

## John 1: Jesus, creator of an old creation of a new one? Andrew Perry

### Introduction

The objective of this essay is to outline a ‘Socinian’ interpretation of John 1. This is a ‘Low Christology’ that reverses the normal incarnational reading in favour of the concept of ‘manifestation’. It relies on typology as a method for determining the nature of John’s points. While technically a ‘Low Christology’, this is compensated with what we may call a ‘High Anthropology’, i.e. an enhanced view of what a man is in the purpose of God as laid down in the creation narrative of Genesis.

In order to defend a ‘Low Christology’ (i.e. that Jesus is the man of the new creation), there are two questions we must answer in respect of John 1:

How is ‘the Word’ the maker of ‘all things’ (John 1:3)?

How is ‘the Light’ the maker of ‘the World’ (John 1:10)?

In tackling these questions, the essay should be seen as setting out the primary intertextual and typological work rather than engaging competing scholarship; this essay outlines the intertextual and typological work that would be taken into a critique of more traditional incarnational readings. We should also add as a point of method that our approach to the NT writings is synchronic, seeing points of agreement, simply because their differing dates are all relatively close in time.

### Identifying ‘the Word’

The identification of ‘the Word’ (i.e. the referent of the expression) as Jesus in John 1:1 is argued here, but the subject matter dealt with is *not* the Genesis creation. The title ‘the Word’ refers to Jesus in John 1:1 for the following reasons:

1) The statement, conventionally translated, ‘the Word was *with* God’, uses a Greek expression for ‘with God’ (πρὸς τὸν θεόν) which indicates a person acting as a mediator. The main mediator in the OT is the high priest (See Exod 18:19, LXX; 2 Cor 3:4; Heb 2:17; 5:1;<sup>1</sup> 1 John 1:1-2; 3:21; Rev 12:5; 13:6), although the mediatorship of the Son on earth was not priestly (cf. Moses’ mediatorship and see Heb 8:4). We could translate the Greek as ‘towards God’ or ‘before God’ but ‘with God’ is the standard rendering. This is fine provided we do not lose sight of the fact that the overtone implied in the expression ‘with’ is one of mediatorship rather than, say, companionship.<sup>2</sup>

2) The statement, ‘the Word was God’, makes a predication of the Word which suggests that the Word is a human person. This use of ‘God’ at the beginning of the gospel matches Thomas’ confession, ‘My Lord and My God’ at the end of the gospel which is addressed to Jesus (an *inclusio*). What Thomas saw in Jesus was the Father and Jesus acknowledges this in his response to Thomas (John 20:29). Jesus alludes to ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9) in his acknowledgment to Thomas that he had now

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek is consistent and is particularly clear in Hebrews where we read, ‘a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God’ (Heb 2:17). The use of the expression helps us see the priestly role of Rev 12:5 in being ‘caught up unto God’, and the false priesthood implicit in the ‘blasphemy against God’ of Rev 13:6.

<sup>2</sup> There are 29 verses in the Greek Bible and the NT that show a collocation of the verb ‘to be’ and the Greek preposition πρὸς. Most translations have differing English prepositions for the Greek πρὸς. The choice is determined by the sense of what is being said in the text. For example, Judith 13:6 is about a bed-post which ‘was above’ the person’s head. Where we have two or more people in a situation in a text, we might have ‘with you’, ‘with each other, or ‘with one another’ (Mark 14:49; Luke 9:41; 23:41). This pattern begs the question for John 1:1 as to where the Word is and here the pattern of usage for πρὸς τὸν θεόν shows a mediator/priestly role such that God is in heaven and the priest/mediator is on earth. A good example is Exod 4:16 which has the verb ‘to be’ and πρὸς to describe Moses’ relation to Aaron as the one who is towards God. For an analysis of the dynamic nature of the relationship indicated by πρὸς see E. L. Miller, “The Logos was God” *EQ* 53.2 (1981): 65-77.

‘seen me’ (John 20:29)—statement that goes beyond the literal seeing of the resurrected Jesus. It is in this sense that Jesus ‘was God’—that of manifesting the Father.

3) The common demonstrative expression, ‘the same’ (John 1:2), is used of persons as well as objects like the temple (John 2:20). It is used of John the Baptist (John 1:7), and it is used elsewhere of Christ (e.g. John 1:15, 30, 33, 34; cf. Ps 102:27; John 7:18; Heb 1:12; 13:8). It is the use of the demonstrative in John 1:7 that is important here because vv. 2 and 7 are in a contrasting relationship: Jesus, the same, was in the beginning with God, but John the Baptist, the same, came for a witness. This contrasting relationship between vv. 1 and 7 establishes Jesus as the referent of *the logos* in v. 1.

4) John’s reasoning is that ‘in (or by) him (the Word) was life; and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4) and this coincides with the view of Jesus as ‘the Word of life’ (1 John 1:1). The clearer identification of Jesus in 1 John 1:1 should control our identification of him in John 1:1—the Word of Life is the Word.

5) The Son of God is referred to as ‘the Word of God’ (Rev 19:13), which invites the view that Jesus is ‘the Word’ of John 1, especially if we regard The Book of Revelation and The Gospel of John as written by the same person.

6) John 1:1 does not use the name ‘Jesus’ but this does not mean that Jesus is not the referent of ‘the Word’. Various names and titles can be used to refer to the same person (this is co-referentiality<sup>3</sup>) and there is a reason why John uses *logos* for Jesus instead of his name. This title draws in the OT allusions that would otherwise be lost if he had used the name ‘Jesus’.

In view of (1)-(6), we reject the view that ‘the Word’ is solely a linguistic personification of something abstract (like a purpose or plan) in John 1:1, 14; rather Jesus is the one who personifies what God has said through the Prophets (or is the embodiment of **the Word of prophecy**<sup>4</sup>). The intertext of 1 John 1:1-4 is particularly clear:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life... 1 John 1:1 (KJV)

This clearly refers to the apostles’ experience of being with Jesus. The language of John 1 is picked up in 1 John 1 and given an exposition in terms of ‘the Word of life’. We reject therefore the view that an *abstract* (Philonic) *logos* is being either personified or presented as a linguistic or attributive hypostatization. The language of John 1 is too personal for these options: *the logos* was towards (with) God and was ‘God’.<sup>5</sup> A person can be ‘with’ someone but not an abstract entity like a word.

Does John 1 refer to the Genesis beginning? Is Christ the creator of this creation? Or does John 1 refer to a **new creation**? And is Christ (like Adam) the creator of this creation? To answer these questions, we have to look at the usage of the expression ‘all things’.

### Partnership

The apostles understood their age to be radically new, and they used creation language to describe their work and experience. It was a creation of *creatures* — a creation of a new man in each believer. James pinpoints God the Father as the Creator in this creation (Jms 1:18), but this does not exclude the possibility that God the Father was carrying out His creative work *by* Jesus. And in fact we shall see that **Jesus is involved**, because it is a creation of new men and women in him.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, ‘Elizabeth Regina is over eighty’ has less information than ‘The Queen of England is over eighty’ although the name and title are co-referential.

<sup>4</sup> This is argued in a related paper, “Manifestation or Incarnation?”

<sup>5</sup> Instead, we would say that Jesus himself is the personification of *the logos*.

<sup>6</sup> See 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; 4:24; Col 3:10; Jms 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23.

This is how it was in Genesis. *Partnership* is not a foreign idea to the Genesis creation narrative. All the things of the Genesis creation were created by God in partnership with the divine council of angels. This relationship is seen in the expression 'let us make' (Gen 1:26). This relationship between God and the angels in heaven is reflected on the earth when man is brought into partnership with God. His work is to be one of ordering and governing creation ('lordship') and this is a *kind of creative work*. This view of Man is what we mean by the phrase a 'High Anthropology'.

The principle of partnership is further reflected when the woman is 'given' unto the man as a helper in the creative work of bearing children to the honour and glory of God. This principle is found also in the making of the sanctuary, where there is partnership in creative work (Heb 8:5) between the Angel of the Lord and Moses the man, and the Levites are again explicitly 'given'<sup>7</sup> to the priests to be helpmeets in this sanctuary.<sup>8</sup>

A general statement about God and the creation of all things is this:

...there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1 Cor 8:6 (KJV)

This text establishes the fundamental relationship: all things are *of* the one God, the Father, but *by (through)* the one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul uses the expression 'all things' and his point is about the new creation, not the Genesis creation, because he talks of *things*, including people alive in Paul's day — (the 'we' in him) - *of God by (through) Christ*. The idea of *reconciliation* connects people with the concept of *all things*, as is shown by the following parallelism:

...through him were all things created... [whether] ...in the heavens... [or]...in earth... Col 1:16cb (KJV revised)

...by him... [were]...all things [reconciled]... whether...in earth...or...in the heavens... Col 1:20bc (KJV revised)

The reconciliation of things *under* heaven, that is, things in the earth was achieved through the Gospel, and Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (Col 1:23), but how was it accomplished for things in the heavens? The contrast between heaven and earth here is also illustrated in Ephesians:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth; even in him... Eph 1:10 (KJV revised); cf. John 11:52

In a dispensation called *the fulness of times*, all things are gathered together in Christ. The type is clearly the gathering of the animals to Noah (by God) in the ark (Gen 6:20), but the type also goes back to the gathering of the animals to Adam (by God). This widens the meaning of *all things*. In Colossians 1, the term embraces the creatures of the new creation. Here in Ephesians 1, the term refers to those in Israel (the heavens) and the Gentiles (the earth) who were being gathered together in Christ (prior to a destruction) — to make out of two, in him, one (Eph 2:15). This view makes it easier to see how there are things in the heavens and in the earth which are reconciled.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, and *by* Christ He was reconciling all things unto himself (2 Cor 5:18; Heb 2:17). Paul is not teaching universalism

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<sup>7</sup> Hence in John 17, the disciples are repeatedly referred to as the ones that have been *given* to Christ, the man, the priest.

<sup>8</sup> We read that God builds *all things* (Heb 3:4) and is the architect (1 Cor 3:10). We read also that Christ *builds* the church — this is a creative work of reconciliation, and we read that Paul builds the church also laying foundations, so creative work is proceeding in a co-operative partnership.

here, since all things are not reconciled as a *fait accompli*. Paul goes on to say that the Gospel was preached to every creature and *those to whom* Paul was writing *had been* reconciled. This shows that the character of the work of creation has to do with the position and status of men and women (Eph 2:10).

The relationship between Christ and God is clear, but elsewhere the “for” and the “by” are predicated of God alone:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things... Heb 2:10 (KJV)

But the stress on people is still found, because the text goes on referring now to Christ:

...for whom are all...by whom are all...both he... and they...are all of one [flesh?]. Heb 2:10-11(KJV)

And again in this next text, the expression ‘all things’ is tied to a mention of people:

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Rms 11:32-36 (KJV); cf. 1 Cor 11:2

The expressions *to him* and *for him* are conveying the point that those who receive God’s mercy ascribe *to* him the glory and they are *for* him as a belonging. We set out a summary of New Testament teaching on ‘all things’ below in Table 1.

<b>The New Creation and All Things</b>	
For of him, and through him, and to him are all things Rom 11:36, Heb 2:10	Here we have the three main prepositions: <i>out of</i> , <i>to</i> , and <i>through</i> the Father are all things.
By him to reconcile all things unto himself Col 1:20, 2 Cor 5:18	God does the reconciling.
Whom he hath appointed heir of all things Heb 1:2	Here the Father has gathered together things and the Son is the rightful heir.
All things...for him Col 1:16	All things given for the Son.
All things are delivered unto me of my Father Matt 11:27, John 17:7	The Father is passing down to his Son his inheritance.
The Father loveth the Son and giveth all things into his hand John 3:35, 13:3	Again, the Father has things ready made to give to the Son.
For he hath put all things under his feet 1 Cor 15:27	The Father does the putting.
Head over all things, to the church Eph 1:22	This is the headship of the church.
Subdue all things unto himself Phil 3:21	This has an element of opposition.
Among all things he might have the pre-eminence Col 1:18	This includes principalities and powers.
The Father, of whom are all things, and we in him;... Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him 1 Cor 8:6	A statement of partnership.
Who created all things by Jesus Christ Eph 3:9	
All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made John 1:3	
For by him were all things created Col 1:16	All things are given to believers through the holy Spirit.
All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore I said, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you John 16:5, 1 Cor 2:10	
How shall he not with him also freely give us all things Rom 8:32, 1 Cor 3:21	
By him all things consist Col 1:17, Heb 1:3	Christ as sustainer.
Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new 2 Cor 5:17, Rev 21:4	Relationship between old and new things.

**Table 1**

It is this connection between *things* and *people* that is made by John:

...All things were made by him; and without him there was not anything made. That which hath been made was life in him; and the life was the light of men... John 1:3-4 (RV and RV mg.)

The companion volume to the standard edition of the Greek New Testament observes that,

A majority of the committee was impressed by the consensus of ante-Nicene writers (orthodox and heretical alike) who took ὃ γέγονεν with what follows. When however in the fourth century Arians and the Macedonian heretics began to appeal to the passage to prove that the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as one of the created things, orthodox writers preferred to take ὃ γέγονεν with the preceding sentence, thus removing the possibility of heretical usage of the passage.<sup>9</sup>

Athanasius (4c.), Irenaeus (2c.), Clement of Alexandria (2c.), Origen (3c.), and Tertullian (2c.), all quote John 1:3 without the phrase “that which was made” at the end of the verse. The Byzantine manuscript tradition may have punctuated the Greek to consciously avoid this use of John, but the earliest manuscripts do not have any punctuation in these two verses.<sup>10</sup>

The first five verses of John concern the person of Jesus and his relationship to the *things* of the new creation. The claim of John is the same as that of Paul — all things were made from God *by (through)* Jesus; or, in other words, all things were made (by God) by Christ. This approach is confirmed by the phrase ‘without him there was not anything made’ (John 1:3), which implies *partnership*. (We would say today, of a colleague, ‘without him I would not have got the job done’).

A similar stress on partnership is seen regarding man and woman: ‘neither is the man *without* the woman, neither the woman *without* the man’ (1 Cor 11:11). Jesus is **not** therefore presented as the Creator *sui generis* (that is, as uniquely the creator), but as one **with** whom the new creation was taking place (Rom 8:32). This *partnership* in the new creation is a reflection of the cooperation between the Father and the angels in the original creation: ‘...Let *us* make man in our image...’ (Gen 1:26).<sup>11</sup> And so of Christ it is written, ‘...for to *make* in himself of twain one new man so making peace...’ (Eph 2:15).<sup>12</sup> Here we read that Christ is our peace, having abolished in his flesh the enmity in order to make in himself one new man by reconciling both Jew and Gentile unto God. Nevertheless, in Col 1:19-20, we read that God makes peace through the blood of his cross, and by Christ, reconciling all things unto himself, in the body of his flesh. So both God the Father and His Son are involved with this work.

This ‘life’ made through Jesus (the Word) is defined as ‘light’:

...that which hath been made was life in him; and the life was the light of men... John 1:3-4(RV and RV mg.)

This distinguishes the Word from the light, but what is this ‘light’? The definition of light is ‘life’ and this is a clue. The subject of life made from Adam is the topic of Genesis 2 (LXX) — and this life was *Eve*. Indeed, the meaning of ‘Eve’ is life, because she was the mother of all living. Therefore, John is saying that that which was built through Jesus ‘in him’ was Eve (cf. 1 John 4:9).<sup>13</sup> The type of Eve here is a type

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<sup>9</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 195, who cites in support the analysis of K. Aland “Eine Untersuchung zu Johannes 1, 3-4. Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes” *ZNW* 59 (1968): 174-209. Metzger demurred from the majority view.

<sup>10</sup> P66, P75, S, A, and B—see P. Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations* (Cambridge: Tyndale Press, 1990), 104-5.

<sup>11</sup> The male and the female are, together, *man*.

<sup>12</sup> See also John 5:17; 1 Cor 12:6; Eph 1:11; Phil 1:6; 3:21.

<sup>13</sup> The concept of life is important in the NT — believers rise from the dead to new life (Col 2:12-13).

of the church, the bride of Christ. This was a light, which was then shining in John's day (the tense has changed to the Present), but the darkness has not comprehended the light (John 1:5).

This light, or Eve, is different to **the Light** of John 1:7ff and the KJV translators mark this as their interpretation with a capital 'L'. The content of John 1:4-5 and John 1:7ff is *light*, but the subjects are different.<sup>14</sup> John the Baptist is positioned in the second paragraph of John's prologue as the forerunner to 'the *true* (as opposed to typical) Light', who was Jesus; but 'the light' of the first paragraph is the anti-typical Eve (Matt 5:14). The use of 'true' marks out Jesus in a way that the light of his bride is not marked, for Eve is the glory of the man (1 Cor 11:7).

Our Genesis perspective on John 1 is reinforced by the mention of darkness, because light requires darkness (Isa 6:9-10). This darkness was the state of the world at the time that Jesus came into the world (John 1:9), and it persisted after his ascension, for the believers subsequently shone as lights in the darkness. This is what we would expect from Genesis 1, because in the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth, the earth was without form and empty, and darkness covered the face of the deep. The world of John's day was then a place of *darkness*.<sup>15</sup> Such darkness is as much the work of God as the subsequent introduction of order.

The fact of this darkness should not be dismissed in our thinking, for it is part of the pattern of creative redemption and new creation *through* a destruction of the old creation. When creations in God's purpose are destroyed, they return to darkness. If the people are darkened, then the creation of that people, which was initiated in light (!), has ended. Hence, the Gospel of John introduces us to a dark world into which the Light comes, and in which the light subsequently shone.<sup>16</sup>

### **Making 'the World'**

The 'making of the world' has been thought to be a proof of the incarnation reading of John 1. Thus far we have illustrated that John's thoughts about 'all things' have been of the **new creation**, rather than of the Genesis creation.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. John  
1:10 (KJV)

In this verse, 'the world' is to be sharply distinguished from the concept of 'all things'. For example, Heb 1:2 says that the Son has been appointed *heir* of all things, but the 'worlds' were *made* through him; and John 1:10-11 describes a world that the Light entered and who rejected him, while John 1:3 refers to a creation of *all things*.

The concept of 'the world' is a societal concept. John writes that the Light coming to the world could light every man (John 1:9), but he came to his own (people) first. It was these people that did not receive him, and therefore did not know him (hence John 1:26 says 'whom *ye* know not').<sup>17</sup> He was then in *that world* circumscribed as the world of the Jews rather than among the peoples of the whole world.

The introduction of John the Baptist as 'a man sent' echoes the description of Moses 'the man' sent from God (Exod 3:14; 11:3, Num 12:3). This in turn suggests that the type behind 'the Light' of John 1 is the

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<sup>14</sup> Israel were to be the 'light' to the nations, and the Angel of the Presence stands to Israel as Christ stands to the renewal of Israel. This is shown by the fact that Israel had light when Egypt was in darkness (Exod 10:23); it is shown by the fact the Angel of the Lord gave them light, but Egypt darkness (Exod 13:21); it is shown by the fact they would have appeared as a train led by the Light in the wilderness; and it is also shown by the fact the candlestick represents Israel.

<sup>15</sup> It is also what we would expect at the time of the Exodus: the plague of darkness still saw Israel with lights, thus indicating that they were lights in that darkness (Exod 10:23).

<sup>16</sup> Pharaoh (Egypt) had his heart hardened, and destruction followed, with the emergence of the new creation of Israel.

<sup>17</sup> We read in Matthew 1 that 'he shall save his people from their sins' (v. 21), and this mention of Christ's *own people* comes at the same point in Matthew's account as we find in John 1.

Angel of the Lord to whom Moses was a witness. Apart from one incidental occurrence (Gen 44:3), the first mention of ‘light’ after Genesis 1 is Exod 10:23, ‘...all the children of Israel *had light* in their dwellings ...’ (cf. Esth 8:16), and this fact is significant. The Angel of the Lord first gave Israel light during the plague of darkness.<sup>18</sup> The Angel of the Lord then appeared as a light, first to Moses at the bush, and then to Israel when taking them out of Egypt (Exod 13:21). This angel prevented the destroying angel from annihilating Israel’s firstborn (Exod 12:23). He then stood as a pillar of light to protect the nation at the Red Sea (Exod 14:19-20; Num 14:14), and then led Israel through the wilderness, again as a pillar of fire (light) and a cloud (Exod 40:38; Num 9:15; Deut 1:33). The first being to be ‘the Light’ is therefore the Angel of the Lord.

Moses was ‘the man’ (Exod 11:3) who saw the Angel of the Lord as a light at the burning bush, and he was ‘sent’ to the nation of Israel as a witness to that light. So too John the Baptist was ‘a man’ sent to be a witness to the ‘true Light’. The Light of the Exodus had lit the dwellings of Israel during the plague of darkness, and it lit the way for the nation during their wilderness journeys. So too the “true” Light was to be a light to every man coming into the world, and he declared that he *also* was to be followed, as in the wilderness; and those who followed him would not walk in the darkness at night, just like Israel (John 8:12).

An insight into the work of the Angel of the Lord is provided by the remark made to Moses, ‘I will *make* of thee a great nation’ (Exod 32:10; Num 14:12). This remark shows the angel’s own perspective upon his Exodus work — it concerned *making something*.<sup>19</sup> He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and delivered them at the Red Sea, and the Israelites had responded by making *false gods* whom they claimed had brought them out of Egypt (Exod 32:4). The angel of the Lord’s response to this was a proposal that he *make* of Moses a great nation, and he would have destroyed the people. This shows us how he viewed his work for God; he viewed his work as one of *making* a nation. Moses’ intercession saved them on that day.

The allusions in John’s prologue then direct our attention to the Exodus and the work of the Angel of the Lord. This work was a *creative* work in which a ‘world’ was made, and this ‘world’ was the nation. Such a work was a continuation of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for God had likewise declared to Abraham that he would *make* of him a great nation. For those who argue that it was the Word who made this world, and that the Word therefore had some manner of existence before his birth of the Virgin Mary, we can reply that this world was made by God through an *angel* who was the first manifestation of ‘the Light’.

Other phrases in the prologue fit this OT typology quite well: For example, Moses had asked the Angel of the Lord for his *name*, and the *name* of the Lord was placed in the angel (Exod 23:21), and so John comments of the Jews of his day that some ‘believed on his (Christ’s) *name*’ (John 1:12).<sup>20</sup> Again, Christ came to ‘his own (people)’, and ownership of a people is an emphasis we find in Exodus—“And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord your God, who bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exod 6:7). When the people rejected the Angel of the Lord and fashioned golden calves, the Levites remained faithful and they were rewarded with the office of priesthood—they became the sons of God (Exod 32:29). Similarly, in John’s day, those who believed on the name of Christ, were given power to become sons of God (John 1:12). And finally, the true Light tabernacled with the nation (John 1:14), just as the Angel of the Lord had tabernacled with Israel in their midst and manifested the presence of Yahweh. In this way, the nation beheld his glory reflected in the face of Moses; and likewise, the disciples beheld the glory of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Hence, we read that light comes into the world and that men should not live in darkness (John 3:19; 12:46).

<sup>19</sup> Other verses which mention the *making activity* of the angel of the Lord are Exod 4:11; 14:21; 15:25; 24:8; and 1 Sam 12:6. Certain Psalms also describe the creative activity of the angel, e.g. Pss 95:6; 100:3.

<sup>20</sup> John is careful to record John the Baptist’s *name* (John 1:6), and he does so to establish that John’s name was not the name given for the belief of the people.

<sup>21</sup> Another example where Christ is equated with the Angel of the Lord is found in 2 Corinthians 4:17 — ‘Now the Lord is that Spirit’. This is an identity in typology, because Paul is inviting us to see the angel of

## Passover Lamb

In John's Prologue, v. 10 is a transitional verse in which the text moves from a consideration of 'the Light' as a type of Christ (vv. 7-9) to a consideration of 'the Word' (Jesus) as the Passover lamb.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. John 1:10 (KJV)

This transition is indicated by the pronouns. In Greek, some pronominal forms may be either masculine or neuter while others are unambiguously masculine or unambiguously neuter. Here in v. 10, any ambiguity in one pronoun is settled by the unambiguous form of the other pronouns. Thus, in English versions, John writes that the world did not know 'him' (masculine pronoun), and the world that did not know 'him' was the very same world into which 'he' came (third person verb, no pronoun), and it was *this* world that was made through 'him' (masculine or neuter pronoun form).

Because the pronoun in 'the world did not know him' is unambiguously masculine, this disambiguates the earlier pronoun in 'the world was made through him', the form of which is indeterminate as to masculine or neuter. Given that 'the Light' is a neuter noun, the masculine pronouns of v. 10 pick up on the only prior masculine subject, namely 'the Word'; they are best taken as implicitly referring to Jesus.

The first detail to examine in v. 10 is "through him" (δι' αὐτοῦ, RSV). This expression is used of agency: someone does something through someone else. Thus, God sent his son into the world so that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16); or again, God did signs and wonders through Christ (Acts 2:22). The same expression is used in John 1:3—the new creation comes about by God acting through Christ; or again, in John 1:7, men believe in Christ through John the Baptist. Accordingly, John 1:10 is not affirming that Jesus is the maker of the world, but that the world was made through him. This is clearer in the RSV than the KJV which has 'made by him'.

The question is: who made the world through Jesus? While 'God' is an obvious answer, the text so far has presented John the Baptist and the Angel of the Lord, and we have seen that the Angel of the Lord 'made' Israel through his actions in Exodus. While God is the agency behind the Angel of the Lord, we should focus on the Angel of the Lord and ask the question: how did the Angel of the Lord make the world through Jesus?

The Angel of the Lord prevented the destroying angel from annihilating the firstborn of Israel, by not allowing the destroyer to enter houses where the blood of the Passover lamb was on the lintels. (Exod 12:23). This blood showed that there had already been death in the house, and as a result there was no need for the destroying angel to enter the house. In a sense therefore it was *this blood* that saved Israel, and it was because of this sacrifice that Israel could be re-born through the waters of the Red Sea. John's statement that 'the world was made *through him*' is a reference to this particular Passover sacrifice as 'Jesus' and the means through which the 'world' was made.

A sacrifice stands at the Exodus beginning, as is generally the case with other OT beginnings. This sacrifice is of supreme importance, and easily overshadowed by the various typical sacrifices of the Law. Its importance is secured by the Book of Revelation and the description there of the beginnings of the millennium. In that book Christ is chiefly portrayed as 'the Lamb' at every point. Such an emphasis in the Apocalypse is matched by John's use of Exodus typology.

Just as a Passover sacrifice stood at the beginning of the Mosaic 'world', a renewed Passover sacrifice is the starting point for the new creation of those who would be part of 'all things'. It is stressed by John:

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the Lord who revealed God to Moses in the mount *as* Christ. Believers are like Moses beholding with open face the glory of the Lord (Exod 33:23). And this glorious Light is reflected upon them as their faces shine as lights to the world. In this way their image is changed by the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). This light that they are given is a ministry of righteousness, and this is made with great plainness of speech, and without the use of a veil, which Moses used whenever he communicated the words of the Lord to the people (Exod 34:32-35).



“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29-36). That ‘made through him’ is a reference to a Passover sacrifice is reiterated in John 3:17—the world is ‘saved’ through him (cf. Rms 5:9). This way of drawing types is characteristic of John’s writings. He places Jesus into the middle of some other typical situations, for instance, the offering of Isaac, the giving of the manna, and Moses’ ascents up Mt. Sinai.

That John is using language typologically is indicated by his description of Jesus or ‘the Word’ as the ‘*true* Light’, for ‘true’ here denotes, not the opposite of false, but rather the measure of the standard. It is like saying of a right angle that it is true if it conforms to the *definition* of a right angle. In typology it amounts to saying that Christ is the archetype for the typical Light. Other examples of this use of ‘true’ which involve typology include ‘true riches’ (Luke 16:11), ‘true bread’ (John 6:32), ‘true vine’ (John 15:1), ‘true tabernacle’ (Heb 8:2), ‘figures of the true’ (Heb 9:24) and ‘true witness’ (Rev 3:14).<sup>22</sup> With John having introduced the ‘true’ Light, he reminds his readers that it was through ‘the Word’ that the Angel of the Lord ‘made the world’.<sup>23</sup>

This deployment of typology is similar to Paul’s use of ‘the rock’ (1 Cor 10:1-5). The people journeyed through the wilderness with a rock, and Paul comments that this rock was Christ. So they journeyed with Christ through the desert. But the rock that was struck was a literal rock, and the water was provided by the Angel of the Lord who led them through the wilderness. He sustained them by day with manna (also Christ) and water. So Christ went with them and sustained them, if only they had eyes to see the doctrine being taught in their midst. Christ was there *in type*, as Paul says, the Exodus was a type, and the things that happened to the Israelites were types.

### **Conclusion**

John presents Jesus as ‘the Word’ of Genesis 1, as well as ‘the Light’ and the ‘Passover Lamb’ of the Exodus. This isn’t an incarnational Christology but a narrative one based on typology.

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<sup>22</sup> Here the true witness is contrasted with the typical witness in the heavens of the rainbow (Ps 89:37) — all covenants require a witness.

<sup>23</sup> The anti-type can also function as a way of speaking about the type, because you seek to identify the significance of the type in terms of the anti-type — this would be a typical metonymy.