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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

INCARNATION AND COVENANT IN THE PROLOGUE
TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL
(JOHN 1:1-18)

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Wilson Paroschi

October 2003

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ABSTRACT

INCARNATION AND COVENANT IN THE PROLOGUE
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Wilson Paroschi

Adviser: Robert M. Johnston

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Title: INCARNATION AND COVENANT IN THE PROLOGUE TO
THE FOURTH GOSPEL (JOHN 1:1-18)

Name of researcher: Wilson Paroschi

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Robert M. Johnston, Ph.D.

Date completed: October 2003

Most scholars would agree that the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel—as John 1:1-18 is usually called—introduces Jesus Christ as a divine, pre-existent being who at a certain point in time was made flesh and lived among humans. No agreement, however, exists on the point in the narrative at which the shift from one state to the other takes place. As John the Baptist is mentioned in vss. 6-8, many think that the following verses refer to the ministry of the incarnate Christ, while others, struck by the explicitness of vs. 14, argue that this verse marks the transition from pre-existence to incarnation. Some try to combine both views and argue that the central section of the Prologue (vss. 6-13) describes what they call the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ in Old Testament times. There are also those who, not impressed either by vss. 6-8 or vs. 14, contend that it is

only the first three verses of the Prologue that necessarily refer to the pre-existent Christ. For a few interpreters the entire Prologue is about the incarnate Christ.

By making a detailed and comprehensive analysis of this issue and evaluating all differing views, the dissertation is intended to establish exactly at what point the Prologue begins to speak about the incarnate Christ. The analysis is based on the Prologue's present form and organization, and presupposes its coherence and unity.

Three main chapters form the bulk of this study. These correspond to the natural divisions of the Prologue (vss. 1-5; vss. 6-13; vss. 14-18) and to a certain extent to the various views on the point of incarnation.

The first main chapter (chapter 2) considers the incarnation in vss. 1-5 and concludes that there is no evidence to support the claim that the transition from pre-existence to incarnation occurs either in vs. 4 or in vs. 5, and much less that the entire Prologue is about the incarnate Christ. The perspective of these verses is fundamentally cosmological and, as such, they refer to the pre-existent Christ.

Chapter 3 addresses the question whether vss. 6-13 describe the ministry of the pre-incarnate Christ in the Old Testament period. The conclusion is that they describe the historical ministry of Jesus Christ, whose coming into the world—the point of the incarnation—is mentioned in vs. 9, though the modality of his coming is not spelled out until vs. 14.

The last chapter establishes the meaning of vs. 14 in view of an incarnational interpretation of vss. 6-13. This verse, together with vss. 15-18, is not meant to announce the incarnation proper, but rather to express its theological significance, which is based on the covenantal traditions of the exodus story and later prophetic expectations.

It consists of a radical affirmation that the new, eschatological era of salvation has been inaugurated with the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BA	Bible Amplifier
BDAG	Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich's <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 ^d ed.
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETHL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie

BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>Bijdr</i>	<i>Bijdragen</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BiSe	Biblical Seminar
<i>BiTod</i>	<i>Bible Today</i>
<i>BiTr</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BRBS	Brill's Readers in Biblical Studies
BSRel	Biblioteca di scienze religiose
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
CBETH	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBSS	Cassell Biblical Studies Series
CEP	Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives
CEv	Cahiers évangile

<i>CIW</i>	<i>Classical Weekly</i>
CNT	Companions to the New Testament
CPNIVC	College Press NIV Commentary
CRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>DBS</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément</i>
<i>Did</i>	<i>Didaskalia</i>
<i>DJG</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i>
EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Evangelical Journal</i>
<i>EtCl</i>	<i>Études Classiques</i>
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EstB</i>	<i>Estudios Bíblicos</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
EtB	Études Bibliques
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>FilNeo</i>	<i>Filología Neotestamentaria</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FPE	Fuentes Patristicas: Estudios
FTS	Frankfurter Theologische Studien
GSL	Geistliche Schriftlesung

GTS	Gettysburg Theological Studies
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HC	Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HSMS	Harvard Semitic Monograph Series
HT	Helps for Translators
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
IVPNTCS	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JDTh</i>	<i>Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>

<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Kairos</i>	<i>Kairos: Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theology</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
<i>Kerux</i>	<i>Kerux</i>
<i>LV</i>	<i>Lumière et vie</i>
<i>Mar</i>	<i>Marianum</i>
MLBS	Mercer Library of Biblical Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>NAWG</i>	<i>Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen</i>
NCB	New Century Bible
NEB	Die neue Echter Bibel
<i>Neotest</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>

<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTP	New Testament Profiles
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	New Testament Theology
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
ÖTKNT	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Oudtestamentische studiën
PBTS	Paternoster Biblical and Theological Studies
PC	Proclamation Commentaries
<i>PEGLBS</i>	<i>Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society</i>
<i>Presb</i>	<i>Presbyterion</i>
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>

QD	Quaestiones disputatae
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RefR	<i>Reformed Review</i>
RestQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RHPhR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RivBib	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
RNBC	Readings: A New Biblical Commentary
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
RTL	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
RThom	<i>Revue thomiste</i>
RThPh	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
SBFA	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBL SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCC	Studies in Creative Criticism
ScEs	<i>Science et Esprit</i>
Se	<i>Semeia</i>

SHVL	Skrifter utgivna av Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTI	Studies in New Testament Interpretation
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SPIB	Scripta pontificii instituti biblici
SPNT	Studies on Personalities of the New Testament
SPS	Sacra Pagina Series
SPSH	Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities
StD	Studies and Documents
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
<i>StO</i>	<i>Studium Ovetense</i>
<i>StTh</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>ThBeitr</i>	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
<i>ThD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament

<i>ThQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>ThR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>ThViat</i>	<i>Theologia Viatorum</i>
<i>ThZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TTL	Theological Translation Library
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
TzB	Texte zur Bibel
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WPC	Westminster Pelican Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
<i>ZKTh</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

ZSNT Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament

ZThK *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, as John 1:1-18 is usually called,¹ is one of the best known passages in the New Testament. Behind its simplicity of language lies a density of thought that has attracted the attention of a host of Bible students and exerted a considerable influence on Christian theology.² The Prologue, with its specific character and function, introduces the book of John.³ It is not merely a rhetorical introduction such as Heb 1:1-4, or a literary preface like Luke 1:1-4, explaining how the

¹There are exceptions. Although considering John 1:1-18 as a literary unit, Stephen S. Smalley refers to the entire chap. 1 as “the Prologue” (*John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 2^d ed., NTP [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998], 135-137); for Ben Witherington III, the Prologue consists only of vss. 1-14 (*John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 47-59). In the early church, Heracleon, the gnostic and earliest commentator on John, seems to have already anticipated the view that the Prologue comprises vss. 1-18, though in liturgical practice throughout the centuries the reading of the Prologue used to stop at vs. 14. This practice probably goes back to Origen, who held that vss. 16-18 continue the witness of the Baptist (Benedict T. Viviano, “The Structure of the Prologue of John [1:1-18]: A Note,” *RB* 105 [1998]: 177, 182).

²C. K. Barrett declares: “What is hardly open to question is the universal instinct of Christendom, which has found here the climax of New Testament Christology, itself the edge of the New Testament message” (*New Testament Essays* [London: SPCK, 1972], 27).

³For Elizabeth Harris, John’s Prologue may have been composed following Graeco-Roman literary convention of introducing epic dramas with a πρόλογος (*Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist*, JSNTSup 107 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 12-16). The variety of definition and terminology of ancient prologues, however, something that Harris willingly acknowledges, points to a certain fluidity and development which seems to weaken the case for any acquaintance on the part of the fourth evangelist and his readers with those forms and functions.

author came to write his book. In John, the explanation for the writing of the Gospel is left to the end (20:30-31). As has been said, the Prologue is “a curtain-raiser for the Gospel, like the overture of an opera,”¹ in the sense that it introduces the major themes which are explored throughout the whole work.² It is also “an instruction to the reader as to how the entire Gospel should be read and understood”;³ that is, it sets forth the perspective which governs John’s presentation of Jesus.⁴

¹Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1972), 81. See also Clayton R. Bowen: “Prologue: the word suggests the preface to a play; just as clearly the verses themselves suggest a striking of the great major chords whose harmony is to vibrate until the last curtain falls” (“The Fourth Gospel as Dramatic Material,” *JBL* 49 [1930]: 298).

²This is why classicist Heinrich Lausberg calls John’s Prologue an “exordium” in the ancient rhetorical sense of offering an introductory summary of what was to follow (“Der Johannes-Prolog: Rhetorische Befunde zu Form und Sinn des Textes,” *NAWG*, no. 5 [1984]: 193). See also his “Prolog J 1:1-18 und ‘corpus narrativum’ J 1:19-20:29 als grundständig einander zugeordnete Teile des Johannes-Evangeliums: Rhetorische Befunde,” *NAWG*, no. 1 (1987): 1-7; Simon R. Valentine, “The Johannine Prologue: A Microcosm of the Gospel,” *EQ* 68 (1996): 291-304. According to D. Moody Smith, the Prologue can be described as a summation of John’s narrative, as well as of the entire Gospel message (*John*, ANTC [Nashville: Abingdon, 1999], 63). For examples of the thematic interrelationship between the Prologue and the Gospel, see R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, IBT (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 117-119.

³Hartwig Thyen, “Aus der Literatur zum Johannesevangelium,” *ThR* 39 (1974): 223 (all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated).

⁴“From the outset, the reader understands Jesus in the light of his origin with God, his role in creation, the incarnation, and his mission to reveal the Father. Jesus’ role is also defined in relation to Moses and John the Baptist, who will bear witness to him. The opposition is established between those who reject Jesus and those who believe on his name, and the latter are identified as the ‘children of God’” (Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 119-120). E. F. Scott comments: The Prologue was written “with the express intention of placing the reader at the right point of view for understanding the story which is to follow” (*The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, 2^d ed. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908], 145). Many scholars refer to the Prologue as the “key” to the understanding of John (see R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 78).

These eighteen verses, however, to use the words of Enrique López, contain “a small world of problems.”¹ There seems to be no area within the wide range of biblical studies in which this passage offers no difficulty.² It is perhaps the most controversial passage in John’s Gospel, if not in the New Testament.³ More than a century ago, Wilhelm Baldensperger referred to it as “the sphinx at the entrance of the Fourth Gospel.”⁴ Exactly because of its mysteries and wonders the Prologue has raised enormous scholarly interest. It is hard to think of another passage that has received so much attention.⁵ The literature on it is so vast that it seems unlikely that any claim to

¹Enrique López, “Dos siglos de crítica literaria en torno al Prólogo de San Juan,” *StO* 1 (1973): 135.

²See the helpful introductory discussion by Ulrich Busse, *Das Johannesevangelium: Bildlichkeit, Diskurs und Ritual. Mit einer Bibliographie über den Zeitraum 1986-1998*, BEThL 162 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 57-70.

³“The Johannine Prologue is one of the most important passages in the New Testament, but also one of the most controversial” (Morna D. Hooker, “John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue,” *NTS* 16 [1969-1970]: 354). Already in 1897, Alfred Resch described it as a “riddle” (*Das Kindheitsevangelium nach Lucas und Matthaeus*, vol. 5, *Aussercanonische Paralleltexzte zu den Evangelien*, 5 vols., TU 10 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897], 254), as did Paul Gächter in 1936 (“Strophen im Johannesevangelium,” *ZKTh* 60 [1936]: 105) and Joachim Jeremias in 1967 (*Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1967]: 8). That this description is still suitable can be seen from a recent article by Stephen J. Patterson, in which he used adjectives such as “mysterious” and “puzzling” to refer to the Prologue, for him “one of the most difficult texts to understand” (“The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and the World of Speculative Jewish Theology,” in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 323).

⁴Wilhelm Baldensperger, *Der Prolog des vierten Evangeliums: Sein polemisch-apologetischer Zweck* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1898), 1.

⁵For bibliography, see Edward Malatesta, comp., *St. John’s Gospel 1920-1965: A Cumulative and Classified Bibliography of Books and Periodical Literature on the Fourth Gospel*, AnBib 32 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); Gilbert van Belle, *Johannine*

originality can still be made without jeopardizing one's claim to credibility. There still remain, of course, many problems to be solved, and many things to be said. But perhaps, as John Painter notes, "on the basis of existing evidence, it seems that what can be said with some probability has been said."¹ This is particularly true about the central theme of this passage, on which the following pages offer an introductory discussion, highlighting its significance and centrality in the dynamics of the Prologue, and so laying the foundation for this study.

The Theme of the Prologue

The primary focus of this dissertation is the relationship between pre-existence and incarnation in John's Prologue. This, however, presupposes a positive answer to the question whether there is such a relationship at all in the Prologue, especially in view of some recent attempts to empty the incarnation of its significance by denying in one way

Bibliography 1966-1985: A Cumulative Bibliography on the Fourth Gospel, BETHL 82 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988); Watson E. Mills, ed., *The Gospel of John*, vol. 4, *Bibliographies for Biblical Research: New Testament Series*, ed. Watson E. Mills, 21 vols. (Lewiston: Mellen, 1995); Watson E. Mills, comp., *Index to Periodical Literature on Christ and the Gospels*, NTTS 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 4, *Bibliographies for Biblical Research: Periodical Literature for the Study of the New Testament*, ed. Watson E. Mills, 11 vols. (Lewiston: Mellen, 2002).

¹John Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 30 (1984): 460. Anyone wishing to say something new on the Prologue must remember the dictum quoted by W. C. van Unnik in a similar context: "The new things he said were not true and the true things were not new" ("The Purpose of St. John's Gospel," in *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the International Congress on "The Four Gospels in 1957" Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1957*, ed. Kurt Aland, et al., TU 73 [Berlin: Akademie, 1959], 383).

or another the pre-existence of the Johannine Jesus.¹ It seems, therefore, appropriate to address this question before dealing with the actual problem and purpose of this study.

The Story of Jesus Christ

Though it introduces some of the main themes of the Gospel, the Prologue, as well as the entire Gospel, has only one subject: Jesus Christ. All other themes and concepts must be considered in connection with him. It is to be noted, however, that this subject is not mentioned by name until the end of this introductory passage (1:17).² This is probably deliberate; the human name of Jesus Christ is not used until he actually enters the realm of human existence. Prior to that, while still referring to him in the primeval time of creation, the fourth evangelist employs the unusual and rather controversial title Logos (1:1-3, 14). The reason for this will probably remain one of the hidden and intriguing mysteries of this Gospel, whatever may be said of its conceptual background.³ Nevertheless, this title seems to have furnished the author we call John with a means to differentiate between the two modes of Jesus Christ, namely, his divine

¹One example is that of Heidelberg emeritus professor Hartwig Thyen, who is in the process of producing a massive multi-volume commentary on the Gospel of John, the first volume of which he kindly shared with me ("Das Johannesevangelium," unpublished manuscript, Aug. 2000). I am citing from this manuscript with the author's permission.

²See Lausberg, "Der Johannes-Prolog," 193.

³Robert Kysar alludes to the "alluring" power of the Logos concept in John's Prologue, traditionally by far one of the most disputed issues in the Fourth Gospel's interpretation, with scholars having exhausted every conceivable possibility in an effort to understand its background, meaning, and implications (*The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975], 107).

pre-existence with God and his human existence with humankind. On one hand, therefore, λόγος helps to make a distinction; on the other, it establishes the fundamental unity between the One who was before creation with God and the One who came in flesh (vs. 14) to reveal or to explain (ἐξηγέομαι) God (vs. 18).¹

Be that as it may, what really matters here is that Jesus Christ is introduced in the Prologue framed by two sets of affirmations:² “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God” (vs. 1), and “the Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth” (vs. 14). In other words, according to John’s Prologue, the Logos who was in the beginning with God, the Logos through whom all things were made (vs. 3), the Logos who was God, “was made flesh.” That is, he moved out of the primeval, cosmic setting into the realm of humankind by taking on the reality of existence as an individual person in a concrete historical situation. This fact is seen by many as the primary issue in John 1:1-18, as well as in the whole Gospel.³

¹Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall, NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 258.

²See Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne M. Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 175-177.

³Rudolf Bultmann is one of the main proponents of this idea. With a language that sounds rather orthodox, he strongly maintains that the theme of the Fourth Gospel is to be found in 1:14a, that is, in the statement that the Logos, who was God, manifested himself in flesh, as a true man (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 62, 62 n. 4, 64, 67-68; idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans. Kendrick Grobel [London: SCM, 1952-1955], 1:40). According to Bultmann, this fact also explains why the title Logos plays no further role in the rest of the Gospel, for “the Logos is now present as the Incarnate, and indeed it is only as the Incarnate that it is present at all” (*The Gospel of John*, 63).

“Who would deny,” asks Ed. L. Miller, “that the advent of the pre-existent and divine Logos into the world at a certain moment in our history is indeed the focus of the Prologue?”¹

In relation to this point, two extremes have been observed. On one side there are those who emphasize the divinity of the Logos at the expense of his humanity and, on the other, those who insist upon the human existence of the Logos, thus minimizing John’s characterization of him as a divine, pre-existent being. The debate is well known and does not need to be addressed here.² What concerns us now is how the theme of the incarnation affects the interpretation of the Prologue and, more precisely, of those verses prior to vs. 14.

The Centrality of the Incarnation

First of all, as Friedrich Mildenerger says, “a theological understanding of the Prologue certainly has to start from vss. 14-18.”³ This is methodologically correct, for

¹Ed. L. Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3-4*, NovTSup 60 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 11. Gail R. O’Day concurs: “The Prologue is concerned with two different spheres of God’s presence: the timeless, the sphere of the cosmic Word of God, and the timebound, the sphere of John the Baptist, the world, and the incarnate Word. Establishing the interaction between these two spheres is the overriding concern of the Prologue” (“The Word Become Flesh: Story and Theology in the Gospel of John,” in *Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, vol. 2, “What Is John?” ed. Fernando F. Segovia, SBLSymS 7 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1998], 70).

²This has been done by several authors, but not always with the meticulous and cogent style of Marianne M. Thompson in *The Incarnate Word: Perspectives on Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993).

³Friedrich Mildenerger, *Biblische Dogmatik: Eine biblische Theologie in dogmatischer Perspektive*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991-1993), 1:133.

the Prologue, and the Fourth Gospel as a whole, is about Jesus Christ, not about the Logos. Herman Ridderbos agrees: "Jesus Christ is, in essence, the subject of the Prologue, the Logos the predicate. And not the reverse."¹ This means that any reference to the pre-existence of the Logos must be interpreted in the light of the incarnation. "It is only from Jesus Christ as the incarnate Logos," continues Mildenerberger, "that we can also think of something like a *before* the incarnation of the Logos."² The incarnation does not establish "the confines and limits of the Logos," as Ernst Käsemann insinuates in order to vindicate his docetic interpretation of Johannine Christology,³ but the fourth evangelist is not interested at all in any kind of speculation about the pre-temporal existence of the Logos. Although he begins his book by referring to the being of the Logos with God in the eternity past, John's mind is already focused on the revelatory aspect of the mission of the Logos among men.⁴ The Logos in the Prologue becomes relevant only in connection with what he tells about Jesus Christ. The very purpose of

¹Herman Ridderbos, "The Structure and Scope of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," *NovT* 8 (1966): 52.

²Mildenerberger, 1:133.

³Cf. Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 43.

⁴See Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 265. Cullmann's discussion of the Logos concept is illuminating. Arguing from a salvation-history perspective, he emphasizes that when the evangelist refers to the being of the Logos "in the beginning," he does so "only in the closest connection with what he says of the further work of Christ," for the incarnate One, the Son of God, as he appeared in the flesh, is the very center of God's saving activity, and as such he "cannot simply have appeared from nowhere" (*ibid.*, 249-250). So, the starting point of John's theology is "a concrete event, the life of Jesus" (263).

the Gospel endorses this idea: John was written so that not only the messiahship but also the divine origin of the man Jesus Christ might be acknowledged and believed (20:31). In an insightful article, Gail R. O'Day argues that the incarnation of the Logos plays a "pivotal role" in the Fourth Gospel, in the sense that it provides a "hermeneutical principle" on the basis of which only John's theology can be properly understood.¹

This does not mean, however, that the pre-existent Logos in the Prologue should be conceived only as a theological abstraction, as if λόγος were nothing more than a mere personification of a philosophical concept, as some, including Mildenerger, argue.² Thyen combines this idea with a doxological understanding of John 1:1-18. He maintains that "the entire Prologue, from the first verse, must be read as a doxological poem on the Incarnate, and not something like a narrative of the prehistory of this

¹Gail R. O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Reading the Incarnate Words," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 27-32.

²"We may not and must not simply assume that the λόγος ἄσαρκος is a *concretum*, an autonomous subject. There is no doubt that the Logos is linguistically treated and possibly also presented as such. But an interpretation that uses this idea has to pay attention to the fact that Logos, just as wisdom, is an *abstractum*" (Mildenerger, 1:133). John A. T. Robinson explains the pre-existent Logos as a poetic personification of God's self-expression. "That the Logos came into existence or expression as a person," he says, "does not mean that it was a person before." The incarnation was the union of the anhypostatic (impersonal) Logos with the hypostatic Jesus; this distinction, Robinson thinks, is vital in order to guard John's Christology from the charge of docetism (*The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley [London: SCM, 1985; Oak Park: Meyer-Stone, 1987], 380-381). For Hans Schwarz, the pre-existence of the Logos in John must also be interpreted as an abstraction, a theological concept which was necessary to express that God was indeed fully present in Jesus. "Pre-existence," he says, "does not imply a pre-existent person but the certainty and insistence that that which appeared in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth was indeed of divine origin and had occurred with divine sanction" (*Christology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 235-236).

incarnation.”¹ Then, Thyen lists several passages which, he thinks, support the view that there is no “pre-existent Logos” in John’s Gospel and that it is the incarnate One, the Jewish man Jesus Christ, that is both “pre- and post-existent” (1:15; 6:51; 13:1; 16:17; 17:5).² Though it cannot be denied that these passages refer to the pre-existence of Jesus of Nazareth, they do not invalidate a divine and personal understanding of that pre-existence as implied in the statements about the Logos in 1:1-3 and 14. The very notion of incarnation requires such an understanding of pre-existence. And by saying ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, vs. 14 also secures the identity of the pre-existent Logos with the man Jesus Christ (cf. vs. 17).³

¹Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 11. See also his “Aus der Literatur zum Johannesevangelium,” 39:62-63.

²Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 11.

³Thyen (ibid.) also quotes Karl Barth (*Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, et al. [New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1936-1969], 52), but in a way that seems open to suspicion. It is true that Barth also argues that Jesus Christ is “the content and form” of the pre-existent Logos (ibid., 53), but his emphasis is more on the mystery that involves the divine Word, and not so much a denial of the Word, as in the case of Thyen. Barth acknowledges that “God became man,” but his idea is that one cannot go behind the point of incarnation, a point at which we would have to reckon with God in himself, in his divine, transcendent domain. Thus, under the title λόγος ἄσαρκος, “we pay homage to a *Deus absconditus* and therefore to some image of God which we have made for ourselves” (ibid., 52). Whether Thyen misuses Barth or not, Barth’s philosophical understanding of the biblical God does not seem appropriate either. It ought to be noted that the Fourth Gospel’s portrait of the pre-existent Logos is not the product of our own individual speculations, as “some image of God which we have made for ourselves.” Not to refer to this portrait, no matter the reason, is to compromise the entire Johannine Christology. When John says that “these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (20:31), he means exactly that. Jesus is both God’s Messiah and God’s Son, and in this Gospel there is no hint of adoptionism involving his divine sonship. Even though he had an earthly mother (2:1, 12), he also had a heavenly Father (6:46; 10:15; 12:50; 16:15; 17:11), with whom he had a personal and intimate relationship even before the creation of the world (1:1-3, 18; 17:5). So John himself takes the reader before the point of

There should be no question that, irrespective of historical and philosophical premises, the Logos of vss. 1-3 and 14 is, linguistically as well as theologically, depicted as a person, as an autonomous individual. "That is quite a claim!" exclaims Robert Kysar. Whether one believes it is true or not, he argues, one must recognize that the Johannine Logos is a person.¹ In order to assimilate this fact, it may be argued that John uses metaphorical, dogmatic, or even mythological language,² but that language cannot be regarded merely as doxological. Doxology is, by definition, an ascription of glory to someone, usually a divine or heavenly being, and there is nothing in vss.1-3 or in the whole Prologue that resembles a doxology, not a single word or expression of praise,

incarnation, into the heavenly realm, the sphere of God in himself, in order to make clear the full identity of Jesus Christ. If it were not for his docetic view of the Johannine Jesus, one certainly could agree with Käsemann that "judged by the modern concept of reality, our Gospel is more fantastic than any other writing of the New Testament" (*The Testament of Jesus*, 45). Whether John's Christological claims go back to Jesus himself or are the result of developed tradition, as some have argued (e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980], 31-32), does not affect these considerations. The Johannine Logos is indeed a personal, pre-existent, and divine being, and no other NT writing has had more impact on Christian thinking about these issues than the Fourth Gospel (see Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 283).

¹Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), 25. R. V. G. Tasker says: "It is the unique contribution of the Prologue of the Gospel of John, that it reveals the Word of God not merely as an attribute of God, but as a distinct person within the Godhead, dwelling with the Creator before creation began, and acting as the divine agent of creation" (*The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], 42).

²Bultmann says: "He [the Logos] is spoken of as a person, in the language of mythology" (*The Gospel of John*, 19).

either to God or to the Logos.¹ Even if there were, however, the jump from doxological statements to the conclusion that the text in question conveys a theological abstraction seems difficult to justify.

Even though the whole Prologue is to be interpreted in the light of the incarnation, the incarnation is not to be used as an argument to obfuscate the paradox of the identity of him who is the subject of this Gospel. As his pre-existence cannot be used to deny the significance of his earthly reality, as if his humanity was merely docetic, his human existence cannot in itself be used to deny his divinity and personal pre-existence. He is God, and he is man. It is the incarnation that brings these two realities together, and for this reason the incarnation is central to John.² To the evangelist, therefore, the incarnation is not a concept, nor is it an ahistorical occurrence. It is a specific event at a

¹In the NT, there are no fewer than sixteen examples of doxologies: Rom 11:36; 16:25-27; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:20-21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pet 3:18; Jude 24-25; Rev 1:5-6; 5:13; 7:12. The identification of Luke 2:14 and 19:38 is more problematic (see I. Howard Marshall, "Romans 16:25-27: An Apt Conclusion," in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 170-183). According to Jeffrey A. D. Weima, all NT doxologies exhibit a relatively fixed pattern, consisting of four basic elements: the object of praise, the element of praise, the indication of time, and the confirmatory response (*Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, JSNTSup 101 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 135-144). None of these elements is found in John's Prologue.

²Maybe this explains why there is no reference to the virgin birth in the Fourth Gospel. Not that the concept of incarnation is "difficult to reconcile" with the doctrine of the virgin birth, as claimed by Bultmann (Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, 2 vols., ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller [London: SPCK, 1957-1962], 1:34), but there exists no suggestion of pre-existence as with the concept of incarnation, whereby a figure who was previously with God takes on flesh (see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, new updated ed., ABRL [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 141).

definite time in the life of an actual, personal being.¹ There is a *before*, as there is an *after* this event. There is a pre-existent Logos (λόγος ἄσαρκος) who is introduced in his cosmic setting, just as there is an incarnate Logos (λόγος ἑνσαρκος) who becomes the subject of John's narrative. Such a view is fundamental to any exegetical or literary interpretation of the Prologue, for if there is no pre-existence, or if the pre-existent Logos is only an abstraction, then John 1:14 becomes irrelevant, not to say meaningless.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

Leaving the more theological concerns aside, the notion of the incarnation as an individual, punctiliar event immediately raises the question as to the precise point in the Prologue's narrative at which the transition from the pre-existent Logos to the Logos incarnate takes place, that is, the point at which the historical appearance of Jesus Christ is first referred to. Already a matter of discussion in the early church, this issue is regarded by Bultmann as "the first exegetical problem" of John 1:1-18,² and by Käsemann as even more controversial than the Prologue's purpose or literary form.³

This is but one of the many problems involving this passage that has not received

¹See Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 52.

²Rudolf Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," trans. John Ashton, in *The Interpretation of John*, 2^d ed., ed. John Ashton, SNTI (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 28. Similarly, John Ashton refers to this problem as the Prologue's "key question" ("The Transformation of Wisdom: A Study of the Prologue of John's Gospel," *NTS* 32 [1986]: 170).

³Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague, NTL (London: SCM, 1969), 139.

an agreed solution. On account of the introduction of John the Baptist in vss. 6-8, most interpreters find it quite natural to conceive the following verses (vss. 9-13) as a description of a historical event, in this case, the ministry of the incarnate Christ.¹ Others, however, oppose this idea by arguing that the first explicit reference to the incarnation is not found until vs. 14, which is also usually understood as the climax and the theological center of the Prologue.² In fact, as Bultmann remarks, the statement καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο “does not sound as if there had already been talk of the incarnate One.”³ Any attempt to see the shift from pre-existence to incarnation earlier in the narrative would seem to destroy the climactic character of that statement,⁴ thus reducing it to “a pale variant upon an already established theme.”⁵ To avoid this problem, some interpreters prefer to combine both views into an intermediate solution: to see in the central section of the

¹So Barrett: “It is vss. 6-8 that makes vs. 11 refer to an historical event, the ministry of Jesus ushered in by the testimony of the Baptist” (*New Testament Essays*, 32). Raymond E. Brown also notes that “most of the phrases found in [vss.] 10-12 appear in the Gospel as a description of the ministry of Jesus” (*The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2 vols., AB 29 and 29a [Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-1970], 1:29).

²George R. Beasley-Murray’s statement is typical: “For the evangelist it would appear that the account of the Prologue moves to the statement of vs. 14; by virtue of its theological significance it forms the center of gravity of the Prologue, and indeed of the Gospel itself” (*John*, 2^d ed., WBC 36 [Nashville: Nelson, 1999], 4).

³Bultmann, “The History of Religions Background,” 29.

⁴Referring to the attempt to interpret vss. 9-13 in the light of the ministry of the incarnate Logos, Margaret Davies argues: “The difficulty with this interpretation is that it ruins what would otherwise be a startling climax in 1:14” (*Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, JSNTSup 69 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992], 127).

⁵Ashton, “The Transformation of Wisdom,” 175.

Prologue (vss. 6-13) an account of the pre-incarnate Christ's activity in Old Testament times.¹ To make things even more complicated, C. H. Dodd argues that "it is only the first three verses of the Gospel that necessarily refer to the pre-incarnate Logos,"² while for a few others, Thyen included, the whole Prologue is about the historical Christ.

The purpose of this study is to establish where in the Prologue the incarnation occurs. The working hypothesis here pursued is that the first reference to the incarnate Christ is found in vs. 9. In this connection, it is argued that (1) vss. 1-5 focus on the pre-existent Logos; (2) in addition to vs. 9, vss. 10-13 do not refer to the activities of the pre-incarnate Logos in the Old Testament period; and (3) vs. 14, though still the pinnacle of the Prologue, is not its incarnational turning point.

Justification for the Study

Despite the importance usually attributed to the issue of the point at which the Prologue moves from pre-existence to incarnation, no comprehensive investigation of it has yet been undertaken. Most commentaries and studies on the interpretation and the structure of the Prologue deal with this issue, but not as a main subject and much less in a systematic way, that is, by carefully addressing all the exegetical matters involved in

¹E.g., Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 139-141. According to this view, vss. 1-5 speak of the pre-existent Logos in the beginning, while vss. 6-13 of the pre-incarnate Christ through the prophets in the Old Testament period, and vss. 14-18 of the New Testament incarnate Christ.

²C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 283.

the discussion and in dialog with all contrasting views.¹ As in the case of the classical studies of Bultmann, Käsemann, Schnackenburg, and Haenchen,² as well as of more recent ones,³ the point of incarnation is mostly treated only as a subset of the Prologue's literary history, which then functions as a key to the interpretation of the whole passage. That is to say, the relationship between pre-existence and incarnation in the Prologue is established on the basis of source and redaction analysis, which controls the entire discussion. Opposing views are dealt with rather irregularly and only when they affect or are affected by that analysis. Even among those who adopt a more wholistic approach, remarks on the point of incarnation are either scattered throughout a commentary,⁴ or, more often, subordinated to structural analysis.⁵

¹Discussion of relevant literature with regard to the specific views is presented in the course of the dissertation.

²Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background," 27-46; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 138-167; Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog," *BZ* 1 (1957): 69-109; Ernst Haenchen, "Probleme des johanneischen 'Prologs,'" *ZThK* 60 (1963): 305-334.

³E.g., Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 239-250; Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 161-186; Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community," 460-474; Gérard Rochais, "La formation du prologue (Jn 1:1-18)," *ScEs* 37 (1985): 5-44; 161-187.

⁴E.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2^d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 149-170; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 1-17; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 111-139; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SPS 4 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998), 33-48; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 47-65.

⁵E.g., M.-É. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans (Westminster: Newman, 1957), 73-81; R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1981): 1-31; Ignace de la Potterie, "Structure du Prologue de saint Jean," *NTS* 30 (1984): 354-381; Otfried Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus in Joh 1:1-18," *ZNW*

Another problem has to do with the weight usually attributed to vss. 6-8. As a rule, these verses are treated as decisive in establishing the point where the Prologue moves from pre-existence to incarnation and great efforts are made trying to ascertain the literary status of these verses in relation to a possible source used by John. Most interpreters who conceive the incarnation in vs. 9¹ do so because of the reference to John the Baptist in vss. 6-8. O'Day says, "The way one interprets the place of the John the Baptist verses directly influences one's answer to the question, at what point does the Prologue begin to speak about the historical Jesus (the incarnate Word)?"² This statement is essentially correct, but it gives the impression that the whole issue depends on vss. 6-8, which is not the case. As a matter of fact, these verses can be used as evidence for the opposing views that the introduction of the historical Christ takes place in vs. 5³ and, on the other hand, that it cannot occur prior to vs. 9 or even vs. 10.⁴ This

78 (1987): 1-25; James T. Dennison, "The Prologue of John's Gospel," *Kerux* 8, no. 2 (1993): 3-9; Jan G. van der Watt, "The Composition of the Prologue of John's Gospel: The Historical Jesus Introducing Divine Grace," *WTJ* 57 (1995): 311-332; Stephen Voorwinde, "John's Prologue: Beyond Some Impasses of Twentieth-Century Scholarship," *WTJ* 63 (2002): 15-44.

¹For references, see below, 25, n. 1.

²O'Day, "The Word Become Flesh," 70.

³"It is . . . clear that in vss. 1-5, 9-12 the source spoke of the pre-existent Logos . . . before going on to tell of his incarnation in vs. 14. It is also clear, however, that the evangelist wants to regard the text from vs. 5 onwards as referring to the incarnate Logos. For it is only because he found in the words τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει . . . an expression of the revelation given by the historical Jesus, that he is able to introduce the Baptist at this point as the witness to the light" (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 17).

⁴"The editor of the Prologue has inserted a reference to John the Baptist after vs. 5, and one can scarcely imagine that the editor would introduce John the Baptist after describing the

means that this issue cannot, and should not, be established with reference to vss. 6-8 only, not even with reference to these verses in connection with vs. 14.

The main contribution of this dissertation, therefore, is to offer a detailed study entirely devoted to the question of the point of incarnation in John's Prologue. In doing this, all conflicting views regarding the perspective, whether pre-existential, pre-incarnational, or incarnational, of the various sections of this passage, as well as all exegetical factors relevant to the discussion, are individually acknowledged and investigated.

Critical Presuppositions

As noted above, any research that concentrates on such a formal question as the point of incarnation in the Prologue is heavily impacted by one's view on the literary history and form of this passage. The hypothesis that John 1:1-18 was originally a hymn to Christ, worked over by the evangelist and placed at the beginning of his Gospel as an introduction, continues to play a major role in its interpretation. Most of those who see references to the incarnate Christ prior to vs. 14 resort to the hymn hypothesis to explain the difficulty presented by this verse, which contains the first clear mention of the incarnation. The argument is simple: the pre-Johannine hymn envisaged the incarnation in vs. 14, but by adding vss. 6-8 John made it clear that he wanted at least vss. 9-13 to refer to the incarnate Logos, "so that vs. 14 becomes more of a resumptive summary of a

ministry of Jesus and its effects. Clearly the editor thought that the references to the coming of Jesus began in vs. 10; he put the coming of John the Baptist in vss. 6-8 before the coming of Jesus, and used vs. 9 to connect John the Baptist to the moment of that coming" (Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26).

claim already made.”¹ Some scholars even venture to say that the evangelist misunderstood his source,² while others suggest that the Prologue actually comprises two different hymns to Christ: one consisting of vss. 1-12 and the other of vss. 14-17.³ When vss. 9-13 are already seen as incarnational in the context of the alleged hymn, the problem of vs. 14 (-18) is solved by denying its climactic character and reducing it to a mere “footnote” added by the evangelist to the hymn to explain the reason for prefacing his Gospel with such a composition.⁴

Another solution is to find a chiasm in the Prologue and argue that “there are two references to the incarnation because the chiastic structure demands that there be two references, just as there are two references to John the Baptist.”⁵ Such an approach has the advantage of taking the Prologue as a unit, but, besides relegating exegesis to a subordinate position,⁶ it does not contain in itself any criticism of the traditional hymn hypothesis. As a matter of fact, most of those who argue for a chiasm or other parallel structure in John 1:1-18 still think that this passage derives from an existing Christian

¹Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 244.

²Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*, trans. Robert W. Funk, ed. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 117, 128.

³Mathias Rissi, “Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums,” *ThZ* 31 (1975): 321-336; idem, “John 1:1-18 (The Eternal Word),” *Int* 31 (1977): 394-401.

⁴Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 165.

⁵Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” 13-14.

⁶See the criticism of Culpepper’s chiastic approach by Voorwinde, 24-25.

hymn.¹

Despite its wide acceptance, however, the hymn hypothesis does not seem appropriate to explain all the Prologue's literary questions, including an eventual double allusion to the incarnation. A full review of the hymn hypothesis appears in appendix A.

It is possible to make sense of vss. 9-13 and vs. 14 as they now stand without having to appeal to an independent, conjectural source. Hence, the assumption that the present form of the Prologue is not fortuitous, much less mistaken, should not be dismissed as a misuse of critical sensibility. In addition, given the subjective and circumstantial nature of the evidence on which the hymn hypothesis rests, the only objective approach is in fact to build a thesis on the hard evidence of the text itself.² The fourth evangelist, or whoever left the Prologue as it has always been known in Christian tradition, was certainly an author in his own right. The fewer speculative categories are imposed on the form and content of these eighteen verses, the easier it becomes to understand how they came to be considered a suitable introduction to the Gospel.³

In this dissertation, the point at which the incarnate Christ in John's Prologue is

¹See, e.g., Culpepper, *The Gospel and the Letters of John*, 109-120.

²See Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 10.

³Contemporary Johannine scholarship, particularly under the influence of the New Literary Criticism, has shown a renewed interest in John's finished text. Several interpreters, even among those of a more traditional orientation, have come to recognize the coherence and sophistication of the structure of the Fourth Gospel, both literary and theological, as something which "no longer permits us to make secondary phenomena, such as supposed sources or postulated redactions, the key to its understanding" (Udo Schnelle, "Recent Views of John's Gospel," trans. Frederick J. Gaiser, *WW* 21 [2001]: 359).

first referred to, and for that matter the meaning of vs. 14, with all the climactic savor of its explicit reference to the incarnation, is not sought in connection with any hypothetical source, but on the basis of the Prologue's present form, organization, and relation to the Gospel.

Delimitations and Methodology

This study, which is both exegetical and theological, focuses on the relationship between pre-existence and incarnation in John 1:1-18. The method utilized is primarily synchronic, for it approaches the Prologue as a coherent unit and tries to establish that relationship on the basis of the thought progression of the text as it now stands and as it relates to the longer narrative of the Gospel. Notwithstanding its limitations, the commentary-like style of some sections, particularly in chapters 3 and 4, is only an attempt to remain as close as possible to the text and its dynamics. Diachronic analysis is also employed whenever necessary to establish the meaning of an individual passage in view of its own textual tradition, association of ideas, and historical setting. The reader should not expect a detailed treatment of those parts of the Prologue that are not fundamentally related to the purpose of this study.

In addition to this Introduction (chapter 1), the dissertation has three main chapters, which correspond to the natural divisions of the Prologue (vss. 1-5; vss. 6-13; vss. 14-18) and to a certain extent to the different views on the point of incarnation. The scope and methodology of each chapter can be described as follows:

Chapter 2 addresses the question whether the description of the Logos in vss. 1-5

is already framed by an incarnational perspective. The chapter is subdivided into three sections, which look at incarnation in vss. 1-3, vs. 4, and vs. 5 in turn. Each section opens with a brief description of the incarnational hypothesis and its main arguments, which is then followed by a detailed evaluation. The evaluation notes the parallels to the creation story of Genesis and explores them consistently. It also includes critical and contextual analysis of key terms and motifs, such as ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν (vs. 1), πάντα and γίνομαι (vs. 3), the position of ὁ γέγονεν (vss. 3-4), life and light (vs. 4), the verb καταλαμβάνω and the light/darkness contrast (vs. 5).

Chapter 3 examines the view that vss. 6-8 refer to the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ in Old Testament times. It has four main parts (vss. 6-8; vs. 9; vss. 10-11; vss. 12-13). The pre-incarnational hypothesis is introduced and explained in connection with the first part and then, as the chapter unfolds, systematically addressed and evaluated in light of the development of the text. The evaluation follows a contextual approach in which each verse or group of verses is subjected to careful investigation. Special attention is paid to the salvation-history role of John the Baptist (vss. 6-8), the syntactical meaning of the participle ἐρχόμενον and the identity of the light (vs. 9), κόσμος and τὰ ἴδια/οἱ ἴδιοι (vss. 10-11), and the children of God (vss. 12-13).

The fourth chapter investigates vss. 14-18, with particular emphasis on the position and meaning of vs. 14 within the Prologue. The climactic tenor of this verse is noted and interpreted accordingly. The issue of background, whether the exodus or the wisdom tradition, and its theological significance is discussed first, then the passage is consistently interpreted against that background. Individual words and motifs are

frequently subjected to minute analysis to reveal their correlation to the large picture. The study is centered on three major emphases about the Logos present in vs. 14: his dwelling on earth; his visible glory; and his grace and truth.

Chapter 5, the Conclusion, reviews the results of the previous chapters, notes their implications for understanding the structure and thought progression of the Prologue, and highlights issues that may deserve further investigation.

Three appendices on critical issues concerning the formation of the Prologue and its relation to the Gospel follow. Appendix A provides an extensive review and assessment of contemporary research on the hymn hypothesis, underscoring its weaknesses and deficiencies. Appendix B deals with the Logos concept and its relevance for John's Christology, in particular his recurring emphasis on the pre-existence of Jesus. Appendix C uses the rejection/acceptance motif to highlight the strong structural connections between the Prologue and the bulk of the Gospel.

Definition of Terms

Critical scholarship has indicated that, with John, the notion of a single author, or of a document written from start to finish in one sitting, is problematic. It seems reasonable to assume that this Gospel is the end product of a composition process, yet it is impossible to determine whether that process was oral or written, as well as the number of stages or persons (redactors) involved. In this dissertation, "John" and "the fourth evangelist" are used interchangeably to denote whoever put the Gospel into its present form, without prejudging the authorship issue or the question of what and how

much is more appropriately described as redactional. Likewise, the expression “the *Fourth Gospel*” is not used in a critical sense, but only as an alternative to the traditional title “the Gospel of John.”

Several scholars use the terms “pre-existent” and “pre-incarnate” synonymously to refer to the Logos prior to the incarnation. In this dissertation, unless when part of a citation, “pre-existent” designates the Logos in his primordial relationship with God up to the time of creation, while “pre-incarnate” the Logos in his eventual relationship with the world between creation and the incarnation. This distinction is more significant in chapter 3.

The term “covenant,” introduced in chapter 3 and extensively used in chapter 4, carries the general biblical sense of a divine provision intended to create a special relationship between God and Israel, or God and his people. It implies the notion of a religious community in fellowship with God and within which God lives.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRE-EXISTENT MODE OF THE LOGOS

(JOHN 1:1-5)

It is almost universally held that the first five verses of the Prologue constitute one section and that the second section does not begin until vs. 6.¹ This view springs

¹E.g., Harnack, 218; J. E. Belser, "Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums," *ThQ* 85 (1903): 485; Wilhelm Heitmüller, "Das Johannes-Evangelium," in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt*, 3^d ed., 4 vols., ed. Wilhelm Bousset and Wilhelm Heitmüller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917-1918), 4:40-41; Alfred Loisy, *Le quatrième Évangile*, 2^d ed. (Paris: Nourry, 1921), 87; Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 5th and 6th eds. (Leipzig: Deichert, 1921; reprint, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1983), 64; M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 2^d ed., EtB (Paris: Gabalda, 1925), 1; Walter Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 3^d ed., HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), 15; Gächter, 101-103; Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums: Der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschungen* (Freiburg: Paulus, 1951), 71; Hermann Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 10th ed., NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 29; Walther Eltester, "Der Logos und sein Prophet: Fragen zur heutigen Erklärung des johanneischen Prologs," in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen zu seinem siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 10. Dezember 1964*, ed. Walther Eltester, BZNW 30 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 124; Joachim Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1965), 72; Ridderbos, "The Structure and Scope of the Prologue," 53; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 3 vols., trans. Kevin Smyth, et al. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968-1982), 1:227; Werner de Boor, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 2 vols. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1968), 1:33, 42; Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue," 356; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 149; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 77-78; Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community," 469-470; Michael Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh*, NTA 20 (Münster: Ascendorff, 1988), 300; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 348; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 113; Gail R. O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 9:516; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, NAC, 25a ([Nashville]: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 111; Udo Schnelle, *Das*

naturally from the feeling that the reference to John the Baptist marks a thematic shift in which the incarnate Christ becomes the new subject matter, against the being and activity of the pre-existent Logos of the previous verses.¹ As Brown says, it is difficult to imagine that the evangelist “would introduce John the Baptist after describing the ministry of Jesus and its effect.”²

Several scholars, however, take a different stance. Bultmann, for example, though admitting that the first explicit mention of the incarnation is in vs. 14, contends that vs. 5 must already be taken in connection with the historical Christ and be interpreted in the light of vss. 10-11 as alluding to his rejection, or the failure of the people to understand him.³ In this case, the introductory section of the Prologue, with its description of the transcendental Logos, would necessarily end at vs. 4.

Another view is represented by Theobald. He also interprets vs. 5 from an incarnational standpoint, but for him this verse alludes rather to the triumph of Jesus in

Evangelium nach Johannes, ThHK 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 36; Ludger Schenke, *Johannes: Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1998), 22-23; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 36-37; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 48; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, EBS (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 57; Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 12.

¹Charles H. Talbert asks: “Should the reader assume that with vss. 6-8 there has been a movement from eternity to history so that what will follow will deal with the Jesus of history?” (*Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* [New York: Crossroad, 1992], 67).

²Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26.

³Cf. Bultmann, “The History of Religions Background,” 29.

his death and resurrection.¹ Differently from Bultmann, Theobald takes vss. 1-5 as a literary unit, but this is also true of those who see the first reference to the incarnation in vs. 4,² as well as of those who argue that the whole Prologue is about the historical Christ.

Given these differences on the structure and interpretation of vss. 1-5, a detailed analysis of these verses is in order. This chapter looks at incarnation in vss. 1-3, vs. 4, and vs. 5 in turn. The question is whether the description of the Logos in these verses is framed by a historical or transcendental perspective. The operating hypothesis is that in this section the Prologue refers only to the activity of the pre-existent Logos in the beginning.

All Things Were Made through Him (vss. 1-3)

While some interpreters debate about the point in the Prologue at which the transition from the pre-existent Logos to the incarnate Christ takes place, others argue that the entire Prologue refers to the incarnation. This view depends on a rather unusual interpretation of vss. 1-3, in particular vs. 3a: πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. In what follows, a short introduction to this interpretation leads into a comprehensive discussion of the

¹See Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 214. Theobald even refers to vss. 1-5 as a "prologue within the Prologue," which encompasses three important motifs: word, light, and life. The first has an introductory character. It is a metaphysical reflection on the person of Jesus Christ. The other two consist in an anticipation or summary of Jesus' activity in the entire Gospel (ibid., 300-329).

²So Miller, for whom vss. 1-5 (with the omission of vss. 1c, 2 as probable interpolations) consist in a complete hymn composed within the Johannine community to celebrate the salvation brought about by the Logos ("The Logic of the Logos Hymn," 559).

main issues involved.

Incarnation in Vss. 1-3

The view that John's Prologue is from start to finish about the revelation of the incarnate Logos is most fully sustained by Paul Lamarche.¹ He posits that the basic perspective of John 1:1-18 is God's universal plan of salvation, first revealed to the Gentile world (vss. 1-9) and then to Israel (vss. 10-11).² In order to maintain this hypothesis, Lamarche takes the term λόγος in vs. 1 not primarily in a trinitarian context, but in the context of salvation history as a reference to God's saving plan; that is, to "Christ the Savior as he was foreseen by God at the beginning and as he accomplished the divine plan."³ The Logos is still the "Second Person of the Trinity," but he must be seen here not as the One who "exists necessarily and eternally in God," but as the Christ who even before the foundation of the world was "destined to take flesh and to save mankind."⁴ This interpretation leads Lamarche to take the first two occurrences of

¹Paul Lamarche, "Le Prologue de Jean," *RSR* 52 (1964): 497-537. See also T. E. Pollard, "Cosmology and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *VC* 12 (1958): 147-153; Luise Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt: Beobachtungen zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium*, WMANT 37 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), 230; Thyen, "Aus der Literatur zum Johannesevangelium," 39:62-63; idem, "Das Johannesevangelium," 11; Ignace de la Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 2 vols., AnBib 73 and 74 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977), 1:161-166; Eugene A. Nida, "Rhetoric and the Translator: With Special Reference to John 1," *BiTr* 33 (1982): 327; Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 170-179.

²See Lamarche, 510-514.

³*Ibid.*, 536.

⁴*Ibid.*, 526. For Lamarche, "the opening words of the Prologue (ἦν ἀρχῇ) do not refer to the Trinity, which has no beginning, but to the history of the world" (*ibid.*, 536). Ashton has a

γίνομαι in vs. 3 in the broad sense of “to become/happen” and to conclude that this verse refers not to creation, but rather to the historical manifestation of the Logos, which includes the natural law of the Gentiles and the election of Israel.¹ Then, by reading the expression ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ with vs. 4 as “what came about in him,” he finds in these words a summary of everything that was accomplished in Jesus, through his “death, resurrection, and glorification.”²

Assessment

Attractive as it is, Lamarche’s view depends upon an untenable interpretation of John 1:1-3. It is true that in these verses the evangelist is not concerned with the Trinity, but one wonders if this really means something in relation to John or to any other New Testament writing. Cosmological speculations about relationships within God or in trinitarian processions are a later theological phenomenon. This is not to say, however,

more subtle way of escaping the constraint caused by vss. 1-2. Although believing that the incarnate Christ is the subject of the extant Prologue, he proposes that originally these verses consisted in a Johannine (i.e., from the Johannine community) hymn on the wisdom theme, but replacing the traditional term σοφία by the term λόγος. This allows him to explain the λόγος of vss. 1-2 in the context of the alleged hymn as the plan of God. “From the very beginning,” he says, “God has his plan close to him, and his plan was a facet of his divinity” (“The Transformation of Wisdom,” 172-173). But when he comes to the Prologue in its present form, Ashton says nothing on the meaning of vss. 1-2, except that the evangelist’s central insight was “the identification of Jesus Christ, revered and worshiped by Christians alone, with the figure of wisdom” (179).

¹See further, Pollard, 149-152.

²Lamarche, 527. The contrast between δι’ αὐτοῦ (vs. 3) and ἐν αὐτῷ (vs. 4) is fully explained: “Everything that has happened ‘through his mediation’ (διὰ) played its part in the realization of the divine plan, but it is only by the events that happened directly through him and in him (ἐν αὐτῷ), that is to say in Jesus Christ, that the plan of salvation has been accomplished” (ibid., 536).

that John's introductory statements should not be understood from a cosmological standpoint. If there is an issue in Johannine exegesis that enjoys considerable consent, it is that the evangelist introduces his Gospel by referring to Jesus from the perspective of eternity.¹ Lamarche does not deny this necessarily, but he makes too great an effort to read into the first sentences of the Prologue a theological signification that cannot be demonstrated to have been intended by John. To say, for example, that the title Logos refers to Christ "the Savior," or the Christ "of the Gospel," and that the close relationship of the Logos with God presented in vss. 1-2 refers to "the divine plan of salvation for all, conceived by God before the foundation of the world,"² is to impose a degree of exegetical precision that is absent from the passage.³

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν

In the light of the Prologue's opening sentence (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), the

¹Cf. Talbert, *Reading John*, 66. In John, maintains Barrett, "salvation is given its shape by cosmology" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 152).

²Lamarche, 526.

³The passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 11.11), which is frequently cited to support this idea (Pollard, 151; Lamarche, 525; La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 162-163; and especially Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 171), offers "only a formal parallel to John 1:3," as Bultmann correctly remarks (Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes: Ergänzungsheft*, KEK [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957], 11), and as such it has little if any significance. See also Davies, who says that the Prologue's use of time expressions such as "in the beginning" and "was" must be understood metaphorically. She does so in order to preserve at all costs God's transcendent reality, thus denying a more historical understanding of that reality (vss. 1-3) and of the incarnation (vs. 14), "as if God changed at a particular time." Thus, "λόγος is not God in himself but God's expression of his purpose in creating and sustaining the world" (*Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 121). A similar idea is expressed by Schottroff, 230-232.

conclusion that the evangelist is thinking here on cosmological categories seems inescapable. This sentence consists of a deliberate allusion to Gen 1:1,¹ so deliberate that Lamarche's silence about it may well indicate his failure to cope with it. John's intention, however, is not to discuss cosmology for its own sake, or to provide a kind of Christological doctrine of creation,² or to correct a possible misinterpretation of the

¹This claim, according to Haenchen, is supported by the fact that the expression ἐν ἀρχῇ is identical with the LXX rendering of בְּרֵאשִׁית of Gen 1:1. "That is no mere coincidence," he says; "the agreement is intentional" (*John 1*, 109). Ed. L. Miller notes two other evidences for this: (1) the allusion to the Genesis creation story is entirely consistent with the Jewish tenor of the Fourth Gospel and, more immediately, of the Prologue itself, and (2) the prepositional phrases ἀπ' ἀρχῆς or ἐξ ἀρχῆς are usual throughout the Greek NT and are *always* employed in the Johannine literature, with this one exception ("'In the Beginning': A Christological Transparency," *NTS* 45 [1999]: 588-589).

²See, e.g., Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986*, 2^d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 343; R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 2^d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 167-168; Abraham Terian, "Creation in Johannine Theology," in *Good News in History: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. Ed. L. Miller (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), 45-61; E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, BIS 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 166-167. This idea, however, is more closely associated with Peder Borgen, who argues that John 1:1-5 can be characterized as a targumic rendering of Gen 1:1-5, while John 1:6-18 elaborates upon terms and phrases from the previous verses. He bases his argument not only on the expression ἐν ἀρχῇ, but also on the important terms φῶς and σκοτία, which are equally common to both John (1:4-5) and Genesis (1:2-5). He also claims that the content of vs. 3 in the Prologue is nothing but a midrashic paraphrase of Gen 1:1 (God created "heaven and earth"). Finally, Borgen adduces some evidence from Jewish literature, especially Philo, to suggest that the term λόγος in the Prologue is an interpretation and replacement of the phrase εἶπεν ὁ θεός in Gen 1:3, as John 1:3 replaces ἐποίησεν . . . τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν in Gen 1:1 ("Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 16 [1969-1970]: 288-295; idem, "Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John," *NovT* 14 [1972]: 115-130; idem, "The Prologue of John as Exposition of the Old Testament," in *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity*, BJS 131 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1987], 75-101). Interesting as it is, the idea that John 1:1-5 is a Christological exposition (midrash) of Gen 1:1-5 does not seem to fit the implied purpose of the Prologue, which is to provide the essential information on the origin of Jesus. In other words, instead of explaining Genesis, John wants to explain Jesus, and the appeal to the creation story seems to function only as a framework for his introduction of Jesus'

creation account of Gen 1 by a rival sect,¹ but “to give to the Christ-event the

pre-existence and creative activity. For further criticism of Borgen’s view, see Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” 5.

¹Elaine H. Pagels argues that the Johannine community and the community represented by the *Gospel of Thomas*, which she believes lived in close proximity with one another, held conflicting exegetical traditions about creation and that the Prologue is John’s attempt to refute his opponents’ views. According to Pagels, Thomas takes Gen 1:3 to mean that when the primordial light appeared on the first day, there appeared in that light the form of a primordial *anthrōpos* (Jesus? cf. log. 77), through whom all things came into being, including mankind which, according to Gen 1:26-27, was created in the image of God (actually the primordial light/*anthrōpos* of Gen 1:3; cf. log. 50). With the fall, humanity lost its original, singular condition and was deprived of its divine origin, but the image of God implanted at creation enables humankind to find the way back to its origin in the mystery of the “beginning” (log. 17-19, 24), that is, the primordial condition of light (log. 77), and recognize themselves as “sons of the living Father” (log. 3). Thus, by identifying the end with the beginning, Thomas remits eschatology to protology (cf. esp. log. 18). Against such views, Pagels continues, John, interpreting Gen 1:1-3, insists that the primordial divine light resides exclusively in the Logos (cf. John 1:4) and becomes perceptible to humankind, not through the image of God implicitly present in human nature, but only through the Logos incarnate (“Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” *JBL* 118 [1999]: 477-496). The possibility of a conflict between John and Thomas had already been suggested (see Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* [Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990], 260-263; Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995]; April D. de Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, VCSup 33 [Leiden: Brill, 1996]), but this is the first time that an attempt to see this conflict on the basis of John’s Prologue is made. Pagels’s thesis, however, raises a number of questions. Her picture of the interpretation of Genesis in the *Gospel of Thomas* seems to be consistent with what is known from other gnostic sources (assuming that Thomas is gnostic); she herself mentions some of them (*The Writing without Title; Eugnostos; Apocryphon of John*). However, is it possible to argue that John was keen to correct Thomas or the traditions behind it? Is there sufficient evidence to argue that John “knew, and thoroughly disagreed with, the type of exegesis offered in Thomas” (Pagels, 479)? Apart from the fact that the origin and the dating of Thomas’s traditions are a formidable riddle, what prevents John and Thomas from representing differing traditions on the Genesis creation that developed independently from each other? This is precisely the conclusion of a study on the similarities between John and Thomas by Ismo Dunderberg, who argues that “no certain indicators of a literary dependence between the two Gospels could be found, and neither did these materials suggest that the communities behind these texts had dealings with each other. . . . [Their conceptual affinities] are to be located within a similar context of early Christianity” (“Thomas’ I-sayings and the Gospel of John,” in *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, ed. Risto Uro, SNTW [Edinburgh:

fundamental 'setting' in which alone it can be understood."¹ While the other evangelists trace their account of Jesus back to the episodes involving his virgin birth (Matthew and Luke) or his baptism (Mark), John traces it farther back, before creation. Due to his argument in the main part of the Gospel about Jesus' origin and the integrity of the descent/ascent motif, it is imperative that his account reach back to the divine Logos in his essential relationship with God. Barrett declares that ἐν ἀρχῇ gives the Fourth Gospel narrative of Jesus "an absolute theological framework."² One might add that this is also a necessary framework.

T & T Clark, 1998], 63). In addition, all the logia in Thomas mentioned by Pagels (log. 1, 4, 11, 17-19, 22, 37, 49-50, 61, 70, 83-85) have to do with the kingdom of God except one (log. 77), while in John's Prologue the subject matter is God's revelation through the Logos. When the Prologue talks about the eschatological blessings brought by the incarnate Logos, the time reference is always the present life, not the apocalyptic or primordial one (cf. 1:12, 14, 16). Therefore, one may also legitimately ask whether it is not Thomas that is actually reacting against Johannine realized eschatology, as Ramón T. Etcheverría maintains (*Estudios sobre el evangelio de Tomás*, FPE 2 [Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 1997], 383-416). Finally, Pagels is not able to demonstrate that John 1:4 is in fact essentially polemic. There is no single hint of this, neither in the text itself nor in its immediate context. In another article, Dunderberg tackles the possibility of a conflict underlying John and Thomas. After a careful examination of the main differences between these two writings, he concludes that there is not "sufficient basis to posit an actual controversy between Johannine and Thomas Christians" ("John and Thomas in Conflict?" in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, NHMS 44 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 364).

¹Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 24. Pollard misses the point when he declares that "if the theme of the Prologue is primarily cosmological, it is not a real introduction to the Gospel, for it is introducing a theme which has no place in the Gospel itself" (149). As Barrett says, "the Prologue claims no more than the rest of the Gospel, but sets first in a cosmological aspect what later will appear in a soteriological" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 157). For further information, see below, appendix B.

²Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 149.

That John refers here to time before creation is clear from the fact that in the beginning the Logos “was” (ἦν); that is, he already existed.¹ The verb points to a continuous existence, whereas in Genesis it describes a completed action (ἐποίησεν). In other words, whereas in Genesis ἐν ἀρχῇ is the starting point of “the heavens and the earth,” in John it is the point of reference in relation to which the evangelist emphasizes the pre-existence of the Logos.² At the time of creation, the Logos already existed; He was already there with God (vss. 1b, 2), and if he was with God, he was distinct from God, but as far as his attributes are concerned, the Logos was what God was (vs. 1c).³

Creation vs. God’s Plan

According to Brown, another evidence that the “beginning” in vs. 1 refers to time before creation is that creation comes only in vs. 3.⁴ As already mentioned, Lamarche disputes this interpretation, arguing that the verb used here is not κτίζω (“to create”) as in Col 1:15 or Rev 4:11 and 10:6, or even ποίεω (“to do/make”), but γίνομαι, which

¹See Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 2.

²Against Jürgen Becker, who thinks that John is not interested beyond the time of creation (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 2 vols., ÖTKNT [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979-1981], 1:72). As Schnelle says, John 1:1 is a reference to the “absolute beginning,” that is, to the time before the creation (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 31).

³“The essence of the Logos is nothing else than God himself (vs. 1c). From an objective point of view, in terms of essence, the Logos and God cannot be differentiated. Therefore, the explicit emphasis is that the Logos is God himself” (Günther Keil, *Das Johannesevangelium: Ein philosophischer und theologischer Kommentar* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997], 22). See further, Michael Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort: Textlinguistische Studie zum Johannesprolog*, SBS 106 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 42-47.

⁴Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:4.

means not “to be created” but “to become/happen,” as in other occurrences of the same verb in the Prologue itself (vss. 6, 12, 14, 15, 17), as well as in other biblical and extra-biblical literature (Rev 1:1; Jdt 9:5-6; 1QS 11:10, 18-19; *Gos. Truth* 34:4-6, 21-23).

Being so, and in view of the fact that, in his opinion, the Prologue’s central perspective is God’s universal plan, Lamarche then concludes that this passage “perfectly expresses God’s activity by means of his Logos throughout the history of the world, starting, of course, from creation, right up to the incarnation.”¹

The word πάντα (vs. 3) is also used to support this conclusion. T. E. Pollard, Ignace de la Potterie, and to a lesser extent John Ashton argue that if John wanted to refer to the universe, he would have used τὸ πᾶν or τὰ πάντα. Since he did not use the article, the term must be understood “in a far wider sense, to ‘all things’.”² Accordingly, vs. 3 designates “not all the things that were created, but ‘everything’ that was accomplished by the Logos within the process of revelation and salvation.”³

The meaning of the noun πάντα, however, varies according to its use with or without article. That in its anarthrous form it means just “all things” or “everything” is undisputed, but this fact by itself does not prevent πάντα from being a reference to all things in the universe or to all the things that were created by God. In other words, the term itself is generic or indefinite, and its precise extent and content must be determined

¹Lamarche, 524.

²Pollard, 149; La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:162-163; Ashton, “The Transformation of Wisdom,” 171, 184, n. 37.

³La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:163.

not so much on lexical as on contextual grounds.¹ This is clear from the following examples taken from the Johannine literature: John 4:29, 39; 4:45; 5:20; 10:41; 14:26; 15:15; 16:30; 18:4; 19:28; 21:17; 1 John 3:20; Rev 21:5. The context indicates that in each one of these passages, πάντα refers to something different. Since in Rev 21:5 it is clearly related to the eschatological re-creation of heaven and earth (cf. 21:1),² it is not safe to argue that in John 1:3 this term does not, or cannot, refer to all the things in the universe that were created by God in the beginning.³

As for γίνομαι, contrary to what Lamarche affirms, this verb can legitimately be used to convey the conception of creation. This is how the Septuagint consistently

¹See Bo Reicke, "παῖς, ἄπαξ," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 5:886-890.

²Thus, only by excluding the book of Revelation from the Johannine writings can Ashton say that "the anarthrous form [πάντα] is common in the Johannine writings, but there is no parallel in the sense required by the traditional view" ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 171).

³The reference to the universe by an enumeration of its constituent parts ("heaven" and "earth") in Rev 21:1 and many other passages is due to the influence on the NT of the Hebrew, which does not have a specific word for "universe," like the Greek κόσμος (e.g., Gen 1:1; 2:4; Deut 4:39; Neh 9:6; Pss 69:34; 146:6; Jer 51:48; Matt 5:48; Mark 13:27; Acts 4:24; 14:15; Phil 2:10; Rev 5:3, 13). The same happens with the expressions τὸ πᾶν or τὰ πάντα. They correspond to the Hebrew כָּל/כָּל־, which obviously functions as a kind of collective noun (cf. Ps 145:9; Eccl 11:5), for it encompasses all the parts that make up the universe. This Hebrew word may also be used without the article (כָּל), as in Pss 8:7, 103:22, and Isa 44:24, and yet have the same meaning. What matters most, however, is that in all of these passages כָּל is translated in the LXX only by πάντα instead of τὰ πάντα (cf. Sir 39:21; 43:33), so is also כָּל in Ps 145:9. Therefore, there is no semantical reason to deny that πάντα in John 1:3 could be a reference to all the things God created (see further, Cornelis Houtman, *Der Himmel im Alten Testament: Israels Weltbild und Weltanschauung*, OTS 30 [Leiden: Brill, 1993], 75-77). Ashton's remark that the πάντα of Ps 8:7 is "corrected" into τὰ πάντα when quoted in the NT (Heb 2:8 and 1 Cor 15:27) ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 184, n. 37) appears to be a biased explanation. It seems preferable to understand the change as the author's own linguistic preference (on 1 Cor 15:27, see Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 74 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 206-207).

renders the Hebrew הָיָה in the creation narrative of Gen 1. Another evidence comes from the Prologue itself: the unequivocal reference to creation in vs. 10b, something that even Lamarche acknowledges, though with some reluctance.¹ The close parallel between vs. 3a ($\text{πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο}$) and vs. 10b ($\text{ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο}$) cannot be overlooked. Lamarche's attempt to justify his position by appealing to the other occurrences of γίνομαι in the Prologue (vss. 6, 12, 14, 15, 17) is not appropriate. To say that in all these verses γίνομαι has the same meaning as in vs. 3 is to disregard the syntactical differences among them. In vss. 6 and 15, for example, γίνομαι refers to persons, not to things, and in vss. 12 and 14 it is used with a predicate.² This leaves only vs. 17, where γίνομαι probably means "to become/happen," but the choice of this verse, which speaks of Jesus' grace and truth, to the exclusion of vs. 10b, as a hint to explain γίνομαι in vs. 3a is hard, if not impossible, to justify.

Cosmological Setting

There is nothing in vs. 3 that actually precludes the passage from referring to

¹"No doubt in vs. 10 the world has 'become,' that is, has been 'created,' unless this refers rather to the world of men which has come about in history; but in any case this is just one aspect of 'becoming' in the Prologue" (Lamarche, 524). Ashton is even more positive. Though recognizing that "it may seem perverse to deny that here at any rate there is a direct reference to creation," he contends that in its first two occurrences in this passage, κόσμος corresponds to τὰ ἴδια in vs. 11 and, as such, "it is the world as the realm of the revealing Word," more precisely "Judaea, Jerusalem, or even the temple" ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 173-174).

²On γίνομαι , see Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and aug. by Henry S. Jones, Roderick McKenzie, et al., 9th ed. with a new suppl. added (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 349; J. Guhrt, " γίνομαι ," *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1986), 1:181-182; W. Hackenberg, " γίνομαι ," *EDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 1:247.

creation, neither in connection with πάντα nor with γίνομαι. To deny this, as Lamarche and others do, is to deprive these terms of a legitimate nuance of meaning. At the same time, to claim that this whole passage, starting from vs. 1, refers essentially to God's salvific plan which was conceived in the eternity past, is to leave the realm of exegesis and to derive from the text a theological conclusion that does not seem to be evident. On the contrary, a plain reading of vss. 1-3 immediately evokes the cosmological scenery of the creation story.¹ The title Logos itself could have been a brilliant literary strategy on the part of the evangelist to combine into one concept the Jewish wisdom motif, a term (Logos) widely used in Greek philosophy and which had cosmological associations, with the Old Testament tradition of God's creative word (Ps 33:6, 9; cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.).² The proximity and the tone of vs. 10b also warrant this conclusion. With its

¹Even Pollard, who supposes that the main concern of the Prologue is revelational, admits that "it would be foolish to deny categorically that, when he began his Gospel with the words 'in the beginning,' the fourth evangelist had Gen 1:1 in mind" (148). In a later work, Ashton also recognizes that "creation is indeed one of its [the Prologue's] themes," but then he insists that "it would be closer to the mark to say that it is a hymn about revelation that culminates in incarnation—the incarnation of the revealing Logos" (*Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 528).

²Lindars is right when he says that the origins of the Johannine Logos "are not to be sought outside the biblical tradition" (*The Gospel of John*, 83). He is also right that this fact does not suffice for explaining John's choice of the term "Logos." He then suggests two reasons: (1) though the Prologue's formal background is to be found in the wisdom tradition, John uses λόγος rather than σοφία because a masculine noun was needed to express the incarnation (this view is carried even further by Martin Scott [*Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, JSNTSup 71 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 94-115, esp. 113-114]), and (2) the incarnate Son is not only the revealer of divine truth, but he is himself the content of the apostolic preaching (Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 83). It is possible, however, that John chose "Logos" for literary convenience, because this was the term commonly used by Greek-Hellenistic philosophers in their attempt to understand how a transcendent God could relate to this world. Although one must distinguish between the vehicle and the concept (see J. B. Skemp, *The Greeks and the Gospel* [London: Kingsgate, 1964], 57), a familiar vehicle could

obvious reference to creation, this verse offers the only real parallel in the Prologue to γίνομαι in vs. 3, whereas the word κόσμος replaces and partially explains the meaning of πάντα in that passage.¹

The idea that the entire Prologue concerns the incarnate Logos and his mission, at the expense of a cosmological understanding of vss. 1-3 in particular, is definitely incorrect, for it does not do justice either to John's vocabulary or to his intent in relation to his radical claim in the Gospel that "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (20:31). There is no question that the Prologue is interested in revelation. One could even say with Ashton that revelation is the Prologue's "primary concern,"² provided that the starting point of that revelation is seen in a cosmological setting and is concerned with the origin and the attributes of the Logos, that is, his divine pre-existence with God and his involvement in creation. Pollard disagrees with the idea that the "theme of the Prologue is primarily cosmological," saying that if it were, it would not be a "real introduction to the Gospel, for it is introducing a theme which has no place in the Gospel."³ However, a cosmological interpretation of this passage is conceptually

make a new concept more palatable in a predominantly Hellenistic environment (see Robert Kysar, "The Gospel of John," *ABD* [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 3:923; D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, NTT [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 18-20).

¹Ashton's treatment of vs. 10b is disappointing, for he avoids the real problem by taking the reader's attention away from it, as he does in relation to "Logos" in vss. 1-2 (see above, 28, n. 4). When he comes to the expression δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο in vs. 10b, he immediately discusses the meaning of κόσμος, which he believes to be parallel to τὰ ἴδια in vs. 11, and simply never comes back to γίνομαι (see "The Transformation of Wisdom," 173-174).

²Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 528.

³Pollard, 149.

necessary for a correct understanding of many of Jesus' statements in John, as well as the character of his mission.¹

The Creative Qualification of the Logos (Vs. 4)

Some scholars have no problem in taking vss. 1-3 as a cosmological reference to the pre-existent Logos, but insist that, beginning with vs. 4, the subject matter definitely changes to the ministry of the incarnate Christ. This section discusses the controversial punctuation of ὁ γέγονεν at the end of vs. 3, which is crucial for an incarnational interpretation of vs. 4, and the important words "life" and "light" (vs. 4).

Incarnation in Vs. 4

The central argument for an incarnational interpretation of vs. 4, which is shared by those who argue that the whole Prologue is about the incarnate Christ, is that ζωή in this passage refers not to the creative life of the divine Logos, but to the salvific life of the historical Jesus.² Dodd, for example, contends that "it is certainly the evangelist's

¹Despite his view of the Prologue as a later addition to the Gospel, Zumstein is correct when he says that the Prologue provides "the hermeneutical framework within which the Johannine narrative must be read" (239). Ridderbos notes that the Prologue describes "the background against which Jesus' historical self-disclosure must be understood" (*The Gospel according to John*, 17). For further arguments in favor of a cosmological interpretation of John 1:1-3, with special emphasis on the terms πάντα and γίνομαι of vs. 3, see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 72-76.

²Vs. 4 is at the very center of Lamarche's argument. He first establishes what he thinks to be the correct meaning of this passage: a description of "what happened in Christ at his birth, that is, through his flesh" (523-524). Then he goes on to see if it is possible to interpret vss. 1-3 likewise (524-527). Having done this, he comes back to vs. 4 (and vs. 5) and tries to explore the full significance of this passage to his interpretation of the Prologue (527-529). "It is fair and reasonable to say," he concludes, that all the "salvific events accomplished in and through

view that life was in Jesus Christ when he exercised his historical ministry (cf. 5:26), and that this life was the light of men (cf. 8:12; 9:5; 12:46)."¹ Hence he concludes that the description of the pre-existent Christ's activity is necessarily restricted to vss. 1-3.²

Lamarche observes that "life" in the sense of "natural life" is not characteristic of John.³

Ashton complements that by saying that the identification of ζωή with φῶς in vs. 4b locates this "life" firmly in the realm of "spiritual revelation."⁴

Christ according to the plan of God . . . are 'life'" (527-528).

¹Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 283.

²Ibid. Dodd suggests that vss. 4-13 should be read on two levels of meaning. On one level, they describe the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ in the world; on the other, they summarize the historical career of Jesus of Nazareth (ibid., 284). These two levels, he notes, reflect a fundamental ambiguity of the text itself, due to the combination of a Jewish OT conceptual background with a Hellenistic philosophical influence, since the audience the evangelist wanted to reach was essentially Hellenistic. Such an audience, for whom the Prologue was "the first introduction to the Christian faith," would have no clue whatsoever that this whole passage describes "events in a historical life," except from vs. 14 on (ibid., 283). See also his "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and Christian Worship," in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: Mowbray, 1957), 9-22.

³Lamarche, 523.

⁴Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 172. Other advocates of vs. 4 as the first reference in the Prologue and the Gospel to the incarnate Christ include: Zahn, 59-60; Loisy, 92-96; R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment*, 3^d ed. (London: SCM, 1941), 99; Marc-Fr. Lacan, "L'œuvre du Verbe incarné: Le Don de la Vie," *RSR* 45 (1957): 61-78; Bruce Vawter, "What Came to Be in Him Was Life (Jn 1:3b-4a)," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 401-406; Frederic W. Schlatter, "The Problem of Jn 1:3b-4a," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 54-58; Miller, "The Logic of the Logos Hymn," 553-558; Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort*, 120-121; idem, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 211-216; idem, "Le Prologue johannique (Jean 1:1-18) et ses 'lecteurs implicites'," *RSR* 83 (1995): 200-205; Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 31-32; idem, *The Gospel of John*, 35-36; Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 52. The most thorough defense of this idea, however, is provided by Miller, in his *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, esp. 45-100.

Such an interpretation depends almost entirely on the punctuation of vss. 3-4, in which the relative clause ὃ γέγονεν at the end of vs. 3 is taken as the subject of ζωὴ ἦν of vs. 4a, and not as an adjective modifying ἔν, the subject of vs. 3b.¹ The Greek sentence, then, would read ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, which is translated by those who interpret it from the incarnational standpoint, "That which has come to be in him was life."² The implication of such a rendering of the text is that, according to Ed. L. Miller, it "expresses the Johannine belief that salvific life . . . has appeared to men in the historical advent of the incarnate Logos."³ Needless to say, according to this view, vs. 5 continues the same thought by referring to the results of the earthly ministry of Jesus and

¹Zahn argues that ὃ γέγονεν should be read with vs. 3 (52-54). For Dodd also, the position of ὃ γέγονεν does not seem to play any role in his understanding of vs. 4 as the first possible reference to the incarnation. This does not mean, however, that he necessarily prefers to read ὃ γέγονεν with vs. 3 (see C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963], 377).

²Loisy adopts a different translation. By taking ὃ γέγονεν to refer to the created world of men, something that forces him to interpret αὐτῷ as a neuter "it," he translates the sentence as, "That which has come to be, in it [he, i.e., the Logos] was life" (92; cf. Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981], 179). Loisy explains that this translation describes the manifestation of the salvific life of the incarnate Logos in the world of men (93). A similar translation had been previously adopted by Ignace de la Potterie ("De Punctuatie en de Exegese van Joh 1:3-4 in de Traditie," *Bijdr* 16 [1955]: 117-135) and Theobald (*Im Anfang war das Wort*, 15, 19-20), but eventually both of them came to prefer "That which has come to be in him was life" (see La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:163; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 188, 224-227; idem, "Le Prologue johannique," 195, 204). The main objection against Loisy's translation is that the pronoun in the prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ most likely refers to the Logos, as argued by Aland and Hofius, not to ὃ γέγονεν (see Kurt Aland, "Eine Untersuchung zu Joh 1:3-4: Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes," *ZNW* 59 [1968]: 390; Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus in Joh 1:1-18," 8).

³Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 77.

bringing this first section of the Prologue to a close.¹ Lamarche even sees in vs. 5b an allusion to Christ's "successful struggle against the powers of darkness at his death and resurrection."²

Assessment

Already a problem in the ancient church, the interpretation of vss. 3b-4 has generated solutions proposed through the centuries, apparently exhausting the possibilities of the text. It is not easy to establish the punctuation of the original text, though many scholars, struck by the patristic evidence and the rhythmical balance, have accepted the reading which makes ὁ γέγονεν the beginning of vs. 4,³ but without necessarily seeing in it an allusion to the incarnation.⁴ This fact by itself seems to suggest that a cosmological understanding of vs. 4, in the same line of vss. 1-3, is not only possible, but also natural and forthright. The same applies to the words life and light. The fact that the Gospel uses these motifs in relation to the ministry of Jesus does not necessarily demand an incarnational interpretation of vs. 4.

¹So Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 189.

²Lamarche, 529.

³The consensus of ante-Nicene writers, whether orthodox or heretical, in taking ὁ γέγονεν with what follows, is impressive. In the fourth century, however, when the Arians and Macedonians began to appeal to this passage to prove that the Holy Spirit was a created being, orthodox writers preferred to read ὁ γέγονεν with the preceding sentence, thus removing the possibility of heretical use the passage. For full discussions, see Aland, 174-209; Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 17-44.

⁴Schlatter surely overstates the case when he says that "most critics" who accept the full stop before ὁ γέγονεν "see in the text a reference to the incarnation" ("The Problem of Jn 1:3b-4a," 54). To be correct, the argument should run the other way around (see below, 55, n. 2).

The Problem of ὁ γέγονεν

Two arrangements of the last part of vs. 3 and beginning of vs. 4 are possible.

The difference depends on punctuation nonexistent in ancient manuscripts.

Ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ

The difficulties in taking ὁ γέγονεν with what follows are enormous. Neither the patristic evidence nor the rhythmical balance is conclusive. The oldest manuscripts (P⁶⁶, 75*, S* A B) have no punctuation here, and in any case the presence of punctuation in Greek manuscripts, as well as in early versions and patristic writings, indicates only the current exegetical understanding of a passage's meaning. As for the alleged rhythm, it is wise not to insist too much on this, for this issue is too controversial to be used as a foundational argument for any textual reconstruction or exegetical interpretation, even of the first five verses of the Prologue.¹ Walter Schmithals comments that it would be more logical if those who want to argue for the rhythm considered ὁ γέγονεν a textual corruption, as does Walter Bauer, instead of reading it with vs. 4.²

¹See below, 232-233. Another imbalance in the rhythm of vss. 1-5 occurs in vss. 1-2, where vs. 2 repeats what has just been clearly stated in vs. 1 (see Smith, *John*, ANTC, 52-53). No wonder vs. 2 is often considered an interpolation by those who support the hymn hypothesis (see Rochais, 7-9). Ridderbos says that "anyone wanting to bring the first five verses of the Prologue completely into logical order has to perform all sorts of surgical operations" (*The Gospel according to John*, 38). As for vss. 4-5, Lindars suggests that "the ancient reading may be a false inference on stylistic grounds, whereby each verse can consist of two balanced clauses" (*The Gospel of John*, 85).

²Walter Schmithals, "Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums," *ZNW* 70 (1979): 20 (quoting Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 12-13). Besides Bauer, other scholars who consider ὁ γέγονεν a textual corruption include: Emanuel Hirsch (*Studien zum vierten Evangelium*, BHT 11 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1936], 44) and Louis Bouyer (*The Fourth Gospel*, trans. Patrick

Some syntactical and semantical considerations also make the punctuation between οὐδὲ ἔν and ὁ γέγονεν highly problematic. If ὁ γέγονεν is placed at the beginning of vs. 4, as the subject of ἦν, the pattern in the Prologue of using ἦν only as a predicate of ὁ λόγος and its characteristics (cf. 1:1a-c, 2, 4b, 9, 10, 15b-c) is broken down.¹ Further, ζωὴ without the article is a predicate noun, and inasmuch as it is a characteristic of the Logos, it cannot have ὁ γέγονεν as the subject.² Another point is that, as the subject, the perfect ὁ γέγονεν would require the predicate to be in the present tense (ἐστίν) rather than in the imperfect (ἦν). As it is, despite Lamarche's insistence that "this question is not really important,"³ ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν can hardly make any sense.⁴ If it were not so, ancient as well as modern writers would not try at all costs to establish ἐστίν as the original reading.⁵

Byrne [Westminster: Newman, 1964], 28). For Peter Cohee, ὁ γέγονεν is "an intrusive gloss" ("John 1:3-4," *NTS* 41 [1995]: 470-477).

¹Vs. 8, where ἐκεῖνος refers to John the Baptist, is no different because the phrase consists of a negation (οὐκ ἦν), which actually emphasizes the exclusive use of ἦν as a predicate for ὁ λόγος. In contrast, John uses ἐγένετο as a predicate of creation in the widest possible sense, including the Logos when he moves into the realm of creation, that is, when he incarnates (vs. 14) (see Peter van Minnen, "The Punctuation of John 1:3-4," *FilNeo* 7 [1994]: 37-38).

²See Gese, 179.

³Lamarche, 528. This is indeed an attempt to conceal the obvious, otherwise Lamarche himself would not be so hesitant to accept the imperfect.

⁴See esp. Zahn, who strongly argues that we should either read ὁ γέγονεν . . . ἐστίν or leave ὁ γέγονεν with vs. 3 (52-53).

⁵This reading is found in ℵ D Old Latin syr^c cop^{sa, fay} and many early ecclesiastical writers. A modern example is that of Boismard, who not only takes ἐστίν as the original reading in vs. 4a, but also corrects, without any manuscript evidence, the second ἦν as well (12-19). In his commentary on John, however, Boismard shifts back to the received reading (see M.-É.

Semantically, as Haenchen notes, the difficulty of connecting ὁ γέγονεν with what follows is that this punctuation “does not allow the sentence to speak of the Logos.”¹ Finally, since the earliest examples of this reading are found in gnostic sources or in the writings of those who engaged in the gnostic controversy, Schnackenburg may be right in suggesting that the early attachment of ὁ γέγονεν to ἐν αὐτῷ ζωῇ ἦν was due to the Gnostics’ desire to find in the Fourth Gospel a support for their doctrine of the origin of the Ogdoad. The gnostic punctuation, not the gnostic interpretation, would have then influenced the subsequent textual tradition of this passage.²

Οὐδὲ ἐν ὁ γέγονεν

This reading has been objected to on several grounds, though the arguments are not so strong as it may appear at first sight. It is frequently pointed out, for example, that ὁ γέγονεν with ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν is redundant³ and adds nothing to the sense of vs. 3,

Boismard and A. Lamouille, *Synopse des Quatre Évangiles en Français*, with the collabor. of G. Rochais, vol. 3, *L’Évangile de Jean*, 3 vols. [Paris: Cerf, 1972-1977], 72-76). There is no question that the textual support for ἦν is much stronger; also the second ἦν in vs. 4b seems to require the first (see Aland, 206-207). J. C. O’Neill’s idea that the original had no verb at all, either ἦν or ἐστίν, is speculative and has nothing to recommend it (“The Prologue of St. John’s Gospel,” *JTS* 20 [1969]: 42).

¹Haenchen, “Probleme des johanneischen ‘Prologs’,” 319, n. 61.

²Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:240. See also Haenchen, *John I*, 113-114; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2^d ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 168.

³Lacan calls it a “gross redundancy” (“L’œuvre du Verbe incarné,” 62). For Loisy, this reading “does not explain or emphasize anything, but only consists of a pleonastic development of the text” (92). “With what goes before,” argues Gese, “it is unnecessary” (178).

“except changing the perspective from the event of creation (ἐγένετο: aorist tense) to existence itself (γέγονεν: perfect tense).”¹ Nevertheless, not only a true redundancy would require ἐγένετο and not γέγονεν, as Miller himself points out,² but also this change in perspective may well reflect the very idea that the evangelist intended to convey.³ In addition, Bruce M. Metzger observes that, even if the pleonastic character of this reading is assumed, it would be entirely consistent with “the Johannine repetitive style, as well as with Johannine doctrine (cf. 5:26, 39; 6:53).”⁴ Metzger also notes “John’s fondness for beginning a sentence or clause with ἐν and a demonstrative pronoun (cf. 13:35; 15:8; 16:26; 1 John 2:3, 4, 5; 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 4:2; etc.).”⁵ The absence of the definite article before ζωῇ, which is a serious problem for some scholars,⁶ is no real objection, for it is well known that “the article is often lacking with abstracts.”⁷

¹Van Minnen, 37.

²Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 20.

³See Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 71-73. As Ridderbos says, “the perfect γέγονεν can be easily understood as the permanent effect of ἐγένετο” (*The Gospel according to John*, 37, n. 62). Similarly, Christoph Demke: “It is clear that creation and preservation of the world are not differentiated here. Everything that exists, exists through the Logos” (“Der sogenannte Logos-Hymnus im johanneischen Prolog,” *ZNW* 58 [1967]: 54-55). See also Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 175.

⁴Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 168.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Boismard and Lamouille refer to this problem as the main internal argument against this reading (71).

⁷F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early*

Furthermore, as Bauer argues, the absence of the article in vs. 4a and its presence in vs. 4b only indicates its demonstrative meaning in the second clause, as in Rev 4:2.¹

Another argument against keeping ὃ γέγονεν with vs. 3 is that this represents the easier reading, while ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωῇ ἦν represents the more difficult reading. Early readers and scribes would have found the latter hard to understand, so they attributed ὃ γέγονεν to vs. 3b and punctuated accordingly. The main proponent of this idea is Kurt Aland; Miller agrees.² This is not the case of an easier reading versus a more difficult one, however, but rather of a plausible reading versus a implausible one. In spite of Ashton's attempt to discredit the received punctuation on the grounds of plausibility as well,³ it is obvious that it is the alternative punctuation that really makes little if any sense. The sentence ἐν αὐτῷ ζωῇ ἦν, says Aland, "was not difficult to exegete,"⁴ while the difficulties involving ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωῇ ἦν, warns Miller, "should not be underestimated."⁵ The bottom line, however, as Martin L. West explains,

Christian Literature, trans. and ed. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), §258.

¹Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 13.

²See Aland, 184-185; Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 44-51.

³"The extraordinary difficulty, not to say impossibility, of finding a satisfactory sense for the following verse without resorting to the desperate expedient of putting the stop after ὃ γέγονεν, a punctuation which is grammatically very awkward . . ." ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 171-172).

⁴Aland, 204.

⁵Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 45. See also Metzger: "Despite of valiant attempts of commentators to bring sense out of taking ὃ γέγονεν with what follows, the passage remains intolerably clumsy and opaque" (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New*

is that it is not enough to choose the “more difficult” reading. The interpreter must also be sure that it is in itself the “more plausible” reading. “There is an important difference,” he says, “between a more difficult reading and a more unlikely reading.”¹

All of this means that the claim according to which vs. 4 contains the earliest reference to the incarnation in the Prologue lies on a fragile foundation. Although it is difficult to be entirely certain about the correct position and meaning of ὁ γέγονεν, the attempt to place it at the beginning of the following verse seems to be the least satisfactory solution.² Even Bruce Vawter, who defends the incarnational interpretation

Testament, 168, n. 2). For Bauer, no matter if the comma is put before or after ἐν αὐτῷ, “the sentence makes no tolerable sense” today, as it did not to “the ancient interpreters, whether within or outside the Church. . . . The ancient textual variant ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωῇ ἐστίν,” he says, “only shows that” (*Das Johannesevangelium*, 12). Barrett thinks almost the same (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 157), and the same applies to Schnackenburg, who rejects the punctuation before ὁ γέγονεν because of the “great difficulties” this reading raises (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:240). Morris wonders if those who adopt this reading “really face the difficulties” (*The Gospel according to John*, 73). Udo Schnelle is a curious example of a scholar who once favored the alternative reading because of its textual evidence (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, trans. Linda M. Maloney [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 216), but eventually turned back to οὐδὲ ἐν ὁ γέγονεν on account of the enormous internal difficulties in taking ὁ γέγονεν with vs. 4 (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 34).

¹Martin L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique Applicable to Greek and Latin Texts* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973), 51. See also Eldon Jay Epp, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. David A. Black (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 31-32.

²Other scholars who, despite the external evidence, also read ὁ γέγονεν with vs. 3 include: H. J. Holtzmann, *Evangelium, Briefe und Offenbarung des Johannes*, 3^d ed., HC 4 (Tübingen, Mohr, 1908), 34; Lagrange, 6-7; Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes: Wie er spricht, denkt und glaubt* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1930), 5-6; Jeremias, *Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums*, 17; De Boor, 1:1:39; A. Feuillet, “Prologue du quatrième évangile,” *DBS* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1972), 8:cols. 627-629; Borgen, “The Prologue of John as Exposition

of vss. 3b-4, recognizes that, if placed at the end of vs. 3 and read as a reference to creation, ὃ γέγονεν would still make good sense.¹ In this case, since the Greek perfect represents not merely a past event, but a present reality that results from a past event, the meaning of vs. 3b would be that, outside the range of the Logos' activity, nothing of what came into existence was made.²

In Him Was Life

Vawter contends that ζωή in John "never means the merely natural life of creatures"; that is, "ζωή is not the possession of every man but it is the gift of God through faith," hence his conclusion that vs. 4 does not speak "of the role of the Word in creation, . . . but in salvation."³ In order to refer to creation, he adds, this verse would

of the Old Testament," 79; Rissi, "Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," 322, 324; Siegfried Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 20; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 32-33; Lausberg, "Der Johannes-Prolog," 202-206; Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John 1*, ed. Walther Fürst, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 29-31; Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus," 4-8; O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 9:520; Thyen, "Das Johannesevangelium," 5, 7-10. Carson also prefers the received reading, but following Georg Korting ("Joh 1:3," *BZ* 33 [1989]: 97-104), he takes ὃ γέγονεν as the subject of the second clause of vs. 3 and οὐδέν (for οὐδὲ ἔν, as in $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ $\mathfrak{B}^*$ D) adverbially, and translates this passage as, "All things were made by him, and what was made was in no way made without him" (*The Gospel according to John*, 118). Though grammatically possible, the word order (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδέν ὃ γέγονεν) seems to disfavor this translation, to say nothing of the manuscript support for οὐδὲ ἔν.

¹Vawter, 404. Schlatter also admits that "a reference to the pre-incarnate Word in vss. 3b-4a is not impossible" ("The Problem of Jn 1:3b-4a," 56).

²Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 71.

³Vawter, 404-405.

have to be “an exception.”¹

Convinced that ὁ γέγονεν should be read with vs. 3, Schnackenburg pertinently enquires of vs. 4, “what ζωή would this be?”² Even conceding that this passage does talk about creation, however, it seems that the issue here has nothing to do with natural life, as distinguished from salvific life. When the Fourth Gospel refers to natural or physical life, without any ethical or anthropological connotation, as in the case of βίος in 1 John (2:16; 3:17),³ the word used is always ψυχή and not ζωή (cf. 10:11, 15, 17; 12:25; 13:37-38; 15:13). So Vawter is essentially right when he argues that ζωή in vs. 4 is not to be equated with human life in the sense of mere existence, for in John it is possible for a person to exist without having ζωή (6:53), and conversely to have ζωή, or at least the assurance of ζωή, while no longer existing (11:25). Though alluding to man, the emphasis in 1:4 is actually on the Logos, as it has been since vs. 1, as the possessor and giver of life. This passage is not fundamentally concerned with the mere physical act of human living or existing as a result of the creative work of the Logos, but rather with the fact that everything that was brought into existence (vs. 3), including mankind, was brought into existence through and because of him who has life in himself (ἐν αὐτῷ). According to this view, vs. 4 is not specifically a statement about the creation of human beings or the creation of life, as was already implied in vs. 3. It is rather a statement

¹Ibid., 404.

²Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:240.

³Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB 30 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982), 312-313.

about the creative qualification of the Logos (vs. 4a), as well as about man's dependent nature (vs. 4b).

The concept of the Logos having life in himself appears also in the Gospel. John 5:26 reads: "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]." Because the Son is the possessor of life, he can also be the giver of life (5:25; 10:28; 17:2). This means that the relationship between God and the Logos in the Prologue is similar to the relationship between the Father and the Son in the rest of the Gospel. Both 1:4 and 5:26 insist that the Logos/Son "shares in the self-existing life of God,"¹ which is defined as "light," whether in relation to creation or to salvation (1:4b; 8:12; 9:5). Therefore, the either/or solution suggested by Vawter for 1:4, namely, salvation or exception, is not appropriate. It could even be said that this passage has a soteriological implication, as 5:26 certainly does, but ζωή here does not refer primarily to salvific life, or to physical life, and much less to life in "its broadest sense,"² or in "its absolute meaning without further differentiation as to the forms in which it consists."³ Since ζωή is an inherent attribute of the Logos, it refers rather, according to Schnackenburg, to "the divine, spiritual life with which the Logos is filled,"⁴ and it is exactly because of this ζωή that the Logos is fully qualified both to create and to save.

¹Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 118.

²Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 73.

³Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 38.

⁴Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:240.

Life That Was Light

In vs. 4b, the verb εἰμί conveys a statement of resemblance, which makes φῶς a symbol for ζωή¹ (cf. 8:12), and so these two words must refer to the same thing.² In this case, φῶς is intended to explain metaphorically the significance for humanity of the ζωή which the Logos possessed.

The creation account of Genesis still offers the best hint for the meaning of this metaphor. "Light" is presented in Gen 1:3 as the first act of creation, thus pushing back the darkness of the primordial chaos (vs. 2) and making life possible³ (cf. "living creatures" in vss. 20-24, and "man" in vss. 26-28). In the natural world, Edwyn C. Hoskyns notes, "light presupposes life";⁴ that is, light is the essential condition for the existence of life. So also in the ideal world, so to speak, the world as it was created by God through the Logos; light signified life, not the contrary.

¹On the semantical usages of the copula εἰμί, see the helpful discussion by G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 101-102, and D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2^d ed. (Grand Rapids: Backer, 1996), 57-60.

²See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 40, and esp. Ed. L. Miller: "It would be extremely odd, from a literary-aesthetic standpoint, if 'light' here were intended to bring to mind an idea involving a quite different texture from the 'life' with which it is identified" ("The True Light Which Illumines Every Person," in *Good News in History: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. Ed. L. Miller [Atlanta: Scholars, 1993], 77).

³See Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1:343.

⁴Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis N. Davey, 2^d ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 143. Alluding to Gen 1:3, 26-27, Boismard and Lamouille declare that "the reader understands that the light is created in order that man may exist" (74).

The point at issue here is not merely natural life, which means that there is no need to dismiss the Johannine distinction between ζωή and ψυχή. By saying “the life was the light of men,” John is not alluding to the moment in which man was created, but rather to the already created human being, thus he is more concerned with quality of life than with biological life. He wants to make clear that the fullness and the genuineness of human existence, something that goes beyond the range of ψυχή, can only be achieved under the radiance of the life (ζωή) that was in the Logos, that is, under the divine influence of the Logos himself. “The purpose of creation,” says Becker, “is not biological life only, but a life full of significance in relationship with God.”¹

In 1:4 John does not dwell on the thought of the life of the Logos as the light of

¹Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:73. It is interesting to note how elusive the interpretation of vs. 4b has been. The traditional understanding of the sentence ἡ ζωὴ ἣν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, which finds parallels in ancient Greek literature, is that it refers to a kind of divine illumination, but it is hard to find two scholars who agree on the content and purpose of this illumination (e.g., Zahn, 56-60; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 79; Alfred Wikenhauser, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, RNT 4 [Regensburg: Pustet, 1961], 42; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 158; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 86; Gese, 179; Bruce, 33). Some suggest that the idea is that of revelation (e.g., Barth, *Witness to the Word*, 35-44; Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *John*, CPNIVC [Joplin: College, 1998], 40; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 53), while others prefer to think of ethical or soteriological categories (e.g., Bouyer, 43-45; De Boor, 1:39-41). Still others do not indicate clearly what they mean (e.g., Borchert: “Life is the source of light for humanity” [108]; J. N. Sanders: “Since he [the Logos] is immanent in the world as its life, he is also its light” [*A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, ed. and comp. B. A. Mastin, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 72]; and Beasley-Murray: “ζωή . . . and φῶς . . . include the life and light which come to man in both creation and new creation” [*John*, 11]). But, since ζωή and φῶς in this sentence probably have the same referent, any interpretation that takes them to mean two different things is ruled out. This is why Becker argues that inasmuch as ζωή was in the Logos, and this ζωή was τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “the meaning of life is to live in the realm of creation a life under the Logos, that is to say, God. . . . In contrast with the Gospel, eternal life beyond creation is not in view” (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:73).

the κόσμος but passes at once to the world of human beings. To use the term ζωή to oppose a cosmological interpretation of this passage or an interpretation that acknowledges the creation story as the “guiding thought,”¹ however, is to follow too narrow a semantical and exegetical course that, contrary to what is argued, finds no support in 5:26. The fundamental characteristic of the Johannine Logos in his relationship to the world, whether in creation or in salvation, is that he has life in himself. This is what guarantees the effectiveness of his work (5:24-27). Maybe this explains why most of those who opt for the punctuation before ὁ γέγονεν do not interpret this passage as a reference to the historical Christ.² Aland, for instance, clearly understands the “beginning” of vss. 1-3 in connection with “the time before and up to the creation of the world,” and vs. 4 as “the transition to the history of humanity.”³ Brown, who strongly rejects the incarnational interpretation of this passage, also emphasizes that “in vs. 4 the Prologue is still speaking in the context of the creation

¹J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 1:5.

²See, e.g., Bernard, 1:4; Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1930-1933), 5:6; Gächter, 101-102; Hoskyns, 142-143; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 39; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 89; Boismard, 12-16; Wikenhauser, 42; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:6-7; Aland, 207-209; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 70-72; Heinrich Zimmermann, “Christushymnus und johanneischer Prolog,” in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, ed. Joachim Gnilka (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 254-255; Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:73; Gese, 178-179; Joachim Gnilka, *Johannesevangelium*, NEB 1 (Würzburg: Echter, 1983), 14; Édouard Delebecque, *Évangile de Jean*, CRB 23 (Paris: Gabalda, 1987), 61, 143; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2, 11.

³Aland, 207.

narrative of Genesis.”¹

Despite this, there is no reason to understand ζωή here as “the power to produce life which is in the natural world and in man, vitalizing energy, the creating and supporting source of all forms of temporal existence.”² This ζωή can only refer to the divine, spiritual, and eternal life, which alone could bring sense to human biological existence, which was never intended to be only “temporal,” at least not according to the book of Genesis (cf. 2:9; 3:22). For this reason this life was τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. As in Genesis the light of God’s presence shone and provided the necessary condition for the existence of life,³ also in John, which introduces the Logos from the perspective of the creation story, the fullest expression of human life in the beginning was only possible under the divine influence of the Logos himself, that is, by means of an intimate and abiding relationship with him who was the source of life.

In conclusion, there is nothing in vs. 4 that necessarily requires an incarnational interpretation neither in connection with the life/light motif nor in relation to ὃ γέγονεν,

¹Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26-27.

²See W. H. Cadman, *The Open Heaven: The Revelation of God in the Johannine Sayings of Jesus*, ed. G. B. Caird (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), 19.

³In Jewish tradition, the notion of light preceding the creation of the heavenly bodies in the Genesis account (cf. Gen 1:14-19) became associated with the effulgent splendor of the Divine Presence (cf. *Somn.* 1.75; *Gen. Rab.* 3.4). Light was thought to have another source (Job 38:19; Is 30:26); Ps 104:2, with its theme of creation, describes God as “wrapped in light as with a garment” (see Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPSTC [Philadelphia: JPS, 1989], 7). According to Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, “since the sun is only later introduced as the immediate cause of light, the chronology of the text emphasizes that God is the ultimate source of light” (*Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 61).

even if this relative clause is taken as the subject of the following ἦν. The punctuation of vss. 3b-4 is a famous crux, but the attempt to read ὁ γέγονεν with vs. 4 is certainly the most problematic alternative and no exegetical thesis should be built on such a shaky foundation. When ζωή is also properly understood in terms of the life which the Logos possesses (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωή ἦν) and φῶς as symbol for ζωή, then it becomes virtually impossible to read this verse as a reference to the incarnate Christ.

The Antithesis between Light and Darkness (Vs. 5)

The first reference in the Prologue to the historical appearance of Jesus Christ is thought by some scholars to be not in vs. 4, but in vs. 5. According to this view, the opening section of the Prologue with its cosmological emphasis ends at vs. 4, while vs. 5 marks the transition from statements about the pre-existent Logos to direct statements about the Logos incarnate. Under consideration in this section is the verb καταλαμβάνω, the light/darkness antithesis, and the relation between vs. 5 and vss. 6-8.

Incarnation in Vs. 5

Referring to the transition from vs. 4 to vs. 5, J. Ramsey Michaels argues that John “boldly passes over the entire Old Testament period in silence. In one breath he speaks of light and life coming into existence at the creation, and in the next he proclaims that same light shining today, unquenched by the darkness around it.”¹ The basic argument for this view is the change from the imperfect tense (ἦν), hitherto used in

¹J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, NIBC, 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1989; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 22.

connection with the Logos, to the present tense (φαίνει), which, as W. H. Cadman contends, cannot be taken timelessly, “to denote an activity of the pre-incarnate Logos in revealing to men the life which was in him,” at least not in the light of vss. 6-8, where John the Baptist is introduced as a witness to the light. Since “the witness of John is to Jesus, the incarnate Logos, who is the light” (cf. 1:15; 1:19-24; 8:12; 9:5), vs. 5 must refer to the activity of the historical Christ, with φαίνει pointing to “the revelation to men of the life which was always in the Logos, so that they might participate in it, if they would, and so come to the divinely willed end of their creation.”¹

Cadman also takes the “darkness” in the same ethical sense of its occurrence later in the Gospel (cf. 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46), as a reference to “the world of men which is called darkness because it has not the life which was in the Logos.”² Based on 9:39-41, 12:46, and 15:22-24, he even claims that the darkness prevailed in the world up to the coming of Jesus. Prior to that, “the light was not shining yet”; before Jesus, “it was not possible for men to have life,”³ the spiritual and eternal life that he came to offer. As for the present tense, Cadman explains that what the evangelist had in mind was not only the revealing activity of Jesus while he was on earth, which as a historical event belongs to the past, but also the continuation of this activity in the Christian preaching after the death of Jesus. The evangelist’s choice of the aorist tense in vs. 5b (κατέλαβεν) shows a

¹Cadman, 20-21. Similar arguments are used by Georg Richter, “Die Fleischwerdung des Logos im Johannesevangelium,” *NovT* 13 (1971): 94-95.

²Cadman, 20.

³Ibid., 21.

reversion to the ministry of Jesus, with a direct allusion "to the conquest of the ruler of this world by the death and resurrection of Jesus (12:31-32; 14:30)."¹

Another argument, which is particularly associated with Bultmann and Käsemann, is the supposed parallelism between οὐ κατέλαβεν in vs. 5 and οὐκ ἔγνω and οὐ παρέλαβον in vss. 10-11.² Bultmann finds that vss. 10-11 can only refer to "the tragedy of Jesus' life,"³ and so interprets vs. 5 along the same lines. He also suggests that, on the basis of the thought progression in the Prologue as well as in the Gospel, this way of understanding vs. 5 is far more logical. First comes the rejection, which is mentioned in vss. 10-11 and developed in the first part of the Gospel (chaps. 2-12), and then the acceptance (vss. 12-13), which becomes the theme of the Gospel's second part (chaps. 13-17).⁴ This implies that vs. 5 would destroy John's structural pattern unless it is also taken in connection with the rejection of Jesus.

¹Ibid.

²Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background," 28-30; idem, *The Gospel of John*, 45-48; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 143-148. The parallelism between vs. 5 and vss. 10-11 is also assumed by a number of other scholars, including: Lagrange, 8-9; Zahn, 63-64; Loisy, 95-96; Lacan, "L'œuvre du Verbe incarné," 76; F.-M. Braun, "Le péché du monde selon saint Jean," *RThom* 65 (1965): 181; Demke, 58; Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 20-21; Yu Ibuki, *Die Wahrheit im Johannesevangelium*, BBB 39 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1972), 183-185; Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:73-75; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:246-247; Barth, *Witness to the Word*, 65-66; Rissi, "Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," 323, 329; Rochais, 14-15; Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 173; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 39-40; Keil, 25.

³Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background," 29. See also Heitmüller, 4:43.

⁴See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 48.

Assessment

Bultmann's appeal to the structure or thought progression of the Prologue and the Gospel to establish the meaning of vs. 5 is inadequate, if not illegitimate, for this passage would say something positive about Jesus, as for example in Cadman's interpretation, only if it referred to the incarnation. If interpreted in the context of creation, it would not represent any threat to John's thematic structure, either in the Prologue or in the Gospel itself. The other arguments, however, demand a detailed evaluation.

The Verb καταλαμβάνω

The parallelism between vs. 5 and vss. 10-11 would require the verb καταλαμβάνω in vs. 5b to mean intellectual apprehension and thus be rendered as "to grasp/comprehend."¹ There is no question that this is a valid meaning of the term. Such

¹Wikenhauser prefers to render καταλαμβάνω as a synonym for παραλαμβάνω (vs. 11), meaning "to receive/accept" (43). Similarly, Jacob A. Dyer: καταλαμβάνω must be construed in the light of both παραλαμβάνω and λαμβάνω in vss. 11-12, thus it "conveys the idea of acceptance" ("The Unappreciated Light," *JBL* 79 [1960]: 170-171); and Bryant and Krause (41-42). Lacan combines both meanings, "to grasp/comprehend" and "to receive/accept" ("L'œuvre du Verbe incarné," 76). Painter once did the same (*The Quest for the Messiah*, 122-123), but he no longer does so ("Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?" in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl H. Ulrichsen, *NovTSup* 106 [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 182, n. 6, 191). It is extremely doubtful, however, that this represents an adequate translation of the Greek. Matthew Black does not regard "to receive/accept" as an acceptable translation (*An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3^d ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], 10-11), though he suggests that this was the meaning of an original Aramaic. See, however, Walter Nagel ("Die Finsternis hat's nicht begriffen" [Joh 1:5], *ZNW* 50 [1959], 132-137) and especially Gese (180, n. 3), who describe Black's speculation as "nonsense". The only fragment quoted by Liddell and Scott (897) to support καταλαμβάνω as "to receive/accept" (Plato Comicus *Fragment* 119) is far from being conclusive. It is uncertain whether the quotation reads κατέλαβον or, more probably, κατ' ἔλαβον (see John M. Edmonds, ed., *The Fragments of Attic Comedy: After Meineke, Bergk, and Kock*, 3 vols. [Leiden: Brill, 1957], 1:528-529). Also the diachronic understanding of vs. 5 in the light

a meaning finds support not only in ancient Greek literature,¹ but also in the New Testament itself (cf. Acts 4:13; 10:34; 25:25; Eph 3:18), as well as in the Latin tradition,² but several reasons oppose this interpretation in this passage.

First, a cognitive understanding of καταλαμβάνω would fit Bultmann's existential approach, in which "darkness" refers to "that constitution of existence in which it does not understand itself, is lost, does not know its way . . . , is blind . . . and dead for to the real life belongs the illumined state of the self-understanding."³ It does not fit a more historical interpretation of the Christ-event, even if "darkness" here is still taken metaphorically, as it may occur in the rest of the Gospel (cf. 8:12; 12:35).

Second, the meaning "to grasp/comprehend" represents a figurative extension of

of vs. 11, and not the opposite, does not seem to be hermeneutically correct. Theobald says: "When the reader sees vs. 5b, he has not seen vs. 11 yet, and so he, or at least the first-time reader who is not necessarily disabled, must be able to explain vs. 5b without glancing forward at the development of the text" (*Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 215). On the other hand, if vs. 11 was supposed to refer to vs. 5, it is not easy to explain why it has παραλαμβάνω instead of simply repeating καταλαμβάνω, especially in view of J. Wellhausen's remark that, "as a rule, compound verbs [in John] are used only when the preposition really means something. When the concept remains unchanged, the simple verb is preferred" (*Das Evangelium Johannis* [Berlin: Reimer, 1908], 138). See also the analysis of καταλαμβάνω and παραλαμβάνω by Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 219, 297.

¹See Liddell and Scott, 897; Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded to Strong's Numbering System* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896; reprint with Strong's numbering added, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 332-333.

²Cf. the Vulgate: "*tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt*." Under the influence of the Latin Vulgate, this was also the translation of the first English Bibles and finally was standardized by the King James Version (see Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945], 93-94).

³Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 46-47.

καταλαμβάνω as “to overcome/overtake.”¹ This meaning implies the notion of significant effort on the part of the implied subject,² which does not fit the language and the attitude depicted in this passage, as if “darkness” had done its best to comprehend the light, but without success.

Third, σκοτία in this context must be understood metaphorically in connection with φῶς and ζωή, which makes the translation “to grasp/comprehend” absolutely awkward. This translation would require the interpreter to go beyond the limits of a thoroughly Johannine metaphor (cf. 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 John 1:5; 2:8, 9, 11) and to risk making an allegorical interpretation, in which σκοτία would refer to the whole group of Christ’s human enemies.³

Finally, if καταλαμβάνω is taken to mean intellectual apprehension, the

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols., 2^d ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:382. Cf. G. Delling: “Κατά gives to the simple form the character . . . of intensity (to grasp with force . . .)” (“λαμβάνω,” *TDNT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 4:10). In a footnote, Louw and Nida wonder whether “to grasp/comprehend” should really be classified as a figurative extension of meaning, arguing that “the average Greek speaker would probably be no more aware of this figurative significance of καταλαμβάνω than an English speaker would be aware of the figurative background in the term *understand*” (382, n. 7). This may be true, but the fact that καταλαμβάνω meaning “to grasp/comprehend” was used only in the middle voice (see BDAG, 520; Thayer, 332-333) seems to point to a definite semantical distinction in Greek usage.

²Thus Thayer’s definition as “to lay hold of with the mind” (332-333), as well as Liddell and Scott’s to “seize with the mind” (897).

³See Nagel, 136-137. Boismard comments: “The ‘darkness’ mentioned in vs. 5 cannot refer to men. St. John says that men walk in the darkness (John 8:12; 12:35; 1 John 2:11), that they remain in darkness (John 12:46; 1 John 2:9-11), that they run the risk of being overtaken by the darkness (John 12:35), but he never says that men themselves are the darkness” (21). Thyen, who adds that σκοτία is, by definition, *against* the light (“Das Johannesevangelium,” 12).

interrelationship between the two parts of the verse is compromised. If there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the two clauses of vs. 5, as it would appear, not only is the parallelism with vss. 10-11 destroyed,¹ but the aorist κατέλαβεν, according to this translation, would add to vs. 5a a new emphasis not fully related to it.² For this reason, López says that this understanding of the passage results in “a slight internal contradiction.”³

It seems, therefore, inappropriate to assume a parallelism between vs. 5 and vss. 10-11, even if Käsemann thinks that this parallelism is “unmistakable” and “cannot be disputed.”⁴ The main pillar on which this idea rests, the interpretation of καταλαμβάνω as “to grasp/understand,” is certainly not strong enough to endure the burden. On the

¹If the parallelism is admitted, the καί in vs. 5b should be translated as “yet,” but if vs. 5b gives the reason for vs. 5a, then the καί would mean “for,” thus ruling out any possible parallelism with vss. 10-11 (see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:8).

²See further, Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 189, 215. Miller seems to acknowledge this, but inasmuch as he insists on the incarnational interpretation of vss. 4-5, he appeals to the doubtful gnomic aorist in his attempt to make sense of κατέλαβεν (*Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 94). But, there is nothing necessarily gnomic or proverbial in vs. 5b. On the contrary, the aorist here seems to describe a true narrative. Furthermore, several scholars deny the presence of the gnomic aorist in the NT (e.g., Ludwig Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik: Das Griechisch des Neuen Testaments im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache*, HNT 1/1 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1911], 152; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, trans. and adap. from the 4th Latin ed. by Joseph Smith, SPIB 114 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963], §256; Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 12-13). Zerwick also warns about artificial appeals to the gnomic aorist to solve difficulties, for “this solution hides the difficulty rather than solves it” (§256).

³López, 141.

⁴Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 144. For Bultmann, the οὐ κατέλαβεν in vs. 5 “cannot have any other meaning than that of the οὐκ ἔγνων and the οὐ παρέλαβον of vss. 10-11” (*The Gospel of John*, 46).

other hand, there is much to be said for interpreting this verb as “to overcome/overtake,” a meaning also well attested in ancient Greek literature,¹ including the Septuagint (Gen 31:23; Exod 15:9; 2 Kgs 25:5; Jer 52:8; Sir 11:10; cf. 1 Thess 5:4). Besides the fact that καταλαμβάνω was interpreted with this meaning by “most Greek commentators since Origen,”² the only other occurrence of this verb in John’s Gospel has this meaning (cf. 12:35).³ Since the subject in that passage is the same (σκοτία), it may even be argued that both texts convey the same metaphor, admittedly with a different nuance.

Theobald also argues that the correspondence between the present φαίνει and the aorist κατέλαβεν, by which vs. 5b provides the reason for vs. 5a, becomes intelligible only if this translation is accepted. In this case, the aorist would point to a certain moment in the past in which the darkness could not extinguish the light, and because of that the light still shines (present tense).⁴ Thus, if this passage refers to the incarnate Christ, it certainly does not refer to his rejection. The answer to the question of Rochais, whether John 1:5 is “a cry of victory” or “a note of failure,”⁵ must unequivocally affirm

¹See Liddell and Scott, 897. James H. Moulton and George Milligan illustrate from the papyri this use of the verb: “evil” overtaking one (*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930; reprint, 1952], 328).

²BDAG, 520.

³For σκοτία ἤδη ἐγεγόνει in 6:17, $\aleph$ D read κατέλαβεν δὲ αὐτοὺς ἡ σκοτία (“but the darkness overtook them”). Although it makes sense, this reading hardly represents the original, due to the much stronger manuscript support for the received text ($\aleph^{75}$ A B L Δ W Θ 33 579 700).

⁴Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 214.

⁵Rochais, 14.

the former, though Rochais himself, who also endorses the parallelism between vs. 5 and vss. 10-11, prefers the latter.¹ The tone of this verse is not of tragedy, but of triumph; not of pessimism, says Thyen, but of certainty of victory.² To borrow a phrase from Otto Schwankl, the darkness is not against the light, but subject to it.³

Light and Darkness

A question that still remains, however, concerns the proper definition of that darkness and, consequently, the interpretation of the triumph of the light in connection with either the earthly Jesus or the pre-existent Logos.

Darkness as death

Schwankl, as well as Theobald and Cadman, convinced that the καταλαμβάνω in vs. 5 means “to overcome/overtake,” prefers the incarnational interpretation. The metaphor of darkness is understood as the exact opposite of light in vs. 4, that is, as a reference to “death,” which would necessarily include Jesus’ own death. Since the text speaks of triumph and victory, it is argued that, though the whole ministry of Jesus is envisaged, the “primary reference” of this passage is to his victory over the powers of

¹“It is obvious,” he says, “that the explanation of vs. 5 is to be sought in vss. 10-12b” (ibid., 15).

²Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 12.

³See Otto Schwankl, “Die Metaphorik von Licht und Finsternis im johanneischen Schrifttum,” in *Metaphorik und Mythos im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge, QD 126 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 143.

darkness through his death and resurrection.¹ It is obvious, therefore, that at the heart of this interpretation lies the idea that καταλαμβάνω implies conflict, hence Schwankl's statement: "The enemy is not against the hero of the passage, but subject to him."² Origen contended that "unless the darkness had pursued the light, . . . [vs. 5b] would have no meaning."³ Borchert tries to justify this position by saying that "conflict is at the core of this Gospel. Conflict is clearly related to the coming of the Logos to earth."⁴

Elsewhere in John the idea of an ethical conflict between "light" and "darkness" in the context of Jesus' ministry is quite evident (cf. 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36, 46). Of particular interest is 12:35, a passage in which this conflict is conveyed by the same verb

¹Cadman, 22. See also Lamarche, 528-529; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 214; Michaels, 22; Schwankl, 143; Borchert, 109-111. Painter seems to come very close to this position ("Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?" 186, 196). Theobald even calls vss. 1-5 "a prologue within the Prologue," for he understands these verses as a summary of the complete revelation of Christ, which starts in eternity and comes down to its historical realization (Theobald, "Le Prologue johannique," 202-205; idem, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 211-229, 300-329). Already in 1921 Loisy had said that "the first five verses of the Fourth Gospel are by themselves a kind of general preface which summarizes in an abstract way the theme of the book. . . . The Logos is here considered firstly in himself and in his relation to God (vs. 1), then in his relation to the created world (vss. 2-3), and finally in his particular relation to men" (87-88). Also, Marc-Fr. Lacan: "The first five verses [of the Prologue] are a summary of the whole Gospel" ("Le Prologue de saint Jean: Ses thèmes, sa structure, son mouvement," *LV* 33 (1957): 100). Miller holds a similar idea. He believes that John 1:1-5 (excluding vss. 1c-2, which he regards as interpolations) is a complete hymn in which "the early Johannine community celebrated the salvation-history enacted through the Logos" ("The Logic of the Logos Hymn," 559). In his *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, Miller gives a comprehensive defense of his thesis.

²Schwankl, 143.

³Origen *Commentary on John* 2.22.

⁴Borchert, 110.

(καταλαμβάνω). It seems, therefore, not only natural to understand 1:5 likewise, but also rather convenient, for if interpreted in reference to creation, this verse could imply the same mythological conflict found in philosophical and gnostic sources, as suggested by Dodd.¹ However, inasmuch as such a concept is not entirely compatible with the Johannine dualism between light and darkness, it is no wonder that some scholars try to dissociate vs. 5 from the creation account,² while others prefer to avoid altogether the notion of a conflict by opting for the meaning “to grasp/comprehend.”³ In both cases, the only alternative seems to be to interpret the passage from the incarnational standpoint. But this does not have to be so, at least not if the creation story of Genesis is followed closely. Richard Bauckham has convincingly shown that the Johannine uses of the light/darkness imagery are better explained by their parallels in Jewish literature, including the Old Testament, and particularly the creation narrative of Genesis.⁴

¹After comparing John 1:5 to some passages in the *Hermetica*, a collection of pagan writings of a philosophical and religious nature attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, an Egyptian deity, Dodd concludes: “In both writers we have a reduced survival . . . of the primitive myth of the conflict of the Light-God with the monster of darkness” (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 36, n. 1).

²Borchert is explicit on this (109-111).

³This is particularly true for Schnackenburg: “The notion of conflict is to be avoided. A reminiscence of the mythical struggle between light and darkness at the beginning of the cosmos is excluded by the fact that humanity is already envisaged in vs. 4. Even a metaphorical recourse to the myths of primitive times would be very strange, since mythical language and cosmogony are entirely absent. But it is also hardly possible to think of the darkness having failed to quench the light of Christ in the world: John is so convinced of the victory of Christ . . . that even the possibility of defeat is not suggested” (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:247).

⁴Richard Bauckham, “Qumran and the Fourth Gospel: Is There a Connection?” in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans,

Darkness as absence of life

In Genesis, the primeval, chaotic darkness (1:2) was completely dissipated¹ when God called light into being (vs. 3), which probably refers to the light of His own presence,² for without light there could be no life. If, then, John 1:5 is interpreted against this background, the metaphor of “darkness” would not refer specifically to death, as it is implied later in the Gospel, but simply to the absence of life. In this case, the conflict suggested by the verb καταλαμβάνω is not so much rivals or adversaries trying to defeat each other, but two contrasting realities that are mutually exclusive. In the creation story of Genesis, light and darkness are not two forces set against each other. They are opposites, but not enemies fighting for supremacy.³ Darkness was basically

JSPSup 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 267-279. Bauckham's main contention is that the Johannine light/darkness imagery is not dependent on the Qumran texts, as many authors have traditionally supposed (e.g., James H. Charlesworth, “A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13–4:26 and the ‘Dualism’ Contained in the Gospel of John,” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [New York: Crossroad, 1990], 76-106), and that “what the Johannine use has in common with the Qumran use is much more plausibly attributed to common dependence on the Hebrew Bible and general Jewish tradition than to any closer relationship between John and Qumran” (Bauckham, 271). With regard to John 1:4-5, Bauckham argues positively that it is “an exegesis of the opening verses of Genesis, and . . . an interpretation of the light and darkness of the first day of the Genesis creation narrative (Gen 1:3-5)” (277-276). Similarly, Boismard: “The first five verses of the Prologue [are] exactly parallel to the account of the creation in the book of Genesis: the opposition between light and darkness of which St. Johns speaks, is exactly that of Gen 1:3” (16).

¹Or “domesticated,” as Laurence A. Turner says (*Genesis*, RNBC [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 22), for the darkness is not destroyed (Boismard and Lamouille, 75).

²See above, 56.

³As Bruce remarks, this is true even of ordinary light/darkness: “A little candle can dispel a roomful of darkness and not be dimmed by it” (34).

only the circumstantial reality that needed to be changed if life were to exist.¹ Thus vs. 5 does not describe a cosmic warfare,² but only the triumph of the light of the Logos over the absolute darkness that existed in the beginning. It must be admitted that there is a certain literality in this way of understanding darkness,³ but since ζώή in vs. 4 is much more than mere existence, σκοτία here does not lose its metaphoric connotation, neither does καταλαμβάνω its conflictive force. This is why the light still shines.

Cadman and Theobald dispute this interpretation by arguing that the present φαίνει cannot be taken timelessly to refer to the activity of the pre-existent Logos, because in vs. 6 John the Baptist is introduced as witness to the light.⁴ Scholars who hold a cosmological interpretation of vss. 1-5 have in fact incorrectly taken φαίνει as a

¹Contrary to Claus Westermann, who interprets the darkness of Gen 1:2 in the light of ancient Near Eastern cosmologies "not as a phenomenon of nature, but rather as something sinister" (*Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984], 104), Gordon J. Wenham argues that the term here is primarily "another description of the terrible primeval waste," though it could also hint "at the hidden presence of God" (*Genesis 1-15*, WBC, 1 [Waco: Word, 1987], 16). George M. Landes also questions "how negative darkness was considered to be by the Gen 1 author, for it is not radically changed or destroyed in creation, but simply limited and incorporated into the temporal structure of the world as night" ("Creation Tradition in Proverbs 8:22-31 and Genesis 1," in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. Howard N. Bram, Ralph D. Heim, and Carey A. Moore, GTS 4 [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974], 286).

²Cf. Painter, "Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?" 196: "If Gen 1:3 is the basis of John 1:5, the word that splits the darkness sets the light into mortal combat with the darkness."

³See Köstenberger, 55. The same ambiguity may be present in Gen 1:2-3. According to Wenham, at the same time that the darkness of vs. 2 is physically shrouding the earth, it could also metaphorically be veiling the divine presence (16, 18, 37). See also the interesting analysis by Nicolas Wyatt of the role played by darkness in a theophany ("The Darkness of Genesis 1:2," *VT* 43 [1993], esp. 547-549).

⁴See Cadman, 20-21; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 214.

timeless or unhistorical present,¹ that is, not related to time or history. Yet, this is not only awkward, but also unnecessary, for ζῶῃ in vs. 4 does not need to refer to physical life per se. As already seen, it refers rather to qualitative life, life as defined in the Logos himself and life that he wanted mankind to experience both in creation and in salvation (cf. 5:26; 10:10). The present tense is perfectly appropriate to describe the meaning of the Logos for humanity—in this case, a continuous or ongoing present—without the need to set this passage exclusively into an incarnational framework as a reference to the victory of Jesus over the powers of evil in his death and resurrection. Otherwise, we would have to assume with Cadman that, up to the coming of Jesus, there was no light in the world and men had no choice but to live in absolute darkness.² Despite Cadman's valiant attempt to demonstrate the validity of such a concept, it collides head-on with what John says about God's historic revelation to Israel (cf. 5:37-39),³ even if one

¹So Barrett: "No particular manifestation of divine light is meant; it is as much an eternal property of the light to shine in the darkness as it is of the life to be the light of men, and of the Word to have life in himself" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 158). See also Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 9; Lagrange, 9; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 75. For Haenchen, the present tense "expresses an indefinite but very long duration of time [prior to the incarnation], during which the state of affairs represented by 'is shining' (φαίνει) persisted" (*John 1*, 115). Also, Schnelle: "Vs. 5 speaks . . . of a fruitless working of the λόγος ἄσαρκος (unfleshed word) in history" (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 217). Eltester (126) and Peter von der Osten-Sacken ("Der erste Christ: Johannes der Täufer als Schlüssel zum Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," *ThViat* 13 [1975-1976]: 160) argue that the present tense comprises the period from creation until today; for Feuillet, the period goes until "the end of time" (8:col. 631).

²Cadman, 21.

³This is the passage used by Cadman to argue that "until he to whom the Scriptures are there said to bear witness had come it was not possible for men to have life" (ibid.). See, however, the exegesis of this passage by Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John*, NovTSup

recognizes the prophetic character of Old Testament Scriptures.¹

Darkness as sin

It is sometimes argued that σκοτία in 1:5 refers to the darkness of sin entering the world through man's fall in the garden of Eden, while the verb καταλαμβάνω describes the attempt by darkness to overcome the light.² Though the darkness did succeed in enveloping humanity and making it sin, it was not strong enough to overtake the divine light, which continued shining: "a ray of hope" was given to man in the promise of Gen 3:15, says Brown.³ This interpretation has in its favor three points: it still takes this passage against the background of the creation account; it preserves the conflictive nuance of καταλαμβάνω; and it gives the aorist its normal meaning as referring to a single past action. Nevertheless, it must be rejected for five reasons: it introduces a foreign concept in John's narrative;⁴ it defines darkness in a way not suitable to the Genesis use

42 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 216-231.

¹"Being the witness of God to his Son, the Scriptures are prophetic, not life-giving" (Hoskyns, 273).

²E.g., Aland, 207-208; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26-27; Borgen, "Logos Was the True Light," 128; De Boor, 1:41; Kysar, *John*, 30; Schenke, 26. Van der Watt argues that "the reference to darkness in vs. 5 indicates the presence of sin in the world" (319), then concludes that "the logical progression in the Prologue becomes clearer: there was the time before creation [vss. 1-2], there was the time of creation [vs. 3], and there was the time after creation but before incarnation [vss. 4-5]" (ibid.).

³Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:27.

⁴See Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 9. Feuillet correctly rejects this idea, but for the wrong reason. Struck by the combination of the present φαίνει and the aorist κατέλαβεν, he mistakenly resorts to the expedient of taking the latter as a gnomic aorist, and thus seeing vs. 5b

of the term; its appeal to Gen 3:15 to explain the triumph of the light is not exegetically adequate; it destroys the antithetical correspondence between light and darkness; and, finally, it alters the sequence of the Genesis account. This last point needs clarification.

Harold W. Attridge argues from a form-critical perspective for a literary phenomenon in John which he calls “genre bending.”¹ Focusing on some “encounter discourses” (chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 17), which he considers to be a subset of the discourse material, he attempts to show that, no matter the precise genre that seems to be at play in a particular discourse, at the end the evangelist usually breaks with the genre convention and brings the scene to an unexpected conclusion.² Whether or not one agrees with Attridge, especially on the level of presuppositions grounded on the discipline of Form Criticism, his study provided the stimulus to consider the formal way in which the fourth evangelist alludes to the creation story in 1:1-5.³ Mentioning only the elements cited by John, the Genesis narrative speaks successively about the

as applicable to “the entire religious history of humanity” (8:col. 631). See also Boismard, 21, n. 1. On κατέλαβεν as a gnomic aorist, see above, 63, n. 2.

¹Harold W. Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 3-21.

²An example is the dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well in chap. 4, which, according to some commentators, evokes a type scene of a patriarch encountering his future bride (cf. Jerome Neyrey, “Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10-26,” *CBQ* 41 [1979]: 436-437). At the end of the story, Attridge comments, “the woman, who already had had more than her share of marital experiences (4:18), is no longer the object of desire, but the one who conceives of a desire for deeper acquaintance with Jesus. . . . Jesus, who appears initially in the formal position of the suitor, quickly becomes the one to be courted and sought” (Attridge, 13).

³This is not a response to Attridge’s interest in seeing “how narrative forms are bent in the Gospel” (cf. *ibid.*, 7).

beginning (Gen 1:1a), God (vs. 1b), darkness (vs. 2), light (vs. 3), life (vss. 20-27), and finally the whole creation (vs. 31). John, however, introduces the Logos in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2); he then moves from the creation in general (vs. 3) to a statement about life (vs. 4a), which is the same as light (vs. 4b), the light that overcomes the darkness (vs. 5).

Genesis: beginning→God→darkness→light→life→whole creation

John: beginning→Logos/God→whole creation→life→light→darkness

This is not, of course, genre bending in the sense proposed by Attridge, but it is a literary bending, which was certainly motivated not only by the introduction of the Logos into the narrative,¹ but especially by the introduction in vs. 6 of John the Baptist, who came as a witness to the light. Without John the Baptist in this context, such a change would not be necessary. What really matters here is that the interpretation which takes darkness in connection with the fall does not fit either the context or the sequence adopted by John. Therefore, there should be no question that in vs. 5 he is still alluding to the creation story, and this allusion, contrary to what Evans suggests, is not restricted

¹As already noted (cf. above, 31), however, this is not to be considered a Christological interpretation of the doctrine of creation and much less a Logos tradition based on some sort of Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of Gen 1:2-5, as suggested by Thomas H. Tobin ("The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *CBQ* 52 [1990]: 252-269). First of all, Tobin's argument is open to suspicion for being entirely dependent on the hymn hypothesis. In addition, in view of the many differences between the Johannine Logos and the Philonic Logos, which Tobin himself recognizes (264-265, 268), it is arbitrary to single out possible similarities between them in order to claim that Hellenistic Judaism is "the most plausible world of thought against which to understand . . . the Prologue" (265). The fundamental question that must be asked in this connection is whether it is really possible to make a distinction between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism in any meaningful way (see Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 90-101).

to the language.¹ It also includes the sequence in which the language is conveyed. The reverse sequence rules out any possibility that σκοτία should be taken as a reference to man's fall in Gen 3 and calls for the primal darkness of Gen 1:2 as the correct identification.²

John the Baptist

The final argument for an incarnational interpretation of John 1:5 is the mention of John the Baptist in vs. 6. Since he came as a witness to the light, and the light is Jesus, it is argued that vs. 5 must already refer to the incarnate Christ.³ For this reason several scholars who interpret this passage from the creation standpoint are ready to

¹"In terms of language Gen 1:1-3 provides the closest parallels to the opening words of the Prologue. Creation is certainly alluded to, but it is creation as seen through the lens of wisdom" (Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue*, JSNTSup [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 79).

²Other suggestions concerning the identification of "darkness" in John 1:5 are even less convincing. For Hoskyns and Ellis, it refers to the opposition to Jesus on the part of his contemporary Jews (Hoskyns, 143; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* [Collegeville: Liturgical, 1984], 22-23). Lightfoot takes darkness in a moral sense, to refer to men's sinful choices as a result of their sinful nature, what he calls "the law of their own making" (*St. John's Gospel*, 79-80). A similar position is held by Bouyer, who understands darkness as a reference to "the creature's nothingness claiming to be self-sufficient" (44). Under the influence of the book of Revelation, Sanders sees in vs. 5b an allusion to the imperial persecution of the church (*A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 73). Gniska understands darkness as the result of the rejection of the light on the part of non-Christian religions (14), while Baylis sees it as the deadly condition "wherein man does not know God" (Charles P. Baylis, "The Meaning of Walking 'in the Darkness' [1 John 1:6]," *BS* 149 [1992]: 218). Finally for Beasley-Murray, darkness is a broad concept with literal and symbolic meaning which describes the cosmological situation in the beginning and the moral condition that reigned from the fall to the incarnation, as well as in the era of the resurrection, that is, the time of the Paraclete (*John*, 11).

³So Cadman, 21.

admit that we may have here a deliberate ambiguity. Carson even speaks of “a masterpiece of planned ambiguity,” for at the same time that this passage “makes no mention of the incarnation,” it anticipates “the light/darkness duality that dominates much of the rest of the book.”¹ Harnack tried to find a facile solution for this problem by combining both the cosmological and the historical dimensions allegedly present here and suggesting that the evangelist is alluding to the illuminative activity of the incarnate Christ “from the perspective of eternity.”² Those who accept the hymn hypothesis easily explain this difficulty away by arguing that “the evangelist saw in vs. 5 an allusion to the entrance of the Logos in the world, that is, to the incarnation; then he introduced the Baptist in vss. 6-8.”³

¹Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 119. The same argument of ambiguity is used by several scholars who want to interpret καταλαμβάνω as “to overcome/overtake” without giving up the traditional meaning “to grasp/comprehend.” Some even suggest to combine both ideas by using the translation “to master” (e.g., F. W. Gingrich, “Ambiguity of Word Meaning in John’s Gospel,” *CIW* 37 [1943]: 77; Morton Smith, “Notes on Goodspeed’s ‘Problems of New Testament Translation,’” *JBL* 64 [1945]: 510-511; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 73-74; Kysar, *John*, 30; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 138; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 138; Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 288; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 77; Whitacre, 53; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 54; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel: Issues and Commentary* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001], 74). Since “to grasp/comprehend” is not a suitable meaning in this context, the translation “to master” must certainly be rejected.

²Harnack, 218.

³Rissi, “Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums,” 323. For Haenchen, the insertion of John the Baptist at this point was a mistake on the part of the evangelist: “Because the lack of reference to the Baptist in the Prologue struck him [the evangelist] as an error, he felt compelled to rectify the omission by the addition of vss. 6-8. And, of course, he did not reinstate the order of events that he had in mind. He then had to accept the view that vs. 5 describes the appearance of Jesus, who could only ‘really’ come after John, the forerunner” (*John* 1, 128).

The reference to John the Baptist is neither mistaken nor accidental, and if it looks ambiguous, this is due only to the use of the same metaphor that appears later on in the Gospel, and not to a possible double meaning of the verb καταλαμβάνω. This is not to deny that John sometimes uses words in more than one way, which is widely acknowledged,¹ but this is not the case with this verb in this context. With regard to the metaphor of “darkness,” though Carson contends that in John σκοτία is “not only the absence of life, but positive evil,”² none of the examples he mentions (3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46) actually requires such an ethical emphasis as its basic definition, especially not in the light of 3:19, where “people loved [i.e., preferred] darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.”³ The ethical emphasis is primarily connected, not so much with that which is preferred, in this case, the darkness, but with the motive behind the act: darkness was preferred “because their deeds were evil.”⁴ It may be argued that an ethical emphasis is implied in or can be understood as an overtone of the term,⁵ which is true,

¹Especially after the publication of Oscar Cullmann’s “Der johanneische Gebrauch doppeldeutiger Ausdrücke als Schlüssel zum Verständnis des vierten Evangeliums,” *ThZ* 4 (1948): 360-372. See also E. Richard, “Expressions of Double Meaning and Their Function in the Gospel of John,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 96-112.

²Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 119.

³Carson correctly interprets μάλλον ἡγάπησαν in this passage in terms of a personal preference: “they preferred to live without [the light]” (*The Gospel according to John*, 207). This is a Semitic idiom which means “to prefer/decide for” (see Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 100).

⁴See further, Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:148-149.

⁵As in 1:5, the overtone may be the literal primal darkness of Gen 1:2.

but it is not an essential part of the definition. If light is life (ζωή), the antithesis requires darkness to mean basically absence of life (cf. 8:12; 12:46), which in final analysis means death; not necessarily physical death, but especially qualitative death (cf. 3:36; 6:53; 1 John 5:12).

Likewise, there is no need for a sharp distinction between φῶς (i.e., ζωή) in 1:4-5 and its use in the Gospel.¹ This fact by itself is enough to prevent the mention of John the Baptist in vss. 6-8 from demanding vs. 5 to refer to the historical appearance of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the text says only that John came as a witness to the light (vs. 7), and since in the Gospel tradition John was the forerunner of Jesus (cf. vss. 15, 30), one would scarcely imagine that the author “would introduce John the Baptist after describing the ministry of Jesus and its effect.”² As Käsemann correctly highlights, “the advent and activity of the Baptist is similarly seen throughout the whole New Testament as eschatological, that is, as bound to the advent and activity of Jesus Christ,”³ which is then properly referred to in the Prologue at vs. 9. “In this way,” says Van der Watt, “John’s announcement forms a ‘bridge’ between the λόγος ἄσαρκος and the λόγος ἑνσαρκος.”⁴

This means that the idea that vs. 5 is the first reference in the Prologue, and consequently in the Gospel, to the incarnate Christ does not seem to be correct. In this

¹See above, 50-57.

²Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26.

³Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 145.

⁴Van der Watt, 320.

passage John is still speaking of the pre-existent Logos, and the allusion to the creation story of Genesis must be seen as clear and unequivocal.¹

Conclusion

Alluding to the structure of John 1:1-18, Käsemann speaks of the “inescapable conclusion” that the first section of the Prologue does not end at vs. 5, as most interpreters suppose, but actually at vs. 4. The division which allows the new section to start at vs. 6 “cannot be possibly right,” he says, for it scarcely makes “any sense of vs. 5.”² But, once the awkward and forced parallelism between vs. 5 and vss. 10-11 is dismissed, the only option is to take vs. 5 in connection with the previous verses. There is no other way to see the Prologue’s first five verses but as a unit and, contrary to what Käsemann claims, vs. 5 makes perfect sense within such a structure. This is not enough,

¹Cf. Gese, 179. It would be wise, however, not to stretch the parallels between the Prologue and Gen 1 to avoid becoming speculative and arbitrary. This is what happens, for example, with Mary Coloe, who sees in both John 1:1-18 and Gen 1:1-2:4a a structure of six strophes in parallel array, while in Genesis there is yet a seventh climactic strophe, corresponding to the seventh day of creation. In John, such a climax is reached, not in the Prologue, but at Jesus’ death when he cries out “It is finished” (19:30), thus bringing the new creation to a completion (“The Structure of the Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” *ABR* 45 [1997]: 40-55). For Calum M. Carmichael, not only the Prologue, but the first five chapters of John’s Gospel are based on the creation story. Arguing that Gen 1 serves as a response to negative developments in connection with the golden calf narrative (Exod 32), he claims that John 1-5 offers an allegorical interpretation of Gen 1 akin to Philo’s in order to present the historical life of Jesus as a recapitulation of the function of the Logos at creation. So the seven-day scheme, for instance, is completed with John 5:1-47 (*The Story of Creation: Its Origin and Its Interpretation in Philo and the Fourth Gospel* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996]). These are but two examples of a fertile imagination which remind us of Carmichael’s own assessment of Philo as “a consummate exponent of the art of finding several meanings in the same text” (104, n. 2).

²Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 143.

however, to settle the question concerning the point of the incarnation of the Logos. As noted, some scholars feel very comfortable with the idea that vss. 1-5 belong together, nevertheless they see in vs. 5 a description of the historical activity of Jesus Christ.

The issue, however, is that nothing in vs. 5 obligatorily points to the incarnate Christ. While the concept of light/darkness is common to the rest of the Gospel, it is the Gospel that develops historically the dualism introduced in the Prologue, and not vice versa; this dualism uses the imagery of Gen 1 so explicitly that it cannot be ignored. For this reason, it would be a mistake to take *φάινει* as a timeless or unhistorical present, with no relation to Jesus' earthly ministry. The ambiguity of John's language is right here, and nowhere else in this passage. The primordial darkness was not able to dim the light that was in the Logos when he performed his creative work, and so this light has never ceased shining since then. It shone in the beginning to humankind, offering them the benefits of the Logos' divine life (vs. 4), and it continued shining through the same Logos in the eschatological era of his revelation in flesh (5:26; 6:27; 8:12; 10:10). This is why John the Baptist, as an authentic forerunner, is mentioned in vss. 6-8.

The Fourth Gospel shares the New Testament view that the historical manifestation of the divine Christ was inaugurated by John the Baptist. This only reinforces the idea that in vss. 1-5 of the Prologue, the Logos is still portrayed in his pre-existent mode.

With regard to vs. 4, the reference to "life" does not point necessarily to the ministry of the incarnate Christ, nor should it be interpreted in connection with the creation of life in the beginning. The life in question is neither salvific nor physical; it is

life as an inherent attribute of the Logos (“in him was life”): the divine, spiritual life with which the Logos is filled, and which qualifies him both to create and to save (cf. 5:26). This interpretation implies that the expression ὁ γέγονεν is not the subject of ζωὴ ἦν in vs. 4a, but an adjective which modifies ἔν, the subject of vs. 3b. At any rate, the reading which connects ὁ γέγονεν with vs. 4 is the least probable solution for this difficult textual problem, and no incarnational theory should be based on such a fragile foundation. It is important to remember, however, that even if read with vs. 4, this verse does not need to refer to the incarnate Christ.

As for vss. 1-3, there is no compelling evidence to set these verses in an incarnational framework and to deny their cosmological setting. Neither πάντα nor γίνομαι requires such a conclusion, whether linguistically or contextually, and the unequivocal reference to Gen 1:1 (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν) should be enough to settle the question.

The incarnation of the Logos is not the subject of the opening five verses of the Prologue, neither is it implicitly referred to. The most one could say is that there might be an ambiguity in the present tense φαίνει in vs. 5. On one hand, this verb describes something that happened in the beginning, when the light of the Logos broke through the darkness so that everything that exists could be created. On the other, it describes something that was still in force at the time John wrote his Gospel, and his Gospel is about the incarnate Logos. Thus φαίνει seems to encompass both the primordial, cosmological activity of the divine Logos, as well as the eschatological, historical dimension of his human appearance on earth. It remains, however, that the fundamental purpose of this passage is to declare the triumph of the Logos in the beginning, thus

preparing the reader for the triumph of the incarnate Logos in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

John's presentation of the pre-existent Logos is not an end in itself, and should never be seen in isolation from the reality and significance of the incarnation. But, any attempt to deny the actual, personal pre-existence of the Logos as a divine being must certainly be reputed as alien to the Prologue. The Johannine Logos is not a theological abstraction, even if it was conceived under the influence of the wisdom tradition, and so it cannot be understood merely as a poetic personification of God's plan. The Johannine Logos is a person who at a certain point in history took on human form and nature and lived as a real human being. John 1:14 consists of an emphatic affirmation of this fact.

CHAPTER 3

THE MINISTRY OF THE INCARNATE LOGOS

(JOHN 1:6-13)

In comparison with the first five verses of the Prologue, vs. 6 (“There was a man . . .”) involves a basic change of content. The fourth evangelist moves from statements about the pre-existent Logos and abstract issues such as life, light, and darkness, to a historical person living in a concrete historical situation. Inasmuch as that person is John the Baptist,¹ the precursor of the Messiah according to the Synoptic

¹Peter Hofrichter’s thesis that, in its original form, vs. 6 referred to the Logos and thus consisted of the first mention in the Prologue of the incarnation (*Im Anfang war der ‘Johannesprolog’: Das urchristliche Logosbekenntnis, die Basis neutestamentlicher und gnostischer Theologie*, BU 17 [Regensburg: Pustet, 1986], 91-94), is interesting but essentially speculative. He argues that behind the extant Prologue, which comes from a later ecclesiastical redactor, there lies what he calls a “Logos-confession,” the first of its kind in early Christianity, whose influence can be detected not only in the Fourth Gospel, but also in almost every NT writing, as well as in the gnostic literature. With regard to vss. 6-8, he suggests that vss. 6c, 7a, and 8 are redactional, and that the original reading of this section would have been: “There came a man sent from God, that he might bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.” The “man [ἄνθρωπος] sent from God,” therefore, would have referred originally to Jesus, not to John the Baptist. Because of the fiery criticism he received, especially by Theobald (*Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 112-117), Hofrichter wrote a second book (*Wer ist der ‘Mensch, von Gott gesandt’ in Joh 1,6?* BU 21 [Regensburg: Pustet, 1990]), in which he offers sixteen “internal and contextual” arguments to support his reconstruction (12-22; reprint in English, 75-85). He points out, for example, that without Jesus Christ as the subject of vss. 6-8, there is no antecedent masculine noun to the “him” in vss. 10-13. But this is not a real difficulty, for the repetition of the term λόγος in vs. 14 may well indicate that this is the subject of vss. 10-13 also (see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:10). Practically every argument can be explained in another way, and most of the times with much more sense, which means that his entire thesis rests only on circumstantial evidence. In his review of Hofrichter’s first book, Barnabas Lindars

tradition (Matt 3:1-11; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18), most modern scholars, even some among those who accept the hymn hypothesis, find it quite natural to understand this new section as referring to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.¹ Yet, since the incarnation is explicitly presented only in vs. 14, there are those who, in accordance with almost all church Fathers, still prefer to see in these verses an account of the revelation of the pre-incarnate Logos to Israel in Old Testament times by means of the prophetic office.² George R. Beasley-Murray, for example, argues that this is “the most natural

correctly dismisses it as “a curiosity of scholarship” (*JTS* 38 [1987]: 500).

¹Walter Schmithals declares that the presence of vss. 6-8 in the Prologue makes clear that vss. 9-13 refer to the incarnate Christ. Then he adds: “If John the Baptist is the witness to the light that shines in the darkness (vss. 4-5), then this light upon which every man is dependent (vs. 9) can only be Jesus Christ” (*Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe: Forschungsgeschichte und Analyse*, BZNW 64 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992], 276). Similarly, O’Day: “The witness of John belongs to the story of Jesus. As the light enters the world, the focus shifts from the eternal Word to the historical” (“The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” 9:521).

²E.g., B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: Murray, 1882; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 5; Boismard, 24-45; Eltester, 124, 129-131; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 78; Boismard and Lamouille, 77; Gese, 180-183; Kysar, *John*, 30-32; Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l’évangile selon Jean*, vol. 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 96; Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 126-127; Talbert, *Reading John*, 72; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 139-141. Most of the supporters of the hymn hypothesis also argue that vss. 9-13 originally described the activity of the pre-incarnate Logos in OT times. Only after, and because of, the introduction of vss. 6-8 by the evangelist, did those verses come to refer to Jesus Christ (e.g., Bernard, 1:7-19; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:256-258; Haenchen, *John I*, 114-118; Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe*, 274-277). Dodd, in turn, argues that vss. 4-13 are essentially ambiguous and involve two levels of meaning. For Hellenistic readers, these verses are nothing more than a reference to the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ in the world, but for Christians, they consist of a summary of the historical ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 282-284; idem, “The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and Christian Worship,” 9-22). Beasley-Murray holds the same view (George R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991], 30-31; idem, “The Mission of the Logos-Son,” in *The Four*

interpretation” of this passage.¹ Margaret Davies notes that an interpretation that conceives these verses from the perspective of the incarnation would ruin the startling climax of vs. 14.² To use the words of John Painter, “the proclamation of the incarnation in [vs.] 14 comes as an anticlimax.”³

This chapter examines these views. It aims to show that vss. 6-13 cannot be correctly interpreted except in connection with the ministry of the incarnate Christ. The study is divided into four parts: vss. 6-8, vs. 9, vss. 10-11, and vss. 12-13. Each verse or group of verses is subjected to a detailed investigation, in order to reveal the basic perspective from which they must be understood.

The Ministry of John the Baptist (Vss. 6-8)

This section focuses on the place and role of John the Baptist in salvation history. Inasmuch as the issue is more thematic than exegetical, appeal is made to both Synoptic and Johannine materials in order to establish the theological framework within which vss. 6-8 must be understood. The problem of the Fourth Gospel’s denial of the Elijanic role of John is also addressed, as is the relation between vss. 6-8 and vss. 9-13.

Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck, 3 vols., ed. F. van Segbroeck, et al., BEThL 100 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992], 3:1867-1868; idem, *John*, 12-13).

¹Beasley-Murray, “The Mission of the Logos-Son,” 3:1867.

²Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 127. So also Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 78.

³Painter, “Christology and the History of the Johannine Community,” 462.

John's Place in Salvation History

One of the most vigorous defenses of the idea that vss. 6-13 describe the activity of the pre-incarnate Logos between creation and the incarnation comes from Thomas L. Brodie, who argues that there is "significant evidence" to support this interpretation.¹ The first evidence he calls the "immediate context," which sets these verses in an intermediate chronological position. This position has to be regarded as a basic clue to the meaning of the passage. The argument is that vss. 6-13 do "not state clearly to what period they refer." They do not go back explicitly to the beginning as does vs. 1, neither do they point with explicit clarity to the period of the incarnation as does vs. 14. Instead, Brodie says, "they are set, rather vaguely, in between."² Hence his conclusion that the Prologue offers a threefold time-based division, which is a description of salvation history: the beginning (vss. 1-5), the Old Testament (vss. 6-13), and the New Testament (vss. 14-18).³

Little effort is required to note the fragility of Brodie's argument, unless one agrees that John the Baptist is only "rather vaguely" situated, within the salvation-history chronology, between the beginning of John 1:1 and the advent of the incarnate Christ. It is a fact, as Barrett remarks, that with vs. 6 for the first time in the Prologue the stage of

¹Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 139-141. With the exception of Westcott, Brodie is the only scholar who tries to justify his choice for this interpretation, whereas all the others simply take it for granted or limit their arguments to the significance of vs. 14 (e.g., Bernard, 1:13; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 78).

²Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 139.

³Ibid., 135.

history is reached,¹ but this does not mean that this history necessarily refers to God's long dealing with Israel in the Old Testament period. Such an idea would be more appropriate in relation to the introduction to Hebrews (cf. 1:1-4) than to John's Prologue.² The fourth evangelist does not seem to be interested in providing a full chronological account of salvation history, otherwise he would have been more explicit on that. After introducing his narrative with an account of the pre-existent Logos, in which he gives information on his divine nature and creative activity, the evangelist drastically changes his perspective and starts talking about John the Baptist, who, since the time of early Christian preaching, was closely associated with the gospel story (cf. Acts 1:21-22; 10:37; 13:24-25).³

¹Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 159.

²Boismard and Lamouille do argue that, in this aspect, John's Prologue parallels the introduction to Hebrews (77), but they do not explain how.

³Unlike the Synoptics, John's Gospel does not call John "the Baptist" (1:6, 15, 19, 26, 28, etc.), neither does he state explicitly that he baptized Jesus, though it does refer to his activity as a baptizer (1:25, 28, 31; 3:23). On the whole, however, the Fourth Gospel seems to leave John's baptismal ministry in the background, in order to emphasize his role as a witness to Jesus (cf. 1:31). As Harris remarks, "the overall conception which dominates the presentation of John in the Fourth Gospel is that of witness" (*Prologue and Gospel*, 31). The traditional argument according to which the absence of the title "the Baptist" would suggest that the author of the Gospel was also named John (see Leon Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969], 246-247) is not conclusive, even if Bruce and Carson cannot think of a better explanation for such an omission (see Bruce, 35; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 120). Bernard contends that "it would not be . . . necessary for an evangelist writing for Christian readers at the end of the first century to say explicitly 'John the Baptist,' when introducing the John who bore witness to Jesus at the beginning of his ministry" (1:8).

John and the New Aeon

In the gospel tradition, which includes the Fourth Gospel (1:19-28), the advent and activity of John the Baptist are entirely bound to the advent and activity of Jesus Christ. He was born of priestly lineage (Luke 1:5-7) about half a year before Jesus, to whom he was physically related through the kinship of their mothers (vs. 36), though there is no evidence that he knew Jesus before their adult lives. Before his birth, he was announced as the forerunner of the coming Messiah (Luke 1:13-17; 76-77), who became a prominent theme in his preaching (see Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:15-18) as well as in his ministry, for he was the one who baptized Jesus and introduced his public ministry (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; cf. John 1:29-34). According to the Synoptics, John's imprisonment was the signal for the start of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Mark 1:14-15; Matt 3:12-17).¹ This means that John belongs to a specific historical situation, which cannot be generalized as if it referred "rather vaguely" to the period between Adam and Jesus Christ.

An issue that Brodie is not able to explain satisfactorily, if this whole passage is seen as an allusion to the Old Testament period, is the anachronistic introduction of John the Baptist at the beginning of vs. 6 and not at the end of vs. 13. The only thing he says,

¹John 3:24, however, clearly indicates that Jesus had already started his ministry before John was put in prison, which means that "John and Jesus acted and worked side by side in Israel for a time" (Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 145). Dodd tries to solve this discrepancy between John and the Synoptics by suggesting that Jesus' early activity in the Fourth Gospel was still a "provisional and preparatory stage," and that it was only after the imprisonment of the Baptist that Jesus came into Galilee announcing that the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of God was at hand (cf. Mark 1:15) (Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 291-292).

rather obscurely, is that John the Baptist “embodies” and “epitomizes” the Old Testament.¹ Westcott attempts an explanation by saying that “the review of the revelation, preparatory to the incarnation, starts from the last, that is, the most intelligible stage in it,” for the Baptist is to be considered “the last representative” in the long line of God’s messengers who announced the coming of the Messiah.² At first sight, there seems to be nothing wrong with the idea that John was the last and greatest member of the prophetic succession (cf. Matt 11:12-13; Luke 16:16). Jesus clearly speaks of him as the eschatological Elijah promised in Mal 4:5-6 (Matt 11:14; 17:10-12; Luke 1:17), and all four Gospels define John’s mission in terms of Isa 40:3 (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). A closer look, however, shows the evidence pointing in another direction.

In Jewish expectation Elijah was a prophetic figure who would precede the Messiah and his kingdom.³ Early Christians, including Jesus himself, shared the conviction that this expectation had found its fulfilment in John the Baptist. For this reason, the Synoptics portray Jesus referring to God’s kingdom as something already in

¹Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 139. At this point, Brodie introduces a partial citation from Haenchen (to support his statement that John “embodies the OT”), but in a way that is inappropriate. Haenchen’s argument merely concerns the literary style in which the Baptist is introduced in vs. 6, which, he says, is not poetic but prosaic. His full sentence reads: “The segment [vss. 6-8] is reminiscent of the narrative style found in the OT, for example, in 1 Sam 1:1” (*John 1*, 116). In other words, this is clearly not a theological statement about the salvation-history meaning of John the Baptist and thus should not be used as such.

²Westcott, 5.

³Markus Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 461-476.

effect among his contemporaries (cf. Matt 11:12-13; Luke 16:16; 17:21). By accepting John's role as the precursor of the kingdom, Jesus announced that "the kingdom was already present because Elijah had already returned."¹ There is also good evidence that the expression "from [ἀπό] the days of John the Baptist" (Matt 11:12-13) should be read inclusively, not exclusively.² This is another indication that, for Jesus, the advent of God's kingdom was not primarily dependent upon his own ministry, but rather upon John's. According to Käsemann, "the Old Testament epoch of salvation history concludes with the Baptist, who himself already belongs to the new epoch and is not to be counted among the prophets."³ This means that John's association with the story of Jesus is not only chronological but especially theological, in the sense that he was the one who actually began the kingdom, or, as Käsemann says, he was "the initiator of the new aeon."⁴

Essentially the same thing can be said with regard to the Fourth Gospel, though this Gospel turns the more eschatological expectation regarding the Baptist in the

¹Ibid., 476.

²W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr. list four arguments to support this idea: (1) In Matthew ἀπό much more often than not is inclusive; (2) if the purpose were exclusion, one would expect reference to a point in time rather than to a span of time ("the days of John"); (3) Jesus and John were alive at the same time, which means that the time of Jesus, the time of the kingdom, must include "the days of John"; (4) throughout Matthew, the activities of John and Jesus are set in close parallelism (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997], 2:253-254).

³Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague, SBT (London: SCM, 1964), 43.

⁴Ibid. See further, Davies and Allison Jr., 2:254.

Synoptics into a more soteriological one. While in the Synoptics the ministry of John is related to the introduction of God's kingdom, in the Fourth Gospel what he introduces is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29).¹ The Baptist appears to be the same precursor of the Synoptics, who comes as a prophet (cf. vs. 23) to introduce Jesus to Israel (vs. 31), after which he and his ministry fades away, for, as in the Synoptics, Jesus is greater than he (vss. 26-27). The idea that Jesus is greater than John and brings John's ministry to a fulfillment is further expanded and dramatized. After the baptism of Jesus, John points at him and repeats to two of his disciples that Jesus is the Lamb of God. When they hear this, they understand the message: they leave John and follow Jesus (vss. 35-37).² In chap. 3, not only two, but "all" come to Jesus (3:26; 4:1) and John confirms that Jesus is the Christ (3:28).

Even more significant, however, is the fact that John uses the metaphor of a wedding to refer to the coming of the Messiah and identifies himself as the friend of the bridegroom and Jesus as the bridegroom (vs. 29). The bridegroom's friend (the *shoshbin*), who was also the bridegroom's best man, was a familiar figure in the Jewish life of the day. He had important things to do both before and especially during the wedding, assisting the bridegroom in everything and acting as a kind of master of ceremonies.³ By describing himself as a *shoshbin*, John emphasizes his intimate

¹On John 1:29, see Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 69-75.

²As D. G. van der Merwe observes, "the entire process of discipleship started with him" ("The Historical and Theological Significance of John the Baptist as He Is Portrayed in John 1," *Neotest* 33 [1999]: 289).

³See D. J. Williams, "Bride, Bridegroom," *DJG* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992),

connection with the beginning of Jesus' messianic ministry, as well as the subordinate aspect of his own mission. Having performed his task and achieved his goal, it is time to leave the scene, like the friend of the bridegroom, for it is the bridegroom who must increase, whereas the friend must decrease (vs. 30).¹ This allows the conclusion that, in a sense similar to the Synoptics, John the Baptist is portrayed in the Fourth Gospel as the initiator, the master of ceremonies who inaugurates the messianic age, not the boundary which he himself was not allowed to cross (cf. 5:35-36).²

The attempt of Brodie and others to make John a hostage of the Old Testament period of salvation history, therefore, does not seem appropriate. The same is true of the attempt to see a precise sequence in the chronology of salvation history in John's

86-88, and esp. Renzo Infante, "L'amico dello sposo, figura del ministerio di Giovanni Battista nel Quarto Vangelo," *RivBib* 31 (1983): 3-19.

¹According to A. van Selms, there is good evidence that ancient Sumerian and Babylonian law utterly prohibited the bridegroom's best man from marrying the bride, and echoes of this prohibition may be detected in the OT, in passages such as Judg 14-15, where even the Philistines acknowledged the rightness of Samson's complaint. Van Selms suggests that the statements of John the Baptist in John 3:28-30 are to be understood against this same background, which means that the farthest the Baptist can go as the Messiah's best man is organizing the details and presiding over the wedding, for "under no circumstances is he allowed to marry the bride" ("The Best Man and Bride: From Summer to St. John with a New Interpretation of Judges, Chapters 14 and 15," *JNES* 9 [1950]: 65-75).

²The combination of the comparative μέζων and the verb τελειόω in this context (5:35-36) is highly significant. It seems to imply that the testimony of Jesus was "greater" than John's because he came "to finish/perfect" what had been initiated by John. Both of them had been sent by God (1:6; 5:36), but the Baptist "was not the light" (1:8). He was just "a burning and shining lamp," who came "to testify to the light" (1:8). The testimony of Jesus was greater because, since he was the true light (1:9), his works testified on his own behalf and, by doing (ποιέω) his works, he would bring John's testimony to completion. "What had been done partially by the servants of God is finally accomplished by his Son" (Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 266).

Prologue.¹ Westcott is not far off when he says that John was “the last representative” of the prophetic line that heralded the coming Messiah.² Jesus himself implied so (Luke 16:16). But John was certainly much more than that; he was also the friend of the bridegroom who made everything ready for the wedding (cf. 1:29), and rejoiced at hearing the bridegroom’s voice (3:30). He is not left out of the celebration. On the contrary, he is present as the bridegroom’s best man, taking an active part and even leading the ceremony, thus constituting the connecting link between the preparation and

¹Cf. Brodie: “The basic point is clear: the central section of the Prologue . . . may reasonably be read as referring first of all to the intermediate section of history—the OT” (*The Gospel according to John*, 140). Brodie’s concept of salvation history follows closely that of Oscar Cullmann, for whom salvation history, which emphasizes the historical character of God’s saving activity, involves a continual forward development of saving events (see Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, trans. Sidney G. Sowers, NTL [London: SCM, 1967], esp. 122, 294, 332). From this perspective, it is possible to speak of salvation history in John 1:1-18, without necessarily interpreting vss. 6-13 in connection with the OT period. Cullmann says: “Nowhere has the unity of the entire revelatory process as a Christ-process—a unity which in the New Testament is everywhere more or less presupposed—found more powerful expression than in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, where creation and redemption appear as a single process in which Christ and revelation are active” (*Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, rev. ed., trans. Floyd V. Filson [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964], 24; cf. idem, *Salvation in History*, 270-271). In one of his last works, Cullmann refers to the salvation-history content of John 1:1-18 as “the grand idea of the Prologue” (“The Theological Content of the Prologue to John in Its Present Form,” trans. Ulrike Guthrie, in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert R. Fortna and Beverly Gaventa [Nashville: Abingdon, 1990], 296). Other scholars who also see some sort of salvation history in John’s Prologue include Brown (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:cxv, 23-24), Jeremias (*The Central Message of the New Testament*, 76), and especially Miller (*Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 11-12, 97-103). Of these, the most interesting view is that of Miller, who sees a complete salvation-history account in hymnic form in the first five verses of the Prologue, with the exception of vss. 1c-2, which he discards as redactional interpolations. Needless to say, his hypothesis depends on an incarnational interpretation of vss. 4-5, which he claims to be beyond any doubt: “Even if the implication for the hymn should be rejected, our thesis about the salvation-historical interpretation of the passage may stand on its own” (ibid., 11).

²Westcott, 5.

the actual event or, in the case of Jesus' messianic ministry, between the expectation and its fulfillment.

A Contextual Reading of Vss. 6-8

There is no reason why the same idea cannot be applied to the mention of the Baptist in vss. 6-8. If Jesus is the light who is just about to come into the world (vs. 9), there seems to be nothing that precludes taking John in this context as the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, as virtually the whole New Testament does, rather than a sort of embodiment of the Old Testament. The fourth evangelist would only be anticipating in the Prologue what he does later in the Gospel narrative in a more developed fashion (1:19-34).¹ This means that vss. 6-8 not only link the Prologue to the continuing narrative, they also make it clear that the Prologue is indeed to be seen as the beginning of the whole Gospel.²

The movement from vs. 5 to vs. 6 may appear somewhat abrupt, both in language and content, but it is no more abrupt than the movement in terms of space and time that it conveys, namely, the movement from eternity to history, from the primordial time of creation to a historical event in first-century Palestine. Even from this perspective,

¹Although also thinking that John 1:6-13 refers to the OT period of salvation history, Beasley-Murray correctly considers John the Baptist's ministry as "the commencement of the kerygma" (*John*, 11); but he refers only to vss. 19-34 and not to vss. 6-8. Since, however, he does not seem to share Brodie's idea that the Baptist in the Prologue embodies the OT, he concludes that vss. 6-8 are an interpolation that interrupts the flow of the narrative (*ibid.*).

²"The Prologue appears to be the origin of the narrative that follows, for that narrative develops what is already explicitly contained or suggested, in concentrated language and ideas, in the Prologue" (Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 36).

however, there is no need to overemphasize the abruptness of such a movement,¹ which in itself does not prove anything.² In addition, regardless of what can be said about the literary style of vss. 6-8,³ a fair analysis of the Prologue as we have it will surely indicate that its thematic development is not fundamentally compromised by the presence of these verses. This is shown, for example, by the repetition of the key term "light" in vss. 7-9 and by the second *ἵνα*-clause with the intransitive πιστεύω (vs. 7c), which clearly presuppose vss. 4-5.⁴

John's Role in the Fourth Gospel

The portrait of the Baptist in the Prologue, or for that matter in the Fourth Gospel as a whole, is rather unique among the New Testament writings.⁵ What matters most for

¹"Abrupt" and "incongruous," states Robinson, who thinks that these verses belonged originally with vs. 19 and were moved into their present position when the Prologue was prefaced to the Gospel by the evangelist or a later redactor ("The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," *NTS* 9 [1962-1963]: 125).

²Eugen Ruckstuhl is substantially right in arguing that "the lessening of the coherent flow of thought after vs. 5 could be an indication that the passage on the Baptist (vss. 6-8) was inserted into this place in an original text. But the indication in itself is not enough to establish this" ("Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, 2 vols., ed. William C. Weinrich [Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984], 2:448). However, to affirm that, because vs. 15 looks like an insertion, vss. 6-8 are an insertion (*ibid.*) is unacceptable. It is obvious that the connection between vss. 14 and 16, through the repetition of the word stem πληρ-, is interrupted by vs. 15, but this does not lead to the conclusion that vss. 6-8 are an insertion, much less that this insertion would have been carefully planned by the evangelist, as Ruckstuhl supposes, only to provide a chiasmic parallel with vs. 15 (*cf. ibid.*).

³See below, 240-242.

⁴Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:223.

⁵Studies on John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel include: Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Urchristentum*, vol. 1, *Johannes der Täufer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932), 26-

the fourth evangelist is John's role as a witness to Jesus, not as a precursor.¹ When questioned by Jewish emissaries who were trying to probe the secret of his person and activity (vs. 19), John is reported to have explicitly replied that he was not the eschatological Elijah (vss. 20-21), the precursor of the Messiah promised by the prophet Malachi (4:5-6).

In the Synoptics, however, Jesus himself declares that John was Elijah (Mark 9:11-13; Matt 11:14; 17:10-12), and Luke 1:17 reports Gabriel predicting that John would come before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah." This is one of the many difficulties involving John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, and it may be assumed that the solution to it is to be found in the polemical situation in which this Gospel was conceived and written: the polemic about the confession of Jesus as Messiah and Son of

31; Raymond E. Brown, "Three Quotations from John the Baptist in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 22 (1960): 292-298; Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 248-312; Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, SNTSMS 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 87-106; Ernst Bammel, "The Baptist in Early Christian Tradition," *NTS* 18 (1971-1972): 109-113; Josef Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation, Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte*, BZNW 53 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 186-216; Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*, JSNTSup 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 70-77; Edmondo R. Lupieri, "John the Baptist in New Testament Traditions and History," in *ANRW*, II/26:1, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 455-459; Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 26-62; Van der Merwe, 267-292; Markus Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des alttestamentlichen Propheten im frühen Christentum*, BZNW 88 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 89-97, 244-247.

¹"John's job in the Fourth Gospel is to witness to Jesus; anything else about him is irrelevant" (Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within the Second Temple Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 195). According to Webb (75), the word "witness" itself (or the μαρτυρ- word group) is repeatedly used in the Fourth Gospel to describe John's function (1:7 [2x], 8, 15, 32, 34; 3:26; 5:33, 34, 36, and possibly 3:32 [2x], 33 as well); in passages which may not use this term, the idea is still clear (1:35-37; 3:27-30; 10:41).

God (cf. 20:31).¹

According to the majority interpretation today, the central issues of Johannine Christology were developed in discussions and debates with Jewish groups from which the Johannine Christians separated. It seems appropriate to think that the Baptist's denial that he was Elijah consists of an indication of such debates, as M. de Jonge argues.² He calls attention to evidence, both biblical and extra-biblical, that among some first-century Jewish groups there might have existed a popular expectation of a purely human Messiah who would not know his identity until Elijah anointed him and revealed him.³ Since the Christ of the Fourth Gospel is the pre-existent Logos, it is natural that the evangelist would try to avoid any suggestion that Jesus became God's Son or God's

¹Since the publication of J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* in 1968 (rev. and enl. ed. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1979]), it has been almost universally accepted that the Fourth Gospel was written within a situation marked by a fiery conflict between Christians and Jews at the end of the first century, and that at the heart of that conflict were some Christological issues, more precisely the claim that Jesus was the Messiah and the unique Son of God (see Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 48-56; James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991], 220-229).

²M. de Jonge, "Jewish Expectations about the 'Messiah' according the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 19 (1972-1973): 246-270; idem, "John the Baptist and Elijah in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 299-308.

³In the first century, the concept of a hidden Messiah is explicitly found in *1 En.* 48:6-7, 62:7, and implicitly in *4 Ezra* 7:28, 12:32; *2 Bar.* 29:3; 39:7. By the end of the second century, Elijah's role becomes explicit (*Justin Dialogue with Trypho* 8.3-4; 49.1; 110.1; cf. *m. Sotah* 9:15; *m. 'Ed.* 8:7) (see De Jonge, "Jewish Expectations about the 'Messiah'," 252-256; Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*, 76). On the whole issue of the hidden Messiah, see Erik Sjöberg, *Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien*, SHVL 53 (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), 41-98.

Messiah only when he was baptized by John and received the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:19-34), for this would make Jesus dependent on John. John's Gospel not only denies the Elijanic role of the Baptist; it also omits any explicit reference to Jesus being baptized by him (cf. 1:33-34). The evangelist also made sure to emphasize that Jesus was prior to John, despite his coming after him (1:15, 27, 30).¹

Whatever the precise facts, it is clear that in the Fourth Gospel John the Baptist is not the eschatological Elijah, the precursor of the Messiah. It does not seem appropriate, however, to exaggerate the significance of this fact, so as to describe the whole idea of a precursor in this Gospel as "anathema," as Walter Wink does.² The denial that the Baptist is Elijah may be entirely related to the situation in which this Gospel was written, and if that denial was uttered by John, against Jesus' affirmation of it in the Synoptics, it

¹This interpretation is certainly to be preferred to that of Martyn himself, which involves a number of source-critical conjectures of little if any exegetical warrant (see J. Louis Martyn, "We Have Found Elijah," in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity; Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs, SJLA 21 [Leiden: Brill, 1976], 181-219). Also unnecessary is the hypothesis suggested by Robinson, who argues that the Fourth Gospel reflects an older and more accurate tradition than that of the Synoptics when they seem to contradict each other (John A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection," *NTS* 4 [1957-1958]: 263-281; cf. idem, *The Priority of John*, 183-184; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:48-49; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 103-104). An idea that, for all its simplicity, has much to recommend it is that this difficulty would simply point to the psychological difference between the one who makes the comparison (Jesus) and the one who refuses it (John himself) (see C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Implications of Certain Features of the New Testament*, SBT [London: SCM, 1967], 70). For other suggestions, see Craig L. Blomberg, "Elijah, Election, and the Use of Malachi in the New Testament," *CTR* 2 (1987): 105-107.

²Wink, 89.

is not even necessary to posit any radical contradiction between these two traditions.¹

John's role as a witness does not exclude his traditional role as a precursor, at least not on the semantical level; and the Fourth Gospel narrative shows clear traces of John's role as a precursor. The first is the formal position of John's account in relation to Jesus' ministry both in the Prologue (1:6-8) and in the Gospel itself (1:19-34), which suggests the idea of a precursor.² The second is the quotation from Isa 40:3 in John 1:23, in which John explicitly defines himself as a prophet performing a preparatory work for the coming of the Messiah.³ The third trace is found in John 1:26-27 and 33,

¹The Fourth Gospel's portrait of John the Baptist is often described as the culmination of a process in which John is "christianized" by the fourth evangelist. See the classical statement with which Martin Debelius concludes his work on the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel: "Yes, the Christians went even further in the christianization of John's story: since the forerunner position of the Baptist threatened the dignity of the Lord, John was put next to Jesus; the Baptist became a 'friend,' the forerunner became a 'witness,' the prophet became a saint" (*Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer*, FRLANT 15 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911], 143). For a typical tradition-historical reconstruction of this process, see Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 282-285; and especially Michael Cleary, "The Baptist of History and Kerygma," *ITQ* 54 (1988): 211-227. For a full set of historical objections to the Fourth Gospel's portrait of the Baptist, see Maurice Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 63-79.

²Contrary to what Wink says (89), the Baptist's statements that Jesus was *πρῶτος* (1:15, 30) do not necessarily rule out the precursor concept. There is a question whether *πρῶτος* must be taken as an adjective ("first"), meaning that Jesus was pre-existent, or as a substantive ("superior"), meaning that he was greater than John. Even though the temporal understanding seems preferable (see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:56, 63-64), in both cases *πρῶτος* conveys an affirmation about Jesus Christ and not about John the Baptist, as Wink implies. It does not deny that the historical appearance of Jesus was preceded by John's (*ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος . . .*) (see Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 75).

³The insistence of Wink and others that this passage is deprecatory, that it shows the evangelist wiping out John's significance as a precursor and reducing him to a mere "voice" (see Wink, 89-90; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 173), does not do justice to the text. The first part of the quotation is identical to that of Synoptics: *φωνὴ βοᾶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*

where the two sayings of the Baptist in the parallel account of the Synoptics form the core of his precursory work: the prediction of the coming Messiah and the contrast between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism (cf. Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16).¹

All of this means that, despite the renunciation of Mal 4:5-6, the salvation-history role of John the Baptist as the precursor of the Messiah has not been entirely forgotten,² neither has it been completely replaced by the witness concept. John's denial that he is Elijah may be more a literary strategy of the fourth evangelist to fight Christological misconceptions than a denial of the Baptist's traditional role as a precursor. It seems, therefore, correct to say that the Baptist is introduced in the Fourth Gospel as a precursor who is a witness,³ for he is the first person to witness to Jesus as the lamb of God (1:29,

(cf. Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4) and the second part only combines into one sentence what the Synoptics have in two. The main difference is that while the first three evangelists apply Isaiah's passage to John, in this Gospel John applies it to himself (see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:50-51). In other words, this quotation in the Fourth Gospel does not make any statement about the Baptist which is not also made in the Synoptics, and the role of making "straight the way of the Lord" clearly presupposes a precursory ministry. Mark is the only Synoptic writer who connects this quotation with the one from Malachi, thus combining the Baptist's Elijanic role to the prophecy of Isaiah (cf. Mark 1:2-3).

¹See Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 253-256. Another related trace is possibly found in 3:28, where John says to his disciples: "You yourselves bear witness to me that I said, 'I am not the Messiah,' but 'I have been sent before him.'" Webb points out that "the first statement refers back to John's witness to the first emissaries in 1:20. It is probable that the second statement ('I have been sent before him'), which incorporates a forerunner role, refers back to John's identification of himself as the Isaianic voice in the wilderness in 1:23. Thus," he concludes, "John's role as forerunner is still present, but muted" (76, n. 85). See also Robinson, *The Priority of John*, 183.

²See further, Ernst, 191; Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 25, n. 37.

³For an interesting discussion on the concept of witness in the Fourth Gospel, see Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 39-62.

36) and Son of God (vs. 34), the one upon whom the Spirit of God descended and remained (vs. 32), who himself baptizes with the Holy Spirit (vs. 33).¹ The implication of this for understanding John the Baptist in the Prologue is that the statements that John was “sent from God” (vs. 6), that he “came as a witness to testify to the light” (vs. 7), so that “all might believe through him” (vs. 8), would not only define but also summarize his entire role in this Gospel in relation to Jesus.²

Vss. 6-8, therefore, do not exist because John somehow epitomizes the Old Testament and much less because the evangelist misunderstood his source by interpreting vss. 9-13 in connection with Jesus’ earthly ministry, as argued by Haenchen.³ Likewise, there is no reason to jump from vs. 9 to vs. 14 to highlight the absurdity of having John preparing the way for the incarnation, as Brown does.⁴ What follows John’s account in the Prologue is not the birth of Jesus⁵ but his presence and

¹See Trites, 91.

²Commenting on 1:7, Bultmann says that the evangelist “not only accepts the witness of the Baptist, but expressly lays claim to it—and in this he agrees with the rest of the Christian tradition, which sees the Baptist as the ‘forerunner’” (*The Gospel of John*, 52).

³Haenchen, *John 1*, 117, 128.

⁴“Since John the Baptist had preceded the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in order to prepare the way for the divine Christological announcement at the baptism, it is seen as logical in the Prologue that John the Baptist would prepare the way for the incarnation (1:6-9, 14)—absurd from the viewpoint of chronology but very perceptive from the viewpoint of salvation history!” (Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 284).

⁵This statement assumes the traditional view that the incarnation took place at Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit. See discussion by Charles H. Talbert, “‘And the Word Became Flesh’: When?” in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 43-52.

activity in the world (vss. 9-12). In addition, the theme of vs. 14 is not chronologically subsequent to that of the previous ones.¹

The simplest and best explanation for the first mention of the Baptist in the Prologue is that the good news started with the preparatory proclamation he carried out. In this sense, the Prologue only anticipates what one finds in the Gospel in a more developed way (1:19-34). Notwithstanding that John himself was not the light, “his unique place in salvation history as the one who pointed to the coming of the light”² is honored and preserved. Édouard Delebecque remarks that the preposition ἵνα after the negative clause of vs. 8a may even indicate the certainty of the divine plan: “He was not the light, but it was necessary that he bear witness to the light.”³ Such is the significance of John’s ministry in the gospel story.⁴ He is the one who introduces Jesus to Israel, and in this sense all believers are indeed brought to Christ through him (δι’ αὐτοῦ, 1:7b).⁵

¹See below, chapter 4.

²Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 42.

³Édouard Delebecque, “... Mais afin qu’il témoignât sur la lumière’ (Jn 1, 8): Note sur un emploi de ἵνα chez Jean,” *EtCl* 54 (1986): 147-158.

⁴Webb puts forth an attractive thesis. Since the target audience of the fourth evangelist was the Jews of his own time, Webb thinks that the issue of John the Baptist may have been only “one of the many points of contention” within the framework of the Jewish-Christian debate. The Jews at the end of the first century considered John a “good man,” as Josephus himself reports (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.2). Both groups, therefore, might have claimed the Baptist in support of their own point of view: the Jews contending that “John’s ministry was prior to that of Jesus and that Jesus was John’s disciple,” to which the Christians responded that “Jesus was prior because he was the Word and . . . John witnessed to Jesus’ superiority” (Webb, 77; see also Taylor, 197-198).

⁵Trites, 91. Moloney’s attempt to take δι’ αὐτοῦ as a reference to the Logos and not to the Baptist (*Belief in the Word*, 35, n. 51) is forced and inadequately justified. As Barrett says,

Coming into the World (Vs. 9)

Having affirmed that John the Baptist was not the light, but that he was sent as a witness to testify to the light, the fourth evangelist announces now the coming of the light into the world, “the true light” (vs. 9) that was the object of John’s testimony. The argument of this section is that vs. 9 refers to the historical appearance of Jesus Christ. The main issues here considered are the participle ἐρχόμενον, the identity of the light, and the meaning of φωτίζει and ἀληθινός.

The Participle ἐρχόμενον

The interpretation of John 1:9 involves a well-known problem of translation. The participle ἐρχόμενον has traditionally been taken either as masculine accusative, agreeing with πάντα ἄνθρωπον (“he was the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world”), or as neuter nominative, in connection with τὸ φῶς and forming a periphrastic imperfect with ἦν (“the true light, which enlightens every man, was coming into the world”). There is also the question whether ἐρχόμενον describes a continuous and repetitive coming or a single event.

Πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον

In favor of taking ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον, which is the interpretation of most church Fathers, ancient versions, and some modern scholars as well,¹ it is said that,

“δι’ αὐτοῦ must refer to John; men do not believe *through* Jesus but *in* him” (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 160).

¹E.g., Paul Schanz, *Commentar über das Evangelium des heiligen Johannes* (Tübingen:

since the subject in vss. 10-11 is the Logos, it is logical to suppose that he is also the subject of vs. 9. Another argument has to do with syntax: πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον, with the participle following immediately the word it modifies, is to be preferred, because in the alternative rendering the verb ἦν is separated from the participle by a clause (ὁ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον). A third reason for taking ἐρχόμενον with πάντα ἄνθρωπον is that the phrase “every man coming into the world” is supposedly a common rabbinic expression for “all men.”¹

It is important to note, however, that the rabbinic expression כָּל בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם is in the plural (“all who come . . .”) and does not include the generic term “man” (אִישׁ/אָדָם).²

Fues, 1885), 85-86; F. C. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922), 33; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 15; Charles Masson, “Le Prologue du quatrième évangile,” *RThPh* 117 (1940): 300; Hirsch, 44-45; Hoskyns, 145; Friedrich Büchsel, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 5th ed., NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 28; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 77, 82; Tasker, 46; Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 27; Wikenhauser, 44-45; Bouyer, 48; De Boor, 1:44-45; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 52, n. 2; Schultz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 23-24; Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:82-83; Haenchen, *John 1*, 117; Keil, 19.

¹Cf. *Lev. Rab.* 31.6 (2x). For further examples, see Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 15; and esp. Hofius, “Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus,” 10, n. 58.

²Burney's contention that the Aramaic equivalent of the rabbinic phrase would be כָּל אִנְשׁ אָחִי בְּעוֹלָמָא (“every man coming into the world”) (33), is syntactically farfetched. In Aramaic, as in Hebrew, the syntax does allow the participle to be used substantively, that is, in the place of a noun, and not only attributively, as a verbal adjective (see Stanislav Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik mit Bibliographie, Chrestomathie und Glossar* [Leipzig: VEB, 1975], 387-388). This means that, contrary to what Burney implies, a literal Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew כָּל בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם would not require the word אִנְשׁ (“man”), which is already included in the participle אָחִי. The reason Burney uses אִנְשׁ in his translation is obvious: inasmuch as he seeks to “prove beyond the range of reasonable doubt” that the Greek language of this Gospel is actually “based upon an Aramaic original” (1), he had somehow to account for the word ἄνθρωπον in this passage. The inadequacy of his reconstruction is also evident from the fact that, in order to read “it was the true light” at the beginning of this verse, he needed a

Had John intended to say simply “all men,” the expression “coming into the world” after πάντα ἄνθρωπον would be completely “redundant and banal,” as Thyen remarks,¹ for it does not add anything to “every man.”² Moreover, if ἐρχόμενον was supposed to refer to πάντα ἄνθρωπον, it would in all likelihood be used with an article (τὸν ἐρχόμενον), that is, as a relative clause (“who comes”)³ (cf. 1:18). Without the article, ἐρχόμενον would here have to be taken adverbially (“as he comes”), meaning that every person receives a special, divine enlightenment at the moment of his birth, an idea not only highly questionable from the theological standpoint, but also rather strange in view of the

demonstrative pronoun in Aramaic, which is absent from the Greek text. The way he solves this difficulty is arguing that the original pronoun ܐܝܢܐ was misread ܐܝܢ and then rendered ἦν by the Greek translator (33).

¹Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 17.

²In relation to this issue, Bultmann, who subscribes to Burney’s view of an Aramaic original for the Prologue, takes a more logical yet violent position. On one hand, he accepts the validity of the rabbinic parallel; on the other, he agrees that ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον alongside ἄνθρωπον “is superfluous.” His solution to this difficulty is typical: ἄνθρωπον is an “explanatory gloss” (*The Gospel of John*, 52, n. 2). Gese takes a different stance. Though rejecting the idea of an Aramaic original, he assumes, on the basis of the poetic style of the Prologue, a Hebrew original and even attempts to reconstruct it (171-175). Nevertheless, he denies any link between this verse and the rabbinic expression because of the redundancy generated by ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον after ἄνθρωπον. “It is nonsense,” he says, “to add an indirect paraphrase to the concept that is expressed directly, and this sort of formulation is never found in rabbinic texts” (180-181).

³The anarthrous use of the attributive participle is almost completely absent from the NT (cf. Acts 2:2; Rev 4:1) (Archibald T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman, 1934], 1105). When used attributively, “the participle often takes the article even when the preceding substantive to which it belongs is anarthrous” (Blass and Debrunner, §412). In this case, it would be equivalent to a relative clause (ibid., §270).

thematic substance of John's Prologue.¹

Ἦν τὸ φῶς . . . ἐρχόμενον

Ἐρχόμενον must refer to τὸ φῶς. John has other passages in which the same verb (ἐρχομαι) is used to describe the coming of the light into the world (3:19; 12:46; cf. 9:5; 12:35). But this raises the issue of whether it is possible to read ἦν . . . ἐρχόμενον as a periphrastic construction ("was coming"), taking τὸ φῶς as the subject. Despite the fact that this is the majority interpretation today,² some scholars do not feel comfortable with the separation of ἦν from ἐρχόμενον by an entire relative clause (ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον), which, it must be admitted, makes the whole sentence a little awkward.

According to Maximilian Zerwick there are nine examples of the periphrastic

¹The rabbis did think of some kind of pre-natal instruction (see T. Francis Glasson, "John 1:9 and a Rabbinic Tradition," *ZNW* 49 [1958]: 288-290), but, as Bernard says, "the idea of any special divine enlightenment of infants is not Scriptural" (1:10). Cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 124. For this same reason, Hofius's thesis that ἐρχόμενον refers to ἄνθρωπον by way of another rabbinic formula (בּוֹא לְעוֹלָם: "entering the world") ("Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus," 10) must be equally rejected. The Hebrew בּוֹא, as an infinitive construct, does not represent a good parallel to ἐρχόμενον (see Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 129).

²E.g., Holtzmann, 38-39; Loisy, 99; Lagrange, 12-13; Bernard, 1:10; Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 18-19; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:9; F.-M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien: Sa théologie*, 2 vols., EtB (Paris: Gabalda, 1966-1972), 1:27; Schottroff, 231, n. 1; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 89; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 160-161; Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John*, HT (London: UBS, 1980), 17-18; Bruce, 35-36; Barth, *Witness to the Word*, 59-60; Kysar, *John*, 31; Michaels, 26; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 121-122; Miller, "The True Light Which Illumines Every Person," 64-66; O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 9:521; Borchert, 113; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 43-44; Bryant and Krause, 43; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 55; Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 2^d ed., NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 30; Gary M. Burge, *John*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 57.

imperfect in the Gospel of John (1:9, 28; 2:6; 3:23; 10:40; 11:1; 13:23; 18:25, 30),¹ one of which (2:6) has more intervening words than 1:9,² but there is no example, either in this Gospel or in any other New Testament writing, of a complete relative sentence between the two constituent parts of the periphrasis.³ Contrary to what Boismard and Lamouille argue, this does not necessarily prove that “such a construction is impossible,”⁴ but it does render it improbable. There is yet a second problem with this interpretation: the attempt to make τὸ φῶς the subject of ἦν. Though syntactically possible, this seems to break the pattern of vss. 10-12, where the Logos is clearly the implied subject of ἦν and ἦλθεν, for the pronoun αὐτόν there is masculine, and must refer back to ὁ λόγος of vss. 1-4.⁵

If the Logos is taken as the implied subject of ἦν, with τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν as the predicate (“he was the true light”), another interpretation for the participle ἐρχόμενον is thus necessary, for, as argued above, it does not seem correct to take it in connection

¹Zerwick, §362. James H. Moulton and Wilbert F. Howard also count 18:18 as a periphrastic imperfect, and not simply as an adjectival construction (*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929], 452).

²In 1:9, eight words separate the imperfect ἦν from the participle ἐρχόμενον, while in 2:6, the periphrasis is separated by ten intervening words (ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὑδρίαι ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμόν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι). Lagrange states that the construction in 1:9 is in complete agreement with the “Johannine style” (12).

³For a list of all periphrastic imperfect in the NT, see Moulton and Howard, 452.

⁴Boismard and Lamouille, 77. Likewise, Gese: “It is . . . not possible to construe a periphrastic construction ἦν . . . ἐρχόμενον, ‘he was coming (into the world)’ that would permit an entire relative clause to come between the two parts of the sentence” (181).

⁵See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 52, n. 2.

with ἄνθρωπον. An attractive alternative is to construe ἐρχόμενον as a circumstantial participle (“by coming”), whose syntactical relationship would then be with the subject of φωτίζει in the relative clause, indicating the manner or perhaps even the cause of the action¹ (“he was the true light, which enlightens every man, by coming into the world”). This view, which is currently growing in acceptance among Johannine interpreters,² does not seem to face any serious threat from the Greek syntax and is certainly to be preferred in view of the immediate context.³ It can also be easily reconciled with the fact that the expression “the one who comes into the world” or simply “the one who comes” is repeatedly used in this Gospel in relation to Jesus Christ (cf. 1:15, 27; 3:31; 6:14; 11:27).⁴

¹See Wilfrid Haubeck and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Neuer sprachlicher Schlüssel zum griechischen Neuen Testament*, 2 vols. (Giessen: TVG, 1994-1997), 1:519.

²Those who adopt this interpretation include: Boismard, 27-29; Eltester, 128; Borgen, “Logos Was the True Light,” 122-123; Feuillet, 8:col. 633; Rissi, “Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums,” 323, n. 13; Boismard and Lamouille, 76-77; Gese, 173, 181; Delebecque, *Évangile de Jean*, 61; Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 17. Some scholars, though understanding ἐρχόμενον as a circumstantial participle, prefer to render the subject of ἦν as “it,” taking φωτός in vss. 7 and 8b as its antecedent (e.g., Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 193; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 43; Whitacre, 54; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 1). The larger context, however, seems to favor the Logos as the subject. The same applies to Sanders’s view, which takes “the true light” as the subject, and the relative clause as the predicate: “The true light was that which lights every man as it comes into the world” (*A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 75-76). See also Robertson, who takes ἦν in the strong sense of “to exist”: “there was” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:9).

³Westcott’s objection that “the context does not call for any statement as to the mode of the action of the light” (7) is fully comprehensible since, for him, this passage does not convey any special reference to the incarnation (see above, 83, n.2).

⁴N. H. Cassem has shown that the phrase εἰς τὸν κόσμον conveys a rather specific meaning in the Fourth Gospel, where it is used fourteen times: eight times with the verb ἐρχομαι (1:9; 3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37), four with ἀποστέλλω (3:17; 10:36; 17:18 [2x]), one with λαλῶ (8:26), and one with ἐγεννήθη (16:21). In all the instances in which it is

Leon Morris disputes the circumstantial understanding of ἐρχόμενον by simply saying that “this . . . does not seem to be the significance of the incarnation in John, and therefore should be rejected.”¹ This is not a valid argument, however; besides being rather vague, it gives the impression that such an understanding of the text would exhaust the meaning of the incarnation, which is not possible. Certainly, it cannot be denied that the incarnation was the manner in which the light of the Logos, who was “the true light,” came to humanity (cf. 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).

Whether ἐρχόμενον is taken periphrastically in connection with ἦν or circumstantially with the subject of φωτίζει, however, the bottom line is the same: the announcement of the incarnation, though the latter understanding adds an adverbial connotation to the participle, which is obviously absent from the former. That is, the enlightenment of every man is somehow subordinated to the light’s coming into the world.²

Continuous vs. Single Coming

Most of those who see in vss. 6-13 a description of the activity of the pre-

used with ἔρχομαι, it is predicated of Jesus (or the predicted Messiah). “Thus,” Cassem concludes, “from the text alone one suspects that ‘coming into the world’ is a technical term for a messianic or prophetic mission” (“A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the Use of κόσμος in the Johannine Corpus with Some Implications for a Johannine Cosmic Theology,” *NTS* 19 [1972-1973]: 83-84).

¹Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 83, n. 65.

²As Borgen points out, the circumstantial rendering of ἐρχόμενον makes it “impossible here to separate light’s enlightening work from its coming. In other words, both φωτίζει and ἐρχόμενον characterize the coming of Jesus” (“Logos Was the True Light,” 123).

incarnate Logos in Old Testament times, argue that the participle ἐρχόμενον in vs. 9 implies a continuous and repetitive coming, and thus cannot refer to a single event such as the incarnation.¹ The idea is not that the Logos came in person, but through the Old Testament saints and prophets.² However, not only is this idea alien to Johannine thought,³ and awkward in this context, but there is no reason why ἐρχόμενον, even if understood as a periphrastic imperfect (with ἦν), should indicate a continuous process.⁴

¹Westcott, 7; Boismard, 32; Eltester, 131; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 89; Boismard and Lamouille, 77; Léon-Dufour, 96; Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 31; Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 127; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 140.

²Eltester, 131. Westcott says: "He was . . . on his way to the world, advancing towards the incarnation by preparatory revelations. He came in type and prophecy and judgment" (7).

³Morris argues that a continuous coming of Christ is confirmed by the present participle καταβαίνων in 6:33, 50 (*The Gospel according to John*, 83, n. 65). But, in the same discourse, the aorist participle καταβάς is also used (vss. 41, 51, 58; cf. 3:13). Barrett explains: "There is no essential difference of reference, though there is a difference of emphasis. The present participles, in this verse [vs. 33] both καταβαίνων and διδούς, are descriptive: Christ is one who descends and gives; the aorist puts the same fact with a greater stress on history: on a unique occasion in time Christ did descend" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 290-291). The conjunction ὅταν in 9:5 has also been taken as an indication of a continuous coming of the Light to the world. In this case, it would be translated as "whenever" (cf. Delbert Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John*, JSNTSup 56 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 164-165). With the present subjunctive, however, ὅταν may also indicate duration ("as long as") (Friberg, Friberg, and Neva, 286), which seems to be the correct meaning in this passage (see Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 972; Maximilian Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993], 314; Haubeck and von Siebenthal, 1:556).

⁴Bernard, who reads ἦν . . . ἐρχόμενον as a periphrastic imperfect, argues that this construction simply means "was in the act of coming" (1:10), which is also recognized by Westcott as a fair possibility (6). The perspective would obviously be that of John's ministry. Gese, who takes ἐρχόμενον as a circumstantial participle, says that the emphasis of vs. 9 is "on the entrance [of the Logos] into the world," at the same that it "announces the theme of the next section, the question of his being accepted by humanity" (181).

Coming as it does after the denial that John is the light and before the statement that the light is in the world (vs. 10), and by describing the manner in which the Logos enlightens every men (“by coming”), this passage was probably designed to create a sense of expectation and realization concerning the light’s entrance in human history.

The Identity of the Light

Etienne Trocmé holds a rather unique interpretation of vs. 9 regarding the identity of the light.¹ Struck by the impressive reference to the incarnation in vs. 14, he thinks that, besides vss. 6-8, vss. 9-13 are also connected with John the Baptist, and thus have nothing to do with the coming of Jesus Christ. In order to maintain this hypothesis, Trocmé is forced to row against the mainstream of Johannine scholarship and to assert that “John” is the actual subject of ἦν in vs. 9, and “the true light” its predicate. His “inescapable conclusion” is that “John the Baptist is described here as a light of a kind.”²

This is a surprising conclusion, to say the least, for τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν emphasizes the definite and absolute identity of the light and cannot be understood simply as “a light of a kind.” In addition, this conclusion is inappropriate, if not impossible, for it collides head-on with the clear statement in vs. 8 that John “was not the light,” even assuming, as Trocmé does, that the Prologue results from “a clumsy combination of sources or . . . poor editing of an earlier text.”³ Further, he arbitrarily

¹Etienne Trocmé, “Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel,” *Did* 6 (1995): 3-13.

²*Ibid.*, 11.

³*Ibid.*, 10. Trocmé’s solution to this blatant contradiction is a clear example of a remedy

makes “the true light” the subject of vs. 10 and John the Baptist of vss. 11-13, apparently unconcerned whether the grounds for this exegesis are strong enough to bear the burden, or if there are any grounds at all, especially with regard to vss. 12-13.¹

There is little if any question that John 1:9 talks about the Logos as “the true light . . . coming into the world.” In this passage, one finds the first statement in the Prologue about the coming of the Logos in flesh, even though the modality of his coming is not specifically mentioned until vs. 14. “In view here,” notes Ridderbos, “is only the coming as such.”²

The Shining of the Light

The light theme was first mentioned in vss. 4-5, in a context that refers to the primordial time of creation. The first substantive statement about φῶς in the Prologue makes it a symbol for ζῶή (vs. 4b), and vs. 4a makes it clear that ζῶή is much more than

worse than the disease: “‘The true light that gives light to every human being coming into the world,’ is the light of reason, which makes human beings different from animals, but is not in itself the full revelation of God’s will. As that ‘true light,’ John the Baptist can witness to God’s Light, as vss. 7-8 suggested” (11).

¹Without hesitation, Trocmé cites John 1:35; 3:23, 25-26 to interpret vs. 12, and says that “John the Baptist had some disciples, who acknowledged that he was ‘the true light’ and had been sent by God to humankind” (ibid., 12). Leaving aside “the true light” part, this statement is correct, but it is hard to see how it clarifies the meaning of vs. 12. Besides, vs. 7 says that John came so that “all might believe through [διὰ] him,” while vs. 12 speaks of those who believed “in [ἐν] his name.” He explains vs. 13 as follows: “What matters is that this amazingly close relationship with God is not given by the Baptist to his disciples. It is only a possibility, an ability, a right that is granted. What was only possible becomes real when the disciples of John the Baptist turn to Jesus and follow him (see 1:35-39)” (ibid.).

²Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 43.

mere physical existence. It is life as an inherent attribute of the Logos, that is, “the divine, spiritual life with which the Logos is filled,”¹ and which alone could bring sense to man’s biological life, both in the beginning (vs. 4a) and in the messianic era (5:26; 10:10).² John equates ζωή with φῶς because he uses the creation story to introduce the gospel story. The absolute, primordial darkness which reigned in the beginning could not overcome the light that was in the Logos, so that he could carry out his creative work, and this light still shines through the Logos revealed in flesh (8:12; 3:16; 10:10).

The present tense φαίνει (vs. 5) is significant. Though referring primarily to the creative activity of the Logos in the beginning, it is also pertinent to the salvific activity of the Logos in the new beginning.³ It embraces both beginnings, for the verbal tense expresses something that was still effective at the time John wrote his Gospel,⁴ and not only because it describes “the essential nature of light.”⁵ This means that there is a

¹Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:240.

²Probably nobody is clearer on this than Becker: “Inasmuch as he [the Logos] is life and light, the meaning of life is to live in the realm of creation a life under the Logos, that is to say, God. . . . The purpose of creation is not biological life only, but a life full of significance in relationship with God. This is exactly what the work of the Logos intended with creation” (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:73). See also Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:394.

³Commenting on vss. 4-5, Michaels, for example, says: “In one breath he [the fourth evangelist] speaks of light and life coming into existence at the creation, and in the next he proclaims that same light shining today” (22).

⁴Moloney is right when he says that φαίνει “is part of the narrator’s experience” (*Belief in the Word*, 36), though this does not imply that since vs. 4 the Prologue is already talking about the incarnation and its meaning (cf. *ibid.*, 31-32).

⁵See Zerwick and Grosvenor, 285. As already noted, this is not a timeless or unhistorical present, as held by some scholars (see above, 69-70). On this, I agree with Cadman

precise correspondence between φαίνει in vs. 5 and φωτίζει in vs. 9,¹ which is also in the present tense. The only difference is that the context of the latter is no longer that of the Genesis narrative of creation, but that of the Gospel narrative of salvation, which is made clear by the presence of John the Baptist in vss. 6-8.²

(20-21) and Theobald (*Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 214), but not to the point of interpreting φαίνει primarily as a reference to the ministry of the incarnate Logos as they do (see also Michaels, 22). The word conveys the notion of an ongoing present; it consists first in a description of what happened at creation, but it also includes a description of what happened through Jesus Christ.

¹So Bultmann: "The meaning of the present tense φωτίζει is no different from that of φαίνει [in] vs. 5; it states that the incarnate Logos is the Revealer, without considering the question whether or to what extent men open themselves to his revelation" (*The Gospel of John*, 53).

²"In the present context," argues Schnackenburg, "it can hardly be doubted that the reader is meant to think at once of the incarnate Logos whose 'illumination,' active since creation and always remaining (present) active, has been bestowed in a special manner since the incarnation on men" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:254). This means that φωτίζει, like φαίνει, cannot be interpreted as a timeless present, as some have suggested (e.g., Lagrange, 12; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 82; Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 176). What is in view here is "the actual enlightening function which the incarnation effects" (Borgen, "Logos Was the True Light," 125), with the present tense only reflecting the historical standpoint of the evangelist. Barth's attempt to establish a distinction between φωτίζει and φαίνει, as if the former referred to the effect of light and the latter to its activity only (*Witness to the Word*, 61), does not seem to be correct. There is not enough contextual evidence to make such a distinction. Both the verb κατέλαβεν and the semantical relationship between the two clauses of vs. 5 (see above, 62-63) indicate that φαίνει, as much as φωτίζει, refers to the effect of light (cf. Sir 24:32, where both verbs are used synonymously). Again, since "light" is introduced in vs. 4 as a symbol for "life," φωτίζει is to be explained metaphorically only in relation to the life which the Logos has in himself (5:26) and which he came to offer (8:12), no matter how reductionistic this interpretation may appear. In this sense, as in vs. 4b (see above, 54, n.1), the old debate whether φωτίζει describes an inner illumination (meaning "to instruct/give knowledge") or a forensic scrutiny ("to shed light upon/bring to light") (cf. Miller, "The True Light Which Illumines Every Person," 69-82) becomes irrelevant. By talking about φῶς, φαίνει, and φωτίζει, the fourth evangelist is actually talking about ζωή and its manifestation. He is only trying to explain the significance of the Logos as the source of life for humanity, irrespective of what can be said about the dominant theological meaning of φωτίζει in the NT and in the patristic literature, as a

The reference to John also helps to explain the adjective ἀληθινός, but not in terms of a theological conflict against a Baptist community. Independent of such a conflict, vs. 9 still makes good sense,¹ with ἀληθινός only emphasizing the superiority and exclusivity of Jesus, in the sense of “the perfect light,” as Bernard points out.² In this case, the contrast with John does not necessarily imply that he was a false light, but only an imperfect or preparatory light (cf. 5:35). However important he was, for he was sent by God, and however powerful his testimony was, John was not “the light” (vs. 8). Only Jesus was “the true light,” which, by coming, “enlightens every man” effectively.

Therefore, in agreement with the great majority of Johannine scholars, the most

spiritual enlightenment (see Thayer, 663; and esp. Hans Conzelmann, “φῶς,” *TDNT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 9:343-358).

¹See Ridderbos, “The Structure and Scope of the Prologue,” 53.

²Bernard, 1:11 (cf. Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 17). This is another hotly debated issue; Bernard’s view is far from being consensual (see G. D. Kilpatrick, “Some Notes on Johannine Usage,” *BT* 11 [1960]: 174-175). The lexical meaning of ἀληθινός includes not only the idea of “perfect,” but also of “genuine,” in which case the contrast would be with that which is false or fictitious. It may also simply refer to “that which conforms to reality,” or even to “that which is trustworthy” (cf. Thayer, 27; BDAG, 43). Miller suggests that in John’s Gospel, when used with propositions, ἀληθινός affirms conformity to reality (cf. 4:37; 8:16; 19:35), but when used of things or persons, it affirms authenticity (cf. 4:23; 6:32; 15:1; 17:3) (“The True Light Which Illumines Every Person,” 68). With regard to 6:32 (“the true bread”) and 15:1 (“the true vine”), however, it does not seem wise to insist that the contrast is to something spurious or falsely conceived. In both instances, Bernard’s category is clearly to be preferred. John 5:35 could be used as an indication that ἀληθινός in 1:9 does not necessarily suggest that John the Baptist was false or misleading light, but only an imperfect and preparatory light. Ceslas Spicq’s idea that the emphasis is on that which is divine and heavenly, in contrast to something that belongs to this world (*Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3 vols., trans. and ed. James D. Ernest [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994], 1:84-85), recalls Plato’s theory of ideas and does not seem to do justice to the Jewish character of the Fourth Gospel. See further, Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:500-501; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 160; A. C. Thiselton, “ἀλήθεια,” *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1986), 3:893-894.

natural interpretation of vs. 9 is to equate “the shining of the light with the advent of the light. If so, we have here a light that radiates from the incarnate Logos rather than the pre-existent Logos.”¹ This interpretation is especially appropriate in view of the immediate context of the verse and the theological significance of John the Baptist.

He Came to His Own (Vss. 10-11)

The last clause of vs. 9 introduces the theme of “world” which is basic for the interpretation of vs. 10 and, in a sense, also prepares for the interpretation of vs. 11. The following discussion addresses the question whether the phrases “he was in the world” and “his own” relate to the time before or after the incarnation.

Ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν

The importance of the term “world” (κόσμος) in the Johannine literature is readily evident from the number of its occurrences: 105 times, which is a frequency of two and one-half times that of the entire rest of the New Testament taken together. In the Fourth Gospel alone, it appears 78 times, which is almost six times more frequently than in the Synoptics.²

Although the Greek term generally refers to the material universe or the entire world order,³ in John it only rarely has this meaning (11:9; 17:5, 24; 21:25). The

¹Miller, “The True Light Which Illumines Every Person,” 79.

²See Cassem, 81.

³See BDAG, 561; Liddell and Scott, 985.

dominant sense of κόσμος in this Gospel is that of the inhabited world, or more precisely “the world of men and human affairs.”¹ Occasionally the term seems to be used for the world as the realm and object of God’s saving activity through Jesus Christ (1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:51; 8:12), but most times a strong ethical connotation is involved. The world not only needs redemption, it is also actively evil and entirely subjected to “the ruler of this world” (7:7; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In the second half of the Gospel, “world” rather consistently refers to those who have rejected Jesus and turned themselves against him and his followers (14:17, 27; 15:18-19; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14-16, 25; 18:36).²

Sometimes the term “world” may be used as the object of the preposition ἐν (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) and associated with the verb εἰμί (1:10; 9:5; 12:25; 13:1; 16:33; 17:11 [2x], 13). In this case, κόσμος appears to refer simply to geographical location, as its first two occurrences in 1:10 (“he was in the world, the world was made through him”), but even so it is capable of responding, for the next clause says that “the world did not know him”

¹Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 161.

²Cassem argues that John uses κόσμος in a more positive sense in the first part of the Gospel (chaps. 1-12) and in a more neutral or negative sense in the second (chaps. 13-20) (88-89). Nevertheless, Carson has correctly observed that even though a few passages may have a neutral overtone, the vast majority are decidedly negative. “There are no unambiguously positive occurrences” (*The Gospel according to John*, 122). When John tells us that God loves the world (3:16), it is not an endorsement of the world, as Cassem supposes (88), but “a testimony to the character of God” (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 123). It is true, however, that the most explicit, negative or hostile statements occur in the second half of the Gospel and this seems to accord rather well with the overall thematic structure of the book. In chaps. 1-12, though the world is evil and opposed to Jesus (cf. 7:7; 12:31), he is still in the process of revealing himself to the world. But in chaps. 13-20, as a result of the world’s rejection, he turns away from it and concentrates on those who have accepted his word and because of this do not belong to the world anymore (cf. 15:18-19) (on the structure of John, see below, appendix C).

(vs. 10c). Therefore, it does not seem correct or necessary to say that in this verse κόσμος is used in two senses: as an equivalent to πάντα in vs. 3 (vs. 10a-b) and to σκοτία in vs. 5 (vs. 10c), as maintained by Günther Baumbach.¹ In vs. 10b, John is not merely recapitulating what he said in vs. 3, otherwise the contrast between clauses b and c would lose its force and become irrelevant. The statement that “the world was made through him” makes more sense if κόσμος here has the same meaning as in the next statement, namely, that of a general reference to humanity; its function is only to underscore the fact that “the world did not know him.” In other words, men were supposed to have known their Creator. Brown points out that a similar semantical relationship can be found in 3:19:² “The light has come into the *world*, but *men* preferred darkness rather than light” (cf. also 8:12).³

Could this passage (vs. 10) relate to the time before the incarnation?

Schnackenburg says it could,⁴ and Brodie clings to this to support his pre-incarnational

¹Günther Baumbach, “Gemeinde und Welt im Johannes-Evangelium,” *Kairos* 14 (1972): 121.

²Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:10.

³For further discussion on the κόσμος concept in the Johannine writings, see Hermann Sasse, “κόσμος,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 3:894-895; Braun, “Le péché du monde selon saint Jean,” 181-201; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:508-510; Martin Hengel, “Reich Christi, Reich Gottes und Weltreich im 4. Evangelium,” *ThBeitr* 14 (1983): 201-216; J. Guhrt, “κόσμος,” *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1986): 1:525-526; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 206-208; Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 80-85; Bill Salier, “What’s in a World? Κόσμος in the Prologue of John’s Gospel,” *RTR* 56 (1997): 105-117; Stanley B. Marrow, “Κόσμος in John,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 90-102.

⁴Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:255-256.

interpretation.¹ There seems to be a problem here, however, for Schnackenburg's statement actually refers to vs. 10 in the context of the alleged Logos-hymn, a hypothesis that Brodie himself strongly repudiates.² Boismard also contends that it is precisely the reference to creation that suggests that the presence of the Logos in the world mentioned here "should be regarded as a consequence of his creative activity."³

The reference to creation in vs. 10b, however, is only serving a rhetorical purpose, and as such it is to be taken in connection with the following sentence and not so much with the previous one. That is to say, the fact that the world was created by the Logos only intensifies the world's culpability for not having known its Creator.⁴ In addition, the clause ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν (vs. 10a) seems to contrast with ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν of vs. 1b,⁵ thus situating the Logos in a completely different context than that of creation. This context is unequivocally defined by the mention of John the Baptist (vss. 6-8), as well as the use of the participle ἐρχόμενον (vs. 9), which signals the historical coming of

¹Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 140,

²Cf. *ibid.*, 134.

³Boismard, 33 (cf. also 34: "The Word of God . . . was in the world because the world was made by him").

⁴"The perversity of this rejection is suggested by the fact that its locus is ironically the world which the Word has created" (Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John*, RNBC [Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 25).

⁵The contrast is not with ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν (vs. 1a), as argued by Borchert (113). Though it is an adverbial clause, ἐν ἀρχῇ is obviously temporal, while ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ indicates a location somehow comparable to πρὸς τὸν θεόν in vss. 1a, 2 (see Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament Greek*, 53).

the Logos into the world. The aorist tense in vs. 10c (ἐγνώ), which indicates a single action, reinforces this idea. This leaves no doubt that, in the Prologue's present form, vs. 10 refers to the λόγος ἑνσαρκος, as Schnackenburg himself acknowledges,¹ rather than to the λόγος ἄσαρκος. Brown further comments that in the Old Testament, "the basic sin is the failure to obey Yahweh, while for John the basic sin is the failure to know and believe in Jesus."²

His Own People

The study of vs. 11 shows even more clearly that this whole section (vss. 9-13) must be construed in connection with the historical advent of Jesus Christ. It is evident that vs. 11 parallels vs. 10; at the same time it particularizes the tragedy of the Logos in the world, bringing the narrative from a more general context (κόσμος) into a more specific one (τὰ ἴδια/οἱ ἴδιοι).³ The Greek term ἴδιος, whether used as adjective, substantive, or adverb, basically means "peculiar to, particular, private."⁴ It occurs fifteen times in John's Gospel: seven as a possessive adjective (1:41; 4:44; 5:18, 43; 7:18; 10:3, 12) and eight as a substantive (1:11 [2x]; 8:44; 10:4; 13:1; 15:19; 16:32;

¹Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:258.

²Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:10.

³There is no justification for Baldensperger's and Lamarche's view that ὁ κόσμος (vs. 10) represents the pagan world, while τὰ ἴδια (vs. 11) the Jewish (Baldensperger, 13; Lamarche, 510). As Ashton says, "the evangelist nowhere makes this distinction (indeed in chap. 15 at least, ὁ κόσμος must refer primarily to the Jews) and there is no need to assume that it is drawn here" ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 174).

⁴Spicq, 2:205.

19:27). When substantivized, the masculine plural οἱ ἴδιοι means “one’s own people” (1:11b; 13:1), while the neuter plural τὰ ἴδια “one’s own possession” or “one’s own home.”¹ John knows both uses (10:3-4; 16:32; 19:27). When preceded by the preposition εἰς, wherever it is used in both the New Testament (John 16:32; 19:27; Acts 21:6) or in the Septuagint (Esth 5:10; 6:12; 3 Macc 6:27, 37; 7:8), it conveys the basic idea of a house, a property, or a homeland.² This by itself suggests that εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν in John 1:11 represents an advance upon the thought of vs. 10, instead of a mere repetition of it, as claimed by Bultmann.³ For most interpreters, including virtually all

¹BDAG, 466-467; Thayer, 296-297.

²Ibid.

³“Vs. 11 is exactly parallel to vs. 10, and each verse explains the other: εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν corresponds to ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν as οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον corresponds to ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω” (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 56). In order to maintain this view, Bultmann relies on supposed gnostic parallels to take τὰ ἴδια in the general sense of “property/possession” and then construes οἱ ἴδιοι as those who belong to the Logos as their creator (cf. *ibid.*). Jacob Jervell, however, has shown that in the gnostic writings τὰ ἴδια does not refer to the material or physical world, but to a kind of upper or heavenly world from where the οἱ ἴδιοι, at present lost in the chaos of creation, were taken away. That is their true home, the home for which they long and into which they will eventually return (“Er kam in sein Eigentum: Zum Joh 1,11,” *StTh* 10 [1956]: 17-18). Because of this, Jervell concludes that the case for translating εἰς τὰ ἴδια as “to what was his” or “to his own possession” is not strong enough, and so he correctly opts for the translation “to his home.” Nevertheless, he still thinks that the reference is to the world and that vss. 10-11 actually betray John’s distinctively anti-gnostic tendencies: “Τὰ ἴδια, the original place and home of men, is not in heaven, not up there in the reign of light, but here below, on earth” (*ibid.*, 20-21). A similar view is also held by Loisy, 100; Lagrange, 13; Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 21; Büchsel, 31; Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 83; Wikenhauser, 45; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 144; Schottroff, 230-231; Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 24-25; Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:74-75; Haenchen, *John 1*, 118; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 331; Talbert, *Reading John*, 72; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 219-220; Sigfred Pedersen, “Anti-Judaism in John’s Gospel: John 8,” in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives. Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel Århus 1997*, ed.

ancient Fathers, the conclusion that τὰ Ἰδιὰ refers to Israel as God's holy nation, and οἱ Ἰδιοὶ to the Israelites as God's own people, seems irresistible.¹

This issue, however, involves some difficulties. What is at stake is the identification of τὰ Ἰδιὰ and οἱ Ἰδιοὶ with the nation and the people of Israel respectively. It is argued that the parallelism between vs. 10 and vs. 11 and the difference between the Johannine Ἰδιος and the Septuagint περιούσιος seems to preclude such an identification.

The People of Israel

The idea that τὰ Ἰδιὰ in vs. 11 cannot be taken as a synonym for κόσμος in vs. 10 seems rather obvious and there is no need to go into details.² As John W. Pryor remarks,

Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen, *JSNTSup 182* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 177-178.

¹Modern scholars who opt for this interpretation include: Westcott, 8; Bernard, 1:15; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 402; Boismard, 35; Bouyer, 49; Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament*, 82; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:10, 30; Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 283; Gese, 182; Bruce, 37-38; Kysar, *John*, 31; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 124-125; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 140-141; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 85-86; Borchert, 96; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 44-45; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 37; Whitacre, 55; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 56; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 12-13; Wilckens, 30-31; Burge, *John*, 58. Lindars thinks that τὰ Ἰδιὰ refers to the world, but with οἱ Ἰδιοὶ there is a "subtle transition" to Israel (*The Gospel of John*, 90). Schenke relates vs. 11 to humanity in general but does not exclude the possibility of a more specific reference to the Jewish people as representatives of the world (29). So also Gnllka (15), Delebecque (*Évangile de Jean*, 144), Harris (*Prologue and Gospel*, 159), and O'Day ("The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 9:521). For some authors, however, it is the other way around: the reference is primarily to the Jews, and only secondarily to the world (e.g., Hoskyns, 146; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 77; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 163; Michaels, 23).

²For a full set of arguments, see Thyen, "Das Johannesevangelium," 19-22.

while it is acknowledged that the Logos is the creator of the world and that he was sent into the world, it is quite clear that the world is not his home (cf. 8:23; 13:1; 17:14, 16, 24; 18:36-37; 20:17), as it is not the permanent home of those who belong to him, the “his own” (cf. 13:1; 15:18-19; 17:6, 9, 11, 14-16, 18).¹ Actually, it would be easier to demonstrate that in John, especially in the second part of the Gospel, “the world” is a synonym for Israel (cf. 15:18-25; 18:20, 36), than to demonstrate that τὰ ἴδια in 1:11 stands for κόσμος in vs. 10, at the exclusion of Israel.

On the other hand, the attempt to see τὰ ἴδια in relation to the Jewish nation and οἱ ἴδιοι to the Jewish people apparently clashes with the fact that when the Septuagint speaks of Israel as God’s special people, it does not use the adjective ἴδιος, but περιούσιος (Exod 19:5; 23:22; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Isa 43:21). Thus Bultmann argues that “it is impossible in the Prologue . . . to take τὰ ἴδια (or οἱ ἴδιοι) to mean Israel or the Jewish people.”² Pryor, however, insists that τὰ ἴδια does refer to Israel and οἱ ἴδιοι to the people of Israel, but not in the theological sense of λαὸς περιούσιος, the people of the covenant. “They are simply,” he says, “his own people according to the flesh, the people of his homeland (εἰς τὰ ἴδια).”³

¹John W. Pryor, “Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel: John 1:11,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 210.

²Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 56, n. 1. It must be remembered that, for Bultmann, the OT played no significant role in the composition of the Fourth Gospel, whose conceptual thought actually “belongs to the sphere of early Oriental Gnosticism” (ibid., 29), rather than to the Jewish religious tradition.

³Pryor, “Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel,” 217. “The reference in vs. 11 is exclusively to the mission of the incarnate Logos to Israel, his people κατὰ σάρκα. As such, εἰς τὰ ἴδια is to be translated ‘to his home’ and οἱ ἴδιοι means simply ‘his fellow countrymen and

This is an interesting suggestion, but in view of the content of vs. 11, it is unacceptably anachronistic, for nobody can come for the first time to his homeland; one can only return to it and be rejected by his own kinsfolk. Pryor's argument makes Jesus a Jew even before his birth and, apparently ignoring this fact, he declares that "Jesus came as Messiah to the people of his own race, Israel."¹ Moreover, the only passage that he uses as evidence (4:44) is far from supporting such an idea. Pryor argues that by qualifying πατρίς with Ἰδία in that passage, John is deliberately emphasizing the peculiar relationship that he understood to have existed between Jesus and Galilee, which represented the wider Israel. Then he relates this to 1:11 and concludes that Jesus came to Israel as his Ἰδία πατρίς, not as God's covenant people.² But, as Schnackenburg points out, Ἰδία in 4:44 is "merely the equivalent of the possessive pronoun,"³ which is in fact the predominant sense of ἰδιος in the Hellenistic Greek.⁴

women" (ibid., 201). See also John W. Pryor, "Covenant and Community in John's Gospel," *RTR* 47 (1988): 48; idem, *John: Evangelist of the Covenant People; the Narrative and Themes of the Fourth Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 8.

¹Pryor, "Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 217.

²Ibid., 216-217. A few other scholars also interpret John 1:11 on the basis of 4:44, though with some important differences: e.g., Mathias Rissi, "Die Hochzeit in Kana (Joh 2,11-11)," in *OIKONOMIA: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie. Oscar Cullmann zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. Felix Christ (Hamburg: Reich, 1967), 82-83; Günter Reim, "John 4:44—Crux or Clue: The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth in Johannine Composition," *NTS* 22 (1976): 479; Heinrich Lausberg, "Minuscula philologica VII: Das Epiphonem des Johannes-Prologs (J 1,18)," *NAWG*, no. 7 (1982): 284.

³Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:462-463. Cf. BDAG, 467; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 691.

⁴See G. Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic*

The proverb cited in 4:44 is one of the few Johannine statements that has a close parallel in the Synoptic tradition (Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24), where the term is always αὐτοῦ, not Ἰδία. Yet, even granting that Ἰδιος adds a certain relational emphasis, as assumed by Pryor,¹ it is unjustified and even forced to make πατρίς, whatever its meaning in that context,² a symbol for the whole of Israel and, as such, a suitable explanation for τὰ Ἰδία in 1:11.³

Judaism and Primitive Christianity, 2^d ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 123-124; Blass and Debrunner, §286; Moulton and Milligan, 298.

¹Pryor argues that Ἰδιος was carefully chosen by John to show human relationship, as in 1:41, 5:18, and 10:3-4, besides 4:44 ("Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 215-216). According to Spicq, however, the possessive use of Ἰδιος with regard to members of the family was in fact common and widespread in the Hellenistic Greek (2:209). Occasionally, instead of the normal possessive, Ἰδιος could be employed if the circumstance demanded a certain emphasis on the idea of property or belonging, as in 1:41, where the position of τὸν Ἰδιον was probably meant as a hint that the unnamed companion of Andrew went after his brother also (see Westcott, 25; James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek*, vol. 1, 3^d ed. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908], 90; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 691). Pryor also says that "John shows no tendency to substitute Ἰδιος for αὐτοῦ" ("Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 216); thus he gives the impression that his claim regarding John's special use of Ἰδιος is correct. But in chap. 10, though αὐτοῦ is not used, another possessive is (ἐμός), and practically in the same sense of Ἰδιος, that is, adjectively (10:26, 27; cf. Ἰδιος in 10:3, 12) and substantively, also in the neuter plural (10:14 [2x]; cf. Ἰδιος in 10:4).

²See discussion in Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 331-334.

³At this point, Pryor refers to another article in which he supposedly develops the idea that πατρίς in 4:44 stands for the whole Israel (John W. Pryor, "John 4:44 and the *Patris* of Jesus," *CBQ* 49 [1987]: 254-263). That article, however, is disappointing because he deals with this issue briefly, only in the last few lines. He presents two arguments: (1) "The immediate context in chap. 4 carries suggestions of a contrast between Israel *in toto* and Samaria (4:9, 20, 22)," and (2) "the theme of rejection in John embraces the whole of the Jewish nation and . . . the summary in 12:36-43 applies to all Israel" (*ibid.*, 263). Both statements may be considered substantially correct, but to use them as a clue to interpret πατρίς in 4:44 is precarious. To conclude from them that "the Judea-Galilee dichotomy of 4:3 has given way to a Samaria-

The Covenant People

Pryor's thesis cannot be correct. The traditional view that both τὰ ἔθνη and οἱ ἔθνη in the Prologue refer to the nation and people of Israel and that they do carry a theological connotation is still preferable. That in the Septuagint ἔθνος "is never used either adjectivally or substantively in a reference to the special status of Israel as God's own"¹ is true. It is mistaken, however, to use this argument as a key to interpret John 1:11 for two reasons. First, this is an argument from silence and so, at most, it conveys a statement about the Septuagint, not about John. That is to say, it does not demonstrate that John could not have used another term to express the same idea, especially in view of the fact that λαὸς περιούσιος is not the only expression found in the Old Testament Greek to refer to Israel as the covenant people. As a matter of fact, the use of the simple possessive in its various forms is far more frequent than the adjective περιούσιος (e.g., Exod 15:13; 1 Kgs 3:8; 8:16; Pss 33:12; 105:43; Isa 43:20-21; Jer 33:24; Ezek 13:18-19; Joel 2:18; Mal 3:17). Second, Pryor's argument presupposes that when the fourth evangelist quotes or alludes to the Old Testament, he follows the Septuagint. But ἔθνος in 1:11 may only represent the evangelist's own rendering of the Hebrew עַמִּי used in Exod 19:5 (cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18) and translated in the Septuagint as περιούσιος.²

Galilee dichotomy (with the latter standing for the wider land of Israel)," so that when "Jesus leaves Samaria for Galilee [4:43], in doing so he is returning to Israel" (ibid.), is not only to read too much into the text, but also to ignore the fact that the Judea-Galilee dichotomy is still consistently repeated in the context (see 4:3, 45, 47; 54; cf. 5:1; 7:1).

¹Pryor, "Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 215.

²That περιούσιος was not the only Greek way of expressing the meaning of עַמִּי or a

There is as yet no consensus regarding whether John's use of the Old Testament is based on the Septuagint or on the Hebrew text, which he translates, or even on some targumic tradition.¹

It does not seem impossible, then, to take τὰ ἴδια and οἱ ἴδιοι in a theological sense, in connection with Israel as the nation and the people of God. When Pryor tries to refute the view that this passage is only a repetition of vs. 10, he appeals to the context and correctly argues that vss. 12-18 are "deliberately loaded with theological terminology from the Old Testament, and that John is saying something quite specific about the nature of the Christian community vis-à-vis the traditional claims of Israel."² Thus, his attempt to restrict vs. 11 to a merely ethnic meaning sounds rather strange and inconsistent. This passage cannot be interpreted in isolation from the following verses without giving up important information about its meaning and scope.

First-Century Judaism

The decision on whether vs. 11 refers to the coming of the pre-incarnate Logos to

technical term, even among Diaspora Jews, is clear from the fact that, in the second century, this Hebrew word was translated by Symmachus, at least in Exod 19:5 and Deut 14:2, as ἐξαίρετος.

¹Johannes Beutler, "The Use of 'Scripture' in the Gospel of John," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 147. Maarten J. J. Menken makes a good case for John's dependence on the LXX when quoting the OT (*Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form*, CBETH 15 [Kampen: Pharos, 1996]). He admits, however, that this dependence is not uniform. In most cases, John seems to quote the LXX by memory and at times he seems to translate straight from the Hebrew (ibid., 205-209). See also Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2001), 63-74.

²Pryor, "Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 214.

the Old Testament Israel or to the historical ministry of Jesus Christ is even easier than that concerning vs. 10. Those who consider it to refer to the pre-incarnate Logos usually contend that this verse points to the different manifestations of the divine Word to the chosen people by means of the law and the oracles of the prophets¹ or of wisdom's search for a resting place in Israel (cf. Sir 24:7-8).² This idea, however, will not stand for the following reasons: the Johannine Logos is a person, rather than a prophetic utterance; the language of acceptance and rejection is not used in relation to the wisdom tradition;³ the aorist ἦλθεν ("came") points to a specific coming, as οὐ παρέλαβον ("did not receive") signifies a specific reaction. These considerations make it virtually impossible for vs. 11 to refer to God's revelations in the Old Testament period.⁴ In vss. 6-8 the time frame of the narrative is clearly that of the gospel story; the context of vs. 11 is not only vss. 6-10, but also vss. 12-13, and these verses in their present form "must

¹So Boismard, 35.

²So Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 90.

³In his definitive analysis of the exegetical and theological background of John's Prologue, Evans does not even include Sir 24:7-8 as a possible parallel to John 1:11 (see *Word and Glory*, 83-86). For more details, see Pryor ("Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel," 204-207), who also concludes: "The case is not strong for seeing vs. 11 as a statement in the wisdom tradition of the rejection of the Logos by Israel during the course of her history" (ibid., 207).

⁴Even Westcott, who sees vss. 6-13 in connection with OT Israel, recognizes this (8). Cf. also Gese, 182; Bernard, 1:15. Lindars's position, therefore, is unacceptable. While conceding that ἦλθεν does indicate a definite act in time, he insists that "it still does not mean the incarnation primarily, but the choice of Israel as God's special people" (*The Gospel of John*, 90). Van der Watt says: "There were those who did not accept the Light personified and those who did accept him. This is indeed the story of Jesus' life on earth according to John's Gospel" (320).

refer to the incarnate ministry of Jesus as in 3:1-8";¹ and the parallelism between κόσμος (vs. 10) and τὰ Ἰδα/οἱ Ἰδοι (vs. 11) is also present in the rest of the Gospel, referring specifically to Jewish opposition to Jesus (cf. 7:1, 7; 8:23; 9:39-40; 15:18-19; 18:19-20).²

Finally, a well-known hermeneutical rule asserts that before inquiring into the meaning of a certain text, the interpreter must ask how the first readers are likely to have understood it. It is almost impossible that the original readers of John's Gospel would not have seen here a reference to first-century Judaism. The fourth evangelist "took no steps to exclude this obvious interpretation. It follows that he probably intended it."³ In vs. 11, therefore, John is not thinking of what happened in the past days of Israel's history, but rather of what happened when the Logos was made flesh and lived among his own people.

Children of God (Vss. 12-13)

The idea that the central section of the Prologue refers to the earthly ministry of Jesus finds in vss. 12-13 its ultimate evidence.⁴ It is argued in this section that the child-

¹Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, CBQMS 22 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1989), 103, n. 7.

²"Israel is not the κόσμος, but . . . in some sense the Jews exemplify or typify the response of the κόσμος to the Logos" (Salier, 113). Also, Ridderbos: "Throughout this Gospel there is reference to 'the world,' but that world manifests primarily in the confrontation between Jesus and Israel" (*The Gospel according to John*, 45). See also Marrow, 100-101.

³J. Louis Martyn, "Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community," in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie*, ed. M. de Jonge, BETL 44 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 163.

⁴See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:29.

father relationship with God and the new birth mentioned in these verses are eschatological. They cannot refer to Old Testament Israel. The topic is divided into three parts: the first defines that child-father relationship and the other two expand John's concept of God's children, highlighting its covenantal and universal aspects, thus preparing for the interpretation of vss. 14-18.

Eschatological Child-Father Relationship

The embarrassment that this passage represents to those who argue that vss. 6-13 are to be interpreted as pre-incarnational is enormous. Despite agreeing with Dodd that this whole section is ambiguous, "at once an account of the relations of the Logos with the world, and an account of the ministry of Jesus Christ,"¹ Beasley-Murray does not hesitate to admit that vss. 12-13 "most naturally relate to the gospel of new life in Christ."² Even Brodie, who so boldly contends that from vs. 6 through vs. 13 John alludes to the divine activity in Israel during the Old Testament period, also comes to recognize that these verses show "a very close affinity with Johannine thought about the incarnation."³ Brodie's difficulty with vss. 12-13 is evident from his limited comments on the passage. He says only that the main idea of these verses, that "belief generates birth, a supernatural birth," is "not alien to the Old Testament."⁴ It is one thing,

¹Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 284.

²Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 30-31.

³Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 140. See also Westcott, 5-10; Bernard, 1:13-19; Boismard, 34-45; Talbert, *Reading John*, 92; Léon-Dufour, 103-109.

⁴Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 140.

however, to find a supposed Old Testament parallel to this idea and quite another to pretend that this is enough to bring out the full meaning of this passage.¹

No interpretation can do full justice to these verses unless they are taken in connection with the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Evidence for this is the general agreement among the proponents of the Logos-hymn hypothesis that vss. 12-13, or at least part of them, were added by the evangelist when he gave the Prologue its final form.² The underlying assumption is well-known: the evangelist altered his hymnic source, in which the first reference to the incarnation occurred only at vs. 14 and, by inserting these verses in addition to vss. 6-8, he made this whole part of the Prologue an account of the incarnate Christ.³ This is only an assumption, however; yet it is not

¹Even so, Brodie's willingness to accept a certain ambiguity in this passage (cf. *ibid.*) is to be preferred to the insistence of some on ignoring the fundamental incarnational content of these verses and on applying them solely to the "believers of the old covenant" (see Eltester, 131; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 90-93; Gese, 182-183, 203; Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 126-127). Kysar and Talbert follow a different course. They connect only vss. 9-11 with the OT Israel, which allows them to interpret vss. 12-13 from the perspective of the incarnation (see Kysar, *John*, 30-31; Talbert, *Reading John*, 72). Talbert categorically denies that vss. 12-13 can be understood in relation to the pre-incarnate Logos (*ibid.*).

²According to the reconstructions of the alleged hymn provided by Rochais (7-9), vs. 12 is integrally accepted only by two interpreters (Gächter, 109-110; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 151). Ashton also seems to accept vs. 12 as part of the original hymn ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 174). Vs. 13 is excluded on the whole or in part from virtually all reconstructions; only two reconstructions incorporate a few parts of this verse (O'Neill, "The Prologue to St. John's Gospel," 42-43, 51-52; Peter Hofrichter, "'Egeneto anthropos': Text und Zusätze im Johannesprolog," *ZNW* 70 [1979]: 234).

³Cf. esp. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 17; Haenchen, *John I*, 114-117, 127-129; Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 244; Schmithals, "Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums," 38-40. Käsemann takes a different stance. By stopping the hymn at vs. 12 and considering vs. 14 (-18) merely a sort of "footnote" added by the evangelist to his source, he says that there is no conclusive argument that the central section of the Prologue "ever referred to anything save the

wrong, at least with respect to the Prologue as it now stands, which is the text on which this discussion is based.

Having described the rejection of the Logos by his own people (οἱ ἴδιοι), the evangelist now speaks of those (οἱ ὅσοι) who accepted him, and of what happened to them (vs. 12). There is no need to posit a chiastic structure in the Prologue, as does Culpepper, to note the correspondence between clauses a (“all those who received him”) and c (“those who believe in his name”) in this passage.¹ Both are an expansion of the indirect object αὐτοῖς in clause b² and are, therefore, mutually related, with the second consisting in an explanation of the first.³ In this passage, “to receive the Word means to believe in his name.”⁴ This fact, which brings to the act of receiving a personal and historical dimension (“his name”), suggests a reference to Jesus Christ, even though he has not yet been named (cf. vs. 17). The expression “believe in his name” is typical of

historical manifestation of the Revealer” (*New Testament Questions of Today*, 150). For a critical reconstruction of the hypothetical Logos-hymn which includes all of vss. 12-13, see Josef Blank, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 3 vols., GSL (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1977-1981), 1a:75. For Blank, however, contrary to most interpreters, the hymn in its original form (vss. 1, 3-4, 9-14, 16) already included a description of the earthly activity of the incarnate Logos in its central part, which comprised vss. 4, 9-13, without compromising the climax of vs. 14 (ibid.).

¹See Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” 15.

²The fact that vs. 12a is in the nominative is explained as a *casus pendens*, that is, a construction in which a phrase or expression is taken out of its normal place in the sentence and put first. Such a construction was more common in colloquial than in literary Greek, but John employs it 27 times, while in the Synoptics there are 21 occurrences (see Bernard, 1:15).

³Brown even suggests introducing vs. 12c with “that is” (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:11).

⁴Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 38.

John and is always used in relation to Jesus (2:23; 3:18; 1 John 3:23; 5:13; cf. John 20:31);¹ its basic meaning is to accept "him for what he was and as he manifested himself."²

As for the middle clause ("to them he gave the right to become children of God"), Gese tries to explain the "children of God" concept in view of the Old Testament statements about the people of Israel as God's children (Exod 4:22; Deut 1:31; 32:6, 18-19; Hos 11:1; etc.),³ but this by no means suffices to explain John 1:12. The aorist in the expression τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι indicates a status not possessed before.⁴ The obvious contrast between the reception accorded the Logos in this verse and in the previous one implies that οἱ ἱδιοὶ in vs. 11 could be spoken of as children of God. This matches quite well the Old Testament concept of Israel as God's own people. In Deut 32:4-9, for

¹Talbert interprets vss. 9-11 in connection with the pre-incarnate Logos, but in the case of vss. 12-13, he admits that "believe in his name" is an activity of positive response that can only refer to the incarnate Logos (*Reading John*, 72).

²Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 45. Also, D. Moody Smith: "As in the OT 'name' indicates more than just the verbal designation of a person. It signifies the reality and importance of the person himself. To believe in Jesus' name is not merely to confess him verbally, but to have faith in who and what he is" (*John*, PC, 2^d ed. rev. and enl. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 32). For more on John's concept of believing, see Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 179-186; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:558-575; Johannes Beutler, "Glaube und Zeugnis im Johannesevangelium," *Bijdr* 34 (1973): 60-68; Ferdinand Hahn, "Das Glaubensverständnis im Johannesevangelium," in *Glaube und Eschatologie: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Erich Gräßer and Otto Merk (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 51-69; Kysar, "The Gospel of John," 3:927-928; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 296-298.

³Gese, 182. See also Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 282; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 90-91.

⁴Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:11.

instance, both concepts are explicitly combined. So, if vs. 12 alludes to Old Testament Israel, one must ask: how could they have become (γενέσθαι) if they already were? This is why Gese concludes that “the concept of being children of God, in the light of the old traditions of Israel as God’s children . . . remains a riddle, coming as it does after vs. 11 with its statement about Israel.”¹ Yet, it remains that τέκνα θεοῦ does not refer to οἱ ἴδιοι who “did not receive him,” but rather to the ὅσοι, who “received him.”

Vs. 13 unequivocally identifies the act of becoming a child of God with the mystical experience of being born of God (ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν).² In the light of chap. 3, where the concept of the new birth is linked with the life and death of Jesus (3:11-16), Brown reasons that it is incredible that in the Prologue, when referring to the right to become a child of God, the evangelist would have in mind God’s revelations to ancient Israel. If that is the case, concludes Brown, “the whole conversation with Nicodemus is

¹Gese, 182. Brown raises the same problem when he says that any scholar who wants to apply vs. 12 to OT Israel must explain that the text actually speaks about becoming children of God as a result of the activity of the Logos in the world (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:29).

²There is some textual support in early patristic traditions, chiefly Latin (it^b Irenaeus^{lat} Origen^{lat} 1/2 Tertulian Ambrose^{2/5} Jerome^{1/3} Augustine^{1/14} Sulpicius^{vid}), for a reading in 1:13 in the singular: “he who was not born . . .,” which would then be a clear reference to the virgin birth of Jesus instead of to the rebirth of believers. Although some scholars favor this reading (e.g., Ignace de la Potterie, “Il parto verginale del Verbo incarnato: ‘Non ex sanguinibus . . . , sed ex Deo natus est’ (Gv 1,13),” *Mar* 45 [1983]: 127-174), the plural is certainly to be preferred, since it is attested by all the Greek manuscripts, as well as most versional and patristic witnesses. The singular reading may have arisen from the desire “to locate the orthodox notion of Jesus’ birth in a passage that otherwise lacked it” (Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 59). For further discussion, see John W. Pryor, “Of the Virgin Birth or the Birth of Christians? The Text of John 1:13 Once More,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 296-318.

unintelligible.”¹ What is more, even though the idea of a new, spiritual birth is not explicit in the Old Testament, there are references to a supernatural renewal of Israel. This renewal, however, is always eschatological and mostly related to the notion of the new covenant (Ezek 36:25-27; cf. Isa 44:3; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20). Likewise, the child-father relationship with God of the ὅσοι in John 1:12 can only be interpreted eschatologically, with regard to the historical advent of the Logos,² for it is the result of a personal decision about him (ἐλάβον αὐτόν) and a vital commitment to him (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ) (cf. 1 John 3:1, 9; 5:1).³ Of this relation, the outward and collective relationship that existed under the old covenant could only be a “shadow.”⁴

¹Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:29.

²“Vs. 12 specifies the gift which is his [the Revealer’s] to bestow and the goal of his redeeming effectiveness. The establishment of sonship to God through the Son of God is the eschatological end of all God’s dealings with the world, the goal of the Creator and the creation. . . . The whole of salvation history is here recited, the second creation likewise emerges as the recapitulation and the completion of the first. . . . Vs. 12 could then be regarded as the culmination of the whole. In it is summed up, as a résumé, what was achieved by the manifestation of the Revealer” (Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 151-152).

³Commenting on vss. 12-13, Blank says: “The possibility of the divine sonship lies not in man as such [human descent], but in the Word of God who has come into the world, and on this one decides by his attitude towards him, that is, if he accepts the Logos, which means, if he believes in his name. . . . Through faith the believer receives the promised capacity of becoming a child of God. This promise is an effective, creative word, through which a new, eschatological creation happens, the birth from God” (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1a:95).

⁴Westcott, 9. Otto Pfleiderer asks: “If vss. 12-13 described the results of the OT revelation, what more would remain for the Christian revelation to accomplish that should be new and greater than this?” (*Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Connections*, 4 vols., trans. W. Montgomery, TTL 22, 24, 27, 31 [London: Williams & Norgate, 1906-1911], 4:9).

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The implication of such an understanding of vs. 12 is that, by not accepting Jesus, οἱ Ἰδαοὶ missed a decisive opportunity within salvation history to enter into a higher level of relationship with God as his spiritual children, born of him and no longer relying on human descent or bloodline (cf. vs. 13).¹ Therewith, the promise of the new covenant found its fulfillment in the life of a faithful remnant, the ὅσοι. To them, who did receive Jesus and believed in his name,² “he gave the right to become children of God.”

The fate of οἱ Ἰδαοὶ seems to be further developed in the discourse of 8:31-47. Even though the expression τέκνα θεοῦ does not occur in this passage, and τέκνα is used only in connection with Abraham (vs. 39), there is no question that in the context τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ and σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ are equivalents to τέκνα θεοῦ, in the sense of God’s covenant people. This is clear, for example, from vs. 41 where those people literally claim, “we have one father, God himself.”³ Jesus, however, disputes this claim. He says that Abraham’s children would do the works of Abraham (vs. 39b) and God’s children, the works of God (vs. 42), but their works pointed to another direction.⁴ By refusing to

¹See Pryor, “Covenant and Community in John’s Gospel,” 48.

²In the sentence τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, the present tense reflects the historical standpoint of the evangelist. See, however, Bernard, 1:17, n. 1.

³In post-biblical Judaism, descent from Abraham was frequently claimed as grounds for membership in God’s covenant (see Thomas B. Dozeman, “*Sperma Abraham* in John 8 and Related Literature: Cosmology and Judgment,” *CBQ* 42 [1980]: 344-346).

⁴The identity of “the Jews” who believe (vs. 31) and yet want to kill Jesus (vs. 37) is a source of much discussion. For surveys, see James Swetnam, “The Meaning of πεπιστευκότας

accept Jesus and his word (vss. 42-43), by not believing on him (vss. 45-46), and by even trying to kill him (vss. 37, 40), they betrayed their true ancestry: "You are from your father the devil" (vs. 44), "not from God" (vs. 47). At the dawn of the new era, the eschatological goal of all God's dealing with Israel,¹ οἱ Ἰδοὶ missed the opportunity of having a new, genuine child-father relationship with God.² They could no longer claim

in John 8:31," *Bib* 61 (1980): 106-109; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 346-348. Probably the best solution is still that of Edwin A. Abbott (*Johannine Grammar* [London: A & C Black, 1906], §2506), but as corrected by Swetnam. According to Abbott, since there is no pluperfect active participle in Greek, John uses the perfect πεπιστευκότας in vs. 31 as the equivalent of a pluperfect, that is, to indicate more than a simple past (so also Zerwick and Grosvenor, 312). For examples, see Mark 5:15 and John 11:44. The weakness of Abbott's view, however, is that he takes the believers of vss. 30-31 as the same people, who lost their faith in the subsequent dialog (vss. 34-47). But even granting that they had a partial faith, as Abbott suggests (§2506), it is hard to see how these people could have passed so quickly from belief to unbelief (vss. 45-46) and even to a desire to kill (vss. 37, 44). Swetnam's thesis is that the believers of vs. 31 are not the same people who had just believed in vs. 30, but rather Jews who had once believed in Jesus, but no longer did so. This not only helps to understand the hostile mood from the very beginning, it also solves many problems within the context. Furthermore, as Swetnam remarks, if John had intended the Jews of vs. 31 to be the same people of vs. 30, he could have simply written ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς. "The fact that he has used a specifying phrase indicates that persons different from the believers of vs. 30 were in question" (108). Giuseppe Segalla's objection to this interpretation is unfounded ("Un appello alla perseveranza nella fede in Gv 8,31-32?" *Bib* 62 [1981]: 387-388). He says that vss. 31b-32 convey a call to perseverance and, as such, can only refer to believers. But conditional clauses with ἐάν and the aorist subjunctive may be futuristic even if the verb in the apodosis is a present indicative (see Ernest D. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 3^d ed. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898], §263; Robertson, *A Grammar to the Greek New Testament*, 1016-1020). This usage is common to John (8:16, 54; 12:24; 19:12), and the futuristic tone of vs. 31 is clear from the immediate context (cf. vs. 32). Instead of a call to perseverance, therefore, it seems that we have here a call to a (re-)acceptance of Jesus and his word (cf. vs. 37c). Burton translates vs. 31b as follows: "If you shall abide in my word, (you will show that) you are truly my disciples" (§263).

¹See Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 152.

²Jerome H. Neyrey's analysis of John 8:21-59 ("Jesus the Judge: Forensic Process in John 8:21-59," *Bib* 68 [1987]: 522-523) is highly stimulating, though I disagree with his

the status of the covenant people. In the messianic era, they are no longer the true σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ and, therefore, no longer τέκνα θεοῦ.¹ From now on membership in God's covenant is defined on the basis of one's response to Jesus.

Universal People

Another passage relevant to the concept of God's children in the Fourth Gospel is 11:52, the only place besides 1:12 in which the expression τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ appears. The context of this passage is the unintentional prophecy of Caiaphas about the meaning of Jesus' death (vss. 49-50). In his interpretation, John confirms what Caiaphas said, "that Jesus was about to die for the nation [ἔθνος]" (vs. 51), but then adds, "not for the nation only, but to gather into one also the dispersed τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ" (vs. 52). This

fundamental premise, that the process is designed to establish whether the statement in vs. 31 (that they "believed him") is true (cf. esp. 509, 519). As argued above (135, n.4), it is probable that the Jews referred to in this passage were former believers and not "pseudo-believers," as Neyrey argues (536). What sets the tone of the entire dialog is not John's statement in vs. 31 but the Jews' own statement that they were σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ and did not need Jesus' offer of spiritual freedom (vs. 33). The recurrence of "Abraham" in the whole passage shows this. Neyrey also overlooks the fact that the whole discussion is not in relation to Israel's historical status as God's people, but to its status now that the Messiah has come. At any rate, his forensic interpretation is helpful and sheds additional light on the significance of the dialog.

¹Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 28. See also Matthew Vellanicke, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, AnBib 72 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977), 252-263; Neyrey, "Jesus the Judge," 520-535; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 337-341. It has been argued that John 8:31-47 is still in the realm of intra-Jewish polemic (Ingo Boer, "The Jews in John's Gospel," *ThD* 32 [1985]: 41-42; Robert I. Vasholz, "Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?" *Presb* 11 [1985]: 118-123; Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 156-160; and esp. Stephen Motyer, *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and 'the Jews,'* PBTS [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997], 160-210). This is correct, but even if John is "still fighting a factional battle within Judaism rather than launching his arrows from without" (Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 159), the theological significance of his arguments must be acknowledged.

statement shows the identity of those who would be counted among God's children:

believing Jews ("not . . . only"), as well as believing Gentiles ("but . . . also").¹ There is

¹Some scholars reject the idea that τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ in this passage could also refer to Gentiles. Wayne A. Meeks, for example, argues: "Now because the context makes it clear that these children include more than the ἔθνος of the Judaeans, the reader may jump to the conclusion that Gentiles are included. . . . It is Greek-speaking Jews who are meant" ("Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, SPSH [Chico: Scholars, 1985], 97). This interpretation, however, cannot be correct for there is no evidence that ἔθνος in 11:48-52 stands for the Judaeans only, to the exclusion of the remaining Jews. On the contrary, in this passage ἔθνος is used in the singular and with the definite article; in the NT this construction always refers to the Jewish people in general, unless otherwise specified (see Vellanickal, 221). As for the notion that "the dispersed children of God" refer to diaspora Jews, it should be remembered that as the gathering of Israel is a biblical idea (Isa 11:12; 27:12; 35:10; 40:11; 43:5-6; 49:5, 18; 54:1, 13; 60:4, 7, 9; Jer 23:3; 31:8, 20; 32:37; Bar 4:37; 5:5; Ezek 11:17; 28:35; 34:12-13; 37:21; 38:8, 12; 39:27; Hos 2:2; Mic 2:12; 4:6, 12), so is the gathering of the Gentiles (Isa 2:3; 60:6; 56:6-7, Zech 14:16-17). Moreover, the use of this idea in the NT in connection with the death of Jesus would not be a Johannine innovation (Matt 21:33-46; Mark 12:7-12; Luke 20:9-19; cf. Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; Eph 2:11-18). For Jewish material on the gathering of all people by the Messiah, see Otfried Hofius, "Die Sammlung der Heiden zur Herde Israels (Joh 10:16; 11:51f.)," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 289-291; Frédéric Manns, *L'Évangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, SBFA 33 (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1991), 231-233. In 11:48-52 John is looking at the significance of Jesus' death retrospectively, that is, from the perspective of the end of the first century, "with the early missionary activity of the church already behind him" (Severino Pancaro, "'People of God' in St. John's Gospel," *NTS* 16 [1969-1970]: 114-129). This also explains the apparent anachronism in John's statement about the gathering of God's children; otherwise one would have to admit that these dispersed people were already children of God without having heard of Jesus and being begotten from above. J. Louis Martyn contends that they were already children before they were scattered and, as such, they could only be Jewish believers ("A Gentile Mission That Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?" in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 131). The context, however, makes this idea highly improbable, for this gathering, being effected by the cross, seems to be primarily soteriological, in the sense that these people would be called by God to accept Jesus and to become his children. There might also be some ecclesiological implications, for "the death of Christ in the first place makes men children of God and thus unites them in the church" (Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 407). If not, what gathering would this be? Martyn fails to answer this question. He sees this passage merely as a psychological reinforcement of those people's belief; an "assurance" ("A Gentile Mission That Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?" 131). The

here a movement from ethnic Israel to a universal people, but without the exclusion of the former. The death of Jesus, which would ratify the new covenant and be the means used by God to gather into one all his children, is universal in its application and, contrary to a few dissenting voices,¹ this concept is clearly present in the Fourth Gospel. This is indicated by references such as “God so loved the world” (3:16), “the Savior of the world” (4:42),² and “I will draw all people to myself” (12:32). This last statement is particularly revealing, coming as it does shortly after the reference to the Greeks’ request to see Jesus and shortly before the end of Jesus’ public ministry.³

Concluding this section, then, it seems correct to say that the children of God in John are neither the Jews nor the Gentiles, exclusively speaking. They can be both.

Race or human descent no longer plays any role either for or against in establishing this

majority interpretation, that in 11:52 John is basically alluding to Gentiles, is to be preferred. Schlatter says: “The children of God, who do not belong to the ἔθνος, are not Jews, for the ἔθνος comprises all the Jews” (*Der Evangelist Johannes*, 260).

¹E.g., John Painter, “Church and Israel in the Gospel of John: A Response,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 104; Meeks, “Breaking Away,” 97; Martyn, “A Gentile Mission That Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?” 126-135. More recently, however, John Painter seems to have changed his position on this. See his “The Johannine Literature,” in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, *NTTS* 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 573-574.

²On this passage, see Craig R. Koester, “‘The Savior of the World’ (John 4:42),” *JBL* 109 (1990): 665-668.

³“John 12:20-32 . . . indicates that Jesus’ personal mission is not accomplished (his ‘hour’ not yet come) until the Greeks (the Gentiles), like the Jews and the Samaritans, are drawn to him. The desire of the Greeks to see Jesus matches that of Andrew and his unnamed companion (1:37-39), of Simon (1:41), of Nathanael (1:45) and of the Samaritans (4:29-30, 40). Their coming completes the universal cycle, lends full force to the πάντα in 12:32 and ironically illustrates the truth in the fear of the Pharisees (12:19)” (Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42*, *WUNT* 31 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1988], 202).

identity, but only belief that results in a new birth. This was the experience of the ὄσσοι of 1:12, who in chap. 10 are called τὰ ἴδια πρόβατα (vss. 3-4, 12) and in 13:1 become the new οἱ ἴδιοι.¹ The reference is primarily to the group of the original disciples (cf. 13:18; 6:70). As the twelve tribes of Israel (see Exod 24:4), the twelve disciples form the core of the new-covenant people, that is, the people of the new covenant.² This probably explains the prominence given in the Fourth Gospel to the belief of the disciples in Jesus.³ The eschatological child-father relationship and spiritual renewal, for which Israel as a whole was destined, were fulfilled only in the life of the ὄσσοι. From vs. 14 through vs. 18 the Prologue will develop the meaning of this experience for them. The use of the first-person plural in this last section (vss. 14, 16) is significant, as is the fact that the language here reflects that of the establishment of the first covenant between God and Israel at Sinai (Exod 33-34).

Conclusion

The main argument of this chapter was that the central section of the Prologue

¹See Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema*, SBLDS 63 (Chico: Scholars, 1983), 64, 114.

²Referring to John 13:1, Bultmann says: "The subject of this section is the circle of those . . . represented by the Twelve (eleven); but the use of the term ἴδιοι here, and not μαθηταί, is significant; it shows that they are the representatives of all those who believe" (*The Gospel of John*, 488-489). See also Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 448; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 438; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 461; Michaels, 245; Pryor, *John*, 55; Voorwinde, 20. On the representative character of the disciples in John, see further, Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 67-73.

³See Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 135-139.

(vss. 6-13) cannot be properly understood except from the perspective of the incarnate Logos. It still remains to explain how this idea relates to vs. 14, with its full and evidently climactic statement about the incarnation. This will be done in chapter 4.

As far as vss. 6-13 are concerned, the attempt to see here an account of the activity of either John the Baptist or of the pre-incarnate Logos during the Old Testament period is completely inadequate and should not be insisted upon. Taken separately, only vss. 9-10 could at first sight allow a pre-incarnational interpretation, but four points should always be kept in mind: (1) even if read as a circumstantial participle, which seems to be the correct reading, ἐρχόμενον does not necessarily describe a durative or repetitive process; (2) the expression ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν seems to establish a contrast with ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν of vss. 1-2, instead of pointing to creation (vs. 3); (3) the correspondence between οὐκ ἔγνω (vs. 10) and οὐ παρέλαβον (vs. 11) indicates a specific historical situation not compatible with the Old Testament history of God's dealing with Israel; and (4) the phrase ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω is elsewhere used by John to the world's failure to recognize the incarnate Christ (1 John 3:1; John 16:3). Even if these points are not individually conclusive, the evidence for an incarnational view of these verses is cumulative and should not be considered in isolation from the whole context.

Fundamental in this connection is the reference to John the Baptist in vss. 6-8. From an exegetical standpoint, it is irrelevant to conjecture whether these verses have altered the meaning of a pre-existing hymn into which they were supposedly inserted. What really matters is that in the gospel tradition, including the Fourth Gospel (1:19-28), John the Baptist is entirely associated with the advent of Jesus Christ. Even if his role in

John's Gospel is not so much that of a precursor, Brodie's attempt to distance him from the eschatological manifestation of Christ and to locate his ministry "rather vaguely" between creation and the incarnation is unacceptable. That John performed a prophetic mission in relation to the Messiah is true (see 1:23), but this is not enough to lock him into the Old Testament period of salvation history. That the Old Testament period of salvation history ends with him is also true, but the evidence shows that he himself is the beginning point for the story of Jesus' ministry, which means that he himself already belongs to the new aeon and is not to be listed among the prophets.

Both John and Jesus belong to the same period chronologically as well as theologically. The bridegroom's friend does not prepare the way for the bridegroom and then leave the scene (cf. 3:29). On the contrary, he takes an active part in the celebration, even acting as a sort of master of ceremonies. The fact that in this Gospel the emphasis on the Baptist falls on his role as a witness rather than as a precursor may only reflect the polemical situation in which the Gospel was written. At any rate, the relationship between John and Jesus in the Fourth Gospel does not allow the kind of interpretation proposed by Brodie and others for vss. 6-8 of the Prologue. In addition, it is awkward to have a summary of the Old Testament period of salvation history starting with John the Baptist. In this Gospel, as well as in the Synoptics and the early apostolic preaching, John's ministry is eschatological in nature, not only in that it prepares the way for Jesus' ministry, but also because it inaugurates that ministry.

Also important for establishing the correct meaning of this whole section are its concluding verses: vss. 11-13. No other interpretation can do full justice to these

verses except taking them in connection with the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. The language is so clear and the meaning so obvious that for most of those who argue for a pre-incarnational interpretation of vss. 6-13, the appeal to the argument of ambiguity becomes an embarrassing need. Such an argument, however, seems to be nothing more than a futile attempt to hide a weak hypothesis, or conversely, a veiled way to acknowledge a more plausible interpretation. There is no ambiguity in this passage. What one finds here is, on one hand, the tragic story of the Messiah's coming to his own people (οἱ Ἰδαῖοι) only to be rejected by them and, on the other, his acceptance by a faithful remnant (ῥῶοι), to whom he gave the right to inherit the promise of the new covenant. These became God's children not because of their Abrahamic descent, but because of their faith in God, which allowed them to experience the spiritual renewal inherent to the new covenant. In the remainder of the Prologue (vss. 14-18) these people will give a powerful testimony to their experience and faith.

In conclusion, then, as is held by the vast majority of modern scholars, John 1:6-13 refers to the historical appearance of the Logos. As for the precise point of that appearance, it seems reasonable to speak of vs. 9. Since φωτίζει can hardly be taken as an unhistorical present, vs. 9 does not merely announce the incarnation; it actually describes in metaphoric language the significance of that event to humanity. It does so from the historical vantage point of the evangelist. In other words, though carrying a sense of expectation, vs. 9 also carries a strong sense of realization concerning the entrance of the Logos into human history: "He was the true light, which enlightens every man, by coming into the world."

CHAPTER 4

THE COVENANTAL MEANING OF THE INCARNATION

(JOHN 1:14-18)

Vs. 14 marks another turning point in John's Prologue.¹ The term λόγος, not used since vs. 1, reappears; the first-person plural is suddenly introduced; the argument takes on a more theological connotation; and the whole passage begins to move to a stirring conclusion.

For many scholars, this verse represents the high point of John 1:1-18, all the more so because of its explicit statement on the incarnation (καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο).² Yet, as Bultmann correctly remarks, this statement "does not sound as if there had already been talk of the incarnate One,"³ which seems to compromise an incarnational interpretation of vss. 6-13. An easy and creative solution to this problem is to resort to the hymn hypothesis and argue that in the original Logos hymn vs. 14 did express "an

¹"There is at least some measure of agreement that a major division occurs at vs. 14" (Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue," 356).

²Beasley-Murray says: "For the evangelist it would appear that the account of the Prologue moves to the statement of vs. 14; by virtue of its theological significance it forms the center of gravity of the Prologue, and indeed of the Gospel itself" (*John*, 4). Similarly, Valentine: "The pinnacle of Johannine theology is seen in the declaration: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'" (295). On the climax of John's Prologue, see the introductory discussion by J. S. King, "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel: Some Unsolved Problems," *ET* 86 (1975): 373.

³Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background," 29.

altogether novel insight, splendid in its implications.”¹ But this solution would suggest that the evangelist did a very poor job in the Prologue, altering the meaning of the hymn and thus making the announcement of the incarnation in vs. 14 to come as “an anticlimax.”² Another solution, which preserves the evangelist’s literary dignity, is to consider the whole section of vss. 6-13 an account of the impersonal activity of the Logos in Old Testament times. This idea, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, is flawed at many crucial points. A third solution is to organize the Prologue as a sort of chiasmic structure,³ but besides reducing vs. 14 to a mere variant of vs. 9 (-11), and

¹Ashton, “The Transformation of Wisdom,” 175.

²Painter, “Christology and the History of the Johannine Community,” 462.

³Attempts to find chiasm or another sort of parallel structure in John’s Prologue are numerous. See, e.g., Nils W. Lund, “The Influence of Chiasmus upon the Structure of the Gospels,” *ATHR* 13 (1931): 41-46; Boismard, 79-80; Lamarche, 529-532; Borgen, “Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John,” 291-294; Hooker, “John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue,” 357; Feuillet, cols. 654-655; Annie Jaubert, *Lecture de l’évangile selon saint Jean*, CEv 17 (Paris: Cerf, 1976), 19; Vellanickal, 124-126; Clémence Hélou, *Symbole et langage dans les écrits johanniques: Lumière-Ténèbres* (Paris: Mame, 1980), 66; Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” 9-17; Gese, 186-190; Marc Girard, “Analyse structurelle de Jn 1,1-18: L’unité des deux testaments dans la structure bipolaire du Prologue de Jean,” *ScEs* 35 (1983): 15-25; Jeff Staley, “The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implication for the Gospel’s Narrative Structure,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 244-249; Marc Cholin, “Le Prologue de l’Évangile selon Jean: Structure et formation,” *ScEs* 41 (1989): 198-205; Roland Meynet, “Analyse rhétorique du Prologue de Jean,” *RB* 96 (1989): 481-510; Talbert, *Reading John*, 66-67; Dennison, 3; Stibbe, *John*, 30-31; John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood: SVSP, 1994), 198-202; William J. Dumbrell, “Grace and Truth: The Progress of the Argument of the Prologue of John’s Gospel,” in *Doing Theology for the People of God: Studies in Honor of J. I. Packer*, ed. Donald Lewis and Alister McGrath (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 106; Kimberly D. Booser, “The Literary Structure of John 1:1-18: An Examination of Its Theological Implications concerning God’s Saving Plan through Jesus Christ,” *EJ* 16 (1998): 13-29; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 295; Viviano, 176-184; Peter F. Ellis, “Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel,” *SVTQ* 43 (1999): 284; Köstenberger, 57; Voorwinde, 28.

assuming a number of difficult symmetrical structures, its complexity weakens its plausibility.¹

The thesis of this fourth chapter is that though no longer the great incarnational turning point in the Prologue, vs. 14 still retains its climactic force if interpreted, together with vss. 15-18, as a theological reflection on the covenantal meaning of the incarnation. The analysis is divided into three parts: the dwelling of the Logos, his visible glory, and his covenantal faithfulness.

The Dwelling of the Logos (Vs. 14a-b)

The last section of John's Prologue opens with a statement that not only affirms the incarnation of the Logos, but also his dwelling among human beings. The incarnation is already implicit in vs. 9, and that the Logos dwelt among us is the obvious

¹Despite the belief of several scholars that John's Prologue can be organized as a chiasm or other symmetrical structure, others do not hesitate to express their suspicion about such a possibility. This is true not only of those structures which are extremely complex, like Culpepper's and Meynet's, but also of those which are content with more general correspondences, such as the parabolic structure suggested by Dennison and Voorwinde. Culpepper himself admits that some parallels of his own structure may not be so persuasive, and that "the interpreter must also bear in mind that all literary structures are in varying degrees artificial" ("The Pivot of John's Prologue," 17). The charge of artificiality is also justified from the fact that Culpepper allows his exegesis to be nothing but a servant of his literary analysis, rather than the opposite. Regarding the alleged parallelism between vss. 9-10 and vs. 14, for example, he says: "There are two references to the incarnation because the chiastic structure demands that there be two references, just as there are two references to John the Baptist" (ibid., 13-14). Also difficult to understand is the parallelism between vs. 3 and vs. 17, or between vss. 4-5 and vs. 16. Culpepper tries to argue that though these parallels are "not obvious," they "are not absent" (ibid., 11), but Brown correctly dismisses them as "highly imaginative" (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:23). For Miller, the whole project of finding "an elaborate chiastic structure" in John's Prologue is but an exercise in "exceedingly vivid imaginations" ("The Logic of the Logos Hymn," 552). For further criticism, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 4; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 132-144; Van der Watt, 314-318.

implication of vss. 10-13. The laconic, straightforward way in which these two facts are now stated and especially the pictorial language that is used, however, seem to indicate that in this section the evangelist is more concerned with the theological meaning of the incarnation than with the event itself. This would certainly free him from the charge of repeating himself. The following discussion, which focuses on the first two clauses of vs. 14, tries to uncover the covenantal significance John attached to the incarnation.

The Sinai Background

Another important element which definitively sets vss. 14-18 apart from the previous verses is the deliberate allusion to the giving of the law at Sinai, particularly the second giving following the episode of the golden calf (Exod 32). As John goes back to the creation story of Gen 1 to introduce his account of the Logos and so to emphasize his divine pre-existence with God (vss. 1-5), he now resorts to the covenant story of Exod 33-34 to convey the meaning of the incarnation of the Logos to those who received him. The parallels between the two narratives are striking and have been acknowledged to varying degrees by many interpreters.¹ According to Evans, there are five important

¹E.g., Westcott, 10-16; Holtzmann, 42-57; Zahn, 81-100; Lagrange, 21-33; Hoskyns, 147-154; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 86-88; Boismard, 135-145; Wikenhauser, 47-51; Lester J. Kuyper, "Grace and Truth: An Old Testament Description of God, and Its Use in the Johannine Gospel," *RefR* 16, no. 1 (1962): 1-16; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:14-18; De Boor, 1:53-61; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 94-100; López, 143; Rissi, "Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," 331-333; idem, "John 1:1-18," 399-400; Morna D. Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," *NTS* 21 (1975): 52-56; Anthony T. Hanson, "John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34," *NTS* 23 (1977): 90-101; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 165-170; Bruce, 39-45; Henry Mowley, "John 1:14-18 in the Light of Exodus 33:7-34:35," *ET* 95 (1983-1984): 135-137; William J. Dumbrell, "Law and Grace: The Nature of the Contrast in John 1:17," *EQ* 58 (1986): 25-37; Barth, *Witness to the*

points of convergence: (1) the contrast between Moses and Jesus found in vs. 17 explicitly refers to the giving of the law at Sinai; (2) the statement “we have seen his glory” (vs. 14) points to Moses’ request to see God’s glory (Exod 33:18); (3) John’s assertion that “no one has ever seen God” (vs. 18) echoes God’s response to Moses: “You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live” (Exod 33:20);¹ (4) the evangelist’s assertion that Jesus exists “in the bosom of the Father” (vs. 18) contrasts with Moses’ brief glance of God’s “back” (Exod 33:23); finally, (5) the expression “full of grace and truth” (vs. 14; cf. vs. 17) most likely corresponds to *רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת* of Exod 34:6.²

The Tabernacle Motif

Another important point of convergence is found in the tabernacle imagery used in vs. 14b-c to convey the very notion of the incarnation. The idea is obtained from the combination of two words, σκηνώ and δόξα. Σκηνώ, which means “to dwell” and appears only here in the Gospel,³ recalls the language that the Old Testament, in both its

Word, 100-132; Pryor, “Covenant Community in John’s Gospel,” 48-49; Luc Devillers, “Exégèse et théologie de Jean 1, 18,” *RThom* 89 (1989): 204-212; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 129-135; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 90-101; Schenke, 31-36; Whitacre, 58-63; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 13-16; Wilckens, 32-36; Christian Grappe, “Jean 1,14(-18) dans son contexte et à la lumière de la littérature intertestamentaire,” *RHPH* 80 (2000): 153-169.

¹All OT quotations in this chapter are from the NRSV.

²Evans, *Word and Glory*, 79-81.

³On σκηνή/σκηνώ, see Wilhelm Michaelis, “σκηνή,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 7:368-394; Colin Brown, “σκηνή,” *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:811-814; Jan-A. Bühner, “σκηνώ,” *EDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 3:252-253. On the Hebrew equivalents, see M. Görg, “שֶׁנָּה,” *TWAT* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970-1996), 7:cols. 1337-1348.

Hebrew and Greek forms, uses for the tabernacle in the wilderness (מִשְׁכָּן, σκηνή),¹ the portable prototype of the temple and the ancient dwelling place of God in Israel. Δόξα (“glory”) certainly refers in this connection to the glorious manifestation of God’s presence in the tabernacle (see Exod 40:34-38).² Although not including this parallel in his list, Evans does accept its validity and even touches on its theological significance.³

On account of the use of the same verb σκηνοῶ, as well as of its corresponding noun σκηνή, in Sir 24:8 to describe wisdom’s dwelling in Israel,⁴ some scholars prefer to see John 1:14b in connection not with the tabernacle in the wilderness of Exod 33:9-11

¹The verbal form of מִשְׁכָּן is שָׁכַן, which also means “to dwell.” This word is related to the post-biblical term שְׂכִינָה, which literally means “residence,” but most commonly referred to the glory of God present in the tabernacle and the temple. On שְׂכִינָה, see Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 71-72.

²See E. M. Sidebottom, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel in the Light of First-Century Thought* (London: SPCK, 1961), 36-37. Morris says: “That John wants us to recall God’s presence in the tabernacle in the wilderness seems clear from the immediate reference to ‘glory,’ for glory was associated with the tabernacle” (*The Gospel according to John*, 91).

³Evans, *Word and Glory*, 82.

⁴The passage of *1 En.* 42:2, which describes wisdom’s “dwelling among the children of man” and is frequently quoted as another parallel to John 1:14b (see Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 67, n. 1), involves several difficulties. It belongs to the second part of *1 Enoch* (chaps. 37-71), usually called “The Book of Parables (or Similitudes)”; no Aramaic, Hebrew, or even Greek manuscript of any part of it has yet been discovered. It is known only in Ethiopic. In addition, this section deals with themes such as the coming judgment, the Messiah, the Son of man, the righteous One, the elect One, and the resurrection of the righteous, which has fed the suspicion that it is actually a Christian composition. Since no explicit quotation from these chapters is recorded before the early Middle Ages, J. T. Milik has suggested that they were not written until the last quarter of the third century (*The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, with the collabor. of Matthew Black [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976], 89-98). For a review of Milik’s thesis, see M. A. Knibb, “The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 345-359. The date suggested by Knibb, which is probably the dominant view today, is the end of the first century A.D. See also Christopher L. Mearns, “Dating the Similitudes of Enoch,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 360-369.

(cf. 25:8-9), but with the wisdom motif.¹

The whole poem of Sir 24 praises wisdom's virtues and identifies her with the divine revelation to Moses, and thus to Israel. The Sinai imagery is already present since vs. 1, where the Jews as the chosen people are supposedly alluded to ("her people"). Wisdom is portrayed as a revelation of the Most High (vs. 3). Her throne is in the "pillar of cloud" (vs. 4), which symbolized God's guiding presence with his people under the leadership of Moses. She walked around the entire universe seeking for "a resting place" (vss. 6-7) until God commanded her to make her dwelling (κατασκηνόω) in Israel (vs. 8), which no doubt recalls the tabernacle in the wilderness. The temple motif is also brought into the picture as the place where wisdom, which is eventually identified with the law (vs. 23), ministers before God (vss. 10-12), "stipulating the religious and liturgical rules to be followed in the worship of the Lord."²

¹See Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 222; Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 55. A few authors do not even consider the possibility of a connection with the Israelite tabernacle of Exodus (e.g., Siegfried Schulz, *Komposition und Herkunft der Johanneischen Reden*, BWANT 81 [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960], 34-35; Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 106; Wilckens, 33), while Schnackenburg suggests that this verse combines disparate notions: originally it pointed to the wisdom motif, but the tabernacle imagery may have been in the evangelist's mind when he inserted the clause "we have seen his glory" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:269). So also Rissi, who thinks that the Prologue actually consists of two different hymns (vss. 1-12 and vss. 14-17): "The second hymn of the Prologue stems, as the first one, from the realm of language of Jewish wisdom. Its motifs are taken from the Exodus tradition (esp. Exod 33-34)" ("Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," 331). For Schmithals, while the background of vss. 1-13 is to be found in the wisdom tradition, that of vss. 14-18 is entirely Christian, with close affinities to the theology of Paul, as well as to that of John himself (*Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe*, 272-273). A rather unique view is that of Gordon D. Kirchhevel, who argues that John 1:12-14, 18 portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of predictions in Aramaic tradition related to Isa 53:1-2 ("The Children of God and the Glory That John 1:14 Saw," *BBR* 6 [1996]: 87-93).

²Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New*

It is difficult, therefore, to agree that in 1:14-18 John is simply echoing what Jesus Ben Sirach says about wisdom in his book, or even that he is looking at the exodus story through the lenses of wisdom.¹ Not only does the fourth evangelist omit or make a different use of some of the motifs mentioned in Sir 24, such as the pillar of cloud and wisdom's ministry before God, but he also uses motifs and concepts not found there in such an explicit connection, such as "glory" and "grace and truth."²

More significant is the way in which John departs from Ben Sirach in the central

Translation with Notes, Introduction and Commentary, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 333. James L. Crenshaw interprets this passage in connection with the daily sacrificial system and describes it as expressing "an entirely new concept" ("The Book of Sirach: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *NIB* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1997], 5:757). It must be noted, however, that the notion of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place among his people in the wilderness cannot be dissociated from the sacrificial system, which provided the juridical rationale so to speak for God's presence among his sinful people. For further studies on Sir 24, see Maurice Gilbert, "L'éloge de la Sagesse (Siracide 24)," *RTL* 5 (1974): 326-348; Patrick W. Skehan, "Structures in Poems on Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 365-379.

¹A direct influence from Sirach on John's Prologue is argued by Ceslas Spicq, "Le Siracide et la structure littéraire du Prologue de saint Jean," in *Mémorial Lagrange: Cinquantenaire de l'école biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem (15 novembre 1890-15 novembre 1940)* (Paris: Gabalda, 1940), 183-195. This article, however, suffers from a serious methodological deficiency: it takes into consideration only the similarities between John and Sirach, in complete isolation from the differences. The most Spicq is able to demonstrate, therefore, is exactly what he considers "superfluous" (*ibid.*, 193), that is, that the fourth evangelist probably knew Sirach. Schnackenburg also strongly rejects the idea of a direct dependence of John on Sirach (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:231).

²There is no question that "glory" in Exod 40:34-38 is related to the cloud of God's presence, but while Ben Sirach uses this image (24:4) to state that "wisdom dwells with God" (Skehan and Di Lella, 332), John clearly applies it to the dwelling of the Logos among humans. As for "grace and truth," Scott is right in arguing that "there is no direct parallel to the combined attributes of χάρις and ἀλήθεια in descriptions of Sophia" (*Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 107). The expression "compassionate and merciful" (οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων) found in Sir 2:11 certainly alludes to Exod 34:6-7, but as in Exodus it consists in a description of God, not of wisdom (see Crenshaw, "The Book of Sirach," 5:622).

part of his argument. In Sir 24:8 and 10, wisdom, that is, the law, is said to have made her dwelling among God's people (cf. Exod 40:20-21) and to have ministered in the tabernacle/temple (ἐν σκηνῇ ἁγίᾳ), which means that the tabernacle/temple retains its identity as a physical structure. In John 1:14, however, the Logos not only takes on flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο), something that finds no parallel in any sayings of the wisdom tradition¹ or for that matter in the wide spectrum of pre-Christian Jewish thought,² but also becomes himself the very reality of God's presence among humans (καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν),³ thus replacing the function which traditionally belonged to the tabernacle/

¹See Evans, *Word and Glory*, 93. Though recognizing that the statement ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο goes "beyond anything said directly of Sophia in the tradition," Scott tries to minimize the significance of this fact. He argues that "if Sophia was active in creation, seeks a dwelling-place continually with humanity, and is responsible for them, it is only one final logical step from there to ἡ σοφία σὰρξ ἐγένετο" (*Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 105). This argument, however, is not convincing. The complete absence in the wisdom tradition of any parallel, even a remote one, to the notion of incarnation, seems to contradict the idea that this was "only one final logical step." The final step taken by Ben Sirach is actually the identification of wisdom with the law, which has nothing to do at all with the notion of incarnation. Scott's statement that "for the wisdom theologians there already was a very real sense in which Sophia had 'taken on flesh': she was to be found embodied in the Torah" (ibid., 105-106) is precarious.

²Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 242-243.

³It has sometimes been argued that the tabernacle motif in John 1:14 emphasizes the temporary habitation on earth of the divine Logos (e.g., Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 84; Wikenhauser, 48; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 94), but none of the other four times in which this motif is employed in the NT has such a connotation (see Rev 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3). In addition, any exegesis that uses this motif to deduce the transience of the sojourn of the Logos on earth becomes liable to the charge of allegorization. See further, Boismard, 48; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 51; Bühner, "σκηνώω," 253. It has also been argued that the combination of clauses a and b of vs. 14 suggests that the Logos dwelt in human nature as in a tent (e.g., Bernard, 1:20-21; Boismard, 144; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:33; W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, BiSe [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974; reprint with a new Preface by Stanley E. Porter, Sheffield: JSOT, 1994], 298, 333, 335, n. 98). This conclusion does not seem to be warranted, however, for ἐν ἡμῖν can hardly be a synonym for σὰρξ; it only means that the Logos "took up

temple.¹ The “glory” which is reported to have been seen is no longer associated with a physical tent or building (cf. Exod 40:34-35), but with the person and ministry of the Logos (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ).² There is no denial of the previous theological status of the tabernacle/temple, but that status is now appropriated by Jesus.³

Finally, the high point of Ben Sirach’s theology is his identification of wisdom with the law, possibly to protect the religious identity of his people from being absorbed into a kind of cultural globalization that was then gaining ground within Judaism. John, however, exalts God’s eschatological revelation through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos, but instead of equating him with the law, he does exactly the opposite: he distinguishes them and so he preserves the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He does not depreciate the law, neither does he set it in opposition to grace, but he points to

residence in our midst” (Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 165).

¹“When the Prologue proclaims that the Word made his dwelling among men, we are being told that . . . Jesus is the replacement of the ancient tabernacle. The Gospel will present Jesus as the replacement of the temple (2:19-22), which is a variation of the same theme” (Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:33). For the notion that the Gospel portrays Jesus as replacing the temple as well, see Anthony T. Hanson, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1980), 110-121; Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 100-115; Peter W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 163-175; Stephen Motyer, “The Fourth Gospel and the Salvation of Israel: An Appeal for a New Start,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 92.

²Even Scott agrees that “there is a definite change of emphasis from Sirach 24 to John 1:14b. While the wisdom passage refers to a general dwelling of Sophia among the wise of Israel, the hymn makes the identification with a specific person, whom the writer will shortly name as Jesus Christ” (*Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 106). He tries to explain this difference as if it were only a “narrowing down of focus” that still could be understood on the basis of “the description of Sophia in Sirach” (ibid.). Unfortunately, he does not say how this occurs.

³Walker, 164.

something about God that did not come through the law, and that is his “grace and truth.” Those came only through the Logos.¹

It emerges, therefore, that the fourth evangelist is not simply modeling the Logos story after that of wisdom and bringing it to completion, as if “the Logos accomplished what was prefigured by wisdom,”² or the incarnation represented only “the end point of a line which stretches back to its origins in the wisdom tradition.”³ The Johannine Logos is not merely a masculine version of the Sirachic wisdom,⁴ neither is the Johannine

¹On vs. 17, see below, 210-214.

²Léon-Dufour, 117.

³Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 105.

⁴Several authors have maintained that the Johannine Logos is only a masculine surrogate of the feminine Sophia (e.g., J. Rendel Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917], 4; Eldon Jay Epp, “Wisdom, Torah, Word: The Johannine Prologue and the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by His Former Students*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 132; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 83). This view, however, is most insistently argued by Scott. He starts from the presupposition that the Jewish wisdom figure, which in both Hebrew (חֵכֶמָה) and Greek (σοφία) is a feminine noun, was actually conceived under the influence of ancient Near Eastern goddess worship and came eventually to be depicted as “God in feminine form, equivalent to the more common Jewish expression of God in the masculine form, Yahweh” (*Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 77). Then he seeks to identify the impact of the feminine gender of the personified Sophia on the Johannine portrait of Jesus. In his analysis of the Prologue, he not only contends that this passage reflects the influence of the Sophia tradition (ibid., 94), but also that it contains a Christological understanding of Jesus as Sophia incarnate (ibid., 105), and that the use of Logos imagery is John's solution to gender dissonance, that is, “since Jesus is male, so too is the Logos” (ibid., 105). In other words, the masculine title “Logos” is nothing else but “a cover for the gender problem surrounding the identification of Jesus with the female Sophia” (ibid., 115). Scott goes so far as to assume a sort of androgynous understanding of the Johannine Jesus, whom he calls “Jesus Sophia”: “a unique blend of the male and female”; “Jesus is a man who exhibits all the characteristic traits of the woman Sophia” (ibid., 174). For a concise but effective analysis of Scott's proposal, see the review of his book by Craig R. Koester (*JBL* 113 [1994]: 152-154).

Prologue just an affirmation, with secondary changes, of the worldview of Sirach.¹ If any relation between John and Sirach in the last part of the Prologue is to be assumed, it would only be in terms of a reaction against Ben Sirach's claim that the tabernacle/temple and the law were the focal points of the entire universe, the loci of God's supreme revelation to mankind, the place where the Creator's wisdom came to dwell. This is exactly what John claims for Jesus.²

Thus, the exodus motif found in John 1:14-18 is not to be construed on the basis of Sir 24. On the contrary, the two authors are looking at the same episode in Jewish history as the background for their exposition, with the possible difference that the fourth evangelist is also interacting with Ben Sirach in order to establish the uniqueness and the superiority of the Christ-event.³

Tabernacle and Covenant

Whatever the precise literary history of the book of Exodus,⁴ the attempt to

¹N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 415.

²*Ibid.*, 416.

³For Koester, Sir 24 plays no role at all in the composition of John 1:14-18. Struck by the differences between these two passages, he suggests that the similarities only reflect a common tradition. "It is surprising," he says, given the many parallels between the Prologue's previous verses and wisdom traditions, "that these traditions apparently did not provide the imagery for John 1:14b-18. . . . Therefore," he concludes, "John 1:14 marks a transition point; it completes a series of images that closely resemble wisdom traditions, and introduces allusions to Sinai" (*The Dwelling of God*, 109-110). See also Haenchen, *John 1*, 119; Gese, 204; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 51.

⁴OT critical scholarship generally considers the literature that now bears the authority of Moses a composite work, representing basically three or four different periods and writers with

understand John's use of the tabernacle motif in the Prologue of his Gospel must proceed from the text in its final form, which not only is a finished, coherent product with a distinct theological perspective,¹ but also was the text that the evangelist knew and used.² On the basis of the book as it now stands, it seems possible to argue that the tabernacle in the wilderness is closely related to the concept of God's covenant with Israel at Sinai. As Fretheim notes, "Exodus advances from an oppressive situation in which God's presence is hardly noted in the text to God's filling the scene at the completion of the tabernacle."³ In this sense, the tabernacle takes on a central position in the theological development of the book, making possible the fulfillment of the promise which lies at the very heart of the covenant: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from the

different theological interests: the so-called "documentary hypothesis." For a detailed history and assessment of research on this hypothesis, see Cornelis Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, CBETH 9 (Kampen: Pharos, 1994); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1992). Specifically on the book of Exodus, see William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 47-52; H. Cazelles, *Autour de l'Exode: Études* (Paris: Gabalda, 1987).

¹See Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1:678-680; and esp. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, IBC (Louisville: Knox, 1991), 1-22.

²For a suggestive theological interpretation of the tabernacle in Exodus on the basis of the classical documentary hypothesis, see Horst D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. Leo G. Perdue, OTL (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995-1996), 1:64-80; 2:214-224; and Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 8-11.

³Fretheim, *Exodus*, 1.

burdens of the Egyptians" (Exod 6:7).¹

Covenant and deliverance are already associated at the beginning of the narrative (cf. 2:24-25). This association is then repeated and expanded in 6:2-8, which is the foundational text for God's election of Israel,² for besides ensuring Israel's deliverance, it explicitly connects divine intervention with the promise made to the patriarchs of a covenantal relationship between God and his people (Gen 17:7). The covenant, however, is presented in this passage not so much as the basis for God's deliverance of his people, but God's acts of deliverance would find their expression and purpose in the covenantal relationship already promised to Abraham (cf. Exod 19:5).³ At Sinai (chaps. 19-40), God made his definitive move towards the fulfillment of that promise or, in Gowan's words, "to make the exclusive relationship an intimate one."⁴ As Gowan highlights, in his acts of deliverance from Egypt, God had already showed his commitment to Israel before he asked any response from them. He had already cared for them and begun to nurture them in the wilderness. But since any good relationship requires a mutual understanding of each one's duties, now that God had effectively brought his people out of Egypt (cf. 19:1), he reveals what he expected from them

¹See John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Waco: Word, 1987), 397; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, 4 vols., trans. Johan Rebel and Sierd Woudstra, HCOT (Kampen: Kok; Leuven: Peeters, 1993-2002), 3:553.

²See John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 31-34.

³Ibid., 34. See also Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 102-103.

⁴Gowan, 175.

(chaps. 20-23).¹

What Gowan and many others fail to explore, however, is that from the viewpoint of the book's final redaction, as soon as the people commit themselves to doing everything that God has commanded and the covenant is ratified (chap. 24), the tabernacle comes into the picture: "Have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell [יִשְׁכְּנֵנִי] among them" (25:8).² Both the building and the function of the tabernacle were necessary if God's covenantal promise was to become a reality. The tabernacle would function as the medium of God's presence and the ritual of sacrifice as the continual provision of atonement for the sins of the people, so that a holy God could in fact dwell among them (Exod 29:42-46; cf. Lev 26:9-13).³

The ark of the covenant played a fundamental role in this connection. Located in the holy of holies, the ark contained the tablets of the covenant and was covered with the mercy seat, which was at the same time a symbol of the propitiation of sins⁴ and the place where God would meet his people (Exod 25:21-22; 29:42-43; 30:6, 36; cf. 40:20-

¹Ibid., 176.

²Brevard S. Childs correctly argues that "it is necessary to deal seriously with the present form and position of the tabernacle chapters [chaps. 25-31] within the book of Exodus. The fact that their present position represents the final stage of a long redactional process in no way undercuts the importance of hearing their witness" (*The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974], 542).

³On the function of the tabernacle, see Christoph Barth, *God with Us: A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 106-107; Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 7; and esp. Angel M. Rodríguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 139-141.

⁴C. L. Seow says, the mercy seat was "a 'cover' for the box symbolizing the 'covering' of sins" ("The Designation of the Ark in Priestly Theology," *HAR* 8 [1984]: 190, n. 22).

21; Lev 16:2; Num 7:89; 17:4).¹ In Exodus, therefore, a theological reading beyond the concern for source analysis clearly indicates that tabernacle and covenant are intrinsically related to each other. The latter does not reach its fulfillment until the former comes to life.²

Incarnation and Covenant

The significance of the relation between tabernacle and covenant to the interpretation of John 1:14a-b can hardly be overemphasized. By saying that "the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us," the fourth evangelist is not simply resorting to the tabernacle motif in the exodus story to convey the message that Jesus Christ himself was now the locus of God's presence on earth. He is actually claiming that the covenantal promise has found in Jesus Christ an eschatological fulfillment that goes beyond anything the Israelites had experienced in their past history: a perfect fulfillment of

¹In the traditions associated with the temple in Jerusalem during the monarchy, the ark even came to be identified as a sort of throne for the invisible Yahweh (2 Kgs 19:15; Pss 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16; cf. 1 Kgs 8:6). On the ark as a throne, see Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 107-108; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "YHWH Sabaoth: The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Others Essays: Papers Read at the International Symposium for Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 5-7 December, 1979*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 109-138.

²"The tabernacle represents the presence of God in fulfillment of his covenantal pledge, 'I will be your God and you shall be my people,' and therefore completes the revelation of God's name: 'I am Yahweh your God, who redeemed you from the land of Egypt' ([Lev] 26:12-13). In the service of the tabernacle the sons of the covenant realize their new life of freedom 'to walk erect'" (Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 540). Similarly, Dumbrell: "The construction of the tabernacle seems to function as the implementation of the covenant or seems to have been intended to function in that way" ("Law and Grace," 29).

God's original plan with Israel as foretold also by Old Testament prophets, in particular Jeremiah.

The New Covenant

In view of the imminent fall of the southern kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah promised restoration for both Israel and Judah, and the establishment of a new covenant between God and his people (Jer 31:31-34). At the core of this new covenant was the same relationship God always intended to have with Israel—"you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (30:22)—which would finally be accomplished by means of God's definitive dwelling among them. There would be an important difference in relation to Israel's history up until then, however. The presence of God would apparently no longer depend on a physical structure such as the tabernacle or the temple,¹ not even on the ark of the covenant which had traditionally

¹Writing from exile, Ezekiel announces the coming of a new covenant in which God's dwelling among his people would be established forever, thus bringing the covenantal relationship to a level of realization never achieved before (see Ezek 37:26-27). He seems to foresee the fulfillment of this promise in a new physical temple to be built in Jerusalem (cf. 43:1-9). In fact, Ezekiel even provides a description of this new temple, its architecture and ordinances; the abundance of its details and size (see chaps. 40-48) has been a source of embarrassment for many interpreters. The passage involves a series of difficulties; in spite of this several scholars view it as a program for the reconstruction of the restored state of Israel (e.g., Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Int* 38 [1984]: 181-208). In his extensive treatment of these chapters, Daniel I. Block calls attention, among other things, to six "fantastic and stylized elements in the vision" which, being "quite idealistic and even unimaginable," suggest that the vision was never intended to have a literal fulfillment: (1) the mythical affinities of the high mountain on which the prophet observes the new city (40:2); (2) the river which flows from within the temple complex itself, increases dramatically in size, and eventually turns the Judaeen desert into an Edenic paradise, even sweetening the Dead Sea (47:1-12); (3) the plan of the city which is idealized as a perfect square with three gates on each side to provide access for the twelve tribes (48:30-34); (4) the emphasis

been the supreme symbol of God's favor and enthronement in the midst of his people (see 1 Sam 4:1-22). Jer 3:16-18 reads:

In those days,¹ says the Lord, they shall no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.

on the twelve tribes, which involves an anachronism of about five centuries; (5) the distribution of the land among the tribes (48:1-7, 23-29), which greatly disregards topographic and historical realities; and (6) the dimensions of the temple (chaps. 40-42) and the city (48:15-20), dominated by multiples of five, with twenty-five being a particularly common number (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 501-502). In addition, Block argues, if Ezekiel's vision were to be taken as a program for the postexilic restoration of the nation of Israel in its own homeland, those who returned from Babylon were but a handful of Judaeans; the land was never divided among the tribes; no figure like Ezekiel's prince (cf. 44:3; 45:7, 16, 22; etc.) ever emerged in the community; the reconstructed temple was much inferior to the architectural design envisioned by Ezekiel; and most important of all, the glory of the Lord never returned (see Hag 2:3-9) (ibid., 502). A historical interpretation, therefore, seems to be out of question. In view of this, it would be tempting to give Ezek 40-48 an eschatological interpretation, as does Jon D. Levenson (*Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, HSMS 10 [Missoula: Scholars, for Harvard Semitic Museum, 1976]). Though avoiding the historical difficulties, such an approach is also problematic. "The program is incapable of realistic fulfillment in any age," says Steven Tuell ("A Temple Vision of Ezekiel 40-48: A Program for Restoration?" *PEGLBS* 2 [1982]: 97), unless it is spiritualized so to speak, and viewed as an ideation of God's plan for his people. This is basically the interpretation proposed by Block: "The issue for the prophet is not physical geography but spiritual realities. As in his earlier vision[s], historical events are described from a theological plane, and the interpreter's focus must remain on the ideational value of that which is envisioned" (505). To his people in Babylon, God promises a new covenant and the permanent reestablishment of his residence among them (Ezek 37:26-27); the vision of chaps. 40-48 picks up this theological theme and develops the spiritual reality in concrete terms, employing and stylizing the familiar cultural idioms and symbols of temple, altar, sacrifices, prince, and land (ibid., 505-506).

¹The expression "in those days" almost certainly refers to the days of the new covenant (cf. 50:4-5) which would be effective in the eschatological era of salvation. Such is the dominant meaning of this expression in the later prophets (e.g., Joel 2:29; Zech 8:23; cf. Jer 33:15-16) (see Andrew W. Blackwood Jr., *Commentary on Jeremiah: The Word, the Words and the World* [Waco: Word, 1977], 60).

This passage has been understood as if Jeremiah, writing after the loss of the ark of the covenant, were reacting against overconfidence in that sacred object, as it fostered among the people a false sense of security about God's permanent residence in their midst.¹ Most interpreters, however, argue that this prophecy has a future, eschatological focus and is not necessarily related to the actual condition or understanding of the ark either in Josiah's time, which is the historical setting of the immediate literary context (cf. 3:6), or even in the latter years of Jeremiah's own ministry.

This prophetic fragment implies nothing with respect to the religious situation of God's people in the late seventh or early sixth century B.C., but rather it "anticipate[s] a future age in which the ark would no longer have a function."² The ark would cease to have any important role in the faith of God's future Israel. The reason is clear: as a symbol of God's throne and presence on earth the ark would lose its significance because Jerusalem itself would become God's throne, meaning probably that God's presence would no longer be circumscribed to or mediated by a temple or a building, but would be openly experienced everywhere by those who trusted in him.³ Jeremiah's

¹So C. L. Seow, "Ark of the Covenant," *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:390. Similarly, Robert P. Carroll: "The observation in vs. 16 about its [the ark's] loss not being missed in the future is in keeping with such a demythologized bit of ancient wood" (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 150).

²See Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, WBC 26 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 61.

³Referring to a statement by Jerome, according to which Jerusalem would be God's throne in the sense that God would be enthroned in the hearts of the believers (*Commentary on Jeremiah* 3.17), William McKane says: "A community adorned with righteousness and wisdom, which depends wholly on Yahweh, is a more glorious throne for Yahweh than the cherubim and

prophecy is not a critique of the people's attitude towards the ark, or a retrospective reflection on the disappearance of the ark. Instead, it seems to indicate that it was God's intention that the ark should disappear.¹

When and how precisely the ark disappeared is not known. The Bible is silent on this matter. According to some Jewish traditions, Jeremiah himself removed the ark and hid it in a cave on the mountain from which Moses saw the promised land.² It is possible, however, that this story is nothing else but "a later legend dependent on the present passage [Jer 3:16-18]."³ At any rate, the ark is not listed among the spoils that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple to Babylon when Jerusalem was sacked (2 Kgs 25:13-17; Jer 52:17-23).⁴ Whatever the precise facts, the ark was lost and was never rebuilt. In the second temple, in the very spot in which the ark would have stood, there

the ark" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986-1996], 74).

¹William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 120.

²See 2 Macc 2:4-8. This tradition can be traced at least to the historian Eupolemos (see Eusebius *La Préparation Évangélique* 9.39). For additional sources, see Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 48-58. For the view that the ark was destroyed in Manasseh's time, see Menahem Haran, "The Disappearance of the Ark," *IEJ* 13 (1963): 46-58; idem, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 281-284.

³Holladay, 121.

⁴"Although there can be no absolutes in scholarship, the lines of evidence converge on the first half of the sixth century B.C.E. as the period during which the ark was lost" (Seow, "The Designation of the Ark in Priestly Theology," 189).

was, instead, a stone three fingers high,¹ which means that the chamber was virtually empty.²

As for God's presence among his people, what remained was only the promise of God's glorious return to make the covenantal relationship more real than ever in the new, eschatological era of salvation (Jer 3:16-18; Ezek 37:26-27; Joel 3:17; Hag 2:3-9; Zech 2:10-11; cf. Isa 44:3-5).³ For John to claim that "the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only One from the Father, full of grace and truth," can only mean that the incarnation of Jesus Christ signals the arrival of such an era. In this case, John's view represents a complete break with the Judaism of his day, which still posited some form of continuity between Israel's sanctuaries of the past and life in the future.⁴

¹See *m. Yoma* 5:2.

²This is exactly what Josephus says (*Wars of the Jews* 5.219). The Roman historian Tacitus also reports that "it was a common knowledge that . . . the place was empty and the secret shrine contained nothing" (*Histories* 5.9).

³This is the case for most Jewish stories of the hidden ark. In 2 Macc 2:4-8, for example, the reappearance of the ark, as well as God's glory, after the purification of the temple is anticipated. Cf. Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 58. For Jewish expectations of a literal, physical temple, see, e.g., *Jub.* 1:17-29; *1 En.* 90:28-29; *Tob* 13:13-18; 14:5; *T. Levi* 18:6; *T. Benj.* 9:2; *Tg. Isa.* 53:5; *Tg. Zech.* 6:12-15; *Sib. Or.* 3.286-294; 5:423-433. On this issue, see further, R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 123-134; Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation*, BZNW 107 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 183-213.

⁴Several scholars have highlighted the fact that in the entry of the Logos into the realm of humankind is the fulfillment of the OT promise of God's dwelling among men (e.g., Bernard, 1:21; Hoskyns, 149; Boismard, 135-145; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:273; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:32-33; Rissi, "John 1:1-18," 399). The issue, however, goes further than this, for the promise is actually linked to the notion of a new covenant, in which God's saving relationship with his people would find its ultimate expression.

The Arrival of the New Era

In 1:14 John is not announcing the incarnation event as if he had not spoken about it yet, neither is he merely repeating that event, for nowhere in the previous verses is the incarnation so explicitly mentioned. His summary of the gospel story, of Jesus' coming into the world and the response he met with, is substantially complete with vs. 13. What is not complete is the salvation-history meaning of that story, and this is what he pursues now. The language he has just employed to describe both the rejection of Jesus by οἱ Ἰδιῶται (vs. 11) and his acceptance by the ὄσοι (vs. 12), as well as the transformation that came to them as a result (vs. 13), already displayed strong covenantal associations, even evoking important ideas related to the new covenant.¹ The promise of the new covenant, however, does not consist only of a child-father relationship with God and supernatural renewal. It also involves the fulfillment of the promise, which corresponds to the very essence of the covenant, of God's dwelling in the midst of his people and his fellowship with them, as the demonstration that he is their God and that they are his people. This was the supreme goal of the exodus from Egypt,² which

Boismard comes very close to his idea, but besides being mistaken at some important points, such as the meaning of vss. 14c, 16a, and 16b-17, he fails to consider the ultimate purpose of the covenantal promise, as well as the prophetic connections which anticipate an eschatological relationship with God no longer mediated by the tabernacle/temple. This has led him to say, for example, that "Christ's humanity is . . . the tabernacle of the new covenant and of the new exodus" (144). On this issue, see above, 152, n. 3.

¹See above, 121-134.

²"Not the settlement in Canaan ([Exod] 3:8, 17; 6:8), but YHWH's residence in the midst of Israel is here mentioned as the goal of the exodus out of Egypt. When YHWH dwells in the midst of Israel (29:45) and takes up contact with the Israelites (29:42b, 43a), then they

became a symbol for the exodus from Babylon and the eschatological era of salvation. In the book of Revelation, this fellowship is presented as the supreme goal of the entire salvation history (see Rev 21:1-5).¹

The fulfillment of such a promise is the theme of John 1:14a-b and, for that matter, of this whole section of the Prologue (vss. 14-18). This fits perfectly John's dominant eschatological emphasis, according to which the future is not only the object of hope, but has already become a reality through the advent of Jesus Christ.² It follows, therefore, that the *καί* at the beginning of vs. 14 cannot be taken either as inaugural³ or

will understand that the purpose of the exodus was YHWH's fellowship with Israel (cf. 19:5 and see Lev 26:11-12)" (Houtman, *Exodus*, 4:553).

¹It is not without a reason that, in its description of the new Jerusalem, Rev 21-22 goes back to Ezekiel's vision in chaps. 40-48. As an ideation of the spiritual realities awaiting for Israel (see above, 160, n. 1), Ezekiel's vision was probably John's main source of inspiration for his portrait of God's perfect relationship with his people after the cosmic dissolution of the present order and the establishment of the new one (see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 1046, 1061, 1074). In this new order, however, there is no need for any tabernacle/temple, for God himself and the Lamb will be the temple and their glory the light of Jerusalem (Rev 21:22-23). For John's use of Ezekiel, see further Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 64-84.

²On the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel, see esp. Rudolf Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958-1961), 1:134-152; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 144-150; Alf Corell, *Consummation Est: Eschatology and Church in the Gospel of St. John* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 79-112; Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 268-291; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 67-70; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 214-226; Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 149-151; Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, 3 vols., WUNT 96, 110, 117 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997-2000), 3:240-462; Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 88-90.

³So Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 143.

resumptive¹ in relation to the historical progress of the narrative, for the main focus now is not so much the fact itself,² but rather the theological meaning of that fact. This does not mean, however, that the καί must be taken as epexegetical,³ for the clause ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο can hardly be considered an explanatory addition to what has just been said, as can χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος in vs. 16.⁴ According to Theobald, vs. 14's initial καί is a kind of signal which raises the attention. It indicates a new stage in the argument, as well as underlines the importance of the following statements.⁵ Even though it picks up a fact already implied in the narrative, this καί introduces something new and unique, and that is a profound reflection, marvelous in its implications, on the covenantal significance of that fact. Since this reflection also brings the Prologue to a conclusion, it seems fully justified to construe the καί as emphatic, meaning something like "yes" or "indeed."⁶

¹So Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 283.

²Taken strictly on the historical plan, Trocmé's statement that vs. 14 is "the impressive summary of the whole story of Jesus and his disciples as told in the Gospel" (10) appears to be completely unjustified.

³So La Potterie, "Structure du Prologue de saint Jean," 371. Hoskyns's difficulty in taking this καί as a simple conjunction connecting vss. 13 and 14 (164) is perfectly understandable. It would make some sense only if the singular reading ὃς οὐκ . . . ἐγεννήθη in vs. 13 were adopted, even though the abrupt change from the passive (ἐγεννήθη) to the active (ἐγένετο) would be difficult to explain (see Thyen, "Das Johannesevangelium," 26).

⁴Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1181; Blass and Debrunner, §442.

⁵Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort*, 25. Schnelle's statement, that "the initial καί first draws attention to itself" (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 39) is obscure.

⁶Lausberg's attempt to make this καί a "distant redactional connection" between vs. 1 and vs. 14 ("Der Johannes-Prolog," 238) does not seem appropriate. Though the term λόγος is used in vs. 14 for the first time since vs. 1, and these two verses establish a contrast between the two modes of being of the Logos, a syntactical connection between them is definitely forced and

By the same token, contrary to what Bultmann says, it makes a difference whether ἐγένετο and ἐσκήνωσεν are regarded as inceptive or constative.¹ The context seems to favor the latter, for the former could well imply something not mentioned before. Apart from that, however, by emphasizing the beginning of the action, the inceptive aorist calls attention to the action itself. Only the constative aorist, which emphasizes the act as a single whole irrespective of the parts or time involved, allows an assessment of the meaning and purpose of the action, as one finds here.² In conclusion, according to this interpretation, instead of being deprived from its significance and reduced to “a pale variant upon an already established theme,”³ vs. 14 continues to be “the classical statement of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation.”⁴ It retains its full force, and its climactic character is by no means ruined by an incarnational interpretation of vss. 9-13.⁵

should not be insisted upon. With reference to καί as emphatic, see H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), 250-252.

¹Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 66, n. 5. See also Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 50.

²On the constative aorist, see Zerwick, §188, and esp. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 831-834.

³Ashton, “The Transformation of Wisdom,” 175.

⁴Smith, *John*, ANTC, 58.

⁵Against Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 78; Painter, “Christology and the History of the Johannine Community,” 462; Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 127.

A Real Incarnation

In vs. 14a, two words are difficult. These are σάρξ and ἐγένετο.

The meaning of σάρξ

In John's Gospel σάρξ refers to human nature in general, that is, created human beings of flesh and blood (1:13; 3:6; 6:51-56, 63; 8:15; 17:2).¹ The word does not convey the same moral connotation commonly found in the writings of Paul (e.g., Rom 7:18, 25; Gal 5:16-21).² Here σάρξ "represents human nature as distinct from God."³ In view of the dynamics of the Prologue, the use of σάρξ in this passage is clearly intended to establish a contrast with the divinity of the Logos in vss. 1-3, for this is the first time that the term λόγος is used since vs. 1. The emphasis of vs. 14 is that the same Logos who "was with God" and "was God," is the Logos who "was made flesh" and "dwelt among us."⁴ Three contrasts are here established: between the eternal ἦν and the historical ἐγένετο, between the divine θεός and the human σάρξ, and between the heavenly πρὸς τὸν θεόν and the earthly ἐν ἡμῖν. Therefore, as Thompson argues, this verse "demands the identity of the Logos and the flesh: only in this manner can he be

¹"Sheer humanity," says Bultmann (*The Gospel of John*, 63).

²See Eduard Schweizer, "σάρξ," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 7:138-140; A. C. Thiselton, "σάρξ," *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1986), 1:678-679; Alexander Sand, "σάρξ," *EDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 3:232-233; and esp. Thompson, *The Incarnate Word*, 39-49.

³Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 164.

⁴Thompson, *The Incarnate Word*, 39-40.

said to have ‘dwelt among us,’ that is, among those who are also flesh.”¹

The meaning of ἐγένετο

Although ἐγένετο says very little about the incarnation itself, which makes the task to explain its exact meaning almost impossible,² there is general agreement that it is far from supporting Käsemann’s docetic interpretation, according to which incarnation is conceived only in terms of epiphany.³ Schnelle contends that vs. 14a “emphasizes the real incarnation of the Son of God and also represents a succinct statement of the fundamental change in the nature of the Logos, while preserving the Logos’s divine identity.”⁴ That is to say, in view of the fact that the Logos continues to be the subject of

¹Ibid., 42.

²Bernard, 1:20.

³Käsemann understands incarnation only as a “manifestation of the Creator on earth” (*New Testament Questions for Today*, 159, 161). This means that, by being made flesh, the Logos “does not really change himself, but only his place” (*The Testament of Jesus*, 12), and this place where the epiphany of the Logos occurs is called “flesh” (*New Testament Questions for Today*, 158). “‘Flesh’ for the evangelist here is nothing else but the possibility for the Logos, as the Creator and Revealer, to have communication with men” (ibid., 159).

⁴Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 222. Schnelle’s statement, however, raises an important semantical issue. Barrett argues that ἐγένετο “cannot mean ‘become,’ since the Word continues to be the subject of further sentences—it was the Word who ‘dwelt among us,’ and whose glory ‘we beheld;’ the Word continued to be the Word” (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 165). As for the meaning “be born” (“the Logos was born flesh”), Barrett says that this would be tolerable were it not that γεννηθῆναι has just been used in this sense (vs. 13), and that the use of a near synonym would be too harsh (ibid.). Barrett’s own timid solution is to construe ἐγένετο in the same sense as in vs. 6: “the Logos came [on the human scene] as flesh” (ibid.). J. C. O’Neill, however, though fully agreeing with Barrett in relation to the rendering “become,” points out that the meaning “be born” “is not intolerably harsh if we note that vs. 13 speaks of the moment of conception, whereas vs. 14, having in mind the visible manifestation of the Word whose glory appears to be seen, speaks of the moment of birth.” Then he adds, “Only when born can his glory be seen” (“The Word Did Not ‘Become’

the next clause, ἐγένετο certainly denotes an identification in the sense that σάρξ cannot simply be taken as a garment in which God wandered on earth; the Logos, who was God, was also a man, and a real man. Clause c of vs. 14 (“we have seen his glory”) is also important in this connection. Coming after clauses a and b, it indicates that, in the revelation of the glory of God, the reality of the flesh cannot be hidden any more than the glory of God can be detached from the humanity of the earthly Jesus, as Ridderbos says.¹ This means that ἐγένετο must refer to “a mode of existence in which the deity of Christ can no more be abstracted from his humanity than the reverse.”²

The Glory of the Logos (Vs. 14c-d)

Clauses c (“we have seen his glory”) and d (“glory as of the only One from the Father”) of vs. 14 are meant to confirm the idea that the covenantal promise of God’s perfect dwelling among his people has in fact been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This prepares the ground for the claim that, with that event, the new era of salvation has arrived (vss. 14e, 16). This section concentrates on the glory of the Logos, its association with the idea of God’s presence in the tabernacle/temple, its visibility, and its

Flesh,” *ZNW* 82 [1991]: 127). O’Neill further suggests that in vs. 6 ἐγένετο could also be understood as: “There was born a man” (ibid.). In this work, when referring to the incarnation of the Logos, I have consistently used the translation “be made” (“the Logos was made flesh”), like the old Latin “*et verbum caro factum est*,” a translation also looked at favorably by O’Neill (ibid.).

¹Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 50.

²Ibid. For a detailed assessment of the humanity of the Logos in the Fourth Gospel, see Thompson, *The Incarnate Word*.

divine attribute.

The Glory We Have Seen

The Greek clause καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (vs. 14c) picks up the ἡμῖν of vs. 14b and changes the subject from the third-person singular (ὁ λόγος) to the first-person plural (ἡμεῖς), so indicating the collective nature of the action.¹ The verb (θεάομαι) emphasizes the reality of that action and, consequently, of the glory (δόξα) of the Logos.

God's Presence as Glory

"Glory" is not to be taken in its original Greek sense of splendor or fame, but according to its usage in the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, the word δόξα usually renders the Hebrew כְּבוֹד, which is a technical term for the visible and powerful manifestation of God to his people.² It is particularly associated with God's presence in the tabernacle/temple.³ When Moses went up Mount Sinai (Exod 24:15-16), a cloud covered the mountain and the glory of God settled there while God instructed Moses how to build the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was built, the cloud covered it and the

¹Against Thyen, who thinks that the first-person plural refers to the author only. He says that the plural is nothing but an invitation to "all potential readers" to join the author in his confession ("Das Johannesevangelium," 34).

²C. John Collins, "כְּבוֹד," *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:581-583. Rolf Rendtorff describes כְּבוֹד as "that aspect of the activity of Jahweh that could be perceived by men and in which he himself is revealed in his power" ("The Concept of Revelation in Ancient Israel," in *Revelation as History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou [New York: Macmillan, 1968], 37).

³M. Weinfeld, "כְּבוֹד," *TDOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-), 7:27.

glory of God filled it (40:34-35).

The phenomenon of the glory happened also when Solomon's temple was dedicated (1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 7:1-3). The temple then replaced the tabernacle and became God's dwelling place on earth, the place where his glory abode (Ps 26:8). Small wonder, says Carson, that all in the temple, aware of God's presence, would cry "Glory!" (Ps 29:9).¹ Just before the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, the glory of God is reported to have left Jerusalem (Ezek 11:22-23);² and it never came back.

In the Targums, "glory" became a substitute for God's name when that name was used in reference to the manifestation of God's presence among humans,³ mostly also in the context of the tabernacle/temple. Thus, while in Exod 24:10 Moses and the elders "saw the God of Israel" on Mount Sinai, in the Targums of both Onkelos and Jonathan they "saw the glory [יקר] of the God of Israel."⁴ Likewise, while in Isa 6:1 the prophet says that he "saw the Lord" in the temple, in the Targum of Isaiah he "saw the glory of

¹Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 128.

²Although the concept of God's קְבוֹד in the tabernacle/temple is usually assigned by OT scholarship to some specific source strata, particularly associated with the Jerusalem priesthood, Weinfeld demonstrates that this is not always the case and that such a concept is very ancient in Hebrew tradition (7:32). On God's presence in the temple and the manifestation of his glory, see Clements, 17-78.

³See Roger le Déaut, "Targumic Literature and New Testament Interpretation," *BTB* 4 (1974): 268-269.

⁴J. W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum, from the Chaldee: Genesis and Exodus*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1862; reprint in 1 vol., New York: Ktav, 1968), 400, 526.

the Lord.”¹ It is, therefore, appropriate, Brown notes, that after saying that the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among men, “the Prologue should mention that his glory became visible.”²

The Visible Glory of Christ

The context of incarnation requires the glory of Christ to have been completely visible and tangible, which means that vs. 14 describes a concrete experience in the life of the people represented by the ἡμεῖς, who included the evangelist and probably no more than a handful of first-generation believers who were still alive at the time the Gospel was written.³ They saw the glory of the Logos, thus confirming the claim that

¹J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 20-21. See further, Gerhard Kittel, “δόξα,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 2:245.

²Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:34.

³It is customary to say that the first-person plural in vs. 14 (cf. vs. 16; 21:24) points to the experience of a specific Christian community at the end of the first century, the Johannine community, whose history, location, composition, theology, and literature are claimed to have been entirely reconstructed, and to which this Gospel was written (see D. Moody Smith, “Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Delineation,” *NTS* 21 [1975]: 236-238). There have always been some, however, who protested against the idea of a Johannine community, especially because of the high degree of refinement of its historical reconstruction, which in most cases seems to be nothing more than “an exercise in creative imagination with very few historical controls” (Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 483). The advent of newer literary-critical approaches threw cold water on the diachronic studies of John and the abusive use of the text as a kind of window through which the history of the Johannine community could be reconstructed. Of particular importance in this process was R. Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). More recently, the very notion of a Johannine community has been challenged, and more than ever the possibility that the fourth evangelist had a wider audience in view when he wrote his Gospel has become an issue. At the center of the discussion is Richard Bauckham and the book he edited *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). The book is a collection of essays with a single purpose: “The aim of this book is to

the eschatological promise of God's dwelling among his people found its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth.¹

Opposition to the visible glory

The idea that the glory of the Logos was physically visible and that it was actually seen by the ἡμεῖς is disputed by some scholars. Barrett, for example, though saying that the "first-person plural is to be taken with full seriousness," argues that it does not refer here to eyewitnesses but to the apostolic church, which is "the heir of the apostles and of their authority."² For Bultmann, the plural also refers to the church but,

challenge and to refute the current consensus in Gospel scholarship which assumes that each of the Gospels was written for a specific church or group of churches. . . . It is probable that the Gospels were written for general circulation around the churches and so envisaged a very general Christian audience" (1). Three essays have particular significance for the study of the Fourth Gospel: Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?" 9-48; idem, "John for Readers of Mark," 147-171; Richard A. Burridge, "About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences," 113-145. Responses to Bauckham include: Philip F. Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's *Gospel for All Christians*," *SJTh* 51 (1998): 235-248; David C. Sim, "The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham," *JSNT* 84 (2001): 3-27. See also Richard Bauckham, "Response to Philip Esler," *SJTh* 51 (1998): 249-253; idem, "The Audience of the Fourth Gospel," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 101-111. To my knowledge, the first full-scale commentary on John to incorporate Bauckham's thesis and to abandon the Johannine community hypothesis altogether is that of Thyen, to be published soon by Mohr (Tübingen), and of which the first manuscript part (covering John 1-4) is here used under the title "Das Johannesevangelium."

¹Carson even suggests taking the καί at the beginning of this clause as ascensive ("even"), as in Acts 7:55 ("He . . . saw the glory of God, even Jesus at the right hand of God") (*The Gospel according to John*, 128).

²Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 143 (cf. 166). Similarly, M. de Jonge: "The 'seeing' of the eyewitnesses is the basis of their bearing witness and of all the church's speaking. The *pluralis apostolicus* passes over into the *pluralis ecclesiasticus*, and the *pluralis ecclesiasticus* is inconceivable without the *pluralis apostolicus*" (*Jesus: Inspiring and*

contrary to Barrett, he does not ground it on the empirical experience of any person. It refers rather to “the sight of faith,” for the revelation of the glory itself is not a historical event, but an existential experience which has been historicized, and because of this it can be transmitted to all future generations.¹

The main reason why both Barrett and Bultmann deny the eyewitness status of the ἡμεῖς is that, according to them, not all who saw Jesus in person saw his divine glory.² That the glory could not be seen by the world is in fact a favorite statement,³ and Bultmann even speaks of the “mystery” which hung over the figure of Jesus. He came in total “hiddenness,” not because he was not a real man, but because he was “a mere man.” His divinity was “completely lacking in visibility,” so that it could not “fill men with enthusiasm and touch their feelings or . . . fascinate and overwhelm them.”⁴ For Bultmann, the life of Jesus became a revelation of glory only in the light of the glorification. Only those who believed were then able to look back upon Jesus’ earthly

Disturbing Presence, trans. John E. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1974], 154). So also Gese: “The apostolic ‘we’ . . . has become the ‘we’ of the ecclesia” (207).

¹Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 68-70.

²See Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 143; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 69.

³E.g., Jacques Dupont, *Essais sur la christologie de Saint Jean: Le Christ, parole, lumière et vie, la gloire du Christ* (Bruges: Abbaye de Saint-André, 1951), 289; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 84-85; Wikenhauser, 48; Bouyer, 53; John Marsh, *Saint John*, WPC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 101; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:270; Kittel, 2:249; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 95; Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 32-33; Bruce, 41; Gniska, 15; Kysar, *John*, 32; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 223, n. 89; Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 43, n. 78; Johan Ferreira, *Johannine Ecclesiology*, JSNTSup 160 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 154; Wilckens, 34.

⁴Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:40-49.

life and say that they saw his glory.¹

Refutation of the opposition

Four points, however, militate against the notion of a hidden glory that could only be seen in retrospect and through the eyes of faith.

The meaning of θεάομαι. Whatever the precise shade of meaning of θεάομαι,² this verb invariably refers, whether in John's writings (John 1:14, 32, 38; 4:35; 6:5; 11:45; 1 John 1:1; 4:12, 14) or in the New Testament as a whole (Matt 6:1; 11:7; 22:11; 23:5; Mark 16:11, 14; Luke 5:27; 7:24; 23:55; Acts 1:11; 21:27; 22:9; Rom 15:24), to physical, not spiritual, sight or a vision.³ It is never used, for example, of seeing God. Even when it carries the notion of perceiving something above and beyond what is actually seen (e.g., John 1:32), θεάομαι by itself does not rule out the element of

¹Ibid., 49. Commenting on John 17:1, Bultmann argues that "the evangelist has depicted the work of Jesus in such a way that it can only, and should only, be understood in the light of the end: as eschatological event. In the ὥρα of separation past and future are bound together, so that the latter gives meaning to the former" (*The Gospel of John*, 493).

²Because the root meaning of θεάομαι suggests connection with "theater," Edwin A. Abbott would translated it as "to contemplate" (*Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three* [London: A & C Black, 1905], §1604). G. L. Phillips thinks that it means "to look at some dramatic spectacle and in a measure to become part of it" ("Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel," in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. L. Cross [London: Mowbray, 1957], 89-90, 92). According to Wilhelm Michaelis, θεάομαι "has a certain loftiness and even solemnity" ("ὁράω," *TDNT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 5:318); for W. E. Vine it means "to view attentively, to see with admiration, desire, or regard" (*The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, ed. John R. Kohlenberger III, with James A. Swanson [Minneapolis: Bethany, 1984], 1009).

³See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:501-503.

eyewitness.¹ According to 1 John 1:1-3, the revelation brought about by the incarnate Logos was not only seen with the eyes; it was also felt with the hands. The object of such a sight has to be concrete.

Faith not based on sight. The emphasis John places on faith that is not grounded on physical sight is essentially theological, but it must also be seen from a historical perspective. The Fourth Gospel was conceived and written in a time of religious conflict. It was also a time of transition between the generation who knew Jesus personally and the second generation, who knew him only through the testimony of others. Most of those prominent people who had been with Jesus were no longer alive (see 21:18-19). The impending death of the beloved disciple himself (vss. 20-23),² who is presented as an eyewitness and source of the material in this Gospel (vs. 24),³

¹Michaelis, "ὁπάω," 5:345.

²It is not relevant whether the beloved disciple was still alive or had just died when chap. 21 was written. Arguments can be advanced for both sides, but they are hardly capable of proof. What is difficult is to agree with Robinson that the beloved disciple was not even old at that time (*The Priority of John*, 71). For the idea that he was still alive, see Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 682.

³Modern scholarship is still very cautious about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, but in general the authority of the beloved disciple and his status as eyewitness is now widely recognized (see R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend*, SPNT [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994], 56-88). The main question that still remains is the identity of that disciple. To the long list of possible candidates discussed by Culpepper not long ago (the apostle John, Lazarus, John Mark, Matthias, the rich young ruler, Paul, Benjamin, Gentile Christianity, an itinerant, prophetic community, and John the elder), at least one more has to be added: Thomas (James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* [Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995], esp. 225-287). About the traditional identification of the beloved disciple with the apostle John, Moloney declares: "However much the scholarly assessment of the internal and external evidence militates against

was probably leading the second generation into distress and uncertainty.¹ This situation may have been one of the reasons for this Gospel, so that the purpose of the evangelist was to persuade that second generation that the lack of a living apostle was no barrier to their Christian experience (20:30-31).²

John's statement of purpose is to be understood in connection with the story of Thomas (vss. 24-29), at the end of which Jesus says: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (vs. 29). This statement is not a depreciation of faith which is based on physical sight, as Bultmann claims.³ On the contrary, though the focus here is not on Thomas, the privilege of the first generation who saw Jesus is recognized in the very attempt to overcome it. And though the story of Thomas is about the resurrection itself, vss. 30-31 make it clear that,

the traditional identification of John the son of Zebedee with the beloved disciple, there is always the chance that the apostle John may have been in some way 'author' of the Gospel we traditionally call 'of John.' It is arrogant to rule any possibility out of court. It should not worry us that we cannot be sure" (*The Gospel of John*, 8).

¹See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2:1048-1049; Paul S. Minear, "The Audience of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Interpreting the Gospels*, ed. James L. Mays (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 247-264; Jon Paulien, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, BA (Boise: Pacific, 1995), 19-23.

²This is an oversimplification of the problem regarding the purpose and audience of the Fourth Gospel and assumes that the original reading of John 20:31 is the present subjunctive πιστεύητε (P^{66vid} B Θ 0250), which suggests that John's aim was to strengthen the faith of those who already believed ("that you may continue to believe"), and not the aorist πιστεύσῃτε (N² A C D W f¹³ 33 M), which would imply a non-Christian audience ("that you may come to believe"). For a sound text-critical analysis of this passage, see Gordon D. Fee, "On the Text and Meaning of John 20:30-31," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, 3 vols., ed. F. van Segbroeck, et al., BETHL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992): 3:2193-2205.

³Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 696.

whatever the source relationship of these two verses with the previous ones,¹ the ultimate object of faith is Jesus' whole life as an expression of his messiahship and divinity.²

Vs. 30 explicitly declares that "many other signs" were performed "in the presence of the disciples," yet they were not included in the Gospel, and in vs. 31 we are told that the signs which were included were selected because of their capacity to generate the same faith developed by the disciples. What was seen by the disciples is now written down so that the second generation may come to the same point of confessing, as Thomas did: "My Lord and my God!" (cf. 17:14, 20; 19:35; 21:24; 1 John 1:1-4; 2:21-25).³ Such was the importance of the experience of the first generation. Though having seen Jesus is no longer a prerequisite for faith,⁴ this is so because of the testimony of those who did see him. A hidden glory, therefore, does not seem to fit a

¹Bultmann, of course, believes that in vss. 30-31 "the evangelist is taking over the conclusion of the σημεῖα-source" (ibid., 698).

²So correctly Bultmann: "Naturally the declaration does not look back especially to the Easter stories, but like the similar statement of 12:37, it embraces the whole activity of Jesus, in which the Easter narratives are included" (ibid.).

³In the statement of purpose (20:30-31) "the author presents his book as a substitute for the signs, thus recognizing that his readers will have access to faith through reading rather than through seeing" (Minear, "The Audience of the Fourth Evangelist," 255; cf. 263). Paulien calls attention to the fact that, contrary to the Synoptics, where Jesus repeatedly uses touch to perform his miracles, the signs recorded in the Fourth Gospel were accomplished by the power of Jesus' word, even in the case of the blind man of 9:1-12. Though Jesus smears a little mud into that man's eyes, the miracle does not occur until the man washes his eyes in the pool of Siloam (vss. 6-7). For the second generation of believers, the message of Jesus' miracles in John is that the lack of the physical presence of Jesus is no barrier for faith. The written word is as effective as the incarnate One (22).

⁴So O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 9:850.

contextual reading of John 20:24-31.

The connection between σάρξ and δόξα. The specific connection between σάρξ and δόξα means that to speak of a hidden glory would make sense only if one could also speak of a hidden flesh. That is, σάρξ implies that the δόξα was physically visible because σάρξ was manifested “among us.” “At stake,” Ridderbos contends, “is the glory of God in the flesh, which could only be seen . . . by those who were the eyewitnesses of that flesh.”¹ It follows that any attempt to see the glory of Jesus in reference to a single event, such as the baptism, death and resurrection, glorification, and especially the transfiguration,² which is not even recounted in John, does not seem to do any justice to the emphasis on the incarnation and dwelling in vs. 14. One must certainly think of a continuous glory in the life of the earthly Jesus.³

In a statement that conceals his true understanding of θεάομαι and δόξα,

¹Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 52.

²Michaels (26) emphasizes the baptism as the moment when the glory of Jesus was revealed and was seen by the evangelist and other believers. Kittel (249), De Boor (1:54), and Borchert (120) emphasize the death, so also Th. C. de Kruijf (“The Glory of the Only Son [John 1:14],” in *Studies in John: Presented to Professor Dr. J. N. Sevenster on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, NovTSup 24 [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 111-123), while Serafin de Ausejo (“¿Es un himno a Cristo el prólogo de San Juan? Los himnos cristológicos de la Iglesia Primitiva y el prólogo del IV Evangelio,” *EstB* 15 [1956]: 406-407) and Witherington (*John's Wisdom*, 55), the resurrection. For Gerard S. Sloyan (*John, Interpretation* [Atlanta: Knox, 1988], 19) and Wilhelm Thüsing (*Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium*, NTA 21 [Münster: Aschendorff, 1970], 226, n. 16) the glory of Jesus was especially revealed in his glorification; for Dupont (279), Boismard (138-139); Bouyer (53), Brown (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:34), Boismard and Lamouille (78), and Léon-Dufour (119), it was in his transfiguration.

³Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 53.

Bultmann declares rather surprisingly: "The δόξα is not to be seen alongside the σάρξ, nor through the σάρξ as through a window; it is to be seen in the σάρξ and nowhere else. If man wishes to see the δόξα, then it is on the σάρξ that he must concentrate his attention, without allowing himself to fall a victim to appearances."¹

The meaning of δόξα in John. The noun δόξα and the verb δοξάζω are sometimes used in the Fourth Gospel in the neutral sense of "honor" or "to honor" (5:41, 44; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 12:43).² These words are also frequently used in relation to the departure of Jesus (7:39; 12:16, 23; 13:31-32; 16:14; 17:1, 5, 24). In this case, δοξάζω is always an action of the Father, who will glorify Jesus in his presence with the glory he had before the world existed (cf. 17:5).³ With reference to the life of Jesus, δόξα is used only three times after the Prologue, always in connection with miracles (2:11; 11:4, 40). The same happens with δοξάζω: Jesus revealed the Father's glory by doing his work

¹Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 63.

²See Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 206.

³The idea of Jesus' being glorified by the Father is tied up with the concept of his "hour" (12:23, 27-28; 17:1), which is normally understood in terms of the death of Jesus: his approaching hour is the hour of his death (e.g., Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2:382-383). Nicholson, however, has convincingly shown that "the ὥρα of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is not the hour of his death, but the hour of his return to the Father, in which hour the death played a part" (147). "Just as the ὥρα of Jesus is not a reference to his death but to his return above to the Father, so too the 'glorification of the Son of man' does not refer to the death of Jesus but to something which the Father does to the Son, either coincident with or subsequent to, the return of Jesus above" (ibid., 149). See also W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel: Tradition and Redaction*, NovTSup 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 129; Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 55.

(17:4), which consisted basically, but not exclusively, of miracles (6:30; 7:21-23; 9:3-7; cf. 4:34-38). Performing miracles can then summarize the ministry of Jesus in John (12:37; 20:30-31). Miracles are the activity of God (5:19-20, 36; 10:25, 32) carried out by Jesus in the presence of the disciples (20:30) and the Jews in general (10:32). The miracles are not glory in themselves, but a revelation of glory.¹ They reveal the presence and power of God on earth (14:10) and testify that Jesus was in fact sent by God (3:2; 5:36; 6:14, 29-30; 7:31; 9:16; 20:30-31). Hence, upon his departure from this world, Jesus could look back on his entire ministry and say that he had revealed God's glory (17:4). For John, says Nicol, the whole point of the miracles "is the historical reality of the glory."²

Concluding this discussion, in contrast to the Old Testament, therefore, "there is here no longer any thought of visible light or radiance accompanying Christ in his earthly life,"³ but in spite of that it is not correct to say that, in the Fourth Gospel, "the divine presence and power were apprehensible [only] by those who had the faculty of faith."⁴ The point is not that Jesus' glory was not immediately visible, but that it did not effect faith (2:11; 4:48; 6:30, 36; 7:31; 9:35-41; 10:25-26, 37-38; 11:40-45; 12:37). And it did not effect faith, not because Jesus' miracles were ambiguous in the sense argued by

¹Nicol, 133.

²Ibid., 138. On the materiality of the miracles, see Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:524-525; and esp. Thompson, *The Incarnate Word*, 56-63. Both of them are in part responding to Bultmann who finds it questionable whether the evangelist himself regarded the miracles as actual historical occurrences (*The Gospel of John*, 119, n. 2).

³Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 207.

⁴Ibid.

Bultmann,¹ but because of sin which dwells in the human heart (16:9; cf. 3:19-20; 9:39-41; 10:37-38; 12:42-43).

There was nothing wrong with the miracles, nor does John criticize them.² The reason why Jesus did not entrust himself to those who had believed on account of the miracles in 2:23-24 is not because of the miracles themselves, but because of man (see vs. 25).³ The purpose of Jesus' miracles in the Fourth Gospel is to evoke faith (cf. 2:11; 12:37; 20:30-31). The miracles were God's testimony to Jesus (5:36-37), and they would have been convincing had the people allowed themselves to be convinced (15:24-25). Faith in this Gospel is always the result of seeing, not the condition for it (12:37).⁴ The contention of Bultmann and others that the glory was hidden derives from the attempt to understand the revelation of God's presence and power (δόξα) in the miracles and works of Jesus in the light of those passages which speak about the eschatological

¹See Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:44-45.

²It is sometimes asserted that John is somewhat cautious toward miracles and the faith which grows out from them (e.g., Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 131; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:127; Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:190).

³On the clarity and sufficiency of the miracles for faith, see the excellent discussion by Wolfgang J. Bittner, *Jesu Zeichen im Johannesevangelium: Die Messias-Erkennntnis im Johannesevangelium vor ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund*, WUNT 26 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 259-282.

⁴John 11:40 does not contradict this statement. In this passage, Martha's faith is the condition for the realization of the miracle itself, and so it points back to Jesus' statement to her in vss. 25-26: "In their conversation Jesus has certainly promised Martha that belief in him will lead to life" (Smith, *John*, ANTC, 226). It is not the same faith referred to in vs. 45, that is, the faith which came as a result of seeing Lazarus being resurrected by Jesus, neither can it be the same retrospective faith argued by Bultmann.

glorification of Jesus by the Father.¹ These are two different concepts, however, and the use of the same words (δόξα and δοξάζω) in relation to both should not cause disregard of their differences.²

Glory as of the Only One from the Father

After attesting the reality of the glory of the incarnate Logos, John explains what that glory was. He does this in a way that leaves no doubt about its essential nature and origin: “glory as of the only One from the Father” (vs. 14d). The Greek text of this clause (δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός) offers several difficulties.

Analysis of the Phrase

The particle ὡς does not seem to introduce a simple comparison, as if the glory of

¹“The old δόξα [the δόξα of Jesus’ earthly life] was indeed that of the μονογενής, in its complete fullness. . . . But what the δόξα was, it was only sub specie of the present ὥρα; indeed it will only really become that now. In other words, the evangelist has depicted the work of Jesus in such a way that it can only, and should only, be understood in the light of the end: as eschatological event” (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 493). Kittel also speaks of “the distinctive Johannine tendency to describe the life of Jesus from the standpoint of the exaltation” (249), so that, for John, “the δόξα derives from his death” (ibid.). Cf. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 207. Several authors say that Jesus revealed his divine glory throughout this entire ministry, but in one way or another they also emphasize the cross as the supreme revelation of that glory, thus taking the ὥρα of Jesus as the hour of his death (and resurrection) only, and apparently ignoring the fact that the eschatological glorification of Jesus was an act performed by the Father, not by Jesus himself. Bryant and Krause’s statement may be considered typical: “Jesus’ glory is seen, not primarily in his attributes . . . but in his actions, or works as John calls them, especially in his culminating works of dying and rising. For John, Christ’s highest moment of glory is his crucifixion (and rising again)” (48). See also Loisy, 106; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 82; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 93; Bruce, 41; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 128; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 14; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 143; Ferreira, 149-165; Burge, *John*, 59.

²On the eschatological glorification of Jesus by the Father, see Nicholson, 149-151.

Jesus were similar to the glory of an only son of a father.¹ Inasmuch as it is followed by μονογενοῦς, which is technically a genitive of definition, ὥς aims to define precisely the unique character of that glory. Hence Bultmann's statement that it means "in accordance with the fact that."² The anarthrous πατρός does not necessarily imply a hypothetical father.³ The omission of the article can well be explained as a sort of assimilation to μονογενοῦς,⁴ which also lacks the article because of its character as a predicative nominative.⁵

Μονογενής, the nominative form of μονογενοῦς, literally means "of a single [μονός] kind ["γένος]," and is etymologically related to the verb γίνομαι ("to become"), and only remotely to γεννάω ("to beget").⁶ This means that the probability of the

¹So Holtzmann, 44-45; Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 25. See also Dumbrell, "Law and Grace," 30-31.

²Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 71, n. 1. Similarly, BDAG: "Marker introducing the perspective from which a pers., thing, or activity is viewed or understood as to character, function, or role" (1104).

³Against Holtzmann, 44-45; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 82. Sanders even tries to justify what he considers to be a more accurate translation ("of a father"): "It is John's habit to disclose his meaning gradually" (ibid.). "Father" is John's most common designation of God. He uses this word 136 times, of which at least 120 refer to God, twice as often as anyone else in the NT. The word "God" itself appears in John 108 times. On John's concept of God as "Father," see Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 57-100.

⁴Blass and Debrunner, §257.

⁵Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 71, n. 1.

⁶Eugene A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone* (Waco: Word, 1977), 64. See also Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version," *JBL* 72 (1953): 213-219; J. A. Fitzmyer, "μονογενής," *EDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 2:439-440; BDAG, 658.

translation “only begotten” being correct is rather remote, though a few interpreters still insist on this meaning.¹ Μονογενής is used of Christ only by John, both with and without the word “Son” (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9), and it could in a sense be taken as the Johannine equivalent to the Synoptic ἀγαπητός, “beloved” (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cf. Mark 9:7).² It points to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the “only” Son of God, and so in this passage (1:14) it stresses the incomparable character of the glory which was seen in him.

The prepositional phrase παρὰ πατρός could be taken in connection with the remote δόξαν,³ but it is far better to connect it with μονογενοῦς, due to its proximity.⁴ La

¹Friedrich Büchsel, “μονογενής,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 4:737-741; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 82; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 96; John V. Dahms, “The Johannine Use of *Monogenēs* Reconsidered,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 222-232; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 53.

²The equivalence between μονογενής and ἀγαπητός should not be pressed too far. The traditional argument that in the LXX these two words are used interchangeably to translate the Hebrew יְחִיד (Gen 22:2, 12, 16; Judg 11:34; Amos 8:10; Zech 12:10; Jer 6:26) (see Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 128, n. 2) seems highly suspicious. H.-J. Fabry argues that ἀγαπητός is actually a misreading of יְחִיד as יְחִיד (“יְחִיד,” *TDOT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-], 6:43). In Gen 22:2, the presence of the verb ἀγαπάω may also have influenced the translator, who would have then simply repeated the mistake in vss. 12 and 16. The addition of μονογενής, along with ἀγαπητός, in codex A in Judg 11:34 seems to indicate the scribe’s awareness of a mistranslation. Furthermore, it should also be noted that Aquila and Symmachus, to the extent that their translations can be recovered, did not make the same mistake: in Gen 22:2, Aquila reads μονογενής rather than ἀγαπητός, while Symmachus reads μόνος; in Gen 22:12 and Amos 8:10, Symmachus reads μονογενής; so also both Aquila and Symmachus in Jer 6:26.

³See Haubeck and von Siebenthal, 520. If connected with δόξαν, the meaning of the clause would be something like, “glory as of the only One, which was given to him by the Father.” Scholars who favor this interpretation include: Loisy, 106; Lagrange, 23; Bernard, 1:23; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:34; Braun, *Jean le Théologien: Sa théologie*, 199-200; Boismard and Lamouille, 78-79; Manns, 30.

⁴Bernard’s objection to connecting παρὰ πατρός with μονογενοῦς is problematic. He

Potterie is certainly right by saying that “to go from δόξαν straight to παρὰ πατρός, bypassing the important words ὡς μονογενοῦς, is stylistically too harsh.”¹ Most contemporary scholars connect παρὰ πατρός with μονογενοῦς.² With regard to παρὰ itself, Schnackenburg suggests that it needs to mean no more than a simple genitive,³ but it is always preferable to keep the original meaning of the preposition, which in this case is basically “from” or “coming from.”⁴ There are several parallels in the Fourth Gospel

argues (1:23) that μονογενὴς παρὰ is an unusual combination, especially in John, who always uses ἐκ θεοῦ, not παρὰ θεοῦ, when he wishes to say “to be born of God” (cf. John 1:13; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). This is, however, an argument from silence; it does not prove that John could not have written μονογενὴς παρὰ. Second, in the first century, the distinctions between the prepositions παρὰ, ἀπό, and ἐκ were being gradually obliterated, so that John could write ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξηλθον (8:42), παρὰ [τοῦ] θεοῦ ἐξηλθον (16:27), and ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξηλθες (vs. 30) (see Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 579). Third, Bernard’s argument is misleading, for in all the passages he mentions the word used is actually γεννᾶσθαι, not μονογενής. It is true that later Christian theologians used μονογενής as a synonym for γεννᾶσθαι, but in the first century that usage had not been established yet (see Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 305, n. 1).

¹La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:179.

²E.g., Westcott, 12; Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 25; Hoskyns, 149; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 71; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 305; Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 86; Wikenhauser, 48; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:271; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 82; De Kruijf, 120; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 166; Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 33; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 96; La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:179-180; Delebecque, *Évangile de Jean*, 61; Léon-Dufour, 120; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 253; Michaels, 23; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 93-94; Borchert, 120; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 53; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 39; Bryant and Krause, 48-49; Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 28; Wilckens, 34; Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2 vols., ThKNT, 4 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000-2001), 1:66; Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 37.

³Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:271.

⁴See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 614-615.

for the idea of Jesus coming from (παρά) God (6:46; 7:29; 9:16, 33; 16:27; cf. 8:40; 10:18; 15:15, 26; 16:28). Furthermore, as Theobald remarks, παρά πατρός places more emphasis on the Father as the origin of the Son than on the Son himself.¹ Therefore, it is not a glory that comes from the Father, but a glory that is defined on the basis of Jesus' unique relationship with the Father, from whom he comes. That relationship, which had already been referred to in connection with the Logos and God (1:1-2), points to the divine status of Jesus and his prerogative to be the very presence of God on earth. The glory that was seen in Jesus was not a glory which was given him by the Father, but, to use Bultmann's category, a glory in accordance with the fact that he is the only One from the Father and, by having no equal, he is the only One in the position to reveal that glory (cf. vs. 18).²

The Divinity of Jesus

Although the humanity of Jesus is fully attested in John, there is no question that the emphasis falls on his divinity.³ It could even be said that σάρξ stresses the humanity of the Logos as much as the concrete reality of God's presence among humans, and, for this reason, it implies the complete visibility of Jesus' glory, as well as the revelation of

¹Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 253, n. 225.

²Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 71, n. 1. One might agree with Brown that "there is no major difference in meaning no matter which word [δόξαν or μονογενοῦς] the phrase [παρά πατρός] modifies" (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:14). In both cases, the emphasis is on the divine and unique nature of Jesus' glory, but μονογενοῦς παρά πατρός emphasizes Jesus' relationship with the Father and his coming from the Father in a way that δόξαν . . . παρά πατρός does not.

³Nicol, 134.

his divinity. On this issue, there is always the danger of a one-sided reading, but the astounding miracles of the Johannine Jesus are intended to show, by the power they represent,¹ that the man Jesus of Nazareth was at the same time God striding across the earth.² The very designation of the miracles as “signs” (σημεῖα) suggests their revelatory function; thus no ambiguity can be ascribed to them without compromising the whole purpose of this Gospel (20:30-31). John presents the miracles of Jesus as if they had the power to evoke belief in him (2:11; 12:37; 20:30), which means that his glory was indeed visible to all. In this connection, four points must be emphasized: the Jews themselves asked for signs (2:18; 6:30); they believed that signs could authenticate Jesus’ divine claims (3:2; 6:14, 29-30; 7:31; 9:16; cf. 11:47); they saw the signs (2:23; 4:48; 6:2, 14; 12:37); yet, they did not believe (6:36; 10:25, 37-38; 12:37; cf. 9:41).³ This explains Jesus’ surprise with their response (15:24-25).

The meaning of Jesus’ miracles is important. The very term “sign” recalls the

¹See Dupont, 289.

²Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 106. Contrary to what Käsemann says, the earthly life of Jesus is not used by John “merely as a backdrop for the Son of God proceeding through the world of man and as the scene of the inbreaking of the heavenly glory” (*The Testament of Jesus*, 13; cf. 73). As Schnelle highlights, John’s emphasis on the visibility of Jesus’ miracles emphatically secures the identity of the pre-existent Logos with the fleshly Jesus Christ. Though the miracles do reveal Jesus’ divinity, with their mass and reality they also witness to Jesus’ humanity, “for they occur in space and time and are accomplished on behalf of concrete persons” (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 175, 233-234).

³As Nicol points out, the fact that even unbelievers saw the glory of Jesus as revealed in his miracles is further demonstrated by their conspiracy to kill him after the resurrection of Lazarus (11:45-53). The issue, therefore, is not that the glory could not be seen, but that its “brightness,” that is, “the light of Jesus’ divinity,” was rejected (133).

exodus tradition and the role of Moses, who was empowered by God to perform signs before both the Israelites (Exod 4:8-9, 17, 28-31) and Pharaoh (7:3, 8; 10:1-2; 11:9-10). About the sequence or arrangement of the signs in John, Smith speaks of "a deliberate purpose and intention."¹ Thus, the first miracle, at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11), finds in the steward's reaction (vs. 10) a casual explanation that conceals a deeper theological meaning. According to Smith, "that the best wine is kept until last says something about the appearance of Jesus in the economy of salvation."² Regardless of how one assesses the meaning of Jesus' signs in John,³ one thing is certain: signs were

¹Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 109. Many scholars think that the miracles recorded by John were taken from a collection of Jesus' signs that had been formed as an aid to proclamation. For a survey of proposals, see Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel*, 13-37. See also the more recent works of D. Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources, and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 62-79; Hans-Peter Heckerens, *Die Zeichen-Quelle der johanneischen Redaktion: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des vierten Evangeliums*, SBS 113 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984); Robert T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Earliest Version of John's Gospel: Recovering the Gospel of Signs* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989); Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 76-90; Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, rev. and exp. ed. (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994), 175-193. Recent scholars who reject the signs-source hypothesis include: Bittner, 1-16; Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 25-29; Christian Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen: Die Wundergeschichten des Johannesevangeliums literarisch untersucht. Mit einem Ausblick auf Joh 21*, WUNT 69 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 10-48; and esp. Gilbert van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis*, BETHL 116 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994).

²Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 109.

³Koester also calls attention to the fact that some OT messianic prophecies (Gen 49:10-12; Amos 9:11, 13; cf. Joel 3:18; Isa 25:6), as well as late first-century Jewish tradition (2 Bar. 29:5), associated the lavish outpouring of wine with the advent of the Messiah. Thus, in the Gospel narrative (cf. 1:41, 45, 49), he concludes, "the wine miracle at Cana confirms the disciples' confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah" (*Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 79).

related to the establishment of the first covenant, and signs were also related to the establishment of the new covenant. Signs indicated that Moses was sent by God (see Exod 3:12). Signs also indicated that Jesus was not only sent by God but was the μονογενὴς παρὰ πατρός, the only One to come from the Father in order to reveal him (John 1:18).

Thus the emphasis of vs. 14c-d is the reality of God's presence on earth. By saying, "we have seen his glory, glory as of the only One from the Father," John wants to confirm the factuality of the incarnation, as well as Jesus' divine origin and power. If the divine Logos came to dwell among humans, in fulfillment of the covenantal promise, then his glory should have been unambiguously visible to all. For John, the glory of Jesus was particularly visible through his miracles. But only those who believed in him came to enjoy the blessings of the new era of salvation which he inaugurated.

The Covenantal Faithfulness of the Logos (Vss. 14e-18)

In vss. 14e and 16, the fourth evangelist focuses on the covenantal attributes of the Logos and their impact on those who believed in him. By explicitly recalling Israel's experience at Sinai (vss. 17-18), he closes the Prologue with a staggering claim regarding Jesus' revelatory role, which greatly affects one's understanding of the first covenant.

Jesus' Grace and Truth

The idea that in the last section of the Prologue John is trying to convey the meaning of the incarnation against the background of the covenant story of Exodus finds

powerful evidence in vs. 14e (“full of grace and truth”). This clause, echoed in vs. 17, is a deliberate allusion to **רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת** in Exod 34:6.

The Connection to Exod 34:6

Most scholars share the view that John 1:14e refers to Exod 34:6.¹ Others do not affirm the connection, though they allow the phrase “grace and truth” to parallel the familiar phrase **רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת**.² A small number deny any connection at all. Their views are discussed next.

Opposition to the connection

Among those who explicitly deny any connection between the Prologue’s “full of grace and truth” and **רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת** of Exodus, Loisy says that “‘grace and truth’ do not signify, as often in the Old Testament, the merciful goodness and the veracity of God, but the divine benefits of salvation.”³ Even more incisive is Bultmann, which is not surprising in view of his consistent denial of the Old Testament as a possible background of the Fourth Gospel. In a few lines of a footnote he rejects any link between “full

¹For references, see Evans, *Word and Glory*, 81, n. 2.

²E.g., Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1924-1961), 2:361-362; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 27-28; Strachan, 107; Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 82, 175-176; Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 86-87; Boismard, 53-58; De Boor, 1:56; Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 143; Borchert, 121-122. Bernard gives Exod 34:6 a bare mention, much preferring Ps 85:9-10 as a likely source (1:25-27). Carson also acknowledges Exod 34:6, but suggests that 33:16 (LXX) stands behind John’s “grace and truth” (*The Gospel according to John*, 129-130). Other occurrences of **רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת** in the OT include: Gen 24:27, 49; 47:29; Josh 2:14; 2 Sam 2:6; 15:20; Pss 25:10; 61:8; 85:11; 86:15; 89:15; Prov 3:3; 20:28.

³Loisy, 107.

[πλήρης] of grace [χάρις] and truth [ἀλήθεια]" with Exod 34:6 on the grounds that John does not use ἀλήθεια in the sense of אֱמֶת and that the Septuagint does not use χάρις but ἔλεος to translate דִּבְרֵי.¹

La Potterie repeats some of the objections raised by Bultmann, but he also argues that אֱמֶת דִּבְרֵי in Exod 34:6 describe God's subjective attributes, while χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια in John indicate an objective reality: they refer respectively to the gift of revelation and to the revelation itself.² In fact he goes so far as to claim that in 1:17, instead of writing ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐγένετο, John could have written ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐχαρίσθη ("the truth was given").³

¹Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 74, n. 2.

²Ignace de la Potterie, "Χάρις paulinienne et χάρις johannique," in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Earle Ellis and Erich Gräßer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 258-259.

³Ibid., 274. La Potterie supports his argument by reference to 2 John 1-3, where, according to him, χάρις and ἀλήθεια are used in the same way as he believes they are used in John 1:14-17. He finds a chiastic pattern in that passage: the two extremes (A and A') are ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (vs. 1b) and ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ (vs. 3c); then come B and B', διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν (vs. 2a), and χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη (vs. 3b); the two middle members are μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (vs. 2b), and ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν (vs. 3a). La Potterie is thus able to claim that B corresponds to B', that is, that τὴν ἀλήθειαν in vs. 2a is the equivalent to χάρις in vs. 3b. "Despite the difference of vocabulary," he insists, "these two members are . . . parallel" (ibid., 272). Hence his argument that ἀλήθεια means revelation, and χάρις the gift of revelation: "Truth is a grace from the Father" (ibid., 273), which means that χάρις and ἀλήθεια here would form what is called a hendiadys, where a second coordinated noun is in fact dependent on the first and serves to explain it. If this happens in 2 John, La Potterie concludes, the same may happen in the Prologue to the Gospel (ibid.). Notwithstanding its complexity and artificiality, La Potterie's idea has been endorsed by at least one interpreter (see Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 39, 45).

Refutation of the opposition

Two points lay at the foundation of Bultmann's and La Potterie's arguments; both are lexicographical.

The meaning of χάρις. Both Bultmann and La Potterie emphasize that the usual translation of חֶסֶד in the Septuagint is not χάρις but ἔλεος. La Potterie even adds that χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια is never found as a translation of חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה.¹ As a matter of fact, of the 245 occurrences of חֶסֶד in the Hebrew Old Testament, it is translated in the Septuagint 184 times by ἔλεος and its cognates and only once by χάρις (Esth 2:9),² which most often translates חן (61 times of 69 occurrences). It is important to note, however, that Esther, a book of the third division of the Hebrew canon, belongs to the later stages of the Septuagint,³ a time in which there was already a growing tendency to translate חֶסֶד by χάρις rather than by ἔλεος.⁴ Besides Esther, the translator of Sirach uses χάρις for חֶסֶד at least in 7:33, 40:17, and probably also in 17:22.⁵ This tendency is confirmed

¹La Potterie, "Χάρις paulinienne et χάρις johannique," 258.

²In Esth 2:17 the evidence is ambiguous. The Hebrew reads חֶסֶד וְחָן, while the LXX only χάριν.

³See Henry St. J. Thackeray, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 13-15.

⁴See Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 175, n. 3; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:272, n. 193; Grappe, 163, n. 48. Cf. La Potterie: "Without question, in more recent Hellenistic Judaism χάρις is frequently used to translate חֶסֶד" ("Χάρις paulinienne et χάρις johannique," 258).

⁵See G. H. Box, "Sirach," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols., ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 1:377. Cf. Skehan and Di Lella, 283.

by the remaining fragments of the Hexaplaric versions: Symmachus uses χάρις for ܠܚܡܐ in 2 Sam 2:6, 10:2, Pss 30:8, 39:11, and 88:25; Theodotion in Prov 31:26; Quinta in Ps 32:5; Sexta in Pss 30:17 and 32:18.

It is possible that the Christian Palestinian word for χάρις in John's time was ܠܚܡܐ, which is obviously related to the Hebrew ܠܚܡܐ. Evidence for this is the use of this word in a number of passages of the New Testament, including John 1:14-17, in what is known today as the Palestinian Syriac version, whose language is the Aramaic dialect spoken in Palestine during the early Christian centuries.¹ That the earliest manuscripts of this version are from the sixth century,² however, precludes any certainty about this.³ At any rate, there is no real objection for taking χάρις in John's Prologue as equivalent to ܠܚܡܐ. La Potterie's claim that the problem is not only χάρις but the whole phrase χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια as an allusion to ܠܚܡܐ וְאֱמֶת is an argument from silence. It does not prove that John could not have done so,⁴ especially in view of the fact that he is not always bound to the Septuagint when alluding to the Old Testament.⁵

¹See James A. Montgomery, "Hebrew *Hesed* and Greek *Charis*," *HTR* 32 (1939): 97-102; Matthew Black, "Does an Aramaic Tradition Underlie John 1:16?" *JTS* 42 (1941): 69-70.

²See discussion by Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 75-82.

³Montgomery's attempt to trace this version back to the Jewish Christians who fled across Jordan at Vespasian's invasion (100) is, at best, speculative.

⁴For a detailed assessment of La Potterie's interpretation, see Hanson, "John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34," 92-95.

⁵See above, 125-126.

The meaning of ἀλήθεια. Bultmann's argument that John never uses ἀλήθεια in the sense of אֱמֶת is also questionable. There can be no doubt that most of the time ἀλήθεια in John means simply truth in contrast to falsehood (see 4:18; 5:33; 8:40, 44-46; 10:41; 16:7; 1 John 2:4, 21, 27), but this in no way provides evidence of Greek affinities in John's thought, as Bultmann claims, to the exclusion of the Old Testament tradition.¹ Several authors have shown that a clear-cut contrast between Hebrew and Greek views of truth is not always possible.² As Thiselton argues, it is also "misleading to tie exegetical conclusions about the meaning of ἀλήθεια to a theory about Johannine affinities of thought."³ On this issue, La Potterie parts company with Bultmann. He strongly disputes the idea that John's concept of truth is Greek. He argues rather for a late biblical and post-biblical background of sapiential and apocalyptic literature, in which truth also includes the notion of "revealed truth." Hence his conclusion that in John's Prologue ἀλήθεια refers to that which is revealed by the Logos, that is, the revelation itself, while in Exod 34:6 אֱמֶת describes the content of revelation, that is, an

¹See further, Rudolf Bultmann, "Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium," *ZNW* 27 (1928): 113-163; idem, "ἀλήθεια," *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 1:238-251; idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:18-19. Similarly, Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 170-178.

²E.g., Josef Blank, "Der johanneische Wahrheits-Begriff," *BZ* 7 (1963): 163-173; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 167; Kuypers, 11-16; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:499-500; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2:225-237; Ibuki, 176-207; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 259-262; and esp. Dennis R. Lindsay, "What Is Truth? 'Αλήθεια in the Gospel of John," *RestQ* 35 (1993): 129-145; Thyen, "Das Johannesevangelium," 38-42. See also James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 161-205.

³Thiselton, "ἀλήθεια," 3:889.

attribute of God.¹

That ἀλήθεια in the Fourth Gospel can also mean the revelation brought by and revealed in Jesus there is no reason to doubt (see 8:32; 16:13; 17:17, 19; 18:37; cf. 14:6-11), but this does not imply that in the Prologue it carries the same meaning, not even in the light of vs. 17.² Underlying La Potterie's idea is the assumption that the meaning of ἀλήθεια in the Prologue must be consistent with that of the Gospel itself.³ Yet ἀλήθεια does not have only one meaning in the main body of the Gospel, nor is it used again in a phrase that resembles so closely an Old Testament formula as in John 1:14 and 17. Further, χάρις never reappears in this Gospel, whether in the sense of רַחֲמִים or in any other sense (cf. 2 John 3; Rev 1:4).⁴ The word πλήρης does not reappear either.

In any case, this would not be the only time that John uses a word differently in the Prologue than the rest of the Gospel. In fact, it may not be appropriate to always expect semantical consistency on the part of an author, at the expense of his literary and theological freedom.⁵ The decisive factor must always be the immediate context, and the

¹See further, Ignace de la Potterie, "La verità in San Giovanni," *RivBib* 11 (1963): 3-24; idem, *La vérité dans saint Jean*, 1:117-241. Cf. David J. Hawkin, "The Johannine Concept of Truth and Its Implications for a Technological Society," *EQ* 59 (1987): 3-13.

²See below, 210-214.

³"The word ἀλήθεια in John describes in a general way the revelation brought by Christ, and nothing in the Prologue compels or invites us to introduce here a different meaning" ("Χάρις paulinienne et χάρις johannique," 258).

⁴Dumbrell sees in this fact a sign of John's intention to direct us to the OT context ("Grace and Truth," 115).

⁵For this reason, the attempt of some interpreters to combine in John 1:14 and 17 the OT meaning of רַחֲמִים with that of ἀλήθεια in the Gospel, whether in the sense of "divine reality"

references to the Exod 33-34 in John 1:14-18, which are neither few nor insignificant,¹ are to be taken as the most important clue for the meaning of the clause “full of grace and truth.”² Hanson is right when he says in relation to Exod 33-34: “It would be impossible to find a scripture passage which contains more fundamental elements in common with John 1:14-18. I find it inevitable to conclude that one is the basis of the other.”³

God's Covenantal Faithfulness

It is not easy to find precise English equivalents to **רַחֻם** and **אֱמֻנָה**, particularly **רַחֻם**. While **אֱמֻנָה** can more simply be construed in terms of “truth” or “faithfulness,” **רַחֻם** may encompass a wide variety of meanings, such as “love,” “mercy,” “kindness,” “compassion,” “goodness,” and even “faithfulness,” “loyalty,” and “reliability.”⁴ When they occur together, the difficulty of understanding them is even greater. **רַחֻם וְאֱמֻנָה** is sometimes taken as two separate attributes, which, in reference to God, are manifested in

(Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:273; Thiselton, “ἀλήθεια,” 3:890) or “divine revelation” (Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 167), is not really necessary, in addition to being completely unconvincing.

¹See above, 147-149.

²It is to be noted also that the parallel between John 1:14e and Exod 34:6 does not involve only χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια, but the whole clause πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας, in which πλήρης (“full”) would be John’s rendering of the adjective **בָּרַךְ** (lit., “abounding”), a far better rendering than the LXX’s πολυ- (“very”) (see Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 95).

³Hanson, “John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34,” 95.

⁴See Kuyper, 2-5.

“active kindness and protective faithfulness respectively.”¹ However, the traditional interpretation, that this compound phrase is a hendiadys in which **אֱמֶת** describes or explains **חֶסֶד**,² has been thoroughly confirmed by the minute analysis of Gordon R. Clark.³ This means that in **חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת**, the main word is **חֶסֶד** and that **אֱמֶת**, when God is the agent, points to his genuineness, permanence, and reliability, that is, his unwavering, enduring, reliable commitment to man in which **חֶסֶד** is the appropriate action.⁴

In Exod 34:6, the meaning of **חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת** must be seen in the context of the covenant and against the episode of the golden calf (chap. 32).⁵ According to the final redaction of Exodus, God announces his intent to fulfill the promise of a covenantal relationship between himself and his people (2:24-25; 6:2-8). Then he delivers Israel from Egypt and discloses to her the laws that would regulate that relationship (19:4-6; 20:1-23:32). When the people pledge to obey him and the covenant is ratified (chap. 24), God sets forth the plans for the construction of the sanctuary (chaps. 25-31), so that

¹So Alfred Jepsen, “אֱמֶת,” *TDOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-), 1:314.

²In his classical monograph on the subject, Nelson Glueck says that “*hesed* corresponds to the demands of loyalty and includes the concept of *’emeth*. The phrase **חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת** is then to be regarded as a hendiadys in which **אֱמֶת** is an explanatory adjective” (*Hesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967], 55; cf. 102).

³Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 242-255.

⁴*Ibid.*, 255.

⁵Childs says that the narrative which begins with the story of the golden calf reaches its climax in chap. 34, with the restoration of the covenant which was broken in chap. 32; chap. 33 bridges the two parts of the narrative with the account of Moses’ intercession (*The Book of Exodus*, 610-611). Houtman contends that no exegesis can do any justice to these three chapters if it does not start from the assumption that they form “an unified whole” (*Exodus*, 3:605).

the covenantal promise could become a reality (cf. 25:8). Before the implementation of those plans (chaps. 35-40), however, the Israelites are involved in a frightful act of disobedience, the result of which is the real possibility that God will annul the covenant and destroy them (32:10).¹ After Moses' intercession (33:12-23), God's abundant grace moves him to forgive the people and to maintain his covenant. Granting Moses' request to see his glory as a sign of his favor towards the people,² God reveals himself, his name, and his character, and states among his attributes that he is *יְהוָה יְחַסֵּד וְאֵמֶת* (34:5-7). That was a particularly solemn revelation, coming from the mouth of God himself in the course of the theophany, and highlighting divine mercy and covenantal faithfulness.³ In the sequence (chaps. 35-40), the tabernacle is built and God's promise to dwell among his people is finally fulfilled (cf. 40:34-38).

Thus, by saying that the Logos was "full of grace and truth,"⁴ John may want to

¹Several scholars believe that, given the strong connections to creation traditions in Exodus, including the tabernacle sections, chap. 32 functions as a fall story for Israel, which is preceded by creation and followed by a new covenant (see Brueggemann, 1:927).

²See Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 53.

³"God demonstrated his free act of grace in his choosing Israel to be his people. In that election of Israel he graciously established the covenant, and he graciously forgives the sin of his wayward people. On that foundation he comes to Israel . . . in *hesed* and *'emeth*; these terms describe his faithful covenantal loyalty to his people. It is in this Israel can place her trust" (Kuyper, 10). See also the discussion by Clark, 247-252.

⁴If πλήρης is understood to be nominative, it agrees with λόγος, but since πλήρης is regularly indeclinable in colloquial Hellenistic Greek (Blass and Debrunner, §137), it may be connected here with λόγος, δόξαν, αὐτοῦ, μονογενοῦς, or even πατρός (see J. K. Elliott, "John 1:14 and the New Testament's Use of πλήρης," *BiTr* 28 [1977]: 151-153). A connection with πατρός seems to be out of the question; the introduction of a description of the Father in this context is awkward (see Zerwick, §11). A few interpreters connect πλήρης with δόξαν (so Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 129), but it is Jesus Christ who is likely being described,

call attention to God's covenantal faithfulness, loyalty, and commitment. It is important to note that the emphasis in vss. 14-17 falls exactly on χάρις, since χάρις alone is resumed in vs. 16,¹ not on ἀλήθεια, as claimed by La Potterie, whose interpretation subordinates the first to the second.² The evangelist sees the eschatological fulfillment of God's covenantal dwelling among his people as an act of grace and faithfulness on God's part, so he can claim that those who believed in Jesus, including himself (ἡμεῖς πάντες), have received from that grace, from the "fullness" (πλήρωμα) of that grace (vs. 16a). There is no question that πλήρωμα here bears no technical, gnostic sense.³ It merely picks up on πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας of vs. 14e and underscores that God's abundant faithfulness revealed in the incarnation was abundantly experienced by those who received Jesus.

Jesus, the Revealer

The connection between the Johannine πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας and the Mosaic וְאֵת רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת is further demonstrated on the basis of vss. 17-18 of John's Prologue, though the emphasis of these verses is the revelatory role of Jesus Christ.

not his glory, for in vs. 16 we read of "his fulness" (πληρώματος αὐτοῦ). In this case, it does not make much difference whether πλήρης is taken in apposition with μονογενοῦς, αὐτοῦ or even λόγος. If distance is an issue, μονογενοῦς is certainly the best option (Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983], 148-149).

¹Dumbrell, "Grace and Truth," 115.

²"Truth (ἀλήθεια), for John, is a grace (χάρις) from the Father and from Jesus Christ" (La Potterie, "Χάρις paulinienne et χάρις johannique," 273). La Potterie frequently uses the expression "the grace of truth" (ibid., 273, 275, 276).

³Against Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 77, n. 1.

No One Has Seen God

In line with his previous works on the Christological use of Scripture in the New Testament, Hanson offers vss. 17-18 a simple but ingenious interpretation that may be worthy to consider.¹ He argues that any adequate interpretation of John 1:14-18 must address the issue of the invisibility of God, which is emphasized in vs. 18a, as well as in 5:37 and 6:46 (cf. 1 John 4:12; 5:20). Interpreters in general usually give a twofold explanation for John's statement that "no one has ever seen [οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε] God." Taking the expression οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν in connection with the Old Testament period, they highlight the fact that it was a given within Judaism of John's time that no human could see God with his or her bodily eyes except in the age to come and, convinced that this verse alludes to Moses' experience at Sinai (cf. vs. 17), they try to diminish the significance of that experience by insisting on God's words to Moses, "You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live" (Exod 33:20). As for the theophany itself, the most they concede is that what Moses saw was only a sort of

¹See Hanson, "John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34," 90-101, esp. 95-97. The essence of Hanson's interpretation of this passage had already appeared in an embryonic form in his *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 108-113, a book that generated strong opposition especially because of the author's radical attempt to see the real presence of Christ in the Old Testament at the expense of more traditional approaches, such as typology. This might account for the virtual silence among Johannine scholars on his view of John 1:14-18. It seems that the only commentator who mentions Hanson's interpretation on these verses at all, and interestingly enough with approval, is Ridderbos (*The Gospel according to John*, 57-59). Hanson's article was reprinted with slight alterations in his *The Interpretation of Scripture*, 97-109. See also Anthony T. Hanson, *Grace and Truth: A Study in the Doctrine of Incarnation* (London: SPCK, 1975), 5-10; idem, *The Living Utterances of God: The New Testament Exegesis of the Old* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 122-123; idem, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 21-22, 73-83.

“afterglow of the divine glory.”¹ Then they interpret vs. 18b (“the only Son . . . he has made him known”) with reference to the revelation brought by the incarnate Christ.

Although it appears that Moses did not see the face of God, to all intents and purposes he saw God when God passed before him (vs. 23; cf. 34:6; Num 12:8), a fact that is confirmed in the New Testament (Heb 11:27). In addition, at least four other men in the Old Testament are reported as having seen God. Isaiah literally says, “I saw the Lord” (6:1); so does Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:19); Jacob certainly saw him at Peniel (Gen 32:30; cf. 28:10-17); and Abraham at Mamre (18:1-15; cf. 12:7; Josh 4:13-15; Judg 13:21-22; 1 Kgs 19:11-18; Ezek 1:1-28; Dan 7:9-14). The Jewish belief that God could not be seen by mortal eyes surely did not apply to Moses, who was the primary hero of the Jews, someone who was regarded as “the friend of God”² (cf. Exod 33:11) and even a “divine and holy” person³ (cf. 7:1). Several traditions among Jews and Samaritans had Moses going up to God on Sinai and actually ascending to heaven. Thus he was able, not only to speak with God face to face, but also share, so far as possible, all God’s mysteries.⁴ In the latter midrash, not only Moses but the whole people camped at Sinai

¹Bruce, 44; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 134. See also T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, SBT 40 (London: SCM, 1963), 25-26; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:278; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 169; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 100; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15; Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 110-113.

²See Philo *On the Life of Moses* 1.156.

³See Philo *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.54.

⁴See Philo *On the Life of Moses* 1.158; idem, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.29, 40, 46; Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 3.96; 2 *Bar.* 4:1-7; 59:3-12; 4 *Ezra* 14:3-6; Marqah *Memar Marqah* 2.12; 4.3, 7; 5:3. On these traditions, see the seminal discussion by Wayne A.

had the privilege of seeing God's face and God's glory,¹ a probable allusion to Exod 24:10-11, where the elders are also said to have seen God. It is important to note, however, that for John it is not only God himself but also God's form (εἶδος) that has never been seen; not even God's voice (φωνή) has ever been heard (5:37).

How does John reconcile his emphasis on the invisibility or hiddenness of God with the Exodus narrative, wherein Moses does see God? As Gese correctly acknowledges, there is a contradiction here.² Gese then tries to explain this contradiction by also playing down the revelation to Moses and saying that the revelation was "limited to God's 'passing by' and to seeing his back," in the sense that it "was necessarily hidden by a covering which separates humans from what is transcendent."³ To do this, however, is to assume that John is denying the Old Testament tradition. Some scholars

Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 156-159, 205-209, 241-244; on the divine status of Moses according to Philo, see 103-106. For references and discussion of other OT characters who, according to Jewish tradition, also experienced heavenly visions, ascents, and journeys, see Alan R. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and Their Environment," in *ARNW* II/23:2, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1352-1377. See further, Charles H. Talbert, "The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity," *NTS* 22 (1976): 418-439; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGJU 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 3-123; Christopher Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *JSJ* 10 (1979): 137-154; idem, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 9-348; James D. G. Dunn, "Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 306-309.

¹For excerpts, see Strack and Billerbeck, 4:939-940.

²Gese, 208.

³Ibid.

suggest that vs. 18a consists of a polemical rejection of the Jewish claims about Moses,¹ but two points must be kept in mind: (1) though the context makes it clear that the primary reference of vs. 18a is the Sinai theophany, both the pronoun οὐδεὶς (“no one”) and the adverb πώποτε (“ever”) clearly require a more general application of this statement (cf. 6:46);² and (2) John’s polemic is against contemporary Judaism, not against Moses or the biblical tradition.³

There is no reason to doubt that John’s descent/ascent motif throughout the Gospel establishes a sharp contrast with the claims of Jewish speculative mysticism that Moses ascended into heaven,⁴ but that Moses, as well as Abraham, Jacob, and Isaiah, saw God is well rooted in Scripture itself, and Scripture was an important ally to John in his dispute with his fellow Jews. In the Fourth Gospel, all references to Scripture are positive (see 5:39; 10:35; cf. 1:45; 7:42; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36-37). Even Moses,

¹E.g., Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:36; Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 131, n. 191; Wayne A. Meeks, “The Divine Agent and His Counterfeit in Philo and the Fourth Gospel,” in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Elisabeth S. Fiorenza (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 57-58; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 46.

²Tord Larsson says: “Such passages as 1:18, 6:46, 5:37, 7:28, 8:19, 54f., and 15:21 show that the thought of some degree of hiddenness is an ingredient in the F[ourth] G[ospel]’s notion of God” (*God in the Fourth Gospel: A Hermeneutical Study of the History of Interpretations*, CB 35 [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001], 244).

³That vs. 18a is a polemical statement against the Jewish biblical tradition about Moses is considered by Wengst as “an absurd hypothesis” (1:73, n. 76).

⁴On this, see esp. the discussion by Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 44-72.

when correctly understood, testifies in favor of Jesus (5:45-47).¹

According to Hanson, the solution to the difficulty posited by John's statement that "no one has ever seen God" is simple, though far-reaching in its implications. Taking the word θεός in this passage most likely as a reference to God the Father,² he argues that it was Jesus Christ, not the Father, who was seen by Moses, as well as by the others mentioned in the Old Testament as seeing God.³ John says: "The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (vs. 18b).⁴ For John, therefore,

¹On the place and meaning of the Scripture in the Fourth Gospel, see Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 76-77. See further, D. A. Carson, "John and the Johannine Epistles," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture; Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 245-264.

²There should be no question that θεός in 1:18a refers to God the Father; the following clause (vs. 18b) explicitly equates θεός with πατήρ. In fact, the word θεός appears in the Fourth Gospel 108 times, most of these in reference to the Father (see Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 57-58). On the issue of trinitarianism in John's Gospel, see Larsson, 250-251.

³"According to John, on those occasions in Israel's history when God is described as being seen, it was not in fact God who was seen, but the Logos" (Hanson, "John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34," 96). Though Hanson deserves the credit for elaborating this idea, he was not the first to suggest it: see David Eaglesham, "Note on John 1:17," *ET* 16 (1904-1905): 428; Holtzmann, 49; Nils A. Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 132; Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, NovTSup 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 151-152; Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 85. More recently, see Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 55; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 58; Warren Carter, "The Prologue and John's Gospel: Function, Symbol and the Definite Word," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 43-48; Jey J. Kanagaraj, *'Mysticism' in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into its Background*, JSNTSup 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 224-225.

⁴Whether the Greek text should read μονογενής υἱός or μονογενής θεός is a famous crux. The external evidence, which is entirely Alexandrian (P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ B C* L 33 syr^p cop^b and a good deal of patristic writers), seems to favor μονογενής θεός (see Paul R. McReynolds, "John 1:18 in Textual Variation and Translation," in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for*

Jesus Christ, the only one to come from God and to have seen God (6:46), is the revelation of God (14:8-9; 1 John 5:20), God made visible. He is not only the agent of creation (John 1:1-3), but also the agent of revelation. Whenever God is said to have appeared to people in Israel's history, it was God through the person of Jesus Christ who appeared.¹ The difference between those revelations and the incarnation, says Ridderbos, is that the former were temporary and restricted to a few people.²

Exegesis; Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger, ed. Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee [Oxford: Clarendon, 1981], 105-118). *Μονογενὴς υἱός*, however, is virtually attested by every other representative of every other textual grouping, including several secondary Alexandrian witnesses (e.g., C³ Ψ 892 1241 Athanasius Alexander). This has led Ehrman to argue that "this is not simply a case of one reading supported by the earliest and best manuscripts and another supported by late and inferior ones, but of one reading found almost exclusively in the Alexandrian tradition and another found sporadically there and virtually everywhere else" (79). In addition, Ehrman continues, (ὁ) *μονογενὴς θεός* involves an insurmountable internal difficulty, for it makes Jesus to be the unique God, which contradicts the Johannine emphasis that the Father is God as well (80). It has sometimes been argued that *μονογενὴς* must be taken as an anarthrous noun, and punctuated so as to have three distinct designations of Jesus (*μονογενὴς, θεός, ὁ ὧν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς . . .*) (more recently, McReynolds, 115; D. A. Fennema, "John 1:18: 'God the Only Son'," *NTS* 31 [1985]: 128, 131). But, as Ehrman points out, this is not acceptable from the syntactical standpoint: an adjective is never used as a noun when it is immediately followed by another noun that agrees with it in gender, number, and case. Anything analogous outside this passage has ever been cited. "The result," says Ehrman, "is that taking the term *μονογενὴς θεός* as two substantives standing in apposition makes for a nearly impossible syntax, whereas construing their relationship as adjective-noun creates an impossible sense" (81). On the other hand, *μονογενὴς υἱός* coincides perfectly well with the way *μονογενὴς* is used throughout the Johannine literature. In three other passages *μονογενὴς* serves as a modifier, on each occasion used with *υἱός* (3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) (*ibid.*, 80). Ehrman further suggests that the reading *μονογενὴς θεός* derives probably from an anti-adoptionistic context, and thus represents an orthodox corruption (82). See also Thomas Böhm, "Bemerkungen zu den zyrischen Übersetzungen des Johannesprologs," *ZNW* 89 (1998): 45-65.

¹Hanson, "John 1:14-18 and Exodus 34," 96. Referring to John 1:18 and 6:46, Larsson declares: "All knowledge of God outside of the revelation in the Logos, both pre-incarnate and incarnate seems to be denied" (244).

²Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 58.

The Fourth Gospel itself provides explicit evidence for this claim. Referring to Isaiah's vision of God in the temple, John plainly says that the glory the prophet saw was Jesus', not God's (12:41). Similarly, Jesus' enigmatic statement that Abraham saw his day (8:56), whatever its precise meaning, makes it clear that Jesus, not God, was the object of Abraham's vision.¹ In their respective contexts, both statements make Isaiah and Abraham witnesses to Jesus against the Jews by making Jesus the object of the visions, thus confirming the claim that Jesus is, and has always been, the only authoritative revelation of the Father.

Anachronistic as it may appear, this is indeed what John says. Apart from Jesus Christ there has never been any personal revelation of God. This means that the answer to the question whether vs. 18b (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς) refers to the pre-existent Logos, who *was* in the bosom of the Father, or to the historical Jesus, who *is* now with the Father again,² must positively include both.

By stressing "the perfect communion" that exists between the Father and the Son³ (cf. 10:30; 14:10, 11; 17:21), the fourth evangelist ends the Prologue with an ontological statement about Jesus Christ. As such it has no temporal limitation.⁴ At the

¹On this passage, see the discussion by Carter, 45-46.

²"What is the time indicated by ὢν? Does it allude to the presence of the Son before the incarnation, or to his return after the incarnation?" (Lagrange, 28). Bultmann asks the same question (*The Gospel of John*, 82).

³Léon-Dufour, 1:131.

⁴Francis J. Moloney rightly says that the expression ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς has nothing to do with "indwelling" or "consubstantiality" between Father and Son, but his attempt to see there a reference to the historical experience of Jesus of Nazareth only ("John

same time, this statement sets the stage for the story that follows, to the extent that Jesus can say the otherwise sacrilegious words: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9).¹ As for the charge of anachronism, in the sense that this interpretation projects into the past the historical name of Jesus (cf. vs. 17b) and his filial relation to the Father,² it seems that John wants to establish beyond any doubt both the identity of Jesus Christ with the pre-existent Logos, who “was in the beginning with God” (vs. 2), and the perspective from which any self-revelation of God, whether past or present, must be understood. Only Jesus, who is God’s μονογενῆς υἱός, has the prerogative to reveal God.³

Law and Grace at Sinai

The distinction in vs. 17 between the law given through Moses (ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη) and grace and truth occurring through Jesus (ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο) is now clear. In this verse, John does not mean that the

1:18: ‘In the Bosom of’ or ‘Turned towards’ the Father?” *ABR* 31 [1983]: 63-71) is arbitrary. Not only the statements in 8:56 and 12:41, but also John’s widespread use of ἐγώ εἰμι (cf. 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I am”) clearly suggest that the present participle ὢν in 1:18b points to a reality that transcends time and space, as Lagrange had already suggested (28). Devillers even suggests to interpret this expression in the light of the ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν of Exod 3:14 (195-212).

¹Commenting on vs. 18, O’Day says: “This verse concludes the Prologue, but it also serves as an introduction to the Gospel narrative. It is central to understanding the Fourth Gospel, because it states explicitly John’s understanding of Jesus’ ministry and saving work: to make God known” (“The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” 9:523).

²So Thyen, “Das Johannesevangelium,” 49.

³As often observed, the Greek verb translated by “to make known” in vs. 18b (ἐξηγέομαι) is related to the word “exegesis,” and so “we might almost say that Jesus is the exegesis of God” (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 135).

Sinai event is now obsolete or was inferior to the incarnation event.

The traditional interpretation of this verse has been greatly influenced by the tension between law and grace in the writings of Paul, but unfortunately as it is seen through the eyes of Marcion.¹ The Marcionite influence is still present in those interpretations that assume a complete break between law and grace, as if they originally represented two different systems which were intrinsically opposed to each other and impossible to be reconciled, so that the law needed to be replaced by grace.²

¹The idea that Marcion's understanding of Paul on the relationship between law and grace was substantially correct is still firmly established within some circles of NT scholarship. See, e.g., Gerd Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other side of Early Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 148-169. Lüdemann quotes with approval this statement by Hans von Campenhausen: "To the extent that Marcion experiences the Gospel once more in its true nature as the redemption of the lost, his theology is primitive Christian in the spirit of Jesus; and in his understanding of faith as freedom from the Mosaic law he is directly akin to Paul" (*The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. J. A. Baker [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972; reprint, Mifflintown: Sigler, 1997], 149).

²E.g., Dodd: "The evangelist . . . writes all through with the intention of exhibiting the revelation in Christ as offering in reality that which Judaism meant to offer, but failed to provide—a genuine knowledge of God conveying life to men. . . . The law as such is not for him a way to the knowledge of God's will. It stands over against the true revelation of God. It claims to be, but is not, the divine wisdom, the light of the world, the life of men. Divine wisdom is incarnate in Jesus Christ, in whom is the πλήρωμα of grace and truth" (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 86). Similarly, Becker, who thinks that behind John 1:17 lies an intra-Christian dispute, apparently against some Judaizers who insisted on the observance of the law for salvation. "The Christian church," he says, "should know that Moses and the law belong together. Grace is not to be counted on the side of Moses. It belongs to Jesus Christ, who is not the giver of the law. Christians, therefore, are under grace and not under the law" (*Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:84). Schnelle in turn sees in this verse a conflict against Judaism, yet he also detects here a "Pauline-sounding" antithesis between the Jewish law and the Christian grace. He argues that "there is no salvation-historical continuity between Moses and Jesus; Christians live in grace and truth, not under the law." Then he concludes: "The problem of 'law versus grace,' which was so important for Paul, has in the eyes of the fourth evangelist been solved long since, so that this evangelist can, with a remarkable complacency, assign Jews to the sphere of the law and Christians to the unique realm of grace

A less radical approach seeks to establish patterns of continuity between the law of the Old Testament and the grace of the New Testament, but as a rule this also ends with the exaltation of grace at the expense of the law. Frank Thielman, for example, argues that “the Mosaic law was characterized by grace; but its measure of grace pales in comparison with what has become available with the appearance of Jesus Christ.”¹

None of these interpretations, however, does justice to the context of Exod 34:6. After the episode of the golden calf and the breaking of the tablets of the law by Moses, God asked him to cut new tablets of stone so that he could “write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets” (vs. 1). Moses did so, and then he went up Mount Sinai, where God had promised to pass before him (vs. 4). When that happened, God himself proclaimed among his attributes that he is *רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת* (vss. 6-7). In other words, contrary to what Thielman says, it is not the law proper that was “characterized by grace,” but God himself who said that he is “full of grace and truth.”

and truth” (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, 31).

¹Frank Thielman, *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity*, CNT (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999), 105. Likewise, Carson: “The grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ is what replaces the law; the law itself is understood to be an earlier display of grace” (*The Gospel according to John*, 132). Smith also says: “There is no question that the grace and truth of Jesus Christ are the surpassing gifts. To read 1:16-17 as the supersession of law by Gospel is natural, particularly given John’s treatment of ‘the Jews,’ not to mention the development of Christian thought. Moses (i.e., the law) . . . has been superseded” (*John*, ANTC, 61). Even Hanson, who argues that in 1:17 the fourth evangelist distinguishes two elements in the Sinai event itself, namely, the giving of the law and the revelation on the rock, still interprets this passage under the influence of Paul: “The giving of the law is certainly regarded as temporary, obsolete, and above all indirect (cf. Gal 3:19). But the revelation on the rock is none of these: it was the revelation of God in Christ” (“John 1:14-18 and Exod 34,” 97).

In John 1:17, therefore, the evangelist is only reporting what happened at Sinai. He is only being faithful to the Exodus narrative, wherein the giving of the law through Moses is clearly distinguished from the revelation of God's covenantal faithfulness by God himself. John is not contrasting a graceless law with the grace that is available in Jesus. It is important to keep the text as it is, without reading into it an adversative "but" that is not there.¹ Likewise, it is important to note that in Exod 34:6-7 there is no single indication that God's *חַסֵּד וְרַחֲמִים* to Israel were only partial and thus inferior to his *χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια* in the incarnation. Both the prefixed adjective *רַב* ("abounding") and the five other terms used by God to describe his character (*רַחוּם*, "merciful;" *חַנּוּן*, "gracious;" *אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם*, "slow to anger;" *נֹצֵר חֶסֶד*, "keeping *hesed*;" *נִשְׂא*, "forgiving") warn us against any attempt to diminish or to limit God's grace to Israel.² As Brueggemann says, these terms "provide the core vocabulary of the Old Testament affirmation of God's awesome graciousness." In this context they are intended "to assure Moses (and Israel) that God is deeply committed to sustaining covenant with Israel."³

¹In his commentary on John, Haenchen says that "in this verse 'grace and truth' are contrasted with the law that came into being through Moses in a way that does not appear elsewhere in the Gospels" (*John 1*, 120); in his "Probleme des johanneischen 'Prologs'," he is even more specific: "This contrast between law and grace is alien to the Fourth Gospel" (323). But why postulate an antithesis alien to John's thought if there is nothing in the Greek (neither *ἀλλά* nor *δέ*) that requires antithesis, and especially if the passage can satisfactorily be interpreted in a way consistent with the evangelist's thought? As Sanders argues, "to make law and grace mutually exclusive may be Pauline, but it does not follow that it is also Johannine" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 85).

²"The multiplication of terms is a deliberate attempt at comprehensive statement" (Durham, 454).

³Brueggemann, 1:946-947.

The only new element introduced by John in his recapitulation of the exodus story is that it was Jesus who actually appeared to Moses at Sinai, not God himself, because for John, God cannot be seen except through Jesus.¹ As the first covenant, after being broken, owed its renewal to God's faithfulness, the evangelist credits the eschatological fulfillment of the covenantal relationship, which was inaugurated with the incarnation of Jesus, to the same faithfulness of God as it was manifested through his Son Jesus Christ. For this reason he can refer to the incarnation as "grace instead of [ἀντί] grace" (vs. 16b).² John did not mean that the grace of Christ has been received

¹Some have suggested that vs. 17 conveys a comparison rather than an antithesis: "Just as the law was given through Moses, so grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 98; Joachim Jeremias, "Μωυσῆς," *TDNT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 4:873; Ruth B. Edwards, "Χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος [John 1:16]: Grace and the Law in the Johannine Prologue," *JSNT* 32 [1988]: 8; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 132). This interpretation, however, cannot be correct for three reasons: it assumes a typology between Moses and Jesus that is foreign to the Prologue; it ignores the fact that both the law and grace and truth were fully present in the Sinai event as two distinct revelations; and it gives the explanatory ὅτι at the beginning of this verse an unnatural meaning. In addition, John's way to compare two sentences is either with καθὼς . . . οὕτως (3:14; 12:50; 14:31; 15:4) or with ὥστερ . . . οὕτως (5:21, 26); never with ὅτι.

²The preposition ἀντί has five basic meanings: "instead of" (Gen 22:13; Matt 2:22; Luke 11:11; Jas 4:15); "in return for" (Exod 21:22-25; Matt 5:38; Rom 12:17; 1 Cor 11:15); "in behalf of" (Gen 44:33; Matt 17:27; 20:28; Mark 10:45); "because of" (Luke 1:20; 19:44; Eph 5:31); "therefore" (4 Macc 18:3; Luke 12:3) (see BDAG, 87-88). Of these, only the first would be applicable to John 1:16. For a sound defense of "instead of" as the meaning of ἀντί in this passage, see Edwards, 3-7. It has been argued that ἀντί can also mean "corresponding to," and that this is the case here (Bernard, 1:29; Boismard, 61); the meaning would then be that the grace which the Christian receives corresponds to the source of grace in Christ. Edwards, however, has convincingly shown that ἀντί never actually means "corresponding to," except perhaps in certain compounds (e.g., ἀντίτυπος, ἀντίφωνος), and that "there is nothing in the context to support this obscure meaning, which must fall on linguistic grounds" (5). A number of interpreters and translators take ἀντί in this passage to mean "upon/in addition to," referring to the inexhaustible bounty of God's gifts, resulting in a constant stream of graces (e.g., Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 78; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:275;

instead of the grace of the law, or that the grace of Christ was superior to the grace of the law, or even that the grace of Christ succeeded the grace of the law. The law has no grace in itself. In the New Testament the law is never referred to as or containing χάρις. What John means is only that the grace of Sinai has been replaced by the grace of incarnation.

The issue of continuity/discontinuity between law and grace is not raised here. Neither is there any hint of a grace available in two degrees—Old and New Testaments.¹ There is, however, a hint of one covenant being replaced by another, in that the symbol meets its reality and the promise, its fulfillment. Only in this sense is one superior to the other, for both were covenants of grace, of the same grace, which in both instances was abundantly revealed by Jesus Christ himself.²

For this reason vs. 15 is important in this context which affirms the identity

Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 97; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 168; Gnllka, 16; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15). This meaning would be theologically acceptable here, but, according to Edwards, it must also be rejected “for one very good reason: there is no parallel to this usage in all Greek literature, which uses for this sense not ἀντί, but ἐπί” (cf. Sir 26:15). If John meant ἐπί, Edwards asks, “why did he not write ἐπί like Ben Sirach?” (5). As for the alleged parallel in Philo (*On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile* 145), on close inspection ἀντί betrays its normal sense, “instead of” (Edwards, 5-6; Zerwick, §95).

¹See Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 168. It seems reasonable, however, to assume with Boismard that God’s grace in Jesus Christ “appeared to men’s eyes with an unprecedented precision and clarity” (56).

²Edwards comes very close to this idea when she says, for example, that the “former manifestation of God’s gracious love and favour has now been replaced by a new, personal and unique manifestation through his Son. God’s old methods of dealing with his people—the temple, the sacrificial system, and all the rituals of Judaism—have now been replaced by the sending of his Son in love, in short by the good news of the Gospel” (9).

between Jesus Christ and the God who was seen by Moses on Sinai. John's witness, disturbing as it is at this point,¹ is important "so that we may understand that the One who follows him in the story—Jesus—is in fact the One who was before him, whose glory is spoken of in the pages of the Old Testament."² As it was in the exodus, so it was in the incarnation. As Jesus appeared to Moses and dwelt among his people, so he did now, but with the astounding difference that his dwelling was accomplished by means of his being made human flesh. By doing this, he brought the first covenant, which apparently was intended to be temporary and a sort of shadow of the new era of salvation (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 37:27-28; cf. Heb 8:6-13; 9:9; 10:1), to its perfect fulfillment. Thus to those who accepted him, those who believed in his name, the new covenant took the place of the old one, so that these believers could enter into a new dimension of relationship with God and say with confidence, "from his fulness we have all received." This is the message of vss. 14-18 of John's Prologue.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide a solution to what is considered a central problem of John's Prologue, namely, the relationship between vss. 6-13 and vss. 14-18, especially vs. 14. If an incarnational interpretation of vss. 6-13 is adopted, it is difficult to understand vs. 14, which contains the first and only explicit statement about the incarnation of the Logos in the entire Prologue. It is often argued that vs. 14 is

¹See below, 242-245.

²Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 55.

inherently and evidently climactic in its tone, and that any attempt to see a description of Jesus' earthly ministry prior to it would undermine its force, making it come as an anticlimax, and reducing it to a mere repetition of an already established theme.

Several solutions to this problem have been suggested, but none of them seems to do justice to the content and purpose of vss. 14-18, which are a theological reflection on the covenantal meaning of the incarnation, rather than an account of the incarnation proper. These verses contain no biographical information as do vss. 6-13, which refer to the ministry of John the Baptist, the coming of Jesus into the world, his ministry, his rejection by some, his acceptance by others, and the benefits he gave to them. This means that vs. 14 is by no means to be considered the great incarnational turning point in the Prologue, but in spite of that it is not deprived of its beauty, significance, and climactic tone.

The Sinai imagery (Exod 32-34) employed by John in these verses has been widely acknowledged but not adequately explored. The parallels between the two narratives are too many and too significant to be merely accidental. References to Moses, the law, grace and truth, dwelling, glory, and seeing God are so explicit that it seems impossible to find a Scripture passage which contains more essential elements in common with John 1:14-18 than Exod 32-34.

Attempts to make John 1:14-18 dependent on the wisdom tradition, in particular Sir 24, fail to pay enough attention to the differences between the two passages. It might be assumed, though, that in these verses John is somehow responding to some of Sirach's claims, but a direct dependence is entirely excluded, as is the possibility that the

exodus background was mediated to John through Sirach.

On the other hand, the parallels between John and the exodus tradition go much further than characters, motifs, and incidents. They are also theological insofar as John portrays the incarnation as an event comparable to the establishment and renewal of the covenant between God and Israel. A theological reading of the book of Exodus in its canonical form, which was the form known to John, clearly indicates the centrality of the tabernacle as a means by which God would fulfill his promise of a covenantal relationship with his people (Exod 25:8), a promise that went back to the time of Abraham (Gen 17:7).

Thus the exodus itself finds its expression and purpose in God's intimate fellowship with his people (Exod 2:24-25; 3:8, 17; 6:7-8) as a demonstration of his assertion that he is Israel's God (29:45-46). With the episode of the golden calf, the plans for the building of the tabernacle suffered a serious setback and were almost cancelled (32:10). As a result of Moses' intercession, however, God offered his servant a powerful and sublime revelation of his infinite mercy and covenantal faithfulness (34:5-7) and agreed to renew his covenant with Israel (vs. 10). The tabernacle was then built and God's glory filled it in accordance with his promise (40:34-38).

John 1:14-18 must be read against this background. The astonishing claim that the Logos dwelt among us by being made flesh, rather than by filling Jerusalem's temple with his glory, strongly suggests that the evangelist was also thinking of the new covenant as it was announced by several Old Testament prophets, and of God's glorious return to his people, thus inaugurating the new, eschatological era of salvation and

bringing the covenantal relationship to its fullest expression (Jer 3:16-18; Ezek 37:26-27; Joel 3:17; Hag 2:3-9; Zech 2:10-11). For John, this promise was fulfilled with the incarnation, in which Jesus Christ himself becomes the new tabernacle/temple. And as had happened on Sinai (Exod 34:6), John sees this fact as a sign of God's generous covenantal faithfulness: "The Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (vs. 14).

John had already employed covenantal language in the Prologue to refer to the rejection of Jesus by *οἱ Ἰδαί* (vs. 11) and his acceptance by the *ἄλλοι* (vs. 12), as well as the transformation that came to them as a result (vs. 13). The promise of the new covenant, however, goes far beyond becoming children of God and supernatural renewal. It comprises also a relationship that can only be attained by means of God's personal dwelling among his people, as a sign that he is their God and that they are his people. To leave no room for doubt that this time has in fact arrived, John uses the first-person plural to make two statements: "we have seen his glory" (vs. 14c), and "from his fullness we have all received" (vs. 16a), that is, the fullness of his covenantal faithfulness (vs. 14e).

For this reason John says, "grace instead of grace" (1:16b). Taking the preposition *ἀντὶ* in its normal sense, he refers to the grace of the incarnation as replacing the grace of Sinai, that is, the grace of vs. 14e replacing the grace of vs. 17b. As the first covenant, after being broken, was renewed because of God's covenantal faithfulness, John sees in the inauguration of the new covenant a display of the same faithfulness on God's part through Jesus. But he does not stop here. As if the application to Jesus of

the same attributes associated with God in his revelation at Sinai were not enough, John affirms something rather revolutionary: that it was actually Jesus who appeared to Moses at Sinai and disclosed to him God's covenantal faithfulness (vs. 17b). To this he adds that God himself has never been seen; Jesus Christ is the One who has made him known (vs. 18). No doubt a revolutionary affirmation, and a programmatic one as well, for it introduces a major emphasis of the Gospel, which is exemplified by Jesus' own words to Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9).

The last section of the Prologue, therefore, is distinguished from the previous two in that it does not indicate another stage in the narrative of the activity of the Logos. That narrative is substantially complete with vs. 13. The last section is rather a profound and unique reflection on the salvation-history meaning of the incarnation; a reflection not based on mere theological speculation, but on the experience both objective ("we have seen his glory") and subjective ("from his fulness we have all received") of those who believed in Jesus.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study proposed to establish exactly at what point in the Prologue the incarnation occurs, the point at which the Prologue begins to speak about the historical Christ. The analysis led to the conclusion that this point is in vs. 9, which refers to the coming of the Logos into the world, even though the modality of his coming is not spelled out until vs. 14.

This conclusion has three subsets: vss. 1-5 refer essentially to the primordial time of creation; vss. 6-13 do not describe the work of the pre-incarnate Logos in the Old Testament period; and vs. 14 is not the incarnational turning point in the Prologue. This verse is rather, together with vss. 15-18, a theological reflection on the covenantal meaning of the incarnation. This interpretation preserves the significance and the climax of vs. 14.

Inasmuch as every chapter ends with a comprehensive summary and conclusion, only a brief review of the most significant results is necessary here. In addition, I present some directions for further research.

Review of Significant Results

Besides the Introduction (chapter 1) and this Conclusion (chapter 5), three main chapters form the bulk of this dissertation. Each chapter covered one section of the

Prologue: vss. 1-5; vss. 6-13; vss. 14-18. This arrangement basically corresponds to the different views on the point of incarnation.

Chapter 2 considered the incarnation in vss. 1-5 and concluded that there is no evidence to support the claim that the transition from the pre-existent Logos to the incarnate Christ occurs either in vs. 4 or in vs. 5, and much less that the entire Prologue is about the incarnate Christ. These claims depend on a series of difficult, if not impossible, semantical and syntactical arguments, and fail to do justice to the parallels between these verses and the creation story of Gen 1. The parallels are not restricted only to the language; they involve even the sequence of the narrative. The present tense φαίνει in vs. 5, one of the finest examples of Johannine ambiguity, does seem to reach the time of Jesus' ministry and of the Gospel writing, but its main reference is to the creative activity of the Logos in the beginning.

Chapter 3 addressed the question whether vss. 6-13 describe the activity of the pre-incarnate Logos in Old Testament times by means of the prophetic office or the historical ministry of Jesus Christ. The conclusion was that they describe the ministry of the incarnate Christ, whose coming into the world is explicitly mentioned in vs. 9. The evidence for a pre-incarnational understanding of these verses is so precarious that this interpretation should not even be regarded as a reasonable option. The reference to John the Baptist, the rejection/acceptance motif, and the concept of God's children are decisive for such a conclusion. Also significant is the introduction of covenantal language in vss. 11-13; this language pervades the rest of the Prologue. Allusions to the old and, even more so, to the new covenant seem to characterize the coming of the

incarnate Logos into the world as an eschatological event that fulfills prophetic expectations.

Chapter 4 explained vss. 14-18 in view of an incarnational interpretation of vss. 6-13. The thesis of the chapter was that a reference to the incarnation prior to vs. 14 does not diminish the relevance or the climactic tenor of this verse. In this last section of the Prologue, rather than narrating the event of Jesus' entrance into the human realm as flesh, John actually provides a powerful statement on the theological meaning of that event. Here he portrays the incarnation of the Logos as the fulfillment of God's promise of a perfect relationship with his people in the new, eschatological era of salvation. To accomplish this, he uses Sinai imagery, in particular the tabernacle motif and incidents related to the second giving of the law. He then conforms this imagery to the announcement of the new covenant by the prophets, according to which God's presence among his people would no longer be mediated by or circumscribed to a building. For John, instead of coming and filling the tabernacle/temple with his glory, the Logos himself becomes the locus of God's presence on earth and his glory is made visible to all. This was accomplished because of the abounding covenantal faithfulness of the Logos, the same attribute he revealed at Sinai.

There is, therefore, in John's Prologue thematic coherence and a definite development of thought. Vss. 1-5 describe the pre-existent Logos, his transcendental relationship with God and his role at creation, including the significance to mankind of his divine life under the symbol of light. Vss. 6-13, which describe the historical ministry of the Logos, pick up the light theme and reset it in the context of salvation.

Those who were impacted by the light and believed in it were able to enjoy the benefits of salvation, which are defined and expanded in vss. 14-18. There is no repetition or interruption, no abrupt movement not justified by John's change of perspective. The thought moves from a cosmic setting to historical facts and then finishes with a theological assessment of those facts. This is the first example in the Gospel of metaphysics, history, and theology combining to produce a passage of everlasting value.

The three essays appended to this dissertation deal with the formation of the Prologue and its relation to the Gospel. Appendix A provides an assessment of contemporary research on the hymn hypothesis and concludes that the evidence for this hypothesis rests on a fragile foundation and, therefore, should not be used as a hermeneutical key to interpret the text. Appendix B shows how it is possible to explain the Logos concept in view of some Christological emphases of the Gospel, even though the term itself is not used again with the same meaning as in the Prologue. Appendix C uses the rejection/acceptance motif to explore the strong connections between John 1:11-12 and the structure of the Gospel, which could suggest common authorship and careful literary planning on the part of the evangelist.

Directions for Further Research

This study has raised some questions that may need further investigation. One of these has to do with the meaning of individual words, such as ζωή, σκοτία, ἀλήθεια, and especially δόξα. Little room has been given in Johannine scholarship for these words to have different meanings in different contexts. Perhaps the clearest example of that is

δόξα. Interpreters in general assume that, when referring to Jesus, whether in relation to his miracles or his death and resurrection, δόξα carries the same idea. In fact, the revelation of God's δόξα in the miracles and works of Jesus is usually understood in connection with, and in subordination to, those passages which speak of the eschatological glorification of Jesus. In John, however, the eschatological glorification of Jesus is always an act performed by the Father, not by Jesus himself as are his miracles. Two different concepts, therefore, seem to be at play. The use of the same words (δόξα and δοξάζω) in relation to both is not in itself a sign of inconsistency. Research unbiased by assumptions of consistency may detect fresh nuances in John's theology that will clarify these and others issues presently unresolved.

Another question open to future exploration is whether the covenant theme recurs in the Gospel, and to what extent. Though the validity of a certain theme or concept does not necessarily depend on its recurrence in a different context, further allusions may provide a better picture of what the author thinks of that particular theme or concept. The presence of the covenant, more specifically the new covenant, in the Gospel may be hinted at, for example, in the theme of the new birth in chap. 3; in Jesus' statements to the Samaritan woman on the water of life (4:14; cf. 7:37-39) and the true worship (4:21-25); in Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath (5:9-18; 7:22-23; 9:13-16) and the giving of the new commandment (13:34); in the sermon of the bread from heaven in chap. 6; in Jesus' exchange with the Jews in 8:31-47; in the promise of the Holy Spirit (14:15-31; 16:4-15); in the allegory of the vine (15:1-17); and in Jesus' intercessory prayer in chap. 17. Also significant is John's omission of the Lord's Supper, which in

the Synoptics is associated with the establishment of the new covenant. For John, according to the Prologue, it is the incarnation that signals the arrival of the new covenant. Further research into the covenant theme in the Fourth Gospel could be a welcome follow-up to the findings reported here.

In conclusion, research on themes and issues of the Prologue should, and certainly will, continue. The overwhelming amount of literature on this passage shows the complexity of its eighteen verses. At the same time, it shows the tantalizing power these verses have exerted on biblical scholarship. Not all the problems pertaining to this passage have been solved. Not everything that should be said has been said. The “sphinx at the entrance of the Fourth Gospel” is still surrounded by mysteries and charms which will continue to inspire and to challenge, to amaze and to provoke even the most brilliant and tenacious minds. The relationship between the two modes of Jesus Christ, the pre-existent and the incarnate, will always be an important part of the discussion. This comprehensive study on the point where the Prologue moves from one mode to the other, it is hoped, will so clarify the issues as to establish a platform upon which subsequent studies can build.

APPENDIX A

THE HYMN HYPOTHESIS

An issue that still divides Johannine scholarship is whether the Prologue is an integral part of the Gospel or an existing hymnic composition that was adapted by the evangelist and placed at the beginning of his book to introduce it. Reasons can be advanced for both views. This appendix discusses the evidence against the unity and the integrity of John 1:1-18, and the hypothesis that has traditionally been thought appropriate to explain that evidence.

Evidence and Hypothesis

The idea that John's Prologue was initially a hymn to Christ, into which secondary material was inserted to make it a fitting introduction to the Gospel, rests on several textual and stylistic considerations.

The Baptist Passages

Probably the main evidence that the Prologue was not originally the work of the evangelist is that vss. 6-8 and especially 15, which deal with John the Baptist, look more like later accretions,¹ for they seem to have a different style and to interrupt the flow of

¹There is an almost universal consensus on this (see Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community," 461). Schmithals refers to this consensus as "unanimous and obvious" (*Johannesevangelium und Johannesesbriefe*, 264). Haenchen even ascribes these

thought. There are also shifts in subject (vss. 14, 16: "we"; vs. 15: "John") and tense (vss. 14, 16: aorist; vs. 15: present). It has even been suggested that these verses were mechanically transplanted from before 1:19, where the original Gospel actually began.¹ There seems indeed to be a direct connection between these verses and vs. 19.² What makes this hypothesis even more attractive is that, in this case, the earliest beginning of John would then have been much more similar to that of the Synoptics, at least to that of Mark, since it also starts with John's testimony to Jesus.³

Style Analysis

Another indication that the Prologue may have once existed independently from

verses to a misunderstanding of the original Prologue on the part of a later redactor, who also added chap. 21 to the Gospel (*John* 1, 117, 128). Harald Sahlin's idea that vss. 6-8 belonged originally with vss. 1-5 as a reference to the incarnation of the Word (the Word "became man, sent by God . . ."), rather than to John the Baptist ("Zwei Abschnitte aus Joh 1 rekonstruiert," *ZNW* 51 [1960]: 64-67), is provocative and imaginative, but essentially unprovable. This is true also for the similar suggestion by Hofrichter (*Im Anfang war der 'Johannesprolog'*, 91-94). In his *Wer ist der 'Mensch, von Gott gesandt' in Joh 1,6?* Hofrichter brings this issue back again and, despite the strong reaction against his previous work, which he himself mentions (7), offers an exhaustive defense of his Christological interpretation of vss. 6-8 (12-22).

¹So Wilbert F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation*, 4th ed. rev. C. K. Barrett (London: Epworth, 1955), 118-119; John A. T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 125-127; Fortna, 15-16, 28-29.

²Brown contends that it makes more sense if only vss. 6-7 came before vs. 19, but he also regards vss. 8-9 and 15 as alien to the Prologue. For him, these verses were introduced by the editor when the Prologue was added to the Gospel (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:27-28, 35). See also Hirsch, 45; Boismard and Lamouille, 73.

³See Howard, 118; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 111. For R. H. Lightfoot, on the contrary, it is the present form of the Prologue that parallels the beginning of Mark's Gospel (1:1-13), which he also calls a "prologue" (*The Gospel Message of St. Mark* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1950], 18-19).

the Gospel is that, regardless of its overall thematic relation with the longer narrative, there are terms and concepts that do not recur. "Logos," for example, the most typical term in the Prologue, is not used as a title for Jesus anywhere in the Gospel, but only in 1 John 1:1 and Rev 19:13. Likewise "grace" (vs. 14) and "fulness" (vs. 16), two other significant concepts in the Prologue, are completely absent from the Gospel. The picture of Jesus as the tabernacle (vs. 14) is also absent, in spite of the significance of vs. 14.

Style analysis seems to confirm the presence of non-Johannine material in the Prologue. Based on the studies of Eduard Schweizer and Eugen Ruckstuhl, who compiled, respectively, a list of thirty-three and fifty style characteristics which are scattered almost evenly throughout the whole Gospel,¹ Rudolf Schnackenburg argues that only vss. 2, 5-8, 12-13, 14b-c, 15, 17-18 were composed by the evangelist and that the remaining verses were incorporated by him from another source.²

¹Eduard Schweizer, *Ego Eimi: Die religionsgeschichtliche Herkunft und theologische Bedeutung der johanneischen Bildreden, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Quellenfrage des vierten Evangeliums*, FRLANT 56 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939), 87-99 (positive characteristics [87-89]; negative characteristics [97-98]; less characteristic traits [98-99]). In 1951, Ruckstuhl corrected and expanded Schweizer's list (*Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums*, 203-205). In 1959, F.-M. Braun reproduced Ruckstuhl's list and added one more characteristic (*Jean le Théologien et son évangile dans l'Église ancienne*, EtB [Paris: Gabalda, 1959], 401-403). In the second edition of his *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1987), Ruckstuhl gave "the list of the Johannine stylistic characteristics with all references from the Johannine literature" (291-303). Finally in 1991, he published a list of 153 stylistic features divided into three different groups (Eugen Ruckstuhl and Peter Dschulnigg, *Stilkritik und Verfasserfrage im Johannesevangelium: Die johanneischen Sprachmerkmale auf dem Hintergrund des Neuen Testaments und des zeitgenössischen hellenistischen Schrifttums*, NTOA 17 [Göttingen: Vandehoeck & Ruprecht, 1991], 164-169).

²Schnackenburg, "Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog," 77-82.

Poetic Style

Some lines in the Prologue have also been identified as bearing a highly poetic style known as climactic or progressive parallelism, in which each line contains the key term of the next line, forming a kind of staircase pattern called sorites: a-b, b-c, and so on.¹ It is maintained that this poetic form, though occasionally found in the Psalms (29:5; 93:3; 96:13; 121:1-4) and elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (6:37; 8:32; 10:11; 15:19), never attains the same beauty as in John 1:1-5.² The same poetic pattern is found also in Wisdom of Solomon (6:17-20). This is yet more significant in view of the apparent relationship between the role of wisdom in that book and similar Jewish writings and that of the Logos in the John's Prologue.

In the wisdom literature, which consists of poems written in the regular form of Hebrew parallelism, wisdom is praised for its involvement in creation, its world-embracing significance, and even its earthly dwelling in a "tent" (see Prov 8:22-36; Wis 7:22-8:1; Sir 24:1-22).³ Since such ideas are also present in the Prologue in connection

¹Thus in vs. 1: "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God." In vs. 3 the term is "came into being" or "was made." The pattern is clearer in vss. 4-5: "In him was *life*, and the *life* was the *light* of men. And the *light* shines in the *darkness*, and the *darkness* did not comprehend it." Note also "world" in vss. 9-10, "his own" in vss. 11a-b, "receive" in vss. 11b-12a, "glory" in vss. 14a-b, and "fulness" in vss. 14b-16. "In this way," Boismard speculates, "the thought seems to soar boldly, as in a spiral flight. That is why, ever since the time of St. Irenaeus, the symbol of the eagle in full flight soaring towards heaven, has been applied to St. John" (5). On sorites, see Henry A. Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites (*Climax*, *Gradatio*) in the Tannaitic Period," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 117-151.

²See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:19.

³For a comprehensive listing of the parallels between John's Prologue and the wisdom literature, see Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*; Epp, "Wisdom, Torah,

with the Logos, the conclusion that the Logos concept in John's Prologue was somehow influenced by the wisdom concept in Jewish literature is seen by many interpreters as quite irresistible.¹ This fact, combined with the bracketing of vss. 6-8 and 15, as well as with the poetic and conceptual uniqueness of the references to the Logos, has also contributed to the estimation of the Prologue as a separate entity, a hymn to Christ modeled after the wisdom tradition and used by the evangelist to introduce his Gospel.

The hypothesis that the Prologue was originally a hymn to Christ was advanced as early as 1875 by J. Wagenmann.² Bultmann saw the Logos hymn as a gnostic composition from the Baptist circles (the Mandeans) used by John to sing the praises of his Christ.³ This view was called into question by two of Bultmann's own pupils,

Word," 128-146; Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 94-115; and esp. Evans, *Word and Glory*, 83-99.

¹C. H. Dodd admits: "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that, while the Logos of the Prologue has many of the traits of the Word of God in the Old Testament, it is on the other side a concept closely similar to that of wisdom, that is to say, the hypostatized thought of God projected in creation, and remaining as an immanent power within the world and in man" (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 275). Some scholars even speak of a Jewish "wisdom myth," whose fortunes, carefully reconstructed from a number of fragmentary passages, closely approximates those of the Logos of the Johannine Prologue (see esp. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 22; Hans Conzelmann, "The Mother of Wisdom," in *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. Charles E. Carlston and Robert P. Scharlemann [London: SCM, 1971], 230-243; Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe*, 272-273). Against such a notion, see Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 31-36.

²J. Wagenmann, "Zum johanneischen Prolog," *JDTh* 20 (1875): 441-446.

³Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background," 27-46. "There is no difficulty in this conjecture," says Bultmann, "if one may suppose that the Evangelist once belonged to the Baptist community, until his eyes were opened to perceive that not John, but Jesus was the Revealer sent by God" (*The Gospel of John*, 18). For H. H. Schaefer, the hymn was to Enosh,

Haenchen and Käsemann, who contended that the hymn was originally Christian, not Baptist.¹ Other authors have suggested alternative views,² but the essential Christian character of the passage is now widely acknowledged.³

The hymnic character of the Prologue seems to be confirmed by the observation that only vss. 6-8 and 15, and maybe also vss. 12-13 and 17, the alleged redactional additions, are written in prose. All the remaining verses fall into some sort of parallel clauses, thus meeting the basic requirement of Hebrew poetry. Many scholars are even convinced that those clauses are rhythmical and can be organized in strophes. The

rather than to John the Baptist, and was also essentially gnostic ("Der 'Mensch' im Prolog des IV. Evangeliums," in *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, ed. R. Reitzenstein and H. H. Schaeder [Leipzig: Teubner, 1926], 306-341).

¹See Haenchen, "Probleme des johanneischen 'Prologs'," 305-334; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 138-167.

²Painter suggests that the hymn was a sectarian Jewish composition in praise of wisdom/Torah ("Christology and the History of the Johannine Community," 462). For Ashton, it was a hymn on God's salvific plan (λόγος), closely related to Col 1:25, written within the Johannine community after the wisdom motif ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 161-186). The gnostic theory was renewed after the publication of the Nag Hammadi documents (e.g., Gesine Robinson, "The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. James E. Goehring, et al. [Sonoma: Polebridge, 1990], 37-50), and this includes the view that the Prologue was initially a hymn to John the Baptist (see Jack T. Sanders, "Nag Hammadi, Odes of Solomon, and NT Christological Hymns," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World*, 51-66; Patterson, 323-332). These views, however, have not been accepted except by a few scholars. For valuable assessments of the relation between John's Prologue and gnostic literature, including the Trimorphic Protennoia, see Yvonne Janssens, "Une source gnostique du Prologue?" in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie*, ed. M. de Jonge, BEThL 44 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 355-358; Craig A. Evans, "On the Prologue of John and the Trimorphic Protennoia," *NTS* 27 (1981): 395-401; idem, *Word and Glory*, 13-76.

³See esp. Evans, *Word and Glory*, 77-186.

opinions, however, are highly divided. While many argue for a regular succession of couplets or triplets,¹ Haenchen speaks of “free rhythms,” not defined either by meter or stress,² and while Bernard completely avoids a formal strophic outline,³ Becker identifies three strophes,⁴ and Schnackenburg four, which he also thinks correspond to the hymn’s thematic structure or movement of thought. Thus, according to Schnackenburg, the first strophe (vss. 1, 3) describes the pre-existent and divine being of the Logos and his role in creation; the second (vss. 4, 9) his significance as life and light for the world of men; the third (vss. 10-11), his rejection on the part of humanity before the Incarnation; and the fourth (vss. 14a, d, 16), the event of the Incarnation itself which brings salvation to those who believe.⁵

¹E.g., Gächter, 99-111; Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 142; Schnackenburg, “Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog,” 84-85.

²Haenchen, “Probleme des johanneischen ‘Prologs,’” 308-309. Haenchen not only argues for an irregular succession of groups of lines in the Prologue, but also insists that a definite rhythm is not required, since it is also absent from other known early hymns to Christ (ibid., 333-334). See also Brown, who contends that “matching length is a criterion”, though “strict mathematical proportion . . . is not to be demanded” (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:22).

³Bernard arranges the hymn in couplets (vss. 3-5, 11, 14a-d), triplets (in vss. 1, 10, 18), and even single lines (vss. 2, 14e), but he does not break them up in strophes (1:cxliv-cxlv).

⁴These he divides as following: (1) vss. 1, 3-4; (2) vss. 5, 11-12b; (3) vss. 14a-b, 16 (see Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:70). A similar three-strophe arrangement is suggested by Rochais: (1) vss. 1, 3-5; (2) vss. 10-12; (3) vss. 14-16 (161-162).

⁵Schnackenburg, “Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog,” 75, 84-85 (see also Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:224-232). Brown, “with great hesitancy,” also suggests a four-strophe organization: (1) vss. 1-2: the Word with God; (2) vss. 3-5: the Word and creation; (3) vss. 10-12b: the Word in the world; (4) vss. 14, 16: the community’s share in the Word (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:22).

Hymnic Parallels

The final evidence for the hymn hypothesis is the parallels between the Prologue and other alleged Christological hymns in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline Epistles (Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16).¹ In Phil 2:6-11, Christ was in the form of God; then he emptied himself and took the form of a servant, becoming in the likeness of man; and finally God exalted him so that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord. It is argued that these emphases are also present in the Prologue (see vss. 1-2, 14, 18). The same happens with Col 1:15-20, where the Son is the image of the invisible God; he is before all things, and all things are created in, through, and for him; he is the beginning; all the fullness of God dwells in him and all things are reconciled through him (see John 1:1-3, 14, 16). Among the six statements about Christ that appears in 1 Tim 3:16, three seem to find an explicit parallel in the Prologue: his incarnation, the fact that many believed in him, and his glorification (cf. John 1:14, 12, 18), in addition to the implicit reference to his pre-existence (“he was revealed in flesh”; cf. John 1:1).²

In his study of the hymnic character of John’s Prologue, De Ausejo noticed that all these primitive hymns (including Heb 1:2-4) contain three basic elements that “summarize the doctrinal core concerning the person of Christ and his work”: his pre-

¹According to Ralph P. Martin, other NT passages that can also be identified as Christological hymns are Heb 1:3, 1 Pet 1:18-21, 2: 21-25, and 3:18-21 (*A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997], 19).

²See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:20-21.

existence, his earthly life, and his exaltation,¹ and concluded that all these elements are also present in the Prologue.²

Assessment

Although the hypothesis that John 1:1-18 incorporates an existing hymn has truly become an exegetical dogma within Johannine scholarship,³ to the point of having its own hermeneutical guide,⁴ for several scholars the evidence for such an hypothesis is not

¹De Ausejo, 276.

²For De Ausejo, the three basic themes correspond to the three strophes of the hymn, which he organizes as follows: (1) vss. 1-5, 9-11; (2) vss. 14a-b; (3) vss. 14c, 16, 18 (414-416). In order to consider his third strophe a reference to Christ's exaltation, he suggests that the καί of vs. 14c has an adversative connotation and should be translated as "but," so establishing the "antithesis between the former kenotic situation and the glorious one that now starts to be powerfully described" (403). Accordingly, he interprets παρὰ πατρός (vs. 14) and ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (vs. 18) as allusions to Christ's sitting at the right hand of God (407).

³See Jeremias: "The Prologue, as everyone knows today, is . . . a hymn to the Logos Jesus Christ" (*The Central Message of the New Testament*, 72). Pancaro considers it "quite certain that, in composing the so-called Prologue, John made use of a hymn" (*The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 535). Schmithals speaks of the hymn theory as enjoying a "wide consensus" which "has appropriately gained thorough acceptance," and of those who reject the theory as standing "outside the consensus" (*Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe*, 126-127). "The only real difficulty," says Witherington, "is in deciding what originally belonged to the hymn" (*Jesus the Sage*, 284).

⁴In an attempt to make stylistic research more effective for reconstructing the hymnic source of John's Prologue, Demke suggests three methodological principles: "1. Style analysis can determine the extent and form of the source only preliminarily. 2. This preliminary reconstruction of the source must be tested in an analysis of the structure itself, and that means in the actual interpretation, and then be corrected if necessary, whereby the corrections should preferably indicate a more precise evaluation of the style analysis. 3. The structural analysis of the source needs to start from the structure of the Prologue, in order to reveal the possible tensions between the structure of the source and that of the Prologue, and thus to obtain a further criterion for verifying the form of the source" (47).

as conclusive as it may appear. What Schnackenburg considers “the simplest explanation” for the Prologue’s literary problem,¹ may not be as simple as he presumes; besides, it is vulnerable at its basic assumption. This section offers a detailed assessment of the hymn hypothesis and the evidence against the unity of the Prologue.

Hymnic Parallels

There is no question that the earliest church had its own Christological hymns (see Acts 2:47; 16:25; 1 Cor 14:15, 26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Jas 5:13), and there exists extra-biblical attestation from the early second century that the Christians of Bithynia in Asia Minor used to sing “a hymn to Christ, as to a god.”² Also significant is Eusebius’s report, at the turn of the third century, of psalms and hymns which “from the beginning” were sung to “Christ as the Word,” referring to him as divine.³

It is one thing, however, to admit that the primitive Christians had hymns and songs to Jesus as a divine being, or even as the Word, and quite another to claim that John’s Prologue was one of those. Possible similarities between the Prologue and other New Testament hymns to Christ would be an appropriate test for the hypothesis, as claimed by Brown,⁴ only if the hymn genre of such passages could be established beyond

¹See Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:227.

²Pliny *Letters* 10.96.

³Eusebius *Church History* 5.28.5.

⁴Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:20.

any doubt, which is far from being the case.¹ What is more, the appeal to the similarities should never be made in isolation from the dissimilarities, for even a superficial look at the passages suffices to show how different they are among themselves, and especially from the Prologue, in terms of vocabulary, theme, and rhetoric. An important emphasis in the other alleged hymns is the death of Jesus (Phil 2:8; Col 1:18, 20), which is not explicitly mentioned in the Prologue (cf. John 1:10c-11). The attempt of De Ausejo and others² to see in John 1:18 a reference to Christ's glorification is inadequate, as

¹A few studies on Phil 2:6-11, one of the most acclaimed NT Christological hymns and, according to Jeremias, "the one undoubtedly most akin to the Christ-hymn in John 1" (*The Central Message of the New Testament*, 75), show the variety of opinions. Arguing from a form-critical, literary, and contextual standpoint, Gordon D. Fee strongly rejects the hymnic character of this passage (*Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 39-46; see also his "Philippians 2:5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?" *BBR* 2 [1992]: 29-46). Not satisfied with the traditional definition of the genre "hymn," Gunter Kennel developed a set of literary criteria for a text to be included in a certain genre. Then he carefully analyzed the formal features of three NT passages usually classified as hymns (Luke 1:46b-55; Phil 2:6-11; Rev 19:1-8); a detailed comparison of the results led him to conclude that those passages do not belong to the same genre, because they differ too much. Considered separately, Luke 1:46b-55 and Rev 19:1-8 could fit into the hymn genre, but not an oral genre, since both passages are essentially literary and closely interwoven their contexts (*Frühchristliche Hymnen? Gattungskritische Studien zur Frage nach den Liedern der frühen Christenheit*, WMANT 71 [Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1995]). A step further was taken by Ralph Brucker, who adduced evidence from ancient literature to suggest that Phil 2:6-11 is not a hymn, but rather an epideictic passage (γένος ἐπιδεικτικόν), that is, a passage in which the virtues of Christ are praised as an incentive to moral persuasion ("Christushymnen" oder "epideiktische Passagen"? *Studien zum Stilwechsel im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*, FRLANT 176 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997]). See also Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus*, JSNTSup 36 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), esp. 31-45; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 97-98; Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 167, 265.

²On De Ausejo's view, see above, 235, n. 2. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:20-21; Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. with

Schnackenburg, himself a proponent of the hymn hypothesis, has correctly shown.¹

Poetic Style

The presence in the Prologue of poetic features does not necessarily make it a hymn either. In the Greek literature, including the Septuagint (e.g., 2 Chr 7:6; Neh 12:24, 46, 47; Jdt 15:16; Pss 99:4; 118:171; 148:14; Sir 44:1; 1 Macc 4:33), the term ὕμνος always refers to a song or poetic composition written in praise of and directed to a deity or an honored person. A ὕμνος also regularly ends with a prayer of petition.² This definition is also entirely consistent with the form-critical understanding of the genre “hymn” since Hermann Gunkel’s pioneering study of the Psalms in 1933.³ For Gunkel, hymns are the easiest type of Psalm to recognize and their main trait is the “glorification of the God of Israel as the one to be praised.”⁴ The Prologue, however, while focused on

the assist. of Todd C. Penner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 534.

¹See Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:224.

²Fowl, 31-45. See also Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen*, StUNT 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 21-23. For further information, see Gerhard Delling, “ὕμνος,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 8:489-493, and especially Klaus Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” in *ANRW*, II/25:2, ed. Wolfgang Hasse (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 1149-1171.

³See Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, compl. Joachim Begrich, trans. James D. Nogalski, MLBS (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 23-65.

⁴*Ibid.*, 22, 25. Gunkel provides a list of thirty seven characteristics of what he calls “the form-language of the hymns” (*ibid.*, 34). As far as the structure is concerned, a hymn (1) normally begins with a call to praise; (2) in its main part recounts God’s acts or attributes as reasons for praise; then (3) usually closes with an expression of praise somewhat similar to the one used in the introduction (esp. 27, 29, 40). Although Gunkel’s work has been expanded and

a divine being, is not an expression of praise, nor does it end with a prayer.¹ It is true that the hymn hypothesis does not refer to the Prologue in its present form, but to a previous, independent form which is supposed to have been used by the evangelist. This, however, does not solve the problem. The great majority of those who defend the hymn hypothesis engage in some sort of textual reconstruction, including strophic arrangement, in order to justify their claims. But none of the proposed forms of the original hymn—and they vary as much as their proponents²—fits the definition above, so that to talk about the “irreducible minimum of common material”³ in all reconstructions becomes completely irrelevant.

In his study of confessions and hymns in the New Testament, W. Hulitt Gloer rightly defines a hymn as a song of praise equivalent to those found in the Psalms; nevertheless, he does not hesitate in describing John 1:1-18 as a Christological hymn.⁴

revised to varying degrees, his main arguments are still accepted today (e.g., James Limburg, “The Book of Psalms,” *ABD* [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 5:531-534).

¹This is exactly why Charles H. Griblin refers to the Prologue as a “doctrinal meditation rather than a hymn” (“Two Complementary Literary Structures in John 1:1-18,” *JBL* 104 [1985]: 87-103). Cf. Hofrichter, who calls the Prologue a “confessional text” (*Im Anfang war der ‘Johannesprolog,’* 41). For Klaus Wengst, however, the Prologue is “a song” (*Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums*, StNT 7 [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972], 205). In Jeremias, the lack of criterion is evident: he refers to the Prologue as “an artistically contrived song, an early Christian religious poem, a psalm, a hymn to the Logos Jesus Christ” (*Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums*, 8). Thyen rejects the notion of a hymn, nevertheless he describes the Prologue as a doxological poem (“Das Johannesevangelium,” 1).

²For charts with the reconstructions of the alleged hymn, see Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 71; and esp. Rochais, 7-9.

³Robinson, “The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John,” 126.

⁴W. Hulitt Gloer, “Homologies and Hymns in the New Testament: Form, Content and

More intriguing, however, is his conclusion that hymns and confessions are “very similar” in content, and that what sets a hymn apart is its poetic style.¹ In fact, the poetic features of John’s Prologue, particularly of vss. 1-5 and 9-11, seem to be the ultimate argument on which the hymn hypothesis rests.² It is, however, very forced logic to jump from the poetic style to the conclusion that the passage in question contains hymnic material. One thing does not imply the other.

Parallelisms, sorites, and rhythms are not restricted to hymns, not even to poetry.³ Poetic devices can perfectly be found in non-poetic or prosaic writings. Stanislav Segert lists twenty-five examples of parallelism and ten of sorites in John’s Gospel outside the Prologue.⁴ In the Prologue he acknowledges the more distinct poetic quality of vss. 1-5 and 9-11 as compared to the other two sections (vss. 6-8 and 14-18). But even allowing

Criteria for Identification,” *PRS* 11 (1984): 131.

¹Ibid., 129.

²See Bernard, 1:cxliv; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:224-225; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:20; Painter, “Christology and the History of the Johannine Community,” 463.

³“Parallelism of various sorts occurs in prose as well as in poetry. Rhythm, which is basic to all human speech, is important in prose as well as in poetry. And figures of speech, for example, metaphor or personification, appear prominently in prose as well as poetic texts. . . . Neither rhythm/meter, parallelism, nor other poetic techniques can, in and of themselves, serve as a hallmark for identifying poetic expression” (David L. Petersen and Kent H. Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 14).

⁴Parallelisms: 3:14, 17, 18, 30, 36; 4:14; 5:17, 19, 21-23; 6:39; 7:16, 24; 11:25-26; 12:25, 26; 13:20; 14:1, 11, 13-14, 19, 20, 23-24, 27; 15:20; 16:23. Sorites: 6:31-35, 41, 48-51, 51-56 “flesh,” 53-56 “blood”; 10:14-15; 11:51-52; 13:31-32; 14:27 (see Stanislav Segert, “Semitic Poetic Structures in the New Testament,” in *ANRW*, II/25:2, ed. Wolfgang Hasse [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984], 1454-1455).

for vss. 6-8 to be an addition, he does not exclude the possibility of considering some of the structures there as poetic as well (see "light" in vs. 7b, 8a-b, cf. 9a-b; "witness, witnessing" in vs. 7a-b, 8b).¹ The same could be said about vs. 15: according to Ruckstuhl, the sentence following εἶπον is an "unusual, but good" example of antithetical parallelism.²

Whether one agrees or not with Ruckstuhl, to see a hymn in John's Prologue on the basis of its poetic style seems unjustified. The difficulty of arriving at a clear understanding of what is poetry or prose in this passage³ may even suggest that John 1:1-18 was composed in "rhythmical prose," as several scholars have argued.⁴ In this case, it is impossible, comments Barrett, to strike out certain passages as prose insertions into an original Christ-hymn.⁵ Thus the unity of the Prologue becomes a valid conclusion. Although assuming an independent Logos hymn, Old Testament scholar Hartmut Gese also vehemently rejects the attempt to exclude some verses in the Prologue on the basis

¹Ibid. Barrett argues that these verses are just "less rhythmical" than the rest and can be set out in parallel couplets as well (*New Testament Essays*, 39).

²Ruckstuhl, "Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," 2:446.

³For the conflicting views of what is prose and what is poetry in the Prologue, see Schulz, *Komposition und Herkunft der Johanneischen Reden*, 21-25.

⁴Eltester, 116-120; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 150; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 112; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 64; Bruce, 28; Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 22-23; O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 9:517; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 81; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 3; Ruckstuhl, "Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," 444, 447-448. Cf. also Haenchen, who argues that behind the Prologue there is a hymn, but written "in a kind of rhythmical prose" (*John I*, 125).

⁵Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 150.

of an eventual differentiation between prose and poetry. Of vss. 6-8 and 15, he argues that while in content they seem to be secondary, they are poetic as well and, from the literary standpoint, fit perfectly into the framework of the original composition and are “not the result of a redaction that was foreign to the original hymn or did violence to it.”¹

The Baptist Passages

Vss. 6-8 and 15 are considered the strongest evidence against the Prologue having been composed as a whole by the evangelist, exactly as we have it.² In fact, the view that the Prologue is a unified composition stands or falls on the understanding of these verses.³

The view that these verses originally belonged with 1:19 can hardly be correct. Besides the lack of manuscript evidence, both the role of John the Baptist as a witness “of the light” (vs. 7b) and the second *ἵνα*-clause with the intransitive *πιστεύω* (vs. 7c) clearly presuppose the preceding verses (vss. 4-5).⁴ It could be argued, of course, that there was considerable adaptation when the material was moved, but this argument

¹Gese, 188.

²So Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 82. For Davies, however, the most significant evidence for seeing parts of the Prologue as a pre-Johannine composition is the absence of the term “grace” (1:14, 16-17) elsewhere in the Gospel (*Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 261).

³This is possibly what Painter means when he says that the consensus that vss. 6-8 and 15 were added by the evangelist “is crucial and has far-reaching implications for an understanding of the Prologue” (“Christology and the History of the Johannine Community,” 461).

⁴See Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:223.

simply cannot be verified. In addition, such an extent of adaptation would make any reconstruction virtually impossible and weaken the case for a continuation with 1:19.¹ Even vs. 15, which is considered the most disturbing of all of the Prologue's alleged insertions,² is valuable where it is, for it confirms the pre-existence of the Jesus.³ If it were an insertion, its presence between vss. 14 and 16 would not have the same value, especially in the light of vs. 30, which would be its obvious source, since both verses are practically identical. As an insertion, it would not add anything relevant to the Prologue; it would not explain anything, but only interrupt, as Robinson remarks.⁴

It should be remembered, nevertheless, that in order to consider a passage as an insertion, one must be able to explain why it was inserted at that particular point.⁵

Gérard Rochais is one of the few scholars who seem to be aware of this. He puts a great effort into finding a satisfactory explanation for all the Prologue's insertions. He suggests that vs. 15 was introduced by the redactor at that point because John the

¹See also above, 72-73.

²Robinson describes vs. 15 as "the most rude interruption in the Prologue" ("The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 122). Viviano refers to it as "a disappointment after vs. 14" (182).

³John's witness in this verse refers primarily not to the reality of the incarnation, as argued by Carson (*The Gospel according to John*, 130), much less to Jesus' glorification, as argued by Barrett (*New Testament Essays*, 47), but rather to his pre-existence. It confirms the fact that "the One who follows him in the story—Jesus—is in fact the One who was before him" (Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 55). A careful contextual reading of this verse demonstrates this (see above, 216).

⁴Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 125.

⁵See Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue," 354.

Baptist, having witnessed Jesus' baptism, was "the first guarantor of the community's faith," whose confession appears in vs. 14c-d.¹ The problem with this suggestion is that it does not take into consideration vs. 30, which, together with vss. 31-34, accomplishes that intent much more effectively.² This means that vs. 15, with all its proximity and similarity to vs. 30, does not seem to need to be treated as an insertion. On the other hand, a fact usually overlooked is that, despite their similarities, vs. 15 is not identical to vs. 30. This suggests that both verses may go back to the same oral tradition on John the Baptist that was used by the evangelist in two different contexts, with slight variations.³

¹Rochais, 24-25.

²Another explanation suggested by Rochais is that vs. 15 was introduced for polemical reasons, either against followers of John the Baptist or against Cerinthus and his sectarians (25); however, there is nothing intrinsically polemical in John 1:15. In addition, this passage is not primarily about John the Baptist, but about the Logos, and, as such, it merely reinforces the pre-existence of the incarnate One. Equally unacceptable is Brown's suggestion that "the final redactor, seeing that it might be useful here to emphasize the theme of pre-existence, copied into the Prologue the sentence from vs. 30" (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:35). This is no real answer; it does not account for the position of vs. 15 in its context. Richter's theory is even more problematic. He suggests that vs. 15 was inserted between vss. 14 and 16 to provide a structural parallelism with vss. 6-8, but he himself admits that this parallelism is not exactly perfect (107-113; 265-269). Much more realistic is Schmithals, who simply admits that "the reasons why the evangelist might have introduced the Baptist already in the Prologue" are "disputed and mysterious" (*Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe*, 264).

³Cecil Cryer suggests that vs. 15 was a marginal gloss that came to be absorbed into the text. Based on vs. 30, he argues that "if the phrase were due to our author, we should expect ἐστίν rather than ἦν" ("The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel," *ET* 32 [1920-1921]: 440, 443). This argument, however, besides lacking manuscript support, ignores the fact that from the text-critical perspective the more different a citation is from its source, the more probability it has of representing the original reading, and the differences between vs. 15b and vs. 30 go much beyond the difference between ἐστίν and ἦν. In other words, vs. 30 can scarcely be the source for vs. 15 (on the scribal practice of harmonizing discordant parallels or quotations, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3^d ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 197-198; Wilson Paroschi, *Crítica Textual do*

Whatever the precise facts, one thing must be emphasized: "It is not easy to account for the presence of this verse in the Prologue at all," as Robinson says, "unless it was there already as part of the original building."¹

Style Analysis

The integrity of the Prologue is also evidenced by style-critical considerations. It is important to note in this connection that Schnackenburg's style analysis only demonstrates that vss. 6-8 and 15, besides vss. 2, 5, 12-13, 14b-c, and 17-18, were composed by the same author of the Gospel. It does not prove that the remaining verses were not, or could not have been, written by the fourth evangelist. The distinct characteristics of a writer should not so quickly become a negative criterion for the identification of sources.² The absence of characteristic Johannine elements in a few verses in the Prologue does not necessarily exclude them as non-Johannine, unless those elements must be found in any single verse or section of the entire Gospel.³ Common

Novo Testamento, 2^d ed. [São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1999], 96-97, 153-154).

¹Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 125. See also Barrett: "It is true that vs. 16 can be read without difficulty immediately after vs. 14, but it is unnecessary for that reason to suppose that vs. 15 is an interpolation" (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 167; cf. Gese, 188). There is no reason, however, to deny the parenthetical nature of this verse (against Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue," 357), even if it plays an important role in the argument of the Prologue. For the view that vss. 6-8 and 15 are in fact the very center of the Prologue, for they testify to the identification of the pre-existent Logos with the man Jesus, see Osten-Sacken, 155-173.

²See D. Moody Smith, *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 9.

³On "the hapax legomenon fallacy," see the illuminating article of Michael Goulder, "A

authorship should not be discarded on so narrow a basis. The attempt to do so is correctly described by Gese as “highly problematical.”¹

The argument that it is precisely the verses without the typical Johannine style that have terms and concepts foreign to the Gospel should not be pressed too far. On one hand, the Prologue as a whole shows a remarkable “closeness to Johannine language,”² as terms such as ζωή, φῶς, σκοτία, κόσμος, ἀπεστάλμενος παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, μαρτυρίαν, ἀληθινός, πιστεύουσιν, δόξα, ὁ ἐχόμενος (εἰς τὸν κόσμον) and ἔγνω demonstrate. That is to say, the similarities outweigh the differences, and one can only regret that the differences have occupied scholarly attention more often.³ On the other, as Ruckstuhl observes, “almost every chapter in the Gospel contains words which appear just once.”⁴ A good example is the important title “lamb of God” used for Jesus in 1:29 and 36 and never again in the Gospel; but not even on that account does it need to be

House Built on Sand,” in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study*, ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985), 14-16.

¹Gese, 172.

²Ibid.

³Even Bultmann acknowledges that “the language of the Prologue is the same as that of the discourses of the Gospel itself” (*The Gospel of John*, 13, n. 1). Even though this does not prevent him from ascribing most of the Prologue to a previous source, it does make him reject the notion that John 1:1-18 was a later addition to the Gospel (ibid.). Schnackenburg goes so far as to say that while using a primitive hymn, the evangelist “added his own comments and forged links between it and the Gospel narrative” (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:223). Commenting on this statement, Voorwinde says, “whether or not such links needed to be ‘forged’ they would appear to exist in profusion for those wishing to see them” (18).

⁴Ruckstuhl, *Die Literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums*, 97, n. 1.

ascribed to an independent, fragmentary source.¹ Moreover, in his last and more definitive work on the Style Criticism of John's Gospel, Ruckstuhl comes to argue, for example, that vss. 1 and 11, which are usually thought to have belonged to the original Logos hymn, also contain typical Johannine stylistic features,² thus confirming his previous judgment that "the Prologue is a personal creation of the evangelist."³

¹Bultmann ascribes this title to a piece of Jewish-Christian tradition alien to the evangelist's own conceptual world, which was essentially gnostic, and for that reason the title is not used again in the Gospel (*The Gospel of John*, 96-97). But Fortna, whatever the merits of his Source Criticism, does not see any problem in making the lamb of God title in 1:29 an original part of the so-called Signs Source and, in 1:36, the evangelist's redactional repetition, even if the title or concept it involves is not used again or further developed in the rest of the Gospel (20, 25, 32-33). See also Jürgen Becker, "Wunder und Christologie: Zum literarkritischen und christologischen Problem der Wunder im Johannesevangelium," *NTS* 16 (1969-1970), 135.

²See Ruckstuhl and Dschulnigg, 175. First of all, Ruckstuhl and Dschulnigg developed four criteria for considering a word or construction typically Johannine: (1) it must appear in the Fourth Gospel at least three times; (2) it must not appear in any of the Synoptics or in Revelation more than half as often (in absolute numbers) as in John's Gospel; (3) it must not occur in any other NT writing more frequently (in relative terms) than in John; and (4) in any of the thirty-two witnesses drawn from extra-canonical Hellenistic literature (100 B.C.-A.D. 150) it must not occur more frequently (in relative terms) than in John (31-33). In John 1:1 the characteristic is "Resumption" (*Wiederaufnahme*), that is, the retaking of "a sentence or part of a sentence with the same or other corresponding words or constructions in reverse order" (105). According to Ruckstuhl and Dschulnigg, this stylistic feature occurs twenty-nine times in John (1:1; 3:12, 20-21, 31, 32-33; 6:46, 57; 8:15-16, 18; 9:28; 10:4-5, 38; 12:35-36; 13:31; 14:1, 11, 20; 15:2, 4, 9, 10; 16:27-28; 17:1, 10, 11, 16, 23; 18:36), three times as much as in the Synoptics altogether, and almost four times as much as in 1 John (8 times), the book in the NT with the highest level of resumptions after the Fourth Gospel. In Hellenistic literature, the highest concentration of resumptions is in the *Hermetica*: 21 occurrences, or 17,7 in relative terms (104-106). With regard to John 1:11, the characteristic is εἰς τὰ ἴδια, which occurs exactly three times in John (1:11; 16:32; 19:27), just once in the rest of the NT (Rev 21:6), and the most it occurs in one single Hellenistic writing is three times in 3 Macc (6:27, 37; 7:8), which correspond to 8,8 in relative terms (157). Boismard and Lamouille also list εἰς τὰ ἴδια as a typical Johannine construction (505).

³Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums*, 97, n. 1. In Ruckstuhl

On this account, some scholars have proposed an intermediate solution for the problem of the Prologue: they have ascribed the composition of the Logos hymn to the Johannine community.¹ According to this view, the hymn predated the Gospel but was composed in the same conceptual and social environment in which the Gospel was eventually redacted. Thus, the possibility of a common authorship remains open and there are indeed those who suggest that the hymn was composed by the evangelist himself.² Undoubtedly, this represents an improvement. As has been shown, however, the Prologue does not look like a hymn and it is questionable whether it can even be called a poem. Furthermore, when issues such as the Logos concept and the relationship between vss. 11-12 and the structure of the Gospel as a whole are taken into consideration,³ the chances that the Prologue's incorporation into the Gospel occurred

and Dschulnigg, *Stilkritik und Verfasserfrage um Johannesevangelium*, Ruckstuhl does not deal specifically with the Prologue, but his strong persuasion is the same as before: one writer wrote all the Fourth Gospel (20-22), even if not at one sitting (see his "Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," 454, where he suggests that John 1:1-18 was composed by the evangelist to introduce a primitive form of his Gospel).

¹See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:20; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 4; Rissi, "John 1:1-18," 394; Gese, 188; Rochais, 5; Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom," 162, 174; Jean Zumstein, "Le Prologue, seuil du quatrième évangile," *RSR* 83 (1995): 223; Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 156. For Smalley and Zumstein, however, the Prologue was not written before the Gospel, but after it; for Ashton, it was written "at a time when the composition of the Gospel was well under way" ("The Transformation of Wisdom," 162).

²See Cryer, 440, 443; Bernard, 1:cxxxviii; Gächter, 110-111; De Ausejo, 392; Humphrey C. Green, "The Composition of St. John's Prologue," *ET* 66 (1954-1955): 294; Wikenhauser, 48; Feuillet, 8:col. 662; Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 239; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 295, 388-389; Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John*, 3-4; Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 374, n. 38; Viviano, 182.

³See below, appendices B and C.

only at a later stage seem greatly reduced.

Conclusion

Despite its widespread acceptance, the hymn hypothesis does not seem to be adequate to explain the origin and the makeup of John 1:1-18. On one hand, it overemphasizes the significance of the evidence against the unity of this passage; on the other, this passage does not meet the criteria for a hymn. There are interruptions and repetitions in the Prologue; there are terms and concepts that do not recur in the Gospel; changes in the style can be detected as the passage moves from one section to another, but none of this proves that an existing text was worked over whether by the evangelist or a later redactor. The variety of reconstructions of the alleged text, as well as the similarities and connections with the Gospel, which are far more abundant than the differences, seem to support this conclusion.¹

As for the idea that the original, underlying text was a hymn, the situation is even more discomfoting. There is nothing in the Prologue, either in its present form or in any assumed reconstruction, that necessarily requires it to be classified as a hymn, or even as a poem. Its poetic style and occasional parallels to other hypothetical hymns do

¹In 1964, after surveying the major contributions to the study of the Logos hymn, Eltester concluded that "the differences about the limits of this hymn, its structure, its rhythmic form, and finally its concrete origin, are so great that we must say with Käsemann: 'The state of discussion is not a happy one'" (115-116 [quoting Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, 144]). Since then the situation has not improved. Of his own reconstruction, Schmithals makes this astonishing statement: "There can be no doubt about the original unity of the reconstructed hymn and about the correctness of the reconstruction itself" ("Der Prolog des Johannesevangeliums," 33), only to offer later on a different reconstruction in his *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe* (270-271).

not warrant such a classification.

The interpretation of the Prologue, therefore, is not to be controlled by the hymn hypothesis, no matter how attractive this hypothesis appears. Possible difficulties in the text, such as the meaning of vs. 14 if the incarnated Christ is already referred to earlier in the narrative, are not to be solved on the basis of this hypothesis, even if the solution looks convincing. Bultmann rightly says that the critical analysis should be nothing more than a “servant” of the exegesis,¹ but in the case of John 1:1-18 one can only regret that the hymn hypothesis has usually functioned as a master. For this reason, the bottom line is not so much how to explain the origin of this passage,² but how to interpret it.

¹Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 17.

²Hypotheses, however, are unavoidable. A hypothesis on the origin of the Prologue that has much to recommend it is that of Lindars. He suggests that John 1:1-18 was originally a Christological sermon prepared by John, who consciously modeled some of his statements on Jewish wisdom poems (Barnabas Lindars, *John*, NTG [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 35-36). This would account for the general poetic features found in the text. “There was no need for him [the evangelist] to keep tightly within the limits of the poetic models, because his own composition was not a poem, and was serving a different purpose” (Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 81). Ridderbos also alludes to the kerygmatic traits of this passage (“The Structure and Scope of the Prologue,” 52-53), and several other scholars decidedly favor the idea that preaching was one of the main elements that shaped the traditions found in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 26; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:xxxv; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 44). It is Lindars, however, the one who has given the idea of “homilies in John” its best expression (*The Gospel of John*, 51-54; idem, *Behind the Fourth Gospel*, SCC 3 [London: SPCK, 1971], 43-60; idem, “Traditions behind the Fourth Gospel,” in *L’Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie*, ed. M. de Jonge, BEThL 44 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1971], 107-124; idem, *John*, 33-39). That the fourth evangelist was a preacher and that he had been preaching for a number of years before writing his work, there is no reason to doubt. It may also be assumed, with a high degree of probability, that he also made notes for his preaching throughout the years, even if Eusebius says that his preaching was unwritten (ἀγράφω) (*Church History* 3.24.7). When he eventually wrote his Gospel, he made use of those notes, which might already have been changed, enlarged, and edited at many points. The Gospel itself might have gone through more than one edition.

From the exegetical standpoint, what really matters is that the Prologue as it now stands came down to us as an essential part of the Gospel. This is the text that the interpreter has to deal with, even if it represents the final stage in the history of an editorial or compositional process. To argue otherwise is to transfer the controlling principle from the text itself to the interpreter's own imagination.

Whatever the precise facts, the idea of a sermon seems to do more justice to the nature of the Prologue, and of the Gospel, than that of a hymn. In the end, however, this hypothesis is also essentially unprovable. There is no hortatory section in these verses, or a clear statement that describes them as a "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22). Nevertheless, the emphasis on accepting and believing, the assurance of a child-father relationship with God (John 1:12), the new birth (vs. 13), and the "we" section of vss. 14 and 16 may indicate that the Prologue was, or came from, one of John's sermons. Be that as it may, the advantages of the homily hypothesis over the hymn hypothesis are several: (1) it stays away from the hymn genre for which there is no single evidence in the Prologue, at the same time it accounts for the poetic elements of some verses; (2) it is arguable on the basis of the homiletic traces found in the text; (3) it postulates an origin for the Prologue that is more compatible with the character of the Gospel as a whole; (4) it does not require the original text to have had the rigid form of a hymn; (5) it implies that the Prologue was written by the same author of the Gospel, though conceding it to have had a life of its own; (6) it allows the Prologue to have had a natural, organic growth, instead of being the result of a violent graft; and (7) it accounts for both the similarities and the dissimilarities between the Prologue and the longer narrative. What is not necessary, however, and perhaps not even correct, is to argue, as Lindars does, that the Prologue was not an original part of the Gospel (*The Gospel of John*, 50, 82). John 1:1-18 does not look like an afterthought which was grafted on to the Gospel only at a later stage. It is a profound theological composition placed at the introduction of the Gospel for Christological and literary reasons. As Barrett says, "the Prologue is necessary to the Gospel, as the Gospel is necessary to the Prologue. The history explicates the theology, and the theology interprets the history" (*New Testament Essays*, 48).

APPENDIX B

THE LOGOS CONCEPT

One of the arguments that the Prologue may have had an origin independent from the Gospel is that it has terms and concepts that do not recur, such as "Logos," the most characteristic term in John 1:1-18 and never again used in the Gospel with the same meaning.¹ Even assuming, however, that the non-recurrence of a term does not constitute in itself a sign of source borrowing or second-hand editing,² it might be possible to explain that term within the large context of the writing where it appears. The following discussion attempts to show the significance of "Logos" to the concept of pre-existence and other Christological emphases in the Fourth Gospel.

The Pre-existence of Jesus

As a designation of Christ, "Logos" is used in the Prologue only in connection with his pre-existence (vss. 1, 14). Once he incarnates, the term itself disappears and

¹The classical expression of this argument is found in Adolf Harnack ("Über das Verhältnis des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZThK* 2 [1892]: 189-231), who concludes that John's Prologue has little to do with the substance of the narrative that follows, but consists merely in a philosophical treatise written to conciliate the interest of the Hellenistic reader (230). See also Jan-A. Böhner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 4.

²See Eugen Ruckstuhl, "Johannine Language and Style: The Question of Their Unity," in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie*, ed. M. de Jonge, BEThL 44 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 127.

one then reads of “Jesus,” or of the “Son”¹ (1:17-18). Since the Gospel is the story of the incarnate Word, one should not be surprised that he is never again referred to as “Logos,” neither by the evangelist, nor by Jesus himself.² On the other hand, as Ridderbos highlights, the entire Gospel is full of attributes that in the Prologue are assigned to the Logos: the Logos was God (1:1), so was Jesus (5:17-18; 10:33; 20:24); the Logos was in the beginning with God (1:1), so was Jesus (17:5, 24); in the Logos was life (1:4), so it was in Jesus (5:21, 24, 26; 6:51, 54, 57); the Logos revealed his glory (1:14), so did Jesus (2:11; 17:22); the Logos came as light into the world of darkness (1:4-5, 9), so did Jesus (3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46).³

Furthermore, without what is said about the Logos in the Prologue “the man Jesus,” notes Rissi, “cannot be understood,” for it is the Prologue that provides the real beginning of the story of Jesus, which would otherwise remain a mystery.⁴ In other

¹See Smith, *John*, ANTC, 58; Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 261.

²Brodie says: “The Word becomes flesh. Thus, the Word has not disappeared from the Gospel, but rather has become something else” (*The Gospel according to John*, 134). Similarly, Bultmann: “It is therefore perfectly appropriate for the title Logos to play no further part in the rest of the Gospel. The Logos is now present as the Incarnate, and indeed it is only as the Incarnate that it is present at all” (*The Gospel of John*, 63).

³Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 17. For the idea that the Logos concept is the very “center from which the entire act of God described in this Gospel both takes place and is understood,” see P. Joseph Cahill, “The Johannine *Logos* as Center,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 54-72.

⁴Rissi, “John 1:1-18,” 394. Rissi’s view of the Prologue is rather interesting, for he supposes that John 1:1-18 comprises two independent hymns on Christ: one consisting of vss. 1-12 and the other of vss. 14-17. In spite of this, he argues for a substantial dependence of the Gospel on the Prologue, pointing out that John’s story of Jesus actually begins not in Bethlehem (cf. 7:41), or in his parents’ house (cf. 6:41-42), but in heaven (cf. 1:18; 3:13; 6:32-33; 7:28-29;

words, without the Prologue's depiction of the Logos as the One who "was in the beginning with God" (1:2) and who at a certain point in history "was made flesh and dwelled among us" (1:14), the Gospel readers would not understand passages such as: "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?" (6:62); or "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23); or "I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (16:28). It is always worthy to remember that the Fourth Gospel does not provide any explicit information on Jesus' birth.¹

Morna Hooker correctly observes that for John the point at issue in most passages where Jesus meets opposition and where his hearers reject his teaching is the question of his origin: "Those who reject him fail to recognize that he is 'from above'"² (e.g., 6:29-33, 38-39, 41-42, 46-51, 57-58; 7:27-29, 41-44; 8:14, 23-27, 42-43, 58-59; 9:29; 12:44-46, 49-50). This means, she continues, that without the Prologue many of the statements of Jesus in John would be incomprehensible, as they were to the Jewish opponents in the story.³ Such statements, contrary to what Theobald says, are not few, neither can they be arbitrarily regarded as redactional accretions without compromising

17:5, 24) (see also his "Die Logoslieder im Prolog des vierten Evangeliums," 321-336).

¹On the question whether John 1:13 refers to Jesus' virginal birth (ὅς οὐκ . . . ἐγεννήθη) or to the new birth of the children of God mentioned in vs. 12, see above, 133, n. 2.

²Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 44.

³Ibid., esp. 44-51. For Bultmann, who believes that the Logos concept has its origin in mythology, the Prologue cannot be understood without the Gospel: "Does this introduction give the reader the key for the understanding of the Gospel? It is far more a mystery itself, and is fully comprehensible only to the man who knows the whole Gospel" (*The Gospel of John*, 13).

one's credibility.¹ It seems, therefore, appropriate to conclude with Hooker that the Prologue has "always formed the essential opening paragraphs of the Gospel."²

Jean Zumstein recognizes that John 1:1-18 deals with the origin of the following drama's protagonist in the sense that it reveals his "most fundamental identity." On account of this he suggests that the main function of the Prologue is to provide the "hermeneutical framework" for the understanding of the Gospel.³ Zumstein thinks, nevertheless, that the Prologue is a secondary addition, for not only the "theological backbone" of the Gospel, which he thinks to be the "Christology of the one sent," is absent from the Prologue, but also the central emphases of the Prologue, namely, the pre-existence and the incarnation, are not prominent in the Gospel.⁴

Neither argument is entirely correct. The Christology of the one sent is indeed an

¹See Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 372-373. Theobald also tries to defend the lateness of the Prologue in relation to the Gospel by suggesting that the arguments of both are on different rhetorical levels. For him the Prologue is marked by a "metareflexivity" (*Metareflexivität*), that is, a superior mode of abstraction and generalization, when compared to the Gospel (*ibid.*, 371-372). Even if this is granted, however, it has no chronological implication. In other words, it does not prove by itself that the Prologue was written after the Gospel and with the Gospel in view. Theobald even calls the Prologue "the oldest commentary" on John (*ibid.*, 373). See also Raymond F. Collins, "The Oldest Commentary on the Fourth Gospel," *BiT* 98 (1978): 1769-1775.

²Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 51. Witherington says: "Throughout the Gospel, knowing where the Son of God came from and where he is going is the key to understanding who he is, and thus is also a key to understanding why so many misunderstand and reject him" (*John's Wisdom*, 47). See also Hartwig Thyen, "Johannesevangelium," *TRE* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977-), 17:201.

³Zumstein, esp. 239.

⁴*Ibid.*, 218-220, 222, 239.

important concept in the Gospel. Jesus' role as emissary or agent for God is the most frequent Christological title in John. It is mentioned no less than thirty-five times in the Gospel, in all except five of its chapters (chaps. 1, 2, 11, 19, 21). However, it is an overstatement to say that this concept is the "theological backbone" of the Gospel, for this concept does not stand by itself. As Smith points out, the idea of the sending of the Son into the world, which is an eschatological event, is only part of the broad descent/ascent motif found in John, yet the Prologue, by introducing the incarnation of the pre-existent Logos, offers the appropriate and necessary background for its understanding. Therefore, concludes Smith, it is only because of the Prologue that the reader is not at all surprised to find out in the Gospel that God has sent his Son, who has descended from heaven.¹ This also explains why the pre-existence of Jesus and his incarnation are not prominent in the Gospel. They are assumed, though it cannot be denied that they are explicitly mentioned or at least alluded to in several passages (the pre-existence: 6:46, 62; 8:58; 16:27-28; 17:5; the incarnation: 6:38; 41, 51-59; 19:34-35).

Johannine Christology

The attempt to use the Logos concept to understand some major facets of the Fourth Gospel's Christology is legitimate, but perhaps not to the point assumed by Paul S. Minear, who argues that "the Logos thought pattern pervades the later chapters as clearly as it dominates the Prologue."² Apparently unhappy with the fact that the term

¹Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, 101.

²Paul S. Minear, "Logos Affiliations in Johannine Thought," in *Christology in*

λόγος does not appear again in John in precisely the way it is used in the Prologue, Minear attempts, though not with total success, to demonstrate the existence of what he calls “affiliations” of the Logos idea scattered throughout the Gospel (5:19-38; 6:48-71; 8:31-47; 12:44-50; 17:6-26).¹

The passage of 9:29, however, seems to be important in this connection. In the story of the blind man healed, the Pharisees exclaim: “We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man [Jesus], we do not know where he comes from.” This statement conveys a strange logic, which may well hide a deeper meaning. What does the fact that “God has *spoken* to Moses” have to do with Jesus and his origin? Almost nothing, unless the reference to Jesus is construed against the background of the Logos concept.² Without going into details regarding Moses’ relationship with the narrative plot of this Gospel, it is appropriate to say that not only the ministry of Jesus, as argued by Hoskyns, but also the writing of the Gospel itself seems to have occurred “in the

Dialogue, ed. Robert F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1993), 142. See also Hooker, “The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret,” 45. Voorwinde similarly argues that “λόγος is used in succeeding chapters in ways that presuppose the occurrences in the Prologue (e.g., 4:41, 50; 5:24; 8:31, 37, 43, 51, 52; 12:48; 14:24; 15:3; 17:6, 14, 17)” (19).

¹Voorwinde, however, rightly says that “this Gospel’s strong emphasis on the words of Jesus should not be overlooked” (19, n. 27). At this point, he refers to Werner H. Kelber, who points out: “In distinction to the other three canonical Gospels, the Fourth Gospel has availed itself of a sayings tradition of massive proportions. The Farewell Discourse alone (13:31–17:26), a vast repertoire of speech materials, comprises approximately one-fifth of the Gospel. If we discount chapter 21 as a later redactional addition, three-fourths of chapters 1-20 consist of sayings, dialogues, and monologues” (“The Birth of a Beginning: John 1:1-18,” *Se* 52 [1990]: 126).

²Another echo of the Logos concept of the Prologue is perhaps found in 17:14, 17. See Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 267-268.

context of a race owing its allegiance . . . to Moses"¹ (cf. vs. 28). Moses was the normative character of first-century Judaism, and the belief that God's most complete revelation had taken place through him (Exod 33:11; Num 12:2, 8) was the basis on which the entire Jewish religion rested. For John, however, the revelation through Moses was partial (1:17). There were some issues about God that only Jesus, who was the Word of God and who was in the beginning with God (vss. 1-2) could reveal. Only Jesus could provide a perfect revelation of God (vs. 18). There is, therefore, a subtle irony in 9:29: the contrast between the claim of the Jews that they knew that God had spoken to Moses and the fact that they did not know Jesus, who himself was God's Word made flesh.²

The bottom line, as Rissi and Hooker contend, is that what the Prologue says about the Logos constitutes the necessary introduction for a correct understanding of the Gospel's portrait of Jesus.³ As such, it is rather implausible that the Gospel could have

¹Hoskyns, 139-140.

²Paul D. Duke comes very close to this idea. See his *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Knox, 1985), 68-69.

³"As the Gospel stands at present, these verses are intended to offer an introduction to the events which follow" (Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret," 40). "The so-called Prologue of the Fourth Gospel is not a mere foreword to the story of Jesus. It describes the beginning of that story and, at the same time, interprets the significance of Jesus' entire life. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, the author of the Fourth Gospel sees this beginning, not within history, but before the beginning of time, in God. This is the secret of the man Jesus, without which he cannot be understood" (Rissi, "John 1:1-18," 394). See also Ridderbos: "The story presupposes the Prologue; in fact, in the elevated pronouncements Jesus makes concerning himself the story can hardly be understood apart from the thrust of the Prologue; at least it would not have the context that the Prologue gives to it" (*The Gospel according to John*, 18).

ever existed without this introductory passage. The Jesus who appears in the Gospel's narrative is entirely bound up with the Prologue's notion of the pre-existent Logos who was made flesh. "The Gospel of John," observes Thompson, "is first of all a narrative of what happened when the Word of God was embodied in human form and 'dwelt among us.'"¹

James D. G. Dunn, who discusses the theological meaning of Jesus' origin in John from the perspective of the socio-religious context of the late first-century Judaism, when this Gospel was supposedly written, goes a step further.² He offers an impressive amount of data to suggest that in the period between the two Jewish revolts there was considerable interest among the Jews in general in the possibility of gaining heavenly knowledge through visions and heavenly ascents. Then he argues that in presenting Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God who is also the Son of Man, John wanted to oppose the current Jewish speculation and persuade his readers that Jesus was from above and, because he was from above, he was the only one who could bring and embody the true knowledge of God and of heavenly things (1:17-18). Thus the claim of Jesus' messiahship was enhanced by the claim that he was also "the Son of God" (20:31), which to the Jews could only mean that he was "equal to God" (5:18; 10:33). For Dunn, the Prologue, with its description of Jesus' pre-existence according to the wisdom category, provides the decisive clue to the Gospel's Christology, for it is only in

¹Marianne M. Thompson, "What Is the Gospel of John," *WW* 21 (2001): 334.

²Dunn, "Let John Be John," 293-322.

the wisdom tradition of Jewish background that one finds a parallel to the synthesis of Johannine conceptuality: a wisdom which is "distinct from all other potential intermediaries, angelic or human, precisely by virtue of its precosmic existence with God, . . . precisely by virtue of its close identity with God."¹ This fact led Dunn not only to affirm the necessity and intentionality of the Prologue,² but also to reject expressly the possibility that it was a later addition to the Gospel.³

Conclusion

It is not safe, therefore, and not even correct, to use the term Logos as evidence for source relationship in John's Prologue. Since that term as a designation of Jesus is used only in connection with his pre-existence, there is nothing necessarily strange in the fact that it does not appear again in the rest of the Gospel, for the Gospel is about the incarnate Christ. What the Prologue says about the Logos, however, establishes the appropriate background against which the stress on Jesus' divine and heavenly origin throughout the Gospel must be understood. As a matter of fact, most of the central

¹Ibid., 314.

²"The fourth evangelist really did intend his Gospel to be read through the window of the Prologue" (ibid., 317). Although Dunn does not say so, it seems legitimate to conclude that this position represents an advance upon his previous view of the Prologue as an earlier, independent poem which, in its present form and setting, is not well connected to the Gospel (see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 239-245).

³"I find it impossible to regard the Prologue of John's Gospel as redactional (i.e., added after the fourth evangelist put the Gospel into its present form); the themes of the Prologue are too closely integrated into the Gospel as a whole and are so clearly intended to introduce these themes that such a conclusion is rendered implausible" (Dunn, "Let John Be John," 313). A similar claim is made by Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 114-115.

emphasis of Johannine Christology can hardly make sense without the Logos statements in the Prologue, whether in relation to personal attributes or conceptual affinities such as the creative Word of God and the wisdom motif of Jewish religious tradition.

This also seems to oppose the idea that the Prologue represents a later addition to the Gospel. Lindars, for example, argues that John wrote the Prologue with the first edition of his Gospel in view, that is, it was added to the Gospel at the time of its second edition to provide the rational basis for its Christology.¹ By maintaining this, Lindars tries to account for what he considers two opposing realities about the Prologue: its thematic unity with the Gospel, on one hand, and, on the other, its artificial connection with the Gospel by means of vss. 6-8 and 15, which, together with vs. 19, were likely the original beginning of the Gospel.²

As already argued, it seems highly improbable that the Fourth Gospel once began with vss. 6-8, 15, and vs. 19. The way in which vss. 7-8 resume the light theme of vss. 4-5 seems to contradict this view.³ In addition, the pre-existence of Jesus and other

¹Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 50, 82. See also Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 372-373; Zumstein, 223; Ruckstuhl, "Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," 454.

²Ibid., 76-77, 82. Robinson's idea is very similar to Lindars's. The main difference is that, instead of calling the Prologue a homily, as Lindars does, he refers to it as "poetic meditation" ("The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 127). Ruckstuhl, too, favors the view that the Prologue was composed by the evangelist after the first edition (*Vorform*) of his Gospel ("Kritische Arbeit am Johannesprolog," 454); so also Stephen S. Smalley, "Diversity and Development in John," *NTS* 17 (1970-1971): 287; Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community," 460; Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 371-373; Ed. L. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," *JBL* 112 (1993): 446; and Zumstein, 239.

³See above, 242-243.

Christological emphases found in the Gospel presuppose the Logos concept introduced in vss. 1-3 and vs. 14. Whether there was in fact a previous edition of this Gospel nobody knows for sure. One thing, however, seems to be clear: some of the main aspects of John's Christology are comprehensible only on the basis of what the Prologue says about and in connection with the Logos, something that even Lindars acknowledges.¹ As Barrett says, "the Prologue is necessary to the Gospel, as the Gospel is necessary to the Prologue. The history explicates the theology, and the theology interprets the history."²

¹"The Prologue provides the rational basis of the Christology of John, which is presupposed throughout the Gospel, and (if it is indeed an addition for the second edition) was added precisely to clarify this" (Lindars, *John*, 39).

²Barrett, *New Testament Essays*, 48.

APPENDIX C

THE REJECTION/ACCEPTANCE MOTIF

The structural connection that exists between John 1:11-12 and the longer narrative also seems to suggest that the Prologue as it now stands was not a later addition to the Gospel.¹ These verses may comprise much more than a casual reference to the rejection of Jesus by some of his own people and his acceptance by others. They may have provided the evangelist the basic framework for the writing of his Gospel, which, except for the passion account (chaps. 18-21), appears to have been designed after the rejection/acceptance or unbelief/belief pattern introduced in the Prologue.²

Several scholars have noted that these two verses contain a summary of the two main divisions of the Gospel: vs. 11 covers chaps. 1:19–12:50, while vs. 12 chaps. 13:1–20:31.³ Claus Westermann goes a little further. He argues that vs. 11a (“he came to what was his”) summarizes chaps. 1:19–6:71, and vs. 11b (“his own did not receive

¹It is important to note that the supporters of the hymn hypothesis who also think of the Prologue as a later addition usually consider John 1:11-12, or at least vs. 11, part of the original Logos hymn. From a list of thirty-seven different reconstructions of the alleged hymn provided by Rochais (7-9), vs. 11, or part of it, is excluded only by Gottfried Schille (*Frühchristliche Hymnen* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965], 127); Boismard and Lamouille (73); and of course Miller (“The Logic of the Logos Hymn,” 552-561), who thinks that the hymn can be found only in vss. 1-5.

²“The plot of the Gospel is propelled by conflict between belief and unbelief as responses to Jesus,” concurs Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 97).

³See Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:19.

him”) chaps. 7:1–12:50, while vs. 12 summarizes chaps. 13:1–17:25.¹ If this is correct, and there are reasons to believe it is, the possibility that the Prologue was not an original part of the Gospel would be greatly reduced. This appendix studies the significance of John 1:11-12 to the understanding of the structure and the plot of the Gospel as a whole.

He Came to His Own (Vs. 11a)

The basic structure of John’s Gospel is plain and is acknowledged by most interpreters.² After the Prologue, an account is given of the public ministry of Jesus (1:19-12:50). This section comprises a “relatively continuous narrative,”³ as Brown remarks, in which Jesus “shows himself to his own people as the revelation of his Father.”⁴ According to Westermann, however, something happens at the end of chap. 6:

¹Claus Westermann, *The Gospel of John in the Light of the Old Testament*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 7.

²For a survey of alternative views, see George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, AnBib 117 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1987), 17-85. More recent proposals, besides that of Mlakuzhyil himself (137-241), include: Egil A. Wyller, “In Solomon’s Porch: A Henological Analysis of the Architectonic of the Fourth Gospel,” *StTh* 42 (1988): 151-167; Charles H. Giblin, “The Tripartite Narrative Structure of John’s Gospel,” *Bib* 71 (1990): 449-468. See also Gunnar Østenstad, “The Structure of the Fourth Gospel: Can It Be Defined Objectively?” *StTh* 45 (1991): 33-55.

³Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:cxix.

⁴*Ibid.*, 1:cxviii. Under the influence of Dodd, this first main section of John has been called “The Book of Signs” (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 289). It may or may not include the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus’ gathering of the first disciples (1:19-51) (see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:cxviii; Beasley-Murray, *John*, xc; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 23). Others do not follow Dodd’s nomenclature, yet they usually recognize that 12:50 marks the end of the first main division of the Gospel, in which the general subject is the revelatory mission of Jesus to his people (see Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 10).

though the focus is still on Jesus' public ministry, the emphasis changes from the revelation itself to the rejection of that revelation.

After having been introduced by John the Baptist (1:19-30), gathering the first disciples (1:31-51), and revealing himself to them and to his own family (2:1-12), Jesus brings his revelation of God, as well as of the fundamental themes of his message,¹ to the whole of Israel: the Judeans (2:13-3:36; 5:1-47), Samaritans (4:1-42), and Galileans (4:43-54; 6:1-71). Although the seeds of unbelief and opposition already appear in this section (3:11-12; 5:16-18, 30-46), they do not turn into open rejection until after the discourse of the bread from heaven in chap. 6. This discourse closes the Galilean ministry; yet, more important than its geographical connection is its literary function in the drama of the Gospel.² It is the most revelatory, and thus the most provocative, of the public discourses of Jesus in John. Jesus' claims for himself are so radical that they

¹E.g., the Messiah (1:41, 45; 4:25-26, 29); the Son of God (1:49; 3:36; 5:17; etc); the one sent (3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24; 6:29, 38; etc); the resurrection (2:19-22; 5:21, 25-29; 6:39-40); the descending/ascending motif (1:51; 2:13; 3:31-32; 6:38; etc); the new birth (4:3-10); the Spirit (3:5-8, 35; 6:63; etc); eternal life (2:15-16; 3:36; 4:13-14; etc); the judgment (2:17-21; 3:36; 5:22; etc); light/darkness (2:19-21).

²It has sometimes been suggested that if chaps. 5 and 6 were transposed, the sequence would be better, at least as far as geography is concerned, for in chap. 6 Jesus is back in Galilee (cf. 4:43-54) just after he has been active in Jerusalem (chap. 5) (see esp. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 209-210; Bernard, 1:xvii, 171). This may be true; a good case could also be made on a literary basis, in relation to the drama sequence in these chapters. Thus, chap. 6 would close the cycle of Jesus' revelation to Israel; at the same time it would start a new cycle, marked by opposition and rejection. Combining the geographical and rhetorical arguments, the transposition of chaps. 5 and 6 would seem to make sense. The complete absence of manuscript support, however, must be acknowledged as a strong argument against such a transposition, and since the literary climax is indeed chap. 6, and not chap. 5, the present order of the text can be preserved without any problem. See further, Francis J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, BSRel 14 (Rome: LAS, 1976), 87-89.

cannot but challenge the audience and force it to make a decision.¹

Commenting on John 6:60-71, Bultmann notes that this passage “clearly marks an important dividing line in Jesus’ ministry,” for it has to do with “the separation of the twelve as the true disciples from the mass of untrue disciples.”² Bultmann is so impressed by the content of these verses that he suggests that their original context was between chaps. 12 and 13, from where they were taken by the editor and placed in their present position.³ Even if one does not follow Bultmann’s idiosyncratic composition theory, it is difficult not to agree with him on the significance of this passage, which ends with the withdrawal of many of Jesus’ followers and the confession of faith of the twelve somewhat comparable to that of Mat 16:16.⁴ “From the end of this chapter,” observes Kysar, “the conclusion of John’s Gospel is clear.”⁵ Any hopes of a popular and successful ministry are put to rest.

¹See Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2:10-12, and esp. Kysar, *John*, 89, 114.

²Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 285.

³For Bultmann, the editor came to place this passage in its present position because the description of Jesus’ discourse as σκληρὸς λόγος (6:60) and the statement about πνεῦμα and σὰρξ (6:63) fit perfectly after 6:51b-58, which, as Bultmann believes, were already an addition to the discourse on the bread of life (*ibid.*, 287).

⁴Bernard points out the way John brings to a climax the conclusions of major sections of his Gospel: 1:18, the conclusion of the Prologue; 6:60-71, the closing of the first year of the ministry of Jesus; 12:36b-50, the climax is the final rejection of Jesus by the Jews; 20:30-31, the conclusion of the resurrection narratives and of the Gospel itself; and 21:24-25 as the end of the epilogue (1:xxxiii).

⁵Kysar, *John*, 89.

They Received Him Not (Vs. 11b)

The unbelief and defection with which chap. 6 ends set the tone which persists from chaps. 7 through 12. Opposition to Jesus and to his message becomes the new constant of his ministry. With the dramatic end in Galilee, the scene now shifts to the heart of the Jewish nation. Instead of more revelatory discourses, there is a series of encounters, conversations, and confrontations between Jesus and the Jews, especially with the religious leaders, which only serve to aggravate the rejection.¹ As Ridderbos says, in this section “the effective break between the Jews and Jesus comes to some kind of conclusion.”² Chaps. 7-12 are designed in such a way as to highlight the successive efforts of the Jewish leaders to reject Jesus and to seal their rejection by conspiring against his life.³ There is a crescendo in these chapters, which goes from the episodes of unbelief and suspicion in chap. 7 (vss. 1-10, 25-31, 40-44, 45-52) through the harsh interchange of chap. 8, which bears on the status of the Jews within the Abrahamic covenant (vss. 31-59), to the formal decision of the Jewish leaders in chap. 9 to eject

¹The diverse and fragmentary character of the content of these chapters has led many scholars to conclude that the sequence and composition of the various parts can hardly be understood as an original whole and that they show signs of disorder. Referring to chap. 8, for instance, Bultmann says that it consists of “a collection of isolated fragments which have been put together without much plan” (*The Gospel of John*, 238, n. 4). This idea, however, is no longer seen as appropriate to describe the Fourth Gospel. Even Haenchen, who holds radical views on the composition of John, writes that “the time of theories of displacement is gone” (*John* 1, 51).

²Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 253.

³In relation to this issue, see the excellent discussion by Dodd on the themes of κρίσις (7:24; 8:16; 12:31) and σχίσμα (7:43; 9:16; 10:19), which highlight the divisive effect of Christ especially in chaps. 7-12 (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 352-353).

from the synagogue those who confessed Jesus as the Messiah (cf. vss. 22, 28).¹ As a result, in chap. 10 Jesus has no other alternative but to lead his sheep out of the Jewish religious fold (vss. 1-30), while in chap. 11 the leaders of the Jews make the final decision to bring Jesus to death (vss. 45-53).

In chap. 12, which is the climax of this section and of the first half of the Gospel, Jesus is anointed for his death (vss. 1-8) and some Greeks,² quite likely the "other sheep that do not belong to this fold" (9:16),³ ask to see him, thus prefiguring the subsequent universalization of Jesus' message (12:20-26).⁴ Finally, this section closes with an

¹On this, see the discussion by Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, esp. 37-62. Although Martyn is substantially right in his claim that the episode of chap. 9 points to the situation involving the *Birkath ha-minim*, I find myself among those who, according to Carson, in spite of praising Martyn's work, "quickly concede that the details of his reconstruction are so finely spun that they prove unconvincing" (*The Gospel according to John*, 361). See also D. Moody Smith, "The Contribution of J. Louis Martyn to the Understanding of the Gospel of John," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 275-294, esp. 279-284; Gary M. Burge, "Situating John's Gospel in History," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 35-46.

²The identity of these Greek has been discussed repeatedly. For the view that they "should be understood to be representatives of the Gentiles rather than the representatives of the Greek-speaking Jews in the diaspora," see H. B. Kossen, "Who Were the Greeks of John 12:20?" in *Studies in John: Presented to Professor Dr. J. N. Sevenster on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, NovTSup 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 108-110. Dodd agrees: "In the dramatic situation we may suppose them to be proselytes, but in the intention of the evangelist they stand for the great world at large; primarily the Hellenistic world which is his own mission field. These Greeks are the vanguard of mankind coming to Jesus" (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 371).

³So most commentators (see Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 362-363).

⁴The arrival of these Greeks "serves Jesus as sign that his ministry has come to an end," for "it leads Jesus to affirm: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified [vs. 23];'

evaluation of Jesus' ministry to Israel, "the only honest evaluation possible," as Brown remarks:¹ "Though he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him" (12:37). This is just another way of expressing what had already been put forth in the Prologue: "he came to what was his, and his own did not receive him" (1:11).

The very last part of chap. 12 (vss. 44-50) is not merely a summary of Jesus' teaching²; above all it is a passage that highlights "the full significance of faith and unbelief in Jesus," as Barrett correctly argues.³ John wants to make it as clear as possible that to accept or to reject Jesus was in fact to accept or to reject God himself.

The Children of God (Vs. 12)

In the second major division of the Gospel (13:1–20:31),⁴ Jesus finally turns

and 'the hour' is the Johannine term for Jesus' return to his Father through passion, death, and resurrection (13:1)" (Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 55). See also Johannes Beutler, "Greeks Come to See Jesus (John 12:20f)," *Bib 71* (1990): 333-347; Kiyoshi Tsuchido, "'ΕΛΛΗΝ in the Gospel of John: Tradition and Redaction in John 12:20-24," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 348-356.

¹Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:484.

²See Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 436, 439. The same applies to the idea that this passage is a commentary on the δόξα of vs. 43 (see Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 365) or Jesus' final public appeal (see Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 539; Smith, *John*, ANTC, 245).

³Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 430. There is no question, however, that John's main emphasis in these final verses is on judgment and rejection (see Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 383); so, as Hoskyns remarks, the evangelist "ends by declaring, as authoritatively as he can, what that [the Jews'] rejection was. It was a denial of God" (431).

⁴Dodd (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 289) entitles this section "The Book of Passion," for the obvious reason that it includes the account of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion,

away from Israel and concentrates on those who are his (13:1), the true disciples whom he loves and who have come to believe in him. What John narrates now, especially through chap. 17, is only the private intercourse of Jesus with the Twelve,¹ in which he instructs them on what they need to know as they face the world without his physical presence in their midst. It may seem an oversimplification to say that this whole section is captioned by "But to all those who received him, . . . he gave the right to become children of God" (1:12), but this is what can be inferred from the degree of approval, love, and fatherly relationship that Jesus showed to the disciples, to the point of calling them "friends" (15:13-15; cf. 13:1, 20, 33; 14:18; 16:27; 17:8, 21-26; etc).

The fact that John dedicates so many chapters to Jesus' farewell to the disciples, especially in comparison with the Synoptics, no doubt indicates that whatever the origin of the individual units of this section, it was part of the evangelist's literary design to contrast the rejection of Jesus by Israel at large with his acceptance by a faithful remnant, the new "his own" (13:1), the only ones who really belong to Jesus (15:19; 17:6, 10, 24;

and resurrection (chaps. 18-20). Since a pervading theme of this whole section (chaps. 13-20) is the return of Jesus to his Father (13:1; 14:2, 28; 15:26; 16:7, 28; 17:5, 11; 20:17), which signifies his glorification (13:31; 16:4; 17:1, 5, 24), Brown prefers the title "The Book of Glory" (*The Gospel according to John*, 1:cxix). Regardless of the title, there is general consensus that chap. 13 begins the second major section of the Fourth Gospel. Mathias Rissi disagrees, arguing that the division should be found, not between chaps. 12 and 13, but between chaps. 10 and 11 ("Der Aufbau des vierten Evangeliums," *NTS* 29 [1983], 50-51).

¹Although the Twelve are never explicitly mentioned in these chapters and the term "disciples" in John may have a broad sense (4:1; 6:66; 8:31), 13:21-30 suggests that οἱ ἰδίους of 13:1 refers to the Twelve; Peter, Thomas, Philip, Judas, and Judas Iscariot, each playing a part in the narrative, are specifically named in chaps. 13-17. The parallel account in the Synoptics seems to support this conclusion (cf. Mat. 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14) (see Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 458-459).

18:9).¹ In chap. 8 Jesus denies that the Jews were children of God because they did not believe in him (vss. 42-43, 47, 54-55), thus establishing a new criterion to determine who is a child of God (cf. vss. 39-40). Human ancestry no longer counts (cf. 1:13). The disciples believed in Jesus, so they were given the status of being God's children and in chaps. 13-17 Jesus treats them as such.

Conclusion

The claim that John's general structure is somewhat similar to the thematic motif of 1:11-12 does not seem altogether impossible.² Being so, it must necessarily impact

¹As noted by Francis J. Moloney, "it is almost universally accepted that John 13:1-17:26 is a final collection of many traditions remembered and told in various times and situations throughout the life of the Johannine church" (*Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998], 2). This does not mean, however, that John had no specific plan or purpose in putting all these traditions together. Only from the structural perspective it is already possible to argue that, "whatever the antecedent traditions the evangelist worked with, . . . there can be little doubt that the account of the ministry that lies before us in the Fourth Gospel displays signs of most careful construction" (Beasley-Murray, *John*, xci).

²See Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 239. For the rather artificial view that the structure of the Gospel follows the fourfold structure of the Prologue, see David Deeks, "The Structure of the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 15 [1968-1969]: 107-129. Deeks divides the Gospel into four sections (1:1-18; 1:19-4:54; 5:1-12:50; 13:1-20:31), which he argues are anticipated and summarized respectively by vss. 1-5, vss. 6-8, vss. 9-13, and vss. 14-18 of John 1. But it is hard to see, for example, how 1:6-8 could be a summary of the entire section 1:19-4:54, even if one makes "a little adaptation," as Deeks suggests, on the meaning of the former passage as to include the idea that "Christ supersedes all earlier expectations" (ibid., 111). The same problem is seen in relation to the other two sections, not to mention the fact that 1:1-5, as a summary of its own section, breaks off the pattern at the very beginning, as well as the absence of chap. 21, which Deeks simply discard as a "later appendix" (ibid., 110). Also highly problematic is Staley's fourfold "symmetrical, concentric structure" of the Gospel (1:19-3:36; 4:1-6:71; 7:1-10:42; 11:1-21:25), which he believes to be built upon that of the Prologue and centered around the journey motif (241-263). To mention but only one example, the first section (1:19-3:36) already fails to show any correspondence to the pattern, for Staley leaves out the

one's view of the relationship between the Prologue and the Gospel, for the argument of coincidence does not seem appropriate, nor does it do justice to the degree of similarities, including the thematic and the stylistic ones. Besides, John is a literary composition with such a topical coherence that nothing appears to be just by chance. On the other hand, the idea that the Gospel's dynamics were inspired by the structure and theme of the Prologue is not enough to account for the differences between the two.¹ Had that been the case, the similarities would be much greater and the Gospel would look different than it does now.² In other words, to borrow a phrase of P. Gardner-Smith, it is much easier to explain the differences between the Prologue and the Gospel

first section of the Prologue (1:1-5) and seeks for a parallel in the second section (1:6-8). Also his claim that Jesus' journey into Galilee (1:43-51) parallels "the journey of the light" (1:9-11) in the Prologue (249-250) is imaginative but completely devoid of any exegetical warrant.

¹For a useful summary and discussion of the main theories on the structure of John's Prologue, see Van der Watt, 311-332; Cholin, 189-205. Against the possibility of finding any logical structure or unifying principle in the Prologue, see Miller, "The Logic of the Logos Hymn," 552-561.

²However, there is no reason to agree with Robinson that if the Gospel's composition had been shaped and controlled by the Prologue, then it would be possible "to read the Fourth Gospel as though John were primarily interested in timeless truths of mystical or philosophical speculation which are subsequently illustrated in the history" ("The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," 128). The Prologue is simply not interested in "timeless truths," but in history in the fullest sense of the word. Even when one comes to the statements of vss. 1-5, for instance, one sees that John has conceived them from a historical perspective, in relation to a reference point in time (ἐν ἀρχῇ), and has put them at the service of the historical reality of God's revelation through Jesus Christ. Whatever John says in the Prologue, even about the pre-existent Logos, has to do with a historical person, and that person is Jesus Christ. As Cullmann correctly remarks, "'Logos' in the Gospel of John means the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, the Word who became flesh" (*The Christology of the New Testament*, 264). Similarly, Ridderbos: "Jesus Christ is, in essence, the subject of the Prologue, the Logos the predicate. And not the reverse" ("The Structure and Scope of the Prologue," 52).

with a theory of common authorship and literary planning, than the similarities between the two with a theory of source relationship.¹

¹It is his classical treatment of the relationship between John and the Synoptics, P. Gardner-Smith posed the famous question, "whether it is easier to account for the similarities between St. John and the Synoptists without a theory of literary dependence, or to explain the discrepancies if such a theory has been accepted" (*Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938], x).

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