Εὐαγγέλιον Κατὰ Ἰωάννην
The Gospel According to John

I.A-D ∘ Prologue – Extended Commentary Introducing the Narrative of the Life of Jesus

A:1-11 ∘ 'The Word' is God the Creator – The Life of 'The Word' is the Light Shining in Men's Darkness

▪ *Because this Prologue is composed of both logic and poetry, it requires a less formal style of translation while supplying ellipses of sense, reasoning, and imagery.*

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, ¤ Jn 1:14; 10:33,36; 1Jn 1:1; Rv 19:13

∘1:1∘ 'The Word' was {already} there [was existing] **at** {the very} **beginning**,

2 καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ¤ 1Jn 1:2 cf. Jn 17:5

and so 'The Word' was {already} there [\'] {face-to-face} with God,

3 καὶ **θεὸς** ἦν ὁ λόγος. ¤ Rm 9:5; Pp 2:6

and so {all that} '**God**' {was}, 'The Word' was.

▪ *1 ▪ John 8:58 "Before Abraham came into existence [temporal past], I am existing [eternal present]."*

"Word" may not be the best or clearest translation, but a transliterated "Logos" would probably be even more obscure.

The expression 'The Word' is here set off by capitalizing it and enclosing it in single quotes in order to point to its special usage and to allow the context to load the meaning into the translation. Some of the pronouns and other terms in this passage which refer back to 'The Word' are likewise marked.

Ὁ Λόγος - 'The Word' - has a wide range of meanings or usages in Greek. It rarely means a single "word." How should it be defined here? A word is the expression of collected thought or reason. 'The Word' is the full expression of all of God's collected thought or reason (Hebrews 1:1-3). 'The Word' become human flesh is the revelation to man of God's collected thought or reason; the full, true, and defining expression of personal intelligence, thought, and information.

Though it seems possible, or even likely, that John's use of 'The Word' was partially meant to respond to and to counteract pagan philosophy, particularly gnosticism, nevertheless this possibility can never be the basis for the interpretation of the use of the expression 'The Word'. Scripture interprets Scripture.

The Word is more than Wisdom personified (Proverbs 3:19-20; 8:12, 22-31) - He is Wisdom incarnate (John 17:24; Colossians 1:17; 1 John 1:1-2).

▪ *2 ▪ " πρὸς" = "<u>πρόσωπον</u> <u>πρὸς</u> <u>πρόσωπον</u> "face to face." If John had used μετά, it would mean "with" God. If John had used παρά, it would mean "beside" God. But John used πρός, which means "in the presence" "facing" "directly face-to-face or person-to-person with" God. Compare:*
"For we are now seeing through a {cloudy} mirror in an enigma, but then face to face [πρόσωπον <u>πρὸς</u> <u>πρόσωπον</u>] …" (1 Corinthians 13:12)
"… I hope to come to [πρός] you and to speak face to face [στόμα πρὸς στόμα] …" (2 John 1:12)
"… This Eternal Life, which indeed was with [πρός] the Father …" (1 John 1:2)

▪ *3 ▪ The verb ἦν is used four times in the first four lines. It is imperfect tense, that is, past time, progressive aspect, direct effect. This may be used as an intransitive verb referring to a state of existence (a verb of being), which could be translated "was existing, was (already) there," or it may be used as a copular verb (a verb of coupling or linking), which could be translated simply "was," followed by a Subjective Complement.*
As a verb of coupling = "… and so {all that} God {was}, 'The Word' was."
As a verb of being = "… and so 'The Word' was existing {as} God."

The common translation "the Word was God" leaves out the emphasis and nuance of the structure. Instead, the word "God" in this translation is moved back to its original first place in the sentence, showing emphasis, and is enclosed with single quotes in order to show that the emphasis is upon the qualities which define or characterize all that 'God' is. "All that 'God' was" means something very different from "all that was God." The former points to quality - 'The Word' is nothing <u>less</u> than God in nature and essence; the latter would point to identity - 'The Word' is nothing <u>else</u> than God, which might imply they were the same Person, which they are not.

▪ *1-3 ▪ This is a logical argument. If the Word already existed at the beginning of created time, and the Word existed directly face to face with God - face to face suggests personality, particularly when the other face is a person - then we cannot escape the conclusion that this Word could be nothing other than another face or self or person of God. John perhaps tests our patience with his pedantic and redundant way of saying this, but this is what makes His logic impeccable and inescapable. If John had said "God was the Word," he would have said too much, for God was more persons than just the Word. If John had said "The Word was divine," then he would have said too little, for the Word was more than just divine - as if 'The Word' was only a portion of God, or God was only a portion of 'The Word'. John's choice and formulation of the words, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13 "… not in words taught by human wisdom, but rather, in words taught by the Holy Spirit - matching spiritual things with spiritual words.") perfectly fits within the trinitarian formulation: one God, more than one Person in God.*

The first three lines teach:
Line 1: the eternal existence (and therefore pre-existence) of 'The Word'.
Line 2: the distinct personality and direct relation of 'The Word' to God (The Father).
Line 3: the unity in divine being and essence and the coequal relation of 'The Word' with God (The Father).

The repetitive καί clauses in this passage suggest a linkage of logical inferences in the sense of "it follows that" "hence" or "consequently," so the translation "and so … and so …" works well here.

4 Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

◦2◦ 'This Same {Person}' was {already} there [*] at {the very} beginning {face-to-face} with [/*] God.

5 Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, ¤ Ps 33:6; Pr 8:12,22-30; Jn 1:10; 5:26; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; 1Ct 8:6; Ep 3:9; Cs 1:16-17; Hb 1:2; 1Jn 5:11

◦3◦ All things came into existence **through 'Him'**,

6 καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο
| ... |

7 οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν.
and so | not even one thing which has {ever} come into existence | came into existence **apart from 'Him'**.

▪ 4 ▪ *This resolves an apparent contradiction. The logical law of non-contradiction says that: "The same attribute cannot at the same time both belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect." Lines 1-3 appear to ascribe Godhood in the same respect to different subjects. This might appear to contradict the proposition that there can be only one God. The apparent contradiction is resolved in line 4 by observing that there is one subject in being, but there is a distinction of person within that being. John's redundancy in line 4 clarifies and emphasizes the personal distinctness of the Word. This Person - 'The Word' - eternally exists as God, yet He also eternally exists with God. Hence He is one in Being with the Godhead, yet He is distinct in Person from other Persons of the Godhead. Thus we resolve the tension between the personalities of God and the essence and character of God and we avoid the mistake of thinking that God (the Father) and 'The Word' (the Son) are one Person. This Person - 'The Word' - eternally exists as God, yet He also eternally exists with God. Hence He is one in Being with the Godhead, yet He is distinct in Person from other Persons of the Godhead. This is a mystery, not a contradiction. A contradiction would be that God is one person and three persons, or that God is one god and three gods.*

If John had said, "The Word was a god," then he would have spoken nonsense, for the Word was directly face to face with God - on the same level as God - which would have made the Word a separate God, which is polytheism.

▪ 5 ▪ *πας, like the English "all," rarely means "everyone without exception," but its limits and density are defined by the context. In this context, it is limited to absolutely all created things. As darkness is the absence of light, so evil is the absence of virtue. All created things came into existence through the Word, and virtue is a created thing, but evil is the absence of virtue, and though God is in control of all things, including the rise of evil, and God uses all things including evil to serve and accomplish His good purposes, nevertheless God did not in the original sense create evil. The origin of evil involves a deathly mutation into spiritual nature which is described but not explained in Scripture.*

▪ 5-7 ▪ *This is a logical statement. The logical law of the excluded middle says that: "An attribute must either belong to a subject or not belong to it, there is no middle position." A statement is either true or false, there is no other possibility. All things came into existence through 'The Word', which means nothing has come into existence apart from Him. There is no middle ground. These are two logically equivalent quantitative categorical statements:*

1) All-things are things-which-are-brought-into-existence-by-Him.
2) No-things are things-which-are-not-brought-into-existence-by-Him.
This is stated two ways - positively and negatively - in order to clarify and emphasize that the statement is universal and absolute.

▪ 7-8 ▪ *Sometimes line 7 is divided from lines 5-6 and joined with line 8: "What came into existence in Him was life."*