

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



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## The Jehovah's Witnesses and John 1:1

--By Terry Carter

It is pretty well known that the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Deity of Jesus. They do not believe He was God in the flesh. Sometimes they accuse those of us who do believe in the Divinity of Jesus of being polytheists. That is they accuse us of believing in multiple gods.

The problem they have is that the Bible plainly says that Jesus IS God. Probably the plainest Scripture in this regard is **John 1:1**, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**"

Verse 14 makes it clear that Jesus is the Word, "And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Of course this leaves the Jehovah's Witness with a problem. They admit that Jesus is the Word but they deny that He is God. Consequently they have made their own translation of the New Testament called the *New World Translation*. In this translation they render verse one as follows: "Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

They argue that this is a proper translation since there is no definite article before the word God in the Greek. (In English the definite article is the word "the" while the indefinite article is the word "a" or "an". There is no indefinite article in Greek however.) But this is flawed thinking for the following reasons.

1. The absence of the definite article in Greek does not justify adding the indefinite article in a translation. This is true because there is no indefinite article in the Greek. Only context can determine whether a translator should supply one in English.

The best proof of this is the fact that *New World Translation* itself follows this practice. In fact, right in this very context there are several places where the definite article is missing but they rightly do not supply the indefinite article in the English translation. In verses 6, 12, 13, and 18 there is no definite article before the word God but they do not translate these as "a god". The reason is that it would be obviously incorrect. Consider how these verses would read if they did supply the indefinite article. "6 There was a man sent from **a god**, whose name [was] John...12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of **a god**, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of **a god**...18 No one has seen **a god** at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared [Him]."

Not only is this nonsense, it would refute their own beliefs that Jesus was "a god" who was seen by men since verse 18 would say that no man has seen "a god" at any time. Further it would seem to be teaching polytheism as the text would be talking about "a god" rather than the one and only God. The main point here is that they do not consistently apply their own supposed rule of translation.

2. While they accuse us of being polytheists, it is their own translation that teaches there is another god besides the God. If *The New World Translation* is correct in its rendering of **John 1:1**, Jesus is "a god" distinct from the one God. So I'm wondering who the real polytheists are here?
3. There is good reason not to supply the indefinite article in translating verse one into English. In fact, it would be incorrect to do so because of what is called Colwell's rule. According to this rule, when it precedes the verb, the definite predicate noun drops the definite article while the subject of the sentence does not. So for John to say that the Word was God, the definite article needs to be dropped before the word God which is exactly what John did.

The Watchtower Society published a booklet in 1989 called *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*. The interesting thing is that on page 28 they admit that Colwell's rule applies to **John 1:1** and that therefore the context should determine whether the indefinite article should be supplied by the translator. They say it should be supplied, "...for the testimony of the entire Bible is that Jesus is not Almighty God."

Notice they admit that the context should decide the question but they offer no evidence from the context itself. Instead they beg off the question and depart from the context 'to state their already arrived at' conclusion. They assume the very thing they are attempting to prove. That is, that Jesus is not God. In other words, they argue that it should not be translated "the Word was God" because they don't believe He was.

In summary, the Jehovah's Witness must create their own bogus translation to support their flawed theology. Their translation breaks the very rule that they admit applies to verse one. They fail to follow their own method of translation throughout the passage.

And finally, their translation ultimately teaches what they themselves deny. That is, that there is more than one God.