

John 1:1

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John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." which identifies the Word as Jesus.
This verse clearly teaches that the Word (Jesus) is God.

Since this verse contradicts the Jehovah's Witness belief that Jesus is not God, they mistranslated John 1:1 in their *New World Translation*. They teach that the correct translation should be "the Word was a god" rather than "'the Word was God." According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the word "God" doesn't have an article in front of it, so it should not be capitalized.

This shouldn't surprise us. The Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation* has deliberately mistranslated all verses pertaining to the deity of Christ, including John 1:1, 8:58, 10:33, 14:9, Acts 20:28, Rom. 9:5, Phil. 2:5-6, Col. 1:16, 2:9, Titus 2:13, and Heb. 1:8.

Every Bible translation and version, except for the *New World Translation*, agrees that the passage is correctly translated "the Word was God." Here is why it should be translated "God."

1. The word "God" appears 282 times in the Greek without the article (anarthrous) in the New Testament. To be consistent with their "a god" translation, the *New World Translation* (NWT) should translate all anarthrous verses "a god." But they didn't do this. Instead, the NWT translates it "God" **266 times** and god, a god, gods, and godly **only 16 times**. (*The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament*, Robert H. Countess, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1982, pp. 54-55). This proves the NWT deliberately changed John 1:1 to fit their theology. The verse is correctly translated, "The Word was God."

2. The *New World Translation* overlooks Colwell's rule in Greek which says, "A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb." Simply stated, the word "God" doesn't need an article in John 1:1 because in Greek it precedes the verb.

3. The *New World Translation* capitalizes "God" in John 1:6, 12, 13, and verse 18 (twice), yet all are without the articles. This proves that the NWT translation committee deliberately changed John 1:1 to "a god" because it didn't agree with their preconceived theology. To this day, the names of the translators of the NWT remain a secret.

Here is more information on the John 1:1 translation:

"...and the Word was a god."

A Christian Apologetic Answers

the Jehovah's Witnesses

by David Smart

QUESTION: "Doesn't the lack of the Greek article before theos of John 1:1 mean that it must be translated as "a god"?"

John 1:1 -- [*en arche en ho logos*] [*kai ho logos en pros ho theos*] [*kai theos en ho logos*]
John 1:1 -- [*In the beginning was the Word*] [*and the Word was with God*] [*and the Word was God*]

The first thing that must be realized and understood is that the Greek and English languages construct their sentences very differently, and I am not talking about the fact that Greek sentences lack punctuation. In a typical English sentence, the *subject* is followed by the *predicate*. However, in a Greek sentence this structure is not necessarily followed. Sometimes the subject, or its main verb, is found further down the sentence. Quite opposed to English sentence construction, the fact that one Greek word precedes a following word does not necessarily have any significance.

The third clause of John 1:1 (*theos en ho logos*) is known as a *preverbal anarthrous predicate nominative* construction:

1. we have a noun, which is the subject of the clause - *logos*
2. we have an equating copulative verb - *en*
3. and we have a nominative noun, which is the predicate - *theos*.

As I said previously, in Greek construction sometimes the subject, or its main verb, is found further down the sentence. In the English language we put the subject first and the predicate nominative later. Not always so in the Greek language. Greek and English grammatical construction is not the same.

The first noun in this clause is *not* the subject, as it would be in typical English usage. All right, well then how is it that we know *logos* is the subject? *Because the subject is identified by the existence of an article in front of it* (Greek: *ho*). Whichever noun has the article, it is the subject. In this case (*theos en ho logos*) *logos* is the subject because the article comes before it. This is why we translate it as "the Word was God" rather than "God was the Word."

"The subject is made plain by the article (*ho logos*) and the predicate without it (*theos*) just as in John 4:24 *pneuma ho theos* can only mean 'God is spirit,' not 'spirit is God'" (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Stay with me now, because there is another extremely important point to be made concerning this text: *if both of the nouns in a predicate nominative construction have the article, or if both lack the article, the two nouns become interchangeable*.

A big fuss is made especially by the Jehovah's Witnesses that the word *theos* in the last clause of John 1:1 is "anarthrous" (i.e. without the article). For this reason, they assure us, it should be translated as "a god." This completely misses the point as to why *theos* does not have the article. If there had have been an article in front of *theos*, then John would have been telling us that "God was the Word" as well as "the Word was God." You see? This is *why* there is no article in front of *theos*. John was quite intentionally avoiding "modalism" (or sometimes "Sabellianism").

There is no article in front of theos because John did not think or teach that Jesus Christ and the Father were both the same person. For very sound and rational reasons this teaching was considered heretical centuries ago, and not even Jehovah's Witnesses teach modalism.

"The structure of the third clause in verse 1, *theos en ho logos*, demands the translation 'The Word was God.' Since *logos* has the article preceding it, it is marked out as the subject. The fact that *theos* is the first word after the conjunction *kai* shows that the main emphasis of the clause lies on it. Had *theos* as well as *logos* been preceded by the article the meaning would have been that the Word was completely identical with God, which is impossible if the Word was also 'with God.' . . . The NEB paraphrase '*what God was, the Word was*' brings out the meaning of the clause as successfully as a paraphrase can" (Bruce, *The Gospel of John*).

"And the Word was God (*kai theos en ho logos*). By exact and careful language John denied Sabellianism by not saying *ho theos en ho logos*. That would mean that all of God was expressed in *ho logos* and the terms would be interchangeable, each having the article" (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

But how does John wish us to take the word *theos* in the last clause? Does he want us to understand it as *indefinite*, so that no particular "god" is in mind? Or, in correct Greek translation, does the preverbal position of *theos* (adding emphasis), and coupled with the lack of the article, indicate that John is describing the nature of the Word, saying that the Word is God?

It can be easily demonstrated that the anarthrous *theos* is quite in fact qualitative, not indefinite. If the anarthrous *theos* is to be taken as indefinite, and hence translated into English with an indefinite article ("a god"), then we must do the same to the other 282 times that *theos* appears without the article. In fact,

there are four more instances in chapter 1 of John alone where *theos* appears anarthrously, and yet the Jehovah's Witnesses inconsistently translate *only* verse 1 as indefinite, while in the remaining four instances in the first chapter where *theos* appears anarthrously they don't translate them as "a god."

In 2 Corinthians 5:19 the word *theos* appears anarthrously, but the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation* (NWT) does not translate it as "*For a god was in Christ...*" Nor do they translate John 1:6 as indefinite either ("*There was a man sent from a god, whose name was John*"). John 1:12 would not mean the same if they translated it as indefinite ("*...to them gave the power to become the sons of a god...*"). Same with verse 13 ("*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of a god*") and verse 18 ("*No man hath seen a god at any time...*").

Even though in every one of these we see *theos* appearing without the article, Jehovah's Witnesses do not translate them in the indefinite as "a god." They only do it to the third clause of verse 1. Rather inconsistent, this author notes, not to mention a clear demonstration that the authors of the NWT had no grasp of the Greek language.

"The Word is distinguishable from God and yet *theos en ho logos*, the Word was God, of Divine nature; not "a god," which to a Jewish ear would have been abominable; nor yet identical with all that can be called God (modalism), for then the article would have been inserted..." (Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*).

"The uses of the Greek article, the functions of Greek prepositions, and the fine distinctions between Greek tenses are confidently expounded in public at times by men who find considerable difficulty in using these parts of speech in their native tongue" (Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*).

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