

in the way he uses it. We cannot add the contrast between the two ages to the two spatial oppositions we have already noted.

Closely connected with the above/below motif and interwoven with it in the elaborate conceptual web that sets apart those who belong to this world from those who do not, is the figure of the Son of Man. Wayne Meeks, who draws attention to the combination of motifs designed to emphasize the sheer otherness of Jesus, speaks in this context of 'redundance', comparing the Gospel's insistent repetition of this bundle of themes with the way in which the 'noise' that may interfere with electronic communications is overcome by repeating the signal in as many different ways as possible.²⁶ One important motif associated with the Son of Man is that of being 'lifted up' (on the cross, and thereby back to heaven).²⁷ In its second occurrence (8: 28) the lifting up results in the disclosure of the identity of the Son of Man. Over thirty years before Jörg Frey asked his question concerning the function of Johannine dualism (see above), Meeks had expressed his astonishment that the social function of the Gospel's *myths* had been almost totally ignored.²⁸ Clearly there is myth in the dualism and dualism in the myth, and these two questions are effectively the same. So also, not surprisingly, are the two answers, although Meeks stresses an element missed by Frey, that 'the book functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narratives and dialogues'.²⁹

In telling the story of the Son of Man who came down from heaven and then re-ascended after choosing a few of his own out of the world, the book defines and vindicates the existence of the community that evidently sees itself as unique, alien from its world, under attack, misunderstood, but living in unity with Christ and through him with God.³⁰

One final question remains to be answered. To quote Frey once again: 'Is the polemical opposition between Jesus and "the Jews" in chapter 8 to be understood within the same framework (*Rahmen*) as

the confrontation of community and world in chapters 15-17?' Behind this question lies the observation that 'the Jews' are virtually absent from the Farewell Discourse—as indeed are the figure of the Son of Man and the symbolism of darkness. Frey makes no attempt to answer his own question. The sheer generality of the term *κόσμος* is the main difficulty; but we have to accept, I think, that at least from 15: 18 onwards the clear antagonism towards the world that is evident in the Prologue, quickly narrowed in the Prologue itself to focus on Jesus' own people, has broadened out once more to be directed to the world at large. Interestingly, Frey does not include chapter 14 in his question, rightly so, because despite the concluding reference to 'the prince of this world' (14: 30) we do not yet get the impression of radical enmity, even hatred, that startles the reader by its sudden appearance in the following chapter: 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you' (15: 19). Right at the beginning of the discourse, in 13: 33, Jesus' reference to something he had said to 'the Jews' enables the evangelist to remind the readers of the Gospel that they are no longer present: of course they have no place in the supper-room, the cenacle. But if, as we may suppose, chapter 14 belongs to the same level of redaction as what precedes, then their absence cannot be taken to signify any slackening of hostility on the part of the community. Chapters 15-17 are quite different. The allegory of the vine shows the community turning in on itself: the simple instruction 'love one another' is in fact restrictive. The community has begun to huddle together with occasional frightened glances at the world outside. Jürgen Becker speaks in this context quite justifiably, I believe, of a 'churchified dualism' (*verkirchlichter Dualismus*).³¹

3. LIFE

The Synoptic Gospels have been left on one side thus far because the polar opposites that I have been considering up to now have relatively little place in them. But life (and implicitly death) is different. The richness of this concept in the Johannine writings is due to the

²⁶ 'Man from Heaven', 144.
²⁷ See Ch. 6, pp. 267-71, and Ch. 12, pp. 468-9.
²⁸ Meeks, 'Man from Heaven', 145.
²⁹ Ibid. 163. Frey criticizes Meeks, unfairly, I think, for his 'psychologizing transference of the literary picture of an alien, misunderstood revealer to the believer's feeling of alienation, corresponding to the sectarian isolation of the community' (*Eschatologie*, 1, 335). He says that this is hard to establish (*begründen*). Of course it is: no hypothesis of this kind can be proved. As in all such cases, the strength of Meeks's suggestion lies in its explanatory power.

³¹ Becker, p. 151. For Becker this characterizes the third stage of a developing dualism. He may be right too about a first, pre-Gospel stage, with no hint of any dualism. He is surely wrong, however, about the middle stage. See above, n. 15.

complexity of the traditions it reflects. To begin with it virtually replaces the proclamation of the kingdom as the object of the gospel promise; and in the single context in which this does occur, the dialogue with Nicodemus, the real topic of discussion is rebirth from on high, soon to be reinterpreted in John's characteristic fashion as *ζωὴ αἰώνιος*, a term usually translated as 'eternal life'. So where does this term come from and why does John select it to denote the fruits of the gospel message?

Its immediate source is the Synoptic tradition. Jesus speaks of entering into life and entering into the kingdom in a passage where the two expressions are clearly equivalent: 'it is better for you to *enter life* maimed than with two hands to go to hell... it is better for you to *enter the kingdom of God* with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell' (Mark 9: 43, 47). Just how close the two concepts are may be seen from Matthew's adaptation of this passage, for he actually replaces Mark's 'kingdom of God' with 'life' (18: 9). There is also the story of the man anxious to know what to do in order to 'inherit *eternal life*' (Mark 10: 17). To his disappointment he is told to get rid of his wealth; whereupon 'he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions'. At this Jesus drove the lesson home to his disciples: 'How hard it will be for those who have riches to *enter the kingdom of God*' (Mark 10: 22-3; cf. Matt. 19: 24, Luke 18: 24).

The passage that points most strongly to John's dependence upon the Synoptic tradition is this: 'He who loves his soul (*τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ*) loses it and he who hates his soul in this world (*ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ*) will keep it for eternal life (*εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*)' (John 12: 25).³² Now this is an adaptation of a saying found, with slight variations, in all three Synoptic Gospels: Mark 8: 35; Matt. 10: 39; 16: 25; Luke 9: 24; 17: 33. But John has made a significant advance by introducing his own special term, *ζωὴ αἰώνιος*, into the saying. As Dodd remarks, he alone 'has given it a form which obviously alludes to the Jewish antithesis of the two ages: he who hates his soul in this world/age (*הַיָּמִים הַזֵּה*) will keep it for the world/age to come (*לְיָמֵי הַבָּא*) and consequently will possess *חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא* (the life of the world/age to come)'.³³

³² Unfortunately English is unable to preserve the distinction between natural and supernatural life. In this context *ψυχὴ* means 'self', as its Syriac equivalent *ܦܫܐ* regularly does, and often enough the Hebrew *נַפְשׁ* too. And we shall see that the RSV's 'eternal life', which makes little sense, should be replaced here by 'the life of the new age'.

³³ *Interpretation*, 146.

If Dodd is right then John has made two changes, first in distinguishing between *ψυχὴ* and *ζωὴ* and secondly in selecting the term *κόσμος*, in which the spatial or local sense predominates, rather than *αἰών* (age), which preserves the temporal meaning of the classical Hebrew *עוֹלָם*.³⁴ Nevertheless John continues to attach an eschatological dimension to 'life', as is proved by the way in which he opposes it to the traditionally eschatological 'wrath of God': 'He who believes in the Son has *ζωὴ αἰώνιος*; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him' (John 3: 36). (Paul establishes an even starker contrast between righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*) and the wrath of God when he summarizes his gospel at the beginning of Romans (1: 17).)

John sees *ζωὴ αἰώνιος*, then, as a present possession. In the *Psalms of Solomon* (a work in which, incidentally, the eschatological force of the term 'kingdom of God' is especially evident) the meaning is different: 'But they that fear the Lord shall rise to eternal life (*εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*) and their life (*ζωὴ*) shall be in the light of the Lord and shall never again fail' (Pss. Sol. 3: 12). The 'sons of truth' at Qumran are promised both 'abundant peace with long life' and 'eternal joy with life for ever' (*חַיֵּי עוֹלָם*) plus 'a crown of glory and a robe of majesty in eternal light' (*בְּאוֹר עוֹלָמִית*) (IQS 4: 6-8).³⁵ The elect in 1 *Enoch* are to have 'light, joy and peace, and inherit the earth'; once wisdom is given to them 'they will all live' (1 *Enoch* 5: 7-8; cf. Matt. 5: 5).

³⁴ Schnackenburg (ii, 521 n. 5) says of Dodd's suggestion that *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* in John is connected with the Jewish idea of the life of the age to come that 'it can hardly be right', but he offers no argument. In fact the suggestion that the Aramaic *ܕܠܝܬ* might be an abbreviation of *ܕܠܝܬ ܕܥܠܡܐ* was made as long ago as 1898 by G. Dalman in *Die Worte Jesu*, 121-2. The first occurrence of the Hebrew equivalent of *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* is in Dan. 12: 2. And many of those who sleep in the ground of dust shall awake, some to everlasting life (*חַיֵּי עוֹלָם*), and some to everlasting abhorrence (*חַיֵּי עוֹלָם*). The word *עוֹלָם* is a noun. There are relatively few adjectives in classical Hebrew, and nouns are often employed to qualify a preceding noun. ('Holy Spirit', literally translated from Hebrew, is 'the spirit of holiness, *arctura dywotny*' (cf. Rom. 1: 4). *עוֹלָם* signifies either the remote past or the distant future; but it can also mean 'perpetuity'. In the latter case it is often hard to know whether this is thought of as never-ending, i.e. eternal, or simply as of indefinite duration. One must let oneself be guided by the context. The Daniel passage appears to imply both *another age* and *forever*.

³⁵ The traditional biblical promise of *long life* is combined remarkably easily with the seemingly very different promise of *eternal life*. The transition is assisted by the ambiguity of *עוֹלָם*, the notion of indefinite duration slips into that of perpetuity. Did God really, as the RSV translation of Ps. 21: 5 implies, promise the king 'length of days for ever and ever'? (See n. 34, above).

In the Parables section too we are told that 'the righteous will be in the light of the sun, and the chosen in the light of eternal life: and there will be no end to the days of their life' (1 *Enoch* 58: 3).

In these passages eternity undoubtedly includes the notion of endlessness, but also (particularly at Qumran) a special quality of life peculiar to the new age. It is this special quality—not endlessness—that is suggested by John's term ζωή αἰώνιος, which might therefore be translated 'the life of the new age'. In none of the passages quoted, including those from the Synoptic Gospels, is there any difficulty in thinking of a life that, in the words of Ps. Sol. 3: 12, 'will never fail' (οὐκ ἐκλείψει ἐστὶν). But once transferred to this world (and the present age) life has become a *symbol*, and if one insists on retaining the rendering 'eternal', which is what αἰώνιος always means in secular Greek, then 'eternal life' can only be a *metaphor*. The new life enjoyed by the faithful is more than ordinary physical existence: it is the life of faith. Christians are no more immune from physical death than other folk.³⁶ But the benefits that accrue to them from their acceptance of the message of Jesus are, for this evangelist, best symbolized by life and all that is associated with it; the term αἰώνιος indicates its radical difference from natural life. Once this is understood it matters little whether the word is taken metaphorically and translated as 'eternal' or given an alternative rendering (this after all is where the logic of Dodd's argument leads) so as to suggest a different kind of life—'the life of the new age'.³⁷ Used as a

³⁶ It just might occur to an attentive reader of the words αὐτῶν ἀποθανεῖν αἰώνια (John 11: 26) that αἰώνιος, like αἰώνιος, is used metaphorically. But the English ('shall never die') is harder than the Greek. One must sympathize with the correspondent in the pages of *Theology*, 89 (1986), 383–4, who suggests substituting 'shall not die eternally' as a way of alleviating the perplexity of the bereaved when they hear the words 'shall never die' read out over the coffin of a loved one. But 'eternally' too must be construed as a metaphor.

³⁷ It has been suggested that there is something of the same idea at Qumran, especially in the hymnic conclusion of the Community Rule (1QS 10: 9–11: 22) and in parts of the Thanksgiving Scroll. The first to argue this was H.-W. Kuhn in *Endervortung und gegenwärtiges Heil* followed by G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life*, 152–6; J. J. Collins, 'Apocalyptic Eschatology', D. Anne, *Cultic Setting*, 29–44. I used to think that these scholars were misapplying theological categories that simply have no place in the Qumran community. But I now think that I was mistaken in this criticism, and that Collins, for instance, was right to observe that 'death does not arise as a theological problem in the Hodayot because the community believed that it had already transcended death by passing over into the community of the angels' ('Apocalyptic Eschatology', 35). Additional support for this view may be found in 4Q418 *Instruction* (e.g. lines 69 and 81) and 4Q81: *Ages of Creation*.

complementary adjective attached to ζωή, the term αἰώνιος does not describe life, nor does it indicate that this new life differs from ordinary human life in extent, not, at any rate, *merely* in extent. Another term that serves equally well to convey the same idea and found frequently in the Odes of Solomon is 'immortal' or 'deathless' life (ἀθάνατος ἡ ἀθνητός): 'Immortal life rose up in the land of the Lord, and it became known to his faithful ones, and was given unsparingly to those who trust in him' (15: 10; cf. 28: 6; 31: 7; 38: 3; 40: 5). A life that is not subject to death differs from natural life in essence, not just in duration. Conceptually the *Odes* and the Gospel are nowhere closer than in the way they envisage the believer's participation in the life of faith: 'All his children will praise the Lord, and they will receive the truth of his faith.... We live in the Lord by his grace, and we receive life through his Messiah' (41: 1, 3).

Lying behind the eternal life of the Fourth Gospel, therefore, and the immortal life of the *Odes of Solomon* is not just a profound faith in God as the author of life but the very different belief that God would ultimately 'swallow up death for ever' (Isa. 25: 8), a belief that would later find orthodox expression in the prayer of the Fifteenth Benedictions: 'may you be praised, Lord, you who give life to the dead'. (Eventually this prayer came to be recited three times a day: *m. Ber.* 3: 3; 4: 1.³⁸)

All the eschatological and dualistic implications that could be drawn from such a faith are prominent in a passage from the *Testament of Asher*: 'Death succeeds to life, dishonour to glory, night to day, and darkness to light; but the universe is subject to the day, and darkness to light; and so death is confronted by eternal life (τὸν θάνατον ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἀντιμέτωγὴ)' (T. *Asher* 5: 2).³⁹ The same idea occurs in Joseph's beautiful prayer for Aseneth:

Lord God of my father Israel
the Most High, the Powerful One of Jacob,
who gave life to all (things)
and called (them) from the darkness to the light,

³⁸ Paul says in his speech before Felix in Acts 24 that he shared his belief in a general resurrection with the Pharisees. The view of Josephus is a good deal less clear (*Ap.* 18: 14; *Bj.* 2: 103). According to G. F. Moore it was 'the primary eschatological doctrine of Judaism' (*Judaism*, II, 379). For extended discussions see Str.-B., IV, 2: 1166–98; Schürer, *History*, II, 539–44, with bibliography.

³⁹ The meaning of the concluding part of this passage is not entirely clear. De Jonge translates: 'that is why eternal life has to wait for death' (Sparks, *Apocryphal Old*

and from the error to the truth,
You, Lord, bless this virgin,
and renew her by your spirit
and make her alive again by your life.
(Jos. As. 8: 9)

By now it should be clear that John has two sources for his notion of ζῶν *aiônios*: first Jewish eschatology, from which he derives his concept of a life that transcends human life as we know it; and secondly the Synoptic tradition, which allows him to replace the preaching of the kingdom by a term more suggestive of the benefits that follow upon the acceptance of the gospel. In the symbolic structure of the Fourth Gospel, for the most part strikingly interlocking and consistent, the concept of life occupies a central place.⁴⁰ Applied to the water that represents revelation (4: 10–11; 7: 38), the word ζῶν, 'living', has a riddling quality, but like 'bread of life' (6: 35, 48) or 'living bread' (6: 51), which have an identical reference, 'living water' is a particularly appropriate term for what the evangelist sees to be the true source of life—a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (4: 14). We have already seen how in the prophetic I am' sayings Jesus is offering life to all prepared to listen to his message. Bread and water, the staple necessities of life, are natural symbols of supernatural life. Wine, in the context of the fruitfulness hoped and prayed for at a wedding-feast (2: 1–11), fits easily into the same broad symbolic field, as does the suggestion of rebirth attendant upon baptism (3: 1–8). In fact all Jesus' great healing miracles carry with them something of the same idea. In the first of them Jesus promises the royal official at Capernaum, 'Your son will live' (4: 50), whilst the second, the healing of the cripple at the pool (ch. 5), is seen as a fitting occasion for a discourse in which Jesus claims to have been given the power to bestow life. The cure of the blind man symbolizes his allegiance to the life that is light; and the most important sign of all, the raising of Lazarus, is the occasion of Jesus' extraordinary claim that he is in person 'the resurrection and the life' (11: 25).

Testament, 580). If that is correct, then this conception of eternal life is diametrically opposed to John's insistence that it *precedes* physical death.

⁴⁰ In an otherwise exhaustive discussion of Johannine symbolism R. A. Culpepper (*Analogy*, 180–98) fails to include life. It is a notable omission, for life is the symbol round which all the others cluster.

It should be added that life is conceptually very close to salvation, and the proximity both assists and enriches its symbolic significance in the gospel tradition. In Syriac the same word, ܠܝܬܝܐ, means both life and salvation,⁴¹ and a similar ambiguity is not uncommon in the Synoptic Gospels, where σώζεναι, which in classical Greek simply means 'to save', is often used of a physical cure: 'your faith has made you well' (Mark 5: 34; 10: 52; cf. 5: 23, 28; 6: 56). In the Fourth Gospel, told by Jesus that Lazarus is asleep, the disciples reply, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep he will recover (εἰ κεκοίμηται σωθήσεται)' (John 11: 12); Lazarus will be cured, he will recover, he will live.

Here, in the Lazarus episode, late as it is, lies the clearest indication of the likely origins of John's conception of life. Rising from the dead, Lazarus symbolizes—though he does not exemplify—the new life that Jesus has come to bring. The link between this life and resurrection had already been noticed in the great discourse of chapter 5: 'For as the Father raises the dead, and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will' (5: 21). Certainly John evinces little interest in the futuristic eschatology implicit in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; nevertheless this is most probably the origin of his own concept of the life of the new age.

The occasion of the fusion of these two ideas is doubtless the resurrection of Jesus. This had had a similar impact upon the thinking of Paul. But Paul never quite existentializes or internalizes the concept of resurrection as he does that of death (Romans 6). This task is left to John.

4. JUDGEMENT

If life is what is promised to those who accept the revelation of Jesus, judgement is what is promised to those who do not. So in this respect the theme of judgement (*κρισις*) is simply the obverse of that of life. Judgement is also, however, the process of separating the sheep from the goats, the actual sorting out whereby believers and unbelievers are placed on opposite sides of the divide. The Greek verb *krinein* means both 'judge', with the additional connotations of separation and discrimination, and 'condemn'. No English translation can do full justice to this ambiguity, as can be easily perceived by comparing

⁴¹ This root should be distinguished from ܠܝܬܝܐ, which means redemption, saving from.