

"Letter to a Jehovah's Witness"

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written by Roy B. Zuck

Academic Dean at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas

Share this with him when he comes knocking.

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by ROY B. ZUCK

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Dear Jehovah's Witness:

That 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 unequalled 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 discuss 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 as 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 no co-equal" (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 Witnesses say, that Thomas was referring to Christ when he said "my Lord" but 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. Is it not rather evident from this that Christ the Lord (Kurios) is Jehovah God?

2. Several verses show that the Christ of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. For example, Isaiah wrote about Jehovah in Isaiah 6:1-10, and John in John 12:31-42 says that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of Him.

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 and 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 (Exod.34:14). Christ Himself said that worship is due to God alone (Matt.4:10), and yet He accepted worship. If Christ in His pre-existent 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 Greek 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 a 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 principle 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 without 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 "Jesus is 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 to 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. (Matthew 1:23, for example, which states that Jesus is Immanuel, in the Greek is rendered "with us is the God". Jesus is therefore 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 that 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 "firstborn". These are two different words in the Greek, with two different meanings. "First-created" is protoktistos, and "firstborn" is protokos. Colossians 1:15 does not use the word protoktistos, "first-created". Instead it uses protokos. The 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 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 arche. 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.

## **PHILLIPIANS**

What about Phillipians 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 with 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 Phillipians 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, Phillipians 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 with 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 Scriptures. 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 sinner in need of God's grace (Rom.3:10, 23;

Jer.17:9; Eccles.7:20; Eph.2:1, 2; 1 John 1:8); (2) realizing 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; and (3) receiving Jesus Christ into your heart as your Saviour (Acts 16:30, 31; John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 4:12; Rom.10:13).

Christ came to do more than just atone for Adam's sin and to restore "perfect human life with it's 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 (1 Pet.2:24; 3:18; Rom.5:6, 8), 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 1:7), 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 as 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 from all our sin and declared righteous in Christ. "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 and be perfectly righteous in God's sight by accepting Christ's atonement for you, by receiving Him as your personal Saviour. Though you are a sinner who has fallen short of God's glory (Rom.3:23), you can be pardoned of your sins and declared righteous in Christ by placing your faith (trust) in Him. Millions who have done this through the centuries have experienced a miraculous change of heart and life as He promised. Will you turn to Him now, asking Him to forgive you of your sins and be your Saviour?