

A LETTER TO A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

Dear Jehovah's Witness

Thank you very much for stopping by to distribute your literature. In our day of godless living, many people, no doubt, slam their door. But I'm glad you came by. I am interested in spiritual things and in sharing Bible truths with others. May I share with you some important matters regarding the Bible? By having them in writing, you can consider them carefully and, I trust, objectively. Let me say, first, that there are several things about Jehovah's Witnesses that I admire. Your zeal for and involvement in your organization are unequaled by most other religious groups. Also your interest in the Bible is commendable. I assume that you, like most Jehovah's Witnesses, spend several hours every week studying the Bible. Also you and I have several things in common. I share your concern about religious apostasy in much of Christendom, your teaching against evolution and your belief in the coming Battle of Armageddon when God will destroy the forces of Satan and then establish on earth His Kingdom in which there will be universal peace and righteousness.

Rather than discussing many different teachings, I would like to suggest that we consider what is perhaps the most important issue, namely, the person of Christ. You and I both believe that Jesus Christ was a perfect Man, and that He is a person distinct from God the Father. However, you teach that before His earthly life, Christ was a spirit creature, Michael the archangel, who was created by God and became the Messiah at His Baptism. According to the well-known Jehovah's Witness publication *Let God Be True* (p. 33), Jesus is "a mighty one, although not almighty as Jehovah God is." According to John 1:1 in your Bible, *The New World Translation*, Christ is "a god" but not "the God." In other words, you teach that Jesus "was and is and always will be beneath Jehovah" and that "Christ and God are not coequal" (*The Watch Tower*, April 15, 1957).

Does the Bible substantiate these statements, or does it teach that Christ is God? This is an extremely important question.

I would like to raise the following points for you to consider prayerfully.

1. Several Bible verses specifically affirm the deity of Christ. In Matthew 1:23, Christ is called "Immanuel," which means "God with us." When Thomas touched the wounds of the risen Lord, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). There is no basis whatsoever for saying, as some Jehovah's Witnesses say, that Thomas was referring to God the Father when he said "my God." Instead Thomas called Christ both his Lord and his God and Christ did not correct him!

Colossians 2:9 clearly confirms the deity of Christ, when it states that in Him "all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily" (*New World Translation*).

Jesus Is Lord!

Stephen called Jesus "Lord" (Acts 7:59, 60), and we are to confess Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). "Lord" in these verses is *Kurios*, which is the Greek word for Jehovah in the Greek version of the Old Testament. In Exodus 34:14 it is clear that we are to worship no one but Jehovah. But in Hebrews 1:6 the angels worship Christ. In Isaiah 44:6 Jehovah is called the first and the last, but in Revelation 22:13 Christ is the first and the last. Since there cannot be two firsts nor two lasts, is it not clear that Jehovah and Christ must both be God? This reveals that "Jehovah" is used not only of God the Father, but also of God the Son. Though they are distinct persons they are each called "Jehovah" because they each possess deity.

3. Attributes of Christ show that He is God. Jesus Christ knows all things (John 1:48; 2:25; 6:64; 16:30; 21:17). He is eternal (Mic. 5:2), all powerful (Matt 28:18; Heb 1:3), sinless (John 8:46) and unchanging (Heb 13:8). Since only God possesses these attributes, this indicates that Christ possesses deity.

4. Certain works of Christ show that He is God. Jesus Christ has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-7; Eph 1:7), control nature (Matt 8:26), give eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2) and judge the world (John 5:22, 27). Since only God can do these things, does it not follow that Christ is God?

5. Christ received worship. Christ is worshipped by the angels (Heb 1:6) and by man (Matt 14:33), and yet only Jehovah is to be worshipped (Exodus 34:14). Christ Himself said that worship is due to God alone (Matt 4:10), and

yet He accepted worship. If Christ in His preexistent state were the archangel Michael, how could He have received worship, since angels are not allowed to receive worship (Rev 19:10; 22:8, 9)? If Christ were not God, then worship of Him would be idolatrous.

What about John 1:1? You say, "Christ the Word is 'a god,' according to John 1:1 in the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation*." Your translators say the small "g" is required because the Greek word for God (*theos*) is not preceded by a definite article, "the" (*ho*).

What The Greek Really Says

You are correct in saying that in John 1:1 the Greek word for God is not preceded by a definite article. However, good Greek scholarship agrees that this does not mean the word should be translated "god" with a small "g." The definite article is omitted because of a somewhat technical rule of Greek grammar.

A definite predicate nominative which precedes a verb does not have the definite article. The order of the Greek words in the last clause of John 1:1 is "God was the Word" (*theos en ho logos*). The subject of the sentence is "the Word," the verb is "was" and the predicate nominative is "God." Usually the predicate nominative follows the verb, but in this case it precedes it; and since it precedes the verb no article is necessary.

When a Greek writer wanted to stress the quality of the person or thing which was in the predicate nominative case, he would put it before the verb rather than after it. This is what John did to stress the fact that the Word (Christ) possesses the qualities of Godhood. This fundamental principal of Greek grammar thus supports the deity of Christ and gives no support whatsoever to the translation, "The Word was a god." The intent of John could be rendered in English, "The Word was fully God."

May I point out too, that even your *New World Translation* does not always follow its "no article/small 'g' rule." For example, in John 1:6, 12, 13, the word "God" does not have the article in the Greek, but it does have a capital "G" in the *New World Translation*. It is correct to use the capital in those verses but it is inconsistent with the *New World Translation* of John 1:1.

You might also be interested in noting that in John 13:3 the word "God" occurs twice, each time with a capital "G." But in the Greek the first occurrence of the word does not have the definite article and the second occurrence does. Since both obviously refer to the same person, God the Father, it would again be wrong to assume that the alleged "no article/small 'g' rule" has any validity in Greek grammar.

Another observation is that with out the article, *theos* signifies divine essence, while with the article *theos* suggests divine personality (see Dana and Mantley, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 139). Also *theos* is a definite noun and therefore cannot have the indefinite article "a."

It is important to keep in mind that when John 1:1 states that "the Word was God," it does not mean Jesus is God the Father, nor is Jesus the Trinity. The Jehovah's Witnesses booklet, *"The Word - Who is He? According to John"* (p. 6), erroneously tries to suggest that this is what non-Jehovah's Witnesses mean by their translation, "The Word was God." But this is not the case at all! As already shown, this clause stresses the divine quality of the Word. John is telling us that in the beginning the Word existed, was with God the Father and possesses full deity.

You should know too that there are verses clearly referring to Christ in which the word "God" does have the definite article ("the"), thus showing that Jesus is "the God," that is, Jehovah. (Matt 1:23, for example, which states that Jesus is Immanuel, in the Greek is rendered "With us is *the* God." Jesus is therefore the Jehovah God!). You say that Christ is "a god," according to the *New World Translation* of John 1:1 - one who was created by Jehovah. How could Christ be "a god" when in Isaiah 43:10 Jehovah says there is no God before Him or after Him? No god would ever be created by Jehovah because, as He stated, "Before me there was no God formed, and after me there continued to be none" (*New World Translation*). John 1:1 states that the Word (Christ) was with God. And yet in Deuteronomy 32:39 Jehovah states, "There is no god with Me." If Christ is not God but "a god," then Deuteronomy 32:39 is contradicted!

Isaiah and Colossians

I'm sure you are aware that Isaiah 9:6 calls Jesus Christ "the mighty God." No doubt you, like other Jehovah's Witnesses, have a ready answer for this verse. You explain that Christ is "the mighty god" but not "the almighty." You say that Christ is the mighty, never the almighty and that Jehovah is the almighty God, never the mighty. However, Jeremiah 32:18 shows that Jehovah is the mighty One. Therefore, since Christ is the mighty God (Isa 9:6) and Jehovah is the mighty God (Jer 32:18), they are both God. They both possess full deity.

What about Colossians 1:15-17? Jehovah's Witnesses refer to this passage to support their teaching that Christ was created by Jehovah (e.g., *Let God Be True*, p. 35). This is based primarily on the words, "the firstborn of all creation," in verse 15.

However, if this verse were teaching that Jesus Christ is the first created being made by Jehovah, the word "first-created" would have been used of Christ, not the word "first-born." These are two different words in the Greek, with two different meanings. "First-created" is *protoktistos*, and "first-born" is *prototokos*.

Colossians 1:15 does not use the word *protoktistos*, "first-created." Instead it uses *prototokos*. This latter word means an heir, a begotten one, the first in rank. The teaching of Colossians 1:15, then, is that Christ is first in rank above all creation; He is the Heir of all things. He is prior to all creation and superior over it as the Lord.

Your *New World Translation* adds the word "other" four times in Colossians 1:15-17, so that the passage states that Christ created "all other things," that is, everything except Himself. However, there is no basis for adding the word "other." It does not occur in the Greek manuscripts. The translators of the *New World Translation* admit this by putting the word "other" in brackets. Obviously this is done in order to comply with the assumption that firstborn means first-created. But, as we've seen, this is not the meaning of firstborn, and therefore it is also wrong to add the word "other." There is no verse in the entire Bible that states that Christ was created by Jehovah!

Some might raise a question about Revelation 3:14. This passage wrongly translated in the *New World Translation*, "the beginning of the creation of God" should be rendered "the source (or origin) of God's creation." The

Greek word for source or origin is *arch*. This is consistent with the statements in Colossians 1:16 and John 1:3 that all things were made by or had their origin or source in Jesus Christ. Since all things were made by Christ (John 1:1) and all things were made by Jehovah (Heb 3:4), both persons possessing this omnipotent creative power are God with full deity.

Philippians

What about Philippians 2:6? The *New World Translation* suggests that Christ was not equal with God and did not even want to be: "Although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God."

This is a poor translation of the Greek. The *Phillips Version* gives a much better rendering of the Greek: "He, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to His prerogatives as God's equal." The *New American Standard Version* renders it: "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped." The *Living Bible* puts the meaning in these words: "Who, though He was God, did not demand and cling to His rights as God."

It is important to remember that Philippians 2:5-8 is discussing the incarnation of Christ, His act of leaving heaven's glory and coming to the earth. By stating that He did not cling to His prerogatives and rights as God, Philippians 2:5 is saying that He willingly came to the earth. Also it is important not to overlook the first part of the verse: "He existed in the form of God." The word "form" means essential attributes. Therefore since Christ was in the form of God, that is, possessing the attributes of deity, it is wrong to suggest that He did not want to be equal with God. He already was - and is - God! The view that His being equal to God was something that He had to grasp for is excluded by the fact that He already existed in the form of God.

What about John 10:30? I assume that you, like other Jehovah's Witnesses, believe that this verse, "I and the Father are one," means that Christ was one with God the Father in purpose and not in nature and essence. However, if that were all Christ was saying, why did the Jews want to stone Him? They themselves thought His purpose was the same as God's. Verse 33 of John 10 explains that they wanted to stone Him because of blasphemy, because

He claimed to be God! The *New World Translation* uses the words "a god," but as explained earlier, *theos* is a definite noun and without the article denotes divine essence. As John 5:18 reveals, the fact that Jesus called God His Father meant to the Jews that He was making Himself "equal with God."

I have spent much time discussing the deity of Christ because this is the central point of the Scripture. Indeed, a man or woman cannot be saved unless they believe Jesus Christ is God! God Himself came to save men from their sins. The Bible teaches we are to turn to Christ as Jehovah God for salvation. Pardon from sin comes by [1] recognizing that you are a hopeless sinner in desperate need of God's mercy, grace and forgiveness (Rom 3:10, 23; Jer 17:9; Eccles 7:20; Eph 2:1-2; 1 John 1:8); [2] Realizing and believing that Jesus Christ came to earth for the explicit purpose of dying as a substitute for you (Isa 53:6; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18), bearing the penalty of your sins Himself; [3] Repenting of and turning away from all known sin {seeing sin as God sees it and being willing to forsake it} (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3-5; Acts 2:38; 3:19); and [4] Surrendering to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life allowing Him to reign in your heart (John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 4:12, 16:30; Rom 10:13).

Christ came to do more than just atone for Adam's sin and to restore "perfect human life with its rights and earthly prospects" (*Let God Be True*, p. 96). He came to forgive sins (Eph 1:7), to give eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2), to justify us {declare us righteous by His grace} (Rom 3:24), to die for our sins (Rom 5:6, 8; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18), to reconcile us to Himself {remove the enmity between man and God} (Rom 5:10), to redeem {ransom or purchase} us from the penalty and power of sin (Gal 4:4-5; Eph 1:17) to make us a holy people (Col 1:22; Jude 1:24), and to make us children of God (John 1:12).

Forgiveness of sins does not come by trying to pass the test Adam failed or to maintain "integrity" (as the August 15, 1956 issue of *The Watch Tower* suggests). By attempting to keep integrity or by works of the law, "no flesh will be declared righteous before him" (Rom 3:20, *New World Translation*).

How then can a sinful man appear righteous in the sight of God? The Scriptures say "it is a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release of the ransom paid by Jesus Christ. God set him forth as an offering for propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom 3:24, 25; *New World Translation*). On the basis of Christ's atonement

we can be pardoned and freed from all our sin and declared righteous in Christ Jesus. "By means of him (Christ) we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one, yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of undeserved kindness" (Eph 1:7; *New World Translation*).

You can have forgiveness of sins, declared righteous in God's sight, and be freed from the power of sin by accepting Christ's atonement for you, by making Him your personal Lord and Savior. Though you are a sinner who has fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23), you can be pardoned and freed from your sins by placing your trust in Jesus Christ! Millions who have done this through the centuries have experienced a miraculous change of heart and life (John 3:3) as He promised. Will you forsake your sin, your false notions, and your dead works and turn to Jesus Christ asking Him to forgive you and make you whole? What will you do with Jesus Christ who is God?¹

- Incidentally, it is also important to note that in the past your organization has established a very confusing view of the end times as indicated by their record of setting erroneous dates for Christ's return. The world's end has been prophesied for 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, and 1975. Will you trust the eternal welfare of your soul to the teachings of those who have been the originators of such obvious falsehood?

Deut. 18:22 *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

¹ This tract was adapted from the *Moody Monthly* article by Dr. Roy Zuck, March 1973.