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Two Ways Jehovah's Witnesses Changed the Bible - Part 1
Colossians 1:15-20

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I think most evangelical Christians know that what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach when they go door to door in peoples' neighborhoods is wrong. They just don't know what about it is wrong. There are a number of things we could focus on that are troublesome about that organization. The way their leadership, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS – the official corporate name of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization), dictates control to the members and demands unquestioning obedience under threat of excommunication is trouble enough. Submission is also enforced by shunning from your families and friends. But even worse are the doctrinal deviations the organization presses on its unwitting followers.

One way these false beliefs are infused on the rank and file is by strict control of information flowing in and out of the membership's perception. Jehovah Witnesses are prohibited from reading books and literature or listening to tapes or videos from non-WBTS sources. Members are required to report violations of this code by fellow Jehovah's Witnesses to local authorities. Of course, these restrictions are less enforceable now than in the past with more access to information on the internet to non-WBTS websites, such as www.marketfaith.org, and various anti-Jehovah's Witness sites.

The most significant doctrinal issue where Jehovah's Witnesses deviate from historic Christianity concerns the full deity of Jesus Christ. Christians have, from the first century, believed Jesus was the incarnation of the Infinite and Eternal God,

and in the eternal Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jehovah's Witnesses absolutely deny these doctrines. They say that Jesus was God's first created being and was Michael the Archangel in his preexistence. In all of their literature, the WBTS diminishes the place of Jesus from being equal to God.

Perhaps the most egregious way the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has sought to hide the truth of Christ's deity from its own people is literally to change the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses own Bible translation, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT), is considered by most Bible scholars as the most biased and distorted ever published. That version's New Testament was first published in 1950 as *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. The entire NWT Bible was released in 1961. It has undergone several minor revisions in the intervening years, most recently in 2013.

Especially in the New Testament, the NWT mistranslates any verse that supports the deity of Jesus. We could look at a number of examples of this perfidy. However, in this two part series we will examine just two major samples that will show, beyond any doubt, that the translators, and the revisers, did their work with the intent of obscuring from their readers that Jesus was God Himself.

In this part one, we begin by looking at one important New Testament passage from Paul's letter to the Colossians.

The 2013 edition of the NWT renders Colossians 1:15-20 this way:

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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.

Let's analyze this translation carefully. First look at verse 1:15.

Here is how the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates it: "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*" Not any difference, huh?

Okay, but the WBTS always interprets the word "firstborn" (*prototokos*) to mean "first-created." As we stated, Jehovah's Witnesses' theology asserts that Jesus was Jehovah God's first created being, and is not eternal God. However, in this context, if verses 16-20 are translated correctly (as in the NASB below), it cannot mean what their interpretation indicates. The phrase has to mean that Jesus, as God, was not the first created creature, but is, by His divine nature, superior to all creation. The verses that follow (vss. 16-19) make this interpretation the only one possible and the WBTS' impossible. But we now need to analyze the rest of the pas-

sage in the NWT to see how they cover this.

First, this is how the NASB correctly renders verses 1:16-20.

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."

Now go back and compare the NASB to the NWT above. Notice how the NWT has inserted in verses 16-20 the word "other" five times in verses 16, 17, and 20 (I underlined them for you). Notice that you don't see that word in those same verses in the NASB. The reason is that it does not appear in the Greek text and *should not be there*. So "other" is an unwarranted addition to the NWT English text.

So why did the NWT translators do that? Why did they put a word in the English text that should not be there? For one thing, it was so that their misinterpretation of verse 15 will stand. And then also, obviously, so that the whole passage, verses 15-20, will conform to the Jehovah's Witnesses' theological position about the preexistent Jesus. The WBTS contends that Jesus was not the creator of "all things" (*panta* or *pantas* - one word in Greek), i.e.: literally everything that exists in the whole universe! According to WBTS theology, Jesus only assisted Jehovah to make all "other" things, besides himself.

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Curiously, earlier editions of the NWT had the word "other" in parentheses in these verses, but in the 2013 edition they were removed to make their unjustified addition less conspicuous. In other words, the revision editors (whoever they were) decided that leaving the parentheses on the word "other" brought undue attention to the fact they are not in the Greek text and should not be there (which presented a really big problem for their theology). So, rather than remove the words (as they probably knew they should), they just took out the parentheses. This is one way the Jehovah's Witnesses changed the Bible!

Anyway, the clear teaching of the Colossians 1:15-20, when correctly translated from the 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.

In the next installment we will examine another, even more egregious, example of how the Jehovah's Witnesses translators of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* distorted the Bible in order to obscure the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

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