

new world translation of the holy scriptures

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is a modern English translation of the Bible published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, the main legal entity used by the Jehovah's Witnesses. This translation has gained both support and criticism since its first release in the 1950s, and it continues to be a significant part of the religious literature used by Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. This article explores its history, translation philosophy, features, and the criticisms it has faced, as well as its reception among various audiences.

History of the New World Translation

Origins and Development

The New World Translation was first published in 1950, with the New Testament being released earlier in 1950. The translation committee, which operated anonymously, aimed to provide an accurate, modern English translation of the Scriptures that reflected the beliefs and teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses.

- 1950: The New Testament was first published.
- 1961: The complete Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments, was released.
- 1984: A revised edition was published, making several changes to improve clarity and accuracy.
- 2013: A further revision was released, which included updated language and additional revisions based on modern scholarship.

The translation effort was motivated by a desire to provide a version of the Bible that aligned closely with the theological views of Jehovah's Witnesses, particularly regarding the use of God's name, Jehovah, which they believe is essential to a proper understanding of the Scriptures.

Translation Philosophy

The translation philosophy behind the New World Translation is characterized by a commitment to what the translators termed "dynamic equivalence," which attempts to convey the meaning of the original texts in a way that is accessible to modern readers. This approach emphasizes clarity and readability while also striving to remain faithful to the original languages.

Key elements of the translation philosophy include:

1. **Use of God's Name:** The New World Translation consistently uses the name "Jehovah" in place of "LORD" or "God" in the Old Testament, and in many instances in the New Testament. This reflects the belief of Jehovah's Witnesses that God's name should be known and used by His worshippers.
2. **Literal Accuracy:** While aiming for readability, the translation also seeks to maintain a level of literal accuracy. The translators consulted a variety of biblical texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek to ensure that their English representation was as faithful as possible.
3. **Modern Language:** The translation employs contemporary English, making it accessible to a wide audience. This decision was made to ensure that readers could understand the text without needing extensive background knowledge.

Features of the New World Translation

Structure and Design

The New World Translation is published in various formats, including hardback, paperback, and digital versions. Its design includes features that enhance readability and usability:

- **Clear Headings:** Each book of the Bible is introduced with clear headings to help readers navigate the text.
- **Footnotes:** The translation includes footnotes that provide additional context, alternate translations, and references to related scriptures. This helps readers understand the nuances of particular verses.
- **Cross-References:** Throughout the text, cross-references link related passages, allowing readers to see connections between different parts of the Scriptures.

Use of the Translation

The New World Translation is used in various contexts by Jehovah's Witnesses, including:

- **Public Meetings:** During meetings at Kingdom Halls, members often read from the New World Translation.
- **Personal Study:** Jehovah's Witnesses are encouraged to study the Bible regularly, and the New World Translation is the primary version used for personal study.
- **Evangelism:** Witnesses often distribute copies of the New World Translation during their door-to-door ministry.

Criticism and Controversies

Despite its popularity among Jehovah's Witnesses, the New World Translation has faced significant criticism from biblical scholars, theologians, and other religious groups. Some of the main points of contention include:

Translation Choices

Critics have pointed out certain translation choices that they believe reflect the theological biases of the translators. These include:

1. John 1:1: The New World Translation translates this verse as "the Word was a god," which differs from traditional translations that state "the Word was God." Critics argue that this translation undermines the doctrine of the Trinity.
2. Colossians 1:16-17: The translation renders this passage in a way that emphasizes Christ's role as a created being, which is a point of contention for many Christians who believe in the pre-existence of Christ.
3. Revelation 7:4: This verse discusses the number of people sealed by God, and the New World Translation specifies "144,000" as a literal number, a belief that aligns with Jehovah's Witnesses' eschatology.

Accusations of Bias

The anonymity of the translation committee has led to suspicions regarding the objectivity of the translation. Critics claim that the translators' background and beliefs may have influenced their decisions, leading to a biased representation of the Scriptures.

- Lack of Scholarly Recognition: Many biblical scholars do not recognize the New World Translation as a legitimate scholarly effort, arguing that it does not meet the rigorous standards typically applied to Biblical translations.

Reception Among Different Groups

The reception of the New World Translation has varied widely:

- Jehovah's Witnesses: For Jehovah's Witnesses, the New World Translation is considered the most accurate and reliable translation available, and it is central to their religious practices.
- Mainstream Christian Denominations: Many mainstream Christian groups reject

the New World Translation and prefer traditional translations like the King James Version (KJV), New International Version (NIV), or English Standard Version (ESV). They often cite the translation's perceived biases and inaccuracies as reasons for their rejection.

- Scholarly Community: Biblical scholars largely regard the New World Translation with skepticism, often criticizing its methodology and the motivations behind certain translation choices.

Conclusion

The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures remains a significant work within the context of Jehovah's Witnesses and their religious practices. While it has its supporters, particularly among members of the faith, it also faces substantial criticism from various quarters, including scholars and other religious groups. The controversies surrounding its translation choices and underlying philosophies highlight the complexities involved in biblical translation and interpretation. As with any translation, understanding the context, purpose, and beliefs that shape it is essential for a comprehensive view of its impact on religious thought and practice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures?

The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is a modern translation of the Bible published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, which is associated with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

What are the key features of the New World Translation?

Key features of the New World Translation include its use of contemporary English, an emphasis on accuracy to the original texts, and the inclusion of the name 'Jehovah' in the Old Testament and New Testament, reflecting the translation philosophy of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

How does the New World Translation differ from other Bible translations?

The New World Translation differs from other Bible translations in its specific rendering of certain key passages, particularly those related to the divinity of Christ and the use of God's name, 'Jehovah,' which many other translations do not include.

Is the New World Translation considered a reliable translation?

The reliability of the New World Translation is a subject of debate; proponents argue it is a faithful rendering of the original texts, while critics claim it is biased to support the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Who translated the New World Translation?

The New World Translation was produced by a committee of Jehovah's Witnesses, known as the New World Bible Translation Committee, whose members have remained anonymous.

What languages is the New World Translation available in?

The New World Translation is available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and many others, making it accessible to a wide audience around the world.

Are there any major criticisms of the New World Translation?

Major criticisms of the New World Translation include claims of bias in translation choices, particularly regarding the nature of Christ and the use of 'Jehovah,' as well as concerns over the anonymity of the translators.

How can I access the New World Translation?

The New World Translation can be accessed online for free at the official Jehovah's Witnesses website, and it is also available in printed form at their local congregations and through their publications.

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