

**Is Christ “The Beginning of God’s Creation”
or
“The Supreme Ruler of God’s Creation”?
*What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?***

An in-depth study of the key words and phrases in this verse

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What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

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¹ CLIE, 2019 See <https://www.clie.es/curso-de-griego-biblico>

² Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005

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INTRODUCTION

1. The question

Revelation 3:14 is one of the favourite “proof texts” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They claim that it “proves” that Jesus Christ is what they call a “created being”, the first “being” created by God, and that therefore the standard teaching of Christianity, namely that he is “the eternal Son of God”, is wrong. The standard teaching of Christianity is based on an understanding of statements in the Bible, and it goes back to at least the second century A.D., further clarified in writings over the course of the following few hundred years.

So who is right? Whose understanding of the statements of the Bible is justified, and whose is mistaken? More fundamentally, what does Revelation 3:14 itself actually say? The Jehovah’s Witness translation of the verse differs fundamentally from most other translations. Which translation is right, and which is wrong?

2. Opinions or evidence?

Here we are not interested in *opinions*; what we want to see is *the evidence* – and that is what this article presents. The reader without a knowledge of Greek can, if he or she wishes, skip the original version of the quotations [and the pronunciation guide given for those with limited knowledge of the language], and continue reading with the translation and the commentary that follows, but it is important to emphasise the fact that here is the evidence – it is not about *opinions*. The comments are no more than unbiased, factual explanations of the meaning of the Greek text.

PART ONE: THE TEXT

First we shall look at some translations of Revelation 3:14, and then we shall go to the actual meaning of the original Greek in which the verse was written.

1. Some translations of Revelation 3:14

NIV³:

“These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation”

NRSV⁴:

“The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation”

AV/KJV⁵:

“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God”

The New World Translation (1961 edition & 2013 revision)⁶:

“These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God”

2. The Greek text of Revelation 3:14

The Greek text⁷ of Revelation 3:14 reads:

Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ [Tade legei ho amēn, ho mártus ho pistós kai alēthinós, hē archē tēs ktíseōs tou theou]

A word-for-word translation would be:

Thus says the amen, the witness the faithful and true, the [archē] of-the creation belonging-to-the God.

(We will look at the meaning of the word that I have not translated, “archē”, in the rest of this article.)

The reliability of the original text is not disputed. In all the thousands of early manuscripts of this verse there are no variations that affect the words used. Specialists in the Greek source texts of the New Testament refer to verses such as Revelation 3:14 as “textually secure”, i.e., “the NT manuscripts have no competing [textual] variants”⁸ – they all say the same thing.

³ “The Bible: New International Version” © NIV Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by the International Bible Society

⁴ “The Bible: New Revised Standard Version” Copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

⁵ The Authorised Version of 1611, generally known in the USA as “The King James Version”

⁶ Published by the Watchtower Tract and Bible Society of New York, Inc., an organisation belonging to the Jehovah's Witness; 1961: Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., revised 2013.

⁷ “The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition” © Stuttgart, 1993: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft

⁸ See Karen H Jobs and Moises Silva, “Invitation to the Septuagint”, 2000, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic. pp. 190-191 For a similar situation with another verse whose translation is disputed by the Jehovah's Witnesses, see my article on John 8:58 on this website, here:

http://www.livingwater-spain.com/John8_58.pdf

PART TWO: THE CONTEXT

1. The general context: the letters to the seven churches

If we are to understand the meaning of this verse, it is essential to understand the context. The introduction to Revelation explains that what comes next is a prophecy (Revelation 1:2). Chapters two and three of this book consist of individual letters to each of seven churches in south-western Turkey in the first century A.D. The writer of Revelation is John, but in the whole of these two chapters he is quoting and writing down the words that Jesus Christ told him to write, so effectively, the words that we read in these chapters are the words of Christ.

The seven letters all have a common structure. This is not the place to look at the whole of that structure, but it is relevant to our understanding of Revelation 3:14 to know that all of the letters start with some phrases – different in each letter – in which Christ describes himself. Each of these descriptions refers back to some aspect of the description of Christ in Revelation chapter one, and the particular description used is relevant in some particular way to the particular church to which the letter is addressed.

2. The immediate context: the rest of the verse

Many words in one language can be translated by more than one word in a different language. Key to choosing the right word for the translation is of course to understand the meaning that the word has in the source language, in the context in which it is used. What is the context in Revelation 3:14? We have already commented on the general context for all seven letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3: they all present the words of Christ himself to each of the churches. Now we need to look at the immediate context, what is said in this verse. The following sections address this.

I. “Thus says the Lord”

All seven letters begin with the words “Thus says ...” followed by a description of Christ.

The phrase “Thus says the Lord” occurs 419 times in the Old Testament (in the NRSV translation). This was the standard phrase that prophets used when they delivered messages from God to the people. The Jewish people of New Testament times, who were used to reading the Scriptures that were originally written in Hebrew in the Greek translation (the Septuagint), were extremely familiar with this phrase and the minor variations in its endings:

Τάδε λέγει κύριος (Exod. 4:22) [tade legei kurios]	Thus says the LORD
Τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς (Exod. 9:1) [tade legei kurios ho theos]	Thus says the LORD God
Τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ (Exod. 5:1) [tade legei kurios ho theos Israel]	Thus says the LORD God of Israel

The first words in all seven of these letters are Τάδε λέγει ὁ ... – “Thus says the ...” The NIV translates this phrase as “These are the words of ...”, but the Greek is

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identical to the above phrase in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. So when the Jewish Christian believers who received these seven letters heard, in this prophetic context, the phrase, “Thus says the ...”, they knew which word had to come next: “LORD”, “LORD God” or “LORD God of Israel”.⁹

Except that that was not what came next.

Next came “the one who ...”, followed by a quotation from the description of Christ that had just been given in Revelation chapter one.

It was a way of saying, “The way that God speaks, that’s how Christ speaks.” It was a way of saying, Christ has the same authority as the Lord God of Israel. It was a way of saying, “A message from Christ is equivalent to a message from God”.

II. The ways that Christ describes himself in Revelation 3:14

In this verse Christ describes himself with a series of words and phrases:

1. the Amen
2. the faithful and true witness
3. the [archē] of God’s creation.

1. The Amen

To say “Amen” is to express approval of what has just been said and agreement with it. Since before the time of Christ, the Jewish people have said "amen" at the end of each prayer. In the “Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT”, Holladay states:

אָמֵן: surely!, solemn formula by wh. the hearer a) accepts the validity of a curse or oath, Dt 27₁₅₋₂₆ (12×), b) accepts a salutary message Je 28₆, or c) joins himself to a doxology Ps 106₄₈. (Hol575 pg 20)¹⁰

In New Testament times this use of the word “Amen” continued in the early church. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 14:16 the Apostle Paul writes “If you are praising God with your spirit [i.e., speaking in an unknown tongue], how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?” (NIV)

The use of the title “the Amen” for Christ in Revelation 3:14 also seems to echo the thoughts behind Paul’s words to the Corinthian believers:

“the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes.”²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:19-20, NIV)

In fact – even more significantly – in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 65:16 God is called “the Amen”. In this verse, this word, אָמֵן [āmēn], is usually translated into English with the word “truth” or “true”.

However, in calling himself “the Amen”, Christ is applying to himself a title applied to God in the book of Isaiah.

⁹ The “New World Translation has “Jehovah” (Ex 4:22), “Jehovah the God of Israel” (Ex 5:1), “Jehovah the God of the Hebrews” (Ex. 9:1), etc.

¹⁰ Reproduced in the program Bible Works 10

2. The Faithful And True Witness

As indicated above, the characteristics of Christ described at the beginning of each of the seven letters to the churches are largely derived from the description of Christ in Revelation chapter 1. In Revelation 3:14 we have a nearly-exact quotation from Revelation 1:5: “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” (NIV)¹¹

To whom or what was Christ the Faithful and True Witness? The answer to this must be in other statements that he made. For instance, he said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14 6, NIV) Even more clearly, a few moments later in the same discourse, he said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

In being “the faithful witness” to the Father, he was faithfully revealing the nature and character of God.

Other echoes of the final phrase of Revelation 1:5 are found throughout this book, where Christ is repeatedly called “King of kings and Lord of Lords” (17:14, 19:16).

So this second description that Christ gives of himself in Revelation 3:14 gives an important indication of who he is and how important he is as the visible representation of God.

3. The [archē] of God’s creation

This is the third description that Christ gives of himself in Revelation 3:14. However, we will leave discussion of the translation of the word ἀρχή [archē] until later in this article. However, the translation of the phrase that follows it must be looked at, which we will do now.

III. The meaning of the final phrase of this verse

Before looking at the translation of the key word, ἀρχή [archē], it is necessary to look at the final phrase of this verse.

We note that at the end of the verse, the Greek says τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ [tēs ktiseōs tou theou], which means “of God’s creation”. It does not mean what the New World Translation says, “of the creation by God”, which would be τῆς κτίσεως ὑπὸ [τοῦ] θεοῦ [tēs ktiseōs hupo [tou] theou]. Sentences elsewhere in the Bible that do speak of actions by God do indeed use the phrase ὑπὸ [τοῦ] θεοῦ [hupo [tou] theou]. See, for instance, Romans 13:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:4.

Thus, the last phrase of Revelation 3:14 makes no statement about who carried out the act of creation. On the contrary, it states to whom all of creation belongs, namely, to God.

By changing the final phrase of the verse to “the creation by God”, the Jehovah’s Witnesses are able to change the meaning of the whole verse by making it imply that Christ was not actively involved as Agent in the creation. This claim that is made by the Jehovah’s Witnesses contradicts other clear statements of Scripture (for instance, in John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:3). These other verses state that Christ carried out the creation.

¹¹ ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἀρχὼν τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς (Rev. 1:5)

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So the change that the Jehovah's Witnesses have made at the end of Revelation 3:14 avoids a problem for them with their version of the first part of the verse, the part that states in the Greek that Christ is the Author, the Source or the Supreme Ruler of God's creation. By stating at the end of the verse that the creation was "by God" (instead of that it belongs to God, as stated in the Greek), the Jehovah's Witnesses seek to promote their doctrine that claims that Christ was a part of the "creation by God", a mere "created being". At the same time they seek to eliminate the possibility that readers might recognise that Christ is described earlier in the verse as the Author, Source or Supreme Ruler of God's creation. The change that they have made with this final phrase of the verse is therefore crucial in their redefinition of the meaning of the verse as a whole.

PART THREE: THE MEANING OF THE WORD APXH [ARCHĒ]

1. What do the dictionaries say?

I reproduce here in their entirety the text of the entry on ἀρχή [archē] in each of three of the most-used major lexicons (dictionaries) of New Testament Greek.¹²

Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon

[Fri] ἀρχή, ἤς, ἡ strictly *primacy*;

(1) in relation to place *corner* of a cloth (AC 10.11);

(2) in relation to time *beginning* of anything (MT 24.8), *(the) first* (JN 2.11), opposite τέλος (*end, cessation*); of first teaching *elementary* (HE 6.1); ἀπ ἀρχῆς, ἐξ ἀρχῆς *from the first, originally* (JN 6.64; 15.27); ἐν ἀρχῇ, κατ ἀρχάς *in the beginning, at the first* (JN 1.1; HE 1.10); τὴν ἀρχήν in JN 8.25 is probably adverbial *at all, possibly to begin with*;

(3) in relation to rank (*position of*) *power, rule, domain* (EP 1.21); as a person with authority or a supernatural being *ruler, authority* (RO 8.38)

ἀρχή N-NF-S ἀρχή

Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon (GIN)

[GING] ἀρχή

ἀρχή, ἤς, ἡ—**1.** *beginning, origin* Mt 19:4; 24:8; Mk 1:1; 13:8; Lk 1:2; J 1:1; 15:27; Ac 11:15. ἀρχὴν λαμβάνειν *begin* Hb 2:3. στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀ. *elementary principles* 5:12. ὁ τῆς ἀ. τοῦ Χ. λόγος *elementary Christian teaching* 6:1. ἀ τῆς ὑποστάσεως *original conviction* 3:14. ἀ τῶν σημείων *first of the signs* J 2:11. τὴν ἀρχήν = ὅλως *at all* 8:25. Fig. Col 1:18. *First cause* Rv 3:14. Concrete = *corner* Ac 10:11.—

2. *ruler, authority, official* Lk 12:11; 20:20; Tit 3:1. Of angels and demons Ro 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Col 2:10, 15.—**3.** *Rule, domain, sphere of influence* Jd 6. [The derivative *arch-* serves as a prefix, and *-archy* as a suffix, in numerous words.]

[pg 27]

Danker, Greek NT Lexicon (DAN)

[DANK] ἀρχή

ἀρχή, ἤς, ἡ [ἀρχω; a multivalent term with basic signification of priority]

— **1.** ‘point of derivation or originating moment’, **beginning, start** Mt 19:4; 24:8; Mk 1:1; Lk 1:2; **J 1:1; 2:11; Phil 4:15; 2 Th 2:13 v.l.; Hb 7:3**; ἀ λαμβανειν *begin* **2:3**; ἀ τῆς ὑποστάσεως *original commitment* **3:14**; τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀ. τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ *the basic features of God’s sacred pronouncements* **5:12**; λόγος τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ *primary teaching about Christ* **6:1**; by extension, of the corner of an object as perceived by an observer **Ac 10:11; 11:5**. In **J 8:25** τὴν ἀρχήν = ὅλως *at all*. In imagery: of Christ **Col 1:18**; cp. **Rv 3:14; 21:6; 22:13**.

By extension — **2.** ‘one who enjoys preeminence’, in earthly or supra-terrestrial realm, often pl. **ruler, authority** Lk 12:11; Ro 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16.

— **3.** ‘assigned position or sphere of activity’, **position, domain, jurisdiction** Jd 6; cp. **Lk 20:20**.

BDAG

The most prestigious lexicon of Koiné Greek, the accepted authority on the definitions of the words of the language, is the third English edition of “A Greek-English Lexicon

¹² As reproduced in the program Bible Works 10

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of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature” by Walter Bauer, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, which is known for short as “BADG”, the initial letters of the surnames of its editors.¹³ Its entry for ἀρχή [archē] confirms the accuracy of the definitions in the above three lexicons. The BDAG entry for this word is exhaustively comprehensive and is far too long to reproduce in its entirety here, since it covers more than one large page of double column text (on pp. 137-8), so here is a summary of the entry, showing the principal definition titles:

the commencement of something as an action, process or state of being; ... one with whom a process begins; ... the first cause; ... a point at which two surfaces or lines meet, *corner*; ... a basis for further understanding; ... an authority figure who initiates activity or process, *ruler, authority*; ... the sphere of one’s official activity, *rule, office*

One of the great strengths of BDAG is that the definitions that it gives are based on the usage and meaning of words in literature written in Greek over a period of more than 700 years, spanning a period from 500 years or more before the time of Christ to 200 AD and later. Its definitions are supported both by Biblical references and by quotations from other Greek texts. For example, under the definition “an authority figure who initiates activity or process, *ruler, authority*”, this meaning of ἀρχή [archē] is shown in the writing of Aeschylus in the fifth century BC¹⁴, as well as in writers of subsequent centuries and in numerous Biblical texts.

Brill

The recently-published major reference work, “The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek”¹⁵ gives the following definitions of ἀρχή:

A inception, beginning, origin ... B first element, foundation, principle ... First Cause, Creator ... C command, power, sovereignty, authority ... leadership ... government ... celestial powers ... malignant powers

As with my quotations from Brill and BDAG elsewhere, the use of ellipsis (“...”) in this extract should not be viewed with suspicion; it eliminates a large number of detailed references to usage by writers of the time and does not change the meaning of the entry. Readers desirous of seeing the full entry are encouraged to consult the original (p. 310).

Thus, all the lexicons consulted state that ἀρχή [archē] means “primacy” (Friberg) or “priority” (Danker) and give variants on two principal translations:

1. ruler: “(position of) power, rule, domain” (Friberg); “ruler, authority, official” (Gingrich); “‘one who enjoys preeminence’, in earthly or supra-terrestrial realm, often pl. ruler, authority” (Danker); “one with whom a process begins; ... the first cause; ... a point at which two surfaces or lines meet, *corner*; ... a basis for further understanding; ... an authority figure who initiates activity or process, *ruler*,

¹³ “A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature”, 3rd edition, © 2000 by The University of Chicago.

¹⁴ Classical Greek playwright (520. – 456 BC.). He is considered as the greatest representative of Greek tragic literature. – <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeschylus> consulted on 24th October 2016

¹⁵ Italian edition by Franco Montanari, Torino, Italy: Loescher Editore, 1995, 2nd edition, 2004, 3rd edition, 2013. English edition (quoted from here): edited by Madeleine Goh & Chad Schroeder under the auspices of the Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University (Advisory Editors: Gregory Nagy & Leonard Muellner), Leiden, The Netherlands and Boston, USA: Koninlijke Brill NV, 2015

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- authority*; ... the sphere of one's official activity, *rule, office*" (BDAG); "First Cause, Creator, power, leadership, sovereignty, authority" (Montanari/Brill)
2. beginning: "originally" (Friberg); "origin" (Gingrich); "point of derivation or originating moment" (Danker); "one with whom a process begins, first cause" (BDAG); "beginning, origin, foundation" (Montanari/Brill).

Other possible translations are derived from these basic meanings. Thus Gingrich gives "Rule, domain, sphere of influence". Danker gives " 'assigned position or sphere of activity', position, domain, jurisdiction", BDAG gives "the sphere of one's official activity, *rule, office*" and Friberg and BDAG also refer to the rare case (in Acts 10) where the word is used to refer to the corners of a cloth, which were considered the most important parts, as it was by its corners that the cloth was raised and lowered.

Note that all the lexicons support their definitions by reference to specific Bible verses. It is very instructive to look at these verses, some of which we will consult below. Brill and BDAG also quote extensively from Greek writers from classical times through to the time of the composition of the New Testament and the first centuries thereafter.

<p>It is thus clear that the word ἀρχή [archē] means "priority, precedence, primacy" or "pre-eminence", and that it can, depending on the context, be translated either as "ruler" or as "beginning"/"origin" or by other words that convey the same idea of priority, superiority or supremacy.</p>
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The Jehovah's witnesses will respond as they do when their version of the Bible disagrees with all other versions. They will say of the translations, "they are all wrong", and this is exactly what they have said to me, in my study when faced with numerous Bible translations and Greek dictionaries. However, such a response rejects the objective facts concerning the Greek language, facts that are undisputed outside the Jehovah's Witness organisation, and it is unlikely to convince anyone who is not already a Jehovah's Witness. It definitely will not convince anyone with knowledge of the subject.

We shall therefore continue this article by examining the use in the Bible of this word and of words derived from it. Here we are not interested in opinions but in facts. We shall therefore also report on the words used by the Jehovah's Witnesses in their version of the Bible where the Greek has ἀρχή [archē].

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2. The translation of ἀρχή [archē] elsewhere in the New Testament

We especially need to see how the Jehovah’s Witnesses themselves translate the word ἀρχή [archē] elsewhere in the Bible.¹⁶

Exact form of ἀρχή [archē] used	Bible verse	NIV [and NRSV]	NWT translation (2013 revision)
τὰς ἀρχάς [Accusative plural] [tas archas] καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας	Luke 12:11	<u>rulers</u> and authorities	<u>government officials</u> , and authorities
τῇ ἀρχῇ [Dative singular] [tē archē]	Luke 20:20	to the <u>power</u> [NRSV: to the <u>jurisdiction</u>]	to the <u>government</u>
ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν. [Accusative singular] [hotan katargēsē pasan archēn kai pasan exousian kai dunamin]	1 Corinthians 15:24	after he has destroyed all <u>dominion</u> , authority and <u>power</u> . [NRSV: after he has destroyed every <u>ruler</u> and every authority and power.]	when he has brought to nothing all <u>government</u> and all authority and power.
ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας [Genitive singular] [huperanō pasēs archēs kai exousias]	Ephesians 1:21 [Note that this verse is describing Christ!]	far above all <u>rule</u> and authority	far above every <u>government</u> and authority
τὰς ἀρχάς [tas archas] [Accusative plural]	Ephesians 6:12	the <u>rulers</u>	the <u>governments</u>
ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας. [Genitive singular] [hos estin hē kefalē pasēs archēs kai exousias]	Colossians 2:10 [Another verse describing Christ]	He is the head over every <u>power</u> and authority. [NRSV: who is the head of every <u>ruler</u> and authority.]	the one who is the head of all <u>government</u> and authority.
τὰς ἀρχάς [Accusative plural] [tas archas]	Colossians 2:15	the <u>powers</u> [NRSV : the <u>rulers</u>]	the <u>governments</u>

¹⁶ There is a lot of evidence that what the Jehovah’s Witnesses actually did when they produced “The New World Translation of the New Testament” in the 1950s was to work from the English Authorised (“King James”) Version of 1611, modernising the English, changing verses that contradicted their doctrines, and inserting the word “Jehovah” more than 600 times, even though it nowhere appears in any one of the thousands of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. We shall not look at any of these points in the current article, but they are addressed in other articles on this website, for instance, here: <http://livingwater-spain.com/beduhn.pdf> . On the use by the Jehovah’s Witness translators of the English Authorised (King James) Version, rather than the Hebrew original of the Old Testament, and on their insertion of the word “Jehovah” into their version of the New Testament see chapter 16 of that review.

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

Thus we see that in numerous other cases, even the Jehovah's Witness "New World Translation" renders the word ἀρχή [archē] with words and phrases that denote authority and rule, their favourite translations being the phrase "government officials" and the word "government" or "governments".

One cannot help wondering if the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses view themselves as in conflict with *all* "worldly" government authorities is what has encouraged them to choose these words and phrases for their translation. As the contexts show, the meaning of the Greek word is far broader than just political or government entities or bodies, referring in fact to any sort of ruler or authority, whether terrestrial or supernatural. Whatever may be their reasoning, they have in any case chosen words and phrases that imply power, authority and rule.

In the light of these facts, their translation of ἀρχή [archē] in Revelation 3:14 by a totally different word is revealed as being determined by their theological stance, not by the context nor by the meaning that they themselves elsewhere give for this word.

3. The word ἀρχή [archē] in the history of the Greek language

At the time when the New Testament was written, the word ἀρχή [archē] had already existed for hundreds of years, with the meaning "superiority", "supremacy", "rule" or "authority", from which is also derived the idea of "beginning". We can see this both in classical Greek texts, as demonstrated by the BDAG lexicon, and in the Greek translation from the Hebrew of the Jewish Scriptures (known to Christians as the "Old Testament"). This translation is usually called the Septuagint, and it is often designated with the Roman numeral LXX, which means "seventy", the number of translators reported to have carried out the translation into Greek. The translation was made by Jews living in Alexandria, approximately 250 years before the time of Christ.

Some examples from the Septuagint

Genesis

ἔτι τρεῖς ἡμέραι καὶ μνησθήσεται Φαραω τῆς ἀρχῆς σου (Gen. 40:13 BGT)
[eti treis hēmerai kai mnēsthēsetai Farao tēs archēs sou]

The most authoritative modern translation into English from the Septuagint text is the "New English Translation of the Septuagint", abbreviated NETS¹⁷. It translates this verse as follows:

"yet three days and Pharaoh¹⁸ will remember your office" (i.e., "your position, your status"). (See also Genesis 41:13.)

Deuteronomy

ἔσται ὅταν καθίσῃ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ (Deut. 17:18)
[estai hotan kathisē epi tē archēs autou]

NETS:

"it shall be, when he has sat upon the seat of his rule"

¹⁷ "A New English Translation of the Septuagint" ("NETS"), New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Translations from the Septuagint into English below are from NETS, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁸ NETS transliterates names from the Greek text, and this frequently is slightly different from the traditional English translation.

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

ὅπως ἂν μακροχρονίση ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ (Deut. 17:20)

[hopōs an makrochronisē epi tēs archēs autou]

NETS:

“in order that he be long-lived in his rule”

Job

ὑποκάτω παντὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀρχὴ αὐτοῦ (Job 37:3)

[hupokatō pantos tou ouranou archē autou]

NETS: “Under all of heaven is his rule”¹⁹

Isaiah

μεγάλη ἡ ἀρχὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς εἰρήνης αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ὄριον ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον Δαυὶδ (Isaiah 9:6²⁰)

[megalē hē archē autou kai tēs eirēnēs autou ouk estin horion epi ton thronon Daud]

NETS:

“His sovereignty is great, and his peace has no boundary upon the throne of Daud” [David].

Interestingly, this is part of a great prophetic passage concerning Christ. However, regardless of its subsequent application, the key fact for our consideration here is that the word ἀρχή [archē] is used with the meaning “sovereignty”, a synonym for rule by a king.

Jeremiah

τάδε λέγει κύριος συντριβήτω τὸ τόξον Αἰλαμ ἀρχὴ δυναστείας αὐτῶν (Jer. 25:15 in the LXX).²¹

[tade legei kurios suntribētō ton toxon Ailam archē dunasteias autōn]

NETS:

“This is what the Lord says: Let the bow of Ailam be crushed, mainstay of their dominance.”

Ezekiel

ἔσται ἀρχὴ ταπεινὴ ¹⁵ παρὰ πάσας τὰς ἀρχάς οὐ μὴ ὑψωθῆ ἔτι ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη (Ezek. 29:14)

[estai archē tapeinē ¹⁵ para pasas tas archas ou mē hupsōthē eti epi ta ethnē]

NETS:

“it shall be a lowly principality¹⁵ compared to all principalities.” (The NIV and NRSV translations from the MT use the words “kingdom” and “kingdoms”.)

Many other examples could be quoted from the Septuagint, showing that for hundreds of years the main meaning of the Greek word ἀρχή [archē] was “sovereignty”, “superiority”, “supremacy”, “rule” or “authority”.

¹⁹ The Septuagint translator here gave his interpretation to the symbolic meaning of the Hebrew text, so English translations from the Hebrew are slightly different here. However, this does not affect our present investigation, which is to explore the meaning and use of the Greek word ἀρχή [archē] over a period of hundreds of years.

²⁰ There are occasional slight differences of versification between the Septuagint Greek text of the Old Testament and the Masoretic Hebrew text on which translations into English and other modern languages are based. In the Masoretic Text (“MT”) this is Isaiah 9:7.

²¹ There are significant differences between the order of chapters of Jeremiah in the Greek text, compared with the Hebrew text. The MT reference for this verse in Jeremiah 49:35.

4. Cognates of ἀρχή [archē] and compound words using it

I. Cognates

Another important factor in understanding the meaning of a word is to look at its cognates, which are similar words that are related to it. Two or more words are cognates when they are derived from a common word. They therefore normally have an equivalent or very similar meaning. The dictionary defines “cognate” as follows:

adj. having a common ancestor or origin || (of languages or words) having a common source or root || (of subjects etc.) related, naturally grouped together²²

In this particular case, we discover that in Greek there are various cognates related to the word ἀρχή [archē].

Cognates of ἀρχή [archē] in the New Testament

Here are some of these words, along with their translation in the New International Version (2011 revision) and in the Jehovah’s Witness “New World Translation”.

Cognate	Sample verse	NIV translation	NWT translation
ἄρχων [archōn]	Luke 18:18	ruler	one of the rulers
ἄρχειν [archein]	Mark 10:42	those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles	those who appear to be ruling the nations
ἄρχειν [archein]	Romans 15:12	to rule over	to rule

Thus, these cognates of ἀρχή [archē] are translated, even by the New World Translation, by nouns such as “ruler(s)” and the verb “to rule”, words that emphasize the concepts of supremacy and authority.

The word ἄρχων [archōn] was also used as the title for the First Magistrate in Greek republics.²³ Thus, it was used for the Chief Magistrate of Athens. The word was also adopted by the Spanish language, and the derived Spanish form “arcontado” is defined by the dictionary as “the form of government in Athens”.²⁴

These uses confirm the semantic field of these words, which indicate positions of power, primacy, government and authority.

The word ἀρχή [archē] is of course a noun, but there are two verbs that are cognates of it, ἄρχειν [archein], as indicated in the above table, and ἄρχω [archō], which is used in the same way, with the meaning of to rule, to have priority, to initiate or to begin. Thus, in the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 15:6 we find “ἄρξεις σὺ ἐθνῶν πολλῶν σοῦ δὲ οὐκ ἄρξουσιν” [arxeis su ethnōn pollōn sou de ouch arxousin], which NETS translates as “You will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.”²⁵

²² “Longmans English Larousse, 1968, Harlow and London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd

²³ Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado, 1967, Paris: Editorial Larousse

²⁴ “Diccionario Etimológico Español e Hispánico” by Vicente García de Diego of the Real Academia Española, 1954, Madrid: Editorial S.A.E.T.A. See entries for “arcontado” and “arconte”.

²⁵ The New World Translation rendering of Deuteronomy 15:6 is not strictly-speaking relevant here, since it is purportedly from the Hebrew, not the Greek Septuagint translation. However, even their translation does indeed say “you will dominate many nations, but they will not dominate you.”

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

II. Compound words

A compound word is formed from two (or more) different words or morphemes. ἀρχή [archē] was also frequently used as a component in the creation of compound words, to convey the idea of superiority or supremacy.

Many of these cognates of ἀρχή [archē] and compounds formed with it occur in the Bible.

Compound words formed with ἀρχή [archē] that are used in the New Testament

Compound words	Sample verse	NIV translation	NWT translation
ἀρχισυνάγωγον [archisunagōgon]	Acts 18:17	the synagogue <u>leader</u>	the <u>presiding officer</u> of the synagogue
ἀρχιερεῖς [archieireis]	Matthew 2:4 and approx 50× in the NT	<u>chief</u> priests	the <u>chief</u> priests
ἀρχιποίμενος [archipoimenos]	1 Peter 5:4	<u>Chief</u> Shepherd	the <u>chief</u> shepherd
ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτῆρα [archēgon kai sōtēra]	Acts 5:31	<u>Prince</u> and Saviour	<u>Chief Agent</u> and Savior
ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς [archēgon tēs zōēs]	Acts 3:15 cf also Hebrews 2:10, 12:2	the <u>author of life</u>	the <u>Chief Agent</u> of life
ἐκατόνταρχος [hekatontarchos] Literally: “ <u>ruler</u> of one hundred”; usually translated by the Latin word “centurion” ²⁶	Matthew 8:5	a <u>centurion</u>	an army <u>officer</u>
τετραάρχης [tetraarchēs]	Matthew 14:1, Luke 3:19, etc.	the <u>ruler</u> (NRSV ²⁷)	the district <u>ruler</u>
ἀρχιτέκτων [architektōn]	1 Corinthians 3:10	<u>master</u> builder (NRSV) ²⁸	<u>master</u> builder

Again, the translations of compound words formed with ἀρχή [archē] show that even the New World Translation uses words and phrases that emphasise pre-eminence: “presiding officer”, “chief priests”, “Chief Agent”, “ruler”, “master builder”, etc.

²⁶ On three occasions, Mark uses a Greek transliteration of the Latin “centurion”: κεντυρίων [kenturion] (in 15:39, 15:44 and 15:45). These seem to be the only occasions when the Latin word is used in the New Testament, with the Greek ἐκατόνταρχος being used on all other occasions.

²⁷ The NIV gives the word “tetrarch”, which is not a translation but a mere transliteration of the Greek. In his “Analytical Greek Lexicon”, Friberg defines the Greek word as follows: “strictly *ruler over the fourth part* of a kingdom, *tetrarch*; in the NT a petty prince subordinate to the Roman emperor, *governor* of a region”. The Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible used the transliteration “tetrarch” and the word thus became adopted as an English word.

²⁸ The NIV has “builder”

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

Greek formed many other compound words with ἀρχή [archē], and some of these have been adopted by other languages. A few examples are: patriarch: father and ruler of a family; monarchy: rule by only one person; oligarchy: rule by a few.²⁹ Reed states, “It is the root of our words *archbishop*, *architect*, and other words referring to someone who is chief over others.”³⁰

The use of such cognates and compound words in the Bible is not rare. As an example, the word ἄρχων [archōn], “ruler”, is used over 130 times in the Greek text of the Bible (the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and the original Greek text of the New Testament).

III. Cognates of ἀρχή [archē] and compound words incorporating it in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament

Just as shown, above, with the use of the word ἀρχή [archē] itself in the Septuagint, we could also show the frequent use of cognates of ἀρχή [archē] (such as ἄρχων [archōn]), and compound words incorporating it that had been employed over a period of hundreds of years before the time of Christ, as confirmed by their use in the Septuagint, but we consider that the above evidence is more than sufficient to satisfy the reader, whom we would not wish to burden with further long lists of examples and their translations.

IV. The effect of using ἀρχή [archē] to create compound words

Thus we see that the effect of using ἀρχή [archē] to create compound words is always to convey the idea of leadership, rule or supremacy. Other examples could be given and no cases are observed throughout the Bible where using ἀρχή [archē] in a compound has any other effect. Significantly, when combined with another word, it never conveys the idea of beginning to do or be anything, only of being the principal or leading figure.

5. The Beginning

Naturally, there are also cases where the context indicates that the best English translation of ἀρχή [archē] may be by using the word “beginning”. After all, if such were not the case, it would not appear as an option in the lexicons! The most well-known case from the Septuagint is in its translation of the first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1. The Septuagint has

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν
[en archē epoiēsen ho theos ton ouranon kai tēn gēn],

which NETS translates as “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth”. The well-known Hebrew text of this verse³¹ is translated by the NIV as “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.

This meaning of the word ἀρχή [archē] is consciously echoed in the New Testament in John 1:1:

²⁹ The definitions here are taken from Wenham, J, “The Elements of New Testament Greek” (1965 edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 210. Other sources give equivalent definitions.

³⁰ Reed, David A, “Jehovah’s Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse”, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986 (31st printing, July 2006, p. 104).

³¹ בָּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ [Bārē’sīt bārā’ ’Elōhīm ’ēt haššamayim w’ēt hā ’ārets]

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
[en archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos],

which both the NIV and the NRSV translate as:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Significantly, this same verse describes Jesus as “God”, as confirmed by all major translations, but disputed by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is not the place to investigate the translation of the word θεὸς [theos], “God”, but the following verses in John 1 do in fact go on to describe Christ’s role in creation.

Thus, Genesis 1:1 starts with the words “In the beginning God ...” and John 1:1 starts with “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God”, a clear a deliberate parallel to the first verse of the Bible. John 1 goes on to explain that this Word was Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Since the earliest times, readers of John chapter 1 have understood it to describe Christ as God, without confusing him with what the New Testament repeatedly calls “God the Father”.

We need to bear in mind that the concept behind the Greek word here translated “beginning” is priority, primacy or pre-eminence. Thus, a good alternative to the English word “beginning” might be a phrase such as “first of all” or “before anything else”. This helps us to see that, however it is translated into other languages, the Greek word ἀρχή [archē] always carries the idea of source, origin, supremacy, precedence or having the first place.

6. “I am the First; I am the Beginning.”

When I was in discussion with some Jehovah’s Witnesses concerning Revelation 3:14, one of them triumphantly quoted from Christ’s words Revelation 22:13: “I am ... the beginning”. For her, that settled it: I was wrong, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses were right. This verse stated, she said, that Christ had a beginning; therefore, he was a “created being”.

Unfortunately, this merely illustrates at its worst the Jehovah’s Witness technique for using Scripture: pick a verse, or – better still – a phrase taken out of a verse, and present it as “conclusive evidence” of the claim being made. Point made. End of discussion. Victory for Jehovah’s Witness doctrine and defeat for everyone else. It doesn’t matter if some phrases in the verse have been missed out, as in this case. Above all, avoid any phrase and any verses that may undermine this claim or show it to be false.

Let us first look at the whole of Revelation 22:13. It states:

ἐγὼ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.
[egō to alfa kai to ō, ho prōtos kai ho eschatos, hē archē kai to telos].

Word-for-word, this means:

I the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

The NIV renders this as “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” The New World Translation has the same words.

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

In other words, even the Jehovah's Witnesses translation doesn't claim that here Jesus is saying, "I had a beginning." But Jehovah's Witness teaching claims that this is what the verse means.

However, we should not stop here. The next step is to look at the wider context, starting with the book of Revelation. The phrase quoted above is one of a series of similar statements in the book of Revelation. In fact, there is a pattern of "Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End" sayings in Revelation. To avoid misunderstanding them or being misled, we need to look at all of them. Here they are, with an indication of who is the speaker in each case:

A (Alpha) & Ω (Omega) in Revelation		
God the Father:	I am the Alpha and the Omega.	(1:8)
Christ:	I am the first and the last.	(1:17)
Christ	These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.	(2:8)
God the Father:	I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.	(21:6)
Christ:	I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.	(22:13)

So we see that the same statements are attributed three times to Christ and twice to God the Father. Richard Bauckham states, "The three phrases – the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end – are very probably to be considered equivalent."³²

So, if Revelation 22:13 "proves", as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim, that "Christ had a beginning and that therefore he is a 'created being' ", Revelation 1:8 and 21:6 must "prove" that God the Father "had a beginning; therefore, He is a 'created being'."!

This is the point at which we realise that:

- 1) The Jehovah's Witnesses are selectively quoting Bible verses out of context and ignoring those verses that do not suit their doctrine;
- 2) Their understanding of the meaning of the word ἀρχή [archē] is faulty. It nowhere implies the meaning "created being"; on the contrary, it always implies some sort of pre-eminence, rulership, control or even existence before anything else.

Next, we should look beyond the Biblical book in question (in this case, the book of Revelation), to the general teaching of Scripture.

The following words of Isaiah 44:6 are particularly relevant in this case (see also Isaiah 41:4 and 48:12):

"This is what the LORD says – Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God'. (NIV)" The New World Translation's version of this verse is as follows:

³² Richard Bauckham in "The Theology of the Book of Revelation", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993 (23rd printing, 2015), p. 26.

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

“This is what Jehovah says, The King of Israel and his Repurchaser, Jehovah of armies: ‘I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me.’”

Clearly, the verses in Revelation echo these statements in Isaiah. In this message addressed to inhabitants on earth, God had said that before anything or anyone on earth existed – or even the earth itself – He existed, and that after everything and everyone had ceased to exist on earth – or even the earth itself – He would still exist.

Clearly, if God describes Himself as “the first and the last, the beginning and the end”, this cannot mean that He is finite, that He is a “created being” or that at one time He did not exist. He is graphically saying in a way that mortal, finite human beings will understand that He is immortal, infinite and eternal.

Therefore, when Christ makes the same statements, they, too, do not imply that He is finite, that He is a “created being” or that at one time He did not exist. He is applying to Himself God’s words in Isaiah 44 and graphically saying that He is immortal, infinite and eternal.

PART FOUR: THE MEANING OF REVELATION 3:14

1. So can Revelation 3:14 mean that Christ was created by God?

What is the correct translation of the word ἀρχὴ [archē] in Revelation 3:14? Is it possible that it might mean “beginning” in the English sense of the word? In order to answer these questions, we need to ask another: “Do other Biblical statements about Christ support the claim by the Jehovah’s Witnesses that he was a ‘created being’?” In a word, no. Not only is there a total absence of verses that might be understood to state this, on the contrary, the Bible states that “all things were made by him [i.e., Christ]; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3, Authorised Version).

In Colossians 1:16 we read concerning Christ that “by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him.” (NIV) This passage emphatically states (twice!) that Christ is not a created being. As I state in my review of Jason BeDuhn’s book on the New World Translation (here: <http://livingwater-spain.com/beduhn.pdf> – see chapter 14),

If all created things were made by Christ, then this can lead to only one conclusion: that Christ himself is not a created being. (After all, he could not, by definition, have “created himself”, which is a meaningless phrase.)

The Jehovah’s Witnesses recognise that this verse proves the falsehood of their doctrine claiming that Christ is a ‘created being’. They solve the problem, not by changing their teaching *but by changing the Bible!* To get round this problem, they add the word “other” no less than *four times* in their “translation” of Colossians 1. Thus, their version of the Bible says “all other things have been created through by him”.

In the book review referred to above, I comment as follows:

By the simple addition of the one word “other”, the meaning is totally changed to the *opposite* of the meaning of the Greek text.

The Greek text says that Christ is not a created being. The NWT translation says that he *is* a created being, just that all *other* created beings were created by him (after he had been created by God).

The meaning of the Greek text is clear. Translating it does not present any problems. ...

... the Greek language does have a word for “other”, but ... it appears no-where in this text. In fact, Koiné Greek has two words for other:

- ἕτερος [“heteros”] means “other (different from)”
- ἄλλος [“allos”] means “other (another one the same as)”.

Neither of these words appears in Colossians 1:16-17, but the English word “other” has been added by the NWT translators, who object to the clear meaning of the passage, which tells us that Christ is not a created being.

I refer readers to the above book review for more information on this.

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

So we have the answer to the question, “Do other Biblical statements about Christ support the claim that he was a ‘created being’?” It is a clear and unambiguous “no”. In seeking to translate accurately the word ἀρχή [archē] in Revelation 3:14, we are led by the consistent teaching of the Bible unavoidably to the conclusion that the meaning of this word is best rendered by words such as “ruler” or “authoritative sovereign”.

2. Conclusion

We need to return to the immediate context of the use of the word ἀρχή [archē] in Revelation 3:14. As indicated above, Christ here uses three phrases to describe himself:

1. the Amen
2. the faithful and true witness
3. the ἀρχή [archē] of God’s creation.

We have already noted that the first phrase echoes a title given to God in Isaiah 65.

The second phrase echoes part of the description of Christ in Revelation 1:5, which says: “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” (NIV) It is significant that this earlier description also calls Christ “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (in the Greek, ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς [ho archōn tōn basileōn tēs gēs]).

To our amazement, we discover that the New World Translation (2013 revision) translates Revelation 1:5 as follows:

‘Jesus Christ, “the Faithful Witness,” “the firstborn from the dead,” and “the <u>Ruler</u> of the kings of the earth.” ’ (emphasis added)
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The reference in Revelation 3:14 back to Revelation 1:5 with its use of the word ἄρχων [archōn], “Ruler”, is a major indication of meaning of the cognate word ἀρχή [archē] in Revelation 3:14. Here, Christ has just quoted from Revelation 1:5, the source of the phrase “the faithful and true witness”. He *continues to refer back to the same verse in chapter 1*, this time using the word ἀρχή [archē] instead of the word ἄρχων [archōn], *since both words mean “ruler”*. This follows on from the application to Christ of the title “the Amen”, which had previously been applied to God in a major Old Testament prophetic book. Thus, the intended meaning is clear.

Having used a phrase (“the Amen”) that likens Christ to God and a phrase (“the faithful and true witness”) that alludes to Revelation 1:5, where Christ is described as the ruler of the kings of the earth, *is it likely that the third phrase in Revelation 3:14* (“ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ” [hē archē tēs ktíseōs tou theou]) *could be contradicting the meaning of the previous two, by saying that Christ is a mere “created being”?*

On the contrary, it appears to be a commentary on two statements in the gospel of John, a book that many scholars believe was published perhaps five years before the book of Revelation – and had the same author. Those statements about Christ come in the Prologue to the gospel and are:

1. “He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:2)
2. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:3, NIV)

What is the real meaning of Revelation 3:14?

The first statement declares that Christ was co-existent with God: when God was there, so was Christ, “in the beginning”.

The second statement declares that it was Christ who made everything.

What better way to summarise both these statements than by using the word ἀρχὴ [archē] in its full range of meanings:

- Christ was there from “the start” – i.e., always;
- Christ was the First Cause, the Initiator and the Source of all created things.

All of the above evidence leads us to the unavoidable conclusion that the translation of ἀρχὴ [archē] in Revelation 3:14 as “the beginning” by the Authorised (King James) Version is seen to be an error which did not manage to communicate the fullness of the meaning of the word. This error was enthusiastically grasped by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who have gone further by changing the final phrase of the verse, “the creation of God” (which was correctly rendered in the AV/KJV), to make it say “the creation by God”, a change that they needed to make in order to give support to their mistranslation of the key word ἀρχὴ [archē] earlier in the same verse.

All the evidence presented in this paper indicates that the correct translation of Revelation 3:14 is the description of Christ as “the ruler, the source or the (supreme) sovereign of God’s creation”.

An accurate translation that conveys the meaning of the Greek text would be:

Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Source and Ruler of God’s creation ...

All translations require decisions to be taken, as to which word in the target language best represents the meaning of the words in the source text, in the context in which they were used. A paraphrase that includes the nuances of the key words, but does not introduce any new ideas that are not in the text, would be:

Thus says the LORD, the Amen, who has the characteristics of God, the witness who has faithfully and truly revealed God’s nature and character, the Source, Initiator, First Cause and Supreme Ruler of God’s creation ...

No translation that conveys a meaning that is in conflict with this can be justified.