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[**Greek Scholars & The Watchtower: Julius Mantey**](#)

Posted on [June 19, 2012](#) by [humblesmith](#)

Julius Mantey was arguably the greatest Greek scholar of the 20th century. He was co-author of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, a Greek grammar that was in use for half a century to teach Greek in prominent schools. Along with other Greek grammar book authors A. T. Robertson and Daniel Wallace, Mantey disagreed with the Watchtower's (Jehovah's Witnesses') book, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT). For several years, Mantey was quoted in a footnote to the NWT, with the Watchtower trying to use Mantey's grammar book to support their view of the bible. Mantey took offense, and wrote the letter below.

The significance of this letter is that it is from a respected author of a Greek grammar. We live in a free country, and Watchtower supporters have, and likely will continue, to disagree with any point they desire.

I am not in a position to defend Mantey; a scholar of his caliber does not need a defense from me. I am not a language scholar, do not pretend to be one, nor will I hide my ignorance of the

languages. Concerning grammar and translation, too many arguments are made from those who should have remained silent, and I do not wish to contribute to the problem by adding my words to the conversation.

But I know enough to use the tools and quote the scholars. Of the three Greek grammars I mentioned, all specifically disagree with the NWT. The Watchtower can protest all they want, but their disagreement is with the unified opinion of all the language scholars. If the Watchtower ever publishes a Greek text that is used in accredited schools to teach Greek, or can find one that is in agreement with them, they will be taken seriously. Until then, they will not. Below is a top-tier scholar's view of the Watchtower and their book.

Anyone can write a book claiming to know what they are talking about, but this does not make them true. The only objective reference we have for language is the recognized grammars. If the Watchtower claims all of the grammars are wrong, they have made a self-refuting statement.

Julius R. Mantey
414 Palmette Road
New Port Richey, FL 33552
July 11, 1974

Watchtower Bible & Tract Society
117 Adams St.
Brooklyn
New York 11201

Dear Sirs:

I have a copy of your letter addressed to *Caris* in Santa Ana, California, and I am writing to express my disagreement with statements made in that letter, as well as in quotations you have made from the Dana-Mantey Greek Grammar.

(1) Your statement: "their work allows for the rendering found in the Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures at John 1:1." There is no statement in our grammar that was ever meant to imply at "a god" was a permissible translation in John 1:1.

A. We had no "rule" to argue in support of the trinity.

B. Neither did we state that we did have such intention. We were simply delineating the facts inherent in Biblical language.

C. Your quotation from p.148 (3) was in a paragraph under the heading: "With the Subject in a Copulative sentence." Two examples occur there to illustrate that "the article points out the subject in these examples." But we made no statement in the paragraph about the predicate except that, "as it stands the other persons of the trinity may be implied in *theos*." And isn't that the opposite of what your translation "a god" infers? You quoted me out of context. On pages 139 and 140 (VI) in our grammar we stated: "without the article *theos* signifies divine essence . . . *theos en ho logos* emphasizes Christ's participation in the essence of the divine nature." Our

interpretation is in agreement with that in NEB and the TEV: “What God was, the Word was”; and with that of Barclay: “The nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God”, which you quoted in your letter to *Caris*.

(2) Since Colwell’s and Harner’s articles 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.

(3) Your quotation of Colwell’s rule is inadequate because it quotes only a part of his findings. You did not quote this strong assertion: “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.”

(4) Prof Harner, vol. 92:1 (1973) in JBL, has gone beyond Colwell’s research and has discovered that anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb function primarily to express the nature or character of the subject. He found this true in 53 passages in the Gospel of John and 8 in the Gospel of Mark. Both scholars wrote that when indefiniteness was intended the gospel writers regularly placed the predicate noun after the verb, and both Colwell and Harner have stated that *theos* in John 1:1 is not indefinite and should not be translated “a god”. Watchtower writers appear to be the only ones advocating such a translation now. The evidence appears to be 99% against them.

(5) your statement in your letter that the sacred text itself should guide one and “not just someone’s rule book”. We agree with you. But our study proves that Jehovah’s Witnesses do the opposite of that whenever the “sacred text” differs with their heretical beliefs. For example the translation of kolasis as cutting off when punishment is the only meaning cited in the lexicons for it. The mistranslation of ego eimi as “I have been” in John 8:58. The addition of “for all time” in Heb. 9:27 when nothing in the Greek New Testament supports it. The attempt to belittle Christ by mistranslating *arche tes ktiseos* “beginning of the creation” when he is magnified as “the creator of all things” (John 1:2 and as “equal with God” (Phil. 2:6) before he humbled himself and lived in a human body here on earth. Your quotation of “The father is greater than I am” (John 14:28) to prove that Jesus was not equal to God overlooks the fact stated in Phil. 2:6-8. When Jesus said that, he was still in his voluntary state of humiliation. That state ended when he ascended to heaven. Why the attempt to deliberately deceive people by mispunctuation by placing a comma after “today” in Luke 23:43 when in the Greek, Latin, German and all English translations except yours, even in the Greek in your *KIT*, the comma occurs after *lego* (I say) — “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” 2 Cor. 5:8, “to be out of the body and at home with the Lord.” These passages teach that the redeemed go immediately to heaven after death, which does not agree with your teachings that death ends all life until the resurrection. Cf. Ps. 23:6 and Heb. 1:10.

The aforementioned are only a few examples of Watchtower mistranslations and perversions of God’s Word. In view of the preceding facts, especially because you have been quoting me out of context, I herewith request you not to quote from the *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* again, which you have been doing for 24 years. Also that you not quote it or me in any of your publications from this time on.

Also that you publicly and immediately apologize in the Watchtower magazine, since my words had no relevance in the absence of the article before *theos* in John 1:1. And please write to Caris and state that you misused and misquoted my “rule”. On the page before the Preface in the grammar are these words: “All rights reserved — no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher.” If you have such permission, please send me a photo-copy of it.

If you do not heed these requests you will suffer the consequences.

Respectfully yours,

Julius R. Mantey

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