

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## John 1 and “the word”

From the first translation of the Bible from Greek into English by William Tyndale in 1534 until modern versions, the latest in 2002, translators have warned us that the King James and other versions are mistaken when they read “all things were made by *Him*” (John 1:3), i.e. Jesus the Son. The Greek does not say this, and the standard translations simply support ecclesiastical tradition. The following 50 translations, including 9 before the King James Version in 1611, do not force the reader to understand that the “word” was the Son before the Son’s birth.

It was the Roman Catholic Douay/Rheims version, translated from the Latin by Gregory Martin in 1582, which first rendered John 1:3, “all things were made by *him*,” rather than “by *it*” (the “word”). This was followed by the King James in 1611. This translational move made the public think that the Son of God created the universe and was also God. This made two Gods, distorted the creed of Jesus (Mark 12:28-34) and usurped the position of the Father as the *unaccompanied* Creator (Isa. 44:24) who “made them male and female” (Mark 10:6; Gen. 1:27) as Jesus and the Hebrew Bible (the OT) said.

In modern times the celebrated commentary on John by Leon Morris says: “More important for our understanding of this Gospel in general and of its use of the term ‘word’ in particular is *its Jewish background*...The ‘word’ irresistibly turns our attention to the repeated ‘and God said’ of the opening chapter of the Bible. The word is God’s creative word...Thus throughout the Old Testament the word of the Lord is thought of as His effective agent for the accomplishing of His divine will, ‘by the word of Yahweh were the heavens made,’ (Ps. 33:6). When God speaks He does something. His word is a divine action...‘So shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth. It will not return to me void, but it will accomplish what I please and it will prosper in the thing for which I sent it’ (Isa. 55:11). In Ps. 29 the voice of the Lord is regarded in much the same way” (but no one would call the voice “he”). Archbishop Temple wrote: “The word (*logos*) alike for Jew and Gentile represents the ruling fact of the universe and represents that fact as *the self-expression of God*. The Jew will remember that ‘by the word of the Lord the heavens were made’; the Greek will think of the rational principle of which all natural laws are particular expressions. Both will agree that this *logos* is the starting point of all things.”

Morris says: “It is probably impossible for us to read the Prologue without thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth. But it is worth bearing in mind [!] that there is nothing to link the two until we come to v. 14. Up to that point the first readers of this Gospel would have thought of the Word in terms of a supremely great Being or *principle*. If we are to evaluate the intended impact of these words we must bear this in mind...John 1:14: Notice that this is the first time in the Gospel that John indicates that the word and Jesus are to be taken as the same. Up till this point [i.e. John 1:1-13] it would have been quite possible for the reader to have taken the ‘word’ to refer to *some supreme cosmic principle or the like*.”

I add this: In verse 5 the light which is in the world is an it (*auto*); only in verse 10 is this light turned into a masculine person “him.” That is because the light is Jesus when Jesus is born, and before this Jesus, the Son of God, is not yet in existence. Thus the word *is Jesus* only after Jesus begins to exist, is born. Before that the word is the word of God, the one God’s plan and wisdom, not yet the Son of God. There is no preexisting Son in the New Testament. God did *not* speak in a Son in the Old Testament times (Heb. 1:2). There was as yet no Son of God because the Son of God was to be the descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:14-16). And thus there is no basis at all for the Trinity.

Now listen to these translations:

1. “All things were made by it” (Tyndale, 1534)
2. “The worde...All things were made by the same” (Coverdale, 1535)
3. “All things were made by it and without it nothing was made” (Matthews’ Bible, 1537)

4. "All things were made by it and without it was made nothing that was made" (The Great Bible, 1539)
5. "All things were made by it" (Taverner NT, 1540)
6. "All things were made by it"(Whittingham, 1557)
7. "All things were made by it" (The Geneva Bible, 1560)
8. "All things were made by it" (Bishops' Bible, 1568)
9. "All things were made by it" (Tomson NT, 1607)
10. "Nor can anything be produced that has been made without it [Reason]" (John LeClerc, 1701)
11. "The word...through the same all things were made" (Mortimer, 1761)
12. "In the beginning was Wisdom...All things were made by it" (Wakefield NT, 1791)
13. "The Word...All things were made by it" (Alexander Campbell, founder of the Church of Christ, 1826)
14. "The Word...All things were formed by it" (Dickinson, *A New and Corrected Version of the NT*, 1833)
15. "All things were made by it" (Barnard, 1847)
16. "Through it [the logos] everything was done" (Wilson, *Emphatic Diaglott*, 1864)
17. "All things through it arose into being" (Folsom, 1869)
18. "All things were made through it" (Sharpe, *Revision of the Authorized English Version*, 1898)
19. "All things were made by the Love thought" (Goddard, 1916)
20. "All things came into being in this God-conception and apart from it came not anything into being that came into being" (Overbury, 1925)
21. "All came into being through it" (Knoch, 1926)
22. "The word...the living expression of the Father's thought" (Blount, *Half Hours with John's Gospel*, 1930)
23. "The word was god" (C.C. Torrey, *The Four Gospels*, 1933)
24. "Through the divine reason all things came into being" (Wade, *The Documents of the NT Translated*, 1934)
25. "Without it nothing created sprang into existence" (Johannes Greber, 1937)
26. "It was in the beginning with God, by its activity all things came into being" (Martin Dibelius, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, translated by F.C. Grant, 1939)
27. "Through its agency all things came into being and apart from it has not one thing come to be" (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Readings from St. John's Gospel*, 1939)
28. "The energizing mind was in existence from the very beginning" (Crofts, *The Four Gospels*, 1949)
29. "First there was the Thought and the Thought was in God...He, him" (Hoare, Translation from the Greek, 1949)
30. "In the beginning God expressed Himself...That personal expression, that word...He" (J.B. Phillips, *NT in Modern English*, 1958)
31. "All was done through it" (Tomanek, 1958)
32. "The Word was the life principle [in creation]" (William Barclay, NT, 1969)
33. "This same idea was at home with God when life began...He" (Jordan, Cottonpatch Version, 1970)
34. "All things became what they are through the Word" (Dale, NT, 1973)
35. "Within the Word was life" (Edington, 1976)
36. "It was his last word. Only it come first" (*Gospels in Scouse*, 1977)
37. "By it everything had being, and without it nothing had being" (Schonfield, The Original NT, 1985)
38. "All things were made through the Word" (Inclusive Language Lectionary, 1986)
39. "In the beginning was the Plan of Yahweh. All things were done according to it" (Hawkins, *Book of Yahweh*, 1987)
40. "All things happened through it" (Gaus, *Unvarnished NT*, 1991)
41. "In the beginning was the divine word and wisdom...everything came to be by means of it" (Robert Miller, *The Complete Gospels*, Annotated Scholars' Version, 1992)

42. "All things were made through the Word" (Throckmorton, 1992)
43. "In the beginning there was the divine word and wisdom, everything came into being by means of it" (Robert Funk, *The Five Gospels*, 1993)
44. "All things were made by the Word" (*NT in the Inclusive Language Bible*, 1994)
45. "Through the Word all things came into being" (Inclusive NT, 1994)
46. "All things came into being through the Word" (Gold, *NT and Psalms*, 1995)
47. "In the beginning was the message, through it all things were done" (Daniels, *The Four Gospels: A Non-Ecclesiastical NT*, 1996)
48. "All things through God were made" (VanCleeef, 1999)
49. "That word of God was God...God's way of speaking and acting" (Beck, NT, 2001)
50. "In the beginning was the Word or the expression of divine Logic" (Zeolla, *Analytical-Literal Translation of the NT*, 2001)
51. "Nothing but God, and all that He means existed in the beginning of absolutely everything. There was no possible way to separate God from His meaning, for only by His meaning can He be identified as God. God's intentions and purposes existed with Him from the very beginning of everything. God, through His intentions and purposes created everything that has, or has had, existence in all of time" (Junkins, *A Fresh Parenthetical Version of the NT*, 2002)

The evidence of fifty translations and paraphrases will show that it is an imposition on Scripture to insist that John wrote, "In the beginning was the Son of God. All things were made by him, the Son, Jesus." John was thinking of the Son as *promised* but not yet in existence. John spoke of *the word*, God's purpose for the world. If the *Son* existed from eternity, that turns God into two and undermines the "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is *one Lord*," Jesus' first commandment (Mark 12:29). If the Son was in existence before he came into existence, this makes no logical sense and contradicts the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

It destroys the Old Testament promise that the Son was in the future to come into existence (2 Sam. 7:14-16). It destroys Matthew's "book of the generation/origin of Jesus" (Matt. 1:1, 18, 20). It contradicts Luke's message from Gabriel that the virginal begetting was the origination point of the Son of God and the exact and only reason for Jesus being uniquely the Son of God (Luke 1:35). If the Son of God is pre-human he cannot be human. If the Son of God existed *before his begetting*, it is impossible for him to have been begotten, brought into existence. If the Son is God, he cannot die, since God cannot die. If Jesus is God, there is no sacrifice or death for sin, since the immortal God is incapable of dying. If the Son of God was originally a holy angel, he also cannot have died, since holy angels are immortal (Luke 20:36). Jesus really was a human being originating in the womb of his mother. (See our video free at [Jesusishuman.com](http://Jesusishuman.com))✧

Translated by our good friend Professor Marian Hillar, Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

Martin was one of the original scholars of St John's College, Oxford, and he became a tutor in the household of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. When the duke was imprisoned for his Roman Catholicism, Martin escaped to Douai, where he joined W. Allen. In 1573 he was ordained a RC priest. After some time in Rome he returned to Douai in 1578 where he spent most of the rest of his life translating the Vulgate (Bible in Latin) into English. He wrote about the religious life and organized charities of Rome in a work called *Roma Sancta* which remained unpublished until 1969. He died on Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1582, the year in which the NT appeared in Rheims, known as the Douay-Rheims Bible. This version is the first to read "All things were made by *him*" (John 1:3), promoting the Trinitarian idea of the eternal Son, Jesus.

*New International Commentary on the New Testament, John*, pp. 75, 102, emphasis added.

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