

JESUS IS JEHOVAH

How to Witness to Jehovah's Witnesses About The Deity of Christ

Part One

By R. K. McGregor Wright, Ph.D.

1. How Could Jesus Be *Both* God And Man?

These days, hardly nobody denies that Jesus was a real human being, or that he had a "human nature," if they believe he existed at all. Today the big problem is to convince people he was anything else than a man. We live in an anti-supernaturalist age when the most "objective" type of knowledge is the kind of knowledge we encounter in the physical sciences -- things like "The formula of water is H₂O," or "The nearest star is about 4.5 light-years from the earth." The average person has no idea how to actually prove such statements, but we have such overwhelming confidence in "science" that we trust that they can be proved somehow.

At the same time, people these days think religion only requires "faith" rather than proof, and that religious claims are not supposed to be provable at all. In fact, most people think faith and reason are necessarily incompatible, because they are different "types" of knowledge altogether. They think science is "objectively true" while religion is only "subjectively true," if it is true at all. But it was not always like this. There was once a time when "science" was really little more than philosophy mixed with various occultisms such as astrology, and people thought water was one of only four elements, and believed that the stars were very close indeed. They also had no trouble believing that a man might actually be a god visiting the earth, and not have a human nature at all. In such a case, the man people saw was but a disguise, an "appearance" only.

One thing they were perfectly clear about, for their philosophy made it clear; it was impossible for someone to be both God and a man at the same time. Even the Jews, who ought to have known better, agreed with the Greeks about this; the coming Messiah would no doubt be a man, for he would be a descendant of David, and would be born in Bethlehem. But he could not be God. So when Jesus admitted to his enemies during his trial that he had in fact claimed to be the Son of God, thereby implying that he participated in the deity of Jehovah himself, the High-priest accused him of blasphemy. How could this man standing before them be God? Their philosophical and theological presuppositions ruled that out from the start.

II. Arianism

The Arians of the fourth century were caught in this rationalist tradition. They too, reasoned philosophically that because there was only one God, Jesus could not also be God. As a man, he could share some of the divine attributes, and so be called "a god," but he could not be eternally the

Son of God. They reasoned that as the "begotten" Son, he must have been the first created being. They assumed the references in the Bible to the Son's "begetting," must refer to his original creation, and they argued from Proverbs 8:22f., as if it taught Wisdom was created. In fact, verse 22 was translated in the Septuagint as "The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways, etc.," although the Hebrew term appears twelve times in Proverbs with the meaning of "acquire" or "possess." When the Arians equated the Logos of John's Gospel with the Wisdom of Proverbs, they reasoned that this proved the Logos was created. So Jesus could be "a god," but he could not be Jehovah himself.

During the first two centuries of the Christian Church, Bible students reasoned that not only was all the Arian exegesis of the various texts invalid, since it was based on presuppositions drawn from non-christian philosophy, but that there were many textual proofs which could only mean that the New Testament writers believed Jesus to be Jehovah incarnate. Accordingly, when the question came to a head at the Councils of Nicea in 325 and Chalcedon in 451 A.D., the Church reaffirmed that the Son was "of the same substance" with the Father, thereby being eternal, rather than being only of a similar substance (merely "a god"), with a beginning in time. Therefore, in the incarnation, the one Person of the Son of God had both a complete human and a complete divine nature. That is, the eternal Person of the Son added to himself a complete human nature, through which he expressed his person-hood on earth to as great a degree as the human nature was capable. As a more recent incarnational hymn has it, when we look at the baby in the cradle at Christmas, we "veiled in flesh the Godhead see," and so "hail the incarnate Deity." So Jesus was not part god and part man, nor was he a mixture of divine and human attributes, nor was he a god who only appeared to be human, nor was he a man who was adopted into sharing some of the divine attributes. Jesus was 100% God and 100% Man, and the Person who shone through the human nature was the one Person of the eternal Son of God. And the same situation obtains today. The Incarnation is just as complete and real now as it was in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. The One true Mediator between God and Man, is "the man Christ Jesus" (1Tim 2:5).

The affirmation that the Son is eternal, being of the same "substance" (or fundamental reality) as the Father, secured the subsequent development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus was God, not just "a god." The Prophet Isaiah had said that there was no other god in existence other than Jehovah himself (Isa 41:4, 42:8-9 and 17, 43:10-11, 44:6-8 and 24, 45:5-7 and 14 and 21, etc.), so the Arians were really polytheists (like the pagans whose philosophy they had compromised with), believing in one big God and other smaller gods and angels, of whom Jesus happened to be the first. But to say the Son is eternal is to say Jesus is Jehovah, for there can be only one eternal.

III. Jehovah's Witnesses Are Basically Arians

The Watchtower society holds essentially the same view of Jesus as was condemned by the early churches at Nicea in 325, when they repudiated the importation of Greek philosophical presuppositions into the Christian world view. The Bible must be accepted on its own terms, and not filtered through a humanistic sieve of rationalist assumptions borrowed from paganism.

Nicea reaffirmed that those passages which teach the full Deity of Christ must be received at face value, and not diluted by rationalism. If the Bible says Jesus was a man, we believe this against the Greek Gnostics and Docetists who argued that he was indeed God, but that the human nature was just an appearance; he just "seemed" (*dokein*) to be a man. And if the Bible says he was Jehovah-God, then we believe this also, against those false philosophies which reason that he cannot be both human and fully divine. The Incarnation was the Incarnation of Jehovah.

When the Jehovah's Witnesses come to the door, they are not primarily interested in arguing

theology, or even in Bible study. They are interested in getting people with a grudge against their past church experience to study with them, with "God's organization," apart from which no truth about the Bible can be had. They do not believe the Bible can be understood without a divinely appointed teacher, and since they deny the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead (as the Bible requires), the Holy Spirit cannot be that teacher.

Instead of trusting Jesus' promises about the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God, the Witnesses trust their own anonymous literature controlled as it is, by a "college of cardinals" called the "Governing Body" of nine to fifteen men meeting in Brooklyn, New York. These men function in the Watchtower organization in exactly the same way as the Vatican functions in the Roman Catholic Church, as the final interpreting authority who alone can interpret the Bible correctly. In other words, the Watchtower Society is a daughter of Mystery Babylon (Rev 17), controlled as it is, by pagan philosophical thinking. The Watchtower does not get its presuppositions from the Bible any more than the Arians did of old.

But presuppositions govern conclusions just as surely as the International Rules govern the game of Chess. They define what counts as a valid move all across the board. Therefore, we must become more self-conscious about our presuppositions. We must examine ourselves to see what assumptions control our thinking. Are we willing to let God speak to us in his written Word, and let him interpret his own Word to us by his Holy Spirit, or must we forever reach for finite human authorities to tell us what it can and cannot mean according to extra-biblical assumptions borrowed from the world's philosophies?

Just like Arianism was, the doctrines of the Watchtower are complex and involve alterations to virtually everything the Bible teaches. The Watchtower denies everything of importance to the Gospel of Christ, including the substitutionary atonement, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection, justification by faith alone, the regeneration of the believer, eternal security, and eternal punishment. From then on, everything is different, despite some apparent similarities of terminology. This means that when they are getting little satisfaction out of a discussion of one point, they will simply change the subject, hoping you will follow them there, where a whole new set of texts can be presented to the unsuspecting listener.

They are trained by each other to shift the ground to another topic, in the hope that eventually you will be intrigued enough to come to one of their "Bible studies" which will really be a study of one of their magazines called *Awake* or *The Watchtower*. They do not encourage people to study the Bible by itself, but only through their literature. And you cannot even find out who the authors are, because all their material is anonymous. You either believe their materials or you remain in darkness. Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Watchtower, even said that it was his experience that anyone who claimed to study the Bible by itself alone would "pass into darkness within two years."

Accordingly, the Witnesses will jump from text to text in quick succession, creating an impressionistic picture of having the Bible on the side of their peculiar doctrines. If they find out that you have a good knowledge of their ideas already, they will quickly find a way of closing the conversation and getting out of there; they want to talk to ignorant people, not argue with Biblically prepared individuals.

Remember, the Watchtower teaches you cannot have assurance of salvation unless you are actually going door to door and drawing more people into the Society. In fact, the Witnesses at the door are really earning their salvation by their witnessing, hoping to escape Armageddon, and to survive into the millennium. So naturally once they realize you are a bad prospect they lose interest quickly. The trick is to make it difficult for them to leave. You must always maintain the status of an interested

seeker in Scripture (how else should a Christian read the Bible?) who would be glad to talk with them if they have time at all, for in order to make any impression you will have to get them to come back several times. You can't do much in one unplanned meeting.

If they offer you literature, take it gladly. It's better for you to have it, than for some unsuspecting person to read it thinking it is a form of Christianity. If they have a copy of their Bible, the *New World Translation*, make sure they leave you a copy. And if they have tracts or books on the doctrine of God and the Trinity, get them too. They also print a very important text containing all their arguments against Christian doctrine, called *Reasoning From The Scriptures*. Buy this from them as soon as you can; it's a very important source of their techniques, and a sort of summary of all their apologetic arguments. You need it.

IV. The Need For A Strategy As Well As Proof-Texts

How then, can we witness to Jehovah's Witnesses? It must be insisted from the outset that we must assume they are sincere in their beliefs, for they would have dropped out long ago if they were not. Door-to-door evangelism is tiresome and frustrating, and gives the Watchtower people the feeling they are being persecuted.

Often one of the two who come to your door is less experienced, and is being trained by the (usually) older one. So try to concentrate on the one who seems less experienced, less certain of himself, asking him a lot of questions, taking nothing for granted, insisting that they prove each point from the Bible. Of course, they will not allow that person to come back again, but they will replace him/her by a much more experienced and committed heretic to "deal with" you. But sowing seeds of doubt about the infallibility of the Watchtower has produced unexpected fruit in God's timing.

But the Witnesses are trained to expect rebuffs and rudeness, which they get a lot of; most people simply turn them away with "No thanks I'm a Baptist (Catholic, Christian, Agnostic, etc.)" and close the door on them, so they are always pleasantly surprised to hear you say "Of course I would love to talk with you, so come right in and sit down. Would you like a cup of tea or something? I love to hear people talk about the Bible."

Make sure you listen carefully to them for half an hour or so, asking questions only for clarification, questioning nothing. This gives you the right to say something concrete to them; you have earned the right to be heard. Remember, these people have no clear idea what the Gospel is; they do not know Jesus as their personal Savior like you do, so you have an important testimony they need badly to hear. At some point early in your developing relationship with them (perhaps in the second meeting) make sure they know good and clearly what "Jesus is my Savior" really means to you personally. You are responsible to the Lord to make sure they do hear the Gospel at some point in your meetings with them, whether they will listen long enough to get the Bible proofs that Jesus is Jehovah or not.

THE KEY POINTS OF THE STRATEGY ARE TWO ONLY:

1. Limit The Discussion To Scripture Only

The Watchtower has a strategy, and you must have a strategy too; just quoting texts at each other is hardly enough. This "battle of the texts" usually amounts to "Well, you have your interpretation, and we have ours," and nobody convinces anybody. To avoid this dilemma, you must request agreement on two things right at the start.

First; You must limit the discussion to the Bible alone.

Second; You must stick to the one topic of the Deity of Christ.

At least in theory, the Watchtower person will readily agree with you that the Bible as the Word of God, is the final authority in matters of religion. It is therefore quite easy to get them to agree to appeal to the Bible alone, and not argue about what some encyclopaedia or their own literature may say. This is important, because it is easy to get tangled up in what the Catholics or the Baptists think about something, and then never get to the Bible.

2) Stick To One Subject—The Deity of Christ

Then secondly, you need some way of stopping them from changing the subject when they run out of ideas. You can say, "Well, it seems to me from what you have said so far (you just listened to them for thirty minutes, remember) that you are saying Jesus is partly divine, and can be called 'a god' in some sense, but he is not the Almighty God, or the Jehovah of Genesis and Isaiah. This is such an important point, and its very different from what I think the Bible is saying. It seems to me if we don't get it straight who Jesus is, nothing else really matters much. We need to be at least worshipping the right God, don't we, so would you mind if we dealt with this question first? Perhaps you can begin by telling me exactly from the Bible who you think Jesus is and how he relates to God the Father." They will readily agree with this.

You have just saved yourself from endless debates about the date of the second coming, whether heaven will really be on earth or not, which church is the "true church," and where the dead are, etc. Now you can stick solidly to the Deity of Christ and nothing else needs to get in the way. It was Jesus himself who asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" and it is still the biggest question of all.

Don't be afraid to use their own Bible translation. It has serious problems, but if you follow the present method, the translation will make no difference. In fact, it will be possible to incidentally undermine their faith in this ridiculous translation without even seeming to do so. They should go away very puzzled at the contradictions and inconsistencies in their "authoritative" version, thereby undermining the reliability of "God's Organization."

Do not use the modern liberal versions such as the *New English Bible* or the *Revised Standard Version*, or paraphrases like the *Living Bible*. The *King James* is OK, but the *New American Standard Bible* or the *New King James Version* are better. But their own *New World Translation* (NWT) is the most useful in the long run, because they cannot appeal from it to another version. Of course, you will already have looked everything up in your own NKJV or other trustworthy version, so nothing can take you by surprise.

If you do not have a strategy you will be at the mercy of the Witnesses' own methods and it will be next to impossible to get anything done. Using the following method, you will keep the subject on track and make some progress towards showing them the massive evidence in the Bible for the idea that Jesus is Jehovah.

Part Two

By R. K. McGregor Wright, Ph.D.

This three-part article is continued from Jesus is Jehovah - Part One.

V. Avoid The Familiar Texts

Remember, the Watchtower does not teach its people how to understand Bible verses and arguments in their natural context. Their books just quote verses that seem to be relevant, and no serious exegesis of extended passages is attempted. They are therefore familiar with a large amount of separate texts and are most comfortable if they can stay with these selected texts. So do not use the usual proofs for Christ's divinity. Do not start with John 1:1 about the Word being God. They already have their own little dance to do about this text, and it is based on their ignorance of Greek.

Since they have their *Emphatic Diagloa*, or *Kingdom Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, they can always snow you by quoting their own translation and appealing to the Greek, of which they have no useful knowledge. Then it just becomes a "battle of the authorities," and nobody can win. This is why you must use their translation. And do not go to John 8:58 (I am) because their translation butchers that too. And do not use 1 John 5:8-9 in the *King James Version*, because it is probably a spurious addition, and does not appear in modern versions. Romans 9:5 also teaches that Jesus is "God blessed forever," but this is often mistranslated in the modern liberal versions (such as the RSV) to look like a doxology much like *the New World Translation*, so avoid that too. Use only arguments which they have almost never seen before.

VI. Use The "Indirect" Method

By the "indirect method" I mean that first you must get their agreement with the premises of your argument, and then show them that the apparent conclusion is in fact unavoidable. If the premises come from their own translation, they have nowhere to go except out the door in a hurry! They will of course, resist the necessary conclusion, however clearly the premises demand it, but you must depend on the Holy Spirit to testify to his own logic, and use his own Word to regenerate the confused mind of the Witness.

God tells us in such passages as James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:22-25, and in John 1:11-13,3:3-8, and Hebrews 4:12-13, and Isaiah 55:6-11, that he regenerates us by using the power of his Holy Spirit applying his Word to our hearts. We must trust the Lord to regenerate whom he will (Romans 9:18) for all that the Father has given to the Son will infallibly come and be saved (John 6:37-39, 44 and 65). Considering how confidently they trust in their own reasoning, these verses in John should be very frightening to the Witnesses.

VII. Arguments Found In The Bible Itself

1) Start With Romans 1:18-21, and Move to Colossians 2:9.

Use Romans 1 to get their agreement that the Creator God revealed in the creation (verse 20) is indeed Jehovah. They will agree readily that when it speaks of "his eternal power and divine nature," it means the eternal nature of Jehovah as the Creator. Their NWT says "his eternal power and Godship." This sounds like rather odd English, but is technically correct, and helps your case. The Creator's "Godship" then, is the combination of attributes which identify Jehovah as the Almighty God. This is the first premise of your argument.

You must then point Out that this word for "godhead," or "Godship," occurs only twice in the whole New Testament -- here, and in Colossians 2:9. Going to this context you find that verses 8-9 speak of "Christ; because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." The word

for "divine quality" in the NWT is the same word as appeared in Rom 1:20, and means Godship or Deity. The Greek spelling is slightly different because this form of the word derives from the noun and the form in Rom 1:20 derives from the adjective, but even a Jehovah's Witness can see that it is from the same root *Theios*, which meant "having the nature of God."

The Colossians text may now be paraphrased "For in Christ dwells [as its natural home], the entire completeness [all the fullness] of what makes God to be God [the Godship], in bodily form." Or to put it another way, the entire completeness of the Creator Jehovah dwells in the body of Christ. The NWT term "divine quality" may seem weaker at first, but the Witness has already agreed from Romans that it means that the very "quality" referred to is what makes God recognizable as the eternal Creator. "Divine quality" is what makes God to be God.

The Witnesses will not want to accept this conclusion, but you must press it strongly, that if the word means full Deity in one Pauline passage it must surely have that same meaning in the only other place it occurs. Therefore, Colossians states that Jesus is fully God. The expression "all the fullness of the divine quality" could mean nothing else.

Ask the Witnesses if they think this could have been a slip of the pen on Paul's part. They will not want to allow this, which would undermine the authority of the Bible. Now you are ready to take them indirectly to another case in Paul's letters.

2) Start Again With Isaiah 45:23, and Then Go To Philipians 2:5-11.

Isaiah Chapters 40-48 contain the highest expression of monotheism to be found in the Old Testament. Read the following verses with the Jehovah's Witness, being careful to offer few if any comments, and then only to emphasize that Isaiah obviously believed that Jehovah, as the eternal Creator of the world, is repeatedly claiming here to be the only existing God.

In Isaiah 40:3, the coming Messiah is "the LORD."

In 40:10, the coming one is "the Lord God."

In 40:13, nobody can tell the Holy Spirit how to understand the Bible.

In 40:25, nobody is even "like God."

In 41:21-24, only Jehovah as Creator, can predict the future.

In 42:8, Jehovah will not share his divine glory with a lesser being.

In 42:17, it is shameful to worship a lesser god than Jehovah.

In 43:1, the Lord is the Creator; 3, the Savior; 10, to whom Israel witnesses that he is the only existing God and Savior.

In 43:13, nobody can reverse a decision of Jehovah; 25, he saves us for his own sake (glory), and not for our sakes.

In 44:6, there is no god besides Jehovah; 8, and he recognizes no other God but himself.

In 44:24, Jehovah created the heavens all by himself, and the earth all alone; 28, even a wicked King Cyrus will do exactly what he wants.

In 45:5, beside Jehovah there is no god; 6, "no one beside Me";

In 45:14-15, no other Savior; "there is no other God beside Me."

Its pretty hard to weaken this kind of testimony, so repetitive and pervasive does it appear throughout Scripture. Isaiah is certainly a clear example of God's attitude towards people who want to have more than one "god."

Jehovah is not just the biggest god in town, but the only one; "Before Me there was no god formed, and there will be none after Me. . . I am the first, and I am the last, and there is no god besides Me" (43:10, 44:6). The "gods" of the heathen are mere idols, figments of the gentile imagination, represented by carved trees and stones. It is wicked and sinful to imagine any other god as existing before the face of Jehovah God.

This view of God is called "monotheism," while a person who believes in more than one god is a "polytheist." Paul tells us that the "many gods" of the gentiles are really just demons when there is any spiritual power at all behind the visible idol. There can only be one eternal being, only one absolute, only one ultimate, and the Bible presents that as being Jehovah only.

This is not a negotiable issue, for the ultimate reference-point for truth determines all else; to change one's god is by implication to change one's universe, and with it one's whole world of discourse. A person who claims to worship Jehovah and who then says that Jesus is "a god" also, is just a polytheist hiding under the guise of Jehovah-worship. One God does not mean two, even if the second one is smaller, or created and therefore finite.

Another way of making this point is to ask the Witnesses whether Jesus is "a true God" or "a false God." If he is a false God, why do they give him any attention at all, and if he is a true God, they are not really monotheists, and come under the judgment of the prophet Isaiah in the above passages. The only remaining possibility is that they agree with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; Jehovah is one, tri -personal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The next step in this argument is to look at the last verses of Isaiah 45. In verses 22-23 we read that Jehovah ("I am God and there is no other,") swears "by Myself, . . . that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear (allegiance.)" Jehovah swears by himself because there is nothing and no one above him to whom he could appeal for confirmation. This is what it means to be "absolute" or "ultimate." The Witnesses will agree with this, and it makes no difference which translation they refer to.

3) Now Turn To Philippians 2:9-11.

The third step is to turn to Paul's quotation of Isaiah 45 in Philippians 2:10-11, that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." It seems that here we have another Pauline slip of the pen. This trained Rabbi, who knew much of the Old Testament off by heart in the original Hebrew (for this was how the Rabbis taught the Bible in those days), changed the speaker in the quotation from Me (Jehovah) to Jesus. His use of this verse from the strongest passage on Jehovah's monotheism in the whole Bible, shows that Paul believed Jesus to be Jehovah. He could hardly make it any clearer.

How could anyone with a knowledge of Hebrew make an error like this? He states that it is to the glory of the Father that the Son be given "the name which is above every name." But there is only one name above every (other) name, and that could only be "Jehovah." No other name could be higher than that (verse 9). Therefore, it is to the glory of the Father that the Son be called Jehovah. If this is not so, then it would be idolatry for "every knee" to bow "at the name of Jesus." The personal name "Jesus" actually means "The Lord saves."

This argument is rationally irresistible, but the Witnesses may still prefer their college of cardinals in Brooklyn to the Apostle Paul. Of course, to admit that the Bible in any sense allows that Jesus is Jehovah is to admit that the Watchtower is a false prophet.

VIII. What Is The Trinity?

At some point in their presentation the Witnesses will have made a reference to the "Trinity doctrine." It is always interesting to ask them what they think the Trinity really is, because they usually have only the vaguest notion, and habitually quote inaccurate encyclopaedia articles written by liberal or secular writers, to explain what they think it is.

They also use the classical agnostic trivialisation of the doctrine which claims the idea of a Trinity is "mathematically absurd" because $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$, not 1! They do not seem to be aware that when we say "God is one" and "God is three," the one and the three refer to different referents; one substance, and three persons. They may then be told that the Trinity is not a "thing" but a group of six minimal doctrines separately found in the Bible. You can then offer to explain what you understand by the term "Trinity."

The six separate doctrines are as follows;

1. "The Father is Jehovah," which the Watchtower agrees with,
2. "The Son is Jehovah," which they reject,
3. "The Holy Spirit is Jehovah," which they reject because they also reject the personality of the Spirit. For the Witnesses, the Holy Spirit is just a power or force from God when he is acting at a distance.

Together, these three simple propositions describe the Unity of the substance or being of God. Then there are three more;

4. "The Father is not the Son," which they agree with,
5. "The Son is not the Spirit," which they agree with, and
6. "The Father is not the Spirit," which they agree with.

Together, these last three propositions describe the distinction between the eternal Persons of the Godhead of the One Deity of Jehovah. Together, these six propositions outline the essential features of the doctrine of the Trinity.

But notice that the Jehovah's Witnesses already agree with four out of the six propositions. This makes them already two-thirds Trinitarian!! They will be very shocked to observe this, for they have heard so much nonsense about the "pagan doctrine" of the Trinity that it never occurs to them to find out what it really amounts to. It would only be necessary for them to agree with statements 2. and 3. to become full Trinitarians. You have already established that the Son is Jehovah, and the third can be easily proved from 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, where even their own translation correctly says, "Jehovah is the Spirit" and then speaks of "Jehovah the Spirit."

The personality of the Holy Spirit is also indicated in John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-15, or Ephesians 4:30, where the Spirit is variously said to teach, witness, glorify Christ, guide believers, hear, speak, and disclose truth, and be grieved with our sin. Would the Witnesses like to argue that witnessing is an impersonal act? Can electricity be grieved? Of course not.

Part Three

By R. K. McGregor Wright, Ph.D.

This three-part article is continued from [Jesus is Jehovah - Part Two](#).

IX. John's Logos; The Word Was God.

A glance at an interlinear Greek-English New Testament such as the Watchtower's *Emphatic Diaglot* soon shows that they translate the phrase "and the Word was God" in John 1:1, as "the Word was a god." The newer version of this is called *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, and reprints the Westcott and Hort Greek text.

How exactly, are we to honor the Son of God in our personal worship? Is he to be given a lower

form of worship than we give to the Father, like the Catholics tell us that they give to Mary or the saints? Or is Jesus to be given the same honor in worship as we give to his Father? John has already answered this question for us in his chapter five, "For the Father. . . has committed all judging to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father" (John 5:22-23). John held that we should worship the Son with the very same level of honor with which we honor the Father. This of course, is only possible if the Son is himself fully God.

So what about the Witnesses' treatment of John's first verse? The Watchtower's *Interlinear* states in its Appendix that when the Greek noun *Theos* is "without the definite article," it should be rendered "and the Word was a god." It is easy to see from the *Interlinear* that the definite article (*ho*, the) is missing from the second occurrence of *Theos* (God) in this opening verse of the Gospel. Aside from the fact already established that this peculiar rendering makes John contradict Isaiah (that there is no other god besides Jehovah), is it really true that the absence of the definite article means the presence of the indefinite article "a" or "an?"

To begin with, there is no "indefinite article" in Greek. When the Greeks wanted to express that there is an indefinite example of something (not "the,") they used "one (thing)" or "some (things)." These forms do not appear in this verse, making "a god" a very unlikely rendering. The Watchtower translators then show on the very same page that "a god" is wrong when they translate verses 6, 12, 13, and 18.

Verse 6; "sent from a god"?

Verse 12; "children of a god"?

Verse 13; "born of a god"?

Verse 18; "no man has seen a god"?

Compare these with,

Verse 19; "the record of the John (*ho in the form tou*)"?

Compare also verse 15, where "John" appears without the definite article, with verse 26, where the definite article does appear as *ho*. Should this be rendered as "the John answered"? If the answer is NO, then in 1:1, *ho Theos* (here in the accusative form *ton Theon*) should not be translated "the God."

Not only does the Watchtower not render *Theos* by "a god" in these four verses, but it would make nonsense of the verses to do so, as a comparison with verses 19 and 26 demonstrates. The real reason for the use of the definite article in this way in the New Testament is the peculiarity of Greek that occasionally it uses a definite article before proper names to indicate emphasis only. It has nothing to do with the presence or absence of "a" or "an" which is an English phenomenon only. In other words, although they know quite well that Greek has no indefinite article, the Watchtower translators (presumably Fred W. Franz) inserted it from the English and then based the argument against the correct translation "and the Word was God," or "and God was the Word" (the original order in the Greek), on the English distinction. They then contradict this weird treatment of John 1:1 in the rest of the very same chapter (to say nothing of the rest of the New Testament). This gives you some idea why you never meet a Jehovah's Witness who has a degree in New Testament Greek.

In the back of the *Kingdom Interlinear*, reference is made on pages 1158-1160 to the opinions of the New Testament Greek Grammar of the well-known scholars Dana and Mantey. This caused Dr. Mantey to tell a Mr Van Buskirk (letter of February 25, 1974) who had written to him about it, that the Witnesses had misused his views and misrepresented him by quoting him out of context, and that he regarded their use of his published writing as not honest. The reader can find the details in the Appendix to *Jehovah of the Watchtower* by Walter Martin and Norman Klann.

The only reason for translating John's statement that "and the Word was God" by "and the Word was a god" is to destroy its plain testimony to the full Deity of the Word. There is no question that

this was their purpose, because they did not follow through with similar verses in the same chapter.

The average Jehovah's Witness may be perfectly sincere in his ignorance, but the same cannot be said of the leadership who produced this highly tendentious *New World Translation*.

In response to this exposure of the inconsistency of their own translation, the Witnesses will probably refer to such verses as "the Father is greater than I." But such verses merely show that the three Persons are distinct, or that Christ as man obeyed the Father in the incarnation. They do not show that Jesus did not have a truly divine nature. The Witnesses commonly draw conclusions from such verses which are not warranted by the premises. Just writing out their argument on paper will show this. It is easier to get away with invalid reasoning in conversation than it is if the argument is on paper.

John 1:1-3 contains much more of interest about the Logos. If Christians are right, because "the Word was with God" already in the beginning, he must have preceded time. This is important, because it would then necessarily follow that he was eternal. And this is exactly what these verses teach.

We are told in verse 3, that "All things came into being through him." The term for "All things" is the usual expression in Greek philosophy for the world, the cosmos as a whole, *ta Panta*, "the Everything." The finite and temporal cosmos did not exist forever in eternity, like God; there was a time when it "came into being," or "became". The Word did not come into being, for the little noticed verse 2 tells us that he already "was" in the beginning with God. In fact, as if to reinforce this thought, verse 3 continues to say that nothing "became" without this prior creative activity of the Word. That is, the Word preceded all things which "became."

This Prologue to John's Gospel therefore carefully distinguishes between temporal things, all of which "come into being," for which the verb "to become" is used, and those things which already existed before the things (*ta Panta*) which came into being, God and his Logos, for which the simple verb "to be" is used in the form "was." To put it another way, the creation "became," while those things which were eternal simply "were" in the beginning.

The key point of these opening verses, is that the Logos is eternal. This simple consideration by itself is quite enough to establish with certainty that the Watchtower is not "God's Organization," but just another heretical sect.

This distinction between a temporal becoming versus an eternal being is carefully maintained elsewhere in this Gospel. In Chapter 8, Jesus is defending himself against his enemies the Pharisees. In verses 13-18 he claims to be the self-identifying One of the Old Testament; "I am he who bears witness of himself" (Exodus 3:13-14). His enemies saw the connection and questioned who his Father was (verses 18-20). Jesus tells them in verses 44-47 that they are "of [their] father, the devil," and their answer is simply that he is demon-possessed. Finally, Jesus tells them in verse 56 that he was seen by Abraham. Predictably, they jeer that "you are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

At this point, if the Witnesses are correct, Jesus ought to have responded with "Yes, before Abraham came into being, I already was." This would have been a simple claim to having preexisted with Abraham, like any other angel. Instead, Jesus says that "before Abraham came into being, I AM." This confirms that when he had said that he was "he who bears witness of himself," (verse 18), he was indeed identifying himself not just as the first created being, but as Jehovah himself. "He was in the beginning with God" because he preceded everything that "came into being."

When we look at the *New World Translation*, we soon discover that the Watchtower translators are desperate to cover up these facts. Accordingly, instead of giving *ego eimi* as I am, as they do elsewhere (see verses 18 and 28, and many other places in this Gospel), they deliberately mistranslate the Greek present tense as "I have been," which is the English past-perfect tense. Then in order to secure their cover-up, they actually make up a non-existent "rule" for the Greek and print it in a footnote.

Unfortunately they even go further than this by pointing out that in the Septuagint of Exodus 3:14 the Hebrew for "I Am" is not given as *ego eimi*, but as *ego eimi ho ohn*, meaning "I Am The Being." This footnote is a classical example of how the Witnesses like to change the subject in order to avoid the evidence of verses that disprove their theories. The problem is, that in Revelation 1:8 their own translation admits that the speaker is "Jehovah God," and in verses 12 and 17-18 the speaker states that he was dead and is now alive. He repeats this in 2:8, and again in 22:12-16. Therefore "the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" is Isaiah's Jehovah and is also John's Jesus. That is, Jesus is Jehovah.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from these considerations is that the Word is eternal. Therefore the Watchtower is a false prophet which does not bother to pay enough attention to the Greek text.

X. Some Supporting Verses You Probably Won't Get To ...

There are numerous other verses which directly teach or at least imply the full Deity of Christ. Fullscale studies of these verses have been common in the past two hundred years of orthodox theology.

Famous earlier texts such as B.B. Warfield's *The Lord of Glory*, (1907) and Henry P. Liddon's Bampton Lectures of 1860, *The Divinity of Our Lord And Savior Jesus Christ* have been often reprinted and are well worth careful study, as are more recent works such as David Wells' *The Person of Christ*, (1984), or Oscar Cullmann's *The Christology of the New Testament*, (1959).

All orthodox systematic theologies and presentations of the doctrine of the Trinity contain at least summaries of the Biblical evidence for the deity of Christ. Compare pages 257-270 of *Integrative Theology*, Vol I, by Lewis and Demarest, or pages 382-387 of Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, Vol II, with the carefully arranged material of Edward H. Bickersteth's *The Trinity*. This last book was specially aimed at Arianizing tendencies in the Church of England during the 1800s, and is possibly the best and most generally useful book ever written on the Biblical evidence for the Trinity and its importance for worship.

Bickersteth had a pastoral heart for the practical effect of true (or false!) doctrine on the spiritual life of the believer, and presents a very large body of verses and their interpretation in easy-to-understand form, much of it set out in charts and lists on page after page of evidence from both Testaments. It has been kept in print continuously by Kregel's since 1957, and should be read carefully by anyone who has become frustrated with trying to talk with Jehovah's Witnesses. Remember the saying that the person who does not read is no better off than the person who cannot read.

These sources will explain such verses as Zech 12:10 (John 19:23 and Rev 1:7), Rev 1:7-8, Zech 14:2-5, Isa 9:6, Heb 2:14, 2 Tim 3:16, 1 John 1:1-3, Rom 1:2-5, as well as dozens in which the many names and titles and functions of Christ assert his deity in one or another aspect. The many passages

from the Old Testament which refer to Jehovah (such as Isa 45:21-23), and are then applied to Jesus by New Testament writers with little or no explanation, are covered fully by Bickersteth. We will here examine two such verses only.

Isaiah 9:6

This verse states that "for a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace," etc. This verse is often referred to at Christmas as a place from which the Incarnation might be taught. The title "Mighty God" is literally *El Gibbor*, where *El* means God and *gibbor* is used as an adjective, "Mighty." But this word is one of several terms for "Man" in the Hebrew, and means Man as powerful, a mighty man of war. It is often used to refer to the thirty powerful soldiers who formed the personal body-guard of King David. To omit the idea of Man from this word is therefore to weaken its force greatly. The title literally means "Mighty God-Man." Here we have in one title the idea expressed by the first part of the verse, that the human Child was born, while the divine Son was given. Here in a nut-shell are the humanity and the divinity of the incarnation together in one verse while clearly distinguished as to their origin. The Son, being Eternal, was not "born," and the human nature of the baby was not "given" in the same sense, since it was already present in history in the nature of Mary his mother. It is Isaiah after all, who foretells the Virgin Birth in 7:14.

The title "Eternal Father" might at first cause a problem; how can the Son be identified as the Father? Would this not blur the distinction between these two Persons of the Trinity? The solution is at hand when we recall that in the Hebrew idiom the Maker or Creator of something may be called its "father." To this day the Arabs call a person the "father of troubles" who is always getting into trouble, just as what Saddam Hussein called the "mother of all battles" turned out to be the "mother of all defeats."

In Hebrews 1:1-2 God is said to have "made the world" by the Son (NWT, "the systems of things.") The term for world here is not *kosmos*, meaning the physically ordered universe, but *aion* (in the plural), meaning the temporal flow of "the ages." Because he made the ages, the Son may be said to be the Father of the Ages, and this is the better translation of *olam Ab* in Isa 9:6. So Jesus is "Father of Eternity" because he precedes time, as John says in John 1:1-3. In this way the Messiah will become as the Davidic King, the "Prince of Peace." Whether translated "Father of the Ages" or "Eternal Father," the title depicts the Deity of the Son who was "given."

Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12

These verses describe Jehovah as "the First and the Last," the one who is both the Creator and Consummator of the creation. The Jehovah's Witnesses have no difficulty in agreeing that this group of titles applies in these contexts to Jehovah himself.

Likewise, the title "I am" with which God introduces himself first to Moses and then to Pharaoh in Exodus 3:13-15, refers to the eternity or timelessness of the divine nature. Unlike the finite and evolving gods of Egypt, the I AM is above time, having created time along with everything else. This Name reappears throughout the Old Testament, being part of the name Jehovah (or Yahweh) itself. So in these verses of Isaiah, "I am" refers to the divine Present, "the First" refers to eternity past, while "the Last" refers to eternity future. We are not surprised therefore to see Jesus described in similar terms as "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" in Hebrews 13:8, while in 1:8, the Father says of the Son, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever." This verse in Psalm 45:6-7 refers to the coming messianic King.

The problem for the Watchtower appears when this title is used by John in Revelation 1:8 and 1:17-18. In Rev 1:8 The Lord God, calling himself "the Almighty," says "I am the Alpha and the

Omega," transmuting the time image into that of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. John "turned to see the voice that was speaking with me," and he sees "one like a son of man." This human Person is then described in verses 12-16, "and when I saw him I fell at his feet as a dead man." The Man then speaks to him, identifying himself as "I am the First and the Last," showing that he is the One who first spoke to him in verse 8. He then says "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." This settles the question of who the speaker is. John calls him "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead" in 1:5, and here he says he was dead and then resurrected. But this means that John has applied the divine titles of Jehovah from Isaiah directly to Jesus. John does the same thing in verse 7, when he quotes from Daniel 7:13 which refers to the "Son of Man" coming on the clouds, and then immediately adds a quotation from Zechariah 12:10 where Jehovah says that "they will look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him." John has already applied this phrase to Jesus in 19:37 by changing "they shall look on Me" to "they shall look on Him whom they pierced." Here in Rev 1:7 the tribes of the earth mourn over the Coming One who they "pierced" who then identifies himself as Jehovah in verse 8. By the end of the book of Revelation, "I, Jesus" says again "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." There is no question who is speaking here in verses 12-13 because he identifies himself as "Jesus" in verse 16.

There is no escape from John's use of these divine titles from Isaiah. John clearly believed in the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation, so that Jesus could one moment be called the Son of Man (the child who was born) in 1:4, and the next moment call him the Son of God (the Son who was given) in 2:18. Both refer in context to the Man standing amid the candlesticks (or "lampstands") whom he calls the Lord God Almighty in verse 8 who died and rose again in verse 18.

In 451 A.D., the Council of Chalcedon summarized this Biblical material by saying that there are "two natures" of the "one Person" of the incarnate Son.

XI. Conclusion

The Biblical evidence for the full Deity of Christ, that Jesus the incarnate Son was Jehovah in the flesh, is overwhelming to the candid reader. Only a person enslaved to the rationalist presuppositions of Greek philosophy is going to want to avoid this evidence. It has been said that the Deity of Christ is in the Bible much as salt is found in the sea. One may prove the sea's saltiness in two ways; one can either simply taste it wherever we dip in our hand, or we may go to the evaporating sea-water in warm shallow rock-pools and find the crystals of salt clearly visible on the evaporating edge of the pool. The Deity of the Messiah is everywhere we dip into the Word, but some verses crystallize it more clearly.

It is the hope and prayer of the present writer that using the definite strategy here outlined, Bible believing Christians may help Jehovah's Witnesses to come to see that they too, must witness to Jehovah-Jesus, for "I am God, and there is no other" (Isa 46:9).

What To Read Next

The links below are direct links to where the book can be purchased from Books-A-Million. The best single study of the Witnesses' history and doctrine is still probably *Jehovah of The Watchtower* (1974), by Walter Martin and Norman Klann. Many Witnesses have abandoned the Watchtower after reading this book. Any Christian bookstore will order this for you if they do not have it already. Martin also has a chapter on the Watchtower in his large compendium called

Kingdom of the Cults .

Fred Franz was for many years the head of the Watchtower organization, and Raymond Franz his nephew was also on the Governing Body for years. In fact, he was the main author and chief editor of the Watchtower's Bible dictionary called *Aids To Bible Understanding*. When Raymond Franz realized that the Watchtower's erroneous attempts to date the Second Coming were based on obsolete and fallacious ideas about the fall of Jerusalem (erroneously dated in the 1800s at 606 B.C.), he tried to get them to face this, but got thrown out of the organization for his pains. He wrote an important critique of the Watchtower's inconsistencies in many areas, called *Crisis of Conscience* (1983). This is a devastating and important study, and deserves close attention. Needless to say, no attempt has been made by the Watchtower to answer this unfortunate gentleman.

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<http://www.dtl.org/trinity/article/jehovah/pt-1.htm>