

Understanding John 1:1 “προς τον θεων” – “Towards God”

“In the Beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was towards [in the service] of God, and the Logos was a god.” John 1:1

Bro. Richard Doctor -- General Convention July 2010

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John Wycliffe: The efforts of the outstanding scholar and likely church messenger John Wycliffe in the 1370's produced the first English Bible translation still readable. With his characteristic intellectual boldness The Wycliffe translation of John 1:1-2 broke with 900 years of tradition and the two times the Greek phrase “προς τον θεων” [“pros ton theon,” or “towards the God”] appears in the New Testament, he renders this phrase “at God.” Yet, despite, this enlightened guidance, subsequent English translators (including both King James translators and the Wilson Diaglott) have fallen back in step with the Latin Vulgate's incorrect affirmation of Trinitarian belief. Any other preposition but “with” creates difficulties for Trinitarians. Following the Vulgate, John 1:1-2 has undeservedly become a Trinitarian proof text. Other usage of this phrase will show that the correct thought is to be “towards” as in the sense of *“being ready for service”* or *“in the things pertaining unto.”* **It does not suggest “with God.”**

Strong's Concordance: “προς,” (S.4314)“...a preposition of direction; forward to, i.e. toward...” After this, special rules are then introduced by Strong to justify the translator consensus for John's Gospel. The correct sense of this phrase is revealed by looking at other uses.

Hebrews 2:17: Aside from John 1:1 the phrase appears only one other time in the New Testament in Hebrews 2:17 (Rotherham) “...that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest, *in the things pertaining unto* God...” This follows the King James. Examination of the Greek will show that the phrase “pros ton theon” is here rendered, “in [the things] pertaining unto God...” This casts a much different light on John 1:1.

Flavius Josephus: New Testament contemporary historian Flavius Josephus in his “Antiquities” (9:236) writes that righteous King Jotham was to be pious “in the things pertaining to God.” [Translation cited from Steven Mason, Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees, Brill Academic Publishers (2001), p.87.] Somewhat earlier (7:384), writing about the death of King David and his special charge to his son Solomon, Solomon is, “to be just towards your subjects and pious *towards* God.” Here the phrase appears as “[pious] towards God,” is once again “pros ton theon.” Finally, appealing directly to his countrymen, Josephus asks them to act “towards others — righteous, and *towards* God — pious” [“pros ton theon eusebia”] Mason adds, “...that we frequently find the qualifier “pros ton theon” appended to “eusebia” [“pious”] and he proceeds **to cite eighteen examples** of the phrasing of John 1:1 in his footnotes.

Conclusion: The thought “with God” can not be correct in John 1:1-2 and should be literally “towards God”; with the interpretive understanding *“being ready for service”* or *“in the things pertaining unto.”* The High Priest called from among men had this same service towards God as the Logos had from before the foundation of the world.

Alfred Marshall Diaglott (1968) – John 1:1 “with -- God”

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος	
In [the] beginning was the Word, and the Word	
ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.	
was with - God, and God was the Word.*	
2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.	←
This one was in [the] beginning with - God.	
3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς	
All things through him became, and without	
αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. 4 ἐν	
him became not one thing which has become. In	

Alfred Marshall Diaglott (1968) – Hebrews 2:17 “in regard to -- God”

17 ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς	
Whence he owed by all means† 'to the 'brothers	
(ought) (his)	
ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ	
'to become like, in order that 'a merciful 'he might become and	
πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν,	←
faithful high priest [in] the in regard - God,	
things to	
εἰς τὸ ἰλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ	
for the to make propitiation for the sins of the	
λαοῦ. 18 ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς	
people. 'in 'what 'For 'has suffered 'he	
[way]	

Steven Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, Brill Academic Publishers (2001), p.87

The significance of this double designation comes to light first in David’s instructions to Solomon. Four times David admonishes Solomon to rule in a pious (εὐσεβῆ) and just (δίκαιον) manner (*Ant.* 7:338, 342, 356, 374). On the fifth occasion, as David is dying, he finally elaborates: Solomon’s task is, “to be just toward your subjects and pious toward God” (δικαί μὲν εἶναι πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχομένους, εὐσεβεῖ δὲ πρὸς τὸν . . . θεόν, 7:384). This explanation of εὐσέβεια as describing the relationship toward God and δικαιοσύνη, the “horizontal” relationship to men, is confirmed several times. The righteous King Jotham, “εὐσεβῆς μὲν τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, δίκαιος δὲ τὰ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ὑπῆρχεν” (*Ant.* 9:236). John the Baptist, says Josephus, exhorted the Jews to act πρὸς ἀλλήλους δικαιοσύνη καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεία (*Ant.* 18:117). Finally, according to Josephus the first two of the dozen oaths taken by the Essenes (*War* 2:139) were: πρῶτον μὲν εὐσεβήσιν τὸ θεῖον, ἔπειτα τὸ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους δίκαια φυλάξειν. Even when the man-ward qualification of δικαιοσύνη is lacking, we frequently find the qualifier πρὸς τὸν θεόν (appended to εὐσέβεια).⁹ There can remain little doubt that the almost formulaic εὐσέβεια καὶ δικαιοσύνη that Josephus employs in characterizing public figures is to be understood in terms of this vertical/horizontal distinction.¹⁰

Translations of John 1:1 Emphasizing προς

Date	Translator	Bible	Translation
96 AD	<i>John (author)</i>		“In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was <i>towards</i> [<i>in the service of</i>] God, and the Logos was a god.”
382 AD	<i>Hieronymus (St. Jerome)</i>	<i>Latin Vulgate (Common language)</i>	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <i>with</i> God, and the Word was God.”
1370s AD	<i>John Wycliffe</i>	<i>English Bible</i>	“In the bigynnyng was the word, and the word was <i>at</i> God, and God was the word.”
1611 AD	<i>Translation committee</i>	<i>Authorized version ("King James")</i>	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <i>with</i> God, and the Word was God.”
1860 AD	<i>Benjamin Wilson</i>	<i>Emphatic Diaglott</i>	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <i>with</i> God, and a god was the Word.” <i>Interlinear</i>
1963 AD	<i>Translation committee</i>	<i>New American Standard</i>	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <i>with</i> God, and the Word was God.”
1973 AD	<i>Translation committee</i>	<i>New International Version</i>	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was <i>with</i> God, and the Word was God.”