

EXAMINING THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION

The New World Translation of the Bible was released in six volumes for the benefit of Jehovah's Witnesses, from 1950 to 1960 and revised in 1981 and again in 1984. The New World Translation Committee stated that its members wished to remain anonymous. However, former members of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization have identified the members of the Committee as being: Nathan H. Knorr, Frederick W. Franz, George D. Gangas, and Albert D. Schroeder. However, according to Raymond Franz, the "principal translator of the Society's New World Translation" was Frederick W. Franz. Also M. James Penton concurs in saying: "to all intents and purposes the New World Translation is the work of one man, Frederick Franz." In the producing of this translation it was realized that the Bible should define its own terms rather than following the phrasing of other English translations. This meant that greater use was made of the Hebrew and Greek lexicons that were based on the original language words.

POINTS OF EXCELLENCE

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

These were primarily translated from Rudolph Kittels Biblia Hebraica. The points of excellence are:

- Use of the Divine Name in all occurrences. (NOTE: There is great uncertainty as to which is more accurate - whether Yahweh, or certain others – but not Jehovah for the reasons explained in STUDY 22. Perhaps simply presenting the letters YHWH would have been best).
- Consistency in translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh* as soul.
- Consistency in transliteration of *sheol*.

CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

- Consistency in transliteration of *hades* instead of the word 'hell'.
- Consistency in transliteration of *gehenna* instead of the word 'hell'.
- Transliteration of *tartarus* instead of the word 'hell'.
- Consistent distinction between the singular and plural of the word "you."
- The fine distinctions in verb forms of the Greek language are demonstrated, no doubt from referencing the renowned translation entitled "*The New Testament in the Language of the People*" (1937) by Charles B. Williams. Examples in the NWT are:

Matthew 7:7: "...keep on asking...keep on seeking..." *rather than* "ask...seek."

John 17:21: "...are in union with me" *rather than* "in me."

Ephesians 5:11 "quit sharing with them in the unfruitful works" *rather than* "do not share..."

- Legitimate placing of punctuation or rendering of expressions that are in harmony with the teaching of the rest of Scripture e.g.:

Luke 23:43: "I tell you today, You will be with me in paradise."

Romans 9:5: "God, who is over all, [be] blessed forever..."

- Whereas the standard translations have a Trinitarian bias, the NWT has provided renderings in the relevant texts which harmonize with the immediate or wider contexts, which either mitigate against the Trinitarian rendering or are neutral i.e. could be rendered either way. The relevant texts are:

Acts 20:28: "...with the blood of his own [Son]."
Titus 2:13: "...of the great God and of [the] savior of us, Christ Jesus."
2 Peter 1:2: "of our God and [the] savior Jesus Christ"

- Legitimate word choices harmonizing with the teaching of the rest of Scripture: As with REB and NJB rendering 'proskyneō' as "pay homage" the NWT gives "did obeisance" *rather than* 'worshipped.' Other examples in the NWT are:

Luke 22:29:

"I make **a covenant** with you ... for a kingdom" *rather than* "I assign to you a kingdom."

Acts 13:48:

"...all those who were **rightly disposed** to everlasting life" *rather than* "appointed to."

2 Corinthians 13:14: "...and the **sharing in** the holy spirit..." *rather than* "fellowship of the..."

2 Thessalonians 2:2: "...through an **inspired expression** (Literal 'spirit')." Also 1 John 4:1.

Hebrews 11:5:

"By faith Enoch was **transferred**..." *rather than* "taken up" which is sometimes mistranslated in the paraphrased Bibles as "taken up to heaven."

However, most of these renderings are also spread throughout in a good number of other translations.

PROBLEM AREAS

GENERAL

The NW Translation Committee's claim to have attempted to use a single English word for each occurrence of the Hebrew and Greek words is a poor approach to translation. According to research professor of N.T. D. A. Carson each Greek or Hebrew word: "brings a broad semantic range with it before it is shaped by the context." In other words the NW Translation Committee may have failed to recognize that the meaning of many words is gained only when the word is examined in context.

~ THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES ~

APOSTASY

Jeremiah 23:15 (Heb. *hnuppa* = ungodliness, godlessness, profaneness).

NWT- "**apostasy**"

All other translations - "ungodliness", "**godlessness**."

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology gives the meaning of *hnuppa* as: "godlessness. ungodliness, perversity" but not apostasy.

APOSTATE

Job 8:13, 13:16, 15:34, 17:8, 20:5, 27:8, 34:30, 36:13, Psalms 35:16; Proverbs 11:9; Isaiah 10:6; Isaiah 9:17, 33:14: (Heb. *hanep* = godless, ungodly).

NWT- "**an apostate(s)**"

KJV- "a hypocrite." This is one of the many words that have changed meaning over time.

All other translations - "the **godless man** (men)" or "impious man (men)."

For all of the above texts the *BDB Hebrew lexicon* defines *hanep* as "profane, irreligious ...godless, godless man...profane men" but not apostate in the above texts. The only time the word **apostate** is used in this lexical definition is set within brackets and with reference to the Syriac word in relation to the Muslim religion: "(Syr. profane, hence oft, heathen, **apostate**; inclining to a right state, esp. the true religion, **a Muslim**)."

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology gives the definition of this Hebrew word as: “be godless, defiled, perverse, defiant” but not apostate. And in Job 36:13 ESV it states that: “*those godless in heart cherish anger.*” To translate wrongly as in the NWT: “those apostate in heart lay up anger” makes no sense because it is not a feature of apostasy to “lay up anger” just because a person has changed his or her view concerning a belief or even left God. Clearly, in all these verses this is a case of purposeful mistranslation by the NWT translation committee. So the dictionary definition of apostasy is: “An abandonment of one’s religious faith, or any cause or principle to which one was attached. *Apostanai* “to stand away from.” Is it really “an abandonment of one’s religious faith” if one leaves a particular denomination but continues to believe and live in accordance with the Scriptures? Job 8:13 is in the context of those who “forget God.” But many who leave the Jehovah’s Witnesses organization do not forget God, but by personal study they realize that a good number of the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses are simply wrong. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society may view changes in understanding of the Scriptures by an individual as apostasy; yet this is, in fact, exactly what the WBTS itself has done throughout its history. Indeed there is a world of difference between one who is *godless* and one who is *apostate*. A person accused of apostasy may not actually be godless but simply seeks to know the truth of the Scriptures. In reverse a godless person may never have apostatized from a particular religious group. However, true apostasy does concern one’s leaving God, but that is not the subject of the above mistranslated verses in the NWT.

WISDOM

Proverbs 1:20, 21; 3:14-18; 8:1-3; 9:1-5:

The Hebrew word *hokma* translated as wisdom is **feminine** for the sake of personification of wisdom as a woman. The intent that personification is meant is demonstrated by the entire context of these passages. In 8:4-22 **she** speaks as **I, me and myself** demonstrating the personification. Yet the NWT consistently translates the pronouns associated with *hokma* **as neuter**, that is, **it** and **itself**, and thereby losing the effect of this figure of speech. This is a case of contextual mistranslation. Likely this mistranslation is made because of the false teaching that Proverbs 8 is about a pre-existent person who became Jesus Christ.

ACTIVE FORCE

Genesis 1:1-2:

“In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth proved to be formless and waste and there was darkness upon the surface of [the] watery deep; and **God’s active force** was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.”

The phrase “**God’s active force**” is interpretive rather than translational. The Hebrew is *ruach elohim* which means “spirit of God” as in most translations (with or without a capital “S”).

SUBSTITUTING OF WORDS

Zechariah 12:10. “...they will look upon the one whom they have pierced...”

Here the Hebrew is “look upon **me** whom they have pierced...” This can be seen in the Hebrew Interlinear and all other translations.

EXAMPLES OF WOODEN LITERALISM and HARSH CONSTRUCTION

Genesis 4:8:

(NWT) “After that Cain said to Abel his brother: [“Let us go over into the field.”] So it **came about** that while they were in the field Cain **proceeded to** assault Abel his brother and kill him.”

(HCSB) “Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”

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Genesis 6:3:

(NWT) “After that Jehovah said: “My spirit shall not **act toward** man indefinitely in that he is also **flesh**. Accordingly his days **shall amount to** a hundred and twenty years.”

(NJB) “Yahweh said, ‘My Spirit cannot be indefinitely responsible for human beings, who are only flesh; let the time allowed each be only one hundred and twenty years.’”

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Genesis 18:20:

(NWT) “Consequently Jehovah said: “The cry of complaint about Sod’om and Go-mor’rah, yes, **it is loud**, and their sin, yes, it is **very heavy**.”

(NET) “So the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so blatant.”

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Genesis 19:22:

(NWT) “Hurry! Escape there, because I **am not able to do a thing** until **your arriving** there!”

(ESV) “Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.”

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Genesis 24:32:

(NWT) “With that the man came on into the house, and he **went unharnessing** the camels and **giving** straw and fodder to the camels and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.”

(NIV 2011) “So the man went to the house, and the camels *were unloaded*. Straw and fodder *were brought for* the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet.”

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Genesis 24:66:

(NWT) “And the servant **went relating** to Isaac all the things he had done.”

(NASB) “The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.”

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The NWT Reference Edition on p. 1572 explains the function of the continuous and progressive action of Hebrew verbs. However, to bring this into the English creates an unnecessary wordiness and difficulty in reading and gives no improvement to ones understanding of the many narrative passages.

OVERLY LITERAL TRANSLATION LEADING TO FAULTY INTERPRETATION

“*That is why the wicked will not stand up in the judgment*” (Ps. 1:5 NWT). Many other literal versions also give the similar rendering of “stand in the judgment.” So this is taken by some to mean that the wicked will never be resurrected. Yet, this is in contradiction of Jesus’ words in John 5 which speaks of a resurrection of the unrighteous. Also the judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15 showing the wicked as having been judged at that future time. However, there are translations which present the clear meaning as e.g. “*Therefore the wicked will **not survive** judgment* (NAB and HCSB); “*When judgement comes they will **not stand firm**”* (REB and NJB); “*shall not stand [justified] in the judgment*” (Amplified); “*For this reason the wicked **cannot withstand** judgment*” (NET). The notes for the NET Bible state:

Heb “arise in,” but the verb is used metonymically here in the sense of “stand”; “endure,” as in 1 Sam 13:14 and Job 8:15. The negated Hebrew imperfect verbal form is here taken as indicating incapability or lack of potential, though one could understand the verb form as indicating what is typical (“do not withstand”) or what will happen (“will not withstand”).

~ THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES ~

For the most part the Christian Greek Scripture section is fairly literal and is rendered from Westcott & Hort's text, but consulting the Nestle-Aland text in its revisions. However, it does have some peculiar non-literal renderings - paraphrases. Some of these appear to be to emphasize certain theological points peculiar to the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses. There are also words added to and words omitted from the text. Sometimes it is unclear why there is a change from the text. Nevertheless, these are all indicators of a lack of faithfulness to the text and, without doubt, to the principle concerning the scroll of Revelation which applies to all of the holy Scriptures:

- ❖ "I am bearing witness to everyone that hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone **makes an addition** to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this scroll; **19** and if anyone **takes anything away from the words** of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take his portion away from the trees of life and out of the holy city, things which are written about in this scroll." (Rev. 22:18, 19).

INCORRECT TRANSLATION OF INDIVIDUAL *WORDS* TO
EMPHASIZE A THEOLOGICAL POINT

Matthew 24:3b:

NWT - "system(s) of things." 34 occurrences. No other translation uses this phrase or any similar term.

KIT - "age" (Gk *aiónos*). All interlinears give "age," or "ages," as the meaning.

Most modern translations render *aiónos* fairly consistently as "age," "ages," or "long ago" in the more than 40 occurrences that do not mean "ever." *Aion* always refers to **time** and so because "system of things" does not refer to time it is as incorrect a rendering as "world" in the KJV and others. The NWT and KIT have the footnote "or 'order of things.'" However, it is really the Greek word *kosmos* that refers to the 'order of things' i.e. an orderly arrangement and refers to "the world of mankind." See Bauer's Gk-Eng. lexicon.

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Luke 23:42:

NWT- "...when you **get** into your kingdom."

KIT- "...whenever you might **come** into your kingdom."

All other translations have the word "come."

The NWT seems to have been so rendered as to give the impression that Jesus goes to get into his kingdom in heaven instead of coming into his kingdom on earth.

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Luke 24:35:

NWT "...became known to them **by** the breaking of the bread."

KIT "...became known to them **in** the breaking of the bread."

Most translations have *in*. The NJB has *at*. The NIV has *when*.

This simply links the timing of his recognition to them at the breaking of the bread, not that it was the way he broke it that enabled them to recognize him.

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Acts 3:15:

NWT -	“The chief agent of life.”
KIT -	“Chief leader of the life.”
Moffatt -	“Pioneer of life.”
Rotherham -	“Princely leader of life.”
Diaglott, NASB, NJB, REB, KJ, NKJ, Young’s -	“Prince of life.”
Weymouth -	“The guide of life.”
UBS, NAB, ESV, NRSV, NIV, NLT -	“Author of life.”

In the lexicons the Greek word *archegos* used here is **never defined as agent** or agency but is always presented as meaning leadership i.e. Jesus was the first to be resurrected immortal and has led or pioneered the way for others to follow.

Romans 5:14:

NWT - “...of Adam, who **bears a resemblance** (Gk *typos*) to him.”
KIT - “...of Adam, who is **a type** of the one...”
Most translations have “type.” NJB - “prefigured.” REB - “foreshadows.”
NIV - “pattern.” NLT - “a symbol, a representation of.”

Bauer’s Lexicon defines *typos* as used in Romans 5:14 as: “of the types given by God as an indication of the future, in the form of persons or things.” Here the NWT seems to be watering down the exact paralleling of Adam with Jesus—the second Adam.

Romans 8:23:

NWT - “Release **from** our bodies by ransom.”
KIT - “Release by ransom **of** the body.”
Most other translations - “Redemption of the body.”
NJB - “For our bodies to be set free.”
REB - “Our liberation from mortality” *which does not mean from our bodies.*
NLT - “...we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.”

The rendering in the NWT of “Release **from** our bodies” indicates the pagan Greek concept of something [*spirit, soul or person*] being released heavenward at the point of death whereas release or redemption **of** our bodies from corruption and mortality is the Bible teaching (1 Cor.15). A Greek noun in the genitive case (such as “the body” in Rom. 8:23) following the Greek word for release (*apolutrosin*) is always the *object* of the releasing e.g. Ephesians 1:14 “Releasing...**of** the thing preserved.” Here Paul uses the identical grammatical construction (*apolutrosin* followed by a genitive case noun) as in Romans 8:23 and so showing that it should be rendered as “Release...**of** the body” as in the KIT and in all other translations. For the NWT to be correct possibly either the Greek word *apo* meaning “from” or *ek* meaning “out of” or “from” would have to be in this Greek text. This is not the case.

Romans 10:13:

NWT – “everyone who calls on the name of **Jehovah** [Gk *kyrios* = Lord] will be saved.”
KIT - “...everyone who likely might call on the name of **Lord** will be saved.”

Yet the earlier context of Romans 10:9 shows that this is a reference to Jesus: “If you publicly declare that ‘word in your own mouth’ that Jesus is Lord...you will be saved.” Romans 10:13, therefore, should not have been translated with the word *Jehovah*. The Greek word *kyrios* should have been translated “Lord” in spite of verse 13 being a quotation from Joel 2:32. The context shows that Paul’s intention was to apply the thought in Joel to Jesus. There is no legitimate basis for translating the 237

occurrences in the Christian Greek Scriptures of *kyrios* as “Jehovah.” None of the so-called J references actually supports this action.

Please see STUDY 22 concerning the introduction of the name ‘Jehovah’ into the Christian Greek Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:23:

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- NWT - “...during his **presence** (Gk *parousia*)”
 - KIT - “...in the presence of him.” Also in Rotherham.
 - Most other translations - “...at his **coming**.”
 - Diaglott (main text) - “...at his appearing.” But interlinear section has “presence.”
 - Moffatt - “...at his arrival.”
 - Weymouth - “...at his return.”
 - NLT - “...when he comes back.”

Note: *Parousia* in an eschatological setting means advent or **coming to be present** according to almost all scholars. *Parousia* was always translated *adventus* in the early Latin Bibles whenever it referred to Jesus’ return.

Ephesians 4:8:

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- NWT - “He gave gifts **in** men.”
 - KIT - “He gave gifts **to** the men.”
 - All literal translations and REB - “He gave gifts to men.”

No other translation says *in* not even in Psalm 68:18 from where it is quoted. Such mistranslation can be used to strengthen congregation authority. However, the gifts to men were most likely the miraculous gifts of the spirit in the first century.

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INCORRECT TRANSLATION OF *PHRASES* TO
EMPHASIZE A THEOLOGICAL POINT

- NWT Matt. 3:17: “whom I have **approved**” KIT “in whom I found good pleasure.”
- “ Mark 1:11: “I have approved you” “in you I **thought well**.”
 - “ Luke 3:22: “I have approved you” “in you I thought well.”

In the theology of Jehovah’s Witnesses this rendering is used to indicate that Jesus was officially approved to become a spiritual son of God and therefore the Messiah **only at his baptism**; whereas Jehovah’s words (along with the spirit descending) were simply to enable John the Baptist to identify/confirm that Jesus was the Son of God/Messiah (John 1:33). Luke 1:32 shows Jesus to be “Son of God” from his birth. Luke 2:11 shows Jesus to be the Messiah from his birth.

John 8:58:

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- NWT - “Before Abraham came into existence **I have been**.”
 - KIT - “Before Abraham to become I am.”
 - Most translations - “Before Abraham came to be I am.”

All other instances of this Greek phrase *ego eimi* are translated as “**I am (he)**” or “I am the one” in John 4:26, 8:24, 8:28, 9:9, 13:9 and 18:5. This is recognized as correct by all Greek scholars. Originally the NW Translation Committee stated that this phrase was in *the perfect indefinite tense* in English. Later it was stated to be in *the perfect tense indicative*. Although by comparison with similar phrases in

the Scriptures it is possible, it is not accepted as the correct tense by all scholars who treat it as a *present tense* phrase.

So why don't the standard translations say "I am he" or "I am the one" in John 8:58 as in all the other verses? It is, no doubt, to support the attempt to prove the Trinity doctrine by connecting this verse with Exodus 3:14. The "I am," in these other Bibles refers to Jehovah and so the attempt is made to prove that Jesus, in saying, "I am" is also Jehovah. The NWT tries to circumvent this problem by translating as "I have been" and thereby keeping Jesus as appearing to have literally pre-existed. However, this is inconsistent translating in view of all the *ego eimi* texts in John. Only the Diaglott is consistent with John 8:58 as "I am he."

The Jehovah's Witness Greg Stafford shows quite clearly that all the *ego eimi* statements, including John 8:58 are Jesus' self-identification as the Messiah. So even if "I have been" was a correct translation, *from the past to the present*, it would still refer to him as the Messiah i.e. "I have been he the Messiah." This, however, cannot mean literal but only ideal [*foreordained in God's mind*] pre-existence because the Messiah, the Son of God came into existence at His conception (Lukel:32, 35). (Please see Volume One, STUDIES 10 to 17).

Acts 2:42, 46, 20:7, 11:

.....
NWT - "....to **take of meals.**"
KIT - "....to the breaking of bread."
All other translations - "....**breaking of bread.**"

The context of 2:42 shows that the breaking of bread had spiritual significance along with teaching, sharing and prayers. In 2:46 KIT shows that the breaking of bread was a separate event to the "partaking of food." In 20:11 KIT reads "Having broken the bread and having tasted."

WORDS ADDED TO THE TEXT

It is very valuable when the rendering of certain Greek words is expanded into an English phrase which draws out the fuller meaning. However, there are numerous occurrences of words not in this category which have been added to the English text of the NWT. These words are not in the Greek and are not an expansion into English of the Greek. These words are either not found in any other translations or are only occasionally found in the obscure translations of those not so qualified as translators or of dated versions. *Examples are:*

John 17:2:

.....
NWT - "...as regards the whole [**number**] whom you have given him."
KIT - "...in order that **all** which you have given him."

This gives the false impression that there is a specific number of those who are given to Jesus. In Jehovah's Witnesses' theology this number is the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14.

Galatians 6:1:

.....
NWT - "You who have spiritual **qualifications** try to readjust such a man."
KIT - "You the spiritual ones..."
Most translations - "You who are spiritual..."
REB - "You, my friends, who live by the Spirit..."

WBTS publications give the impression that Galatians 6:1 is proof that only the elders are to "try to readjust such" an erring man. The spurious addition of the word *qualifications* makes it appear to rank

and file Jehovah's Witnesses that this refers to the elders. Yet, obviously, all Christians are either "spiritual" or should be attempting to be so. Hence, this verse encourages all who are spiritual, both men, whether servant leaders (including ministerial servants) in a congregation or not, and women, to "try to readjust such a man" or "restore such a one" NASB. Furthermore, this passage is addressed to the *adelphoi* which means "**brothers and sisters**" and not simply "brothers." No letter of Paul's was ever addressed directly to the elders. It is only in Philippians that the elders are included in the address to the "holy ones" – the "brothers and sisters" (Phil. 1:1, 12).

Ephesians 1:10:

.....
 "...for the administration at the full limit of the appointed times, namely to gather all things together **again** in the Christ..."

The word 'again' is not in the interlinear Greek text, but has been added in the NWT thereby changing the meaning of the text.

Ephesians 4:9:

.....
 NWT - "He descended into the lower regions **that is** the earth."
 KIT - "He stepped down into the lower parts **of** the earth."
 Rotherham - "...descended into the under parts of the earth."
 Most other translations - "...descended into the lower parts of the earth."
 NJB - "...gone down to the deepest levels of the earth."

This simply means that Jesus was in *hades* until the third day. In the NWT the words "that is" have been added and the word **of** ignored. The REB paraphrase of "Descended to the lowest levels, down to the very earth" no doubt, reflects the translators' incarnation beliefs.

Hebrews 9:27,

.....
 NWT - "And as it is reserved for men to *die once for all time*, but after this a judgment..."

KIT - "And according how much it is lying off to the men once to die, after but this (thing) judgment..."

Most other translations – "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment..."

According to all lexicons the Greek term ἅπαξ ("hapax") means "once."

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 WORDS MISSING OR SUBSTITUTED IN THE TEXT

Romans 8:1

NWT – "Therefore those in union with Christ Jesus have no condemnation."

KIT – "Nothing really **now** (Gk *nun*) condemnation to the ones in Christ Jesus."

UBS Interlinear - "No then [there is] **now** condemnation to the ones in Christ Jesus."

ESV and all other versions – "There is therefore **now** no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."

The word "**now**" is vital to the continuation of the argument from chapter 7 of Romans. Why, when the Greek word *nun* is in the text, omit it as the NWT has done?

NOTE: the phrase "in union with" is a legitimate expansion of the Greek word *en* as may be found in a number of other translations.

OUT OF DATE WORD CHOICES

Romans 2:8 - NWT “contentious” as in KJV whereas the lexicons show for Romans 2:8 this to be “selfish,” “selfish ambition” or self-seeking” as in NKJV.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE RENDERING: “The Word was a god.”

Although ‘word for word’ this may seem to be correct, yet grammatically and as a translation it is incorrect because, in its attempt to show an identity, it fails to reflect the **purely qualitative aspect** of the phrase. The overwhelming majority of scholars who have addressed this subject understand John to be emphasizing the qualities or character of *the logos* and **not an identity** as a second god.

In his outstanding study of John 1:1 *Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns Mark 15:39 and John 1:1*, Philip B. Harner concluded that:

Perhaps the clause could be translated, 'the Word had the same nature as God.' This would be one way of representing John's thought, which is, as I understand it, "that *ho logos*, no less than *ho theos*, had the nature of *theos*. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 92, 1 (March 1973), p. 87.

COMMENT

Prior to Harner’s study of qualitative anarthrous predicate nouns (PN), ‘**qualitative**’ nouns were viewed more or less as ‘**indefinite**’ nouns. However, Harner found that 80% are qualitative and 20% are ‘**definite**’ and none are exclusively indefinite. Since then *Paul Dixon* has shown that of the three semantic forces, namely, the definite, the indefinite, and the qualitative **only one of these three** is John’s intended meaning. *Don Hartley* took this a stage further in his studies and concluded that *qualitativeness* is a valid semantic category *apart from definiteness or indefiniteness*. He noted that from the standpoint of pure analysis, ***theos* in John 1:1c is most likely qualitative**. The problem with the rendering “a god” is that it wrongly mixes the categories of *qualitativeness* with that of *indefiniteness* to produce an identity—a second god; whereas the above facts show that John is giving a purely qualitative nuance and not an identity. Although the WTS quotes Harner as supposedly supporting the NWT rendering of “a god,” his study actually shows this rendering to be incorrect. There are approximately 1,023 occurrences of the word *God* **with the definite article** in the Greek Scriptures and 282 occurrences of the word *God* **without the definite article** i.e. anarthrous.

THE ARGUMENT CONCERNING NWT INCONSISTENCY

Some scholars, for instance, Dr. Robert H. Countess of the University of Tennessee, present the somewhat overstated argument that for the NWT to be consistent with its John 1:1 translation these 282 occurrences of the anarthrous noun should also have been rendered as *a god* and yet only 16 have been so rendered in the NWT. For example the NWT renders 2 Corinthians 5:19 as “**God** was by means of *Christ* reconciling the world...” instead of “**a god** was by means of *Christ*...” to match with “*the word* was **a god**.” Also John 1:18 would have to be wrongly rendered: “**A** god no one has seen at any time.” However, as shown above anarthrous nouns may be not only ‘**qualitative**’ or ‘**indefinite**’ but 20% are ‘**definite**.’ To determine which, will **depend on the context** and an example is Acts 28:6 which is correctly translated in all versions as “a god;” and so the NWT appears to be fairly consistent (but not in John 10:33) in this aspect of translation according to each relevant context. Nevertheless, this does not make the rendering “a god” in John 1:1 correct because, as Harner, Dixon, and Hartley have shown, the anarthrous noun here demonstrates a qualitative aspect and is neither definite nor indefinite and so not that of an identity. So according to Greek grammarian Daniel B. Wallace, by incorrectly taking *theos* as indefinite in the NWT “the theological implication would be some form of polytheism, perhaps suggesting that the Word was merely a secondary god in a pantheon of deities. (*Greek Grammar – Beyond the*

Basics, p.266).

Furthermore, the Greek word order reads *kai theos en ho logos* “and god was the word.” However, this does not mean that it should be translated as “And God was the word.” The reason is that the subject is “the word” because it has the definite article, rather than “God” which does not. So this word order is against the Arian rendering in the NWT of “and the Word was a god.” This reading could only be correct if the Greek word order had been ‘*kai theos en ho logos*’ which it is not.

Therefore, taking into account the above factors concerning the word order in Greek and the fact that it is neither definite nor indefinite and so does **not concern an identity but is qualitative**, one excellent rendering is that which is found in the NEB and REB of “and what God was, the Word was” although it is unnecessary to capitalize ‘word’ because there are many reasons why *ho logos* does not refer to a person (please see Volume One, STUDY 17).

WHAT THE GREEK SCHOLARS THINK OF THE RENDERING OF JOHN 1:1 IN THE NWT

Please bear in mind that these scholars, although Trinitarian, do not see an equation of *theos* and *logos* in John 1:1 so that *logos* = *theos*. This is because they take *theos* to refer to the Father. So to present a ‘*logos* = *theos* concept’ would wrongly result in the Modalist thought that ‘the Word was the Father.’ So just as these scholars do not accept *theos* as indefinite in John 1:1, neither do they accept it as definite, as do the many amateur Trinitarians, but as qualitative.

Dr. F. F. Bruce (University of Manchester, England):

Much is made by Arian amateur grammarians of the omission of the definite article with ‘God’ in the phrase ‘And the Word was God’. Such an omission is common with nouns in a predicate construction. ‘a god’ would be totally indefensible.

Dr. William Barclay (University of Glasgow, Scotland) in *The Expository Times*, Nov, 1985:

The deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translations. John 1:1 translated: ‘. . . the Word was a god’...a translation which is grammatically impossible. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest.

Dr. Julius R. Mantey describes the NWT rendering of John 1:1 as:

A grossly misleading translation. It is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 “the Word was a god.”

Dr. Charles L. Feinberg (La Mirada California):

I can assure you that the rendering which the Jehovah's Witnesses give John 1:1 is not held by any reputable Greek scholar."

Dr. Harry A. Sturz (Chairman of the Language Department and Professor of Greek at Biola College):

Therefore, the NWT rendering: "the Word was a god" is not a "literal" but an ungrammatical and tendentious translation. *The Bible Collector*, July - December, 1971 p. 12.

Dr. Paul L. Kaufman (Portland Oregon):

The Jehovah's Witness people evidence an abysmal ignorance of the basic tenets of Greek grammar in their mistranslation of John 1:1.

ENDORSEMENTS

The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has in the past quoted a few Hebrew and/or Greek scholars as endorsing the NWT. However, when some of these scholars have later read such quotations they have invariably denied their support for the NWT and pointed out that they were quoted out of context by the Watchtower organization.

GENERAL COMMENT

Although excused as a result of an attempt to gain literalness, the expressions of English in the Hebrew Scriptures of the NWT are very difficult and in some instances incomprehensible according to Hebrew scholars. In spite of the fact that some passages of the Hebrew are difficult, even for the best of translators, it is vital that a translator expresses what the best evidence indicates the passage to mean in clear English.

Some renderings in the Christian Greek Scriptures of the NWT are not as literal as the Watchtower organization claims them to be; but perhaps the worst and most incorrect features of this part of the NWT are:

1. The insertion of the name “Jehovah” 237 times (with no legitimate basis) rather than “lord” (Gk *kyrios* in KIT) and so causing confusion with Jesus on some occasions. This goes beyond the mandate for a translator i.e. adding to the Scriptures (*Rev. 22:18, 19*). There are numerous faults in the explanation given in the KIT because there is no valid evidence that the early Greek text was tampered with.
2. The very Gnostic rendering of Roman 8:23 as “release...from the body”
3. The christologically distorted rendering of John 1:1 as “a god.”

Some renderings seem strongly biased toward the Watchtower’s own overly complex eschatology with a two stage invisible return of Christ, especially by rendering *parousia* as “presence” and then interpreting as an invisible presence; rather than correctly rendering it as “coming” or “coming to be present.”

Certainly it is a very deceptive thing when the simple change of a word can very significantly change the meaning of a sentence so that one arrives at a wrong conclusion and therefore, a wrong belief. This is obviously dishonest. Such changes should only occur when there are significant or even overwhelming textual and contextual reasons for such renderings or when there are legitimate expansions of the Greek words into phrases to give their full meaning in English. Otherwise such changes in meaning change the very dynamic of biblical teaching and can enable a subtle form of manipulation of the reader’s mind. The sad thing is that the membership of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is led by their governing body to believe that their translation is the best and that it is virtually faultless; whereas, although very accurate in many ways, it is a translation that can lead to certain false beliefs.

The last revision of the NWT was in 1984 and was a rather limited revision, yet translation work of the scholars has continued to develop and so now leaves all the pre-mid 90s translations as decidedly lacking in some respects.

However, there are, of course, no perfect translations because all carry the bias (*usually Trinitarian*) of their translators. Many paraphrased Bibles are very much worse than the NWT and deserve even greater criticism.

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