

verb preceding an arthrous predicate, which is clearly definite. Do these parallels mean that the anarthrous predicates in 1:49 and 9:5 must also be regarded as definite?

In his study of this type of construction Colwell argued that the anarthrous predicates in these two verses should be regarded as definite.²² The parallels are indeed persuasive, and it is quite possible that Colwell is right at this point. An anarthrous predicate preceding the verb, that is, may be definite if there is some specific reason for regarding it as definite. But the present study would indicate that the nouns in these two verses are exceptional cases. The majority of such predicates in the Fourth Gospel are like 1:14; 8:31, and 9:24, which were discussed above. There is no basis for regarding such predicates as definite, and it would be incorrect to translate them as definite.²³

In light of this examination of John's usage we may turn to the verse in which we are especially interested, 1:1. Our study so far suggests that the anarthrous predicate in this verse has primarily a qualitative significance and that it would be definite only if there is some specific indication of definiteness in the meaning or context. As an aid in understanding the verse it will be helpful to ask what John might have written as well as what he did write. In terms of the types of word-order and vocabulary available to him, it would appear that John could have written any of the following:

A. ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός

→ B. θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος

C. ὁ λόγος θεὸς ἦν

D. ὁ λόγος ἦν θεός

E. ὁ λόγος ἦν θεῖος²⁴

²² Colwell, "A Definite Rule," 13-14.

²³ Variant readings for predicate expressions in John represent four types of modification: (1) inversion of the anarthrous predicate — verb sequence, with addition of the article (1:49; 10:2); (2) addition of the article to an anarthrous predicate preceding the verb (8:54; 10:36; 17:17); (3) inversion of the anarthrous predicate — verb sequence, without addition of the article (13:35); (4) inversion of the verb — anarthrous predicate sequence (18:15). The first two types of modification make the predicate noun unambiguously definite. Colwell discussed only the first type, with reference to John 1:49; Matt 23:10; and Jas 2:19. These indicated, he believed, that "the scribes felt that a definite predicate noun did not need the article before the verb and did need it after the verb" ("A Definite Rule," 16). But the first two types of modification listed above could also mean that the scribes believed that the definiteness of an anarthrous predicate was not sufficiently explicit before the verb, and so they modified the clause to make the noun unambiguously definite.

²⁴ The word *theios* appears only a few times in the NT: Acts 17:27 (v. 1.), 29; Tit 1:9 (v. 1); 2 Pet 1:3, 4. It is not used in the Fourth Gospel. But presumably John could have used it, or some other word meaning "divine," if he had wished to do so.

Clause A, with an arthrous predicate, would mean that *logos* and *theos* are equivalent and interchangeable. There would be no *ho theos* which is not also *ho logos*. But this equation of the two would contradict the preceding clause of 1:1, in which John writes that ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. This clause suggests relationship, and thus some form of "personal" differentiation, between the two. Clause D, with the verb preceding an anarthrous predicate, would probably mean that the *logos* was "a god" or a divine being of some kind, belonging to the general category of *theos* but as a distinct being from *ho theos*. Clause E would be an attenuated form of D. It would mean that the *logos* was "divine," without specifying further in what way or to what extent it was divine. It could also imply that the *logos*, being only *theios*, was subordinate to *theos*.

John evidently wished to say something about the *logos* that was other than A and more than D and E. Clauses B and C, with an anarthrous predicate preceding the verb, are primarily qualitative in meaning. They indicate that the *logos* has the nature of *theos*. There is no basis for regarding the predicate *theos* as definite. This would make B and C equivalent to A, and like A they would then contradict the preceding clause of 1:1.

As John has just spoken in terms of relationship and differentiation between *ho logos* and *ho theos*, he would imply in B or C that they share the same nature as belonging to the reality *theos*. Clauses B and C are identical in meaning but differ slightly in emphasis. C would mean that the *logos* (rather than something else) had the nature of *theos*. B means that the *logos* has the nature of *theos* (rather than something else). In this clause, the form that John actually uses, the word *theos* is placed at the beginning for emphasis.

Commentators on the Fourth Gospel, as far as I know, have not specifically approached the meaning of this clause from the standpoint of the qualitative force of *theos* as an anarthrous predicate preceding the verb. In many cases their interpretations agree with the explanation that is given above. But consideration of the qualitative meaning of *theos* would lend further clarification and support to their understanding of the clause. J. H. Bernard, for example, points out that Codex L reads *ho theos* instead of *theos*. "But this," he continues, "would identify the Logos with the totality of divine existence, and would contradict the preceding clause."²⁵ In a similar way W. F. Howard writes that *theos* and *ho logos* are not interchangeable. Otherwise, he continues, "the writer could not say 'the Word was with God.'"²⁶ Both writers, in effect, are arguing that the predicate *theos* cannot be regarded as definite in this clause. In terms of our analysis above this would mean that clause B should not be assimilated to clause A.

Bruce Vawter explains the meaning of the clause succinctly and lucidly: "The

²⁵ J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (New York: Scribner, 1929) 1, 2.

²⁶ W. F. Howard, *The Gospel according to St. John* (IB 8; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952) 464.

Word is divine, but he is not all of divinity, for he has already been distinguished from another divine Person."²⁷ But in terms of our analysis it is important that we understand the phrase "the Word is divine" as an attempt to represent the meaning of clause B rather than D or E. Undoubtedly Vawter means that the Word is "divine" in the same sense that *ho theos* is divine. But the English language is not as versatile at this point as Greek, and we can avoid misunderstanding the English phrase only if we are aware of the particular force of the Greek expression that it represents.

In his discussion of this clause R. E. Brown regards the translation "the Word was God" as correct "for a modern Christian reader whose trinitarian background has accustomed him to thinking of 'God' as a larger concept than 'God the Father.'"²⁸ Yet he also finds it significant that *theos* is anarthrous. Later he adds, "In vs. 1c the Johannine hymn is bordering on the usage of 'God' for the Son, but by omitting the article it avoids any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father. And for Gentile readers the line also avoids any suggestion that the Word was a second God in any Hellenistic sense."²⁹ In terms of our analysis above, Brown is arguing in effect that clause B should be differentiated from A, on the one hand, and D and E on the other.³⁰

Rudolf Bultmann's explanation of the clause also reflects an appreciation of the qualitative force of *theos* without specifically recognizing it as such. The clause means first, he suggests, that the Logos is equated (*gleichgesetzt*) with God; "*er war Gott*."³¹ Bultmann means by this that we must not think in terms of two divine beings, in a polytheistic or gnostic sense.³² Thus he guards against assimilating clause B to D or E. But he explains further that this equation between the two is not a simple identification (*einfache Identifikation*), because the Logos was *pros ton theon*.³³ In this way he guards against assimilating B to clause A. Bultmann's interpretive instinct at this point is unquestionably sound. In terms of the analysis that we have proposed, a recognition of the qualitative significance of *theos* would remove some ambiguity in his interpretation by differ-

²⁷ B. Vawter, *The Gospel according to John* (JBC; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 422.

²⁸ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John, I-XII* (AB 29; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) 5.

²⁹ Brown, *John, I-XII*, 24.

³⁰ Brown (*John, I-XII*, 25) also mentions the view of De Aulsebrook that throughout the prologue the term "Word" means Jesus Christ, the Word-become-flesh. "If this is so," he comments, "then perhaps there is justification for seeing in the use of the anarthrous *theos* something more humble than the use of *ho theos* for the Father." But if *theos* is qualitative in force, it is not contrasted directly with *ho theos*. John evidently wished to say that the *logos* was no less than *theos*, just as *ho theos* (by implication) had the nature of *theos*.

³¹ R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Meyer 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 16.

³² Bultmann, *Johannes*, 16-17.

³³ Bultmann, *Johannes*, 17.

entiating between *theos*, as the nature that the Logos shared with God, and *ho theos* as the "person" to whom the Logos stood in relation. Only when this distinction is clear can we say of the Logos that "he was God."

These examples illustrate the difficulty of translating the clause accurately into English. The RSV and *The Jerusalem Bible* translate, "the Word was God." *The New English Bible* has, "what God was, the Word was." *Good News for Modern Man* has, "he was the same as God." The problem with all of these translations is that they could represent clause A, in our analysis above, as well as B. This does not mean, of course, that the translators were not aware of the issues involved, nor does it necessarily mean that they regarded the anarthrous *theos* as definite because it precedes the verb. But in all of these cases the English reader might not understand exactly what John was trying to express. Perhaps the clause could be translated, "the Word had the same nature as God." This would be one way of representing John's thought, which is, as I understand it, that *ho logos*, no less than *ho theos*, had the nature of *theos*.

At a number of points in this study we have seen that anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb may be primarily qualitative in force yet may also have some connotation of definiteness. The categories of qualitiveness and definiteness, that is, are not mutually exclusive, and frequently it is a delicate exegetical issue for the interpreter to decide which emphasis a Greek writer had in mind. As Colwell called attention to the possibility that such nouns may be definite, the present study has focused on their qualitative force. In Mark 15:39 I would regard the qualitative emphasis as primary, although there may also be some connotation of definiteness. In John 1:1 I think that the qualitative force of the predicate is so prominent that the noun cannot be regarded as definite.

In interpreting clauses of this type it is important to recall that Greek writers also had other types of word-order available. If a writer simply wished to represent the subject as one of a class, he could use an anarthrous predicate noun after the verb. If he wished to emphasize that the predicate noun was definite, he could supply the article. The availability of these other types of word-order strengthens the view that in many instances we may look primarily for a qualitative emphasis in anarthrous predicate nouns that precede the verb.