

Endnote — *The Case for Primacy*

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between
God and men, the man Christ Jesus ... (1 Tim 2:5)

1.

Is *the beginning* [ἡ ἀρχὴ] a definite moment in time? The question seems almost nonsensical: of course *the beginning* is an initial moment in time as well as the front of a book or of a play or of any number of things. *The beginning* is first and the first, but *first* in a sense of location in time and space, not first in a sense authority or superiority or dominion. And it is here where the definite article <ἡ> for the Greek signifier <ἀρχὴ—*arche*> assists the auditor in assigning a *signified* to the *signifier*.

In Koine Greek, definite nouns—signifiers [words] that represent definite or specific things—have with them a definite article that agrees with the noun in gender, number, and case. These definite nouns can be used as a pronoun to represent the specific thing such is their hard linkage to the noun. So when a definite article is missing, the auditor needs to look for the definite noun with which the noun-missing-its-article shares the article of the other as in the iconic clause, Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος (3rd clause John 1:1), that has the article <ὁ> (masculine singular, nominative case) being shared by Θεὸς and Λόγος, thereby disclosing that the Logos [ὁ Λόγος] was truly God [Θεὸς] and was with or of [πρὸς] the God [τὸν Θεόν] (2nd clause). Thus, when a signifier that ought to have a definite article is missing that article and none can be found for it, the auditor needs to rethink assigning *definiteness* to the signifier and needs to consider the signifier as a modifier rather than as a noun. And such is the case for ἀρχὴ, which would have been written in uncials and without ascent or aspiration marks through the 3rd-Century CE, in the 1st clause of John 1:1, which begins, Ἐν ἀρχῇ —

Without a definite article, ἀρχὴ, as used in the first and second verses of the Gospel of John first chapter is not well translated into English as <*the beginning*>, a phrase that in English requires the use of the definite article, for the beginning of a matter or a thing is a definite moment in space or time. Other uses for ἀρχὴ need considered, with the seemingly most logical being first in authority or rule as in being the *principal*, an English word that is used both as an adjective and a noun. Thus, if John 1:1–3 were rethought and retranslated to read, *In primacy was the Logos, and the Logos was with the God, and God was*

the Logos. This one was in primacy with the God. All things through Him came to be, and without Him came to be not one thing, New Testament dynamics would be figuratively turned on its head—and John’s Gospel would agree with Paul’s epistle to the Philippians:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in *Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5–8 emphasis added)

Paul’s epistle to the Philippians was written some three decades earlier than John’s Gospel. Although John was probably familiar with Paul’s epistles and certainly seems to be familiar with 1st & 2nd Peter, for in Chapter 21 of John’s Gospel readers find the narrative structure of Peter’s epistles in what John records Jesus telling Peter (*Feed my lambs, Tend my sheep, Feed my sheep*), John’s expression of Jesus’ preexisted as the Father of Himself who was a co-princep with *the God* as Tiberius Caesar was the co-princep with Augustus Caesar for a year before the elder Caesar died and Tiberius ruled the Roman Empire as its sole emperor beginning in 14 CE, now increases the importance of the Logos who was God entering His creation as His only Son (John 3:16), where upon baptism by John, He as the man Jesus the Nazarene, a human person, would receive a second breath of life, the breath of the Father [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ], that gave to His inner self life that it did not previously have because of having been born as a human person.

But perhaps of most importance is the Logos’ voluntarily surrendering of *primacy* and submitting to death and becoming the subject of the God of the dead ones, the Father, thereby leaving *the God* as the soul deity that all in heaven and on earth must worship, with this soul deity, *the God*, not being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which was the God of the living ones (Matt 22:32). In other words, the Christian who prays to Christ Jesus, or the Jew who prays to the God of Abraham, or the Muslim who prays to the God who created all things prays to a wrong God, thus revealing that none know the God and Father of Christ Jesus and of circumcised of heart Israel (see John 20:17).

In rereading John 1:1–2, changing the translation of the Greek signifiers Ἐν ἀρχῇ from *In beginning* to the more natural *In primacy*, an equally valid translation, the dynamics of true monotheism figuratively turns Unitarian, Binitarian, and Trinitarian dogmas out to pasture where they need to die in peace, pushing up daisies that have only one petal left, a petal not known by Unitarians or Trinitarians. And though upon acceptance as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering the glorified Christ Jesus had returned to Him the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), through having submitted Himself to death the glorified Jesus made Himself subservient to the Father, the God of the dead ones to whom the Father will give life at His pleasure, with the First to whom He gave life being the man Jesus immediately following Jesus’ baptism. Hence, what the Psalmist wrote came to pass:

I will tell of the decree:

YHWH said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you. (2:7)

Who is *me*? To whom did the conjoined deities represented by the Tetragrammaton YHWH speak? Was it not to His anointed (from Ps 2:2)? But how was *the anointed one* anointed if not in baptism that represents real death followed by receipt of the spirit of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ]? ... As King David was anointed with oil by the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 16:13) and immediately had the spirit of the Lord rush upon him, the man Jesus was anointed in water representing death by John the Baptist and immediately had the spirit of the Father descend upon Him in the form of the dove thereby giving life to Jesus' inner self.

And in a theological point that is outside of the present discussion, John the Baptist rewrote the role of the prophet Samuel when he baptized Jesus, who presently reigns over circumcised-of-heart Israel and who will, as King of kings and Lord of lords, reign over Israel during the Millennium as King David reigned over Israel from Hebron then from Jerusalem for forty years and as King Solomon reigned in peace from Jerusalem over Israel for forty years ... David's reign over Israel from Hebron forms a shadow and type of the glorified Jesus' reign over circumcised-of-heart Israel prior to the single kingdom of this world being given to the Son of Man halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation; whereas David's reign over Israel from Jerusalem forms a shadow of the Endurance of Jesus, the 1260 days between the kingdom being given to the Son of Man and the coming of the Messiah [the Second Advent]. King Solomon's forty year reign in peace forms a shadow of Christ's reign during the Millennium, with the roles of both prophet and king (Samuel, David, and Solomon) having been rewritten by John the Baptist and Jesus during their ministries.

2.

A naïve assumption exists among many readers that words have meaning. I once heard radio talk show host G. Gordon Liddy in a commentary about "discovered" rights in the U.S. Constitution argue that *words have meaning*, that judges can't give legally important words politically correct meanings ... why can't they? What's to stop them? How a word has traditionally been understood—no, tradition really doesn't count for much. In a close paraphrase of Dr. Johnson's words in his 1755 Dictionary, *To try to fix* [as in fasten down] *the language is as trying to enchain the wind*. The meaning assigned to a word depends upon the reading community in which the auditor resides, a situation that goes back to the Tower of Babel. And a situation that frustrates *Constitutional Originalists*.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness: his sons were sons of righteousness that spoke one language with the same words, the words that Noah spoke before, during, and after the Deluge. But as these sons of righteousness migrated from the east, they settled on flat land in Shinar, and they agreed that they ought to build a city and tower "with its top in the heavens" (Gen 11:4) and build a *shem* for themselves, a *shem* [name] unlike the *Shem* of Noah — an interesting play on the word, with the movement being from a living, breathing son of righteousness

to an ephemeral title or authority representing righteousness, a movement from what is living and appears solid to what is like wind itself. And the voice of *YHWH* said to the other, “Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech” (v. 7).

What happened? The people were making bricks ... the bricks didn’t change. The same bricks that were being made before the voice of *YHWH* spoke to the other were still being made when the language of this people was confused supernaturally. The bricks [linguistic objects] that were the *signifieds* for whatever *signifier* the people used to represent these bricks were unaffected by confusion of the language: the signifier that had named the bricks suddenly became many signifiers, so many that one person couldn’t understand the speech of another person. The hard link that had attached the bricks to whatever name they were called was broken, shattered. Everyone had differing names for the bricks. And this has been the state of all languages ever since: signifiers [the oral or inscribed signs] are only linked to signifieds [those things that words name] through a historical trace, or an element of Thirdness, whichever linguistic paradigm you wish to use.

A historical trace will produce a stereotypical image for a signifier: if I say, *There is a cow in the classroom*, you will, most likely, do a double take for <cow> are large four-legged animals that give milk and there is obviously no such animal in the classroom. You then wonder if I have said that a person in the classroom has cow-like qualities? That would certainly be a possibility. But that stereotypical image of a large, ungraceful bovine that the word <cow> produced in your mind comes from the historical trace that links signifier to signified. You would then take this trace and try to adapt it to fit a specific person in the classroom. If this stereotypical image fits no person, then you would dismiss what I said as nonsense.

You, as the auditor [hearer or reader], will give meaning to a word through a combination of knowledge and experience and participation in a particular reading community. If your reading community calls Sunday the *Sabbath*, then for you the Sabbath is the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath as I keep the Sabbath. Your reading community might be larger than mine—if it is, then the majority of people will identify the first day of the week as the Sabbath and a minority will identify the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath ... but if you argue, *Sunday isn’t the Sabbath, Saturday is*, a true premise for the person who accepts Moses as the person’s authority for when the Sabbath begins and ends, then you voluntarily separate yourself from the majority of Christendom by believing the writings of Moses, the prerequisite for hearing the voice and words of Jesus (John 5:46–47).

But by again bringing in John’s Gospel, we find that it seems John called at least all of the Feast of Unleavened Bread *Sabbath* and possibility the entire period when a male Israelite came to Jerusalem as commanded in Deuteronomy 16:16 was *Sabbath*; for John writes, Οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν ἵνα μὴ μείνη ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ ἣν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου — *The Jews, since preparation it was, that may not stay upon the*

stakes the bodies during the Sabbath, for~was great the day of that the Sabbath (19:31).

A narrow reading of <ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου> will have <ἐκείνου—of that> referencing what possesses it, <τοῦ σαββάτου—the Sabbath>, not an entirely logical assumption. A more broad reading will have will have <ἐκείνου> referencing the High Sabbath, the 15th of *Aviv*, that begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with <τοῦ σαββάτου> referencing all seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and possibly the entirety of the period between the 10th of *Aviv*, when paschal lambs were selected and penned through the beginning of the 23rd of *Aviv* when male Israelites were free to return home to begin their barley harvest [the harvest of firstfruits].

Elsewhere, John writes, Ἦν ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων—*Was near the Passover of the Jews* (John 11:55) ... why would John make a distinction between <τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων> and *the Passover* as Jesus then and as Christians now keep the Passover?

The logical assumption was that the Jews, formerly of the temple, kept the Passover differently than did Christians, with John writing from the last decade of the 1st-Century referring back to 31 CE, roughly four decades before the temple was destroyed. Thus, to take the practices of the Pharisees and apply them to Jesus and His disciples is contradicted by John writing, τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων. By the principle of narrative economy, the qualifier <τῶν Ἰουδαίων> would not have been included if a difference didn't exist between how Pharisees of the temple (perhaps the only sect of Judaism that remained after the Rebellion and the razing of the temple) kept the Passover and how John and Jesus' disciples kept the Passover, with this difference not being of substance/style but of calendar date.

If Jesus and His disciples kept the Passover as Moses commanded, there was in the 1st-Century *difference* in assignment of meaning to <τὸ πάσχα—the Passover> with this *difference* determining whether the lamb should be slain at dusk going into the dark portion of the 14th of *Aviv* as Moses commanded, or at the end of the 14th going into the 15th as Pharisees read Moses. This is an assignment of meaning similar to what has been done in the 21st-Century to the word *Sabbath* and the question of whether Christians should assembled on the 7th day or on the 1st day.

Historically, we are quite certain that the Sadducees and Pharisees differed on when to keep the Wave Sheaf Offering, with the Sadducees holding that iconic phrase, “On the day after the Sabbath” (Lev 23:11) referenced the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with Christ Jesus ascending to the Father *on the day after the weekly Sabbath* according to all four Gospels (read Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, in Greek) ... the Pharisees would have observed the Wave Sheaf Offering on the 16th of *Aviv*, the day after the High Sabbath of the 15th — and here is where observance of the Wave Sheaf Offering separates false from genuine Christians; i.e., separates Christians that hear and believe Jesus' words from those that do not hear Jesus' words because they don't believe the writings of Moses.

If Jesus **were not** three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish [whale], then the year when Jesus would have been crucified would have had the 14th day of *Aviv* falling on Friday, and the 15th day falling on the weekly Sabbath, and the day after the Sabbath, the 16th day, being Wave Sheaf Offering, as Pharisees reckoned when the Wave Sheaf Offering was to be kept. However, *this reckoning will make Jesus a liar: He would not satisfy the sign of Jonah.* Whereas **if the Wave Sheaf Offering was kept as Sadducees kept the Offering**, the year Jesus was crucified would be 31 CE, and the Sadducees would have observed the Wave Sheaf Offering on the 18th of *Aviv*, the fourth day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The 14th of *Aviv* would fall on Wednesday, April 25th (Julian), and Jesus would satisfy the sign of Jonah; He would have been in the tomb three days and three nights before being resurrected from death early on the dark portion of the day after the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread.

Thus, the suggestion of John's backhanded reference, Ἦν ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, is that the Jews of Herod's Temple were keeping the Passover on the wrong day, and were not keeping it as Moses commanded, which was a long term problem prior to King Josiah (see 2 Kings 23:21–23) and a problem that returned immediately after Josiah's death. And though Scripture is silent as to when Sadducees sacrificed paschal lambs, it seems that since Sadducees were politically and religious out of power and are known to have kept the Wave Sheaf Offering as Christians, following the authority of Jesus, keep the Wave Sheaf Offering today, Sadducees were probably killing the Passover in the late afternoon of the 13th of *Aviv*, not in the late afternoon of the 14th as Pharisees did. Certainly, if the Passover were to be kept as Moses commanded, with Israel remaining in their houses until dawn on the 14th of the first month (see Ex 12:22), then leaving Egypt on the dark portion of the 15th day, the day that would become *the great Sabbath of that the Sabbath*, Passover lambs would have been slain at sunset going into the 14th day of the first month. Thus, if the man to whose house Jesus' disciples went to prepare the Passover for Jesus to eat were a Sadducee, he would not have been surprised by the day or the hour when Jesus kept the Passover; for most likely this would have been when he believed the Passover should be eaten.

What happened to the Sadducees after Calvary? They disappear into the historical flotsam of 1st-Century Judea and are gone from Jerusalem before the Rebellion of 66–70 CE (Pharisee Zealots would have killed them if they had stayed). And it might be that Jews who converted to Christianity were primarily Sadducees; for to them, Jesus and his disciples would have correctly understood Scripture.

Therefore, in deconstructing the seemingly innocent phrase <Ἦν ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων> the alleged discrepancy between the Gospels of Mark and John as to what day Jesus was crucified that practitioners of historical criticism find disappears: both gospel authors will have Jesus eating the Passover on the day when paschal lambs, according to Moses, were to be killed, with this day being the First Unleavened [τῆ πρώτῃ τῶν ἀζύμων] of Matthew's Gospel (26:17),

an eighth unleavened day that is to the seven day long Feast of Unleavened Bread as the Last Great Day is to the seven day long Feast of Tabernacles, thereby causing the Spring Feast to form the mirror image [chiral image] of the Fall Feast with all of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—when the bread of affliction is eaten—being compressed into *Yom Kipporim*, when Israel afflicts its souls by fasting, and with the first day of the Holy Year [1st of *Aviv*] not being a Sabbath as the first day of the 7th month is a High Sabbath [Feast of Trumpets] for theological reasons that I won't introduce here.

To distinguish the Passover Christians keep from the Passover that Pharisees then kept and that rabbinical Judaism now keeps, John needed to add the qualifier <τῶν Ἰουδαίων> to the word representing the Passover: τὸ πάσχα.

Endtime Christians add a modifier to the name of a fellowship to distinguish between those who keep the 7th day Sabbath and those who do not; e.g., *Church of God 7th day*, or *Seventh Day Adventists*.

For purposes of disambiguation, the actions and practices of the *OTHER*, those not of the reading community, that differ with the practices of *US* are denoted by additional modifiers and qualifiers.

Again, for purposes of disambiguation since the separation of signifier from signified at the Tower of Babel, additional words or signs or glyphs have had to be added to an inscribed text to narrow assignments of meanings to the inscription (whatever has been inscribed), with oral communication being readily deconstructed by the hearer being present to ask the speaker, *What do you mean when you say that?* These words/glyphs that are only used for purposes of clarification so that an inscribed text mimetically represents for the reader the same information that the hearer of the communication has through being present when the communication or narrative was uttered aloud—these words/glyphs function somewhat like stage directions for a play: they were never uttered aloud, but form unpronounced linguistic determinatives that convey information that would not be otherwise available to the reader, information such as *who said what, where, and in what language*. This type of information is important to the reader but would have been known to the hearer through the hearer being present when the communication occurred. There was never a need for these determinatives to be pronounced: technically, they relay the context for which or in which the communication occurred. They are part of the background as the landscape of the mountainous American West and rural Alaska is for a new generation of novelists and essayists that use the landscape as a character in their writings—as I unknowingly used the geography and weather of the Aleutians as character elements in my writings (that is *unknowingly* until I entered graduate school at University of Alaska

Fairbanks and discovered that there were many young western outdoor writers doing the same thing that I was doing).

An example of the above can be seen in the commonly read citation of Psalms 2:7, with determinatives included and excluded:

Included determinative:

I will tell of the decree:

YHWH said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

Excluded determinative:

I will tell of the decree:

You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

If you as the hearer of the spoken words, *You are my Son; today I have begotten you*, would you need to be told whose voice you heard? You would not. You would know who said that you are *the One's* son, and if birth comes through breathing on one's own, then on the day when you receive a second breath of life, the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ], as Adam received life when *Elohim* [singular in usage] breathed into the man of mud's nostrils and he became a *nephesh*, you would be born of God. And according to the writer of Hebrews, "Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him *who said to Him*, / 'You are my Son, / today I have begotten you'" (Heb 5:5).

Elsewhere the writer of Hebrews says, "For to which of the angels did God ever say, / 'You are my Son, / today I have begotten you'" (Heb 1:5) ... the question will now be, when did God say *You are my Son, today I have begotten you* to Christ Jesus other than on the day when Jesus was born of God the Father through receiving a second breath of life, the breath of God, when He rose from being baptized by John. Thus, it is logical that what early copies of Luke's Gospel have the Father saying was probably heard by Christ Jesus although not necessarily heard by John the Baptist who may well have heard what Matthew's Gospel records ("This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" — Matt 3:17) and some noise that sounded like a thunder clap ala John 12:28–29. If then, Matthew's source for what he wrote about Jesus' baptism were John the Baptist or one of John's disciples, Matthew would record what John heard, not necessarily what the Father said directly to Jesus. However, if Luke's source was—as seems the case—Mary, the mother of Jesus [how else is he to know what he writes in the first two chapters of his Gospel], then Luke would record what Jesus told His mother about what had happened. The opening of the heavens that Matthew records (3:16) would come with noise that was heard as words by Jesus to whom the words were directed.

3.

If I were to assert when Jesus was baptized and the heavens opened and the breath of God descended upon Jesus in the visible form of a dove that John heard the opening of heavens as thunder, saw the dove, and heard a voice from heaven say, *This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased* in Aramaic, but that

Jesus heard God say, *You are my Son, today I have begotten you*, I would be incorporating privileged knowledge that neither Matthew nor Luke had about the primacy of the Logos [ὁ Λόγος] who was God [Θεός] and who was the God [τὸν Θεόν] (John 1:1) before the world existed (see John 17:5). My assertion would be a proposition based on inference in a syllogism [συλλογισμός] in which I hold that what is recorded in Matthew's Gospel is true, that what is recorded in John's Gospel is true, and what is recorded in early copies of Luke's Gospel is true, that what is written if the Epistle of the Hebrews is true. For it was this Logos who was God who entered His creation (John 1:3) as the only Son of Him (John 3:16), not the only Son of the God [τὸν Θεόν] who remained in heaven; that the man Jesus the Nazarene was humanly born as the only Son of *YAH*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of living ones, not dead ones (Matt 22:32); that the man Jesus did not become the Son of the God [τὸν Θεόν] until the breath of τὸν Θεόν descended upon Him in the form of a dove on a particular day, the day when Jesus was baptized.

When attempting to determine the validity of syllogisms, the usual method is to construct a Venn diagram that consists of three overlapping circles—represented by the letters A, B, & C—that will now have seven elements: the three circles, A, B, C, plus the overlaps of AC, AB, CB, plus an addition small overlap of ABC. In plotting narratives that can be reread with interest or viewed additional times with interest, a person will find that the narrative has seven characters representing each of the seven elements of a traditional Venn diagram, with one character being an unchanging indeterminate type, another character being a weak-willed determinative type, and a third character being an bridge-builder that stands apart from the indeterminate and determinate characters, and with four additional characters possessing combinations of traits [this realization was first posited by Dr. Alan Manning now of Brigham Young University's linguistics department]. But in this character diagram, there is an eighth element, the background or landscape in which the seven characters dwell; e.g., the island on the television series *Gilligan's Island*.

Taking the above and applying it to a poem such as the following—

HARD EDGED

chisel chain
filed yesterday
bit bark,
growled,
pissed chips—

today, I would show
how to bed old-growth,
but a spotted owl
on down-soft wings
caught media headlines;

band headrigs rust quietly
beside stilled greenchains
while with idled saw,
I meander through firs
flagged with blood

red surveyors' ribbon,
blowdowns that had stood
as boundary trees
for what would have been
last year's clearcut.

(from *Upriver, Beyond the Bend*)

—we see that there are actually two contexts, two backgrounds: one for the words and one for the concepts produced by the words. These two contexts—which gives meaning to the words—while separate work together to form one context.

The context for a poem is both the form of the poem on the page (i.e., the amount of white space surrounding black letters) as well as the situational setting for the things or events named by the signifiers. However, because of the white space—the emptiness surrounding the words—a person's focus involuntarily shifts from the situational setting and gives priority to the words themselves, not what the words mimetically represent ... the focus of all short line inscription is the inscribed words, not what the words name or represent, with this awareness going back centuries, millennia. Therefore, with the foremost context for short line text being the form/appearance of the words on the page, the person who writes in short lines and uses privileged information (such as what are *headrigs* and *greenchains*, or for that matter, *chisel chain*) moves the focus of the reader from the things of these words to ephemeral words.

The above cannot be stressed too much: the focus of Hebraic poetry such as the prophecies of Isaiah is not outward and pertaining to physical nations and peoples, but inward and pertaining to ideologies and assemblies of ideologies.

In testing the validity of syllogisms by arraigning these syllogisms in a Venn diagram, the first and most important context of the test for validity is the background for the Venn diagram—the act of putting the syllogisms in a Venn diagram.

The most important aspect of the context for a poem is its appearance on that page, with the appearance of the words involuntarily causing the reader to focus on the words, not the things that the words name or represent, things that might well be unfamiliar to the reader ... the unfamiliarity of the things named inevitably turns the focus onto words as *signifiers without signifieds* that the reader can assign to them, and in the production of signifiers without signifieds we have looped back to Holy Writ and John's Gospel.

Before I return to John's Gospel, a little privileged information: fallers cutting fir, spruce, and hemlock in the Northwest—Oregon to Alaska—generally use square-grind chisel saw chain because it cuts faster even though it is more

difficult to sharpen. The cutters [teeth] of saw chain work as mini-planes to literally plane a cut through wood, with a rounded edge cutter not being as efficient as a hard corner or 90° edge to plane away the wood that is to be wasted. So the poem's title and first stanza represents working fallers [loggers] cutting timber. But there is movement to the second stanza, movement represented by the dash: for environmental reasons, logging of old growth timber in the Northwest was suspended because of endangered spotted owls that choose to nest in old growth Douglas fir timber and to make their living on mice that live in these tree crowns. There is now no work to be done, no timber to fall, no logs being delivered to mills, no one working in the mills; yet the overly-ripe old growth timber that environmentalists sought to protect falls of its own accord in wind storms so the trees are not being saved by shutting down loggers.

Can everybody find all of the preceding in the few short lines of the poem? You probably could if you knew of the spotted owl controversy. You probably wouldn't if you didn't, meaning that privilege knowledge is required for a reader to assign intended signifieds to the signifiers of the poem. But can some meaning be taken from the poem without knowing about spotted owls? I would hope so. I didn't intend the piece as an unsolvable puzzle, but an attempt to capture the frustration of being put out of work by adorable spotted owls that also nest between the "K" and the "M" of the K-Mart sign in Grays Harbor, Washington.

The context in which the narrative is received remains an important element in the assignment of meaning to the narrative: if a long narrative purports to be a work of fiction, the narrative is read through a willing suspension of disbelief, or at least read this way until the author writes something that causes the reader to trip over his or her words and no longer suspend disbelief as Ken Kesey does in his novel, *Sometimes a Great Notion*, in which he has a rattlesnake bite a hound dog during a fox hunt on the Oregon coast. I spent decades on the central Oregon Coast, having graduated from Taft High School, Lincoln City, Oregon. And there were neither foxes nor rattlesnakes in Oregon's Lincoln County. So for me, Kesey broke my suspension of disbelief when he inserted a rattlesnake into the context of the cold rainforests of the coast—rattlesnakes are found as far west as Cottage Grove at the south end of the Willamette Valley and not far from where Kesey lived outside of Springfield. But in coastal forests coyotes would feast on any fox that ventured into their domain and rattlesnakes would drown.

The vast majority of Christians suspend disbelief when they pick up a copy of the Bible: there is little that can harm their devotional suspension of disbelief. However, because it is their business to be critical and not devotional, the practitioners of historical criticism do not suspend disbelief. And here is the problem that confronts endtime disciples: when experts—historical critics—are really poor readers of Holy Writ, what are faithful disciples to do with perceived discrepancies and genuine discrepancies when they encounter what they didn't realize was in New Testament gospel accounts about Jesus the Nazarene? Will they stumble over something such as *where was Jesus the day after He was baptized*, a question posed by historical criticism?

In Matthew's Gospel, we find,

Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But *when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**"

Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (Matt 3:5–4:1 emphasis and highlighting added)

Matthew's companion Synoptic Gospels, Mark and Luke, also have Jesus going into the wilderness to be tempted by the Adversary for forty days:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**" The spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. (Mark 1:9–12 highlighting added)

And he [John] went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. ...* Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**"

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. (Luke 3:3–8; 21–22; 4:1–2 emphasis and highlighting added)

The highlighted words spoken by the Father after Jesus was baptized differ by a word: Οὗτός [This one] versus Σὺ/σοὶ [You], which changes to whom the words were spoken, either to John [Matthew's account] or to Jesus [Mark's and Luke's accounts]. I have looked briefly at this discrepancy but right now I want to address what John seems to say:

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. (John 1:19–37 emphasis added)

Because John repeats the passage that *I baptize with water*, the coming of the priests and Levites to John to ask why is he baptizing those who come to him seems, when read inattentively, to be the same occasion as when Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to John to be baptized. But the two accounts [Matthew's and John's] are not about the same occasion; for in the first, Pharisees and Sadducees are coming to be baptized whereas in John's account, priests and Levites came from Jerusalem to challenge John, not to be baptized by him. And in Matthew's account, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John before he baptized Jesus, before he saw the breath of the Father descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove; whereas in John's account, no baptism is recorded but at some time in the past John saw the spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of the dove.

An undefined length of time passed between Pharisees and Sadducees came to John to be baptized and priests and Levites went to John to challenge his right to baptize sinners. In this undefined period, Jesus was baptized—and there is no

reason to believe that the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness could not have also passed; i.e., be in this undefined period. So there is no discrepancy to be found when logically comparing Matthew's Gospel and John's Gospel. Even a casual reading of Matthew's account and John's account discloses that when Pharisees and Sadducees came to John because they wanted to be baptized is not the same occasion when priests and Levites went to John to challenge his authority to baptize. The two Gospels address separate occasions when prominent Jews went to John; therefore when John's Gospel has John the Baptist seeing Jesus coming toward him on the day after he was challenged by priests and Levites should not be read as to mean that the day after Jesus was baptized, John saw Jesus coming toward him. That isn't a valid assignment of meaning to the passage, which any test of validity for the syllogism would confirm.

Now, who was present when the Father spoke following Jesus' baptism? John the Baptist was, and perhaps John's disciples were. Luke's account has others being baptized before Jesus was; so these others might have been present. But except as John or Matthew were John's disciples, neither would have been present. Mark and Luke would not have been present. So who reported to Mark and Luke what was said when Jesus was baptized? It is unlikely that Jesus told anybody other than His mother and possibly His disciples years later about His baptism, and it is equally unlikely that either Mark or Luke ever met John the Baptist. So the telling of what was said would mostly have come from one of John's disciples who became one of Jesus' disciples, which narrows considerably the source for the account and gives greater credibility to Matthew's use of Οὗτός [This one] than to Mark's use of Σὺ/σοὶ [You], with the earliest copies of the Luke's Gospel having the voice of God quote from Psalms 2:7.

Did Jesus need to be told that He was the Beloved of the Father? That wouldn't seem to be the case. However, confirming to Jesus that upon His receipt of the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] in the form of the dove, a second breath of life, that Jesus was this day begotten of God (from Ps 2:7) would seem a reasonable thing for the Father to tell Jesus. Plus, there is a subtlety in Matthew's account: when the words of God are heard, Jesus is already the beloved Son of God—and Jesus couldn't be the Son of τὸν Θεόν prior to receiving a second breath of life, the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ]. So both Matthew's account and the earliest form of Luke's account, although they differ, are reasonable and logical and by inference are both true, meaning that in making copies of copies of copies of the Gospels before the first surviving copy was written, a scribe not understanding spiritual birth left out a sentence because it didn't fit into prevailing 2nd-Century dogma about human persons being humanly born with immortal souls that needed regenerated rather than the person needing a second breath of life to make alive the previously dead inner self.

But if a scribe left out a sentence, even a critical sentence, does this invalidate Matthew's Gospel from being written under inspiration of the spirit of God? No, it doesn't. Does it invalidate Luke's Gospel? Again, no.

In the case for <primacy> rather than <beginning> as the best translation of ἀρχῆ in John 1:1 and 1:2, the situation exists prior to the Logos entering His creation as His only Son that Jesus addresses indirectly,

Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to Him, and He healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." Knowing their thoughts, He [Jesus] said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Matt 12:22–28)

If *in primacy* ὁ Λόγος was the equal of τὸν Θεόν as Paul asserts (Phil 2:6) when Paul tells the holy ones at Philippi to “do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than” themselves (*v.* 3), then it was only through ὁ Λόγος and τὸν Θεόν being of one mind and in full agreement in love (*v.* 2) one with the other that these two—as if married and one entity—could avoid a situation akin to Satan casting out Satan, thereby creating a house that would not stand or long endure.

The question should now be, why would the God of the living ones—the God of Abraham—surrender primacy by entering His creation where Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel are then dead ones and not under this God of the living ones but have become the subjects of τὸν Θεόν, the God of dead ones?

Jump ahead to when this world and all that is in it passes away (1 John 2:17) ... when this world passes away, there will no longer be any *living ones*; there will only be *dead ones* as David was a *dead one* when Peter spoke on that day of Pentecost following Calvary. All of humankind would then be the dead subjects of τὸν Θεόν, the God of the dead ones. Over whom would the God of the living ones reign? No one, unless His reign would be over angels, living ones in the supra-dimensional heavenly realm. Then over who would τὸν Θεόν reign other than dead human beings and rebelling angels condemned to death?

Now, how would two co-equal in primacy continue as co-equals in primacy if one reigned over living angels and the other reigned over angels condemned to death: would not such an unequal state of affairs strain the relationship of one to the other? Humanly it certainly would, but God is not human and doesn't/didn't have the mind of a man in either. But in a relationship based upon perfect love, the one who will eventually emerge as the superior of the other simply because the one rules over the living and the other reigns over the dead chose—out of love for the other—to enter His creation and to subject Himself to death and to the other, τὸν Θεόν. ... What kind of love is this? Certainly not human love.

While the focus of Christians has been on what the man Jesus Christ did for us, created with dead inner selves that were from our creation the subjects of τὸν Θεόν, the God of dead ones, our focus should have been—as with words used in a poetic expression—on what ὁ Λόγος, the God of living ones, did for τὸν Θεόν, the God of dead ones ... a man will scarcely give his life for God, his acknowledged superior, and even more rarely give his life for another man, his equal. But women put their lives at risk with every pregnancy; put their lives at risk each time they have sexual relationships with their husbands although that is not how childbirth is perceived in this modern world. But backing up only a century, how common was it for women to die in childbirth? Far too common. Yet in the Pastoral Epistle 1st-Timothy, Paul writes that the woman will be saved in childbirth: the woman will be saved by putting her life at risk for a still-unborn child, will be saved when a Son is begotten.

The test of whether a text is part of Holy Writ is whether the text delivers a common message, contributing in some way to the whole ... the Pastoral Epistles do, as do the Gospels. But without John's Gospel, would any Christian begin to appreciate what ὁ Λόγος, the God of living ones, put at risk when He subjected Himself to His co-princep, τὸν Θεόν, the God of dead ones? If there was any invisible crack in the love the one had for the other, we would have no hope, no salvation, no Savior. And it is the story of this perfect love that hasn't been well told; that has been concealed by ἀρχῆ without a definite article in John 1:1 and 1:2 being translated into English as <beginning> rather than as <primacy>

Of making many texts, there is no end ...

*

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