

Jesus - According to “The Way International”

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A topic so utterly important as God and His Son Jesus Christ certainly deserves both yours and my clearest and best thinking.¹ —Victor Paul Wierwille

On October 30, 1977, Victor Paul Wierwille stepped from his luxury coach and strutted proudly to the front door of his former United Church of Christ in New Knoxville. There, in an act representing what he saw as “a potentially greater Reformation” than that begun by Martin Luther, he nailed his “version” of Luther’s 95 theses to its door. It screamed: JESUS CHRIST IS NOT GOD—Never Was and Never Will Be.” Then, “Dr. Wierwille strode back to the custom coach after placing an autographed copy of *Jesus Christ Is Not God* at the foot of the church door for all to see. As the custom coach pulled away, its foghorn blasted three times to signify the ceremony’s completion.”² The Way members present at this important symbolic gesture were thrilled.

According to *Time* magazine, Wierwille arrogantly challenged Christians, “You show me one place in the Bible where it says he [Jesus] is God.... I don’t want your rapping, your double-talk, your triple-talk; all I want is Scripture.”³ Scripture, however, is exactly what Wierwille did not want, and it is exactly what he would not listen to. For example, to “document” that “Jesus Christ is not God” in John 1:1-14, he had to add over 40 words in brackets in his translation to “clarify” its true meaning:

In the beginning was the Word [God], and the [revealed] Word was with [*pros*] God [with Him in His foreknowledge, yet independent of Him], and the Word was God. The same [revealed Word] was in the beginning with [*pros*] God.... All things were made by him [God]; and without him [God] was not any thing made that was made.... In him [God] was life; and the life was the light of men.... And the light [God] shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.... There was a man sent [*apostello*] from God, whose name was John. The same [John] came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light [God], that all *men* through him [John] might believe. He [John] was not that Light [God], but was sent to bear witness of that Light [God].... *That* was the true Light

[God], which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.... He [God] was in the world [by the revealed Word], and the world was made by him [God], and the world knew him [God] not.... He [God] came unto his own [Israel], and his own received him not.... But as many [of Israel] as received him [God], to them gave he [God] power [*exousia*, authority, the right] to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on [unto] his name [namesake, Jesus Christ].... Which were [who was] born [conceived], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.... And the Word [revealed Word, Jesus Christ] was made flesh [the conception], and dwelt among us [his birth].⁴

And, although Wierwille claimed that it is Christians who “substantiate their beliefs by isolating bits of biblical texts,”⁵ the shoe is actually on the other foot.

We may summarize Wierwille’s teachings about Jesus under the following seven points.

1. Jesus was first created as a sperm. “Jesus Christ’s existence began when God created the sperm with soul-life in Mary.”⁶

2. Jesus is the highest creature. “His position is second only to God.”⁷

3. Jesus existed with God in the beginning only in God’s foreknowledge. “Jesus Christ was not literally with God in the beginning; neither does he have all the assets of God.”⁸ And, “Where was Jesus Christ before he was born to Mary? Jesus Christ was with God in His foreknowledge. ... Jesus Christ was with God before the foundation of the world, meaning that God foreknew him.... We, as well as Jesus Christ, were with God in His foreknowledge, but not in existence, before the foundation of the world.”⁹

4. Jesus is not God. It is crucial that Jesus be only a man. Thus, “When my life is over, I think my greatest contribution may prove to be the knowledge and teaching that Jesus Christ is not God.”¹⁰ It is important to observe that Wierwille, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christadelphians and other cults, connected salvation to the rejection of Christ’s deity. In other words, if Christ is God, the salvation of men and women is impossible. Wierwille’s conclusion here was based on a misunderstanding of the Christian view of the nature of Jesus as fully God and fully man—undiminished deity and full humanity in one Person, He argued that if Christ is God, then He could not represent or die for men.

If Jesus Christ is God and not the Son of God, we have not yet been redeemed. The difference is that important, that critical.... Our very redemption, the crucial point on which all of Christianity rests, is dependent on Jesus Christ’s being a man and not God. Our passover, which was Jesus Christ tortured, crucified, dead and buried, had to be a sheep from the flock. God would hardly qualify as one of our brethren, yet His Son could.¹¹

Of course, if Jesus was fully human, Wierwille’s argument is irrelevant.

5. Jesus is the replacement for Lucifer, “Clearly, Jesus Christ is presently

second only to God in power and authority. Lucifer as the morning star was replaced by Jesus Christ who is now the morning star.”¹²

6. Jesus was not virgin born. Wierwille apparently taught that Jesus was born “dead in trespasses and sins, without hope.” “Why didn’t Jesus come with the spirit upon him when he was born? Because then he could not have redeemed you and me. He had to be born just as we are—a natural man, naturally dead in trespasses and sins, without hope.”¹³

Wierwille believed that Jesus was born of God’s sperm but that Mary was a virgin only until the conception of Jesus, but not after. During her pregnancy she had sexual relations with Joseph. Citing Matthew 1:18-20, Wierwille declared: “‘Take unto thee’ literally means ‘to take her as a wife,’ not just to take her and watch over her until the baby is born. Mary is already the wife of Joseph so the instruction to ‘take unto him’ would mean something more; it means intercourse.”¹⁴ But Wierwille apparently forgot to read the next few verses. The reason why Christians refer to the virgin *birth*, not the virgin conception, is because the Bible states plainly that Joseph “had no union with her until she gave birth to a son” (Matthew 1:25).

7. Miscellaneous. In addition, Wierwille taught of Jesus that, after His death, “for three days and three nights he had no consciousness.”¹⁵ “The Word of God says that Jesus Christ was dead for 72 hours. How could Jesus Christ be God for God cannot die?”¹⁶ Biblically, however, Jesus was never unconscious for three days, and obviously, the second Person of the Godhead cannot die. But, on the Cross, Jesus’ human nature expired; it ceased its biological functioning. Since this nature was not eternal, but truly human and began at the incarnation (Philippians 2), it was subject to death.

Wierwille also implied that, at least temporarily, John the Baptist might have been “better than Jesus because he came into the world with more of the power of God than Jesus did.”¹⁷ Supposedly, Jesus did not have a spiritual nature until the age of 30, whereas John had “spirit” from the womb. Wierwille taught that until age 30 Jesus was comprised only of body and soul. Body and soul cannot communicate with God, only spirit can. Wierwille thought that Jesus had no communion with God until He was 30.

In conclusion, the Jesus of The Way is not the biblical Jesus. While The Way does accept Jesus’ physical resurrection, ascension and return, it denies His very nature and mission. For Wierwille, even the term “Son of God” only refers to one who was a special human being.

Notes

¹ Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God* (New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1975), p. 4.

² *The Way Magazine*, January-February 1978, p. 22.

³ *Time*, September 6, 1971, p. 54.

⁴ Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, pp. 87, 91, 93-101.

⁵ Victor Paul Wierwille, *The Word’s Way* (New Knoxville, OH: ACP, 1971), p. 25.

- ⁶ Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, p. 117.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58, emphasis added.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
- ¹⁰ Cited in J. L. Williams, *Victor Paul Wierwille and The Way International* (Moody Press, 1979), p. 50; from Mal Miller, "The Way Followers March on New Knoxville Church," *St. Mary's (Ohio), Evening Leader*, October 17, 1977.
- ¹¹ Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, pp. 6-7.
- ¹² *The Way Magazine*, March-April 1979, p. 4.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, Marcy April, 1976, p. 11; see Wierwille, *The New, Dynamic Church* (New Knoxville, OH: ACP, 1972), p. 60.
- ¹⁴ Wierwille, *The Word's Way*, p. 166.
- ¹⁵ *The Way Magazine*, March-April 1977, p. 6.
- ¹⁶ Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, p. 76n.
- ¹⁷ *The Way Magazine*, March-April 1976, p. 11.