

John 1:3

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.
(KJV)

1. Trinitarians use this verse to show that Christ made the world and its contents. However, that is not the case. What we have learned from the study of John 1:1 above will be helpful in properly interpreting this verse.

John 1:1-3

(1) In the beginning was the Word [the wisdom, plan or purpose of God], and the Word was with God, and the Word was divine.

(2) The same was in the beginning with God.

(3) All things were made by it [the Word]; and without it was not anything made that was made.

2. The pronoun in verse 3 can legitimately be translated as “it.” It does not have to be translated as “him,” and it does not have to refer to a “person” in any way. A primary reason why people get the idea that “the Word” is a person is that the pronoun “he” is used with it. The Greek text does, of course, have the masculine pronoun, because like many languages, including Spanish, French, German, Latin, Hebrew, *etc.*, the Greek language assigns a gender to all nouns, and the gender of the pronoun must agree with the gender of the noun. In French, for example, a table is feminine, *la table*, while a desk is masculine, *le bureau*, and feminine and masculine pronouns are required to agree with the gender of the noun. In translating from French to English, however, we would never translate “the table, she,” or “the desk, he.” And we would *never* insist that a table or desk was somehow a person just because it had a masculine or feminine pronoun. We would use the English designation “it” for the table and the desk, in spite of the fact that in the original language the table and desk have a masculine or feminine gender.

This is true in the translation of any language that assigns a gender to nouns. In Spanish, a car is masculine, *el carro*, while a bicycle is feminine, *la bicicleta*. Again, no English translator would translate “the car, he,” or “the bicycle, she.” People translating Spanish into English use the word “it” when referring to a car or bicycle. For another example, a Greek feminine noun is “anchor” (*agkura*), and literally it would demand a feminine pronoun. Yet no English translator would write “I accidentally dropped the anchor, and *she* fell through the bottom of the boat.” We would write, “it” fell through the bottom of the boat. In Greek, “wind” (*anemos*) is masculine, but we would not translate it into English that way. We would say, “The wind was blowing so hard *it* blew the trash cans over,” not “the wind, *he* blew the trash cans over.” When translating from another language into English, we have to use the English language properly. Students who are studying Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, French, German, *etc.*, quickly discover that one of the difficult things about learning the language is memorizing the gender of each noun—something we do not have in the English language.

Greek is a language that assigns gender to nouns. For example, in Greek, “word” is masculine while “spirit” is neuter. All languages that assign gender to nouns demand that

pronouns referring to the noun have the same gender as the noun. Once we clearly understand that the gender of a pronoun is determined by the gender of the noun, we can see why one cannot build a doctrine on the gender of a noun and its agreeing pronoun. No student of the Bible should take the position that “the Word” is somehow a masculine person based on its pronoun any more than he would take the position that a *book* was a feminine person or a *desk* was a masculine person because that is the gender assigned to those nouns in French. Indeed, if one tried to build a theology based on the gender of the noun in the language, great confusion would result.

In doctrinal discussions about the holy spirit some people assert that it is a person because the Bible has “he” and “him” in verses that refer to it. So, for example, John 14:16 and 17 reads:

John 14:16 and 17

(16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

(17) the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

In the Greek language, “spirit” is neuter and thus is associated with the neuter pronoun, “it.” So, for example, verse 17 above should be literally translated as: “The world cannot accept it (the spirit), because it neither sees it nor knows it. But you know it, for it lives with you and will be in you.” Any *Analytical Lexicon* will confirm that the pronouns in this verse that refer to spirit are neuter, not masculine.

If the pronouns in the Greek text are neuter, why do the translators translate them as “he” and “him?” The answer to that question is that translators realize that when you are dealing with a language that assigns genders to nouns, it is the context and general understanding of the subject at hand that determines how the pronouns are to be translated into English as we have seen in the above examples (desk, bicycle, car, wind, *etc.*). It is amazing to us that Trinitarian translators know that the same neuter pronoun can be converted to an English masculine pronoun (*e.g.*, “it” becomes “he”) but are evidently not as willing to see that a Greek masculine pronoun could be translated as an English *neuter* pronoun (*e.g.*, “he becomes “it”), if the subject matter and context warrant it. Linguistically, both conversions could be completely legitimate. But any change depends, not on the gender assigned by the Greek language, but rather on the subject matter being discussed. For example, the *logos* is God’s plan and should be an it,” and “holy spirit,” when used as God’s gift, should also be translated into English as an “it.” To the unindoctrinated mind, plans and gifts are obviously not “persons.”

Trinitarian Christians believe “the Holy Spirit” is a masculine being and translate the pronouns that refer to it as “he” in spite of the fact that the noun is neuter and call for an “it,” not a “he” in Greek. Similarly, even though the masculine noun calls for the masculine pronoun in the Greek language, it would still not be translated into English as the masculine pronoun, “he,” unless it could be shown from the context that the subject was actually a male; *i.e.*, a man, a male animal, or God (who represents Himself as masculine in the Bible). So the question to answer when dealing with “the Word,” “the

Comforter” and “the holy spirit” is not, “What gender are the noun and associated pronoun in the Greek language?” Rather, we need to ask, “Do those words refer to a masculine *person* that would require a “he” in English, or do they refer to a “thing” that would require the pronoun “it”?” When “holy spirit” is referring to the power of God in action or God’s gift, it is properly an “it.” The same is true for the “comforter.” For a much more exhaustive treatment of the subject of holy spirit see, *The Gift of Holy Spirit, Every Christian’s Divine Deposit*, available from CES.

In Hebrew, “spirit” is feminine and must have feminine pronouns, while in Greek, “spirit” is neuter and takes neuter pronouns. Thus, a person trying to build a theology on the basis of the gender of the noun and pronoun would find himself in an interesting situation trying to explain how it could be that “the spirit” of God somehow changed genders as the New Testament was written.

Because the translators of the Bible have almost always been Trinitarians, and since “the Word” has almost always been erroneously identified with the person of Christ, the pronouns referring to the *logos* in verse 3 have almost always been translated as “him.” However, if in fact the *logos* is the plan, purpose, wisdom and reason of God, then the Greek pronoun should be translated into the English as “it.” To demand that “the Word” is a masculine person and therefore a third part of a three-part Godhead because the pronouns used when referring to it are masculine, is poor scholarship.

3. Viewed in light of the above translation, the opening of the Gospel of John reveals wonderful truth, and is also a powerful polemic against primary heresies of the day. We have already seen (under John 1:1) that Gnostics were teaching that, in the hierarchy of gods, the god *Elohim* and the god Christ were actually opposed to each other. Also active at the time John was written were the Docetists, who were teaching that Christ was a spirit being and only appeared to be flesh. The opening of John’s Gospel shows that in the beginning there was only one God, not many gods. It also shows that this God had reason, wisdom, a plan or purpose within Himself, which became flesh in Jesus Christ. Thus, God and Christ are not at cross purposes as some were saying, and Christ was not a spirit being as others were saying.

The opening of John reveals this simple truth in a beautiful way: “In the beginning there was one God, who had reason, purpose and a plan, which was, by its very nature and origin, divine. It was through and on account of this reason, plan and purpose that everything was made. Nothing was made outside its scope. Then, this plan became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and tabernacled among us.” Understanding the opening of John this way fits with the whole of Scripture and is entirely acceptable from a translation standpoint.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 86-88
Snedeker, pp. 411 and 412

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