



*Quaker Universalist Voice*  
**Bible Translator Notes**  
**on Pronouns**  
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These translations of the Bible often repeat nouns instead of pronouns. What does this accomplish?

The purpose of the emphasized use of nouns in these translations of the Bible is to avoid the difficulty of unclear pronoun references, to remove the improper use of male-imagined pronouns and to make the meaning clearer.

A pronoun is a language device that is used primarily to prevent the monotony that could result from the indefinite repetition of a noun. But, the meaning of these pronouns depends on the antecedent nouns to which the pronouns refer. Even when reading English versions of the New Testament, a careful reader can often be puzzled about the antecedents of the abundant number of pronouns. Easy and clear reference to the antecedent nouns is essential to accurate reading and comprehension.

The Greek text of Luke uses very few substantive nouns or personal pronouns. Readers can make a long search to go back far enough in the text to find the substantive antecedent reference for a pronoun. In Luke's Koine Greek, the lack of clear references to antecedent nouns is even greater than any English translation shows. Koine Greek uses very few personal pronouns. Instead Koine Greek has first, second, and third person verbs in singular or plural forms. For example, in Luke 24:1, a word for word literal translation reads, "the but one the week still early upon the tomb came (3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, "they") carrying (3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, "they") spices. A literal, word for word, translation of the Koine Greek would provide a different monotony of repetition of pronouns and obscure meaning.

The Resurrection narrative in Luke 24 illustrates this problem. There are few nouns in this chapter of 53 verses. There are only 10 verses that have a substantive noun in Luke 24. These include 'figures' (v. 4), 'one born human' (v.7), 'Jesus' (v. 15), 'Cleopas' (v. 18), 'Jesus of Nazareth' (v. 19), 'women' (vs. 22 and 24), 'the eleven' (v. 33), and 'the leader' (v. 34). In verse 10, the women are identified with names and the noun, 'apostles' (ones sent out), is used.

The translations here, the repetition of nouns, rather than pronouns, helps to make the message easier for children to understand and to make it easier for parents and teachers to avoid improperly male-imagined pronouns.