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More Light on the New World Translation
The Jehovah's Witnesses Bible - Part 1

By Tal Davis

There may be nothing more annoying than to have your Saturday morning disrupted by a knock on the door and to find two Jehovah's Witnesses standing on your front porch. You can recognize them immediately because the men will be wearing nice suits and ties, and the women in fashionable and modest dresses. Usually one of them will be carrying a brief case or shoulder bag. Of course they want to engage you in a discussion of their beliefs and try to get you to take some of their literature. If the discussion goes very long, they will pull out a Bible and quote a passage or verse to substantiate whatever they are attempting to assert.

But the question that we must ask is: Just which Bible are they using? In the past, we have written articles exposing the numerous errors and translation biases of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* – the only Bible used by Jehovah's Witnesses. In this piece we will review some of that information and then look at some new material that we have learned about that version.

In 1950, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS/Jehovah's Witnesses) first published a New Testament Bible version which they called the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. In 1961, they added the Old Testament. Published together they became the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT) – the official translation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

When that version was initially published, the names of the translators was not released. The publisher said the translators did not want any

glory for it to go them, but only to Jehovah God, so they chose to remain anonymous. In any case, the names of the translation committee (all now deceased) eventually became public. The committee included WBTS Governing Body members George Gangas (1897 - 1994), Albert Schroeder (1911 - 2006), Fredrick Franz (1893 - 1992), and then WBTS President, Nathan Knorr (1905 - 1977). None of those men had any significant training in biblical Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic languages. Yet somehow they managed to produce what the WBTS claimed was the most accurate and scholarly English translation ever done.

Since 1961, the WBTS has made a few revisions of the NWT; notably in 1984, and most recently in 2013. The forward to the 2013 edition has this statement: "This revised edition has built on the fine foundation laid in previous editions of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, a Bible that was first released more than 60 years ago. However, the English language has changed during the past half century. Such change prompted current members of the New World Bible Translation Committee to initiate this comprehensive revision. Our goal has been to produce a translation that is not only faithful to the original texts but also clear and easy to read." (<http://www.jw.org/en/publications/bible>) In that newer edition, the translators quietly made a few major changes that differed from the earlier versions. In that 2013 edition, the translators again are not identified by their names, but they had to have been different persons from the original committee.

That being said, before we analyze the NWT, we must reiterate one very important fact about Jehovah's Wit-

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nesses' theology. They absolutely deny the full Deity of Jesus Christ and the historic doctrine of the Trinity as taught by all branches of Historic Christianity. The WBTS asserts that Jesus, in His preexistent state, was Jehovah God's first created being. He was known as Michael the Archangel and was a godlike being, but not equal to Jehovah and not worthy of worship. It is obvious that the way they translate the Bible is colored by that doctrinal bias, as we will see.

In past articles on the www.marketfaith.org website we have examined how the NWT translators consciously mistranslated a number of key verses. In this two part series we will again review the current state of the NWT and explore some new points we have learned about the subject. We will carefully analyze some of the most significant New Testament passages that are seriously distorted in the NWT in order to buttress their antagonistic perspectives on the Deity of Christ and the Trinity.

In part one we will look at four mistranslated passages in the NWT. In part two we will look at other such distorted verses and expose what is probably the most blatant and biased distortion ever made in any biblical translation.

JOHN 1:1 - This may be the most important verse in the New Testament wherein the NWT has misread the Greek text. The older 1984 NWT version rendered this key passage this way: **"In (the) beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."** The newer 2013 edition has it this way: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."** Notice that the 1984 edition put a definite article "(the)" in parentheses in the first clause. That indi-

cates to the reader that the word does not appear in the Greek text. The 2013 edition removed the parentheses. That's not really a problem. Most translations have it that way.

However, the 2013 NWT edition, as did the earlier ones, continued to put an indefinite article ("a") in the third clause before the second "god" (*Theos*). Though they do not show it in parentheses, the word "a" also is not in the Greek text. The problem is that no other standard translation adds that word in this context, and all credible Greek scholars agree that the grammatical rules do not allow it. The WBTS obviously places it in the verse so that "the Word" (*ho Logos* - the preexistent Jesus) is not perceived to be equal to God or eternal, but was only a created entity by Jehovah. A sort of lesser "god." The New American Standard Bible (NASB), like most other standard English versions, correctly renders the verse: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**

Another additional point about this passage, as explained by Greek scholar Dr. Rudolph Gonzalez, is that the verb "was" (*en*), used three times in the verse, is in the imperfect tense which stresses indefinite continuous aspect. So the force of the syntax is that it means "continuously was." So, as Gonzalez says, the verse could be correctly translated as, **"In the beginning continuously was the Word, and the Word continuously was with God, and the Word continuously was God."** (Dr. Gonzalez's full, and informative, lecture on the NWT can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w d398oz_HLE).

JOHN 1:3-4 - The NWT translates these verses like this: **"3 All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence. What**

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has come into existence 4 by means of him was life, and the life was the light of men." Dr. Gonzalez makes a point (one that we had not noticed previously) that the NWT has inconspicuously put a period after the phrase "not even one thing came into existence" in verse three. That, then, places the last phrase of verse three (biasedly translated as "What has come into existence...") as the beginning phrase in the next sentence that is completed in verse four.

This completely changes the meaning of both verses. All other English translations render it as does (or similar to) the NASB: **"3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."** All versions place the period at the *end* of verse three. The WBTS covertly has demoted Christ from Creator of *everything* that has come into existence to just bringing into existence "life." Can you see the significant difference? The clear teaching of the verse is that not even one thing came into being apart from Him. In other words, Christ is God who created everything in the universe!

JOHN 8:58 - Another important passage in John's Gospel is in verse 8:58. The NWT renders this verse: **"Jesus said to them, 'Most truly I say to you, before Abraham came into existence, I have been.'"** All other English translations render it like the NASB, **"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'"** It is easy to see how the NWT has altered the meaning of the verb tense in the last clause. The Greek term is *egó eimi* (I am). As Dr. Gonzalez reports, if the NWT rendering ("I have been") of the verb *eimi* is correct it would have to be in the past perfect. That is, it started in the past and is completed. But it is not perfect, but present

active indicative. That is, not past, present, or future, but is *always* and continuously so. As he indicates, there is simply no grammatical basis for the NWT change.

It is clear that Jesus, by using the verb "I am," was alluding to the Old Testament name of God (*YHWH* or Jehovah, AKA: The Tetragrammaton), which is a derivative of the Hebrew word for "I am." Jesus was, in essence, identifying Himself as equal to the God of the Old Testament. The Jews knew what He meant because they took up stones to execute Him for blasphemy. The Jehovah's Witnesses obviously altered the verb tense in the NWT to obscure the full theological implication of that statement.

ACTS 10:36 - This passage is part of Peter's message to the Gentiles in Cornelius' household. 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)."** Luke, the author of the Gospel bearing his name and the book of Acts, clearly calls Jesus "Lord of all." The use of "Lord" (*kurios*), whenever used in the New Testament in this kind of context, is clearly an allusion to the Old Testament name of God – which was rendered that way by the Jewish translators of the Greek Septuagint (ca. 200 BC). This was because the Jews did not pronounce the Hebrew divine name (*Yahweh*). Even when reading the Old Testament (*Torah*) text aloud in Hebrew, Jewish people did not (and still do not) pronounce that name, but substitute the Hebrew word for "LORD" (*Adonai*).

The 1984 NWT translated this 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]."** Notice how the translators added the word "(others)"

in parentheses to the end of the verse. The parentheses indicated that it is not actually in the Greek text. This addition intended to diminish the implication that Jesus is truly "Lord of all," that is to say, *everything*, not just "all (others)," and thus He *is* God!

To their credit, the 2013 NWT translators changed their rendering. It now reads, "**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.**" The new translators realized the earlier unwarranted addition of "(others)" to the text. Note, however, that the 2013 revision editors, after removing "(others)" from the text, nonetheless altered the phrase "this One is Lord" by using the lower case in the word "one." Why that change? In order to reduce the inference of the verse that Jesus is "Lord of all", i.e.: God.

Also notice how they translated the Greek pronoun "*houtos*" as "this one". The pronoun is a nominative masculine singular and should be translated as "He".

Conclusion to Part 1

In this first installment of two in this series, we have reviewed several of the most egregious and bias renderings of key Scriptural passages as translated by the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, the official Bible of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses). As we have seen in numerous verses and passages, they have intentionally mistranslated words and phrases for the clear purpose of obfuscating to their readers the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

It is a sad consequence that millions of sincere members of the Jehovah's Witnesses are unaware how their leaders are deceiving them into believing false teachings using what they think is the very Word of God itself. In the next installment we will analyze several other key passages purposely distorted by the WBTS. We will also look at another way, perhaps the most guileful of all, that the WBTS is falsifying what God has written in His Word to blind its people from worshiping the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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