

CONCERNING CHURCH AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING

HOW CAN TIMING AND EDUCATION CHANNEL GOD'S REVELATION?

WHAT INSIGHT CAN BE GAINED CONCERNING PROOF VERSES TRUST?

BY Garth Wardrop

734 East Mountain Street Apartment 12

Pasadena, CA 91104

May 26, 1982

The Subject At Hand

Teachings which are intended to be based upon the Bible are the subject of this paper. People may intend to adhere to what the Bible says, but intentions by themselves are insufficient. How can anyone understand the Bible without the guidance of someone else (Acts 8:30-31)?

The ways in which a number of church and Jehovah's Witnesses teachings differ from one another help to demonstrate the following. (1.) Circumstances at the beginning of an evangelizing work heavily influence how those of that work interpret the Bible (whether accurately or inaccurately). Timing is important (Dan. 12:4,9). Religious educational environment is important (Acts 8:30-31, See Mr. Armstrong's article on the beginning of the present work in the December 1978 Plain Truth). (2.) Some insight into the dilemma of "proving all things" verses "trust" will be demonstrated. and (3.) The Father's role in drawing people to Christ will be better understood, because of the difficulty of individuals to identify the work which is really of God.

The history of various teachings may shed more light upon their accuracy than clever arguments of the present day which would have accounted for loopholes in their arguments. Jehovah's Witnesses may not be unreasonable in identifying Michael and the Christ as the same individual. Evidence of this teaching in the second century A.D. sheds more light upon it.

Teachings concerning Christ among Jehovah's Witnesses beyond this are found among past Unitarians and Christadelphians. Unitarianism began in Hungary in 1568, and spread to England in 1773. The New Testament done by a Unitarian Society in London in 1808 is valuable evidence paving the way for Jehovah's Witnesses interpretation of John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:8. Their insistence that Jesus did not exist from eternity made their discussion concerning Hebrews 7:3 (the origin of Malchizedek) of value. Benjamin Wilson drew upon some of these Unitarian teachings, as his footnote on Hebrews 7:3 in The Emphatic Diaglott shows. Wilson was a Christadelphian, a "sect" otherwise called "brothers of Christ." In the book, Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers, Jehovah's Witnesses note the unscriptural beliefs of Unitarianism (Page 354), and they identify the Christadelphians as a sect (Page 346) defining a sect as "a religious organization of persons who follow a particular creature in their belief and practice a specific religion based on the traditions of men," (Page 345).

Unconverted people may be the guardians of important truth. Evidence concerning Joseph's birthright and the chaos and confusion of the earth just before the six-day renewing of the earth was popularized among independent protestants in the 19th century. (See The Encyclopedia of American Religions, Volume 1, Pages 417-452, The Emphasized Bible by Rotherham, Page 33, Footnote E, etc).

The authority of any Bible teaching is enhanced when it is known to exist among converted people of the past. The Waldenses are embraced as brethren by individuals among the Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Worldwide Church of God, and others. I don't present evidence concerning the Waldenses here, but it raises the question as to whose teachings most resemble those of Waldo's disciples. Teachings concerning Daniel and Revelation in the Church of God, Seventh Day shed valuable light upon Mr. Armstrong's studies however. History in this way sheds much light upon what is really needed in the full understanding of God's revelation.

1. The Past Eternity of Christ

Was God, the Father, living at a time when no other recorded being had yet existed? Jehovah, the Father, alone is from eternity, according to Jehovah's witnesses. They did not invent this teaching. They reasonably insist that the King James Bible incorrectly says in Micah 5:2 that the origin of the one to be born in Bethlehem is from "everlasting." John 1:1 specifies by itself nothing about past eternity. They correctly insist that when Colosians 1:15 refers to Christ as "the firstborn", it is not a provable reference to Christ's resurrection but it refers to Christ's relationship to all of creation.

Hebrews 7:3 says that Melchizedek "is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but like the Son of God He continues a priest forever." Check here the footnote on this verse in The Emphatic Diaglott by Benjamin Wilson. It, along with the Holy Name Bible agrees more with Jehovah's witnesses that Melchizedek was without recorded genealogy and has neither recorded beginning of days nor end of life. This view may be incorrect, but Matthew 1:17 shows that it is not unreasonable. In Matthew 1:17, Matthew says that there are 14 generations from David to the exile when in fact Matthew is referring to 14 generations as he has recorded them for a particular purpose. Hebrews 7:3 is too detailed in its wording, however, to suggest that more words need to be added to make it clear. Melchizedek simply has neither parentes nor any beginning of life.

If Melchizedek was made "like a son of God," does that mean that the son of God was a different individual from Melchizedek? The answer is found in Revelation 1:13. Jesus here is described as "one like a son of man." Jesus was often called "son of man," as well as "son of God," so that in Hebrews 7:3, while Melchizedek was "made like the son of God," other evidence actually is necessary to clarify whether or not Melchizedek was the Christ.

Jehovah's witnesses claim that the Bible teaches that Christ was created and not from past eternity, but that he did exist "as the first of Jehovah's created works." Knowledge of Hebrew and Greek is not much help on this point. The way in which people ~~are~~ from ancient times have compared Scriptures has shaped doctrinal thinking. The average person among Jehovah's witnesses is like most church members who don't think through the facts behind what they are taught. According to Jehovah's witnesses, Charles Russell, the 19th-century organizer of Jehovah's witnesses, made a careful and unbiased study into God's Word. Of course, Herbert Armstrong did the same. The reason why they came to different conclusions is found in Acts 8:31. The Acts records ~~how~~ the fact that the Ethiopian eunuch knew that he, by himself, could not understand the Bible. Not only that, God was not going to reveal his Word through his Spirit alone. A man of God was brought into the act.

You can know more fully the job God has given converted men to do in passing on God's precepts to us. Mr. Russell and Mr. Armstrong were not introduced to the Bible in the same religious environment. They could never have come to precisely the same conclusions as a result. Now let's understand in this light the view that Christ was created.

First, the evidence concerning Colosians 1:15. Paul was not addressing whether or not Christ was ever created. He referred to Christ as the "firstborn" and justified his statement in verse 17 by saying that Christ is before all things. In other words, he makes it plain that all creation has occurred while Jesus has been alive, but he is discussing the importance and majesty of Christ and not anything about Christ's past eternity.

Jehovah's witnesses teach that just as a firstborn ~~is~~ is the ~~ix~~ first of his generation brought into the world, so Jesus as firstborn was created as "the beginning of creation" as it is termed in Revelation 3:14. The urgent need to believe this came through Charles Russell's influence. In the 19th century, Russell was appalled by the ~~ix~~ disgusting creed-laden rhetoric of mainstream Christianity. The fate of Biblical doctrine in traditional Christianity was greatly influenced by events of the Nicene council in 325 A.D.

A certain elder named Arius had reacted vigorously to the possible attempts of the Bishop Alexander to display his knowledge. Bishop Alexander taught concerning the unity in the Father, Son, and Spirit, and Arius associated the Bishop's teachings with those of Sabellius some fifty years earlier. More about him later. In reaction to the bishop's teaching, Arius insisted that Jesus was a totally different individual from the Father and that only the Father could be accurately referred to as "God."

Arius swallowed hook, line, and sinker, an old teaching that the Father begot Jesus before the world was created. Arius then reasoned that if the Father begot the son, then the son must not have previously ~~ix~~ existed. See A Historical View of the Council of Nice by Isaac Boyle Pages 6-7. This valuable book is part of a two books in one publication in paperback put out by Baker books. It also contains Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History translated by Christian Frederick Cruse.

This false teaching about the begetting of Christ ruled out any possibility of either Arius or the other bishops from teaching the truth about Christ. Justin the Martyr quoted Psalms 110:3 in the Septuagint only fifty years after the New Testament was finished as evidence of this ancient misunderstanding. Both Arius and his accusers believed it. It guaranteed that the great controversy that so dramatically has affected mainstream Christianity has been ~~ix~~ ~~ix~~ far removed from the Bible teaching.

The stand Arius took against mainstream Catholicism concerning Christ has made him a hero in the eyes of Jehovah's witnesses, and Arius was far from alone in his anticatholic views. Most Jewish-Christians saw Godship as primarily vested in the Father. In fact, many Jewish Christians identified Christ's begetting with his anointing at the time of his baptism. This view of Christ is commonly known as "adoptionist Christianity." The Key of Truth is the manual of the Paulicians of Armenia which reflects adoptionist views possibly influenced by the traditions reflected in the "Shepherd of Hermas" which I am discussing later.

The view that only the Father is properly identified as "God," is called unitarianism. Unitarians and sabbath keepers were persecuted by the establishment with equal impunity. In 1689, the British Bill of Rights was adopted and with it freedom of press and related toleration legislation for religious freedom. However, Catholics and Unitarians were not ~~xxxxxxx~~ given the toleration extended to other British worshippers.

Unitarianism must have seemed to be a logical alternative to the mainstream beliefs which right or wrong were lost in ancient creeds, foreign mysticism, and Greek philosophy. Scholars thought they were really enlightened to uncover fragments of ancient Jewish-Christianity which brought a vague picture of the life of the people of Christ's day into Biblical interpretation.

In around 1790, Gilbert Wakefield was working on a translation of the Bible, and a society of Unitarians in London carried on his work after his untimely death. They wanted to complete his translation work, but Wakefield's work was too incomplete to be useful for this. They decided instead to revise a translation done by the head of the Irish church, Archbishop Newcome. The Archbishop himself was not a Unitarian as far as I know. He (interestingly) held the office once held by the famous expert on chronology, Archbishop Ussher about whom I discuss later, because of his influence upon Jehovah's witnesses and upon Dr. Hoeh's earlier work.

Wakefield taught that Melchizedek was without recorded genealogy as Hebrews 7:3 of the revision of Newcome's translation records. The London society completed the first edition of their revision of Newcome's translation in 1808. The fourth edition done in 1817 is in the Ambassador-college library and I have a photostated copy.

In 1864, Wilson published his interlinear New Testament, The Emphatic Diaglott which like the London society before him draws upon Wakefield's views in Hebrews 7:3. Wilson's rendering of John 1:1 and of Hebrews 1:8 also echos the work of the work done in London. That's not all. The interlinear done by Wilson uses the Greek text of Grisbach which was used by Newcome much to the pleasure of the London Unitarians.

Where do you think I first heard of Newcome's translation from? I read of the revision on the translation first in the appendix on John 1:1 in Jehovah's witnesses' Bible. This Unitarian New Testament is heavily footnoted and provides valuable and detailed doctrinal studies of the unitarians of its day.

The notes on John 1:14 thereabout shows that as "begotten" Son, Christ was understood to be the "beloved" Son. They rejected the view that Christ was begotten before all worlds.

The note on Colosians 1:15 shows that as firstborn, the resurrection is meant, not only in verse 15 but of course in verse 18 where it is ~~xxxxx~~ obvious. They rejected the view which I ~~xxx~~ mentioned earlier that Christ was the firstborn in anyway at the beginning of original creation.

The London unitarians demonstrated that rejected the ancient misconception concerning Jesus's begetting was not enough for restoring God's truth. Likewise, rejecting mainstream Christianity was not enough for Charles Russell in the 1870's when his studies planted the organization we know of today as Jehovah's witnesses. Now that the received text was under fire, vigorous life was being injected into the unitarian beliefs, and fresh attempts by modern historians to uncover the facts concerning the apostles only served to discredit more and more of mainstream Christianity.

Herbert Armstrong saw through the matter concerning Christ's begetting. He concluded that as the only begotten Son, Christ had been conceived in Mary's womb. Mr. Armstrong encountered an unusual situation among the sabbath keepers of the Church of God Seventh Day. These sabbath keepers are not Unitarians, because they refer to Christ as "God," and they reject the Trinity doctrine, because like Jehovah's witnesses, they regard the Holy Spirit as God's power and not as a third person who exists alongside the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, whenever I have heard any of Jehovah's witnesses discuss the question, I have been made aware only of unitarian teaching and the trinity doctrine.

2. The Divinity of the Logos

Jehovah's witnesses have been criticized for translating John 1:1, "The Word was with God. And the word was a god." They refer to the word before he became flesh as "a god." Archbishop Newcome translated the passage, "the Word was God," as do most English translations. The Unitarian revision, however, translates this "The word was a god," and Benjamin Wilson did likewise in his interlinear.

It just so happens that the unitarians did not see this as a reference to the pre-existent logos or word. They rejected the accounts of Christ's birth from a virgin's womb like so many Jewish Christians of old had done. Charles Russell and his disciples were more knowledgeable, however.

Again Russell was victimized by the limited evidence in the controversy between unitarians and trinitarians. The Trinitarians incorrectly said that Jesus was begotten before the world existed and is referred to as God the Son in John 1:1. The unitarians correctly insisted that Jesus was not identified with the use of a proper name in the Greek of John 1:1. Of course the unitarians before Russell's day rejected the accounts of Jesus's birth in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. So they took John 1:1 as a reference to Jesus's miraculous ministry. Russell believed the Biblical accounts of Jesus's birth, but he figured that Jesus was the first who Jehovah, the Father, created. No wonder a proper name was not used in the Greek at the conclusion of John 1:1. God was from eternity. Jesus, Russell reasoned, was creation's firstborn and not from etern

Herbert Armstrong's conclusion on the matter have an unrecognized safeguard. In pages 63-65 of The Incredible Human Potential, he noted that Jesus became the only begotten Son as a result of his being conceived in Mary's womb. He has repeatedly noted that "God" is a family name. God technically speaking became a real family when Jesus was begotten in Mary's womb. Before then, they are referred to as "elohim," which is a uniplural term just as a church, group, or family is uniplural. Mr. Armstrong has not addressed the question of the Greek of John 1:1.

The unitarians are evidently correct in rejecting the common rendering of John 1:1 which says that "the Word was God." However, they have incorrectly used this to prove that Jesus was not on the same level of divinity with the Father. The fact is that Jesus was not the Son of God before he became flesh, so that a proper name was not necessary in the last phrase of John 1:1. The Expanded Translation of the New Testament by Wuest as well as the New-English Bible alludes to this.

James Moffatt, Edgar Goodspeed, and Hugh Schonfield have translated the last phrase of John 1:1 by saying that the word or logos was divine. The unitarian influence upon these translators is unmistakable. In Romans 9:5 they write "God be blessed forever," instead of saying (as if it referred to Christ, "God, blessed forever." In Hebrews 1:8, they write concerning Christ's throne, for Christ is being addressed, "God is your throne," instead of "Thy throne O God." John 1:1, Romans 9:5, and Hebrews 1:8 are key test passages which show the viewpoint of the translator concerning the divinity of Jesus.

3. The Messengers Who Sinned (2 Peter 2:4)

Jehovah's witnesses are not unreasonable (even though they may be inaccurate) in concluding that the sons of God (Genesis 6:2,4) are the angelic messengers who sinned mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. This was a widespread teaching at the ~~the~~ time Jesus taught. The book of Enoch with words quoted in Jude 14-15 taught this. So did Philo and the book of Jubilees which predate Jesus of Nazareth, so that historians figure that 1 Peter 3:19-20, 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 echo this.

Herbert Armstrong concluded that the sons of God mentioned in Genesis 6 were of the house of Seth. Unfortunately, the ancient evidence connecting sons of God with people of Seth may only go back to the fourth century. However, the book of Jubilees of about 130 B.C. did record that Seth's descendents named among Noah's ancestors did avoid intermarriage with Cain's offspring. Luke 20:34-36 furthermore says that angels neither marry nor are given in marriage as if angels could not have taken wives on the earth as so many Jews believed. It taxes my patience to show both sides of the evidence here now that I have written all that I know in a correspondence concerning Problems of Bible Translation which I can make available.

Herbert Armstrong was made aware of two general teachings concerning Genesis 1:2. He concluded that long after the original ~~creation~~ creating of the heavens and earth, the earth became waste and empty. Charles Russell concluded that no such destruction occurred between the time in the very beginning and the time of the "six-day" creation. Mr. Armstrong concluded that the angelic messengers sinned before the six-day creation not in Noah's day. Charles Russell reasonably drew upon the most ancient Jewish evidence.

Who is correct? Unfortunately for those who need to be more careful in studying the matter, Isaiah 45:18 by itself does not prove anything either way. Isaiah 45:18 does prove that Jehovah's witnesses don't live up to the standards of consistency in their translation which is needed for such matters (See their publication All Scriptures Inspired and Beneficial beginning on page 326). Credit Joseph Rotherham in his Emphasized Bible for mentioning how Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 along with Genesis 1:2 are the only three places where the Hebrew words "tohu" and "vohu" are used. They refer to the results of destruction in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, favoring the conclusion that they refer to this as well in Genesis. This easily allows for the angelic sin to have been before Adam's lifetime and not afterward as Jehovah's witnesses say that it was.

4. Did the Logos Appear As Jehovah

In Psalms 110:1, the one who later became the Father is identified as Yahweh or Jehovah. The policy of Jehovah concerning the delegation of ~~his~~ His name is found in Exodus 23:20-21. He was sending an angel before the Israelites who would not pardon their transgressions, because, He insisted, "My name is in him." His name was often in the Logos. How is that?

Jesus told the Jews and John noted that no one had seen God the Father or ever heard His voice (John 1:18, 5:37). Nevertheless, the elders ~~and~~ along with Moses saw the God of Israel (Ex. 24:10). They did not see the Father, but they saw the one in whom Jehovah had placed His name. As a result, one identified as Yahweh or Jehovah (along with two others) appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:2). In this respect, Exodus 24:10 refers to someone other than the Father as the God of Israel. It should be noted that in Acts 5:30, the one who raised Jesus from the dead is referred to as the God of the fathers of the Jews, and the Father raised up Jesus. Therefore, the Father and His intermediary to the Israelites are referred to as God of prechristian Israel.

Who did the prechristian Israelites actually see if it was not the Father? Jehovah, a stone upon which Jews and Israelites stumble (Isaiah 8:13-15), is identified as the stone which the builders rejected (1 Peter 2:7-8) which is identified as the Christ (Matthew ~~22~~ 21:42-43). The rock identified Jehovah and the Logos as the same individual as long as the name of Jehovah was vested in the Logos.

Jehovah's witnesses are not unreasonable in rejecting the literal saying, "The rock was Christ," in 1 Cor. 10:4. After all, when we say concerning the body of Christ that the statement "this is my body" is figurative, we are referring to the same term "is" in the present tense which is translated "was" in its past tense in 1 Cor. 10:4. Jehovah's witnesses correctly translate the sense "This means my body" in the accounts of the passover, so in 1 Cor. 10:4 they translate Paul's words by saying, "The rock meant the Christ."

5. The Sabbath That Remains (Heb. 4:9)

In Genesis 2:3, Jehovah's witnesses take the Hebrew to be saying that God "has been resting" from His creative work. They insist that this sabbath rest in which Jehovah himself is setting the example is to last until Christ delivers up all things to the Father as detailed in 1 Cor. 15:28. They see the weekly sabbath as something never decreed until one month after the Exodus as described in Exodus 16.

Obviously, Jehovah's witnesses object to the common translation of Genesis 2:3 which says that God rested (not has been resting) from all his work. However, Hebrews 4:4 undoubtedly says that God rested on the seventh day from all His works.

Fenton's translation of Exodus 20:8-11 shows that Jehovah's witnesses' view on this matter was not unique to themselves. Fenton refers to the six days in which God did His work recorded in Genesis 1 as occurring during six ages. Six days the Israelites were to work and rest on the seventh, because in six ages God had created the heavens and earth and then He rested.

Jehovah's witnesses view the law which Jehovah decreed from the beginning (Matt. 19:8) as something not nailed to the cross. The sabbath which He hallowed at the time of Adam yet remains.

The injunction in 1 John 2:4 does not by itself refute Jehovah's witnesses' teaching concerning the sabbath. They ~~ex~~ attempt to enforce strictly the law of God as they understand it. They probably view the weekly sabbath as what was originally intended to be a sign between God and ~~his~~ His constituted carnal nation (Ex. 30:17). The sabbath that remains however (Heb. 4:9), is the sabbath which originally was (Gen. 2:3). Any question concerning future sabbaths (Ezek. 46:1-3, Isaiah 66:23) falls into the same category as future sacrifices (Ezek. 43:15-19, 44:15), and neither the weekly sabbath nor animal sacrifices (according to their view) are a present-day institution for Jehovah's people.

Just as the sabbaths, new moons, holy days and dietary laws are a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:17), so the sacrifices have a shadow and not the actual image (Heb. 10:1, and these shadows (which are not the actual ~~reality~~ reality for today) are equally necessary in their view.

Herbert Armstrong received the mantle of God's work which had previously been done by sabbath keepers before him. Charles Russell may have been exposed to sabbath keepers but certainly in an environment quite different from that encountered by Mr. Armstrong.

6. The Chronology of the Kings

Archbishop Ussher skillfully worked out a chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah which set the standard for Bible-believing Christians, until it fell under heavy attack when secular historians had correlated the chronology of the Assyrian kings late in the 19th century. When Bible students could not agree as to how to harmonize the Bible with this new information, people such as Jehovah's witnesses and originally Dr. Hoeh simply looked for flaws in the Assyrian evidence. Dr. Hoeh wrote his compendium with this in mind. However, Bible scholars have continued to suggest ideas until Dr. Hoeh drew upon different suggestion and found a reasonable (if not totally conclusive) way to harmonize the kings with the secular evidence. Twenty pages would be needed to show the details of all the evidence. However, three examples which open Jehovah's witnesses' reasonable view to question are useful here.

1 Chronicles 5:17 describes enrollments in the days of "Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel." Based upon this passage alone, Ussher and Jehovah's witnesses may be correct in insisting that Jeroboam of Israel died about 26 years before Jotham's accession to the throne. Dr. Hoeh has shown a way of harmonizing the Scriptures with the secular evidence in a way that shows about four years in which Jeroboam II ruled Israel and Jotham ruled Judah 751-747 B.C.

2 Kings 16:2 and 18:2 as Ussher and Jehovah's witnesses have worked it out suggest that Hezekiah was born when his father was a son of 12 years. Ahaz began to reign when he was a son of 20 years, and he reigned 16 years, so he was a son of 36 when he died (2 Kings 16:2). His son, Hezekiah, then began to reign being a son of 25 years (2 Kings 18:2). Dr. Hoeh has solved the problem by suggesting that Ahaz was a son of 20 years at the time that his father's 16-year governorship ended, but his father, Jotham, lived until into his twentieth year (2 Kings 15:30,33). Ahaz's sixteen years themselves were counted beginning after the death of his father, Jotham. Ahaz died at the age of about 40 years leaving Hezekiah who was now a son of 25 years to reign on his own.

Finally, Jehovah's witnesses show problems in the secular chronology. The worst of these involves the time of the death of Ashurbanipal king of Assyria. In the article on "Chronology" in the Aid to Bible Understanding they take issue with the memorial to the mother of Nabonidus. They quote from Stele H1A translated in James B. Prichard's Ancient Near-Eastern Texts Page 311. So many of the numbers of years in the account had to be inserted by historians who used other accounts to reconstruct the text. However, another Stele, H1B was later discovered found in later editions of Prichard's book on Page 561 which confirms reconstructions of the other Stele which had been in much poorer condition.

Daniel 9:25, Luke 3:1, and Matthew 12:40

Raymon E. Brown wrote the Anchor Bible commentary on the book of John. He made an observation concerning John 2:20 which solved more chronological problems all at once than any seemingly minor observation ever could. What a chain reaction!

Brown realized that John 2:13,20 referred to the 46 years from the time Josephus said that Herod began to work on the temple in 20/19 B.C. to what Luke identified as Tiberius Caesar's 15th year (Luke 3:1). The Syrians used a Fall-to-Fall ~~xx~~ calendar and Tiberius began to reign in the summer of 14 A.D. By counting year 1 from the previous fall, the 15th year would have begun around Trumpets day of 27 A.D. This is most interesting, because Brown had little regard for the chronological scheme of the book of John.

Jehovah's witnesses always count the years 18 months later than the manner suggested by Brown. This requires the events of John 2 to have been in the year 30 instead of 28 A.D.

The difference is devastating. Both the church and Jehovah's witnesses agree on the following: (1.) Daniel 9:25 identifies 483 years from the time of the order to restore and build Jerusalem until the time of Jesus's baptism dated in Luke 3. (2.) Jesus ministry began when he was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23). (3.) Jesus's ministry lasted three and a half years.

When were the 483 years of Daniel 9:25? The church has said this was 457 B.C.-A.D. 27. Jehovah's witnesses say it was 455 B.C.-A.D. 29. Jehovah's witnesses agree with people such as J. D. Douglas (who wrote the New Bible Dictionary) that the order to restore and build Jerusalem involved Nehemiah and not Ezra. Not only that, Jehovah's witnesses insist that the secular historians are incorrect in dating the accession of ~~X~~Xerxes in 465/464 B.C. Daniel 9:25 when harmonized with Nehemiah 2:1 (they insist) shows that Xerxes's accession was in 475/474 B.C.

On the other hand, the church has taught that secular history miraculously demonstrates Bible prophecy. After all, Horn and Wood in their book The Chronology of Ezra 7 refer to business documents which show that ~~X~~Xerxes's accession was in the winter. They follow the almost universally-accepted view of chronology which identifies the year as 465/464 B.C. By counting year 1 beginning the following trumpets day, they point out that Ezra just happened (Ezra 7:1-3) to come to Jerusalem in 457 B.C. Now Ezra 9:9 shows that Ezra prayed to God with the understanding that the physical protection of Jerusalem was part of his mission. Ezra 4 and Nehemiah 1 shows that they tried to build a wall around Jerusalem before Nehemiah was commissioned. So Ezra 7 and Daniel 9:25 can be linked by the secular evidence.

Next, Jesus was born about 30 years before the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. The London unitarian society in their notes on the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke agree that this fact dates Jesus's birth. They and Jehovah's witnesses agree that this points to about 2 or 1 B.C. The London unitarians, however, rejected the authenticity of this story. They pointed out that Josephus identified Herod's death as being in probably 4 and maybe 3 B.C. Jehovah's witnesses insist that the ~~xxx~~ eclipse before Herod's death mentioned by Josephus was in 1 B.C. not 4 B.C.

⊗ ARTA - XERXES

Here again, because of their understanding of Luke 3:1, Jehovah's witnesses have taken a radical view of the dating of an event. There is, in fact, no reason to make necessary the conclusion that Jesus was born any later than 4 B.C.

Matthew 12:40 is most interesting in light of the evidence already given. Jesus's ministry lasted 3 and a half years according to both the church and Jehovah's witnesses. Mr. Armstrong has insisted that Jesus's ministry was during the years 27-31 A.D. Jehovah's witnesses identify His ministry as during the years 29-33 A.D. Matthew 12:40 refers to Jesus being in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. If Jesus died in 31 A.D., it had to be on a Wednesday (Nisan 14), and if in 33 A.D., it was a Friday (Nisan 14). Jehovah's witnesses give a chronology of these events in their study entitled "Main Events of Jesus's Earthly Sojourn." This study is not only in the Aid to Bible Understanding, but it is also in the supplementary material of the Kingdom Interlinear. The description "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" fits better into Jesus's time in the grave if he was crucified in 31 A.D. than if he was crucified in 33 A.D.

Compare. The church conclusion at no time is at odds with secular history. Jehovah's witnesses must take a radical view of Xerxes accession and a minority view of Herod's death. The church takes Matthew 12:40 literally, while Jehovah's witnesses must take it idiomatically or figuratively. What more technically clear expression is Matthew to use to say that Jesus is to be in the grave for three complete days? He would have to use a Hebrew-style parallelism in order to make himself more clear. If Matthew had recorded that Jesus would be in the heart of the earth for three days (never mind any reference to three nights), there might be the possibility of a Friday crucifixion.

8. How Was 1914 Calculated?

"Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24). How many of these "times" make up the "times of the Gentiles?" A beast's mind was given to Nebuchadnezzar for seven times (Daniel 4:16) as a prophetic type of the seven times during which the Gentiles with a beast's mentality would tread down Jerusalem. Church members and Jehovah's witnesses share a common understanding which figures seven times to be 2520 years.

If Jerusalem is trodden down for seven times, then when is it first trodden down? 2 Chronicles 36:21-23 records that Cyrus's order to allow Jews to return to Jerusalem is to fulfill the seventy years during which Jerusalem has been keeping "sabbath." This seventy-year rest of the land ends with events recorded in Ezra 3 with the keeping of a feast of tabernacles in 537 B.C. So, Jerusalem was first trodden down in 607 B.C. The 2520 years from that time ended in 1914 A.D.

Jehovah's witnesses were warning beforehand that something would happen in 1914. Charles Russell first studied in a climate of setting dates which began with Miller's expectations centered around 1844 B.C. The Encyclopedia of American Religions Volume 1 in the section on the Adventist movement has an excellent article on this 19th century speculation. Needless to say, World War I broke out in 1914. Jehovah's witnesses suffered disastrous persecution and saw this as the great tribulation.

CONCERNING CHURCH AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING

Josephus and the ancient Jewish Talmud taught that seventy years elapsed between Jerusalem's fall and the return of the exiles. 2 Chronicles 36:21-23 and Daniel 9:2 have been noted by Jehovah's witnesses to prove this. Zechariah 1:12 and 7:4 when compared with the more widely-accepted view of ancient history point to 50 years between Jerusalem's fall and the return of the first exiles.

Several seventy-year periods mentioned in the Bible can be identified in the widely-accepted view of secular history. Seventy years for the king of Babylon (Jer. 25:10-11) tie in with the fact that Babylon reigned supreme during the years 609-539 B.C. The indignations against Judah and Jerusalem (Zechariah 1:12) began with events described in Jeremiah 52:4, so they cover the years 590-520 B.C. The seventy years of fasting done by the people mentioned in Zechariah 7:1-4 covered the years 587-517 B.C.

Other seventy-year periods are not specified in the Bible. Nebuchadnezzar's family and religious party ruled Babylon during the years 626-556 B.C. Daniel's career as recorded from Daniel 1:1 to the very last verse last from the Spring of 606 B.C. to the Spring of 536 B.C. Jehovah's witnesses' view of 2 Chron. 36:21-23 and Daniel 9:2 sounds reasonable when the verses are taken by themselves, but it is probably made to look most attractive, because of the influence of Jewish tradition when a comparison with other scriptures and with secular history clarifies the fact that the seventy years from the time of Jerusalem's fall did not in fact end until the time of the events described in Zechariah 7. Also, God maintained a curse upon the land of Judah until a time a generation after the exiles had begun to return from Babylon (Zechariah 1:12).

Here again, Jehovah's witnesses have thought that the Bible conflicts with secular history. The church has never had a problem involved with this time period. The only minor confusion which has occurred is in the fact that secular historians before 1950 tended to date the capture of Jerusalem in 586 b.c. As a result, Mr. Armstrong in the booklet How to Understand Bible Prophecy dated events in the life of Ezekiel one year later than Bible scholars would today.

9. The Resurrections and the New World

In order to understand better how hard it can be to understand the Bible, notice what the early churches of Asia believed concerning future events. The Theology of Jewish Christianity by Jean Danielou, Volume 1, Translated by John Baker, Pages 377-404 provides a good overview of ancient teachings concerning this.

Christians in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) undergo final training before receiving totally incorruptible spirit bodies after the millenium. Isaiah 65:17--66:24 speaks of the millenium. Isaiah 65:22 alludes to 1000 years by saying in the Septuagint, "the days of my people shall be the days of the tree of life." It happens that the days of the tree of life were 1000 years (Irenaeus Against Heresies 5:23:2).

"And after 1332 days, the Lord will come with His angels and with the armies of the holy ones from the seventh heaven, with the glory of the seventh heaven, and He will drag Beliar and his armies into Gehenna. And He will give rest to the godly whom He shall find in the body in this world. . . . But the saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are stored up on high in the seventh heaven: with the Lord they will come, those whose spirits have been reclothed; they will descend and be present in the world; and He will establish those who have been formed in the body, with the saints, in the garments of the saints; and the Lord will minister to those who have kept watch in this world. And afterwards they will be transformed in their garments on high, and their bodies will be left in the world," (Ascension of Isaiah 4:14-17). "This form of millenarianism, which the Ascension shows to have been present in the Syro-Palestinian area, is an early type, representing a common basic belief, and not connected with any one particular group," (The Theology of Jewish-Christianity Pages 378-379).

Irenaeus had four sources to draw upon. (1.) The New Testament, (2.) The Ascension of Isaiah, (3.) Papias, and (4.) Justin Martyr were primary sources for his analysis. After the thousand years, the rest of the dead were to be raised on judged. Even though Irenaeus associated the New Heavens and Earth of Isaiah 65-66 with the thousand-year reign, he understood the vision of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22) to be after the judgment.

What happened to these teachings? Eusebius's history 3:39 answers the question. According to Eusebius, Papias taught "That there would be a corporal reign of Christ on this very earth, which things he appears to have imagined as if they were authorized by the apostolic narrations not understanding correctly those matters which they propounded mystically in their representation, for he was very limited in his comprehension as is evident from his discourses, that he was the cause why most of the ecclesiastical writers urging the antiquity of the man were carried away by a similar ~~opinion~~ opinion as for instance Irenaeus or any other that adopted such sentiments," (Quoting Christian Frederick Cruse's translation).

It simply did not occur to the London unitarians of around 1800 to regard what Irenaeus taught as anything close to accurate. The notes in their New Testament show, however, an attempt to understand the book of Revelation literally, but it took William Miller in the 1830's and 40's to add widespread zeal to the study of prophecy. He began the so-called "Advent movement" in ~~Amx~~ the United States. Both sabbath-keepers and Sunday worshipers were caught up in the speculations. The great disappointment in 1844 only added a framework for the seventh-day adventists to conclude that God's heavenly sanctuary was cleansed in 1844.

Charles Russell studied among Sunday-keeping Adventists. They (like the Seventh-day ~~Adventists~~ Adventists) expected the time of the end to be on the heels of a long prophesied period; Instead of 2300 years, however, they looked ahead to 1914 to mark the end of a ~~2520-year~~ 2520-year period which began with Jerusalem's fall.

Then 1914 unfortunately happened as it did. Now realize! In 1844, William Miller's disciples suffered a real let-down. Christ did not come as they had expected. Later, Ellen G. White and her Adventist disciples found a mystical interpretation to account for what had happened. Nothing on this earth in 1844 added credibility to this Seventh-day Adventist interpretation. But, in 1914, something began to happen. Jehovah's witnesses at first were disoriented under the persecution which occurred during the war that broke out. But they weren't alone in tribulation. It was like nothing the world had ever experienced.

The events spoke for themselves. "Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short," (Rev. 12:12). That is just the tip of the iceberg! The whole of Revelation 12 gave them reason to apply to themselves and to contemporary events not only evidence for the beginning of the end of the indignations of this age, but "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down (Revelation 12:10). After all, 1914 had been anticipated as the end of the 2520-year times of the Gentiles. The books could not be understood extensively until the time of the end (Dan. 12:4). Now the Revelation was beginning to become more understandable.

What Revelation 12:10 began ~~xx~~ suggesting to them was that the kingdom had come; the kingdom had been inaugurated. The Christ was established on His throne with Satan thrown down to the earth. The great tribulation ended in 1918, and in the 1920's, Jehovah's witnesses experienced a revival with the events of World War I as a spring board.

Now Christ's salvation ~~xxxx~~ would be enforced. The dead in Christ were rising first. In 1935, the doctrine concerning the 144,000 was proclaimed. The 144,000 made up Christ's little flock. This little flock would govern with Christ. The number 12 is the number symbolizing government. Yes, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel made up this little governing flock. Added to this was the great crowd (Rev. 7:9-17). This great crowd of witnesses would continue to carry out the work of the worldwide public proclaiming of the good news (Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10).

Naturally, on the heels of the events of Revelation 12 occurred the events of Revelation 13. The great false hope for world peace became the league of nations. However, it received a mortal wound. Then world war II occurred and the witnesses suffered persecution. Afterward, the mortal wound was healed and the United Nations became Babylon's great hope for world peace. Revelation 17:18 says that over the kings of the earth the great whore dominates, and the seven heads of the beast upon which she sits are these: (1.) Ancient Egypt, (2.) Ancient Assyria, (3.) Babylon, (4.) Persia, (5.) Greece, and these five had fallen before John received the Revelation; (6.) Rome, the present ruler at the time of the Revelation; and (7.) Powerful, wealthy, and otherwise intimidating Anglo-America.

This present generation in which someone living at the beginning of the tribulation remains alive shall not pass away until all the end-time indignations run their course. This present generation is to see the events finally come to a head in the great and terrible day of Jehovah. "The day of Jehovah will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud ~~xxxx~~ noise, and the elements will be dissolved with ~~fire~~ fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as Jehovah has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom Jehovah calls," (Joel 2:32).

Next the prophetic chronology picks up with Revelation 20:4. Seated on thrones are those to whom judgment was committed. People who have been slain for their loyal testimony have come to life and reign with Christ a thousand years.

Next, Revelation 20:5 speaks of the "rest of the dead" indicating that from the point of view of the Revelation, those in 20:4 are identified as "dead" although they are brought to life and the second death has no power over them (Rev. 20:5-6). In the view of Jehovah's witnesses, bringing the dead to life refers to incorruptible, established life. In Revelation 20:12, "the dead" stand before the throne and are judged. They have been resurrected, but they are still referred to as "the dead." As a result, when 20:5 says, "the rest of the dead did not come to life again until the thousand years were ended," this does not mean that the resurrection of judgment takes place after the thousand years.

"The hour is coming (marked by the millenium) when all who are in the memmorial tombs (from which one may be raised) will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment," (John 5:28-29).

So the new heavens and new earth are established on the heels of the day of Jehovah at the beginning of the millenium. Isaiah 65:17--66:24 describes conditions on the earth during this time. Revelation 21-22 describes the exaltation of the new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, beginning at this time. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing (not the long-since established health) of the nations (Revelation 22:2).

At the end of the thousand years, Satan to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7-10, Ezek. 38-39). The catastrophe after which the New Heavens and earth were originally established does not allow for the war of Gog and Magog of which Ezekiel wrote to occur at the beginning of the millenium after the events near Har-magedon. The white-throne judgment is simply a view of the resurrection of judgment during the millenium and Satan's deception afterward from a different angle.

Are there any other resurrections? No. "O Jehovah our God, other lords besides Thee have ruled over us, but Thy name alone we acknowledge. They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end ~~th~~ Thou hast visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them," (Isaiah 26:13-14 ~~XXXXXXXX~~ R.S.V. generally).

How can we understand prophecy? "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; all those doing them have a good incite," (Psalms 111:10, New-World Translation). I am aware of four reasonable and highly developed harmonies of the multitudes of scriptures on prophecy. These are the studies of (1.) Jehovah's witnesses, (2.) Adoff Knoch (more on him later), (3.) Gene Scott, and (4.) Herbert Armstrong. Each of these four can command a disciple's loyalty. I have listened to the loyal testimony among three of the four who I have just named. That has convinced me that an ~~individual's~~ one's own belief that the guidance of some "Bible teacher" makes sense simply is not a responsible basis for personal faith. "We trust the brethren," one of Jehovah's witnesses replied to one of my hard questions. "You Americans would not intentionally misrepresent the scriptures," a Philippine member of the Worldwide Church of God told me. "When I read The Unsearchable Riches I can finally see what the Bible is saying," a fellow at the Concordant Publishing Concern told me, for he was in his first love (Revelation 2:4).

How can we know who has God's truth? Instructions are much easier to discern than prophecy. Psalm 111:10 identifies "doing" those things related to the fear of Jehovah as a prerequisite for incite. Someone's incite can only be viewed by a stranger as something that is bias. One's way of life and personal circumstances shapes personal biases. Psalms 111:10 provides the key for the incite which is associated with the right biases. "None of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand (Daniel 12:10). Wisdom and wickness are mutually exclusive. The wise and understanding are not wicked; the wicked are not wise and understanding.

When has obeying the sabbath shaped anyone's bias? Among the Seventh-day Baptists of England, Peter "Chamberlain, who privately began to observe the seventh day sabbath in 1651 and later pastored a sabbatarian congregation, espoused the thesis (perhaps first stated by Thomas Tillum in 1651 and later held among the seventh-day adventists in America) that Daniel 7:25 predicts the change of the day of worship from the true seventh day sabbath to Sunday. This scripture, which refers to one who shall think to change times and laws, Chamberlain understood of the papacy which he loaded with the guilt of having subverted the fourth commandment.

Around 1664, A seventh-day baptist, Stephen Mumford, came to Rhode Island and was instrumental in founding the first such church in America at Newport, Rhode Island in 1671. American baptist writers of sabbatarian persuasion took the same view of Daniel 7 as their English counterparts, tracing the antichristian apostacy of Sunday worship to the edict of Constantine, A.D. 321, as enforced and elaborated by the church of Rome, the mother of harlots in the book of Revelation. For them, Sunday was the popery's chief pillar. . . .

A seventh-day baptist, Mrs. Rachael Oaks Preston, convinced some of the adventists with whom she worshiped in Washington, New Hampshire of the sabbatarian position. Soon, adventist writers came to identify the seventh-day worship with the seal of God in Revelation 7 and to proclaim that the remnant who kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus--that is worshiped on the seventh day--would number 144,000," (The Lord's Day by P. K. Juit, Pages 54-55).

Dugger and Dodd's book A History of the True Religion reflects a view of prophecy rooted in the only group which Mr. Armstrong could identify as God's church. According to their understanding, Rome was divided having ten kings. Three were plucked up by 538 A.D. when Justinian wrote the letter to the Roman pope urging the uniting of church and state. Then 1260 years later, General Burthier took the pope prisoner, and the power of the pope was in steady decline (Pages 26-27). The Philadelphian era of God's church began with the ratification of the American Constitution which guaranteed an open door for the church (Page 254). One German came from Germany to America in 1693-1694 with forty men called the "society of the woman in the wilderness," (Page 257). They applied Revelation 12:14-17 as a deliverance which made them believe that the millenium was at hand. But was it the time of the end?

Herbert Armstrong saw one aspect of the arrival of the time of the end in the Italian quest for colonial expansion. He uncovered an evident but overlooked fact. Ethiopia is the one African territory which remained independent from prechristian times and had ancient links which identified it as the king of the south of ~~the~~ Daniel 11:40. It this light, the time of the end mentioned in Daniel 11:40 referred to events as early as 1896 when Ethiopia defeated Italy. But in 1935, Italy, under Musolini, got revenge. Could Musolini spearhead the events leading to the gathering at Armagedon was the question Mr. Armstrong was soon to ask. Revelation 17 was already understood in church teaching as a reference to the papacy. The end time was at hand, and the books were being understood more and more. From the time of Justinian's first restoration of the Roman empire with Roman Catholic assistance, five resurrections had come and gone. Musolini's accord with the pope made a sixth apparent. Now that the Revelation was being unveiled, it was evident that Revelation 17:8-10 used the present tense in referring to this then present Roman resurgence.

In 1943, it was becoming evident that ~~neither~~ Musolini nor Hitler would lead armies into the glorious land so that Daniel 11:41 would not be fulfilled until later. The seventh Catholic resurrection of the Roman world awaited a time when Europe had once more risen from the ashes of war.

Mr. Armstrong's understanding of prophecy has had an unusual (if not unique) characteristic. The seventhteenth-century Society of the Woman in the Wilderness applied Revelation 12:14-17 to itself. Furthermore, it has been common for earlier seventh-day worshipers to understand Revelation 12:14 as clarification upon verse 6 and having the same application. With every tongue (figuratively speaking) there's an interpretation, one of Jehovah's witnesses told me privately, for Revelation 12:1-6 was interpreted by 12:7-17. Each group applied all of Revelation 12 to themselves. In contrast to this, Mr. Armstrong did not come to any new understanding which would apply verses 1-6 to his own time and era of God's work. The same is true of the primary understanding of Daniel 7 and of Revelation 13. A necessary exception is Revelation 12:7-17, for those verses apply without question to the end time.

Two important things made their impact upon the capacity to understand prophecy for Mr. Armstrong as a result. (1.) The church before Mr. Armstrong's time had put into practice the fear of God and incite had resulted. (2.) So much of prophecy could not be understood until the time of the end. Any time in which Mr. Armstrong or any church member has anticipated the very end too early, misunderstandings have resulted or more understanding yet lay ahead. In the article on "The Arab World in Prophecy" in the December 1979 Plain Truth, Keith Stump wrote of a dual application to Daniel 11:40. A dual application simply did not occur to Mr. Armstrong when he wrote the article "The Middle East in Prophecy" which discusses the wars between Italy and Ethiopia.

July of 1957 was not too early for Dr. Hoeh to apply Ezekiel 38 and 39 to present events. On pages 17 and 20 of that month's Plain Truth, he used Ezekiel 38 to note that Cush and South-East Asia would eventually fall to the Communists. He applied Cush to India primarily and only Ethopopia secondarily. Ethiopia has fallen. Thailand alone has escaped so far in Southeast Asia, and he has no reason to doubt that India isn't drifting into the Communist orbit. That is an unusual indication that Ezekiel 38 and 39 describes events at the beginning of the millenium and not at the end except perhaps by dual application.

While Jehovah's witnesses understand the tribulation to have been 1260 days, Mr. Armstrong saw Daniel 12:7 as including more than the tribulation. The 1260 days consists of a tribulation of over two years (Hosea 6:2) followed by the heavenly signs (Matt. 24:29, and with the heavenly signs followed by the year-long day of the Lord (Isaiah 34:8, Joel 2:31). Strictly tied in this sequence, the fifth seal of the Revelation pictures the tribulation, the sixth the heavenly signs, and the seventh the day of the Lord. The seven trumpets blow during the day of the Lord. The dead in Christ do not rise until the last of these seven trumpets are blown (1 Corinthians 15:52). Now that the first resurrection has taken place, the seven plagues and the climactic battle of the day of the Eternal takes place.

For a second time, the Eternal will recover a remnant of His people (Isaiah 11:11). They are purged en route to the homeland (Ezek. 20:37). ~~Once~~ Once they are settled and prospering, Russia and allies launch an attack to seize Israel's wealth and are defeated by the Eternal (Ezek. 38-39). Peace is now assured until Satan's thousand-year banishment ends.

The rest of the dead (that is those not in the first resurrection) do not come to life (are not resurrected until the thousand years have ended (Rev. 20:4-6). Satan is loosed and those who remain from the millennial rule must overcome Satan's deception (Rev. 20:7-10). Satan is disposed of.

The day of judgment is for the purpose of making way for the new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65:17, so that Isaiah 65-66 is simply view in Revelation 20:11-15 from a different angle all as the immediate prelude to the new heavens and new earth. Just as Paul's departure did not mean he was immediately with Christ (Philippians 1:23, so the new heavens and new earth are not immediately on the heels of the day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10).

After all these things, the new Jerusalem is established as headquarters of the government whose increase in the New heavens and new earth shall have no end (Isaiah 9:6-7, Revelation 21-22). All things (the universe) are under the charge of God and his sons (Heb. 2:7). God has planted the heavens (Isaiah 51:16) for the work ahead.

10. Michael as Christ

Jehovah's witnesses identify Michael with the Christ, and it seems that this was done in the shepherd of Hermas in about 140 A.D. Michael is the great and glorious angel with functions which identify him as the Logos as the shepherd of Hermas 8:1-3 and other examples display (The Theology of Jewish-christianity Pages 119-124). Alongside the parallels between Michael and the Logos was Gabriel identified as the angel of the holy spirit especially in the Ascension of Isaiah (Pages 126-130). Ascension of Isaiah 3:16 mentions "the angel of the holy spirit and Michael the prince of the holy angels," (Page 127). The angel of the holy spirit is to be worshiped and is glorious like the Lord of all the splendors (Ascension of Isaiah 9:27-36). "The Lord and the angel of the Spirit adore and praise God," (Ascension of Isaiah 9:40). "And I saw how he ascended into the seventh heaven, and all the righteous and all the angels praised him. And then I saw him sit down on the right hand of that Great Glory whose brightness I told you that I was not able to look upon. And also the angel of the Holy Spirit I saw sitting on the left hand, and this angel said unto me, 'Isaiah, son of Amoz, I now dismiss thee. . . . Return into thy earthly vesture until thy days are fulfilled. Then thou shalt return hither," (Ascension of Isaiah 11:32-35). "The Lord called me and placed me at His left hand next to Gabriel and I adored the Lord," (2 Enoch 24:1). Michael in 2 Enoch played the role of the Lord in the Ascension, and Gabriel in 2 Enoch played the role of the angel of the holy spirit in the Ascension.

What does the Bible say that would connect Christ with Michael? "The Lord (Christ) himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God," (1 Thes. 4:16). The cry of command and the archangel's call are one and the same, that of the Lord himself. Based upon this reasoning, the same one who withstood Satan's temptations in the wilderness later led the angels of the heavens in driving out Satan and his angels (Matt. 4, Revelation 12).

Is this a sound teaching? The first problem is that 1 Thes. 4:16 can be taken more than one way. Michael alone is specifically identified as an archangel (Jude 9). Even if Christ were the archangel of 1 Thes. 4:16 (which is debatable), is this the same archangel as that of Jude 9? Not necessarily. Michael the archangel mentioned by Jude treats Satan as an equal. Christ, however, the beginning of creation (Rev. 3:14) as the firstborn can reasonably be expected to hold a superior position to that of Satan. Furthermore, one like a son of man (Daniel 7:13, Rev. 1:13) is not specifically connected with Michael (Daniel 12:1, Rev. 12:7) even though the Revelation especially consists of integrated visions which might indicate if the Christ and Michael were one and the same.

11. Falsum In Uno Falsum In Toto

Once a society of free thinkers in New York asked the Watchtower Society to send two speakers to address their group on Biblical matters, and the request was granted. These learned men held to a Latin maxum: "Falsum in uno, falsum in toto," meaning that an argument proved false in one point is totally false. One man challenged the speakers on the reliability of Genesis 1:3 and 1:14 ~~xx~~ in the New World Translation. "Let light come to be," says Gen. 1:3 and "Let luminaries come to be," in Genesis 1:14. "Stop!" he said. "What are you reading? My Bible says God made light on the first day and again on the fourth day, and that is inconsistent." Though he claimed to know Hebrew, it had to be pointed out to him that the Hebrew word translated "light" in verse 3 is "or" whereas the Hebrew word translated "luminaries" in verse 14 is "moroth," (All Scripture Inspired and Beneficial Page Pages 327-328).

"For a given Hebrew or Greek word, there has been assigned one English word, and this has been used as uniformly as the idiom or context permits in giving the full English understanding," (Page 327). It was on this very point that I questioned one of the congregation members to find out how much this was really a provable fact. "We trust the brethren," I was told, and no wonder! Bitter critics, such as Walter Martin in his book of accusation, The Kingdom of the Cults took Jehovah's witnesses to task on this point concerning consistency. The fact is, however, that the New World Translation sets an example on how to render many passages in a consistent manner which others ought to follow.

They took advantage of the loyalty of the brethren when they came out with their Bible concordance, however. Idiom and context imposes limits, of course, as to how consistent a translation can be. A concordance of Hebrew entries and a concordance of Greek entries, both to the New World Translation coded to Strong's concordance would show the real colors of the New World Translation.

The Kingdom Interlinear can be the most readily checked out for its consistency. Nelson's concordance to the Revised Standard Version is based upon a Greek text which is at least close enough to the Greek text used by Jehovah's witnesses to make a study more convenient. Check out the Greek word which out of doctrinal bias is translated "worship" (John 4:24) when it relates to the Father, and see what happens when the word is applied to Christ. Context requires a different translation; or is it doctrinal bias? There is a fine line between the two.

Bagster's concordance to the King James Bible can be used with reservations for the Hebrew text. Check out the Hebrew "tohu" in Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 45:18, etc. Isaiah 45:18 alludes to Genesis 1:2, but reading the New World translation, you would not know this. Byington and Rotherham in their translations correctly show the consistency of the word "tohu" in these verses. It is hard to be consistent when doctrines call for inconsistency. Nevertheless, it is one of the most consistent translations ever done, and I challenge Jehovah's witnesses' critics to remove their unreasonable biases or be silent.

The most diligent attempt to translate the Bible on a plan of consistency was first done by Adoff Knoch. He founded the concordant publishing concern and completed a New Testament in 1926. A staff continued his work and has been working on an Old Testament which he began. Ray Emry is doing the revision on the New Testament.

They have demonstrated that consistency in translation by itself is far from sufficient, and Knoch showed the unmistakable influences of the ideas of Bullinger, even though one of Bullinger's congregations had excommunicated him.

One of Knoch's disciples wrote a commentary which taught that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three manifestations of the same individual. This is the trinity doctrine which Sebalius taught 1700 years ago.

The Bible does not interpret itself without God's holy spirit to quicken or make alive the mind of the one studying it. Two diligent Bible students may independently come to agreement generally on which church is teaching God's truth. However, agreeing upon much more than that is simply too much to ask. "Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter," the apostle Paul instructed (2 Thes. 2:15). "If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord," wrote Paul to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 14:37).

"Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence," (1 Peter 3:15). Satan the devil accuses the brethren day and night before our God (Rev. 12:10).

If someone preaches to me and cannot afford to consider the possibility as to whether orx I am converted or whether I am not with equal anticipation, he has a problem. If I am converted, and loyalty to his congregation does not allow him to face that possibility, he then accuses the brethren in his heart. I can treat him in a more responsible fashion. I can deal with one of Jehovah's witnesses as if he were converted but of a different fellowship, and Jehovah can deal with the situation if it so happens that he is not converted. Michael did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment against Satan (Jude 9). If one of Jehovah's witnesses accuses Mr. Armstrong out of frustration because I won't come to one of Jehovah's witnesses' study sessions, then the accusations are sufficient to speak for themselves. Jehovah will deal with him. I am not authorized to do what Michael wasn't authorized to do against Satan.

"By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: no one who does not do right is of God, nor any one who does not love his brother," (1 John 3:10). I can afford not to accuse any of Jehovah's witnesses who visits me. Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14). I have no need to construct another.

Garth Wardrop