

and co-author of the authoritative text *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*.³ Now, let's examine this scholarly support the Watchtower so proudly boast of.

(1) Citing Johannes Greber as an authority—It is true that Johannes Greber rendered the latter part of John 1:1 as “the Word was a god” (*The New Testament, 1937*).⁴ However, is Greber really a biblical scholar? By no means! In fact, Johannes Greber was an occultic spiritist who authored a book entitled *Communication with the Spirit World of God*. In this book, Greber claims that spirits helped him in his translation of the New Testament.⁵ Greber also reported seeing the translation come in “large illuminated letters and words passing before his eyes.”⁶

According to the April 1, 1983, issue of *The Watchtower* magazine, the Watchtower Society claims that it didn't discover Greber was a spiritist until the 1980 edition of his New Testament was published.⁷ The Society says that when it discovered this heinous fact, it immediately ceased citing Greber. This is a blatant fabrication and misrepresentation of the facts! In reality, the Watchtower knew as far back as 1956 that Johannes Greber was a spiritist.⁸ The February 15, 1956, issue of *The Watchtower* magazine contains nearly a full page on Greber and his spiritism.⁹ Yet, despite the knowledge that Greber was a spiritist, the Society continued to cite him as an authority in support of its translation of John 1:1 (see the 1961 edition of the *New World Translation*).

(2) Misquoting Philip B. Harner—This scholar was misquoted by the Watchtower Society in favor of the *New World Translation's* rendering of John 1:1. Not only does Harner's article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* not support the Watchtower's view, he emphatically argues against it!¹⁰ Harner states that had the Greek sentence of John 1:1 been constructed in a particular way (*ho logos en theos*), then it *could* be translated as “the Word was a god.” But John did not use that construction. Rather, he wrote the sentence in such a way (*theos en ho logos*) that it can *only* mean that the Word is as fully God as the other person called “God” (the Father) with whom He existed “in the beginning”—“the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God.”¹¹

(3) Misquoting Julius R. Mantey—Did this biblical scholar, author of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, really support the Watchtower translation of John 1:1? On the contrary, he utterly repudiated it! Dr. Mantey was personally interviewed by Dr. Walter Martin of the Christian Research Institute. In the interview, Martin asked Mantey about the Watchtower's translation of John 1:1, “the Word was *a god*.” Mantey responded, “The Jehovah's Witnesses have forgotten entirely what the order of the sentence indicates—that the ‘Logos’ [or Word] has the same substance, nature, or essence as the Father. To indicate that Jesus was just ‘a god,’ the Jehovah's Witnesses would have to use a completely different construction in the Greek.”¹² Dr. Martin then responded, “You once had a little difference of opinion

with the Watchtower about this and wrote them a letter. What was their response to your letter?” Dr. Mantey said, “I was disturbed because they had misquoted me in support of their translation. I called their attention to the fact that the whole body of the New Testament was against their view. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is glorified and magnified—yet here they were denigrating Him and making Him into a little god of a pagan concept.”

Noting that the Jehovah's Witnesses are notorious for quoting biblical scholars in support of their theology, Dr. Martin asked, “Do they quote these people in context?” Dr. Mantey said, “No. They use this device to fool people into thinking that scholars agree with them. Out of all the Greek professors, grammarians, and commentators they quoted, only one (a Unitarian) agreed that ‘the word was a god.’”

Dr. Mantey then spoke of the deceptive nature of the *New World Translation*: “I believe it's a terrible thing for a person to be deceived and go into eternity lost, *forever lost*, because somebody deliberately misled him by distorting the Scripture!...Ninety-nine percent of the scholars of the world who know Greek and who have helped translate the Bible are in disagreement with the Jehovah's Witnesses. People who are looking for the truth ought to know what the *majority* of the scholars really believe. They should not allow themselves to be misled by the Jehovah's Witnesses and end up in hell.”

Only One True God—John 17:3 reads in the *New World Translation*: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, *the only true God*, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” A good exercise with Jehovah's Witnesses is to ask them how many true Gods there are, and based on this verse they will say that Jehovah (the Father) is the one true God. Then point out to them that in their Bible John 1:1 says that Jesus is “a god.” Now ask them if they agree that Jesus is “a god.” The answer will be “yes.” Then ask whether Jesus is a *true* God or a *false* god. That presents a real dilemma for them. For if they say that Jesus is a false god, this contradicts their own Bible that says Jesus is “a god.” And if they say Jesus is a true God, then this, too, contradicts the Watchtower understanding of Scripture, for John 17:3 says there is *only one true God*—Jehovah.

By saying there is both an “Almighty God” (Jehovah) and a lesser “mighty god” (Jesus), the Jehovah's Witnesses are setting forth *polytheism* (the belief in more than one God), a doctrine that goes against the whole of Scripture. God's Word is crystal clear on this—there's only **one** true God—“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me” (*Deut 32:39*). “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” (*Isaiah 43:10*). “Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (*Isaiah 44:8*). “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me” (*Isaiah 45:5*).

Empty Arguments on John 1:1—The Jehovah's Witnesses note that in the Greek text there is a definite article “the” (Greek: *ho*) before the first occurrence of “God” (*ho*

theos—literally “the God”). However, there is *no* definite article (“the”) before the second occurrence of “God” in the Greek text (it simply reads *theos*—literally “God”).¹³ Their whole defense for their outlandish translation is right here: **(1)** Because the first *theos* has a definite article (“the”) before it, it should be translated “God” (Jehovah); and **(2)** because the second *theos* has no definite article before it, it must refer to a lesser deity who simply has godlike qualities, and should be translated “a god.”¹⁴ This is Watchtower reasoning at its best designed for the simple-minded.

(1) *The Watchtower* magazine claims that *ho theos* (“the God”) is never used of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.¹⁵ Any student of Scripture can easily see that's false! When Thomas exclaimed of Christ, “My Lord and my God” (*John 20:28*), it literally reads in the Greek, “The Lord of me and **THE GOD** [*ho theos*] of me.” Other examples of *ho theos* (“the God”) used of Christ include Matthew 1:23 and Hebrews 1:8. Clearly, the same words used to set forth the Father as God, are used to set forth the Son as God.

(2) If they claim that the Greek word for God *theos*, when it appears without the definite article (“the”), must be translated “a god,” then why do they render *theos* in John 1:6, 12, 13 & 18 as “God” (not “a god”) when the Greek word likewise appears *without* the definite article? In all, over 280 instances can be cited in the New Testament where *theos* appears without the definite article. The Watchtower translators rendered the vast majority of them as “God.” If their rule by which they translate “a god” in John 1:1 is followed, we would come up with some strange-reading verses indeed. The following have no definite article before *theos*; they would read this way—“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of *a god*” (*Matt 5:9*). “There was a man sent from *a god*, whose name was John” (*John 1:6*). “No man hath seen *a god* at any time” (*John 1:18*). These sound rather ridiculous, don't they? A few other sample passages are listed here where the definite article is not used with *theos*. See if the Jehovah's Witnesses rule rendering “a god” makes any sense (*Matt 6:24; Luke 1:35,78; 2:40; John 3:2,21; 9:16,33; Rom 1:7,17,18*).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREAT “I AM”

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” —John 8:58

The *New World Translation* corrupts this verse by saying, “Before Abraham came into existence, *I have been*.” The Jehovah's Witnesses don't mind you thinking that Jesus was *preexistent* (“I have been”), but they don't want you to think that Jesus was *eternally preexistent* (“I AM”). “I AM” is God's Name. “God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM...Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (*Exod 3:14*). This name conveys the idea of God as eternally self-existent. Jehovah never came into being at a specific point in time. He's always existed. He was never born. He will never die. He doesn't grow older. He's beyond the realm of time. To know Jehovah is to know The Eternal One.

What a powerful connection Christ is making in John 8:58!—“Before Abraham was, **I AM**.” He is declaring Himself to be the great “I AM” of Exodus 3:14. But the average Jehovah's Witness would never make this connection. Why? because the *New World* translators have made sure of it. They not only have mistranslated this passage in John with “I have been,” but they have also mistranslated God's Name (“I AM”) in Exodus 3:14 with “I SHALL PROVE TO BE.” They have completely cloaked the connection between these two verses—on both ends! The obvious goal of the Watchtower Society is to keep Jesus from being identified as Jehovah—the Eternal God. No one reading the *New World Translation* would see the relationship between Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58.

Is “I AM” the correct translation in these passages? All reputable Greek scholars agree that it is, and all reliable Bible translations have it so—the King James, New King James, American Standard, Revised Standard, English Standard, New International, Amplified, New English Translation, Young's Literal Translation, Today's English Version, etc.

The key issue is the proper translation and interpretation of the Greek words **ego eimi**—“I AM.” It is important to note that the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that dates prior to the birth of Christ—renders the Hebrew phrase for “I AM” in Exodus 3:14 as *ego eimi*. Scholars agree that the Watchtower Society has no justification for translating *ego eimi* in John 8:58 as “I have been.” These Greek words, *ego eimi*, appear often in John's Gospel, and they are *always* translated as “I am”—*even in the New World Translation!* In John 4:26; 6:35,48,51; 8:12,24,28; 10:7,11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5 & 18:5,6,8—the Jehovah's Witnesses correctly translate *ego eimi* as “I am.” All of these passages they translate correctly! But when it comes to 8:58 where Jesus plainly and without question identifies Himself as the Eternal God, the Almighty Jehovah, the Great “**I AM**,” the Watchtower translators have no other option—either they change their doctrine of Christ, or they conceal the truth! They chose the latter. They changed Jesus' words from “I am” to “I have been.” One speaks of Him as eternal and self-existent, while the other merely states that He existed before Abraham. Christ's use of these words *ego eimi* constituted His claim to be eternal—to exist without a beginning—in contrast to Abraham, who had a beginning. Abraham was created and finite; Christ was uncreated and infinite. Now, we must ask ourselves the question—How can any honest and clear-thinking person not readily see the obvious and deliberate deception of the translators of the *New World Translation*?

Then, too, it is highly revealing that the Jehovah's Witnesses attempted to classify the Greek word *eimi* as a *perfect indefinite* tense rather than a *present* tense (*NWT 1950 edition footnote*). (Such a tense would allow for the translation “I have been.”) However, this claim proved to be very embarrassing when Greek scholars pointed out to the Jehovah's Witnesses that there is *no such thing* as a *perfect indefinite* tense in Greek grammar!¹⁶ The *New World* translators had made up this

phony tense to cover up their interpretation. Following their public embarrassment, they knew they had to make a change. But instead of changing their improper translation from “I have been” to “I am,” they changed the identity of the verb. They now said, *eimi* is “properly rendered in the *perfect tense indicative*” (NWT 1971 footnote). They wanted it to appear to be an honest mistake. But in reality, they were still lying in order to justify their translation. While there *is* a perfect tense in Greek, there is *no* perfect tense form of *eimi* in the entire New Testament! *Eimi* is clearly a present active indicative form—as any beginner’s Greek grammar will show. It’s a simple present tense of the verb “to be.” Jesus was clearly saying “I AM.” The Watchtower’s theological bias has kept them from translating the word correctly in the present tense. They have gone to great lengths to deny the Deity of Christ. They have continually dodged the issue to justify their abhorrent translation. Serious Bible students should take heed—“Every word of God is pure...Add thou not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov 30:5-6).

Something else, too—The Jehovah’s Witnesses very own study Bibles prove that Jesus was claiming to be the “I AM” in John 8:58. Their 1984 large-print *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures with References* has a footnote on Exodus 3:14 admitting that the Hebrew would be rendered into Greek as “Ego eimi”—“I am.” And their 1985 *Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* reveals that Jesus’ words in John 8:58 are the same: “ego eimi.” By consulting these two Watchtower publications, the connection between John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14 is unmistakably clear.

Now the Jehovah’s Witnesses try to argue that Jesus in answering the Jews here was referring to His *age* and not to His *identity*.¹⁷ But the context reveals otherwise. The key issue throughout this entire eighth chapter is—WHO JESUS WAS—His identity! Read verses 12, 19, 24, 25, 28, 53 & 58 and this becomes abundantly clear. In fact, the Jews plainly asked Him, “Who art Thou?” (v25). This question was in response to what Jesus had just declared to them, “If ye believe not that I am [ego eimi] he, ye shall die in your sins” (v 24). The King James Version has “*he*” in italics to let us know that it is not in the original Greek text and was inserted by the translators. Christ literally said, “If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins.” The same is true of verse 28, the “*he*” again is inserted and in italics. Christ literally said, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I AM [ego eimi].” Remember when they came to take Him in the garden—Jesus said, “Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am [ego eimi] he. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am [ego eimi] he, they went backward, and fell to the ground” (John 18:4-6). The same is true here in both cases, the “*he*” is inserted and not in the original. Christ literally answered them with this awesome title of Deity—“I AM”—and all of His enemies fell backward to the ground, powerless to lift a finger against the Son of God had He not willingly given Himself into their hands (John 10:17-18).

Jesus purposely used this phrase *ego eimi* as a means of identifying Himself as “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16).

Also notice in John 8:58 that Christ began His “I AM” declaration with the words “Verily, verily” (KJV) or “I tell you the truth” (NIV). These words represent the strongest possible oath and claim. We might paraphrase it, “I assure you, most solemnly I tell you.” Jesus didn’t want anyone to be confused about the fact that He was claiming to be the Eternal God. And, of course, when Jesus made this claim, the Jews immediately picked up stones to kill Him (v 59)—there was no question in their mind—they clearly recognized that He was identifying Himself as Jehovah God—“I AM THAT I AM”—of Exodus 3:14. They were acting on the prescribed penalty for blasphemy under Old Testament law: death by stoning (Lev 24:16). The very same thing happened in John 5:18, “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself *equal with God*.” And then again in John 10:30-33, “I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, *makest Thyself God*.” All three of these clashes of chapters 5, 8 & 10 have to do with **WHO JESUS IS**. It’s ridiculous for the Jehovah’s Witnesses to try to hide from the truth by saying that Jesus was referring to His *age* and not to His *identity* in John 8:58, so they mistranslate His words to “I have been,” instead of “I am.”

But what is it that provokes the Jews to pick up stones? These three incidents tell us plainly with these words—“*equal with God*,” “*makest Thyself God*” and “*I AM*.” Without question, on all three of these occasions, Jesus was identifying Himself as Jehovah God. The Jews knew exactly what He was saying. To reject this truth about the Lord Jesus Christ is to be lost forever! Make no mistake about it! Solemnly, from His own lips, He warns you—“**If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins**” (John 8:24). ☐

References

- [1] *Aid to Bible Understanding* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1971), pp 1134,1669; *The Watchtower*, 15 Sept 1962, p 554; *The Watchtower*, 15 April 1976, p 231 [2] *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), pp 416-17 [13] Walter R. Martin, “The New World Translation,” *Christian Research Newsletter*, 3:3, p 5 [4] David Reed, *Jehovah’s Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), p 72 [5] *The Watchtower*, 15 Feb 1956, p 111 [6] Lorri MacGregor, *Coping with the Cults* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1992), p 21 [7] *The Watchtower*, 1 April 1983, p 31; cf. Reed, p 72 [8] Lorri MacGregor, *What You Need to Know about Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1992), p 63 [9] *The Watchtower*, 15 Feb 1956, pp 110-11; cf. Reed, p 73 [10] Robert M. Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), pp 70-73 [11] Robert M. Bowman, *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), p 95 [12] Julius Mantey, cited by Walter R. Martin, “The New World Translation,” *Christian Research Newsletter*, 3:3, p 5 [13] *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p 919 [14] *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, p 212 [15] *The Watchtower*, 1 July 1986, p 31 [16] Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, pp 90-98 [17] *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, pp 417-18

Jesus is “Jehovah” in the Jehovah’s Witness Bible!

Who is God?—Jehovah (*Deut 6:4*).

No other “gods”—(*Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:5,22; 46:8-11; Deut 32:39; Ex 20:2-3*). Yet their Bible (NWT) calls Jesus “a god” (*John 1:1*).

Bow before another god?—No (*Ex 34:14*). Knees bend to the Father (*Eph 3:14*). Knees bend to Jesus (*Phil 2:9-11*).

Who is the Lord?—God (*Acts 4:24; 17:24*). Jehovah (*Deut 10:17*). Jesus (*Luke 2:11; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:11; Rev 19:16*).

How many Lords?—One Lord (*1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:5*).

Who is Savior?—God (*2 Sam 22:3; Psalm 17:7; Luke 1:47; 1 Tim 1:1; Jude 25*). Jehovah alone (*Isaiah 43:11; 45:21; 49:26; 60:16; Hosea 13:4*). Jesus (*John 4:42; Acts 5:31; Phil 3:20; 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2 Peter 1:1,11*).

Who forgives sins?—God (*Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21*). Jesus (*Mark 2:5-7,10; Luke 5:20-24; 7:48*).

Who is the Shepherd?—Jehovah (*Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:10-11*). Jesus (*John 10:11,14; Heb 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25*).

Who is the Mighty God?—Jehovah (*Isaiah 10:20-21; Jer 32:18*). Jesus (*Isaiah 9:6*).

Who has witnesses?—Jehovah (*Isaiah 43:10; 44:8*). Jesus (*Acts 1:8; 10:36-43; 13:31; 22:15*).

Who is the First and the Last?—Jehovah (*Isaiah 44:6; 48:12*). Jesus (*Rev 1:17,18; 2:8; 22:12,13,16,20*).

Who is Alpha and Omega?—Jehovah (*Rev 1:8*). Jesus (*Rev 22:12,13,16,20*).

Who is the Stumbling Stone?—Jehovah (*Isaiah 8:13-15*). Jesus (*Matt 11:4-6; Acts 4:10-11; Rom 9:32-33; 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Peter 2:4-8*).

For whom did John prepare a way?—Jehovah (*Isa 40:3; Luke 1:76; John 1:23*). Jesus (*Matt 3:3,11-17; Mark 1:1-3; John 1:23-36*).

Who created all things?—God (*Gen 1:1; Eph 3:9*). Jehovah alone (*Isaiah 44:24; 48:13*). Jesus (*John 1:1-3*). If Jesus is a created being, then he is a “thing” that “came into existence,” but John 1:3 says “*all things* came into existence through him.” Yet in Col. 1:16-17 the NWT says, “By him all *other* things were created.” The word “*other*” is inserted *four times* here, but it’s *not* in the Greek! By deceptively inserting “*other*,” the Jehovah’s Witnesses want you to believe that Jesus himself was created, then he created all “*other*” things.

Then Psalm 102:25-27 clearly refers to Jehovah (v 22), and the NT directly quotes this passage and applies it to the Son of God (*Heb 1:10-12*). The same is said of “Jehovah” (*Isaiah 44:24*).

Who did Isaiah see?—Jehovah (*Isaiah 6:1-5*). Jesus (*John 12:37-42*). John applies Isaiah’s vision of Jehovah’s glory *to Christ*. The NWT marginal reference points from this passage (v 41) back to Jehovah’s glory of Isaiah 6. The “him” to “put faith in” and “confess” (v 42) is none other than the glorious “him” that Isaiah saw and spake of! ☐

jehovah’s witnesses & john’s gospel

John’s Gospel is the richest book in the New Testament with regard to substantiating the full Deity of Jesus Christ. Unlike the Synoptic Gospel writers (*Matthew, Mark and Luke*), John begins his Gospel in eternity: “*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*John 1:1*). It is from this eternal perspective that John understands the true significance of the work of Christ.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus claims to be God (*John 8:58*), is recognized by others as being God (*20:28*), and is portrayed as being preexistent and eternal (*1:15,30; 3:31*), self-existent (*1:4; 5:26*), omnipresent (*1:47-49*), omniscient (*2:25; 16:30; 21:17*), omnipotent (*1:3; 2:19; 11:43-44*), and sovereign (*5:21-22,27-29; 10:18*). Christ is set forth as the Creator of all things (*1:3*), and He claims to be the theme of the entire Old Testament (*5:39-40*). These and many other evidences in John’s Gospel point to the absolute Deity of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, the Watchtower Society must do something to “take the wind out of the sails” of John’s Gospel. They do this by mistranslating key verses. In this tract we will see how the Jehovah’s Witnesses distort John 1:1 and John 8:58. In so doing, we will unearth even further evidence regarding the deviousness of the *New World Translation*.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREAT “GOD”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” —John 1:1

The *New World Translation* corrupts this verse by saying, “the Word was *a god*.” Notice the two references to “God” in this verse. The Greek word for God in both cases is *theos*. The Watchtower Society teaches that there is justification for translating the first occurrence of *theos* as “God” but the last occurrence as “a god.” This is in contrast to all standard Bible translations—the King James, New King James, American Standard, Revised Standard, English Standard, New International, Amplified, New English Translation, Young’s Literal Translation, Today’s English Version, etc.—which translate both occurrences of *theos* as “God.”

The Watchtower cites a number of biblical authorities to support its translation of John 1:1—“the Word was *a god*.” [1] The translation of the New Testament by Johannes Greber (1937) was cited for many years as supporting the Watchtower translation. [2] Dr. Philip B. Harner’s scholarly article entitled *Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns in the Journal of Biblical Literature*. [3] Dr. Julius R. Mantey—a Greek scholar