

## A Non-Genesis Creation Interpretation of John 1:3-4

by William Schlegel

Almost all deity-of-Christ and Arian readers of the Bible understand John 1:3-4 to be a statement about the involvement of the Logos of John 1:1 in the Genesis creation of the physical universe.<sup>1</sup> The Logos of John 1:1 is taken to be a pre-incarnate divine person or being distinct from the God of John 1:1b<sup>2</sup>, either one member of a co-equal “godhead” (Trinitarianism), or a subordinate god/angel (Arianism) who eventually became incarnated as Jesus.

Some Biblical Unitarians also interpret John 1:3-4 in a Genesis creation context, but maintain that the Logos of John 1:1 is not a literal person, only a personification of God’s Wisdom or Plan involved in the Genesis creation.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, this paper interprets the Prologue of John, focusing on verses 3-4, as introducing a new beginning in the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, and not directly describing the Genesis creation of the physical universe. While intentionally re-using some Genesis language, John 1:3-4 introduces **other** things, not the material universe, that came to be in and through the Logos/Word, the man Christ Jesus. The non-Genesis view of John 1 was essentially the view of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Socinian reformers:

In the cited passage (John 1:1) wherein the Word is said to have been in the beginning, there is no reference to an antecedent eternity, without commencement; because mention is made here of a *beginning*, which is opposed to that eternity. But the word *beginning*, used absolutely, is to be understood of the subject matter under consideration...As then the matter of which John is treating is the Gospel, or the things transacted under the Gospel, nothing else ought to be understood here beside the beginning of the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

### A Brief Summary of John 1:1-2: a Non-Genesis Creation Interpretation

- “In the beginning was the Word” (1:1a) is an intentional parallel but not a direct reference to the Genesis creation. John’s “beginning” refers to a new beginning in the life and ministry (the gospel) of the human person Jesus of Nazareth. The human Jesus is called the Word because through him God spoke and worked to bring about the ongoing new creation (John 4:50, 5:8, 6:54, 8:25, 29, 44, 9:7, 14:10, 14:24, 15:27, 16:4, 17:21).

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Trinitarians: Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 79ff; Beasley-Murray et al., *John, Volume 36*, 11; For a modern “Arian” (Jehovah’s Witnesses) view, [www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/bible-verses/john-1-1/](http://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/bible-verses/john-1-1/)

<sup>2</sup> “and the Logos was with God” καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Buzzard and Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 190ff. Smith, *Wisdom Christology in the Gospel of John*, 49ff.

<sup>4</sup> Rees, *The Racovian Catechism.*, 64-65. For more recent expressions of the New Beginning/Creation view of John 1, see Perry *John 1:1-18*, and Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels*, 45ff.

- “and the Word was with God” (1:1b) means that the human Jesus had a unique relationship with God. Jesus, in Moses-like fashion saw and heard things from God (1:17, 1:45, 3:2, 3:11, 5:19, 8:26, 8:28, 8:38, 8:40, 9:16, 9:33, 15:15). The “Word was with God” also foreshadows the human Jesus’s post-ascension position with God (John 1:18).
- “and the Word was God” (1:1c) is not a statement about ontology, but means that God (the Father, the one true God, 17:3) spoke and worked in and through the man Jesus. Rather than being about ontology, “the Word was God” is a statement about representation and agency. This Gospel declares some 40 times that Jesus was sent. As Jesus declared in John’s Gospel, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” and “the Father who dwells in me does His works” (John 5:19, 5:30, 8:28, 10:38, 14:7, 9-20, 28, 17:21, 20:28). The God in Jesus was the Father. “God” in John 1:1c is the same “God” in 1:1b and is the same God in 1:2. The past tense “**was** God” (not “**is** God”) since in this short statement the author introduced and summarized the historical work of God in the life and ministry of Jesus.
- John 1:2 begins a contrast between the human Jesus (the Word) and John the Baptizer. “**This one**” οὗτος<sup>5</sup> who “was in the beginning with God”<sup>6</sup> is the Logos, the human Jesus, in whom life came to be and who was the true light (1:3-4, 9) - in contrast to “**this one**” οὗτος in 1:7, John the Baptizer, who was not the light but came to bear testimony to the light.<sup>7</sup>

### Typical translations compared with Literal Translations

Typical translations render John 1:3 as: “all things **were made** through him, and without him not anything was made...” (KJV, RSV, ESV). Or, “all things **came into being** through him” (NRS), “All things came into being **by Him**” (NAS). NET has “all things **were created** by him”.

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<sup>5</sup> Masculine singular near demonstrative pronoun, “this, this one, he”. On the comparison of οὗτος in vss. 2 and 7, see Perry, *John 1:1-18*, 23ff.

<sup>6</sup> “God” in verse 2, as in verse 1, is the Father, not the Trinity, and not the Son, and not abstract “deity”.

<sup>7</sup> The appearance of John the Baptizer early in the Prologue - the sixth verse of the Gospel (and 1:15, 1:19-35, 3:25-30) - is more evidence that “the beginning” of John 1:1 and all of the verses in the beginning of John’s Gospel refer not to the Genesis creation but to the same beginning that the Gospel of Mark describes, “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. John the Baptizer is so quickly and prominently introduced in the beginning of John’s Gospel because the Baptizer has a key role in that beginning, not in the Genesis beginning.

Four times in the first chapter of the Gospel (1:15, 1:30, 1:33, 1:34; also 3:26) the Baptizer distinguishes between himself and “this one” οὗτος, the man Jesus. In the Prologue, John the Baptizer is not being distinguished from and not testifying about:

1. a pre-incarnate divine Logos involved in the Genesis creation, nor
2. an abstract yet personified logos or light involved in the Genesis creation.

The author of the Gospel of John clarifies the relationship between two human beings who were ministering and making disciples at the same time. The author draws the contrast in order to establish the roles of each and priority of the one man (Jesus) to the other (John the Baptizer).

There are several vocabulary and translation issues within this verse that we will examine as we proceed. Translations of John 1:3 of “all things” which “were made” or “were created” presuppose and advocate a Genesis creation, material beginning. However, the biases of a Genesis creation interpretation and translation of verse 3 become apparent when compared to literal translations of John 1:3:

Youngs Literal:

“all things through him **did happen**, and without him **happened** not even one thing that hath happened.”

Literal Standard Version:

“all things **happened** through Him, and without Him not even one thing **happened** that has happened.”

The word choice of these literal translations - specifically “happened” instead of “were made” or “were created” - does not so readily recommend a Genesis creation context.

Additionally, the word “things” in John 1:3 suggests the material, physical universe of the Genesis creation. But the word “things” is not literally in the Greek New Testament text (see further below). John 1:3 can justifiably be translated:

“All happened through him, and without him nothing happened...”

Interpreted and translated this way, the verse introduces events which the author is about to describe **in his Gospel**. “All *things*” the author is about to record happened through the Logos who was with God – and not through someone or something else.<sup>8</sup> All the divine teaching and all the miraculous signs: the changing of water into wine, the healing of the sick and lame by a spoken word, the feeding of a multitude, the giving of sight to the blind, and the raising of the dead with a spoken word. And, perhaps the most important of all those things that happened was the resurrection of a human life to immortality. All these things **came to be**, that is, **happened** through the Logos, the man Jesus of Nazareth.

Indeed, there are some intentional parallels of language between the Septuagint translation of Genesis 1 and John 1. But the parallel language in John serves a different purpose than in

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<sup>8</sup> See comments above on John 1:2. The comparison in the Prologue is between Jesus and John the Baptizer. All things happened through the Word (Jesus), not through the Baptizer. Cf. John 10:41, “John performed no miraculous sign, but everything John said about this man was true!” Many wondered if the Baptizer was the Christ (Jn. 1:20, Lk. 3:15). John’s Gospel – starting in the Prologue - clarifies the relationship between Jesus (the Word) and the Baptizer. While the Baptizer was important, Jesus had supremacy as God’s chosen vessel through whom redemption, restoration and new life came. Neither John the Baptizer nor **anyone else** is God’s Messiah through whom such things happened or will happen (cf. John 20:31).

Genesis. Words like “light” and “darkness” in the first verses of John’s Gospel are not the light and darkness of the Genesis creation account.<sup>9</sup>

And, there are gigantic differences between Genesis 1 and John 1. Things that come to be in John’s Gospel are not the things that come to be in Genesis. Every verse in John 1 is very different from Genesis 1.<sup>10</sup> In John 1:1, the third word is different from Genesis 1:1. In the LXX Genesis, the third word is “created”<sup>11</sup>. But no word for “create” occurs anywhere in John’s Prologue - a strange fact if John is describing the Genesis’ creation. Likewise, John’s famous noun *logos* is not in the Genesis creation account.<sup>12</sup> There is no second G/god-figure or personified Logos present and partnering with God in the Genesis creation account of light, darkness, the separation of the waters, creation of dry land, plants, trees, sun, moon, stars, animals or humans.<sup>13</sup>

John 1 may have some parallels to the Genesis beginning but has many differences because John describes a different beginning. Similarities, intentional continuity and parallelism (typology) do not prove identity, but in fact are evidence of differentiation. Two parallel lines are not identical lines, but are different lines. The Genesis 1 and John 1 beginnings may be parallel beginnings, but they are not identical beginnings.

### Examination of Key Words in John 1:3

πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν  
all through him came to be, and apart from him came to be not one (that which came to be)

#### **all things**

<sup>9</sup> In Genesis light precedes life. Exactly the opposite in John 1:3-4 where life precedes light. Further, all the language in the Prologue that alludes to Genesis is re-iterated later in the Gospel of John itself, and applied to the ministry of the human person Jesus. Words like “beginning, darkness, light, life” are explicitly connected to the ministry of the human person Jesus in the Gospel, which is evidence that the Prologue also describes the human person Jesus. See also 1 John 2:7-11 where light and darkness do not refer to the Genesis beginning.

<sup>10</sup> Compare for example, Gen. 1:6 with John 1:6:

Gen. 1:6, “God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and let it separate water from water.’”

John 1:6, “A man came, sent from God, whose name was John.”

<sup>11</sup> The Greek (LXX) text of Genesis uses ποιέω (do, make, accomplish, create) for the Hebrew words ברא and עשה. Neither ποιέω nor another Greek word for “create” κτίζω are in John’s Prologue.

<sup>12</sup> The first time the noun *logos* occurs in Genesis is in the plural form (Gen. 4:23): “You wives of Lamech, hear my words!” The closest Hebrew equivalent to *logos* is *davar*, which is not found in the Hebrew Genesis creation. The first time *davar* occurs is in Genesis 11:1, also in plural. The verbal form λέγω is in the LXX of Genesis 1. Psa. 33:6 (LXX 32:6) does state that “by the *logos/davar* of the LORD the heavens were made”, but this is in parallel to the “breath of his mouth”. Neither *logos/davar* nor *pneuma/ruah* are persons, nor are they abstract wisdom or plan. The emphasis in Psa. 33:6 is on God’s power and ability.

<sup>13</sup> Finding either a personal or impersonal Logos in Genesis 1:26 at the creation of man is eisegesis.

The Greek word translated “all *things*” is one Greek word, not two words - the neuter plural adjective “all” (πάντα<sup>14</sup> *panta*). The word “*things*” is supplied by translators.<sup>15</sup> But although the adjective “all” is only one word, it functions as a noun, meaning **all something**. The reader has to decide what the *something* of the **all** is. All the universe? All material things? All people? All powers? All teaching? All events? There are many options.

Context is necessary to interpret the word “all”. The translation “all *things*” tends to convey material, physical things. However, all material things may not be the “all *things*” the author intended to communicate here in John’s opening sentences.

It is helpful to see how the author uses “all” in the rest of his book. Of the 65 occurrences of the word “all” in the Gospel of John (with and without a noun supplied), there is not one occurrence where “all” means unequivocally “all the created physical, material universe.”

Different, non-material meanings of “all” in the Gospel of John include: all (*things*) the Father showed Jesus (5:20), all (*things*) Jesus heard from the Father (15:15), all (*things*) the Father gave to Jesus (17:7, 16:15), all authority, privileges or power (3:25, 13:3, 5), all truth (14:26), all knowledge (16:30, 21:17), all (*things*) said or taught (10:41, 14:26), all (*things*) that belong to the shepherd (i.e., sheep, 10:4). In many of these references there is no noun with the adjective “all”. Context, as well as grammatical gender, number and case determine what “all” is intended.

Another significant use of “all” (usually in masculine) in the Gospel of John means “all” people. The word “all” is used three more times in the Prologue, in each case referring to all people:

1:7 “This one came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all (mp)<sup>16</sup> might believe through him.”

1:9 “The true light that gives light to all human beings” (mp, the noun “men, human beings” is in the Greek text).

1:16 “from his fullness we have all (mp) received”

Other examples in John’s Gospel of “all” meaning all people, include:

3:16 “that all (ms, “everyone”) who believe in him should not perish”.

3:20 “all (ms) who do evil”

3:26 “all (mp) are coming to him”

6:37 “all (ns, which many translations in context understand to be people) that the Father gives me will come to me;”

<sup>14</sup> πάντα is the grammatical form for both the masculine singular accusative, and the neuter plural nominative (cf. John 1:9 as a masculine singular accusative).

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, many translations add the word “thing” to the word “ἐν/one” toward the end of 1:3 “not one *thing*, *nothing*.”

<sup>16</sup> Abbreviations for gender/number: masculine plural= mp; neuter plural = np; masculine singular = ms, etc.

17:21 “that they may all (mp) be one”

Significant for our study are examples in the Gospel of John where “all” by itself in the same neuter plural as in 1:3 means **events** - including events associated with the life of Jesus:

4:29, 39 “Come, see a man who told me all *things* (np) that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?”

4:45 “they had seen **all** (np) *things* he had done in Jerusalem”

5:20 “For the Father loves the Son, and shows him **all** (np) *things* that He Himself is doing”

15:21 “But they will do **all** (np) these *things* to you on account of my name”

18:4 “Jesus therefore, knowing **all** (np) the *things* that were coming upon him”

19:28 “After this Jesus, knowing that **all** (np) *things* were now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), ‘I thirst.’”

“All things were now finished”. What all things? The Genesis creation (cf. Gen. 2:1)? Obviously not. John 19:28 refers to all things that happened in Jesus’s ministry.

All these references show that there is a wide range of meanings for “all” in John’s Gospel, particularly of things that are not material or physical; and, a significant use of the neuter plural “all” (πάντα) means “all events”. Rather than take the “all things” of John 1:3 to be a reference to all material things in the created universe - a way in which the word is never used anywhere else in the Gospel of John or for that matter rarely if ever in all of the New Testament - the word **all** is better understood in John 1:3 as all the events that the Gospel of John is about to narrate.<sup>17</sup>

### ἐγένετο *egeneto* “were made”, “came to be” or “happened”?

Another word that requires consideration is ἐγένετο *egeneto*,<sup>18</sup> the Greek word that is often translated in John 1:3 as “was made” with the implication of things being “created”.

For instance:

ESV, RSV: “All things **were made** through him, and without him was not any thing **made** ...”

NAS: “All things **came into being** by Him, and apart from Him nothing **came into being**...”

NET: “All things **were created** by him, and apart from him not one thing **was created** that has been created.”

<sup>17</sup> Again, commentators puzzle over the early appearance of John the Baptizer in the Prologue as he abruptly interrupts a presumed Genesis creation description. But the Baptizer fits well into an introduction of “all *things*” that came to be through the Logos (the man Jesus). See footnotes #7 and #8.

<sup>18</sup> Verb, indicative aorist middle 3rd person singular from γίνομαι. The syntax of John 1:3 is “all - through him - came to be”.

These are theologically biased translations of *egeneto* that cause readers to think that the Genesis creation is the topic. It is understandable why so many readers think John 1:3 describes the Genesis creation when material connotations of “all *things*” (see above) are combined with “were made” or “were created”.

But *egeneto* has a wide range of meanings, many which have nothing to do with creation *ex nihilo*.<sup>19</sup> The word occurs 51 times in various forms in the Gospel of John, 17 times in this exact form (ἐγένετο *egeneto*). Setting aside for the moment the two occurrences of *egeneto* under discussion in John 1:3, the author of John’s Gospel does not use *egeneto* anywhere else to mean “were made” or “were created” in a material, physical sense.<sup>20</sup> Instead, throughout John’s Gospel *egeneto* communicates the historical sense of something that “happened, came to pass, came to be, came about, occurred, was done, came, came on the scene, arrived, was.”<sup>21</sup>

A few examples:

1:6 “*There was egeneto* a man sent from God, whose name was John.”

1:17 “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth **came egeneto** through Jesus Christ.”

1:28 “This **happened egeneto** in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”

2:1 “On the third day there **was egeneto** a wedding in Cana...”

3:25 “a discussion **arose egeneto** about purification...”

10:22 “At that time the Festival of Tabernacles **came about egeneto**...”

10:35 “to whom the word of God **came egeneto**”

19:36 “these things **happened egeneto** in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled...”<sup>22</sup>

Presuppositions affect how translators interpret a passage and then which words they choose to translate one language into another language. Readers should be aware that a word like *egeneto* has many translation possibilities. Out of the seven times that *egeneto* appears in John 1, the word is typically translated six different ways: “was made” in 1:3 (2x), 1:10; “was” in 1:6; “became” in 1:14; “came” in 1:17; “happened” in 1:28.<sup>23</sup> We are justified in rejecting the theological presuppositions that interpret and translate John 1:3 in an ontological, material sense

<sup>19</sup> Perry, *A Socinian-Racovian Style Reading of John's Prologue*, 6, distinguishes two broad categories of meaning of *egeneto/ginomai*: 1) the historical-temporal, and 2) the ontological-existential. He gives reasons why the “historical-temporal” meaning is preferred in John 1:3.

<sup>20</sup> John 1:10 is often mistaken to be about Genesis creation, but in error: “world/*kosmos*” in John is not planet earth, but relates to human society. In John 1:10 “world” most likely means Israelite society. Schlegel, *Jesus Did Not Create Planet Earth, a Commentary on John 1:9-13*. <https://landandbible.blogspot.com/2020/11/jesus-did-not-create-planet-earth.html>

<sup>21</sup> 1:3 (2x), 6, 10, 14, 17, 28; Jn. 2:1; 3:25; 5:9; 6:16, 21; 7:43; 10:19, 22, 35; 19:36. The meaning “happened, came about” is also the case for the other forms of the verb in John’s Gospel.

<sup>22</sup> When there is no direct object or predicate of the verb *egeneto/ginomai*, as in the examples given, the meaning in John’s Gospel is *happened* and its synonyms *came about*, *was*, *took place*. This is the case in John 1:3 - there is no direct object or predicate. Even with a direct object or predicate, e.g., “water that had become wine” (2:9), something happened with what already existed, i.e., there was no creation *ex nihilo*.

<sup>23</sup> Three other forms of γίνομαι appear in the Prologue (1:3b, 1:12, 1:15), also with various translations.

like “were created” (NET) or “were made”. A historical, non-material interpretation and translation such as “happened” is to be preferred.

The Greek words for “create” or “make” **are not** in John’s Prologue.<sup>24</sup> This absence of any “create” verb (active or passive) in John’s Prologue is more evidence that John’s first chapter is **not** commenting on the Genesis creation. John’s subject is different from Genesis’s subject. In John there is no mention of the creation of the heavens and earth,<sup>25</sup> seas, dry land, sun, moon, stars, rocks, plants, trees, birds or animals. The author of the Gospel of John mentions nothing of such things because these things are not his topic. His topic is a new beginning in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

There are two other verses in John’s Prologue where *egeneto* is paired with the word “through”: 1:10 and 1:17. In both cases the things that “came to be through” are not physical or material. The world/*kosmos* “that **came to be through** him” is not planet earth, but relates to a segment of human (Israelite) society. The “grace and truth” that **came to be through** Jesus Christ (1:17) is also non-material. The “grace and truth” that came through Jesus in 1:17 is a kind of inclusio of “all” that came to be “through him” in 1:3. All things included in “grace and truth” came to be through the man Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Author’s purpose statement: This one through whom all things happened is the Christ**

The author has a reason for stating here at the beginning of his book that **all things happened through** the Word (the man Jesus). The same reason is reiterated in the purpose-for-writing-statement at the end of the book. The reason the author wrote was so that his readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31). All the messianic events that happened, all the life-restoring signs that came to be through him - **all these things** are evidence that Jesus of Nazareth (the Word) is the Christ. John the Baptizer was not the Christ and neither is anyone else who had or would come later. No man ever spoke like the man Jesus (7:46) and no such **things happened** through anyone else. The declaration of Andrew in chapter 1 announces the same purpose: “We have found the Christ!” (1:41). All things that happened (or came to be) through Jesus of Nazareth is evidence that he is the Christ.

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<sup>24</sup> The verb *egeneto/ginomai* is in the Greek translation of the Genesis creation account. It is not the word in Genesis for “create” or “make”, but is the equivalent of the Hebrew הָיָה *hayah* (be/become/was) “let there be... and it was”. John’s use of *egeneto* and other Genesis language (in the beginning, light, darkness, work, finished, garden) communicates continuity with the Genesis beginning. The same God is at work in both beginnings.

<sup>25</sup> See note 17 about “world” in John 1:10. World/*kosmos* in John is not planet earth.

<sup>26</sup> Many commentators recognize a chiastic parallel between John 1:3 and 1:17: “all things” in 1:3 is parallel to “grace and truth” in 1:17. Culpepper, *The Pivot of John’s Prologue*. Compare how the world/*kosmos* was “rescued, saved, preserved” through the sent Son (3:17), that is, salvation of the world/*kosmos* is another immaterial happening through Jesus.

It makes good sense that John's introduction (1:1-18) introduces the rest of his Gospel and not the Genesis creation, since all that happened in his Gospel confirms that Jesus is the Christ. The author's topic is not the Genesis creation but the identification of the Christ.

### **through δὴ – the Word is the channel not the source for what comes to be in John 1**

Deity-of-Christ readers claim they see Jesus as the active creator in verses like John 1:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2.<sup>27</sup> But each of these references has a very important word that tends to be overlooked: the word is **through δὴ**. Some translations of John 1:3 misdirect by translating "through" as "by" ("all things were created **by** him" NET; also, NAS, KJV) as if the Logos is the active creator. But the L/logos is not the source of what comes to be (happens) in John 1:3. God is the source who brings new things to be **through** the Logos. Just as new things come to be **through** the man Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2<sup>28</sup>, so here in John 1:3, all things came to be **through** the Word, the man Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was not the creator in either Genesis 1 or John 1.<sup>29</sup> The Jesus of John's Gospel made it clear that he was not the source of things **that came to be** in his ministry (John 5:30, 8:28, 10:49, 14:10, cf. Acts 2:22, 17:31). However, Jesus Christ was present and participated in the things that came to be in John's Gospel.<sup>30</sup> The things that John's Gospel describes came to be **through** Jesus. God has even granted to Jesus the authority to raise the dead and give life to others (John 5:26, Acts 2:22). But the source of all that happened came from outside of Jesus Christ. The source for what happened was God, who is also called the Father in this Gospel. The Father brought about these things **through** His Word, the man Christ Jesus.

We have confirmation in other New Testament literature which describes God's work being accomplished **through** Jesus. When the New Testament describes God bringing about things **through** Jesus Christ, it is in the context of renewal and resurrection life of new creation, not

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<sup>27</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 80: "He does not say that all was made by Him, but 'through' Him. This way of putting it safeguards the truth that the Father is the source of all that is.". Despite such scholarly caveats, mainstream Christians believe that Jesus was the creator of the universe, e.g., <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-the-Creator.html>. Arians recognize the word "through", but see a subordinate, pre-incarnate angel/Son of God involved in the Genesis creation.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor. 8:6 concerns how believers can relate to foods offered to idols vis-a-vis the believer's relation to God through Jesus Christ. The "all" includes Paul and others alive in Paul's day: "...and **we** through him." In Colossians 1:16 Paul specified the "all" that came to be **in** and **through** the man Christ Jesus: "**all...thrones, dominions, principalities or authorities - all were created through him...**" That is, God created a new authority structure **through** the resurrected man Christ Jesus, who is now at God's right hand (cf. Eph. 1:19-23). In Hebrews 1:2 it is the ages αἰῶνας/*eons*, in context the current and coming ages, that God has created **through** the man Christ Jesus (cf. Eph 1:21, 2:7; Heb 2:5, 6:5).

<sup>29</sup> Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem thousands of years after God, the Father, created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>30</sup> Perry, *John 1:18*, 79-80: "...the phrase 'without him nothing was made' ...implies partnership...It was God that made everything, not the *Logos*. God made everything through the *Logos*."

Genesis. Paul's Adam – Jesus parallel is a good example. Jesus is the second Adam, not the second God. As **through** the first Adam came all human life, society and death, also **through** the second Adam, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, comes redemption and life in the age to come (Rom. 5:14-19, 1 Cor. 15:20-22, Acts 2:22, 2 Cor. 5:19, cf. Rev. 1:5, 21:5).

Deity-of-Christ and Arian interpreters tend to miss the new creation context of passages like John 1, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 because they have followed the path of 2<sup>nd</sup> century and later church fathers who assimilated Neo-Platonic Greek ideas about a personal divine Logos involved in the creation of the material world.<sup>31</sup> But this kind of speculation is nowhere in the Bible and in fact directly contradicts the Bible. The Bible declares that the One God, the Father, created all, and that the One God, the Father, brings about the redemption and new creation **through** the human person, the Lord Jesus the Messiah (Exo. 20:11, Deut. 32:6, Isa. 44:24, Mal. 2:10, Matt. 19:4, John 3:17, 1 Cor. 8:6, Rom. 5:12-17, 1 Cor. 15:21-22, Col. 1:15-18, 1 Tim. 2:5-6, Heb. 1:1-3).

Failure to see the human person Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the beginning of God's new creation prevents a person from understanding the promise that God has given to human beings through Jesus – specifically, resurrection (new) life in the age to come.

All comes **through** the man Jesus, the firstborn of God's new creation (Col. 1:18, Rev. 1:5, 1 Cor. 15:23). In and through Jesus the Messiah there is resurrection life, and Jesus's life is the down-payment and guarantee for others of the regeneration life of the age to come.

**“that which came to be in him, it was life”**

There is a punctuation and translation issue at the end of John 1:3. Philip Comfort explains, “The last phrase of 1:3 (ο γεγονεν - “that which has come into being”) has been connected with 1:3 or with 1:4 by various ancient scribes and modern translators by means of punctuation.”<sup>32</sup>

There was no punctuation in the oldest Greek texts and the verse divisions were added much later in history, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The question is: does the phrase ὁ γέγονεν<sup>33</sup> “that which came to be (that which happened)” at the end of verse 3 go with what precedes it, or with what comes after it in 1:4?

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<sup>31</sup>While maintaining the Father was the one true God, 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian Logos theorists claimed a secondary, lesser god (the Logos) was involved in the creation of the material world. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Logos morphed into a “one being, co-equal” status with the Father and Spirit. Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho*, ch. 56.

<file:///C:/Users/user/Zotero/storage/3G7Y2JZ9/01285.html>; Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 138ff.

<sup>32</sup> Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 252. See also Perry, *The Punctuation of John 1:3b-1:4a*, [https://www.academia.edu/107696554/The\\_Punctuation\\_of\\_John\\_1\\_3b\\_4a](https://www.academia.edu/107696554/The_Punctuation_of_John_1_3b_4a)

<sup>33</sup> Verb, indicative perfect active 3rd person singular from γίνομαι.

Most modern English translations join “that which came to be” with what comes before in 1:3. The Genesis creation assumptions become apparent in the translations, e.g., KJV “without him was not anything made **that was made**”, or even more so, NET “apart from him not one thing was created **that has been created**.”

But attaching 1:3b to 1:3a produces an unnecessary redundancy: “apart from him not one *thing* was made **that was made**”. As did a consensus of ante-Nicene writers<sup>34</sup>, it makes better sense to take ὁ γέγονεν (“that which came to be”) with what follows in 1:4. The UBS Nestle-Aland and Wescott-Hort New Testament Greek texts also assign 1:3a to what follows in 1:4.<sup>35</sup>

Taken with what follows in 1:4, the text can be rendered, as does the NRS:<sup>36</sup>

“3b) What has come into being 4) in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”<sup>37</sup>

1:3b with 1:4 present a clarification and emphasis of what the author meant by “all *things* that came to be” in the first part of verse 3: “...**all things came to be** through him and without him nothing came to be. **That which came to be** in him, it was **life**...” A most significant thing of “all *things*” that **came to be through** him, it was **life**.

It is eternal life ζῶν ἰαίωvιov of the age to come that concerns the Gospel of John.<sup>38</sup> All the signs that Jesus performed, all things that came to be (happened) - all confirm that life comes to be through him. The capstone of all the restoration events and miracles described in John’s Gospel is life from the dead.

The life (pre- and post-resurrection) of the man Jesus is a beacon of light for all men, the guarantee and hope of resurrection life for others.<sup>39</sup> “Because I live” said the Jesus of John’s Gospel, “you will live also” (John 14:19; cf. 5:28-30, 8:12; 1 John 5:11-12, 2:25). The Apostle Paul similarly connected life and light to the man Jesus: “...the Christ was to suffer and be the first to **rise from the dead**, to proclaim **light** both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Act 26:23).

<sup>34</sup> Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 167.

<sup>35</sup> Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 252. See also <https://www.die-bibel.de/en/bible/NA28/JHN.1>

<sup>36</sup> See Perry, *A Socinian-Racovian Style Reading of John’s Prologue*, 9. We agree that because of the neuter relative pronoun ὃ, it is best to translate “**that which** came to be in him, **it** was life”.

<sup>37</sup> Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 167 writes (emphasis mine): “to take ο γεγονεν with the following sentence (“That which has been made in him was life” – **whatever that may be supposed to mean**)” and note #2 “Despite valiant attempts of commentators to bring sense out of taking ο γεγονεν with what follows, the passage remains intolerably clumsy and opaque.” Metzger’s perplexity is a result of presuming a Genesis creation context. But the bewilderment disappears once the text is understood to be describing a new beginning, indeed, new **life** in the man Jesus.

<sup>38</sup> John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3

<sup>39</sup> See footnote #9: light in John 1:4 is not Genesis 1:3-4 light.

Summary:

1. John 1:3-4 have typically been interpreted and translated as a description of the Genesis creation of the material universe. But an examination of the vocabulary of John 1:3-4 shows that it is possible and preferable to understand these verses in a non-Genesis creation context.
2. We examined the range of meanings of the word “all” (πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν – nominative neuter plural πάντα). Of the 64 other occurrences of “all” in John’s Gospel, “all” never means the entire created physical universe. A better referent to “all” in John’s Gospel, especially of the neuter plural, is all that happened or came to be through the life of the man Jesus of Nazareth.
3. We also examined the range of meanings of ἐγένετο *egeneto*, the Greek word that is often translated in John 1:3 as “were made” with the implication of “were created”. But Greek words for create do not occur in John 1 and the word ἐγένετο *egeneto* is not used in John’s Gospel to mean “created” ex nihilo. It is preferable to understand ἐγένετο *egeneto* in John 1:3-4 as relating to things that “happened, came to pass, came to be (in the sense of occurred), came on the scene, was done, came, arrived, or even simply “was.”
4. With these viable vocabulary options – as literal translations (YLT, LSV) confirm - a better translation of John 1:3 is: “All happened through him, and without him nothing happened...” This means that all the things that came about - which this Gospel is about to describe - did so through the Word, the man Jesus of Nazareth. John 1:3-4 introduce the central theme of the Gospel and align with the author’s purpose-for-writing statement that Jesus is the Christ (1:17, 20, 41; 3:28; 4:25; 7:26-27, 31, 41-42; 9:22; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34, 42; 17:3; 20:31). That all these things happened through Jesus, not through the Baptizer (1:20, 3:28) nor through anyone else who had or might yet come, is evidence that the Christ has come and been identified (1:41, 11:27, 17:3, 20:31).
5. Our approach has been to understand John’s opening sentences by considering the use of the same language within the Gospel of John. We’ve made no appeal to, nor assumed influence from non-biblical external texts. Other New Testament passages, however, do agree and support our interpretation, e.g., 1 John 5:11-12 (“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his son”) and Acts 26:23 (“Christ was to...be the first to rise from the dead, to proclaim light...”), 2 Tim. 1:10 (“who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light”).
6. The coming to be or happening of things in John 1:3 occurred **through** the Logos. That is, the Logos was neither the source nor the creator. The Logos was the channel through whom someone else, namely God, brought things to be.

7. As pre-Nicene writers and UBS Nestle-Aland and Wescott-Hort New Testament Greek texts punctuate, John 1:3b (ὁ γέγονεν “that which came to be/happened”) is to be understood with what follows in 1:4: “**That which came to be in him, it was life**, and the life was the light of all people.”
8. That is, John 1:3b-4 emphasizes **life** among the *things* that came to be or happened through the Logos. As evidenced by the signs that Jesus did, the life that came to be through and in him was restoration life, the capstone being the resurrection to eternal life of the Messiah Jesus himself, and the light in his resurrection that shines for all others (cf. Acts 26:23, 2 Tim. 1:10). In a parallel inclusio statement, John 1:17 sums up the things that came to be through Jesus Christ as “grace and truth”.
9. While there are intentional echoes of Genesis, John’s Prologue introduces events described in John’s Gospel that evidence a new beginning in the man Jesus (the Word) and show that Jesus is indeed the Christ. Neither the Prologue nor the body of the Gospel of John describe events or things that came to be in the Book of Genesis.

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