

Word, properly and accurately summed up as 'the Word was made flesh'.

On the first hypothesis v. 14 represents a fresh and quite remarkable insight; on the second it is simply the final variant of the theme.

This approach has been anticipated to some extent by C. H. Dodd, who also attempts a double analysis, first from the perspective of what he calls 'the cosmical Logos', and secondly from that of 'the Logos incarnate'.²⁴ He carries this programme through with characteristic care and insight, but he leans too heavily on Hellenistic parallels and his solution ultimately fails to convince. Nevertheless, it scarcely deserves the high-handed treatment it receives at the hands of Käsemann, who dismisses it summarily and without argument as 'extremely dialectical'.²⁵ Barnabas Lindars follows Dodd in seeing in the paragraph leading up to the statement of the Incarnation 'two levels of meaning running along parallel lines'.²⁶ But he fails to pursue the implications of this view.

(a) *A Wisdom hymn?*

Clearly the hypothesis that we are dealing with a Wisdom hymn depends upon the excision, or rather bracketing, of vv. 6-8. For there can be no doubt that with these verses included the Prologue is dealing with the Incarnate Word at least from v. 9 on. But provided that all reference to the Baptist is excluded, and the difficult *ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον* of v. 9 either regarded as an editorial insertion or else taken with *ἀνθρώπων*,²⁷ then there is nothing which does not fit in admirably with the hypothesis that the hymn is a Christian version of a traditional Wisdom theme.

Here we must briefly consider an important passage in the Dead

²⁴ *Interpretation*, 263-85. See also 'Prologue', 9-22.

²⁵ 'Structure', 144.

²⁶ *Gospel*, 78. A similar idea had already occurred to R. H. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 81.

²⁷ This is how it is taken by all the ancient versions, with the possible exception of the Sahidic Coptic, which is ambiguous. Dodd, who is attracted by the suggestion that we have to do with an original Hebrew or Aramaic circumlocution for 'man', is also inclined to this rendering, as is E. Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, 126. But the majority of modern commentators agree that the versions are wrong at this point, and take *ἐρχόμενον* with *φῶς*. Nevertheless, the Greek is cumbersome and the order difficult. If the verse was composed *d'un seul jet*, which I doubt, then A. Feuillet has what appears to me the neatest solution: 'le Logos était la vraie lumière, qui illumine tout homme en venant dans le monde', 'Prologue', col. 633.

Sea Scrolls (IQS 11: 11) whose significance is generally overlooked. Cited by Bultmann without comment as a parallel to John 1: 3,²⁸ it is frequently quoted but seldom fruitfully. The first to draw attention to what I believe to be its real significance was T. E. Pollard,²⁹ who has been followed by P. Lamarche³⁰ and I. de la Potterie.³¹ Because of the importance of their suggestions I propose to summarize their strongest arguments here and to add one or two of my own.

Vermes translates the passage in question as follows:

All things came to pass (יָצָא) by His knowledge,
He establishes all things by His design
And without Him nothing is done (נַעֲשֶׂה).³²

As Pollard points out, the context of this passage in *The Manual of Discipline* 'has no reference to creation, but rather to the doctrine prominent in the Scrolls, that God is in control of everything, and particularly of human destiny'.³³ Raymond Brown quotes the passage, but glosses the final 'is done' with 'is made' in order to bring it in line with the traditional interpretation.³⁴ But at least the niphal of יָצָא, as Pollard points out, is not naturally rendered by a verb expressing creation, an idea which in any case is foreign to the context.

More significantly, the verb *γίνεσθαι*, without contextual support such as it finds in Genesis 1, does not naturally refer to creation either. Used regularly in the sense of 'happen' or 'come to pass', it is a verb that corresponds well to the niphal of יָצָא, which, as Pollard notes, is the form used by Delitzsch in his Hebrew translation of the Prologue. It is worth adding too that this is how the text is very overloaded: surely a glossator has been at work! The likeliest solution is that most of v. 9 was, as Brown suggests, composed by the editor responsible for inserting the preceding three verses, with a view to facilitating the transition to v. 10. Either *ἀνθρώπων* or its Semitic equivalent *ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον* will have been the original reading, with the synonym added later as a gloss. Bultmann, followed by Schnackenburg, opted for the former solution in his early article ('Background', 35 n. 34), but changed his mind in his commentary *Gospel*, 52 n. 2.

²⁸ Cf. *Gospel*, 37 n. 5.

²⁹ 'Cosmology'.

³⁰ 'Prologue'.

³¹ *Vérité*, 162-6.

³² *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 93.

³³ 'Cosmology', 152. The hymns are particularly redolent of this doctrine. See IQH 1: 6-24; 4: 13; 10: 1, 9; 12: 10.

³⁴ *Gospel*, 6.

early Syriac translators understood it.³⁵ Lamarche also refers to a passage from the Gospel of Truth: 'Nothing happens without him (viz. the Logos), nor does anything happen without the Father's will' (37: 21). In this passage the Coptic is variously rendered 'happens' or 'comes into being', but the majority of translators opt for the former alternative, which, it must be said, is favoured by the context.³⁶ The latter rendering has clearly been influenced by the standard interpretations of the Prologue, itself the starting-point of the Gnostic commentary.

What about *παύρα*? De la Potterie argues that in New Testament times the regular expression for the created universe was *τὰ πᾶντα*. This is true, not just of the NT, but also, overwhelmingly, of the LXX.³⁷ The anarthrous form is common in the Johannine writings,

³⁵ The Sinaitic MS is defective at this point; the Curettonian reads *καὶ τὰ πάντα*. The p^eal of *καὶ* is as generally unlifted as *γένησθαι* to express the sense of 'being created'. Burkitt's translation of the Curettonian version of Jn. 1: 3 reads: 'Everything came to pass in Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came to pass in Him'; *Evangelion De-Mepharreshe*, 423. This is also the sense required in 4 Ezra 6: 6, where the Syriac reads *om̐* and the Latin *facta sunt*. For an equivalent use of the niph'al of *הָיָה*, see IQ 27 I. 1. 3-4: ... *הָיָה בְּיָמֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַזֶּה* (where the niph'al participle has a future meaning (Milik: *le mystère futur*; Stoberg: *das zu verwirklichende Geheimnis*). Cf. IQ 26 I. 1. 1. Rabinowitz ('a mystery to be') compares CD 2. 10; 13. 8; IQS 3. 15; 10. 5; 11. 3-4; 18; JBL 71 (1952), 19-32.

³⁶ Contrast 18: 34: 'the one who made the all'; cf. 19: 7.

³⁷ The form *τὰ πᾶντα* does not occur in the Pentateuch except for two highly significant instances in Genesis: Gen. 1: 31 ('God saw everything that he had made'), and Gen. 9: 3, where in making God give *τὰ πᾶντα* to Noah and his sons the translator is no doubt deliberately echoing the conclusion of chapter 1: after chaos, in the form of the flood, has been reconquered, the restored universe is handed back to mankind in the person of Noah. Apart from 3 Macc. 2: 3 (*ὁ κόσμος τὰ πᾶντα*), the few instances in the historical books (LXX 2 Kings 19: 30; 24: 23; 3 Kings 14: 26; 2 Macc. 10: 23) scarcely count. Nor do the relatively numerous instances in the Ecclesiastes, since it is clear that we have to do here with an idiosyncratic translator (Aquila?) oblivious to the solemn overtones of the term discernible elsewhere in the wisdom literature: Job 8: 3; 11: 10; 28: 25 (?); Wisd. 1: 7; 14: 7; 27: 8; 1: 5; 9: 1; 11: 24; 12: 15; 18: 14; 16; Ecclus. 18: 1; 23: 20. To these may be added LXX Jer. 10: 16; 28: 19. (Wisd. 7: 27, where *πᾶντα* and *τὰ πᾶντα* occur in close proximity, constitutes in itself a strong argument for a felt difference between the two uses: wisdom is omnipotent—*πᾶντα δύναται*—and she renews the whole universe—*τὰ πᾶντα καὶνέει*.) Against this formidable list there are only two instances in the wisdom literature (not counting Ecclesiastes) where *τὰ πᾶντα* refers to something other than the created universe: Job 13: 9 and Wisd. 1: 10. Bar. 3: 32, where the phrase *ὁ κόσμος τὰ πᾶντα* is balanced by *ὁ κατασκευαστὴς τῆς γῆς*, is not, I would contend, a counter-example. For further instances see e.g. T. Asher 5. 2; Josephus, *Contra Ap.* 2. 190 (*τὰ σὺμπαντα*); Justin, *Dial.* 56. 11; *Did.* 10. 3.

On the other side, among the innumerable instances of the plain *πᾶντα* in LXX there are only 6 which might be interpreted as referring to the universe. Elsewhere, especially in the Stoic tradition studied by E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 240-50, there

but there is no parallel in the sense required by the traditional view. All of which suggests that the phrase from Col. 1: 16, *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα* ('because the universe was created in him'), far from being a genuine parallel, has probably contributed towards a continuing misinterpretation.

To these arguments should be added 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 *ὁ γέγονεν*, a punctuation which is grammatically very awkward and is attested by none of the early witnesses.³⁸ For if we read *ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶν ἦν*, taking *ὁ γέγονεν* to refer to the created world, and *ἐν αὐτῷ*, as it surely must on this reading, to the Logos, then, as Schnackenburg so pertinently enquires, 'what kind of life is that?'³⁹ The following sentence locates *ζῶν* firmly in the realm of spiritual revelation (it is identified with *φῶς*); but v. 3 then remains utterly obscure. Bultmann's solution is certainly too Procrustean to be satisfactory.⁴⁰ Schnackenburg himself, like many of the earliest commentators, abandons the struggle and opts, somewhat gingerly, for the alternative punctuation.

For all these reasons it is necessary to reassess the role of the

is less uniformity, as is illustrated by a hymn to Selene (cited p. 250): *ἐκ αὐτοῦ γὰρ πᾶντ' ἐστὶ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ τὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ*. We should leave out of account examples with *πᾶντων* (Wisd. 8: 3; Ecclus. 1: 4; 2 Macc. 1: 24) and *ἀπάντων* (Ecclus. 24: 8), since the genitive plural is always found in the anarthrous form in the LXX (though not elsewhere, as is shown by a number of examples cited by Norden, *ibid.* 164f.; 245; 247). In Ecclus. 39: 21 the Greek reads *πᾶντα γὰρ εἰς γένεας αὐτῶν ἐκτίσθη*. But here the *πᾶντα* has a distributive rather than an inclusive force. In Judith 8: 14 the reading is uncertain, as it is in Isa. 44: 24. This leaves only 3 clear counter-examples: Ps. 8: 17; 103: 24; Ecclus. 43: 33. Of these the first is particularly interesting, since it is actually *corrected* into *τὰ πᾶντα* when quoted in the New Testament (Heb. 2: 8 and 1 Cor. 15: 27).

The NT parallels cited by Bultmann (*Gospel*, 37 n. 1) all have *τὰ πᾶντα*. Bultmann (p. 19) is aware of the difference, but attempts to explain it away. H. Thyen, referring to John 1: 3 in another context, actually misquotes it, arguing that '*τὰ πᾶντα* [sic] should not simply be identified with "mankind"' (Heilf., 177 n. 35).

³⁸ The evidence is most fully set out by K. Aland, 'Untersuchung'. Aland's conclusions are contested by E. Haenchen, who argues: 'One misconstrues the facts when one connects *ὁ γέγονεν* to verse 4 by invoking the oldest manuscripts, to say nothing of the fact that one does not thereby achieve a meaningful text' (*Johannesevangelium*, 122). But this is precisely one of the strengths of Lamarche's case, with which Haenchen was evidently unacquainted.

³⁹ 'Was ist das für eine ζῶν?' *Johannesevangelium*, I, 216.

⁴⁰ 'What has come to be—in him (the Logos) was the life (for it); or: 'What has come to be—in it he (the Logos) was the life' (*Gospel*, 39).

Logos in the Prologue, possibly in the direction already indicated in the *Manual of Discipline*. As Lamarche says, 'in this sentence—so close to John 1: 3—what takes the place of the Johannine Logos is the divine plan' (ἡ ἐκδοχή).⁴¹ Lamarche cites numerous examples of ἡ ἐκδοχή in the sense of 'the thoughts' or 'the plans' of God.⁴² And he argues that they furnish us with a very close conceptual parallel to the idea of the Logos that pervades the Prologue. For although the word itself occurs only three times, the whole passage is filled with the sense of the divine plan—which is in point of fact one of the meanings of the Hebrew דָּבָר. And this is a meaning rendered more naturally by λόγος than by σοφία.

More important than any of the passages cited by Lamarche is the famous epilogue to the prophecy of Second Isaiah:

For as the heavens are higher than the earth
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts (חֲשֹׁבוֹתַי) than your thoughts
(Isa. 55: 8–9)

which is directly followed by the declaration concerning 'every word (כָּל דָּבָר) that goes forth from my mouth', a declaration that harks back to the same author's prologue: 'the word of the Lord abides for ever' (Isa. 40: 8). The whole of the prophet's message is bracketed by these two statements concerning the word of God,⁴³ which may fairly be said therefore to signify the divine plan. Second Isaiah is anxious to promulgate, a plan which involves the superimposition of creation upon history.

Much later, in Wisdom 18, the role of Sophia is taken over by the Logos. In this extended meditation upon the episode of the slaying of the first-born in Egypt, God's instrument is, instead of Sophia, his 'all-powerful word', which 'leaped from the royal throne into the midst of the land which was doomed' (Wisd. 18: 15).

All this supports the contention that λόγος in the Prologue is more than utterance (λόγος προφορικός) and more than thought (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος): it is the plan of God, in a meaning closely related to, if not identical with Col. 1: 25, where τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ stands in apposition to τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν ('the mystery hidden for ages and generations').

How then are the opening verses of the Prologue to be inter-

⁴¹ 'Prologue', 42.

⁴² Jer. 29: 11; 51: 29; Mic. 4: 12; Ps. 33: 10f.

⁴³ Cf. C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja: Kapitel 40–66* (Göttingen, 1966), 38.

preted? From the very beginning God has his plan close to him, and his plan was a facet of his divinity. All human history, every single thing that has ever happened, took place through the mediation of the Logos, but what has come to pass in him (i.e. the special events of God's intervention on behalf of his people), this was life, a special life that was God's prerogative to bestow, a life that was also light—illumination and revelation. The contrast here is similar to that lying behind Sir. 1: 10: 'She (wisdom) dwells with all flesh according to his gift, and he supplied her to those who love him.' On this interpretation v. 4 alludes to the tradition most fully represented in Wisdom 10, which describes Wisdom's share in all the main events of Israel's history from Adam to the Exodus. The living history of this small nation, the history, that is, in which the Logos is most immediately involved (ἐν αὐτῇ), is at the same time a revelation for all mankind (cf. Isa. 49: 6). The Logos, guiding and controlling the destiny of Israel (this is after all God's true design) is present not just as its life but as the bearer of God's light. There is still something mysterious about the passage. Although the images are Johannine, they are articulated in a non-Johannine way. In the Gospel life is the reward and the consequence of welcoming the light. Here it is the other way round: life comes first and is identified with light. As Strack-Billerbeck observes, this is also the reverse of the regular rabbinical view that 'the light is the life of humankind'.⁴⁴

The following verse (5) speaks of the light of men that shines in all the God-directed events of history right up to the new dawn of Christianity. But here for the first time a choice is involved: human beings do not have to welcome the shining. For the most part, as Israel's history shows, they do not, and so there is a darkness, a night (σκοτία), and although the darkness does not succeed in mastering or overcoming the light, neither is the darkness entirely dispelled.

As the hymn continues, the σκοτία is defined more closely. (Bultmann and Käsemann both rightly insist upon the parallelism between v. 5 and vv. 10–11.) It is first of all identified as ὁ κόσμος and then, even more precisely, as τὰ ἰδιώτα. There is no question of temporal succession here: the Greek is quite plain: ἦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

⁴⁴ *Kommentar*, ii. 358. There is perhaps some light to be shed on this passage, as M. McNamara suggests, from the Palestinian Targum on Exod. 12: 42: *Targum*, 103–4.

—the Logos does not enter the world at this point, it is already there. The movement is one of greater precision, sharper focus.

But what is meant by *δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο* (v. 10)? At first sight it may seem perverse to deny that here at any rate there is a direct reference to creation. But *κόσμος* in the Gospel (unless exceptionally in ch. 17) does not mean the cosmos, it means the world of men, and often enough of those men who, confronted with the light, stubbornly keep their eyes shut. Käsemann's insistence upon the cosmological slant at this point⁴⁵ (which he also reads into the Gospel as a whole) is supported by neither argument nor evidence. Lamarche suggests that the verse is treating 'of the world of men which has come about in history',⁴⁶ or even, adds de la Potterie, 'the group of men which has received the light of revelation through him'.⁴⁷ On the other hand, there is no justification for Baldensperger's view (in which he is followed by Lamarche) that *ὁ κόσμος* represents the Greek world, *τὰ ὅσα* the Jewish. The evangelist nowhere makes this distinction (indeed in ch. 15 at least, *ὁ κόσμος* must refer primarily to the Jews) and there is no need to assume that it is drawn here. Rather we have a typical example of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In its first two occurrences in v. 10, *κόσμος* clearly corresponds to *τὰ ὅσα*: it is the world as the realm of the revealing Word; in its third occurrence it corresponds to *οἱ ὅσιοι*: it is the world of those men who, in their sullen hebetude, refuse to see the light. It is important to recognize that *τὰ ὅσα* (the home of the Logos) is not outside the *κόσμος* but within it (Judaea, Jerusalem, or even the Temple).

Up to this point, although the material of the hymn is human history, the perspective adopted has been atemporal, or almost so. Thus *ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ* certainly marks an advance upon *πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ*; but the advance is one of greater intensity and closer definition, like a camera zooming in on a relatively restricted section of the large scene it has hitherto been surveying from afar. The

⁴⁵ 'Structure', 144. John 17: 5, 24 are the only instances in which *κόσμος* bears the meaning Käsemann assigns to it. Even where Jesus is spoken of as entering or leaving the world it is the world of men that is meant.

⁴⁶ 'Prologue', 40.

⁴⁷ *Vérité*, 164. The idea is certainly present in the *Testament of Moses*, though the corrupt state of the text impedes a clear vision: 'omnes gentes quae sunt in orbe terrarum deus creavit ut [et?] nos [...] praevidit illos et nos ab initio creaturae ad exitum saeculi, et nihil est ab eo neglectum usque ad pusillum, sed omnia praevidit et provovit cum eis [promovit cuncta?]' (12: 4-5). Cf. IQH 1: 14f, etc.; 4 Ezra 6: 6; Apoc. Abr. 22; *Odes Sol.* 16: 9: 'the worlds are by his word'.

present tense of *φαίνεω* in v. 5 shows that the revelatory role of the Logos in human history involves one continuous uninterrupted activity. Similarly, if vv. 10-11 do not actually carry the action further, there is no need on that account to reject them (as W. Schmithals does)⁴⁸ as repetitions and redundant. For they too move in the direction of greater precision and intensity.

There is nothing that has been said of the Logos up to this point which could not equally have been asserted of Wisdom, even if, as I have tried to show, some of the overtones of the hymn are most suitably carried by the term *λόγος*. And this is equally true of the two following verses (12-13), for the grim record of Israel's rejection of the light is offset by the persistent tradition of the Remnant. Dodd has demonstrated how the 'children of God' theme of v. 12 can be matched in the Old Testament.⁴⁹

No doubt the language here echoes the thought-world of the Gospel. This is best explained if the author of the original hymn was a member of the Johannine community and familiar with the themes of light, life, world, child of God, and so on. But it is illuminating to regard his composition first of all from the perspective of Jewish wisdom.

Raymond Brown objects at this point: 'It seems incredible that in a hymn coming out of Johannine circles the ability to become a child of God would have been explained in another way than in terms of having been begotten from above by the Spirit of Jesus.'⁵⁰ But surely the real entrance to life in the Fourth Gospel is the acceptance of revelation in faith, which is precisely the point being made in v. 13. Moreover, if we understand the central theme of the hymn to be *revelation* and accept that it emanated from Johannine circles, then the revelation of Jesus must have been seen as the last and definitive manifestation of the shining of the light, a shining which has no end. Such a vision implies that the life and teaching of Jesus are the climax of the divine plan, but it does not yet identify the person of Jesus with the plan: in theory he could be no more than the last of the prophets sent out by Wisdom (cf. Luke

⁴⁸ 'Prolog', 23-6.

⁴⁹ *Interpretation*, 281f. Bulmann ('Background', 28) points out the parallel with Luke 7: 35: *καὶ δὲκαὶ αὐτῷ ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ*. R. A. Culpepper, in what seems to me the most valuable section of his article ('Pivot'), gives a very full discussion of the background to the term *τέκνα θεοῦ* in the Johannine writings. It is hard to be sure whether these verses (12-13) belonged to the original hymn or not. Either way, it makes little difference to my own argument.

⁵⁰ *Gospel*, 29.

11: 49),⁵¹ a representative of Wisdom in the same simple sense as all the prophets who had preceded him. Upon those who, unlike the majority, welcomed his message, God bestowed the right to become his children.

One can see how on this view v. 14 expresses an altogether novel insight, splendid in its implications: the plan of God has actually taken flesh and Wisdom has pitched her tent among men. Far from being a pale variant upon an already established theme, as Käsemann suggests, the *καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἐγένετο*, on this interpretation, rings out as a marvellously cogent conclusion to the hymn.

Nevertheless the objections against this hypothesis, if it is taken in isolation, are formidable. It is not just that the language is redolent of the preoccupations of the Johannine community: *φῶς*, *σκοτία*, *ζωή*, *κόσμος*, *πιστεύειν*, *τέκνα θεοῦ*. The theme too, the opposition of darkness and light seen in terms of the failure of the Logos (or the light) to receive a welcome from his own people—this theme is present throughout the whole Gospel. And surely no one from the Johannine circle, even someone coming across the hymn for the first time, would fail to make the identification, very early on, between the Logos that is light and the Christ that is truth. So we are led to a consideration of the alternative hypothesis, not however as an alternative, but as a dialectical enrichment.

(b) *A hymn to the Incarnate Word?*

The view of the Prologue as a hymn to the incarnate Word is most fully and effectively sustained by Lamarche. Taking both occurrences of *γινέσθαι* in v. 3 as reference to history rather than to creation, he easily evades the kind of difficulty which, as we have seen, forced Schnackenburg to adopt the alternative punctuation. 'The word of God,' writes Lamarche, 'before being the revelation of the mystery was actually an inner word, hidden mystery, divine plan.'⁵² So he is able to take *ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ* as 'what came about in him,' and to find in these words an allusion to all that has been accomplished in Jesus: 'his whole earthly life, especially his death, resurrection, and glorification'. The contrast between *δὲ αὐτοῦ* and *ἐν αὐτῷ* is fully explained: 'Everything that has taken place

through his mediation (*δὲ αὐτοῦ*) has played its part in the realization of the divine plan, but it is only by the events that have taken place directly through and in him (*ἐν αὐτῷ*), that is to say in Jesus Christ, that the plan of salvation has been accomplished.'⁵³

For Lamarche (and it is difficult to deny the attractiveness or indeed the cogency of this interpretation) the whole hymn is concerned with revelation rather than with cosmology. The light specifically mentioned in v. 4 is already implied in what precedes, and the darkness that follows is easily and directly recognized as a symbol of the blindness of mankind to the light which, properly and rightfully, is their enlightenment. The rejection of the proffered revelation by the world in general (v. 10) and the Jews in particular (v. 11) is too well attested elsewhere to require further comment. Only the favoured few, those who by according their faith have received the right to become children of God, have slipped away out of the sinister domain John calls *ἡ σκοτία*. And so vv. 12-13 form an effective conclusion to the story.

But how, on this hypothesis, are we to account for v. 14? Lamarche, who proposes a chiasmic structure of the Prologue somewhat resembling that of Boismard,⁵⁴ displaces this verse from the centre: it corresponds, he believes, to v. 9, which is another way of expressing the Incarnation (taking *ἐργάμενον* with *φῶς*). But Lamarche's view depends upon an untenable exegesis of vv. 11-12,⁵⁵ and so we are obliged to confront the difficulties raised by this interpretation more directly.

In his 1923 article, Bultmann raised the question whether v. 14 belonged to the original version of the Prologue. Could it not, with what follows, have been added on later either by the evangelist himself or by an editor or redactor? Since he had already argued that the *Vorlage* was pre-Christian one might have expected him to ascribe v. 14, or at least the very Christian-sounding *ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἐγένετο* to a later hand. On the contrary, it is precisely this phrase that he wishes to retain since, on his view, the group from which the original composition emanated certainly had 'the conception of the historical embodiment of the revealing deity in his emissary'.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 48.

⁵² 'Prologue', 37.

⁵³ Namely, the distinction between Israel and 'the pagan world'. Lamarche offers no argument for this view, but contents himself with the assertion that the Prologue is written from the same perspective as the Letter to the Ephesians ('Prologue', 47).

⁵⁴ 'Background', 32.

⁵¹ *ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ εἰμὲν ἀποκρῆναι εἰς αὐτοῦς προβήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους*. Matt. 23: 34 puts this saying into the mouth of Jesus, and transposes the Wisdom who sends into sages who are sent; cf. Str. 2.4: 33f.

⁵² 'Prologue', 42.

Once Bultmann's hypothetical source had been abandoned, this question was bound to be raised again; raised it was by Ernst Käsemann, and subsequently many scholars have followed him in excising this verse from the postulated original.

According to Käsemann, 14a adds nothing to what precedes: is 14a, he asks, 'anything more than the mere taking over of what has already been said in the hymn, a phrase of connection and transition which allows the evangelist to come now to what is really important to himself and to declare the purpose of quoting the hymn?'⁵⁷ Since Käsemann holds that 'There is absolutely no convincing argument for the view that vv. 5-13 ever referred to anything save the historical manifestation of the Revealer',⁵⁸ he fails to see how the following verse, or at least its opening phrase, could be said to add anything substantial to what has gone before. What is singular in Käsemann's view, apart from its blindness to the plausibility of the Wisdom-hymn hypothesis, is his conviction that the expression *ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἐγένετο* in which many commentators have detected a markedly anti-docetic ring, remains in perfect accord with the picture of Christ which he himself discovered elsewhere in the Gospel—a divine being sojourning on earth ('der über die Erde schreitende Gott'). Georg Richter has argued that this interpretation cannot be sustained, on the grounds that *γένεθαι* followed by a predicative noun always implies a real change of state or status.⁵⁹ Whether this is so or not (and Klaus Berger has adduced some strong arguments against Richter's position),⁶⁰ the chief reasons for refusing to accept Käsemann's position are not properly speaking philological at all. The case rests primarily upon the clear identification of the pre-existent Logos with the Jesus of the Gospel, whose humanity, though seldom stressed, is consistently taken for granted.

It must be acknowledged, however, that such arguments do nothing to establish the *originality* of the verse in question. Richter himself in fact agrees on this point with Käsemann: 'the incarnation is to be understood as real, but the sentence does not come from the evangelist: it is secondary'.⁶¹ Specifically, he ascribes it to

the anti-docetic redactor who was also responsible, he thinks, for other insertions of a similar tendency (especially 6: 51b-58; 13: 12-17; chs. 15-16; 5: 28f.).⁶²

It must be conceded, I think, that Käsemann and Richter are right to argue that the Gospel is more concerned to proclaim the divinity of Jesus than his humanity (though surely this is not so much denied as taken for granted). Moreover, the hushed reverence we associate with the *incarnatus est* of the Mass, the glad amazement that God has *condescended* to take on a human form, both belong to a later age. Bultmann may be guilty of some over-interpretation here: 'the Revealer is nothing but a man . . . It is in his sheer humanity that he is the Revealer'.⁶³ (There is something paradoxical about Bultmann's own position here; for having laboriously pared down the humanity of Jesus to the ultimate essence of the Word, he is left with a man who is actually no more human than Käsemann's 'über die Erde schreitender Gott'.)

But of course the fact that the Gospel places no stress upon incarnation as such is no reason for not ascribing v. 14 to the *Vorlage* of the Prologue. This argument would work only if Gospel and Prologue were shown to have been conceived with the same end in view. And this is precisely the point at issue.

The hymn, resonating as it does upon two registers, is asserting throughout, but subtly and implicitly, the identity of the Logos and the Revealer. But until v. 14 there is no explicit statement to that effect. It is of course true, as Richter points out, that

⁶² To maintain this, Richter has to show that there is nothing in the remainder of the verse either which would imply divinity; for an 'anti-docetic' redactor would naturally be anxious to guard against misunderstanding at this point. Accordingly he argues (1) that *αἰώνιον* means simply 'dwell' ('sein (dauern) Wohnsitz nehmen'); (2) that in the context it is no more than a synonym for incarnation; (3) that it is best understood from Paul's use of *αἰώνιος* in 2 Cor. 5: 1, 4 and from the use of *αἰώνια* in 2 Pet. 1: 13f. Against this, it must be said that (1) though Richter refers to Moulton-Milligan, he omits to mention a papyrus cited there (Sgll. 177) in which 'the thought of temporary dwelling is well brought out'; *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, 1930), s.v. 578; (2) he ignores what, in the context, is a scarcely mistakable allusion to Sir. 24: 8, 10; (3) the word *δῶκα* itself, even without *αἰώνιον*, would be enough to suggest a divine epiphany, and is certainly a highly unlikely term for the so-called anti-docetic redactor to pick on.

Richter suggests three different ways of understanding v. 14a: (a) 'die Fleischwerdung ist nicht real zu verstehen'; (b) 'die Fleischwerdung ist zwar real zu verstehen, aber der Ton liegt nicht auf *sarx*, sondern auf *Logos*'; (c) 'die Fleischwerdung ist real zu verstehen, und der Hauptakzent liegt auf *sarx*' (p. 86). But the verse maintains the identity of *λόγος* and *σάρξ*, so it is a fatal mistake to follow Bultmann and Käsemann in looking for a Hauptakzent in the first place.

⁵⁷ 'Structure', 155.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 150.

⁵⁹ 'Fleischwerdung', 87-8.

⁶⁰ 'Zu "Das Wort ward Fleisch".'

⁶¹ 'Fleischwerdung', 92.

⁶³ Gospel, 62-3.

Christian hymns do exist which contain no direct mention of the Incarnation. But the Prologue is surely incomplete without such a reference. That a Jewish Christian, reflecting on the history of God's revelation as expressed in the wisdom tradition, should have composed a hymn seeing the life and work of Jesus as the final triumphant expression of this revelation—this is conceivable. But to have composed the hymn in such a way that it could also be read as referring *directly* to the Incarnate Word who came into the world and was rejected by his own people, without including any explicit affirmation of the identity of these two figures—this is a suggestion which places too great a strain upon our credulity.

Again, while the *σάφ' ἐγένετο*, taken in isolation, might conceivably be thought to be protesting against a docetic interpretation of the Gospel, much in the manner of the opening of 1 John, it is hard to deny that the second half of the verse rounds off the Wisdom theme with a deliberate allusion (in the use of *σκηνοῦν*) to Sirach 24.

There is a further reason for continuing to see v. 14 as part of the original hymn. This reason, involving an appeal to literary sensitivity, is certainly more subjective than the first two and will carry more weight with some than with others. Bultmann's comparison with the *incarnatus est* of the Mass, rejected so scornfully by Käsemann, touches the truth, it seems to me, in one important respect. For it acknowledges the sudden change of mood, the climactic coda, where the ultimate destiny of the Logos is announced, glowingly, for the first time. Shorn of this climax, the hymn is very much a case of Hamlet without the Prince. And the remainder of the verse ('and dwell amongst us, and we have seen his glory . . .'), which focuses attention for the first time upon the community who are the recipients of the revelation, fits in admirably with all that precedes. I have compared the movement of the hymn to that of a camera, gradually zooming in upon the focus of interest; this is now defined even more closely as the revelation—in the flesh—to the group itself: *ἐν ᾧ μὲν, ἐθεοοῦμεθα*.

Richter emphasizes how different the perspective of v. 14 is from that of the Gospel as a whole, which tends to ignore the properly incarnational aspect of the coming of Jesus. But the difficulty is more apparent than real. The reason for the author's excitement here is that the divine plan he has been outlining, God's revelation to mankind, has actually been embodied in the very man who

founded the community to which he himself belongs and is proclaimed by it as the Son sent by the Father: 'and we have seen his glory'. This is the natural outcome of the hymn, not a later insertion. If it does not put the stress exactly where the Gospel puts it, this is not because there is any conflict between the two but because their starting-points are different. The meditation of the Prologue begins in heaven with the Logos at the side of God; that of the Gospel begins with Jesus. They reach the same point from opposite ends. It is *because* they reach the same point that the evangelist (or, if Lindars is right, whoever was responsible for the second edition) is prepared to incorporate the hymn into his work. Had it been felt as incompatible he could easily have omitted it altogether. In short there is every reason for asserting that v. 14 formed the climax of the original hymn.

In my view there can be no satisfactory interpretation of the Prologue that fails to recognize the author's double interest: it is a meditation on wisdom offering a variation on a traditional theme; it is also a hymn to the Incarnate Word. And the juxtaposition or rather intermingling of these themes prepares the way for the climactic utterance of v. 14. The writer's central insight is summed up here—the identification of Jesus Christ, revered and worshipped by Christians alone, with the figure of Wisdom. This stems from the realization, expressed throughout the hymn, that the history of Wisdom has been re-enacted by Christ: the divine plan seen at work throughout the history of Israel has actually taken flesh in him.

The commentator who approaches closest to this view is C. H. Dodd. But he is mistaken, I believe, in envisaging 'a reader in the Hellenistic world for whom this Prologue is the first introduction to the Christian faith'.⁶⁴ Such a reader, thinks Dodd, would naturally take the passage to refer to the pre-Incarnate Logos, a concept readily intelligible to him because of his background in Hellenistic Judaism. Only the Christian reader, already acquainted with the Incarnate Logos, could grasp the whole message. But the double register on which the Prologue plays is not to be explained simply on the hypothesis of a double readership. Rather it is the key to the whole understanding of the passage, justifying its movement and opening the way to the climactic affirmation, 'the Word was made flesh'.

⁶⁴ *Interpretation*, 283.

3. MYTH, HISTORY, OR THEOLOGY?

Most of the problems concerning the meaning of the Prologue are to be resolved, explicitly or implicitly, by formal exegesis. But what is possibly the most crucial question of all is the hardest to answer with any assurance. It is this: what exactly is being affirmed in the opening of v. 14: *ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἐγένετο*? Later theology would have few doubts about the nature of this claim: with the Word identified with the Son as one of the three partners in the stately dance of the Trinity, the ontological force of the affirmation is as unmistakable as it is mysterious. And given the clear affirmations of pre-existence in the body of the Gospel (one of them inserted into the Prologue itself: v. 15), the question might appear superfluous. But of a Prologue detached from the Gospel and its own later accretion it still makes sense to ask how strong an identity is being asserted between the *λόγος* and the *σάρξ*, between Wisdom and Jesus Christ.

The verb *γένεσθαι*, as I have argued, is properly used of an event or happening. But there is no possibility of viewing incarnation (or resurrection for that matter) as an event like any other, in principle observable and open to the scrutiny of the historian. Are we dealing with a metaphor, of the kind Paul used when he spoke of the Church as the 'body' of Christ? This seems too weak a category to cover the claim that is being made here. So if neither history nor metaphor really fit, what of myth? Is this familiar term too vague to be counted any more satisfactory than the other two? It is certainly elusive and probably misleading, unless buttressed by argument and explanation.

Conscious then of the rather slippery nature of the word 'myth' Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, following a hint of Hans Conzelmann,⁶⁵ has suggested as an alternative the term 'reflective mythology'. This, as she understands it, 'is not a living myth but is rather a form of theology appropriating mythical language, material, and patterns from different myths, and it uses these patterns, motifs and configurations for its own theological concerns. Such a theology is not interested in reproducing the myth itself or the mythic materials as they stand, but rather in taking up and adapting the various mythical elements to its own theological goal and theoretical concerns.'⁶⁶

⁶⁵ 'The Mother of Wisdom', 230-43.

⁶⁶ 'Wisdom Mythology', 29.

In so far as it draws attention to the ambiguity of the term 'myth', often employed emotively as well as vaguely, this is a useful suggestion. But the expression 'reflective mythology' (like 'theology') seems to imply a deliberate distancing from the religious experience, and however appropriate to Philo—or Plato—it fails to do justice to the properly religious involvement of the Prologue or the other christological hymns to which Fiorenza wishes to apply it. I believe that the term 'myth', provided it be carefully enough defined, still gives us the right category of understanding.

'Myth', then, I take to mean the expression in story-form of a deeply held *religious* conviction concerning man's relation to the deity, the cosmos (or part of it), or human institutions. (In this sense the narrative of the Fall in Genesis 2-3 is a myth, but the account of creation in Genesis 1 is not: it is rather an anti-myth, the rejection of a Babylonian-type cosmogony.) The myth offers an explanation of how some feature of human life arose, and at the same time furnishes a model, frequently ritualistic, of human behaviour. In general it helps human beings to locate themselves, to know where they belong *vis-à-vis* God, the universe, and their fellow human beings. It operates symbolically rather than literally and in so far as it speaks of the divine this is unavoidable. Any rigorous programme of demythologization, if designed to eliminate symbolic thinking altogether, must end in silence. (Even theology, however far removed it may be from myth, is ultimately rooted in symbol or metaphor.)

Now the place of myth in a historically based religion like Judaism or Christianity is often hard to determine, since history and myth are alternative modes of explanation which cannot be held together with any comfort. But historical events, or alleged historical events, may either be partly mythologized (like the crossing of the Sea of Reeds in Exodus 14) or made to function as myths by being drawn in to explain the origin of a particular custom or institution. However, in such cases the need to maintain some historical plausibility limits the possibilities to a degree which will vary from one culture to another. There are unlikely, for instance, to be any talking animals in such narratives, whereas in pure myth these abound.

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that specifically Christian myths are all constructed round the person of

Christ or some aspect of his achievement or experience, which is believed to be somehow reproduced or re-enacted by the faithful. Thus they make sense of *their* experience by appealing to his. Paul's most astonishing speculative feat was his existentialization, as it were, of the events of the first Easter. More simply, in the Synoptic Gospels, one can see how the Christian community justified and explained its own experience of persecution by seeing it as endured in Christ's name and for his sake.

Nowhere is this kind of explanation stronger than in the Fourth Gospel, one of whose aims, quite clearly, is to try and make sense of the community's rejection by the Jews. An all-pervasive theme in the body of the Gospel, it also helps us to understand the attraction of the tradition of personified wisdom for the author of the Prologue, especially the version according to which Wisdom failed to find a home among her own people. For this was also the experience of Jesus *and of the community*. Once the two communities, Jewish and Jewish-Christian, had parted, the conviction that the history of revelation had been re-enacted by Christ must have helped to sustain the Christians' sense that they too were reliving the rejection undergone by the Revealer. Here is a good example of what Wayne Meeks calls the 'continual, harmonic reinforcement between social experience and ideology'.⁶⁷

The theme of Wisdom in her role as God's agent in revelation is thus taken over, adapted, and made to function as a myth. The author is much more interested in the revelational aspect of this tradition than in the cosmological, for he belongs to a community that sees its founder as the Revealer and is proud of its own mission to further his revelation. The story element of the ancient tradition, though compressed and refined, remains recognizable, and still involves the career of a heavenly being determining the fate of mankind. What is more, it enables the members of the circle from which it emanates to locate themselves *vis-à-vis* the world as a whole and the Jewish community (which in some respects they identified with 'the world') in particular. But the myth is now purely Christian. The identification of the heavenly figure with a historical individual marks the triumphant outcome of a long and complex midrashic development. The Jewish ancestry of the Prologue is evident, and it shares with Judaism the characteristic

which singles out both religions and distinguishes them from all others, including Gnosticism, that make no claim to a contingently historical revelation.

⁶⁷ 'Man from Heaven', 164.