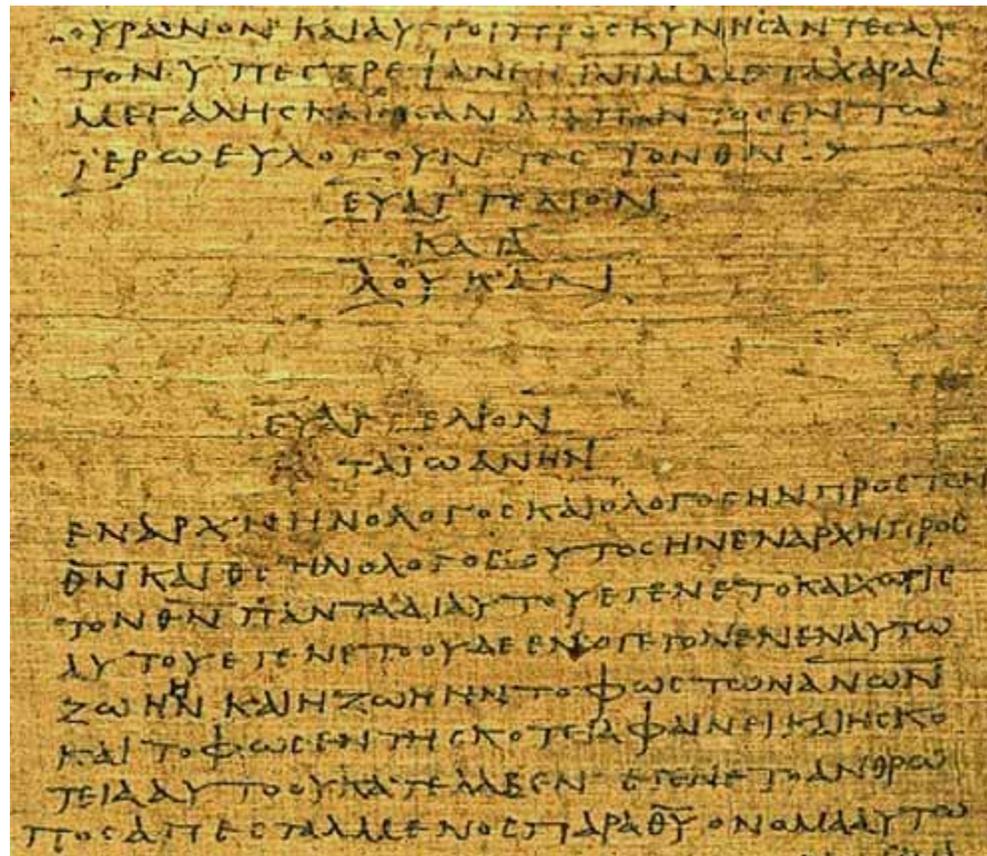


Nota Bene: As this translation/interpretation is a work in progress it will be updated as and when newly translated verses are available and is subject to revision and the correction of typos.

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The Gospel According to John

A New Interpretation

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Preface

The genesis of this interpretation of meaning was some marginal notes I made, in 1977 while a Christian monk, in my copy of τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον, for as the title indicates this is an interpretation and not a literal translation.

As I have sometimes done in translations of mine from Hellenic Greek (for example tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum), I have here opted for some transliterations (such as logos and theos) in an endeavour to avoid reading into the text the meanings that some of the English words conventionally used in other translations - and given in lexicons - may now suggest, or do suggest often as a result of over a thousand years of exegesis. For the hope is that such transliterations, and eschewing some other English words that have traditionally been used will enable the reader to approach and to appreciate the text in a new way, sans preconceptions, and hopefully appreciate how it might have been understood by those - both pagans and new converts - who first heard or read this evangel in the formative years of Christianity before Christian doctrine became formalized, before disputations about heresy, and before there were extensive theological commentaries on the text.

To give just two examples. (i) In 8.7 and in respect of ἀναμάρτητος I have eschewed the common translation of ἁμαρτία by English word 'sin' and which English word, through centuries of Christian exegesis and preaching, has become a theological abstraction and a pejorative term, whereas the the original meaning of the English word syn imputed the sense of doing what was wrong, of committing an error, of making a mistake, of being at fault; of in some way overstepping the bounds or transgressing limits imposed by others, and thus of accepting responsibility for such an infraction, a sense which the suggested etymology of the

word *syn* implies: from the Latin *sons, sontis*. While my translation of 'mistake' (in 8.7) and 'error' (in 1.29) may well be controversial, to me it imparts something important regarding the teachings, and the life, of Jesus of Nazareth: something quite human, something rather different from a stern preacher preaching about 'sin'; something which seems to express what the Beatitudes express, and something which individuals such as Julian of Norwich, George Fox and William Penn many centuries later tried to say and write about Christianity and about the teachings and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the interpretation of this particular verse is "So, as they continued to ask he straightened himself, saying to them: Let he who has never made a mistake throw the first stone at her." (ii) In 1.10 - ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο - I take the sense of ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν as suggesting not that "he was in the world" but rather that he was "of the world", among - with - those of the world, with his mortal body subject to pain and bodily death, with καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο thus implying not that "the world was made/created through him" but that the world was presenced in him, past, present, and future, with the English word 'presenced' - etymon: Latin *praesentia* - suggested by how he came to be embodied, presenced, in the Eucharist (qv. the phrase "This same presence may be called moste fitly, a reall presence, that is a presence not fained, but a true & a faythfull presence," in John Foxe's *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history: contaynyng the Actes and monumentes of thynges passed in every kynges tyme in this realme*, 1570).

In several instances, in respect of choice of English words, I have taken inspiration from the Anglo-Saxon version of the Gospels - the Wessex Gospels, dating from c.990 CE - as for example at 1.18 and 1.32.

Regarding the Greek text, I have followed Nestle-Aland (NA28), although I have on occasion favoured some variant reading such as from the Textus Receptus (Stephanus, 1550) or from a particular MSS with such departures noted in the commentary and which commentary illustrates my methodology and thus my interpretation. Which is of seeking to understand the meaning of certain Greek words in their historical context and of searching for appropriate English words to express that meaning and not the "meaning" that particular English words may now convey to the detriment of understanding this particular Gospel in that historical context.

In terms of layout of the translation, I follow the tradition of the Anglo-Saxon version - adopted by both Wycliffe and Tyndale - of placing each verse on a separate line and capitalizing the initial letter of each verse.

David Myatt
2017

Introduction

A Question Of Interpretation

Vernacular translations are, by the nature of translation, interpretations, with the history of vernacular translations of the Bible - and especially of the Gospels - revealing how such interpretations could be used to support schisms; for example, in the case of Wycliffe's English, the Lollards, and in the case of Luther's German, the Protestant reformation. In addition, some translations enriched the vernacular language itself, as for example, the translations of Tyndale and the King James Bible did in respect of English.

My own interpretation of the Gospel of John is not intended to be schismatic but rather to be unfamiliar, with such unfamiliarity hopefully betaking some readers to the unfamiliar milieu of an ancient Judaea governed as it was by Rome and abode as it was of those Judaeans who believed in a Messiah/Messiah, with it being written in the first chapter of the Gospel of John that in, reference to Jesus, Andrew - the brother of Simon Peter - announced: εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (we have found the Messiah).

My interpretation is intended to be unfamiliar for several reasons. Firstly, because the Gospels were written in Hellenistic (Koine, κοινή) Greek, with the author of the Gospel of John by including colloquial Greek sayings and offering explanations for some particular terms [1] indicating that his intended or actual audience - those reading or hearing his Gospel in late first century and early second century CE - were most probably native speakers of Hellenistic Greek or at least quite familiar with that language.

Intended to be unfamiliar secondly because the standard English versions of the Gospel of John - and English versions of the other Gospels - have become so familiar to so many people in the West over so many centuries that certain words and terms have acquired particular meanings, with those meanings and certain passages - via iconography, exegesis, and preaching - assuming archetypal status. Hence, and to provide just some examples, our assumptions about God (theos), about 'angels' (τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ), about Heaven (οὐρανός), about sin (ἁμαρτία) and about 'the Holy Spirit' (τὸ πνεῦμα).

An interpretation intended to be unfamiliar, thirdly, because the Gospels were written at a time when Christianity was, in the lands of the Roman Empire, one small religious sect among many others and had yet to develop a standardized doctrinal theology or a centralized ecclesiastical authority, with the Gospel of John not providing any theological explanation of what is meant by theos, by τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ, by οὐρανός, by ἁμαρτία, by τὸ πνεῦμα, and by many other terms. Thus, there is a natural tendency for us to project medieval, Renaissance, and modern meanings onto such terms with the inevitable consequence of us assuming that we understand the message of the Evangelist and thus comprehend at least something of Christianity itself.

In contrast, what are we to make of such translated passages as the following:

I beheld the Spiritus as a dove descend from Empyrean and remain there with him. (1.32)

It was He who sent me to baptize in water, saying to me: 'Upon whosoever you behold the Spiritus descend and remain there with, is the same one who baptizes in Halig Spiritus.' (1.33)

Having spoken to you of earthly things and you lack trust, how can you trust if I speak of things caelestien? (3.12)

And this is the condemnation: That the Phaos arrived in the world but mortals loved the darkness more than the Phaos, for their deeds were harmful. (3.19)

Are we betaken to an unfamiliar milieu where, having read or listened to the evangel attributed to John from familiar translations, we believe we may know something about such things as Heaven (οὐρανός, Empyrean) and the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα, the Spiritus) but now may have some doubts about their meaning and doubts about how they may relate to the Light (φῶς, Phaos) and thus to a man named Jesus? Are such doubts relevant or perhaps even necessary given that the emphasis in the Gospel seems to be on individuals trusting in the person of Jesus after they had accepted that the narrated signs (σημεῖα) - such as the Passion, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his Ascension - indicate that he may well be the only begotten Son of Theos so that, by trusting in him, we have the opportunity of life everlasting?

Such were some of the questions I pondered when a Christian monk, and my fallible interpretation of the Gospel of John, founded on some forty years of reflection and study, is my fallible attempt to find some

answers.

[1] Qv. my comments on 1.42 and 1.51.

Chapter One

1 In primacy was the logos, and the logos was with Theos, and the logos was Theos.

2 For this was, in primacy, with Theos

3 Who brought into being all beings and without whom no beings would exist:

4 Who was Life and which Life was the Phaos of human beings.

5 And the Phaos illuminates the dark and is not overwhelmed by the dark.

6 There was a man, a messenger from Theos, named John

7 Who, arriving as a witness so that others might trust him, gave evidence concerning the Phaos

8 For he himself was not the Phaos but rather gave evidence regarding the Phaos:

9 Of the advent into the world of the genuine Phaos who could enlighten any person.

10 He who was of the world with the world presented in him but whose own did not recognize him.

11 For having ventured to his own his own did not receive him

12 While those who did receive him he confirmed as children of Theos including those affirming his Nomen

13 Who were begotten not of blood nor by the design of mortals but of Theos.

14 And the Logos became corporeal and dwelt among us and we perceived his numinosity, the numinosity of the only begotten of the Father, abounding in veritas, benevolence.

15 John was a witness for him and loudly said, "This is he of whom I spoke: the one who, arriving after me, takes precedence because he came-into-being before me.

16 Out of his plenitude we have been given benevolence after benevolence

17 For while the Nomos was received from Moses, benevolence and veritas came to be through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has ever yet beheld Theos; but the being in the greda of the Father has made him known."

19 For such was the evidence John gave when the Judaeans dispatched priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him: "Who are you?"

20 And he admitted, he did not deny but admitted, "I am not the Christ."

21 So they asked him: "Who, then? Are you Elijah?" And he said: "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

And he replied, "No."

22 So they asked him: "Who, then? For we have to give an answer to those who dispatched us. What have you to say about yourself?"

23 He replied: "I, a call sounding out in forsaken places, straightening the way for the Master, just as Isaiah the Prophet said."

24 Now those dispatched were from the Pharisees

25 And they asked him, saying: "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, not Elijah, not the Prophet?"

26 John, answering them, said: "I baptize in water yet standing in your midst is someone you do not recognize

27 Who, proceeding me, arrives after me whose sandal strap I do not deserve to unfasten."

28 Such was what came to pass in Bethany, on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day he saw Jesus approaching him and said: "Observe! The Lamb of Theos who removes the error of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said: 'Having arrived after me, he takes precedence because he came-into-being before me.'

31 Although personally unacquainted with him, it was for his discovery by Israel that I set out to baptize in water,"

32 And, as evidence, John said: "I beheld the Spiritus as a dove descend from Empyrean and remain there with him.

33 And although personally unacquainted with Him, it was He who sent me to baptize in water, saying to me: 'Upon whosoever you behold the Spiritus descend and remain there with, is the same one who baptizes in Halig Spiritus.'

34 Such have I seen and such is my evidence that this is the Son of Theos."

35 Next day, John once more stood with two of his disciples

36 And, looking at Jesus as he passed them by, said: "Observe, the Lamb of Theos."

37 Hearing him say this, his two disciples followed Jesus

38 And Jesus, seeing them following him, turned around, asking: "What do you seek?"

And they replied: "Rabbi," - which is to say, when interpreted, Master - "where do you stay?"
39 He replied: "Arrive with me and you will see." So they arrived and saw where he stayed, staying with him that day: this, around the tenth duration.
40 One of the two who had followed him after having heard John was Andrew, brother of Simon Peter,
41 Who having firstly sought his brother Simon said to him: "We have found The Messiah," which when interpreted is Christ.
42 And he led him to Jesus who, looking at him, said: "You are Simon, son of John, and you will be called Kephas," which, when explained, is Petros.

43 The next day Jesus went forth into Galilee and there found Philip, saying to him: "Follow me."
44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the community of Andrew and Peter.
45 Philip, finding Nathaniel, said to him: "We have found the one written about by Moses in the Nomos and by the Prophets: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph."
46 And Nathaniel asked him: "Has anything good ever come from Nazareth?" To which Philip replied: "Set out with me and see."
47 When Jesus beheld Nathaniel approaching he said this about him: "Behold, a true Israelite: someone without guile."
48 Nathaniel said to him: "From where do you know me?" In answer, Jesus said: "Before Philip called you I beheld you beside a tree of figs."
49 To which Nathaniel replied: "'Rabbi, you are the Son of Theos, you are the King of Israel."
50 In answer, Jesus said: "Are you persuaded because I beheld you beside a tree of figs? You will see much more than that."
51 And he said to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that you will see the sky opening and those envoys of Theos descending to and ascending around the son of a mortal."

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Chapter Two

1 On the third day there was a marriage in Cana, Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.
2 Also invited to the wedding were Jesus and his disciples
3 And when there was an insufficiency of wine the mother of Jesus said to him: "They do not have any wine,"
4 And Jesus said to her: "My lady, what has that to do with you and me? For my season is not yet due."
5 His mother said to the attendants: "Do whatever he says."

6 And - as there were there six stone water-urns set up according to Judaeans cleansing holding two or three measures each -

7 Jesus said to them: "Fill those urns with water." And they completely filled them.

8 Then he said: "Now pour some out for the master of ceremonies." And they did.

9 Thus the master of ceremonies tasted the water become wine unaware from whence it was - although the attendants, having poured it, were aware - and called out to the spouse,

10 Saying to him: "Everyone sets out the better wine first and then, after a sufficiency is drunk, an inferior one, but you have kept the better wine until now."

11 This was the commencement of the signs, and this Jesus did in Cana, Galilee, and thus was his numinosity manifest with his disciples trusting him.

12 After this he - with his mother, brothers, and his disciples - went down to Capernaum, staying there for not many days,

13 And when the pascha of the Judaeans was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 Where, in the temple, he found those sellers of oxen and sheep and doves as well as those seated changers-of-money,

15 And, fashioning a flail from cords, he cast all of them - including the sheep and the oxen - out from the temple and poured away the coins of those changers-of-money and overturned their tables,

16 Saying to those sellers of doves: "Take those from here. Do not make the house of my father a house of merchandise."

17 His disciples recalled that it was written: "Enthusiasm for your house will devour me."

18 In response, the Judaeans said to him: "What sign do you show us for you doing such things?"

19 Jesus replied, saying to them: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it."

20 The Judaeans said: "Forty and six years years was this temple in building, and you will raise it in three days?"

21 But he spoke of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was raised from the dead his disciples recalled that he had said this and trusted what was written and the word that Jesus had spoken.

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at pascha on the feast-day, many trusted in his name having beheld the signs which he did,

24 But Jesus did not place his trust in them since he understood everything

25 And did not need anyone to give evidence regarding a person, aware as he was of the person within.

Chapter Three

- 1 Now there was a Pharisee - a man called Nicodemus, a leader of the Judaeans -
- 2 Who, arriving at night, said to him: "Rabbi, we recognize that you are a teacher, arriving from Theos, for no one is able to do the signs you do unless Theos is with them."
- 3 In answer, Jesus said to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that if someone is not born anew they are unable to behold the Kingdom of Theos."
- 4 Nicodemus said to him: "How can a person be born when they are old? How are they able to twice enter the womb of the mother?"
- 5 Jesus answered: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that if someone is not born of Water and Spiritus they are unable to enter the Kingdom of Theos.
- 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spiritus is spiritus.
- 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you to that it is needful for you to be born anew.
- 8 The wind blows where it will, and when you hear its sound you do not know from whence it came or whence it goes. So it is for everyone who is born of the Spiritus."
- 9 In reply, Nicodemus said to him: "How are such things able to exist?"
- 10 Jesus answered, saying to him: "You - a Magister of Israel - do not apprehend such things?

- 11 Verily verily I say unto you that what we recognize, we can talk about, and what we have observed we can give evidence concerning, and our evidence has not been accepted.
- 12 Having spoken to you of earthly things and you lack trust, how can you trust if I speak of things caelestien?
- 13 And no one has ascended into Empyrean without having descended out from Empyrean, the son of a mortal who is in Empyrean,
- 14 For just as Moses elevated that serpent in a forsaken place so will the son of a mortal be elevated
- 15 So that all those trusting in him might have life everlasting.

- 16 For Theos so loved the world that he offered up his only begotten son so that all those trusting in him would not perish but might have life everlasting.
- 17 For Theos did not dispatch his son to the world to condemn the world, but rather that the world might be rescued through him.
- 18 Whosoever trusts in him is not condemned while whomsoever does not trust is condemned for he has not

trusted in the Nomen of the only begotten son of Theos.

19 And this is the condemnation: That the Phaos arrived in the world but mortals loved the darkness more than the Phaos, for their deeds were harmful.

20 For anyone who does what is mean dislikes the Phaos and does not come near the Phaos lest their deeds be exposed.

21 But whomsoever practices disclosure goes to the Phaos so that their deeds might be manifest as having been done through Theos.

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples, having arrived in the land of the Judaeans, stayed there together, for he was baptizing.

23 Also baptizing - in Aenon near Salim - was John, since the water there was plentiful and others had arrived to be baptized,

24 And John had yet to be hurled into a guarded cage.

25 Now, it came to pass that some disciples of John were disputing with a Judaeian about the cleansing,

26 So they went to John and said to him: "Rabbi, there on the other side of the Jordan is the one you gave evidence about. He is baptizing and everyone is going to him."

27 In answer, John said: "A person is unable to receive anything unless it is gifted to them from Empyrean.

28 You yourselves can give evidence that I said I am not the Christ but was dispatched before him.

29 He who has an espousess is the spouse, and the friend of the spouse - who stands by him and listens - is joyous with joy because of his words. Hence, my own joy is complete.

30 It is necessary that he continues to grow and that I wane.

31 The one who arrives from above is above everything while the one from the Earth is of the Earth and speaks about the Earth: the one who arrives from Empyrean is above everything.

32 He gives evidence about what he observed and heard and yet no one accepts his evidence.

33 Whomsoever accepts his evidence certifies by their seal that Theos is steadfast,

34 For the one dispatched by Theos speaks the words of Theos since he does not apportion Spiritus.

35 The father loves his son and has placed all things in his hands:

36 Whomsoever trusts in the son shall have life everlasting but whomsoever does not trust the son shall not see that life; rather, the anger of Theos abides on them.

Chapter Four

1 Now, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus had made more disciples and baptisms than John

2 Even though it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples,

3 He left Judaea and went back again into Galilee

4 With him of necessity having to pass through Samaria.

5 Thus did Jesus arrive in a town in Samaria called Sychar near to the plot of land that Jacob had gifted to Joseph his son

6 Where the well of Jacob was. And Jesus, wearied by his walking, sat down beside that well: this, around the sixth duration.

7 When a Samaritan woman arrived to haul-out water, Jesus said to her: "Grant me to drink,"

8 For his disciples had departed to the town to purchase food,

9 With the Samaritan woman saying to him: "How do you, a Judaeon, ask to drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" For Judaeans do not use Samaritan things.

10 Jesus answered and said to her: "Had you been aware of the gift of Theos and who it was saying to you 'grant me to drink,' you would have asked of him and he would have gifted you with living water."

11 The woman said to him: "Sir, you do not have anything to haul-out with and the well is deep. From where then is this living water that you have?"

12 Are you better than our ancestor Jacob who gifted us with this well which he himself drank from as did his sons and livestock?"

13 Jesus answered and said to her: "Whomsoever drinks this water will thirst again

14 But whomsoever would drink of the water I gift them would not ever thirst. Instead, the water I gift them would be in them a source of water rising up to life everlasting."

15 The woman said to him: "Sir, grant me that water so I never thirst nor have to be here, hauling."

16 To her he said: "Go, call your spouse and return here."

17 The woman answered, saying to him: "I do not have a spouse."

Jesus replied: "It is good that you said you have no spouse.

18 Although you have had five spouses, he whom you are with now is not your spouse. Thus, you told the truth."

19 The woman said to him: "Sir, I deem you are a prophet.

20 Our ancestors gave reverence on this mountain but you say that the necessary place of reverence is in Jerusalem."

21 Jesus said to her: "My lady, trust me. There is a season arriving when you will reverence the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

22 You reverence what you do not recognize; we reverence what we recognize, for deliverance is of the Judaeans.

23 But a season is arriving - and is here, now - when the sincere reverencers will reverence the Father in spiritus and sincerity. And the Father seeks those who so reverence him.

24 Theos is Spiritus, and it behoves those reverencing him to give reverence in spiritus and sincerity."

25 The woman said to him: "I am aware that the Messiah - called the Christ - is arriving. When he arrives, he will disclose everything to us."

26 Jesus said to her: "I am: who speaks to you."

27 It was then that the disciples arrived and, although they had wondered why he was speaking with a woman, none of them asked "What are you enquiring about?" or "Why are you speaking to her?"

28 The woman, leaving her water-urn, departed for the town and said to the people there

29 "Follow! Behold a man who related to me everything I have ever done. Could it be the Christ?"

30 So they went forth from the town to arrive near to him.

31 Meanwhile, the disciples made a request of him, saying: "Rabbi, eat."

32 But he said to them: "I have food to eat that you do not recognize."

33 Then the disciples said among themselves: "Did anyone provide, for him to eat?"

34 Jesus said to them: "My food is that I undertake the design of the one having sent me and accomplish His work.

35 Do you not say: There are four moons until the harvest arrives? Behold, I say to you: raise your eyes and observe the fields for they are already nearing harvest-white.

36 The one reaping receives payment, gathering together fruit for life everlasting, so that both the one sowing and the one reaping can rejoice.

37 In this instance, there is a relevant saying: One sows and another reaps.

38 I sent you to reap that which you did not toil for but which others did toil for, and you are entering into that toil."

39 Now, many Samaritans in that town trusted in him because of the word of the woman who gave evidence: "he related to me everything I have ever done."

40 Thus when the Samaritans, arriving, were near him they invited him to stay with them. And for two days he

stayed there.

41 And many more trusted because of his word,

42 Saying to the woman: "We do not trust because of what you told us, for we ourselves have heard and recognize that this is indeed the Servator Of The World.

43 And, after two days, he went forth from there into Galilee,

44 For Jesus himself gave evidence that a prophet is not esteemed in his own village.

45 On his arrival in Galilee, the Galileans accepted him having observed all that he had done at the feast in Jerusalem, for they themselves had gone to that feast.

46 Then he went again to Cana of Galilee where he had made that water wine. And there was in Capernaum a royal official whose son was ill.

47 When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea he went to him to ask him to descend and heal his son who was about to die.

48 Jesus said to him: "If you do not observe signs and portents you will not trust."

49 The royal official said to him: "Sir, descend before my dear child dies."

50 Jesus said to him: "Be on your way: your son will live." The man trusted the word of Jesus that he had said to him, and went on his way.

51 And even as he was descending his servants met him, saying that his son was alive.

52 Thus he enquired of them in which duration his betterment took hold. And they said to him: "Yesterday, at the sixth duration the fever left him."

53 The father therefore learned that it was the duration when Jesus had said to him: "Your son will live," and thus he himself was trusting as was everyone in his household.

54 That was the second sign that Jesus brought about when he arrived in Galilee from Judea.

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Chapter Five

1 Following this, there was a Judaeen feast and Jesus went to Jerusalem.

2 And there is in Jerusalem by the place of the sheep a pool, named in the language of the Hebrews as Bethesda, which has five colonnades

3 In which were a large number of the infirm - the blind, the limping, the withered - awaiting a change in the

water

4 Since on occasion an Envoy of Theos descended into the pool, stirring the water, and whomsoever after that stirring of the water was first to enter became complete, the burden of their affliction removed.

5 And there was a man there who for eight and thirty years had been infirm.

6 Jesus, seeing him lying there and knowing of that lengthy duration, said to him: "Do you seek to be complete?"

7 The infirm one replied: "Sir, I do not have someone who when the water is stirred could place me in that pool, and, when I go, someone else has descended before me."

8 Jesus said to him: "Arise. Take your bedroll, and walk."

9 And, directly, the man became complete, took up his bedroll and walked around. And it was the day of the Sabbath.

10 Thus did the Judaeans say to the one who had been treated: "It is the Sabbath and it is not permitted for you to carry your bedroll."

11 To them he answered: "It was he who made me complete who said for me to take my bedroll and to walk around."

12 So they asked him: "Who is the man who said for you to take the bedroll and walk around?"

13 But the healed one did not know, for there was a crowd there with Jesus having betaken himself away.

14 Following this, Jesus discovered him in the temple and said to him: "Behold, you are complete. No more missteps, lest something worse befalls you."

15 The man then went away and informed the Judaeans that it was Jesus who had made him complete.

16 And thus did the Judaeans harass Jesus because he was doing such things on the Sabbath.

17 When Jesus responded to them: "My father even now labours, and I also labour,"

18 The Judaeans were even more determined to kill him since not only had he annulled the Sabbath but also because he spoke of Theos as his Father, presenting himself as equal to Theos.

19 In response, Jesus said to them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that the son is not able to do anything on his own: only that which he observes his father doing. For whatever the father does, the son also does,

20 For the father loves the son and reveals to him all that he does. And, beyond this, he will reveal to him greater works which shall astonish you

21 Since just as the father awakens the dead, and gives life, so also the son gives life by design to

whomsoever,

22 For the father does not choose anyone, having accorded all choosing to his son

23 So that all might honour the son as they honour the father. And whoever does not honour the son, does not honour the father who sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you that whomsoever hears my Logos, and trusts who sent me, has life everlasting and is not entered into the choosing but passes from death into life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you that a season is arriving, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Theos and those who listen shall live.

26 Just as the father possesses Life within himself so he gifted the son with Life within him,

27 And also gifted him - as the son of a mortal - with the authority of choosing.

28 Do not be astonished at this, for a season is arriving when all those in their burial places will hear his voice

29 And proceed forth: those who have acted honourably to anastasis of life; those who have acted dishonourably, to anastasis of the choosing.

30 For I am not able to do anything on my own. When I have listened, I choose; and my choosing is fair since I do not seek my own design but rather the design of he who sent me.

31 If I am a witness about myself then my testimony is invalid,

32 But there is another as a witness for me, and I recognize that his testimony about me is valid.

33 You inquired after John, and he was evidential to the veritas.

34 And, although the testimony I receive is not from people, I say these things that you may be rescued.

35 He: a lantern, firefull and revealing; you: desirous to seasonably exult in his phaos.

36 I however have a testimony beyond that of John, for the deeds the father gifted me that I should accomplish them - the deeds which I do - are witness that the father sent me,

37 With the father - he who sent me - a witness about me: he whose voice you have never heard, whose likeness you have never observed,

38 With his Logos not remaining within you for you do not trust the one he sent.

39 You search the writings because you suppose that there is within them life everlasting and that they are a witness about me.

40 And yet have no desire to go to me so that you might have Life.

41 I do not receive honours from people,

42 But I have recognized you: for love of Theos is not within you.

43 I have arrived in the name of my father yet you do not accept me, but if another arrives in his own name you will accept him.
44 How are you able to trust when you accept honours from one another and yet do not seek the honour that is only from Theos?
45 Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the father, for it is Moses - on whom you rely - who is the one accusing you.
46 Had you trusted Moses, you would have trusted me for it was he who wrote about me.
47 Thus, since you do not trust what he wrote, how can you trust what I say?

Commentary

Chapter One

1.

a) Ἐν ἀρχῇ

I have eschewed the conventional, and the somewhat bland, 'in the beginning', for the more descriptive 'in primacy', a sense which the Greek suggests.

b) λόγος

It is, in my view, better to transliterate this than give a definite interpretation such as 'Word', especially since I incline toward the view that λόγος (as the following verses indicate - cf. the note on πρὸς τὸν θεόν below) is used here both in the sense of divine wisdom as manifest in the divine Law (as for example in the LXX text of Exodus 34.28) and in reference to Jesus - the divine made manifest - thus implying a fundamental principle which describes/reveals the nature of Being and beings, and thus the relationship between Being and beings.

In this case, between the divinity and we mortals, and the duties and responsibilities of mortals.

Thus the translation 'In primacy was the logos.'

c) θεὸς

A transliteration for two basic reasons. (i) Because this is the very beginning of the text, with nothing having been mentioned so far about the nature or the attributes of the deity, and (ii) because the English word God now implies a particular cultural interpretation, the assumption being of God, as father. It is here just theos, or Theos if one reads Θεόν rather than θεόν, which after much reflexion, I am inclined to do.

The nature and attributes of Theos do become revealed, as the text proceeds, and to transliterate here is to approach the text as the evangel it was, and to thus possibly appreciate how it was received by those who first heard it or read it in the formative years of Christianity.

i) In respect of Theos, the lack of the definite article in θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος formed part of a certain theological controversy in the 4th and 5th centuries CE concerning the nature of Theos/God and the nature of Spiritus/The Holy Spirit (qv. 4.24). The basis of the controversy was whether 'the Theos' (ὁ θεός, The God) was the same or different from Theos, and if so whether Jesus, as the son of Theos, was always-existent (and thus the same as The God) or came-into-being afterwards, with the dispute later described as the Arian controversy, with 'Arianism' (the belief that Jesus was not equivalent to The God) denounced as a 'heresy'.

ii) In respect of the meaning of θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος there was also some dispute on grammatical grounds and which dispute continued into the Renaissance and beyond. The conventional reading was "the logos was Theos", with the minority reading (qv. Jean Daillé) being "Theos was the logos." Although my initial reading - as evident in earlier drafts of my translation - was 'Theos was the logos' I have, after much reflection and a re-reading of pertinent texts by John Chrysostom, Origen, and others, decided on "the logos was Theos."

2.

a) πρὸς τὸν θεόν

What does πρὸς τὸν θεόν mean? Perhaps not exactly what the conventional translation of 'with' implies, given πρὸς here is a preposition (with the accusative) which is generally indicative of movement (*toward*, or to interact with, or *unto*, something) and that, for the reader of the translation, 'the Logos was *with* Theos' is

not very clear. With, the reader might well enquire, in what manner? As in the sense of being beside, or close? As in the Shakespearean Heaven doth with us as we with torches do? [1] As in – a sense not relevant to the Greek here but which English usage might suggest – supporting?

The English word *with* – with all its possible meanings, recent and otherwise – is not therefore in my view altogether satisfactory in suggesting the sense of the Greek. In the subsequent verse of John – 1.42 πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν – the sense is *to* Jesus, and in Hebrews 2:17 τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν suggests the sense of 'concerning', of relating to, which the English word *with* can also denote.

Positioned as it is between 'the primacy of the Logos' and the 'Logos was Theos', the sense – because of the repeated ἦν – suggests melded, with a free, non-literal, interpretation therefore being:

In primacy, the Logos, with Logos and Theos melded, for the Logos was Theos.

This evangel does not, therefore in my view, begin with some sort of philosophical statement of a neo-Platonist kind about some metaphysical principle termed Logos, but rather is a reminder that, for mortals, what has and had primacy was Logos understood, prior to Jesus, as the divine guidance manifest in the wisdom that is the Law, and that this wisdom, given to mortals by the divinity was, of itself and for us, a divine manifestation, a presencing, of the divinity. A sense which the mention of John the Baptist in v. 6-7 confirms, for John was sent by the divinity to testify – μαρτυρήση – as to this truth. For God is Wisdom, the Law, and the Law is of God and, importantly according to the Old Testament context of this gospel and of the other gospels, how mortals could – before the birth of Jesus – know and understand and be in the presence of God. As Paul of Tarsus expressed it in relation to the evangel of Jesus of Nazareth:

πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη

love is the completion of the law [2]

With arrival of Jesus, the Logos is manifest in and through his life, teachings, crucifixion, death and resurrection, with reverence of and trust in Jesus reverence of and trust in Theos, with Jesus saying in 4.21 that "there is a season arriving when you will reverence the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem," and in 3.16 that "all those trusting in him would not perish but might have life everlasting."

b) Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν

This line, with its repetition of ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ and of πρὸς τὸν θεόν from line 1 is very interesting, especially in relation to οὗτος which here imputes the sense of "for *this* was in [that] primacy [already melded] with Theos," a translation which in my view is somewhat more meaningful than the conventional [3] "the same was in the beginning with God" and certainly more accurate than the "He was with God in the beginning" of some newer translations.

3.

πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο

ἐγένετο - born, or (even better) *came into being*, rather than the more prosaic 'made' as if in illusion to something having been manufactured. The sense is of things - of beings - coming into being, given existence, because of and by Theos.

4.

a) ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων

Literally, "in whom The Life was" (that is, in whom The Life had being, existence) and "which Life was [became] the φάος of human beings."

b) ἄνθρωπος - human beings, rather than the archaic 'man/Mankind'.

An alternative for ζωὴ would be 'being' in the sense of having existence as opposed to non-existence (death), suggesting "Who was Being and which being became [through Theos] the φάος [the being] of human beings."

Given that φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, 'the spark', of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen, I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which all other translations use and which, as in the case of God, has, in the context of the evangel of Jesus of Nazareth, acquired particular meanings mostly as a result of centuries of exegesis and which therefore conveys or might convey something that the Greek word, as used by the author of this particular Greek text, might not have done.

Hence my transliteration - using the Homeric φάος instead of φῶς - and which transliteration requires the

reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply. As in the matter of logos, it is most probably not some sort of philosophical principle, neo-Platonist or otherwise.

Interestingly, φῶς occurs in conjunction with ζωή and θεός and ἐγένετο and Ἄνθρωπος in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, thus echoing the evangel of John:

φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος [4]

Life and phaos are [both] of Theos, The Father, Who brought human beings into existence

c) τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει

Here, the value of using the transliteration phaos is evident, for 'phaos illuminates the dark' rather than 'light shines into the darkness' since the suggestion appears to that there is a revealing [5] of what has been obscured; that 'phaos dispels the obscurity' as the illumination brought by the Sun dispels the obscurity that is a feature of the night, or least was, in the days when the evangel of Jesus of Nazareth was revealed, when the dark night could only partially (and not very far, in distance) be illuminated by items such as small oil lamps or by candles or by the flicker of burning torches.

5. ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν

καταλαμβάνω is an interesting word to use, suggestive here, given the context, of an activity - overcome, seize, take - rather than 'comprehend' which is somewhat anthropomorphic.

Hence, 'not overwhelmed by', as the dark of the night cannot overwhelm the illumination that the Sun brings but rather is itself overwhelmed.

12. Nomen: ὄνομα. Not simply 'name' as we understand a name but rather a term, an appellation, 'a word', which expresses or signifies his very nature, his being, his physis.

13. θέλημα - not 'will' but 'design/desire', giving thus "not by the design/desire of mortals/human beings." The English term 'will' has too many modern and post-Hellenic connotations (qv. JS Mill, Nietzsche, JS Huxley, καὶ τὰ λοιπά)

14. καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. Compare the beginning of the Ἱερός Λόγος tractate of the *Corpus*

Hermeticum: Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία, The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.

As noted in my commentary on that tractate, 'numen' expresses the religious sense of δόξα better than ordinary (now overused) words such as 'splendour' and 'glory', and with 'numinal' more expressive and more appropriate there than 'divine'.

πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθεία. Regarding χάρις the English term benevolence is more appropriate than 'grace' given over a thousand years of exegesis in respect of 'grace', including the *sola gratia* of the Reformation. In respect of ἀληθεία I have chosen the Latin *veritas* in order to avoid the disputations - philosophical and otherwise - and the assumptions that the English word 'truth' so often now imputes and engenders, with the reader (or the listener) thus having to reflect on what *veritas* might, in this context, signify. In addition, ἀληθείας here suggests not some abstract, impersonal, 'truth' but rather truthfulness, sincerity, integrity: the type of person that Jesus of Nazareth is. In respect of 'veritas' suggesting such truthfulness and sincerity, qv. the entry for *veritas* in *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis*, volume 4b. Interestingly, Tyndale in his 1526 translation has "which worde was full of grace, and verite," and at 1.17 has "favour and verite cam by Jesus Christ."

15. ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν

The sense of γίνομαι here is 'came-into-being' (before me), rather than simply 'was before me' for the usage is metaphysical as often in the Corpus Hermeticum, for example Poemandres 17, tractate III:3, tractate IV:4.

17. νόμος. A transliteration - *nomos* - since as with *logos* a particular metaphysical principle is implied and one which requires contextual interpretation; a sense somewhat lost if the English word 'law' is used especially given what the word 'law' often now imputes.

18. Reading *μονογενῆς θεὸς* with NA28 and not the 'Byzantine textual' variant ὁ μονογενῆς υἱὸς which most translators - ancient and modern - have favoured given the difficulty of translating *μονογενῆς θεὸς* in context, although the meaning seems clear: "while no one so far has beheld Theos, the being [ὁ ὢν] in the greada [κόλπον] of the father has now explained [ξηγήσατο] him."

Regarding *greada*, this Old English word - qv. the tenth/eleventh century Anglo-Saxon version of Luke 16:23 - is a fitting translation of the Greek given that the alternatives, lap, and bosom, seem too anthropomorphic to be used in the context of Theos especially as "no one has ever seen him" with it only being said that Jesus has "explained" who and what Theos is. Interestingly, for this verse of the Gospel of John the Anglo-Saxon

translator used the synonym 'barme' as does the Lindisfarne Gospel in respect of Luke 6:38.

19. ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων. After much consideration I have translated Ἰουδαία not by the conventional term 'Jews' but rather by Judaeans, given (i) that the English terms Jews and Jewish (deriving from the 13th/14th century words *gyv*/*gyw* and *Iewe*) have acquired connotations (modern and medieval) which are not relevant to the period under consideration; and (ii) that the Greek term derives from a place name, Judaea (as does the Latin *iudaeus*); and (iii) that the Anglo-Saxon version (ASV) retains the sense of the Greek: here (*iudeas*) as elsewhere, as for example at 2.6, *æfter iudea gecleansunge*, "according to Judaeian cleansing." [6]

23. ἔφη ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῃ. I have opted for a fairly literal translation, with ἔρημος retaining its original meaning of an 'unpopulated, deserted, forsaken' place, and with βοᾶω suggestive of a caller 'calling out aloud' in such a place. Hence, "I, a call sounding out in forsaken places" rather than the conventional (KJV) "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

26. ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε. One - someone - "you do not know" in the sense of not perceiving (seeing) them; that is, not recognizing them. Cf. *συννοία δὲ δάπτομαι κέαρ ὀρών ἐμαυτὸν ὧδε προυσελούμενον* (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 438), "disturbing things devour my heart since I recognize just how mistreated I have been."

Interestingly, the ASV of the Gospel of John has *ne cunnon* so that the text can be read "not acquainted/not familiar with." Cf. *Beowulf*:

metod hie ne cuþon,
dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god,
ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon,
wuldres waldend. (180-183)

[they were] unacquainted with The Chief,
Judge of deeds, and with the Lord God,
as well as unacquainted with how to praise
That Defender of Heaven, the King of Glory.

29. ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου. As mentioned in the Preface, I translate ἁμαρτία not by the conventional 'sin' but rather by 'error' or 'mistake', which is quite apposite here considering the use of the singular and the preceding mention of Jesus as the Lamb of God: of Jesus having arrived to remove the error,

the fault, that 'the world' has made, has fallen into, with 'the Lamb of God' thus healing the injury so caused. Which is quite different from some preacher sternly preaching about 'sin' and warning about the 'fire and brimstone' that await sinners. As Thomas Aquinas noted in his commentary on this passage, "Alia ratio ut excluderet errorem." (Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura, caput I, Lectio 14)

32.

a) τὸ πνεῦμα. Almost without exception, since Wycliffe's Bible the Greek here has been translated as "the spirit", although the ASV has *gast* (*gast of heofenum*), whence the later English word 'ghost'. However, given what the terms 'spirit' and 'ghost' - both in common usage, and as a result of over a thousand years of Christian exegesis - now impute, it is apposite to offer an alternative and one which is germane to the milieu of the Gospels or which at least suggests something of the numinosity presented, in this instance, via the Gospel of John. Given that the transliteration *pnuema* - with its modern association with terms such as *pneumatic* - does not unequivocally suggest the numinous, I have chosen *spiritus*, as referenced in respect of *gast* in Wright's *Anglo-Saxon And Old English Vocabularies* [7].

b) ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. Conventionally, οὐρανός here is always translated as 'heaven' although the term 'heaven' - used in the context of the Gospels - now has rather different connotations than the Greek οὐρανός, with the word 'heaven' now often implying something explained by almost two thousand years of exegesis and as depicted, for example, in medieval and Renaissance Christian art. However, those hearing or reading this particular Greek gospel for the first time in the formative years of Christianity would most probably have assumed the usual Greek usage of "the heavens" in the sense of the "the star-filled firmament above" or in the sense of "the sky" or as the abode of theos and/or of the gods (ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοί), an assumption consistent with the fact that the Evangelist explains and interprets certain non-Greek words (qv. the comment on 1.42) and considering also his use of a colloquial Greek expression (qv. the comment on 1.51).

It therefore seems apposite to suggest a more neutral word than 'heaven' as a translation of οὐρανός and one which might not only be understood in various 'classical' ways by an audience of Greek speakers (such as the ways described above) but also be open to a new, and Christian, interpretation consistent with the milieu that existed when the Gospel of John was written and first heard. That is, before the exegesis of later centuries and long before post-Roman Christian iconography. Hence my suggestion of the post-classical Latin term *Empyrean*, which can bear the interpretation of the abode of theos and/or of the gods, of "the sky", of the "the star-filled firmament above"; and a Christian one suggested by Genesis 2.8 - παράδεισον ἐν Ἐδεμ (the Paradise of Eden) - and also by *shamayim*, שָׁמַיִם

33. ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. *in Halig Spiritus*. I have here used the Old English word Halig - as for example found in the version of John 17.11 in the Lindisfarne Gospel, 'Du halig fæder' - to translate ἅγιος rather than the later word 'holy' derived as that is from halig and used as it was by Wycliffe in his 1389 translation of this phrase, "in the Hooly Gost", which itself echoes the ASV, "on Halgum Gaste."

The unique phrase *in Halig Spiritus* - in place of the conventional 'with the Holy Spirit' - may thus express something of the numinosity, and the newness, of the original Gospel, especially as the word 'holy' has been much overused, imputes particular meanings from over a thousand years of exegesis, and, latterly in common parlance, has become somewhat trivialized.

In respect of ἐν, while most translators have opted here (as in respect of 1.26 ff) for "with", I have opted for "in", given that John baptized "in water" - for example, in Aenon - and given that Jesus baptizes "in, with" (in the name of) Halig Spiritus.

39. ὥρα ἧν ὡς δεκάτη. To translate ὥρα here as 'hour' is somewhat misleading given that the term 'hour' now means a fixed period of sixty minutes whereas the day of the ancient (Roman governed) milieu of the Gospel was divided into twenty-four durations or periods and which durations depended on the length of daylight (and thus the season) at the location in question, with there being twelve durations of daylight and twelve durations of night. Hence the 'tenth duration' mentioned in this verse - whether it be the tenth duration of the daylight hours or the tenth duration of the twenty-four - would not necessarily equate to what we would term 'ten o'clock' in the morning and certainly would not equate to a tenth 'hour' lasting sixty minutes. In addition, it depends on when the first duration was measured from: sunrise, or sunset, or from 'the mid-point of the night'. Which has led to debate among scholars as to whether or not John in this Gospel is, in respect of ὥρα, using Roman terminology for such periods, as well as to debates about whether the Roman durations were reckoned from 'the mid-point of the night' or from sunrise. If reckoned from sunrise, then allowing for latitude and seasonal variation, this 'tenth duration' was between mid to late afternoon. If reckoned from 'the mid-point of the night' then this 'tenth duration' was mid to late morning.

This fluid, local, sense of 'time' is well-expressed by the Old English word *tyd* - from whence the term *tide* - which signified a period, a duration, of the day or of a season when it was appropriate or propitious to undertake a specific task or tasks. Hence the ASV having - for ὥρα ἧν ὡς δεκάτη - *hyt wæs þa seo teoðe tyd*. Such a fluid sense of an appropriate or propitious duration - a tide, a moment, a season - is apposite in several instances when John uses the term ὥρα, as for example at vv. 2.4 and 7.30.

41. τὸν Μεσσίαυ. The Messiah. Following Wycliffe and Tyndale, I have transliterated as Messiah (ASV has

Messiam) rather than the more usual Messiah, given how the term Messiah is now commonly used in a non-Christian way. As John Chrysostom noted in his commentary on this verse (Migne Patrologia Graeca 59, Homily XIX), the use here of the definite article by the Evangelist seems deliberate: with Jesus described as *The* Messias, rather than *a* messias.

42. ὁ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος. I have transliterated Πέτρος - rather than translate as 'Rock' - and for ἐρμηνεύω (the etymon of the relatively modern, c.1670's, term hermeneutic) have chosen 'explain' to compliment the previous use of μεθερμηνεύω, 'interpretation'.

44. ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Ἀνδρέου καὶ Πέτρου. While πόλις here is invariably translated as 'city' that English word is misleading given (i) the modern connotations of the term city, and (ii) with Bethsaida being described by Mark (8.22-23) - ἔξω τῆς κώμης - as a village, and (iii) that some archaeological evidence points to Bethsaida being et-Tell, which in New Testament times was a small fishing settlement beside the Sea of Galilee. Thus, I incline toward the view that πόλις here is best translated as 'community', qv. Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus, 22 and 28. [8]

51.

a) ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα. Conventionally, "you will see [the] heaven[s] open" although as noted in the comment on 1.32 the term 'heaven' now has rather different connotations than the Greek οὐρανός. While, as at 1.32, Empyrean is suitable, the context suggests the ordinary meaning of "the sky", thus avoiding the colloquial "you will see the heavens open."

b) τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ. Conventionally, "the angels of God," but as seems apparent from the use by the Evangelist of expressions such as ἐρμηνεύω and μεθερμηνεύω - explaining and interpreting unusual (for Greek speakers) words such as Rabbi - those hearing or reading this particular gospel for the first time would have been familiar with ἄγγελος as an 'envoy' or as a 'messenger', not as an "angel" and certainly not as a being of the type described by later Christian iconography. Because of this, I incline toward the view that the English word 'angel' is unsuitable as a translation here leading as it does to retrospective reinterpretation of the text. Hence, "those envoys of Theos."

c) τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Is it possible to interpret this in English without defaulting to the masculine singular thus avoiding the conventional appellation *the Son of Man*, and thus providing 'gender inclusive'

alternatives? In the case of υἱὸς this could be 'descendant' - or the later second/third century (CE) 'child' - although ἀνθρώπου is more problematic. For example the Oxford Inclusive version [9] has, for the Son of Man, "the Human One" which rather distorts the meaning of the Greek, missing at it does the reference to υἱὸς, while the inclusive terms 'human' and 'human being' combined with υἱὸς as child impart a particular meaning - the human child, child of human beings - which particular meaning does not readily convey the theological and Biblical resonances of the terms Son of Man/Son of Mankind.

Hence my choice of "the son of a mortal" - of *a* mortal (singular), not of *mortals* (plural) - which not only resonates with the narrative of the Virgin Birth but also provides a necessary contrast with expressions such as Ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος (in truth, this was the Son of Theos) in Matthew 27.54. Hence, Jesus as being a son born of one particular mortal and also being the son of an immortal, a mortal descendant of Theos/God who as a mortal suffers and dies, and yet who, as the Son of Theos, arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

ooo

Chapter Two

4.

a) τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι. This has been somewhat misunderstood in two respects. Firstly, the rather colloquial Greek phrase τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί occurs in Epictetus (Discourses, Book II, 19) and means "what is this between you and me?" That is, what has this to do with us? [10] Secondly, to translate γύναι here as "woman" is misleading, giving the impression as it does of a rebuke. However, correctly understood in its cultural context, it is a polite honorific in the same way that the modern expression "ladies and gentlemen" is a polite form of address. The phrase in Epictetus is followed by ἄνθρωπε; here, the phrase is followed by γύναι, with the former approximating to "friend, fellow, sir" and the latter to "friend, my lady, wife" with 'wife' being, in such a cultural context, an expression of familial inclusion, or of friendship, or of politeness, and thus not restricted to one's partner by marriage, a fact expressed by the ASV version of this passage: *la wif, hwæt ys me & þe*, a literal translation of which is "Wife, what's this to me and thee?"

b) οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου. The sense of ὥρα here is 'season'. Which season is that of 'the signs' (σημεῖα), of the Passion, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his Ascension.

8. ἀρχιτρίκλιος. Literally, 'the authority at the feast'. The English term 'master of ceremonies' suitably suggests the function of this person.

11. ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων. The fact that the Evangelist uses the word σημεῖον and not δυνάμεις as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is notable and thus should be reflected in the translation, with σημεῖον a 'sign', an 'indication', or an 'omen', and with δύναμις literally implying 'force', 'power', 'authority', and which has generally - in respect of the other Gospels - been translated as 'miracle' (a manifestation of divine power).

13. τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων. As with ἰουδαία (qv. 1.19) I have retained the meaning of the Greek and thus have here transliterated πάσχα - pascha - rather than translated as 'Passover' especially as (i) the term Passover now has (often modern) connotations not relevant to the milieu of John the Evangelist and his Gospel, and (ii) that the Greek Orthodox Church retains the word πάσχα in respect of Easter, and (iii) there has been some theological debate as to whether the Christian pascha (that is, Easter) has through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus voided the pascha (and the Temple in Jerusalem) of the type that the Evangelist goes on to describe.

Thus I incline toward the view that the conventional translation here of "the Passover of the Jews" may impose meanings (especially modern meanings) not merited by the original text while a literal translation - "the pascha of the Judaeans" - is open to contextual interpretation, the context here being what John the Evangelist narrates in his Gospel about the signs (σημεῖα) and about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This literal sense is retained in the Latin version of the verse: et prope erat pascha Iudaeorum et ascendit Hierosolyma Iesus.

As to whether the juxtaposition of κατέβη and ἀνέβη - 'went down', to Capernaum and 'went up', to Jerusalem - in verses 12 and 13 - have any significance is moot, with some suggesting that it is meant literally since Jerusalem was at a higher elevation in relation to Capernaum; others that it is metaphorical given that Jerusalem was the capital of Judea and the site of the Temple; while others, such as Thomas Aquinas, compared it to Ephesians IV, 10, and thus considered it in theological terms as a 'descending' and then an 'ascending', with Aquinas writing:

"Sed non vacat a mysterio, quod in Capharnaum descendit, et postmodum Ierosolymam ascendit. Nisi enim descendisset primum, non competisset ei ascendere: quia, ut dicitur Eph. IV, 10, qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit." *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, caput II, Lectio 1

That he descended to Capernaum and then ascended to Jerusalem is not without its mystery since if he did not first descend he would not have been able to then ascend, for as has been related (Eph. IV, 10) "The one who descended is the same as the one who ascended." [11]

22. καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς.

a) The consensus is that γραφῇ here - as throughout the New Testament - has the meaning 'scripture' rather than its normal sense of 'that which is written', with the English word 'scripture' (usually written with a capital S) having the specific meaning "the writings of the Old and/or of the New Testament". However, this specific meaning only dates back to c.1300 and was used by Wycliffe in his 1389 translation, from whence, via Tyndale, it was used in the King James version. Prior to 1300, the ASV has *gewrite* - 'what was written', writing, inscription - with the Latin of Jerome having *scripturae*, as does Codex Palatinus of the earlier Vetus Latina. [12] Classically understood, the Latin has the same meaning as the Greek γραφῇ: writing, something written, an inscription. [13]

Considering what has been mentioned regarding how the Evangelist explained and interpreted certain non-Greek words (qv. the comment on 1.42) and considering also his use of a colloquial Greek expression (qv. the comment on 1.51) it seems probable that the Evangelist is using the word γραφῇ in its usual sense, and that it was only much later that the Greek word, and the Latin *scripturae*, were interpreted to mean 'Scripture' in the 14th century sense of the English word.

Thus I have retained here the ordinary meaning of the Greek, with the reference to the Old Testament being implied by the phrase "trusted what was written."

b) The use here of the singular - τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, 'the word (logos) that Jesus had spoken' - is notable, and occurs several times in this Gospel in relation to Jesus, as for example at 5.24, 14.23, and 15.3.

23. ἐν τῷ πάσχα ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ. The sense of the Greek is "at pascha on the feast-day." Interestingly, for πάσχα here the ASV has *eastron* - Ða he wæs on ierusalem on eastron on freols-daige; Wycliffe has *pask* - And whanne Jhesus was at Jerusalem in pask, in the feeste dai - and Tyndale has *ester*; "When he was at Ierusalem at ester in the feaste".

24. γινώσκειν πάντας. That is, as the Evangelist goes on to explain, he apprehended - he understood - the motivations, the character, of those who trusted him because he aware of, he knew, the person within.

Chapter Three

1. ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων. In reference to Nicodemus, this can be, and has been, interpreted in several ways. As referring to "an Elder," to "a leader," to "a ruler," as well as to "a prince" (cf. 16.11, ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου, "Prince of this world," in reference to τοῦ διαβόλου, the Devil). Given Mark 8.31 - τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων - I have opted for "a leader of the Judaeans."
2. οὗτος ἦλθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ. While many translations refer to Jesus here - as does the KJV, "the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him" - he is not named in the Greek verse, which verse together with the proceeding one might colloquially be translated as "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a leader of the Judaeans. The same it was who arrived at night and said to he himself..."
3. γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν. The question that Nicodemus goes on to ask - πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέροντων - suggests the sense of ἄνωθεν here: 'anew', rather than 'from above.'
4. τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς. Although this literally means "the cavity of the mother" it is most often translated as "the womb of the mother" although the ASV has, instead of 'cavity', 'innoðe' - the 'inside' of the body - and Tyndale simply has 'body' (hys moders body). For the sake of clarity, I have chosen 'womb' here.
5. ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος. In respect of τὸ πνεῦμα as 'the Spiritus' - rather than the conventional 'the Spirit' - cf. the comment on 1.32. Also, I have translated literally - ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς, of the flesh; and ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος, of the Spiritus - thus preserving the definite article, something sometimes lost in translation, although preserved in both Tyndale and the KJV.
8. δεῖ ὑμᾶς γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. The plural 'you' is meant here: 'it is needful for you all [for everyone] to be born anew.'
10. σὺ εἶ ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. Given the use here of the definite article, διδάσκαλος suggests something more than just 'teacher' - cf. 3.2 - and I have therefore opted to use the Latin term Magister, implying as it does a particular and high official status, rather than use the literal "*the* teacher of Israel".

Given the definite article, it is debatable as to whether the Evangelist here wants to convey that Jesus is

using the appellation ὁ διδάσκαλος politely or as a rebuke, although I incline toward the view that it is meant politely. Whatever the intent, the effect is that Nicodemus stays silent either because of being rebuked or because he realizes that despite being known as a Magister he really does not know everything. That the Evangelist later on describes Nicodemus trying to ensure a fair trial for Jesus (7.50f) and assisting in the burial of Jesus (19.39ff) might indicate the latter.

In addition, in order to suggest something about the use here of the conjunctive (which allows for several interpretations of the interrogative) I have avoided the English 'and' and used dashes, thus placing the emphasis on whether or not Nicodemus is aware or unaware of such matters as Jesus has mentioned.

12.

a) οὐ πιστεύετε. As at 1.7, 2.11, and 2.24, the personal context suggests 'trust' rather than 'believe'. Here, 'trust' emphasises the person, the character, of Jesus, while 'belief' can convey a belief in something abstract, impersonal, such as a dogma or some particular interpretation of some faith.

b) τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε. As noted in the comment on 1.32, I have translated οὐρανός not by the conventional English word 'heaven' but by Empyrean. Similarly, for ἐπουράνιος here I have avoided the word 'heavenly' (with all its connotations, ancient, modern, and colloquial) and chosen 'caelestien', a 14th century variant spelling of the post-classical Latin 'caelestianus' which derives from the classical Latin caelestia (celestial).

The effect here of using 'caelestien', as with the use of words such as 'numen' and transliterations such as Theos and phaos, is to suggest the ancient milieu of those who were reading or who were listening to this Gospel in the early years of Christianity, centuries before now common words such as 'heaven', grace, God, and Light had acquired particular theological meanings and an associated iconography.

13. ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Reading the addition ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ with the Textus Receptus and Tischendorf, and which addition is followed by the ASV, Wycliffe, Tyndale, and the KJV.

In respect of "the son of a mortal" for ὁ υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, cf. the comment on 1.51.

19-20. ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα. For their deeds were harmful; that is, caused pain and suffering. To impute to πονηρός here the meaning of a moral abstract 'evil' is, in my view, mistaken. Similarly with the

following φαῦλος in v.20 which imparts the sense of being 'mean', indifferent.

Since the Phaos is Jesus, those who are mean, those who do harm, avoid Jesus because (qv. 2.25) he - as the only begotten son of Theos - knows the person within and all their deeds. Thus, fearing being exposed, they avoid him, and thus cannot put their trust in him and so are condemned and therefore lose the opportunity of eternal life.

21. ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Literally, 'they practising the disclosing.' That is, those who disclose - who do not hide - who they are and what deeds they have done, and who thus have no reason to fear exposure. Here, as in vv.19-20, the meaning is personal - about the character of people - and not about abstractions such as "evil" and "truth", just as in previous verses it is about trusting in the character of Jesus. Hence why here ἀλήθεια is 'sincerity', a disclosing, a revealing - the opposite of lying and of being deceitful - and not some impersonal 'truth'.

24. βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν. A phrase deserving some consideration, for φυλακή is not 'prison' as prisons are understood today and in the past few centuries but rather 'a guarded cage', with βεβλημένος εἰς implying a forceful 'throwing' or a hurling into such a cage.

25. περὶ καθαρισμοῦ. *about the cleansing*. The term 'the cleansing' refers to the traditional ritual purification undertaken by Judaeans.

29. Here, as at 2.9, I have translated νυμφίος by the older (and gender neutral) English term 'spouse' rather than by the now common - rather overused - term bridegroom. In regard to νύμφη I have likewise avoided 'bride' and chosen espousess which - as with espouse - is a variant spelling of espousee, a 14th century term used by Wycliffe and contemporaries, and which term seems apposite here since from the 12th to the 14th centuries it also had a specific religious connotation, being used (as with spouse) in a gender neutral way in reference to those who were devoted to Jesus, although it later came to refer only to those women, such as nuns, who devoted their lives to Jesus.

33. The phrase "certifies by their seal" expresses the literal meaning of ἐσφράγισεν here. Similarly, the meaning of ἀληθής here is well-expressed by the Old English term *soothfast* - trustworthy, steadfast - and which term is used in this verse in the ASV (god ys soðfestnysse) and in the translation by Wycliffe, with *soothe*, and various other derivatives, also used in the Lindisfarne Gospels.

36. οὐκ ὄψεται ζώην. There are two ways of understanding the literal 'shall not see life' depending on how ὄραω is understood in context: as a reference to life everlasting (will not see life everlasting) or as will not perceive, apprehend, understand, take heed of life (for the opportunity it is).

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Chapter Four

1. Ὡς οὖν ἔγνω ὁ Ἰησοῦς. The Textus Receptus, and Westcott and Hort, have κύριος (Lord, Master) instead of Ἰησοῦς.

4. Ἔδει δὲ αὐτὸν διέρχεσθαι διὰ τῆς Σαμαρείας. The Evangelist states that it was necessary (δεῖ) for Jesus to walk through Samaria which given what follows (vv.9-10) suggests a certain historical antipathy between the people of Judaea and the people of Samaria even though the Samaritans - as is apparent from the Gospel - shared many, but not all, of the religious traditions of the Judaeans, as did most of the people of Galilee, including Jesus. Since the Evangelist specifically writes that it was Judaeans who sought to kill Jesus (5.18; 7.1; 7.19 et seq) it seems as if the antipathy by Judaeans to Jesus of Nazareth in particular and to Samaritans in general - with the Evangelist stating that Judaeans would not share or make use of (συγχρόμαι) Samaritan things - arose from Judaeans in general believing that their religious practices based on their particular interpretation of the religion of Moses and the Prophets were correct and that they themselves as a result were 'righteous' - better than Samaritans - with Jesus the Galilean considered by many Judaeans, and certainly by the priestly authorities, as having committed (qv. 10.33) 'blasphemy' (βλασφημία) and thus should be killed.

Such differing religious traditions, such internecine feuds, such religious fanaticism and intolerance on behalf of some Judaeans - an intolerance exemplified also when (qv. 10.22) one of the guards of Caiaphas the High Priest (Καϊάφαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα) physically assaults Jesus for not showing the High Priest "due deference" - exemplifies why in this Gospel Ἰουδαία should (qv. my comment on 2.13) be translated not by the conventional term 'Jews' but rather by Judaeans.

6. ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη. In respect of ὥρα as 'duration' rather than 'hour' qv. the comment on 1.39. As noted there, there are two means of reckoning the durations, with this sixth duration thus being either around the middle

of the day (reckoned from the time of sunrise at the location) or early evening.

7.

a) Ἐρχεται γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας. Given that the English word Samaritan now has meanings which are not relevant to the text here I have opted to use the term Samaritans - rather than Samaritans - to describe the people of Samaria. Hence here the phrase a 'Samaritan woman' rather than a 'Samaritan woman'.

b) δός μοι πεῖν. I take the sense of δίδωμι here to be the more polite 'grant' rather than 'give'. Combined with πεῖν - to drink - this (grant me to drink) imparts a somewhat different tone than the conventional "give me a drink."

9. πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν. This is interesting for three reasons. Firstly, the use of πῶς, 'how' (by what means). Secondly the statement σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν, 'you being Judaeon'. Thirdly the repetition of πεῖν.

The Evangelist then explains the reason for her asking 'how can' Jesus accept water from her: because Judaeans would not share or make use of (συγχρόμαι) Samaritan things. Which leaves unexplained why the woman - who as the Evangelist goes on to explain has a similar religious heritage to Jesus of Galilee - considers him as being from Judaea.

10.

a) εἰ ἤδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ. The ASV has *Gif þu wistes godes gyfe*, with 'wistes' - wistist, in Wycliffe - well-expressing in English the sense of ἤδεις here: "if you were witan to the gift of Theos," or more colloquially "if you were wise to the gift of Theos."

b) ὕδωρ ζῶν. Here, ὕδωρ ζῶν, 'living water' - that is, the water of life, ὕδωρ ζωῆς - has both a metaphysical and a literal meaning. The literal meaning of fresh, clean, water is evident from the reply of the Samaritan woman: οὔτε ἀντλημα ἔχεις, you have nothing to haul-out [water] with. The metaphysical meaning is explained by the Evangelist in the verses which follow: the living water is the gift of Halig Spiritus (the Holy Spirit) and which gift is eternal life.

20. οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν. Given that there is no context - no mention of the form or type of 'worship' - the term 'reverence' seems appropriate regarding προσκυνέω, expressing as it does

both the lack of detail in the narrative and the ambiguity the Greek can have, from a profound 'reverence' - as in the custom of prostration - to an action of honourable respect - as in bowing or being in awe of or showing admiration for - to a silent or verbal (prayerful) personal or communal veneration. In addition, since the English term 'worship' has, over centuries, acquired many religious connotations - both Christian and otherwise - that are not or may not be relevant here, the term is unsuitable, projecting as it does or can do particular meanings onto the text.

21. γύναι. In respect of the polite form of address - here, 'My lady' - rather than the conventional (rather strident) 'woman', qv. the comment on 2.4.

22. ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν. Given (i) that σωτηρία is 'deliverance'; and (ii) that the term 'salvation' has acquired particular meanings through centuries of exegesis, and (ii) that Ἰουδαίων implies Judaeans, the statement is that "deliverance is of - arises from, is because of - the Judaeans." For it is Judaeans who seek to kill Jesus for blasphemy (qv. 10.33) and Judaeans who bring Jesus before Pontious Pilate and insist that he be crucified.

23. ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. In respect of ἀλήθεια as 'sincerity' qv.3.21; hence οἱ ἀληθινοὶ as 'the sincere'. In respect of 'reverencers' - "the sincere reverencers will reverence the Father in spiritus and sincerity" - the English word reverencer dates back to the 16th century and has been regularly used since, denoting as it does a person who shows reverence toward someone or toward something deserving of reverence, qv. 4.20.

As to whether spiritus here is Spiritus as in 1.31-2 (the Halig Spiritus, Halgum Gaste, Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit) or refers to an interior 'spiritual' reverence (cf. 3.6) has been much discussed, with the consensus being that it refers to Halig Spiritus.

24. πνεῦμα ὁ θεός. This can be read "Theos: Spiritus," and - like θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος in v.1 - lead to some theological controversy in the 4th and 5th centuries CE concerning the nature of Theos/God and the nature of Spiritus/The Holy Spirit, for here, as with θεός in v.1, πνεῦμα lacks the definite article while in v.1 λόγος does not.

26. Ἐγώ εἰμι ἰὸ λαλῶν σοι. The first part - Ἐγώ εἰμι - literally means "I am." Most translations insert 'he' - "I am he" - which rather lessens the impact of what Jesus says, which is that he just "is", beyond causality itself and thus beyond any manifestation of Being - on Earth - as "a being", be such a being the mortal Messias or some

other mortal. Expressed less philosophically, Jesus says that it is the divinity who is speaking to her: "it is *I AM* who is speaking to you." Cf. 8.24.

34. ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον. Given (i) θέλημα not as 'will' but rather as 'design' in the sense of 'a plan' that someone can bring to fruition - cf. 1.13 - and (ii) that ποιέω can imply make, produce, construct, and (iii) the following ἔργον, then this suggests the more evocative "undertake the design of [the one] having sent me and accomplish His work."

35. τετράμηνος. Not 'of or lasting four months' but 'of four moons' (four new moons). The word 'month' - with its modern implications of a particular number of days and of there being twelve months in a year - imposes meanings on the text that are not relevant to life in ancient times in a rather remote Roman province during the reign of Tiberius.

I read ἤδη as part of v.35 and not as the beginning of v.36.

36. εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Here, while the English words 'for' or 'unto' for εἰς are not entirely satisfactory - since the sense is of *for* the purpose of entering into life everlasting - I can find no suitable alternatives.

37. ἐν γὰρ τούτῳ ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθινός. The context suggests the meaning of ἀληθινός here. In this [matter] - ἐν γὰρ τούτῳ - of sowing and reaping Jesus says that one person has sown the crop and another person has reaped that crop, which as an objective statement of fact is not always 'true' since the same person can sow a crop and also later on reap the crop they had sown. Thus ἀληθινός here does not suggest 'true' in an objective way but 'real, genuine, trustworthy' - cf. Aristotle, Eudemian Ethics, Book VII, 1236b, ἀληθινός φίλος, a 'genuine friend'; also Plato, Republic, Book I, 347d, ἀληθινός ἄρχων, a trustworthy leader.

That is, in this particular instance the saying is trustworthy, correct; it is relevant. There is therefore no need to suggest, as some commentators have done, that this simple statement of fact is a spiritual maxim concerning the spiritual reality behind outward appearance.

42. ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου. Some MSS - including the Textus Receptus - have ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου ὁ χριστός. It is possible that ὁ χριστός - 'the Christ' - was appended because σωτήρ was an epithet of Zeus (cf. Pindar, Olympian Ode, 5.40, Σωτήρ ὑψινεφές Ζεῦ) and other classical deities and in its Latin form, Servator, was often used in reference to the Roman Emperor and those who had done significant deeds beneficial to Rome or its Empire.

While generally translated in the Gospels as saviour, the classical sense is someone who protects, defends, and preserves; in respect of individuals, someone or some divinity who protects, can defend, them and preserve their life; in respect of communities, someone or some divinity who protects, defends, and maintains the community and thus the status quo, qv. Cicero:

ego tantis periculis propositis cum, si victus essem, interitus rei publicae, si vicissem, infinita dimicatio pararetur, committerem ut idem perditor rei publicae nominarer qui servator fuissem.
(For Placinius, 36.89)

Since both 'Saviour' and 'Redeemer', in the almost two thousand years since the Gospel was written - and first read and heard - have acquired particular theological (and especially soteriological) meanings which are not or may not have been relevant all those centuries ago I have chosen to use the Latin term *servator*. This avoids imposing upon the text much later theological/soteriological meanings, iconography, and archetypes; as for example in the following: "est duplex salus: quaedam vera, quaedam non vera. Vera quidem salus, cum liberamur a veris malis, et conservamur in veris bonis." (Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, caput 4, lectio 5)

The term *servator* also has the benefit of suggesting that the Evangelist, in using the expression ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, might have been contrasting Jesus - as *Servator of The World* - with the Roman Emperor as *servator* of the Roman Empire.

44. ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ πατρίδι. This does not refer to Galilee itself - or to "in his own country" as in the KJV - but rather to "his home village," Nazareth. As to the size of Nazareth during the life of Jesus, and thus as whether it was a town or a village, scholarly opinion - based on the scant archaeological and historical evidence - indicates it was probably a village, not a town, and certainly not a city.

46. τις βασιλικὸς. The 'royal official' belonged to the court of King Herod and the term βασιλικὸς might well have been used by the Evangelist to distinguish this official from a Roman one.

47. ἡρώτα ἵνα καταβῆ. The use of καταβαίνω (descend, come down) is suggestive of topography, with Capernaum a town by the Sea of Galilee and Cana (wherever it was located historically) somewhat higher up, just as Nazareth is above that Sea.

52.

a) ἐν ἧ̃ κομψότερον ἔσχευ. I have translated literally - eschewing prosaic terms such as 'got better' and 'began' - in order to try and convey the meaning of the Greek, of a royal official using a precise expression: κομψότερον ἔσχευ, which implies a sudden 'betterment', a remarkable recovery, rather than 'began to get better.'

b) Ἐχθὲς ὥραν ἑβδόμην. In respect of ὥρα as 'duration' qv. 1.39. As noted there regarding determining durations, the 'sixth duration' mentioned here could be either early afternoon or early evening.

54. The exact meaning of the beginning here - of the final verse of chapter 4 - is difficult to deduce since the Greek text - τοῦτο πάλιν δεύτερον σημεῖον, in the Textus Receptus - even when amended to τοῦτο [δὲ] πάλιν δεύτερον σημεῖον is rather obscure. However the general sense seems clear, with the Evangelist narrating either that Jesus did two signs - 'miracles' - in Galilee after he left Judea for Galilee by way of Samaria with one of them being the healing of the son of royal official, or that the two signs in Galilee are the previous one at Cana (water into wine) and the healing of the son of royal official. I incline toward the former, hence: "that was the second sign that Jesus brought about when he arrived in Galilee from Judea."

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Chapter Five

2.

the place of the sheep. Since the Greek προβατικός means "of or relating to sheep" and there is no mention of a 'gate' (or of anything specific such as a market) I prefer a more literal translation. It is a reasonable assumption that the sheep were, and had in previous times been, kept there prior to being offered as sacrifices, as for example sheep are still so held in particular places in Mecca during Eid al-Adha, the Muslim feast of sacrifice.

named in the language of the Hebrews. ἐπιλεγομένη Ἑβραϊστὶ.

3.

the infirm. The Greek word ἀσθενέω implies those lacking normal physical strength.

awaiting a change in the water. Reading ἐκδεχομένων τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος κίνησιν with the Textus Receptus, omitted by NA28, but included in ASV, Tyndale, and Wycliffe.

4. Reading ἄγγελος γὰρ κυρίου κατὰ καιρῶν κατέβαινε (qv. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on John, Book II, V, 1-4, Migne Patrologia Graeca 73) and ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρα, καὶ ἐτάρασσε τὸ ὕδωρ· ὁ οὖν πρῶτος ἐμβὰς μετὰ τὴν παραχῆν τοῦ ὕδατος, ὑγιὴς ἐγένετο, ὧς δὴποτε κατειχέτο νοσήματι with the Textus Receptus. Although the verse is omitted in NA28, and generally regarded as an interpolation, I include it since it is in ASV, Tyndale, Wycliffe, KJV, and Douay-Rheims.

a) *envoy.* As noted in the commentary on 1:51, interpreting ἄγγελος as 'envoy' (of theos) and not as 'angel', particularly given the much later Christian iconography associated with the term 'angel'.

b) *Theos.* Regarding ἄγγελος γὰρ κυρίου, qv. Matthew 28.2 ἄγγελος γὰρ κυρίου καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, "an envoy of [the] Lord/Master descended from Empyrean/the heavens." Since here κύριος implies Theos (cf. John 20.28 where it is used in reference to Jesus), an interpretation such as "envoy of Theos" avoids both the phrase "envoy of the Master" - which is unsuitable given the modern connotations of the word 'master' - and the exegetical phrase "angel/envoy of the Lord" with all its associated and much later iconography both literal, by means of Art, and figurative, in terms of archetypes and one's imagination. An alternative expression would be "envoy of the Domine," with Domine (from the Latin Dominus) used in English both as a respectful form of address and as signifying the authority of the person or deity.

c) *became complete.* ὑγιὴς ἐγένετο. The suggestion is of the person becoming 'whole', complete, *sanus*, and thus ceasing to be 'broken', incomplete, infirm.

8. *bedroll.* κράβατος (Latin, grabatus) has no suitable equivalent in English since in context it refers to the portable bed and bedding of the infirm. The nearest English approximation is bedroll.

9. *And, directly, the man became complete.* καὶ εὐθέως ἐγένετο ὑγιὴς ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Metaphysically, the Evangelist is implying that 'completeness' - wholeness - for both the healthy and the infirm (whether infirm because of sickness or a physical infirmity) arises because of and through Jesus.

10. *treated*. Taking the literal sense of θεραπεύω here. Hence: cared for, treated, attended to. As a healer or a physician might care for, treat, or attend to, someone.

14. *no more missteps*. μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε. That is, make no more mistakes in judgement or in deeds. Qv. the Preface regarding translating ἀμαρτία in a theologically neutral way as 'mistake' or 'error' instead of by the now exegetical English word 'sin'. Cf. 1.29, 8.7, et seq.

16. *harass*. διώκω. Cf. the Latin *persequor*, for the implication is of continually 'following' and pursuing him in order to not only try and worry or distress him but also (as becomes evident) to find evidence against him in order to have him killed, qv. 5.18, 7.1, 7.19 et seq.

18. *annulled the Sabbath*. ἔλυεν τὸ σάββατον. They were more determined to kill Jesus not because he himself had 'broken' the Sabbath but because they believed he had publicly 'annulled' (λύω) the Sabbath by telling someone to do what the Judeans regarded as impermissible, and thus, by now equating himself to Theos, seemed desirous of replacing their Judaeian laws with new laws of his own.

19. *on his own*. ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ. Literally, of/from himself. The verse itself is evocative of a human son learning by observing what his father does.

21. *awakens*. Given the following ζωοποιέω - 'make alive, give life' - I am inclined to take the general sense of ἐγείρω - 'wake' - rather than the specific 'raise up' and which "raising up of the dead" now implies certain post-Hellenic iconographies.

22. *For the father does not choose anyone, having accorded all choosing to his son*. οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ κρίνει οὐδένα, ἀλλὰ τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν δέδωκεν τῷ υἱῷ. The preceding θέλει and the context suggest κρίνω as 'choose' not 'judge', and which interpretation imparts a somewhat different meaning from the conventional one which involves Jesus giving life to 'whomsoever he wishes' and judging them; and a different meaning given how the term 'judgement' has for over two thousand years been interpreted in relation to the Old and the New Testaments.

Instead of such later interpretations, the Evangelist describes how Jesus simply gives life by design because his father - Theos - has given the task of choosing to his son. Which is why Jesus previously said (4:34)

Ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον

My food is that I undertake the design of the one having sent me and accomplish His work.

Thus here Jesus is affirming that he is indeed annulling the laws of the old covenant: it is he who now chooses who has life everlasting. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39, 2 Kings 5:7, et seq.

24. *not entered into the choosing.* εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται. Literally, "does not go to Choosing" - in conventional terms, does not go into judgement - because having heard, and trusted the father through the son, they already have the gift of life everlasting and thus pass straight from death to that new life.

25. *shall hear ... have listened.* ἀκούσουσιν ... ἀκούσαντες. The literal "shall hear" and "that hear" does not clearly express what is meant.

27. *and also gifted him - as the son of a mortal - with the authority of choosing.* καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν. Literally, "and he gifted him with authority to undertake choosing because he is the son of a mortal." Which explains the following μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, "be not astonished at this". In regard to υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου as 'son of a mortal' instead of Son of Man, cf. the comment on 1:51. Also, cf. 9:35, Σὺ πιστεύεις εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, which makes perfect sense if Jesus is asking "Do you trust the son of a mortal?" but is somewhat problematic if conventionally interpreted as "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

28. *burial places.* While the choice in respect of μνημεῖον seems to be between the literal 'monument', and tomb or grave, a most suitable alternative - cf. ASV (byrgenum) and Wycliffe (in buriels) - is 'burial places'.

29.

a) *those that have acted honourably.* οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες. In various essays - such as *Cicero On Summum Bonum* [14] - and in my commentaries on tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, I have explained my reasons for interpreting ἀγαθός not as some posited, abstract, 'good' but classically as, according to context, nobility, noble, honourable. This is apposite here given the emphasis on personal deeds, on what a person had done (ποιήσαντες) or not done. Cf. the following from the Corpus Aristotelicum:

τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλευσασθαι, τὸ κρίναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἰρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [De

Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]

It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company.

b) *anastasis*. ἀνάστασις. A transliteration since the term 'resurrection' has, since it was first used in the 14th century, acquired various religious, doctrinal, and other associations (such as, in relation to Jesus, the resurrection of the physical body) and which associations may or may not be relevant here. In context, anastasis might refer here (contra Irenaeus) to a non-corporeal elevation or re-birth, and thus to the ψυχή - the spirit or soul - of those mortals who have been gifted with life everlasting proceeding to a place such as Empyrean.

c) *dishonourably*. The sense of φαῦλος is not some posited, abstract, impersonal, 'evil' but of personal deeds that are 'base', mean, and thus ignoble, dishonourable, and hence revealing of a rotten personal character, of a bad physis. Qv. πονηρός and φαῦλος at 3:19-20.

d) *to anastasis of the choosing*. εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως. Literally, 'to anastasis of choosing'. They - or their ψυχή - proceed forth from their place of burial to where Jesus chooses whether or not to gift them with life everlasting.

30. *I am not able to do anything on my own*. Qv. 5:19

33.

a) *you inquired after John*. ὑμεῖς ἀπεστάλκατε πρὸς Ἰωάννην. Literally, "you dispatched unto John," referring to 1:19, the priests and Levites dispatched from Jerusalem.

b) *and he was evidential to the veritas*. καὶ μεμαρτύρηκεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. That is, he attested - gave evidence concerning - the veritas. Regarding veritas, qv. the comment on πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθεία, 1:14.

35.

a) *lantern*. λύχνος. The term 'lamp' is inappropriate given its modern connotations.

b) *firefull and revealing*. καιόμενος καὶ φαίνων. I take this metaphorically - the burning fire of the lantern shines a bright revealing light - rather than the literal "burning and bright".

c) In regard to *phaos*, γν. 1:4-5. Cf. Poemandres, 32, ζῶην καὶ φῶς; Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, I:2, τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τὸν τε ζῶντα.

36. *beyond that of John*. μείζω τοῦ Ἰωάννου. Not the rather strident 'greater than' - with its implication of 'better than' - but the comparative 'beyond that' as in an elder or someone fully-grown who is years beyond the age of someone younger, γν. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 358,

ὥς μήτε μέγαν μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι μέγα δουλείας γάγγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου

Such that neither the full-grown nor any young were beyond the limits of Misfortune's all-taking enslaving vast trawl.
[15]

37. *whose likeness you have never observed*. οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἐώρακατε. An interesting question of interpretation here is the meaning of εἶδος. Whether to translate as 'form' - with a possible implied reference to Plato's 'theory of forms' - or as the literal 'shape' or 'appearance'. Given the context - and 6:46, οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἐώρακέν τις εἰ μὴ ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἐώρακεν τὸν πατέρα - I take the literal meaning; hence *likeness*, as in Wycliffe.

39. *you search the writings*. ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς. Qn. 2:22 regarding γραφή not as the post-Hellenic exegetical 'scripture' but as having the usual Hellenistic meaning of 'that which is written', a writing. The ASV has Smeageað halige gewritu.

41. *I do not receive honours from people*. Δόξαν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβάνω. Regarding δόξα in respect of the supra-personal, γν. the comment on 1:14. Here, the human context implies receiving honour - praise, renown, a good reputation, a title or titles - from others and thus being regarded by people as an illustrious person: being 'glorified' by them on the basis of such human given honours.

44. *from Theos alone*. Reading παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ μόνου. NA28 has παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ. There are two ways of interpreting the Greek of NA28: (i) that genuine honour is only from Theos, and thus that they do not seek such honour as is "only from Theos", or (ii) that they do not seek the honour that is from "the [one and] only Theos."

While the latter imposes a strictly grammatical interpretation on the text, such a restrictive interpretation does not in my view suit the context at all, which is of worldly honours in contrast to the (genuine) honour which Theos bestows. Jesus has emphasized that he has been sent by the father, that the father is his witness, that he does not receive honours from people, and goes on to say that Moses wrote about him. There seems no need to mention that his father is "the only Theos", given the Judaeans would assuredly know that "the father" meant their "one and only god" and that Moses spoke and wrote of "the one God". Cf. John 17:3, τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν and phrases such as ὁ μόνος θεός and ὁ θεὸς μόνος in the Old Testament. [16]

An interesting alternative Byzantine reading (Codex Petropolitanus Purpureus) is τοῦ μονογενοῦς θεοῦ, cf. 1:18, μονογενῆς θεός.

ooo

Footnotes

[1] Measure for Measure. Act One, Scene One, v. 32

[2] Romans 13.10

[3] King James version, following Tyndale.

[4] 1.21 (Ποιμάνδρης)

[5] φαίνω as a revealing is much in evidence in classical Greek literature, often in relation to theos. For example:

ἠτέομεν δὲ θεὸν φῆναι τέρας: αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' ἡμῖν
δεῖξε, καὶ ἠνώγει πέλαγος μέσον εἰς Εὐβοίαν
τέμνειν, ὄφρα τάχιστα ὑπέκ κακότητα φύγοιμεν.

About this we asked the god to reveal to us a sign
And he exhorted us to cut through the middle of the sea to Euboea
In order to swiftly pass that bad luck by.

The Odyssey, Book 3, 173-5

[6] In respect of the term Ἰουδαία, it is interesting to consider two writings by Flavius Josephus, and one by Cassius Dio Cocceianus (dating from c.230 CE). The two works by Josephus are conventionally entitled 'Antiquities of the Jews' (c. 93 CE) and 'The Jewish Wars' (c. 75 CE) although I incline toward the view that such titles are incorrect and that the former - entitled in Greek, Ἰουδαικῆς ἀρχαιολογίας - should be 'Judaean Antiquities', while the latter - entitled in Greek, Ἱστορία Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίου - should be 'History of the Conflict Between Judaeans and Romaeans', and this because of how Josephus, in those works, describes himself and that conflict.

Ἰουδαικῆς ἀρχαιολογίας

In this work Josephus wrote:

1.4 τούτων δὴ τῶν προειρημένων αἰτιῶν αἱ τελευταῖαι δύο κάμοι συμβεβήκασιν· τὸν μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς Ῥωμαίους πόλεμον ἡμῖν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γενόμενον [...]

1.5 διάταξιν τοῦ πολιτεύματος ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθρημνησμένην γραμμάτων [...]

1.6 δηλῶσαι τίνες ὄντες ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἰουδαῖοι

a) 1.4. τὸν μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς Ῥωμαίους πόλεμον ἡμῖν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γενόμενον, "how that conflict between Romaeans and we Judaeans came about."

To be pedantic, Ῥωμαίους - Romaeans - implies those "of Rome". That is, the word suggests those associated with a particular place, as does the term Judaeans. Which association of people with a particular place or region is historically germane.

b) 1.5. διάταξιν τοῦ πολιτεύματος τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθρημνησμένην γραμμάτων, "the decrees of our

civitatium as expounded in the writings of the Hebrews."

Less literally, "the laws of our communities as expounded in the writings of the Hebrews."

c) 1.6 δηλῶσαι τίνες ὄντες ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἰουδαῖοι, "to make known how Judaeans came about."

Ἱστορία Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίους

In the Προοίμιον of this book Josephus wrote:

a) Ἰώσηπος Ματθίου παῖς ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεύς

That is, Josephus describes himself as "the son of Matthias, a priest, from Jerusalem." He does not write that he is "Jewish" and nor does he write that he is from Judaea.

b) σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ ὧν ἀκοῆ παρειλήφασμεν ἢ πόλεων πρὸς πόλεις ἢ ἔθνῶν ἔθνεσι συρραγέντων.

A conventional translation would have πόλις as 'city' and ἔθνος as 'nation' so that the latter part would conventionally be translated along the following lines: "cities would have fought against cities, or nations against nations."

However, the terms 'nation' and 'city' are or can be misleading, given their modern connotations, whereas a historical approximation for ἔθνος would be 'tribe', 'people', or 'community', and for πόλις - understood here as referring to a particular named place with a history of settlement - town, fortified town, burg, borough, municipality. Such choices would produce a translation such as: "municipality would have fought municipality, community with community." The evocation is thus more parochial, more regional, as befits the historical past and the context: here, an insurrection, a conflict between the people of Judaea and the armed forces commanded by Roman citizens (those "of Rome") duly appointed to positions of power.

Regarding The Term Ἰουδαϊκός

While the term is conventionally cited as meaning Jewish - although LSJ provide no sources, with the English word 'Jew' not existing until the 13th/14th century CE - the sense of the term in Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία by Cassius

Dio Cocceianus (for example, 67.14.2, 68.1.2) is Judaeian, referring to the people of Judaea and their customs and way of life, Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου, τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἥθη:

ὕφ' ἧς καὶ ἄλλοι ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἥθη ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδικάσθησαν καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀπέθανον οἱ δὲ τῶν γούν οὐσιῶν ἐστερήθησαν (67.14.2)

[7] Thomas Wright. *Anglo-Saxon And Old English Vocabularies*. Second edition, London, 1884. pp.72, 156, 316.

[8]

ὄρᾳς μὲν ἡμᾶς ἡλίκοι προσήμεθα
βωμοῖσι τοῖς σοῖς: οἱ μὲν οὐδέπω μακρὰν
πτέσθαι σθένοντες, οἱ δὲ σὺν γήρα βαρεῖς,
ιερῆς, ἐγὼ μὲν Ζηνός, οἶδε τ' ἠθέων
λεκτοί: τὸ δ' ἄλλο φύλον ἐξεστεμμένον
20 ἀγοραῖσι θακεῖ πρὸς τε Παλλάδος διπλοῖς
ναοῖς, ἐπ' Ἴσμηνοῦ τε μαντεία σποδῶ.
πόλις γάρ, ὡσπερ καὶ τὸς εἰσορᾶς, ἄγαν
ἤδη σαλεύει κἀνακουφίσαι κάρα
βυθῶν ἔτ' οὐχ οἶα τε φοινίου σάλου,
25 φθίνουσα μὲν κάλυξιν ἐγκάρποις χθονός,
φθίνουσα δ' ἀγέλαις βουνόμοις τόκοισί τε
ἀγόνους γυναικῶν: ἐν δ' ὁ πυρφόρος θεὸς
σκήψας ἐλαύνει, λοιμὸς ἔχθιστος, πόλιν,
ὕφ' οὗ κενούται δῶμα Καδμεῖον, μέλας δ'
Ἄιδης στεναγμοῖς καὶ γόοις πλουτίζεται.

You see how many sit here
Before your altars - some not yet robust enough
To fly far; some heavy as I, Priest of Zeus, with age;
And these, chosen from our unmarried youth.
Enwreathed like them, our people sit in the place of markets,
By the twin shrines of Pallas
And by the embers of the Ismenian oracle.
Our community, as you yourself behold, already heaves
Too much - its head bent

To the depths bloodily heaving.
Decay is in the unfruitful seeds in the soil,
Decay is in our herds of cattle - our women
Are barren or abort, and that god of fever
Swoops down to strike our community with an odious plague,
Emptying the abode of Cadmus and giving dark Hades
An abundance of wailing and lamentation.

[9] *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[10] The Discourses of Epictetus were compiled (by Arrian) some decades before the Gospel of John was written (which according to scholarly consensus was around or shortly after 90 CE). Given that both Epictetus and Arrian were native Greek speakers, the use of such a colloquial Greek phrase by the Evangelist perhaps indicates something not only about John himself but also about the audience and the readers who first heard or read his Gospel.

[11] For context, the Greek of the complete verse of Ephesians is: ὁ καταβὰς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβὰς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα. Literally, "The one having descended is the same as the one who, having ascended high above all the heavens, completes everything."

[12] For context, the verse in the Latin version of Jerome is: cum ergo resurrexisset a mortuis recordati sunt discipuli eius quia hoc dicebat et crediderunt scripturae et sermoni quem dixit iesus

The Latin of Codex Palatinus, Vetus Latina: Cum ergo resurrexit a mortuis commonefacti sunt discipuli eius quoniam hoc dicebat et crediderunt scripturae et sermoni quem dixit IHS.

The Latin of Codex Brixianus, Vetus Latina: cum ergo resurrexisset a mortuis recordati sunt discipuli eius quia hoc dixerat et crediderunt scripturae et sermoni quem dixit IHS.

[13] Qv. Tacitus: "non diurna actorum scriptura reperio ullo insigni officio functam." *Annals*, Book III, 3.

[14] In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* Marcus Tullius Cicero, in criticizing Epicurus and others, presents his view of Summum Bonum, a term normally translated as 'the supreme good'. According to Cicero, honestum (honourable conduct) is the foundation of Summum Bonum which itself can be discerned by careful

consideration (ratio) in conjunction with that knowing (scientia) of what is divine and what is mortal that has been described as wisdom (sapientia),

aequam igitur pronuntiabit sententiam ratio adhibita primum divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia, quae potest appellari rite sapientia, deinde adiunctis virtutibus, quas ratio rerum omnium dominas, tu voluptatum satellites et ministras esse voluisti. (II, 37)

He then writes that honestum does not depend on any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected but instead can be discerned by means of consensus among the whole community in combination with the example afforded by the honourable actions and motives of the finest of individuals:

Honestum igitur id intellegimus, quod tale est, ut detracta omni utilitate sine ullis praemiis fructibusve per se ipsum possit iure laudari. quod quale sit, non tam definitione, qua sum usus, intellegi potest, quamquam aliquantum potest, quam communi omnium iudicio et optimi cuiusque studiis atque factis, qui permulta ob eam unam causam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est, etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident. (II, 45f)

In effect, Summum Bonum – what the Greeks termed τὸ ἀγαθὸν – depends on certain personal qualities such as a careful consideration of a matter; on a personal knowing of what is divine and what is mortal; on the example of personal noble deeds and motives, and on a communal consensus.

There is therefore nothing morally abstract or dogmatic about Cicero's understanding of Summum Bonum which so well expresses the Greco-Roman view, as does Seneca:

summum bonum est quod honestum est; et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt. *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, LXXI, 4

Thus, perhaps a more apt translation of the term Summum Bonum would be *the highest nobility*.

[15] In context, the quotation from Aeschylus is:

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ νύξ φιλία
μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειρα,
ἦτ' ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις ἔβαλες
στεγανὸν δίκτυον, ὡς μήτε μέγαν

μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι
360μέγα δουλείας
γάγγαμον, ἄτης παναλώτου

You, Zeus our Chief, and Nox, our companion -
Mistress of the mighty cosmos
Who cast over the Trojan towers a covering net
Such that neither the full-grown nor any young were beyond the limits
Of Misfortune's all-taking enslaving vast trawl.

[16] In respect of the article, τοῦ, here and the phrase ὁ μόνος θεός, cf. Philo, *De Profugis*, 71-72,

τοῦ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀνθρώπου, ὃς δὴ νοῦς ἐστὶ καθαρῶτατος, εἷς ὁ μόνος θεὸς δημιουργός, τοῦ δὲ λεγομένου καὶ κεκραμένου μετ' αἰσθήσεως τὸ πλῆθος. οὐ χάριν ὁ μὲν κατ' ἐξοχὴν ἄνθρωπος σὺν τῷ ἄρθρῳ μεμῆνυται λέγεται γάρ· ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὸν ἀειδῆ καὶ ἄκρατον ἐκεῖνον λογισμὸν, ὁ δὲ ἄνευ τῆς τοῦδε προσθήκης· τὸ γὰρ ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον ἐμφαίνει τὸν ἐξ ἀλόγου καὶ λογικῆς συνυφανθέντα φύσεως.

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Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV (P75). c. 175-225 CE. Gospel of John, Chapter 1, vv.1 ff. Vatican Library.
