

# JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES DEFENDED

AN ANSWER  
TO SCHOLARS  
AND CRITICS

SECOND EDITION

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Christ θεός in verse 1, and then use θεός of the Father in verse 2. However, this seems unlikely given his preference for calling Christ "Lord" and reserving the term "God" for the Father. And, again, as is the case with Titus 2:13, the second noun, "Savior," is joined to "Jesus Christ," creating a compound proper name which makes it sufficiently definite to stand on its own as a second subject, without the article.

The proper name "Jesus Christ" may be used in apposition to "Savior," in which case "Jesus Christ" restricts the application of "Savior," much the same way as the repetition of the article could have done. We must look at the grammatical, theological and contextual factors in order to properly understand and explain the meaning of this and other passages. We must not perform "limited" exegesis by considering only the grammar or only the theology of the author in question.

Indeed, there are Trinitarian scholars like Murray Harris who would label the rendering "a god" in John 1:1 as "impossible" due to his view of John's "theological context."<sup>124</sup> Also, Trinitarian's perceived view of the theology of the letter to the Hebrews certainly has an impact on how they translate the grammar of passages like Hebrews 3:2. This text could be translated, "He was faithful to the one that made him," or "He was faithful to the one that appointed him." Due to the fact that Trinitarians will not accept Jesus as the first of God's creations, they would also exclude this rendering because of their theology.

**1 John 5:20.** Another text that has been linked to the GS rule is 1 John 5:20. However, Wallace has two concerns about classifying 1 John 5:20 as a legitimate Granville Sharp (GS) construction. They are, 1) does the adjective αἰώνιος (*aionios*, "everlasting") and 2) does the change in gender between *theos* ("God") and ζωῆ (*zoe*, "life") nullify the construction?

Regarding his first concern, Wallace admits that in other examples, such as Revelation 20:1, "the postpositive adjective effectively breaks the construction."<sup>125</sup> But he then presents four

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<sup>124</sup> See Chapter 6, page 349, note 110.

<sup>125</sup> Wallace, "Multiple Substantives," 272.

reasons why 1 John 5:20 should be understood under the confines of Sharp's rule, in spite of the postpositive adjective *aionios*:

- 1) He believes the limited pool of examples containing a trailing adjective with the second noun "is hardly a large enough data base on which to build a compelling principle."<sup>126</sup> Of course, we could argue similarly regarding those examples containing a proper name with the second noun.
- 2) Wallace points to *zoe aionios* as a rare example of an attributive adjective used without the article in the noun-adjective order. This is a legitimate observation, and should be carefully considered.
- 3) He then highlights what he initially calls "one parallel to 1 John 5:20 in the papyri."<sup>127</sup> He adds that the parallel is only in terms of the adjective, and further notes that it is not even completely parallel in this respect, since the adjective occurs with the first noun, not the second. Still, he believes that "the principle is the same." But I fail to see how this is the case, since we are concerned with whether or not the postpositive adjective used with the second noun in a *kai*-joined phrase can account for its use without the article. Also, Wallace's example (*humas . . . tous theous megistous kai antileptoras* [P. Lond. 23:17-18]) contains plural nouns. Thus, it is not a proper parallel to 1 John 5:20.
- 4) Wallace argues that "the most natural reading of 1 John 5:20 is to see the subject, *houtos* ["this one"], as referring to both *theos* and *zoe*. This is a subjective observation, and it may or may not be true. But in this context (see below) it may be equally natural to understand *theos* and *zoe* as having different referents, though closely associated with each other. (Compare Jesus' close association of *aionios zoe* ["everlasting life"] with a knowledge of the Father ["the only true God (see below)], in John 17:3, and the fact that 1 John 5:20 speaks of the Son coming to give us a knowledge of "the true one.")

Regarding the change in gender, Wallace notes that no other GS construction in NT contains this mixture.<sup>128</sup> He offers the following two considerations:

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 274.

- 1) In mixed constructions of this sort the NT and the papyri regularly use a second article.
- 2) Wallace sites just one example from a fourth century CE letter (P. Oxy. 1298) that contains a GS construction with two masculine nouns followed by a feminine abstract noun, and where the nouns have the same referent. But there is no postpositive adjective used with the feminine noun.

Wallace concludes by observing that of the seventy or so instances in which *houtos* has a personal referent, about forty-four of them refer to the Son. But this argument has little force behind it. If *houtos* were used exclusively of the Son, then there might be some significance to this observation, but since it is used of Nicodemus, and even of the antichrist (!), it can hardly be significant in this instance, as somehow limiting the referent to the Son (Joh 3:2; 2 Joh 7).

There are two very significant observations to keep in mind when interpreting 1 John 5:20, and for some reason Wallace does not address either one of them. The first has to do with the immediate context. In the first part of 1 John 5:20 we are told that the Son of God has come and given us the ability to know *ton alethinon* ("the true one"). This creates a distinction between the two, for one gives us a knowledge of the other, but *ton alethinon* is clearly the most natural antecedent for *ho alethinus theos* ("the true God"), who is distinguished from Jesus (*zoe aionios* ["everlasting life"]—compare 1Jo 1:2) *ho huios autou* ("the Son of him" [*autos* = "the true one"]). The reference to "the Son of him" appears to be decisive evidence for applying *ton alethinon* ("the true one") to the Father. It is only natural, then, to view *ho alethinus theos* and *ton alethinon* as the same individual, namely, the Father.

The second observation has to do with the fact that Jesus restricted the application of *ho alethinus theos* to his Father in John 17:1-3 (note the use of *monos* ["only"]).<sup>129</sup> Thus, if *ho alethinus theos* is a title that is said to belong "only" to the Father, and if Jesus was the one commonly understood as

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<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 2, pages 120-122.

"everlasting life" (1Jo 1:2) then we likely have a situation where both nouns and their accompanying adjectives created a semantic distinction between the two. The concepts associated with each semantic signal, in the mind of John and his readers, were only properly associated with distinct individuals.

## Conclusion

What must not be forgotten in all this discussion about the absence of the article before the second noun in an article-noun-καί-noun construction, is that even if the article were repeated this would not guarantee that both nouns are not to be applied to the same person. Consider John 13:13, ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὁ κύριος, or Revelation 1:5, ὁ πρωτότοκος. . . καὶ ὁ ἄρχων, or Matthew 22:32, ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραὰμ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰακώβ. The latter example is especially interesting, considering the parallel account in Luke 20:37, τὸν θεὸν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ θεὸν Ἰσαὰκ καὶ θεὸν Ἰακώβ. Are we to understand that in Luke's account there is only one God spoken of, while in Matthew there is a God for Abraham, a God for Isaac and a God for Jacob? Thus, it is not legitimate to argue that the repetition of the article in the christologically significant passages previously discussed would have made it clear that two persons are in view.<sup>130</sup>

Even if Christ were called "God" in Titus 2:13 or 2 Peter 1:1, it would not add two verses "to the side of the Trinitarian argument."<sup>131</sup> The Bible writers show no awareness of the Trinity doctrine, which arose centuries later, and with much controversy. In fact, the writings of the apostles stand in direct contradiction to

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<sup>130</sup> See also Rev 1:17; 2:8, 26; 12:9; 20:6. This inaccurate argument is frequently advanced by those who try to convince others that only one person (Jesus Christ) is in view in passages such as Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1. For example, Robert Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Word Publishing, 1996), 354, says regarding 2 Peter 1:1, "If Peter *wanted* to indicate that two persons were in view in II Peter 1:1, all he had to do was to add the article before the second noun."

<sup>131</sup> Robertson, "The Greek Article and the Deity of Christ," 187.

such a teaching. The author of Titus 2:13<sup>132</sup> speaks of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" many times (Ro 15:5-6; 2Co 1:3; 11:31; Eph 1:3, 17), and Peter does the same. (1Pe 1:3) So if these verses did call Jesus θεός it would be with the understanding communicated throughout the Bible that Jesus is a divine being who is dependent on the Father, his God, for his authority and life. (Joh 5:26-27) It would be another qualified reference to Jesus as θεός,<sup>133</sup> with the understanding that Jesus has one who is God to him. This is hardly equivalent to the Trinitarian understanding of God, which would explain these qualifying references in terms of Christ allegedly having two natures in one person. Such a teaching is foreign to the whole of Scripture. Before he came to earth Jesus was divine. (Joh 1:1) When he came to earth he was a man, "lower than the angels." (Heb 2:9; compare 2Co 8:9) When he returned to heaven he became a "life-giving spirit" (1Co 15:45).

In Ephesians 5:5 (as well as 1Ti 5:21, 6:13, and 2Ti 4:1), Χριστός is the equivalent of a proper name, and, therefore, does not fit the general description of the nouns in the other eighty or so article-noun-καί-noun constructions in the New Testament. It is similar with 2 Thessalonians 1:12, where the compound name "Lord Jesus Christ" does not require the article to be considered a second subject. In Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 the use of σωτήρ, together with "Jesus Christ," puts these examples outside the general category of article-noun-καί-noun constructions, which do not have the equivalent of a proper name in either the first or second position. This is not to say that such constructions cannot describe one person with two nouns, for, clearly, in the case of 2 Peter 1:11, 2:20, 3:18 and Jude 4, they do. There are several grammatical differences between 1 John 5:20 and the other christologically significant article-noun-καί-noun texts, and both nouns are modified by adjectives and appear to be semantically restricted to distinct individuals. It also appears rather obvious that we should identify *ho alethinous theos* and *ton alethinon* as the same individual, who is distinct from "the Son of him."

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<sup>132</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses do not consider the letter to Titus deuterio-Pauline. See "All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial," 239-240.

<sup>133</sup> See Chapter 6, pages 355-362.

When we interpret grammatical constructions, which involve compound proper names or their semantic equivalents, we cannot simply turn to other constructions that are not precise parallels (that is, which do not contain proper or compound proper names) and say, "It must be rendered this way or that way." Each verse has its own peculiarities that must be carefully weighed before a rule of grammar, which is loaded with limitations, is allowed the final say.