



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
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**What's New with Cults and Sects in America?: Part 2**

By Tal Davis

In Part 1 of this four installment series, we began a review and update on some of the largest and most influential cults and sects in America. Many of these organizations have changed their structures, leaders, and, for a few, even their theology over the past couple of decades. For that reason, it is wise to stay informed about the current status of these diverse movements. In this Part 2, we will look at the Jehovah's Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostals, and the Unitarian Universalist Association. In part 3, we will examine the recent events of Christian Science, the Unity School of Christianity, and The Way International (and its offspring). In Part 4, we will look at the Church of Scientology, the Nation of Islam, and the Unification Church.

**Jehovah's Witnesses**

Second only to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in worldwide membership is the Jehovah's Witnesses movement. That cultic organization was founded in 1884 by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) as "Zion's Watchtower and Tract Society." Today it is officially known corporately as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter abbreviated as the WBTS).

Since its beginning the WBTS has taught many unorthodox theological concepts. Its most important deviations from historic Christianity are its absolute denial of the full deity of Jesus Christ, its condemnation of the Holy Trinity, and its denial of the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.

In order to buttress its theological distinctions the WBTS publishes its own official translation of the

Bible called the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT). The New Testament was released in 1950, and the whole Bible in 1961. That Bible version was universally spurned by Bible scholars as blatantly biased against the deity of Christ. Many New Testament passages were mistranslated to obscure the identification of Jesus with God. It was slightly revised in 1984. It remains the only Bible version that Jehovah's Witnesses are allowed to use in their study and training.

In 2013 the WBTS released a newer revision of the NWT (both the 1984 and 2013 NWT editions are available online for reading or downloading at the official Jehovah's Witnesses website: <http://www.jw.org/en/publications/bible>). Let's examine some key passages in the New Testament that were in past NWT editions that were clearly mistranslated. Did the new revised version correct those biased renderings, and what consequences did they have on WBTS theology?

JOHN 1:1 - The older 1984 NWT version rendered this verse: "In (the) beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Notice that, in the first clause, the 1984 edition put the definite article "(the)" in parentheses. The parentheses were included to indicate that the word does not appear in any Greek text. The 2013 edition has it this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

The 2013 edition removed the parentheses around "the," which is how most Bible versions have it anyway. That was not a problem. Note, however, that, in the last clause, both the 1984 and 2013 NWT editions

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put the indefinite article "a" before the noun "god" (which is in all lower case). The word "a" also is not in the Greek text. Unlike "the," all credible Greek scholars agree that grammatically an "a" does not belong in that place. The WBTS places it in that context so that "the Word" (the preexistent Jesus) is not regarded as equal to Jehovah God, but only as "a god" or super angel. This is a clear distortion of the text to accommodate WBTS theology. The New American Standard Bible (NASB), like most other standard English versions, renders it thusly: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The context clearly equates the Word (Jesus) with the One and Only God.

ACTS 10:36 – The NWT also mistranslated this passage to obfuscate Jesus' deity. The NASB renders that verse: "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)." The writer, Luke, clearly calls Jesus "Lord of all" identifying Him as equal with God. The 1984 NWT had that verse like this: "He sent out the word to the sons of Israel to declare to them the good news of peace through Jesus Christ: this One is Lord of all [others]." Note the word "(others)" in parenthesis at the end of the verse. Remember, when the NWT puts a word in parentheses, it means it is not actually in the Greek text. This addition was obviously made to diminish the implication that Jesus is "Lord of all," (that is, everything – not just "all others") and is, therefore, God.

Surprisingly, the 2013 NWT version renders Acts 10:36 as, "He sent out the word to the sons of Israel to declare to them the good news of peace through Jesus Christ – this one is Lord of all." For some reason, the translators did not repeat

their earlier unwarranted addition of "(others)." They must have anguished over this change because they surely realized the implications of calling Jesus "Lord of all." However, appearances are not always what they seem. Note that the 2013 revision editors, after removing "(others)," also altered the phrase "this One is Lord" by changing the first letter in the word "one" to lower case. This was done to obfuscate the phrase's affirmation of Jesus' deity.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 – This is one of the most significant passages in the New Testament regarding the full deity of Jesus. The NASB accurately translates this passage this way: "15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

The WBTS in the 1984 NWT translated that passage like this: "15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 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. 17 Also, he is before all (other) things and by means of him all (other) things were made to exist, 18 and he is the

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head of the body, the congregation. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he might become the one who is first in all things; 19 because (God) saw good for all fullness to dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile again to himself all (other) things by making peace through the blood (he shed) on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens."

Did you notice the addition of the word "(other)" in parentheses? Remember, that means it is not in the Greek text. This NWT addition was made so the passage would conform to the WBTS theological position about the preexistent Jesus. The WBTS says Jesus was Michael, Jehovah's first created being, and was not the ultimate creator of "all things," just "all (other) things."

Now look at how the 2013 NWT edition renders this passage: "15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All other things have been created through him and for him. 17 Also, he is before all other things, and by means of him all other things were made to exist, 18 and he is the head of the body, the congregation. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might become the one who is first in all things; 19 because God was pleased to have all fullness to dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens."

Note that in the 2013 NWT the unwarranted words "other" are still in

those verses in the text where they do not belong. However, low and behold, the parentheses are gone! In other words, the WBTS decided that the parentheses were an embarrassing admission that the words "other" do not appear in the Greek text and should not be there. But, rather than having to explain why the parentheses were put there, it just removed them. Maybe it hoped no one would notice, especially its own members.

Anyway, the clear teaching of the passage, when translated as it is in Greek, is that everything that exists was created by and for Jesus, was reconciled by Jesus, and is sustained by Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of God (vs. 19; also see Colossians 2:9)!

TITUS 2:13 – Here is another verse the NWT translators had to disassemble to fit their theology. The NASB, in agreement with nearly all other versions, says: "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." The verse, as properly translated, calls Christ Jesus "our great God and Savior."

In the 1984 NWT it was awkwardly rendered: "While we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus." The WBTS actually added two words to the text not found in the Greek: "of (the)." They did put "(the)" in parentheses to acknowledge its absence in the Greek, but did not do so for the word "of." They also eliminated the word "our" from before "great God" and put "of us" at the end of the sentence. Their purpose evidently was to distinguish "the great God" from "[the] Savior of us" since in WBTS theology Jesus cannot be God.

The 2013 version of the NWT has the verse like this: "while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifesta-

tion of the great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ." Notice that they removed entirely "[the]" in the last clause, and removed "us" at the end of the sentence. Nonetheless, they kept and moved the word "of" from before "us" to before "our Savior," even though "of" is not even in the Greek text at this place. They also moved the word "our," not before "great God and Savior," as in the NASB and all other standard translations, but before "Savior, Jesus Christ." The effect of this change is significant theologically. By surreptitiously locating the word "our" before "Savior, Jesus Christ" instead of where it belongs, before "great God," the WBTS is still clearly trying to distinguish "God" from, "Savior, Jesus Christ."

The phrase should correctly read as the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) has it: "...while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." In other words, Jesus Christ Himself is "our great God and Savior!"

One other point. The 2013 NWT translation continues to render, as did the 1984 edition, the common Greek words for Lord (*kurios*) and God (*Theos*) as "Jehovah." It does this 237 times in the New Testament. This is a totally unwarranted use of the Old Testament name of God (as transliterated by the WBTS) in the New Testament. But that is not the worst thing. *Kurios* is rendered as "Jehovah" only when it is used in the context of a reference to God in a generic sense, or when used in a passage that quotes from the Old Testament. But *kurios* is never translated as "Jehovah" in the nearly 400 times in the New Testament when it is applied as a title to Jesus Christ. There is simply no justifiable textual or linguistic basis for using "Jehovah" or for making that distinction. The word *kurios* should always be accurately translated, according to context, as "Lord" or "Master." *Theos* should always be translated as "God." Neither Greek word can ever be translated legitimately as "Jehovah."

The New Testament writers, following Jewish tradition and the 3rd Century BC Greek Septuagint's translation of the Old Testament, understood the term *kurios* (Lord), in most cases, to be a reference to deity (Yahweh) in the fullest sense. Thus, when New Testament writers called Jesus *kurios* (Lord or Master), they were directly identifying Him with the God of the Old Testament (Yahweh or Jehovah).

It is obvious that the NWT's illegitimate use of "Jehovah" to translate *kurios* (Lord) or *Theos* (God) 237 times in generic reference to God, but never as a title of Jesus, is to reinforce the distinction between God and Jesus in the minds of uninformed Jehovah's Witnesses. It is fair to say, then, the 2013 New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is still one of the most biased, distorted, and deceptive Bible versions ever published.

Another important change in the WBTS in the past couple of decades is how it is organized and led. In 1992, long time WBTS president Fredrick W. Franz (1893-1992) passed away at the age of 99. He was succeeded by Milton Henschel (1920-2003). However, in 2000 Henschel resigned as president. Unlike past times, however, he was not followed by an individual, but by two separate corporate leaders, Don Adams (b. 1925) and Leon Weaver, Jr. (age unknown). Adams was named president of the WBTS of Pennsylvania, and Weaver president of the WBTS of New York. Adams stepped down in 2014 and was replaced by Robert Ciranko (age unknown). Those corporate presidents do not, as did past presidents, serve on the most powerful WBTS committee, the eight man Governing Body. They are now part of a wider second-tier committee structure called Governing Body "helpers."

For more in-depth information on Jehovah's Witnesses' history and beliefs visit these links:

The Jehovah's Witnesses Bible: Is It Reliable?

<http://www.marketfaith.org/the-jehovahs-witnesses-bible-is-it-reliable>

The Angel – Man: Jehovah's Witnesses View of Christ – Part 1

<http://www.marketfaith.org/the-angel-man-jehovah%E2%80%99s-witnesses-view-of-christ-part-1>

The Angel – Man: Jehovah's Witnesses View of Christ – Part 2

<http://www.marketfaith.org/the-angel-man-jehovah%E2%80%99s-witnesses-view-of-christ-part-2>

What Do You Know about Jehovah's Witnesses?

<http://www.marketfaith.org/what-do-you-know-about-jehovahs-witnesses>

The 2013 Revised Jehovah's Witnesses' Bible

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2015/08/the-2013-revised-jehovahs-witnesses-bible>

### **Oneness Pentecostalism (United Pentecostal Church, et. al.)**

Actually, the Oneness Pentecostal movement (AKA: Apostolic Pentecostals) has not changed very much over the past couple of decades. Churches and denominations of that persuasion still emphatically deny the historic doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Instead they argue that God consists of one person who is "manifested" totally in Jesus Christ alone. In other words, Jesus is both the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is but the power of God projected into the world, but not a person, as such. Thus, churches in this movement are often called "Jesus Only" churches. Not only does Oneness Pentecostalism teach that faith in its unorthodox doctrines of God and Jesus are necessary for salvation, but it also says one must be baptized in water in "Jesus name" only, must speak in tongues, and must live a holy life (as it defines it).

In recent decades, several Oneness preachers have gained some notoriety among evangelicals. Those include Irvin Baxter, Jr., a United Pentecostal pastor and founder of Endtime Ministries who has a weekly TV show focusing on Bible prophecy (he rarely mentions his Oneness doctrinal beliefs on his show).

Another, even better known Oneness TV preacher is T. D. Jakes, founder and pastor of the Potter's House, a megachurch in Dallas, Texas. In a 2012 Baptist Press release, Jakes was quoted as having affirmed the Trinity in a public discourse with several Christian leaders (see <http://www.bpnews.net/37054>). However, he stated his continued preference to use the term "manifestation" to describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rather than "persons." He justified this by misinterpreting Paul's use of *ephanerothe* in 1 Timothy 3:16, which is translated "manifested" in the KJV and a few other versions. It is probably better translated as "revealed" (NASB); or "appeared" (NIV). In any case, it does not mean that the totality of God was "manifested" only in Jesus.

For background information on Oneness Pentecostalism and a dialog with a Oneness advocate visit these links:

The Hidden Cult of Oneness Pentecostalism

<http://www.marketfaith.org/the-hidden-cult-of-oneness-pentecostalism>

One on One with a Oneness: Part 1 <http://www.marketfaith.org/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-1>

One on One with a Oneness: Part 2 <http://www.marketfaith.org/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-2>

One on One with a Oneness: Part 3 <http://www.marketfaith.org/2013/09/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-3>

### **Unitarian Universalist Association**

The history of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) can be traced back many centuries to the heretic Arius who denied the full deity of Christ. Unitarian movements have sprung up at varying times since then. In the 18th century unitarian churches were established in Europe and the United States as sort of non-Trinitarian Christian organizations. Universalism, as a theological construct, also dates from ancient times. It basically declared that all people will eventually be saved and go to heaven.

In 1961, American Unitarian churches merged with a small movement called the Universalist Church of America to form the current UUA. In the decades since, the UUA has developed into a society of local congregations that focus primarily on liberal social, political, environmental, and gender-related issues. One surprising trend is the increasing growth of neo-paganism and witchcraft in some UUA congregations. The influence of secular humanism, while still strong, has diminished somewhat with the rise of postmodernism.

According to the 2008 PEW Research Center's American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), 586,000 Americans identify as UUA. About 60% of them are women, and about half are 55 years old or older. Politically they are about 42% registered Democrats, 18% Republicans, and 40% Independents or other. ([https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/congservices/2012\\_uudemo\\_survey.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/congservices/2012_uudemo_survey.pdf))

Each year the UUA meets for a General Assembly. UUA congregations send delegates who meet to pass various resolutions on topics of concern. In the last few years here a few titles of some major resolutions adopted by the assembly.



**BUILD THE MOVEMENT FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL 2019** - This resolution encourages all UUAs to work for passage of legislation in favor of the "Green New Deal," an all encompassing progressive change of society to fight climate change.

**SUPPORT OUR FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BOYCOTT ON BEHALF OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS 2019** - This resolution encourages UUAs to legally fight against any attempts to stop them from boycotting companies that support Israel and which do not support the efforts of Palestinians against Israel.

**END FAMILY SEPARATION AND DETENTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND ABOLISH ICE 2018** - This resolution, passed in 2018, urges the end of the separation of family members who seek asylum in America. It also urges the complete elimination of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

**STOP THE HATE: PROTECT AND SUPPORT OUR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING FAMILY 2016** - This resolution, passed in 2016, supports the efforts of transgender people and "non-conforming" families. That latter group, we assume, refers to same-sex families who want to adopt children. The UUA has a long record of supporting the LBGT agenda. Many of its clergy are openly gay or lesbian.

**THANKSGIVING DAY RECONSIDERED 2016** - This resolution, passed in 2016, suggests that Americans should reconsider the history and moral origin of Thanksgiving Day. They especially question if the Pilgrims, and other European colonists, were worthy to be celebrated, or were actually exploiters of Native Americans worthy of condemnation.

For more information on the worldview, history, and beliefs of the Unitarian Universalist Association visit these links:

The Gospel According to Christopher Reeve – Unitarian Universalism

<http://www.marketfaith.org/non-christian-worldviews/the-gospel-according-to-christopher-reeve-unitarian-universalism>

Unitarian Universalists: Who Are They and What Do They Believe (Or Not)?

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2015/11/unitarian-universalists-who-are-they-and-what-do-they-believe-or-not>

Eight Barriers to Reaching Unitarian-Universalists: Part 1

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2017/04/eight-barriers-to-reaching-unitarian-universalists-part-1>

Eight Barriers to Reaching Unitarian-Universalists: Part 2

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2017/04/eight-barriers-to-reaching-unitarian-universalists-part-2>

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