

The Cult of "Jehovah's Witnesses"

By Al Dager

While we Christians sit in front of our television sets, or cloister ourselves within the confines of our own church's activities, the Watchtower society is gaining converts from among our neighbors.

All Scripture quotations are from the Watchtower Society's own *New World Translation* of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

God is not a triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity is a Roman Catholic fabrication.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Deuteronomy 6:4: "Listen, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God (Hebrew, "Elohim")..."Elohim" is the plural form of "El," indicating a plurality of persons in the single entity of the Godhead.

Genesis 1:26-27: "and God went on to say: Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness...And God proceeded to create man in his image, in God's image he created him."

In these verses God refers to Himself as "us," who created man in "our" image according to "our" likeness. It is obvious that He is speaking in the plural.

It is true that Jehovah is one Jehovah, or God is One God. But this does not address the nature of God. The doctrine of the Trinity does not say there are three Gods, but that the one God exists in the plurality of three persons, all of whom are of one essence. The Word and the Spirit proceed from the Father, not as something created, but as of the same nature and essence as the father, just as a man's son is of the same nature and essence as his father.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

The Holy Spirit is not a person. He is God's "active force." In *Let God be True*, (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society), p. 108, we read, "The holy spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God which moves his servants to do his will."

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Deuteronomy 6:4: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Galatians 5:22-23: "On the other hand, the fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."

Luke 12:12: "for the holy spirit will teach you in that very hour the things you ought to say."

These verses show that the Holy Spirit can teach and, therefore, possesses intelligence, an attribute of a person. The characteristics of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Galatians 5:23 are those of a person, not an impersonal force.

Many Scriptures identify the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and, as such, is of the same essence and nature as God, just as is the Word of God (Genesis 1:2, Exodus 31:3, Numbers 24:2, I Samuel 19:20, John 4:24, Romans 8:14, I Corinthians 7:40, Ephesians 4:30, etc.).

Acts 5:3-4: "But Peter said: 'Ananias, why has Satan emboldened you to play false to the holy spirit and to hold back secretly some of the price of the field?... you have played false not to men, but to God.'"

John 16:7-14: Jesus said, "Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth, It is for your benefit I am going away. For if I do not go away, the helper will by no means come to you; but if I do go my way, I will send him to you. And when that one arrives he will give the world convincing evidence concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment....when that one arrives, the spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own impulse, but what things he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things coming. That one will glorify me, because he will receive from what is mine and will declare it to you."

Notice that Jesus used the personal pronouns, "He," and "Him," not the impersonal "it," which would be used of an impersonal active force. Even in their own translation, the Jehovah's Witnesses retained these personal pronouns. Certainly if the Holy Spirit is not a person, they would have been able to find some scriptural evidence to support that contention. On the contrary, all references to the Holy Spirit indicate that He is a person.

It is also important to note verse 14 where Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will glorify Him. The Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to glorify Jesus—an indication that they do not have the Holy Spirit.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Jesus is *a* god—not Jehovah God.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING #1:

Since God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4), Jesus cannot be Jehovah. Jesus, as the word of God in John 1:1, must only be *a* god. Also, in the Greek the definite article "the" is not present. Therefore, the writer's intention was to portray Jesus as merely *a* god rather than *the* God. The Bible speaks of many gods.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

In John 1:1, the Greek text says, "*Theos eo o logos*" ("God was the Word"). It does not say, "A god was the Word." Also, in English we would say, "the Word was God"; we wouldn't say, "the Word was the God." Certainly the lack of the definite article is insufficient reason for the Jehovah's Witnesses to insert their indefinite article "a" and be dogmatic about it.

Isaiah 44:6-8: "This is what Jehovah has said, the King of Israel and the Repurchaser of him, Jehovah of armies, 'I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no God.... Does there exist a God beside me? No, there is no Rock, I have recognized none.'"

In every Scripture verse where the word "god" is used to denote someone other than Jehovah, the reference is to false gods. If Jehovah does not recognize anyone else as a legitimate god, how would He recognize Jesus the incarnate Word as a god without inferring that He is a false god? Is the Word which became flesh—Jesus—a false god?

Who is the Alpha and the Omega—the first and the last (the eternal One)?

Isaiah 44:7: Jehovah says, "I am the first and the last."

Revelation 1:8: Jehovah says, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says Jehovah God, 'the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty.'"

Revelation 22:13-16: Jesus says, "I am the alpha and the Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end....I, Jesus, sent my Angel to bear witness."

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING #2:

Jesus spoke of God in the third person: "He," "God," etc.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Philippians 2:5-6: "Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God." The mental attitude, or "mind of Christ" to which the apostle Paul was referring in this writing, is an attitude of humility which Jesus displayed when he walked the earth as a man. When the Word was made flesh (Jesus), He took in His flesh the nature of man completely. He humbled Himself and, as the Word of God incarnate, left His glorious attributes in heaven to become a man. But His spirit and personality had not changed: he spoke as a man, but He remained in His nature and essence the Word of God.

Other English versions render Philippians 2:5-6 in a manner similar to the King James Version: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, though it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

The Greek text reads: "*os en morphi Theon uparchon ouch arpoqmon egesato to einai isa Theo*" ("who in form of God subsisting not robbery deemed it to be equal with God"). This indicates that the Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation renders the verse to say what was not intended in the original Greek language.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Jesus is a created being.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Colossians 1:15: "he [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation."

Revelation 3:14: "These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God."

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Colossians 1:15: The word translated "firstborn" (Greek, "*prototokos*" means "firstbegotten." Jesus, as a man, is the offspring of God directly—of the same nature and substance, just as any man's son is of the same nature and substance as his father. He is not something different. "Firstbegotten" does not mean "first created."

In fact, the next two verses show that Jesus, in His pre-incarnate existence as the Word of God, was the creator of all that exists: "because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist."

Notice that the Jehovah's Witnesses inserted the word "other" several times where, in fact, it does not exist in the Greek text. If we read these verses and eliminate the word "other" contained in the brackets, we'll have a better understanding of who Jesus, as the Word of God, really is: the creator of the universe for whom all things were created.

Is it not dishonest for the Watchtower Society to insert its own theological bias into these verses—not to clarify anything, as is done in other translations—but to give it an entirely different meaning than what is found in the original?

Revelation 3:14: The Greek says, "arche tes ktiseos" ("the beginning of the creation" or "the ruler of creation.") The term "arche" denotes a position of authority, not just the source of something. It is used in "archangel" to denote an angel of greater authority than the hosts of angels. Arndt & Gingrich say that, linguistically, "first created" can be construed from the term, but so, also, can "ruler of creation" or "authority of creation." This verse cannot stand alone to prove either point of view. However, remembering that Isaiah 44:7, Revelation 8:1, and Revelation 22:13-16 demonstrate that Jesus is Jehovah, then the only acceptable rendering of Revelation 3:14 is "ruler" or "authority" of creation.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Jesus is the Archangel Michael.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Revelation 12:7: "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon..."

Michael must be Jesus because he fights the dragon (Satan) and casts him out of heaven.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Hebrews 1:5-14: "...to which one of the angels did he [God] ever say: 'you are my son; I, today, I have become your father'? And again: 'I myself shall become his father, and he himself will become my son'? But when he again brings his First-born into the inhabited earth, he says, 'And let all God's angels worship him.'

"Also, with reference to the angels he says: 'And he makes his angels spirits, and his public servants flames of fire.' But with reference to the Son: 'God is your throne forever and the scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of uprightness. You at [the] beginning O Lord, laid the foundation of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands...'

"But with reference to which one of the angels has he ever said: 'Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet'? Are they not all spirits for public service, sent forth to minister for those who are going to inherit salvation?"

There is no evidence or verification from Scripture to support the Jehovah's Witnesses' theory that Jesus is Michael. On the contrary, it would be a sin for the angels to worship another angel as they are commanded to worship the Son of God in verse 5.

This doctrine debases the nature of Jesus, the Word of God, to that of a created being. This is "another Jesus (II Corinthians 11:4) whose disciples have no assurance of salvation.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Jesus was not raised from the dead bodily. There is no physical resurrection—only a spiritual resurrection.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Colossians 15:45-50: "it is even so written: 'The first man Adam became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.... Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, neither does corruption inherit incorruption."

Jesus could not have been raised in the flesh or he would have remained merely a man and would never regain the higher nature he had prior to his incarnation. "Therefore the bodies in which Jesus manifested himself to his disciples after his return to life were not the body in which he was nailed to the tree. They were merely materialized for the occasion, resembling on one or two occasions the body in which he died...." (*The Kingdom is at Hand*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society), p. 259.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Luke 24:38: After His Resurrection, Jesus came to His apostles and told them not to be afraid: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

I Corinthians 15:35-45: "Nevertheless, someone will say: 'How are the dead raised up? Yes, with what sort of body are they coming? You unreasonable person! What you sow is not made alive unless first it dies; and as for what you sow, you sow, not the body that will develop, but a bare grain, it may be, of wheat or any one of the rest; but God gives it a body just as it has pleased him, and to each of the seeds its own body...."

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised up in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised up in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised up a spiritual body."

A "spiritual" body does not mean a "spirit." A body has substance—flesh and bone—and is inhabited by a spirit.

Matthew 27:50-54 demonstrates that Jesus is the first fruits of a *bodily* resurrection: "Again Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and yielded up [his] breath.

"And, look! The curtain of the sanctuary was rent in two, from top to bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rock-masses were split. And the memorial tombs were opened and many bodies of the holy ones that had fallen asleep were raised up, (and persons, coming out from among the memorial tombs after his being raised up, entered into the holy city,) and they became visible to many people."

Note that the *bodies* of the "holy ones" (saints) came out of the graves after Jesus was raised up. Contrary to the Watchtower's version, the Greek does not say that they "became visible," implying that they were not in bodies. It says they appeared to many.

John 2:18-22: "Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to him: 'What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things?' In answer Jesus said to them: 'Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Therefore the Jews said: 'This temple was built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was talking about the temple of his body. When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples called to mind that he used to say this; and they believed the Scripture and the saying that Jesus said."

In view of these irrefutable Scriptures, there is no need to haggle over whether or not the body in which Jesus appeared to his disciples was "materialized for the occasion." But to understand the Jehovah's Witnesses' reasoning, we must address another of their doctrines: that man does not have a soul and, therefore, has no consciousness after death.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Man does not have a soul; he *is* a soul, and is not immortal.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Genesis 2:7 says that "man became a living soul." Therefore, man *is* a soul. He does not *have* a soul. When that soul dies he ceases to exist.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

I Kings 17:21: Elijah, praying for a widow's son, said, "O Jehovah my God, please, cause the soul of this child to come back within him."

Matthew 10:28: Jesus said, "And do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna."

I Thessalonians 5:23: "And sound in every respect may the spirit and soul and body of you [brothers] be preserved in a blameless manner..."

III John 2: "Beloved one, I pray that in all things you may be prospering and have good health, just as your soul is prospering."

In view of these and many other Scriptures, Genesis 2:7 proves nothing more than that man is called "a soul" in much the same manner as women's shoes may be called "heels." There are, in fact, over 350 scriptural references to the soul as just one aspect of man's being.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TEACHING:

Since there is no soul and, therefore, no consciousness after death, there is no eternal Hell, Hell is the grave.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REASONING:

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6: "For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they any more have wages, because the memory of them has been forgotten. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished; and they have no portion any more to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun."

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 merely points out Solomon's contention that a dead man is no longer conscious of anything that transpires on the earth. All of his affairs are forgotten since he no longer has any portion in what is done on the earth. That there is consciousness after death is proven by many Scriptures. Likewise, many Scriptures prove that Hell exists as a place of torment, not as the grave, although some references to the grave are unfortunately translated as "hell."

Matthew 25:41: Jesus tells of the last judgment of unrepentant souls: "Then he will say in turn to those on his left, 'Be on your way from me, you who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

Matthew 18:9: "...it is finer for you to enter one-eyed into life than to be thrown with two eyes into the fiery Gehenna."

Matthew 5:22: "Whoever says, 'You despicable fool!' will be liable to the fiery Gehenna."

II Corinthians 5:8: "But we are of good courage and are well pleased rather to become absent from the body and to make our home with the Lord."

Luke 16:19-31: Jesus spoke of Lazarus and the rich man who were in two separate compartments in Hades (the underworld). The rich man was in torment and Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom" awaiting the resurrection. This is not a parable, but an account of an actual happening. Yet, even if it were a parable, all of Jesus' parables were based on reality, not upon myths. When He spoke of Hell He spoke of a literal place, not of a myth.

YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT:

- When the Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door, they are usually a couple comprised of one new recruit and one experienced member.
- They have just left the "Kingdom Hall" with that day's message fresh in their minds. They are not generally prepared for a serious challenge on any other subject.

- They do not have a comprehensive knowledge of God's Word.
- What they know is primarily that which they have been taught according to the Watchtower guidelines.
- They have learned to speak the language of God's people, and will readily agree that they are saved by the cleansing work of Christ's blood. Much of what they say will sound scriptural, but the meanings they apply to their words differ from those applied by followers of the biblical Jesus.
- Many are actually afraid and uncomfortable with canvassing.
- They are under constant fear that, no matter how much they do for the Watchtower Society it will never be enough to earn their salvation; they have no guarantees, because theirs is a work-oriented salvation, rather than a grace-oriented salvation that has been made available freely to anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.
- They are in need of evangelization just as are all the lost.
- God loves Jehovah's Witnesses too. And Jesus died to guarantee their salvation. They need God's Word given in a spirit of love and genuine concern, backed up by prayer for God's Spirit to open their eyes to His truth.
- Most Jehovah's Witnesses have come out of churches that have not grounded them in the Scriptures. A large percentage of them are ex-Roman Catholics.
- They are taught that the Bible is not as important in learning God's truth as the writings of the Watchtower Society. Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, speaking of his own writings, *Scripture Studies*, said, "Not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the 'Scripture Studies' aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the 'Scripture Studies' with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the scriptures." (*The Watchtower*, September 15, 1910, p. 298.)

SOME FINAL COMMENTS:

We see, then, that to be "in the light" is to agree with the Watchtower's teachings—at least Russell's *Scripture Studies*. The reason he perceives those who read the Scriptures after leaving the *Scripture Studies* as being in darkness, is because they will inevitably leave the Watchtower Society after having come to the truth by the Holy Spirit.

We do not need commentaries on Scripture—we need Scripture itself to give us the truth.

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