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Elihu continued and said:

“Bear with me a little, and I will show you, for I have yet something to say on God’s behalf.”
—Job 36:1-2 (NRSV)

The “Glory” ‘Seen’ by Isaiah According to John 12:41

Greg Stafford**

Though today there is no known New Testament (NT) manuscript which uses the name “Jesus” in John 12:41, for good reasons the *New International Version* (NIV [Zondervan, 1988]) replaces the Greek pronoun “his” (*autos*) with the proper name “Jesus” in its translation of this text as follows (with my underlining and bracketed words added), “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ [or, ‘his’] glory and spoke about him.”¹

The underlined part of the above verse from the NIV makes plain the *reason* Isaiah said/spoke according to John 12:41, namely, “because” Isaiah “saw his” (= Jesus’) “glory.” But when we read about “glory” or when we discuss its use according to the Bible our concept of “glory” often centers around what we think of as “divine splendor” or “heavenly radiance,” such as we find described in part of the vision of Isaiah Chapter 6.

For example, in the Hebrew and Greek (LXX) texts of Isaiah 6:1-3 we find words used for what could be considered this kind of “glory,” namely, in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 6:3 a form of the noun *kavōd* and in the Greek text of Isaiah 6:1, 3 forms of the noun *doxa*. The Hebrew of Isaiah 6:3 speaks of the “whole earth” being “full of his [God’s] glory,” as does the Greek text, and the Greek text of Isaiah 6:1 speaks about the ‘house of heaven’ being “full of his [God’s] glory.” Therefore, many Trinitarians seize upon the use of “glory” here in these texts, and as it is described throughout Isaiah 6:1-4, as a likely connection and background to the use of “glory” in John 12:41.

Upon closer review of the context of Isaiah 6:1-4 and John 12:41, however, it does not appear likely there are any good reasons for believing “glory,” as used in John 12:41, has anything to do

* This article is in large part related to the content and the history involved with an earlier online response I prepared against some of Dr. James White’s arguments concerning Isaiah Chapters, 6, 52, and 53, and John 12:41. See my “Response to Dr. James White, Part One: Introducing the Issues” (January-May, 2007), and my “Response to Dr. James White, Part Two: ‘He Saw His Glory, and He Spoke About Him’” (April-June, 2007). See the Elihu Books Topical Index (http://www.elihubooks.com/content/topical_index.php) under “J – James White: Stafford’s 2007 Blog Response: Part One” and “Part Two.” See also my more recent article, “Dr. James White and the Assumptions of Trinitarianism Revisited,” *Watching the Ministry* (August 1, 2011).

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¹ At least two other English translations similarly make the textual identification clear in John 12:41 by inserting “Jesus” into the text rather than translating the pronoun αὐτοῦ (*autou*) that is used twice in John 12:41. These are *The Jerusalem Bible: Reader’s Edition* ([JB] New York: Doubleday, 1968) and *The New Jerusalem Bible: Reader’s Edition* ([NJB] New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1990]). Most other English translations I reviewed leave it for the reader to determine from the context that “his” in John 12:41 is, in fact, “Jesus.”

with “divine splendor” or with a “heavenly radiance.” There are also no good reasons for understanding the “glory” ‘seen’ by Isaiah according to John 12:41 as having anything to do with a *shared glory* among three “persons” belonging to a unity of substance, as we find taught in Trinitarian theology. Rather, as I intend to show in this paper, there are very convincing reasons for believing the “glory” spoken about in John 12:41 involves the taking on of “flesh” or humanity by “the Word,” a real spirit (non-human) being who existed “with God” (John 1:1), as well as this same being’s human suffering to the point of actually being “lifted up” in death by his enemies, enemies whom he is said to have come to save.—Isaiah 52:13; 53:5, 11-12; John 1:11; 8:26-30; 12:16, 23, 32-34.

When it comes to almost any analysis of the biblical words for “glory” as it is used in the commonly accepted collection of Old Testament books, the book of Isaiah stands above them all in terms of the number of times “glory” is used.² Further, as has been observed by L.H. Brockington, after noting the LXX “translator’s fondness for the use of δόξα [*doxa*, ‘glory’] and cognate forms”:

[T]he comparative frequency of the use of the noun δόξα [*doxa*, ‘glory’] in the LXX and in Isaiah [shows the] word was therefore not only a favourite one in the translator’s vocabulary but had considerable significance for him. ... and was associated, directly or indirectly with God’s redemptive work among men.³

In light of the above, consider several uses of *doxa* (“glory”) from the LXX of Isaiah which show clearly the “considerable significance” of the term “glory” when used by the Greek translator of the Hebrew text of Isaiah. Brockington cites the following five (5) texts which uses *doxa* “to denote a man’s external appearance,” that is, “what he looks like in the eyes of others.”⁴ Here I will provide basic transliterations and translations of both the Greek and then the Hebrew texts of these five examples, with underlining added to some of the corresponding or related parts:

1. Isaiah (LXX) 11:3 - *ou kata tēn doxan krinei*
 (“not according to [man’s outward] glory will he judge”);
1. Isaiah (Heb.) 11:3 - *lo’-lemar’eh ‘eynayn yishphot*
 (“not according to what is seen by his eyes will he judge”);
2. Isaiah (LXX) 40:6 - *pasa sarx chotos kai pasa doxa anthrōpou hōs anthos chortou*
 (“All flesh is like grass and all glory of man is like a flower of grass”);
2. Isaiah (Heb.) 40:6 - *kal-habasar hatsir wekhal-chasedo ketsits hasadeh*
 (“All flesh is like grass, and all its glory/goodness is like a blossom of the field”);
3. Isaiah (LXX) 52:14 - *adoxēsei apo anthrōpōn to eidos sou kai hē doxa sou*
apo tōn anthrōpōn

² According to Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pages 341-343, the noun *doxa* occurs a total of sixty-seven (67) times in the LXX of Isaiah, far more than most other biblical books, including Psalms, which has a total of fifty-seven (57) occurrences.

³ L.H. Brockington, “The Greek Translator of Isaiah and His Interest in ΔΟΞΑ” *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1951), pages 24, 26.

⁴ Brockington, “The Greek Translator of Isaiah,” page 27.

- (“your form and your glory which came from mankind will be dishonored by mankind”);
3. **Isaiah (Heb.) 52:14** – *ken-mishchat me’ish mar’ehu weto’aro mibney ‘adam*
 (“so among men you have an unusual face, because your form and your appearance are as a son of man”);
 4. **Isaiah (LXX) 53:2** – *ōs hriza en gē dipsōsē ouk estin eidos autō oude doxa kai eidomen auton kai ouk eichen eidos oude kallos*
 (“he ... is like a root in a land that is thirsty; he has no appealing form nor glory and we saw him and yet he did not possess an appealing form nor physical beauty.”)
 4. **Isaiah (Heb.) 53:2** – *wekhashoresh me’erits tsirah lo’-to’ar lo welo’ hadar wenir’ehu welo’-mar’eh wenechmedehu*
 (“and like the root that is from the desert land, no appealing form belonged to him, no glory that we can see, as there is nothing visual that we desire”);
 5. **Isaiah (LXX) 17:4** – *estai en tē hēmera ekeinē ekleipsis tēs doxēs Iakōb kai ta pionā tēs doxēs autou seisthēsetai*
 (“it will be in that day an eclipse of the glory of Jacob and the fatness [or, ‘abundance’] of his glory will be made to tremble”);
 5. **Isaiah (Heb.) 17:4** – *wehayah bayyom hahu’ yiddal kevod ya’aqov wumishman besaro yerazeh*
 (“and during that time it will be the case that Jacob’s glory will be brought low, and the fatness of his flesh will become lean”).

Where it concerns this last example from Isaiah 17:4, Brockington believes it “may well be ... that the [LXX] translator here took ‘flesh’ in the sense of earthly splendor and majesty—the outward show of the flesh,”⁵ which is also apparent from the language of the Hebrew text.

In the other four texts listed above from Isaiah involving words for “glory,” it is also clear that in Isaiah 11:3 the Greek word (*doxan*) is used in reference to the outward “glory” of man which the Messiah would not look upon as a basis for his judgment. So clear is this the meaning, that we need only look at the further fact that “glory” here in the LXX translates the Hebrew expression “what is seen by his eyes” (*emar’eh ‘eynayn*).

In Isaiah 40:6, the LXX uses “all flesh” (*pasa sarx*) in a parallel sense with “all man’s glory,” for which the Greek uses *doxa* (*pasa doxa anthrōpou*). In Isaiah 52:14 the LXX uses “your form and your glory” (*to eidos sou kai hē doxa sou*) for a man’s physical appearance, namely, that of the future Messiah, as I will show later in this paper. The same meaning is clear also from Isaiah 53:2, “he has no appealing form, nor glory” (*ouk estin eidos autō oude doxa*).

Brockington goes on to list and to discuss other texts in Isaiah LXX which use “glory”/*doxa* in reference to the actual “brilliance” of God’s being, as seen by humans. For example, Isaiah Chapter 6 begins with Isaiah seeing a vision of Jah “on an exalted throne and raised up high.” Then the first verse ends with, “and the house was filled with his glory [*tēs doxēs autou*].” The Hebrew text for this part of the verse reads, “and his robe filled the temple” (*weshulayw mele’im ‘et-haheykhal*). The Greek versions of Aquila (early to middle second century CE), Symmachus

⁵ Brockington, “The Greek Translator of Isaiah,” page 27.

(early third century CE), and Theodotion (late second to early third century CE) all three render the Hebrew text more literally as, “and the toward his feet” (*kai ta pros podon autou*), indicating Jah’s figurative but righteous and fitting “skirts” which Isaiah saw as they “were filling the temple” (*epleroun ton naon*).

Yet, only in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 6:3 is there an explicit use of the actual word for “glory” (a form of *kavod*), namely, where other spirits whom we often call “Seraphs”⁶ (Isaiah 6:2) speak aloud in Jah’s presence as they stand near and even “above” or “in a circle” (LXX: *kyklō*) around him as they ‘call out,’ “Holy!” three times to Jah. Then in verse 3 the Seraphs refer to the “fullness of the earth” as Jah’s “glory” (Hebrew: *kavōdo*). The LXX corresponds to the Hebrew text here in using a form of the Greek word *doxa* (*doxēs*) for “glory.”

After the first part of the vision in Isaiah Chapter 6, according to verse 5 Isaiah writes his “eyes have seen [*ra’u ‘enay*] the King Jaho(h)-ah,” even though Isaiah is “a man guilty in his speech” (or, “unclean of lip”) as are those with whom Isaiah “dwells.” The deficiency in Isaiah’s condition is accounted for quickly, however, for in verses 6-7 one of the Seraphs comes to him with a “burning stone” taken from the “altar” seen in the vision. Then the Seraph touches Isaiah’s lips with the burning stone, which action ‘takes away Isaiah’s guilt/sin.’

The Hebrew text of Isaiah 6:8 begins by using the first person singular in reference to what Jah says (“Whom shall *I* send?”). Then it switches to the plural when Jah speaks of those whom he will send (“Who will go for *us*?”).⁷ This second plural reference could include Jah and the Seraphs who are with him or it could include any other being who may have been present in the vision, including the “reflection of [Jah’s] glory and the exact representation of his being,” namely, the “Word” who was “with” Jah “in the beginning” (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 19:13). As is taught plainly elsewhere in the New Testament, the Word had ‘glory alongside’ the Father before he came to the earth.—John 8:54; 17:5.⁸

⁶ But which translates a noun in the plural (namely, *serafim*) that in the singular (namely, *saraf*) also means “serpent” or even “dragon.” For example, the singular *saraf* is used in Numbers 21:8 for what Jah commanded Moses to make and then to put up for those bitten to look upon, which ultimately was a ‘copper snake’ image. Here the LXX uses *ophis* with no additional description, and apart from a transliterated form of *saraf*. In Deuteronomy 8:15 *saraf* is used with another Hebrew word for “snake,” namely, *nakhash*. Yet, the LXX uses only one term, *ophis*, again with no transliteration for *saraf*. Isaiah 14:29 uses *saraf* along with two other terms meaning “snake,” namely, *tsefa’* and *nakhash*. But instead of transliterating *saraf* the LXX first uses a form of *ophis* and then a form of *aspis* (Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion all use *basiliskos* [“cobra”]; see Ziegler [*Isaias* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), page 178]). The LXX concludes with another use of *ophis* rather than with any transliteration of *saraf*, such as we find with the only two plural forms of *sefarim* used in the Hebrew Bible in Isaiah 6:2 and 2 Kings 17:31. The reference in 2 Kings 17:31 is to an obscure people (“the Sepharvites”; LXX: *hoi sepharouain*) who sacrificed their children to “Adrammelech” and “Anammelech,” a sun and a moon god, respectively. Compare also the serpent imagery highlighted in John 3:14 in reference to Jesus of Nazareth, based on the events of Numbers 21:4-9.

⁷ The LXX, however, uses a different expression in the second instance for what Jah says in verse 8, “Who will go to this people?” (*tis poreusetai pros ton laon touton*).

⁸ For further discussion of the prehuman existence of Jesus of Nazareth as the “Word” and Wisdom” of Jah God, see my article, “Jah Loves Her, Wisdom, His Son, the Word,” *Watching the Ministry* (October 18, 2010), and, “Micah 5:1(2): Reliable Prophecy and Real Personal Preexistence,” *Watching the Ministry* (November 24, 2010), as well as Chapters 3 and 5 in my *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Third Edition (Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2009).

The earliest interpretation of the figures seen in the vision of Jah's glory in Isaiah Chapter 6 comes from Philo of Alexandria, who lived from around 20 BC to around 50 CE. In what Folker Siegert considers the first "commentary" on Isaiah 6:1 from Philo,⁹ after quoting Isaiah 6:1 in *De Deo* Chapter 6 Philo comments only on the meaning and nature of the "Seraphim."¹⁰ Then in Chapter 9 Philo further identifies the one seen by Isaiah in the vision when Philo speaks of the Seraphim as completely surrounding "the Sovereign and Father who is situated in their midst" (underlining added).¹¹

In the letter from Clement of Rome (who lived from around 30 to 100 CE), Clement quotes a form of Isaiah 6:3 (in 1 Clement 34) but with no significant application or insight into the identity of the figures in the vision.¹² In Chapter 3 of his work *On Prayer*, Tertullian (who lived from around 160 to 220 CE) quotes Isaiah 6:3 in a discussion about the "Father's name," but without any further mention of the identity of the other figures in the vision.

Origen (who lived from around 185 to 253 CE) cites Isaiah 6:1-2 in his work *Against Celsus* (1.43 [see also 4.18]). But it is the discussion of Isaiah 6:3 by Origen in his work *De Principiis* ("On First Principles") which for good reasons gets the most attention when it comes to early interpretations of this vision. In *De Principiis* 1.3 the Greek text according to the Butterworth/De Lubac edition¹³ has Origen writing, "[W]e believe that everything whatever except the Father and God of the universe is created."¹⁴ Then Origen writes about an interpretation he received about the figures seen in the vision of Isaiah 6:1-3:

[M]y Hebrew master used to say that the two six-winged seraphim in Isaiah who cry one to another and say, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, were the only-begotten Son of God and the Holy Spirit. And we ourselves think that the expression in the song of Habakkuk, 'In the midst of the two living creatures thou shalt be known' is spoken of Christ and the Holy Spirit."¹⁵

Then in *De Principiis* 4.3 Origen writes further about his teacher's view of Isaiah 6:1-3:

⁹ Folker Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation," in *The Studia Philonica Annual* 10, David T. Runia, ed. (Brown Judaic Studies 319; Atlanta: Scholars press, 1998), page 18.

¹⁰ Philo writes, in part: "<Sera>phim is translated 'patterns' or 'burning,' names that are suitable to the Powers ... [for] they are not powers of a destructive fire, but of a saving one by which the universe has been artistically fashioned" (see Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*," page 6).

¹¹ Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*," page 7.

¹² See ANF 1, page 14; 1 Clement 34 is also reprinted in ANF 9, page 239.

¹³ Henri De Lubac's edition of *Origen On First Principles*, a translation of Koetschau's text by B. W. Butterworth (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), page 32. See also ANF 4, page 253.

¹⁴ See also *De Principiis* 1.3 (De Lubac's edition, pages 33-34), where we have a passage which was omitted by the Trinitarian Rufinius (who lived from around 344/45 to 410 CE) when he translated/edited Origen's work:

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.

¹⁵ See also ANF 4, page 253, for Frederick Crombie's translation of this passage from Origen.

My Hebrew teacher also used to teach as follows, that since the beginning of the end of all things could not be comprehended by any except our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, this was the reason why Isaiah spoke of there being in the vision that appeared to him two seraphim only, who with two wings cover the face of God, with two cover his feet, and with two fly, crying one to another and saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory.’¹⁶

Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek texts of Isaiah 6:1-3 support Origen’s teacher’s apparent view that there were “two” Seraph’s only, or that they covered Jah’s “feet” and “face”¹⁷; rather, the “wings” appear to cover the “feet” and “faces” of the Seraphs, and they appear to figuratively represent that these beings can “fly about.” In any case, this is the first clear instance where the angelic Seraphs alongside or surrounding Jah are identified further by someone as the “Lord Jesus Christ” and as “the Holy Spirit.”

Living around the same time as Origen, Hippolytus (170 to 235 CE) quotes Isaiah 6:3 but he appears to do so only to mark the appearance of the Seraphs along with other angelic beings (such as “Cherubs”) at the time of man’s judgment before God and Jesus of Nazareth (see ANF 5, page 252). Similarly, in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* there are numerous Jewish-Christian prayers dated to before or to near the start of the fourth century CE, one of which first quotes an unknown text as saying, “There is but one holy Being,” after which the chorus of the Seraphs in Isaiah 6:3 is quoted.¹⁸

Near the end of the third century and around the start of the fourth century CE Methodius, who often writes against Origen (see, for example, his work *On the Resurrection*), quotes Isaiah 6:1-9 in what is considered his *Orations Concerning Simeon and Anna*, in which Methodius comments on the Seraphs mentioned in this account. But Methodius does so from a Trinitarian perspective in place several decades before the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) adopted a similar view of the biblical God, one which also effectively continued to replace the divine name in the Hebrew and

¹⁶ De Lubac, *Origen On First Principles*, page 311. See also ANF 4, page 376.

¹⁷ Joseph W. Trigg, “The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen’s Theology,” *JTS* 42.1 (April, 1991), page 39, note 12, points out that “Kretschmar elegantly demonstrates that an early identification of the Seraphim with the two Cherubim supporting the Ark of the Covenant accounts for the tradition, attested by both written and iconographic evidence, that there were *two* Seraphim, an inference not justified by the actual text of Isa. 6.” Nevertheless, I do not see that Trigg has sufficient evidence upon which to conclude that “Origen’s identification of the Seraphim with the Son and the Holy Spirit shows that this identification was already taken for granted in his time” (Trigg, “The Angel of Great Counsel,” note 12, page 39). Indeed, from what we read in *De Principiis* 1.3 and 3.4, particularly in light of the Hebrew text, what Origen relates as from his “Hebrew master/teacher” sounds like a more exclusive interpretation of the text of Isaiah 6 than an interpretation which was “taken for granted” during this time. There may have been some basis for identifying Jesus as one of the Seraphs based on the LXX’s description of the future Messiah as “the Angel of Great Counsel” (*megalēs boulēs angelos*) in Isaiah 9:6, as well as in view of how one of the Seraphs ‘atones’ for the “sin” of Isaiah using the “burning stone” from the “altar” (Isaiah 6:6-7). But there is certainly no similar scripturally connectible basis upon which one might identify the Holy Spirit as one of the Seraphs described in Isaiah 6.

¹⁸ See 7.35.2 in ANF 7, page 473. See also David A. Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish: An Examination of the Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Brown Judaic Studies 65; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), pages 68-69 for the Greek text and for another English translation. Similarly, in 8.12.27 (see ANF 7, page 488), there is another citation of Isaiah 6:2, 3 as part of a series of texts quoted in praise and acknowledgement of the great acts of the God of the Old Testament. On the dates for these texts, see the introductory discussion by Donaldson in the ANF series, pages 387-390. See also Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish*, page 109, who cites this same prayer along with the Greek text.

in many Greek Old Testament texts with the term “Lord.”¹⁹ Methodius gives the following interpretation of Isaiah 6:1-3:

Look around thee with the eye of faith, and thou wilt find around Him, as by the ordinance of their courses, the royal and priestly company of the seraphim. These, as His body-guard, are ever wont to attend the presence of their king. Whence also in this place they are not only said to hymn with their praises the divine substance of the divine unity, but also the glory to be adored by all of that one of the sacred Trinity, which now, by the appearance of God in the flesh, hath even lighted upon earth. They say: “The whole earth is full of His glory.” For we believe that, together with the Son, who was made man for our sakes, according to the good pleasure of His will, was also present the Father [*sic*], who is inseparable from Him as to His divine nature, and also the Spirit, who is of one and the same essence with Him.²⁰

I have used a “sic” in the above quote from Methodius because from “For we believe that” to “was also present the Father” in the above translation by William R. Clark could easily be misunderstood. The basic idea expressed by Methodius is that, in addition to the Seraphs whom he calls God’s “body-guard,” there is in the vision of Isaiah 6:1-9 “also present the Father” as well as “the Son” and “also the [Holy] Spirit.”

As Clark rightly observes in his note to Methodius’ Trinitarian comment, “who is of one and the same essence with Him,” this is nothing more than “the famous [*homo’ousios* (= ‘of the same substance’)] of the Nicene Council.”²¹ Similarly, Methodius cites Isaiah 6:1, 3 in relation to his perceived view of the Jews’ “unbelief, which caused them to refuse to pay to the Trinity the tribute of praise ... the Thrice Holy.”²²

Later in the same work Methodius again cites Isaiah 6:3, but he does so in an obscure manner in relation to the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth.²³ Finally, in his work *Oration on the Psalms*

¹⁹ For a further discussion of this and other English forms of the divine name of the biblical God, see my “‘Christian’ Witnesses of Jah, Jaho(h)-ah God,” *Watching the Ministry* (April 2, 2011). See Chapter 1, pages 62-100, of my Third Edition of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*, for a further discussion of the use and non-use of an actual form of the divine name in copies of biblical and related texts through to and including the first century CE.

²⁰ Methodius, *Orations Concerning Simeon and Anna* 2, ANF 6, page 384. Compare Isidore of Pelusium who lived from around 365-375 to around 435 CE and who, according to David T. Runia, “Philo of Alexandria in Five Letters of Isidore of Pelusium,” in *Earle Hilgert Festschrift: The Studia Philonica Annual* 3 (1991), page 162, in his *Ep.* 2.143 (= *Ep.* 643 Évieux) Isidore writes in relation to Isaiah 6:3:

Those who assert that God is holy a countless number of times, and have the temerity to misinterpret the text, ‘holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth (Is. 6:3)’ are brilliantly refuted by the text, ‘I sought your face (person), your face, Lord, I shall seek. Do not turn your face from me’ (Ps. 26:8)’. Unless the writer was proclaiming the holy Trinity, he would justly stand accused of superfluous language.

Instead of ‘accusing’ Isaiah of either teaching the Trinity or of using “superfluous language,” perhaps Isidore should have considered the potentially *emphatic* nature of the three-times cry of the Seraphs and their desire to repeat what they say about Jah because they believe so much that what they say about him is true.

²¹ See ANF 6, page 384, note 6.

²² Methodius, *Orations Concerning Simeon and Anna* 12, ANF 6, page 392.

²³ Methodius, *Orations Concerning Simeon and Anna* 6, ANF 6, page 385. See the similar citation of Isaiah 6:4 in Methodius, *Orations Concerning Simeon and Anna* 11, ANF 6, page 391.

Methodius cites Isaiah 6:3 when it comes to “announcing salvation upon earth.”²⁴ Though some other works from the first to the third centuries CE and following also quote or refer to Isaiah 6:1-3 to some extent,²⁵ it seems clear that from the time of Methodius forward there is a definite *reinterpretation* of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 6:1 from, “I saw the Lord” (Hebrew: *wa’er’eh ‘et-‘adonay*) to what we find in later Greek versions which replace the divine name in verse 3 with “Lord,” resulting in views of the text ranging from the “Father” (Tertullian), to the Father with only “two” Seraphs (Origen and his “Hebrew master/teacher”) but identified as the “Son” and “Holy Spirit” (though not according to strict Trinitarianism), to actual, pre-Nicene Trinitarianism with the “Father,” the “Son,” and “also the Spirit” present in the vision, according to Methodius.

Yet, it is not until the writings of Gregory of Nyssa (who lived from around 335/336 to around 395 CE) that we find an attempt to read John 12:41 in the light of Isaiah 6:1. In his work *Against Eunomius* Gregory writes in defense of the divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth as part of the Trinity, citing John 12:41 and Isaiah 6:1 as evidence for his view and against that of *Eunomius* (with my underlining added) as part of what follows:

[M]oreover, through the prophet Isaiah it is attested, as to the manifestation of the Divine appearance vouchsafed to him, when he saw Him that sat “on the throne high and lifted up:” the older tradition, it is true, says that it was the Father Who appeared to him, but the evangelist John refers the prophecy to our Lord [in John 12:41], saying, touching those of the Jews who did not believe the words uttered by the prophet concerning the Lord, “These things said [Isaiah], when he saw His glory and spake of Him.” But the mighty Paul attributes the same passage to the Holy Spirit in his speech made to the Jews at Rome, when he says [in Acts 28:25-26], “Well spake the Holy Ghost by [Isaiah] the prophet concerning you, saying, Hearing yea shall hear and shall not understand,” showing, in my opinion, by Holy Scripture itself, that every specially divine vision, every theophany, every word uttered in the Person of God, is to be understood to refer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.²⁶

In addition to Gregory’s reading into “every word uttered in the person of God” all three “persons” of the Trinity, Gregory also wrongly reads into Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 6:9 the view that the Holy Spirit is included in the vision of Isaiah 6, since in Acts 28:25-26 Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 and says the “holy spirit *spoke through Isaiah*” according to these texts (*to pneuma to hagion elalēsen dia Ēsaiou*). Indeed, according to biblical tradition all prophetic experiences involving Jah’s spirit involve this, “for prophecy was at no time produced the will of man, but

²⁴ Methodius, *Oration on the Psalms* 2, ANF 6, page 395.

²⁵ For example, in the apocryphal work *The Revelation of John the Theologian* (referenced in a ninth century CE text of Dionysius the Thracian [see the “Introductory Notice to Apocrypha of the New Testament,” by M.B. Riddle, in ANF 8, page 359, under “Part III,” section “IV”]), Isaiah 6:3 is quoted by Jesus who speaks to John in reference to what will be announced by “myriads of angels and archangels” (ANF 8, page 584). See also Robert V. Hotchess, *A Pseudo-Epiphanius Testimony Book* (Texts and Translations 4, Early Christian Literature Series 1; Missoula, Montana: Scholar’s Press, 1974), page 69, where in 89 and in 89.1 Isaiah 6:1 is quoted as evidence that Jesus preexisted and that in his preexistence he “sat at the right hand of the Father.” But there is nothing in any version of Isaiah 6:1 which expressly indicates this relationship in this vision. In 3 Enoch 24:23 Isaiah 6:1 is quoted as part of a series of texts which present “Yah” or “Jah,” the God of Moses (24:8; compare the use of *YH* in Exodus 15:2), as sitting on “a throne of glory” (24:22) in heaven among thousands of heavenly beings (24:6; compare 1 Enoch 14:18-22; 2 Enoch 20:1-4, 21:1, and 22:1-4 [J]; 2 Enoch 20:1-4, 21:1, and 22:1-2[A]; 3 Enoch 1:12; 22:13-15; 22:13; 22B:5-7; 26:7-12; 35:6; 48B:1-2; Questions of Ezra 27-30; Testament of Adam 1:4; see also 3 Enoch 40:1-2).

²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.14, NPNF 5 (Second Series), page 129.

men spoke [*elalēsan ... anthrōpoi*] from God [*apo theou*] as they were moved by holy spirit [*hypo pneumatōs hagiou pheromenoi*].”—2 Peter 1:21.

This is why according to Mark 12:36 Jesus spoke of “David” as “in the holy spirit” (*en tō pneumatō tō hagiō*) though it was actually David who “spoke” (*autos David eipen*). Though such ‘speaking’ was actually done by David, it could also be the holy spirit speaking by means of him because that is what “inspired” or “taught” him the Father’s will (compare Mark 13:11; Luke 1:67; 10:21; 12:12; John 14:26; Acts 1:16; 4:8, 25, 31). That is why Luke 1:35 expressly identifies the “holy spirit” with “the power of the Most High” (*pneuma hagion ... dynamis hypsistou*). Compare in this same light Acts 1:8, which also associates the receiving of “power” from God with the coming of “the holy spirit” (*lēmψεsthe dynamin epelthontos tou hagiou pneumatōs*). See also Acts 8:17-19, where after the “holy spirit” is given to those in Samaria through the laying on of hands by Peter and by John, a man named “Simon” attempts to buy this “great power/ability” (verse 13, *dynameis megalas*; verse 19, *tēn exousian tautēn*), namely, “the holy spirit” (*pneuma hagion*).²⁷

Even the resurrected Jesus is presented by Luke as having given “directions through the holy spirit [*dia pneumatōs hagiou*] to the apostles” (Acts 1:2). It is not that the holy spirit gave the orders apart from what Jesus did. Rather, Jesus gave instructions to his apostles by means of the holy spirit. It is similar with others who represent the God of Moses, including Isaiah and others who are said to have received and then spoken God’s will, not their own will (compare Isaiah 59:21). In the Bible the holy spirit is often presented as a part or property of Jah’s own being, rather than as separate “person” of a tri-personal God.²⁸ In fact, there is no biblical evidence to support the Trinitarian metaphysic of three “persons” in “one God.” Instead, what we find expressed is “one God, the Father,” though there are other heavenly spirit beings/persons who exist “with” him.—Genesis 1:26; Job 38:7; John 1:1; 1 Corinthians 8:6.²⁹

Therefore, Gregory of Nyssa has provided us with a clear-cut case of an early assumption of Trinitarianism as part of his reinterpretation of Isaiah 6 and John 12:41, as well as of Acts 28:25-26. But if Gregory’s interpretation of John 12:41 in the light of Isaiah 6 is incorrect, how should we understand John’s use of “glory” when it comes to what Isaiah “saw” concerning Jesus of Nazareth in John 12:41? Before providing a further answer to this specific question, consider this brief review of possible interpretations of John 12:41 by R.E. Brown:

²⁷ Texts such as Acts 5:1-9 do strongly personalize the holy spirit, in as much as it is God’s own spirit (note verse 9, “the spirit of the Lord” [*to pneuma Kyriou*]), and since he uses it to speak through others like Peter and the apostles. That is why Peter first speaks of Ananias as “lying to the holy spirit” (verse 3), but then in verse 4 Peter says, “You lied not to men but to God.” Paul shows how this can be the case, “the one rejecting you is not rejecting man but God, the one who puts his holy spirit [*to pneuma autou to hagion*] in you [*eis hymeis*].”—1 Thessalonians 4:8.

²⁸ There are good reasons for believing the “spirit of God” in the Old Testament is the same as the “holy spirit” of the New Testament. See the excellent discussion in Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo, Japan: Seibunsha, 1972). Compare note 1 on page 130 of my Third Edition of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*.

²⁹ See my entire Chapter 2, “One God, the Father,” in my Third Edition of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended* for more on the unbiblical nature of the Trinity doctrine. See also Galatians 3:20, which makes it impossible to understand “God” as a multi-personal being (as in the Trinity), since in this text Paul makes a particular metaphysic of God’s nature or being known, namely: “God” cannot *be* more than one person, which would be necessary for there to be a “mediator” and one for whom the other mediates. But, biblically, “since God is [only] one” then according to Galatians 3:20 “God” cannot be multi-personal, meaning what we otherwise elsewhere also have reasons to believe, that is, the “one God” is one *person*, namely, the “Father.”—Compare John 8:54; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

There are several possible ways to interpret this. If we accept the suggestion of a citation of a Targum, then the statement that Isaiah saw the *shekinah* [Hebrew for “dwelling”] of God may be interpreted in light of the theology of [John 1:14] where Jesus is the *shekinah* of God ... [consider also the] belief that Jesus was active in the events of the OT is attested in [1 Corinthians 10:4], where Jesus is pictured as the rock which gave water to the Israelites in the desert ... In later patristic interpretation Isaiah was thought to have hailed the three divine persons with his “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa. vi 3), and Jesus was identified as one of the seraphs who appeared with Yahweh. Another possible interpretation of John xii 41 is that Isaiah looked into the future and saw the life and glory of Jesus. This is certainly the thought found in the vision section of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (this part of the apocryphon is of 2nd-century Christian derivation). Sir xlvi 24-25 says that through his powerful spirit Isaiah foresaw the future and foretold what should be until the end of time.³⁰

Here Brown captions a number of items in one paragraph, including the view that the interpretation of John 12:41 involves a use of the term “glory” which does not relate to the vision of Jah’s glory in Isaiah Chapter 6, but rather to “the future ... life and glory of Jesus.”

Brown references the second century CE work the *Ascension of Isaiah* as supportive of this view. According to M.A. Knibb, this work is composed of more than one part, namely, chapters 1-5 known today as “the Martyrdom of Isaiah,” and chapters 6-11 known as “the Vision of Isaiah.” Further, chapters 1-5 are also composed of more than one section, including 3:13-4:22, which is known as “the Testament of Hezekiah.”³¹ Knibb also argues for a date as early as “the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C.,” for chapters 1-5, with chapters 6-11 coming from “the second century” CE, and with the completion of all sections of the book according to the present tradition occurring in “the third or fourth century” CE.³²

Yet, all throughout the *Ascension of Isaiah* we read not only about ‘glory’ and about ‘glorious beings’ in terms what we might call “spiritual radiance,”³³ but there are also several texts and sections of texts which use or which associate the use of “glory” with what Isaiah “saw” as described in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (referenced by Brown). Note that in *Ascension* 3:13 there is a vision of the “form into which” the “coming of the Beloved” will be “transformed,” namely, “the form of a man,” as well as a vision of “the persecution with which he would be persecuted,” showing he would be “crucified with wicked men.” This is followed (in 3:18) by a vision of “his ascension to the seventh heaven from where he came.” Then in even more expressly interpolated

³⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), page 487.

³¹ See M.A. Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, J.H. Charlesworth, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), page 143. The text of this work is preserved primarily in five Ethiopic manuscripts listed on page 144 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, with consideration also to a Greek fragment of 2:4-4:4 dated to the 5th/6th century CE and to two Latin translations also dating to around the 5th century CE. There is also a Slavonic textual tradition and some Coptic fragments (Sahidic and Akhmimic) related to this work. See Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” pages 144-149.

³² Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” pages 149-150.

³³ For example, in *Ascension of Isaiah* 7:2 we read, “I saw a glorious angel; his glory was not like the glory of the angels which I always used to see, but he had great glory, and an office, such that I cannot describe the glory of this angel.” Often such beings are put in direct comparison with others who have more or less “glory” (see *Ascension of Isaiah* 7:13-15, 19-20, 27, 32-37; 8:1-4). There are also direct references to the highest “glory.”—*Ascension of Isaiah* 8:8; 9:27; 10:2; 11:32.

language we read in 4:13 that “many faithful and saints ... saw him for whom they were hoping, who was crucified, Jesus ... after I, Isaiah, had seen him who was crucified and ascended” (underlining added).

The ‘transformation’ seen in *Ascension of Isaiah* 3:13 is picked up again in 8:8-10, where the angel leading Isaiah (8:5) says, “I, therefore, have been empowered and sent to bring you up here that you may see this glory, and [see the ‘Chosen One (from 8:7)] being transformed until he resembles your appearance and your likeness” (see also 8:26). In 9:12-13 the angel leading Isaiah tells him he “will see” “the Beloved ... descend into the world” and “become like you in form,” that this human form he will be ‘hanged upon a tree’ (9:14), and then after three days he will “ascend” (9:16-17).

Following these visions, in 10:7-16 Isaiah experiences a vision of the future in which “the Father of” the “Christ, who will be called Jesus,” sends him forth from heaven into the world, descending “as far as ... Sheol.” In 10:14 of this vision, the Father tells the Christ that, ultimately, “in glory you shall ascend and sit at my right hand.” In 10:18 an angel tells Isaiah, “look, that you may see the transformation and descent” of the Christ. Then in *Ascension of Isaiah* 11:1-21 visions are presented from the time of Mary and Joseph’s betrothal (11:1-2), to Jesus’ birth (11:3-14), to his ministry “in the land of Israel” and “Jerusalem” (11:18), to visions seen by Isaiah of Jesus being crucified “on a tree” (11:21). Therefore, Brown’s view that another “possible interpretation of John xii 41 is that Isaiah looked into the future and saw the life and glory of Jesus” does, in fact, have significant support from the *Ascension of Isaiah*. But what about from the biblical book of Isaiah itself and, more importantly, what do we learn from the immediate and surrounding contexts of John 12:41 when it comes to its use of “glory”?

If we consider the immediate context of events leading up to John 12:41, six days before the Jewish Passover Jesus was in Bethany where it is reported he restored life to his friend, Lazarus (John 12:1-2, 9-11). The next day there was in Jerusalem a large crowd prepared to greet Jesus when he entered the city (12:12). According to John 12:13, after “they took palm-tree branches they came near to meeting with him, and they cried out, saying, ‘Please help us, you who has been blessed as the one coming in the name of Jaho(h)-ah, the King of Israel.’”³⁴ John 12:14 records that Jesus took a more humble means of entry into the city by choosing to ride into Jerusalem on a “small donkey” (*onarion*) which, according to John 12:15, fulfilled Zechariah 9:9. Then in John 12:16 we come face to face with the first use of a term related to the noun for

³⁴ This is my own translation of the text of John 12:13 according to P⁶⁶, as represented in *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts: New and Complete Transcriptions with Photographs*, Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), page 436. I have used the anglicized form of the divine name, “Jaho(h)-ah,” in place of the *nomen sacrum* (“sacred name”) abbreviation for “Lord” in the available Greek texts, which texts include not only P⁶⁶ but also P⁷⁵, B, \aleph , A, and many others according to the **B** apparatus for such sacred names in *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: John*, Reuben Swanson, ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), page 173. However, according to the biblical Hebrew text of Psalm 118:25-26, on which the crowd’s cry in John 12:13 is based if not repeated in part, the “name” in which this one was to come is none other than the God identified by the tetragrammaton (יהוה), which in English is best known as “Jehovah” and in its shorter form, “Jah” (compare Exodus 15:2; Revelation 19:1-6). I use the form “Jaho(h)-ah” as this form represents in one form three different yet accurate means of expressing the name of the God of the biblical writings in English, namely: 1. “Jaho(h)-ah”; 2. “Jaho(h)”; and 3. “Jah.” For specific information concerning all of these forms of the biblical God’s name, see Chapter 1 in my *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*, Third Edition (2009), and more recently my article, “‘Christian’ Witnesses of Jah, Jaho(h)-ah God,” *Watching the Ministry* (April 2, 2011), which discusses the use of the divine name in relation to several biblical texts, including John 12:13.

“glory” (as used in John 12:41) in the form of the Greek verb for “glorified” (*edoxasthē*, a form of *doxazō*). The specific application of this verb is expressly stated according to verse 16:

The students of Jesus did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified then they were reminded that these things had been written concerning him and that they did these things with him.

The “when” of “when Jesus was glorified” is made more clear in this account as Greeks who had come to the festival ask Philip (one of Jesus’ students) if they can see Jesus (12:20-21). After telling Andrew and then Jesus about their interest in seeing him, according to verses 23-25 Jesus says in response:

Then Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come, in order that the Son of Man should be glorified [*doxasthē*]. Truly, truly I say to you, unless the seed of the wheat plant falls into the earth so that it may die, it remains only a seed. But if it should die, it will bring forth a great deal of fruit. The one loving his life [or, ‘soul’] loses it, and the one who is not concerned at all [or, ‘completely indifferent’] about his life [or, ‘soul’] in this world, will safeguard it for life that will continue into the coming age.

Clearly, the ‘glorification’ of Jesus which is spoken of in 12:16 is the same ‘glorification’ which is said by John to have been further applied by Jesus to the “hour” of John 12:23 forward to the time when Jesus would die, and to the point where as a result of Jesus’ death there would be “much fruit,” or people who would follow him, be with him, and whom the Father would also then “honor.”—John 12:24-26.

When Jesus finishes speaking in verse 27, he concludes his deep reflection on what he came to do in the name of the biblical God with these words, “Father, glorify your name,” for as Jesus had said earlier, just before the actual betrayal by Judas took place, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31). More specifically, Jesus speaks of “the Father” as “glorified in the Son” in John 14:13, and in John 15:8 “the Father” is “glorified” again, this time in connection with Jesus’ followers (but so also then again with Jesus in direct connection with John 12:24) as they “bear much fruit,” showing “they are [Jesus’] followers.”

This period of ‘glorification’ inclusive of Jesus’ death goes beyond it to his eventual resurrection, and then also to the “fruit” his followers would produce. Yet, as I will now further argue, this period of ‘glorification’ associated with the life and death of Jesus is seen not only from the events or from the time of John 12:23 forward to Jesus’ death and resurrection. As I intend to show in balance of this paper, Jesus’ glorification includes all of these events as well as all that preceded them in connection with Jesus’ real descent from heaven as a personal, heavenly being (taught unequivocally in John 3:13, 6:38, 8:42, 8:58, 16:27-28, and 17:18³⁵).

This one is said to have become “flesh” (John 1:14) and thereafter to have done everything in order to “glorify” his Father’s “name” (John 12:27-28). For it was in the name of the God of

³⁵ See note 6 of my online article, “Jah Loves Her, Wisdom, His Son, the Word,” *Watching the Ministry* (October 18, 2010), for a discussion of John 3:13, 6:38, 8:42, 16:27-28, and 17:18. For more on John 8:58, see Chapter 6, pages 231-299, of my Third Edition of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*; see also my answer to the question, “Why do different editions of the *New World Translation* (NWT) contain different footnotes to its rendering of John 8:58?” in “*Upon the Lampstand*” (December 17, 2009), pages 1-15 (available online through www.elihubooks.com); and see my online article, “New World Translations Footnotes to John 8:58,” *Watching the Ministry* (January 13, 2010).

Moses, and of the Prophets, and of the Psalms that the Christ or Messiah was foretold to come, just as the crowd which met Jesus on his way into Jerusalem showed by their actions and by their words.—See John 12:12-13 and Psalm 118:25-26; compare Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Psalm 45:17; Isaiah 11:2-3; Micah 5:1-4; John 5:43; 10:25; 12:49-50.³⁶

As I have noted already, in John 12:23 Jesus refers to his coming death as part of “the hour” for him to be “glorified.” Then Jesus speaks further in John 12:24-27 about what his death means. In verse 28 the Father’s voice occurs from heaven in response to Jesus. The Father’s voice sounds like “thunder” to the crowd (verse 29), but Jesus explains that the voice is for their benefit, not for his (verse 30). Jesus then comments further about how what took place signaled the ‘casting out’ of the “ruler of this world” (verse 31). Then in verses 32-33 we read:

[Jesus:] “And if I should be raised up [form of *hypso’ō*] from the earth, I will draw every kind of person to myself.” But Jesus said this in order to indicate what kind of death he was about to suffer.

In his written record of Jesus’ life and teachings, John uses forms of the Greek words for “glory” (*doxa*) and for “glorify” (*doxazō*) nineteen (19) and twenty-three (23) times, respectively,³⁷ more than any of the other Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). One of the occurrences of “glorify” is in John 12:23. But after this John/Jesus uses a different verb to convey a similar thought in John 12:32, namely, the verb for “lift up/raise up,” to which is added, “from the earth.” So for John “the hour of Jesus’ glorification” is the actual death “sentence of the cross,”³⁸ though the ‘glorification’ associated with it has been ongoing since he came to the earth as a man (John 1:14). Yet, it also continues after his death and resurrection in the form of the “fruit” put forth by his followers.—John 12:24; 15:8.

That the crowd in John 12 understands precisely what Jesus means in large part is clear from their reply in verse 34: “Therefore, the crowd of people answered Jesus, ‘We heard from the Law that the Christ remains into the coming age. So how can you say, “It is necessary to lift up [= a form of *hypso’ō*] the Son of Man”? Who is this “Son of Man”?’” Jesus answers the crowd in John 12:35-36 by telling them they still have time to become “sons of light” by “believing [= form of *pisteu’ō*] in the light,” that is, the “light” that is Jesus himself according to his own declaration recorded in John 8:12 (compare John 1:5). In John 8 we also read about the need for ‘belief’ or ‘faith’ in “the Son of Man” foretold in Daniel 7:13-14, identified as Jesus of Nazareth in John’s writings through the use of the description “Son of Man,” and in the other Gospels through Jesus’ own quotation or application of Daniel 7:13-14 in Mark 13:26 and 14:62, in Matthew 24:30 and 26:64, and in Luke 21:27 and 22:69.

³⁶ For a discussion of these and other texts pertaining to the coming of the Messiah in the name of the God of Moses, in the name of the God of the Prophets, and in the name of the God of the Psalms, see my “‘Christian’ Witnesses of Jah, Jaho(h)-ah God,” *Watching the Ministry* (April 2, 2011).

³⁷ For instances involving the use of the noun “glory,” see John 1:14 (twice); 2:11; 5:41, 44 (twice); 7:18 (twice); 8:50, 54; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:41, 43 (twice); 17:5, 22, and 24. For instances involving forms of the verb for “glorify,” see John 7:39; 8:54 (twice); 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28 (three times); 13:31 (twice), 32 (three times); 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1 (twice), 4, 5, 10; and 21:19.

³⁸ Craig Evans, “The Function of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Mark and John,” *Novum Testamentum* 24.2 (1982), page 137. Evans writes further, “[F]or ... John christology must be understood in terms of suffering and the cross” (pages 137-138); and, “for John the cross is ‘the hour’ of glorification (cf. 17:1)” (page 138).

Further in relation to this point, in John Chapter 8, after John notes Jesus’ “hour [of suffering and death] had not yet arrived,” in verse 24 Jesus again points to “belief”/“faith” (*pisteu’ō*) in him as necessary for life. That is why in verse 25 those present ask Jesus, “Who are you?” The first part of Jesus’ reply has been called “the most obscure sentence in the Gospel and the most uncertain how to translate.”³⁹ However, the rest of Jesus’ response is not nearly as disputed as verse 25,

³⁹ See Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2006), page 185. Omanson’s quote from George R. Beasley-Murray is from the *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 36, *John* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), page 125. Omanson (page 185) gives three possible ways in which to understand Jesus’ opening words in John 8:25, namely: 1. “As a question ... ‘Why do I speak to you at all?’”; 2. “As an exclamation ... ‘That I speak to you at all!’”; and 3. “As an affirmation ... ‘[I am] what I have told you from the beginning [.]’” Yet, Omanson edits out of his revision to Metzger’s *Textual Commentary* one other possible way to understand John 8:25. Indeed, Bruce M. Metzger, in both his First and Second Editions of *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971, 1994), pages 191 (First Edition) and 223-224 (Second Edition) writes (with all bracketed words original to Metzger):

Several Latin witnesses (and the Gothic), misunderstanding the Greek, translate *Principium, qui et loquor vobis* (“[I am] the Beginning, even I who speak to you”). The Ethiopic omits ὅτι (“[I am] the Beginning, and I told you so”). The Bodmer Papyri II (P⁶⁶) reads, according to a marginal correction that may be by the original scribe ... (“Jesus said to them, I told you at the beginning what I am also telling you [now]”).

Metzger writes that “several Latin witnesses” and the Gothic (and perhaps also in his view the Ethiopic) traditions represent a “misunderstanding” of “the Greek.” Compare Beasley-Murray, *John*, page 126, who also claims the Latin versions and the Ethiopic represent “a clear misunderstanding of the Gr[reek].” See also Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, page 348, “The Latin translations give prominence to a mistaken reading which cannot be justified by the Greek,” though his own reading of P⁶⁶ is itself suspect (“I told you *at* the beginning ...”). H.A.W. Meyer criticizes a similar interpretation by Augustine of Hippo (354 CE to 430 CE), writing that it is “exegetically impossible” (see Meyer’s *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John*, volume 2, Frederick Crombie, trans. and ed. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878], page 28). Still, in the writings of Augustine the understanding of the Latin versions is accepted and advanced, though ultimately with a Trinitarian, non-biblical understanding of “Beginning.” Note the following from Augustine on the meaning of John 8:25:

Therefore, when the Jews asked Him [Jesus] who He was, He answered that He was the Principle.—*The City of God*, Book 10, Chap. 24; NPNF 2, First Series, page 195.

God made all things by His Wisdom or Word, who is named in Scripture “the Beginning,” as He Himself, in the gospel, replied to the Jews when they asked Him who He was, that He was the Beginning.—*The City of God*, Book 11, Chap. 32; NPNF 2, First Series, page 223.

And the Son is also called the Beginning; for when it was said to Him, “Who art Thou?” He replied, “Even the Beginning, who also speak to you.”—*On the Trinity*, Book 5, Chap. 13; NPNF 3, First Series, page 94.

He [Jesus] replied to those who asked Him: “Who are thou?” by saying, “The beginning, for [so] also I speak to you.”—*On the Gospel of St. John*, Tractate 39.1; NPNF 7, First Series, page 222.

I intend to show in a separate writing that the Latin and Ethiopic, non-Greek witnesses may be more consistent with the Greek text of John 8:25 than some others have admitted, and with a resulting understanding that is not quite what Augustine imagined by Jesus’ as “the Beginning,” either. But Omanson does not present or mention any of the information from Metzger’s first two editions on these points, nor does Omanson reference or discuss the marginal reading of P⁶⁶ and its possible significance, which could be understood not as “at the beginning” (as per Metzger and Brown, quoted earlier in this note), but rather as more consistent with the Latin, the Gothic, and the Ethiopic translations (compare the quote from Turner below), which understand Jesus to be directly responding to the immediately preceding question in the same verse (John 8:25), “Who are you?” The answer as given in these other early versions and possibly as indicated by the marginal reading of P⁶⁶ would then further identify Jesus as “the beginning.” See the descriptions and resulting identification of Jesus as the figure of “Wisdom” in Matthew 11:19, 28-30 by comparing it with Luke 7:34-35. See also Matthew 23:34-36 and compare it with Luke 11:49-51. Further, compare the previous New Testament references with the mid-to-late-second century CE reading at 41:1 of Tatian’s “Diatessaron” (a combination, to some extent, of the four New Testament Gospels). Then compare the reading of Sirach

and yet it is perhaps equally powerful, so much so that by his words in John 8:26-30 Jesus seems clearly to have identified himself as the “Prophet” foretold through Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18-19, that is, with these words:

[Jesus, speaking to a specific group of people:] “I have many things to say and to judge concerning you. Yet, the one who sent me is true and what I heard when I was with him are the things I am speaking in the world.” They did not know that he was speaking to them about the Father. Therefore, Jesus said, “When you should lift up [= a form of *hypsō’ō*] the Son of Man then you will realize that is who I am [= “the Son of Man”], and that from myself I do nothing at all. Rather, I am speaking just as the Father taught me these things. And the one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do those things which are pleasing to him.” As he was saying these things many believed in him.

I will soon return to the use of the verb *hypsō’ō* (“lift up”) as well as further consider the verbs *doxazō* (“glorify”) and *pisteu’ō* (“believe”) in relation to Jesus’ life, death, and his identity in both John and in Isaiah (LXX). Before doing so, I will return to John 12 and begin with verse 37, which follows Jesus’ reference to himself as “the light” (*to phōs*) which others should use to “live” (= a form of the verb *peripate’ō*) rather than be in “darkness” (*skotia*), that is, while the light is ‘among them’ (*en humin*) in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. If others “believe” (= a form of *pisteu’ō*) in the “light” then “they may become sons of light” (verses 35-36).

All of these terms are found in the LXX of Isaiah 50:10 (except for “walk” [*peripate’ō*], though a similar term is used [*poreuomai*, “live”/“travel”]), where we read:

51:23-27 with Matthew 11:29-30, which I have done in note 24 of my article, “Jah Loves Her, Wisdom, His Son, the Word,” *Watching the Ministry* (October 18, 2010). Wisdom is also expressly described as “the beginning” in the Greek LXX of Proverbs 8:22 (compare note 8 in my “Jah Loves Her, Wisdom, His Son, the Word”). In addition to the possible, further identification of Jesus as “the beginning” (and so also as “Wisdom”) in John 8:25, other New Testament texts such as Colossians 1:18 (ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, [He/Jesus] “who is the beginning”) and Revelation 3:14 describe the risen Jesus of Nazareth as “the beginning.” Nigel Turner recognizes the potential meaning of John 8:25 with Jesus’ responding to the question, “Who are you?” by identifying himself as “the beginning,” but Turner also makes this unwarranted connection (with my underlining added):

If the scribe [of Bodmer P⁶⁶] represents the Alexandrine school he probably intended *archēn* (“beginning”) to be used in its more theological sense; not as the equivalent of *holōs* (“at all”), in the way St. Chrysostom understood. The scribe’s [of Bodmer P⁶⁶] interpretation was, “I am the Beginning (the Archē), as I have told you.” Incidentally, *archēn* is accusative by attraction into the relative clause. In support of this there is the Old Latin reading, “Initium, quod et loquor uobis (the Beginning, that indeed which I am telling you),” which the Bodmer’s scribe would doubtless have emended to “locutus sum (I have told you),” had he been working on the Latin text. If we could suppose that this St. John were also the author of the Apocalypse, the interpretation would be consistent with what he writes of Christ: “I am alpha and omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 21⁶). [Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), pages 141-142.]

But Revelation 21:6 does *not* have Jesus speaking the words attributed to him by Turner! Indeed, while Jesus does use the expression “the first and the last” in Revelation 1:17 and in 2:8 (though the Alexandrian reading of Revelation 1:17 and 2:8 is “the firstborn,” *not* “the first”), neither text has him using “the beginning and the end” as we see used of “the alpha and the omega” in Revelation 1:8, in 21:6, or in 22:13 (Revelation 1:10, 11 involves an interpolated reading that is not based on the best available evidence). For further discussion of “the alpha and the omega,” “the first and the last,” and “the beginning and the end” texts of Revelation, see my section, “Is Jesus ‘the Alpha and the Omega’?” from my Second Edition (2000) of *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended* (available online in the Elihu Books Topical Index under “**B**, Bible: Teachings and Issues,” and “**B**ible: Texts,” as well as under “**J**, Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended: 2nd Ed. [2000]”). Therefore, more likely connections with Jesus’ potential identification of himself as “the Beginning” in John 8:25 and Revelation 3:14 are the texts from Proverbs 8:22 and Colossians 1:18.

Who among you [*en humin*] is the one fearing the Lord [Jaho(h)-ah]? He must hear the voice of his servant [or, ‘his child’⁴⁰]. He is not a light [*phōs*] to those who live [*poreuomenoi*] in darkness [*skotei*]. You must have confidence when it comes to the name of the Lord [Jaho(h)-ah], and you must rely on God.

The above language and imagery from Isaiah 50:10 LXX is also used by Jesus in his concluding words to those present up to and including John 12:36. Then in verses 37-38 John writes as follows about the response to Jesus by those present:

But though he [Jesus] had performed many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him, in order that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which said, “Lord [Jaho(h)-ah] who believed what was heard from us? And the arm of the Lord [Jaho(h)-ah] to whom has he been made known?”

Here John quotes from Isaiah 53:1, which according to John speaks about Jah’s “arm,” a description which was used also in Isaiah 52:10 and which is followed by a detailed description of Jah’s “arm” that continues all the way through to the end of Isaiah 53:12. Therefore, consider my translation of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 52:10 through Isaiah 53:12,⁴¹ with only a couple bracketed additions to help with understanding a couple of key areas of the text (note: Isaiah 52:11-12 is omitted for this discussion):

Translation of the Hebrew Text of Isaiah 52:10-53:12

- 52:10: Jaho(h)-ah has revealed his holy arm for the eyes of all the nations, and every part of the earth has seen salvation from our God.
- 52:13: Behold! My servant will carefully consider things. He will be raised up; and he will be lifted up high; and he will be glorified to a great extent.
- 52:14: [now speaking to and of this “servant” in the second and third person:] It is as if they were appalled over you very much, for your disfigurement is because of man, and his form and appearance because of the sons of men.
- 52:15: Thus, he will sprinkle many nations with his blood [note: “with his blood” is implied by association with the verb for “sprinkle” used in the first part of the verse]. On his account, kings will shut their mouths. Because that which they had not considered they will have seen, and that which they did not hear they will have understood.
- 53:1: Who has believed where it concerns our report? And on account of whom has the arm of Jaho(h)-ah been shown?
- 53:2: And he will grow up like the young plant grows toward its top soil, and like the root grows away from the dry ground. No unique form or glory belongs to him, and we will see him but not with an appearance so that we will desire him.

⁴⁰ τοῦ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ (*tou paidos autou*), which is also what Jesus of Nazareth is called in the New Testament (see Matthew 12:18 [quoting Isaiah 42:1]; Acts 4:30). The term *paidos* is also used in the New Testament for “Israel” (Luke 1:54) and for “David” (Luke 1:69; Acts 4:25).

⁴¹ Also known or commonly referred to as simply “Isaiah 53” and as the “Fourth Servant Song,” or at times as the “Suffering Servant,” though there are four sections of the book of Isaiah that are typically referred to as “Songs of the Suffering Servant,” namely: 1) Isaiah 42:1-9; 2) 49:1-13; 3) 50:4-9; and 4) 52:13-53:12.

- 53:3: Despised and left alone by men, a man of sorrows and made to know sickness, despised like when people hide their faces, and we have not held him in high regard.
- 53:4: Truly our sicknesses he himself has removed, and our sorrows he has carried, and we ourselves considered him as one afflicted by God and disciplined.
- 53:5: But he was pierced through because of our errors, badly beaten because of our guilt, punishment for the sake of our security came to be upon him, and by his pain we have been healed.
- 53:6: We have all wandered away like a flock of sheep, like a man to his own road we have turned away. But Jaho(h)-ah has caused all of our guilt to meet up with him.
- 53:7: He himself was treated severely and put down by others, yet he does not open his mouth. He is carried along like the one among a flock of sheep taken to be slaughtered. Yet, like a quiet sheep that is about to be sheered he will not open his mouth.
- 53:8: Because of coercion and because of judgment he was taken away, and as for his generation who will consider it, for he has been cut off from the land of the living because of the error of my people, those to whom the mark of death truly belongs.
- 53:9: And his grave will be set up alongside criminals and with the wealthy at his death, though he had done nothing wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth.
- 53:10: Jaho(h)-ah desired to break him down, to make him weak. If he will serve as compensation, then his soul will see the fruit of his sacrifice. His days will continue, and the desire of Jaho(h)-ah he will advance with his hand.
- 53:11: Due to the burden of his soul, he will see; he will be satisfied with what he knows. My servant, the righteous one, he will justify many, when he himself carries their guilt.
- 53:12: And so I will give him a share along with great ones, and with mighty ones he will divide up great wealth, for he has emptied his soul all the way to death. He has been counted among those who sin, but he has carried away the sins of many, and he will stand up for those who sin.

According to Isaiah 52:10, Jaho(h)-ah's "holy arm" is 'bared before all the nations' and the ends of the earth have 'seen the salvation by him.' The Greek LXX here is essentially the same as the Hebrew text. In Isaiah 52:13 the Hebrew and Greek texts use an interjection, "Look!" or "Behold!" (Hebrew: *hineh*; Greek: *idou*), pointing to Jah's "servant" who will be "raised up" (Hebrew: *rûm*), "lifted up high" (Hebrew: *nasa*'), and "glorified to a great extent" (Hebrew: *gavah me'or*). The LXX renders these terms by forms of the verbs *hypsōō* ("lift up") and *doxazō* ("glorify") together with *sphodra* ("greatly"), two of the four key verbs which are also used in John Chapter 12 concerning Jesus of Nazareth.—See John 12:16, 23, 32, 34.

Then in Isaiah 52:14-15 Isaiah sees this very same 'extreme glory' through the manner in which Jah's "servant" (52:13) would appear and how he would affect "many nations." As noted above, John uses the same verbs ("lifted up"/"glorified") that are used in Isaiah 52:13 (LXX), and they are in both used in reference to the "servant's" (Isaiah) or Christ's (John) humanity, suffering, and eventual death. Additionally, the 'glorification' of the "servant" described in Isaiah 52:13 is similar to the "glory" described by the author of Hebrews when it comes to the humanity, the suffering, and the death of Jesus as a man:

Hebrews 2:6-9 (New Revised Standard Version [1989])

But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.” Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. [Underlining added.]

Clearly, then, we have in Isaiah, in John, and in other early Christian writings direct use of “glorify” and related verbs which have nothing at all to do with the type of radiant splendor or heavenly “glory” seen by Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-3. But there is much more evidence to show this, both from Isaiah and from John, and which evidence leads directly to John’s statement about the “glory” Isaiah “saw” according to John 12:41.

In Isaiah 52:14 the “glory” (*doxa*) of the “servant” is explicitly mentioned, not only his ‘extreme glorification’ (= *doxazō* modified by *sphodra*, in Isaiah 52:13 LXX). In other words, in 52:14 we read about Isaiah *seeing* (in vision) the “glory” of the “servant,” with “glory” in its substantive form (rather than as a verb [*doxazō*]), just as we find it used in John 12:41. Indeed, 52:14 LXX (speaking about Jah’s “servant”) reads: “Many will be shocked ... [because of] your appearance and your glory among men” (ἡ δόξα σου ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, *hē doxa sou apo tōn anthrōpōn*).

Though the ‘extreme glorification’ seen by Isaiah in 52:13 naturally entails ‘seeing the glory of the Messiah’ (which Isaiah then explicitly describes in terms similar to Hebrews 2:6-9), the use of the substantive *doxa* in 52:14 is a direct parallel to the use of the same substantive in John 12:41. Further, the use of *doxa* for the “glory” that would be ‘seen’ but not “honored among men” also fits perfectly with John’s use of Isaiah 6:10 when it comes to those who rejected Jesus of Nazareth. But the “glory” Isaiah actually ‘saw’ according to both Isaiah 52:13 and Isaiah 52:14, and through to the end of Isaiah Chapter 53, is where Isaiah ‘speaks about him’ in the manner indicated by John in John 12:41. This is the only conclusion which fits with all of the evidence and, more importantly, with the uses of “glorify” and “glory” that are actually used by Isaiah for the Messiah.

Interpretations of John 12:41 in light of what Isaiah actually “saw” *and* “spoke about” have at times been inaccurate and even misleading apart from a fair consideration of the best available evidence.⁴² Yet, when put into the full and proper context of quotations and expression, the thought and understanding of John 12:41 is rather clear: John has constructed his narrative in John 12 in such a way that it leads progressively to the obvious conclusion that the “glory” of the Messiah, as ‘seen’ by Isaiah, was fulfilled in Jesus through his appearance among men, through his rejection by others, and eventually by his death and by his resurrection. That is why in John

⁴² Like the NIV, several other English translations including the *Jerusalem Bible* (JB) and the *New World Translation*, both its original 1950 and subsequent editions including the most recent Reference edition ([NWT] Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1984) contain references to Isaiah 6:1 for the part of John 12:41 having to do with the “glory” Isaiah is said to have ‘seen.’ The NIV references Isaiah 6:1-4, while the JB cites Isaiah 6:4 and then explains in relation to it that John 12:41 is “interpreted as a prophetic vision of Christ’s glory.” However, interestingly, the NJB has neither the same references nor the same explanation given in the JB. Similarly, the *Revised Standard Version* ([RSV] New York: Nal Penguin Inc., 1974 [1952]) has a cross-reference to Isaiah 6:1 at John 12:41, while the *New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha* ([NRSV] New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) has no such reference.

Jesus is “glorified” and “lifted up” (see John 12:16, 23, 32-34, 36, 37, 38, and 41) and why the use of the same, several verbs (*doxazō*, *hora'ō*, *hypso'ō*, and *pistue'ō*) in John are also found in the LXX of Isaiah 52:10, 13, 15, and 53:1, 2, in reference to what would be ‘seen’ of the future Messiah’s “glory.”—Isaiah 52:14 (LXX).

For this reason, *after* Isaiah describes the Messiah being “glorified” (52:13 [LXX]), and *after* Isaiah speaks of the Messiah’s “glory” (52:14 [LXX]), and one verse *after* Isaiah speaks about the one whose “glory” he just ‘saw’/described, the same verb of sight used by John in John 12:14 is also used in Isaiah 53:2 (LXX), “We saw him” (*eidomen* [= a form of the verb *hora'ō*] *auton*).⁴³ It is only Isaiah 52/53, referenced directly by John in John 12:38, where we have both Isaiah ‘seeing the Messiah’s glory’ and ‘speaking about him’ in the manner in which John is presenting Jesus according to John 12, namely, as one “glorified” through his appearance among mankind and by his being wrongly “lifted up” in death, though rightly thereafter in life for him and for those who follow him.—Compare John 10:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:45; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:22-24; 1 John 4:9.

⁴³ See also the use of *opsontai* (= a form of *hora'ō*) in Isaiah 52:10 in direct reference to the “holy arm” of Jeho(h)-ah, whose “arm” (= the Messiah) is directly referenced again in Isaiah 53:1 (which is quoted by John in John 12:38), as well as the use of *opsontai* (= a form of *hora'ō*) in Isaiah 52:15, also in reference to the Messiah.