

A CRITIQUE OF *THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION OF THE CHRISTIAN
GREEK SCRIPTURES*' TREATMENT OF NINE TEXTS EMPLOYING ΘΕΟΣ IN
REFERENCE TO JESUS CHRIST.

by

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The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary.

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis
is my own original work and has not previously in its
entirety or in part been submitted to any academic
institution for degree purposes.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

Since shortly after its initial publication in 1950, The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (NWT), has been the subject of critical examination by the academic community, as well as both Catholic and Protestant church-oriented publishers.

A primary issue emphasized by reviewers is theological bias as it influences NWT's translation. Countess (1967:160), in regard to John 1:1, has noted that "a prior 'preferred religious view' on the part of the witnesses" has motivated the NWT translators to disregard and violate the rules of Greek grammar as a "grammatical means to a doctrinal end".

My proposed research is founded on the assumption that if a Bible translation's treatment of the original text, either in toto, or in regard to passages related to a specific major subject or theme, can be objectively determined to be erroneous, such a translation's usefulness as either an academic or devotional resource may be called into question. I do not assert that isolated minor differences in translations necessarily invalidate an entire translation, but systemic, concerted

anomalies may certainly do so. As such, the Anti-trinitarianism of the Witnesses (Metzger 1953) and their treatment of related texts (Bowman 1991) cannot be ignored, and has not been ignored, being a common subject of most of the work to date (Steurman 1956).

Bowman (1991:74) writes that “the case against the NWT must rest on the evidence from within the NWT itself; . . .” (he consequently concludes that the evidence is sufficient to reject NWT as an “unreliable translation”).

Bowman's position is similar to my own, inasmuch as my thesis is predicated on a belief that theological bias on the part of NWT's translators is only a problem if it results in an erroneous translation of the text, and only such mistranslation of the Greek text calls into question the trustworthiness of NWT (or any other translation). All translators have biases. It is only when those biases override the translators' allegiance to the text that they become problematic.

Which leads to another common theme in the extant body of critique; that of contradictions of NWT with its stated philosophy of translation. The great gift of the NWT's publishers to their readers is the inclusion of a very clear statement of purposes and principles in the forward to the first edition (1950). As early as 1951, the aims of the translators were being used as a standard for measuring their efforts and detecting controlling biases (Mattingly 1951:439). Countess, in his “Critical Analysis” (1952), masterfully and methodically identified and cataloged certain inconsistencies of NWT with the stated aims of the translators.

The scope and import of these inconsistencies must have been early noted by the Watchtower Society, as subsequent editions of NWT included a much shortened forward, lacking the detail and force of the original.

The work to date has thoroughly identified liberties taken with grammar and lexeme, as well as inconsistencies with NWT's stated aims, and has used Witness theology and doctrine as a backdrop for explaining the assumed motives behind these different translations.

What the extant body of critique has not done is establish and apply an objective test to its treatment of a major subject or theme of scripture (such as the Divinity of Christ), for determining the trustworthiness of NWT as an academic and/or devotional resource.

1.2. Problem

1.2.1. Main Problem

To what extent is *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures'* treatment of texts that arguably¹ use θεός in reference to Jesus Christ consistent

¹ The issue of the referent of θεός in the nine texts of the study is contested to differing degrees (Harris 1998). The arguments for whether or not θεός is referring to Jesus Christ will be evaluated based on grammar and immediate context, on a text-by-text basis, in the research project itself.

with (a) its stated philosophy of translation, and (b) sound exegesis of the Greek text?

1.2.2. Subordinate Problems.

(a) If the NWT's treatment of the texts in question is inconsistent with its stated philosophy of translation, is the nature of the inconsistency such as to preclude sound exegesis of the texts?

(b) Does NWT's treatment of the nine texts in question indicate a pervasive theological bias in regard to the divinity of Christ, and if so, does that bias override the translators' allegiance to the Greek text and sound exegesis thereof?

1.3. Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to determine if the NWT's translation of Christologically significant texts, specifically, the nine texts in which θεός is arguably used in reference to Jesus Christ, is faithful to the Greek manuscripts and the generally accepted tenets of Greek grammar, syntax, and exegesis.

There are two foreseeable potential outcomes.

Potential Outcome 1: If the study shows NWT to be faithful to the original text and to sound Greek grammar, syntax, and exegesis, the results will call into question the validity of the majority of critique and commentary written since NWT's publication.

Potential Outcome 2: If NWT is not found faithful to the original text, (a) the previous research will be affirmed, and (b) the author's hypothesis will have been confirmed; that the theological biases of NWT's translators against the notion of the divinity of Jesus Christ motivated them, consciously or unconsciously, to consistently violate their own stated philosophy of translation, and the rules of Koine Greek grammar and exegesis.

Either outcome will accomplish the purpose of the study.

1.4. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the trustworthiness of the NWT as an academic or devotional resource. For the NWT to be a viable resource for academic purposes, or devotional use by those adhering to orthodox Christianity, fidelity to the original message of the Greek text is the highest priority (Fee 1983:21).

If NWT's treatment of the divinity of Jesus Christ, as reflected in its translation of the nine texts studied, is objectively demonstrated to favor a theological bias over the evidence of the Greek manuscripts, then NWT's treatment of other groups of related texts would be worthy of study. For example, are other bodies of texts related to issues such as pneumatology, ecclesiology or thanatology (areas in which Jehovah's Witnesses' theology is divergent from mainstream protestant & catholic theology [Bowman 1991]), similarly effected?

The NWT's publishers expressed concerns that would support such inquiry into any translation in the forward to the 1950 edition:

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. There is no
benefit in self-deception. More than that, those who
provide a translation for the spiritual instruction of
others come under a special responsibility as teachers
before the divine Judge. Hence our appreciation of
the need of carefulness (pp. 7-8).

For this study to accomplish the researcher's purposes, a methodology must be employed that applies the accepted rules and principles of grammar (e.g., Robertson 1947; Summers 1950; Blass, Debrunner and Funk 1976; Brooks and Winberry 1978; Wallace 1996; Mounce 2003), and exegesis (e.g., Fee 1983), to the nine relevant Greek texts, identifying both the NWT's fidelities and infidelities to the text and its stated philosophy of translation, and then determining (a) to what extent NWT's inconsistencies can or cannot be justified, and (b) if the inconsistencies, taken as a group, depict a controlling theological bias.

1.5. Design and Methodology

The research project is exclusively a literary study. The study involves three distinct tasks: in task 1, the philosophy of translation, purpose, goals and objectives of the NWT's translators must be determined. In tasks 2 and 3, which will be concurrent, the nine texts of the research sample will be subjected to exegesis, and the NWT's treatment of the texts will be evaluated against (a) the NWT's philosophy of translation, and (b) sound exegetical practices.

1.5.1. Task 1: Determining the NWT's Philosophy of Translation

The primary resources for determining the NWT's philosophy of translation will be the literature of the Watchtower Society. Foremost, the 1950 edition of NWT, with its extensive preface and footnotes which make specific and implied statements about philosophy of translation and understanding of Koine Greek grammar and syntax. Other Watchtower publications will be used to determine NWT's translators' and publishers' views on inspiration (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 1989), appropriate handling of scripture, and criteria for evaluating Biblical translations.

Secondary sources will also be employed to accomplish this task, such as Countess (1967; 1982), Bowman (1991), and Reed (1993).

The research method for accomplishment of this task will be “Content Analysis” (Mouton 2001:165-7), and will answer the exploratory question: What is the stated philosophy of translation of the NWT translators and publishers?

1.5.2. Tasks 2 & 3: Translation and Exegesis of the Nine Texts.

The resource materials for tasks 2 & 3 will consist of the 1950 Edition of NWT, (which unlike subsequent editions, includes the extensive forward, footnotes, and appendices), the USB 4 Greek New Testament, a number of commentaries, grammars, lexica, and previous critiques and research works.

The research method for accomplishing task 2 is Textual Analysis (Mouton 2001:167-8), applying Textual, Historical, Source, Redaction, Structural, and Rhetorical criticism to the nine Greek texts of the research sample. My approach to this task will be to analyze the Greek text and evaluate the merits of various alternate renderings, including those of the NWT.

Task 3 will be accomplished through a polemical approach to the NWT's treatment of the nine texts, arguing the strengths and weaknesses of NWT in light of the Greek text and accepted rules of grammar and exegesis.

While working tasks 2 & 3, I will seek to identify themes within NWT's treatment of the nine texts. The conclusions drawn after the accomplishment of these 3 tasks will either prove or disprove my hypothesis.

1.6. Hypothesis

I suspect that the research will show that (a) the theological biases of NWT's translators against the notion of the divinity of Jesus Christ caused them to consistently violate their own stated philosophy of translation and the rules of Koine Greek grammar and exegesis, and (b) that this bias resulted in a work that is more appropriately deemed a paraphrase than a translation (contra NWT,1950:9), and (c) that the NWT is therefore, not suitable for academic or devotional use by those holding orthodox Christian beliefs.

Chapter 2

The Translation Philosophy of the NWT

The first section of this chapter will describe the history of *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (1950), as well as briefly detail subsequent editions. The second section will catalog the values and principles of Bible translation expressed by the translators and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, as reflected in the NWT's Forward, as well as other Watchtower Literature, and outside sources.

2.1. A brief history of the NWT

According to the “Authorized Site of the Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses” (www.jw-media.org), as viewed on 9 September 2007, there are 6.4 million Jehovah's Witnesses, “organized into more than 95,000 congregations in some 230 lands.” Prolific publishing has been a hallmark of Jehovah's Witnesses since the first edition of *Watchtower* was printed in 1879 (Reed 1993:9). The Witnesses have produced over 10 billion pieces of literature in their first century of publishing (1993:9), and these documents have served as a framework for conducting their primary missionary endeavour: catechetical-style instruction

using their various books, magazines, and brochures as Bible study guides (Stuermann 1956:327).

In 1907, the Watchtower Society published its first edition of the Bible for its members. The *Berean Bible*, was the King James Version, with a concordance and over 600 pages of notes (Reed 1993:39). A subsequent edition of the KJV was released in 1942 (Reed 1993:95).

In 1944, the Watchtower published an edition of the *American Standard Version* of the Bible, which they embraced for its use of the name Jehovah, as a translation of the tetragrammaton, throughout the Old Testament, (Reed 1993:97-8). The ASV became the standard Bible used by the Witnesses until it was augmented by the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in 1950, which included 237 insertions of Jehovah as a translation of both Θεός and κύριος (Mattingly 1951:440). Their new translation of the New Testament is primarily based on Westcott & Hort's 1881 Greek text, with variations being footnoted (NWT1950:8).

In 1953, the first volume of the *New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures* was published, with the fifth and final volume being released in 1960 (Reed 1993:105-115). In 1961, the five volumes of the *New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures* were combined with the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* and were published in the single volume, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (Reed 1993:110).

The text of the NWT was revised in 1970, 1971, and 1984 (Reed 1993:115). The nine texts being considered in this research were unaffected in the revisions.

In 1969, the Watchtower published *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*, featuring Westcott and Hort's Greek text, with a literal English rendering beneath each word and the NWT in the outer margins. A revised edition was released in 1985 (Reed 1993:124-5).

An electronic edition of *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* is available at the Watchtower's Internet home page, www.watchtower.org/e/bible/index.htm. The copyright date for the on-line edition is 2006. This version lacks notes or textual apparatus of any kind.

2.2. The Translation Committee

From 1879 until about 1942, the authors of, and contributors to various Watchtower publications were clearly identified. That changed with the election of Nathan H. Knorr as president in 1942. Knorr was born 23 April, 1905 and died 8 June, 1977. He served as president from 1942-1977, the era in which the NWT² was produced (Reed 1993:93). Knorr's administration marked the introduction of anonymous publication within the Watchtower organization (Stuermann 1956:326). Stuermann offers two reasons for the adoption of this authorial

² The abbreviation NWT indicates the 1950 edition of The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scripture unless otherwise noted.

anonymity. Knorr's predecessors, Russell (1879-1916) and Rutherford (1917-1942), were both prolific writers, where Knorr, who was not, relied on his vice president, FW Franz, for most writing tasks (p. 326). Anonymity would eliminate comparisons between Knorr and his predecessors. Also, the Watchtower had experienced personality-centred defections from the main group during the lives and after the deaths of Russell and Rutherford (p. 325). Anonymous publishing would make the Watchtower Society the seeming originator and owner of the thought-life of the group, without promoting individuals around whom cults of personality might develop.

With this authorial anonymity as its backdrop, the 1950 NWT was published with the following attribution; “Rendered from the Original Language by the New World Bible Translation Committee” (title page). Nowhere in the volume is the number of committee members, or their academic qualifications to serve on such a committee, described. As noted by Countess, “the translators' identity has been kept not only from the public, but also from the rank and file constituents” (1982:7).

Reed (1993:103) cites Raymond Franz, one-time member of the Watchtower Governing Body and nephew of Knorr's vice president FW Franz, as identifying Nathan Knorr, Frederick Franz (FW Franz), Albert Schroeder, and George Congas as the members of the committee. The only formal training attributed to the committee members is that of Franz, who had “two years of Greek” (unclear if

Classical or Koine) at the University of Cincinnati, and who had also taught himself Hebrew.

If the members of the committee had other formal training or academic credentials, it has remained either undocumented or at least undiscovered by this researcher. The committee, whatever their academic qualifications, recognized their responsibility for accuracy:

. . . those who provide a translation for the spiritual instruction of others come under a special responsibility as teachers before the divine Judge.

Hence our appreciation of the need for carefulness

(NWT 1950:7-8).

What would seem self-evident is that to produce a “careful” translation of any document, some technical facility with the source language and some understanding of the principles of exegesis and translation are necessary. Because of the lack of documentation, it remains unclear whether the New World Bible Translation Committee possessed such qualifications. However, since NWT must be evaluated on its own merits, the qualifications of the committee members are not as relevant as the quality of their work product. In the end, what matters is whether the NWT is consistent with (a) its stated philosophy of translation, and (b) sound exegesis of the Greek text.

To make that determination, the committee's philosophy of translation must be clearly understood.

2.3. Expressed values and principles of translation

This section will identify the NWT's translation committee's philosophy of translation as expressed in the Forward to the 1950 edition. The Forward to the 1961 edition will be considered to determine if the philosophy had changed with the revision.

The Forward of NWT opens with the declaration that the Greek autographs were inspired and are therefore sacred, and that no copy or translation of the autographs, except by the original authors 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 imperfect, to varying degrees.

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 criticizes 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).

The 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 to make any translation as accessible to the layman as were the original texts.

The fourth expressed value is a literal, word-for-word translation (rather than thought-for-thought), 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 recognizable 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 NWT **should**:

1. not be affected by the controlling influence of a “preferred religious view.” Allegiance to the text must override allegiance to a theological point of view.

2. 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).
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. maintain the use of 1st century figures of speech without alterations or
updating, unless to do so would obscure their meaning to a modern
reader.

2.4. The Forward to the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1970).

The Forward to the 1970 revised edition consists of only two pages, compared to the twenty pages of the 1950 NWT. It reiterates the solemnity of the task of translation (NWT 1970:5), without any reference to translations undertaken by others, or the influence of “religious traditions, hoary with age” (NWT 1950:6). It also reaffirms the value of accuracy in translation (NWT 1970:5).

It states two purposes for the revision; “greater consistency in the renderings of the related parts of the Holy Scriptures, such as in harmonizing with the original Hebrew readings the reading of quotations made in the Christian Greek Scriptures” (NWT 1970:6), and “closer conformity to the literal reading in the original languages.”

2.5. A Word About Textual Criticism

As mentioned in section 2.1, NWT inserts the word Jehovah as a translation of occurrences of both θεός and κύριος some 237 times (Mattingly 1951:440). The committee devotes over fifteen pages of the twenty page Forward to justifying this practice. These justifications provide implications, but few clear statements about the committee's understanding and application of textual criticism.³ Writing about the committee's approach Countess has said,

The translators of NWT have adopted—as well as invented—certain principles whereby they have chosen a reading not found in their basic Greek text or in any Greek text. Unfortunately, the Forward has not set these principles down in some clear fashion. They must be garnered from the forward, the body of the translation, footnotes, and the Appendix (1982:12).

³ For a detailed treatment of textual criticism in NWT, see Countess, 1982:9-40.

Much of what can be gleaned from the Forward, notes and Appendix is not directly relevant to the study sample of this research. Therefore, rather than detailing them here, the applicable implications and explicit statements of the committee will be addressed in the relevant sections of the research.

Chapter 3

Critique and Exegesis of the Sample Texts in John's Gospel

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyze the NWT's treatment of the three texts of the research sample which are found in John's Gospel: John 1:1, 1:18, and 20:28.

It is widely accepted that John 1:1-18 forms a Prologue to John's Gospel (Beasley-Murray 1987:xc, 1-17; Harris 1992:52; Morris 1995:63-95; Wallace 1996:267). Describing the Prologue, Beasley-Murray wrote, "from a literary viewpoint, it is a closely knit composition, constructed with consummate artistry" (1987:4). To treat the relevant verses from the Prologue independently would ignore the context in which they were so carefully written.

Therefore, verses 1 and 18 will be treated as part of a larger unit, as they form the logical beginning and end of the carefully constructed argument of the Prologue to John's Gospel. The meaning of each verse is better understood within the context of the Prologue as a whole than if treated independently.

A third text is pivotal to the Prologue; John 1:14, which marks the movement of “the Word” (Jn. 1:1) from its pre-incarnate state to the point of incarnation (ο λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο), and foreshadows a consequent significance of the incarnation, that of revealing God to those who have not seen Him. Therefore, John 1:14 will be addressed as a logical bridge between John 1:1 and 1:18. John 20:28 will be treated independently.

The NWT's treatment of the texts will be evaluated against (a) established exegetical practices, and (b) NWT's philosophy of translation.

3.2. John 1:1

Table 1: John 1:1 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT.⁴

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
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” (1950:282).	“In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god” (1970:1151).

Regarding John 1:1, the NWT makes no reference to variant readings for this verse, so it must be assumed that Westcott & Hort's text, as in Table 1, was the basis of the translation. The same is the case for verse 14.

⁴ Where the NWT has been revised, the 1970 edition [2nd revision] will also be quoted for comparison. In cases where no revision has occurred, only the 1950 edition will be quoted.

3.2.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

Simple observation of the structure of this verse in the Greek shows it to consist of three separate, yet related clauses. Separate because each clause contains a subject, a verb, and a predicate. Related because each clause contains the same subject, the same verb, and three different predicates; each revealing a distinct truth about the same subject. I will first evaluate each clause separately, then comment on the verse as a whole.

The subject of each clause in the verse is ὁ λόγος (“the Word”),⁵ identifiable as such by being articular in the nominative case in a predicate construction.

3.2.1.1. The First Clause

In the first clause (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), the prepositional phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ, although being emphasized by word order, is employed to tell the reader something about the Word (Beasley-Murray 1987:10), namely, that *the Word was in the beginning*.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ employs the most frequently used preposition in the New Testament, ἐν, which occurs 2752 times (Wallace 1996:357). Generally, ἐν indicates state or

⁵ Much has been written about the meaning of “The Word” (ὁ λόγος). Inasmuch as the NWT is silent on the issue, and a reader of this investigation may access many fine treatments of the subject, it will suffice here to agree with Harris, quoting Minn, the Word is “the Inward and Expressed Thought of the Eternal Mind” (Harris 1992:54).

place, and not motion, and in this instance, used with a stative verb, it is definitely not transitive (1996:357).

Morris effectively argues that John employed the well known language of the first words of the Book of Genesis (“In the beginning”) to allude to another creation account as the foundation of his gospel. Kyser (1978:351) states, “the clear echo of Genesis 1:1 in the prologue seems to mean that the author wants the reader to think of nothing short of that mysterious and supra-temporal *first*”. Morris argues that “like the first, the second [creation account] is not carried out by some subordinate being. It is brought about by the agency of the *Logos*, the very Word of God” (1995:65, bracketed text added).

The use of the preposition ἐν rather than ἀπό signifies that John was describing the Word's status at the time of the beginning, and not that the Word existed from the beginning (originating at this beginning). Had the author wished to communicate the latter idea, he could have constructed the clause thus: ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἦν ὁ λόγος, with an indefinite or qualitative sense, or ἀπ' ἡ ἀρχῆς ἦν ὁ λόγος, to denote a definite (specific) beginning. I take ἀρχή to be semantically definite according to the context (alluding to the creation described in Gen. 1:1), and as such, is anarthrous in consistency with Colwell's Rule (to be addressed with the third clause).

Also, had John wished to communicate the origin of the Word, the simplest way would have been to substitute the verb ἐγένετο (γίνομαι) for ἦν (εἰμί): ἐν ἀρχῇ

ἐγένετο ὁ λόγος. The fundamental difference between γίνομαι and εἰμί is that the former speaks of something happening, or becoming something new, and the latter refers to being. While γίνομαι is often used as a substitute for εἰμί, the converse is not true, and such substitutions frequently indicate new status or place (BAGD 1979:158-160). John was familiar with ἐγένετο, as attested to by his use of it in verses 3, 6, and 14. His choice of the stative verb tells us that he is concerned with the Word's being at the beginning and not the Word's becoming.

In keeping with the allusion to the Genesis 1 creation account, which tells us, “In the Beginning, God created . . .”, John’s account must be reconciled with that of Genesis, which is done in the second and third clauses of John 1:1.

3.2.1.2. The Second Clause

The second clause in the Greek is as follows; καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. The employment of two articular nouns (ὁ λόγος and τὸν θεόν) with the prepositional phrase πρὸς τὸν θεόν depicts the relationship between two distinct entities, answering the question, “What was the relationship between the Word and God?” The answer being, “the Word was with God.” How are we to understand this relationship?

The preposition πρὸς with the accusative is generally used to indicate motion toward something or someone (Mounce 2003:339). The use of πρὸς with the stative verb negates the transitive force of the preposition (Wallace 1996:359), resulting in the majority translation, “the Word was with God”, indicating that the

Word who “was [existing] at the beginning” was present [together] with God at that beginning.

Had John's intent been to merely describe the Word's concurrent presence with God at the beginning, more conventional syntax was available to him. The preposition παρά with the dative case indicates proximity of place (Wallace 1996:378), specifically being alongside of, or next to something or someone (Mounce 2003:339). So one might expect John to write καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, (and the Word was alongside, or next to, God). This dative construction would address the spatial element of relationship: “the Word was [there] with God.”

Had John wished to express a relational aspect between the Word and God, the preposition μετά, in a genitive construction (Mounce 2003:339), was available: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ (and the Word was together with God). Another option for expressing relationship would have been σύν with the dative; καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν σὺν τῷ Θεῷ (and the Word was together with God). Where μετά would indicate “close association”, σύν would “express intimate personal union” (Wallace 1996:377-8).

John may be employing a double meaning through his choice of construction. The prepositional phrase πρὸς τὸν Θεόν may be indicating both a spatial and a relational view of the Word's being with God. Morris (1995:67), regarding the use of πρὸς here, quotes Robertson, “the literal idea comes out well, ‘face to face

with God” (Robertson 1947:625). As Morris (1995:67) writes, “If the preposition is to be taken literally, it means ‘the Word was toward God.’” I would argue that “toward” may indicate a *static inclination*, both spatially and relationally; what Morris (p. 67), describes as “accompaniment and relationship.” Section III.4.b of BAGD’s treatment of πρός (1979:710) justifies this usage to denote “friendly relationship”, where section III.7 (1979:711) describes being “(in company) with someone.”

Accepting the premise of double nuance of πρός (spatial and relational), the first and second clauses would together express the following; In the beginning, when the beginning was happening, the Word already was, and the Word was both physically present with God and relationally inclined toward God. The importance of the first and second clauses of John 1:1 cannot be minimized, as John reiterates both points, echoing the prepositional phrases of both clauses in verse 2 (οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν).

While this interpretation is neither endorsed nor rejected by the NWT, it will prove important for understanding the third clause of John 1:1.

3.2.1.3. The Third Clause

The third clause (*καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος*) is the first occasion in the New Testament where θεός is arguably used in reference to Jesus Christ (or the pre-incarnate Word). At first glance, the clause is a simple predicate nominative, with ὁ λόγος

as subject and θεὸς as predicate, resulting in the majority translation: “and the Word was God.”

As will be seen in the section on the NWT's treatment of John 1:1, the NWT translators based their rendering of this clause on the anarthrous state of θεός. This requires careful consideration.

In April of 1933, E.C. Colwell's article “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament” was published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. The basic premise of his article is this: “A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb” (1933:13). Notice that the definiteness of the PN (predicate nominative) is assumed in the rule, and not determined by it. When considering PN constructions, Colwell states that “the variable quantum is not definiteness but word-order” (1933:13).

It cannot be overstated that Colwell's rule does nothing to determine the definiteness, indefiniteness, or qualitativeness of a noun, but speaks to the articularity, or lack thereof, of predicative nouns in the presence of a verbal copula, having been determined definite by context. Colwell asserts (1933:20), “if the context suggests that the [anarthrous pre-verbal] predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun in spite of the absence of the article.” He further asserts: “In the case of a predicate noun which follows the verb the

reverse is true; the absence of the article in this position is a more reliable indication that the noun is indefinite" (1933:20-21).

While misinterpretation of Colwell's Rule is well documented (Wallace 1996:257-258), misinterpretation or misapplication of Colwell's Rule is not a relevant issue in this study, as there is no evidence that the NWT translators had knowledge of Colwell's Rule, despite Metzger, writing contemporaneously with the NWT, calling it "an established rule of Greek grammar" (1953:75).

What will prove relevant to the application of Colwell's Rule to John 1:1c is the clarifications of the Rule made by Philip B. Harner and Paul S. Dixon (Wallace 1996:259-260). Harner (1973:76) found that "an anarthrous pre-verbal PN is usually *qualitative*—not definite nor indefinite." According to Wallace (1996:260), Dixon also "suggests that the anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative (in John's Gospel at least) is primarily qualitative in force." Wallace (1996:262) draws a "general rule" from the work of Dixon and Harner, concerning phrases fitting "Colwell's Construction"; "An anarthrous pre-verbal PN is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite." These clarifications of Colwell's Rule by Dixon and Harner require an answer to the following question: Is Θεός in John 1:1c, indefinite, definite, or qualitative in semantic force, and does Colwell's Rule apply?

If Θεός in John 1:1c is taken as indefinite, the most logical translation of the phrase καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος would be that of the NWT: "and the Word was a god"

(1950:282). An indefinite anarthrous θεός would not, or could not be the God of the Old Testament, or any specific god for that matter, but must refer to a god, some god within a pantheon of at least two gods.

All forms of Biblical monotheism – strict Old Testament monotheism, Trinitarian Christian monotheism, as well as the monotheism of the Jehovah's Witnesses, do not support the polytheism implied by the translation "a god."

If θεός in John 1:1c is taken as definite, then the two translations available are, "and the Word was God", or, in consistency with NWT's espoused principles,⁶ "and the Word was the God."

John 1:1b stated that "the Word was with God"; "God" being the translation of the articular τὸν θεόν, which is definite in semantic force by virtue of the article. The prepositional phrase πρὸς τὸν θεόν made it clear that the Word, and the God with whom the Word was at the beginning are distinctly separate persons. Had John sought to correct this view and tell his readers that "the Word" and "God" were in fact one in the same person, a convertible proposition, in which both the subject and predicate carry a definite force, would have accomplished this end. Such a convertible proposition could easily be constructed: καὶ ὁ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος, (inconsistent with Colwell's Rule), or, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός, (in conformity with Colwell's Rule). Both the NWT (1950:774) and Wallace (1996:268) argue against

⁶ Detailed in 3.2.2 Critique of NWT exegesis.

the illogic of such a proposition on the grounds that ὁ Θεὸς in John 1:1c, would have to be the same God as the τὸν Θεόν of John 1:1b, and that would result in a convertible proposition logically equal to “The Word was the Father” or “The Father was the Word.” This would become quite problematic as soon as readers reached John 1:14; “The Word (*The Father*) became flesh.” An interpretation that equates the Word, especially the incarnate Word, with God the Father, or at least “reduces the Son to an aspect of God the Father” promotes the Sabellian heresy (Brown 1965:547; Wallace 1996:268).

In light of the research of Harner and Dixon, it is most likely that Θεός in John 1:1c is qualitative in force (Beasley-Murray 1987:10-11; Harris 1992:67; Wallace 1996:269). This interpretation opens up the possibility for translations such as those cited by the NWT (1950:773) at the beginning of their Appendix, “and the Word was divine” or “the Logos was divine.”

An immediate objection to such translations is the availability of the word Θεῖος (divine), as employed in 2 Peter 1:4. Had John wished to communicate some abstract divinity as an attribute of the Word, he could have simply substituted Θεῖος for Θεός: καὶ Θεῖος ἦν ὁ λόγος.

That John did wish to communicate an attribute of the Word, rather than the identity of the Word, is supported by his chosen word order, and the anarthrous use of Θεός, whether for grammatical reasons or to communicate a qualitative force (Harris 1992:63). As previously stated, the identity of the Word could have

been made clear through a convertible proposition using an articular ὁ θεός. By leading the sentence with the anarthrous predicate, John tells his readers that the primary concern of the third clause is the *Godhood* of the subject. Morris (1995:68-9) commenting on this clause states, “John is not merely saying that there is something divine about Jesus. He is affirming that he is God, and doing so emphatically as we see from the word order in the Greek.” Morris also states, “all that could be said about God may fitly be said about the Word.”

While I agree with Beasley-Murray, Harris, and Wallace that the force of θεός in John 1:1c is to be taken primarily as qualitative; it is noteworthy that the semantic force of nouns need not be exclusive. Wallace (1996:263, Chart 27) demonstrates a semantic overlap between definite and qualitative pre-verbal predicate nominatives. Describing this overlap, in terms of the distinction between the persons ὁ λόγος of John 1:1c, and τόν θεόν of John 1:1b, and the sameness of their nature, Beasley-Murray (1987:11) writes, “it denotes *God in his nature*, as truly God as he with whom he ‘was,’ yet without exhausting the being of God . . .” Harris (1992:66) states, “Between the Logos and God the Father, there is not simply a similarity of nature, but an identity of essence.” Also, “having distinguished the person of the Logos from that of the Father (τὸν θεόν, 1:1b), John wished to point to their commonality, not merely in purpose but in being (θεός)” (1992:67).

So the “qualities” being described by the qualitative use of the anarthrous PN Θεός are the qualities native to God the Father, τόν Θεόν of John 1:1b. This is consistent with a majority of translations (KJV, NKJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NASB), “and the Word was God,” in answer to the question, “What was the Word?” (The Word was God in essence) and not the question, “Who was the Word?” (The Word was God the Father, in identity).

I would argue that the semantic overlap of Θεός in John 1:1c is not unlike the double meaning mentioned in regard to John 1:1b. John carefully structured the verse to allow for a latitude of meaning to encompass the fullness of his message. This is particularly relevant as the verse is considered as a whole.

3.2.1.4. Summary of John 1:1 and Conclusions

The following is an exegetical summary of the three clauses of John 1:1. The Apostle first alludes to the creation story of Genesis 1:1 by echoing the words, “In the beginning.” John employs this prepositional phrase to locate his subject temporally at the time of the beginning, and to show Him as logically pre-existing the time of, and creative activity of the beginning. In other words, when the beginning was taking place, the Word was already existing (Carter 1990:37).

The second clause, assuming the audience believes God to be the only being to pre-exist creation, places the Word, a distinct person from God, in the presence of, and in communion with God at the time of that beginning.

Assuming that such a disclosure may confound the monotheistic orientation of his audience, John's third clause clarifies this thought by saying that the Word, who was in existence at the time of beginning, who was present with and in relationship with the God of creation, was himself always (from the beginning) of the very same stuff as the God with whom he was, while still being a distinct person from the God with whom he was.

This third clause forms the climactic apex of a logical chiasm (if not a structural chiasm) formed by verses 1 and 2. John 1:1a and 1:2a both address the Word's being in the beginning; John 1:1b and John 1:2b both address the Word's presence and inclination toward God, and John 1:c describes the nature of the Word, as being essentially God.

The question remains. Does θεός refer to Jesus Christ in John 1:1? The Word, who is the subject of John 1:1, is not identified as Jesus Christ until later in John's Gospel (1:29). Does θεός in John 1:1 refer to the Word (as the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ)? No and yes.

In John 1:1b, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, the accusative case τὸν θεὸν does not refer to Jesus Christ, but to God the Father (Harris 1992:67). This is evident by the articularity of τὸν θεὸν, insuring the understanding that the Word was with a specific God in the beginning, and that God was not Jesus Christ (the Word).

In John 1:1c, the PN θεός does refer to Jesus Christ (the Word), but not as the person God the Father (in a convertible proposition), rather to express that the

pre-incarnate Christ is essentially the same as God the Father in nature and quality, and may be called God without diminishing in any way what God may be known to be (in a subset proposition). The Word is truly and fully God, but not God the Father.

3.2.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis of John 1:1

The NWT translates the first clause, “Originally the Word was” (1950:282). By translating ἐν ἀρχῇ “originally,” the NWT elected to convert the Greek noun ἀρχῇ to an English adverb, thus making the Greek noun modify the stative verb ἦν, rather than serving as a predicate to the subject ὁ λόγος. In “footnote a” to this verse, the NWT acknowledges the more literal reading, “Literally, ‘In (At) a beginning’” (1950:282).

“Originally the Word was” seems more reflective of ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἦν ὁ λόγος, than John's Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, stressing existence *from* the beginning, and not necessarily at/in the beginning. It also eliminates the allusion to Genesis 1:1 altogether, leading the reader away from the natural connections envisioned by the author. In the revised edition, the phrase is replaced by “In [the] beginning the Word was,” (1970:1151), and for this restoration of original meaning, the editors are to be commended.

The NWT translates the second clause, “and the Word was with God,” (1950:282, 1970:1151), in concurrence with KJV, NKJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, JB, NASB, NCV, and others.

The translation of the third clause of John 1:1, “and the Word was a god” (1950:282), is among the most controversial and contradicted in the NWT. Writing about this clause, Metzger (1953:75) referred to the NWT’s treatment as “pernicious” and commenting on the translators’ grasp of Greek grammar said, “As a matter of solid fact, however, such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation.” He addressed the theological implications with the following sentence: “It must be stated quite frankly that, if the Jehovah’s Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists” (p. 75). The Watchtower Society maintains that they are monotheists,⁷ requiring careful consideration of their treatment of this clause.

The NWT dedicates the majority of four pages of its Appendix (1950:773-777) to justifying the translation, “and the Word was a god” (1950:282). The argument begins with quotes of John 1:1 from *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, (1943), and Moffatt’s *A New Translation of The Bible* (1935), both treating θεός as an adjective, translated “divine”. The NWT follows these quotes with,

Every honest person will have to admit that the Word
or Logos “was divine” is not saying that he was the
God with whom he was. It merely tells of a certain

⁷ See “Should You Believe in the Trinity?” (1989:12-14) and “What Does the Bible Really Teach?” (2005:41-42), and visit http://watchtower.org/e/jt/index.htm?article=article_01.htm to examine the Watchtower Society’s stated monotheism.

quality about the Word or Logos, but it does not identify him as one and the same as God (NWT 1950:773-774).

This declaration is inconsistent with the NWT's translation. The noun θεός, which they seem to believe functions adjectivally, in a qualitative sense, is translated quantitatively (a god, among multiple gods) rather than qualitatively (divine) (Countess 1982:42).

The Appendix then spends three paragraphs, citing Dana and Mantey (1927:149), to assert that an articular noun indicates "identity" or "personality" (God), while an anarthrous noun "points to a quality about someone" (divinity) (NWT 1950:774). Countess (1982:43) observes that the quote of Dana and Mantey is truncated at the point where the grammarians make a pro-Trinitarian statement, which undermines the NWT's argument; "As it stands, the other persons of the Trinity may be implied in θεός" (1927:149).

The NWT (1950:775) employs two rules promoted by Robertson for handling predicate nouns to establish that θεός ἥν ὁ λόγος is not a convertible proposition; first, that "predicate nouns tend to omit the article," and second, "predicate nouns occur with the article in convertible propositions" (Robertson 1919:767-8). The NWT concludes that if θεός ἥν ὁ λόγος is not a convertible proposition, "the Word was a god" is a legitimate and favourable translation, as it creates a convertible proposition (1950:776-7).

While they are correct in their assertion that the PN θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος is not a convertible proposition (NWT 1950:776), they fail to tell their readers that a subset proposition (Wallace 1996:41-3) does not necessarily make the Word completely distinct from God, rather a “particular within the larger class” (1996:42). They argue that if the proposition is not convertible, the Word must be a lesser god; reasoning that if the phrase “God was the Word” is not true, then the phrases “the Word was a god” or “the Word was divine” must be true. However, the subset proposition leaves another alternative. While “God was the Word” is not true inasmuch as all that may be considered God is not exclusively limited to investment in the Word, the essence of who and what God is may be fully found in the Word. Morris (1995:69) makes this point well:

He says “the Word was God,” not “God was the Word.” The latter would have meant that God and the Word were the same; it would have pointed to an identity. But John is leaving open the possibility that there may be more to “God” than the “Word” (clearly he thought of the Father as God, and his later references indicate a similar status for the Spirit). But he lays it down unequivocally that nothing less than “God” will do for our understanding of the Word.

The NWT's treatment of this clause is rooted in the semantic force of the anarthrous θεός as being qualitative, and not definite or indefinite (despite the indefinite translation, “a god”). And while the Appendix cites well established Greek grammarians like Dana and Mantey, Robertson, and Green, Metzger (1953:75) points to the absence of Colwell's Rule as a key resource in the NWT's translation: “It overlooks entirely an established rule of Greek grammar which necessitates the rendering, ‘. . . and the Word was God.’”

The NWT's choice of “a god,” while likely intended to magnify the distinction between the Word and God the Father, undermines the Watchtower Society's claims of monotheism, and of more relevance to this investigation, conflicts with the NWT's claim (1950:774) that θεός here is qualitative.

In summary, the NWT's translation of John 1:1 (a) obscures the seemingly obvious allusion to the Genesis 1 creation story by translating Ἐν ἀρχῇ as “Originally,” and (b) inserts polytheism into John's Gospel, by treating what the translators themselves believe to be a qualitative noun (1950:774), as though it were quantitative; making the Word “a god” within a plurality of gods.

The NWT's later revision of John 1:1a to read “In [the] beginning . . .” is commendable, as it restores John's intended allusion.

3.2.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation (John 1:1).

As detailed in chapter 2, to be consistent with the committee's expressed philosophy of, and aims for their translation, the NWT should:

1. not be affected by the controlling influence of a “preferred religious view.”
2. be consistent in its application of Greek grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.
3. consistently hold one translation for each major Greek word, without changing the meaning of the text.
4. employ English vernacular, common to the 1950's, rather than theological jargon.
5. maintain the use of 1st century figures of speech without alterations or updating, unless to do so would obscure their meaning to a modern reader.

The 1950 NWT's translation of ἐν ἀρχῇ as “originally” definitely violates three of the NWT's stated values, and may violate a fourth.⁸ The change in the revised edition makes this point moot.

⁸ First, it stretches the semantic range of the prepositional phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ beyond its accepted uses (BAGD 1979:111-112), second and third, it alters the 1st century figure of speech (“In the beginning” being well known to the Biblically literate in John's audience and among modern readers), obscuring the OT allusion, thereby altering the meaning for a modern reader,

Grammatically, the NWT's case for translating θεόν as "a god" is based upon the premise that anarthrous nouns are indefinite (or qualitative, yet translated as indefinite) and articular nouns are definite (1950:773-7). In John's prologue, there are eight occurrences of θεός, in various cases and constructions (Countess 1982:55). Of these eight occurrences, the NWT translates the two which are articular (vv. 1, 2) as "God" (1950:282). The NWT translates four of the six anarthrous occurrences of θεός "God," one "a god" (v. 1), and one "the [only-begotten] god" (v. 18). So the NWT 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 just eighteen verses of John's prologue. For their inconsistency to be justifiable, John would have 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.

It is the investigator's opinion that a controlling influence, specifically, the "preferred religious view" that Christ is a created being, inferior to God, motivated the NWT translators to render the predicate nominative θεός as indefinite-quantitative, "a god," rather than "divine" or "God" (consistent with their view that an anarthrous θεός expresses a quality of the subject). The NWT stated in the

and fourth, the obscuring of the OT creation story allusion may represent a "preferred religious view" by disassociating the Word with that story.

Forward, “We realize that sometimes the use of so small a thing as the indefinite article or the omission of such may alter the correct sense of the original passage” (1950:9). In light of the lengthy Appendix, and the absence of evidence to the contrary, one must assume that the significance of their rendering was not lost on them.

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 NT, 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 NT, the NWT was inconsistent with its stated philosophy 94 percent of the time.⁹

In its treatment of John 1:1, the 1950 NWT violates every aspect of it’s 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.

⁹ 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.

3.3. John 1:14

Several important connections between John 1:1 and 1:18 must be established for a full understanding of each verse in the context of the prologue.

After establishing the Word's pre-existence of creation, relationship to God the Father, and personal divinity, John's prologue describes the Word's relationship to the created order, both as creator, and as interacting with the creation (Morris 1995:70-77). John then describes the Word in relation to John the Baptist (1995:77-82), the significance of the incarnation, and the rejection of the Creator by the creation, as well as the blessed adoption of those who received the Word (1995:82-90); all of which leads to a key verse for connecting John 1:1 and 1:18.

In John 1:14, the eternally divine Word, which was in the beginning, and was both with God, and was Himself in very nature God, became something that He was not—"the Word became flesh" (*ό λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο*). The choice of *ἐγένετο* (*γίνομαι*) in the aorist tense "indicates action at a point of time" (Morris 1995:90), showing that the One who *was* God from the beginning, at a certain point in time *became* flesh, taking on a humanity that was not previously a part of His nature (Richter 1971:88, cited by Beasley-Murray 1987:14). Morris captures the significance here, "But in one short, shattering expression John unveils the great idea at the heart of Christianity—that the very Word of God took flesh for our salvation" (1995:91).

The word did not simply “take flesh” but “made His dwelling among us” (NIV; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). The verb ἐσκήνωσεν is more literally “pitched his tent” (BAGD 1979:755). Both Morris (1995:91-2), and Beasley-Murray (1987:14) see an allusion to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness in which God pitched His tent in the midst of His people (a view with which this investigator agrees). After establishing the Word’s presence at and involvement in the creation, John now connects the Word, which has become flesh, with the Exodus experience of Israel, by implying that as God dwelt among His people then, He has dwelt among them again by “becoming flesh” and living among them (Brown 1965b:437).

John describes the consequence of this tabernacle in flesh with the phrase, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. In the wilderness tabernacle, the presence of God in the midst of the people was manifest in the shekinah (Beasley-Murray 1987:14), as described in Exodus 40:34. The glory of God, as seen by John's forefathers at the tabernacle, was seen in the flesh of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. And unlike angelic messengers and human prophets, this revelation of the glory of God was revealed by no less than μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας, a unique one from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Unique in that it can be said of no other apart from the Father,¹⁰ that he was in the beginning with God, and was God.

The important themes of uniqueness, God as Father, revelation and seeing, as well as the Exodus association will be revisited in John 1:18. Inasmuch as it falls outside of the scope of this research, the NWT's treatment of verse 14 will not be examined here.

3.4. John 1:18

Table 2: John 1:18 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT.¹¹

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἐώρακεν πιάπτοτε· μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὃν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἔξηγήσατο.	“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” (1950:283).	“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” (1970:1152).

¹⁰ John does not introduce the Holy Spirit in his Gospel until after the Prologue (John 1:32-34).

¹¹ The only difference between the rendering of the 1950 NWT and the 1970 Revised edition 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, TDNT 3:826), such inference is best left to the reader.

3.4.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

This verse is the conclusion of John's Prologue. It contains, as does the first verse of the Prologue, a use of the word θεός in (arguable) reference to Jesus Christ. There are four variant readings of the verse, centred on the phrase μονογενῆς θεὸς.¹² The NWT accepts Westcott and Hort's Greek text as the basis of their translation without comment.

3.4.1.1. The First Clause

The first clause of John 1:18, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἐώρακεν πώποτε·, hearkens back to Exodus 33:20, which became axiomatic in Israel; no one may see God and live (Morris 1995:100). Yet the Old Testament records limited sightings of God, such as that of Moses (Ex. 34:21-23), whom John referenced in verse 17. One must assume from OT precedent that John means that no one has had a full and clear view of God, but as implied by the OT tabernacle allusion in 1:14, people have only seen glimpses of His glory, in various facets. So, prior to the incarnation of the Word, only a partial view of God has been available, and that only to a select few.

¹² The other three variants are ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός, μονογενῆς υἱός θεοῦ, and ὁ μονογενῆς.

See Harris (1995:74-83) for a detailed evaluation of the variants.

3.4.1.2. The Second Clause

The key issue in the second clause is the understanding of the phrase μονογενῆς θεός. The word μονογενῆς “suggests derivation (γένος) rather than birth” (Büchsel 1967, TDNT 4:737-8). “The μονο- does not denote the source but the nature of the derivation. Hence μονογενῆς means ‘of sole descent.’” “But the word can also be used more generally without ref. to derivation in the sense of ‘unique,’ ‘unparalleled,’ ‘incomparable,’ though one should not confuse the refs. to class or species and to manner” (1967:738). Wallace (1996:307, 360) translates μονογενῆς θεός as “the unique God” in accordance with Büchsel's latter assertion.

Harris (1992:85) agrees with Büchsel (1967:741) that as used by John, μονογενῆς is not primarily concerned with the “personal uniqueness” of Jesus, but with his being of unique descent or relationship with God the Father. This is evidenced by both occurrences of μονογενῆς in Johns' prologue being used with a reference to “the Father” (μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός – 1:14, and μονογενῆς θεός ὁ ὃν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς – 1:18). This moves Harris (1992:88) to conclude that,

. . . μονογενῆς denotes ‘the only member of a kin or kind.’ Applied to Jesus as the Son of God, it will mean that he is without spiritual siblings and without equals. He is ‘sole-born’ and ‘peerless.’ No one else

can lay claim to the title Son of God in the sense in which it applies to Christ.

In light of these conclusions, a rendering such as the NWT’s “the only-begotten god” may be seen as accurately capturing John’s intended meaning only if it is referring to the uniqueness of his relationship to the Father (Brown 1965b:438). Such a meaning would be in harmony with John 1:1, which described the Word as being in the beginning with God, and being God; a “unique” position, and with John 1:14 describing a revelation of glory “unique to one from the Father” (who was the Father in the beginning).

This relational emphasis is strengthened by the phrase ὁ ὤν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς. The substantiving article, used with the participle (ὁ ὤν), serves to further identify μονογενῆς θεὸς: “the unique God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father.” The “unique God” who has revealed the unseen God, is able to do so because he “is in the bosom of the Father.” It is the closeness of the relationship (as in John 1:1b), and the shared essential nature (as in John 1:c) that specially qualifies this μονογενῆς θεὸς as exegete of the unseen God.

3.4.2. Summary of John 1:18 and Conclusions

John 1:1 described the Word who was existing in the beginning with God, (alluding to the Genesis Creation story), and was existing with God in the beginning because the Word was also essentially God. John 1:14 described a change in the status of the Word who was God; “the Word became flesh,” and

pitched his tent among us, as did the God of Israel in the wilderness. The result of this tabernacling was that “we have seen his glory, the glory of a unique one from the Father, akin to the glimpses of glory available when the shekinah inhabited the OT tabernacle.

The fullness of the import of the incarnation of the Word is brought out in John 1:18. Where it was axiomatic that God was invisible, and therefore, difficult to know and understand, the incarnate Word, who was with the Father in the beginning, and who is in special relationship with the Father, and who is in very nature God himself, has through his tabernacling among us, made known or revealed to us the truth of God (Carter 1990:38). As Harris (1992:101) said,

The import of the whole clause ὁ ὅν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς is that, because of the unparalleled intimacy that existed (and still exists) between the Son and Father, the Son was qualified to reveal the Father. Ὁ ὅν κτλ. introduces, not the confirmation of the ἔξήγησις, but its ground.

Unlike the wilderness glimpses of the glory of God, seen by a select few in OT theophanies and mediated to the masses, this incarnate Word was accessible to all, and made a full exegesis of God over a span of more than thirty years. This revelation is not just in the body of his teaching, or in his salvific actions, but in his being; the incarnation of the eternal Word of God (Kysar 1978:356).

Does θεός refer to Jesus Christ in John 1:18? In the context of the prologue to John's Gospel, it seems evident that in John 1:18 θεός (μονογενῆς θεὸς) is used in reference to Jesus Christ. The Word who was God in John 1:1, and became flesh in John 1:14, and who revealed the glory of a one of a kind son from the father, is in John 1:18 described as the “one of a kind God,” or “only begotten God” who makes known the unseen God, with whom he was at the beginning, from whom he came into the world, and in whose bosom he is. This interpretation is valid if the anarthrous θεός in μονογενῆς θεὸς is definite or qualitative in force. If it were indefinite, which it almost certainly is not, a minority translation “an only begotten god” (Büchsel 1967, TDNT 4:740) would be worthy of consideration.

3.4.3. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis of John 1:18

The NWT's translation of John 1:18 is mostly in step with the majority of translations, and therefore, requires little comment. Each clause of the verse will be examined, with more emphasis on the second.

The NWT's rendering of the first clause, “No man has seen God at any time,” chooses the more absolute of the two meanings for πάσποτε (BAGD 1979:732). Whereas translating πάσποτε as “ever” leaves room to interpret the clause as either hyperbolic, or as limiting what has been seen of God, the NWT's translation seems to ignore the theophanies of the Old Testament altogether, emphasizing the lack of occurrences of seeing God, rather than limiting the

degree of revelation by God. The Greek word order indicates that John is emphasizing what was or wasn't seen (*θεόν*), and not when (*πώποτε*) it was or wasn't seen (Mounce 2003:32). Other than this subjective translation choice, the NWT's rendering of the first clause is consistent with the rules of grammar and exegesis.

In the second clause, *μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὃν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο*, the NWT translates *μονογενῆς θεὸς* as “the only-begotten god,”¹³ with *μονογενῆς* treated as an adjective in reference to *θεός*. The Watchtower Society's understanding of “begotten” requires further examination.

In the pamphlet “Should You Believe in the Trinity” (1989:16) the Watchtower Society stresses, “So Jesus, the only-begotten Son, had a beginning to his life.” The same pamphlet declares that Jesus was a created being, junior to the Father “in time, position, power, and knowledge” (1989:16). The pamphlet cites examples of physical begetting (Abraham and Isaac) to illustrate their beliefs that the object of *μονογενῆς* must be inferior to its subject (1989:15-16). In light of Watchtower theology, it is clear that the NWT translators believe *μονογενῆς* to refer to a singular procreative generation, and not to the uniqueness of the noun

¹³ Consistent with John 1:1c, the NWT renders this *θεός* with a lower case g, where *τὸν θεόν* in John 1:1b, and *θεόν* in 1:18 are rendered “God.” When the NWT interprets *θεός* as referring to God the Father, the g is upper case (God), and when interpreted as referring to the Word/Christ, it is lower case (god).

being modified by the adjective. This is significant for John 1:18 within the context of the prologue, and especially in relation to verses 1 and 14.

3.4.4. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation (1:18).

In John 1:18a, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἔώρακεν 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 position that anarthrous nouns are indefinite or qualitative. The NWT capitalizes the G ("God") in John 1:18, indicating the belief that this θεόν is Jehovah God (see footnote 13), but the θεός in John 1:1c is not; hence, "a god."

3.5. Summary of Conclusions Regarding John 1:1, and John 1:18.

The NWT's treatment of John 1:1 and 1:18, is more significant when considered as part of the whole of the prologue. The NWT's translation of John 1:1 carries significant ramifications for understanding the nature of, and subsequent identity of "the Word." By rendering John 1:1c, "and the Word was a god" the NWT unintentionally¹⁴ inserted polytheism into the Christology of John's Gospel. I believe this insertion to be an unintentional consequence of the influence of the translators' theological bias against the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses are professed monotheists.

Where the translation of John 1:1c is inconsistent with standard practices of exegesis and translation (in regard to “θεός as “a god”), the translation of John 1:18 is within the reasonable subjective range available to translators. However, the implications of the NWT’s translation of John 1:1c, specifically the lessening of the nature of the Word (Morris 1995:68-9), carry over to the incarnation of verse 14 and the exegesis of God of verse 18. The result **is** that the incarnation and subsequent exegesis are less significant events (as they involve a less significant being). Whether actively or passively, the Jehovah's Witnesses' theological view, that Christ is a created being, and a “junior” to Jehovah, exerts a controlling influence on their treatment of John 1:1, and subsequently affects the whole prologue.

It must then be concluded that the NWT’s treatment of John 1:1, and John 1:18, which both use θεός in reference to Jesus Christ, have a negative effect on the message of John’s Prologue by undermining John’s identification of the Word as God, who became flesh and made known the unseen God.

3.6 John 20:28

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

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.	“In answer Thomas said to him: “My Master and my God” (1950:350)!	“In answer Thomas said to him: “My Lord and my God” (1970:1179)!

When the NWT was revised, “Master” was replaced with “Lord” (NWT 1970:1179), which had been footnoted as an alternative translation of κύριος in the 1950 edition. Westcott and Hort list no variant readings for John 20:28, and the NWT makes no references to variant readings for this verse.

3.6.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

John 20:28 records the response of Thomas to the direct challenge issued to him by Jesus in verse 27, (“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe’” [NIV]).

The verse consists of two clauses, the first (ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ), declares that Thomas responded to Jesus, and the second (ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου), details the content of his response.

The first clause is constructed of two phrases. The first phrase, ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς makes a simple indicative statement: “Thomas answered (or responded).” This,

followed by the quote, would have been sufficient (if awkward) to convey the meaning. However, without clarification, John's readers may not grasp the full import of what Thomas says, by virtue of being uncertain of to whom Thomas refers.

John eliminated the risk of uncertainty with the second phrase of the first clause, *kai εἶπεν αὐτῷ*. Thomas did not simply answer, but when Thomas answered, “he said to him.” In the immediate context, the only “him” to whom Thomas can logically respond is Jesus, who had just directly addressed him. It is noteworthy that Jesus asked Thomas no questions, rather issued a “challenge to his faith” (Harris 1995:110), “μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός.” In this view, the statement of Thomas must be taken as his response to the faith challenge issued by Jesus. It is this response from Thomas that is relevant to this research.

Murray Harris (1995:106-111) makes an exhaustive survey of the grammatical possibilities for understanding the phrase *ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου*. A brief summary is as follows:

1. (a). Considering *ὁ θεός μου* as predicative, and referring to God the Father: “Thomas answered him: ‘(Jesus, you are) my Lord; (Father, you are) my God.’” The presence of the copulative *καὶ*, the absence of vocatives for the implied nouns, and contextual focus on Jesus (and not the Father), make this interpretation unlikely.

(b). Considering ὁ θεός μου as predicative, and referring to Jesus: “Thomas answered him: ‘My Lord is also my God.’” The employment here of καὶ as adjunctive would be extraordinary between two articular nouns, in the same case, with the possessive μου, and no stative verb (ἐστι). This interpretation is unlikely.

2. (a). Considering ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου to be an exclamation of praise to the Father: “(Praise be to) my Lord and my God.” The non-sequitur with “Thomas answered him” created by this interpretation is inexplicable. That, with the fact that all other uses of κύριος in John 20 are clearly referring to Jesus, makes this interpretation unlikely.

(b). Considering ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου to be an exclamation of realization about Jesus: “(It is actually Jesus) my Lord and (he is truly) my God.” The context of the exchange with Jesus, and especially the καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ which immediately precedes the statement, practically demands a personal response and not a general statement, so this interpretation is also unlikely.

3. Considering ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου to be a vocative statement, addressed to Jesus: “In response Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God.’” In this interpretation, the statement of Thomas is a direct response to that of Jesus in verse 27, and in that response, Jesus is both “subject and recipient” (Harris 1995:111). I believe this to be the most likely interpretation for a number of reasons, detailed below.

If Thomas is directly addressing Jesus, one could reasonably expect the vocative case. Because the possessive pronoun *μου* requires an articular subject (Harris 1995:111), the use of the vocative would require a reiteration of the possessive statements; κύριε καὶ θεέ - εἰ ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. I concur with Harris (1995:110), Morris (1995:753), and Wallace (1996:58), that ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός is Nominative for Vocative (Wallace 1996:58), addressed to Jesus, and should be translated, “My Lord and my God.” This use of the nominative case in place of the vocative is an established usage in the NT (BDF 1976:147).

For ὁ κύριος μου to refer to God the Father would be inconsistent with the use of κύριος in John chapter 20. Κύριος occurs seven times in John 20 (vv. 2, 13, 15, 18, 20, 25, and 28). In the six occurrences preceding 20:28, κύριος always refers to the risen Christ, twice in the immediate context of the study text. To shift usage from Christ to the Father, within the narrative of this pericope, would be confusing to the original audience and inconsistent with John's style as a redactor.

Also, for ὁ θεός μου to refer to God the Father would be a strange insertion into the immediate context of the narrative. In John 20, God the Father is referenced by Jesus in verse 17, in the story of Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Christ. John then records the appearance of Christ to the disciples (absent Thomas) on the same day as the appearance to Mary Magdalene, with no reference to the Father. The pericope in which the study text is found (John

20:28), describes events occurring a week later than the appearance to Magdalene, and therefore quite removed from the last reference to the Father. For Thomas to interject a declaration of faith in, or praise of the Father would effectively introduce a new element in his exchange with Christ, an element to which Christ does not then respond.

By employing the possessive genitive (Wallace 1996:82) *μου*, Thomas makes it clear that he is in fact responding to Jesus' command to "cease unbelief and become faithful" (*μὴ γίνου ἀπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός*), by signalling personal faith in Christ as both Risen Lord and God (Beasley-Murray 1987:386). Beasley-Murray (1987:385) also says, "His utterance does not simply acknowledge the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, but expresses its ultimate meaning, i.e., as revelation of who Jesus is." And adding to this notion Morris (1995:753) wrote, "Mere men do not rise from the dead in this fashion. The one who was now so obviously alive, although he had died, could be addressed in the language of adoring worship."

The scriptural endorsement of this view is found in verse 29, where Jesus not only does not correct Thomas for applying θεός to him, but accepts Thomas' words as a declaration of the very faith he advocated in verse 27 (Metzger 1953:71).

Harris (1995:110) detects a pattern in the pericope:

Εἶπεν αὐτῷ (v. 28) is clearly parallel to λέγει τῷ Θωμᾷ (v. 27) and λέγει αὐτῷ (v. 29) on the one hand and ἔλεγον . . . αὐτῷ (v. 25) on the other. In each case there is a speaker (or speakers), a statement that immediately follows, and a person addressed. The whole phrase ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ may be rendered, “In response Thomas said to him.” What follows will be not simply an assertion or ejaculation made in the hearing of Jesus but an exclamation actually addressed to him.

The interpretation that Thomas addressed Jesus as both Lord and God, in response to Jesus’ challenge to faithfulness, is consistent with this pattern.

In summary, ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς tells us *that* Thomas answered, εἶπεν αὐτῷ tells us *to whom* Thomas answered, and ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου tells us the *content of* Thomas’ answer.

Brown (1965:565) considers Thomas’ declaration “the clearest example in the New Testament of the use of ‘God’ for Jesus.” In concurrence, I consider it a virtual certainty that θεός is referring to Jesus in this verse.

3.6.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis

The NWT's translation of John 20:28 is well within the bounds of established exegetical practices. However, two issues are worthy of consideration, one in each clause of the verse. The issue of the first clause is only an issue inasmuch as it influences the second.

The NWT translates the first clause of John 20:28, "In answer Thomas said to him" (1950:350). The translation "In answer" indicates that the translators clearly understood Thomas' utterance to be a response/reaction to Jesus' command of the preceding verse. For the purposes of this study, a relevant question is: To whom do the NWT translators believe Thomas refers in his statement, ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου?

The NWT does not explicitly answer this question, with no footnoting or mention in the Appendix. Countess (1982:59) considers this "*a strange silence*, in a book where footnotes abound."

There is one indication within the NWT of the translators' view of Thomas' reference; that of the upper case g in "God." As mentioned in footnote 13, when the NWT interprets θεός as referring to God the Father, the g is upper case (God), and when interpreted as referring to Christ, it is a lower case g (god). In John 20:28, the NWT has "God" with the upper case g.

An assay of 1,052 occurrences of the NWT's translation of θεός in its various forms finds 1,029 are rendered either "God" with a capital g, or "Jehovah" (both indicating the NWT's belief that θεός refers to the God of the OT. Only 23 occurrences are not translated "God" or "Jehovah." Of these 23 occurrences, there are 3 in which it is clear from the NWT's translation that θεός refers to Christ, (John 1:1, John 1:18, and John 10:33). In each of these instances, we find "god" with a lower case g. Of the 20 remaining occurrences, 6 are treated adjectivally. In the 14 occasions when θεός refers to apostles of Christ, idols, pagan gods, and even "the man of lawlessness," the NWT also employs a lower case g, rendering "god" or "gods" (e.g. Acts 6:43, 19:26, II Thes. 2:4).

While this is not conclusive evidence, the statistics imply that the NWT reserves the capital g ("God") for Jehovah of the OT, and employs the lower case g (god), in reference to Christ. Therefore, one may infer from the translation "My Master and my God" that the NWT believes θεός in John 20:28 to refer to God the Father.

This would imply that Thomas responded to Jesus' challenge to become faithful in regard to His own resurrection, with a non sequitur; an exclamation of allegiance to, or in praise of God the Father. Such views have been advocated by a small minority (Theodore of Mopsuestia, referenced by Brown 1965:565; Beasley-Murray 1987:385), and have been largely dismissed.

3.6.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

There are no indisputable inconsistencies between the NWT's treatment of John 20:28 and the translators' stated philosophy and values of translation. However, it is possible 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.

3.6.4. Conclusions

Based on the NWT's discernible pattern of rendering Θεός with a capital g ("God"), or "Jehovah" when referring to the Father, and with a lower case g ("god") when referring to Jesus, I conclude that the NWT does not believe that Θεός refers to Jesus in John 20:28. This is significant in light of John 20:28's place in the context of John's Gospel.

Morris (1995:753) states,

If, as many scholars think, chapter 21 is an appendix and that the original Gospel ended at 20:31, this will be the last statement made by anyone in the Gospel.

It is significant that it [this final utterance] is an ascription to Jesus of Deity, corresponding to 'the Word was God' in 1:1 (bracketed added for emphasis).

In accordance with this view, Colwell (1933:21) writing about John 1:1c, said, “this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas.”

When the three texts of this research sample, that are taken from John’s Gospel, are considered together, there is a logical synergy that compliments John as a redactor. John's Gospel starts with a prologue that begins with a declaration of the deity of the Word (1:1), and ends with a declaration of the deity of the incarnate Word, Christ Jesus (1:18). John spends chapters 2-19 detailing, through the narrative account of Jesus' ministry and His passion, the exegesis of God, by the incarnate Word, culminating in the self-sacrifice of Christ. Chapter 20 consists of four “resurrection pericopes” (Harris 1995:127), which reach their crescendo in Thomas’ “My Lord and my God.”

If, in fact, the NWT’s use of the capital g (“God”) indicates that they believe Θεός does not here refer to Jesus Christ, the great power of the aforementioned literary and thematic crescendo would be substantially diminished.

Chapter 4

Critique and Exegesis of the Sample Texts: Acts

20:28, Romans 9:5, and Titus 2:13

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyze the NWT's treatment of three texts of the research sample, Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, and Titus 2:13.

4.2. Acts 20:28

Table 4: John 20:28 in the Greek and the NWT.

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition
προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵν περιεποίησατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου.	Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed YOU overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own [Son] (1950:423).

Acts 20:28 constitutes the Apostle Paul's final charge to the Ephesian elders (redacted by Luke), issued as part of his farewell address to them at Miletus.

The NWT (1950:777-778) makes lengthy reference to variant readings for this verse,¹⁵ yet ultimately follows Westcott & Hort's text (as above), with the exception of the bracketed interpolation of "Son." Therefore, in the context of this study, the analysis of the Greek text will be limited to that of the Westcott & Hort text, as employed by the NWT translators.

The 1970 revised edition reads the same as the 1950 NWT, and need not be addressed.

4.2.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

The verse will be approached clause by clause, with special emphasis on (a) ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, and (b) ἦν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου.

The verse begins with Paul's double charge to the Ephesian elders; προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ. Paul employs the imperative προσέχετε with two direct objects: ἑαυτοῖς and παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ. The elders are implored to "pay attention" to both "themselves" and "to all the flock." The order of the objects may imply that failure to pay attention to themselves could result in disqualification to watch over the flock (DeVine 1947:404). This supposed emphasis is supported

¹⁵ Harris (1995:133-137) effectively addresses the textual issues of Acts 20:28, and concurs with the text shared by Westcott & Hort, and USB4. For a thorough treatment of the textual issues, consult Harris.

by Paul's description of his careful supervision of his own ministry and conduct (Acts 20:18-21, 26, 27, 31b, and 33-35) (Marshall 1980:333).

Within the verse, Paul also addresses an even greater reason for the elders to keep watch; that of the elders' appointment by the Holy Spirit ($\text{ἐν } \hat{\omega} \text{ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους}$). The overseers' responsibility to the Holy Spirit is greater than that to the flock, (or to Paul).

By employing ἐν , rather than either περὶ or ὑπὲρ with the genitive, Paul identifies the Ephesian elders as appointed overseers *within the flock*, and therefore as a part of the flock; ("in which the Holy Spirit appointed you overseers").

Constructions with περὶ or ὑπὲρ would signify that the elders were appointed overseers "in regard to the flock," or "on behalf of the flock," without reaffirming their place within the flock. The preposition ἐν helps clarify that the Holy Spirit selected overseers for the flock from among members of the flock. The use of ἐν may have been strategic on Paul's part to instil a sense of humility of place among the Ephesian elders, so they remain grounded within the flock, as servant leaders.

The next phrase for consideration is $\text{ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ}$. The infinitive ποιμαίνειν indicates the purpose (Brooks and Winberry 1979:133) of the Holy Spirit's appointment of the elders as overseers of the flock: to actively shepherd the church of God. In this regard, Paul (or Luke) logically links the words προσέχετε , ἐπισκόπους , and ποιμαίνειν , ("pay attention," "overseers," and

“to shepherd”). This logically necessitates the linkage of παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ with τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ. The flock the elders are to oversee is nothing less than the church of God (Bruce 1968:416). So then, the task of the elders, as appointed by the Holy Spirit, is oversight of the church of God.

There is much to unpack in the final phrase, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου. In ἣν περιεποιήσατο, the relative pronoun signals the revelation of further information about the flock, the church of God; specifically that it is “the church of God, *which He obtained*.¹⁰” The flock, the church, is God’s possession because he obtained it, διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου. The preposition διὰ introduces the means by which (τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου) God obtained the church; “which He obtained through His own blood.” This is the crux of the verse, for how we are to understand τοῦ θεοῦ will be heavily influenced by our interpretation of διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου, and vice versa.

There are two legitimate ways to interpret τοῦ ἴδιου in this sentence: (1) adjectivally, declining τοῦ ἴδιου as neuter, agreeing with αἷματος, or (2) substantivally, declining τοῦ ἴδιου as masculine. The construction of the phrase in the Westcott & Hort text allows for either interpretation.

The adjectival interpretation is supported by the placement of τοῦ ἴδιου in the second attributive position (Wallace 1996:306), requiring the translation “His own blood.” The immediate context indicates that τοῦ ἴδιου refers to the implied “he” of the controlling verb περιεποιήσατο, and the subject of that verb is the God who

possesses the church ($\tauὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ$), “which He obtained with His own blood” ($ἢν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου$).

Arguing for the substantival interpretation, Conzelmann (1987:175) states, “In this case ἴδιος must be understood as a masculine substantive (‘with the blood of his Own’).” In favor of treating τοῦ ἴδιου as a substantive is the fact that had Paul (or Luke) simply wished to communicate possession, he could have chosen the first attributive position (τοῦ ἴδιου αἵματος), or the third person singular possessive pronoun (τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ). Conzelmann (1987:175) acknowledges that ἴδιος can be used in place of the possessive pronoun. The deliberate choice of $\text{διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου}$ leaves open a door for interpretation that could have been easily closed. The decision between attributive and substantival is subjective (Lüdemann 2005:273). The way one interprets the second half of the verse will be based on this subjective decision.

There are four ways to understand the second half of the verse, $\piοιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἢν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἴδιου$ (Harris 1992:137).

First, it may be understood that τοῦ θεοῦ refers to Jesus Christ (DeVine 1947:404; Longenecker 1996:513), so that it may be literally taken that God (Jesus) obtained the church with His own blood. If one accepts that Jesus is referred to as God elsewhere in the NT, then the thought of Jesus acquiring the

church through his death on the cross is not a stretch. However, as Harris (1992:137-138) points out:

New Testament descriptions of Christ's redemptive death as well as of his life always avoid blending unqualified affirmations of his deity (such as θεός) with terms that can be related only to his humanness (such as αἴμα). Nowhere, for instance, do we read of "the cross of God" (cf. John 19:25; Gal. 6:14) or that at Golgotha "they crucified God" (cf. John 19:18) or that "God died and rose again" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14).

In the opinion of this investigator, this NT pattern makes such an interpretation unlikely.

Second, understanding God to be the Father, and the blood in question to be that of Christ, it might be taken that the close personal intimacy and unity of the Father and the Son make the blood of Christ effectively God's own blood (De Boor 1965:376; Bartlett 1901:330-331). The flaw in this interpretation is that the blood through which God obtained the church was actual blood, shed from a real human body (that of Jesus Christ), while *iōiou* carries the lexical significance of being actually peculiar to the head noun (BAGD s.v.1.a.), in this case, the implied subject of the controlling verb περιεποιήσατο. This would call for the shedding of physical blood by God the Father, and not the shedding of *Herzblut* (de Boor

1965) through the Son. As such, this seems an unlikely interpretation to this investigator.

A third interpretation considers τοῦ ἴδιου to be a christological title (Bruce 1990a:391; Harris 1992:139), understood as “His own One.” For this to be an acceptable interpretation, the title must be seen to have been understood by the original audience. Harris (1992:140) offers three lines of supporting evidence for this position: (a) There are fifteen substantival uses of ὁ ἴδιος in the NT, (b) there is support for singular use of ὁ ἴδιος in the papyri as a “term of endearment and close relationship,” despite the singular ὁ ἴδιος appearing only once in the NT, and (c) the NT contains several examples of substantival adjectives or participles employed as christological titles. In my opinion, this support is lacklustre, inasmuch as there is no indication that τοῦ ἴδιου is a christological title in Acts 20:28. I do not believe τοῦ ἴδιου to be substantive, and therefore, I doubt this interpretation.

Fourth, also understanding God to be the Father, and the blood in question to be that of Christ, one might take τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ to be the church of God (the Father), which he (Christ) obtained with his own blood; making Christ the subject of the verb περιεποιήσατο. While this interpretation is conceptually plausible in the realm of Christian theology (consider Romans 8:31-39), there is no grammatical indication of a change in subject in this verse. For this reason, this interpretation, while plausible, requires some subjective decision making apart

from grammar and syntax. Therefore, while I believe this to be the most reasonable interpretation of the meaning of the verse, I do not believe that the translation should reflect the meaning. Paul (or Luke) could have easily indicated the shift in verbal subject, but did not, rather leaving the interpretation to the hearers/readers.

It is worthy of reiteration that the interpretation of this verse, specifically the issue of whether τοῦ ἰδίου is considered attributive or substantive, is a subjective exercise about which renowned experts disagree (Bruce 1990a:434). While it is possible that θεός here refers to Jesus Christ (as in the first proposed interpretation), it seems highly unlikely. It is more likely that θεός here refers to God the Father.

4.2.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis

The NWT's translation, "which he purchased with the blood of his own [Son]" indicates that the translators believe τοῦ ἰδίου modifies an absent noun. They state:

The entire expression could be translated "the blood of His own". A noun in the singular number would be understood after "his own", most likely God's closest relative, his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ (NWT 1950:777).

A supposition from a footnote to RF Weymouth's translation of Acts 20:28, as well as an uncited reference to GC Knapp, are introduced to propose that the original text may have ended with *uiοῦ*. It is noteworthy that there is no manuscript evidence to support this supposition (Countess 1982:60). While I agree with the NWT's basic conclusion, that it is the blood of Jesus Christ being described, had Paul (or Luke) wished to provide a noun for the adjective *τοῦ ιδίου*, he could have. If the NWT proposes that a noun dropped out by means of textual corruption, before reinserting this *dropped* word into the text, solid manuscript evidence upon which to base such a decision must be demonstrated.

The stronger argument available to the NWT for its treatment of this phrase would be the belief that "Son" is the implied substantive of *τοῦ ιδίου*, and that the genitive phrase constitutes a genitive of relationship (hence, an implied *familial* substantive).

4.2.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

A stated goal of the translators was to provide a translation for "those who are scrupulous for getting, as nearly as possible, word for word, the exact statement of the original" (1950:9).

Meeting this goal is a challenge for anyone translating Acts 20:28 who believes *τοῦ ιδίου* to be substantive, for one must either leave the awkward "of his own," or

“of his own One,” or supply a noun. The addition of the bracketed “Son” to the end of Acts 20:28, reflects the translators’ position as well as can be expected.

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 subjective choice between treating τοῦ ιδίου as a substantive rather than attributive may have been made on the grounds of an Arian or Socinian view, this conclusion cannot be drawn from the Appendix to Acts 20:28.

The NWT’s employment of brackets when adding “Son” to the verse is laudable. It alerts their readers that “Son” has been supplied by the translators and, in my opinion, increases the likelihood that readers will consult the footnotes and Appendix (unlike the renderings of RSV and NRSV, which include “Son” without brackets).

4.2.4. Conclusions

It seems highly unlikely that θεός refers to Jesus Christ in Acts 20:28. The NWT’s translation of the Westcott and Hort text is generally consistent with the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis.

4.3. Romans 9:5

Table 5: Romans 9:5 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT.

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
ῶν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὐν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ῶν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.	“to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ sprang according to the flesh; God, who is over all, be blessed forever. Amen” (1950:471).	“to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ [sprang] according to the flesh; God, who is over all, [be] blessed forever. Amen” (1970:1227).

Romans 9:5 is significant in several ways. First, it is the only verse that arguably uses θεός in reference to Jesus Christ, found in an undisputed Pauline Epistle (Harris 1992:144). Second, it is very likely to be the earliest NT reference to Jesus as God (Brown 1965:567). Third, it has long been seen as a litmus test for “determining the christological tenor” of NT translations (Countess 1982:62).

The verse in question is part of a five-verse introduction to a new section in Romans, chapters 9-11, in which Paul addresses his personal grief over Israel’s general rejection of the Messiah (Moo 1996:548). The introduction (vv. 1-5) stresses the special privileges and blessing enjoyed by Israel, as a basis of higher responsibility for Israel (their rejection of Messiah justifying the transmission of the promises to the Patriarchs to the Christian Church), and for appreciation and missiological interest by the gentile church, which owes a debt to Judaism for its Christ (Bruce 1966:182-183).

The NWT follows Westcott and Hort's text. However, the difficulties with translating Romans 9:5 are issues of exegesis and punctuation, rather than grammar or textual variants (Robertson, quoted by NWT 1950:779).

4.3.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

Paul begins his introduction of this section with his personal sorrow for his fellow Jews, identified as τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα (vv. 1-2), and his desire to see them converted (v.3). In a Moses-like declaration, he states that he himself would willingly be cut off, if it would result in Israel's inclusion in Christ.

After making such a bold statement to a predominantly gentile church, Paul offers a chain of ten special blessings, experiences, and characteristics peculiar to Israel as evidence of Israel's special privilege and as justification for his strong feelings (vv. 4-5). As verse 5 contains the last two of these ten, it is necessary to take at least a cursory look at verse 4.

Verse 4 reads: οἵτινες εἰσιν Ἰσραηλῖται, ὃν ἡ σιοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθῆκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι. What is it about Paul's brethren, his “kinsman according to the flesh”, that motivates this great passion?

First, as Jews by genetic descent (οἵτινες, referring back to τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα) they are Israelites, part of God's chosen people, which accounts for the remaining nine elements of special privilege (Cranfield

1979:460-461). This designation heightens the intensity of the problem of Jewish rejection, because it is more than a rejection of the family tree or traditions, but of God's election (Abasciano 2005:116), as will be seen.

The remaining privileges of Israel are “grammatically subordinate to Ἰσραὴλῖται in three relative clauses (ῶν . . . ὐν . . . ἐξ ὐν)” (2005:116). In the first relative clause, Paul’s audience is told, “theirs is *the adoption* (Jewish by birth, Israel by Divine adoption), and *the glory* (manifest in the Shekinah), and *the covenants* (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic), and *the giving of the Law* (probably through Moses at Sinai), and *the cultic worship* (at the temple and in the home), and *the promises* (given to the soon to be mentioned Patriarchs (Nygren 1944:356; Bruce 1966:185; Cranfield 1979:460-464).

Verse 5 begins with the second relative clause, ὐν οἱ πατέρες; “Theirs are the Patriarchs,” with whom the covenants were made, and to whom the promises (including the promise of Messiah) were given, and (as we are about to be told) from whose line is the Messiah (Harrison 1976:102-103).

The third relative clause, καὶ ἐξ ὐν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, indicates that the Israelites and their patriarchs are the source from which came the Christ (or Messiah), in a physical or genetic sense. Jesus is a Jew by birth, and an Israelite by adoption, and as such is part of the special privilege of the Israelites (Stuhlmacher 1994:145-146). The articular construction τὸ κατὰ σάρκα is employed to emphasize the limitations for understanding ἐξ ὐν; specifically, that

the Christ is from them only in regard to his physical place in the material world (BDF 1976:266.2). As the remainder of the verse will show, there is more to the Christ than the physical aspect, to which the Israelites and their patriarchs may lay special claim. As Jewett (2007:566-567) notes,

The neuter article τό is employed here instead of the masculine article ὁ which would normally follow the masculine expression ὁ Χριστὸς if one wished to say “the Christ who is by flesh.” In this instance, the phrase κατὰ σάρκα is being set up as a kind of technical expression, which should be taken into account in the interpretation.

This is important because it signals that Paul’s interest in the Christ’s flesh is not limited to the personal genealogy of Jesus, but opens the door for an incarnational statement; a clause that will serve as counterpoint to the nature of Christ κατὰ σάρκα, by describing his nature κατὰ πνεῦμα, “completing the picture” by denoting his deity (Nygren 1944:358, Moo 1996:565). This brings us to the crux of the issue for this research, the phrase ὁ ὥν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός εύλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

This clause has perhaps been debated and discussed more than any other in the NT (Absaciano 2005:139). The primary issues are punctuation, and exegetical determination of the referent of θεός. I will address each subject separately.

4.3.1.1. Punctuation of Romans 9:5b

“Greek manuscripts of the NT rarely contain punctuation marks and the marks that are found tend to be sporadic and irregular” (Moo 1996:565). As Harris (1992:149) demonstrates, the scribes of the early centuries used punctuation marks in an “inconsistent and erratic fashion.” The most that can be said with certainty regarding manuscript evidence is that beginning in the fifth century, scribes seem to believe a “pause after σάρκα” to be “natural or necessary” (1996:149). There is evidence that a majority of MSS that have a pause or stop after σάρκα, also have a stop after αἰώνας or ἀμήν (1996:149). Westcott and Hort’s text is punctuated as follows: ὁ ὅν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας, ἀμήν.

Jewett captures the situation well, while describing his own treatment of Romans 9:5b: “Since the Greek manuscripts rarely contain punctuation marks, contextual and theological considerations have been followed to decide [how to punctuate this verse]” (2007:567, bracketed added). There are two basic schools of punctuation which have been followed, (a) placing a comma after σάρκα, indicating that words following it would modify ὁ Χριστὸς, and (b) placing a full stop after σάρκα, indicating that whatever follows is an independent sentence, with a new subject, ὁ . . . θεός (Moo 1996:566).

Option (a), with ὁ Χριστὸς as subject, allows for two possible translations of ὁ ὅν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας, ἀμήν, (1) “who is over all, God

blessed forever. Amen.” (NRSV, KJV, JB, NASB); or (2) “who is God over all, forever praised! Amen” (NIV).

Option (b), with θεός as subject, also allows for two possible translations of ὁ ὡν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας, ἀμήν, (1) “God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen” (RSV, NEB, TEV); and (2) “May God, supreme over all, be blessed forever! Amen” (NEB).

The choice of punctuation here reflects one’s determination of the referent of θεός.

4.3.1.2. Exegetical Determination of the Referent of θεός

When considering ὁ ὡν, there are three basic understandings available (Harris 1996:157).

First, one might consider the participle ὡν as otiose, and the article to be taken with θεός. This would make for an unwieldy construction with preferable alternatives available, such as ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων, or ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς. Any argument for treating ὡν as otiose would have to include a claim of sloppiness on Paul’s part, in an epistle renowned for its careful and thoughtful construction. No such argument has been found by this investigator.

Second, ὁ ὡν might be taken as substantival, or titular; “The One Who is, The ‘I am,’” with the resulting translation “The One Who Is over all, God, be blessed.” But the grammatically natural antecedent of ὁ ὡν is ὁ Χριστὸς (Countess

1982:63, Harris 1992:157), and one would expect a change of referent to be signalled by either δέ, or a different word order (Jewett 2007:568). Harris states that to divorce ὁ ὥν from “the grammatically consonant ὁ Χριστὸς is unconscionable,” and that if θεός is thought to be the subject of an independent doxology to the Father, Romans 9:5b would have no syntactical (or logical) link to what it follows (Harris 1992:158).

Third, ὁ ὥν may be understood as relatival; “who is,” equivalent to ὃς ἐστιν. Cranfield and Moo (1996:567) concur that this understanding is “the only natural way to take ὁ ὥν in the position it holds in the collocation of words forming vv. 3-5” (Cranfield 1979:468). Because the proper name ὁ Χριστὸς precedes ὁ ὥν (and agrees with it in case and number) a change in subject should be clearly signalled, and here it is not (Harris 1992:159). As Harrison notes, if another subject is being introduced, then the participle has no legitimate reason for being used (1976:103). I believe this to be the most appropriate understanding, based on the context of Romans 9:1-5.

ὁ ὥν is coupled with ἐπὶ πάντων in the verse, telling us that the antecedent of the participle “is over all.” If πάντων is masculine, the implied rule of the antecedent is over all people, whereas if πάντων is neuter, the implied rule would be over all people and things. This is a subjective decision, without grammatical resolution.

This notion of universal supremacy has been a main point of argument for those advocating the full stop after “flesh” and an independent doxology to God the

Father. They argue that Christ is subordinate to the Father and cannot be the subject of ὁ ὥν ἐπὶ πάντων. Yet Christ himself is quoted in Matthew as claiming to have πᾶσα ἔξουσία (Matt. 28:18), and Paul will announce in Romans 10:12, that Christ is κύριος πάντων (both Jew and Gentile). Obviously, if Paul is using θεός in reference to Christ, then God the Father (or the Holy Spirit) would not be part of πάντων.

The remainder of the verse, εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν is unquestionably a doxology; the issue is whether it is related to God the Father, or to Christ. The strength of argument rests with those who believe this doxology is referring to Christ. Several points in favor of this interpretation are:

“Pauline doxologies are generally either an integral part of the preceding sentence or else closely connected with it” (Cranfield 1979:467). If this doxology does not refer to ὁ Χριστὸς . . . ὁ ὥν ἐπὶ πάντων and [ὁ ὥν] θεὸς, then the Pauline pattern is broken.

Independent blessings of God found in the LXX, with a single questionable exception (Ps. 68:19), have εὐλογητὸς first. If this is a doxology to God the Father, Paul has ignored a large body of well known uses in favor of the single exception. Cranfield considers this argument “so strong as to be in itself almost conclusive” (1979:468).

The use of κατὰ σάρκα in 9:5a, while not requiring one, at least invites an antithesis. Paul customarily supplies his readers with antitheses, rather than

requiring them to supply their own (Moo 1996:567). If the doxology refers to the Father, the phrase καὶ ἐξ ὃν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα is left without a spiritual counterbalance, and could easily lead to an over-identification of the Christ with the Israelites, and lessen his universality.

Those who advocate for the full stop after σάρκα, and for taking the doxology as referring to God the Father, point to a belief that Paul nowhere else refers to Jesus as “God” (Käsemann 1980:259). This is countered by (a) Paul’s (assuming that Paul wrote Titus) almost undeniable use of θεός in reference to Jesus in Titus 2:13 (Moo 1996:568), and (b) the “exalted language” Paul employs to describe Jesus character, nature, and activities attesting to “Paul's full belief in the deity of Christ” (1996:568).

4.3.1.3. Conclusions

In the context of Romans 9:1-5, as an introduction to chapters nine through eleven, a christological interpretation serves the purposes of Paul’s list of privileges of his brethren. The Christ which is ἐξ ὃν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα is not just another part of a rich Jewish heritage; he is also ὁ ὅπερι πάντων and θεός, εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

The very point of listing the ten privileges is “to grieve their forfeiture and to raise the challenge of God’s faithfulness” that will be addressed in subsequent verses (Abasciano 2005:141). The identification of the Messiah as θεός drives the point home all the more, showing that rejection of Jesus Christ is a rejection of not only

the blessings of God, but of the God who blesses. The Christ rejected by most of Israel is exalted by Paul in this doxology (Harris 1992:172). Whereas a doxology to God the Father at the end of Paul's list of Israelite privileges serves as an interruption in the flow of argument. How strange a thing it would be to praise God for the blessings that Paul's brethren had by and large rejected.

Moo (1996:568) believes that "connecting 'God' to 'Christ' is therefore exegetically preferable, theologically unobjectionable, and contextually appropriate." Cranfield (1979:470) quotes Calvin,

To separate this clause [the doxology] from the rest of the context for the purpose of depriving Christ of this clear witness to his divinity, is an audacious attempt to create darkness where there is full light.

Bruce (1966:186-187) while subscribing to the view of Abasciano, Moo, Cranfield and Calvin, warns against dogmatism in regard to this verse, as there is room for honest disagreement on grammatical grounds. Bruce (1966:186) also believes it is "equally permissible to construe" the phrase in question "as being in apposition to 'Christ'" or as an independent doxology to the Father. While Bruce equates the validity of the positions, I believe that the balance of the evidence tips more than slightly toward taking ὁ Χριστὸς as subject and Θεός as predicate.

I agree with Jewett (2007:568), that while absolute "certainty is not possible in a complicated issue like this, the doxology is more likely to have been directed at

Christ than at God.” In light of this, it is most probable that θεός is referring to Jesus Christ in Romans 9:5.

4.3.2. Critique of the NWT’s Exegesis

The NWT’s treatment of Romans 9:5a (“to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ sprang according to the flesh”) is generally in accord with the principles of Greek grammar and exegesis.¹⁶

Of significance to this study, is the NWT’s translation of Romans 9:5b, “God, who is over all, be blessed forever. Amen.” The NWT’s punctuation and translation of the verse shows a belief that θεός is the subject of 9:5b and not a predicate of ὁ Χριστὸς. In the Appendix, they 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 . . .” (1950:779).

¹⁶ In the phrase ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, the reader must supply a verb. Most commonly supplied is ἔστιν, a verb of being, not doing. If a transitive verb is supplied, one might expect a form of ἔρχομαι (from whom came the Christ . . .). The NWT’s “sprang” seems excessively transitive, implying an activeness not native to the thought of the verse. The phrase is about origin and relation, not “springing up/out.” “Sprang” colors the thought of the verse, perhaps not in a consequential manner, but it colors the verse nonetheless. This violates the stated aim of offering “no paraphrase” but to give “as literal a translation as possible” (1950:9). The 1970 revision appropriately brackets “sprang,” indicating that the word is supplied, whereas the 1950 NWT did not.

The Appendix to the NWT (1950:778-779) acknowledges the two schools of thought on this issue, and quote both Moulton and Robertson as stating that based on exegesis, ὁ ὦν ἐπὶ πάντων and θεὸς are more naturally taken as in apposition to ὁ Χριστὸς. (The preceding section of this thesis notes support of this view.)

Two pieces of supporting evidence for the NWT's exegesis are (1) a supposition that "perhaps" ὁ ὦν is the equivalent of "I AM" and (2) that four translations (An American Translation, Moffatt's Bible Translation, The Riverside New Testament, and The Revised Standard Version), agree with their rendering. There are many translations that do not agree with their rendering, yet only one (KJV) is mentioned.

From the limited scope and weight of the evidence offered, it seems that the NWT translators followed Robertson, whom they quoted in the Appendix, ". . . the punctuation of the editor will be made according to his theology" (1950:779). The Jehovah's Witness' theological position that Jesus Christ is a created being, less than God, while not explicitly stated as a factor, may have contributed to their treatment of this verse.

4.3.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

Regarding their rendering of Romans 9:5b, the NWT (1950:779) makes an important statement about the translators' philosophy of translation; "The

grammar of the Greek text admits of [allows for] this" (bracketed added). 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 interpretation as the equivalent of an *endorsement* of that interpretation (Note John 1:1c, John 20:28, and Romans 9:5). This seeming pattern would violate the principles stated in the Foreword of avoiding a "preferred religious view" and of providing as accurate a "word for word" translation as is possible. This will be addressed further in the conclusions of the research project in the final chapter.

4.3.4. Conclusions

Romans 9:5 is a challenging text, the translation of which is determined more by exegesis and context than grammar. As such, sincere and competent interpreters may arrive at different conclusions.

I do believe that when Romans 9:1-5 is considered as an introduction to chapters 9-11, it is much more likely that 9:5b refers to Jesus Christ *as God*, than to God the Father.

The NWT's treatment of the verse (1) leaves τὸ κατὰ σάρκα without a clear antithesis, and (2) concludes a list of Israel's privileges with a praise of the God who gave them. The list in verses 4 and 5 is intended to illustrate the great grief of Paul for his brethren. If the Christ who is from among the Israelites is God over all, then the rejection of him is rejection of God, and not just a benefit of God. But

if the Christ is merely “from among them,” (as the NWT indicates), and not both “over all” and “God,” then the rhetorical power of Paul’s list is greatly diminished.

On the weight of this evidence, I believe (a) the NWT’s treatment of the verse is a misinterpretation, ignoring the natural reading of the verse, and (b) that the “preferred religious view” that Jesus Christ is not God caused them to overlook grammatical evidence and the context in which the verse is strategically placed.

4.4. Titus 2:13

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

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
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,” (1950:630)	“while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus,” (1970:1291)

The NWT follows Westcott and Hort's text for Titus 2:13, with no mention of variant readings.

4.4.1 Analysis of the Greek Text

Titus 2:13 is part of a section (2:1-3:8) on sound doctrine and ethical conduct to be taught to various groups in the church on Crete and is specifically part of a paragraph (vv.11-14) giving the theological basis for this doctrine advocated in vv.1-10 (Collins 2002:348).

"In terms of structure, Titus is one of the most neatly crafted epistles in the New Testament" (Smith 2007:98). This careful construction will be a factor for interpreting Titus 2:13, and requires a brief examination of the paragraph, as an introduction to the verse.

Verse 11 gives the primary basis for righteous living, the fact that "the grace of God for the salvation of all humanity has appeared." The appearance of God's grace for salvation is certainly a reference to Christ's earthly ministry, culminating in the cross (Collins 2002:352).

Verse 12 lists the consequent requirements for those who have received this grace of God which has appeared in the past. Recipients are to reject "ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (NIV).

The movement within the paragraph begins with a past appearance (*Επεφάνη*) of the grace of God, which motivates and requires righteous conduct in the present, while awaiting another appearance (*ἐπιφάνειαν*) in the future, described in verse 13.

Verse 13 is the second half of the sentence begun in verse 12. It begins with *προσδεχόμενοι*, a contemporaneous temporal adverbial participle (Wallace 1996:623), answering the question, "When should one live according to the ethics of verse 12?" The answer being, "While waiting." While awaiting what?

The next clause in verse 13 is τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν; “While awaiting the blessed hope and appearance.” Μακάριος may designate the scope of ἐλπίς (Dibelius & Conzelmann 1972:143). Smith and Song describe the “blessed hope” as “the hope that brings blessing,” and argue that καὶ is epexegetical, indicating that “the appearing” is the “the hope that brings blessing” (2006:285). This latter interpretation seems more likely.

The major point of interpretation of Titus 2:13 is how to handle the genitive chain τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

The first genitive in the chain, τῆς δόξης, may be seen as the object (an objective genitive) of the verbal noun ἐπιφάνειαν (Smith & Song 2006:286), telling the reader that the appearance of the blessed hope is “the appearing of the glory.”

An alternative view is to take τῆς δόξης as an attributive genitive, describing the nature of the appearing. This would make the blessed hope “the glorious appearing.” If this were the case, the usual approach for understanding genitive chains would be violated, as the next genitive phrase, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ, could not be dependent on τῆς δόξης, but would have to be dependent on ἐπιφάνειαν; “the glorious appearing of the great God.”

Also, if τῆς δόξης is seen as an attributive genitive, the idea of glory is lessened and becomes a somewhat disposable adjective, rather than a hallmark of historic epiphanies (Collins 2002:352) and of the parousia (Towner 1989:108). If τῆς δόξης is in fact superfluous, then the obvious verbal parallel, in this “neatly

crafted” epistle (Smith 2007:98), is eliminated. Verse 11 speaks of “the grace of God” which had appeared. Verse 13, if τῆς δόξης is an objective genitive, speaks of “the glory of the great God” which will appear. The obvious parallel (grace of God/glory of God) becomes non-existent if τῆς δόξης is attributive, for the appearing would not then be *of the glory of the great God*, but would instead be the glorious appearing *of the great God*.

The weight of the grammatical and contextual evidence rests with τῆς δόξης as an objective genitive with the verbal noun ἐπιφάνειαν, with τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ dependent on τῆς δόξης; “the appearing of the glory of the great God.”

The primary issue for this study is found in the clause τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Specifically, does τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος refer to one or two persons?

If τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος is referring to two persons, then both referents are dependent upon τῆς δόξης. In this view, the appearing of the glory of the great God is also the appearing of the glory of our savior, Jesus Christ (Hanson 1966:116). At minimum, the literal appearing of Christ at the parousia will make manifest the glory of the great God. The “two persons position” is advocated on the bases that (1) Paul would not have called Christ τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ, and (2) that it is an established Pauline practice to construct phrases with two separate persons implied.

As to the first point, it is predicated on a belief that the NT does not directly use Θεός in reference to Jesus (Harris 1992:176-177). Also, as Smith & Song astutely observe, “this interpretation implicitly affirms the deity of Christ because δόξα refers to the divine nature (2007:290). If the glory of God the Father is manifest in Christ’s appearing, then the divine nature is seen in Christ, affirming his deity.

The second point, of Pauline usage, is in this investigator’s opinion, a straw man. The question is not, “Are there occurrences within the Pauline corpus of two persons or groups within the same phrase?” The question is, “Does the grammatical construction of Titus 2:13 indicate that τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος refers to one or two persons?” When one considers Granville Sharp’s Rule, the evidence for reference to a single person becomes virtually conclusive.

4.4.1.1. Granville Sharp’s Rule for Nouns in the Article-Noun-καί-Noun Construction.

Granville Sharp identified six rules for the use of the Greek article (Wallace 1996:271). The first of these rules is particularly relevant to this study:

When the copulative καί connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill,] if the article ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates

to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e. it denotes a farther description of the first-named person . . . (Sharp, quoted in Wallace 1983:62).

Wallace (1983:62) more clearly summarizes the criteria which qualify a text for the application of Sharp's Rule:

To put it simply, in the construction article-noun-kai-noun, four requirements must be met if the two nouns refer to the same person: (1) both nouns must, of course, be personal; (2) both nouns must be common nouns, i.e., not proper names; (3) both nouns must be in the same case; and (4) both nouns must be singular in number.

The phrase τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος in Titus 2:13, meets the criteria for Sharp's Rule (1) structurally, article-noun-kai-noun, even with the added adjective; and (2) semantically, since neither noun is impersonal, plural, or a proper name. Therefore, if Sharp's Rule is valid, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ and σωτῆρος refer to one person, Jesus Christ (Metzger 1953:79).

Those who have rejected Sharp's Rule have done so largely due to anti-trinitarian bias (Wallace 1983:62, n. 4), the influence of teachers who have rejected the rule (Wallace 1996:272-273), or because they have found exceptions to the rule by

having misapplied it to texts involving impersonal or plural nouns, or proper names (1996:273).

One recent critic of Sharp's Rule is Beduhn, who calls the rule "a fiction concocted by a man who had a theological agenda in creating it, namely, to prove that the verses we are examining in this chapter [Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1] call Jesus 'God'" (2003:92). Beduhn argues that Sharp's error was in failing to consider non-Biblical Greek evidence to evaluate his rule. He cites Smyth to debunk Sharp, but the evidence he pulls from Smyth involves extra-biblical examples in which the nouns are plural, and therefore, disqualified from Sharp's Rule (2003:93). He also states (unsubstantiated) that ὁ Θεός "functions as a proper name in the New Testament" (2003:94), and therefore, texts involving Θεός cannot be considered under the rubric of Sharp's Rule. While it is true that Θεός is sometimes taken as a proper name, it is not technically a proper name but a title, and is not automatically disqualified from Sharp's construction. Beduhn, on the strength of his easily dismissed evidence, calls for the "long overdue dismissal of the phantom of 'Sharp's Rule'" (2003:94). Wallace's (1983; 1996) more thorough examination of Sharp contradicts Beduhn.

When the rule is applied as written, with careful attention paid to the disqualifying exceptions, no one has ever invalidated Sharp's rule in regard to the NT (Wallace 1983:62; 1996:273). Therefore, unless one argues that Titus 2:13 is the one exception to Sharp's Rule within the NT, and provides compelling evidence to

support that claim, the grammatical evidence points to τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ and σωτῆρος as (1) both being dependent on τῆς δόξης, and as (2) referring to one person. The last genitive phrase in the chain, ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, identifies this one person, Jesus Christ, our great God and savior. The question then remains, is this interpretation exegetically supported?

4.4.1.2. Exegetical Evidence for “our great God and savior, Jesus Christ”

Harris (1992:178-179) identifies θεός καὶ σωτήρ as a “stereotyped formula” commonly used by Diasporan and Palestinian Jews “in reference to Yahweh.” As such, to divide the formula and apply the halves in regard to two distinct persons could only confuse an audience that would be predisposed to presume a single referent. Harris makes an almost indisputable point when he states, “If the name Ἰησοῦς Χριστός did not follow the expression [τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν], undoubtedly it would be taken to refer to one person; yet Ἰησοῦς Χριστός is simply added in epexegesis” (1992:179, bracketed added). So the issue for the 1st century reader wouldn't have been the “one or two persons” debate, rather the identification of the one person, which is made clear by the epexegetical (or appositional) genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The use of ἐπιφάνεια is significant. It occurs in five other places in the Pauline corpus, all denoting an appearance of Christ (Smith & Song 2007:285-286). Bowman believes it is “therefore practically certain that Paul uses the term

epiphanēia in Titus 2:13 with the same meaning as he gives it in his other five uses of the term” (1999:31).

The argument is strengthened by the context of Titus 2:11-13, which shows that personal Christianity (v. 12) is lived out between two appearances (vv. 11 & 13) of Jesus Christ (Krodel 1993:89). A Christian on Crete follows the ethical instructions of v. 12, because *the grace of God* has appeared (v. 11). This righteous life is lived while awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of *the glory of our great God and savior*, Jesus Christ (v. 13).

Where the first appearance, of the grace of God, brought salvation, the second appearance, of the glory of God, will bring glorification to those who have received grace and lived in it (Collins 2002:352). Both the grace and glory are inseparably bound in the person of Jesus Christ, and his appearing. “The past Christ-event forms the basis of that future event” (Towner 1989:77).

In summary, from both the standpoint of grammar and syntax, as well as the theological context of the Bible, the NT, and Titus, it seems highly probable that in Titus 2:13, Θεός refers to Jesus Christ, calling him “our great God and savior.” Those who await the blessed hope and appearing, are not waiting for Christ to reveal God’s glory, but are waiting for the appearing of the glory of their savior, Jesus Christ, who is himself the great God (Smith & Song 2007:292).

4.4.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis

From the rendering of Titus 2:13, ("while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation . . .") it can be deduced that the NWT translators believe τῆς δόξης to be an attributive genitive, describing the nature of the awaited epiphany. This equates "happy hope" (μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα) with "glorious manifestation" (ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης), assuming an epexegetical καί. As argued above, this interpretation (1) loses the parallel of "the grace of God" (v. 11) and "the glory of God" (v. 13), (2) disrupts the natural flow of the genitive chain, making τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ dependent on ἐπιφάνειαν rather than δόξης, and (3) lessens the significance of δόξα for the ἐπιφάνεια.

Of greater import for this study is the NWT's treatment of the rest of the genitive chain (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), rendered render "of the great God and of our Savior, Christ Jesus." The 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, Moutlon's

Grammar is described as citing five papyri from the 7th century “which attest the translation ‘our great God and Saviour’ as current among Greek-speaking Christians” (NWT, quoting Moulton 1950:781-782).

The NWT rejects this evidence on two bases: (1) that the relative youth of 7th century manuscripts makes them an unreliable indicator of 1st century usage, and (2) that the theological implications of the cited materials, specifically apotheosis (“mother of god,” and evidence of secular parallels which apply “god and savior” to deified kings), renders it incredible.

As to the age of the papyri, it has not gone unnoticed that the NWT heavily relies on 14th century manuscripts to justify the practice of inserting Jehovah into the text of the NT (Countess 1982:25). To reject 7th century manuscripts, while embracing a small group from the 14th century requires explanation, which the NWT does not provide.

As for the content of the 7th century papyri, the theological implications of the papyri caused the NWT translators to (1) disregard any grammatical or syntactic evidence that might be gleaned, and (2) to make an unsupportable statement to support 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 NT borrowing from pagan culture and practices is partially illustrated by (1) 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; (2) Paul's appropriation of the pagan temple to the unknown God to evangelize those who worshipped there; and (3) Paul's frequent quoting of Greek slogans and poetry, and his application of them to instruct the 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's Appendix is silent on the issue of whether the verse refers to one or two persons. Perhaps Moulton's claim of the necessity of "leaving the matter open" has been interpreted to mean there is no need to justify a position. This may be inferred from the unsupported statement, "we render 'the great God' as separate from 'our Savior Christ Jesus'" (1950:782). The NWT notes that earlier references (John 1:1, 1:18) to Jesus as "a god" and "the only-begotten god" would justify translating Titus 2:13 as referring to one person. If not grammar, then theology must have determined the NWT's rendering.

The means of indicating two persons in the NWT's rendering is the inclusion of the word "of" immediately before "our savior" ("glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Savior"). By doing this, the "NWT has adduced a disjunction

between God and Christ in Titus 2:13, where no necessary disjunction exists in the Greek" (Countess 1982:69).

The disjunction between God and Christ in Titus 2:13 was enhanced when the NWT was revised. The 1970 NWT reads, "while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus," (1970:1291). No explanation is given for this revision.

4.4.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

I begin with a minor point. Based on the principles set forth in the NWT's Appendix for John 1:1c, (that generally, anarthrous nouns are indefinite), one would expect the anarthrous σωτῆρος to be rendered "a savior," unless of course, the appositional presence of Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ negates that principle of translation.

The heart of the matter is the decision to render 'the great God' as separate from 'our Savior Christ Jesus'" (1950:782).

To be consistent with the translators' stated philosophy and values of translation, the NWT must (1) not be affected by the controlling influence of a "preferred religious view," but must place allegiance to the text above theological points of view, and (2) must be consistent in its application of Greek grammar to render

“the truth of the inspired Word as purely and as consistently as our consecrated powers make possible” (NWT 1950:7).

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 grammatical grounds, may be reflective of a “preferred religious view” exerting a controlling interest.

The rejection of “God and Savior” as a “stereotyped formula” may be considered a violation of the NWT’s stated principle of maintaining the use of 1st century figures of speech. By separating the title into a reference to two persons, the original meaning is obscured for a modern reader.

4.4.4. Conclusions

Based on grammatical and contextual grounds, it is most likely that Titus 2:13 uses θεός in reference to Jesus Christ.

While the NWT makes no explicit statement about the deity of Christ in regard to its treatment of this verse, when faced with two basic options for translation, the one which disassociates θεός from Jesus Christ was chosen, without a grammatical argument to support the decision. The implied influence of an Arian view of Christ may be taken into account as a motive, since the Appendix to Titus

2:13 makes it clear that in this case, theology was a greater factor for the NWT translators than Greek grammar and common usage.

Chapter 5

Critique and Exegesis of the Sample Texts:

Hebrews 1:8-9, II Peter 1:1, and I John 5:20

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyze the NWT's treatment of three texts of the research sample, Hebrews 1:8-9, II Peter 1:1, and I John 5:20.

5.2. Hebrews 1:8-9

Table 7: Hebrews 1:8-9 in the Greek and two editions of the NWT.

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
πρὸς δὲ τὸν οὐίον, Ο θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [τοῦ αἰώνος], καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ. 9 ἡγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ	"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. 9 You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness. That is why God, your God, anointed you with the oil of great joy more than	"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. 9 You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness. That is why God, your God, anointed you with [the] oil of exaltation more than

<p>ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν· διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισεν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τούς μετόχους σου.</p>	<p>your partners” (1950:634).</p>	<p>your partners” (1970:1293).</p>
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Hebrews 1:8-9 forms part of a catena constructed of Old Testament quotations intended to communicate characteristics of the Son, which when taken together, decisively demonstrate his superiority to the angels (Rhee 2000:179; Schenck 2001:473-474). This catena may have been drawn from an existing “testimonium,” designed to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (Smothers 1985:335). While an interesting notion, it is neither provable, nor as relevant to this study as the specific selection of OT scripture by the author of Hebrews.

Textual Variants: In verse 8, the NWT chooses the variant reading τῆς βασιλείας σου (in place of τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ). This choice is not explained in the footnotes, which gives the alternative reading and lists three witnesses. Harris (1992:211) states that the arguments for the available readings “are more evenly balanced than some writers have recognized, but with most textual critics and the majority of commentators I opt for σου as the more primitive text.” The manuscript evidence for σου is widely distributed and ancient, and this reading agrees with the LXX. Therefore, I concur with the choice of variant shared by the NWT and Harris.

The significance of this choice of variant is relevant to the discussion of whether ὁ Θεός should be taken as nominative, predicate nominative, or nominative for vocative, and will be taken up in the next section.

5.2.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

The emphasis of Hebrews 1 is the superiority of Christ (Smothers 1985:333), as an introduction to an epistle which is built around and upon Christ's superiority.

The first contrast describes Christ's superiority to the prophets as a revealer of God's will and Word (v. 1). Verses 2 & 3 show that Christ is superior because unlike any prophet of old, Christ is (1) God's Son, (2) appointed heir of all things, (3) creator of all things, (4) the radiance of God's glory, (5) the exact representation of God's being, (6) the sustainer of all things, (7) the one who provided purification for sins, and (8) the one who is seated at God's right hand.

No mortal man could compare to the Christ described here, which leads to verse 4; "So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs" (NIV). Christ is not only superior to the prophets, but also to the angels.

The catena of vv. 5-13 is "Foundational to the writer's Christology and view of atonement" (Smothers 1985:333), and understanding his view will be accomplished by examining his use of OT scripture to construct the catena (Thompson 1976:352). The catena uses OT texts out of their original context,

with christological reference to offer scriptural proof that Christ is superior to the angels (p. 354).

Verse 5 quotes Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14 to demonstrate that Christ has a name superior to that of the angles, namely, that of “Son.” Verse 6 quotes the LXX of Deuteronomy 32:43 and Psalm 97:7, to show that “the angels of God” are to worship the supreme (*tòv πρωτότοκον*) Son of God.

Verse 7 is significant for this study, as it employs a μέν . . . δέ construction to establish contrast between the angels in v. 7 and Christ in vv. 8 & 9. It is interesting that the catena here contains a quote (Ps. 104:4) with the angels, and not Christ as subject (Attridge 1989:57). The quote in verse 7 is unexplained, allowing verses 8 & 9 to establish the significance. This is signalled by the πρὸς δέ τὸν υἱόν of v. 8, completing the μέν . . . δέ construction begun with the πρὸς μέν τοὺς ἀγγέλους of v. 7.

The content of the quote in verse 7 tells us that angels (a) are made (*O ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους*), where Christ is maker of all (v.2), and (b) are transient winds and flames of fire, where Christ's position and being are eternal (vv. 8-9) (Bruce 1990:58-59).

Hebrews 1:8-9 contains two affirmations (quoting Psalm 45:6-7 [44:7-8, LXX]) that serve as the contrast to v. 7. Harris (1992:209) states that “Studies of the use of the LXX in Hebrews suggest that one may safely assume that the author was using a text of the Psalter that was almost identical with the primitive LXX

text (as represented, for the Psalms, by A. Rahlf's text)." Hebrews 1:9 is a verbatim quote of the LXX of Psalm 44:8, but there are two issues for consideration in the author's use of Psalm 44:7 [LXX] in Hebrews 1:8.

Hebrews 1:8a is identical to Psalm 44:7a, with the exception of the brackets:

Psalm 44:7a [LXX] ο Θεόνος σου ο θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ αἰώνος,

Hebrews 1:8b adds a *kai*, effectively dividing the quoted verse into separate parts; the eternal throne of Christ (v. 8a), and the uprightness or righteousness of Christ's rule (represented by his sceptre) (v. 8b).

Hebrews 1:8b	καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος	ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας
	αὐτοῦ [οἱ, σου]·	
Psalm 44:7b [LXX]	ράβδος	εὐθύτητος ἡ ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας
	σου	

The more significant issue is that by moving the article from the second *ράβδος* to the first, the subject and predicate have been inverted (Harris 1992:210).

Rather than the original “The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness” (LXX), we have “and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom.”

Harris (1992:210) states:

Thus, parallelism is created between ὁ θρόνος σου and ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος, indicating that verse 8b is to be construed with verse 8a rather than with verse

9: in administering his kingdom that is eternal, “God”
(whether ὁ Θεὸς here refers to the Father or the Son)
shows perfect equity.

The hermeneutics of the writer of Hebrews, as seen in both his selection of OT scripture, as well as his willingness to reconstruct it to make his point, will be critical as we consider the issue for this study; how should ὁ Θεός be understood in Hebrews 1:8, and 1:9? Each verse will be considered separately, then the verses will be considered together, in the context of Hebrews 1.

5.2.1.1. ὁ Θεός in Hebrews 1:8

In Hebrews 1:8, ὁ Θεός may be understood (1) as a nominative subject with ὁ θρόνος as a PN (“God is your throne”); (2) as a predicate nominative to ὁ θρόνος (“your throne is God”); or (3) as a nominative for vocative (“your throne, O God.”).

Both options 1 & 2 (subject and PN) employ ὁ Θεός to describe the throne, without explicitly identifying whose throne is described. As previously mentioned, verse 8 begins with the completion of the μέν . . . δέ contrast begun in verse 7.

Verse 7 introduces the quote of Ps. 104:4 with καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει.

The quote then explicitly refers back to the angels, Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα . . . If ὁ Θεός is the subject or the PN in Heb. 1:8, then the introductory statement, πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν, has no explicit referent and the parallelism of the μέν . . . δέ construction is weakened. If, however, ὁ Θεός is taken as nominative for vocative, as the explicit referent to τὸν υἱόν, then the strong parallelism of the

$\mu\acute{e}n \dots \delta\acute{e}$ construction remains. The pronoun $\sigma\acute{o}\u03b9$ refers to $\tau\acute{o}v ui\acute{o}v$, tying the quote to the introduction. Yet the pronoun alone is inadequate to qualify the quote as christological material, whereas a vocative $\acute{o} \theta\acute{e}o\u03c7$ (analogous to $\tau\acute{o}\u03c7$ $\grave{\alpha}g\acute{g}\acute{e}lou\u03c7$ in v. 7) solves this problem. Whose throne? The throne of the Son who is God.

As Wallace (1996:59) points out, the idea of “your throne is God” could apply to the angels, as a reference to God’s reign over them. In such a case, “the adversative force” of $\delta\acute{e}$ in the $\mu\acute{e}n \dots \delta\acute{e}$ construction would be lost.

Also, the contrast of Christ to the angels relates to function, comparing the “transient service” ($\tau\acute{o}\u03c7 \lambda eitourgou\u03c7 a\acute{u}tou \pi ur\acute{o}s \phi l\acute{o}ga$ and $\pi ne\acute{u}mata$) of the angels to the “eternal kingship” ($O \theta\acute{e}rno\u03c7 \sigma\acute{o}u \acute{o} \theta\acute{e}o\u03c7 eis \tau\acute{o}v ai\acute{w}na t\acute{o}u ai\acute{w}no\u03c7$) of the Son (Harris 1992:213-214). I concur with Thompson (1976:358, brackets added) that “a major purpose in the citation [of Ps. 44:7 LXX] is to press the phrase, $eis \tau\acute{o}v ai\acute{w}na t\acute{o}u ai\acute{w}no\u03c7$ which contrasts the Son to the angels.” If $\acute{o} \theta\acute{e}o\u03c7$ is the subject or PN, then the Son’s reign is eternal because his throne is God, and the function of reigning is less about the Son and more about the Father. If $\acute{o} \theta\acute{e}o\u03c7$ is nominative for vocative, then the Son, as God, is eternal and as such has an eternal reign (Isaacs 1992:170).

An important issue is how the Hebrew text of Psalm 45:7-8 (44:7-8, LXX) has been understood. Harris (1992:196) states,

The traditional rendering, “your throne, O God,” where [Elohim] is a vocative, is found in all the ancient versions, many English translations (KJV, RV, ASV, Berkeley, NASB, JB, NAB, NIV, NRSV), and many modern commentators (brackets added for Hebrew).

The question then as now is, to whom does *Elohim*/ $\Theta\epsilon\circ\varsigma$ refer? The Psalm is believed to be a wedding song for a king (Carr 1981:102; Attridge 1989:58; Bruce 1990b:59), containing “the strong element of the theological basis of the kingship” (Carr 1981:103). Would the Psalmist refer to an earthly king as God? Bruce (1990b:60) points to the “characteristic hyperbole of the oriental court style” to explain the use of Elohim for the reign of a human king. Such a king’s reign could only be eternal through his progeny. In the context of Hebrews’ contrast of Jesus and the angels, especially if $\Theta\epsilon\circ\varsigma$ is nominative for vocative, the statement is not hyperbolic, for Christ’s reign is eternal, as he is eternally God (Bruce 1990b:60).

As for the Septuagint’s rendering of the Psalm, Brown (1965:562, brackets added) states,

In the preceding verse of the psalm in the LXX we read: “Your weapons, O Mighty One, are sharpened”; the law of parallelism would indicate that the next verse should read: “Your throne, O God, is for ever

and ever.” Moreover, the parallelism from the very next line in the psalm, cited in v. 8 (“and the righteous scepter is . . .”), suggests that “throne” and not “God” is the subject of the line under consideration. There can be little doubt, then, that the reading of v. 8 that we have proposed [“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever . . .] is the correct one.

Harris (1992:203-204) adds grammatical evidence for taking ὁ θεός as nominative for vocative in the LXX :

To render ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός by “your throne is God” is implausible in light of the articular θεός: an anarthrous θεός would have been expected in the predicate (cf. ράβδος in v. 7b). No more probable is the translation “God is your throne,” given the word order and the ambiguity of subject if the two articular nouns θρόνος and θεός were both nominative. In verse 7b the anarthrous state of ράβδος εύθυτητος shows ἡ ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου to be the subject.

It seems more than probable from the evidence of the Hebrew text, as well as the LXX, that ὁ θεός in the LXX of Psalm 44:7 is to be understood as nominative for vocative and should be translated “your throne, O God, . . .”

The simple vocative θεέ is uncommon, appearing in Matthew 27:46, with the NT writers favoring the articular nominative for vocative (Wallace 1996:59). “This is particularly the case in quoting from the LXX (as in Heb 1:8; cf. Heb 10:7), for the LXX is equally reticent to use the voc. form, most likely since Hebrew lacked such a form” (p. 59).

I conclude that the weight of the evidence rests with taking ὁ θεός as a nominative for vocative (Ellingworth 1992:124), translated “your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

The rest of the verse, καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σού (favoring the alternate reading σού¹⁷) shifts from the basis of Christ’s reign (his eternal throne as God) to the nature of and the exercise of his reign (the uprightness or equity of the sceptre of his kingdom). With the addition of καὶ to the head of this clause, along with the shift of the article from the first to the second ράβδος, the writer has made “the sceptre of uprightness” the subject of v. 8b, and parallel with ὁ θόρυβος of v. 8a. One might infer that because he is ὁ θεός, the son has an eternal throne, and the nature of the conduct of his reign is righteous/upright because he is himself righteous, being ὁ θεός. This will be elucidated in verse 9.

¹⁷ The addition of καὶ to the verse has conjoined 8a and 8b. The σού reading strengthens the parallelism, where the αὐτοῦ reading weakens it.

In the context of Hebrews 1, as a full and irrefutable show of the superiority of Christ to angels, the writer of Hebrews uses ὁ Θεός as a nominative for vocative in reference to Jesus, thereby calling him God.

5.2.1.2. ὁ Θεός in Hebrews 1:9

Hebrews 1:9a continues the thought about the righteous reign of the son by adding “you loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness.” In administering an upright kingdom, the divine qualities and character of the son are seen.

Hebrews 1:9b begins with διὰ τοῦτο, signalling that the action of the following verb (ἔχρισεν) is the direct result of what preceded; on account of his love of righteousness and hatred of lawlessness, he was anointed. The relevant issue for this study is the interpretation of ᔁχρισεν σε ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεός σου.

There are two ways to interpret the clause in regard to the subject of the verb ᔁχρισεν.

First, one might take the second occurrence of ὁ Θεὸς (the Father), as the subject, with the first occurrence as a nominative for vocative, referring to Jesus (as in v. 8b). This results in a translation like “on this account, O God, your God anointed you.” If shown to be the best interpretation, this would be the second successive verse to call Jesus “God.” This interpretation is grammatically and syntactically allowable. However, evidence for the second interpretation is more compelling (Harris 1996:219).

Second, one might take the first occurrence of ὁ Θεὸς to be a simple nominative as the subject of ἔχρισεν, and the second occurrence as appositional, further identifying the aforementioned God. This would be rendered “because of this, God, your God, anointed you.” Which God anointed? God (the Father), your God, anointed you (Jesus).

Harris (1992:219-220) offers four convincing arguments in favor of this second view:

(1) There is significant parallelism between Psalm 44:3c and 44:8b.

44:3c διὰ τοῦτο εὐλόγησέν σε ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰώνα

44:8b διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισεν σε ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεός σου

Since ὁ Θεὸς in 44:3c cannot be vocative, the parallel in 44:8b is most likely not vocative.

(2) As previously noted, the author of Hebrews felt comfortable changing the construction of the text to create subject-predicate parallelism to serve his point. If he wanted the first ὁ Θεὸς to be taken as a nominative for vocative, he could have altered the word order; διὰ τοῦτο, ὁ Θεὸς, ἔχρισεν σε ὁ Θεός σου.

(3) In the many uses of ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεὸς μου (Ps. 21:2; 42:4; 62:2; cf. 50:16) and of ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν (Ps. 66:7), and ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεός σου (Ps. 49:7) in the LXX, in each case the first ὁ Θεὸς is nominative.

(4) Without this double reference to the Father in Hebrews 1:9, readers could misinterpret the nominative for vocative reference to Christ as God in v. 8 as saying that Christ is God the Father, or some other erroneous notion. Hebrews presses the deity of Christ in verse 8, and then as a prophylactic, shows the deity of the Father as a separate person from the Son in verse 9. While v. 8 shows the son as *totus deus*, v. 9 shows that he is not *totum dei*.

Smothers (1985:333) equates the prologue of Hebrews (1:1-4) with the prologue of John's gospel, in regard to its power and majesty. It is noteworthy that as John is careful in his prologue to portray both the deity of Christ and his separation from God the Father (John 1:1), the writer of Hebrews also makes these same points with this interpretation of verses 8 and 9. Jesus is called God in verse 8, but lest there be any confusion, he is anointed by God the Father in verse 9.

The language of anointing cannot be lost on the followers of Christ, the Messiah. The "Anointed One" is recognized as God and anointed by God in the same passage (as used by the writer of Hebrews). The Davidic king, whose throne is forever, and whose reign is upright, is anointed because he loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (Davies 1967:23). Like the kings of old, this anointing has "elevated him above his fellows" (Bruce 1990b:60). Unlike the kings of Israel, this King is not only anointed above his citizens, this one is superior to the angels (Attridge 1989:60).

5.2.1.3. Hebrews 1:8-9 in the Context of Hebrews 1

The majority of Hebrews 1 is occupied by the catena of OT scripture, proving the superiority of Christ to the angels, introduced in Hebrews 1:4. The purpose of this exercise does not become apparent until Hebrews 2:1-10, in which another body of teaching “declared by angels” (2:2) is introduced (Lindars 1991:38). If the recipients of the epistle were struggling with temptation to return to the code and cult delivered to Moses by an angel, then understanding that the doctrine of salvation was delivered to the world by the eternal Jesus Christ, God (vv. 2, 8), king (vv. 2, 8), creator (vv. 3, 10), and redeemer (vv. 3), who is far superior to the transient angels, should cure any such temptation (1991:38).

The attributes referenced in Hebrews 1 are more than titles, status, or functions, but are aspects of Jesus as one belonging to a different category, namely, that of deity (Harris 1992:221). The use of ὁ θεός as nominative for vocative in verse 8, calling Jesus God, is perfectly consistent with the claims of verse 3, ὃς ὦν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ.

The further exposition in verse 9, twice uses ὁ θεός in reference to the Father as a means of clarifying (1) that Father and Son are separate persons, *equal in essence*; and (2) that the Father's anointing of the Son demonstrates a *subordination of function*.

In conclusion, it seems most likely that (1) ὁ θεός in Hebrews 1:8 is used in reference to Jesus Christ, calling him God; and (2) both occurrences of ὁ θεός in Hebrews 1:9 are used in reference to God the Father, and not Jesus Christ.

5.2.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis

The Appendix to the NWT is silent regarding Hebrews 1:8-9, so while a plain reading makes some of the decisions of the translators clear, what cannot be known for certain are the factors contributing to the decisions.

Hebrews 1:8 - By rendering the introduction to the quote “But with reference to the Son:” the NWT has captured the second half of the μέν . . . δέ construction begun in verse 7, maintaining the contextual link between verse 7 and verses 8 & 9.

“God is your throne forever and ever,” may indicate that the NWT translators believe that in the clause ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός, the subject is ὁ θεός, with ὁ θρόνος as a PN. This translation is shared by Westcott, Moffatt, and Thomas.

Against this approach is the ambiguity of subject resulting from the articularity of both ὁ θρόνος and ὁ θεός, as well as word order. Had the author of Hebrews wished to differentiate between subject and PN, rendering the PN anarthrous would have done so.¹⁸ If ὁ θεός is a nominative for vocative (as I believe it is)

¹⁸ When it served his rhetorical purposes, the author of Hebrews moved the article ὁ in 1:8b.

there is no problem, as the predicate of the subject ὁ Θρόνος is εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ αἰώνος.

In rendering Hebrews 1:8b, “and the scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of straight principles”, the NWT (1) includes the *kai* of the Westcott and Hort text, conjoining the lines of the psalm, but then (2) translates the rest of the phrase as if working from the LXX text of Psalm 44:7b, with “the scepter of your kingdom” as the subject, and “the scepter of straight principles” as predicate. This (1) negates the subject-predicate inversion created by the writer of Hebrews when he moved the article *ἡ* from the second *ῥάβδος* to the first, and (2) alters the parallelism of the passage. The NWT is silent regarding this rendering.

Hebrews 1:9 - The NWT's treatment of verse 9 is generally consistent with the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis. The translation of 1:9b, “That is why God, your God, anointed you . . .,” indicates that the NWT believes both occurrences of ὁ Θεός refer to God the Father, with the first ὁ Θεός as subject to the verb, and the second ὁ Θεός in apposition to the first.

5.2.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

To be faithful to the philosophy and values of translation stated in the Foreword and Appendix, the NWT 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).

There are two major issues of consistency in the NWT's treatment of Hebrews 1:8b.

First, by rendering καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου “and the scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of straight principles,” the NWT has moved the predicate (ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου) to the head of the sentence, allowing an English reader to assume that the Greek predicate is actually the subject.

The result is twofold. (1) The NWT has (consciously or unconsciously) thwarted the deliberate effort of the writer of Hebrews to establish ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος as subject, parallel with ὁ θρόνος (v. 8a). While this may be more reflective of the psalm being quoted, it does not accurately reflect the Greek text of Hebrews 1:8; and (2) the NWT has consequently opened the door for an interpretation by an English-only reader that is unavailable according to Greek grammar and syntax.

Second, much of the NWT's Appendix for John 1:1c is dedicated to the principle that generally, anarthrous nouns are indefinite, and the translation of them should reflect that. The application of this principle in John 1:1 renders τὸν θεόν in καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν as “God,” and θεὸς in καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, as “a god”.

There is a parallel of construction between John 1:1b-c and Hebrews 1:8b; the presence of an articular noun, repeated in an anarthrous form.

John 1:1b&c καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

Heb. 1:8b καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου·

Whereas the anarthrous θεὸς in John 1:1c is rendered “a god,” the corresponding anarthrous ἥπαρδος in Hebrews 1:8b is rendered “the scepter” rather than “a scepter.”

While I agree with the translation “the scepter,” I must note the inconsistency with the principles set forth in the Appendix to John 1:1c, especially since the constructions are analogous. A possible explanation for this inconsistency is that in John 1:1, τὸν θεόν and θεὸς refer to different persons, and in Hebrews 1:8, ὁ ἥπαρδος and ἥπαρδος refer to the same sceptre.

5.2.4. Conclusions

It seems most likely that θεός in Hebrews 1:8 refers to Jesus Christ, and in Hebrews 1:9 refers to God the Father. When taken together, these verses affirm the deity of Christ, as well as his separateness from the Father. As God in essence, Christ is unquestionably superior to the angels.

The NWT’s treatment of θεός in Hebrews 1:8 is in keeping with a minority of translations, assuming God the Father to be the referent of θεός. The treatment of θεός in Hebrews 1:9 is consistent with a majority of translations, grammarians, and commentators.

While the NWT’s treatment of the verses is allowable by Greek grammar and exegesis, it fails to communicate fully Christ’s superiority (as God) to the angels implied by the author of Hebrews.

5.3. II Peter 1:1

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

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition	NWT 1970 Edition
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: ” (1950:684).	“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: ” (1970:1227).

There are no textual variants of note. The Appendix to the NWT is silent regarding this verse, and the revised edition of the NWT only alters the text by bracketing the last occurrence of “the.”

5.3.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

The salutation which begins II Peter attributes authorship to Συμεὼν Πέτρος, employing a more Hebraic Συμεὼν, rather than the expected Σίμων Πέτρος, or the simple Πέτρος of I Peter 1:1, contributing to the argument for pseudepigraphy (Danker 1978:77). This Peter¹⁹ identifies himself as δοῦλος καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. As a slave/servant who is possessed by Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is a possessive genitive), he is available to be “sent” by Jesus Christ as an apostle. Peter has identified his role, function, position and disposition; slave and apostle

¹⁹ “Peter” will be used to identify the writer of II Peter throughout this section.

of Jesus Christ. The title apostle carries implied authority and inclusion in a well-known group, marking this letter as “official business” and not just friendly correspondence (Davids 2006: 160-161).

The second half of the verse contains the elements of interest for this research.

The intended recipients of the epistle are described as τοῖς ἵστιμον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The first part of the identification of the audience is τοῖς ἵστιμον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν: “to the ones who have received a faith equally honorable with us (with ours).” The audience is τοῖς . . . λαχοῦσιν (those who have received - BAGD s.v.1). Those who have received what? A faith equal to ours: ἵστιμον ἡμῖν . . . πίστιν. Bigg (1901:249) believes ἡμῖν is equivalent to τῇ ἡμῶν. The word order indicates an emphasis on the equality of the received faith of the audience, with that of the author and the group with which he identifies himself, most likely οἱ ἀπόστελοι (p. 250). So, apostles and non-apostles are recipients of a faith of equal honor. The basis of this received faith, and the equity thereof, is the issue for consideration.

The last part of the phrase which identifies the audience of the epistle is ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The phrase ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ describes the cause of the equity of value of the received faith of both apostles and non-apostles; namely the justice (or righteousness) of the one from whom they received it (Davids 2006:162-163). The recipients have received

such a faith because of the justice of either (1) our God and the Savior, Jesus Christ (two persons), or (2) our God and Savior, Jesus Christ (one person). The arguments for each will be evaluated separately.

5.3.1.1. Arguments for a Reference to Two Persons

Stauffer (TDNT 3:106, n. 268) states that the placement of the possessive pronoun ἡμῶν after τοῦ θεοῦ, “separates the attributes,” resulting in “our God and the savior, Jesus Christ. Harris (1992:231) disagrees, “when two substantives are under the *vinculum* of a single article, a personal pronoun applies to both, whether it precedes both . . . , or follows either of the substantives.” This point is well attested by two analogous occurrences of the phrase τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, in II Peter 1:11, and 3:18, which no commentator considers to refer to two persons (p. 231). Had Peter articulated σωτῆρος (τοῦ σωτῆρος) then ἡμῶν would have applied to τοῦ θεοῦ only (Bigg 1901:251).

A second argument is the apparent structural analogy between II Peter 1:1c and II Peter 1:2b, a text which clearly refers to two persons, God the Father and Jesus Christ.

II Peter 1:1c ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

II Peter 1:2b ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

There is however, only an appearance of analogy between the texts. “God and savior” was a well-recognized formula used (1) “by Jews in reference to Yahweh,”

and (2) by Gentiles when referring to an individual god or deified ruler” (Harris 1992:231), and as such was understood to refer to one individual. The phrase “God and Jesus” is not analogous to “God and savior” as “Jesus” is a proper name (with τοῦ κυρίου as an attributive modifier) and “savior” is a title (with Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in epexegetical apposition).

Neither of the arguments for a reference to two persons is particularly convincing.

5.3.1.2. Arguments for a Reference to a Single Person.

There are four reasons to consider τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ a reference to a single person.

First, as mentioned in the previous section, Θεὸς καὶ σωτήρ was a well known stereotyped formula, always referring to a single person (Harris 1992:234). “No living person [in the Mediterranean world of the 1st century] could escape contact with some *theos soter*” (Moehlmann, quoted by Harris 1992:234). This common understanding by the intended audience makes it highly unlikely that Peter employed the formula to refer to two persons.

Second, the construction of the phrase τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is similar to Titus 2:13 in its use of an articular τοῦ Θεοῦ and an anarthrous σωτῆρος identified as Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

As seen in section 4.4.1.1, the first rule of Granville Sharp for handling the Greek article demonstrates that when an articular substantive and an anarthrous

substantive are conjoined by καὶ, the two substantives refer to the same person.

Sharp's rule does not apply to substantives which are impersonal or plural, or to proper names.

The phrase τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος meets the criteria for application of Sharp's Rule, and therefore, τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is almost definitely referring to one person, Jesus Christ, as both God and Savior.

The intervening pronoun ἡμῶν is inconsequential to the application of Sharp's Rule, as "more than half of the NT texts that fit Sharp's rule involve some intervening word between the two substantives" (Wallace 1996:277).

Third, σωτήρ occurs five times, with great consistency of use in II Peter:

- 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 1:11 τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 2:20 τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 3:2 τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος
- 3:18 τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Harris (1992:235) notes that all five occurrences (1) are anarthrous and refer to Jesus Christ, (2) are linked with a preceding articular noun, and (3) the four occurrences of σωτήρ with κύριος all refer to a single person. This pattern of usage supports Jesus Christ as the single referent of θεός and σωτήρ in II Peter 1:1. "The use of σωτήρ elsewhere in 2 Peter strongly suggests that the onus of proof rests with any who would deny that in 1:1 also there is a reference to only one person, Jesus Christ" (1992:235).

Fourth, II Peter 3:18 uses the phrase τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in a doxology explicitly addressed to Jesus Christ. This doxology “forms a *lovely inclusio.*” with II Peter 1:1 (Davids 2006:163). “An author who can address a doxology to Christ would have little difficulty in applying the term Θεός to him (Harris 1992:235).

When considering the weakness of the arguments for reference to two persons, and the strength and number of arguments for reference to one person, it seems clear that (1) τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ has a single referent, and as such (2) calls Jesus Christ “our God and savior” (Blum 1981:267).

5.3.2. Critique of the NWT's Exegesis

The NWT's treatment of the first half of the verse is consistent with the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis. The last phrase of the verse, ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, which the NWT translates “by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ” (1950:684), requires comment.

The NWT's translation shows that the translators believe the phrase refers to two separate persons, “our God (the Father)” and “the savior 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 (2).” Agreement between II Peter 1:1 and 1:2 is irrelevant, as the texts are not structurally analogous, as any perceived analogy overlooks the

application of Sharp's Rule to the qualifying grammatical construction present in 1:1 and absent in 1:2 (the second substantive in the chain is Ἰησοῦ. Proper names are disqualified for consideration under Sharp's rule). As stated in section 5.3.1.1, verses 1 and 2 only appear to be analogous, as "God and savior" was a well-recognized formula which always referred to an individual, and the phrase "God and Jesus" is not analogous. A large number of translations (RV, Goodspeed, TCNT, NASB, Berkeley, RSV, NEB, NAB, GNB, NIV, REB, NRSV) recognize this difference and translate 1:1 with a single referent and 1:2 as referring to two persons.

As the NWT translators believe the verse refers to two persons, the addition of the article "the" to savior in the NWT's rendering correctly assumes that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in apposition to σωτῆρος has made the anarthrous head noun semantically definite. In the 1970 revision, this article has been bracketed to show that it was supplied.

5.3.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

To be in line with the translators' stated philosophy and values of translation, the NWT must be consistent in its application of Greek grammar to render "the truth of the inspired Word as purely and as consistently as our consecrated powers make possible" (NWT 1950:7).

By not recognizing the difference between “God and savior” as a stereotyped formula, and (1) “God and Jesus” not structurally analogous, (2) “God and Lord” as not formulaic, the NWT translators elevated a perceived parallel construction with v. 2, over the grammatical evidence of v.1, as a factor for taking τοῦ θεοῦ and σωτῆρος as referring to the same person.

The result is a rendering of II Peter 1:1 in which the “NWT has adduced a disjunction between God and Christ” as done in Titus 2:13, “where no necessary disjunction exists in the Greek” (Countess 1982:69).

The rejection of “God and Savior” as a “stereotyped formula” may be considered a violation of the NWT’s stated principle of maintaining the use of 1st century figures of speech. By separating the title into a reference to two persons, the original meaning is obscured for a modern reader.

5.3.4. Conclusions

Based on grammatical grounds, it is most likely that II Peter 1:1 uses θεός in reference to Jesus Christ. The NWT’s rendering (which negates that reference) is only shared by the 1901 ASV, and Weymouth’s Modern Speech New Testament. The overwhelming majority of Bibles and commentaries retain the original reference to Christ as “God.”

5.4. I John 5:20

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

Westcott & Hort's Greek	NWT 1950 Edition
οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκει 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 NWT accepts the Westcott and Hort text without comment, and the 1950 rendering of I John 5:20 remains un-revised.

5.4.1. Analysis of the Greek Text

I John 5:20 occurs within the epilogue to John's first epistle, verses 13-21 (Hiebert 1990:309). Verse 13 explicitly states the purpose of the epistle; to foster assurance of eternal life through faith in Christ. Verses 14-17 describe believers' confidence in prayer and responsibility as intercessors on behalf of other believers in need of prayer on account of sin. Verses 18-20 summarize John's message in three statements beginning with οἴδαμεν.

- In verse 18, "we know" that believers, "born of God," do not continue in sin, as they are safeguarded by the "the one born of God (Christ)" and are safe from the "Evil one."

- In verse 19, “we know” that as God's children, although safe in Him, we are in enemy territory; the world “under the control of the evil one.”
- In verse 20, “we know” that we have been given the knowledge of God and eternal life through inclusion in Jesus Christ (Lieu 1991:22).

Verse 21, abruptly ends the epistle with an admonition against idolatry, in counterpoint to the references to the true God in v. 20.

I John 5:20 is complex, formed by two sentences. In the second sentence, Θεός is arguably used in reference to Jesus Christ. Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος prompts the relevant question for this research: to whom or what does οὗτός refer? It is impossible to answer this question without analysing each part of the verse and the interrelatedness of the parts.

The verse can be naturally broken down into the following parts:

- 20a οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ οὐίος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔκει
- 20b καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν
- 20c ἵνα γινώσκομεν τὸν ἀληθινόν,
- 20d καὶ ἔσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ
- 20e ἐν τῷ οὐίῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ.
- 20f οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

Verse 20a opens with the particle δέ, unlike the first two οἴδαμεν ὅτι clauses, which stood alone. The δέ has the effect of connecting what is known in verse 20 with what is known in verse 19 (Griffith 2002:94). The force of the particle is “weak adversative” (2002:94) introducing the contrast to the two things known;

“We know we are God’s children in the Evil one’s territory (v.19)” but, we need not be alarmed, because “we [furthermore] know that the son of God has come and . . .” Because the Son of God has come, with all the implied consequences of His coming, it is not a crisis for the children of God to be present in the Evil one’s territory. The effect of the historic coming of the Son of God is durative (Olsson 1999:147), as seen by ἥκει in the perfective present tense (Wallace 1996:533).

What is the first practical result of the coming of the Son of God? Verse 20b answers, “and he has given us understanding.” The perfect tense δέδωκεν, conjoined to ἥκει by καί, pointing to the perfective force of ἥκει; “The Son of God *has come* and *has given* us understanding.”

What is the result of this understanding which the Son has given? “. . . so that we know the True One” (v. 20:c). The Wescott and Hort text has γινώσκομεν (indicative mood) rather than the expected γινώσκωμεν²⁰ (subjunctive mood).²¹

²⁰ If γινώσκωμεν (subjunctive mood) is accepted as the favored reading, the ἵνα introduces a purpose clause (Griffith 2002:95), clarifying the purpose of the understanding which has been given in v. 20b; specifically “so that we might know . . .”

²¹ The UBS 4, NA 27, and Robinson-Pierpont GNT show no variant reading of γινώσκωμεν, and Westcott and Hort offer no textual support. However, I shall follow the Wescott and Hort reading, as the NWT gives no explicit indication in footnotes that it has not done so. The NWT translation reads like the subjunctive γινώσκωμεν. This will be addressed in section 5.4.2.

The use of the indicative mood forces the *iva* clause to indicate result and not purpose (Hiebert 1990:325). The result of having been given understanding by the Son of God is that we know the true one. The object of this knowing is the masculine substantival adjective, *τὸν ἀληθινόν*.

And who is this “true one?” Two options are available: namely, that the Son of God gave understanding so that (1) he himself, Jesus, is known, or (2) that God the Father, is known. Harris (1992:243) notes that “The Son’s mission is the revelation of the Father, not of himself.” Particularly, in the Johannine context, the Son came into the world (John 1:14) to make the true God (John 17:3) known to those who had not seen Him (John 1:18; John 14:6-9). It is almost certain that *τὸν ἀληθινόν* here refers to God the Father, and not to Jesus Christ.

I John 5:20d begins with *kai*, describing a further result of the understanding given by the Son of God; that along with “knowing the True One” (v. 20c), “we are in the True One” (*ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ*). In the absence of an explicit signal that *τῷ ἀληθινῷ* is referring to someone other than *τὸν ἀληθινόν* of verse 20c, one must assume the same referent, God the Father. Had John employed *δέ* rather than *kai*, a change in referent might be inferred, allowing an interpretation of *τῷ ἀληθινῷ* as referring to Christ. However, verse 20e strengthens the case for *τῷ ἀληθινῷ* to refer to God the Father.

In what respect are we “in the True One?” We are in the True One as we are in the Son of the True One (ἐν τῷ σίῳ αὐτοῦ), and that Son is Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ (in epexegetical apposition to τῷ σίῳ αὐτοῦ).

The KJV takes the entire phrase ἐν τῷ σίῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ as appositional to the preceding phrase καὶ ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, rendered “and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” This interpretation is problematic, as it essentially requires τὸν ἀληθινόν of v. 20c to refer to Christ. In this view, Christ the Son of God, gave us understanding, so we know Christ the True One, who is His (The Father's) Son. This renders τῷ σίῳ αὐτοῦ otiose, as he was already identified as the Son of God in v. 20a.

If, however, τὸν ἀληθινόν and τῷ ἀληθινῷ refer to the Father, then the phrase ἐν τῷ σίῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ makes perfect sense as a description of the means by or manner in which we know and are in the True One: by virtue of our inclusion by faith (1 John 5:11-12) in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is reflective of the verse¹⁹; we are safe in enemy territory because as children of God, we are in the Son of God, and greater is the one who is in us, than the one who is in the world (I John 4:4). Our union with Christ preserves us in the world as we await eternal life.

Before addressing the final sentence in I John 5:20, I note Olsson's (1999:152) observation:

Interpreted in its context 5.20 calls to mind the dualistic nature of the Johannine presentation of God.

The true God is contrasted with idols in 5.20-21, the Son of God is contrasted with the evil one in 5.18, and existence in the evil one [or his realm] is contrasted in him who is true in 5.19-20 (brackets added).

The last sentence of I John 5:20 makes an emphatic assertion; οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. That ζωὴ is anarthrous indicates it is to be taken together with ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός. Whoever is the true God, is also eternal life.

The question must be answered, does οὗτος refer to God the Father, or to Jesus Christ?

Bultmann (1973:90) offers the grammatical argument, “οὗτος ('this one'), in its position after the phrase ‘in his Son Jesus Christ,’ cannot refer to God, but only to Jesus Christ, although the preceding ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ('in the true one') can refer only to God.” His rather decisive statement assumes that grammatically, οὗτος must refer to its most immediate antecedent, Jesus Christ. Robertson (1947:702) advocates the general rule of interpreting οὗτος as referring to its nearest antecedent, yet in the case of this verse, believes οὗτος refers to God the Father (Harris 1992:247). Mounce (2003:117) acknowledges that context is sometimes the determining factor for understanding the antecedent of a relative pronoun.

Other arguments for taking Jesus Christ as the referent of οὗτος are that (1) whereas Jesus is identified as “the life” (Jn. 11:25; 14:6) and the source of life (Jn. 1:4) and eternal life (I Jn. 5:11) in Johannine documents, the Father is nowhere else given the predicate ζωή; and (2) ἀληθινός is applied attributively to Jesus five times in Johannine documents, and this attributive construction may signal a shift in subject from the Father to Christ (Harris 1992:248); and (3) John has called Jesus “God” in John 1:1; 1:18; and (quoting Thomas) in 20:28, and therefore, this usage should not seem strange.

The arguments for God the Father as the referent of οὗτος are that (1) the relative pronoun is referring to the dominant logical subject of the verse (God the Father) rather than to the immediate antecedent, or to the grammatical subject (όυιός); (2) repetition (of ἀληθινός in this case) is a “characteristic of John” (Hiebert 1990:326); (3) The Father as source of the life one finds in the Son is attested to in John 5:26, and more immediately in I John 5:11; (4) Jesus calls the Father τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν in John 17:3.²² Furthermore, knowing this “One True God” is eternal life (αὕτη δὲ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν . . .), as in I John 5:20; and (5) perhaps most importantly, the reference to the “true God” in verse 20 establishes the context for its antithesis in verse 21,

²² Ferreira points out that “the one true God” in John 17:3 has been taken as more Pauline, than Johannine language, and that John 17:3 may be a later emendation to the text. There is no textual evidence for this theory.

Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων. If John is contrasting idols with Jesus Christ, it is without parallel.

Smalley (1984:308) believes the lack of crystallizing evidence may betray a deliberate ambivalence on John's part. While this may be possible, and while John certainly communicates the interconnected involvement of Father and Son in the eternal life of the believer (Strecker 1996:211), this position ignores the singularity of οὗτός, ἔστιν, ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς, and ζωὴ αἰώνιος, and seems to take an "easy way out" of a difficult decision.

Bennett (1910:319) sees a possible broader Trinitarian implication, taking the anointing of I John 2:27 as a Holy Spirit reference that might be connected with the "understanding" given by Christ. The result of Bennett's theory is that the references to ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς are to be seen as references to the Godhead. This seems unlikely, as John had the word ὁ θεότης available to him had he wished to state, "This is the true Godhead and eternal life."

I concur with Harris (1992:253) that God the Father is the probable referent of οὗτός. I base this conclusion on the argument in the immediate context of the verse. Specifically, that (1) the Son of God has come, and (2) has given us understanding, (3) so consequently (a) we know the true God (whose Son gave us understanding), and (b) we are in the true God, (4) by virtue of being in the Son of the true God. (5) This one is the true God and eternal life, and we are in the true God and have eternal life by virtue of being in His son (vv. 11-12), who

has given us understanding of the true God. In light of this, O children of the true God, keep yourselves from idols (v. 21).

As Brooke (1912:153) states, “The God who completely fulfils the highest conception of Godhead is the God who has been revealed in Christ Jesus, as contrasted with all false conceptions of God, against which the readers are warned in the next verse.”

I acknowledge the merits of Wallace’s position (1996:327), that (1) grammar cannot decisively decide this issue, and (2) there are no grammatical reasons to preclude Jesus Christ as the referent of οὗτός.

The strength of argument for each of the two available positions seems weighty enough to make dogmatism in either case unwise if not unwarranted. It is certainly possible that θεός is used in reference to Jesus Christ in I John 5:20. However, I believe it is more likely that θεός refers to God the Father in I John 5:20.

5.4.2. Critique of the NWT’s Exegesis

The NWT’s treatment of I John 5:20 is generally consistent with the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis. The rendering of the verse indicates that the NWT translators believe οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος refers to God the Father and not to Jesus Christ.

5.4.3. Critique of the NWT's Consistency with the Translators' Stated Philosophy and Values of Translation

There are no noteworthy inconsistencies with the translators' stated philosophy and values of translation.

5.4.4. Conclusions

There is sufficient evidence to support the positions of both those who believe Θεός in I John 5:20f refers to God the Father and those who believe the referent is Jesus Christ. Also, there is a lack of decisive evidence to disqualify either position.

As such, while I John 5:20 may be considered as evidence of the NT calling Jesus Christ God, it should not be considered as definitive evidence. More clear texts are available for settling this issue.

The NWT's treatment of the verse is generally within the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis.

Chapter 6

The Conclusions and Their Significance to the Research Problem.

6.1. A Brief Reiteration of the Problem, Objectives, and Purpose of the Research Study.

The main problem of this research project was: To what extent is *The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*' treatment of texts that arguably use Θεός in reference to Jesus Christ consistent with (a) sound exegesis of the Greek text, and (b) its stated philosophy of translation?

Two subordinate problems were:

- (a) If the NWT's treatment of the texts in question is inconsistent with its stated philosophy of translation, is the nature of the inconsistency such as to preclude sound exegesis of the texts?
- (b) Does NWT's treatment of the nine texts in question indicate a pervasive theological bias in regard to the divinity of Christ, and if so, does that bias override the translators' allegiance to the Greek text and sound exegesis thereof?

The primary objective of this study was to determine if the NWT's translation of the nine texts of the sample is faithful to the Greek manuscripts and the generally accepted tenets of Greek grammar, syntax, and exegesis.

The following sections will demonstrate that (1) the objective of the research has been met, and (2) which of the potential outcomes described in the proposal has been realized.

6.2. Summary of Findings Regarding the Nine Texts of the Research Sample

The research sample includes nine passages, eight of which are single verses. One passage consists of two verses (Hebrews 1:8-9), each being relevant to this study. After careful exegetical analysis of the nine Greek passages, along with a critical evaluation of the NWT's treatment of the texts, I have concluded the following:

First, there are seven occurrences of θεός within the nine passages in which it is virtually certain that θεός refers to Jesus Christ (John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8; Titus 2:13; and II Peter 1:1), three in which it is highly unlikely (Acts 20:28; twice in Hebrews 1:9) and one in which it is unlikely but not definitively so (I John 5:20).

Second, the NWT's rendering of the texts (and in some cases, their comments on those texts in footnotes and/or the Appendix) makes it clear that **its translators** believe (a) θεός only refers to Jesus Christ in two verses (John 1:1; 1:18), and (b)

their use of a lower case “g” in both verses indicates that they believe θεός, when applied to Jesus, conveys a status of “less than” God the Father. While Jesus, as the Son of God, is “a god” (Jn. 1:1) and “the only-begotten god” (Jn. 1:18), he is not equal to God the Father, as Deity.

Table 10: Conclusions about the Nine Texts of the research Sample and the NWT's Renderings Thereof.

Text	Does θεός Refer to Jesus Christ in the Greek Text?	To Whom Does θεός Refer in the NWT's Rendering?
John 1:1	Certainly	Jesus, as a lesser god.
John 1:18	Certainly	Jesus, as God's begotten son, a lesser god.
John 20:28	Certainly	God the Father (attested to by the capital “G” God). ²³
Acts 20:28	Highly Unlikely (refers to God the Father)	God the Father (attested to by “the blood of his own [Son]”).
Romans 9:5	Almost Certainly	God the Father (attested to by the capital “G” God).
Titus 2:13	Almost Certainly	God the Father (attested to by the disjunction of God & Christ).
Hebrews 1:8	Almost Certainly	God the Father (attested to by the capital “G” God, and “God is your throne”).

²³ As noted earlier, the NWT uses the capital “G” (God) to denote the Father, and the lower case “g” (god) to denote Christ, or others called θεός, but thought to be less than fully “God.”

Hebrews 1:9	Highly Unlikely (refers to God the Father)	God the Father (attested to by the capital “G” God, and “God, your God”).
II Peter 1:1	Almost Certainly	God the Father (attested to by the disjunction of God & Christ).
I John 5:20	Unlikely, but not impossible.	God the Father (attested to by the capital “G” God).

I agree with the NWT’s assessment regarding the referent of θεός in Acts 20:28, Hebrews 1:9, and I John 5:20, all referring to God the Father. I disagree with the NWT’s assessment regarding the referent of θεός in John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; and II Peter 1:1. At first glance, Table 10 may seem to imply that I agree with the NWT regarding John 1:1 and 1:18. This is not the case, as the meaning it ascribes to θεός is inconsistent with the natural lexical meaning in the context of the verses and the interpretation of the majority of commentators.

I conclude that (1) in all seven instances in which θεός refers to Jesus Christ in the NT, it does so to ascribe essential Deity to him, and that (2) in every one of these seven instances the NWT fails to communicate this message. To understand this pattern of divergence, one must evaluate the NWT’s Greek exegesis.

6.2.1. Conclusions Regarding the NWT's Greek Exegesis

What does the NWT's treatment of these texts say about the translators' understanding of and application of Greek grammar and exegesis?

As described in chapter 3, Colwell's Rule was considered by Metzger (1953:75) to be "an established rule of Greek grammar" and relevant to exegesis of John 1:1c (as it pertains to word order and articularity of nouns). The four pages of the NWT's Appendix pertaining to John 1:1 are silent in regard to Colwell's Rule. In the absence of contradictory evidence, I must conclude that the translators were either unaware of it, accidentally overlooked it, or deliberately disregarded it.

A similar issue is Sharp's Rule, regarding conjoined substantives in an article-substantive-kai-substantive construction, in which the two substantives refer to a single person. A knowledge application of Sharp's Rule and the subsequent contributions of Harner and Dixon (Wallace 1996:259-260) have significant bearing on the interpretation of both Titus 2:13 and II Peter 1:1. Yet, as with Colwell's Rule, the NWT is silent regarding Sharp's Rule, and I conclude they were either unaware of it, accidentally overlooked it, or deliberately disregarded it.

Neither Colwell's Rule nor Sharp's Rule are obscure or arcane facets of Koine Greek scholarship. The NWT's silence in regard to both rules, especially in light of apparent access to mainstream Greek grammars of the day (Moulton 1906; Green 1912; Dana and Mantey 1927; Robertson 1947), begs the questions, Did

they know about these rules of grammar? And if not, would knowledge of them have changed their understanding of John 1:1, Titus 2:13, and II Peter 1:1? I cannot answer these questions.

As mentioned in section 4.3.3, when dealing with texts that may refer to Jesus Christ as God, the NWT translators take the grammatical and semantic *allowance* of an interpretation as the equivalent of an *endorsement* of that interpretation (John 1:1, 20:28, Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13, and by extension, II Peter 1:1). A repeated such “allowance” is the existence of any published translation which agrees with that of the NWT, despite its minority status or obscurity. Many of these cited minority translations were the work of solo translators, without the checks and balances provided by a committee (e.g. Weymouth's 1903 “The Modern Speech New Testament”; Moffat's 1922 “A New Translation of the Bible”; Goodspeed's 1923 “An American Translation”; and Spencer's 1937 “The New Testament: A New Translation from the Original Greek”). This is relevant as a solo translation is more apt to be influenced by theological biases than the work of a diverse committee. When the NWT finds an agreeable published translation, or an interpretation deemed “allowable” by a recognized grammarian, it moves forward with its preferred translation, despite the weight of evidence to the contrary.

A key question for this research is: Does the NWT's treatment of the nine texts of the research sample indicate a pervasive theological bias in regard to the divinity

of Christ, and if so, does that bias override the translators' allegiance to the Greek text and sound exegesis thereof?

As the NWT translators apply Greek grammar and exegesis to these texts, they consistently translate the texts so as to downplay any possible allusions to the deity of Christ. For example, regarding John 1:1, the NWT uses four pages of its Appendix to employ intellectual gymnastics as well as selective and incomplete grammatical arguments to justify the translation "and the Word was a god." Likewise, in regard to John 1:18, the NWT translates μονογενῆς Θεός as "the only-begotten god," with μονογενῆς treated as an adjective in reference to Θεός, depicting Christ as a being created by God and therefore junior to God. These minimizations could be a coincidental misapplication of grammar and exegesis, but such consistency of coincidence seems improbable, especially in light of the fact that the non-christological parts of the verses of the research sample are generally translated in accord with the majority of mainstream translations. Only the christologically significant portions diverge from the majority; making random coincidence improbable.

It is noteworthy that the twenty-nine page Appendix (1) essentially reserves comment on grammar for four christologically significant texts (John 1:1; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; and Titus 2:13), and (2) always finds a grammatical justification for either applying Θεός to God the Father, or applying it to Jesus as a lesser god.

I conclude that the NWT's treatment of the nine texts of the research sample (1) does indicate a pervasive theological bias in regard to the divinity of Christ, and (2) that this bias caused the translators to selectively seek and apply grammatical justification for translations that support their theological position. This bias overshadowed the translators' allegiance to the Greek text and the sound exegesis thereof. Rather than the original text determining doctrine, doctrine seems to have controlled the translation of the original text.

This bias is evidenced in the Appendix for John 1:1. After quoting Dana and Mantey's position that there is no definite rule governing the presence or absence of the article with θεός, the NWT states: "The above disposes of the trinitarian argument that the article was omitted before θεός in the predicate of John 1:1 according to the general rule that it was not needed, but would be understood" (1950:775-776). While **the** said argument may be employed by trinitarians, it is by no means a "trinitarian argument" but a grammatical one; the aforementioned Colwell's Rule (though not recognized as such by the NWT). The NWT translators seem to have been (consciously or unconsciously) seeking to refute trinitarians, rather than "to avoid this snare of religious traditionalism" (NWT1950:6), and to render "the truth of his inspired Word as purely and as consistently as our consecrated powers make possible" (NWT 1950:7).

I must conclude that (1) the NWT translators had sufficient facility with Koine Greek, and access to grammatical resources to allow for an accurate translation

of the Greek New Testament, and (2) that theological bias, specifically an Arian view of Christ, served as a controlling influence in the NWT, overshadowing allegiance to the meaning of the original text, resulting in inaccurate translations of every occurrence of Θεός in reference to Jesus Christ.

6.2.2. Conclusions Regarding the NWT's Consistency with the Translators'

Stated Values and Philosophy of Translation.

When taken as a whole, (1) has the NWT shown inconsistency with its stated values and philosophy, and if so, (2) has the nature of the inconsistency resulted in less than sound exegesis of the texts? As seen in chapters 3, 4, and 5, the NWT has shown inconsistency with its stated values and philosophy in the following ways:

1. 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 (John 1:1; John 1:18; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; II Peter 1:1).

There are many examples based in downplaying the deity of Christ, 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 lord and my God” refers to God the Father, despite Thomas’ utterance being a direct response to Jesus; the separation of the conjoined “God and Saviour” in Titus 2:13 and II Peter 1:1, resulting in references to two separate persons (God the Father and Jesus) rather than the grammatically natural single referent.

2. It has been inconsistent in its application of Greek grammar, syntax, and vocabulary (John 1:1; John 1:18; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; II Peter 1:1). For example, in John 1:1, the NWT's case for translating θεός as "a god" is based upon the premise that anarthrous nouns are indefinite (1950:773-7). In John's prologue, there are eight occurrences of θεός'; two articular and six anarthrous. The NWT translates the two which are articular (vv. 1, 2) as "God" (1950:282), and translates four of the six anarthrous occurrences of θεός "God," one, "a god" (v. 1), and one "the [only-begotten] god" (v. 18). So the NWT translators concretely applied the rule they espoused in only one of eight occurrences in a single chapter.

3. It has not held one translation for each major Greek word (John 1:1; John 1:18; John 20:28). While 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 NT, 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 NT, the NWT was inconsistent with its stated philosophy 94 percent of the time.

4. It has not employed English vernacular, common to the 1950's, rather than theological jargon (John 1:1).

5. It has altered 1st century figures of speech, obscuring their meaning to a modern reader (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; II Peter 1:1). For example,

in Titus 2:13, the rejection of “God and Savior” as a “stereotyped formula” may be considered a violation of the NWT's stated principle of maintaining the use of 1st century figures of speech.

Of greatest relevance for this study is that the NWT (1) has been affected by the controlling influence of a “preferred religious view,” and (2) has been inconsistent in its application of Greek grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, and (3) these have resulted in less than sound exegesis of a majority of the texts of the research sample.

6.3. Purpose and Hypothesis

The purpose of this study has been to determine the trustworthiness of the NWT as an academic or devotional resource. The criterion for establishing trustworthiness in this study is the assumption that if a Bible translation's treatment of the original text, either in toto, or in regard to passages related to a specific major subject or theme, can be objectively determined to be erroneous, such a translation is untrustworthy.

My hypothesis entering into this project was that the research would show that (a) the theological biases of NWT's translators against the notion of the divinity of Jesus Christ caused them to violate their own stated philosophy of translation and the rules of Koine Greek grammar and exegesis, and (b) that the NWT is therefore, not suitable for academic use, or devotional use by those holding orthodox Christian beliefs.

I conclude that (1) the theological biases of the translators have caused them to violate their own stated philosophy of translation and the rules of Koine Greek grammar and exegesis, (2) resulting in a treatment of the original text that can be objectively determined to be erroneous, and (3) the NWT must therefore be deemed untrustworthy as either an academic or devotional resource. These conclusions confirm my original hypothesis.

It might be inferred from the amount of and nature of the supporting documentation in the NWT that the translators believed themselves to be conveying an accurate translation. However, the tendency to embrace readings which deliberately conceal other plausible readings has resulted in the promotion of a “preferred religious view.” One can only conclude that the consistency shown in this regard betrays a strategy designed to subvert possible interpretations which conflict with Jehovah’s Witness doctrine.

All translators have biases, and these biases are only problematic if and when they become a controlling influence in the translation process, as they have in the case of the NWT. Jehovah’s Witnesses, catholics, protestants, atheists, or Buddhists are equally capable of producing an accurate and trustworthy NT translation, if they adhere to the rules of Greek grammar and exegesis, and sound values and philosophy of translation. It is not the specific bias of the translators that renders the NWT unsuitable for academic or devotional use;

rather the fact that this bias came to exert a controlling influence which resulted in erroneous translation.

6.4. Recommendations for Further Research

This research has been based on a narrowly focused subject with a relatively small sample of texts, demonstrating that the NWT's treatment of the divinity of Jesus Christ favors a theological bias over the evidence of the Greek manuscripts. Is this controlling influence of theological bias unique within the NWT, or are other areas similarly affected? There are many texts imply the deity of Christ without the explicit use of θεός (such as the "I Am" texts of John's gospel). It may be interesting to evaluate the NWT's treatment of such a group of texts.

Jehovah's Witnesses' theology is significantly divergent from mainstream protestant & catholic theology in regard to soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and thanatology (Bowman 1991). Also, the literature of the Watchtower Society is virtually silent on the love of God, preferring the sovereignty and justice of God as themes of study.

It may be interesting to evaluate the NWT's treatment of texts referring to death, or the Holy Spirit, or church leadership with a methodology similar to this present research to see if a controlling influence of a preferred religious view is also evident in regard to these areas.

Any such investigations would serve to either confirm or weaken the conclusions of this research.

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