

THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN - EARLY TRANSLATIONS AND THE TRUE MEANING

The first English version of the Scriptures made by direct translation from the original Hebrew and Greek, and the first to be printed, was the work of William Tyndale. Meeting bitter opposition, he was accused of perverting the meaning of the Scriptures. In October 1536 he was publicly executed and burned at the stake. Yet Tyndale's work became the foundation of subsequent English versions. William Tyndale translated the prologue of John's Gospel much differently than popular modern translations. Below is a modern spelling of John 1:1-5 and verse 14 according to his 1534 translation of the New Testament:

'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with god: and the word was god. The same was in the beginning with god. All things were made by it, and without it, was made nothing, that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not...

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw the glory of it, as the glory of the only begotten son of the father, which word was full of grace and verity.'

The image to the right the first page of the Gospel of John of a surviving copy of Tyndale's 1526 New Testament. The word order, "and god was that word" follows that of the Greek text.

The table below shows several of the earliest English translations of the 16th century that translated John 1:1-3 in a similar way interpreting the Word (Greek, Logos) as an "it" as an attribute of God rather than a "he" that implies the word is a preexistent person. In most modern English translations John 1:1-3 is typically translated in such a way to bias the reader to interpreting the Word as being "he". However, it should be understood that the Word (Logos) is an abstract noun that pertains to an attribute of God pertaining to his wisdom including his logic, reasoning, plan, and purpose for humanity. It is through this Logos (Word) that all things became. The word was also made flesh when Jesus was conceived since he is the center of God's plan and purpose for humanity. However, this is not to say that the Word was a preexistent person that existed before Jesus came into the world.



John 1:1-3 (Tyndale 1525) ¹ In the beginning was that word, and that word was with god, and **god was that word.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with god. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Tyndale 1534) ¹ In the beginning was the word: and the word was with God, and **the word was God.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Cloverdale Bible 1535) ¹ In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and **God was the word.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **the same**, and without **the same** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Matthews Bible 1537) ¹ In the beginning was the word: and the word was with God, and **the word was God.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

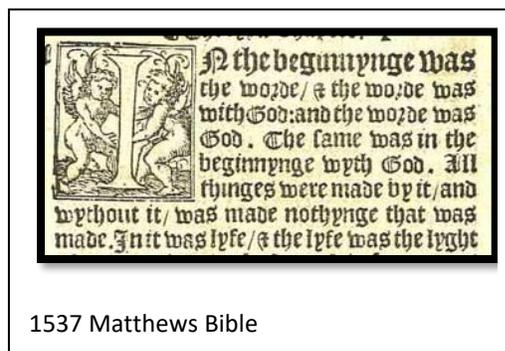
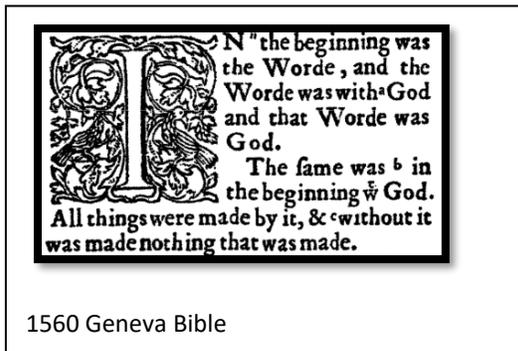
John 1:1-3 (The Great Bible 1539) ¹ In the beginning was the word: and the word was with God, and **the word was God.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Geneva Bible 1560*) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Bishops Bible 1568) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **God was that Word.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Geneva Bible 1599) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **that Word was God.** ² **The same** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by **it**, and without **it** was made nothing that that was made.

* There were 64 versions of the Geneva Bible between 1560 and 1611



An alternative interpretation of John 1:1-5 and verse 14 which reflects the meaning of the Greek text, is as follows:

'In beginning was the reasoning, and the reasoning was according to the God: and "God" was the reasoning. This was in beginning according to the God. All things were made through it, and apart from it nothing was made. What was made through it was life, and the life is the light of men; and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not apprehend it...

... And the reasoning was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten son from the father, full of grace and truth.'