
PROS APOLOGIAN® - 1 Peter 3:15

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. (NASB)

THE IDENTITY OF THE WORD ACCORDING TO JOHN

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Kenneth R. Guindon

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν.

The Identity of the Word According to John

(“Does the rendering of John 1:1 in *The New World Translation* violate rules of Greek grammar or conflict with worship of only one God?”
See *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1975, pp. 702-704)

When Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, Egypt was discoursing on the subject of the Trinity, his presbyter, Arius, answered him, saying that if the Father begat the Son, then the latter must have had a beginning and therefore his substance was made from nothing. Over one hundred years ago, Isaac Boyle wrote the following about the Arian debate:

These novel and hitherto unheard of opinions excited many persons to enter into the controversy. By a little spark a great fire was thus kindled.¹

Reporting on Arius’ arguments during the Nicean Council, Dr. Boyle tells us, “the bishops, ... stopped their ears on hearing such language, and rejected this doctrine as remote and alien from that of the Church.”²

Clearly, Arianism was not the historical opinion of the Church; it was novel, heretical and blasphemous to the ears of the bishops, many of whom had endured severe persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. But, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society contends that the bishops were wrong, apostates, and only Arius and his supporters were the defenders of the true biblical faith! Is it possible that Jehovah’s Witnesses are right?

According to the Watchtower Society the answer is yes! Like Arius, the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the Logos is *a god*, another god along side the Father.³ The Watchtower’s views belittle the Almighty who could not keep His promise that the Church would not be conquered by Satan’s powers (Matt. 16:18; 28:20). The Witnesses’ teachings elevate Satan’s power and disparage the faith of the Christian martyrs. Hopefully, “The Identity of the Word According to John” will furnish an adequate response to the Watchtower Society concerning the correct translation of John 1:1. We have in mind primarily: the 62 page booklet *The Word-Who Is He? According to John*

¹ Isaac Boyle, *A Historical View of the Council of Nice* (Nicea), reprinted in Bakers Twin Brooks Series volume of *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), page 7. See also, Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, pp. 618-621.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

³ An explanation and a brief history of Arianism will be found in Appendix C.

(1962) and *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1975 (“Questions from Readers,” pp. 702-704) as well as more recent publications such as, *Should You Believe in A Trinity?* (1989), and articles found in *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (with References, 1984), page 1579, and, *Insight on the Scriptures*, (1988, Vol. 2), pages 52-72 (52-56 in particular). Since this article was written some twenty years ago, the Watchtower Society’s writers have been busy responding to questions on this topic; still, nothing has changed. Error will always be error while truth never changes.

Our topic is necessary because, although wounded by deacon Athanasius at Nicea, the old Serpent and Dragon has reared up its ugly head, this time disguised as Witnesses for Jehovah! Arianism is alive and well today, at least among the members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.⁴ The identity of the Word according to John is critical to our eternal destiny. The reason is: eternal life is intrinsically linked to the Son of God who is Life eternal, the Saviour of the world (John 17:3; 1 John 1:2; 5:12, 20).

A review of early Christian writers will demonstrate that the Church always believed that the Word was of the same nature as God, in spite of the fact that a few early writers were tainted by subordinationism.⁵ Only one brief patristic quotation is given here because we prefer to argue our thesis from the Scriptures and from the grammatical principles involved in the translation of John 1:1. Testimony from several early Christian writers to the Deity of the Logos will be found in appendix B.

Clement of Alexandria writes in *The Instructor of Children* (ante AD 202).

[1, 8, 62, 3] Nothing exists except that which God causes to be. There is nothing, therefore, which is hated by God; [4] nor is there anything hated by the Word. Both are one, both are God; for he says: “In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God.”⁶

⁴ J. D. Douglas (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), pp. 67-68. “The most noteworthy Arian-like Christology in modern times is the teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who deny the eternity of the Son of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, and who, like Arius, posit the Logos as an intermediate being between the Creator and creation.” (S. J. Mikolaski in the article, *Arianism*).

⁵ Subordinationists believed that the Son and the Spirit were somehow inferior to the Father.

⁶ (William A. Jurgens, in Volume 1, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1970), page 179).

AND THE WORD WAS... ?

In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.

(John 1:1 according to *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*).

So proclaims the Bible produced by Jehovah's Witnesses. Seventy million copies have flowed from the Watchtower's printing plants around the world. Everyone is free to express his opinion in a democratic society, but we are not quibbling here over a trivial matter where opinion doesn't count. We must know the truth about Jesus Christ.⁷ A number of scholars have objected to the Witnesses' translation of John 1:1, so we are not remiss when we ask: What did John mean when he wrote *theos en ho logos* (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος)?

A review of various scholars' criticisms will provide some background to the issues surrounding the translation of John 1:1. Soon after the release of *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (their edition of the New Testament), Dr. Bruce M. Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary explained:

As regards Jn. 1:1, Colwell's research casts the most serious doubts on the correctness of such translations as 'and the Logos was divine' (Moffatt, Strachan), 'and the Word was divine' (Goodspeed), and (worst of all) 'and the Word was a god' (so the recently published Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* [1950]).⁸

Why would the Jehovah's Witnesses introduce such a novel translation knowing they would certainly receive such criticism? Obviously, because they think they are God's people and have the truth. They consider themselves to be in the best position to translate the Scriptures because they believe God directs their organization.

There can be no doubt that their translation "the Word was a god" is designed to bolster their contention that the Word was God's first creation. Dr. Robert H. Countess, in a rather lengthy article on the NWT, wrote:

But the really trenchant significance of this rendering "a god" is that Jesus Christ is not "very God of very God" and the second person of the Trinity. He is merely "a god" in a pantheon of lesser divinities. The Witnesses would tell us that Jesus in his pre-human state was an angel, identifiable in the Old Testament with Michael and as such, God's

⁷ Isaiah 9:6; Heb 2:10; 5:9.

⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Expository Times*, 63, Jan. 1952, pp. 125-126.

Chief Executive Officer. Yet Jesus is to be regarded as unique and worthy of obeisance, but not worship.⁹

Countess makes a good point when he says:

The effect of designating Christ “a god” is at the very least startling to the Christian reading or hearing this translation. Certainly there must be ponderous evidence for such a departure from the almost universal manner in which this verse has been rendered in the past—“and the Word was God.”¹⁰

Is there then overwhelming evidence for the NWT’s rendering of John 1:1? And, is their translation in harmony with the Scriptures and the Church’s historic teaching? Is Jesus a secondary god? Is he by nature inferior to his Father? What did John want to convey when he wrote GOD WAS THE WORD (the word order in Greek)? The Witnesses have apparently used Moffatt’s and Goodspeed’s translations to justify their own, which is really something quite different. Discussing the appendix in the NWT, Mr. Countess comments: “The appendix is not slow to give reasons. Referring to *The Complete Bible* and to Moffatt,” the NWT appendix argues:

The reason for their rendering the Greek word “divine,” and not “God,” is that it is the Greek noun *theos* without the definite article, hence an anarthrous *theos*. The God with whom the Word or Logos was originally is designated here by the Greek expression ὁ Θεός, *theos* preceded by the definite article *ho*, hence an articular *theos*. Careful translators recognize that the articular construction points to an identity,¹¹ a personality, whereas an anarthrous construction points to a quality about someone.

Based upon this statement in the NWT appendix, Dr. Countess identifies the principles followed by the Watchtower Bible translators:

Thus NWT derives a translation principle which may be stated as follows: anarthrous Θεός equals “a god”; arthrous Θεός equals “God.” The anarthrous is qualitative; the arthrous is quantitative. An incidental criticism at this point is necessary. NWT has “a god,” clearly a quantitative rendering! The translators, to be consistent with their principle, should have followed Moffatt and *The Complete Bible*, both reading “divine.”¹²

Next, Dr. Countess shows how the translation committee for the NWT loosely handled the Greek text. (NWT, 1950, revised edition, 1951).

...of 282 occurrences of the anarthrous Θεός NWT sixteen times has either “a god, god, gods, or godly.” The translators were, therefore only 6% faithful to their canons

⁹ Robert H. Countess, Ph.D., “The Translation of ΘΕΟΣ in the *New World Translation*,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 10, 1967, p. 155.

¹⁰ Countess, p. 154.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

enunciated in the appendix to John 1:1 - i.e. Θεός = a god and ὁ Θεός = God. On the other hand they were 94% unfaithful.¹³

This statistical evidence is sufficient proof that the translators of the NWT are aware that *theos* should be translated “God” except in rare cases. This is especially true in John 1:1 where John, a Jew, would never dream of placing another god alongside Yahweh (Jehovah). Yet, despite the biblical evidence prohibiting it,¹⁴ Jehovah’s Witnesses are guilty of doing this very thing. The grounds for their translation are presented in *The Watchtower* magazine of November 15, 1975.

FROM THE WATCHTOWER

For the reader’s convenience, we have numbered the paragraphs for the November 15, 1975 issue of *The Watchtower* (article on pages 702-704). In paragraph six, we read:

The New World Bible Translation Committee chose to insert the indefinite article “a” there. This helps to distinguish “the Word,” Jesus Christ, as a god, or divine person with vast power, from the God whom he was “with,” Jehovah, the Almighty.

After quoting Greek scholar E. C. Colwell in paragraphs seven through nine, *The Watchtower* focuses on the matter of “context” which Prof. Colwell mentions. *The Watchtower* states: “Not any inviolable rule of grammar, but context must guide the translator in such cases.” Because we need to know the identity of the Word according to the apostle John, we too must examine the context of John 1:1 to see how it bears on the translation.

For those who may not have a copy of this Watchtower’s article, we quote paragraphs 13-14 in their entirety.

Certain scholars have pointed out that anarthrous predicate nouns that precede the verb in Greek may have a qualitative significance. That is, they may describe the nature or status of the subject. Thus some translators render John 1:1: “The Logos was divine,” (*Moffatt*); “the Word was divine,” (*Goodspeed*); “the nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God.” (*Barclay*); “the Word was with God and shared his nature,” (*The Translator’s New Testament*).

Does being “divine” or godlike mean that Jesus Christ is himself almighty and coeternal with God the Father?

¹³ Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁴ Deut. 6:4; Ex. 34:14; Ps. 86:10; 1 Chron. 17:20; Is. 45:21, 22.

Someone might wonder, “How does this affect me?” Simply put, the difference is this: either God is our Saviour or he enlisted a creature to save mankind.¹⁵ In other words: our salvation was accomplished by God or an angelic creature who took flesh!

Here is the situation in a nutshell. John wrote in Greek “God was the Word,” which in English is rendered *The Word was God*. Several translators believe that the Greek text will be clearer for English readers if the noun *theos* (God) is rendered “divine.” Anyone can see that this weakens what the apostle John wrote; the noun has given place to an adjective. Once Moffatt and Goodspeed had taken this first step, it was a simple thing for the Watchtower translators to go a step further. But in doing so, they obscured what the original Greek says about the Logos, the Word of God. Anyone is then in a position to interpret “divine” as he desires. The Witnesses would have us believe that *divine* means the Word is divine, godlike one, yes, *a god* (John 1:1c). They do this without batting an eye because they believe that the Logos is God’s first creation, the archangel Michael.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON JOHN 1:1

The Witnesses are confident that Drs Goodspeed and Moffatt have provided sufficient basis for *The New World Translation’s* “a god.” Hopefully what follows will enable the reader to form an enlightened opinion of such translations.

The Word was God. Some translators have incorrectly rendered this “The Word was divine,” but this is an unwarranted weakening of the statement. As there is no article in the Greek (*theos*), the term must be taken as a predicate, in which case it states the characteristic of the Word; but since it is a noun and not an adjective it must assert the Godhead of the Word. It involves not merely divinity but deity.¹⁶

“The Word was God”. Nothing higher could be said. All that may be said about God may fitly be said about the Word. This statement should not be watered down. Moffatt renders, “the Logos was divine” (similarly Goodspeed, Schonfield, *et al.*). While this English probably means much the same as does the ARV the emphasis is different, and the modern translation is no improvement. John is not merely saying that there is

¹⁵ 1 John 4:9-10.

¹⁶ Donald Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (London: InterVarsity, 1970), p. 930.

something divine about Jesus. He is affirming¹⁷ that He is God, and doing so emphatically as we see from the word order in the Greek.

Strachan's statement ignores the usage of the New Testament as do the translations of Moffatt, Goodspeed, Schonfield, etc. On Moffatt's reading N. Turner comments, "Once again dilution of the high Christology of a New Testament author is seen to be based on a fallacious appeal to unfounded grammatical principles" (*Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, Edinburgh, 1965, p. 17).¹⁸

The preceding furnishes us some perspective for judging the merits of a translation other than the traditional "God" in John 1:1c. We note that the Witnesses quoted two translations which bring out the idea of the Greek by means of paraphrase or interpretation: "the nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God," (Barclay); "the Word was with God and shared his nature," (*The Translator's New Testament*).¹⁹

The Witnesses claim in the Foreword of *The New World Translation* that theirs is not a paraphrase but "as literal a translation as possible". But in their desire for exactitude, the Witnesses go astray when they insert the indefinite article ("a") before *theos* in John 1:1c. Whereas the two translations quoted above do bring out something of the idea of the Greek text, the meaning is altogether different from that of *The New World Translation*.

These rather paraphrastic translations do not deny that the Word is of the same nature as God the Father. To acknowledge them as Father and Son is an admission that they share the same nature. Doesn't every true son share his father's nature? John tells us that the Logos is the only-begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16; 1 John 4:9). But the Witnesses deny that the Father and the Son have the same nature (essence). They do not believe that the Father begets the Son in eternity and that the Son receives his glory and being from the Father. Their relationship is eternal, without beginning nor end (it is outside of time). This is the meaning of the phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." When time and creation came into existence...the Word was *already* present. John emphasizes this by writing: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:3). Christians believe that Jesus is the Creator of "all things" (Col. 1:16-17).

¹⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 76-77.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, footnote 15.

¹⁹ *The Watchtower*, November 15, 1975, page 703.

GRAMMAR APPLIED TO JOHN 1:1

When we know the grammatical principles that govern the predicate nominative and the Greek article, we easily understand why various translations of John 1:1 have been attempted. The reader should note that our quotations from the same grammarians quoted by the Watchtower Society *are longer* than the Watchtower's. It is our intention to respect the context, something the Watchtower Society has sometimes neglected to do. Under the heading, "The Absence of the Article," Dana and Mantey in *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, write:

*Sometimes with a noun which the context proves to be definite the article is not used. This places stress upon the qualitative aspect of the noun rather than its mere identity. An object of thought may be conceived of from two points of view: as to *identity* or *quality*. To convey the first point of view the Greek uses the article; for the second the anarthrous construction is used.²⁰ (some emphasis added).*

In the appendix of *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, the Watchtower Society quoted Dana & Mantey's *Grammar* hoping to find some support for their translation of John 1:1. Here is the Watchtower Society's quotation:

Surely when Robertson says that θεός, as to the article, "is treated like a proper name and may have it or not have it" (R. 761), he does not mean to intimate that the presence or absence of the article with θεός has no special significance. We construe him to mean that there is no definite rule governing the use of the article with θεός, so that sometimes the writer's view point is difficult to detect, which is entirely true. But in the great majority of instances the reason for the distinction is clear. The use of θεός in Jn. 1:1 is a good example.²¹

At this point, the Witnesses stopped quoting from Dana & Mantey. A diligent student should always verify sources. Our readers need to see what the authors say immediately after the point where the Witnesses stopped quoting from Dana & Mantey.

Πρὸς τὸν θεόν points to Christ's fellowship with the person of the Father; θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος emphasizes Christ's participation in the essence of the divine nature. The former

²⁰ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Macmillan, 1927, Reprinted 1957), page 149.

²¹ Ibid., page 140, quoted in: *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1950, revised 1951), pp. 774-775; *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1969), page 1159.

clearly applies to personality, while the latter applies to character. This distinction is in line with the general force of the article....²²

There can be no doubt: Dana & Mantey understood John 1:1 to mean that the Word *is* God. The absence of the article was intentional and was necessary to avoid saying that the Word was the Father, or all of God. Many decades ago, the renowned Baptist scholar, A. T. Robertson wrote:

In a word, then, when the article occurs with subject (or the subject is a personal pronoun or proper name) and predicate, both are definite, treated as identical, one and the same, and interchangeable.²³

John does not say the Word is ὁ θεός because he is distinguishing the *person* of the Word from the Father. Neither does he want us to believe that the Word was “a god.” If he had wanted to, he could have inverted the word order like this: ὁ λόγος ἦν θεός.²⁴ This change of position (*theos* coming at the end of the phrase) weakens the statement because the emphasis is no longer on the noun *theos*.²⁵

Had John wanted us to believe that the Logos is divine, but not the Almighty God, he could have written ὁ λόγος ἦν θεῖος.²⁶ But he didn't choose to do so; instead, he wrote, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, indeed a startling statement. Word-order is what makes his meaning so controversial, especially, coming after “the Word was with God”. This has constantly been interpreted to mean two things: 1) that the Word of God eternally exists in intimate fellowship with God the Father and, 2) not only is he with God, but he is God! He who was with God (the Father) and participated in the very nature (divinity) of the Father, came down and dwelt among us! This is the good news: God the Word took flesh and became our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16, Byzantine Greek text). To summarize: the Word is God because he is God's Son from all eternity. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the last of the apostles wrote a theological treatise for the Church, to help us appreciate the greatest moment in history: the Incarnation of the Word of God!

Some readers may feel they are now sufficiently informed and would like to let the matter rest; if so, this would be an appropriate place for them to end

²² Dana & Mantey, page 140.

²³ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 768.

²⁴ Philip B. Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, March 1973, pp. 84-85.

²⁵ Robertson, op. cit., p. 417.

²⁶ Morris, op. cit., p. 77; Harner, pp. 84-85.

their study. But others who are deeply involved with the Jehovah's Witnesses would be grateful if we delved more deeply into the identity of the Word according to John. Therefore, our investigation of the Greek predicate noun continues.

MORE ON PREDICATE NOUNS

In the appendix to *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, the Witnesses appealed to various scholars to buttress their contention that Jesus is not truly God, equal in nature to the Father. Love of the truth motivates us to learn what these scholars actually wrote about the presence or absence of the article with predicate nouns.

In the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Philip Harner explains two important principles involved in the use of predicate nouns. The first principle is demonstrated in Mark 7:26: "The woman was a Greek..." (ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἑλληνίς). One might also look at Mark 1:16, "...for they were fishermen" (ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς). On the first example, Harner says it: "...indicates the category or class of which the subject is a particular example."²⁷ Mark says that this woman was a Greek, "although other women would also belong to this category."²⁸

The second principle that concerns us, is: "A predicate noun is arthrous when it is interchangeable with the subject in a given context."²⁹ Mark 12:7 is an example of the second principle, "This is the heir" (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος; cf. 1 Cor 15:56). What does this mean for our study?

John's Gospel reveals to us that although the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30), they are not interchangeable persons. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. In the Prologue of John, the Father and the Son are distinguished from each other as to *person*, but are compared as to *nature*. John thus avoided a pitfall later called *Sabellianism* (c. AD 250).³⁰ As stated,

²⁷ Harner, op. cit., p. 75.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Endeavoring to defend the doctrine of one God, Sabellius denied the distinctive personality of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He taught that God was one Person who revealed Himself in three distinctive modes.

John differentiates the Word of God from the Father and tells us that the Son is in the bosom of his Father and makes known (explains) his Father (John 1:1, 14, 18).³¹

B. F. Westcott addressed this in his commentary *The Gospel According to St. John. The Witnesses' Kingdom Interlinear Translation* uses the Greek text of Westcott & Hort (1881) so we might hope that Westcott's comments on John 1:1 will have some importance for them since they have quoted him in *The Watchtower*. Westcott wrote:

The predicate (God) stands emphatically first, as in iv 24. It is necessarily without the article (Θεός not ὁ Θεός) inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person. It would be pure Sabellianism to say "the Word was ὁ Θεός". No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word...

...Thus we are led to conceive that the divine nature is essentially in the Son, and at the same time that the Son can be regarded, according to that which is His peculiar characteristic, in relation to God as God.³²

This is the obvious reason why John did not use the definite article *ho* before *theos* in John 1:1c. Also, "Predicate nouns as a rule are anarthrous," says Robert Funk in his well-known Greek Grammar.³³ So we should not be surprised to learn that based on his studies in the Gospel of John, Professor Harner concluded:

"But I would judge that in 40 of these cases the qualitative force of the predicate is more prominent than its definiteness or indefiniteness."³⁴

And later he added:

...the question of definiteness or indefiniteness is *secondary* to the qualitative significance of the predicate.³⁵

The categories of qualitiveness and definiteness, that is, *are not mutually exclusive*, and frequently it is a delicate exegetical issue for the interpreter to decide which emphasis a Greek writer had in mind.³⁶

³¹ In John 1:18, several Egyptian papyri (p⁶⁶, p⁷⁵) give a variant reading, the "only-begotten God". This reading is usually found in a footnote; yet others believe it to be original and have printed it in the text. Although this is not critical to our discussion, we bring it to the reader's attention because he may come across it in his reading of John's Prologue.

³² Reprinted, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), page 3.

³³ Robert W. Funk (trans. and ed.), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), p. 143.

³⁴ Harner, op. cit., p. 83.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 80 (emphasis added)

³⁶ Ibid., p. 87 (emphasis added).

To summarize, we could say: First, an anarthrous noun points to the nature or character of something; and second, word order, i.e., whether the predicate nominative precedes or follows the copulative verb, is important. Third, qualitiveness and definiteness are not mutually exclusive, and fourth, John does not teach that the Son is the Father.

In John 1:1, the word order is: predicate nominative, verb, subject. The article (*ho* with *Logos*) points to the subject of the clause and the predicate nominative (*theos*) tells us something about the subject. The word order in John 1:1c clearly emphasizes the predicate nominative making it emphatic and definite).³⁷ Harner suggests the following paraphrase as a translation: “the Word had the same nature as God.” While this in itself is not a problem, it is better to take it simply the way it was written: “and the Word was God”.

E. C. COLWELL'S STUDIES

Consequently, we may say that while John 1:1 falls within the two principles formulated by Philip Harner, word order is to be taken into account. As Dr. Countess remarked, only ponderous evidence could lead us to translate “the Word was a god.” Long ago (1933), Dr. Colwell’s studies revealed that the tendency of New Testament writers, and the apostle John in particular, is to employ a predicate nominative without the article when it stands before the verb. We now move on to consider Dr. Colwell’s study and his conclusions.

According to the critical Greek text, John 1:49 reads: *σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ*. Colwell, examining the difference in position of the two predicate nominatives in this single sentence, explains:

What reason is there for this difference? When the passage is scrutinized, it appears at once that the variable quantum is not definiteness but word order. “King of Israel” in this context is as definite as “Son of God.”³⁸

The presence and absence of the article is more easily appreciated when we write John 19:21 on two separate lines like this:

³⁷ See Appendix A.

³⁸ E. C. Colwell, “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LII (1933), p. 13.

Μὴ γράφε, Ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀλλ' ὅτι
ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Prof. Colwell's comment is enlightening: "...in each case the title itself remains the same; the article does not occur in the second instance because the predicate precedes the verb."³⁹

The following chart with comments by Prof. Colwell⁴⁰ should prove helpful to any Jehovah's Witness seeking to understand the Greek idiom of John 1:1.

The close relation between word-order and the use of the article in these cases can be shown by a different grouping of the same figures:

I.	Definite Predicates after the Verb	255	
A.	With the Article	299	90%
B.	Without the Article	26	10%
II.	Definite Predicates before the Verb	112	
A.	With the Article	15	13%
B.	Without the Article	97	87%

Here are Prof. Colwell's conclusions from his study of the article in the New Testament.

The following rules may be tentatively formulated to describe the use of the article with definite predicate nouns in sentences in which the verb occurs. (1) Definite predicate nouns here regularly take the article. (2) The exceptions are for the most part due to a change in *word-order*: (a) Definite predicate nouns which follow the verb (this is the usual order) *usually* take the article; (b) Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb

³⁹ Ibid. One should study the following in the Greek text: Matt. 27:42, 11, 37; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3, 37; John 18:33; and, compare these passages: John 8:12 with 9:5; and Matt. 5:14. Note too the correlation between word order and the use of the article in Matt. 13:37-39. These examples are all found on page 14 in Colwell's article.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

usually lack the article (c) Proper names regularly lack the article in the predicate; (d) Predicate nominatives in relative clauses regularly follow the verb whether or not they have the article....

But it is in the realm of translation and interpretation that the data presented here have their most valuable application. They show that a predicate nominative which precedes the verb *cannot* be translated as an indefinite or a “qualitative” noun *solely because* of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun in spite of the absence of the article. In the case of a predicate noun which follows the verb the reverse is true; the absence of the article in this position is a much more reliable indication that the noun is indefinite. Loosely speaking, this study may be said to have increased the definiteness of a predicate noun before the verb without the article, and to have decreased the definiteness of a predicate noun after the verb without the article.

The opening verse of John’s Gospel contains one of the many passages where this rule suggests the translation of a predicate as a definite noun. Καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος looks much more like “And the Word was God” than “And the word was divine” when viewed with reference to this rule. The absence of the article does *not* make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John, for this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas. (John 20:28)⁴¹

The preceding is from the pen of a well-known Greek scholar. In contrast, people know that *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* was produced by a committee of questionable caliber (the translators’ names are a closely-guarded secret). In the appendix of *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (1969), the Witnesses stated that Acts 28:6 is a “case paralleling that of John 1:1”.⁴² This is not a factual statement as even a cursory examination reveals. However, Mark 2:28 is an exact parallel to John 1:1: “Hence the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath” (Mk 2:28, KIT). Looking at the left hand side of the page in their own *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, one sees that “Lord,” *kurios*, is anarthrous and precedes the verb. The Watchtower Bible Translation Committee, recognizes that *Lord* is definite here and honestly spells lord with a capital “L”. Because Mark 2:28 is an exact parallel with John 1:1, one might wonder if only prejudice against the Trinity led the Watchtower Bible translators to write “and the Word was *a god*”.

John 17:17 is another example of a grammatical situation similar to that in John 1:1. The Greek text reads: ἀγίασον αὐτούς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὁ λόγος ὁ

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁴² *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1969), p. 1160.

σὸς ἀλήθεια ἔστιν. Interestingly, the noun *aletheia* (truth) occurs two times in this phrase, once with and once without the article. All can see that where *aletheia* precedes the verb (*estin*), it does not have the article. Dr. Nigel Turner explains:

...an article which would normally be present is absent when its noun occurs as a predicate and at the same time its position in the sentence is *before* that of the verb.... It is an instance of the predicate occurring before the verb "to be" and losing its definite article in consequence. (ft., The Greek word-order is: "Thy Logos Truth is." It is an instance of Colwell's rule.)⁴³

Having thoroughly examined the grammatical principles involved in the translation of John 1:1c, we only need to double check the accuracy of what we have said so far. This can be accomplished by examining the apostle John's teaching about Jesus. Although, we are constrained to do this in a very summary fashion, our investigation should afford a clear idea of what John believed about the Logos. Is Jesus God, or is he *a god* according to John?

⁴³ Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 9.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY (John 21:24)

The verbs John used describe the Word as already existing before creation (time is included in creation) occurred. When John introduces John the Baptist, he speaks about him coming *in time* (verse 6). The Word *was* ἦν (already) *in the beginning* (1:1a); John the Baptist *came* (ἔγένετο) at a point in time. The Word is the true Light and John the Baptist came to “bear witness of that Light” (vv. 6-9).⁴⁴

John has recorded Christ's own testimony concerning his being eternal: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). This is one of the most direct statements the Saviour ever gave about his own person. The Jews recognized it as a claim to be *God*. How did they react when they heard our Lord say: “I am”? “Then took they up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:59).

One hundred years ago, Anglican Bishop and Bible translator, B. F. Westcott wrote:

The phrase marks a timeless existence. In this connexion “I was” would have expressed simple priority. Thus there is in the phrase the contrast between the created and the uncreated, and the temporal and the eternal.⁴⁵

John also tells us that Jesus “manifested his glory and his disciples believed on him,” (2:11). One has a right to ask why the Creator would share his glory with a creature; especially in view of Isaiah 42:8: “*I am the LORD [YAHWEH]: that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*” Because Jesus is of the same essence as the Father, every Sunday we confess him in our Creed to be “Light from Light, true God from true God”. This is why Christians have no problem accepting, “and the Word was God.”

Faith in Jesus Christ is always placed on the same plane as faith in God (John 14:1; 2:23; 3:17; 5:39-40; Isa. 45:21-25). The Scriptures tell us:

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

⁴⁴ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), Volume 1, pp. 69-76.

⁴⁵ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 140; also, see Hendriksen, Volume 2, pp. 66-67, and A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), Vol. 5, pp. 158-159.

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Jn 5:22-23, emphasis added).

In light of all of this, how could anyone deny that Jesus Christ, is the Word of God made flesh and he shares his Father’s honor and glory? This is the very truth of Scripture.

“Worthy is the Lamb (...) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever” (Rev 5:12-14).

The Word of God made flesh is the Yahweh of the Old Testament Scriptures (Ps 102:25-27 cf. Hb 1:10-12); he shares one throne with his Father (Ap 22:3) and he is called *Lord of Lords* (Dt 10:17 cf. Rev 19:6) like his Father.

Attempting to demonstrate that Jesus is *not* God, *The Watchtower’s* article (11/15/75) cited Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Cor 8:6). If this teaches that only the Father is God, then it also teaches that only Jesus Christ is Lord to the exclusion of the Father! Obviously, the Watchtower Society’s interpretation is wrong. They take a similar position when they refer Trinitarians to John 17:3: “...the only true God”. Are we to understand that Jesus is a false God (Jn 1:1)? Again, discerning Christians detect the fallaciousness of the Watchtower Society’s arguments.

Many believe that John 5:18 teaches the deity of Christ. John reports that Jesus habitually called God “his own Father” (πατέρα ἰδίου). This practice caused great consternation to the Jews and provoked them to seek his death. Being “the only-begotten Son,” is an indication of Jesus’ unique relationship with his Father. Christians understand that the phrase “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30) refers to the equality of nature shared by the Father and the Son, and not only to their unity of purpose in redemption. A well-known Protestant commentator on the Gospel of St. John writes:

He was claiming that He partook of the same nature as His Father. This involved equality. So the Jews held that He was guilty of blasphemy as well as of sabbath breaking.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Morris, op. cit., p. 310.

All this evidence from John's Gospel leads us to conclude that the Jehovah's Witnesses foolishly follow guides as blind to Christ's true identity as were the Pharisees and other religious leaders of his day (Mt 15:14). Why is it, that in spite of the Orthodox Church's history reaching all the way back to the apostles, the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society unearths a heresy invented by Arius of Egypt? As the saying goes: *Where there is smoke there is fire*. This smells of something originating in the pits of eternal perdition. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, *who is the image of God*, should shine unto them."⁴⁷

Our only desire is the salvation of those who have been misled. May the Holy Spirit lead them to a personal knowledge of Christ. Correctly identifying the Word and believing what the apostle John taught his "little children" (1 Jn 2:18, 28), can result in an experience of passing from "death unto life" (John 5:24). John concludes in his First Epistle: "This is the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20 cf. 1:2). Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, recognized that the subject here (and in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth, thy Word (Logos) is truth) is Jesus Christ,⁴⁸ who, as the great I Am, is the Word, the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Light.

This discovery will bring joy and happiness to all who believe in and obey Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world (Jn 14:21; 1 Jn 4:14). May every reader, especially *Jehovah's Witnesses*, experience the many blessings which come from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Kenneth R. Guindon

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. 4:4.

⁴⁸ *De Trinitate*, L.I.C. vi; 9; cf. also: Claudio G. Morino, *Verbum Dei Semen*, (Paris: Editions Pierre Téqui, 1986), vol. 2, p. 126, also ft. 256; St. Augustin, *L'évangile commenté par les Pères*, éditions ouvrières, Paris: 1966, pp. 325-326.

Appendix A

The Use of the Greek Article and Predicate Nouns in Greek

The use of the article must be understood from the viewpoint of the original language and only becomes a problem in translation. One sees this in languages such as Latin, Spanish and French.

Curtis Vaughan and Virtus Gideon, in, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* quoting H. A. A. Kennedy, “Recent Research in the Language of the New Testament” in *Expository Times*, Vol. XII (1901), p. 343, explain this:

“The Greek article has been called “one of the most delicate problems in New Testament exegesis,” and undoubtedly its true significance has often been missed both by translators and exegetes. It does more than simply make a word or an idea definite. Some words are definite enough without it (e.g., ἥλιος, sun)”

And under the subtitle “Note on the Nonuse of the Article,” Vaughan and Gideon conclude:

“It is important for the student to remember that the Greek may omit the article in some instances where the English requires that the definite article be used. Conversely, the Greek occasionally employs the article where English usage will not permit it. *Sensitivity to both Greek and English idiom is needed.*”

“Omission of the article, especially with words which might be expected to use it, has a characterizing effect on the construction. An example is John 1:1, Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. Had the article been used with Θεός, the suggestion would have been that the Word is identical with the entire essence of the Deity. As it actually stands, Θεός, (without the article) is the predicate, and it is the nature and attributes of Deity that are ascribed to the Word. That is to say, it is the nature of the Word, not the identity of his Person, to which attention is called by the absence of the article.”

Curtis Vaughan and Virtus E. Gideon, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), pp. 80, 84-85. (emphasis added).

Appendix B

Several quotes from early Christian Writers

From St. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* (ante AD 200).

[1, 7, 1] The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning—for He was in God—and of our well-being. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things. It is by Him that we are taught to live well and then are sent along to life eternal. ...[3] He is the New Song, the manifestation which has now been made among us, of the Word which existed in the beginning and before the beginning. The Savior, who existed before, has only lately appeared. He that has appeared is in Him that is; for the Word that was with God, the Word by whom all things were made, has appeared as our Teacher; and He, who bestowed life upon us in the beginning, when, as our Creator, He formed us, now that He has appeared as our Teacher, has taught us to live well so that, afterwards, as God, He might furnish us abundantly with eternal life.

The Instructor of Children (ante AD 202).

[1, 8, 62, 3] Nothing exists except that which God causes to be. There is nothing, therefore, which is hated by God; [4] nor is there anything hated by the Word. Both are one, both are God; for he says: “In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God.”

(William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1970), Vol. 1, pp. 176, 179.

From St. Basil the Great:

Things subject to birth and corruption are described as prior to one another; are we therefore to compare God the Father as superior to God the Son, who exists before the ages? The supreme eminence of the Father is inconceivable; thought and reflection are utterly unable to penetrate the begetting of the Lord. By means of two words St. John has admirably contained the concept within tangible boundaries: he says “In the *beginning was the Word*” (Jn 1:1). Thought cannot reach beyond *was*, or the imagination *beginning*. No matter how far your thoughts travel backward, you cannot get beyond *was*. No matter how hard you strain to see what is beyond the Son, you will find it impossible to pass outside the confines of the *beginning*. Therefore, true religion teaches us to think of the son with the Father.

If we count, we do not add, increasing from one to many. We do not say, “one, two, three,” or “first, second, and third.” God says, “I am the first and I am the last” (Is 44:6). We have never to this present day heard of a second God. We worship God from God, confessing the uniqueness of the persons, while maintaining the unity of the Monarchy.

St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, David Anderson, trans. (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), paragraph 14, pp. 29-30; p. 72).

Appendix C

Brief Explanation and History of Arianism

(From the Catholic Encyclopedia, copyright © 1913 by the Encyclopedia Press, Inc. Electronic version copyright © 1996 by New Advent, Inc. The following text has been rearranged and edited for our purposes.) The entire article is on the Catholic Internet site: [New Advent](#).

History

First among the doctrinal disputes which troubled Christians after Constantine had recognized the Church in A.D. 313, and the parent of many more during some three centuries, Arianism occupies a large place in ecclesiastical history. It is not a modern form of unbelief, and therefore will appear strange in modern eyes. But we shall better grasp its meaning if we term it an Eastern attempt to rationalize the creed by stripping it of mystery so far as the relation of Christ to God was concerned. In the New Testament and in Church teaching Jesus of Nazareth appears as the Son of God. This name He took to Himself (Matt., xi, 27; John, x, 36), while the Fourth Gospel declares Him to be the Word (*Logos*), Who in the beginning was with God and was God, by Whom all things were made.

A similar doctrine is laid down by St. Paul, in his undoubtedly genuine Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. It is reiterated in the Letters of Ignatius, and accounts for Pliny's observation that Christians in their assemblies chanted a hymn to Christ as God. But the question how the Son was related to the Father (Himself acknowledged on all hands to be the one Supreme Deity), gave rise, between the years A. D. 60 and 200, to a number of Theosophic systems, called generally Gnosticism, and having for their authors Basilides, Valentinus, Tatian, and other Greek speculators.

Catholics had always maintained that Christ was truly the Son, and truly God. They worshipped Him with divine honours; they would never consent to separate Him, in idea or reality, from the Father, Whose Word, Reason, Mind, He was, and in Whose Heart He abode from eternity. But the technical terms of doctrine were not fully defined; and even in Greek words like essence (*ousia*), substance (*hypostasis*), nature (*physis*), person (*hyposopon*) bore a variety of meanings drawn from the pre-Christian sects of philosophers, which could not but entail misunderstandings until they were cleared up.

The adaptation of a vocabulary employed by Plato and Aristotle to Christian truth was a matter of time; it could not be done in a day; and when accomplished for the Greek it had to be undertaken for the Latin, which did not lend itself readily to necessary yet subtle distinctions. That disputes should spring up even among the orthodox who all held one faith, was inevitable. And of these wranglings the rationalist would take advantage in order to substitute for the ancient creed his own inventions. The drift of all he advanced was this: to deny that in any true sense God could have a Son; as Mohammed tersely said afterwards, "God neither begets, nor is He begotten" (Koran, cxii). We have learned to call that denial Unitarianism.

It was the ultimate scope of Arian opposition to what Christians had always believed. But the Arian, though he did not come straight down from the Gnostic, pursued a line of argument and taught a view which the speculations of the Gnostic had made familiar. He described the Son as a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures; as Himself made out of nothing, yet as making all things else; as existing before the worlds of the ages; and as arrayed in all divine perfections except the one which was their stay and foundation.

Such is the genuine doctrine of Arius. Using Greek terms, it denies that the Son is of one essence, nature, or substance with God; He is not consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father, and therefore not like Him, or equal in dignity, or co-eternal, or within the real sphere of Deity.

Arius

Arius, a Libyan by descent, brought up at Antioch and a school-fellow of Eusebius, afterwards Bishop of Nicomedia, took part (306) in the obscure Meletian schism, was made presbyter of the church called "Baucalis," at Alexandria, and opposed the Sabellians, themselves committed to a view of the Trinity which denied all real distinctions in the Supreme. Epiphanius describes the heresiarch as tall, grave, and winning; no aspersion on his moral character has been sustained; but there is some possibility of personal differences having led to his quarrel with the patriarch Alexander whom, in public synod, he accused of teaching that the Son was identical with the Father (319). The actual circumstances of this dispute are obscure; but Alexander condemned Arius in a great assembly, and the latter found a refuge with Eusebius, the Church historian, at Caesarea. Political or party motives embittered the strife. Many bishops of Asia Minor and Syria took up the

defense of their “fellow-Lucianist,” as Arius did not hesitate to call himself. Synods in Palestine and Bithynia were opposed to synods in Egypt.

During several years the argument raged; but when, by his defeat of Licinius (324), Constantine became master of the Roman world, he determined on restoring ecclesiastical order in the East, as already in the West he had undertaken to put down the Donatists at the Council of Arles. Arius, in a letter to the Nicomedian prelate, had boldly rejected the Catholic faith. But Constantine, tutored by this worldly-minded man, sent from Nicomedia to Alexander a famous letter, in which he treated the controversy as an idle dispute about words and enlarged on the blessings of peace. The emperor, we should call to mind, was only a catechumen, imperfectly acquainted with Greek, much more incompetent in theology, and yet ambitious to exercise over the Catholic Church a dominion resembling that which, as Pontifex Maximus, he wielded over the pagan worship.

The Council of Nicea

A council was, therefore, assembled in Nicaea, in Bithynia, which has ever been counted the first ecumenical, and which held its sittings from the middle of June, 325.

It is commonly said that Hosius of Cordova presided. The Pope, St. Silvester, was represented by his legates, and 318 Fathers attended, almost all from the East. Unfortunately, the acts of the Council are not preserved. The emperor, who was present, paid religious deference to a gathering which displayed the authority of Christian teaching in a manner so remarkable. From the first it was evident that Arius could not reckon upon a large number of patrons among the bishops. Alexander was accompanied by his youthful deacon, the ever-memorable Athanasius who engaged in discussion with the heresiarch himself, and from that moment became the leader of the Catholics during well-nigh fifty years.

A creed was drawn up on behalf of the Arian party by Eusebius of Caesarea in which every term of honour and dignity, except the oneness of substance, was attributed to Our Lord. Clearly, then, no other test save the *Homoousion* would prove a match for the subtle ambiguities of language that, then as always, were eagerly adopted by dissidents from the mind of the Church. A formula had been discovered which would serve as a test, though not simply to be found in Scripture, yet summing up the doctrine of St. John,

St. Paul, and Christ Himself, "I and the Father are one". Heresy, as St. Ambrose remarks, had furnished from its own scabbard a weapon to cut off its head. The "consubstantial" was accepted, only thirteen bishops dissenting, and these were speedily reduced to seven. Hosius drew out the conciliar statements, to which anathemas were subjoined against those who should affirm that the Son once did not exist, or that before He was begotten He was not, or that He was made out of nothing, or that He was of a different substance or essence from the Father, or was created or changeable. Every bishop made this declaration except six, of whom four at length gave way. Eusebius of Nicomedia withdrew his opposition to the Nicene term, but would not sign the condemnation of Arius. By the emperor, who considered heresy as rebellion, the alternative proposed was subscription or banishment; and, on political grounds, the Bishop of Nicomedia was exiled not long after the council, involving Arius in his ruin. The heresiarch and his followers underwent their sentence in Illyria. But these incidents, which might seem to close the chapter, proved a beginning of strife, and led on to the most complicated proceedings of which we read in the fourth century.

While the plain Arian creed was defended by few, those political prelates who sided with Eusebius carried on a double warfare against the term "consubstantial", and its champion, Athanasius. This greatest of the Eastern Fathers had succeeded Alexander in the Egyptian patriarchate (326). He was not more than thirty years of age; but his published writings, antecedent to the Council, display, in thought and precision, a mastery of the issues involved which no Catholic teacher could surpass. His unblemished life, considerate temper, and loyalty to his friends made him by no means easy to attack. But the wiles of Eusebius, who in 328 recovered Constantine's favour, were seconded by Asiatic intrigues, and a period of Arian reaction set in. Eustathius of Antioch was deposed on a charge of Sabellianism (331), and the Emperor sent his command that Athanasius should receive Arius back into communion. The saint firmly declined.

In 325 the heresiarch was absolved by two councils, at Tyre and Jerusalem, the former of which deposed Athanasius on false and shameful grounds of personal misconduct. He was banished to Trier, and his sojourn of eighteen months in those parts cemented Alexandria more closely to Rome and the Catholic West. Meanwhile, Constantia, the Emperor's sister, had recommended Arius, whom she thought an injured man, to Constantine's leniency. Her dying words affected him, and he recalled the Lybian, extracted from him a solemn adhesion to the Nicene faith, and ordered Alexander, Bishop of the Imperial City, to give him Communion in his own church (336). Arius openly triumphed; but as he went about in parade, the evening before this event was to take place, he expired from a sudden disorder, which Catholics could not help regarding as a judgment of heaven, due to the bishop's prayers.

WILLIAM BARRY

Transcribed by Anthony A. Killeen (A.M.D.G.)

Appendix D

John 1:1 in the latest publications of Jehovah's Witnesses

Thus the Scriptures identify the Word (Jesus in his prehuman existence) as God's first creation, his first-born Son.

That Jehovah was truly the Father or Life-Giver to this firstborn Son and, hence that this Son was actually a creature of God is evident from Jesus' own statements. (p. 52).

...throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures, translators are obliged to use the indefinite article or not according to their understanding of the meaning of the text. The Hebrew Scriptures are consistently clear in showing that there is but one Almighty God, the Creator of all things and the Most High, whose name is Jehovah. (Ge 17:1; Isa 45:18; Ps 83:18). (p. 54).

From *Insight on the Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1988), Volume 2, article "Jesus Christ," pp. 52-72.

Careful translators recognize that the articular construction of the noun points to an identity, a personality, whereas a singular anarthrous predicate noun preceding the verb points to a quality about someone. Therefore, John's statement that the Word or Logos was "a god" or "divine" or "godlike" does not mean that he was the God with whom he was. It merely expresses a certain quality about the Word, or Logos, but it does not identify him as one and the same as God himself.

In the Greek text there are many cases of a singular anarthrous predicate noun preceding the verb, such as in: Mr 6:49; 11:32; Joh 4:19; 6:70; 8:44; 9:17; 10:1, 13, 33; 12:6. In these places translators insert the indefinite article "a" before the predicate noun in order to bring out the quality or characteristic of the subject. Since the indefinite article is inserted before the predicate noun in such texts, with equal justification the indefinite article "a" is inserted before the anarthrous θεός in the predicate of John 1:1 to make it read "a god." The Sacred Scriptures confirm the correctness of this rendering.

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, With References
(Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1984), page 1579.

Brief Comments on the References Cited by the NWT

Mark 6:49; 11:32; 4:19; Jn 9:17; 10:13; 33; 12:6 - *hoti*.

Jn 6:70, *eks humon heis diabolos estin* - *follows a prepositional phrase*.

Jn 8:44, That one a murderer was. (This one speaks of the devil's nature and identity; we have no objection to translating it as "he was a murderer" [KJV]).

Jn 10:1, That one a thief is.

What should one think of these statements? Simply this: fundamentally, the idea expressed in everyone of these references is that they point either to the identity or to the work of an individual. Who or what is this person? The answer is easily given in *English* as: a prophet, a woman, a Greek. The Greek doesn't require an article here. [Neither does French if one were to say: *Il est médecin*, meaning, He is a doctor. Notice there is no article before doctor in French.] But to translate "the Word was a god" is tantamount to teaching two gods, which is unscriptural. Neither Greek nor English grammar necessitates our adding the indefinite article before *theos*. The Greek text says "God was the Word" clearly identifying or pointing to his nature, telling us who or what he is. He is not the same person as the Father, but he is of the same essence as God the Father.

Interestingly, the French edition of *The New World Translation* admits this. It renders John 1:1c *La Parole était dieu*, (without an indefinite article as in the example above. The only difference with the orthodox translation is NWT's use of a lower case "d" for God (Dieu) *theos*. One would not hear the difference but would learn of it only when reading the text.

We should help the Witnesses see that their appeal to translations such as Moffatt's and Goodspeed's New Testaments does not serve their purpose since *divine* and *a god* are two different things. As we have seen, John 1:1 is satisfactorily paraphrased: as "the nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God," (*Barclay*), or, "the Word was with God and shared his nature," (*The Translator's New Testament*). As Harner suggested: "the Word had the same nature as God." We could readily opt for: *what God was, the Word was*. And this is without a doubt what the apostle John was writing to the Church.

The Watchtower Society should look at and discuss Mark 2:28 which IS AN EXACT PARALLEL to John 1:1. Why haven't they done so? (As far as I know.) Why didn't they take a look at John 3:29? "He that has the bride is the bridegroom" (NWT). In Greek the phrase we are examining is: *numphios estin*. There is no definite article before *numphios*, yet NWT inserted it. It is clear that this a question of identity (and needless to say, of good English). In other words: the bridegroom is the one who has the bride. What could be clearer than this?

+++

K.R.G.