

John 1:1.

John 1:1 (NASB)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:1 (AGNT)

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

1 En archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος (*En archē ēn ho logos*) - “in beginning was the Word”.

1.1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν (*En archē ēn*) - “in beginning was”.

The Greek says “in beginning” (there is no definite article before “beginning” in Greek) and that is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew *בְּרֵשִׁית* (*bereshith*) in Genesis 1:1 which has the same meaning and to which John here directly refers (“beginning” is anarthrous in Hebrew as well). Genesis 1:1 says that “in beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, thus *bereshith* denoting the state at the point when God began the work of creation (Luginbill, n.d.) – not the beginning of creation itself. The latter view results in a logical error, as according to it at the point when God began to create – which is here described as “in beginning” - creation would already have to have been there, as only then “in beginning” could be taken to mean “beginning of creation”, but the very point is that it is at that point that God started His creative work.

By writing *en archē* John refers to the same point in time as Moses did in Genesis 1:1 – the point when as yet there was nothing. And just as Moses moves forward from that point to tell of God’s first creative act (“In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth”), so John describes the state before creation came into being. And before creation came into being, the Word was (John 17:5; cf. Micah 5:2).

It must be noted that John does not say “in (the) beginning the Word was created” or “in (the) beginning the Word came into being”, but “in beginning the Word was”. This can be contrasted with how He describes the incarnation of the Word using the word *ἐγένετο* (*egeneto*) - “became” - since Christ’s bodily existence had a definite beginning:

John 1:14 (NASB)

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (AGNT)

14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (*egeneto*) καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

The fact that the Word preceded creation and that this is what is meant by “in beginning” is then further restated just two verses later in John 1:3 which says that “all things came into being through Him”:

John 1:3 (NASB)

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

If “all things came into being through Him”, then the Word is not a part of creation, and if it is not a part of creation, then it is God, as this verse confirms and as other scriptures teach (John 1:10; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2).

Only one conclusion is possible:

Now, as what was before creation must be eternal, and as what gave being to all things, could not have borrowed or derived its being from any thing, therefore Jesus, who was before all things and who made all things, must necessarily be the Eternal God (Clarke, 1832).

1.2. ὁ λόγος (*ho logos*) - “the Word”.

Pre-incarnate Jesus is called “the Word”, because just as a “word” is that by which we communicate with others, so Jesus is the One by whom God communicates with the world and makes Himself known, by whom He manifests Himself (John 14:9; Hebrews 1:1-3).

2. καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν (*kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos*) - “and the Word was with God”.

The Greek preposition πρὸς (*pros*) with the accusative case is sometimes used in the New Testament in the sense that is translated with the English word “with” (Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:56 - “Are not His sisters here with us?”; Mark 9:16 - “And He asked them, ‘What are you discussing with them?’”; 1 Corinthians 16:6 - “and perhaps I will stay with you”; 2 Corinthians 5:8 - “to be at home with the Lord”; Galatians 1:18 - “and stayed with him fifteen days”; Galatian 4:18 - “not only when I am present with you”; 1 John 1:2 - “the eternal life, which was with the Father”). This translation, however, does not convey its full meaning, as *pros* with the accusative signifies orientation/direction/tendency towards someone/something, thus having the notion of intercourse and communion, a notion that is absent in the case of other words meaning “with” - μετὰ (*meta*) “with, among, in company with someone”, σύν (*syn*) “with” (marker of accompaniment and association), or παρά (*para*) “at/by (the side of), beside, near, with” (marker of nearness in space; BDAG).

The Word was in a relationship with God characterised by permanent orientation/tendency towards Him (Godet, 1895). The essence of this relationship is love (Meyer, 1874; Matthew 3:17; Mark 9:7; Colossians 1:13).

John 17:24 (NASB)

24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

The usage of this preposition by John implies intercourse and therefore separate personality (Dods, 1892), thus teaching that two distinct Personalities within the Godhead.

3. καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (*kai theos ēn ho logos*) - “and the Word was God”.

The word θεὸς (*theos*) is anarthrous to denote God in substance and essence while drawing distinction from God the Father in the previous clause mentioned (“and the Word was with God”). Just as in John 1:14 the words Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (*Kai ho logos sarx egeneto*) - “and the Word became flesh” - express the state into which the Divine Word entered by a definite act, so in John 1:1 θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (*theos ēn ho logos*) - “and the Word was God” - expresses that essence which was His Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν (*En archē*) - “in the beginning” - that He was God (Alford, 1874).

The omission of the article, however, does not indicate any lower status of the Word, as that would introduce an unbiblical concept of a lesser “god” directly contradicting the strict monotheism of the Bible (John 17:3) and one which would have been unacceptable to believers, especially those of Jewish descent.

Had John used the article, it would have resulted in logical inconsistencies, as it would have equated the Word with God the Father with whom it has just been described, and would have made the Word the entire Godhead, thus when the very name “Word” presupposes the existence of the One whom it manifests (Hengstenberg, 1865).

The meaning of the verse thus is:

In (the) beginning (before creation came into existence) was the Word.
The Word was towards God (the Father).

The Word was (Himself) God.

The first thing spoken here of Christ attributes to him eternity; the second speaks his relation to the Father; this speaks the oneness and sameness of his essence with that of the Father (Poole, 1685).

4. False translation by the Watchtower's New World Translation.

4.1. The Watchtower's New World Translation erroneously translates θεὸς (*theos*) in καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (*kai theos ēn ho logos*) – with "a god", the sense thus being "and the Word was a god". Firstly, the concept of "a god" is unbiblical, as the most fundamental teaching of both Testaments is that there is only one God. There is nothing like "a god" in the Bible, there is no subcategory of divinity, no lesser "god", no two gods where one is supreme and the other subordinate.

This concept goes against the clear teaching of the Word of God about the nature of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23; Romans 9:3-5; Philippians 2:3-8; Colossians 2:8-9; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Acts 20:28; etc.) and results in idolatry - since if Jesus is "a god", a created being, then His worship in accordance with the scripture (John 20:28; Luke 24:50-53; John 9:38; Isaiah 45:22-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:6-8; Hebrews 13:21; Revelation 5:11-14; Matthew 28:9; Matthew 28:17; etc.) is worship of a creature.

4.2. Secondly, NWT's wrong translation shows an inconsistent approach by the Watchtower to rendering the text in order to defend their false doctrine. Jehovah Witnesses often claim that the second *theos* in John 1:1 is rendered "a god" since it does not have the definite article, but this argument doesn't hold in their own translation.

In John 1:6 NWT says "There came a man who was sent as a representative of God" - "God" is written in capital letters and there no "a" before "God" despite there being no definite article in the Greek here (the Greek text says παρὰ θεοῦ - [*para theou*]), just as in John 1:1. For the NWT to be consistent, it would have to translate this expression "representative of a god".

In John 1:12 NWT says "However, to all who did receive him, he gave authority to become God's children, because they were exercising faith in his name" - "God" is again capitalised and no "a" is written before it, but in the Greek text there is no article before "God's" (the Greek text says τέκνα θεοῦ [*tekna theou*]). As above, for the NWT to be consistent, a translation "children of a god" would be required.

In John 1:13 NWT says "And they were born, not from blood or from a fleshly will or from man's will, but from God" - "God" again capitalised despite again being anarthrous (the Greek text says ἐκ θεοῦ [*ek theou*]).

In John 1:18 NWT says "No man has seen God at any time" - "God" again written in capital letters despite there being no definite article in the Greek (the Greek text says θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν [*theon oudeis heōraken*]). However, later in the same verse the Greek expression μονογενῆς θεὸς (*monogenēs theos*) is translated "the only-begotten god", with the anarthrous *theos* now translated as "god" written in small letters as this is what fits the Watchtower doctrine ("the" is also added despite there being no definite article).

Introducing the concept of "a god" and using this translation according to how it fits one's doctrine regardless of what the inspired text says is a serious error. It must also be noted that at the time the New Testament was written only capital letters were used so the decision to capitalise a word is editorial, not based on what the original Greek text says.

References:

Clarke, A. (1832). The Adam Clarke Commentary, Commentary on John. Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/john-1.html>

- Dods, M. (1892). The Gospel of St. John. In W. R. Nicoll (Ed.), The Expositors Greek Testament. Hodder & Stoughton. Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/egt/john-1.html>
- Godet, F. L. (1895). Commentary on the Gospel of St. John (Vol. 51). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/gsc/john-1.html>
- Hengstenberg, E. W. T. H. (1865). Commentary on the Gospel of St. John. Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/heg/john-1.html>
- Luginbill, R. D. (n.d.). Explaining and Defending the Trinity and the Person of Christ, Question 3. Retrieved from: <https://ichthys.com/mail-Trinity%20defense.html>
- Meyer, H. A. W. (1874). Critical and exegetical commentary on the New Testament: John. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/hmc/john.html>
- Poole, M. (1685). English Annotations on the Holy Bible by Matthew Poole. Retrieved from: Retrieved from: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mpc/john-1.html>