

IS
JESUS
CHRIST
GOD?

Does the Bible say who Jesus Christ really is?

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Translation by Dino Cianflone

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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the honour and
glory of our*

LORD JESUS CHRIST

*for the instruction of all those who desire to
know Him for who He truly is*

ABBREVIATIONS

CTNT, Commentario teologico del Nuovo Testamento *{Theological Commentary of the New Testament}*, Paideia, Brescia
GDLI, Grande Dizionario della lingua Italiana *{Complete Dictionary of the Italian Language}*, UTET - Torino
GLNT, Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento *{Complete Lexicon of the New Testament}*, Paideia, Brescia
NWT, New World Translation of the Holy Bible
N.T., New Testament
O.T., Old Testament
KJV, King James Version
TEV, Today's English Version
LB, Living Bible
NIV, New International Version
NKJ, New King James Version
PME, Phillips Modern Version
JB, Jerusalem Bible
RSV, Revised Standard Version
NAS, New American Standard
ESV, English Standard Version
CEI, Testo édito a cura della Conferenza Episcopale *{Text published by the Episcopal Conference}*

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PREFACE

In presenting this work of Pastor Domenico Barbera to the public, I can testify that in its uncomplicated simplicity and clarity, it is a valid instrument in the hands of every believer who wants to be aware and, at the same time, convinced that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are wrong in refusing to recognize that Jesus Christ is truly God. Domenico Barbera was born in Lascari, a small centre located in the province of Palermo, in 1934. He was already pastor of the communities of Misilmeri and Palermo and later of Agrigento in 1966 when he received governmental recognition of his nomination as “Minister of religion” by the “Assemblee di Dio in Italia” *{Assemblies of God in Italy}*.

In 1972, he immigrated to Canada where he currently lives and is carrying out his pastoral ministry with the “Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada” in the Community of Niagara Falls, Ontario. Domenico Barbera, in this work, does not revert to arduous and deep theological language, but with Bible in hand, he directs the reader that wants to “investigate the Scriptures” without preconceived ideas to the evidence, in order to know the truth with regard to Jesus Christ. To achieve this goal, Pastor Barbera refers to the

Greek language in which the New Testament was written and compares the lexical meaning of certain words, thereby proving to the reader that the NWT (New World Translation = The Bible published by the Jehovah's Witnesses) is not faithful to the text and that the compilers of that translation have done everything to demean the “divine personality” of Christ, reducing Him to a simple mortal man. The author of this work, before even approaching the subject, takes his departure point from a phrase that is found in the Letter of Jude that says:

I felt I had to write and urge you ... For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord (v. 4).

And he ultimately concludes that *They are godless men, who ... deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord and whose condemnation was written about long ago* (from ancient times). Therefore, the work in its entirety, conducted in very simple language, is particularly useful for the “ordinary” person who can easily be seduced by error. That does not stop its content from being valid also for the “specialist”. We pray therefore for the broadest diffusion of this work and that it can generally be of great usefulness among Christians of every kind, encouraging them “to contend for the faith”, proclaiming everywhere that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:11).

Nino Tirelli

PRESENTATION

A Christian, who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot remain indifferent when this person is despised and dishonoured. The question that David asked, *Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?* (1 Samuel 17:26), can be repeated whenever we encounter people that are without scruples in presenting Jesus Christ differently from how He is presented in the Holy Scriptures.

In this book, **“IS JESUS CHRIST GOD?”**, Pastor Domenico Barbera, in presenting this careful study, has done everything to help us understand “who Jesus Christ truly is”. Domenico Barbera, over and above being a preacher and teacher of the Bible for many years, is currently pastor of the Church of Niagara Falls, Ontario, which is affiliated with the “Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada”. Reading the work of Pastor Barbera does not require great effort to understand that the author is well informed on the subject; not only for the careful study relative to the various translations, in light of the Greek text, but also for the clarity with which he makes evident the misrepresentation of the NWT in translating important texts that emphasize the deity of Christ.

The main purpose that the author aimed to achieve in this work is to lift up Jesus Christ and to recognize His proper place, that is, as the Gospel proclaims Him. The author is knowledgeable about many other topics that are the subject of controversy, but in this work, he has preferred to deal with the fundamental theme of Christianity, which is the deity of Jesus Christ. A building collapses without a solid foundation, *When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?* (Psalm 11:3).

The fundamental rock of Christianity has always been and will forever be “Emmanuel, God with us”; *the word made flesh*; Christ who died and resurrected; He who said:

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matthew 16:18).

This book is profitable reading for all and can be used as a valid instrument, particularly by anyone who delights in the study of the Bible. The question posed by the famous French thinker and religious writer Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) is relevant.

“Must we believe in the Jesus of philosophers and science or do we believe the Christ of the Gospel?”

The Christ that we believe in is the “Son of Almighty God”; He that the Holy Scriptures define as *the same yesterday, today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). If we do not accept the doctrines of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus then, as Pastor Barbera rightly observes, “We do not have the right to call ourselves

Christians”. From ancient times the Devil said: *Did GOD really say?* (Genesis 3:1). He continues to speak this way today in another form, always in order to cause doubts about God and what He has said. We are grateful for the work of Pastor Barbera and believe that it will contribute to emphasize the truth of the Gospel. We therefore express our best wishes for broad dissemination of this work.

Alberico De Vito

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INTRODUCTION

The question posed in the title of this book is not formulated as an uncertainty regarding the person of Jesus Christ, but rather to persuade the reader to know who Jesus Christ truly is and, for our part, to depict a truth that we believe is pivotal and is the very foundation of Christianity, in clear and simple language.

If Christianity is beautiful in its theological structure, in spite of all those distortions that have been introduced from the beginning of its formation during the course of the centuries by many elements pertaining to various currents of thought, the Christ of Christianity must be even more beautiful, because He and He alone gives importance and value to Christianity and without Him, there would be no reason for its existence. In the preparation of this book, we have been animated by a desire to know who Jesus Christ truly is, as He is presented in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. Through the course of the centuries, there have been many that have taken their turn to write and speak about the person of Jesus Christ, let alone of the divinity of this wonderful Son of God and, at the same time, Son of man.

We do not assume the presumption of being included in the number of so-called “greats”, because we are fully aware of our very modest work, especially when we think of the voluminous works that have been published. Compared with them, we have written only a very few pages. If we began and completed it all, we have only done so in the hope that someone, finding himself/herself in doubt and uncertainty, would find light and knowledge, not only to be protected from the error of heresy, but above all, to believe in Christ and to love Him, serving Him with greater energy and genuine faith and zeal.

Early on, we did have in mind to impart the book with scholarly quotations, because we know all too well that the excessive use of quotations usually does not only serve to present the weight of culture and knowledge (indispensable for a degree or doctorate thesis), but it also has the flavour of weighing down the work, rendering it difficult to check and verify, especially for anyone that does not have a particular competence.

Since our aim is to reach the greatest number of readers, especially where there is not a deep knowledge, we have tried and done our best to avoid generating quotation after quotation (especially in regard to the interpretation of certain Scriptures), preferring rather Biblical documentation, thereby allowing a person easy accessibility and avoiding to fall into the trap of heresy.

In this work, we have not taken into account the so-called “expert”, but the ordinary person who can more easily be seduced by error. However,

little by little, as the subject came under examination, we became aware that some substantial quotations were necessary; therefore, we have not hesitated to introduce them, limiting ourselves only to those concerned with the etymological meaning of the various Greek words that we have used in our research.

In the beginning, as we have said earlier, we did not intend to examine certain texts, such as Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; John 8:58, let alone the title of “Son of God”, not because it was not in harmony with our work plan and study, but mainly in recognition of all those works that have been published prior to our own in which these texts have been examined and even though some have been around for a very long time, it is always useful to consult them. However, after careful reflection, we are convinced that in this work, it was useful to include them, therefore, the last two chapters have been added, which have inevitably enriched this work.

If we had had in mind to write a true and proper Christology by referring to all those texts that speak about Jesus Christ, we would have examined many other texts and explained many other words that have been given incorrect interpretations with catastrophic consequences as far as the consideration of the person of Jesus Christ is concerned. From the time that we got the idea to write this book, we were fixed on dealing with the deity of Christ from a different point of view and in this, we have remained firm.

Even though we have not dealt with the subject of the humanity of Jesus in a specific way, this does

not mean that we put it in doubt. In fact, it is not possible to speak about the deity of Christ while excluding His humanity, as though it were a matter of two persons that have nothing in common with each other. Christ Jesus is the only indivisible person, in whom Christian faith is fully confident. In regard to the Greek words to which we frequently refer, while realizing that this language is not accessible to all, we were unable to do without them, due to their great importance, in the research and study of what we have written.

We assure the reader that everything we have explained about the etymological meanings of various Greek words cited in this work is scientifically demonstrable and certain. The authors that we have quoted from are a sure guarantee to justify our statement. Verification of the Greek terms can be done by consulting a Greek-English Dictionary. We have transcribed the various linguistic definitions.

At this time, we can do no less than to express our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Nino Tirelli for his diligent efforts in astutely reviewing this work, along with the wise advice he provided. In thanking God and Jesus Christ, along with the Holy Spirit for the help we were given, we wish, from the depths of our heart, that the blessing of God be abundantly poured out and that all readers draw the greatest possible benefit toward achieving a true and complete knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest reward that we seek for our work.

Domenico Barbera, Niagara Falls, June 1992

PART ONE

**HOW JESUS CHRIST IS PRESENTED IN
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

Chapter 2

THE LORDSHIP AND DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

When in the course of the treatment of the previous chapter we stated that the editors of the NWT have distorted certain texts in the New Testament that emphasize the Deity of Jesus Christ, we did not say this just to speak some words, but we said it because we are in a position to provide the most overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that the above mentioned editors, in rendering certain texts where the deity of Jesus Christ cannot be denied, have done everything possible to misrepresent the Greek text. To know how the Greek term **“arnēomai”** has been rendered in the New Testament by the NWT, we need only to examine the thirty texts of the New Testament in which it appears.

In the 30 occurrences of the Greek term **“arnoumenoi”**⁸ encountered in the New Testament in its various forms, only three times has the Greek word been rendered “*proving false to*” (Jude 4 and 2 Timothy 3:5) and “*prove false to*” (Revelation 3:8); once “*To repudiate*” (Titus 2:12) and once “*refused*” (Hebrews 11:24). In order to prove this, we here below quote all 30 passages, so the reader can verify for himself. At this point, we would like to apologize and ask the reader’s patience if in the course of this study we are forced to quote many passages from the Bible. We assure you that what we are doing is not purely rhetorical nor are we motivated by an exquisitely polemic, sectarian or destructive spirit (even though what we say has much to do with the controversy). We are moved only by love for the truth and then, because we consider the many souls and their good, both in the present and in the future in this important and fundamental theological argument and we desire that they would accept and follow nothing other than what the Bible teaches and not what is preached by the Watchtower society that has no scruples about distorting the Word of God. Here below are the texts in question. In the study that will follow, we will place the English word beside the corresponding Greek between quotation marks “ ” and the word that the NWT uses will appear between parenthesis ().

1) Luke 8:45, reads:

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

⁸ cf. for the term **“armēomai”**, H. Schlier, *GLNT, I*, col. 1247-1255

When they all denied **“arnoumenon”** (denying) it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

2) Acts 4:16:

"What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny **“arneisthai”** (deny) it.

3) John 1:20 (NKJ):

He confessed, and did not deny **“ērnēsato”** (deny), but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

4) Mark 14:68:

But he denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about".

5) Mark 14:70:

Again he denied **“ērneito”** (denying) it.

6) John 18:25:

As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it, saying, "I am not".

7) John 18:27:

Again Peter denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

8) 1 John 2:22:

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies **“arnoumenos”** (denies) the Father and the Son?

9) Titus 1:16:

*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny **“arnountai”** (disown) him.*

10) Hebrews 11:24:

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused **“érnésato”** (refused) to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*

11) Titus 2:12 (ESV):

*training us to renounce **“arnēsamenoī”** (repudiate) ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.*

12) Acts 3:13:

*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned **“érnēsasthe”** (disowned) him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.*

13) Acts 3:14:

*You disowned **“érnēsasthe”** (disowned) the Holy and Righteous One.*

14) Acts 7:35:

*This is the same Moses whom they had rejected **“érnēsanto”** (disowned).*

15) Matthew 10:33:

*But whoever disowns **“arnēsetai”** (disowns) me before men.*

16) John 13:38:

*Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown **"arnēsō"** (disowned) me three times!*

17) 2 Peter 2:1:

*even denying **"arnoumenoi"** (disown) the sovereign Lord who bought them.*

18) Jude 4:

*and deny **"arnoumenoi"** (proving false to) Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

19) Revelation 3:8:

*you have kept my word and have not denied **"ērnēsō"** (prove false to) my name.*

20) Revelation 2:13:

*Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce **"ērnēsō"** (deny) your faith in me.*

21) 1 Timothy 5:8:

*If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied **"ērnētai"** (disowned) the faith.*

22) 2 Timothy 3:5:

*having a form of godliness but denying **"ērnōmenoi"** (proving false to) its power.*

23) 2 Timothy 2:12:

*if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown **"arnēsometha"** (deny) him, he will also disown **"arnēsetai"** (deny) us.*

24) 2 Timothy 2:13:

if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown **“arnēsasthai”** (deny) himself.

25) 1 John 2:23:

*No one who denies **“arnoumenos”** (denies) the Son has the Father.*

26) Luke 9:23:

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny **“ēnēsastho”** (disown) himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

27) Luke 12:9:

*But he who disowns **“arnēsamenos”** (disowns) me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.*

28) Luke 22:57:

*But he denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.*

29) Matthew 26:70:

*But he denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it before them all.*

30) Matthew 26:72:

*He denied **“ērnēsato”** (denied) it again, with an oath.*

Now let us examine why, out of 30 texts, the NWT only translates three differently. First of all, we notice that Revelation 2:13 and Revelation 3:8 have the same Greek term in the form **“ērnēso”**. In the first case, it is rendered “deny”, while in the second, it is rendered “prove false to”. Already the reader, at this point, can begin to open his eyes

and can reasonably ask himself why? Let us read Revelation 3:8 more in depth:

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

The NWT interprets it: “I know your deeds—look! I have set before you an opened door, which no one can shut—that you have a little power, and you kept my word and did not prove false to my name”.

First of all we observe that the One that is speaking to the seven angels of Revelation is Jesus Christ.

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John

¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. (Revelation 1:1; 22:16).

The One who addresses His message to the church of Philadelphia is called, *the holy one, the true one* (ESV). In this text, the NWT has removed the two definite articles that are found before the two Greek words: “**ho haghios**” the holy one and “**ho alethinos**” the true one. If an objection had to be made that the omission of the definite article before the two Greek words is not essential to the discourse, we answer: this text does not refer either to two names nor to two preachers; it refers instead to two adjectives.

We can therefore ask, Why did the editors of the NWT remove the two definite articles? The answer

is given in the words of verse 8. This text speaks about **“ērnēso to onoma mou”**. Translating this phrase into, “(You) did not prove false to my name” is to violate the text in a deliberate way.

Again in this sentence the article **“to”** has been omitted. Since this text speaks about the NAME of the One that is called, *the holy one, the true one* and since He is clearly Jesus Christ, it was therefore necessary, not only to eliminate the first two definite articles, but also to omit the third, because it is with the omission of the third article that the ruse of the Watchtower is unmasked. In fact, although Revelation 2:13 contains the same words as Revelation 3:8 in their form, the editors of the NWT had no difficulty translating, **“to onoma mou”** as “my name”, precisely because **“ērnēso”**, “to deny”, is in relation to faith; while in Revelation 3:8, **“ērnēso”** is in relation to the NAME of Jesus.

Since the Watchtower has purposed to deny, at all cost, the deity of Jesus Christ, the editors of the NWT have no scruples about translating Revelation 3:8; “(You) did not prove false to my name”. We therefore believe that we have clearly demonstrated not only the Watchtower’s strategy, but also the plan of the NWT, which is purposely distorted in order to debase the name of Jesus Christ.

Let us now examine 2 Timothy 3:5, which says, *having a form of godliness but denying its power*. The NWT says, “having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power”. It is not difficult, in reading these two translations, to see a remarkable difference. The phrase, **“morphosin**

eusebeias” means a form of godliness or a form of holy devotion, i.e. it has to do with something apparent, external. There is no purpose clarifying the concept of godliness, even though we say that godliness is not an ideal, but rather one’s behaviour towards God and the kind of life-conduct that is dictated by the norm of doctrine. While for the first translation, **“morphosin eusebeias”** means only something apparent, external, for the second, it is something of power.

If this, “proving false to its power”, has to do with “holy devotion”, we are somewhat perplexed as to how such importance can be given to it. All this because of the unwillingness to translate **“ērnēmenoi”** = to deny. We wonder; For what purpose? Perhaps in order to establish an excuse to use it for other texts such as Revelation 3:8 and Judah 4? If our interpretation is correct, this scheme of the Watchtower is most contemptible. We have already spoken about Jude 4, above all, when we remembered that 2 Peter 2:1 uses the same term **“arneumenoī”**. There remains for us to consider the last Greek term in Jude, which is precisely, **“despotēn”**⁹. It will be remembered that this term means:

Master, Owner, Sovereign, Despot.

It is true that the Greek word that we are examining is used in the New Testament in the profane sense of “master or the head of the household”, but it is also true that it is used in regard to divinity. It is our duty to point out how the editors of the NWT have played their hand

⁹. cf. H. Rengstorf, *GLNT, II*, col. 849-864.

whenever this term is found in relation to God and how they have withdrawn it when it speaks about Jesus Christ.

Let us examine those passages in which the term **“despotēn”** refers to God.

Luke 2:29:

*Sovereign Lord **“despota”**, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.*

The NWT reads: “Now, Sovereign Lord, you are letting your slave go free in peace according to your declaration”.

Acts 4:24:

*When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord **“despota”**," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.*

The NWT reads: Upon hearing this they with one accord raised their voices to God and said: “Sovereign Lord, you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them.”

Revelation 6:10:

*They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord **“despotēs”**, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"*

The NWT says: And they cried with a loud voice, saying: “Until when, Sovereign Lord holy and true, are you refraining from judging and avenging our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?”

Let us now examine those passages in which the term **“despotēn”** refers to Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 2:1:

*But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord **“despotēn”** who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

The NWT says: However, there also came to be false prophets among the people, as there will also be false teachers among YOU. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves.

The term “owner” in lower case, speaks for itself, without further comment.

Jude 4:

*For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign **“despotēn”** and Lord.*

The NWT says: My reason is that certain men have slipped in who have long ago been appointed by the Scriptures to this judgment, ungodly men, turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct and proving false to our only Owner and Lord, Jesus Christ.

From the comparison of these texts, it is clear enough that the Greek term **“despotēn”**, used in these passages, always has the same meaning:

Master, Lord, Owner, Sovereign, Ruler. Why then, in the first three texts in which **“despotēn”** refers to God, does the NWT interpret it, “Sovereign Lord”; while in the other two texts which refer to Jesus Christ, is it rendered, “Owner” and in 2 Peter 2:1, it is even in lower case?

Even a person with little knowledge can understand how this apparently harmless scheme disguises all the venom and indignation of the fury of the devil and weaves itself with only one purpose; to ignore the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ as an equal divine being to God. Was Jude 4 wrong in declaring that those who deny the Lordship and Deity of Jesus Christ are godless and that their condemnation was written about long ago? No! We and all those who believe and accept the lordship and Deity of Jesus Christ, not as an imposition of tradition, but as the declared truth from the Scriptures, say a hundred times over, “No”, and again, “No!” to all the captious objections of the Jehovah's Witnesses and their society!