

An Examination of the Consistency of the *New World Translation* with the Stated Philosophy of the Translators¹

Kenneth J. Baumgarten²

Kevin Gary Smith³

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the extent to which the The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures' (NWT) rendering of selected Christologically significant texts is consistent with its own philosophy of translation. To test the NWT's consistency with its own philosophy of translation, the authors selected nine Christologically significant texts, namely, John 1:1, 1:18, 20:28, Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8-9, 2 Peter 1:1 and 1 John 5:20. Each of these nine texts arguably uses the Greek term θεός in reference to Jesus Christ. The authors conclude that in seven of the nine sample texts, the NWT violates one or more of its stated translation values and principles. The most common violation is its pervasive tendency to subvert the most natural understanding of the Greek text in favour of a 'preferred religious view'.

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

² Ken serves as the pastor of Compass Point Community Church in Brunswick, Maine. He holds an MTh from the South African Theological Seminary. This article emanates from his MTh thesis, entitled *A Critique of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures' Treatment of Nine Texts Employing θεός in Reference to Jesus Christ*, which was supervised by Bill Domeris.

³ Kevin is the Vice-Principal and Academic Head of the South African Theological Seminary. He holds an MA in New Testament from Global University, a DLitt in Biblical Languages from Stellenbosch University and a DTh from SATS.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the extent to which the *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*' (NWT) rendering of selected Christologically significant texts is consistent with its own philosophy of translation. To test the NWT's consistency with its own philosophy of translation, we have selected nine Christologically significant texts, namely, John 1:1, 1:18, 20:28, Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8-9, 2 Peter 1:1 and 1 John 5:20.

In selecting a set of texts for consideration, the issues of manageability of the sample size and significance of the texts themselves are equally relevant. A random sample may not accurately reflect inconsistencies. The sample set must (1) adequately represent the breadth of New Testament documents, (2) involve a theological issue that has a probability of influencing the translators, and (3) be small enough to be manageable.

The nine texts that arguably use $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ in reference to Jesus Christ meet all three criteria. The size and scope of the sample are self-evident. As for the theological significance, the sample speaks to the essential ontology of Jesus Christ, an issue of supreme scholarly import, as well as conflict for the Jehovah's Witnesses translators, who deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

2. The NWT's philosophy of translation

The Forward of the NWT opens with the declaration that the Greek autographs were inspired and are therefore sacred, and that no copy or translation of the autographs can be considered inspired (NWT 1950:5). Since it is generally accepted that none of the New Testament autographs still exist (Metzger 1992:201), one may infer that all source material used by Bible translators, as well as all Bible translations, are to varying degrees imperfect.

After acknowledging that any and all translations of the text will be less than perfect, the committee first commends those who have sought to bring the Bible to people in their native tongues, and then criticises them for interweaving "religious traditions, hoary with age . . . into the translations to color the thought . . . in support of a preferred religious view" (NWT 1950:6).

In opposition to this practice, the committee declares its first philosophical value: "The endeavour of the New World Bible Translation Committee has been to avoid this snare of religious traditionalism" (NWT1950:6). Furthermore, the committee members implied the importance of allegiance to the text when they wrote, "Our primary desire has been to seek, not the approval of men, but that of God, by rendering the truth of his inspired Word as purely and as consistently as our consecrated powers make possible" (NWT 1950:7).

A second value is related to the first, namely, *consistency*. To maintain this consistency, the translators claim to have "assigned one meaning . . . [t]o each major word" and to have "held to that meaning as far as the context permitted" (NWT 1950:9). This consistency in use of vocabulary is intended to facilitate distinction in English between different Greek words.

The third philosophical value expressed by the translators is the use of the "everyday languages" of the intended audience. The committee stated, "The translation of the Scriptures into a modern language should be rendered in the same style, in the speech forms current among the people" (NWT 1950:9). The use of contemporary vernacular is intended to make any translation as accessible to the layman as were the original texts.

The fourth expressed value is literal, word-for-word translation (rather than thought-for-thought rendering), as much as possible.

We offer no paraphrase of the Scriptures. Our endeavour all through has been to give as literal a translation as possible, where the modern English idiom allows and where literal rendition does not for clumsiness hide the thought. That way we can best meet the desire of those who are scrupulous for getting, as nearly as possible, word for word, the exact statement of the original (NWT 1950:9).

The fifth principle is to take no "liberties with the texts for the mere sake of brevity or short cuts" and to make no "substitutions of a modern parallel, where the original idea makes good sense" (NWT 1950:9). Where value four protects the original wording of the texts, value five guards the original

manners of expression, wherever they are still recognisable and comprehensible to a modern audience. To disregard this value would, by definition, result in paraphrase, earlier rejected by the committee.

So, to be consistent with the committee's expressed philosophy of, and aims for, their translation, the renderings reflected in the NWT should meet these five criteria:

- a) They should not be affected by the controlling influence of any "preferred religious view". Allegiance to the text must override allegiance to a theological point of view.
- b) The translation should be consistent in its application of Greek grammar, syntax and vocabulary in order to render "the truth of his inspired Word as purely and as consistently as our consecrated powers make possible" (NWT 1950:7).
- c) It should consistently hold one translation for each major Greek word, to allow for distinction between Greek words, as much as context will allow, without changing the meaning of the text.
- d) It should employ English vernacular common to the 1950's, rather than theological jargon. The text should be as understandable to the modern reader (contemporary to its publication) as the original was to its original audience.
- e) It should maintain the use of first-century figures of speech without alterations or updating, unless to do so would obscure their meaning to a modern reader.

3. The NWT’s treatment of the sample texts

3.1. John 1:1

Table 1: John 1:1 in the Westcott-Hort GNT and the NWT

Westcott-Hort's GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.	Originally the Word was, and the word was with God, and the Word was a god.	In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.

By rendering ἐν ἀρχῇ as ‘originally’, the 1950 edition broke three of its stated values. This rendering stretches the semantic range of the prepositional phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ beyond its accepted uses. It also alters a first-century figure of speech—‘in the beginning’ being an established biblical idiom (see Gen. 1:1, LXX)—obscuring the Old Testament allusion and thereby influencing the meaning for a modern reader. Obscuring the allusion to the Old Testament creation story may represent a preferred religious view, minimising the intimation in John 1:1 that Christ was uncreated. The change to ‘in [the] beginning’ in the 1970 edition brings the rendering of this prepositional phrase in line with the translation committee’s stated values.

The translators’ decision to render θεός in the final clause as ‘a god’ has drawn extensive scholarly attention. The NWT’s case for translating θεός as ‘a god’ is based upon the premise that anarthrous nouns are indefinite (or qualitative, yet translated as indefinite) and articular nouns are definite (1950:773-777). In John’s prologue, there are eight occurrences of θεός, in various cases and constructions (Countess 1982:55). The NWT renders the two which are articular (vv. 1-2) as ‘God’. It translates four of the six anarthrous occurrences of θεός ‘God’, one ‘a god’ (v. 1), and one ‘the [only-begotten] god’ (v. 18). Therefore, the translators concretely applied the rule they espoused in only one of eight occurrences. This inconsistency is magnified by the fact that all eight examples occur with the same noun in the space of just eighteen verses (John 1:1-18). For their inconsistency to be justifiable, John would need to have used θεός with a remarkable degree of

variability. Such variable usage is unattested to by the body of published comment on the prologue. Wallace (1996:267) suspects a controlling theological bias as the basis of this inconsistency.

We believe the translators' preferred religious view that Christ is a created being inferior to Almighty God motivated them to render the predicate nominative θεός as 'a god' in John 1:1c, treating it as an indefinite-qualitative noun. Translations such as 'the Word was divine' or 'the Word was God' are equally consistent with their observation that the anarthrous θεός expresses a quality of the subject, and are more consistent with their general handling of the noun θεός in John's prologue.

The NWT advocates one translation for each major Greek word, without changing the meaning of the text. Countess (1982:54-55) notes that of 282 anarthrous occurrences of θεός in the New Testament, the NWT only translates 16 of these occurrences "a god, god, gods, or godly". This means that in regard to what is arguably the most "major word" (NWT 1950:9) in the New Testament, the NWT was inconsistent with its stated philosophy 94 percent of the time.⁴

In its treatment of John 1:1, the 1950 NWT violates every aspect of its stated philosophy and values of translation. The revised edition corrects the issues related to John 1:1a, but does not remedy the (a) preferred religious view, (b) inconsistent application of Greek grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, and (c) inconsistent translation of major Greek words (θεός) observed in the treatment of John 1:1c.

⁴ The remaining 266 occurrences are translated Jehovah; a practice wholly unjustified by the manuscript evidence and Greek grammar. See Countess (1982) for a complete treatment of the subject.

3.2. John 1:18

Table 2: John 1:18 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT⁵

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.	No man has seen God at any time; the only- begotten god who is in the bosom [position] with the Father is the one that has explained him.	No man has seen God at any time; the only- begotten god who is in the bosom position with the Father is the one that has explained him.

In John 1:18a, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, the NWT correctly treats the anarthrous θεόν as definite in semantic force (‘God’), and not indefinite (‘a god’, as in John 1:1c). While this treatment is consistent with the rules of Greek grammar and translation, it is inconsistent with the NWT’s previously noted position that anarthrous nouns are indefinite or qualitative (1950:773-777). This may seem like hair-splitting, but to apply their espoused principle rigidly in the case of John 1:1c, but not to apply it in this case, requires an explanation. The translators do not provide any explanation.

As for its treatment of the phrase μονογενῆς θεός (“the only-begotten god”), the anarthrous construction is correctly translated as semantically definite. While this translation is inconsistent with the NWT’s stated position on anarthrous nouns, the articularity and definiteness of the expegetical phrase ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς may have been seen as justifying the translators’ deviation from their stated principles. In the absence of explicit comment within the NWT, we cannot be certain of the deciding factors behind this slight inconsistency.

⁵ The only difference between the rendering of the 1950 edition and the 1970 revision is that the revision removes the brackets from the word ‘position’. Whether bracketed or not, “position” is an interpolation, adding nuanced meaning not lexically native to the noun τὸν κόλπον. While in this context, κόλπος most certainly signifies ‘closest fellowship’ (Meyer 1964:826), such inference is best left to the reader.

3.3. John 20:28

Table 3: John 20:28 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.	In answer Thomas said to him: “My Master and my God.”	In answer Thomas said to him: “My Lord and my God!”

When the NWT was revised, ‘Master’ was replaced with ‘Lord’, which had been footnoted as an alternative translation of κύριος in the 1950 edition, making the verse more consistent in regard to assigning a single translation to each major Greek word. On the surface, the translation of this verse appears to be consistent with the translators’ stated principles and values.

However, it seems that the translation of θεός as ‘God’ with a capital ‘g’ is a sign of a preferred religious view, specifically a bias against viewing Jesus Christ as God, which would violate the principle of faithfulness to the original text over any theological bias. A survey of the sample texts shows that when the NWT interprets θεός as referring to God the Father, the ‘g’ is upper case (God), but when interpreted as referring to the Son (see John 1:1, 18), the ‘g’ is lower case. If this inference is correct, the subtle intimation is that the text refers to two people, that is, ‘my Lord’ refers to Christ and ‘my God’ to the Father. This would be a most unlikely interpretation of Thomas’ exclamation.

3.4. Acts 20:28

Table 4: Acts 20:28 in the Greek and the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950
προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.	Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed <i>you</i> overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own [Son].

For anyone wishing to produce “as nearly as possible, word for word, the exact statement of the original” (NWT 1950:9), which usually has as its goal the hope of leaving difficult exegetical ambiguities unresolved so that readers of the translation have access to the same interpretive options as the readers of the original had, Acts 20:28 poses a serious challenge. The difficulty relates to the rendering of διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου, since the relationship between the two genitive nouns is ambiguous. If the author intended τοῦ ἰδίου as an attributive modifier of τοῦ αἵματος, then the correct translation would be ‘with his own blood’; this translation carries the inference that the verse calls Jesus θεός. On the other hand, if the author intended τοῦ ἰδίου as a substantive, the literal translation would be ‘with the blood of his own [one]’; this means the Father purchased the church with the blood of his own [Son]. The exegetical choice between these two options is close and no translation can sit on the fence.

Along with several major translations (e.g., RSV; NRSV), the NWT interprets τοῦ ἰδίου as a substantive and renders it “his own [Son]”. Countess (1982:60-61) believes the addition of ‘Son’ to the verse “irrefragably stems from a ‘preferred religious view,’ a Socinian view of Jesus Christ.” While the decision to treat τοῦ ἰδίου as a substantive rather than an attributive may have been made on doctrinal grounds, it is consistent with sound exegesis of the Greek text. The NWT’s employment of brackets when adding ‘Son’ to the verse is laudable. It alerts readers that ‘Son’ has been supplied by the translators. If complete objectivity were the translators’ goal, they might have added a footnote containing the alternate rendering and/or a note explaining the ambiguity, but this is not a requirement for consistency with the translators’ values.

3.5. Romans 9:5

Table 5: Romans 9:5 in the Greek and the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
<p>ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.</p>	<p>to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ sprang according to the flesh; God, who is over all, be blessed forever. Amen.</p>	<p>to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ [sprang] according to the flesh; God, who is over all, [be] blessed forever. Amen.</p>

The exegetical difficulty in this verse concerns how to punctuate the Greek text. If a comma follows σάρκα, the implication is that rest of the verse stands in apposition to Χριστὸς, describing Christ as the one ‘who is over all, God blessed forever’ (e.g., JB; KJV; NASB; NRSV). If the Greek text is punctuated with a period or semi-colon after σάρκα, then the rest of the verse functions as a new sentence, a eulogy addressed to God the Father.

The NWT’s punctuation and translation of the verse shows the translators’ belief that θεός is the subject of 9:5b and not a predicate of ὁ Χριστὸς. In the Appendix, the translators state plainly, “We take the passage as a reference to God and as pronouncing a blessing upon him for the provisions just named which he has made . . .” (NWT 1950:779). Two pieces of supporting evidence for this conclusion are (a) a supposition that ὁ ὧν is perhaps the equivalent of ‘I am’ and (b) that four translations (Moffatt 1922; Ballantine 1923; Goodspeed 1923; RSV) agree with their rendering. Amongst the many translations that disagree with their rendering, only the KJV is mentioned.

The NWT’s comments on Romans 9:5b make an important statement about the translators’ philosophy of translation. First, the Appendix (1950:778-779) acknowledges the two schools of thought on this issue, and quotes both Moulton (1906) and Robertson (1947) as stating that ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων and θεός is more naturally taken as in apposition to ὁ Χριστὸς. Then, however, the Appendix rejects this interpretation in favour of taking it as an independent clause, saying, “The grammar of the Greek text admits of this”. It seems that

when dealing with texts that may refer to Jesus Christ as God, the NWT translators take the grammatical and semantic *allowance* of an alternate interpretation as the equivalent of an *endorsement* of that interpretation (John 1:1c; 20:28; Rom. 9:5). Although seemingly recognising that this is grammatically the less likely interpretation, the NWT adopts it without giving adequate reasons for overruling the grammatical evidence. This violates two principles stated in the Foreword, namely, avoiding a “preferred religious view” and of providing as accurate a “word for word” translation as is possible.

3.6. Titus 2:13

Table 6: Titus 2:13 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ	while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Savior, Christ Jesus	while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus

The great Christological debate regarding this verse hinges on whether the genitive chain τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ refers to one person (‘our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus’) or to two persons (‘the great God and our Saviour, Christ Jesus’). A large majority of scholars find the weight of the grammatical evidence strongly favours the genitive chain referring to one person (see Smith and Song 2006 for a detailed treatment).

The NWT rendering indicates that the translators believe τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος refers to two different persons. The Appendix states, “we render ‘the great God’ as separate from ‘our Savior Christ Jesus’” (1950:782). The argument given in the Appendix for this treatment begins by citing Moulton, “We cannot discuss here the problem of Titus 2:13, for we must, as grammarians, leave the matter open” (NWT 1950:781). This quote is given without defining ‘the problem’ of Titus 2:13, rather presuming the reader has

discerned a problem from the alternate translation offered in the footnote to the verse.

Next, Moulton's (1906) *Grammar* is described as citing five papyri from the seventh century "which attest the translation 'our great God and Saviour' as current among Greek-speaking Christians" (NWT 1950:781-782, quoting Moulton 1906). The NWT rejects this evidence on two bases: (a) the relative youth of seventh-century manuscripts makes them an unreliable indicator of first-century usage; and (b) the theological implications of the cited materials, specifically apotheosis ('mother of god', and evidence of secular parallels which apply 'god and saviour' to deified kings), renders it incredible.

As to the age of the papyri, it has not gone unnoticed that the NWT heavily relies on fourteenth-century manuscripts to justify the practice of inserting Jehovah into the text of the New Testament (Countess 1982:25). To reject seventh-century manuscripts while embracing a small group from the fourteenth-century requires explanation, which the NWT does not provide.

As for the content of the seventh-century papyri, the theological implications of the papyri caused the NWT translators to (a) disregard any grammatical or syntactic evidence that might be gleaned, and (b) to make an unsupported statement to justify rejecting Moulton's evidence: The inspired Word of God is against any suggestion that his consecrated people borrowed or annexed anything from the impious pagans who apotheosized or deified their rulers (1950:782). Evidence for New Testament borrowing from pagan culture and practices is partially illustrated by (a) Christ being described in Colossians as leading a victory parade, much like a Roman general or emperor, making a spectacle of the powers and authorities; (b) Paul's appropriation of the pagan temple to the unknown God to evangelise those who worshipped there; and (c) Paul's frequent quoting of Greek slogans and poetry, and his application of them to instruct his readers in the Christian life.

While the rejection of the theological implications of the content of the papyri is well within the rights of any and all readers, it seems to have prejudiced the NWT translators against relevant information on Greek syntax and usage. The NWT translators' professed distaste for the theological content of the papyri cited from Moulton, has resulted in the ignoring of grammatical and

syntactical evidence that may have had bearing on the accuracy of the translation. The apotheotic elements in the papyri were coincidental to the syntactical evidence. The rejection of this evidence, on theological and not on grammatical grounds, may be reflective of a preferred religious view exerting a controlling interest. Furthermore, the resulting rejection of ‘God and Saviour’ as a stereotyped formula may be considered a violation of the NWT’s stated principle of maintaining the use of first-century figures of speech. By separating this title into a reference to two persons, the original meaning is obscured for a modern reader.

3.7. Hebrews 1:8

Table 7: Hebrews 1:8 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
<p>πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν, Ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [τοῦ αἰῶνος], καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ·</p>	<p>But with reference to the Son: “God is your throne forever and ever, and the scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of straight principles.</p>	<p>But with reference to the Son: “God is your throne forever and ever, and the scepter of your kingdom is [the] scepter of straight principles.</p>

The major point of debate regarding this passage is whether ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς must be translated ‘your throne, O God’ or whether the NWT rendering, ‘God is your throne’ is a viable alternative. If the phrase is examined in isolation, either rendering is legitimate, that is, in conformity with the rules of Greek grammar. ‘God is your throne’ interprets ὁ θεός as the subject in a verbless clause, while ‘your throne, O God’ takes ὁ θεός as an example of a nominative used in place of a vocative.

The phrase does not, however, occur in isolation. When the immediate context is allowed to bear on its intended meaning, there are compelling reasons for favouring the translation ‘Your throne, O God’. Verses 7-9 form a μέν . . . δέ construction which contrasts what God says about the angels (v. 7) with what he says about the Son (vv. 8-9). Interpreting ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός as ‘God is your throne’ obliterates the contrast and destroys the force of the argument,

since this could just as easily apply to the angels (Wallace 1996:59). For the argument to make sense, ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός must be making a statement about that Son that could never be made about the angels. This demands the translation, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'.

This is another example, reminiscent of Romans 9:5, of the NWT exploiting grammatical licence to conceal reference to Christ as θεός. While the rules of Greek grammar may permit ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός to mean 'God is your throne', the context of statement in Hebrews 1 does not. Once again, the translators' preferred religious view seems to overshadow their allegiance to sound exegetical handling of a grammatical ambiguity.

There are two lesser issues of consistency in the NWT's treatment of Hebrews 1:8b. First, by rendering καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου as "and the sceptre of your kingdom is the scepter of straight principles", the NWT has moved the predicate (ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου) to the head of the sentence, allowing an English reader to assume that the Greek predicate is actually the subject. As a result, the NWT has obscured the fact that the writer of Hebrews deliberately reversed the order of the subject and predicate in the LXX, making ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος the subject, parallel with ὁ θρόνος (v. 8a). Second, much of the NWT's Appendix for John 1:1c is dedicated to the principle that the translation should reflect the fact that anarthrous nouns are indefinite. In Hebrews 1:8b, however, the NWT renders the anarthrous ῥάβδος as "the scepter" instead of 'a scepter', which is inconsistent with the translators' espoused principle.

3.8. 2 Peter 1:1

Table 8: 2 Peter 1:1 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950	NWT 1970
Συμεὼν Πέτρος δοῦλος καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῖς ἰσότιμον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,	Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained the faith, held in equal privilege with ours, by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ: . . .	Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained the faith, held in equal privilege with ours, by the righteousness of our God and [the] Savior Jesus Christ: : . . .

The issue here is almost identical to that in Titus 2:13, namely, whether τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ refers to one person, Jesus Christ, who is addressed as ‘God and Saviour’, or to two persons, the Father being addressed as ‘God’ and Jesus Christ as ‘Saviour’. The NWT rendering shows that the translators believe the phrase refers to two separate persons, ‘our God (the Father)’ and ‘the saviour Jesus Christ’.

In a footnote to the verse, the translators disclose that the choice of a ‘two-persons’ treatment was made “to agree with the distinction between God and Jesus in the next verse”. Agreement between verses 1 and 2 is irrelevant, however, because the texts are not structurally analogous. Any perceived analogy overlooks the application of Sharp’s Rule to the qualifying grammatical construction that is present in verse 1, but absent in verse 2 (the second substantive in the chain is Ἰησοῦ; proper names are disqualified for consideration under Sharp’s rule). Verses 1 and 2 only appear to be analogous. ‘God and Saviour’ was a well-recognised formula, generally used when referring to an individual. ‘God and Jesus’, on the other hand, was not an established formula and cannot be treated as analogous to ‘God and Saviour’. A large number of translations recognise this difference and translate verse 1 with a single referent and verse 2 as referring to two persons (e.g., Goodspeed; Berkeley; GNB; NAB; NASB; NEB; NIrV; NIV; NRSV; REB; RSV; RV; TCNT; TNIV).

The NWT’s rationale for treating 1 Peter 1:1 in such a way that θεός does not refer to Jesus Christ is weak. It fails to recognise that ‘God and Saviour’ is a stereotyped formula, but ‘God and Jesus’ is not. Rather than taking the grammar of verse 1 at face value by applying Sharp’s rule, it elevates a perceived parallel construction in verse 2 over the grammatical evidence of verse 1. The result is a rendering of 2 Peter 1:1 in which the “NWT has adduced a disjunction between God and Christ . . . where no necessary disjunction exists in the Greek” (Countess 1982:69).

The rejection of ‘God and Saviour’ as a stereotyped formula violates the NWT’s stated principle of maintaining the use of first-century figures of speech, while failing to apply Sharp’s rule (on dubious grounds) looks like prioritising a preferred religious view over the grammar of the original text. We consider the NWT rendering of this verse to be inconsistent with its stated principles and values of translation.

3.9. 1 John 5:20

Table 9: 1 John 5:20 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT

Westcott-Hort GNT	NWT 1950
οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἦκει καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γινώσκομεν τὸν ἀληθινόν, καὶ ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.	But we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us intellectual capacity that we may gain the knowledge of the true one. And we are in union with the true one, by means of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life everlasting.

The ambiguity in this verse concerns whether οὗτός in the final clause refers to Jesus Christ or to God the Father. If to Jesus Christ, then John is calling him ‘the true God’. Although it is possible οὗτός refers to Christ here, there are convincing arguments for taking it with reference to the Father. We believe the NWT rendering of this verse is consistent with the translators’ stated philosophy and values of translation.

4. Conclusions

In seven of the nine texts examined, the NWT has shown inconsistency with its stated values and philosophy. In six of the nine texts, there is evidence that it has been affected by the controlling influence of a 'preferred religious view', allowing a theological point of view to override allegiance to the biblical text (see John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1). There are several examples of downplaying allusions to Christ as $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$, such as the strained effort to justify calling the incarnate Word "a god" in John 1:1, the NWT's treatment of John 20:28, in which "my God" refers to God the Father, despite Thomas' utterance being a direct response to Jesus, and the separation of the conjoined 'God and Saviour' in Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1, resulting in references to two separate persons (God the Father and Jesus) rather than the grammatically natural single referent.

In five of the sample texts, the NWT has been inconsistent in its application of Greek grammar, syntax and vocabulary (see John 1:1, 18; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1). For example, in John 1:1, the NWT's case for translating $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ as "a god" is based upon the premise that anarthrous nouns are indefinite (1950:773-777), but the translation fails to apply this premise consistently. Its handling of $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ also reveals that it has not held one translation for each major Greek word. Finally, its handling of the noun phrase 'God and Saviour', in particular, alters a first-century figure of speech, obscuring its meaning for a modern reader (see Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1).

In conclusion, then, the NWT's treatment of nine Christologically significant texts demonstrates pervasive inconsistency with the five values and principles for translation described by the translators. Any translation that consistently violates its own espoused principles and values must be deemed untrustworthy. We believe this theory is born out by the changes to the Forward and notes in the revised editions. The 1950 edition has a twenty-two page Forward, copious footnotes and over 30 pages of relevant appendices. The revised editions have a two page Forward and no notes or appendices. It would seem that rather than re-examining and remedying inconsistencies (brought out in various critical reviews), the Watchtower Society removed the statements which delineated the translators' working philosophy and specific reasons for

the translations of certain verses which fall outside the mainstream. No explanation is given for this change.

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