

**JOHN 1:1 AND THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION:  
WHAT DO THE GREEK SCHOLARS REALLY SAY?**

**A. T. Robertson:** "So in Jo. 1:1 theos en ho logos the meaning has to be the Logos was God, not God was the Logos." A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament, by A. T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis (Baker Book House, 1977), p. 279.

**E. M. Sidebottom:** "...the tendency to write 'the Word was divine' for theos en ho logos springs from a reticence to attribute the full Christian position to John." The Christ of the Fourth Gospel (S.P.C.K., 1961), p. 461.

**E. C. Colwell:** "...predicate nouns preceding the verb cannot be regarded as indefinite or qualitative simply because they lack the article; it could be regarded as indefinite or qualitative only if this is demanded by the context, and in the case of John 1:1c this is not so." "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature, 52 (1933), p. 20.

**C. K. Barrett:** "The absence of the article indicates that the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true; if ho theos had been written it would have implied that no divine being existed outside the second person of the Trinity." The Gospel According to St. John (S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 76.

**C. H. Dodd:** "On this analogy, the meaning of theos en ho logos will be that the ousia of ho logos, that which it truly is, is rightly denominated theos... That this is the ousia of ho theos (the personal God of Abraham, the Father) goes without saying. In fact, the Nicene homoousios to patri is a perfect paraphrase." "New Testament Translation Problems II," The Bible Translator, 28, 1 (Jan. 1977), p. 104.

**Randolph O. Yeager:** "Only sophomores in Greek grammar are going to translate '...and the Word was a God.' The article with logos, shows that logos is the subject of the verb en and the fact that theos is without the article designates it as the predicate nominative. The emphatic position of theos demands that we translate '...and the Word was God.' John is not saying as Jehovah's Witnesses are fond of teaching that Jesus was only one of many Gods. He is saying precisely the opposite." The Renaissance New Testament, Vol. 4 (Renaissance Press, 1980), p. 4.

**James Moffatt:** "'The Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh,' simply means 'The Word was divine. . . . And the Word became human.' The Nicene faith, in the Chalcedon definition, was intended to conserve both of these truths against theories that failed to present Jesus as truly God and truly man...." Jesus Christ the Same (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945), p. 61.

**Philip B. Harner:** "Perhaps the clause could be translated, 'the Word had the same nature as God.' This would be one way of representing John's thought, which is, as I understand it, that ho logos, no less than ho theos, had the nature of theos." "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," Journal of Biblical Literature, 92, 1 (March 1973), p. 87.

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Henry Alford: "Theos must then be taken as implying God, in substance and essence,--not ho theos, 'the Father,' in person. It does not = theios, nor is it to be rendered a God--but, as in sarx egeneto, sarx expresses that state into which the Divine Word entered by a definite act, so in theos en, theos expresses that essence which was His en arche:--that He was very God. So that this first verse might be connected thus: the Logos was from eternity,--was with God (the Father),--and was Himself God." Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary, Vol. I, Part II (Guardian Press, 1976; originally published 1871), p. 681.

Donald Guthrie: "The absence of the article with Theos has misled some into thinking that the correct understanding of the statement would be that 'the word was a God' (or divine), but this is grammatically indefensible since Theos is a predicate." New Testament Theology (InterVarsity Press, 1981), p. 327.

Bruce Metzger: "It must be stated quite frankly that, if the Jehovah's Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists.... As a matter of solid fact, however, such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation." "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ," Theology Today (April 1953), p. 75.

Julius R. Mantey: "Since Colwell's and Harner's article in JBL, especially that of Harner, it is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 'The Word was a god.' Word-order has made obsolete and incorrect such a rendering.... In view of the preceding facts, especially because you have been quoting me out of context, I herewith request you not to quote the Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament again, which you have been doing for 24 years." Letter from Mantey to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. "A Grossly Misleading Translation.... John 1:1, which reads 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God,' is shockingly mistranslated, 'Originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god,' in a New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures, published under the auspices of Jehovah's Witnesses." Statement by J. R. Mantey, published in various sources.

B. F. Westcott: "The predicate (God) stands emphatically first, as in iv.24. It is necessarily without the article (theos not ho theos) inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person.... No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word." The Gospel According to St. John (Eerdmans, 1958 reprint), p. 3.

Who are these scholars? Many of them are world-renowned Greek scholars whose works the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves have quoted in their publications, notably Robertson, Moffatt, Harner, and Mantey, in defense of their "a god" translation of John 1:1! Westcott is the Greek scholar who with Hort edited the Greek text of the New Testament used by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Yeager is a professor of Greek and the star pupil of Julius Mantey. Metzger is the world's leading scholar on the textual criticism of the Greek New Testament. It is scholars of this caliber who insist that the words of John 1:1 cannot be taken to mean anything less than that the Word is the one true Almighty God.