WHY DO JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES USE THE “NEW WORLD TRANSLATION”?  
And Should We???

Jehovah’s Witnesses have an unusual Bible (the *New World Translation*) containing several changes to the original text to support their false belief that Jesus Christ is not God. Below are just a few important examples of faulty translation work.
PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION

The New World Translation (NWT) is "a translation of the Holy Scriptures made directly from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into modern day English by a committee of anointed witnesses of Jehovah" (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 276). The NWT is the anonymous work of the “New World Bible Translation Committee.” Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the anonymity is in place so that the credit for the work will go to God. Of course this has the added benefit of keeping the translators from any accountability for their errors and prevents real scholars from checking their academic credentials.

Several differences between the NWT and legitimate translations include the following: The NWT has the Greek term word "staurós" ("cross") as "torture stake". It leaves out the words “sheol,” “hades,” ”gehenna,” and "tartarus", where other translations translate some, or all, of these as "hell" because Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in hell. The NWT uses "presence" as for the Greek “parousia” instead of “coming” because Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Christ has returned in the early 1900’s. Worse, there is a consistent effort to remove any references to Jesus Christ as being God. None of these changes arise out of any necessity in the Greek text, rather they simply reflect the Watchtower’s aberrant theology.

The Divine Name

Oddly, one of these changes is, they say, to "restore" the divine name to the Scriptures. By this they mean that God's actual name (not just His "title") has been faithfully included in the NWT rather than substituting it with "LORD" or "GOD". Now, this is not illegitimate in the Old Testament where most translations do this very thing - in fact they usually tell you right up front. For example, the NASB says in its introduction:

"the most common name for the deity is God, a translation of the original Elohim. One of the titles for God is Lord, a translation of Adonai. There is yet another name for which is particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 42:8). This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name. Therefore, it has been consistently translated LORD. The only exception to this translation of YHWH is when it occurs in immediate proximity to the word Lord, that is, Adonai. In that case it is regularly translated GOD in order to avoid confusion.

But this is not what the Jehovah's Witnesses will tell you. They think it's a conspiracy to fool people into believing in the Trinity. They say that since there can be more than one "lord" or "god" it is easy for Trinitarians to fool people into thinking Jesus (who is clearly referred to as Lord and God - even both at once in Jn. 20:28!) is Jehovah. So, to alleviate confusion the creators of the NWT “put Jehovah back in the Bible.” There are about 7,000 times this has occurred and that many of these are in the New Testament. Is this a legitimate practice?

“Yahweh” or “Jehovah”?

First some background on the divine name. In Hebrew the divine name is written in what is known as the tetragramatton YHWH. Hebrew did not originally have vowels and the Jews refused to speak God's name for fear of accidental blasphemy so we simply do not know how it was pronounced. "Yahweh" (using YHWH plus the vowels for the Hebrew word for "Lord" - Adonai) is the most common in scholarly circles. "Jehovah" is a 16th century latinized version of the name. The NASB introduction above follows the quoted entry with these words: "It is known that for many years YHWH has been transliterated as Yahweh, however no complete certainty attaches to this pronunciation." The problem is that there is no letter for "J" in Hebrew! Thus, "Jehovah" cannot be the correct transliteration.

According to the standard Hebrew lexicon, the Brown- Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: "The pronunciation Jehovah was unknown until 1520, when it was introduced by Galatinus; but it was contested by Le Mercier, J. Drusius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety." This does not make it wrong to pronounce the name ‘Jehovah’ any more than it is to say ‘Jesus’ instead of ‘Yeshua’ (or ‘Joshua’), but for all their talk of how important it is to know the divine name, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have chosen the traditional (a word they detest) form of the divine name rather than one that at least bears biblical possibility.
"Lord" or "Jehovah"?

Now, the tetragramaton YHWH does not appear in the Greek text of the New Testament. So, the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that "Jehovah" was substituted for "Lord" (Greek: "kurios") or, less often, "God" (Greek: "theos"). So the first thing to realize is that when you see "Jehovah" in the NWT New Testament, the Greek behind the term is usually "Kurios" - the Greek word for "Lord." The Jehovah's Witnesses may try to justify the mistranslations by stating that it is only when the New Testament quotes the Old Testament that this was done:

NWT Translator's explanation about translating Kurios ("Lord") as "Jehovah"
- The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures pg. 18.

But this is also false. The original NWT from 1950 included a guide to exactly where "Jehovah" had been "restored" to the text. However, as their own Bible references indicate, in the majority of cases "Jehovah" appears even though it is not an Old Testament quote. That these "translation" decisions were made according to theological bias and not because of accurate handling of the text is seen when one considers that the Greek term "Kurios" occurs over 40 times in 1-2 Thessalonians alone, yet is only replaced with "Jehovah" in only 6 instances!

Instances of "kurios" highlighted in 1-2 Thessalonians

What the Watchtower has done is to misrepresent the original text to suit their own theology. In their desperation to get the deity of Christ out of the Bible they have done the very thing they claim to have avoided in their production of the NWT! As will be shown below, this is not the only time the Watchtower mistranslates the Bible to make it look like Jesus is not the true God!
The New World Translation of John 1:1

"the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."
- John 1:1 (NWT)

"God" or "a god"?

At issue here is the Watchtower Society's New World Translation (NWT) of the New Testament, particularly their treatment of John 1:1. While modern translations have "the Word was God," the Watchtower sees fit to translate "theos" as "a god," thus describing Jesus (the Word) as "godlike" rather than God Himself as the text plainly states. [Note: I am using English transliteration of Greek letters here so that non-Greek readers can read them.] The Jehovah's Witnesses' argument for translating "theos" (God) as "a god" centers on the use of the definite article (Greek "ton" or "the" in English) with the first occurrence of God in the verse and its absence in the second. From this they assert that "ton theon" must refer to the God (Jehovah), while "theos" by itself is only a description of the godlike characteristics of the Word. Below is presented the NWT's own Interlinear showing the Greek text (highlighted in orange) in question. Two points will show that this is not a matter of correct translation but of reading one's preconceived theology into the text rather than letting it speak for itself:

1. There is no indefinite article in Greek (in English - "a" or "an"). So any use of an indefinite article in the English translation must be added in by the translator. This is grammatically acceptable in English, so long as it does not change the meaning of the text.

2. There are over 20 uses of the definite article in Greek - some have equivalent usage in English (such as identifying one particular among many, i.e. "the man" rather than just any "man"). However, some usages do not have an English equivalent. Therefore the absence of a definite article may or may not have anything to do with what that absence would mean in English.

There is a perfectly good explanation for why "theos" has no definite article in this passage that does not result in the Watchtower's conclusion. There are three general rules we need to understand to see why:

1. In Greek, word order does not determine word usage like it does in English. We are used to the Subject - Verb - Predicate style sentence and we learn to recognize these parts of speech by their position in the sentence. Thus, "Harry called the dog." is not equivalent to, "The dog called Harry." But in Greek, a word's function is determined by the case ending found attached to the word's root. In this verse, we see two case endings for the root "theo" . . . one is "s" (theos), the other is "n" (theon). The "s" ending normally identifies a noun as being the subject of a sentence, while the "n" ending identifies a noun as the direct object.

2. When a noun is functioning as a predicate nominative (in English a noun that follows a "being" verb such as "is") its case ending must match the noun's case that it modifies so that the translator will know which noun it is describing. Therefore, "theo" must take the "s" ending because it is modifying "logos" (the subject, as "logo" has the "s" ending). Therefore the sentence transliterates to: "kai theos en ho logos" See the problem here? Is "theos" the subject or is "logos"? Both have the "s" ending. The answer is found in the next rule.

3. In cases where two nouns appear, and both take the same case endings, the author will often add the definite article to the word that is the subject in order to avoid confusion. John put the definite article on "logos" (the Word) instead of "theos." So "logos" is the subject, and "theos" is the predicate nominative. In English we would read this verse as: "and the Word was God" (instead of "and God was the word").

The Watchtower's Dishonesty and Inconsistency

One of the most revealing proofs of the Watchtower's bias is their inconsistent translation technique. Just three verses down they translate another case of "theos" without the indefinite article as "God". (Note that case endings such as "ou", "on", or "os" have to do with case usage in the sentence not whether or not "God" should be capitalized).
And this is not the only example of translating other cases of "theos" without the indefinite article as "God." In Jn. 1:18 they translate the same term as both "God" and "god" in the very same sentence (see below).
The Watchtower, therefore, has no hard textual grounds for their translation - only their own theological bias. While Watchtower defenders might succeed in showing that John 1:1 can be translated as they have done, they cannot show that it is the proper translation nor can they explain the fact that they do not translate the exact same Greek phrases in the very same book in like manner. It is only their pre-conceived heretical belief that forces them to inconsistently translate the Greek text into their own particular English version thus allowing their error to gain some semblance of legitimacy to those ignorant of the facts.

The New World Translation of Colossians 1

"By means of him all [other] things were created"
- Colossians 1:16 (NWT)

"All things" or "All [other] things"?

In the first chapter of Colossians Paul glorifies Christ by telling of His creative activity, thus showing that Jesus is God incarnate. This Biblical teaching flies in the face of Watchtower theology which teaches that Christ was Jehovah’s first creation - and thus not God. Not able to abide the text in question, the Watchtower has seen fit to add the word "other" into this section not once, but 5 times (1:16-20). They do this without warrant, as their own interlinear (shown below) demonstrates. Is there any good reason to think that this addition is correct?

The Watchtower’s attempt to escape the obvious implication of this passage is a plain examples of reading into the text rather than from the text. To purposefully add a word that changes the meaning of a Biblical text is so obviously wrong it is difficult to imagine how the Watchtower could defend itself, and their explanation shows that they recognize this. In Reasoning from the Scriptures, the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ apologetic handbook, they essentially point to "everything else the Bible says regarding the Son" for their justification. This is a perfect example of circular reasoning. They remove or distort
the numerous passages that clearly show Jesus to be God and then point to those passages and say, "See? He's not God." Amazingly in their booklet titled *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, the Watchtower does not even treat this verse under the section dealing with Trinitarian proof-texts and astonishingly, they even use Col. 3:15 as their own proof text that Jesus is not God! (pg. 26, see pp. 23-28).

"In Him" or "By Means of Him"?

An additional issue is important here. Paul clearly states that all of creation was made in Christ ("en auto" - literally "in Him"). Everywhere else in this passage "en" is translated "in". Yet once again this does not fit with Watchtower theology so they change it when it refers to Christ's role in creation. Suddenly "in" becomes "by means of" . . . why? Because the proper translation shows that Christ Himself was the creator. Watchtower theology tries to lessen the impact of verses like this by asserting that God merely created "through" or "by means of" Christ. For example, in John 1:3 "panta" is correctly translated. Why? Because the preposition "dia" is used with reference the Christ (which the Watchtower thinks saves their position).

Poor translation and grasp of creation theology notwithstanding, there is still a huge problem for the Watchtower. Yahweh specifically states in Isaiah 44:24 that He was all alone at creation. Thus, if Christ was there at creation then he must be Yahweh. (Jehovah's Witnesses might quote Job 38 where "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" at God's creation, but this gets them nowhere unless angels are not part of creation. Clearly creation was a process and they were created prior to the earth. This is why the NWT must change Colossians, for it clearly states that Christ created the angels too - thus He was present prior to the first moment of creation and was not part of it).

The Watchtower's Dishonesty and Inconsistency

That "other" does not appear in the original document is without question. The phrase "ektisthe ta panta" literally translates: "it was created the all" or to put it into proper English grammatical format: "all things were created." This not only does justice to the original text, but allows the clear message of Christ's deity to shine forth (Colossians was written as an attempt to stop the very heresy the Watchtower espouses - see vss. 1:15, 17, 18, 19, 2:9, 10, etc. which clearly point to Christ's deity).
The best the Watchtower can do is point to instances in the NT where "panta" is translated into English along with the word "other." They may cite Luke 13:2 which reads, "all other Galileans." It is interesting to note first that in the NWT the word "other" is inserted in this verse without brackets meaning that it is not considered to be an added word, but only one of clarification. This is acceptable here of course, because the word "other" here does not effect the meaning of the sentence at all - its presence or absence only makes the sentence (in English) more or less clear grammatically. This is not the case with Colossians chapter 1. The insertion of the word "other" 5 times in this passage completely changes the meaning of the text.

It is also noteworthy that the first editions of the NWT did not enclose the word "other" in brackets in this Colossians passage. Their dishonesty was pointed out and they were forced to admit their insertion in the 1961 and later editions.

This has not stopped them from continuing the practice though! As can be seen from the words deliberate insertion without brackets in Philippians 2:9 (below) where "other" must be inserted to avoid Jesus' name being higher than all.
Another problem for the Watchtower arises from a verse the editors missed while inserting terms needed to make their interpretation look more plausible. In Revelation 5:13 we are told that every ("pan") creature in heaven and on earth bowed to Christ (here pictured as the Lamb of God). If Christ is a creature then how could every creature bow to Him? (notice also that the same glory given to God the Father is given to Christ - although God will share His glory with no other! [Isa. 42:8]).

It is only the Watchtower’s pre-conceived heretical beliefs that force them to dishonestly and inconsistently translate the Greek text into their own particular English version (otherwise why would they need it?). This attempt is not only illegitimate, but embarrassingly obvious to anyone with an ounce of sense and understanding of how languages work.
The New World Translation of Hebrews 1

The NWT makes several key changes to the text of chapter 1 of the book of Hebrews to support their heretical doctrines.

"Worship" or "Obeisance"?

The Greek term is from "proskuneo". Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (the authoritative source on Koine Greek as all scholars admit) gives this definition:

‘to kiss’ (used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks before a divinity or something holy.) to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully . . .

Their *Reasoning from the Scriptures* book gives the same basic quote and admits that the term can be used for worship toward God. So neither view can simply argue from the word itself. However, their view is still mistaken and there are some easy ways to show it - using their own materials no less.

If one looks up the verse in the Jehovah's Witnesses' own "Kingdom Interlinear" one can see the Greek and English together. In it, Hebrews 1:6 is translated "worship" (in the 1969 edition at least - sometimes they catch their "mistakes" and "fix" them later - they at least missed this one on their first pass!). Here is a scan of the text in case the later editions are changed:

![The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures pg. 965](image)

Second, even without the Greek it is easy to show that the Jehovah's Witnesses interpretation is false. Hebrews 1:6 is a quote of Ps. 97:7 (as their own NWT footnotes will show), so whatever the phrase means in Ps. 97:7 it also means in Heb. 1:6. Ps. 97 is talking about Jehovah (that's what it says). Oddly, the NWT's own footnote cross references Hebrews 1:6 here (it is letter "Y" in my copy). This shows, in fact, that Jesus is Jehovah! Yet another fun thing happens when we look at Heb. 1:6's footnotes in the NWT. They were clever enough not to reference the Psalm that it comes from - instead they reference Dt. 32:43 (where the same Greek term for "worship" is used in the LXX). But guess what? This is referring to Jehovah too (start reading from Dt. 32:36 and you will see this).

Christ's Throne

Another verse in Hebrews 1 that might sound odd to those familiar with standard translations is 1:8 in which Yahweh says to Christ, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." The NWT has "God is your throne forever and ever." This translation is possible (both "thronos" and "theos" could be substituted for the subject in Greek). The NWT version is quite doubtful, however. In Hebrews Christ the Son is being shown to be better than any competitor for worship. In chapter 1 Christ is being shown to be better than the angels. God being His throne sounds odd, but could be seen as God the Father being the Son's authority. But in what sense would this not also be said of the angels? This would not advance the thesis of the chapter. It would be like me saying that my brother is better than my sister because he is under my parent's authority. Well, so is my sister.
Christ's Creation

In verse 10 Jesus is said to be the one who laid the foundation of the earth. But this verse is a quote from Psalm 102:24-25 which says that God (Jehovah) laid the foundations of the earth! In yet another instance of Watchtower inconsistency they correctly translate "kurios" as "Lord" here instead of "Jehovah" (which they do only in cases where they believe it refers to God the Father). So from the NWT itself we can see that Christ is Lord ("Jehovah") and did what only God could (cf. Isa. 44)

Example of translating Kurios ("Lord") as "Jehovah" in Heb.12:6

(Below) Example of NOT translating Kurie ("Lord") as "Jehovah" in Heb.1:10 although it IS a quote from the O.T. (Ps. 102) addressing Jehovah.

Conclusion

The New World Translation is full of theologically-motivated false translations designed to make the heresy of the Jehovah’s Witnesses sound biblical. But if their arguments concerning the Bible, the trinity, and Jesus’ deity were sound, then why would they need their own special Bible to prove it? Truly biblical arguments are usually not going to get you very far and Jehovah’s Witnesses are not allowed to read non-Watchtower literature. But now you can show them these falsehoods from their own literature.

For more on the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watchtowers’ False Prophecies, False Gospel, and False Jesus, see:

- The Watchman Expositor (www.watchman.org)
- Watchers of the Watchtower (www.geocities.com/Heartland/2919)
- Watchtower Information Service (/www.watchtowerinformationservice.org)
- CARM (www.carm.org/witnesses.htm)
- Jehovah’s Witnesses Exposed (www.bible.ca/jw.htm)