

The Word: Creature or Creator of Everything Created?

While most scholars of the original Greek seem to agree that it is possible that John 1:1 could be translated with "a god", few if any seem to think it is correct to do so. Behind this is the important issue of the nature of Jesus Christ. Let us examine just passages that clearly deal with whether or not he may be a created being.

John does not add the Greek article "the" that our normal English needs to keep from sounding awkward. (This grammatical construction in Greek is called "anarthrous", meaning "without an article.") John's way of writing affirms the Word present at every beginning, not simply the beginning. At the origin of everything is the Word. This thought continues in the next two phrases. The Word was "with" or "toward" God, and in climax the Word "was" God. The Greek is written with great clarity and directness. If a definite article had been used, this would have given credence to the Modalist heresy. The idea behind modalism was that all three persons of the Trinity are the same person, but that they behave in unique "modes" at different times. God in His wisdom did not inspire it in such a way. However, the correct translation (inclusion of "a" or not) of John 1:1 is relatively insignificant. What is significant is the clear meaning found a couple of verses after John 1:1, which provides us with a clear understanding of verse 1. If one understands and accepts what this verse 3 is saying about Jesus, then even if you translate verse 1 as "a god", you'll still know that it doesn't mean he's another god apart from Jehovah.

I believe no verse with a clearer meaning can be found in all of scripture than John 1:3. As mentioned earlier, though some people really dear to me claim that verse 1 can mean "a" god, this verse should remove any doubt to its meaning, as no Greek scholar can be found who disputes the clear meaning of verse 3, that is that Jesus created everything that was created and therefore cannot himself be created!

The point is that it was inspired by God grammatically in such a way that it is always translated with the same meaning "All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being." Certainly, different words can be used, but grammatically it always comes out saying the same thing as opposed to other passages such as, Rev. 3:14 and of course, verse 1 in this chapter. It never comes out saying "Some things came into being...", for instance or "without Him only one thing came into being..." and no Koine Greek (language of the New Testament) scholar says that it should be translated in such a way that would permit a different grammatical structure producing a different literal meaning. If the Word was brought into being before he brought things into being, the verse is a lie. Of course, you can question every word of every sentence and claim everything you don't like ambiguous or metaphorical to such a degree that no one can confidently understand any book or any writing of any kind, but I firmly believe that God intentionally inspired the important passages such that they do not get mistranslated or misunderstood if you understand simple logic and grammar and that the Bible was in fact written so that all can understand the important things.

Although, some translations of the Bible do put John 1:3 a little differently, decide for yourself if there is really any ambiguity. Let's consider the following translation: "All things came into existence through him, and *apart from him* not even one thing came into existence."

Someone may say, "Notice the phrase 'apart from him.' The apostle excludes Jesus from the count." If you said, 'Apart from Billy, the whole family is going to Disneyland' you wouldn't mean

that Billy wasn't part of the family, just that he wasn't included in the count. Every member of the family is going to Disneyland *with the exception of* Billy. In the same way, every created thing was created by Jesus *with the exception of* Jesus Himself. Jehovah created Jesus first, then Jesus created everything else. Jesus is not God."

Note that this argument turns on the ability to replace "apart from Him" with the phrase "with the exception of Jesus." Allegedly they're synonymous. Okay, let's try the replacement and see what happens. The verse then looks like this: "*With the exception of Jesus*, not even one thing came into existence."

If your brow is furrowed trying to figure this out, I'm not surprised. The reconstructed phrase is nearly nonsense. Strictly speaking, it means that Jesus is the only created thing that exists. Read it again and see for yourself. Obviously, the phrase "apart from Jesus" can't mean "with the exception of Jesus." These phrases are not synonymous.

"Apart from Him" means something entirely different. It means "apart from His agency." It's the same as saying, "Apart from me you'll never get to Disneyland. I've got the car." Apart from Jesus' agency nothing came into being that has come into being. Why? Because Jesus is the Creator. He is God The Word. In this case, the synonym of "apart" is clearly "without", as most translations bear out. That makes perfect sense in the context.

Literal translations such as Darby and LITV further confirm this:

- All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being. (John 1: 3 - Darby)
- All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. (John 1: 3 - LITV)

So, what does the Bible say came into existence without Jesus? "...not even one thing came into existence." (John 1:3)

Others may say that the Greek word in John 1:3 (γίνομαι) does not really mean created out of nothing, as only Almighty God can do, but just the forming out of what is already in existence.

Strong's: I come into being, am born, become, come about, happen.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance: to come into being, to happen, to become,

Whereas, κτίζω is the Greek word which is defined as meaning "created out of nothing" is the work of the Almighty.

Thayers Greek Lexicon: properly, create, which applies only to God who alone can make what was "not there before" (Latin, ex nihilo, out of nothing, J. Thayer).

However, it should be noted that this word meaning "created out of nothing" is used in Colossians 1:16 where it says the "Firstborn" (The Word) created all things. So this argument cannot hold up because both words are used interchangeably for the same event by the same person (The Word / Firstborn / Jesus Christ).

Some people may also say that "firstborn" in Colossians 1:15 means that Jesus was brought forth first or created first by God. "God created Jesus and then used him to make everything else" (<http://www.jw.org>, THE WATCHTOWER MARCH 2013). However, when they do so, they seem to miss the connecting grammar in this passage. The Greek word sometimes translated as "for" at the beginning of Col. 1:16 carries the meaning of "because" (even as the NWT translates it), beginning an explanation of why he is called the "firstborn". In other words, he is called the "firstborn" because he created everything. To make sense grammatically with what I think Jehovah's Witnesses are trying to say, it would need to be something like "he is the firstborn of all creation because he was first-created" or "firstborn of all creation as a result of being created first". His creating everything cannot logically make him first-created. Even if you do as the Jehovah's Witness translation does and add "all other" (not found in the original Greek manuscripts), such that it says, "because by means of him all other things were created", it still would not logically make him first-created! It would need to say something like "he is the first-created of all creation because God the Father created him first". That would make their argument logical, but no such rendering is found in Scripture. Rather it's evident "firstborn" is used in the sense that it is in Exodus 4:22 and Jeremiah 31:9. In the first verse, God refers to Israel as His firstborn and the second he does so in reference to Ephraim, carrying a meaning of preeminence rather than a physical birth order.

Someone may also bring up Revelation 3:14, thinking that "the beginning of the creation of God" means the same thing as "the beginning *creature* of the creation of God". But of course, if this is true then it directly contradicts other Scripture such as John 1:3, which we just reviewed and Colossians 1:15-16 where Jesus is called the "firstborn" because he created everything. The ESV describes Jesus' words as "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation." Now let's think about what this does not say in any translation. Does it say that Jesus was the beginning "creature" of God's creation? Does it say that Jesus is beginning "creator" of God's creation? Of course, the answer is NO in both cases. The phrase is simply, "the beginning of God's creation". The way a person understands this is going to be influenced more by theological bias than what the text truly tells us. Assuming you do believe that the correct meaning is "the beginning creature of God's creation", I would suggest to you that the only reason you think that, is either because someone told you that's what it meant, or after you had already come to the conclusion that Jesus is a creature, you saw this verse as having such a meaning.

This is where context and other passages such as John 1:3 and Colossians 1:15-16 can clear things up for us in confirming that the intended meaning is not "the beginning creature of God's creation", but "the beginning creator of God's creation".

Now let's take a quick examination of several translations to bring this into perspective:

- "the head of God's new order" (BBE)
- "the source of God's creation" (CEV)
- "the origin of all that God has created" (GNB)
- "the source of God's creation" (GW)
- "the Head of the creation of God" (LITV)
- "the ruler of God's creation" (NIV)
- "the Chief of the creation of God" (Murdock)
- "the chief of the creation of God" (YLT)

and yes, there are some translations that put it as:

"the beginning of God's creation" (ESV), but most, if not all, of these translators I believe would say that it does not mean that it's saying he was the beginning created being, but the beginning creator.

Also note that God on His throne in Revelation 21:5-6 is also said to be "the beginning", so it should be recognized that Jesus is in the same way the beginning creator. For more on the use of this term see <http://www.forgiveninchrist.org/TheFirstandTheLast.pdf>.

Some people may also say that Proverbs 8 speaks of one who "was made in the very beginning, at the first, before the world began." (GNB) In most Bible translations this one is referred to as "Wisdom" and it does indicate a beginning or creation for it. Some translations do not indicate this one as created or least not clearly where "set up" is used however. For example, in verse 23 we find:

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, Before the earth was. (ASV)
I was anointed from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth *ever was*. (MKJV)
From the age I was anointed, from the first, From former states of the earth. (YLT)
I was set up from everlasting, from that which was before the earth. (LITV)
From eternal days I was given my place, from the birth of time, before the earth was. (BBE)
I was appointed from everlasting from the first, before the earth began. (GW)

Furthermore, notice how Wisdom says in verse 27: "When **he** prepared the heavens, I was there". Of course, we already know that it was actually The Word (John 1:1-3), Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-17) who did this, so it is clear that "Wisdom" was not the Word, but was **with** the Word, Jesus Christ, when **he** prepared the heavens!

Even if the only acceptable translation was that there was a time when "Wisdom" was created, do we then accept that there was a time when God had no "Wisdom"?

When something is said to be an image, an exact representation of something else does that mean they are different type of things? Is a goat an exact representation of a cat? Is a horse an exact representation of a cow? Is an angel the exact representation of God? What kind of being is God the Father? "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God *is* one Jehovah." (Deut. 6:4 – LITV). Of whom does the Bible say Jesus is the exact representation?

He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

If you desire further study, please go to <https://john-hunt.worldbibleschool.org> to enroll in a free Bible Study course where I will be your designated student helper.

I firmly believe that when God wants to emphasize a matter in his written word such as in John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-17, and 1 John 4:8, He so inspires it that it is difficult, if not impossible to mistranslate. --John Hunt

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