

## Creation and Sovereignty:

### The Translation and Early Reception of John 1:3<sup>1)</sup>

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#### 1. Introduction

The prologue of John 1 elaborates on the Word's activity in God's plan from the beginning of time, drawing together echoes of the Genesis creation narrative, the witness of John the Baptist, and the rejection of the incarnate Word by the world. Its elegance and theological vitality have not, however, precluded scholars from raising critical questions about the extent of the prologue, its punctuation, and its interpretation.<sup>2)</sup> While John 1:1–18 is often taken to be the end of the prologue by modern scholarship, early manuscripts and commentators on John variously mark the end of the prologue at verse 5, 14, or 17.<sup>3)</sup> In John 1:3, the verse that will be the focus of this article, the words  $\delta \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \omicron \nu \epsilon \nu$  have been understood as either the

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2) For a concise review of scholarship on the opening of John, see Stan Harstine, *A History of the Two-Hundred-Year Scholarly Debate about the Purpose of the Prologue to the Gospel of John: How Does Our Understanding of the Prologue Affect Our Interpretation of the Subsequent Text?* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2015).

3) See the discussions and evidence examined in P. J. Williams, "Not the Prologue of John," *JSNT* 33 (2011): 375–386.

end of the sentence in 1:3 or as the beginning of the clause in 1:4. If the former, then the text should be translated “not one thing that has been made (or has happened) was made (or happened) without him” (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν; 1:3). If the latter, then the clause would read “what has been made (or has happened) in him was life” (ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν; 1:3–4). The punctuation of the text is difficult to determine with certainty, and this murkiness extends even to Greek manuscripts.<sup>4)</sup>

Another ambiguity in 1:3 has been taken up in recent scholarship and concerns the interpretation of the verb γίνομαι. The verb twice occurs in the aorist (ἐγένετο) within 1:3 and is often understood with reference to creation. Peder Borgen highlights similarities between the use of the term in Gen 1 and its placement in John 1:1–5.<sup>5)</sup> Craig Keener and Michael Theobald make similar observations regarding resonances between John 1:3 and the creation narrative of Gen 1.<sup>6)</sup> John Ashton has problematized this creation-oriented reading, however. He points out that πάντα in John 1:3 has no article, while the more common way to denote “all things” with regard to creation is with the arthrous τὰ πάντα. Ashton proposes that 1:3 refers rather to the occurrence of all things in history happening in accordance with the sovereign

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4) Kurt Aland, “Eine Untersuchung zu Joh. 1,3,4: Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes,” ZNW 59 (1968): 174–209; Dan Nässelqvist, “The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3–4: Arguments from Ancient Colometry,” JBL 137 (2018): 175–191; Hartwig Thyen, “ὃ γέγονεν: Satzende von 1,3 oder Satzeröffnung von 1,4?” in *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 214 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 411–417.

5) Peder Borgen, “John the Witness and the Prologue: John 1:1–34(37),” *The Gospel of John: More Light from Philo, Paul and Archaeology: The Scriptures, Tradition, Exposition, Settings, Meaning*, NovTSup 154 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 221.

6) Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1.374; Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12*, RNT (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 112–113.

actions of God through the Word.<sup>7)</sup> John Behr has employed a similar interpretation of John 1:3 in his reading of the prologue as a paschal hymn.<sup>8)</sup> The flexibility of the word γίνομαι lies at the center of this discussion.

This essay builds upon recent studies of John 1:3 by turning to early translations and receptions of the verse in order to inform the interpretation of its present location in the Fourth Gospel. The article first sets out the potential ambiguities in the Greek text of 1:3. The multiple meanings of γίνομαι become important for understanding two early translations of 1:3, namely, the Latin and Syriac translations. The essay next turns to the reception of 1:3 in the second century by examining quotations and uses of similar language the writings of Ptolemy, the *Gospel of Truth*, Irenaeus, and others. Finally, this study brings these observations to bear on the interpretation of 1:3 within the prologue and within the larger context of John's Gospel. To preview the conclusion from the outset: the translation and reception of 1:3 reveal a productive ambiguity in the Greek text that can be profitably understood with reference both to God's creation and God's sovereign actions through the Word.

## 2. Text and Translation of John 1:3

While the end of John 1:3 contains some textual challenges,

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7) John Ashton, "Really a Prologue?" in *The Prologue of the Gospel of John: Its Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts*, eds. Jan G. van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 359 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 41–42. Ashton's initial arguments in favor of this interpretation can be found in John Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom: A Study of the Prologue of John's Gospel," *NTS* 32 (1986): 161–186.

8) John Behr, *John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 260–264.

the Greek text at the beginning of the verse is reasonably secure. The words πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο can fairly be taken as the earliest recoverable text. There is early evidence for both οὐδὲ ἔν and οὐδέν as the subject of the second instance of ἐγένετο, but οὐδὲ ἔν may be selected as the earlier text due to its strong manuscripts support and its comparative place as the *lectio difficilior*.<sup>9)</sup> The complicated question of how ὁ γέγονεν relates to the other clauses in 1:3–4 can be left aside for now. Although it is important for the interpretation of 1:3–4, the interests of this paper lie elsewhere. The focus of this article is thus on the following Greek text of 1:3: πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἔν.<sup>10)</sup>

The flexibility of γίνομαι allows for multiple nuances in usage. Its fundamental meaning centers on the notion of becoming, but this can be applied with enormous variation and creativity even within such a modest sample size as the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The verb can be used with regard to someone's birth. In a verbal play on God's self-revelation to Moses, the Johannine Jesus declares that he existed before Abraham was born (γένεσθαι; John 8:58). Paul likewise speaks of Jesus's birth with forms of γίνομαι (Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4). A closely related usage expresses the production of fruit that comes forth from plants (Matt 21:19; 1 Cor 15:37). The passing of time can be noted with reference to γίνομαι, especially in narratives (Matt 7:28; Mark 1:9; Luke 1:23; Acts 2:2), while possession can be marked in conjunction with γίνομαι and either a genitive or dative noun (Luke 20:14; Rom 7:3). Two uses of the word are most important for this paper. First, the author of Hebrews

9) The word οὐδέν is found in P<sup>66</sup>,  $\aleph$ , and D, and some minuscules. However, οὐδὲ ἔν is attested in P<sup>75</sup>, A, B, and other uncials.

10) On the emphasis that comes from the positive and negative repetitions in John 1:3, see Walter Klaiber, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2 vols, Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017–2018), 1.27–28.

employs the word with reference to God's creation through speech (Heb 11:3). Second, the verb is employed to refer to the occurrence of various events in time (Luke 11:30; Acts 28:9; Rom 11:5).

These latter nuances become important when turning to the Latin and Syriac translations of John 1:3. The Latin Vulgate, which eventually became the principal Latin translation, stems from Jerome's fourth-century work.<sup>11)</sup> In John 1:3, the Vulgate reads, *omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil*. The perfect passives *facta sunt* and *facta est*, which can be translated, respectively, as "were made" and "was made," mirror the repeated use of the perfect passive form of *facio* in the Vulgate of Gen 1:1–2:3.<sup>12)</sup> The translation of πάντα as *omnia* is a suitable choice, but the lack of a definite article in Latin obscures the anarthrous Greek Vorlage. When combined with *facta sunt*, the Latin subject *omnia* is best understood as a reference to all things that were created "through him" (*per ipsum*). The antecedent of *ipsum* is *Uerbum*, going back to 1:1. The second clause in the Vulgate of 1:3 reaffirms that nothing was created without the Word.

Manuscripts of the earlier Vetus Latina translation are similar to the Vulgate insofar as the words *omnia*, *facta sunt*, *factum est*, and *nihil* are concerned.<sup>13)</sup> All of this strongly suggests a

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11) For a helpful introduction to the Vulgate New Testament, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 330–362.

12) The Vulgate mimics a similar repetition in the Hebrew and Greek texts of Gen 1:1–2:3. On the significance of this repetition for interpreting the Genesis creation narrative, see William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 44–46.

13) This is not to deny some differences in the manuscripts, but these differences are primarily related to spelling or abbreviations. For example, VL 6 reads *nichil* where most Latin manuscripts contain *nihil*. Similarly, VL 27 reads *omnia p(er) ipsū facta s(un)t*, where the letters in parentheses

reading of John 1:3 that interprets the Word as the active agent through whom God created. More variation is found in the Vetus Latina when it comes to the objects of the prepositions.<sup>14)</sup> The pronominal forms *ipsum*, *ipso*, *ipsu*, *issu*, *illum*, and *eum* are attested as objects of *per*, while *ipso*, *ipsu*, *illo*, *illu*, and *eum* can be found as objects of *sine*.<sup>15)</sup> Nevertheless, the combination of *omnia...facta sunt* and *factum est nihil* enabled many Latin writers to interpret 1:3 with reference to the activity of the Word in creation. For example, Victorinus of Poetovio quoted John 1:1–3 in his third-century *Tractatus de fabrica mundi* (Tractate on the Creation of the World).<sup>16)</sup> Victorinus reads the Latin text of John's prologue alongside Isa 11:2–3 and Col 1:15 in order to explicate the Word's activity in the creation of the heavens (Victorinus, *De fabrica mundi* 7).

The Syriac translations enable a different understanding of John 1:3, but the translation choices can still be connected to the presence of the flexible Greek verb γίνομαι in the Johannine prologue.<sup>17)</sup> John 1:3 is extant in three Syriac versions.<sup>18)</sup> The

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are abbreviated in the manuscript. The Vetus Latina text of John 1:1 – 4:48 is available in Philip Burton, H. A. G. Houghton, Rosalind MacLachlan, and David Parker, *Evangelium secundum Iohannem*, AGLB 19 (Freiburg: Herder, 2011).

- 14) For a concise introduction to the Vetus Latina of the Fourth Gospel, see H. A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 165–167.
- 15) For a convenient synopsis of manuscripts containing the Vetus Latina of John's Gospel, see <http://www.iohannes.com/vetuslatina> (last visited October 9, 2021).
- 16) The text of Victorinus's treatise can be found in Johannes Haussleiter, *Victorini episcopi Petavionensis opera*, CSEL 49 (Leipzig: Freytag, 1916), 1–9.
- 17) For introductions to the multiple translations of the New Testament into Syriac, see Sebastian P. Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2006), 31–38; Jonathan Loopstra, "The Syriac Bible and Its Interpretation," in *The Syriac World*, ed. Daniel King (London:

earliest translation is found in the manuscript now known by the name of its editor, Curetonius,<sup>19)</sup> and it runs as follows: *klmām bh hw', wbl'why 'p l' ḥd' hwṭ*.<sup>20)</sup> A wooden English translation may be, “Everything came to pass in him, and without him not even one thing came to pass.” While variations occur in spelling and spacing, the most significant differences between the Syriac versions occur when translating the words that correspond to the Greek πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ. The Peshîṭtâ and Ḥarklean versions make use of the hands as a way of expressing the mediation of the *mlt'* (Word) mentioned in John 1:1–2. Nevertheless, the Peshîṭtâ retains a roughly similar meaning regarding the translation of the verb: *kl b'ydh hw', wbl'dwhy 'pl' ḥd' hwṭ* (all came to pass by his hand, and without him not even one thing came to pass). The seventh-century Ḥarklean version is the latest of the translations examined here. Although the verbal conjugation differs slightly, the same root is employed: *klhn b'ydh hwy, wbl'dwhy hwṭ 'pl' ḥd'* (All of them came to pass by his hand, and without him there came to pass not even one thing).

The translation of *hwy* along with its inflected forms *hwṭ*

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- Routledge, 2019), 293–308; Metzger, *The Early Versions*, 3–98. I have not included Tatian's *Diatessaron* in this article due to uncertainties about what it said with regard to John 1:3. However, it is likely that the *Diatessaron* began with something like the Johannine Prologue. See further Peter M. Head, “Tatian's Christology and Its Influence on the Composition of the *Diatessaron*,” *TynBul* 43 (1992): 130–131. For additional study of the Johannine prologue in Syriac, see Thomas Böhm, “Bemerkungen zu den syrischen Übersetzungen des Johannesprologs,” *ZNW* 89 (1998): 45–65.
- 18) The Syriac translations of the John have been conveniently published in parallel format by George Anton Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîṭtâ, and Ḥarklean Versions*, NTTS 21, vol. 4 (Leiden, Brill, 1996).
- 19) William Cureton, *Remains of a Very Antient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac* (London: John Murray, 1858).
- 20) In the transcriptions of the Syriac texts, I have omitted the portion of the text that corresponds to the Greek ὃ γέγονεν.

and *hw'* as “come to pass” follows the translations of Ashton and Behr.<sup>21)</sup> The copulative verb in Syriac can have various nuances of meaning. It is used in Gen 1:3 in God’s speech that calls light into existence.<sup>22)</sup> Hearing echoes of the creation story in John 1:3 is not out of the question, particularly when one recognizes that John 1:1 opens with *bršit*, clearly echoing Gen 1:1. Yet the verb is broader in meaning. Sokoloff’s update of Brockelmann’s *Lexicon Syriacum* includes eight meanings just for the p’al stem of *hwy*.<sup>23)</sup> Most pertinent for understanding John 1:3 are the meanings *to be* and *to happen to*. The latter of these meanings seems to undergird the English translations of the Syriac versions by Ashton and Behr. Looking at the Peshîṭtâ and Harklean versions, the idiom that all things happened “by the hands” of the Word adds additional evidence to understanding *hwy* in this way. The Word is the mediator through whom God’s actions are made a physical and temporal reality. While creation overtones are not impossible, the Syriac translation leads readers to expect that all things have occurred in the power of the Word. The Syriac is best understood with reference to the sovereign outworking of God’s plan through the Word rather than to God’s creative speech through the Word.

The repeated uses of the word *γίνομαι* are strongly attested in the Latin and Syriac translations of John 1:3. As for modern translators, so the flexibility of this verb proved challenging for ancient translators. The Latin use of *facta est* / *sunt* more strongly resounds with creation narratives, not only because of the appear-

21) Ashton, “Really a Prologue?” 41; Behr, *John the Theologian*, 262.

22) This is found in the so-called Leiden Peshîṭtâ, which includes a Syriac translation of the Old Testament. It reads, *w'mr 'lh' nhw' nwhr' whw' nwhr'* (And God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.).

23) Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 333–334.

ance of the verb in Gen 1:1–2:3 but also due to the passive form of the verb *facio*—a verb that regularly denotes the making or production of something. On the other hand, the Syriac copulative *hwy* and the use of the idiom related to the Word’s hands more easily incline readers to conceive of the Word as the mediator through whom God’s sovereign plans were executed. While both the Latin and Syriac translations seek to render γίνομαι, the verbal selections that are made by the translators incline readers to think more easily of creation, in the case of the Latin, or providential agency, in the case of the Syriac.

### 3. Second-Century Reception of John 1:3

Both the reception of John 1:3 and the use of similar language in the second century reveal a similar tendency to highlight either creation or the Word’s place in God’s sovereign economy. The majority of authors who cite John 1:3 during the second century employ the verse with an eye to creation. Theophilus’s three-volume *Ad Autolycum* was likely written during the 180s. Book 2 contains exegesis of Gen 1–3. Theophilus describes God’s speech with reference to the Johannine Logos. In thus referring to Jesus, Theophilus insists, “all things have been made through him” (δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν; Theophilus, Autol. 2.10).<sup>24</sup> It is noteworthy that Theophilus has included the definite article when referring to “all things” (τὰ πάντα). Theophilus also utilizes πεποίηκεν where John 1:3 reads ἐγένετο. Both the grammar and diction clarify that Theophilus has the Word’s activity during creation in view.<sup>25</sup> Also writing near the end of the second

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24) For the text of Theophilus’s *Ad Autolycum*, see Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

century, Irenaeus follows his Hebrew quotation of Gen 1:1 with a citation of John 1:1-3 that is attributed to “(the Lord’s) disciple John” (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 43).<sup>26)</sup> The Father created all things (*omnia*) through his hands, the Son and the Spirit (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.1-4).<sup>27)</sup> Irenaeus employs John 1:3 to show that other instruments were not required for God to create (*Haer.* 2.2.5).<sup>28)</sup> Tertullian likewise appeals to John 1:3 in his discussion of creation and matter. While Tertullian does not mention John by name, his closing summary emphasizes that “all things were made through him (the Word)” (*per quem [sermonem] omnia facta sunt*; *Herm.* 45.1; see also 20.4).<sup>29)</sup>

25) Paul M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety*, OPCS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 140.

26) On the textual issues surrounding Irenaeus, *Epid.* 43, see Dominic Cerbelaud, “La citation ‘hébraïque’ de la Démonstration d’Irénee (Dém., 43): Une proposition,” *Muséon: Revue d’études orientales* 104 (1991): 221 - 234; J. P. Smith, “Hebrew Christian Midrash in Irenaeus, *Epid.* 43,” *Bib* 38 (1957): 24 - 34. All citations from Irenaeus’s *Epideixis* come from Adelin Rousseau, *Démonstration de la prédication apostolique*, SC 406 (Paris: Cerf, 1995). Translations come from John Behr, *Irenaeus: On the Apostolic Preaching*, Popular Patristics Series 17 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

27) Citations from Irenaeus’s *Adversus Haereses* come from Adelin Rousseau et al., *Contre les hérésies*, 10 vols., SC 100.1-2 ; 152-153, 210-21, 263-264, 293-294 (Paris: Cerf, 1965-1982).

28) Jacques Fantino, “La théologie de la création *ex nihilo* chez Irénée,” *StPatr* 26 (1993): 126 - 135; Jackson Lashier, “Irenaeus as Logos Theologian,” *VC* 66 (2012): 354.

29) Similar language to John 1:3 can be found in *Herm.* 18.1; 20.1. Tertullian here expands the language of John 1:3 to include wisdom (*sophia*) or knowledge (*scientia*). The feminine gender of these words requires Tertullian to employ a feminine pronoun in the language of John 1:3. The text of Tertullian’s *Adversus Hermogenem* comes from J. H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimii Florentis Tertulliani: Adversus Hermogenem liber* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1956).

More allusive proto-orthodox references to John 1:3 may be found in the writings of Justin and Tatian. Justin regularly refers to the Word as a being who is active in the world and was begotten of the Father.<sup>30)</sup> In *2 Apol.* 5–6, Justin takes up the topic of creation and evil, attributing the presence of evil to the revolt of angelic beings. Those who would attribute such errors to God are held to be wrong. In specifying who God is, Justin appeals to similar imagery as is found in John 1:1 by declaring that the Word “was with (God) and was begotten” (συνὸν καὶ γεννώμενος; Justin, *2 Apol.* 6.3). He then states that God “adorned all things through him” (κοσμήσαι τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ; Justin, *2 Apol.* 6.3). Justin’s language suggests that he has a similar understanding of the Word’s activity in creation to that of John 1:3.<sup>31)</sup> Writing a few years later, Tatian declares that God established “all things with him (God) through verbal power” (τὰ πάντα σὺν αὐτῷ διὰ λογικῆς δυνάμεως; Tatian, *Or.* 5.1).<sup>32)</sup> Tatian appeals to the power of the Word to explain the order of creation in terms that are reminiscent of John’s Prologue.<sup>33)</sup> He reuses this language as a ground for worship

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30) E.g. *1 Apol.* 5.4; 33.9; 60.7; 63.15; *2 Apol.* 13.3; *Dial.* 23.3; 61.3. On Justin’s use of λόγος, see M. J. Edwards, “Justin’s Logos and the Word of God,” *J ECS* 3 (1995): 261–280. The text of Justin’s *Apologies* has been taken from Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). The text of Justin’s *Dialogus cum Tryphone* comes from Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris apologiae pro Christianis: Iustini Martyris dialogus cum Tryphone*, PTS 38/47 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005).

31) Stephen O. Presley, “A Loftier Doctrine: The Use of Scripture in Justin Martyr’s *Second Apology*,” *Perichoresis* 12 (2014): 195–196.

32) The text of Tatian’s *Oratio ad Graecos* can be found in Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian—Rede an die Griechen*, SAPERE 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

33) Andrei Timotin, “Gott und die Dämonen bei Tatian,” in *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian—Rede an die Griechen*, ed. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, SAPERE 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 269.

of the true God (Tatian, *Or.* 19.9). While it is not clear if or in what form Justin and Tatian may have known the Johannine prologue, they employ similar language to John 1:3 in order to refer to God's creation of the world through the Word.

This creation-oriented way of using language is found not only in proto-orthodox writers but also in texts whose understanding of creation may have differed in marked ways.<sup>34)</sup> Heracleon, Ptolemy, and others appeal to language from John 1:3 with reference to the act of creation. Heracleon's text and interpretation of John are known from citation in Origen's *Commentary on John*. When it comes to John 1:3, Heracleon seems to have had a text without an article before πάντα, but he nevertheless employs the verse with reference to creation.<sup>35)</sup> Origen criticizes Heracleon's interpretation for two primary reasons. Although Origen's comments are polemical in nature, they give insight into what Heracleon wrote about the Fourth Gospel.<sup>36)</sup> First, the word πάντα appears to have been defined by Heracleon with reference to the cosmos and the things therein (Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14.100).<sup>37)</sup> However, the aeons are not

34) Irenaeus notes that other Valentinians viewed the Word as active among the procession of aeons from the Pleroma (*Haer.* 1.2.6; 1.4.1; 1.8.5).

35) Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14.100–103; 13.19.118. For the text of Origen's *Commentary on John*, see Erwin Preuschen, *Origenes Werke: Der Johanneskommentar*, GCS 10 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903).

36) For a helpful analysis of Origen's quotations at this point, see Carl Johan Berglund, *Origen's References to Heracleon: A Quotation-Analytical Study of the Earliest Known Commentary on the Gospel of John*, WUNT 450 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 107–125.

37) It is possible that John 1:10 has influenced Heracleon's understanding of John 1:3. See further Carl Johann Berglund, "Literary Criticism in Early Christianity: How Heracleon and Valentinus Use One Passage to Interpret Another," *J ECS* 27 (2019): 43 n. 51; Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert*, WUNT 142

included in God's creative action through the Word.<sup>38)</sup> Second, Heracleon is purported to have understood the phrase "through him" (δι' αὐτοῦ) in a problematic way, at least as far as Origen was concerned. Rather than understanding the Word to be the mediatorial agent through whom the Creator acted, Heracleon insists that the Word was the cause for the creative act (Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14.102). Heracleon can thus declare that Christ is the true creator because all things came to be through him (Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.19.118).<sup>39)</sup> If Origen's report is correct, then the Word is not only the agent through whom the Creator acted but also the impulse for the creative act itself. Whatever one makes of Heracleon's interpretation of John 1:3 or of the reliability of the details in Origen's report, Heracleon understands the verse with reference to creation.

Ptolemy likewise applies John 1:3 to the Word's activity in creation when he writes to Flora about the nature of the Law. Ptolemy's letter is recorded by Epiphanius and has been transmitted in his *Panarion* (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.3.1–33.7.10).<sup>40)</sup> Referring to John as "the apostle," Ptolemy paraphrases John 1:3 as follows: τὰ τε πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδέν (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.3.6). The definite article in conjunction with πάντα specifies that Ptolemy has creation

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(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 121–123.

38) Origen even accuses Heracleon of adding "of the things in the world and in the creation" (τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ κτίσει) to the phrase "without him not one thing was made" (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14.101). While Origen's accusation cites an addition to the Fourth Gospel, it is possible that Heracleon only intended an interpretive gloss. In any case, Origen takes exception to Heracleon's understanding of the text.

39) Pier Franco Beatrice, "Greek Philosophy and Gnostic Soteriology in Heracleon's 'Hypomnemata,'" *Early Christianity* 3 (2012): 197–200.

40) For the text of Ptolemy's letter, see Gilles Quispel, *Ptolémée: Lettre a Flora*, SC 24 (Paris: Cerf, 1966).

in view, and Ptolemy insists that creation comes not from a God who makes things corrupt but rather to the God who is just and hates evil.<sup>41)</sup> Creation, like the Law, comes from the Creator and Savior.<sup>42)</sup> Epiphanius records another second-century letter in Pan. 31.5.1–31.6.10. This letter comes from an unknown Valentinian author, who outlines the creation of the world through the procession of aeons. Majesty (Μέγεθος) is said to have accomplished “all things by reflection without speech” (δι’ ἐνθυμήσεως χωρὶς λόγου τὰ ἅπαντα; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.5.4).<sup>43)</sup> Such language is reminiscent of John 1:3. Although the role of the λόγος is different in the letter quoted by Epiphanius, the Johannine imagery is applied to the origins of the cosmos. Finally, the so-called Coptic Egyptian Gospel likewise alludes to creation language in terms that recall John 1:3.<sup>44)</sup> The first Man is portrayed as the one “without whom nothing became” (NHC III 49.10–12) or “without whom there is nothing” (NHC IV 61.12–14).<sup>45)</sup> While the use of John 1:3 in these passages is allusive and may stray from later normative interpretations of the Johannine prologue, each of these

41) Quispel (*Ptolémée*, 79) argues that the “God who corrupts” should be understood as an antimarcionite reference.

42) For more on Ptolemy’s reaction to Marcion, see Winrich A. Löhr, “La doctrine de Dieu dans *La lettre à Flora* de Ptolémée,” *RHPR* 75 (1995): 177–191; Tuomas Rasimus, “Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John’s Prologue,” in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, NovTSup 132 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 145–171.

43) The text of this letter can be found in Walther Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1932), 60–63.

44) On the title of this text, see the helpful discussion in Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit)*, NHS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 18–23.

45) For text and translation, see Böhlig and Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2*, 92–93.

texts reflect a second-century interest in understanding John 1:3 or similar language with reference to creation.

While the most widely held interpretation of John 1:3 appears to understand John's language with regard to the creative activity of the Word, this interpretation was not universal during the second century. As Melito of Sardis builds to the stunning rhetorical conclusion in *Peri Pascha*, he refers to Jesus's victory over death, the salvation that comes through him, and the glory that his hearers and readers should find in Christ. Melito discusses the Genesis creation narrative (*Peri Pascha* 47) and even refers to Jesus's actions in creation (*Peri Pascha* 104).<sup>46</sup> However, he applies language similar to John 1:3 to refer more broadly to the Father's work through the Son (*Peri Pascha* 104).<sup>47</sup> Melito employs a series of relative clauses beginning with a nominative relative pronoun, but the final clause in the sequence begins with a preposition that sets it slightly apart from what comes before and serves as the capstone of the sequence: Christ is the one "through whom the Father did his works from beginning to eternity" (δι' οὗ ἐποίησεν ὁ πατήρ τὰ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι αἰώνων; *Peri Pascha* 104). Although the similarity to John 1:3 is better described as conceptual rather than strictly verbal, Melito appeals to the mediation of Christ with reference to the Father's outworking of all things. He does not apply the Son's mediatorial work to creation alone.

An equally extensive appeal to language that may allude to John 1:3 can be found in the *Gospel of Truth*.<sup>48</sup> While setting

46) Henry M. Knapp, "Melito's Use of Scripture in *Peri Pascha*: Second-Century Typology," *VC* 54 (2000): 356–357.

47) The text of Melito's *Peri Pascha* can be found in Stuart George Hall, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha and Fragments*, OECT (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

48) On the date of the *Gospel of Truth*, see Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*, SBLDS 79 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 4–5. However, Philip L. Tite (*Valentinian*

out a Valentinian understanding of redemption, the author takes up the subject of the Word's activity in redemption. The wills of the Word and the Father share the same desires. The author then clarifies, "Nothing happens without him nor does anything happen without the will of the Father" (*Gos. Truth.* 37.20–24).<sup>49)</sup> The declaration that "nothing happens without [the Word]" is reminiscent of the language in John 1:3.<sup>50)</sup> However, creation is not in view. Rather, the *Gospel of Truth* attributes all that happens to the shared will of the Word and Father with a particular focus on those things related to salvation. Melito and the *Gospel of Truth* thus provide an alternative way of utilizing the language found in John 1:3.<sup>51)</sup> On their understanding, the mediating activity of the Word makes the sovereign actions of the Father effective and comprehensible to human beings.

Clement of Alexandria may serve as something of a bridge figure between these differing second-century interpretations. He cites the verse to urge believers to seek further knowledge of the world and its principles (*Strom.* 7.17.2 [3]).<sup>52)</sup> He utilizes

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*Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity*, NHS 67 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 217–221) has questioned the second-century date of this text.

49) For the text and translation of the *Gospel of Truth*, see Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, "NHC 1,3: The Gospel of Truth," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, NHS 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 82–117.

50) One of the anonymous reviewers pointed out that a comparison of the *Gospel of Truth* with Coptic translations of the Gospel of John would be helpful. While I agree completely, this comparison will need to await a further article.

51) Although dated, C. K. Barrett ("The Theological Vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel and of the Gospel of Truth," in *Essays on John*, ed. C. K. Barrett [London: SPCK, 1982], 50–64.) still provides a useful comparison of theological language in the Gospel of John and the *Gospel of Truth*.

52) For the text of *Stromateis* 7, see F. J. A. Hort and Joseph B. Mayor, *Clement of Alexandria: Miscellanies Book VII* (London: Macmillan, 1902).

John 1:3 when declaring how Jesus reveals the mystery of truth that must increase in the world (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.95.1 [11]).<sup>53</sup> The Word's speech effected not only creation but all of the Wisdom that comes benevolently through the Law and the Prophets (Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.97.3 [11]).<sup>54</sup> Clement can also appeal to the Word's activity in bringing all things into existence when countering Greco-Roman philosophies (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.125.2 [15]). His references to (τὰ) πάντα vacillate between including (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.97.3 [11]) and excluding (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.17.2 [3]) the article.<sup>55</sup> He can thus mention God's speech through the Word with a view either toward creation or toward some expanded understanding of divine activity. In so doing, Clement's complex corpus of writings mirrors the multifaceted ways of interpreting John 1:3 that are evident in second-century literature.

#### 4. Interpreting John 1:3

Thus far this article has argued that the ambiguity of γίνουμαι in John 1:3 was a primary contributor to the different nuances found in the Latin and Syriac translations as well as to the various second-century uses of similar Johannine language. It remains in this section to show how the ambiguity found in John 1:3 can be interpreted both within the Johannine prologue

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53) For the text of *Stromateis* 1–6, see Otto Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus: Stromata Buch I–VI*, GCS 15 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906).

54) For the text of Clement's *Paedagogus*, see Otto Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus: Protrepticus und Paedagogus*, GCS 12 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905).

55) See the helpful synopsis of Clement's citations of John 1:3 in Carl P. Cosaert, *The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria*, NTGF 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 183–184.

and within the Fourth Gospel as a whole. The exegesis follows the translation and reception histories explored so far by arguing that the nuances of both creation and sovereignty should be taken seriously when interpreting John 1:3.

The strongest reason for reading John 1:3 with a view to creation through the Word is found in the similarities to the Genesis creation narratives in the opening of the fourth Gospel. The phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ opens both the first book of the Greek Pentateuch and the prologue of John. John 1:1 resounds with Gen 1:1, and the Word is then oriented to God and identified as God.<sup>56)</sup> To emphasize the Genesis links, the temporal phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ is repeated in John 1:2. Other creation passages, such as Ps 33:6, declare that God created through the Word.<sup>57)</sup> In light of the creation overtones in the opening verses, the statement that all things came to be through the Word can be well understood with a view to God's actions at the beginning of time.<sup>58)</sup> Indeed, the creation associations may continue beyond John 1:3. The author insists that life was in the Word (John 1:4). While life is a multifaceted concept throughout the Fourth Gospel,

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56) On the prepositions and the anarthrous θεός in John 1:1, see Murray Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 190–192; Lidija Novakovic, *John 1–10: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco: Baylor University, 2020), 1–3.

57) John Painter, “Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John,” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, eds. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jerl Henning Ulrichsen, NovTSup 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 184–185. See also Wis. 9.2. For further scriptural parallels in the prologue, see Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue*, JSNTSup 89 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 86–92.

58) Richard Bauckham, “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 150; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 367–368.

the mention of life in close proximity with allusions to Gen 1:1 may enhance the Word's activity in creation.<sup>59)</sup> Likewise, the connections between the Word and light (John 1:4–5) are reminiscent of the first created entity to be named in the Genesis narrative (Gen 1:3–5).<sup>60)</sup> Although the opening prepositional phrase provides the closest allusion to the Genesis creation story, the additional similarities between Gen 1:1–2:3 and John 1:1–5 strongly suggest that John 1:3 should be interpreted with a view to the Word's actions in creation.<sup>61)</sup>

If one extends the view beyond the opening five verses in order to consider creation language elsewhere in the prologue, the clearest example comes in John 1:10. After introducing John's witness (John 1:6–8), the author recalls the Word as the true light who is coming into the world (John 1:9). A pun ensues by which the author considers the various ways in which the Word and the world are related to one another. The Word was in the world (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ), and the world came to be through him (ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο).<sup>62)</sup> Nevertheless, the world did not know him (John 1:10).<sup>63)</sup> The tragedy of the world's ignorance is heightened by the fact that the Word was

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59) Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel: John 1:1–18* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 30–43.

60) Peder Borgen, "Logos was the True Light," *NovT* 14 (1972): 115–130; Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 16 (1970): 288–295.

61) Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols. AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 1.6; Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 167 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38–42; Jean Zumstein, *Das Johannesevangelium*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 76.

62) Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1.10.

63) George R. Beasley-Murray (*John*, WBC 36 [Waco: Word, 1987], 12) notes that similar phrases are found elsewhere in early Jewish literature. See 1 En. 42.2.

the means by which the world was created. An allusion to the Word's activity in creation is thus crucial to the line of thought in John 1:10 and provides additional support for understanding Word's mediation on behalf of all things (πάντα) in terms of creation (John 1:3).

Creation language appears sparsely outside of the prologue. Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee in ways that are reminiscent of poetic passages related to creation (John 6:19).<sup>64)</sup> Jesus recalls the glory that he had with the Father before the world was created in John 17:5 and 24.<sup>65)</sup> Jesus's resurrection in a garden (John 20:15) and the breathing of the Spirit upon the disciples (John 20:22) may both be reminiscent of the creation narrative in Gen 2:4–24. It is also possible that the number of signs in John's Gospel are related to the days of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3.<sup>66)</sup> However, Sosa Siliezar has argued skeptically regarding the last proposal and suggested that the author of the Fourth Gospel employs Gen 1–2 more strategically.<sup>67)</sup> Although it is impossible to determine with certainty how strongly one or all of these references relate to the prologue of John, Jesus's prayer in John 17 contains at least two references to creation. Jesus's communion with the Father before the foundation of the world is thus mentioned in the body of John's Gospel. Yet the lack of obvious similarities between Gen 1–2 and the Fourth Gospel suggests that whatever role creation plays in John, the author does not simply restate God's creation of the world as it is

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64) E.g. Job 9:8; Ps 77:17.

65) Beasley, Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 297–298; Zumstein, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 657.

66) Jeannine K. Brown, "Creation's Renewal in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 286 – 288; Murray Rae, "The Testimony of Works in the Christology of John's Gospel," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 302 – 308.

67) Carlos Raúl Sosa Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John*, LNTS 546 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 123–149.

told in the Pentateuch.

The ambiguous number of references in the body of John's Gospel notwithstanding, it remains the case that the prologue evokes the creation narrative of Gen 1:1–2:3. The placement of the Word with God and as God “in the beginning” echoes the opening words of the Torah, while the presence and activity of the Word are reminiscent of God's repeated speech in the Genesis story. Within this setting, the parallel claims that all things came to be through the Word and that nothing came to be without him identify the Word as the mediatorial agent through whom God created. Perhaps drawing upon a role that was attributed to Wisdom in Proverbs and Ben Sira, the author of the Fourth Gospel portrays the Word as the counselor and mediator through whom God's creative actions become effective.<sup>68)</sup> John 1:3 thus participates in the author's depiction of the Word's actions in creation.<sup>69)</sup> This interpretation is furthered by the reiteration of the creation of the cosmos in John 1:10. As in 1:3, so in 1:10 the world comes to be by means of God's creative activity through the Word. The Latin translation of 1:3 and the extensive second-century interpretation of this verse in light of creation may thus be vindicated by a close reading of this verse in the context of the prologue and, to a lesser degree, by a close reading of the Gospel as a whole.

What, then, is to be made of the broader interpretation of the language in John 1:3 that can be found in the Syriac translation, Melito's *Peri Pascha*, and the *Gospel of Truth*? The

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68) E.g. Prov 8:27–31; Sir 24.3–6. On the sapiential background of the prologue, see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 34; Jörg Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One: Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), 275–277.

69) Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 98–99.

first thing to observe is that the verb γίνομαι is not restricted to creation overtones even within the prologue.<sup>70)</sup> Although the verb describes the coming of the world into existence (John 1:10), ἐγένετο also introduces John's witness to the Word (John 1:6), describes the way in which the Word became flesh (John 1:14), and is used by the author with reference to the grace and truth that came through Jesus (John 1:17). The infinitive form of this verb is also used to portray the change that occurs in people who become the children of God (John 1:12).<sup>71)</sup> Within the prologue, then, the verb may refer to more than creation, and it accomplishes more than echoing the creation narrative from Genesis. In addition, one should recall that the anarthrous πάντα can function differently from the arthrous τὰ πάντα that describes the universe. Ashton observes that the article appears when τὰ πάντα denotes everything that has been created in Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16–17; Heb 2:10<sup>72)</sup>. The last passage is particularly interesting, since the author of Hebrews quotes Ps 8:7 in Heb 2:8. Although the quotation does not use an article (Heb 2:8), the interpretation that follows clarifies that the referent is all created things by including the article (Heb 2:10).<sup>73)</sup> In John 1:3, then, there is reason to allow that the statement “all things came to be through him” extends beyond the act of creation alone. It refers to everything that has ever

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70) Behr, *John the Theologian*, 261–262; John F. McHugh, *John 1–4*, ICC (London: T&T Clark Continuum, 2009), 13; T. Evan Pollard, “Cosmology and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel,” *VC* 12 (1958): 150.

71) Theophil Erwin Müller, *Das Heilsgeschehen im Johannesevangelium* (Zurich: Gotthelf, 1961), 17–18

72) John Ashton, *The Gospel of John and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 148–149.

73) For more on the usage of (τὰ) πάντα in the Greek Old Testament, see Ashton, “The Transformation of Wisdom,” 184 n. 37; Paul Lamarche, “Le prologue de Jean,” *RSR* 52 (1964): 497–537; Ignace de la Potterie, “Structure du prologue de Saint Jean,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 368.

happened.

When this interpretation is pursued into the body of John's Gospel, its significance becomes clearer. The Fourth Evangelist is interested in showing that everything related to God's redemptive plan is revealed through Jesus. The word γίνομαι is thus regularly used in John to refer to historical events.<sup>74)</sup> The first appearance of γίνομαι outside of the prologue prepares readers for the recurrence of this usage elsewhere in the Gospel. The author clarifies that Bethany beyond the Jordan is where John's encounter with the Pharisees happened (ἐγένετο; John 1:28). John bears witness to Jesus, and his actions occurred in the narrative history that the Gospel recounts. The word γίνομαι is also used as a temporal marker to recount when events happen within the narrative, particularly with regard to feasts or to the change of time (John 2:1; 6:16; 10:22). Changes in the state of someone's health (John 5:6, 9) as well as the growth of division (John 7:43; 10:19) are denoted with γίνομαι. Likewise, God's Word "came" (ἐγένετο) to people before Jesus (John 10:35), and the piercing of Jesus's side "occurred" (ἐγένετο) to fulfill scripture (John 19:36). Finally, Nicodemus's question about how the things that Jesus describes can be (John 3:9) and Jesus's declarations that he has told the disciples what will happen beforehand (John 13:19; 14:29) are made with forms of the word γίνομαι. John tells a story about what God has done in Jesus, and this story is set in space and time. An important use of the word γίνομαι within the story is to declare things that have happened through Jesus. The declaration of John 1:3 prepares readers for this facet of the story.<sup>75)</sup> Everything that happens occurs through the Word, and nothing happens in the story without Jesus.

Similar language is found in other early Jewish and early

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74) McHugh, *John 1–4*, 13.

75) Ashton, "Really a Prologue?" 41–42; Behr, *John the Theologian*, 262.

Christian literature that likewise uses a form of γίνομαι or the Hebrew copulative הָיָה to refer to the outworking of God's actions in history. When John the Seer enters through the open door, a voice informs him that he will show the things that "must be" (δεῖ γενέσθαι; Rev 4:1; see also Rev 1:19; 22:6). The imagery in the Apocalypse points to realities that work themselves out in history.<sup>76)</sup> In Judith's prayer for deliverance from the Assyrians, the heroine of the story sets out God's faithfulness in the past (Jdt 9.2–6). She declares that everything that God planned beforehand "came to pass" (ἐγενήθησαν; Jdt 9.5). Although written in Hebrew, the Community Rule from Qumran (1QS) likewise refers to things that occur in history according to God's plan with a form of the copulative verb.<sup>77)</sup> Contrasting the limitations of a human being in setting out the path of one's life, the author declares, "By his [God's] knowledge everything shall come into being (נָהִיָה), and all that does exist (הוֹיָה) he establishes with his calculations and nothing is done outside of him" (1QS XI, 11; see also 1QS XI, 17–18).<sup>78)</sup> The combination of a positive affirmation that things come to exist through God and the negative confirmation that nothing occurs without God are reminiscent of John 1:3.<sup>79)</sup> It is also worth noting that God's creation is praised in terms of the

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76) Of course, neither the way in which the imagery works nor the nature of the realities that are revealed in the New Testament Apocalypse is specified by the verb γίνομαι alone.

77) Pollard, "Cosmology and the Prologue," 151–152.

78) The text and translation of the Community Rule come from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 69–99.

79) Pollard (*Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, SNTSMS 13 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], 10–11) goes so far as to raise the possibility of literary dependence. While it is difficult to make an argument for literary dependence, Pollard's ability to raise this possibility speaks to the near similarities between John 1:3 and 1QS.

ordered set of relationships that come about because of God's knowledge of what exists and what happens in 1QS III, 13–IV, 26.<sup>80</sup>) Creation and sovereignty are thus closely connected in the Community Rule. Finally, one may consider 4 Ezra 6.6 as a similar phenomenon to the translation differences observed in the Latin and Syriac of John 1:3. In this first-century Jewish apocalypse, God declares to Ezra that he planned things before the ages. In the Syriac translation, God's speech continues by insisting that "all things came to pass (*hwy*) through me and not another" (4 Ezra 6.6). On the other hand, the Latin text proclaims that things "were made" (*facta sunt*) through God alone.

Returning to the prologue to John's Gospel, John 1:3 can thus be best understood both with a view to God's sovereign actions through the Word and to God's act in creating through the Word. The author declares in 1:3 that everything has occurred through the Word. Nothing happens apart from the Word's mediation. Such a reading prepares one for what follows in the Fourth Gospel. The eternal life that comes from God is brought to effect in Jesus Christ throughout the Johannine narrative. The Word embodies life and makes it available to whoever will receive him (John 1:12; 3:16). Thus the prologue states that life was in the Word (John 1:4). In 1:3, when *πάντα* is understood not simply as the created universe but as everything that has happened and when *ἐγένετο* is interpreted with a broader view than creation alone, the actions of the Word in bringing God's life-giving and light-shining plans to bear on the world come clear.<sup>81</sup>) The web of concepts in 1:1–5—the Word, God, life,

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80) Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran*, STDJ 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 84.

81) Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 170–173; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 494; Behr, *John the Theologian*, 260–264.

and light—point beyond the act of creation described in Gen 1:1–2:3 to include all that happens and to prepare readers for what follows in the Gospel of John. The Word is the mediator and agent through whom God’s plan from the beginning comes to fruition.

Creation should not, however, be left out of the prologue’s picture.<sup>82)</sup> God’s life-giving actions in the world find their origins in the beginning, echoing Gen 1:1 (John 1:1, 2). The activity of the Word and the use of the verb ἐγένετο remind readers of God’s speech and the repetition of ἐγένετο in the Greek translations of the Genesis narrative. In John 1:3, the author extends the creative actions of the Word to include everything that exists and occurs in the world.<sup>83)</sup> The prologue thus builds from a strong resonance with the creative story to prepare readers for Jesus’s actions as the king and messiah who is uniquely identified with and as God. Through the actions of Jesus the Word, all things were created and all things are enacted. The Word’s mediation in creation forms the basis of the incarnate Word’s eschatologically oriented enactment of all that occurs therein.<sup>84)</sup>

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82) McHugh, *John 1–4*, 11–15. Barnabas Lindars (*The Gospel of John*, NCB [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 77) leaves open this possibility as well when he interprets John 1:1–5 with a view to creation through the Word but notes that “the activity of the Word does not stop at the initial act of creation.”

83) “There is no difficulty in accepting both, for such a double meaning would be entirely in keeping with the style and theology of the evangelist, and here in 1.3 it could well be fully intended” (McHugh, *John 1–4*, 13). McHugh (*John 1–4*, 13) then adds in a parenthetical note “(but contrast 1.9–10),” referring to John 1:9–10. This paper has argued that the creation language in John 1:9–10 does not form a barrier to interpreting John 1:3 with a view to both God’s creation through the Word and God’s sovereign actions *ad extra* through the Word.

84) “Der Gedanke der Schöpfungsmittlerschaft des Logos (vgl. auch 1,10) kommt somit nicht philosophischen Ambitionen entgegen, sondern hat Dienstfunktion: Er begründet den eschatologischen Anspruch des inkarnierten Logos in seiner universalen Weite” (Michael Theobald, “Gott, Logos und Pneuma: ‘Trinitarische’ Rede von Gott im Johannesevangelium,” in *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, ed. Michael Theobald, WUNT 267 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 386–387).

The breadth and ambiguity of the clauses in John 1:3 are thus productive in preparing readers for the multiple ways in which Jesus is active in the Gospel of John.

## 5. Conclusion

This essay has utilized the translation and reception history of John 1:3 to examine its interpretation. It has thereby explored a challenging interpretive puzzle within the Johannine prologue and within scholarship on the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel. Although many understand the claim relating all things to the Word as a reference to the Word's activity in creation, some have sought to interpret 1:3 with a broader view to the Word's actions as the mediating agent through which God exercises sovereignty over everything that happens in the world. This ambiguity is found in the early translation history of 1:3. While the Latin translation utilizes a passive form of the verb *facio* (I make), the Syriac employs the copulative verb *hwy* (to be). With the exception of determining how the final two words of 1:3 relate to the rest of 1:3-4—an issue which has been left aside in this article in order to examine other matters—the Greek of 1:3 is syntactically straightforward. However, the Latin and Syriac versions attest to a high degree of a difficulty when rendering this simple Greek verse into other languages.

The reception history of John 1:3 during the second century bears witness to a similar ambiguity. Both direct citations of the Johannine text and the employment of similar language indicate that early Christian readers could understand the Johannine prologue with reference to creation. Irenaeus even links John 1:3 to a Hebrew version of Gen 1:1 (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 43)! Nor is the citation of John 1:3 in the context of creation discussions limited to proto-orthodox usage. Ptolemy and

Heracleon appeal to this verse in order to bolster their understandings of divine activity in creation. Yet others employ 1:3 to draw attention to the breadth of the divine plan. Melito declares that Christ is the one through whom God enacts all plans throughout eternity, while the *Gospel of Truth* applies similar language to refer to the actions of the Word in redemption.

This article has sought to outline a mediating position between scholars who would argue that one or the other of these interpretive approaches is dominant in the prologue by showing that John 1:3 can be usefully interpreted with a view to both elements. The ambiguity in the prologue is thus productive. Since the Word was in the beginning with God and as God, the coming of all things through the Word in 1:3 specifies that everything was created through the Word. However, the prologue simultaneously prepares readers for Jesus's actions as God's intermediary in the Johannine narrative. Everything that God does has been worked out through the Word. Life is thus found in the Word, whether one is considering the life that comes in God's initial creative act or reflecting on the life that is found through the Word's royal and redemptive actions in the remainder of the Gospel: "All things came to be through him, and not one thing came to be without him" (John 1:3).

### <주요어>

창조, 초기 번역본들, 요한복음, 요한복음의 서문, 수신역사, 주권

### <Key Words>

Creation, Early translations, The Gospel of John, Johannine Prologue, Reception history, Sovereignty

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<Abstract>

## Creation and Sovereignty:

### The Translation and Early Reception of John 1:3

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This paper explores a difficulty that arose among early readers of the Johannine prologue, namely, whether John 1:3 refers to the Word's mediatorial actions (1) primarily in creation or (2) more broadly in the outworking of God's sovereign plan. The challenge of interpreting this verse is evident in the ancient translations of the Gospel of John into Latin and Syriac. After showing that alternative readings are evident in early translations, the article turns to the reception of John 1:3 in the second century. Most second-century readers elucidate John 1:3 with a view to the Word's activity in creation, but some second-century texts utilize the verse to portray God's work through the Word in history. Working from these observations, the paper argues that John 1:3 is best read as an example of productive ambiguity. In other words, the ambiguity in the sentence enables readers to produce multiple readings that are helpful in understanding both the Johannine prologue and the rest of the Fourth Gospel. The Word is both the mediator through whom God created all things and the one through whom God's plans are made effective.

<초록>

## 창조와 주권

-번역, 수신, 그리고 요한복음 1장 3절의 해석-

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본 논문은 요한복음의 서문, 즉, 요한복음 1장 3절이, (1) 주로 창조에서, (2) 좀 더 넓게는 하나님의 주권적 계획의 완성에서, 말씀이신 이의 매개적 행동을 가리키는지에 대한 해석에 있어 요한복음의 초기 수신자들 사이에서 발생한 어려움을 살펴본다. 해당 구절을 해석하는 것의 어려움은 요한복음을 라틴어와 시리아어로 번역한 고대 번역본들에서 자명하게 드러난다. 본고는 먼저 요한복음 1장 3절이 초기 번역본들에서 대안적으로 해석된 것이 분명함을 보인 후, 해당 구절이 2세기에 어떻게 수신되었는지에 대해 검토한다. 대부분의 2세기 독자들은 요한복음 1장 3절을, 창조에 있어 말씀이신 이의 행하심에 대한 관점으로 이해하였다. 그러나 몇몇 2세기 텍스트들은 요한복음 1장 3절을 하나님께서 역사 속에서 말씀이신 이를 통해 일하신 것을 묘사하기 위해 사용하였다. 본고는 이러한 관찰을 바탕으로 요한복음 1장 3절을 생산적인 모호성의 예로 읽는 것이 가장 적절함을 주장하고자 한다. 문장 속의 모호함은 독자들이 다양한 방식으로 읽는 것을 가능하게 하는데 이는 요한복음의 서문뿐만 아니라 네 번째 복음의 나머지 부분을 이해하는데도 도움이 되기 때문이다. 말씀이신 이는 하나님께서 모든 것을 지으신 매개자이신 동시에 하나님의 계획이 실행되는 통로이시다.