

Appendix II

Comments on Improved Translation

Some comments on revised translation are given below, as they relate to RVIC²⁰⁰⁰.

The Greek word *αστραπη*, *astrapē*, usually means “lightning” in Greek literature (though not always; see Thayer’s lexicon). [Related words: *Hb.* *נשן*, *ashath*, “to shine, sheen;” *English* “star.”] Matthew and Luke use it differently in many, and maybe all, places. Lk 11:36 speaks of the bright shining of a lamp (which could hardly be lightning). Mt. 24:27 almost certainly refers to “sunshine,” when it speaks of it coming from the east and going to the west; Lk 17:24 is a parallel passage. While Mt 28:3 and Lk 10:18 could be understood either way, in the interest of consistency the word is here translated “bright light,” or, “bright shining.” In the only other passages using this word, Rv 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18, it is associated with thunder; so in Revelation it is translated “lightning,” though it could also be understood as a constant light.

The Greek word *βασανιζω*, *basanizō*, and three other related words (*βασανος*, *βασανισμος*, *βασανιστης*), originate from an ancient test of rubbing gold (or other monetary metals) against the surface of a basanite touchstone to see if the gold will flake off on it. (FeS₂, iron pyrite, or fools’ gold, will not flake off but will scratch the touchstone.) It is a “test” for genuineness. By extension, when applied to people, any physical “trial;” by further extension, “torture,” especially with the goal of extracting truth or repentance. These words are used in 20 verses, primarily in the gospels and Revelation. In Mt 14:24, the ship was “put to the test” by the waves; not being animate, it would not be tormented. On the other hand in Mt 8:6 there seems to be no compelling reason not to say the sick servant was “tormented,” though “tried” would be another acceptable translation. In 2Pt 2:8, Lot was “put to the test,” or “vexed,” by the Sodomites, but not physically tormented or tortured. Where the translation might be subject to interpretation, “put to the test” has been preferred for the translation, as it allows interpretation closer to the full range of meaning permissible in the Greek wording.

The Greek word *ηκω*, *hēkō*: “to have come” (in the present tense), is used 24 times in the New Testament, 18 of which are in the future tense – *ηξω*, *hēksō*: “I shall have come” (twice in Rv 3:3), *ηξει*, *hēksei*: “he shall have come” (10 times), *ηξουσιν*, *hēksousin*: “they shall have come” (6 times). Although most translators render the future tense as though a present tense, “have come,” here it is rendered, “shall have come,” as also in Rotherham. While *ηκω*, *hēkō*, is nearly equivalent to “to be present,” that rendering is here reserved for *παρειμι*, *pareimi*: “to be by, to be present.”

The Greek words *παρειμι*, *pareimi* (verb, used 22 times) and *παρουσία*, *parousia* (noun, used 18 times of Christ or antichrist, plus 6 times of others) are here translated “to be present” and “presence,” as required by their contrast with “absence” in 1Co 5:3; 2Co 10:10-11, 13:2, 10; Php 2:12 (and also in 2Pt 1:12, where “having been established in the ‘coming’ truth” would seem absurd). Rotherham, Bowes, and Marshall concur. The renderings “to come” and “coming” are here reserved for *ερχομαι*, *erchomai* (over 200 times) and *ελευσις*, *eleusis* (Ac 7:52).

Hebrew idiom is seen in Hb 7:3, as it is by Ferrar Fenton, Lamsa, and Jewish New Testament. The theologically-sensitive Jo 1:1c is analyzed in Table IX.

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Table IX. Four Translations of Jo 1:1c Compared

Table X How Well English Translations Do with Manuscripts and Translation

Table IX. Four Translations of John 1:1c Compared

Four different translations of John 1:1c are tabulated below, together with condensed principal arguments for and against each.

Translation	Pro	Con																
<p>And the Word was God.</p> <p>E.C. Colwell, “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament”; <i>J. Biblical Lit.</i> 52, p. 12-21 (1953).</p>	<p>Definite predicate nouns in New Testament: Colwell, p. 16-17, number of occurrences</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="623 402 1291 560"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>without article</th> <th>with article [®]</th> <th>Sum</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>before verb</td> <td>97</td> <td>15</td> <td>112</td> </tr> <tr> <td>after verb</td> <td><u>26</u></td> <td><u>229</u></td> <td><u>255</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sum</td> <td>123</td> <td>244</td> <td>367</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The table above summarizes the basis for: Colwell’s Rule: “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article.” Colwell, p. 20.</p>		without article	with article [®]	Sum	before verb	97	15	112	after verb	<u>26</u>	<u>229</u>	<u>255</u>	Sum	123	244	367	<p>Colwell’s Rule is mistaken 13% of the time even by his own reckoning. Also, Colwell did not examine the <u>indefinite</u> predicate noun.</p> <p>Harner, p. 83, shows that of 53 times in John that the anarthrous [without ®] predicate noun appears before the verb, >47% are <u>not</u> definite, and maybe as many as 70%!</p> <p>If the definite predicate noun (before the verb) seldom takes the article, the indefinite predicate noun could hardly ever take it.</p> <p>Dodd, p. 102, “It is ... difficult to take the expression, ‘The Word was God’ as other than an affirmation of personal identity (like ‘Dr. Jekyll was Mr. Hyde’): ‘The Word’ and ‘God’ are alternative names for the same Person. Is that what John meant?”</p> <p>Incompatible with “the Word was with God.”</p>
	without article	with article [®]	Sum															
before verb	97	15	112															
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<p>And the Word had the same nature as God. <i>or</i>, and the Word was divine.</p> <p>P.B. Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1”; <i>J. Biblical Lit.</i> 92, p. 75-87 (1973).</p>	<p>Harner, p. 87, “In John 1:1 I think that the qualitative force of the predicate is so prominent that the noun cannot be regarded as definite.”</p>	<p>θεὸς is a noun, not an adjective.</p> <p>Colwell, p. 21, “The absence of the article does not make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John.” [depending on whether Jo 20:28 or Jo 1:18 (see below) is taken as the context]</p>																
<p>And what God was, the Word was. <i>or</i>, he was the same as God.</p> <p>C.H. Dodd, “New Testament Translation Problems II”; <i>Technical Papers for The Bible Translator</i> [United Bible Societies] 28, 1, p. 101-104 (January 1977).</p>	<p>Dodd, p. 103-104, “In English it is natural enough to use the term ‘spirit’ for ‘incorporeal or immaterial being, opp. to <i>body</i> or <i>matter</i>’ (O.E.D.), so that ‘God is spirit’ is a perfectly intelligible proposition. But the term ‘God’ is not naturally used in so abstract a sense and ‘The Word was God’ does not convey the meaning required. The NEB rendering, ‘What God was the Word was’ is an attempt to express the meaning of θεος ἦν ὁ λόγος.</p>	<p>Not a literal translation; interpretive.</p> <p>Dodd damages his argument when he says, “The AV rendering ‘God is a spirit’ (among other spirits) is certainly erroneous. John knows nothing of a plurality of πνεύματα.” But see 1Jo 4:1-6, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God...”</p>																

Translation	Pro	Con
<p>And the Word was a god. <i>or</i>, The Word also was a god.</p> <p>Kingdom Interlinear translation, Appendix, p. 1158-1160.</p>	<p>Dodd, p. 101, “If translation were a matter of substituting words, a possible translation of θεος ην ο λογος would be, ‘The Word was a god’. As a word-for-word translation it cannot be faulted...”</p> <p>The same form is found in Jo 4:19, “I perceive that thou art a prophet” – which clearly is indefinite. Somewhat similar indefinite forms are found in Jo 6:70, 9:28, 12:6, and maybe 18:37.</p> <p>The same indefinite/definite predicate noun question arises in the same form in 1Tm 6:10, “For the love of money is a/the root of all evils,” but “a root” is more akin to human experience.</p> <p>The four oldest and best manuscripts in Jo 1:18 read, “<i>the</i> only begotten god...,” which favors “the Word was a god.”</p>	<p>Dodd, p. 102, “The reason why it is unacceptable is that it runs counter to the current of Johannine thought, and indeed of Christian thought as a whole.”</p> <p>“John could have written any of the following:</p> <p>A. ο λογος ην ο θεος The Word was God [<i>Himself</i>] B. θεος ην ο λογος John 1:1 C. ο λογος θεος ην [less emphatic than B] D. ο λογος ην θεος The Word was a god E. ο λογος ην θειος The Word was divine</p> <p>...John evidently wished to say something about the <i>logos</i> that was other than A and more than D and E.” Harner, p. 84-85.</p> <p>Also, see Colwell, p. 21, above.</p> <p>Dodd, p. 103, note 3, “As for the reading μονογενης θεος in 1.18 (not accepted in NEB), it is in any case grammatically exceptional, if not eccentric.”</p>

Can an individual honestly and objectively evaluate the evidence for and against all four translations? Those whose minds are made up to any one of these will likely think: “Of course my view is right, it has support, and advocates of the other three views just confuse the issue.” Nevertheless, an inquiring individual should be able to observe that each view has some support, and each view has one or more weaknesses. The arguments are not all of equal strength; so the question is: Can one by honest process of elimination select a single best translation?

Colwell’s Rule (which does not claim 100% accuracy), only argues that Jo 1:1c can be translated one way; it does not rule out other ways. Harner’s argument regarding New Testament use of anarthrous predicate nouns weighs against the conventional translation.

Dodd, the driving force behind the New English Bible, pushes his view with facts, strong opinion, and a few arguments which are patently false. It is likely that a somewhat better case could have been made without the latter. (Dodd’s view shares some similarity with Harner’s.)

Harner’s analysis examines the different ways Jo 1:1c could have been expressed in order to mean each of the above translations (#1, #2, or #4, but not #3). The grammatical arguments against the remaining translations (#2 and #4) do not appear strong. If one considers that the word θεός is not a name, but means “a mighty one,” the choice of translation might be between “The Word also was a Mighty One,” or, “and Mighty was the Word!”