CHRIST AS GOD

The identity of the "Word" in John 1:1

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Introduction

The essential and particular identity of Jesus of Nazareth, 'the Word' who is the Christ, has given rise to more controversy and theological debate than perhaps any other single point of doctrine presented in the Bible.[1] Far beyond issues of titles and names, the discussion of Christ's identity touches upon His very nature, and that nature according to the New Testament is two-fold: divine *and* human. The NT is not ashamed to boldly present the man Jesus as God incarnate.

Without a doubt, the presentation of Jesus Christ in His full identity is the burden of the Apostle John's prologue[2] to his Gospel, and the heart of the Gospel itself. While the doctrine concerning the deity of Christ "is not limited to a few verses but includes both explicit statements that say he is 'God' and implicit indications of his deity" that constitute "a

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[1] While the theological debates of the Reformation are arguably more prolific, they properly concern discussion between those who profess faith in Christ—His divinity left unquestioned. The central question of Christology, however, reaches beyond ecumenical discussions and contends with other systems of faith and most essentially distinguishes cults and religious aberrations from the biblical doctrine of the person of Christ. In other words, this doctrine predicates the work of Christ and is the most definitive distinction of Christianity, out of which all other distinctions flow.

[2] The official 'introduction' constituted by the first eighteen verses. A prologue properly serves to publish a "statement of facts" that not only signify the beginning of a work but furnish "an introduction to the subject of the speech or work at hand" (Keener, 338).

major theme throughout the New Testament," [3] it is still evident that unique emphasis is found in the writings of John. For centuries the majority of exegetes have agreed that the Gospel of John is like no other in its emphasis concerning the identity of Christ as truly human and truly divine. Theodore of Mopsuestia (A.D. 350-428) claimed that John wrote his Gospel out of concern that future generations might "lose sight of Christ's divinity."[4] It is significant to understand that "the ancient church was agreed, then, that the primary purpose of the Gospel according to John was to remove any doubt about the doctrinal truth of Christ's divinity, which the other Gospels had not emphasized."[5]

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" —John 1:1

The Gospel of John opens with unprecedented language, sounding to depths beyond human origin and asserting truths that confound all categories of established religion. "Although it's hard to understand, the New Testament both distinguishes Jesus from God and identifies him as God—sometimes in the same breath (cf. John 1:1; 20:28–31; Heb 1:8–9; 2 Peter 1:1–2)."[6]

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[3] Robert Bowman and Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 22.

[4] Joel C. Elowsky, *John 1-10*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 4a (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), xxiii.

[5] Ibid, xxiv.

[6] Bowman and Komoszewski, 21.

That Jesus is both fully man and fully God is a profoundly radical claim that stands as the distinctive testimony and faith of biblical Christianity (cf. John 1:1, 14, 18; 5:18, 23; 8:58; 10:30, 33; 14:9; 17:5, 21; 19:7; 20:28; Phil 2:6; Col 1:16-17, 19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:3; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20-21; Rev 1:8). Many attempts have been launched in assault against this most foundational distinctive of Christianity. In ancient times opposition was posited on philosophical grounds. In more recent times, there have been some attempts to overthrow centuries of Greek scholarship with grammatical novelties selectively applied to certain texts.[7] The criticality of this discussion finds no greater place of debate than in John's prologue to his Gospel. It is plainly the intention of the author to introduce 'the Word' by identification in relation and distinction to God, creation, and humanity. Thus, there is no more appropriate a context than this to present the outrageous but true identity of the nature and essence of 'the Word' who became flesh. The aim of this article, then, is to explicate the plain meaning of the original text in an effort to identify 'the Word' in a manner that is strictly faithful to the grammatical principles of the Greek language[8] and sensitive to its literary and historical contexts. It should also be noted at this point

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[7] See the section below entitled "Identity by Equality" for further discussion concerning the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation*. See also Bowman's work entitled, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, for a more extensive treatment of this issue.

[8] Understanding the original to be written in *Koine* Greek in the most likely form of uncials.

that no recognized scholarship, regardless of theological position, denies that the simple identity of 'the Word' is unambiguously linked to Jesus Christ in this prologue. The pressing question, then, is what does the original text truly communicate concerning the full identity of Jesus Christ, 'the Word?'

Identity in Relation to the Established Identity of God

Limiting the scope to the analysis of John 1:1, the identity of 'the Word' is made clear and stands on its own. While much can be said from other portions of Scripture that would furnish compelling support of the conclusions attested here, the intention of this article is to focus on the theological implications borne out of the grammatical construction set forth in this text alone.

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*
>
> Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος
>
> En archē ēn ho lógos, kaì ho lógos ēn pròs tòn theón, kaì theòs ēn ho logos

Identity by Existence

In relation to 'the beginning' (*en archē*), 'the Word' *was*. The opening of the Gospel of John is the locus of the preexistence of Christ. Kӧstenberger argues that "the focus of this verse is to show the Word's preexistence." [9] These words convey unprecedented meaning as "John's concept of the Word's preexistence surpasses that of his contemporaries." [10] "The Greek word behind 'beginning', *archē*, often bears the meaning 'origin' (cf. BAGD), and there may be echoes of that here, for

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[9] Andreas J. Kӧstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 25.

[10] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 367.

the Word who already was 'in the beginning' is soon shown to be God's agent of creation (vv. 3–4), what we might call the 'originator' of all things." [11] One of the foundational distinctions of the one true God revealed in the OT Scriptures as the One who created the heavens and earth, is His eternality—He alone possesses the fullness of existence in eternity. The fundamental aim of John's prologue is the introduction of Jesus, and John begins with the established identity of the eternality of God by identifying Jesus ('the Word') as preexistent and thus co-eternal with the Father. Brown suggests that the 'beginning' "is not, as in Genesis, the beginning of creation, for creation comes in vs. 3. Rather the 'beginning' refers to the period before creation and is a designation, more qualitative than temporal, of the sphere of God." [12] This is the thrust of John 17:5, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

The concept of the Word's preexistence is most strikingly set forth in the verb employed to describe the state of essential existence in contrast to 'the beginning,' namely '*was*' (*ēn*). The church fathers dwelt strongly on the immense importance conveyed in the use of this verb. "The verb *was* does not express a completed past, but rather a continuous state. The imperfect tense of the original suggests in this relation, as far

[11] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 114.

[12] Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 4.

as human language can do so, the notion of absolute, supra-temporal, existence."[13] It is used four times in the first two verses and stands in direct contrast to created existence expressed by the verb *gínomai*, used three times in verse three for creation and then again at the introduction of John the Baptist (v. 6). The contrast of preexistence to created existence is unmistakable. "Although the meanings of *ēn* ('was') and *egeneto* [a form of *gínomai*] (rendered 'were made' in v. 3, 'came' in v. 6 and 'became' in v. 14) often overlap, John repeatedly uses the two verbs side by side to establish something of a contrast." Carson goes on to point out a critical example of this contrast that ultimately serves the same purpose as John 1:1, "For example, in 8:58 Jesus insists, '[Before] Abraham was born [a form of the second verb], I am (a form of the first verb).' In other words, when John uses the two verbs in the same context, *ēn* frequently signals existence, whereas *egeneto* signals 'coming into being' or 'coming into use'. In the beginning, the Word was already in existence."[14]

Against Arius the meaning of this construction plainly proclaims that "there never was a time when the Word was not."[15] This is why Basil (c. 330-379) argued, "Those two terms, 'beginning' and 'was', are like two anchors," which the ship of

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[13] Brooke Foss Westcott and Arthur Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John Introduction and Notes on the Authorized Version* (London: J. Murray, 1908), 2.

[14] Carson, 114.

[15] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 65.

man's soul may safely ride at, whatever storms of heresy may come. [16] The preexistence of Jesus Christ, the Word, is unassailably proclaimed in this text so as to present Him co-eternal with the established identity of God.

As the text progresses, two key words are used to identify the Word in relation to the established identity and person of God, namely *with* (v. 1b) and *was* (v. 1c). The explicit aim thus reveals that 'the Word' in relation to God is both (a) distinct in person and (b) united in essence.

Identity by Distinction

In relation to the established identity of God (the Father), 'the Word was *with* God.' The main point of this middle segment of the verse is to guard from confusing 'the Word' and the established identity of God.[17] Thus, the Word is not equated with the established identity of God, He is not the same divine person. Moreover, the Word is not merely an expression or a mode of God, He is distinct in person. Jesus is God but Jesus is not God the Father.

The key word that gives rise to a personal conception in this distinction is the Greek preposition, *pros*. The most basic concepts conveyed by *pros* include the notions of

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[16] H. D. M. Spence-Jones, *The Pulpit Commentary: St. John* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 43.

[17] Additionally, it serves to accentuate the intimacy of relationship that Christ shares with the Father and so distinguish Him from all creatures as to His station. This is complimented in the *inclusio* observed in v. 18 ("who is in the bosom of the Father").

accompaniment, relationship, and fellowship. It is important to note the nuance of personhood here. This term is not used to describe the close proximity of impersonal objects, rather it portrays the interfacing of personal discourse. This preposition is most commonly used to denote spatial orientation between people, but is also often used in non-spatial contexts "with verbs or nouns which express the movement of an intellectual content to a specific object."[18] Thus, "the personal being of the Word was realised in active intercourse with and in perfect communion with God."[19]

The evidence clearly suggests a much richer sense than what our English word, "with," is capable of conveying. To illustrate, there are approximately 700 instances of the term *pros* in the Greek NT. Furthermore, there is a remarkable variety of renderings of this term. For example, there are 53 different words used that translate *pros* in the ESV. The majority of cases render the simple form "to, toward." Of the 700 instances, 462 are translated "to" in the ESV; that is 66 percent. The next most common translation is "with," which occurs only 50 times (or 7%). These observations reinforce the exegetical value invested in John's use of *pros* in 1:1 since the typical term designed to convey the meaning of "with" is not used and the word that is used is used in a peculiar sense and context.

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[18] TDNT, 723.

[19] Westcott, 3.

This Greek term for "face" (cf. Matt 6:16; [et. al.]) is the word *prosopon*, which is a compound of *pros* ("to, toward") and *ops* ("eye").[20] In secular Greek, "it is occasionally used for the face of the gods. When used as a part representing the whole, it meant the figure. The meaning person is a borrowing from Latin usage."[21] The relationship and corresponding usage of *pros* and *prosopon* reinforces the personal aspect conveyed by the use of *pros* in John 1:1. It use "suggests that John may already be pointing out, rather subtly, that the 'Word' he is talking about is a person, with God and therefore distinguishable from God, and enjoying a personal relationship with him."[22] This personal emphasis is especially noticed in biographical texts in secular Greek. "In a secular sense πρός is properly used instead of a simple dative only in authors who have certain connections with the dialogue form of Greek biography, namely, Luke and John."[23] Such usage is demonstrated by John in two other places (2 John 12, "I hope to come to you and talk *face to face*, so that our joy may be complete;" and 3 John 14, "I hope to see you soon, and we will talk *face to face*."), where John employs the phrase *stoma pros stoma* (lit. "mouth to mouth"). In 1 Cor 13:12, Paul uses "a triple use of προς [*pros*]"[24] in the phrase, *prosopon pros prosopon*

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[20] "Originally it probably meant that which struck the eye, that which one looks at." (NIDNTT, 1:585).

[21] NIDNTT, 1:585.

[22] Carson, 116-17.

[23] TDNT, 723.

[24] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Jn 1:1.

(lit. "face to face"). Personhood of the Word that expresses fellowship is obvious in John 1:1.

In the thought of personhood, *pros* is sometimes used to convey intimacy between persons. Thus, John's use may best be understood as "πρὸς τὸν θεόν = 'with God,' in the sense, of 'in the presence of God' (cf. Mark 6:3), or 'in the fellowship of God' (1 John 1:2–3), or even (as the next clause suggests) 'in union with God.'" [25] Robertson rightly observes that "προς [*pros*] with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other."[26] So also Morris, "Not only did the Word exist 'in the beginning,' but he existed in the closest possible connection with the Father." [27] This conclusion fittingly brings us to the next clause, which explicitly speaks to the essential unity and equality of 'the Word' to God.

In summary, it must be remembered that "in terms of relationship, not only does πρός establish a relationship between God and the Word, but also it distinguishes the two from each other."[28] This means that the Word is not a mere emanation of God, He is a distinct person. "He is the 'image of God' (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) and not simply of the Father."[29] Christ,

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[25] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 10.

[26] Robertson, Jn 1:1.

[27] Morris, 68.

[28] Köstenberger, 27.

[29] Westcott, 3.

the Word, is identified by personal distinction and yet in close fellowship with God the Father.

Identity by Equality

In relation to the established identity of God (the Father), 'the Word *was* God.' There has been ample evidence of the divine identity of the Word up to this point and yet His identity as God in this verse finds its crowning expression in this third clause. The chief disclosure is that the Word is not *equated* (in identity) with God (the Father), and yet He is revealed as *equal* (in essence) with God (the Father). This equality may best be described as a *unity of essence*, so as to guard from the erroneous impression that 'equal yet with distinction' may be construed as two equal gods. It is crucial to maintain clarity on this point, it is not that Christ is merely equal to God, He is God and yet is not the Father. These are precisely the grounds that gave rise to the scriptural observation and understanding of the tri-unity of God as articulated in the doctrine of the Trinity (see also the appendix on *Identity in Early Christianity*).

In this section, the deeply important phrase, "the Word was God," will be examined with careful attention to the grammatical principles of the Greek language. To begin with, a few grammatical definitions are in order. A word without an article is said to be *anarthrous*. An anarthrous noun is not necessarily *indefinite*. A *definite* noun in English is typically expressed with a definite article (i.e. "the" as in "the God") while an *indefinite* noun is generally expressed with an indefinite article (i.e. "a" as in "a god"). When a verb is used to

equate the subject of a sentence (which is a noun in the *nominative* case) with another noun, that noun is then called the *predicate nominative* (PN).

The Predicate Nominative and Word Order

> In the sentence, "John is a man," "John" is the subject and "man" is the predicate nominative. In English the subject and predicate nominative are distinguished by word order (the subject comes first). Not so in Greek. Since word order in Greek is quite flexible and is used for emphasis rather than for strict grammatical function, other means are used to distinguish subject from predicate nominative. For example, if one of the two nouns has the definite article, it is the subject.[30]

Applying this rule to John 1:1c ("the Word was God"), we may quickly identify "the Word" as the subject, "was" as the equative verb, and "God" as the predicate nominative. As noted by Mounce, the word order in Greek does not determine the predicate nominative but rather is typically employed for emphasis. "Generally speaking, when a word is thrown to the front of the clause it is done so for emphasis. When a predicate nominative is thrown in front of the verb, by virtue of word order it takes on emphasis." [31] This principle becomes substantially important in properly understanding the syntactical relationship and import of John 1:1c since this is a prime example of the predicate nominative taking strong

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[30] William Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 27.

[31] Ibid.

emphasis. Both the word order of the subject and predicate nominative as well as the order of the verb and predicate nominative are out of typical order, an arrangement that is best explained by authorial intent of strong emphasis on the predicate nominative (in this case "God"). John "is affirming that [Christ] is God, and doing so emphatically as we see from the word order in the Greek."[32] The original reading with an interlinear English annotation follows:

kai	*theos*	*ēn*	*ho*	*logos*
and	God	was	the	Word

This clause is pregnant with theological meaning, stunning in grammatical import, and masterful in its efficiency to communicate John's crowning emphasis that Christ, the Word, is God. The explanation given by Mounce is worth quoting at length:

> We know that "the Word" is the subject because it has the definite article, and we translate it accordingly: "and the Word was God." Two questions, both of theological import, should come to mind: (1) why was *theos* thrown forward? and (2) why does it lack the article? In brief, its emphatic position stresses its essence or quality: "What God was, the Word was" is how one translation brings out this force. Its lack of a definite article keeps us from identifying the *person* of the Word (Jesus Christ) with the *person* of "God" (the Father). That is to say, the word order tells us that Jesus Christ has all the divine attributes that the Father has; lack of the article tells us that Jesus Christ is not the Father. John's wording here is beautifully compact!

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[32] Morris, 69.

It is, in fact, one of the most elegantly terse theological statements one could ever find. As Martin Luther said, the lack of an article is against Sabellianism; the word order is against Arianism.

To state this another way, look at how the different Greek constructions would be rendered:

kai ho logos ēn ho theos	"and the Word was the God" (i.e. the Father; Sabellianism)
kai ho logos ēn theos	"and the Word was a god" (Arianism and Jehovah Witnesses)
kai theos ēn ho logos	"and the Word was God" (Orthodoxy)

Jesus Christ is God and has all the attributes that the Father has. But he is not the first person of the Trinity. All this is concisely affirmed in *kai theos ēn ho logos*.[33]

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[33] Mounce, 27-28.

An adequate treatment of John 1:1c cannot ignore the important grammatical principles observed in Colwell's Rule and Construction (see the appendix for a detailed description of Colwell's Rule and Construction). A brief summary of the principle of Colwell's Construction has been stated as, "*an anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite.*"[34] In light of this general observation of Greek grammar, it is significant that an example of an indefinite predicate nominative remains wanting in the NT; the thought of which, though possible, "is nevertheless the most poorly attested semantic force for such a construction."[35] The fact that *theos* in John 1:1c is anarthrous (without the article) indicates that "God" refers not to the definitive identity of the Father (i.e. *ho theos*), yet this does not mean that *theos* ("God") is indefinite here. So if it is not indefinite, is it definite? Colwell's Construction will help.

Definitely Not Indefinite

If *theos* were indefinite, it would be translated, "a god." This is precisely how the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation* renders John 1:1c, "and the Word was a god." They selectively treat the noun *theos* in 1:1c as indefinite simply because it is anarthrous (without an article). Surprisingly, this innovation is not found among the many ancient attempts to

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[34] Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 262.

[35] Ibid.

deny the doctrines of Christ's deity and the Trinity. Because of its disregard of centuries of native and experienced Greek scholarship, this selective innovation is considered by some as "the silly schoolboy translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses."[36] Wallace points out that the translators of the NWT take *theos* in 1:1c as indefinite on theological and not grammatical grounds. They argue their position "on the sole basis that the term is anarthrous. Yet they are inconsistent."[37] He proceeds by quoting R. H. Countess to illustrate this overt inconsistency,

> In the New Testament there are 282 occurrences of the anarthrous theos. At sixteen places NWT has either a god, god, gods, or godly. Sixteen out of 282 means that the translators were faithful to their translation principle only six percent of the time. . . .

> The first section of John–1:1-18–furnishes a lucid example of NWT arbitrary dogmatism. Θεός occurs eight times– verses 1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 18–and has the article only twice– verses 1, 2. Yet NWT six times translated "God," once "a god," and once "the god."[38]

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[36] Robert Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah*, 303. See also Bowman's work entitled, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, for a more extensive treatment of this issue.

[37] Wallace, 267.

[38] R. H. Countess, *The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the* New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982) 54-55.

Reymond points out, "that the anarthrous noun does not connote indefiniteness as the Jehovah's Witnesses contend is evident from the recurring instances of the anarthrous *theos* throughout the Johannine Prologue itself (vv. 6, 12, 13, 18) where in each case it is definite and its referent is God the Father."[39] Wallace's analysis is worth quoting at length:

> If we expand the discussion to other anarthrous terms in the Johannine Prologue, we notice other inconsistencies in the NWT: It is interesting that the New World Translation renders θεός as "a god" on the simplistic grounds that it lacks the article. This is surely an insufficient basis. Following the "anarthrous = indefinite" principle would mean that ἀρχῇ should be "a beginning" (1:1, 2), ζωή should be "a life" (1:4), παρὰ θεοῦ should be "from a god" (1:6), Ἰωάννης should be "a John" (1:6), θεόν should be "a god" (1:18), etc. Yet none of these other anarthrous nouns is rendered with an indefinite article. One can only suspect strong theological bias in such a translation.

> According to Dixon's study, if θεός were indefinite in John 1:1, it would be the only anarthrous pre-verbal PN in John's Gospel to be so. Although we have argued that this is somewhat overstated, the general point is valid: The indefinite notion is the most poorly attested for anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives. Thus, grammatically such a meaning is improbable. Also, the context suggests that such is not likely, for the Word already existed in the beginning. Thus, contextually and grammatically, it is

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[39] Robert Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah*, 303. See also Bowman's work entitled, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, for a more extensive treatment of this issue.

highly improbable that the Logos could be "a god" according to John. Finally, the evangelist's own theology militates against this view, for there is an exalted Christology in the Fourth Gospel, to the point that Jesus Christ is identified as God (cf. 5:23; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28, etc.).[40]

To be sure, "the 'Word does not by Himself make up the entire Godhead; nevertheless the divinity that belongs to the rest of the Godhead belongs also to Him' (Tasker, p. 45). 'The Word was with God, God's eternal Fellow; the Word was God, God's own Self.'"[41] In support of the evidence that *theos* in John 1:1c is not indefinite, Köstenberger summarizes,

> "First, John, as a monotheistic Jew, would hardly have referred to another person as 'a god.' Second, if John had placed a definite article before θεός, this would have so equated God and the Word that the distinction established between the two persons in the previous clause ('the Word was with God') would have been all but obliterated. Third, in Greek syntax it is common for a definite nominative predicate noun preceding a finite verb to be without the article (Colwell 1933: 12–31; McGaughy 1972; Wallace 1996: 256–70), so that it is illegitimate to infer indefiniteness from the lack of the article in the present passage."[42]

Definite

If *theos* were definite, it would be translated, "the God." In the Greek text, *theos* in 1:1b is articular, which means that if the

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[40] Wallace, 267.

[41] Carson, 117.

[42] Köstenberger, 28.

same person is being referred to by the anarthrous PN (*theos*) in 1:1c, then in both places it is definite. "Although certainly possible grammatically (though not nearly as likely as qualitative), the evidence is not very compelling. The vast majority of *definite* anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives are monadic, in genitive constructions, or are proper names, none of which is true here, diminishing the likelihood of a definite *theos* in John 1:1c." [43] Thus, non-indefiniteness does not necessitate definiteness. So while *theos* in 1:1c is clearly not indefinite, "nevertheless, the force of the anarthrous *theos* is probably not so much that of definiteness as that of quality: Jesus 'shared the essence of the Father, though they differed in person'. Everything that can be said about God also can be said about the Word." [44]

> Further, calling θεός in 1:1c definite is the same as saying that if it had followed the verb it would have had the article. Thus it would be a convertible proposition with λόγος (i.e., "the Word" = "God" and "God" = "the Word"). The problem of this argument is that the θεός in 1:1b is the Father. Thus to say that the θεός in 1:1c is the same person is to say that "the Word was the Father." This, as the older grammarians and exegetes pointed out, is embryonic Sabellianism or modalism.[45] The Fourth Gospel is about the least likely place to find modalism in the NT.[46]

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[43] Wallace, 268.

[44] Köstenberger, 28-29.

[45] Wallace notes:

It is not that God changes into Jesus, nor that Jesus is the Father. The grammatical construction of 1:1c precludes a view

> Before 1933 NT commentators saw *theos* as qualitative. For example, in Westcott's com-mentary on John: "It is necessarily without the article (*theos* not *ho theos*) inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person. It would be pure Sabellianism to say 'the Word was *ho theos*.'"
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> Robertson, Grammar, 767-68: "*ho theos ēn ho logos* (convertible terms) would have been pure Sabellianism . . . . The absence of the article here is on purpose and essential to the true idea."
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> Lange's commentary on John: "*theos* without the article signifies divine essence, or the generic idea of God in distinction from man and angel; as *sarx*, ver. 14, signifies the human essence or nature of the Logos. The article before *theos* would here destroy the distinction of personality and confound the Son with the Father."
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> Alford points out: "The omission of the article before *theos* is not mere usage; it could not have been here expressed, whatever place the words might hold in the sentence. *Ho logos ēn ho theos* would destroy the idea of the *logos* altogether. *Theos* must then be taken as implying God, in substance and essence, –not *ho theos*, 'the Father,' in Person . . . . as in *sarx egeneto* [John 1:14], *sarx* expresses that state into which the Divine Word entered by a definite act, so in *theos ēn*, *theos* expresses that essence which was His *ēn archē:* –that He was very God. So that this first verse might be connected thus: the Logos was from eternity, –was with God (the Father), –and was Himself God."
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> Luther states it succinctly: "'the Word was God' is against Arius; 'the Word was with God' against Sabellius."

[46] Wallace, 268.

to either polytheism or modalism. "The predicate (God) stands emphatically first, as in 4:24. It is necessarily without the article (*theos* not *ho theos*) inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person. It would be pure Sabellianism to say 'the Word was *ho theos*.' No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word."[47]

Qualitative

If Christ is not "a god" nor "the God" (as in "the Father"), then how else is He to be explained by the grammar of John 1:1c? The short answer that is consistent with the rules of Colwell's Construction is that 'the Word' is *equated in quality* to 'God.' "When the predicate nominative precedes the copula, the noun preceding the copula emphasizes quality. So the predicate 'God' (*theos*) preceding 'was' indicates that the Logos is divine. He is fully God."[48] In this construction, the predicate nominative *emphasizes* quality and yet does not function as an adjective. "Abbott points out that it is more common to have an adjective than a noun in this position, which makes John's use of the noun all the more significant." [49] Thus, "the anarthrous construction cannot be pressed to produce the weaker sense of merely 'divine' in a sense of distinct from the character of the Father's deity. . . . Scholars from across the contemporary theological spectrum recognize that, although

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[47] Westcott, 3.

[48] Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 258

[49] Morris, 68.

Father and Son are distinct in this text, they share deity in the same way; thus some translate: 'the Word had the same nature as God.'"[50] So in this sense, we may say that the anarthrous predicate nominative 'God' is *specific* rather than *definite*. While qualitative, it is not merely adjectival; it specifies the one true God and emphasizes not His established identity but rather the essence of His being.

> A long string of writers has argued that because *theos*, 'God', here has no article, John is not referring to God as a specific being, but to mere qualities of 'God-ness'. The Word, they say, was not God, but divine. This will not do. There is a perfectly serviceable word in Greek for 'divine' (namely *theios*). More importantly, there are many places in the New Testament where the predicate noun has no article, and yet is specific. Even in this chapter, 'you are the King of Israel' (1:49) has no article before 'King' in the original (cf. also Jn. 8:39; 17:17; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 4:25; Rev. 1:20). It has been shown that it is common for a definite predicate noun in this construction, placed before the verb,

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[50] Keener, 373. He goes on to observe, "in one study of about 250 definite predicative nominatives in the NT, 90 percent were articular when following the verb, but a comparable 87 percent were anarthrous when before the verb, as here. Grammatically, one would thus expect John's predicate nominative '*theos'* to be anarthrous, regardless of the point he was making. Further, John omits the article for God the Father elsewhere in the Gospel, even elsewhere in the chapter (e.g., 1:6, 12, 13, 18). The same pattern of inconsistent usage appears in early patristic texts, and apparently Greek literature in general. And in a context where absolute identification with the Father would be less of a danger, John does not balk at using the articular form to call Jesus *ho theos* (20:28)."

to be anarthrous (that is, to have no article). Indeed, the effect of ordering the words this way is to emphasize 'God', as if John were saying, 'and the word was *God*!' In fact, if John had included the article, he would have been saying something quite untrue. He would have been so identifying the Word with God that no divine being could exist apart from the Word.[51]

Instead of equating the identities of the Word and the Father, the most compendious usage of language is employed to identify Christ as divine as the Father. Therefore, John 1:1c is best understood grammatically and theologically as touching the very nature of Christ as a co-member of the divine Godhead.

> It cannot be understood as 'a god,' as though the Logos were a lesser god alongside the supreme God; nor as simply 'divine,' for which the term θεῖος was well known (in 2 Pet 1:4 believers are said to be θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως, 'sharers of the divine nature'); nor as indicating the exercise of divine functions without possessing the divine nature; rather it denotes God in his nature, as truly God as he with whom he 'was,' yet without exhausting the being of God (observe that the Evangelist did not write καὶ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός ('and God was the Word').[52]

To suggest a qualitative option does not at all diminish or impugn the deity of Christ. "Rather, it stresses that, although the person of Christ is not the person of the Father, their

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[51] Carson, 117.

[52] Beasley-Murray, 10-11.

essence is identical. . . . The *idea* of a qualitative *theos* here is that the Word had all the attributes and qualities that "the God" (of 1:1b) had. In other words, he shared the *essence* of the Father, though they differed in person. *The construction the evangelist chose to express this idea was the most **concise** way he could have stated that the Word was God and yet was distinct from the Father.*"[53]

In sum, "God" in John 1:1c is without an article but is not indefinite. If there was an article in 1:1c, then John could not have written it with an article in 1:1b. Colwell's Construction demonstrates that this particular grammatical construction is well attested to communicate definiteness or specificity by the anarthrous predicate nominative. Strong emphasis is purposed in presenting the predicate nominative before the verb. So we may soundly conclude that Jesus is being identified in the equality of the conception of the being of God without distorting personal distinctiveness.

Identity by Appellations in the Prologue

A proper examination of the identity of 'the Word' should consider his appellations, which especially in a Hebrew mindset serve to designate more than a label or name. That names are of substantial import according to the author is evidenced in the fact that it is the 'name' of 'the Word' that people are to "believe in" in order to be granted "the right to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). It is remarkable that 'the Word' (*ho logos*) is not used anywhere else in the Gospel of

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[53] Wallace, 269.

John in the same sense as it is used in the prologue. This beckons special attention to its identity in these few verses and will aid in our understanding of its use in verse one.

'The Word' is promptly referred to by the personal pronoun "him" in verse three,[54] suggesting the identity of a personal being and not merely a principle, force, metaphysical personality, or agency. [55] 'The Word' is then linked to the concept of 'the true light' (v. 9) through the indication that "in him was life, and the life was the light of men" (v. 4). This 'Light' was the source of revelation and the object of human witnessing. That 'the Light' is one and the same with 'the Word' is made plain in verse ten where he is equated to the same personal being responsible for creation ("the world was made through him"). 'The Word' is then declared to be 'the only Son from the Father' (v. 14) and then explicitly identified with the very personal name, 'Jesus Christ' (v. 17). Rightly observed, "the major burden of 1:14–18 is to identify the Word explicitly with Jesus."[56] Lastly, 'the Word' is identified as 'the One-of-a-kind'[57] and[58] 'God'[59] (v. 18). So in the prologue alone,

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[54] Whereas verse three employs the personal pronoun (αὐτός) verse two begins with the demonstrative pronoun (οὗτος), which is fairly rendered as "he" in some translations. The literal rendering of this pronoun, however, would be more close to "this One."

[55] See Keener for an extensive treatment of 'the Word' in distinction to the existing conceptions known in the milieu of first-century philosophical thought, 341-347.

[56] Köstenberger, 40.

[57] "'Only begotten' fails the etymology test, as it would require a different word, μονογεννητος; μονογενης derives instead from a

the identity of 'the Word' by way of titles is remarkable: the Word, the True Light, the One-of-a-kind, Son, Jesus Christ, *God*.

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different root, γενος, leading to the meaning 'one of a kind'" (Keener, 412-413). This is the same term that is used in verse 14.

[58] These two nominatives ('One-of-a-kind' *and* 'God') are taken appositionally (as though a comma separated them), which effectively yields two identifiers. "*Monogenēs theos*, 'the unique and beloved one, (himself) God'—taking 'God' appositionally" (Carson, 139). So also Morris, "It is possible that we should punctuate with a comma after 'begotten,' thus giving three titles of Christ: 'Only begotten, God, he who is in the bosom of the Father'" (Morris, 101). The NET Bible notes the following in their translation notes: "As for translation, it makes the most sense to see the word θεός as in apposition to μονογενής, and the participle ὁ ὢν (*ho on*) as in apposition to θεός, giving in effect three descriptions of Jesus rather than only two" (*New English Translation Bible* [Biblical Studies Press, LLC, 1996]).

[59] As for the textual variant 'God' over 'Son' in v. 18, "the preponderance of the evidence" (Köstenberger, 50), favors 'God' as the original (see also Reymond, 304-306, and Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002], 169).

The Deity of Christ

A summary of the identity of Jesus beyond John 1:1

The essential identity of Christ is one of the most central concerns of the Christian faith. It is the chief distinctive of orthodox Christianity and therefore if the deity of Jesus Christ is undermined the bedrock of Christianity is assaulted.

That the New Testament presents Jesus of Nazareth as the God-man is plain and undeniable by any honest scrutiny. Not that the evidence of John 1:1 is insufficient to conclude the matter with full assurance, but for the purpose of unmistakable clarity and the demonstration of unfailing harmony in the inspired writings, this section offers a summary of statements from Holy Scripture that represent the sheer wealth of testimony. "The deity of Christ is not an inference derived from cumulative evidence gained by inductive Bible research. Rather it is 'derived directly from statements concerning Him in the Bible. The references are so many and their meaning so plain that Christians of every shade of opinion have always regarded its affirmation as an absolute and indispensable requisite of their faith.'"[60]

Countless volumes have been written on this subject from very capable theologians (some of the more helpful and

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[60] Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 445.

accessible resources are listed in the Appendix C). The intent here is to concisely summarize the breadth of references to Christ as God. It should be kept in mind that "the New Testament nowhere goes out of the way to announce the deity of Christ, rather it is usually presented incidentally as something everybody on the inside of the Christian movement already understands."[61] The deity of Christ is not the product of post-apostolic reflection, nor is it a claim that rests on any single point of evidence. That Christ is the God-man is just as much a supposition of the NT as the existence of God is in the OT. Nowhere does the OT seek to prove the existence of God—it is perfectly understood. Any alternative conclusion testifies to a severe lack of perception, being the fruit of a heart that is willfully ignorant and engrossed in rebellion against God (cf. Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 53:1).

Christ is identified as God in a variety of classified qualities. There is no lack of suggestions concerning how one might remember these qualities, but perhaps the most clever is the pneumonic proposed by Bowman and Komoszewski (see recommended resources): H. A. N. D. S. – Honors, Attributes, Names, Deeds, Seat.[62] For our purposes, the identity of Christ as God will be charted by His *appellations*, *attributes*, and the *adoration* He receives (coming: abilities, actions, and authority).

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[61] Culver, 446.

[62] "Jesus, then, also shares the **honors** that are due to God. Moreover, he shares them because he is due them as the one who has God's **attributes**, who has God's **name**, whose **deeds** on our behalf include the divine work of redemption, and who has taken his **seat** as the Lord enthroned over all creation" (Bowman and Komoszewski, 280).

Christ as God in His Appellations
(Names, Titles, & Designations of Christ)

The matter of names, titles, and designations are of no little importance in the biblical mindset. In order to rightly apprehend the significance of the following, it must be kept in mind that there is *glory* in the name of the LORD (cf. 1 Ch 16:10). The very glory of God is significantly associated with His name, "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens" which is fitting for the LORD alone, as is plainly stated elsewhere, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other" (Ps 8:1, Isa 42:8; cf. 48:11; Ps 29:2; 72:19; 79:9; 96:8; 115:1; etc.). What's more, Jesus Christ is not merely a delegate or ambassador of God, as though He were bearing appellations in simple representation of another. God will not share His glory with another and one unmistakable indication of such "sharing" is found in the appropriation of names, titles, and designations. His glory is intentionally linked with His name and specific designations primarily because they identify Him uniquely among all conceptions of deity. Yet, Jesus is directly assigned names, titles, and designations that are reserved for God alone. This plainly testifies to His deity.

God

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
To you it was shown, that you might know that the **LORD is God**; there is no other besides him. (Deuteronomy 4:35)	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**. (John 1:1)
Dent 4:39; 32:39; 2 Sam 22:32; 2 Chron 15:3; Is 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9; Jer 10:10; John 5:44; 17:3;.Rom 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor 8:4-6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25	Is 7:14; 9:6; John 1:18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:l3; Heb 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20-21

Lord (*kurios*)

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the **LORD**; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)	For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the **Lord**; make his paths straight.' " (Matthew 3:3)
Gen 2:4; Exod 3:15-18; Deut 3:24 LXX; Ps 34:8; 118:25; Is 8:12-13; 40:l3; 45:23; Joel 2:32; [etc.]	Matt. 7:21-22; 8:25; 14:30; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; 6:46; Acts 1:24; 2:21, 36; 7:59-60; 8:25 [etc.]; Rom 10:9-l3; 1 Cor 1:2, 8 [etc.], 31; 2:16; 4:4-5; 5:4; 6:11; 7:17, 32-35; 8:6; 10:21-22; 16:22-23; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Peter 2:3; 3:13-15

In John 8:58, and elsewhere, Jesus utters perhaps one of the most startling blasphemies that Jewish ears could hear, if indeed He were not God. Grudem aptly explains, "Here a sufficient response to prove Jesus' eternity would have been, 'Before Abraham was, I was.' But Jesus did not say this. Instead, he made a much more startling assertion: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:58). Jesus combined two assertions whose sequence seemed to make no sense: 'Before something in the past happened [Abraham was], something in the present happened [I am].' The Jewish leaders recognized at once that he was not speaking in riddles or uttering nonsense: when he said, 'I am,' he was repeating the very words God used when he identified himself to Moses as 'I AM WHO I AM' (Ex. 3:14). Jesus was claiming for himself the title 'I AM,' by which God designates himself as the eternal existing One, the God who is the source of his own existence and who always has been and always will be. When the Jews heard this unusual, emphatic, solemn statement, they knew that he was claiming to be God."[63] Thus, they "they picked up stones to throw at him" (John 8:59).

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
God said to Moses, "**I AM** WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:14)	Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I am**." (John 8:58)
Is 41:4; 43:2, 5, 10-11, 25; 52:6; etc.	John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28; l3:18-19; 18:5-8

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[63] Grudem, 545-46.

The Holy One

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, **the Holy One** in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. (Hosea 11:9)	But ye denied **the Holy One** and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; (Acts 3:14 KJV)
2 Ki 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 71:22; 78:41; Prov 9:10; Is 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11-12, 15; 31:1; etc.; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Eze 39:7; Hos 11:9, 12; Hab 1:12	Mark 1:24; Lu 4:34; Jn 6:69; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 13:35

Savior

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no **savior**. (Isaiah 43:11)	waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and **Savior** Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:13)
2 Sam 22:3; Ps 17:7; 106:21; Is 43:3; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; Hos 13:4	Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim 1:10; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18; 1 John 4:14

Lord of Hosts

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, **the Holy One** in your midst, and I will not	Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of

come in wrath. (Hosea 11:9)	the harvesters have reached the ears of the **Lord of hosts**. (James 5:4)
2 Ki 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 71:22; 78:41; Prov 9:10; Is 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11-12, 15; 31:1; etc.; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Eze 39:7; Hos 11:9, 12; Hab 1:12	Cf. James 5:8

King/Lord of Glory

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Who is this **King of glory**? **The LORD**, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah (Psalm 24:8–10)	None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the **Lord of glory**. (1 Corinthians 2:8)
Ps 24:1, 7-10	1 Cor 2:8; James 2:1

King of kings and Lord of lords

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
…he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the **King of kings and Lord of lords**, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.	They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is **Lord of lords and King of kings**, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

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(1 Timothy 6:15–16)

(Revelation 17:14)

Deut 10:17; Ps l36:2-3; Dan 4:37; 1 Tim 6:15

Rev 17:14; 19:16

First and Last / Alpha and Omega

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "**I am the first and I am the last**; besides me there is no god. (Isaiah 44:6)	"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the **first and the last**, who died and came to life. (Revelation 2:8)
Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev 21:6	Rev 1:7-8, 17b-18; 2:8; 22:12-l3

Bridegroom / Husband

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the **bridegroom** rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:5)	The one who has the bride is the **bridegroom**. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. (John 3:29)
Is 54:5; 62:5; Jer 31:32	Matt 22:2; 25:1-13; Mark 2:19; John 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:7-9; 21:2, 9

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
…For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: '**To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance**.' (Isaiah 45:21–23)	Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)
And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved**. . . . (Joel 2:32)	…**if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved**. . . . For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." . . . For "**everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**." (Romans 10:9–13)
Exod 3:15; Deut 28:58; Ps 8:1, 9; 20:7; Luke 1:49; Rom 2:24; 1 Tim 6;1; Rev 15:4;	Matt 7:22; 10:22; 19:29; 24:9; Mark 9:38-39; l3:13; Luke 10:17; 21:12, 17; John 1:12; 15:21; 20:31; Acts **2:21, 38**; 3:6, 16; **4:**7, 10, **12**, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 40-41; 8:16; 9:14, 21, 27-28; 10:43, 48; 15:26; 16:18; 19:5, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 1 Cor 1:13-15; 6:11; Eph 1:21; Col 3:17; 1 Peter 4:14; 1 John 2:12; 3:23; 5:13; 3 John 7; Rev 2:3, 13; 3:8

Christ as God in His Attributes

Not only does the NT ascribe to Christ names, titles, and designations that properly belong to God alone, it also affirms attributes of Christ that likewise belong to God alone. "He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God God."[64]

Preexistent

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)	who, though **he was in the form of God**, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, **by taking the form of a servant**, **being born** in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6–7)
Gen 1:1; Ps 93:2; cf. Prov 8:23	John 1:1; Matt 9:13; 20:28; Lk 4:43; 5:32; 13:34; 19:10; John 8:42, 58; 10:36; 12:39-41; 13:3; 16:28; 17:5, 24; Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 10:4, 9; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:6-7; Col 1:15-16; Eph 4:8-9; Jude 5

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[64] B. B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadephia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), p. 39.

Self-Existent

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:14)	**In him was life**, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)
Ex 6:2-9; Deut 32:39; etc.	John 14:6; Act 3:15

Eternal

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, **from everlasting to everlasting**! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD! (Psalm 106:48)	He is without father or mother or genealogy, **having neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. (Hebrews 7:3)
Ps 90:2; 93:2; 102:25-27; Rev 4:9-10; 16:5; etc.	John 1:1; 8:56-59; 17:5; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2, 10-12; 7:3; Rev 22:13

Uncreated

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
In the beginning, **God created** the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)	**All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)
Gen 1:1; Is 43:10; etc.	John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:2

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. (Psalm 102:26–27)	But of the Son he says . . . And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." (Hebrews 1:10–12)
Num 23:19; Ps 102;26-27; Mal 3:6; James 1:17; etc.	Heb 1:10-12; 13:8

Omnipotent – *all-powerful*

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job 42:2)	For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, **who is the head of all rule and authority**. (Colossians 2:9–10)
Num 23:19; Ps 102;26-27; Mal 3:6; James 1:17; etc.	Matt 8:26-27; 28:18; John 2:19-22; 10:17-18; 2 Cor 12:9; Eph 1:19-21; Col 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:22

Omnipresent – *ever-present*

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:7–10)	For where two or three are gathered in my name, **there am I among them**." (Matthew 18:20) …Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:11)
Gen 28:15; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 139:7-10; John 4:20-24; etc.	Matt 8:5-13; 18:20; 28:20; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 7:1-10; John 1:47-49; 4:46-54; Eph 4:9-10; Col 3:11

Omniscient – *all-knowing*

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
…God is greater than our heart, and **he knows everything**. (1 John 3:20)	And they prayed and said, "You, **Lord, who know the hearts of all**, show which one of these two you have chosen (Acts 1:24)
1 Kings 8:39; Ps 139:1-4; Isa 46:9-10; Matt 10:30; 1 John 3:20; etc.	Matt 9:4; 11:21-23; 12:25; 17:24-27; Mark 2:6-8; 8:31-32; Luke 5:22; 6:8; 10:13-15; 21:20-24; John 4:16- 18; 11:11-15; 13:10-11, 21-29, 36-38; 16:30-31; 21:17; Acts 1:24; 1 Cor 4:5; Col 2:3; Rev 2:23

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
…for I am God, and there is no other; **I am God, and there is none like me** (Isaiah 46:9)	**And whoever sees me sees him who sent me**. (John 12:45) **I and the Father are one**. (John 10:30)
Exod 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Kings 8:23; 1 Chr 17:20; Ps 86:8; 15a, 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5, 9; Jer 10:6-7; Mic 7:18; etc.	John 12:45; 14:7-10, 23; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15, 19 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb. 1:3

Christ as God in Adoration
(Christ Receives Worship)

Perhaps the greatest of all arguments in identifying Christ as God is that He received worship. More than any other consideration, this requires the highest attention to the context of Israel's monotheism. The trademark of the Hebrew faith, as directed by God in Holy Scripture, is captured in the 'Shema': "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). This was an unmistakable call to total and complete devotion to the one true living God. The imperative is calculated to demand the whole of a person's being, with nothing remaining for devotion to another. The absolute supremacy of God is the essence that demands worship of the creature to Him alone and emphatically to no other. It is a moral outrage to devote oneself by ascribing to any other being the glory and worth

that is due to God alone. This is made plain in the OT Scriptures, "My glory I will not give to another"(Isaiah 48:11). To give glory to anything or anyone other than God is to offer worship to that object, which is a high-handed impertinence against an infinitely worthy God, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols" (Isaiah 42:8). The one true God passionately reiterates His intolerance for the worship of any other, "You shall have no other gods before me. . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Ex 20:3, 5). So great is this emphasis that the Lord immediately declares the necessary and holy consequence for all who would worship another, "for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex 20:5). Idolatry thus receives the sharpest of warnings in the Decalogue and highest of offenses against God throughout Scripture. He calls the worship of another the act of hatred (cf. Ex 20:5, "of those who hate me"). The worship of anything other than God is declared hatred by God!

A prominent stimulus for worship is represented in the gracious salvation that God alone can accomplish (either temporal/physical or eternal/spiritual). Thus, glory and worship on the grounds of salvation is also reserved for God alone, "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:11), "And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me" (Isaiah 45:21). This is profoundly significant in light of Christ, from start to finish, being identified as "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42; cf. Rev 7:10).

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Not created being can rightly receive worship in the economy of God's supremacy. Even the most privileged of heavenly angels forcefully reject worship and redirect it to God alone (cf. Rev 19:10; 22:3, 9). It cannot be stated strongly enough, if Christ receives worship, either He is God or He is the most contemptible blasphemer ever recorded! Yet, it is well noted that the early Christian church "worshipped Christ as God."[65] In fact, "the central feature of Christianity is (and always has been) the worship of Jesus."[66] Thus "to affirm that Christ is God is not simply to suggest He is 'God-like.' Christ is absolutely equal with the Father in His Person and His work. Christ is *undiminished deity*."[67]

Receives Worship

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14)	And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "**Let all God's angels worship him**." (Hebrews 1:6)
Deut 6:13; Matt 4:9-10; Ps 97:7; Is 45:23; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9; etc.	Matt 2:2, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Phil 2:10-11; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:17; 5:14

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[65] Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 121.

[66] Macleod, 119.

[67] Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997), 224.

Receives Honor

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14)	that **all may honor the Son**, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. (John 5:23)
Exod 20:2-3; 34:14; Deut 5:6-7; etc.	John 5:23; Heb 3:3-4

Receives Glory

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? **My glory I will not give to another.** (Isaiah 48:11)	But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and **Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory** both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)
Exod 15:2; Ps. 29:1-3; Matt 5:16; Rom 15:6-9; 1 Chr 29:10-1l; Ps 72:18-19; Rev 4:11; etc.	2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:20-21; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 25; Rev. 5:12-13

Is to be Feared

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. (Deuteronomy 6:13)	For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, **knowing the fear of the Lord**, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. (2 Corinthians 5:10–11)
Deut 6:13; 10:20; Pro l:7; 2:5; 9:10; Is 8:12-13; etc.	2 Cor 5:10-11; Eph 5:21; 6:7-8; Col 3:22-25; 1 Peter 3:14-16

Is to be Served

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, " 'You shall worship the Lord your God **and him only shall you serve**.' " (Matthew 4:10)	No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (Revelation 22:3)
Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10; etc.	Dan 7:14; Rev 22:3; also in the ordinances: Matt 26:2, 18, 26-29; Mark 14:12-16, 22-25; Luke 22:8-20; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor. 10:16-22; 11:20, 27; etc.

Is to be Loved

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4–5)	Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37)
Ex 20:6; Deut 5:10; 6:4-5; 11:1, 13,22; 13:6-11; 19:9; 30:6-8, 16,20; 33:9; Josh 22:5; Matt. 22:37; etc.	Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26; John 14:15, 21; 15:10; Eph 6:24; etc.

"The deity of Christ has real value to the believer concerning knowledge of God, new life, personal relationship with God, and the ability to worship Christ for who he is."[68]

Is the Object of Faith

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)	"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; **believe also in me**. (John 14:1)
Gen 15:6; Is 28:16; 43:10; Mark 11:22; Heb 6:1; 11:6; etc.	Matt 9:28; John 1:12; 3:15-18, 36; 6:35, 40; 7:37-39; 8:24; 11:25-26; 14:1; 20:31; Acts 3:16; 10:43; 16:31; 20:21; 22:19; 24:24; 26:18; Rom 9:33; 10:11; Gal 3:26; 1 Peter 2:6; 1 John 3:23; 5:1, 10, 13; etc.

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[68] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 699.

Established Identity of God	Identity of Christ as God
…keep on praying to a god that cannot save. … there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:20–22)	If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:14) If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. . . . For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9, 13)
Gen 4:26; 1 Chr 16:8; Ps 65:2; Is 44:17; 45:20-22; Joel 2:32; etc.	John 14:14; Acts 1:24-25; 7:59-60; 9:14; 22:16; Rom 10:12-13; 1 Cor 1:2; 16:22; 2 Cor 12:8-9; etc.

Identity in Early Christianity

It is well known that the very first of several major church councils in the post-apostolic era had this concern as its centerpiece. This Christological discussion concerning the deity of Christ and His distinction from the Father was the chief interest in the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). It was again prominent in the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). In these first of church councils, the nature of Christ was affirmed and reaffirmed with no little enthusiasm. The conclusion of these critical studies and debates produced the

most compendious declaration concerning the nature of Christ ever articulated by His church:

> We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, **inconfusedly**, **unchangeably**, **indivisibly**, **inseparably**; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and **concurring** in one person and one Subsistence, **not parted** or **divided** into two persons, but one and the same Son . . .[69]

Christ is *homo-ousios* (of the same essence) as God the Father and not *homoi-ousios* (of similar essence). He is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." [70] These are very helpful attempts to

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[69] "The Symbol Of Chalcedon" adopted at the fourth and fifth sessions of the Fourth Church Council (Chalcedon), A.D. 451. Taken from *Historic Creeds and Confessions* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

[70] "Nicene Creed," *Historic Creeds and Confessions* (A.D. 325).

articulate what was already laid down by Christ and His apostles. The early church no more created the conception of Christ's deity than they did the crucifixion or the resurrection. The words formulated at the early church councils were, then, words that had been reverberating in the hearts and testimonies of the faithful for centuries. "The church Fathers discussed the matter of Christ's deity and debated with errorists and heretics from the beginning. This was long before the strong affirmations of Christ's deity in the early creeds, confessions and definitions."[71]

May the church today, like the faithful of old, respond in faith expressed in humble adoration and praise to "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Amen.

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[71] Culver, 446.

By Daniel Wallace[72]

Colwell's Rule

Colwell's rule is as follows: "Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article . . . a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a 'qualitative' noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun."

Colwell illustrated this principle with John 1:49: ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ· ῥαββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (Nathaneal answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel"). Colwell observed that the structural parallels between the two statements differed at two points: (a) in the second statement, the PN is anarthrous while in the first it is articular; (b) in the second statement, the PN is before the verb, while in the first it is after the verb. Yet the grammatical sense was the same for both statements: the PN in each should be regarded as definite. From this, Colwell assumed that definiteness of the PN could be achieved either by the article or by a shift in word order. His essay dealt with the latter.

In other words, a PN that precedes the copula, and which is apparently definite *from the context*, usually lacks the article.

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[72] Wallace, 257-262.

Colwell's Construction

Colwell's Construction is the application of Colwell's Rule into a different semantic database. Paul Dixon describes the difference:

> The rule does not say: an anarthrous predicate nominative which precedes the verb is definite. This is the converse of Colwell's rule and as such is not a valid inference. (From the statement "A implies B," it is not valid to infer "B implies A." From the statement "Articular nouns are definite," it is not valid to infer "Definite nouns are articular." Likewise, from the statement "Definite predicate nominatives preceding the verb are anarthrous," it is not valid to infer "Anarthrous predicate nominatives preceding the verb are definite.")

Dixon concludes by suggesting that "the anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative (in John's Gospel at least) is primarily qualitative in force."

The studies by Dixon and especially Philip Harner demonstrate that the anarthrous pre-verbal PN is still *closer* to definiteness than is the anarthrous *post*-copulative predicate nominative, and that an anarthrous predicate nominative that *follows* the verb will usually be either qualitative or *in*definite.

A general rule about the construction can now be stated: *An anarthrous pre-verbal PN is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite.* In neither of the two studies were any indefinite PNs found. We believe there may be some in the NT, but this is nevertheless the most poorly attested semantic force for such a construction.

APPENDIX C

Recommended Resources

Bauckham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Bowman, Robert. *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989.

Bowman, Robert. *Putting Jesus In His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007.

Evans, Craig A. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Fee, Gordon D. *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical- Theological Study.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.

Gathercole, Simon J. *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Harris, Murray. *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Hengel, Martin. *Studies in Early Christology*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995.

Hurtado, Larry W. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Longenecker, Richard N., ed. *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Macleod, Donald. *The Person of Christ*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Reymond, Robert. *Jesus, Divine Messiah: the New Testament Witness.* Phillipsburg, N.J: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co, 1990.

Schreiner, Thomas R. *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.