

Pros ton Theon (πρὸς τὸν θεόν)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” —John 1:1 KJV

The *Social Trinitarian*, working from the misconception that the Word (logos) is the second person of the Godhead, cite their position that when two persons are said to be “pros” each other, the Greek preposition should/ must be translated with the English preposition “with” as in “along side of”. Even if we granted that for the sake of argument (which I do not accept as an absolute rule), it would ONLY apply IF the logos was a separate rational person from the Father—this is only supposed by the Pluralists and in no way proven as true. If, on the other hand, the *logos* is not another rational person from the Father, but, rather, an attribute of the Father (as is *eternal life* in 1 John 1:2), then, the understanding of “pros” in John 1:1b could only correctly be understood as “pertaining to” (as is presented in the subsequent part of this article).

Ên (ἦν): verb of being, “was”.

Before we take up the phrase “*pros ton theon*” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν), we should consider the verb of being “ên” (ἦν) as it appears here in the statement: “**ên** *pros ton theon*” (ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν). The verb ἦν (ên) is the *imperfect tense* of the verb εἶμί (eimi). Eimi means “to be” or “I am,” and indicates continuous action in the past. “*In the beginning was (ἦν) the word, and the word was (ἦν) with God.*” It is true that this particular verb tense of εἶμί indicates continuous action in the past and is employed here by the Holy Spirit to show the existence of the word in the beginning. It is used to show its existence contemporary with God. Randolph Yeager (*Renaissance New Testament, Lexicon*) states the following: “Since ἦν transmits the concept of continuous existence in the past we can say that at a timepoint, arbitrarily referred to by creatures of time and space as ‘the beginning’ the Word was already existing and had enjoyed this existence ‘before the beginning.’ Had John used the present tense of εἶμί (ἐστί), we would translate ‘in the beginning is the word’ and comment that the word had a

continuous existence in and simultaneous existence with a point which we call the beginning. In other words, the conclusion would be that the Word had beginning at the same time that time began. This would deny the eternal character of the Word.”

Even though the above is certainly true, any attempt to employ the tense of the word ἦν (ên) to prove a collateral existence of a second God-person along side the Father in the beginning is unconvincing. This effort is futile inasmuch as those who believe that God is a solitary-sentient-being find no inconsistency at all in having God’s word exist at the same time as God Himself. Perish the thought of God without His *logos*: thought, reasoning, word. So, then, Modalism can, and does, speak of the “*eternal word of God.*”

Pros ton Theon (πρὸς τὸν θεόν): was with God.

According to this text, the Word was “with God”: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. (Greek: πρὸς τὸν θεόν, transliterates as: pros ton theon); that is, “with God.” Those not knowledgeable of Greek idioms would see *pros ton theon (with God)* as meaning “face to face” with God (which meaning the Greek preposition “pros” does, rarely, have: see 1 Corinthians 13:12), however, that would be a mistake. Here, “pros ton theon” should be understood as “pertaining to God.” A companion text is found in 1 John 1:2, (καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐώρακαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν. Here eternal life is said to πρὸς τὸν πατέρα); the clause: πρὸς τὸν πατέρα transliterates to pros ton patera, “with the Father;” it is understood, however, that “with the Father” means “pertains to the Father.” Eternal life “pertains to the Father.” No one (that is not attempting to multiply gods) understands eternal life to be a separate person that is “face to face” with the Father. So, then the Word of God pertains to God just as does eternal life. Moreover, according to our text the Word “was God.” Just as eternal life is an intrinsic part of God’s identity, so, too, is His Word.

The Pluralists, working from the misconception that the Word (logos) is the second person of the Godhead, feel that the phrase in John 1:1 “with God” proves that the Word (logos) was another god-person with God the Father

in the beginning. As we demonstrated above 1 John 1:2 disproves that assumption. Moreover, what follows is more evidence that the Greek preposition "pros" of John 1:1 is highly unlikely to have the meaning of "face to face" or "along side of", or "in the presence of": or any like meaning.

"Pros" is a Greek preposition that is used 723 (my personal count -- allow two points plus or minus for margin of error) times in the Greek New Testament, as listed in "*The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*" by Geroge W. Wigram. The primary meaning of "pros" is *to*, or *unto*. Other rare usages of the word are: *among*, *at*, *about*, *nigh*, and *for*. Not counting John 1:1, since that is the text under examination, only 24 times out of 723 does "pros" translate to "with" in the sense of one thing being *alongside of*, or *in the presence of* another thing. While "pros" does seem to, on rare occasions, have the meaning of "alone side of" or "in the presence of" that is most certainly not its primary meaning or use. In fact, in other New Testament texts where the exact same phrase ("pros ton theon") is used, the idea of "along side of" or "in the presence" is far from the meaning. Three of those texts are Romans 15:17, Hebrews 2:17 and Hebrews 5:1. In these places "pros ton theon" is not translated "with God", but is understood, and indeed translated, as "pertain to God" or "pertaining to God."

Romans 15:17, "I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God."

Hebrews 2:17, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." **πρὸς τὸν θεόν, "pros ton theon" pertaining to God**

Hebrews 5:1, "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:" **πρὸς τὸν θεόν, "pros ton theon" pertaining to God**

The translation of John 1:1 πρὸς τὸν θεόν, "pros ton theon" as "with God," instead of "pertaining to God," demonstrates the bias of the translators.

Since the same phrase is used in Romans 15:17, Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1, as is used in John 1:1, and there (in all three texts) is translated "pertaining

to God,” it cannot, therefore, be a conclusive forgone proof that “pros ton theon” means “with,” in the sense of one person being with another person. In point of fact, the evidence tends to lean heavily in favor of the Monarchians’ understanding of “πρὸς τὸν θεόν” (pros ton theon) meaning: “pertaining to God.” The Word, then, of John 1:1, pertained to God, as a man’s word pertains to himself.

The question is asked, What harm would it do to biblical doctrinal continuity to translate “pros ton theon” (as it appears in John 1:1) as the phrase is translated elsewhere in Scripture? The answer is, It does no harm, but aids very much the clarity of holy Scripture. The Word pertaining to God would be in harmony with Psalm 33:6 “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” God’s Word, then, pertains to God, as does His breath (Ps 33:6), His hand (Ezek 2:9), His arm (Isa 51:9) or ETERNAL LIFE: 1 John 1:2 (as we have seen above) informs us that Eternal Life was πρὸς τὸν πατέρα (pros ton patera) “with the Father.” Now, all concerned agree that “pros ton patera” means “pertains to the Father;” so, it is evident that “**pros ton theon**” of John 1:1 should be understood as meaning “pertains to God” or “pertaining to God.”

The task of Bible teachers is to interpret the Word of God in such a way that every part is in harmony. The Psalmist writes: “The sum of Your word is truth ...” (Ps 119:160 NASB). Therefore, John 1:1 must be interpreted in a way that will harmonize with Deuteronomy 32:39. The Pluralists will interpret John 1:1 to mean that the Word (Logos) was another person from God, and that this other person, that was with God, was also God. The fact is, Social Trinitarianism places another god-person with the Father in the beginning. Now, the problem that this presents is found in Deuteronomy 32:39, where the Father states, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me... .” This statement, of Father God, that there was no other god-person with Him, makes null and void the Social Trinitarian’s insistence that the Word was another god- person with God the Father in the beginning. Since there are no opposing truths in the Bible, John 1:1 and Deuteronomy 32:39 cannot stand in tension, the one to the other, but must be harmonized by rightly dividing the Word of God (II Timothy 2:15). When God’s word is rightly divided, it becomes clear that the word “with,” as found in John 1:1, does not indicate another person from God. We know this, because 1 John 1:2 states that Eternal Life is “with” God. So, then, it is doctrinally dishonest to insist that in John 1:1 the same writer meant to say

that the Logos was along side of, or face to face with, God; by his words of "pros ton theon." We do not understand Eternal Life to be another person from God because Eternal Life is said to be with God. No, we understand Eternal Life to be an attribute of God, that pertains to God. In the book of Job 12:16, Strength and Wisdom are said to be with God, "*With him is strength and wisdom ...*" We do not understand Strength and Wisdom to be other god-persons from God the Father, because Strength and Wisdom are said to be with God. No, we understand Strength and Wisdom to be attributes of God, that pertain to God. The Word is no more a person because it is said to be with God than are Strength, Wisdom or Eternal Life!

What would mean "Face to Face"?

At the very beginning of this essay we introduced 1 Corinthians 13:12 as a place (the only place) where "pros" is associated with the phrase "face to face".

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ **πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον**: ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.

But even there "pros" is not connecting one rational person with another rational person, as the Pluralists attempt to make "pros" do, in John 1:1. In the Corinthians text Paul's analogy is a *mirror* as a means to know and understand oneself. In the Apostle's time mirrors were notoriously unclear. (*Darkly*: "Literally, in an enigma. Old word from **ainissomai**, to express obscurely. This is true of all ancient mirrors. Here only in N.T., but often in LXX:" A. T. Robertson). Paul employs the analogy of a *mirror* to illustrate that in this life we cannot know ourselves, but when "*that which is perfect is come*" (the perfect age) we will understand (know) ourselves a clearly as we are understood (known) by God Himself (e.g., "*we will know even as we are known*"; this references the clarity with which God knows His children.). The Greek phrase Paul uses to say this is "**πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον**:" -"prosōpon pros prosōpon", literally, "face to face". But, since his analogy is a mirror, it is not another's face that is in view here but one's own face.

For the Pluralists to have an argument from John 1:1-3, the Greek should read **para ton theon**, but it does not. Para' primary meaning is "face to face", or "alongside of". It appears in the Greek New Testament about 210

times with the primary meaning of "alongside of", or "in the presence of", or "face to face" when persons are referenced. Clear examples of "para" are found in the following passages:

- Matthew 22:25 “Now there were with (para) us seven brethren... .”
“ἦσαν δὲ **παρ**’ ἡμῖν ἑπτὰ ἀδελφοί: ...”
- John 14:17 “... for he dwelleth with (para) you, and shall be in you.” “... ὅτι **παρ**’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται.”
- John 14:25 “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with (para) you.” “Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν **παρ**’ ὑμῖν μένων:”

But even here, we are being charitable to the Pluralists, because even if they had “para” in John 1:1 they would not have an ironclad example of “face to face” or “alongside of”; because, in the passage from the book of Job, that I mentioned above (Job 12:16), the Septuagint (Greek, Old Testament) reads: “par’ (*declension of para*) autō kratos kai ischus...” (“With him are strength and power...”). Strength and Power are attributes of the Almighty that no one (who is not mad with multiplying gods) would suggest are separate god-persons who are “face to face,” or “alongside of” Yahweh.

Conclusion

It is a challenge to interpret Scripture without bringing any bias to the table: a challenge that most men, no matter how well intentioned, cannot overcome. The inconsistency of Social Trinitarianism is demonstrated when John 1:1 is juxtaposed with Romans 15:17, 1 John 1:2, Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. Inconsistency is the pitfall of all false doctrine: “O Consistency, thou art a virtue.”