

God the Father's Only Son*S. J. Stone (1839–1900)*

God the Father's only Son,
 And with Him in glory One,
 One in wisdom, One in might,
 Absolute and infinite;
 Jesu, I believe in thee,
 Thou art Lord and God to me.

Preacher of eternal peace,
 Christ anointed to release,
 Setting wide the dungeon door,
 Unto sinners chained before;
 Jesu, I believe in Thee,
 Christ the Prophet sent to me.

Low in deep Gethsemane,
 High on dreadful Calvary,
 In the garden, on the cross,
 Making good our utter loss;
 Jesu, I believe in Thee,
 Priest and Sacrifice for me.

Ruler of Thy ransomed race,
 And Protector by Thy grace,
 Leader in the way we wend,
 And Rewarder at the end;
 Jesu, I believe in Thee,
 Christ, the King of kings to me.

All that I am fain to know
 While I watch and wait below:
 All that I would find above,
 Length and depth and height of love:
 Jesu, I believe in Thee,
 Thou art All in All to me.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***God and the Word in John 1***Kevin T. Bauder*

Who is Jesus Christ? What is His relationship to God the Father? People who claim to be Christian have tried to answer this question in various ways. Arians suggest that Christ was an exalted creature of the Father. Adoptionists argue that Christ was a righteous man whom God elevated to divine status. Tritheists claim that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three Gods who cooperate with each other. Modalists insist that the one God sometimes presents Himself to His creatures as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit. These answers are very old, but they still show up in groups like Oneness Pentecostalism, Mormonism, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. And none of these answers is truly Christian because none is compatible with the gospel.

While these schemes are very old, none of them had been invented when the New Testament was written. Even so, some texts in the New Testament seem to anticipate where people would go wrong in their understandings of the relationship between God and Christ. One text has special value for understanding Christ's relationship to the Father. That text is John 1:1–18.

These verses were originally written in Greek. To make sense of them, you need to understand a peculiarity of the Greek language. It has to do with a part of speech called the *article*. English has two articles. One is *a* or *an*, and it indicates indefiniteness. The other is *the*, and it indicates definiteness. For example, *a ball* could be any ball, while *the ball* points to a particular ball.

New Testament Greek only has a definite article. It can be used in many ways. But Greek has no indefinite article, no word for *a* or *an*. To make a noun indefinite, a Greek writer would usually use the noun without any article. Instead of writing *a ball*, an author would simply write *ball*.

That usage seems simple, but it gets more complicated quickly. The problem is that the absence of a Greek article does not always make a noun indefinite. In fact, it usually does not. If this point seems hard to understand, it is because English is not like Greek. Here is the general rule for nouns with and without the article. Grammarians James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery state, "It would probably be an accurate summary statement to say



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that the presence of the article emphasizes identity, the absence of the article quality" (*Syntax of New Testament Greek*, 67).

What do these grammarians mean? They are saying that in Greek, the word *ball* without an article does not necessarily mean *a ball*. Rather, the lack of the article draws attention to the "ballish" quality of the thing under view. *Ball* without the article is pointing out, not some particular ball, but the "ballness" of whatever ball that is in view.

This observation is relevant in the first clause of John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word." In the Greek text, the word *beginning* has no article. It says literally, "In beginning...." In other words, John is not pointing to any particular beginning. He is rather designating whatever event has the quality of beginningness.

His claim is that whatever event marks a beginning, the Word already was. Note that John does not say "The Word began." He does not say, "The Word came to be." No: whatever event has the quality of a beginning, at that event the Word already was.

The beginning of the day? The Word already was. The beginning of Israel? The Word already was. The beginning of the world? The Word already was. Some imaginary beginning a billion or so years before God made the earth? The Word already was. The Word must have been before the world, for "All things were made by Him" (1:3). Indeed, "Without Him nothing came to be that has come to be."

Note that the Word did not come to be, but all other things did. All other things had some beginning, but the Word did not. Indeed, all other things were made, but the Word could not have been. The Word is not among those things that were made. He is not one of the things that came to be. He simply was.

If the Word never came to be—if He simply *was* before all beginnings—then the Word is eternal. But only one being is eternal. That being is God.

Everything that exists can be divided into two categories. Those two categories are *God* and *Not God*. Everything in the *Not God* category was made. Everything in the *Not God* category had a beginning. But God is not in that category. He occupies a category of His own.

God had no beginning. God was not made. He existed before all worlds. He alone is eternal. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). God was before this beginning. God caused this beginning. God Himself is not caused. He did not begin. He just was. This is what Paul means when he says that God alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16).

God is eternal because He is before all worlds, before all beginnings, before any possible beginning. Yet the Word is also before all worlds, before all beginnings. He was present before any conceivable beginning. The Word is eternal. And if the Word is the Eternal One, then the Word must be God.

If John went no further, we would already have the strongest reasons to affirm the deity of the Word. We could not possibly put the Word in the *Not God* category. We are not allowed to view the Word as any kind of a subordinate being. God did not create the Word. God did not promote the Word from the rank of creature to the rank of divinity.

What is the relationship between God and Christ? This clause provides the first part of the answer. The Word is the Eternal One. The Word is not a creature. The Word is not *Not God*. But John does not stop there.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
