

Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

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DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT
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"THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST HEARD . . .
THE SAME COMMIT THOU TO FAITHFUL MEN,
WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO."

Dear Mr. Jeff Coons:

In response to your letter, I am enclosing an article of mine on the "a god" mistranslation in John 1:1. And even the apostle Paul was called a god twice (Acts 28:6) and (Acts 14:11-12). Different cities had different gods. They were numerous and most of them had very limited authority. Hermes was a messenger, carrier from god to god. Bacchus was the god of wine and song, etc. One can readily realize how ~~to~~ ridiculous it was to so label Jesus, who raised the dead, fed 5000, stopped the wind and the waves, etc. and even rose ~~th~~ from the dead.

In John 8:58, the JW translation of ego eimi as "I have been" is absolutely wrong. It means "I am" and is in the present tense in Greek. They translated it as if it was in the perfect tense. And I have never read about a "perfect indefinite tense" in any Greek grammar, and I am co-author of the most widely used one in the U.S., and it is also used worldwide.

Jesus said he was the "ego eimi", I believe, mentioned in Exodus 3:14 and 15 which meant Kok. It is so explained in verse 15. And the Jews so interpreted it when Jesus said he was the ego eimi, for they immediately picked up stones to kill him.

JWs have not been saved because they
have not accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
Matt. 7:21; Rom 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; John 3:17 and 16 and 36
Emphasize the necessity of a new birth when
witnessing to them.

God's best blessings on you.

Julius Robert Nantey

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Dear Mr. Jeff Coons:

I wrote this when I learned I had been quoted out of context.

A GROSSLY MISLEADING TRANSLATION

John 1:1, which reads "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" is shockingly mistranslated, "Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god," in a New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures, published under the auspices of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Since my name is used and our Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament is quoted on page 744 to seek to justify their translation, I am making this statement.

The translation suggested in our Grammar for the disputed passage is, "the Word was deity." Moffat's rendering is "the Word was divine." Williams' translation is, "the Word was God Himself." Each translation reflects the dominant idea in the Greek. For, whenever an article does not precede a noun in Greek, that noun can either be considered as emphasizing the character, nature, essence or quality of a person or thing, as theos (God) does in John 1:1, or it can be translated in certain contexts as indefinite, as they have done. But of all the scholars in the world, as far as we know, none have translated this verse as Jehovah's Witnesses have done.

If the Greek article occurred with both Word and God in John 1:1, the implication would be that they are one and the same person, absolutely identical. But John affirmed that "the Word was with (the) God" (the definite article preceding each noun), and in so writing he indicated his belief that they are distinct and separate personalities. Then John next stated that the Word was God, i.e., of the same family or essence that characterizes the Creator. Or, in other words, that both are of the ^{same} nature, and that nature is the highest in existence, namely divine.

Examples where the noun in the predicate does not have an article, as in the above verse, are: 1 John 4:8, "God is love", John 4:24, "God is spirit", Matthew 13:39, "the reapers are angels," i.e., they are the type of beings known as angels. In each instance the noun in the predicate was used to describe some quality or characteristic of the subject, whether as to nature or type.

The apostle John in the context of the introduction to his gospel is pulling all the stops out of language to portray not only the deity of Christ but also His equality with the Father. He states that the Word was in the

beginning, that He was with God, that He was God and that all creation came into existence through Him and that not even one thing exists which was not created by Christ. What else could be said that John did not say? In John 1:18 he explained that Christ has been so intimate with the Father that He was in His bosom and that He came to earth to exhibit or portray God. But if we had no other statement from John except that which is found in John 14:9, "He that has seen me has seen the Father," that would be enough to satisfy the seeking soul that Christ and God are the same in essence and that both are divine and equal in nature.

Heb 1:2-3
Besides, the whole tenor of New Testament revelation points in this direction. Compare Paul's declaration in Colossians 1:19, for instance: "that all the divine fullness should dwell in Him," or the statement in Hebrews, "He is the reflection of God's glory and the perfect representation of His being, and continues to uphold all the universe by His mighty word!" (William's translation). And note the sweeping, cosmic claim recorded in Matthew 28:19, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." Phil. 2:5,9, "who being in very nature God...God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Col. 2:9-10, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...who is the head over every power and authority." Rev. 3:14, "The supervisor (arche) of God's creation". Col. 1:15, "For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." Mark 14:61-62, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one? I am, said Jesus." 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself". John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". John 7:17, "If anyone wills to do God's will he will find out whether my teaching comes from God, or whether I speak on my own."

And, if we contrast with that the belittling implication that Christ was only a god, do we not at once detect the discord? Does not such a conception conflict with the New Testament message both in whole and in part? Why, if John, in the midst of the idolatry of his day, had made such a statement would not the first century hearers and readers have gotten a totally inadequate picture of Christ, who we believe, is the Creator of the universe and the only Redeemer of humanity?

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