not contain the verb εἰμί (*eimi*), but its corresponding participle ὥν (*hon*) (see New World Translation, p. 1363). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Wallace, p. 269-270. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., p. 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Орест Б. Учение свидетелей Иеговы об Иисусе Христе // Курсовая работа, Киев: Евангельская теологическая семинария, 2013; Schnell, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Wallace D. B. Greek Grammar beyond the Basics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. – P. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 213; Let God Be True. – 2nd ed. – Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1952; What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. New World Translation, p. 1121. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid., p. 1121. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Duncan, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Martin, p. 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Make Sure of All Things, p. 487; Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 424; Let God Be True, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Duncan, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Noted in Schnell, p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Warfield, B. B. The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 1: Revelation and Inspiration. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. – P. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. From the book, *The Word Who is He, According to John*, noted in Duncan, p. 32-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Make Sure of All Things, p. 485-486; Reasoning from the Scriptures? p. 410-411; Jesus Christ. Our Questions Answered // The Watchtower. 2012. April 1. P. 4-7; A Conversation with a neighbor. Is Jesus God? // The Watchtower. 2012. April 1. P. 20-22; The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived? p. 11-12; What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Carson D. A. The Gospel according to John // The Pillar New Testament Commentary. –Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W. B. Eerdmans, 1991. – P. 508. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. The New World Translation varies a bit: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Make Sure of All Things, p. 485; What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. The New World Translation incorrectly translates ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ by the phrase “through His Son Jesus Christ.” [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Duncan, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Martin, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Make Sure of All Things, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Morey R. A. How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness. – Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1980. – P. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Schnell, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Make Sure of All Things, p. 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ibid., p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Noted in Martin, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. The New World Translation errantly translates this verse: “But when he again brings his Firstborn into the inhabited earth.” [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Make Sure of All Things, p. 485; Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Carson D. A. Editor’s Preface in The First Letter to the Corinthians // The Pillar New Testament Commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010. – P. 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
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110. Ibid., p. 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid., p. 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Beale G. K. The Вook of Revelation: A Сommentary on the Greek Тext // New International Greek Testament Commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999. – P. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Make Sure of All Things, p. 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Duncan, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Noted in Martin, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Morey, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 442. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. The author of Hebrews quotes the Septuagint: ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος. However, the Hebrew text does not differ. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Morey, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
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127. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 419. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Morris L. The Epistle to the Romans. – The Pillar New Testament Commentary // Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. – P. 350; Dunn J. D. G. Romans 9–16 // Word Biblical Commentary. – Dallas: Word, 1998. – P. 528-529. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
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131. Morris, p. 350; Dunn, Romans, p. 528-529. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Morris thinks the conventional translation fits the context better, but Dunn thinks the opposite. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Let God Be True, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Arndt, et. al., p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Let God Be True, p. 40; http://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
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140. Dunn, Colossians, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Moo, с. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Dunn, Colossians, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Dunn, Colossians, p. 101; Moo, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
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149. See Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Philemon 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
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151. See Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 6:1, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
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153. Jesus Christ. Our Questions Answered, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. See Mk 14:62; Mk 8:38; 13:26; Matt 10:23; 19:28; 25:31; Lk 17:22-30; 18:8; Jn 3:13; 5:27; 6:62. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 408. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Make Sure of All Things, p. 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Make Sure of All Things, p. 238, 255, 486. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Duncan, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
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164. Ibid., p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
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166. Mounce W. D. Pastoral Epistles // Word Biblical Commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 2000. – P. 88-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
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168. Schnell, p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. See 1 Jn 2:1; 3:5; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 1 Pet 2:22; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; Jn 8:29, 46; 15:10; Mk 14:55-56; Lk 23:4, 41, 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Make Sure of All Things, p. 288; Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 218; What Does the Bible Really Teach?, p. 218-219. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Taken from Орест. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)