

JESUS CHRIST

The Firstborn Of All Creation

HE is the image of the invisible God; his is the primacy over all created things. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, . . . the whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything, and all things are held together in him. . . . He is its origin, . . . in all things alone supreme. For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell.—Colossians 1:15-19 *New English Bible*

ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE

The unlearned and unstable are twisting these words of Paul as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction.—2 Peter 3:16 They are well described as “ever learning yet never able to come to an accurate knowledge of the truth.”—2 Timothy 3:7 Faithful ones rendering whole-souled service to Jehovah must beware of being deceived by these ones who are “adulterating the word of God.”—2 Corinthians 4:2 Careful comparison of various translations as well as referring to the original Greek text will bring out the true meaning of any passage to one who trusts in Jehovah with all his heart and does not lean on his own personal judgment.—Proverbs 3:5

Read on, “with this most clearly understood, that no prophetic Scripture can be explained by one's unaided mental powers.”—2 Peter 1:20 *Berkeley Version* Therefore pray, “Uncover my eyes, that I may look at the wonderful things out of your law.”—Psalm 119:18

“FIRST-BORN” NOT “FIRST-CREATED”

Dr. Bruce Metzger of Princeton, N.J., Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, says:

“If Paul had wished to express the latter idea [that Christ was created], he had available a Greek word to do so, the word *protoktistos*, meaning ‘first created.’ Actually, however, Paul uses the word *protokos*, meaning ‘first begotten,’ which signifies something quite different, . . .”

Clement of Alexandria wrote *Excerpta Ex Theodoto* scarcely a hundred years after the death of the apostle John. In it he contrasts the words *protokos* and *protoktistos*. Other christian writers of the first centuries C.E. also made this distinction. Paul said not “first-created,” but “first-born,” an expression meaning something altogether different.

According to Dr. William J. Martin of the University of British Columbia: “The word *first-born* had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as *prime* (from Latin *primus*, first) with us. The prime minister is not the first minister England has ever had, he is the most preeminent. A man in the prime of his life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly, *firstborn* came to denote not priority in time but preeminence in rank.”

It should be remembered that a wrong course of action caused Reuben to forfeit his position as firstborn (2 Chr 5:1-2) and it is well known that Esau actually sold his rank of firstborn to Jacob, his younger brother.—Gen 25:33

Commenting on the five books of Moses, Rabbi Bechai calls Jehovah “the Firstborn of the world.” Surely he does not intend to imply that Jehovah was *created* or that he is a part of *the world*.

Neither did Paul intend to imply that Christ was *created* nor that he is a part of *all things*.

Clearly the emphasis is on *firstborn* rather than *firstborn*. However, regarding the words "born" "begotten" and "beget", the noted English author C.S. Lewis explains: "To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is just this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, and man makes . . . a statue."

"Now that's the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man."

"What God begets is God" — that is why the Father calls his Son "God." "but to his Son he says: 'God, your throne shall last for ever and ever;'"—Hebrews 1:8 *Jerusalem Bible*

FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

Many Bible scholars understand this to be the genitive of comparison. Abbott explains it as "priority in time and distinction from the genus." This makes Christ prior to and separate from "all creation." Therefore, Moffatt translates: "He is the likeness of the unseen God, born first, before all the creation — for it was by him that all things were created. . . ." J.B. Phillips translation reads: "He was born before creation began." Barclay's *New Translation* reads: "begotten before all creation" exactly as Abbott's does. Goodspeed: "born before any creature." *The Berkeley Version* reads: "the first-born before all creation." See also C.B. Williams' *A Private Translation, The Living Bible, and The Simplified New Testament*.

Other scholars feel that this "unduly strains the grammar." They view the phrase as a genitive of relation. Lightfoot explains it as "Firstborn, the absolute Heir and sovereign Lord of all creation." (Christ is called the "appointed Heir of all things" at Hebrews 1:2 and, though the wording is different, it may convey the same thought.) Accordingly, *Today's English Version* reads: "superior to all created things." *The New International Version*

reads: "Firstborn over all creation." And the *New English Bible* says: "his is the primacy over all created things."

A footnote in *NEB* gives "born before all creation" as an alternate reading. The main reading then favors "supremacy" (Lightfoot *et al*) and the alternate favors "priority" (Abbott *et al*). *An Expanded Translation* by Kenneth Wuest tries to incorporate both ideas: "The Son has priority to and sovereignty over all creation."

NO EXCEPTION

Does Colossians 1:15 teach Christ is created? "This interpretation is exegetically and historically impossible; for verses 16-17 emphatically distinguish between 'him' and the 'all things' of creation," according to Baggot. (See his book, *A New Approach to Colossians*, p. 58.)

One erroneous translation deliberately inserts the word "other" four times in these two verses to alter the thought to imply that Christ is the creator of all things except one — himself. This reading would bring Paul into conflict with the apostle John who said: "All creation took place through him, and none took place without him." —John 1:3 *Phillips*

Had the apostle Paul wished to say "other" he could have said *ta alla*; instead, he said *ta panta* (the all) "words which are absolute and comprehensive and will admit no exception."—Lightfoot, p. 150 See any Greek text, e.g. *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation*.

BY HIM, THROUGH HIM, FOR HIM

"*En auto*" means that Christ is the primary cause as well as the instrumental cause of creation. It is "by him all things are created," not merely "by means of him." He did not act as someone else's agent. Christ is the Designer (by), the Creator (through), and the Purpose (for) of all things.

Not only did Christ once act to bring about creation; he continues to act to hold it together. "He is prior to all, and all coheres in him."—*Mo, ET* If Christ were to cease to exist for an instant, all creation would fly apart. Barclay explains that it is because of Christ "the universe hangs together, and does not disintegrate in chaos.

“So, then, the Son is the beginning of creation, and the end of creation, and the power who holds creation together. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Final Goal of the world.”

Christ declares himself to be “the Origin of God’s creation.”—Rev 3:14 *Mo, AT, TEV, ET, ANT, Simplified, Williams*, and others Some translations read: “the Source of God’s creation.”—*NEB, Knox, Jerusalem, Living Bible*. Still others read: “the Beginning of God’s creation.”—*RSV, ASV, KJV* God, the Father also calls himself “faithful and true” and “the beginning” at Rev 21:5-6. Just as we understand the Father to refer to himself as the “Origin and Destination,” so should we understand the Son as the “Origin.” Did he not say, “I and the Father are one?”—John 10:30

ALL THE FULLNESS

“For it was in him that the divine Fulness willed to settle without limit,”—*Mo* “For all the divine fulness chose to dwell in him,”—*AT*

The fulness is the completeness or totality of God. The Son is not only the image (*eikon*) of the unseen God; in him lives the totality (*pleroma*). Vincent says: “*The fulness denotes the sum-total of the divine powers and attributes*. In Christ dwelt all the fulness of God as deity.”

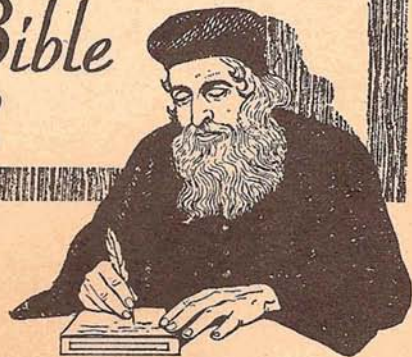
Barclay says the Son “is not simply a sketch of God; He is not a summary of God; He is more than a lifeless portrait of God. In Him there is nothing left out.” Therefore, Barclay’s *New Translation* reads: “For in Him God in all His fullness was pleased to take up his abode.”

Phillips translates: “It was in him that the full nature of God chose to live.” *TEV* says: “It was by God’s own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God.”

Nineteen verses later (2:9) Paul reiterates the same thought: “In him lives all the fullness of deity bodily.”—*Emphatic Diaglott* This was no new concept; years before he had written to the Corinthians explaining that “God was in Christ personally reconciling the world to himself.”—2 Corinthians 5:19 *Phillips* Now to the Colossians he says, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things,”—*RSV* *Have you been reconciled to God?*

Undoubtedly christians have asked you that question before, in some form or other. “Are you saved?” “Have you been born again?” “Do you have eternal life?” We would like to talk to you again. Look up the person you talked to before or write: P.O. Box 1641, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

Translating The Bible —A HAZARDOUS TASK



BIBLE translation can, indeed, be a hazardous task. Jehovah has commanded concerning his word: “You must not add to it nor take away from it.”—Deuteronomy 12:32, 4:2

Adding or subtracting a word can sometimes greatly change the meaning of a statement; for example, the addition of *a* to John 1:1 or the addition of *other* in Colossians 1:16-17.

These two deceptions began to be widely circulated among Jehovah’s faithful ones after the release,

in 1950, of a “translation” which smuggles into the text of Holy Writ many traditions of men in an attempt to pass them off as the Word of God. These “trans-

lators" looked at their religious traditions and decided what they wanted the Bible to say; then they looked for an excuse for "translating" certain words incorrectly.

Sometimes after deciding on the "correct translation" these ones could not decide on the correct excuse. John 8:58 is an excellent example. Traditionally they do not believe that Christ Jesus *is* before Abraham came to be: therefore, they decided on the "translation" *I have been*. The footnote in the 1950 edition says: "... properly rendered in the perfect indefinite tense." Greek scholars quickly pointed out that no such tense exists. These men, not willing to give up their traditions, kept the "translation" *I have been* and changed the excuse in the footnote of the 1963 large print edition to read: "... properly rendered in the perfect tense indicative." Six years later in their interlinear translation they kept the traditional *I have been* but again changed the excuse in the footnote to: "... properly rendered in the perfect tense."

These "translators" claim to have used the Westcott and Hort Greek text. Says the noted scholar Westcott, coproducer of the famous Westcott and Hort text of the Christian Scriptures: "*I am* — The phrase marks a timeless existence. In this connexion 'I was' would have expressed simple priority. Thus there is in the phrase the contrast between the created and the uncreated, and the temporal and the eternal."

The "translators" argue that since they have put the word "other" in brackets this shows that their rendering of Colossians 1:16-17 is not dishonest but was done merely for the sake of clarification. However, the insertion of the word "other" here changes the meaning of the whole text completely. Furthermore, the first two editions did not put the word "other" in brackets. Brackets were added later in order to retain this tradition after Greek scholars pointed out the error. Notice that brackets are not used when "other" is added to Phillipians 2:10.

Clearly the "translators" have violated

the first part of Jehovah's command: "You must not add to it nor take away from it." But what about the second part? See their interlinear at John 14:14 for a critical example. Notice that the Greek text has the word "me" but the narrow English column does not. "If you ask *me* anything in my name, I will do it." Here Jesus is teaching his disciples to pray to him and that he will answer. Later he teaches them to pray to the Father and that the Father will answer. "If you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name." — John 16:23

Why do the "translators" leave out the word "me" at John 14:14? "Adroitly you set aside the commandment of God in order to retain your tradition." — Mark 7:9

What tradition? The tradition which says: "Jesus did not teach them to pray to himself, . . ." — *Truth Book*, p. 152

Not only did Jesus teach them to pray to him; they followed his instructions and prayed to him!

Paul's prayer to Christ ("Lord, what will you have me do?" — Acts 9:6) marked the start of his Life in Christ. Stephen's prayer to Christ ("Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." — Acts 7:59) marked the end of his earthly course and echoed the prayer of our Lord at his death. — Luke 23:46

Throughout the book of the Acts prayers continue to ascend to the Lord Jesus Christ (see 9:20-22 and 22:16 for examples). The disciples during this period were known as those who "call on the name of (not Jehovah — but) our Lord Jesus Christ." — Acts 9:14 and I Corinthians 1:2

The Epistles contain expressions such as, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord" (I Timothy 1:12), which can only be classified as prayer. And the Apocalypse ends in that magnificent prayer of the church which is soon to be answered, "Amen, come Lord Jesus." — Revelation 22:20

The fact is, not only does the *New World Translation* add to the Word of God but it takes away from it in violation of the Bible's direct command. — Revelation 22:19

Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses

HAVE COMPLETE UNITY?

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES have been involved in many important court cases around the world. One such case took place in Scotland in 1954. The following is from that case. The headings identify the person being questioned. Numbers following quotations indicate the pages of the transcript where each testimony is recorded.

HAYDEN C. COVINGTON

Question: Is it not vital to speak the truth on religious matters?

Answer: It certainly is.

Question: You have promulgated — forgive the word — false prophesy?

Answer: We have — I do not think we have promulgated false prophesy, there have been statements that were erroneous, that is the way I put it, and mistaken.

Question: . . . It was promulgated as a matter which must be believed by all members of Jehovah's Witnesses that the Lord's Second Coming took place in 1874?

Answer: That was the publication of a false prophesy, it was a false statement or an erroneous statement in fulfillment of a prophesy that was false or erroneous.

Question: And that had to be believed by the whole of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Answer: Yes, because you must understand we must have unity, we cannot have disunity with a lot of people going every way, an army is supposed to march in step.



Question: Back to the point now. A false prophesy was promulgated?

Answer: I agree to that.

Question: It had to be accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses?

Answer: That is correct.

Question: If a member of Jehovah's Witnesses took the view himself that that prophesy was wrong and said so he would be disfellowshipped?

Answer: Yes, if he said so and kept persisting in creating trouble, because if the whole organization believes one thing, even though it be erroneous, and somebody else starts on his own trying to put his ideas across then there is disunity and trouble, there cannot be harmony, there cannot be marching together. . . . Our purpose is to have unity.

Question: Unity at all costs?

Answer: Unity at all costs, because we believe and are sure that Jehovah God is using our organisation, the governing body of our organisation to direct it, even though mistakes are made from time to time.

Question: A unity based upon an enforced acceptance of false prophesy?

Answer: That is conceded to be true.

Question: And the person who expressed his view, as you say, that it was wrong, and was disfellowshipped, would be in breach of the Covenant, if he was baptised?

Answer: That is correct.

Question: And as you said yesterday expressly, would be worthy of death?

Answer: I think — — —

Question: Would you say yes or no?

Answer: I will answer yes, unhesitatingly.

Question: Do you call that religion?

Answer: It certainly is.

Question: Do you call it Christianity?

Answer: I certainly do. — pp. 340-343

FRED W. FRANZ

Question: But it was a calculation which is no longer accepted by the Board of Directors of the Society?

Answer: That is correct.

Question: So that am I correct, I am just anxious to canvas the position; it became the bounden duty of the Witnesses to accept this miscalculation?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In what form was this miscalculation corrected?

Answer: When we reached the date 1914 and the world developments went forward, then we saw that we had not understood some of the prophecies. . . — pp. 104-105.

Question: Am I right that it was at one time forecast that in 1925 Abraham and other Prophets would come back to earth?

Answer: They were expected to come back approximately then.

Question: But they did not come?

Answer: No.

Question: It was published, was it not, to the body of Jehovah's Witnesses that that was to be expected in 1925?

Answer: Yes.

Question: But that was wrong?

Answer: Yes, . . . — p. 120.

Question: So that once again Judge Rutherford preached error?

Answer: He didn't preach the full rounded out truth of the matter.

Question: In that particular, not putting too fine a point on it, he was in error?

Answer: He was in error.

Question: How does one now joining Jehovah's Witnesses, and reading this erroneous view of Judge Rutherford's, know it is now regarded as erroneous?

Answer: It isn't necessary for him to read that Judge Rutherford is in error on that point. What he is interested in is in the present truth, the up-to-date truth.

Question: Yesterday's errors cease to be published do they?

Answer: Yes, we correct ourselves.

Question: So that what is published as the truth today by the Society may have to be admitted to be wrong in a few years?

Answer: We have to wait and see.

Question: And in the meantime the body of Jehovah's Witnesses have been following error?

Answer: They have been following misconstructions on the Scriptures.

Question: Error?

Answer: Well, error. — pp. 112-114

Question: But I think you have told us already that an acceptance of the beliefs and facts is compulsory?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And there is no possibility of picking and choosing amongst those facts which you will accept, and those which you will reject. It must be taken as a whole?

Answer: That is right, . . . — p. 38.

Question: . . . Jehovah's Witnesses accept without question doctrines and Biblical interpretations as expounded by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society through its Directors?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In publications both periodical and in book form?

Answer: Yes. — p. 25

Answer: These books give an exposition on the whole Scriptures.

Question: But an authoritative exposition?

Answer: They submit the Bible on the statements that are therein made, and the individual examines the statement and then the Scripture to see that the statement is Scripturally supported.

Question: He what?

Answer: He examines the Scripture to see whether the statement is supported by the Scripture. As the Apostle says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

Question: I understood the position to be — do please correct me if I am wrong — that a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses must accept as a true Scripture and interpretation what is given in the books I referred you to?

Answer: But he does not compulsorily do so, he is given his Christian right of examining the Scriptures to confirm that this is Scripturally sustained.

Question: And if he finds that the Scripture is not sustained by the books, or vice versa, what does he do?

Answer: You will have to produce me a man who does find that, then I can answer, or he will answer.

Question: Did you imply that the individual member has the right of reading the books and the Bible and forming his own view as to the proper interpretation of Holy Writ?

Answer: He comes — — —

Question: Would you say yes or no, . . .

Answer: No. . . .

Question: A witness has no alternative, has he, to accept as authoritative and to be obeyed instructions issued in "The Watchtower" or "The Informant" or "Awake"?

Answer: He must accept those. — pp. 122-123

Question: Can you tell me this; are these theological publications and semi-monthly periodicals used for discussion of statements of doctrine:

Answer: Yes.

Question: Are these statements of doctrine held to be authoritative within the Society?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Is their acceptance a matter of choice, or is it obligatory on all those who wish to be and remain members of the Society?

Answer: It is obligatory. — pp. 4-5.

Question: Am I right that the Board of Directors of the Society, in issuing their authoritative interpretation of Scripture seek to apply the interpretations not only to countries but to dates?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And that Judge Rutherford took the view that men came upon this earth in 4025 B.C.?



NOTE:

These testimonies are from the Pursuers Proof of Douglas Walsh vs. The Right Honourable James Latham Clyde, M.P., P.C., as representing the Minister of Labour and National Service. Copies of the complete transcript may be obtained by writing, The Scottish Record Office, H.M. General Register House, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Answer: 4124 B.C.

Question: What is the present view?

Answer: One hundred years have been taken off.

Question: What was Pastor Russell's view?

Answer: Pastor Russell had an extra one hundred years in there.

Question: So that date has been altered three times, has it?

Answer: The date has been corrected.

Question: But once the date was published by the Society all Jehovah's Witnesses were bound to accept it as scripturally true?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And liable to be dis-fellowshipped if they demurred to the date?

Answer: If they caused trouble over it, because the Scriptures say that if anyone is a disturber inside the congregation he is hindering the growth of the congregation and its activities and should be disfellowshipped.

Question: Even though he perchance were supporting the date now taken by the Society, when the Society was publishing the wrong date?

Answer: One who may have a difference of understanding like that will wait upon Jehovah God to see if he is correct, and he will abide by what is published for the time being.

Question: But if he so awaits and understands that he is correct what is he to do?

Answer: He gets a blessing because of his submission and waiting upon Jehovah and not leaning to his own understanding.

Question: In this respect also, namely the date of the coming of mankind upon the earth, two errors have been published as authoritative Scripture?

Answer: Yes, as authoritative chronological dates. . . . — pp. 118-119

Question: Is there any hope of salvation for a man who depends upon his Bible alone when he is in a situation in the world where he cannot get the tracts and publications of your incorporation?

Answer: He is dependent upon the Bible.

Question: Will he be able to interpret it truly?

Answer: No. — p. 133

GRANT SUITER

Question: Indeed can he in the view of Jehovah's Witnesses have an understanding of the Scriptures apart from the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Answer: No.

Question: Only by the publications can he have the right understanding of the Scriptures?

Answer: That is right.

Question: Is that not arrogance?

Answer: No.

Question: You heard the evidence about 1874 having been found to be wrong as a material and crucial date, and about 1925 being a wrong date. On these two items, acceptance and absolute acceptance as Truth was imposed upon all Jehovah's Witnesses at the time?

Answer: That is right. — pp. 499-500

HAYDEN C. COVINGTON

Question: But then it is the case, is it not, that on occasions you have not spoken what is true? [See his first answer above.]

Answer: I have agreed to that many times, and I will agree to it many times more, that we have made mistakes and proclaimed error and have had to correct ourselves many times. . . .

Question: Have you studied comparative religion?

Answer: I have to a certain extent, not very extensively I must confess.

Question: Do you know of any religion of the world, as you would put it so called which has as its set up of publishing what is later proven to be untrue but requiring of its members that under pain of spiritual death they must accept that untruth?

Answer: I do not know of any other organisation except Jehovah's Witnesses. . . .
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