



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 1:1-2, 11-14, 18; John 3:16-17

“In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning ... ¹¹ He came to his own, & his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born...of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh & dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one & only Son from the Father, full of grace & truth... ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one & only Son, who is himself God & is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.” (1:1-2, 11-14, 18)

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (Jn. 3:16-17 CSB)

SUMMARY:

Incarnation is ridiculed as an outdated myth or mere metaphor. Yet, it’s an essential tenet of Christian Faith. Our salvation depends on it. John’s Gospel proclaims, “The Word became flesh.” ‘The Word’ (*Logos*) is not personified, but a person. God the eternal Son, while retaining his divine nature, assumed a human nature (via Virgin Mary) becoming *one person with two natures*. ‘Bethlehem’s Babe’ was the pre-existing *Logos*, the Trinity’s Second Person. Since ‘*only God can save us*,’ Jesus Christ must be God. Since, ‘*the un-assumed is not healed*,’ he must be fully human to thoroughly save us. Scripture affirms ‘both poles’—Christ’s Person is God’s pre-existing Son (with the divine nature) “sent by the Father, came down from heaven above,” as Jesus repeatedly declared. Plus, incarnation adds a 2nd ‘personalized’ human nature, to God’s immortal Son, so he could die a human death for our salvation, enabling believers to become God’s children.

1. Incarnation—the Meaning, the Myth, or the Metaphor?

a. Incarnation—the Meaning

- “In talking of the incarnation, I refer to...*ontological* incarnation as...confessed in the creeds...*I do not mean... incarnation as ‘symbol,’ ‘myth,’ or ‘metaphor,’* as variously proposed...[which] do violence to the most basic logic of Christian faith.” [Ivor J. Davidson, “...*Incarnation,*” A.J. Johnson (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, 37-8]
- Incarnation means “God the Son, without abandoning his divine properties, acquired a human nature, that is, a human body, and, with it, a human way of experiencing, thinking, willing & acting.” [Richard Swinburne, *Christian God*,]

b. Is ‘Incarnation’—the culmination of 100-year progressive development towards ‘Divinization’?

- “The NT...reveals a gradual enhancement...of the human Jesus...culminating...with the fully incarnational picture [of] John’s Gospel...[It’s a] *progressive development toward divinization...Finally in John...Jesus speaks his relationship with God in terms of...unity [giving] the impression of God incarnate.*” [Charlene E. Burns, *Divine Becoming*, 33]

c. Is Incarnation—an outdated notion?

- Historically the “disclosure of God in Jesus has been expressed by speaking of Jesus as God incarnate...[e.g. in] the Nicene Creed...But...increasing numbers of theologians...insist that it is naïve to speak of Jesus in this way. The *doctrine of the incarnation...is in need of revision. It must be updated and brought into line with what we know of the world... which has outgrown the...primitive mentality of earlier times.*” [M. Rae, *Kierkegaard’s Vision of the Incarnation*, p. 173]

d. Is Incarnation—a Myth?

- “When we have accounts in narrative form...[of] *divine interventions (incarnation, atonement, resurrection...)*...we are *compelled...to recognize the presence of myth*...The really important affirmations of the Christian faith are *expressed in metaphor, symbol, and myth.*” [Paul Avis, *God & the Creative Imagination*, 11]
- “A myth is a story...[that’s] not literally true...but...invites a particular attitude...*That Jesus was God the Son incarnate is not literally true*...It’s an application to Jesus of a myth...of divine sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king.” [John Hick, *Myth of God Incarnate*, p. 178]
 - “Jesus of Nazareth was *a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, & signs* that God did among you through him...”—Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:22)
- “Christianity is always adapting itself into something which can be believed...The growing knowledge of Christian origins leads to the conclusion that Jesus was ‘a man approved by God’ [Acts 2:22] for a special role within the divine purpose, but...*later conceptions of him as God incarnate*, the second person of the Holy Trinity ‘*were a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us.*’” [John Hick, *Myth of God Incarnate*, ix]
- Jesus was a “charismatic man, filled with the divine spirit, [who] was gradually exalted & magnified by human piety into the pre-existent Christ, the eternal Logos.” [John Hick, *Christian Theology of Religions: Rainbow of Faiths*, p 96]

e. Is Incarnation—a Metaphor?

- “Great men...‘incarnate’ the spirit of their age. Hitler was evil ‘incarnate.’ Winston Churchill, in 1940, ‘incarnated’ the British will to resist Hitler, so Jesus ‘incarnated’ the ideal of human life lived...in response to God”—John Hick, “*Climbing the Foothills...*,” in J.R. Stone (ed.) *Craft of Religious Studies*, p. 95]

f. The Word (Logos) is *not personified* (like personified Wisdom), *but a Person* (1:1-2, 14)

- “For [John] the Word is not a principle but a living Being & the source of life; *not a personification but a Person*, & that Person divine. The Word is nothing less than God.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, 109]
- “Logos...*is a person*. The Logos is not an abstract philosophical concept. It is not a category of religious experience. Nor is it speculative religious mythology. It is person, in-fleshed, living, historical person.” [Robert Kysar, *John*, p. 25]
- “Despite...surface similarities, *John’s Logos...differs from personified Wisdom*... [In the OT, e.g., Proverbs 8:1-31] Wisdom is not really cast as a person—it’s merely a concept that is *personified*...But in John...*Jesus, a real person, is presented in conceptual terms as ‘the Word’...John’s Logos...transcends...personified Wisdom in... significant ways.*” [Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 53]

2. Incarnation—Defined & Explained

a. Incarnation Defined

- “Latin in origin, the term *incarnation* literally means ‘becoming flesh’ (Lat. *in carne*, Gk. *en sarki*). While the term is not contained in Scripture *per se*, the Greek equivalent is (1 Jn. 4:1 ‘Jesus Christ has *come in the flesh*’ {*en sarki*}). The ...incarnation is at the core of the biblical message...It reveals the true person & nature of the Lord & Savior Jesus Christ...[It] teaches that the eternal *Logos* (Word), the 2nd Person of the Trinity, without diminishing his deity took to himself [‘assumed’] a fully human nature...The full & undiminished divine nature and the full & perfect human nature were inseparably united in the one historical & divine person, Jesus of Nazareth. [So,]...Jesus Christ is God the Son in human flesh (*theanthropos*, the God-man.)...one person with 2 natures.” [Kenneth R Samples, *Without a Doubt*, p 122]

b. Incarnation Explained: The divine person—the Word/Son ‘assumed’ a human nature, in addition to his divine nature

- “Jesus is *not merely divine & human in some sense. He is God the Son* who has *become* human in order to save us.” -Donald Fairbairn
- “*Christ has to be who he is to do what he does to give us the kind of salvation that we have*” –Donald Fairbairn

a. What is a ‘Nature’? “Nature is a ‘what’; Person is a ‘who’.”

- “The God-man, Jesus Christ is ‘two Whats’ (that is, a divine ‘what’ {or nature} & a human ‘what’ {or nature}) & one ‘Who’ (that is, a single ‘person’ or ‘self’).” [K. R. Samples, *Without a Doubt*, 123]
- “Nature” (Gk: *ousia*; Latin: *essentia, substantia*)...referred to what an object is. A *divine* nature is *what* God is in his one, undivided essence, which we describe in terms of God’s attributes. A *human* nature is *what* constitutes humanity, namely, a body-soul composite with corresponding capacities, such as a will, mind, & emotions. *In Christ, there is one ‘person’* (Gk: *hypostasis*; Latin: *persona*), *the Son, who is the subject of 2 ‘natures’* that subsists in both natures & acts through them. *The ‘person’ is the ‘acting subject’; natures are not*. Yet, what is true of each nature is true of the 1 person (aka ‘communication of attributes’). [Stephen Wellum, *Incarnation &...2 Natures of Christ*, p]

b. Incarnation—“The Word became flesh”—is not just taking a human body

- “That which has not been assumed has not been healed, but that which is united to God is also being saved.”—Gregory
- Incarnation—not just taking a human body—“God in a bod(y)—but taking the whole human nature. Gregory of Nazianzus [329-390 AD] argued—‘*Whatever is not assumed is not healed*’...that whatever aspect of humanity the Son did not take upon himself is not touched by salvation. ‘*The un-assumed is unhealed*,’ but there is no aspect of what it means to be human that was un-assumed, & thus no aspect of humanity to which salvation does not reach. [Jesus was 100% human (also 100% divine).” [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Introduction to Christology*, July 21, 2021]

c. Why was Incarnation Necessary? Why must Jesus be God? Why must Jesus also be Human?

a. Essentials of Incarnation:

- One Person; Two Natures: “Jesus Christ is one person possessing two distinct natures: a fully divine nature & a fully human nature (a unity of person & a duality of natures)...Jesus of Nazareth is therefore the God-man.”
- “While Christ has 2 natures, he nevertheless remains a single unified person (not 2 different persons). His human nature subsists only for the purpose of this union; it has no independent personal subsistence of its own. Christ is the *same person both before & after the incarnation*. The difference is that before the incarnation he had but one nature, namely divine. After *the incarnation*, this very *same God the Son added to himself another nature*—a human one— that subsists together with the divine nature he already had & continues to have. While Jesus Christ has a divine & a human consciousness...*he nevertheless remains one person*.” [Kenneth R. Samples, *Without a Doubt*, 124]

b. Why Must Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, be God’s Son, one of the Trinity? (Jn. 1:1-2, 11-14, 18 CSB)

- “In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning ... ¹¹ He came to his own, & his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born...of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one & only Son from the Father, full of grace & truth... ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one & only Son, who is himself God & is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.” (1:1-2, 11-14, 18)

c. Christ must be God, because “*God alone can save us*.” (Jn. 3:16-17)

- “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (Jn. 3:16-17 CSB)
- The ‘principles of salvation’ provide “the logic of redemption in Christ: ‘*God alone can save us*’ and ‘*what is not assumed is not healed*’...With the first two [Church] councils we have the vertical reach of salvation from God above all the way down to humanity below...Christ is one essence with the Father by nature [divine nature] & condescends to become one essence with humanity [human nature] by grace. He therefore, this one person, has both essences [divine & human natures].” [Fred Sanders, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, p. 20]

d. Christ must be human, because “*what is not assumed is not healed*”—Gregory

- The principle “*what is not assumed is not healed*”...[was] articulated by Gregory of Nazianzus. [It] presupposes that the Son of God saved humanity by ‘taking on’ or ‘assuming’ human nature into union with himself. Everything that is human needs to be saved, so everything [human] must be taken into union with Christ. [So,...]if Christ had no human soul [as some alleged], the human soul is left unredeemed...Taken together... these lines of argument [establish the necessity of] the full divinity & full humanity of Christ.” [Fred Sanders, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, p. 20]

e. Why must God’s Son partake of human nature? (Heb. 2:14)

- “Since [we,] the children have flesh & blood in common, Jesus [Lit. he, himself] also *shared in these*, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil...¹⁷ Therefore, he had to be *like his brothers & sisters in every way*...to make atonement for the sins of the people.” (Heb. 2:14, 17 CSB)
- “A human Savior is necessary, because human beings (*‘the children’*) are in need of a propitiatory sacrifice—an atoning sacrifice that puts away sin & satisfies God’s wrath.” [ESV Study Bible]
- Heb. 2 is “emphasizing the humanity of Christ & the necessity of the incarnation to the Son’s atoning work on the cross. In what way does the human nature of Jesus differ from all other people? It differs in that his human nature does not have a *human* personality [person] of its own, but rather subsists in the *divine* personality [person]. This two nature one person Christology does not destroy the true humanity of Jesus...The human nature of Jesus...has its own subsistence...[in the Person of] the 2nd member of the Trinity, God the Son.” [David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, p. 229]

f. The Virgin Birth’ (conception)—the God-ordained Means of Incarnation (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:23; Luke 1:27)

- “*The Virgin Birth was the means of the Incarnation*. The Incarnation, once accomplished, is a lasting state for our Lord. It began at his birth [conception] & continues (...in a resurrection body now) forever.” [C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p.]
- “The God-Man was made *incarnate through the virgin birth—the means by which God chose to accomplish Christ’s coming* (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). The result is that Jesus Christ is not a double being, a compound being, or some kind of hybrid. He is one person, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete in his deity & perfect in his humanity.” [D. S. Dockery, T. Wax, *Christian Worldview Handbook*, p.]
- “The virgin birth tells us that Jesus was...genuinely the son of a human mother...Yet in a unique way which corresponds to his *unique person* as the Son of the eternal God who...entered into our humanity. That Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit means...the Son of God took his earthly origin in the womb of Mary...in accordance with his nature as the Son of God become man...The virgin birth...the movement of the Son of God to become man is *one directional*, from God to man; it cannot be reversed.” [Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation*, pp. 98-99]

g. Incarnation is an addition—the assumption of a human nature

- “Jesus is God the Son *incarnate*. The word ‘incarnation’ comes from the Latin (*in + carnes* [flesh]), which means ‘in the flesh.’ Scripture teaches that the divine Son (person), who eternally shares the divine nature with the Father and Spirit, acted to *assume a human nature without a human “person/subject”* (contra Nestorianism that affirmed two ‘persons’ in Christ). As a result, God the Son *became incarnate*. It’s crucial to think of the *incarnation as an act of addition*, not subtraction, by the sovereign, effectual means of a virgin conception. *The Son*, from the Father & by the supernatural & sanctifying agency of the Spirit, without change or loss of his deity, *added a 2nd nature* to himself consisting of a human body & soul (Jn. 1:14...). As a result, the Son permanently *added a human dimension* to his personal, divine life, & became present to us in a new mode of existence as the *incarnate*” [Stephen Wellum, *Incarnation & the Two Natures of Christ*, p.]

h. The Son didn’t unite with a human person, but with human nature

- In the incarnation, God “‘the Son did *not unite with a human person, but with human nature*, which gained existence in connection with the *Logos (enhyposstasis)*. As a consequence of the incarnation, the *one person* Jesus Christ enjoys the properties of the *two natures*’...[In] this traditional approach to incarnation...*Jesus combines in one person the divine & human nature*, and the incarnation is the means of effecting the union of the two natures. This act was the work of the 2nd Person of the Trinity, the Logos, & resulted in the ‘hypostatic

union' of deity & humanity in Jesus...In this union, *the personal center of the earthly life was the eternal Son, with the human nature linked to Jesus.*" [VeliMatti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction*, pp. 177-8]

i. Incarnation did not change the Son's Person

- "The crucial point of Christology is not merely that Christ be one person or that he has 2 natures, although of course those things are true of him. *The crucial point is that he [Christ] be the same person who has always been the eternal Son of God.* At the end of the day...*the Word before the incarnation & Jesus afterwards are the same person. He who once was merely God is now God and human as well, but he is still the same person* [God's Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity]." [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Intro. to Christology*, July 21, 2021]
- "Not only does the Word have to be God, but Jesus & the Word have to be *the same person*. If Jesus is not the Word, but is instead a man in whom the Word dwells, then God has not come down to save us, & therefore we are not saved. But Jesus *is* God the Word who has become human for our sake. This is the central truth the church sought to proclaim...*The main point of biblical & patristic Christology is not whether Christ is one person with two natures, but who that one person is.*" [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Intro. to Christology*, July 21, 2021]

j. Who is Jesus?

- "The main point...is not *whether* Christ is one person with two natures, but *who that one person is*"—Donald Fairbairn
- "Who is Jesus? He is God's eternal, beloved Son who has become human *while remaining who he already was* [divine], in order to accomplish our salvation."—Donald Fairbairn
- "The main point of biblical & patristic Christology is not *whether* Christ is one person with two natures, but *who that one person is*. *It is not enough simply to assert that Christ is one person & that he has two natures...* Many people in the last 200 years...have affirmed that Christ is one person in two natures, but they have not meant by this that *he is the eternal Son of God who has become human*. The crucial truth—the saving truth—is that for us to be saved, God had to come down to save us. So the one who came down had to be truly God, just as fully God as the Father. Furthermore, the equally crucial truth is that *the Son had to come all the way down to us*—by becoming human so as to live, die, & be raised as a man. If this is the kind of salvation that Scripture says we need, & have, then this is the kind of Savior that we must have. And according to both the Bible & the church's historic consensus, this is the Savior whom we do have. Who is Jesus? He is God's eternal, beloved Son who has become human *while remaining who he already was* [divine], in order to accomplish our salvation." [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Intro. to Christology*, July 21, 2021]
- In the classical view "A person is an individual substance of a rational nature. *It views the 'person' as an agent, or an 'I' who subsists in a 'rational nature.'* ...[So,] the divine Son, in assuming a concrete human nature, adding to himself a human body and soul (including a human will & mind), & as a result, is now able to live a fully human life in and through the capacities of his human nature...[Plus,] the incarnate Son is not limited to living his life merely through his human nature [he also has the divine nature.] [Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, p.]

3. The Preexistence of Jesus Christ

- "John's Gospel...clearly presents the *Son of Man as preexistent.*" [J. Christopher Edwards, *Ransom Logion*...p. 127 #29]

a. Among the 4 Gospels, John emphasizes Christ's pre-existence

a. Mark starts with Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist

b. Matt. & Luke start with Jesus' birth—the "babe of Bethlehem"

c. John starts in the eternal past: "In the beginning..." (1:1)

- "Rather than narrating...stories of Jesus' birth [like Matt., & Luke], the 4th Gospel proclaims the theology of the incarnation: Jesus is the Word of God, who existed with God since before the beginning of time." [Gail Ramshaw, *Word of God, Word of Life*, 43]
- 4 perspectives needed—Who was born in Bethlehem? The Word/Son is "God of God, Light of Light" ['O Come all Ye']

b. Christ's Pre-existence in time—before creation, his eternal Pre-existence ('before all time') (Jn. 1:1-[\[1\]](#))

- "In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.
- "To say...something/someone was 'pre-existent' can mean that he/it existed...prior to any earthly, mundane appearance ...But it can also mean that it/he even existed before the creation of the worlds....

NT texts... typically place [Jesus] as somehow 'there' at, & as the divine agent of, the creation... e.g., Jn. 1:1-3" [L. Hurtado, "Pre-Existence" Blog, Feb. 6, 2019]

- a. Christ's Pre-existence in time (1:30; 5:58)
 - "John [the Baptist] testified concerning him... 'This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because *he existed before me.*' (1:15, cf. 1:30)
 - "Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, *before Abraham was, I am.*" (5:58)
- b. Christ's eternal Pre-existence (1:1-3)
 - "*In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God.* ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through him, & apart from him not one thing was created that has been created." (1:1-3)
- c. Real, Personal Preexistence vs. 'Ideal Preexistence' in God's Mind & Plan (e.g. Jer. 1:5)
 - "The pre-existent state may be described as *ideal* (existence in the mind or plan of God) or *actual* [real] (existence alongside & distinct from God)." [David Capes "Preexistence," R. Martin (ed.) *Dictionary of the Later NT...*, 956]
 - "'Ideal preexistence.' Ideal means... whoever or *whatever is deemed preexistent was in the mind & intent of God* before it appeared on earth... The *problem with 'ideal preexistence' is not that it's untrue but that it's trivial.* [It]'s merely another name for *divine foreknowledge.*... Dunn concludes that the only NT document to express a belief in Christ's real preexistence is the 4th gospel [John]." [D. McCready, "HE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN" JETS, V. 40/3 p. 424]
 - YAHWEH told Jeremiah: "I chose *you before I formed you* in the womb; I set you apart *before you were born.* I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jer. 1:5) **Note:** The Prophet Jeremiah had an "ideal pre-existence" as defined above!
- d. Pre-existence *not* of Jesus' humanity/human nature, but of God's Son/the Word
 - "Jesus' humanity or *human nature cannot be viewed as pre-existent.* Yet [he also states]... that '*the person* who came to be known historically as Jesus' *is preexistent.*...' Orthodox Christian faith believes that Jesus of Nazareth was *personally* identical with the eternally pre-existent Son of God or Logos." [Gerald O'Collins, *Christology*,]
 - The Creeds' "*doctrine of pre-existence* means that the *2nd person of the Trinity, the Son of God, became human in Jesus of Nazareth.*...[It] *doesn't... teach that the man Jesus existed in any real sense before the incarnation,* but that God the Son existed prior to the incarnation. Pre-existence & incarnation belong together & mutually presuppose each other... For classical liberals, pre-existence was either a myth or... a 'thin doctrine of incarnation'... [whereby Jesus is merely of a] God-filled man, not a God-man... The traditional idea of the incarnation is impossible without preexistence & vice versa... [It's] meaning is that Christ *personally* belongs to an order of being other than the created, temporal one. His personal, divine existence transcends temporal (& spatial) categories." [Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World*, pp. 262-3]

4. Jesus affirmations of his Pre-existence in the 4th Gospel, John

a. Christ's Active Personal Pre-existence in John's Prologue

- "John famously affirms: 'The Word became flesh & dwelt among us, & we've seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace & truth' (1:14). Here John makes clear that *the birth of the Word in flesh is not the beginning of his* [i.e., the Word's] *existence.* He has always been with God, & has always been God. He has always been the unique Son from the Father. But now that he has become human, we can see him for who he is." [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Introduction to Christology*, July 21, 2021]
- John "1:1-18 is the paramount e.g. of [John's] attempt to establish the pre-existence of Jesus... The prologue [1:1-18] affirms Christ's pre-existence in an absolute way... The unique expression in the prologue makes 3 fundamental statements describing the pre-existent Logos:
 - a. a real, personal preexistence—'was' [existing];
 - b. the personal union of the Logos 'with God'; &
 - c. the climax statement 'the Word was God'
- ...In the debate with the Jewish community... the [author] affirms the pre-existence of Jesus in the phrase '*before Abraham was, I am*' (8:58). In the famous prayer of Jesus in John 17, the pre-existence of Jesus is indicated with the words 'Father, glorify me in your own presence with *the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed*' (17:5)... John's prologue has had more influence... on the Son of God as preexistent & a divine being than any other passage in the NT." [B. Chacko, *Intercultural Christology in John's Gospel*, pp. 88-9]

b. Pre-existence as a Person, not merely Personified Divine Wisdom/Word

a. Assertion: the pre-existent Logos was impersonal, personified, but not a 'person'

- Some deny the pre-existent Logos *is a person*. E. g.: “Only on John 1:14 does the pre-existent, *impersonal* Logos become personalized in Jesus’ (J.A.T. Robinson)...‘We may properly say that the personified Logos, *the impersonal Logos first became personal in the incarnation*.’” (J. Dunn, *Christology*) [Quote M. J. Harris, *Jesus as God*, p. 58]

b. Rebuttal: “Everywhere in the Prologue the Logos is portrayed as personal, not merely as personified.”—M. Harrisc. “In the Prologue [1:1-18], the focus...is on the person & work of the Son of God (1:14-18), who is the Logos (1:1-2, 14), Jesus Christ (1:17). Can the Logos be identified with Jesus Christ? *Some assert that the Logos is impersonal until the Word...came to full expression in...Jesus of Nazareth, that until 1:14 John has in mind not a personal being, but a personification...*[Yet,] Everywhere in the Prologue the Logos is portrayed as personal, not merely as personified. The 3x repeated [Gk.] *auton* [‘him...him...him’] in 1:10-12 must refer to the Jesus of human history.” [M Harris, *Jn.*, p.]

- There’s “an overwhelming scholarly consensus that proper interpretation of Joh[n’s] theology leads us to conclude a *clear doctrine of pre-existence*.” [Thomas H. McCall, *Analytic Christology & Theological Interpret. of the NT*, p. 156]
- “When Jesus says ‘I’ in these...speeches [about his pre-existence], he doesn’t refer only to a human subject...If the Logos or Son speaks as a person about his pre-existent life with the Father, then the Logos or Son *cannot have been less than personal in this pre-existent state...It is the person who is the I and...can refer to himself as ‘I’ in a pre-existent state...*If the Word is the Son who is this Jesus of Nazareth, then this Word cannot merely be...an eternal Ideal in the mind of God.” [Thomas H. McCall, *Analytic Christology & Theological Interpretation of...NT*, p. 157]

d. The Person, the ‘I,’ of the Logos/Son of God was pre-existent & ‘became flesh’ (Jn. 1:1-2, 14, 18)

- “Traditional Christian doctrine maintains that one of the divine ‘persons’, the pre-existent divine Logos who is the eternal Son of the Father, became fully and completely human, without ceasing to be fully and completely divine...*One of the three divine persons [of the Trinity] became human...*The Son took upon himself a concrete but not yet ‘hypostatized’ [i.e., no human ‘person’] individual human nature... [So] that *a distinct divine person who pre-existed his humanity* took up something that he did not have before—human nature...[So, the one known as] Jesus was pre-existent as a *person*...as a person [he] pre-exists his incarnation as a human.” [Thomas H. McCall, *Analytic Christology & Theological Interpretation of the NT*, pp. 153, 156]

e. Jesus’ affirmations of his Pre-existence

a. Jesus affirms that he was sent by God the Father (3:17; 5:23; 7:28-9; 10:36;

- “God did not *send his Son* into the world to condemn the world, but [*He sent him*] *to save the world...*” (3:17)
- “...Anyone who does not honor *the Son* does not honor *the Father who sent him* [the Son].” (5:23)
- “I’ve not come on my own, but *the one who sent me* is true. You don’t know him; ²⁹ I know him because *I am from him, & he sent me.*” (7:28-29)
- As “*the one the Father set apart & sent into the world...*I said: ‘I am the Son of God.’” (10:36)

b. Jesus affirms that he “came down from Heaven (above)” (3:31; 6:41, 51, 58; 8:23)

- “Christ is not merely the ‘sent’ Son of God (3:18; 5:24-26; cf. 9:7); he is also *the one who ‘has come’* (i.e., from heaven 3:13; 5:36-38; 6:29, 33) from the realm of pre-existence & eternity.” [Carl F H Henry, *God, Revelation & Authority*, p]
 - “I am the bread that *came down from heaven.*” (6:41)
 - “I am the living bread that *came down from heaven.*” (6:51)
 - “This is the bread that *came down from heaven.*” (6:58)
 - “The one who *comes from above* is above all...The *one who comes from heaven* is above all.” (3:31)
 - “*You are from below,*” he told them, “*I am from above...*” (8:23)
- “In...John, the preexistence of Christ is given a more definite & positive role. John...portrays Jesus as the Son of Man & the *one who came down from heaven* (3:13; 6:62). The Son of Man...is identified with a pre-existent heavenly being”
- “No one has ascended into heaven except *the one who descended from heaven—the Son of Man*” (3:13)
- “What if you were to observe the Son of Man ascending to *where he was before?*” (6:62) [B. Chacko, *Intercultural Christology in John’s Gospel*, p. 88]

c. God the Son came all the way down to save us

- “The crucial...saving truth—is that for us to be saved, God had to come down to save us. So the one who came down had to be truly God, just as fully God as the Father. Furthermore, the equally crucial truth is that *the Son had to come all the way down to us*—by becoming human so as to live, die, & be raised as a man. If this is the kind of salvation...Scripture says we need, & have, then this is the kind of Savior that we must have. And according to both the Bible & the church’s historic consensus, this is the Savior whom we do have. Who is Jesus? He is God’s eternal, beloved Son who has become human *while remaining who he already was* [divine—God], in order to accomplish our salvation.” [Donald Fairbairn, *Who is Jesus? Introduction to Christology*, July 21, 2021] 4. Jesus’ consciousness of his pre-incarnate state & relations
- “Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, *before Abraham was, I am.*” (8:28)
- “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that *glory I had with you before the world existed.*” (17:5)
- “Father...*you loved me before the world’s foundation.*” (17:24)

f. False Narrative of “progressive development” Refuted:

- A “*progressive development toward divinization...Finally in John...Jesus [gives] the impression of God incarnate*” -Charlene E. Burns
- Both Paul & John declare that the Pre-existent Son was sent by God the Father (Jn. 3:17; Gal. 4:4)
 - John (AD 90s) “God...*sent his Son* into the world...*to save the world through him.*” (3:17)
 - Paul (AD 50s) “...*God sent his Son*, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law” (Gal. 4:4-5)
- “In John[’s] writings there are close parallels to Paul[’s] ‘*sending*’ passages. *John 3:17 & Galatians 4:4 are strikingly similar* in structure even though the wording is not identical...Since there is no question of direct dependence of the 4th evangelist on Paul’s epistles, many scholars have concluded that John & Paul are drawing independently on an early... ‘formula.’ This seems very probable. But, *does the 4th evangelist [John] move far beyond Paul* in his incarnational theology? [NO!]...The *heart of ‘incarnation’...in the 4th Gospel, as in Paul, lies in the sending of the Son*, who was born of a woman, the Logos who became flesh.” [Graham Stanton, *Studies in Matt. & Early Christianity*, 230, 232]
- One of the earliest NT documents, Paul’s *Galatians* & one of the last NT documents, *John’s Gospel* both affirm that God the Father sent his pre-existent Son into the world. There’s no ‘progressive development towards ‘Divinization’ here!

g. The Logos/Son to be identified with Jesus Christ

- “Nowhere in the Prologue—not even in 1:14—is the Logos explicitly identified as Jesus Christ, who is 1st mentioned in 1:17, yet this identification is a *necessary inference*, for 1:18 makes the same 3 affirmations of Jesus Christ as 1:1 does of the Logos (viz. [1.] timeless existence, [2.] intimate relationship with God & [3.] participation in deity) & the [Prologue’s] themes are developed in the body of the Gospel in reference to Jesus of Nazareth” [M. Harris, *Jesus as God*, pp 58-9]
- “No one has ever seen God. The one & only Son, who is himself God & is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.” (1:18 CSB) [1.] Timeless existence—“The...only Son...*is at the Father’s side*” [2.] intimate relationship with God—“Son...*is at the Father’s side.*” [3.] participation in deity—“The only Son... *is himself God.*”
- We “should affirm that the one whom John envisioned as [‘the Word’] pre-existing with God was not Jesus of Nazareth, but [rather] the pre-incarnate Son of God.” [Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God*, 59]

h. Personal continuity between the preexistent Logos & the historical Jesus

- John implies “the *continuity* of the Savior’s personality [person]. Jesus Christ is the same person who was the preexistent Logos, the Son of God (1:1, 14; 8:58).” [C. Blaising in Treier (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p.]
- “In...1:14 John is *not* affirming that an *impersonal universal* Logos [e.g. of Stoics] became incarnate in the *person* of Jesus Christ, but rather that *the personal individualized Logos assumed a complete & genuine human existence* [nature]. If, for John, the Logos was the *pre-incarnate* Son, then Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the *incarnate* There was *personal continuity between the pre-existent Logos & the historical Jesus*: the [Logos en-fleshed/incarnate Word] was *personally* none other than the [Logos pre-flesh/pre-incarnate Word]. If this is so, what John says in 1:1 regarding the *person* of the Logos, he says, by implication, regarding the *person* of Jesus Christ [the incarnate Logos, since it’s the same Person].” [Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God*, p. 59]

i. Who is Jesus?

- “Who is Jesus? Jesus *is* the divine Son, the 2nd person of the triune Godhead, the Lord of Glory, who in time assumed a human nature, so that now & forevermore he’s the eternal ‘Word made flesh’ (1:14). For this reason, *Jesus is in a category all by himself* as the unique, exclusive, & only Lord & Savior (14:6).” [S Wellum, *Incarnation & 2 Natures*, p]
- “Jesus *is God the Son, the 2nd person of the Trinity*, who has eternally shared the one, undivided divine nature with the Father & Spirit & is thus fully God. John...reminds us that the ‘Word was with God’ (thus a distinct ‘person’) yet also ‘was God’ (thus equal with God), thus underscoring the triune person-relations & a fully shared divine nature within God (Jn. 1:1). *Jesus, then, is the divine Son [of God]*, & as the Son, he is *not* a created being. Instead, *he* is the eternal Son through whom all things were created & are now sustained...*It’s this Son, who became flesh* (1:14) & by virtue of the incarnation & his work becomes our Redeemer & Lord.” [S. Wellum, *Incarnation & 2 Natures of Christ*, p] J. God alone can save us. *Only if Christ was God the Son in person* can we be saved.
- “Neither the early church...nor [the Creed]...is affirming *merely* that Christ has two natures united into one person. Both the church & [the Creed] affirm that *the person* who possesses both divine & human natures *is the eternal second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. Only if Christ was God the Son as a person could he give us a share in his eternal, personal relationship to God the Father.*” [Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, p. 146]

5. The Incarnation of the Word, God’s Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity (1:14)

a. The distinction between ‘person’ & ‘nature’

- “Person & nature answer two different questions. If we are aware (in a bad light, say) that there’s something in a room, we ask: ‘What is it?’ If we...see that it’s a human being, but can’t distinguish the features, we ask: ‘Who is it?’ ‘What?’ asks about the nature, ‘Who?’ asks about the person.” [Frank J. Sheed, *Theology for Beginners*, p. 32]
- The “phrase ‘my nature’...means that there’s a person, ‘I,’ who possesses a nature. The person couldn’t exist without a nature, but [there’s] some distinction...the person possesses the nature, not vice versa. We say, ‘my nature,’ not ‘nature’s me....My nature decides what I can do. I can raise my hand...I can eat, laugh, sleep, think, because...these actions so...with human nature. I can’t lay an egg, because that goes with bird nature...My nature...decides what actions are possible to me, [but,] I do them, I the person; nature is the source of our operations, person does them.” [Frank J. Sheed, *Theology for Beginners*, pp. 32-3]
- “Your essence [nature] is *what* you are, but this is entirely distinguishable from your personal identity [person], *who* you turn out to be...*What Jesus is, is both human & divine, who Jesus is, is the Word...* [By] Incarnation the two natures of Christ are brought to expression in the one Person (*hypostasis*) of the Word or Son...[This] is called the ‘hypostatic union’ —i.e., the union of the 2 natures in the *hypostasis* of the Word...[This means] *the Second Person of the Trinity was indeed the subject or agent, of the human experiences, or acts, of Jesus.*” [Mark A. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 137]
- “To account for what Scripture teaches about Jesus & his relation to the Father & Spirit, the Church *distinguished between the person (or subject) of the incarnation, & the nature(s) the person subsisted in.* The ‘person-nature’ distinction was a theological distinction necessary to account for Scripture’s presentation of the one God who is triune. To explain all the biblical data, the Church distinguished the Father, Son, & Spirit without separating them into 3 Gods.
- Instead, Christian theology affirmed that there are 3 distinct divine ‘persons’ who fully share the one, undivided divine ‘nature’ *and* that the one divine nature wholly subsists in each of the 3 persons so that each person *is* fully & equally God (contra Arianism that denied Christ’s deity).” [Stephen Wellum, *Incarnation & 2 Natures of Christ*, p.]
- An “axiom of Christology is that *one must not treat a nature as if it were a person. A person, or...a ‘personal subject’ is an entity who can be born, live, die, and be raised. A nature is not such an entity. Instead, a nature is a set of characteristics appropriate to either deity or humanity.*” [Donald Fairbairn, “*The One Person who is Jesus Christ,*” in F. Sanders (ed.) *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, 109]

b. What the incarnated Christ is *Not*

- “Scripture nowhere describes the incarnation as the activity of the 2nd member of the Godhead *in a human person* distinct from God, or as God causing someone [a human being] to give perfect expression to his will...As a result of the incarnation, Jesus has 2 natures, but he is not 2 persons. This hypostatic union is the joining of 2 distinct natures in one person, *without creating a ‘hybrid’ 3rd nature.* Jesus is the God-man; he is *not 50% God & 50% man.* The human nature of Jesus is a real humanity

without the sin nature. There's a perfect commingling of the 2 natures of Jesus as a result of the incarnation...yet both natures remain intact. There is *no double personality or independent functioning* of the 2 natures. The *divine nature is not changed* into the human nature nor [vice versa]. [David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, p.]

c. The Second of Trinity was 'expanded' by the human nature

- "In the incarnation we are dealing with a divine person that has been 'expanded,' so to speak, to include a human nature. The 'expanded' divine person 'owns' his human nature, in a way similar to the manner in which I 'own' the limbs of my body. They are parts of me. In an extended or 'stretched' sense *the human nature of Christ is a 'part' of the Second Person of the Trinity.* " [Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate*, p. 162]
- "God the Son became a man with no change in his divine nature [because] *the divine person 'personalized' a human nature created for him.* The person of Christ exists as a God-man because he subsists in the divine nature & the human nature. The Son continued to be God, subsisting in & acting through the divine nature that he...shared with the Father & Spirit from eternity. And the Son can be all...it means to be a man: a person subsisting in & acting through a human body-soul...The Son after incarnation had a truly human mind, will, consciousness, & personality. His birth, his life, his suffering, his death...were all truly human in the full sense of the word." [S. J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*,]

d. *The One Person of the incarnate Christ is the Person of God the Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity*

- "*The person who [said 'before Abraham was, I am,' is] the person of Christ, is the Person of God the Son, [is] the Second Person of the Trinity.*"— Stephen Wellum
- "The person-nature distinction...helps make sense of how Jesus could stand face-to-face with the Jewish leaders & declare..."*Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. (8:58)...The person who made this... statement, the person of Christ, is the Person of God the Son. The Second Person of the Trinity...is the active subject who assumed a human nature & acted through it to say, as a man, that he is God, the Creator-Covenant Lord.*" [S. Wellum, *God the Son*,]
- "The most fundamental...formulation...in faithfulness to the biblical presentation [is]: *the divine person of the Son*, subsisting in the divine nature, *did not become a human person but assumed a human nature*, such that *the same 'I is the person of Christ* that now subsists in the divine nature as God. And through his human nature, the person of Christ asserts itself within a human consciousness & in human language. It is the divine 'I' of a man who is living a genuinely human life. The subject of the incarnation is the person of the Son, the person of Christ, God the Son incarnate." [Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*,]

e. In Jesus there is no human person, no human ego

- "Even if we attribute to Jesus 2 [natures]...*it does not follow that there are in him two persons*, for [he remains]...a 'single independent subject.' At the root of Jesus' [human traits,] human intelligence & will, at the root of his soul itself... stands the divine Person of the Word who has assumed concrete humanity. Thus *in Jesus there is no human person...no human ego*, and yet he is truly man. This is possible because...*his human nature...[is] possessed by]...the ...[divine] person...of the divine Word & Son of God.*" [Adam G. Cooper, *Naturally Human, Supernaturally God*, p 48]

f. Yet, Jesus is fully human

- "The question...is: how can a human nature, which has no personality [person] or reality in its own being, become very man (i.e. real [human] being) in union with the *Logos*?...[Answer:] The incarnation implies that the Son assumes human nature...That is, *the eternal Christ*, who is unchangeable in his divine nature, *unites with* his divine mode of being a *human mode of existence...uniting it...to his Person.*" [James P. Haley, *Humanity of Christ*, p.]

g. As a 'God-man,' Jesus Christ is unique; what he is no 'child of God' will ever be

- "Scripture posits a close relationship between Christ & humanity with regards to the *imago dei* [image of God] (Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15). However, it also makes plain that in addition to becoming an authentic human being, Jesus is also the real 2nd Person of the holy Trinity. In short, *Jesus is the substance* of the 'divine-something' *that no child of Adam...will ever be.*" [James Eglinton, "To Be or to Become...," *Kuyper Center Review*, Vol. 2, pp. 129-30]

h. Natures do not act; Persons do

- "*Classical Christology holds...that natures do not act. Persons act by means of, or through, their natures.* In the case of Christ, the *Logos* acts in and through the...human nature." [Kevin Chiarot, *Unassumed Is the Unhealed...*, p. 199]

- “Christology assumes...there’s *only one acting person (one hypostasis)* who is Jesus. *The...person is the acting subject. Natures do not act; persons do.* But persons act in a nature. When a human agent acts, she or he does so as a human being, but *it is not the nature of humanity that does the acting, the individual person does it.* When Jesus acts, it is Jesus the person who acts but unlike any other acting person he acts in two natures at the same time—divine & human...When Jesus acts, we cannot parcel out his actions as if one action is from the divine & another from the human nature. The mystery that is the incarnation is that one person, Jesus of Nazareth, acts in two natures without conflict.” [D. Stephen Long, “Development of..Christology,” in R. Lovin (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of R. Niebuhr*, p. 290]
- “Classic...theologians...regarded natures as denoting the essential properties & characteristics of a species or type of being. Whereas *persons are concrete acting agents, natures do not act.* Instead, *persons act in relation to the attributes and properties of their nature.*” [Nico Vorster, *Brightest Mirror of God’s Works: Theol. Anthropology*, p 64]

6. Trinity in John’s Prologue

- “John uses the Greek word *logos* to refer to the *Second Person of the Trinity*. He says that the *logos* was with God in the beginning & indeed was God. Later in the chapter [1:14] John speaks of how the *logos* became flesh & identifies the *logos* as Jesus of Nazareth [1:17, 46]. It is very clear that *John is identifying Jesus of Nazareth with the Second Person of the Trinity*. Of course, there are other passages which identify Jesus as God. Rom. 9:5...Titus 2:13...Then in John 20:28, Thomas said to Jesus, ‘My Lord & my God!’ John goes on to say that the *logos* was not created...He also identifies the *logos* as the one through whom the world was created. Only with a doctrine of the Trinity can we make sense of these passages.” [A.T.B. McGowan, *Person & Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus*,]
- “If we take the [NT] passages referring to the divinity of Jesus...& view the through the lens of... John 1, Phil. 2, Col. 1 & Heb. 1... the result is a doctrine of incarnation whereby *the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, takes human flesh and becomes the man Jesus of Nazareth. There is in fact only one person.*” [A.T.B. McGowan, *Person & Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus*,]
- “The [early] church came to believe...that the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, at a particular point in space & time, took to himself a human nature & was thus incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth, *without ceasing to be God*. This Jesus was both God & man, the reality of divinity not being diminished or damaged by his humanity [nor vice versa]...In other words, *the eternal Son of God (the Second Person of the Trinity) did not take over an existing human being but rather, the person of the eternal Son, who already had the divine nature, took a human nature & he (the eternal Son) was therefore one ‘person’ with two natures.*” [A.T.B. McGowan, *Person & Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus*,]
- “The Council of Chalcedon [451 CE] taught that, at the incarnation, the 2nd person of the Trinity, God the Son (or *logos*), took to himself a human nature & was born as Jesus of Nazareth. The [*incarnate*] *Son of God thus had two natures, one divine & one human, both of which were subsumed under one acting subject [on Person]*...There is nothing in the Chalcedonian Definition which’s contrary to Scripture.” [A.T.B. McGowan, *Person & Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus*,]
- “Orthodox Christian theology has always maintained that in the incarnation, God the Son became man, something that he would not have been apart from the incarnation...Whatever the sufficient conditions for being human are, the Logos would not have met them but for the incarnation.” [JR. Farris (ed.) *Ashgate Research...Theological Anthropology*,]
- “The historical *Jesus of Nazareth* is the *eternal Son of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity.*” [Iain Taylor, *Pannenberg on the Triune God*, 113]
- “The personal subject of the Incarnate Lord was single & selfsame in all aspects of his being. In other words, *the Logos of God was the single personal subject (hypostasis) of all the following: the Second Person of the Trinity, the Divine Word, the Son of God, the Christ, & Jesus of Nazareth.* They were all one & the same subject. Obviously, the names of Divine Word, the Eternal Son...& other such titles of this single *hypostasis* [Person] were properly speaking eternal referents that referred to the life of the Word of God before the Incarnation. Equally, some names, such as Jesus of Nazareth...& Son of Man, were titles that specifically related to...the Lord in his

incarnate state. Some titles were able to connote both the eternal life & the incarnate life, such as Son of God...Lord, Life & Light...[This meant] there was not a man, called Jesus, whom God inhabited or inspired...[as] Adoptionists had once taught. There was only the Word who assumed flesh in the womb of the Virgin & was born of her as the Son of God, God from God, Light from Light.” [John A. McGuckin, *Eastern Orthodox Church: A New History*, p. 111]

- “The Scriptures declare that the divine Son has ‘become like his brothers & sisters in every respect’ (Heb. 2:17) yet... without any consequent diminution or degradation of his divinity. According to the NT, ‘The Word became flesh’ (Jn. 1:14), yet in doing so he did not at any moment cease to be the one by whose divine power creation coheres & is upheld (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). *Christ is and remains, therefore, the eternally begotten Son, the second Person of the Trinity*, who, according to the Chalcedonian Definition of 451, shares ‘the same essence with the Father.’ *Nevertheless*, Chalcedon also affirms that *this divine Son has become in the person of Jesus of Nazareth*—mysteriously, paradoxically, irreversibly— Thus did the early church... establish *Jesus of Nazareth as the same ‘person’ as the divine Son*, yet possessed of *both* a divine *and* a human nature from the moment of his incarnation.” [Jonathan P. Badgett, *Mirrors of Self: Human Personhood in Christological Perspective*, pp. 97-98]
- The 4th Gospel “has 2 well-known...foci. [1.] One is the affirmation that there is a unity between Father and Son. Jesus says so explicitly when he claims that the ‘Father & I are one’ (10:30). That unity can...be understood in several ways, as an ontological unity [of being, substance], or as a unity of will, purpose, or mission. [2.] The other focal point is the affirmation that ‘the Father is greater than I’ (14:28), but exactly how that difference is to be understood remains an open question. Does [it] point to the...relationship between source & offspring who are on the same ontological level, or does it point to a difference in kind between creator& creature?” [H. A. Attridge, “Trinitarian...4th Gospel,” 73]
- “The defense...Jesus mounts against the charge [of]...mak[ing] himself equal to God ironically affirms the substance of the charge, but not its corollary, that the claim implies blasphemy. To claim that Jesus is one with the Father...as eternal Son is not blasphemy, says the evangelist, but simply the Truth.” [Harold Attridge, “Trinitarian...4th Gospel,” 75]
- “The phrase *ego eimi*, [‘I am’] in & of itself, is not a pointer to a theological claim. It can simply be an expression, like...‘it’s me,’ ...where the speaker is identifying himself. But when Jesus, in the midst of a heated debate with his opponents in chap. 8, says that ‘before Abraham was, I am,’ [8:58] more is at stake than an ordinary...selfidentification. How to characterize the claim is debatable. *Jesus is at least claiming a trans-temporal or transhistorical existence*. And he is doing so with the language that the God of Israel used to reveal himself to Moses on Mt. Horeb (Ex 3:13).” [H. Attridge, “Trinitarian Theology...4th Gospel,” 75]
- “*The prologue* [1:1-18]...gives the reader or hearer of gospel clues essential to understanding the story that follows. The central affirmation is that what we encounter in the man of flesh & blood, Jesus, is nothing less than the very Word of God, which is itself divine (1:1). But surrounding that affirmation are multiple ambiguities, which fueled the Trinitarian & Christological controversies of later centuries.” [Harold W. Attridge, “Trinitarian Theology & the 4th Gospel,” p. 77]
- “The final designation of Jesus in the prologue may neatly encapsulate the claim, whatever the original reading of 1:18. If the text calls Jesus the ‘Unique (or ‘only begotten’) God,’ the implications for the status of Jesus are clear, but the claim to divine status of the Logos was already made in the first verse of the prologue. If ‘God’ is not the original reading, but is merely an ‘orthodox corruption’ of scripture, importing a later theological judgment into the text, the analysis suggested here is not substantially affected. In fact, the language of Sonship is just as suitable for the kind of affirmation that the prologue is making.” [Harold W. Attridge, “Trinitarian Theology & the Fourth Gospel,” p. 78]
- “Although it may be building on earlier formulations...the *4th Gospel clearly attributes to* [Christ] *a much higher status* [than earlier formulations], intimately bound up with God the Father. If not ‘Trinitarian,’ the gospel is at least decidedly ‘bi-natarian’ [God in 2 Persons].’ While this stance has its roots in Judaism, its insistent articulation by the evangelist & his community may well have been involved in the ‘expulsion from the Synagogue’ often ‘prophesied’ in the gospel [Jn. 9:22; 16:2], whatever lies behind that language.” [H. W. Attridge, “Trinitarian...4th Gospel,” 78-79]

- “The *Gospel of John*...has all the makings of a Trinitarian theology, even if it remains implicit.”
[Harold W. Attridge, “*Trinitarian Theology & the Fourth Gospel*,” 83]