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Heb 1:10-12
John 1:3b-4a

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Foreword

Over the years the Ejournal has published papers that exegete the difficult problem passages of the New Testament, passages that have been mis-interpreted by scholars and theologians in the churches down the ages. Christadelphians have always tackled difficult passages with or without scholarship and they have a stock of alternative interpretations upon which to draw. Equally, scholars have their varying interpretations. There is however a difference worth noting. With pre-existence passages, scholars work with a goal, explicit or implicit, that the development of doctrine in later centuries was broadly correct. They rarely if ever consider questions and lines of exegesis that go against that consensus, for example, that they don't ask whether there is an incarnation specified in John 1:14 – they instead discuss and dispute what that incarnation involves. Christadelphians, as a minority sect, are not inhibited from asking any questions of each problem passage – and so our first question would be what is an incarnation and is one specified in John 1:14.

The two papers in this issue engage scholarship and theological thinking on their own territory on two problem passages.

The first is on Heb 1:10-12, a classic problem passage in discussion about the pre-existence of Christ. This has been discussed briefly before in the Ejournal (Jan, 2017) in a marginal note, which readers might like to consult. T. Gaston presents a new approach to the problem of how to tie Ps 102:25-27 to Heb 1:10-12. For another approach, see the paper by A. Perry which is available on the Ejournal website (http://www.christadelphian-ejbi.org/pdfs/Pre-Existence.pdf).

The second paper revisits the topic of the punctuation of John 1:3b-4a. This was first tackled in a paper from January 2010 (Vol 4/1, 3-8) by P. Wyns ("John 1:3-4"). One of facts about NT scholarship is that, on certain texts, it is vast; scholars have written reams. So it is that you can investigate an issue to varying depths – read two commentaries or read ten commentaries; read twelve papers from journals or read one paper; and read half-a-dozen monographs or just a couple. You could write 1500 words or 8000 and indeed a 119-page monograph on John 1:3-4. It seems that each new generation of scholars must have their say.

Why does Hebrews 1:10-12 cite Psalm 102:25-27?

T. Gaston

Abstract

The quotation of Ps 102:25-27 in Heb 1:10-12 is one of the enigmas of the letter. It is generally understood that the writer is addressing these words to the Son, but ostensibly, there is nothing about their original context that would seem to justify such an application. The implications of addressing these words to the Son are significant, since it would imply the identification of the Son as both Yahweh and creator. After considering some of the previous proposals for the writer's reason for citing Ps 102:25-27, I present a new explanation. The writer does not address Ps 102:25-27 to the Son. Instead, this quotation is used to interpret and expand upon themes introduced in prior quotations, following a hermeneutic method used elsewhere in the letter. This proposal changes the Christological implications of these verses, and thus has significance for the wider Christology of the letter.

1. Introduction

In the early part of the Letter to the Hebrews, the writer makes the case that the revelation of God through the Son is greater than that made in the past through the prophets. Identifying those former revelations as "the message spoken through angels" (Heb 2:2), he argues that the revelation through the Son must be superior because the Son himself is superior. In this context he employs seven quotations from the Old Testament, seemingly to provide scriptural support for his argument. Some of these quotations are unsurprising, being familiar from other Christian writings (for example, Ps 2:7, cited Heb 1:5). Some are more difficult, not least because which passage is being cited is not necessarily obvious (e.g., Heb 1:6). Most difficult of all is the citation of Ps 102:25-27. This citation is difficult both because ostensibly there seems nothing about Psalm 102 that would justify the connection with the Son, and because of the profound Christological implications if these words are applied to the Son. Hence the question of the article: why does Hebrews 1:10-12 cite Psalm 102:25-27?

Psalm 102 does not seem an obvious passage for early Christians to cite in reference to the Son. Other passages cited in Hebrews 1 are common Christian proof texts (Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14, Ps 110:1); as Moffit[1] writes, "[the writer] cites verses from contexts where the 'son' is being used to refer to the divinely appointed king of

[1] Full bibliographical details are supplied at the end of the article.

Israel" (Moffit, 2011, p. 86). However, Psalm 102 is not quoted anywhere else in the New Testament or other literature from this period. Nor is this citation picked up by early Christian apologists in their dialogues with Jewish interlocutors. Steryn writes "none of the other verses of this Psalm are explicitly quoted anywhere else by anyone in the early Jewish or early Christian literature known to us today" (Steyn, 2009, p. 343). Psalm 102 is not obviously a messianic psalm. There is no evidence that this is a royal psalm that applies its words to the Davidic king. The heading makes no association between the psalmist and David. The language of anointing or of sonship are entirely absent. The psalm was not interpreted messianically in rabbinic literature, and other NT allusions to the text are used quite differently (cf. James 1:10; Mk 13:20) (Ellingworth, 1993, p. 126). Worse, even were we to suppose that the psalmist was adopting the voice of a messianic figure, it is not to this speaker that the quoted words are applied. Rather Ps 102:25-27 comes from a passage where the psalmist is addressing his God (v24). In their original context, therefore, the verses cited in Heb 1:10-12 are directed to Yahweh himself. By no reasonable interpretation is the psalmist saying that the Davidic king, the Messiah, or any other human figure, laid the foundations of earth, is to be addressed as Yahweh, or will remain forever.

The Christological implications of Heb 1:10-12 are significant for a text conventionally dated to the first century. Addressing Ps 102:25-27 to the Son would make the Son the creator. Whilst there are other NT passages that would make the Son instrumental in creation ("through him" - 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:16, John 1:3), including by the same writer (Heb 1:2, 2:10), this citation would seem to go further in identifying the Son as the Creator. Also, whilst *kurios* has a wide semantic field, addressing the Son as "Lord" in the context of this citation would identify the Son with Yahweh. If the author intended such implications, then he is affirming the deity of Christ and many commentators have understood him as such. Indeed, it would arguably be the strongest affirmation of the deity of Christ to be found in the New Testament. Vanhoye writes, "there is no stronger statement in the whole of the New Testament concerning the Son" (Vanhoye, 2015, p. 67). (For a fully articulated doctrine of the Trinity, one would want to nuance this identification, such that the Son is being identified as one divine Person amongst three; without such nuance, the identification claims too much.) Given the significance of addressing Ps 102:25-27 to the Son, it is legitimate to question what reason the writer has for doing so.

In this article, I will explore some of the possible explanations why the writer to the Hebrews would have selected this citation and will find each of these explanations deficient. I will then propose a novel explanation of this citation, which has implications for the interpretation for the Christological significance of the letter.

Christian Ambiguity over *kurios*

Ps 102:25 does not contain the word "Lord", but verse 12 does, and by including "Lord" within the quotation the writer identifies the "you" to whom the quotation is addressed. In Hebrew, this Lord is Yahweh, but the LXX translates this as *kurios,* the same word routinely used to translate Yahweh and Adonai. It is generally accepted that the citation of Ps 102:25-27 in Heb 1:10-12 is from the LXX. Steyn writes that, though the quotation does not completely agree with the LXX, it is closer than the other witnesses (Steyn, 2009, p. 346). For Steyn, it is the presence of *kurios* within the LXX of Psalm 102 that "opens up the possibility for a Christological interpretation." The same proposal is made by Barclay, who writes "whenever the early Christians found a text with the word Lord they considered themselves quite entitled to take it out of its context and to apply it to Jesus" (Barclay, 1955, p. 19). Thus, the argument would be that the writer felt sufficiently justified in applying Ps 102:25-27 to the Son because of the ambiguity introduced by Christians when addressed Jesus as "Lord".

Whilst it is no doubt true that by using *kurios* to both refer to their master and to translate the divine name early Christians created potential for confusion, there is no substantive evidence that the NT writers could not distinguish between these two uses. There is general consistency throughout the NT of using *kurios* to stand for the divine name only in quotations from the OT and elsewhere using *kurios* for the lordship of Jesus.[1] Indeed, it is plausible that originally the NT texts, as well as LXX, used the Tetragrammaton and this was only latterly replaced with *kurios* as attitudes to using the divine name changed (Howard, 1977, p. 77). Even if we assume the writer only knew the LXX and in a version that used *kurios,* instead of the Tetragrammaton, there is no reason to believe he was confused about the referent of *kurios* in the OT.

Leaving aside for a moment Heb 1:10, the writer follows the general pattern of the other NT writers. Outside of OT quotations, Jesus is the referent of *kurios* (Heb 2:3, 7:14, 8:2, 12:14, 13:20). *Kurios* translates Yahweh within OT quotations (Heb 7:21, 8:8-11, 10:16, 10:30, 12:5-6, 13:6) and the writer identifies the referent of *kurios* as *theos* (Heb 10:31, 12:7). With the exception of Heb 1:8 (assuming the vocative tense is used), Jesus is never the referent of *theos* within the epistle. It is interesting, and perhaps telling, that the writer omits the double *kurios* of Psalm 110:1 when he quotes it (Heb 1:13). The quotation in Heb 1:10 is different inasmuch as the name of God is not present in the Hebrew of Psalm 102:25, but Yahweh is invoked directly in verses 1 and 12. If the writer is citing a text, Greek or Hebrew, where the Tetragrammaton is used, it is difficult to imagine he is confused about the referent. Even if he cites only the LXX, or similar Greek text, he has shown himself through

[1] For more on the use of kurios in the NT, see (Gaston & Perry, 2017).

his other OT quotations to be clear about the referent of *kurios*. Unless he had other reason, he would have assumed *kurios* in the OT meant Yahweh.

2. Psalm 102 as Messianic Psalm

Motyer argues that it is possible that the writer understood Psalm 102 to be Messianic, even if modern commentators would not. He divides the psalm into three sections. In the first (vv1-12), the poor man who voices those words lays out his complaint. The second section (vv13-23) describes his confidence in a future hope for Zion. Motyer compares the themes described in this section with other psalms (Pss 2; 44; 96; 109) where Yahweh is represented by his anointed in Zion. Thus, he argues, though Messiah is not explicitly mentioned, it may be that a reader could have assumed Messiah was implicit within this future expectation for Zion (Ellingworth, 1993, p. 125). Then, maybe, the *kurios* in this section, to whom the nations gather to serve at Zion was understood not to be Yahweh but the Messiah, and so the one who is addressed as *kurios* in Ps 101:26 LXX (= 102:25) was also understood to be the Messiah (Motyer, 1999).

We are free, of course, to speculate about the mistaken interpretations of any individual reader, but whilst such speculation might make the hypothesis possible, it does not, of itself, make it likely. The thesis of Motyer, like the proposal above, presupposes that the referent of *kurios* in the OT was unclear to the writer. There is no evidence of this. Motyer does not suppose that the writer thought that *kurios* only refers to the Messiah within the psalm; indeed, his thesis is predicated on the assumption that at least sometimes *kurios* is understood correctly to refer to Yahweh. Whilst the psalm does refer to a future hope in Zion, there is actually no explicit reference within the psalm to a king in Zion who could be mistakenly understood to be the referent of *kurios*. In any case, in v25 (=26) the poor man recommences his petition that began in v1, which we can only understood as being addressed to Yahweh. So, it is difficult to understand how the writer could have arrived at the mistaken reading, and with enough conviction to cite it as a proof-text for a profound Christological claim.

Guthrie has a different proposal about how Psalm 102 could have been (mis)understood by the writer. He suggests that the psalm has two sections. The first, vv1-22, is the petition addressed to God. The second section is God's response, introduced by the words "he answered him in the way of strength" (v24a LXX). Therefore, it is argued, the verses quoted in Heb 1:10-12 might have been understood as part of God's response and so addressed to the petitioner. If the petitioner is understood to be the Messiah, or some other typological Jesus-figure, then we would have God addressing him as creator (Guthrie, 1983, p. 77). Bruce repeats this proposal, arguing that faced with a text where God himself addressed someone else as "Lord", a Christian reader would take the reference to be to Christ.

"But to whom (a Christian reader of the Septuagint might well ask) could God speak in words like these? And whom would God himself style as 'Lord,' as the maker of earth and heaven? Our author knows of one person only to whom such terms could be appropriate, and that is the Son of God" (Bruce, 1990, p. 62).

This proposal is also difficult. The psalm is headed as "a prayer of the poor"; there is no particular reason for anyone to assume that the petitioner is the Messiah. Even if the writer assumed that the petitioner is a typological Jesus-figure, it is difficult to read v23 (= 24 LXX) onwards as all part of God's response. Immediately after the supposed introduction of God's response (v24a LXX), we have the words "tell me the fewness of my days" (v24b LXX), which could only be read as the words of the petitioner (rather than God himself).

3. Psalm 102 and Wisdom

The Wisdom literature of the Second Temple period is seen as the background of many NT texts, including Hebrews. Wisdom is ascribed as a master workman in creation (Prov 8:30), and Wisdom is seen as the background of creation language in NT passages, including John 1 and Colossians 1. Assuming Wisdom is the background for other NT writers, there is no reason that this should not also be an important motivation for the writer to the Hebrews. Bateman argues that "the first-century Jew familiar with wisdom literature would recognize the verbal and conceptual links made with Divine Wisdom in Heb 1:5-13." (Bateman, 1995, p. 18). The descriptions of Jesus in Heb 1:3 have resonances with the Wisdom literature (cf. Wis 7:26) (Lindars, 1991, p. 34) (Guthrie, 1983, p. 66) (Gordon, 2000, p. 39) (Manson, 1951, p. 97). Wisdom 9:4 and 10:11 describe Wisdom sitting by the throne of God, which may have resonance with Heb 1:8-9, as well as Heb 1:3c. There would be nothing controversial for a first century Jew about the claim that through Wisdom God "made the universe" (Heb 1:2c); if the writer believed the Son was to be identified with Wisdom, or the embodiment of Wisdom, then this same claim could be applied to the Son. Bateman argues that Ps 102:25-27 is quoted by the writer because the creative activity ascribed to Wisdom is now being ascribed to the Son (Bateman, 1995, p. 18).

There is a problem with this proposal. Psalm 102 is not a Wisdom text. The word "wisdom" is not used anywhere in the psalm (or, for that matter, in Hebrews 1). Were the writer motivated by the Wisdom literature for the ascribing creation to the Son, then quoting Proverbs 8:27-31 would have been apt. One might suppose the writer had concerns about the explicit quotation of a feminine figure in reference to the Son, but the second century apologists had no such qualms about using Proverbs 8 about the Son. Whatever the difficulties with Proverbs 8, it surely has the advantage over Psalm 102 in that it is actually about Wisdom. We may grant that a first century Jewish reader would detect the allusions to Wisdom is some of

Hebrews 1, but no such reader is going to mistake Psalm 102 for a Wisdom text. If we credit the Christian reader with detecting allusions to the Wisdom literature in Hebrews 1, we can credit them with knowing Psalm 102:25-27 is about Yahweh.

In addition, Psalm 102:25-27 proves too much. Any reader familiar with the Wisdom literature would know that Yahweh is the creator, Wisdom is his assistant. Proverbs 8 says that Wisdom was with Yahweh and beside him at creation (vv27,30). Other Wisdom texts likewise say that Wisdom was present at creation and imply that God created through Wisdom (Sir 42:21; Wis 9:1-2,9). Those NT texts understood to be motivated by the Wisdom literature describe the Logos and the Son respectively as instruments of creation (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-18); God is the creator. Likewise, Heb 1:2 also uses the language of instrument ("through whom"), rather than of direct creation. Yet Psalm 102 is unequivocally describing the actions of the creator. Meier notes the problem, but argues that the writer is simply constrained by the text of the psalm, which doesn't make this distinction (Meier, 1985, p. 518). Yet if this is the case, then why choose Psalm 102 as your proof text?

Aside from the fact that Psalm 102:25-27 is obviously spoken about Yahweh, and not Wisdom, it is also an unsuitable description of Wisdom. One of the themes of the quotation is the eternity, or at least the endlessness, of God. This is not a description of Wisdom. Prov 8:22 LXX says God "created" Wisdom, as does Sirach (24:8-9); she is not eternal. She is also not a person – a point which sometimes gets lost in the enthusiasm for parallels with the Wisdom literature. In the Second Temple period, Wisdom was not seen as a second god, or a Neoplatonic hypostasis, or a Gnostic aeon. Wisdom was a personification of the activity of God. Whilst second century apologists would utilise Proverbs 8 as a proof-text for the pre-existence of Jesus either as the Logos or as a second divine person, in the first century Christian writers are usually held to be making a different claim: that the wisdom of God was expressed in Jesus (John 1:14). "To speak of Jesus as God's Wisdom incarnate is to say that he is God's self-expression" (Thomson, 2001, pp. 134-5). Addressing Psalm 102:25-27 to the Son is a substantially different claim.

4. Psalm 102 as the New Creation

A further proposal that has not received wide attention in the literature is the proposal that the Son is addressed as the creator in Heb 1:10-12 with reference to the new creation, rather than the Genesis creation (Perry, 2007, pp. 143-163) (Carter, 1939, pp. 28-29). This proposal picks up on the creative language used elsewhere in the NT to describe what Christ achieved for believers,[1] and the

[1] "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17); "a new creation" (Gal 6:15); "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph

expectation of the creation of "a new heavens and a new earth" (Isa 65:17-18; 2 Pet 3:13). The writer to Hebrews later speaks about heavens and earth that are to be shaken and removed, and a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:26-29). Whilst he does not explicitly refer to the creation of "new heavens", the implication is there. It is possible to read these verses in light of the larger message of the epistle: "God's preparatory purposes through the law and the prophets have reached their climax in the Messiah; and the Messiah himself will be the one who will see God's plan of salvation and justice through to the ultimate 'new age', the 'age to come', the time of renewed heavens and earth" (Wright, 2003). So, arguably, the writer is familiar with the imagery of heavens and earth representing the present age, the present world order. In such a case, naturally, Christ would be the "creator" of the new heavens and the new earth. So, Perry argues, "the foundation of the new earth was laid in the beginning of Jesus' ministry" (Perry, 2007, p. 162).

This proposal suffers a similar obstacle to others considered: Psalm 102:25-27 is addressed to Yahweh. Perry acknowledges this, stating the psalmist "thinks of Yahweh" (Perry, 2007, p. 162) but argues that the use of psalm is typological; the intent of the psalmist is one thing, the application to the Son is another. Yet I am not convinced this suggestion solves very much. Let us grant, for sake of argument, that the writer was familiar with, and motivated by, the concept of OT characters and events prefiguring Jesus and the gospel. We would still need to explain why the writer found such types in *this* psalm. One may readily understand taking David, or other kings, as types of the Messiah, but why would the writer take a declaration about Yahweh's creation as a type of Jesus' ministry? Without such justification, the secondary question as to whether the old or new creations are referred to as no bearing on the issue at hand.

5. Judgement

Vanhoye proposes that Ps 102:25-27 is applied to the Son by the writer, because the psalm speaks of the last judgement and a Christian reader would have believed that the judgement had been given to the Son (cf. John 5:22; Acts 10:42). Except, of course, the writer explicitly identifies God as the judge of all (Heb 10:30; 12:23; 13:4).

6. A New Proposal

Common obstacle to each of the proposals considered above is the fact that Ps 102: 25-27 is addressed to Yahweh, not to the Son (or any analogue of the Son). Since

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2:10); "… so as to create in himself one new man" (Eph 2:15); "…put on the new man which was created according to God" (Eph 4:24); "… have put on the new man … according to the image of him who created him" (Col 3:10);

Heb 1:10-12 seems to address these words as spoken to the Son, scholars have to adduce some kind of rationale as to why the writer would think these words were addressed to the Son or else think it appropriate to apply in that way despite their original context. I want to present a new solution, based on the premise that the writer does not mean to address the Son when quoting the words of Ps 102:25-27. Removing this underlying premise means that the explanation for this citation can be found in the thematic connections it has for the writer.

My proposal is based on the following claims:

(1) The simple *kai* introductory formula in Heb 1:10 does not imply a continuation of the introductory formula in Heb 1:8
(2) Double quotations are used by the writer to develop thematic connections; the second quotation being used to interpret and expand upon the first
(3) God is the throne in Heb 1:8
(4) Psalm 102:25-27 is cited to expand upon the themes introduced in Heb 1:7-9

The remainder of this article will address each of those four claims.

The writer introduces the quotation from Ps 45:6-7 with the words "but to the Son he says" (Heb 1:8), then immediately after he introduces a second quotation with a simple "and" (*kai*). It is assumed by most readers that this "and" means something like "and he also says to the Son …". For instance, Meier writes "the simple *kai* at the beginning of v.10 also indicates that we simply have here a continuation of the contract explicitated (sic) by the introductory rubrics in v.7a and v8a" (Meier, 1985, p. 517n37). But why assume this? It is true that there are examples in the NT of two quotations conjoined by a simple *kai* where the introductory formula of the first applies to the second. For instance:

"For Moses said …" (Mark 7:10; Ex 20:12; Ex 21:17),
"For it is written in the book of Psalms …" (Acts 1:20; Ps 69:25; Ps 109:8)
"For it is written …" (1 Cor 3:19-20; Job 5:13; Ps 94:11)

But within the letter to the Hebrews, there are examples of double quotations that do not follow this pattern. In Heb 2:11 the writer introduces a quotation with the words "For which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying", and then proceeds to quote Ps 22:22, which does indeed use the word "brethren". But he then adds two short quotations from Is 8:17 and Is 8:18, each introduced with *kai palin* ("and again"), despite neither quote addressing anyone as "brethren". There is a connection between the two quotations, they are both familial, but one speaks of

"brethren" and the other of "children". Citing Is 8:17-18 is, presumably, important for the writer because it introduces the concept of *pistis* to explain the shared familial connection between the Son and the ones he sanctifies. The second quotation does not answer to the introductory formula of the first but develops upon the thematic connections.

In Heb 10:30, the writer introduces two quotations from Deuteronomy 32, connected by *kai palin,* with the formula "for we know him who said" (i.e., God). The first quotation is indeed attributed to Yahweh (Deut 32:35), but the second quotation is in the third person and is spoken by Moses (Deut 32:36; cf. Deut 31:30). The theme of the quotations is the same, but the second quotation does not answer to the same introductory formula.

From these examples, it is clear that we cannot simply assume that conjoining two quotations with *kai* means that the introductory formula of the first applies equally to the second. Instead, the writer uses these second quotations to further develop the themes of the first.

A number of scholars have explored the possibility that the writer uses Rabbinic rules of interpretation (Bateman, 1995) (Bowker, 1969, p. 315) (Longnecker, 1975, pp. 181-182) (Moffit, 2011, p. 86). Two of the rules, in particular, that Bowker defines may have relevance here:

gĕzērâ šāwâ – "a verbal analogy from one verse to another; where the same words are applied to two separated cases it follows that the same consideration found in one of them applies to all of them"

kayyose bo bemaqom aher – "as is found in another place; a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity" (Bowker, 1969, p. 316)

We may see an example of *gezera sawa* in Heb 4:3-5, where the writer uses Gen 2:2 to explicate the meaning of "rest" in Ps 95:11. The introductory formula applied to the first ("he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day") is not relevant to the second. These quotations are from very different contexts and a modern interpreter might not see the relevance of the God's cessation of creation to the entry of the Israelites into the promised land. The writer, however, plainly is operating with a hermeneutic that allows verbal or thematic connections between two passages to determine their meaning. Whether or not this constitutes a case of *gezera sawa* is a question for others. For my purposes it is indicative of the hermeneutics of the writer.

Bateman suggests that *gezera sawa* is used in Heb 1:5, connecting two quotations on the word "Son", and between Heb 1:6 and 8, connecting two quotations by the word "God" (Bateman, 1995, p. 17). Pertinent to this article, he also argues for *gezera sawa* connecting "O God" in Heb 1:8 and "O Lord" in Heb 1:10. This seems tenuous to me. Firstly, "God" and "Lord" are not the same word. Secondly, on a standard reading, "God" has two referents in Heb 1:8-9 (i.e., Father and Son), so drawing a verbal analogy from one quotation to the next would be ambiguous, rather than illuminative.

But we have other options. Wright says Ps 102:25-27 "picks up on the 'for ever and ever' in the previous quotation" (Wright, 2003). The throne of the Messiah is to last forever, his kingdom is to last forever, it is without end. The second quotation contrasts the endlessness of the Messianic kingdom, the temporality of the heavens and the earth. For the psalmist, and, I believe, for the writer, the kingdom is "for ever and ever" because it is the kingdom of God – the throne is God. Ps 44:7-8 and Ps 102:25-27 are from very different contexts, but for the writer there are thematic connections, whereby the second can interpret and expand upon the first.

It is sometimes proposed that the intention behind citing Ps 44:7-8 in Heb 1:8-9 is to demonstrate that the Son is called "God", but at most this can be a secondary intent else the quotation would end after the first line. It may not even be particularly significant for the writer's argument, since in Qumran texts angels are called "gods" (4QDeut 32:43; 11QMelch, line 10) (Hurst, 1990, p. 46). Whilst most translators render *ho theos* in the vocative ("your throne, O God, is forever …"), grammatically this could also be rendered as the subject ("God is your throne forever"[1]) or as a predicate nominative ("your throne is God forever"). There can be no objection, *per se*, to the psalmist addressing the Davidic king as "God". Moses was "like God to Pharaoh" (Ex 7:1), Immanuel was to be called "mighty God" (Is 9:6), and angels are also called "gods" (Ps 82:6),[2] so it is possible that the Davidic king might be addressed as such. However, more probably the psalmist meant something like "your throne is (a throne) of God" (Attridge, 1989, p. 58) (Kirkpatrick, 1910, p. 248); after all, the Davidic king was said to sit on the throne of Yahweh (1 Chr 28:5; 29:23). The Hebrew is ambiguous enough to allow for different readings, and both in the Targums and in the Greek translations of Aquila and Theodotion, this is changed to the vocative (Attridge, 1989, p. 58) (Cockerill, 2012, p. 109n). However, in the Targums the reference of "God" is taken to be Yahweh, rather than a human king (Kirkpatrick, 1910, p. 248). The LXX is

[1] See NRSV footnote; GNT footnote.
[2] By the first century, this verse was understood to refer to the judges who received the Law, hence John 10:31-39.

ambiguous and it is this text that the writer cites. How does the writer interpret this verse?

It is possible that the writer thinks that the Son should be addressed as "God". After all, he says the Son has "inherited" a name more excellent than the angels (Heb 1:4); if the Son wasn't called "God" previously, the writer might think he is worthy of that name now. However, it is significant that the writer does not call the Son "God" anywhere else in his epistle. As Ellingworth points out, this would not be the only "atypical" language for the writer. He writes that "*thronos* elsewhere may (4:16) or must (8:1; 12:2) refer to God's throne" (Ellingworth, 1993, p. 123).

The textual variant reading "his" (*autou*) instead of "your" (*sou*) at the end of verse 8 has considerably bearing on the referent of *theos*. "Thus, if one reads *autou* the words *ho theos* must be taken, not as a vocative (an interpretation that is preferred by most exegetes), but as the subject (or predicate nominative)" (Metzger, 1994, p. 593). If the kingdom is God's, not Christ's, then the throne must also be God's. Ehrman writes that witnesses for *autou* are some of the best Alexandrian witnesses from the third century (Ehrman, 2011, p. 310) and Ellingworth says these witnesses "cannot be lightly dismissed as an error" (Ellingworth, 1993, p. 122). The UBS committee rejected *autou* both on the basis of the external evidence and on the fact that the majority of scholars take *ho theos* to be in the vocative. It is true that the majority of the manuscript evidence favours *sou* and the original in the LXX has *sou*. So, what is the origin of the variant? Ehrman proposes that it was anti-Patripassianist change to remove the identification of Christ as the one God (Ehrman, 2011, p. 311). The alternative would be that the writer himself changes *sou* in the LXX to *autou*. On the principle of favouring the more difficult reading, *sou* may well be the original.

There are other advantages to taking *ho theos* as a predicate nominative. DeSilva argues that this reading would be "perfectly parallel in construction with the second half of the verse, both now being predicate nominative sentences" (deSilva, 2000, p. 99n31).

The main objection to taking *ho theos* as predictive nominative is the awkwardness of the expression "your throne is God".[1] Barnes exclaims "But how can God be *a throne* of a creature! What is the meaning of such an expression? Where is there one parallel?" (Barnes, 1834, p. 48). It is true that nowhere else in OT (or NT) is God described as a "throne", but elsewhere God is described as a rock, a fortress (Ps 18:2), a sun, a shield (Ps 84:11), *and so on*. To object that referring to God as a throne "makes the one addressed superior to God" or that it stands at odds with the

[1] For other objections see (Wallace, 1996, p. 59)

writer's affirmation that the Son is seated at the "right hand" of God (Heb 1:3) (Cockerill, 2012, p. 109n) mistakes the use of "throne" in this context. In Heb 1:8 "throne" is synonym to "kingdom". The meaning of the expression is not hard to adduce: "the author of Hebrews would be underscoring the fact that the Son's rule is completely embedded in and backed by the rule of God" (deSilva, 2000, p. 99n31). Because that the foundation of the Son's kingdom is God, his kingdom will last forever.

By quoting Ps 102:25-27, the writer seeks to connect to, and develop upon, themes established by his previous two quotations. The point of this quotation is not the identity of the one addressed as "Lord", or the author of creation, else the quotation would end in verse 10. Since the quotation is continued, the intention must be the contrast between created things, which will "perish", and the "Lord" who will "remain". The quotations in Heb 1:7-9 form a *men* … *de* construction, that contrasts what is said about angels with what is said about the Son. Since the first quotation is a description of angels, rather than being addressed to angels, there is no reason to take the introductory formula in verse 8 (*pros de ton huion*) has implying that Ps 44:7-8 is being addressed to the Son. The point of the quotation is what it says about the Son. The full quotation is predominantly about the kingdom of the Son, its duration (that is, forever) and his qualification to rule (that is, righteousness). This contrasts with what is said about angels (v7), that they are created (*poion,* cf. Heb 1:2) and that they are servants.

Quoting Ps 102:25-27, the writer connects with these themes and develops this contrast further. Because the angels were made (v7), they are part of creation. This links to Ps 102:25-27, which explicitly mentions creation and characterises its impermanence. Like the heavens and the earth, the angels will ultimately "grow old" and "perish" and be "changed". This contrasts with the immutability of the Son's kingdom. Because the Son's kingdom is founded on God, it will last forever. This links to Ps 102:25-27, which explicitly addresses Yahweh as one who was from the beginning and continues for eternity. Founded on God, the Son's rule (and, by implication, the Son himself) will "remain" and "will not fail". Thus Ps 102:25-27 completes the contrast introduced in the two prior quotations, between mutable, impermanent, servants, and an immutable, unending, king.

Thus, the writer's rationale for citing Ps 102:25-27 in this context becomes understandable and justifiable, according to his own hermeneutic. Whether the writer is following an exegetical method of the Rabbis, or one of his own devising, his approach is to use a second quotation to elaborate and develop themes found in his initial quotations. Thus Ps 102:25-27 is quoted to draw out the themes of Ps 104:4 and Ps 45:6-7, developing further the contrast between angels and the Son. This, in turn, builds into the larger framework of the epistle. The former revelations

through angels to the prophets are part of that created order that is passing away (Heb 8:13; 12:25-29), whereas the revelation through the Son is superior and endures, since the Son is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

7. Conclusion

The common reading of Heb 1:10-12 is that the quotation from Ps 102:25-27 is being addressed to the Son. This assumption makes the rationale for the quotation at best inscrutable and at worst unjustifiable. In their original context, the words of Ps 102:25-27 are addressed to Yahweh as the creator. Not to the Messiah or type of Christ, not to Wisdom, not to any OT analogue of the Son. Unless the writer had no qualms applying OT passages about Yahweh to the Son (without further need for justification), then his choice of proof-text seems bizarre.

However, such appearances rest on the assumption that the writer intends to address the words of Ps 102:25-27 to the Son; to call him "Yahweh" and identify him as the creator. Yet our only reason for this is assumption is a simple *kai* that introduces the quotation.

My proposal is that the writer does not address Ps 102:25-27 to the Son. Rather, following a method used elsewhere in the epistle, he utilises a second quotation to develop and elaborate upon themes established by a first. In this case, the writer has established that angels are created whilst the Son's throne is forever. He quotes Ps 102:25-27 to solidify the implications of this contrast, that is, that the angels, as part of creation, are temporary, whereas the Son's eternal kingdom will endure.

Assuming my proposal is correct, then there are number of implications for the Christology of the letter to the Hebrews. If the Son is not addressed as "Lord" in Heb 1:10, then nowhere in the letter is the Son called "Yahweh" or identified as such. (And, if *ho theos* is not in the vocative in Heb 1:8, then nowhere in the letter is the Son called "God".) If the Son is not addressed as the one who laid the foundation of the Earth, then nowhere in the letter is the Son identified as the creator. God made the worlds "through" *(dia)* the Son (Heb 1:2), but this is hardly the same thing. If the Son is not addressed as the one who was from the beginning and will remain, then nowhere in the letter is the Son described as eternal. His throne will last forever, and he is now the same forever, but the question of whether the Son had a beginning (or pre-existed his birth) is not something the writer cares to address. Whilst the Christology of the letter to the Hebrews is by no means determined by this one quotation, these verses have had significant weight in how the Christology the letter is judged. If the general assumptions about these verses are misplaced, then the Christology of the letter may have been misjudged.

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John 1:3b-4a

Andrew Perry

Introduction

John 1:3 has a choice for where the full stop is placed. The modern eclectic text (GNT) places it before ὃ γέγονεν and the Majority Byzantine text places it after ὃ γέγονεν. If an English translation follows the GNT, it will have something like the NAB, and if it follows the Majority Byzantine text, it will be something like the KJV:

> πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν. ὃ γέγονεν (Jn. 1:3 BGT)

> Πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. (Jn. 1:3 BYZ)

> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (Jn. 1:3 KJV; cf. RV, RSV, NASB, NIV and NET)

> All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be… (Jn. 1:3 NAB; cf. NRSV, NEB, NJB)

Whichever way a translation committee jumps, there will usually be a footnote or a marginal note for the alternative. Thus, the RV margin has,

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

As usual, the arguments for each punctuation choice revolve around, (1) Evidence of the manuscripts, versions and church fathers; (2) considerations of Johannine style; (3) Greek grammar; and (4) theological sense. The executive summary of these arguments is that the evidence of the earliest manuscripts and church fathers favours the punctuation in the GNT. Arguments around style and grammar are in a stalemate between the two positions. The last category of argument centres on what the prologue is about and it is not really fair to say that this is a stalemate. Commentators will argue forcefully that their interpretation of the prologue is correct and from that interpretation favour one of the two punctuations.

In this paper we argue for the GNT punctuation and a New Creation reading of the prologue.

> All things were made (γίνομαι) by him; and without him was not any thing made (γίνομαι) that was made (γίνομαι). John 1:3 (KJV)

The reference to a beginning and things which were made or came about in such a beginning clearly echoes the Genesis 1 creation.[1] The verb γίνομαι can have 'historical-temporal' or 'ontological-existential' meanings.[2] So, historical-temporal meanings might be 'to happen', 'to come about', 'to come' and 'to appear'; ontological-existential meanings might be 'to make', 'to become' and 'to create' (see BDAG[3] for others). How we translate the word in v. 3 is a *crux interpretum*.

The verb occurs in vv. 3, 6, 10, 14 and 17. It is like a refrain in the narrative reinforcing a theme of what is variously made, comes about or happens (*all things* (v. 3), *John* (v. 6), *the World* (v. 10), *the Word…flesh* (v. 14), and *grace and truth* (v. 17)). It is important to note that this verb isn't the Greek for 'to create' (κτίζω) or 'to make' (ποιέω); rather, it is a common general-purpose verb.[4] It is an open question why John 1 doesn't use specific create/make vocabulary. The Genesis backdrop means we cannot jettison the idea of creation or the create/make semantic range for the verb, but the emphasis for the verb in John 1:3 seems to be on what comes to pass.[5] In LXX Genesis 1, the verb makes up the 'it was so' refrain, and so in the prologue what is made is presupposed but presented as what has come about in history, and this gives the sense of the verb in v. 3.

The intention in vv. 1-3 is to place Jesus as the Word in a position parallel to what God says: i.e., the '...and God said...' utterances (Gen 1:3ff). The parallel compares the ideas of things that happen through an *agent* and things that happen through an *instrument*. The original creation came about of God the Father by his delivery of

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[1] For this reason, many commentators misread v. 3 as referring to the Genesis creation, for instance, J. Carter, *The Gospel of John*, (Birmingham: CMPA, 14-15.

[2] The terminology comes from E. L. Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 79-80.

[3] BDAG: W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000).

[4] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 37, is simply mistaken to say the verb "is the pure expression of the idea of creation".

[5] See C. Rowland and C. H. Williams, eds., Ashton, *Discovering John: Essays by John Ashton* (Eugene: Cascade, 2020), 80; Miller, ibid. Both commentators take a binary approach and drop the make/create semantic range.

fiats or commands to the angels (cf. Ezek 37:4-5, 9; John 20:22; Heb 11:3). For the work of the new creation, Christ exercises the 'the word of the Lord' (Ps 33:6). Hence, the ongoing new creation is being created by God the Father through the Word.[1]

This is a new idea in John: that *a person* could inherently exercise the power of God's spoken word and, hence, by **metonymy**, using the attribute name for the person, be 'the Word'. When we think of Christ as 'the Word', we think of him as (having) the creative word or voice[2] of God the Father, and what is created are individuals who are meant to be a mirror of him. This is how it was in Genesis: "God said, 'Let there be'...and there was...it was so"; what was created was the substance reflecting a spoken word. With the new creation, what is created is *Christ in us* (Gal 4:19); we are an image of Christ who is both the Word behind our creation (1 Pet 1:23) and the god whose image we seek to bear (Gen 1:26; John 20:28; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10).[3]

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 individual 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, his Word.[4] And in fact, we

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[1] I do not exclude here the agency of others such as angels or apostles.

[2] Compare and contrast Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 8:2 (long 4c recension), "there is one God, the Almighty, who has manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word, **not spoken**, **but essential**. For he is not the voice of an articulate utterance, but a substance begotten by divine power, who has in all things pleased him that sent him." (My emph.) Ignatius is here denying what we are asserting for John, namely that Jesus is the voice of God and delivers his spoken utterance, and that this is what vv. 1, 14 presuppose – so, who was Ignatius' 4c interpolator 'correcting' in his doctrine? Early Socinians?

[3] This makes the created effect of what is said by God a mirror of what he has said: if he says, 'let there be light', then the light mirrors and points to what he has said. This may be the divine basis for a correspondence theory of truth, when we consider that *language* originates with *God*. If this is so, philosophy of language gets it the wrong way around: the problem is not how language can correspond to reality, but how reality corresponds to language - the language is *first*.

[4] *Contra* Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 38, who states, "The question what God was doing, while the Logos was creating, is illegitimate, after v. 1f." Rather, the things that are happening in the ministry of Jesus are happening with the power of God the Father through Jesus the Word.

shall see that Jesus is involved, because it is a creation of new men and women in him (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; 4:24; Col 3:10; Jms 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23).[1]

This is how it was in Genesis. Partnership is not a foreign idea to the Genesis creation. All the things of the Genesis creation were created by God through his word and through the angels. This relationship is seen in the expression 'let us make' (Gen 1:26).[2] This relationship between God and the angels in heaven is reflected on 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 partnership in creative work*.

The partnership is reflected *again*, when the woman is given unto the man as a helpmeet 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.[3] And the Levites are again explicitly 'given'[4] to the priests to be helpmeets in this sanctuary.[5]

Of all the things that happened through Christ, John singles out a *life*, but we need to translate the Greek differently to several versions (e.g., KJV, RV, RSV, NASB, NIV and NET) and more in line with text critical considerations and other versions (e.g., NRSV, NEB, NJB, NAB). The RV mg. gets it right (and most versions have this choice in a margin or a footnote if they follow the opposite punctuation in their main text):

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[1] It is worth distinguishing the new creation of men and women in Jesus from the creation of powers which are *of the world* (Col 1:16). Jesus has old creation authority and new creation authority.

[2] It is beyond our scope to establish that it is the divine council of angels referenced by the 'us'; see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 186-190.

[3] Moses made things on the earth; Christ's role in making things extends to the heavenly things of the future.

[4] Hence in John 17, the disciples are repeatedly referred to as the ones that have been *given* to Christ, the man, the priest.

[5] 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.

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

Manuscripts, Versions and Church Fathers

B. M. Metzger comments on the **text-critical** issue of the punctuation of the Greek of these two verses as follows,

> 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.[1]

Irenaeus (2c CE), Clement of Alexandria (2c-3c CE), Origen (3c CE), and Tertullian (2c-3c CE), Athanasius (4c CE) and Cyril of Alexandria (4c-5c CE) all quote John 1:3 without the phrase "that which was made" at the end of the verse giving, "that which was made in him was life" for v. 4a.[2] The earliest heretical writers quoted by

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[1] B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 195, who cites in support of the majority GNT reading the analysis of the leading text-critic of his day, 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. E. C. Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed (rev).; London: Faber & Faber, 1957), 142-143, agree with the GNT committee view that the RV mg. translation is more natural. They affirm that it respects the rhythmical balance of the sentences, and is used by all orthodox and Gnostic writers before 350 CE except for Alexander of Alexandria. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1937), 4, wryly observes that "It would be difficult to find a more complete consent of ancient authorities in favour of any reading, than that which supports the second punctuation". B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 84, says the external support is overwhelming. See also P. Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Tyndale Press, 1990), 104-5, for a discussion.

[2] F. W. Schlatter, "The Problem of Jn. 1:3b-4a" *CBQ* 34/1 (1972): 54-58 (54) notes that "the reading which makes 3b the beginning of 4 has patristic authority and structural probability." For further support, see B. Vawter, "What Came to Be in Him Was Life (Jn 1,3b-4a)" *CBQ* 25 (1963): 401-406 (401), who avers, "There seems to be no doubt that the weight of critical opinion today favours placing a full stop

Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Hippolytus and Clement of Alexandria follow suit. For example, Epiphanius cites the Gnostic writer Ptolemy quoting John 1:3 without ὃ γέγονεν.[1]

Irenaeus has this comment on John 1:3-4,

> "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made;" for the Word was the author of form and beginning to all the AEons that came into existence after Him. But "what was made in Him," says John, "is life." Here again he indicated conjunction; for all things, he said, were made *by* Him, but *in* Him was life. *Against Heresies*, 1.8.5 (ANF)

Irenaeus clearly reads v. 3b with v. 4 taking ὃ γέγονεν as a predicate noun. Another use of John 1:3 is that of Athanasius,

> Or if, in the words of John, who says, make no exception, 'All things were made by him,' and 'without him was not anything made,' how could the artificer be another, distinct from the Father of Christ?" Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 2[2]

It might be argued that Athanasius is only partly quoting the longer version of John 1:3, but the last clause, John 1:3b, only adds to the point Athanasius is making and it is implausible that he would not have quoted it along with John 1:3a if it were part of the sense-unit he recognised.[3] The context of a quotation usually settles whether the Father is short-quoting or complete-quoting a sense-unit in his text. Miller affirms that it is clear from the multiple citations of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement and Origen that they presuppose the ante-Nicene reading, citing K. Aland's full analysis.[4]

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after the *oude en* (or *ouden*) of Jn 1.3". He notes that this reading is supported by the Vulgate prior to the Sixto-Clementine edition of 1592 and Old Latin manuscripts. He further notes that the haplography of 𝔓66 (c. 200 CE) indicates v. 3b-4a was taken to be the sense-unit (see below).

[1] Epiphanius, *Panarion, Against Ptolemaeans*, I.33.3-6 (Letter to Flora). The text cited is from F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (2 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009).

[2] Text taken from E. R. Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Louisville: WJK Press, 1954).

[3] Older scholarship divided v. 3 into an ''a' and 'b' clause whereas later scholarship has correctly demarcated v. 3 into 'a', 'b' and 'c' clauses.

[4] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 30.

This pattern of quotation is supported by some early uncial manuscripts including, Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (C*, 5c CE), Codex Bezae (D, 5c-6c CE)[1] and Codex Regius (L, 8c CE).[2] It is also supported in the corrected 𝔓75 papyrus (2c CE), which is usually taken as the earliest witness to the punctuation of the New Testament.[3] The punctuation present is a middle dot indicating a minor pause.[4] The evidence of 𝔓66 (2c CE) is inconclusive because any punctuation is inferred from the missing ἐν at the beginning of v. 4 (it starts with αὐτῷ instead of ἐν αὐτῷ). C. K. Barrett thought that the missing ἐν (a classic haplography) pointed to the punctuation being missed off after ὃ γέγονεν as well.[5] Miller, however, thinks that the omission "is most easily explained by an unbroken continuity between the words γέγονεν ἐν".[6]

In contrast, Codex Alexandrinus (A, 5c CE), Codex Vaticanus (B, 4c CE) and the uncorrected Codex Siniaticus (א, mid-4c CE) have no punctuation. Later uncials follow (or better, initiate?) the Majority Byzantine punctuation. Latin, Coptic and Curetonian versions give mixed support to both punctuations. It's hard not to form the impression that the original had no punctuation and then an early punctuation was superseded by a later punctuation.

Later Fathers also support (initiate?) the majority Byzantine punctuation. However, the later punctuation is easily explained as arising from the earlier punctuation, and

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[1] The inclusion of Codea Bezae here follows Miller's analysis, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 33-35.

[2] Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 28-31, has a full discussion of the manuscripts and versions. For an up-to-date list see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 28-29.

[3] P. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 252-253; Comfort's editing and presentation of 𝔓75 chooses to punctuate as per the ante-Nicene pattern – see P. W. Comfort and D. P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (3rd ed.; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019), 2:75. Whether the punctuation mark is from a later corrector or the original scribe is a matter of judgment., but Miller supports the originality of the mark, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 39.

[4] This is also noted in D. Nässelqvist, "The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3-4: Arguments from Ancient Colometry" *JBL* 137/1 (2018): 175-191 (178).

[5] C. K. Barrett, "Papyrus Bodmer II: A Preliminary Report" *ExpT* 68 (1957) 174-177 (175).

[6] E. L. Miller, "P66 and P75 on John 1:3/4" *TZ* 41 (1985): 440-443 (440); *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 36.

this gives rise to a *lectio difficilior* argument first put forward by K. Aland[1] and which influenced the choice of the GNT. D. Nässelqvist argues, "Reading A can thus account for the generation of Reading B due to its difficulty and popularity among opponents. It is harder to explain why an original Reading B was changed into the more difficult and theologically precarious Reading A (the *lectio difficilior*)."[2]

There is a stronger, historical, argument in favour of the GNT reading. Metzger, in the quotation above, is reproducing Westcott's opinion that, "The modern stopping was due to the influence of the Antiochene School, who avowedly adopted it to make it clear that the former words applied only to 'things created' and not, as had been alleged, to the Holy Spirit."[3] Westcott and Metzger are not making a calculated historical guess about the emergence of the later punctuation; this was a live issue in the 4c as is clearly shown in Chrysostom (4c CE),

> "For we will not put the full stop after 'not anything,' as the heretics do. They, because they wish to make the Spirit created, say, 'What was made, in Him was Life'; yet so what is said becomes unintelligible. First, it was not the time here to make mention of the Spirit, and if he desired to do so, why did he state it so indistinctly? For how is it clear that this saying relates to the Spirit? Besides, we shall find by this argument, not that the Spirit, but that the Son Himself, is created by Himself. But rouse yourselves, that what is said may not escape you; and come, let us read for a while after their fashion, for so its absurdity will be clearer to us. 'What was made, in Him was Life.' They say that the Spirit is called 'Life.' But this 'Life' is found to be also 'Light,' for he adds, 'And the Life was the Light of men.' (Ver. 4.) Therefore, according to them the 'Light of men' here means the Spirit. Well, but when he goes on to say, that 'There was a man sent from God, to bear witness of that Light' (vers. 6, 7), they needs must assert, that this too is spoken of the Spirit; for whom he above called 'Word,' Him as he proceeds, he calls 'God,' and 'Life,' and 'Light.' This 'Word' he says was 'Life,' and this 'Life' was 'Light.' If now this Word was Life, and if this Word and this Life became flesh, then the

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[1] Aland "Eine Untersuchung zu Johannes 1, 3-4. Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes".

[2] Nässelqvist, "The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3-4: Arguments from Ancient Colometry", 178. P. Cohee, "John 1:3-4" *NTS* 41 (1995): 470-477 (470), rejects the *lectio difficilior* argument because there is no significant variant reading – just different punctuation. He argues that ὃ γέγονεν is an intrusive gloss.

[3] Metzger, ibid.; Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 29. See also R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 770, 840.

> Life, that is to say, the Word, 'was made flesh, and we beheld' Its 'glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father.' If then they say that the Spirit is here called 'Life,' consider what strange consequences will follow. It will be the Spirit, not the Son, that was made flesh; the Spirit will be the Only-Begotten Son." *The Homilies of St. John*, 5.1 (NPNF)[1]

Chrysostom is combating Arian teaching. The flaws in his exegesis are not our concern, just his awareness of the issue of punctuation. Epiphanius, in his *Ancoratus*, 75 (4c CE), and in his *Anacephalaeosis V, LXIX*, 56[2] (4c CE), also cites the old punctuation and advocates the new punctuation to combat Arian teaching about the holy Spirit.[3] An 'orthodox versus heresy' conflict would seem to be the explanation for the widespread adoption of the later punctuation but it is not just Arians that are accused of misusing the ante-Nicene reading.

Other, earlier, heretics used the ante-Nicene reading for their doctrines. J. Mehlmann notes that the ante-Nicene reading was promoted by followers of Marcion, Bardesanes and Valentinus who were being opposed in *Adamantius' Dialogue* (3c.-4c. CE).[4] Furthermore, later heretics also used the ante-Nicene reading. In his day (4c.-5c CE), Augustine opposed the Manicheans and their usage of John 1:3-4,

> "All things," then, brethren, "all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made." But how were all things made by Him? "That, which was made, in Him is life." It can also be read thus: "That, which was made in Him, is life;" and if we so read it, everything is life. For what is there that was not made in Him? … It is not seemly so to understand the passage, as the same most vile sect of the Manichaeans creep stealthily on us again, and say that a stone has life, that a wall has a soul, and a cord has a soul, and wool, and clothing. For so they are accustomed to talk in their raving; and when they have been driven back and refuted, they in some sort bring forward

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[1] P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976). (NPNF). St. Ambrose, *In Psalmum* XXXVI, 35, has much the same argument, on which see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 46; and Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 39.

[2] Epiphanius, *Panarion, Against the Arian Nuts*, II.56.1-11.

[3] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 50; Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 29. For another example of how the Fathers had to combat the use of John 1:3 to prove the creation of the holy Spirit, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Theological Orations*, 5.12.

[4] J. Mehlmann, "A Note on John 1:3" *ExpT* 67 (1955-1956): 340.

> Scripture, saying, "Why is it said, 'That, which was made in Him, is life'?" For if all things were made in Him, all things are life. Be not carried away by them; read thus "That which was made;" here make a short pause, and then go on, "in Him is life." What is the meaning of this? The earth was made, but the very earth that was made is not life; but there exists spiritually in the Wisdom itself a certain reason by which the earth was made: this is life. *On John's Gospel*, I.16

Augustine handles the ante-Nicene reading and its heretical usage by paraphrasing the tenses and placing the stress on 'in Him'.

In sum, the post-Nicene punctuation looks to have emerged and become dominant as a result of the need to clarify an orthodox reading in orthodox versus heresy conflicts – but we cannot pin down a specific source. The 4c. CE Arian conflict seems the most likely context for the post-Nicene punctuation to have become the preferred **defensive tool** as opposed to just giving differing exegesis of the ante-Nicene punctuation.

Johannine Style

Stylistic arguments in favour of either the earlier or later reading are inconclusive. In favour of the early reading, it can be observed that forms of οὐδείς are often used to end sentences in GJohn.[1] However, this is not always the case. On the other hand, in favour of the later reading, it can be observed that GJohn often begins sentences with ἐν (e.g., John 1:1; 13:35; 25:8; 16:26).[2] This kind of argument is cancelled out by the similar argument in favour of the earlier reading, namely, this is not always the case. Metzger's own view of the later Byzantine punctuation is that,

> "It is more consistent with the Johannine repetitive style, as well as with Johannine doctrine (cf. 5.26, 39; 6.53), to say nothing concerning the sense of the passage, to punctuate with a full stop after ὃ γέγονεν." [3]

However, v. 3a, as it stands, is not formally repetitive and adding ὃ γέγονεν at the end of v. 3 doesn't give you a redundancy (as is often claimed[1]); the change in tense from

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[1] Cohee, "John 1:3-4", 473, cites John 5:30; 6:63; 8:15, 28; 9:33; 10:41; 11:49; 12:19; 14:30; 15:5; 16:23; 18:9, 20, 31; 21:3. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 37, gives secular examples of this way of ending a sentence. See Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 42, for further support.

[2] On this see Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 157.

[3] Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 196.

aorist to perfect for γίνομαι means that ὃ γέγονεν would add something to the sense of what is being said; it's not repeating what has been said. A v. 3 which reads 'and without him was not one thing made that has been made', taking γέγονεν as a present perfect, brings the author's present to the scene being painted, and this states something more than, "all things came to be through him…apart from him not one thing came to be".

However, there is a clear symmetry in the first part of v. 3,

πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν

The symmetry of this antithetic Hebraic parallelism is marred if we include ὃ γέγονεν at the end. The poetic symmetry that we have here is not comparable to repetitions in John's prose narrative. Against Metzger therefore we would argue that John's prose repetitions are irrelevant to the analysis of v. 3. So, for example, the repetition of v. 2 is a repetition for emphasis and contrast with v. 7, without symmetry, and irrelevant as such to the analysis of v. 3. What Metzger needs to show is not whether repetition is a general feature of Johannine style, but whether GJohn has repetitions that are like v. 3 – a symmetric v. 3a and an unbalanced addition – v. 3b.[2]

The **poetic qualities** of John 1:1-5, and particularly v. 3 with and without the clause ὃ γέγονεν, are described and used to support both readings as the more likely original punctuation. D. Näsellqvist pays attention to the number of syllables in the cola of vv. 3-5 looking for balance, rhythm and the use of breath and sound in articulating the words, relying on recent research in ancient colometry.

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[1] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 20. There are other ways to overcome the charge of redundancy documented by Miller. J. R. Michaelis, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 51, comments of John 1:3, that "the classic problem of the verse is that the symmetry is broken by the seemingly redundant clause, 'that which has come to be' (*ho gegonen*) at the end of the verse."

[2] Cohee, "John 1:3-4", 473, states, of v. 3c, "There is no conjunction or repeated element or contrast of opposites, and its attribution there would upset the balance of the verse."

Verse division	Staircase Parallelism[1] (in bold)	Syllables
1:3c/4a	ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ **ζωὴ** ἦν,	10
1:4b	καὶ ἡ **ζωὴ** ἦν τὸ **φῶς** τῶν ἀνθρώπων·	11
1:5a	καὶ τὸ **φῶς** ἐν τῇ **σκοτίᾳ** φαίνει,	10
1:5b	καὶ ἡ **σκοτία** αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.	12

His comment on this punctuation is that it produces balance and rhythm in the cola.[2] His analysis of the cola of the later punctuation is that the result is unbalanced and lacks rhythm because of the shortness of 1:4a.

Verse division	Staircase Parallelism (in bold)	Syllables
1:4a	ἐν αὐτῷ **ζωὴ** ἦν,	6
1:4b	καὶ ἡ **ζωὴ** ἦν τὸ **φῶς** τῶν ἀνθρώπων·	11
1:5a	καὶ τὸ **φῶς** ἐν τῇ **σκοτίᾳ** φαίνει,	10
1:5b	καὶ ἡ **σκοτία** αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.	12

In terms of the poetic qualities of vv. 1-5, there is some force in the argument that the rhythm of vv. 1-5 is only preserved if we follow the earlier punctuation.[3]

Grammar

There are a couple of grammatical difficulties for the earlier ante-Nicene reading,

ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν

(1) The combination of the perfect tense (γέγονεν) with the imperfect (ἦν) is said to be by some - "awkward if not impossible",[4] that is, we would expect to read 'that which has been made in him is (ἐστιν) life'. Some scribes have indeed taken this view

[1] Brown, *The Gospel According to John,* 1-XII, 6; but see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue*, 19.

[2] Näs(„The Question of Punctuation in John 1:3-4: Arguments from Ancient Colometry", 187. We have presented his analysis of vv. 3b-5 but he is equally dismissive of the 'balance' in the Byzantine punctuation of v. 3 taken on its own.

[3] On rhythm, see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue*, 21.

[4] P. Van Minnen, "The Punctuation of John 1:3-4" *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 7 (1994): 33-42 (36); Cohee, "John 1:3-4", 474, says it is a "real difficulty".

as they have altered the verb to ἐστιν (e.g., א D).[1] This objection goes hand in hand with a Genesis creation reading of the prologue. However, J. McHugh has suggested[2] that the perfect tense could be functioning as an aorist, i.e., we have a resultative perfect[3] (rather than a present perfect) - and this would sit well with the imperfect tense giving, 'what came to pass in him was life'. This would be consistent with taking γίνομαι to be conveying the sense of 'what comes to pass'.[4] A new creation reading makes this construal of the grammar plausible – i.e., 'what came to pass in him was (new) life'. We consider this further below when we answer the question: how does vv. 3b-4 make sense in the prologue and GJohn?

(2) The second difficulty surrounds the neuter singular nominative adjective 'one' (ἕν) and the neuter singular relative pronoun 'which' (ὃ). The adjective lacks a corresponding noun, such as that which we find in, say, Matt 27:14, οὐδὲ ἓν ῥῆμα ('not one word'). If we translate the πάντα of v. 3 as 'All things', we can add 'thing' to give 'not one thing' for οὐδὲ ἕν at the end of v. 3. There are other possible translations, for example, 'nothing' (NASB) and 'not any thing' (KJV).

Turning to the relative pronoun, D. B. Wallace notes that the antecedent of a relative pronoun may be omitted for a variety of reasons, for instance, if the relative pronoun embeds a demonstrative pronoun, "in which case the object is clear enough from the context" or "Less frequent, but no less significant exegetically, are instances of poetic material woven into the fabric of a discourse"[5] where the antecedent is absent. It is unexceptionable to have a relative pronoun begin a sentence and the NT Christological hymns in Paul would be relevant comparable examples to the poetic material we have in John 1:1-5. The rhythmic patterns that many scholars have seen in these verses make this the likely explanation of the syntax of the neuter singular relative pronoun 'which' (ὃ). We can see that it is

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[1] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 26, 40, argues that this scribal correction is evidence of the γέγονεν being read with v. 4 – precisely because it was awkward. This makes Codex Siniaticus an inadvertent but strong witness to the ante-Nicene reading.

[2] J. F. McHugh, *John 1:1-4* (ed. G. Stanton; London: T&T Clark, 2009), *John 1:1-4*, 15.

[3] On the 'resultative aorist' see N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Vol III, Syntax*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 72, 83. (MHT)

[4] Ashton, *Discovering John*, 80.

[5] D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 339-340.

picking up the subject of 'All things' (πάντα) that have happened as narrowed down in the contrast, 'not one thing' (οὐδὲ ἕν).[1]

It is worth noting as a postscript that both the early and later punctuations of John 1:3b-4a were made by competent editorial scribes using Greek as a living language. When an ancient scribe or a modern reader finds the Greek before them to be problematic, this may reflect an overly rigid and/or simplifying approach to the text.[2]

The Interpretation of the Prologue

This is the last category of argument. It is a large subject and beyond our scope. We will just focus on vv. 3-4. Obviously, commentators have a general framework for reading the prologue and this influences their interpretation of vv. 3-4 and their choice of punctuation. So, if you drop into a commentary at the notes for vv. 3-4, how the commentator has read vv. 1-2 and how they anticipate reading the verses after vv. 3-4 will be feeding into their interpretation of vv. 3-4. A Genesis Creation framework for reading the prologue brings a different pressure to bear on the question of punctuation than a New Creation framework.

So far, we have considered text-critical, stylistic, poetic and grammatical issues surrounding John 1:3b-4a. We now turn to **matters of sense**. Is the ὃ γέγονεν clause given a better purpose with v. 3 or v. 4? This is where all the interest lies.

(1) Taking the clause with v. 3., is the clause restricting *the scope* of what came to be to those things that were made and that by implication there are uncreated things.[3] This would be to read γίνομαι as about what is created or made, with John being taken to imply that there is that which is uncreated and needs to be excluded from the purview of the Word, i.e., any or all of God the Father, the angels, the Word itself/himself, or perhaps the holy Spirit.

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[1] It is this role of the relative pronoun that Bultmann gets wrong when he claims, "The sentences of the Prologue, all the way through, are to characterize the Logos; v. 4a therefore may not interrupt the continuity, by being a characterization of what is created." *The Gospel of John*, 39.

[2] Teaching grammars are generalised and simplified and they can lead the student to affirming that the Greek before them is ungrammatical, whereas reference grammars such as MHT will offer many more options for analysis.

[3] Cohee, "John 1.3-4", 476; J. R. Michaelis, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 53.

The problem with this proposal is that it offers no reason why John felt this scope restriction was needed. While it was felt to be needed in later church controversies, both the prologue and GJohn have no indication that this was an issue of John's times.

(2) On the other hand, if we read the clause as a present perfect with v. 3, we can say that it is doing nothing more than bringing the present perspective of the author to his statement of what happened/was made through the Word. There is no intention to imply that there are things that were not made/did not happen through the Word. The Church Fathers and the heretics were fighting over what they were reading *into* the text (an eisegesis).

(3) Taking the clause with v. 4 will give a reading dependent on how vv. 1-3 are read. A Genesis or, more broadly, a cosmological, Genesis creation reading of vv. 1-3 is the majority approach, but the question we have to ask is whether this enables a coherent Johannine-based interpretation of v. 4. If a Hellenistic conception of *the Logos* is assumed, the question will be whether it makes Johannine sense to read v. 4 with, for example, J. Nolland who says, "the 'lifefulness' of the Logos was the light of humanity".[1] Or, for example, R. Bultmann who offers another reading, saying, "Precisely this is the meaning of v. 4a: ὃ γέγονεν, ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν: the vitality of the whole creation has its origins in the Logos; he is the power which creates life."[2] The Logos is the power behind the life of creation. Bultmann links 'life' and 'light' in an existential way – 'light' is "the illumined condition of existence",[3] which is to say that life is fundamentally characterized as a kind of light. The problem with naturalistic Logos-Life readings like that of Nolland or Bultmann is that they are not *intertextually driven* from GJohn but *culturally driven* from Hellenistic Philosophy.

Is v. 4a a reference to natural life in general, e.g., NEB "All that came to be was alive with his life?" Why would life in general be said to be *in* the Word? Why doesn't John use the preposition 'of' to express such a relation? Further, how is it that natural life is 'the light of humankind' (v. 4b)? Everywhere, John uses 'life', not for the natural life that creatures may be said to have but, rather, **eternal life** (e.g., John 3:15-16); moreover, he uses 'light' for the light that was Jesus (e.g., John 8:12).[4]

Bultmann affirms,

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[1] J. Nolland, "The Thought in John 1:1c-4" *TynB* 62/2 (2011): 295-311 (297).
[2] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 39.
[3] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 41.
[4] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue*, 64. Miller goes on to make the point that John's preferred term for natural life is ψυχή.

> "Alongside this, the original sense of 'light' as the illumined quality of existence is preserved by its use to designate happiness and salvation; thus, the word comes to describe the divine sphere in general; and its original meaning is preserved above all by the description of salvation itself, in its 'eschatological' sense as 'the light'."[1]

Here, Bultmann's mistaken progression is illustrated: he starts with an 'original' sense which lies outside the Johannine corpus and places 'alongside' this sense the more obvious Johannine eschatological sense. Contrawise, we use the eschatological sense in GJohn to exegete John 1:4.

A variation on the naturalistic reading takes "the antecedent of ἐν αὐτῷ not to be the Logos but rather ὃ γέγονεν: 'What has begun to be, in that there was life.'"[2] We might interpret 'life' strictly biologically or perhaps more existentially, but the question for this proposal will be why John wants to say such an obvious thing about the created order and in such an awkward way.[3] The difficulty in answering this question is why commentators involve the Logos in their exegesis with a translation of v. 4a like, 'What has begun to be, in him, it was life.' This brings in the Logos and takes away the obviousness of 'What has begun to be, in that, there was life.' It looks like we might require a reference to the Logos to make v. 4a work.

If we retain a reference to the Logos, do we need a naturalistic conception of 'life'? There are two possible alternatives: we could go metaphysical or we could go spiritual.[4]

(4) We can shift the interpretation from the naturalistic to the more metaphysical. On this count, the term 'life' would denote not something natural but a principle or archetypal idea about creation that inhered in *the Logos*. Philo offers a contemporary example of some metaphysics where 'in the Logos' is important. For example,

> The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat <u>in the Divine Reason</u> (ἐν τῷ θείῳ λόγῳ); and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it; and the first portion of it, being also the most excellent of all made by the Creator, was the heaven, which he truly called the firmament, as being corporeal; for the body is by nature firm,

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[1] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 42.
[2] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue*, 61; Miller attacks this reading.
[3] Vawter, "What Came to Be in Him Was Life", 403.
[4] These alternatives are discussed in Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 61-70. Bultmann reads the definite article anaphorically.

> inasmuch as it is divisible into three parts; and what other idea of solidity and of body can there be, except that it is something which may be measured in every direction? Therefore he, very naturally contrasting that which was perceptible to the external senses and corporeal, with that which was perceptible only by the intellect and incorporeal, called this the firmament. *Opif.* 1:36 (PHE[1])

Following Philo, we could interpret vv. 3b-4a as saying that the singular idea or principle (ὃ γέγονεν) of all things (πάντα) which inhered 'in him/it' was 'life'. Philo has the advantage over later metaphysical constructions placed upon vv. 3b-4a of being contemporary. Nevertheless, it is clear that the prologue is not doing metaphysics with ideas of 'the senses', 'the intellect' and 'matter'. Philo is doing metaphysics with the Genesis creation account, but the prologue is only echoing Genesis.

The metaphysical reading takes the reality that is the created order and reads ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν as 'was (at first) life in him', i.e., "That which was created and still continues, represents to us what was beyond time (if we dare so speak) in the Divine Mind."[2] We can see that this reading, which has also been prominent in Christian theology since Augustine, depends on a philosophical concept of *the Logos*. However, it disassociates the created order (ὃ γέγονεν) from 'in him' (ἐν αὐτῷ) connecting this expression more strongly with ζωὴ ἦν. This reading takes γέγονεν as a present perfect and interprets the imperfect ἦν as a simple past tense. However, it is more natural to read the Greek taking ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ together and without a pause between ὃ γέγονεν and ἐν αὐτῷ.

The metaphysical interpretation is susceptible to the same objection as the naturalistic reading – it is not intertextually driven. In addition, there is a lack of metaphysical reasoning in the prologue with which the exegete might work, and any exegesis tends to have the exegete's own philosophical vocabulary laid over the top of the text.[3]

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[1] C. D. Yonge, ed., *The Works of Philo* (New York: Hendrickson, 1993). (PHE)
[2] Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 30.
[3] T. E. Pollard, "Cosmology and the Prologue of John" *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958): 147-153, offers the extra argument that John's gospel as a whole is not concerned with cosmology but salvation and life in Christ; it is implausible to suppose that the prologue would not introduce this theme, Hence, a Genesis creation reading is a mis-interpretation.

(5) Is vv. 3b-4a a reference to the special creation of Adam,[1] a life that is said to be *in* the Word? If this is so, why would Adam's life be said to be *in* the Word? Why would Adam's life be the light of men?

(6) An alternative interpretation is to say that we have a reference to the 'incarnation' in vv. 3b-4a, i.e., that which was created *in* the Word was a human life – Jesus Christ.[2] Miller states that what we have in v. 4 are "the spiritual and salvific life and light that are encountered in the incarnate Logos".[3] We could vary this and say that we have such life and light in Jesus and drop the idea of an incarnation (see below). More generally Miller affirms that "ζωή in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles never designates natural, physical life; it always designates the spiritual, salvific or 'eternal' life accessible in Jesus Christ."[4] This more general definition, stripped of a reference to incarnation, could serve as a description of the new creation in Jesus.

On Miller's incarnation reading, vv. 1-5 are separated off from vv. 6-18 as the original prologue. This allows vv. 6-18 to develop its own sequence in which there is a build-up to the incarnation in v. 14. The problem with the reading is that it pre-empts the supposed incarnation of v. 14 with the statement that a life was made *in* the Word. The usual preposition for the incarnation that arises out of this reading of v. 14 is 'the incarnation *of* the Word'. We might also add that 'a life was made *from* the Word' is a better preposition for an incarnation reading of vv. 3b-4a. However, in GJohn 'life' and 'light' are predicated of Jesus and not the pre-incarnate Word. This confirms that we have been right to see Jesus as the referent of 'the Word' in v. 1 and the subsequent pronouns in vv. 2-5.

The difficulties of the creation/cosmological and incarnation readings motivate commentators to take v. 3b with v 3a and punctuate the Greek in that way. However, with this punctuation being textually less probable, the difficulties of the creation/cosmological and incarnation readings of vv. 3b-4a only go to show that a

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[1] Aland, "Eine Untersuchung zu Johannes 1, 3-4. Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes", 207, takes the spiritual life that was created to be that life before the Fall. See Miller's discussion, Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 70-72.

[2] This is the proposal in Schlatter, "The Problem of Jn. 1:3b-4a" and E. L. Miller, "The Logic of the Logos Hymn: A New View" *NTS* 29 (1983): 552-561. This paper summarizes Miller's thesis as set out in his monograph, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 11-15.

[3] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 58.

[4] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 64.

new creation reading of vv. 3b-4a (and vv. 1-5) is right. The ostensible perfect tense in 'what has come to be' indicates a past event affecting a present reality and the present reality for John was that of a new creation.

New Creation

The RV margin reproduces the ante-Nicene punctuation and uses the verb 'to make' for γίνομαι,

> ...All things were made (ἐγένετο) through him (δι' αὐτοῦ); and without him there was not anything made (ἐγένετο). That which hath been made (ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ) in him was life; and the life was the light of men... John 1:3-4 (RV mg. revised)

Our discussion so far has offered two readings of the ante-Nicene punctuation. One reading specifies the new creation of life in him; the other reading makes no such specification. The ante-Nicene versus post-Nicene punctuation issue concerned a full-stop. These two readings concern commas and what we associate with ἐν αὐτω. Following the RV marginal reading above, the two placements[1] of the comma are,

> (1) That which has been made in him (ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ), was life.
> (2) That which has been made, in him it was life (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν).

The first reading (1) lends itself to an exegesis about the new life of individuals in Jesus with suitable intertexts from GJohn. The problem with this is that the imperfect tense is then awkward. The second reading (2) doesn't specify what has been made except to state that in Jesus it was life; here the imperfect is more natural and v. 5 then obviously follows on 'And the life was the light of men'. The following points (i)-(vi) support the second reading.

(i) The RV and other versions translate γίνομαι from the 'ontological-existential' category of verbs, but the 'historical-temporal' category is better. The verb ἐγένετο in John 1:3 picks up on the 'was so' statements of Genesis 1 (MT, היה) as indicated by the LXX. In contrast, the 'to make' verb in Genesis 1 is עשׂה (LXX, ποιέω). What we have in vv. 3-4 is,

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[1] Positioning the comma before or after 'in him/it' has been a question since Augustine; see Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 53.

> All things happened/came about through him, without him nothing happened/came about. That which has happened/come about, in him it was life…

John 1:3 is about what *happened* or *came about* through the ministry of Jesus and the work of bringing about new life in individuals is a part of that ministry[1] – through preaching/witness followed by belief. The perspective of the prologue is one of salvation in history and the 'historical-temporal' range of verbs for γίνομαι is more appropriate in any translation. Although the KJV/RV has 'made', the verb is not one of *creating* or *making* but one of something *happening* in history (a 'was so');[2] this is how the Peshitta understood the verb. Parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls are also supportive of this reading,

> All things come to pass (נהיה[3]) by His knowledge;
> He establishes all things by His design,
> And without Him nothing is done. 1 QS XI.11 (Vermes)

> For without Thee no way is perfect, and without Thy will nothing is done. It is Thou who hast taught all knowledge and all things come to pass by Thy will. 1QS XI.17-18 (Vermes)

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[1] Individuals are encompassed by 'all things' in v. 3 but in v. 4 the focus is narrowed to Jesus. We discuss 'all things' and the new creation in the next chapter.

[2] Following P. Lamarche, "The Prologue of John" in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. J. Ashton; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 47-65; Nolland, "The Thought in John 1:1c-4", 297, objects saying that "While 'everything happened through him' works quite well for v. 3, 'the world happened through him' is not very natural for v. 10". The translation 'came about' is better for v. 10. The punctiliar nature of the aorist is preserved in 'everything happened through him' because John is looking back on 'the beginning' as a particular time. Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 74, overlooks the role of the time-specification of 'In the beginning' in his critique of commentators who use 'to happen' for the general meaning of ἐγένετο. Here 'has happened' is right but 'happens' is wrong because it is not punctiliar.

[3] For this use of the Niphal see BDB, Deut 4:32; Judg 19:30; 20:3, 12; Neh 6:8; Ezek 21:12; and 39:8. The whole argument here is from Pollard, "Cosmology and the Prologue of John", 151-152. See also, Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 22.

> And I have loved thee freely and with all my heart; [contemplating the mysteries of] thy wisdom, [I have sought thee]. For this is from thy hand and [nothing is done] without [thy will]. 1 QH VI.25 (Vermes)
>
> [Nothing] is done without Thee and nothing is known unless Thou desire it. 1 QH IX.4-5 (Vermes)
>
> In the wisdom of thy knowledge, thou didst establish their destiny before ever they were. All things [exist] according to [thy will] and without thee nothing is done. 1 QH IX.19 (Vermes)

The point of these DSS parallels is to show that we have typical Jewish expressions in John 1:3 and to show that these expressions range over things that come about and happen.

(ii) Men are brought onto the scene in v. 4 which gives an earthly context for its assertions; we do not have a reference to a pre-existent Logos in which there was the principle of life. The definite article in 'the light' (vv. 4-5) is repeated in vv. 7, 8, 9 with 'men' repeated in v. 9. This earthly perspective means that we can disambiguate the personal pronoun in v. 4a as 'in *him* was (a) life'. This in turn rolls back to v. 3, so that we have a clear reference to Jesus in δι' αὐτοῦ. In v. 4, John moves from the past to the present. Of the past he says, using the definite article, 'the life…' ('I am the Way, the Truth and the Life', John 14:6) '…was the light of men' ('I am the Light of the World', John 8:12).[1]

(iii) We have discussed above the perfect tense in ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, and considered whether it is a 'present perfect' or a 'resultative perfect'. Without deciding on comma placement, these two forms of the perfect in English are as follows,

> …that which has come about in him was life …
> …that which came about in him was life …

A perceived awkwardness of the present perfect reading with the imperfect led to some scribes introducing the present tense,

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[1] Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, I-XII, 26, would argue that we shouldn't have a reference to Jesus before the introduction of John the Baptist in John 1:6. The counter-argument to Brown is that he gets the reading of vv. 1-3 wrong – Jesus has been the focus since v. 1.

…that which has come about in him <u>is</u> (ἐστιν) life …

But, as Bultmann notes, this doesn't solve the problem because such a present tense "overlooks the context, and it is at once shown to be false by the ἦν in the following sentence",[1]

…and the life <u>was</u> the light of men
…καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων
John 1:4b

The way to take out any perceived awkwardness in reading is to translate the implicit pronoun in the ἦν,

…that which has come about, in him it was life

Here we take the pronoun implicit in ἦν to be neuter and agreeing with the relative pronoun ὃ. This then leads on naturally to the statement that 'the life was the light of men'. However, as we noted above, with McHugh, we could read the perfect as more like an aorist (a resultative perfect) and exegete as,

…that which came about, in him it was life'

The counter-argument to McHugh is that we don't then have an explanation for why John uses the aorist in v. 3 along with the perfect in v. 4.[2]

(iv) Although we favour the present perfect reading, either of the two ways to render ὃ γέγονεν denotes a **spiritually lived life** if we follow an intertextual method of interpretation. This is clear from 1 John 1:1-3,

> That which (ὃ[3]) 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 <u>the Word of Life</u>; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our

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[1] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 40.
[2] Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 81, notes that John is fond of the perfect tense.
[3] The neuter relative pronoun picks up John 1:3b and its neuter relative pronoun; 1 John 1:1-3 uses the neuter relative pronoun several times

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:1-3 (KJV)

This exegesis in 1 John 1:1-3 counts against reading John 1:4 without articulating the implicit pronoun because it is evidently about a life manifested in Jesus. That is, we should translate v. 4a as,

> …that which has come about, in him it was life …

and not as,

> …that which has come about in him, was life …[1]

Focusing upon 'life in him' brings in a notion of **new life in Jesus**. This is a Johannine concept (as it is Paul's), but that doesn't mean John is expressing this concept explicitly in John 1:4.

GJohn has a number of statements about what/who was in Jesus and it is **individuals**; so, typically,

> I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth <u>in me</u>, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5 (KJV); cf. 6:56; 14:20; 15:2, 4, 5, 6, 7; 16:33

John is saying first that such lives are 'in Christ' (to use Paul's phraseology). Hence, individuals have the water of life and the light in themselves (John 4:14; 11:10). This is all about a spiritually lived life in individuals, as the metaphor of 'light' shows; it is not about the physical life of the Genesis creation.

> But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing <u>ye</u> might have <u>life</u> through his name. John 20:31 (KJV); cf. 5:39; 6:27; 12:25

Accordingly, we can say that new life in Jesus is presupposed in,

> …that which has come about, in him it was life …

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[1] On this we differ from Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4*, 82.

because John is reaching back from his present to the past, to the source of the new life in Jesus. John sees these individuals as the light then presently shining in the darkness.

(v) What happened in Jesus did so over time and it was a life which we have characterized as spiritual but which John qualitatively characterizes as 'eternal'. John 1:4 does not present a punctiliar perspective like that presumed in an incarnation or in something that is *once* given as in,

> For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself… John 5:26 (KJV)

It is not difficult to see how Jesus' life could be the light of men, but moving on from v. 4, John changes to the present tense in v. 5, in order to say that the light is still shining[1] in the darkness (cf. Matt 5:14). This is happening in John's present because the darkness did not overcome[2] it (the light). John mixes the present and past tense much as he did in v. 4. He can do this because he has been talking not only of Jesus as the life of light but those individuals who are newly created in him,

> I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8:12 (KJV)

The darkness did not overcome Jesus and so his disciples continue to shine the light of life in John's Day.[3]

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[1] H. Ridderbos, in his "The Structure and Scope of the Prologue to the Gospel of John" in *The Composition of John's Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum* (ed. D. Orton; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 41-62 (51), gets it wrong here when he reads v. 5 with its light shining in darkness in relation to *the Logos*; the thought flows from v. 4 to v. 5 – what has come about is now shining (present tense) in the darkness. As Ashton remarks in his *Discovering John*, 73, "…the rather puzzling use of the present tense φαίνει in 1:5 ceases to be problematic provided it is understood as a remark of the evangelist writing in his own present."

[2] John 12:35 is relevant here because there Jesus warns his disciples to not let darkness overcome them – this suggests 'overcome' is the sense for v. 5 (which is supported by the Greek Fathers (but not the Vulgate)). Here, the punctiliar aorist (κατέλαβεν) corresponds to the 'the beginning' that John is describing.

[3] The darkness is the world as John presently sees it; Jesus, viewed as the light, was still shining in that world in the individuals of the church.

(vi) The Genesis echoes in John 1:1-5 are seen again in the mention of darkness, because light requires darkness (Isa 6:9-10). This darkness was the state of the world at the time that the true Light came into the world (John 1:9, 11; 12:35), and it persisted after the ascension, for the believers subsequently shone as lights in the darkness (Phil 2:15). This is what we would expect from Genesis 1, because in the beginning when God created the heavens 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*.[1] 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 (!) in the exodus, has ended. Hence, the Gospel of John introduces us to a dark world into which the true Light comes, and in which light subsequently shone.[2]

Objections

The **main objection**[3] to a new creation or salvation-historical reading of John 1:1-5 is that this was not the earliest reading in the Fathers. For example, Theophilus of Antioch (c 115-180 CE) interprets John 1:3 in the light of Genesis (*Ad Autolycus* II.22) and the Gnostics used the prologue to support their cosmological dualism. Origen cites Heracleon saying, "he said that it was the Logos who caused the Demiurge to make the world" (*Comm. in Johan.*, ii 18). The argument here is that a new creation reading is absent in orthodox and heretical writings alike and their Genesis-cosmological approach is nearer in time to the apostle John, and some version of this is more likely to be right.

What is missing in the argument is any documented social history connecting 2c writers to John, his local ecclesia and the use of his Gospel in the aftermath of its publication. This is a more substantial point the earlier we date the prologue. We should instead take 1 John 1:1-4 as the earliest commentary on the prologue, one from the apostolic era, and this would not support a Genesis-cosmological reading

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[1] 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).

[2] Pharaoh (Egypt) had his heart hardened, and destruction followed, with the emergence of the new creation of Israel.

[3] This objection is not addressed to the punctuation issue of John 1:3-4; either punctuation can support a Genesis creation reading.

of John 1:1-5. Further, we could note that the hypostatizations of 'the Word of God' in Acts are not cosmological but ecclesial and mission based. The ironic counter-point here to Theophilus of Antioch's interpretation in the mid-2c or that of the Gnostics would be one made by a contemporary who argued that their Genesis-cosmological treatment of 'the Word' is absent from the earliest writings of the apostles, for example, 1 John.[1]

So, an interpretation nearer in time needs to have tentacles that reach out to John in the social history of the church to have any weight. In the absence of such tentacles, **all** of the interpretations of the prologue in the 2c are beneficiaries of this objection to a new creation reading. These might be interpretations now characterized as, for instance, Ebionite, Gnostic, or Docetic, as well as orthodox. In the absence of a social history, does any one of the 2c interpretations have the right to be insulated from critical evaluation by a historian? It is doubtful.

Conclusion

Does John 1 refer just to the Genesis beginning? Did the Genesis creation come about through 'the Word'? Or does John 1 refer to a new creation? And does that creation come through 'the Word'? To settle these questions, we must also look at the usage of the expression 'all things' (πάντα, τὰ πάντα) in the New Testament, Paul first and then GJohn.

[1] It has been regarded as something of a riddle as to how John's Christology can be late but its historical traditions early, on which see B. Lindars, *Behind the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1971), 13. The solution is simply to stop assuming his Christology is late.

Postscript

Correct exegesis is like chess. The Grandmaster chess player not only has a massive knowledge of chess theory and previous games by the chess greats, s/he also reads a board a dozen moves ahead when making a move. An amateur might think 3 or 4 moves ahead. A move may look right to the amateur but be wrong to the Grandmaster.

An exegetical statement is like a chess move. You will have thought ahead about the statement about its assumptions and implications. The error in your statement, however, might be a dozen moves ahead. This is why at the highest level of competition-chess, the players have teams analysing games and situations. Other minds help to catch the errors that lie a dozen moves ahead. Scriptural exegesis is likewise a co-operative endeavour.

The situation in exegesis is like this: one exegete might be playing the text ten moves ahead and saying things about the text that have eliminated all kinds of errors and dead ends. Another exegete might by at the one move ahead. A Trinitarian proof-texter is at the one move ahead stage: "It says 'the Word was God' and that's what it means." They haven't asked a dozen questions about this text, any one of which halt their statement. So, s/he isn't asking what 'was God' could mean in a first-century context set against the Jewish Scriptures. Is 'was God' about name-calling; role and function; indwelling and presence; possession of the Spirit; nature; or identity – to name a few ways to play the game.

Analogies break down at some point and no doubt we can get round this analogy. Maybe we think the 'game' analogy is trivializing. But to continue, in computer chess, you can roll back the board and undo a mistake. In exegesis you can do this too, but maybe you never get to know the mistake and you lose the game. But, while there is life, you can unwind your exegesis and go back to an earlier position and press forward down another route, and perhaps it is the right one.

The tragedy here for the professional scholarly community in Biblical Studies is that a person can be down the wrong road their whole life in an end-game of chess shuffling pawns around until they pass away.[1] Contemplating this tragedy is too

[1] What happens is this: people are what they read and they read in bubbles – they read to confirm and deepen existing understanding. So, a Christadelphian that leaves the faith and becomes a Christian of another denomination will then read stuff in life that confirms that new understanding; they won't re-visit Christadelphian writing because the challenge is uncomfortable.

much, but it is no different from the tragedies of there being millions of sincere adherents in other religions.

The starting point for finding correct exegesis is not (oddly) the Bible – it is an understanding of human history and human nature. Such a study should lead to the first principle that humankind has produced (and does produce) multiple and pervasive competing spiritualities which are in varying degrees false and with no hope. From this starting point, a person may home in on the Bible for their spirituality, and here the situation is the same: there are pervasive and multiple competing interpretations with no real hope. And so, the diligent search for a truth with hope can begin.