Commentary — From the Margins
Theon, Accusative Case of "the only God"*?*

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λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς, Μή μου ἅπτου, οὔπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα
πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ
εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς, Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα
ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν (**John 20:17**)

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Grammar rules are always descriptive, not prescriptive; yet these rules become prescriptive when a language transitions from "natural" users producing "uneducated" texts to instructors teaching novices how these natural users constructed information … grammar rules follow usage and do not establish initial usage; however, once these rules are codified, the educated producer of texts is obligated to follow them whereas the illiterate users retain the freedom to establish new rules as the situation warrants, for imbedded within the human mind is a language use template that determines how communication should occur, with this template probably predating the confusing of languages at Babel. Hence, the person who learns a language through the necessity of communicating in that language with educated users of the language tends to rigidly follow rules whereas the unsophisticated user employs the language however the person's mind conceives that communication can best occur. So the person who uses a language by faith, believing that what the person uttered will be heard and understood, bends or ignores grammar rules that, again, are not really rules but observations about how others who have gone before used the language.

An example of an English grammar rule that isn't a rule pertains to the use of double negatives in a sentence: if a person says, *I don't want no potatoes*, no reasonable person believes that the speakers wants any potatoes. One negative doesn't cancel out the other to make a positive, but a mid 18th-Century grammar book asserted that was the case and educated English users have since been stuck with a nonsensical rule, for in one line of Chaucer's poetry there are four negatives, used to emphasis the negative.

An instructor of first year New Testament Greek will tell his or her students some variation of *words switch genders for phonetic reasons and for reasons of analogy,* and that there is *mandatory inclusion of the definite article as long as the noun is definite and not abstract, that the article has to be there and has to agree in gender, case, and number with the noun*, and that *sentence order is used for emphasis* and sentence order in Koine Greek is most commonly subject, verb, object, whereas in ancient Greek it was subject, object, verb. This New Testament Greek instructor will make a point of emphasizing *it is impossible to*

know or recognize the noun's gender from the inflected form of the article or from the noun's case ending; therefore, it is crucial to learn the lexical gender of every second declension masculine, feminine, and neuter noun, and that *if the article τοῦ modifies a noun, it must always be parsed according to the lexical gender of the noun thus reflecting the grammatical agreement between the article and the noun it modifies.* But the renowned translator Robert Fagles rendered Homer's *te theon te* as "every god" (1.22 *The Odyssey*), determining that the article "te" best reflected the idea of each of many gods taking possession of "pity."

If it is crucial for a student of Koine Greek to learn a noun's lexical gender, what is the student learning when meaning must be assigned to words by the auditor? Is not gender also an assignment made through observing how the noun functions and what articles have been assigned to the noun ... saying that meaning is assigned to words would be akin to telling an English grammar student to read E.E. Cumming's poetry to see how composition rules might be applied.

If the assignment of gender, case, and number to the Greek icon *Theos* were as easily made as our New Testament Greek instructor asserts, there would not have been centuries of Christological debates, with even today no agreement as to number: was Christ one with the Father as in one hypostasis before His birth as the man Jesus? Christian orthodoxy asserts that He was, but neither Christian Unitarians nor Judaism nor Islam agrees. Hence wars have been fought over the assignment of number to the allegedly masculine singular icon θεος, with all sides agreeing that the number should be one ... what's happening that linguistic agreement doesn't equate to human agreement? Where is the fault?

Northwest Coast formline art employs a grammar that is readable by the informed observer, but this "grammar" was lost when well-intended preachers and politicians attempted to scour the stain of paganism from Northwest Coast Native cultures. Recovery of formline's grammar began with Bill Reid's and Bill Holm's independent studies of early pieces: Bill Holm writes in his "Preface" to *Northwest Coast Indian Art* (University of Washington Press, 1965), "When I attempted to reconstruct the rules upon which this system of principles was based, however, it became apparent that, although my conclusions seemed logical on the basis of the material examined, there was no real documentation to substantiate them" (*v*), and "Ideally, a study of this sort should lean heavily on information from Indian artists trained in the tradition that fostered the art. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a qualified informant from the area covered" (*vii*). And concerning the grammar of Koine Greek, the grammar rules for this language of the New Testament were reconstructed from careful examination of surviving texts in a manner analogous to how Bill Reid and Bill Holm "rediscovered" the grammar of formline art. Ideally, reconstruction of such rules should lean heavily on information supplied by speakers for whom Koine Greek was their first language, but such speakers ceased to exist long ago as even Koine Greek evolved with usage. Latin was the language of scholarship for a very long time. And those who have translated the original texts into other languages had to rediscover the grammar by careful analysis, assigning to both words and grammar meanings that stemmed from their mental paradigms.

The Roman Church had no great love affair with books, burning as many as it could so as to limit the spread of alleged heresies. Most Greek texts were burned. Very few survived other than in translation: it is estimated that the Latin Church burned as many as fifteen million documents, books, and codices from the 2nd through 15th Centuries. So it is from Arabic and Latin translations that most Koine Greek texts came to scholars in the 16th-Century—and as our first year Greek instructor will tell his or her students, *Latin often misleads a student if the student uses Latin genders to guess at Greek genders.*

English has combined both the dative case and the accusative case to form the objective case. For an English user, a noun in the Greek accusative case functions as the direct object of the verb. This noun will usually follow the verb. When it doesn't follow the verb, the syntax of the sentence (or of the clause) has been twisted to produce an effect ... the order in which an auditor encounters words inevitably produces a hierarchy of importance. To encounter a direct object before encountering the subject of a sentence makes some sort of statement about the object having greater importance than the subject. To repeat a sentence or a clause is to emphasize the information conveyed by the sentence or clause. In inscribed communication (i.e., written texts) where the auditor can reread the linguistic icons used to convey the particular piece of knowledge, repetition either occurs from sloppy use of the language or from a special need to emphasize the piece of knowledge conveyed. Determining whether repetition is accidental or deliberate becomes a judgment call that must be made by the auditor.

In an attack against Sabellian heretics, Epiphanius references a *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Was this destroyed Gospel the work of the Gnostic philosopher Basildes who taught in Alexandria in the 2nd-Century and claimed to have a secret tradition transmitted to him by Peter, a claim that is akin to Justin Martyr claiming the John was a contemporary? According to Eusebius, all copies of Basildes' widely known *Interpretation of the Gospels* were burned by order of the Church, and the burning of his books in the 2nd-Century would seem to deny validity to Basildes' claim of receiving a secret tradition transmitted directly from Peter[1].

The Gospel of John was allegedly written as a formal rebuttal against Kerinthus, an actual contemporary of the Apostle and a circumcised Egyptian who taught that the universe was created by angels and the message delivered to Moses was given by angels, a teaching that would seem to be supported by Hebrews 2:1, Acts 7:38, and Exodus 3:2, a passage in which *Elohim* could be falsely construed to be angels. Therefore, John wants to make one point absolutely clear: the man Jesus of Nazareth was a deity before His human birth; was the God of Scripture; and returned to being with the Father when He returned to heaven. John does not make any claim about shapeshifting, or changing forms/manifestations, or about God being triune in nature.

John's gospel begins with, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος [In (the) beginning was the Logos] (1:1), an independent clause that will stand by itself as a thought — the

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[1] Peter would have died before Basildes was born or at best when Basildes was a very small infant as Justin Martyr was reportedly born in the year when John is assumed to have died. This would be akin to someone of the post WWII baby boom claiming President Roosevelt as a contemporary.

verb "ἦν" is a transitive verb, meaning that it would ordinarily require a direct object. The noun "ἀρχῇ" is not in accusative or in nominative case and as such cannot be the direct object of the verb. That "ἦν" is a transitive verb is seen in the clause, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος [and Theos was the Logos] (1:1), where the verb "ἦν" transfers identity from "the Logos" to "Theos," thereby causing "Theos" to retain its nominative case ending as a masculine singular noun. So John's Gospel begins with language that readily makes sense and makes the indisputable claim that the Logos was God, sharing even the same definite article, "ὁ," in the third clause of the sentence.

If John's purpose was—and it apparently was—to refute Kerinthus' teaching about creating angels, the refuting of the Egyptian's teaching begins with John's first sentence, a sentence that has caused the Christian Church as much difficulty as Paul's epistles have collectively caused; for the second clause of his initial sentence reads, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν [and the Logos was with the God] (1:1) … the Logos who was God was also with the God—

How much attention should a disciple pay to definite articles? Brits and by extension Canadians have, over the past fifty years, developed the habit of saying, *I'm going to hospital*, or *We're taking him to hospital*, whereas an American will still use the definite article, "the hospital": *We're taking him to the hospital.* When I have asked a Brit why he or she omits the definite article, so far I have only received the reply that the speaker did not omit the article, but said *the hospital.* This is simply not true. The definite article was omitted even if the speaker thought he or she was saying it.

For an American, the difference between "God" and "the God" is enormous; so for translators to omit the definite article in the second clause of John's initial sentence changes meanings in (for a Brit) an almost unimaginable way. If John's sentence were translated, "In (the) beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with the God, and the Logos was God," the sentence would be accurately translated and would be completely translated, and the presence of two entities would be linguistically sound. One entity would be "the" God, and one entity would also be God. And this is the point of John repeating himself: οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν [This one was in (the) beginning with the God] (1:2).

The article "the" is of such importance to English speakers that it must be added to "beginning" before the concept becomes mentally complete: "in beginning" just doesn't work whereas "in the beginning" works fine. "God" is and isn't "the God," with whether He is or isn't depending upon the context in which the icon appears.

The English language quit using case endings nearly a millennium ago, thanks to the three centuries long overlay of Norman French over both Old English and Old Norse then in use on the island when William the Bastard defeated Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings. Nouns lost their suffixes as illiterate Old English speakers and Old Norse speakers orally communicated with each other in word roots (Old English was West Germanic and Old Norse was North Germanic so both used the same roots but differing case endings and pronouns). Thus, when Henry V ordered that his victory at Agincourt be recorded in English rather than in French, the inscribed English language used many Latinate words but did

not use many Germanic case endings, depending instead upon sentence position to determine word usage and case.

The question must be asked: How reliable was the recovery of grammar rules for Koine Greek? The answer is, reasonably reliable, but our instructor teaching New Testament Greek in an American seminary would probably quibble with the qualifier "reasonably," insisting instead that all is known about how the language is used—and then insist that God is triune in nature, consisting of three entities forming one hypostasis, with this hypostasis being linguistically masculine singular. And therein lays the problem that caused Christology to dominate theological discussions throughout the 4th and 5th Centuries: the English word "God," like the Koine Greek word θε–, is not a personal name, but a descriptive referent for the house of the deity that is one in unity. This *house* is one in singularity as the tent of flesh in which the born of spirit disciple dwells is one in singularity ... in John's initial sentence, the second clause, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, has a direct object for the transitive verb "ἦν," with this direct object being, "τὸν θεόν," the accusative case ending (seen in the article "τὸν") for the masculine singular noun "θεὸς." Yet the structure of the sentence, followed by a repetitive sentence, linguistically precludes "ὁ λόγος" from being the direct object "τὸν θεόν."

The structure of John's initial sentence makes θεὸς and θεόν separate entities, both God, both textually present throughout John's Gospel, but with θεὸς—and here the noun is used as a name to distinguish it from the direct object of the second clause, τὸν θεόν—being the One who entered His creation as His only Son, the man Jesus of Nazareth.

With the appropriate definite article, *Theon* is the genitive plural of *Theos*, as *Theos*, itself, in its unaccented form changes gender.

Returning briefly to "God" being the identifier for the house of the deity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as "Chanel" is the identifier for the House of Chanel, the fashion house that carries on the concepts of the famed designer, Coco Chanel, Paul writes, "For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly house, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (2 Cor 5:1). This "house—οἰκία" is "a building from God—οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ," and this building from God is the house to which Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a room or a staying [μοναὶ] (John 14:2); therefore, when the mortal flesh puts on immortality, a disciple has a room or a staying in the house of the Father. But meanwhile, within the disciple's earthly house [ἐπίγεις οἰκία] dwells the new creature born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] as well as Christ Jesus in the form of the spirit or breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] and the crucified old man or the former nature of the person. So with the disciple's fleshly body are three breaths or spirits, with "spirit" being from Norman French, from Latin *spīritus*, the direct translation of the Greek icon πνευμα, meaning "breath," or "wind," or any form of moving air: a force invisible to the eye as air is invisible. These three breaths are the natural breath of the person, "*psuche*," plus the spiritual "breaths" of the Father and the Son, both of which are holy breaths.

And the problem of linguistic singleness has just been transferred from deity to the breaths of the Father and the Son ... when a prisoner in Rome, Paul wrote,

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the [oneness of the spirit—ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος] in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Eph 4:1-7)

The referent of the expression, "one Lord—εἷς κύριος," would be, from the sentence construction, an entity separate from the "one God and Father of all—εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων," with both being linguistically masculine singular entities. As there was one hope and one calling, there is one Lord and one God and Father—and that one Lord, when resurrected from death (Rom 10:9), said He was going to the one Father and God of Him and of His brothers [πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς, Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν] (John 20:17).

The requirement of every disciple is to profess with the mouth that Jesus is Lord and to believe in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. John, more so than the other gospel writers, wanted to stress the divinity of the Logos who entered His creation to be born as the man Jesus of Nazareth, and whether New Testament Greek instructors like it or not, John, in his construction of his first two sentences of his gospel, separates "the one Lord" from "the one God and Father of all." The repetition was for effect in somewhat the same way an English speaker would say, *I don't want no potatoes*, for *the Logos was in the beginning*; *this one was in the beginning with the God*. The Logos is *I Am*, as in "He existed in the beginning, He was God, and He was with the God." He is ever-present, always (the repetition used for emphasis as John used repetition for emphasis; John wrote to instruct, not to impress linguists by his enlightened use of the language).

Trinitarians took the structural separateness that prevents one linguistic masculine singular entity from being another masculine singular entity—if both are truly masculine singular (John wrote without ascents and without lower case letters as far as is known)—and assumed that one entity had to be the other entity if the monotheism of Judaism was to have any bearing on Christian dogma. This assumption was false, and was a tradition given to a lawless Church so that it could not have life as God gave to lawless ancient Israel statutes and rules by which this nation could not have life (Ezek 20:25-26); for the person who assigns personhood to the "breath" of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] commits blasphemy against the Father and the Son. Most likely this person will also commit blasphemy against the empowering breath of God when the person is liberated from indwelling sin and death.

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