MYTH AND METAPHYSICS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

MYTH AND METAPHYSICS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL:

A DIALECTICAL CRITICAL APPROACH TO JOHN'S PROLOGUE

By

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This thesis is an experiment in using Fredric Jameson's dialectical Marxist hermeneutics, particularly as articulated in his *The Political Unconscious*, to read a specific New Testament text, the Prologue to the Gospel of John. The Prologue shall be read through three semantic horizons: the literary, the narrowly social and the broadly economic. It will be argued that the Prologue contains a co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse; that this co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse can be understood as a result of the co-occurrence of lower and higher social strata within early Christian communities; and that this co-occurrence of lower and higher social strata can itself be understand as the vestigial presence of formerly dominant modes of production within the mode of production that dominated the broader historical context in which these communities were located.

Preface

In the 1970s, my paternal grandfather visited what was the then Soviet Union. He did not go on business: he was a retired career soldier working as a hospital security guard. Nor did he go to visit family: his own relatives were Quebecois living in Connecticut, and his in-laws were Brits living in England and British Columbia. No, his trip was wholly personal. His desire to visit the USSR was born of his military career. Like many Canadian men of his generation, he did not plan on serving in the army. Neither did he anticipate that Adolf Hitler et. al. would force war upon the British Commonwealth in 1939. Nonetheless, he volunteered for service not long after Canada declared war. He spent the next few years in Europe, stationed first in England and later fighting in Italy and Holland. In 1945, he participated in one of the last actions in the European theatre: the pacification of the German occupation force on Texel Island several weeks after Germany surrendered formally.

I believe that it was on Texel Island that the roots of his eventual visit to the USSR took hold. The Germans on that small, Dutch, Island had not surrendered, and for good reason: several hundred prisoners of war from the Georgia SSR had risen up near war's end and were engaged in armed conflict against the German garrison. My grandfather and his fellow Canadians had essentially to act as referees, allowing both sides to put down arms without fear of attack from the other. I think that it was because of this action that he became aware acutely of the contributions that the USSR–"the Reds," as he would say–made to the war. He credits them, in fact, with making the difference between Allied victory and Allied defeat. Profoundly grateful, he has spent the

rest of his life learning as much as he could about the USSR. This led eventually to his trip to the Soviet Union.

It was only recently, perhaps in the last five years, that I learned of my grandfather's lifelong fascination with "the Reds." It explained something that had long baffled me. Much of my family is politically and socially conservative. Somehow, my own political leanings were always to the left. I never understood this entirely. Even though my grandfather rarely spoke openly of his political views, they must have somehow come through. Children have an incredible ability to absorb even the unspoken and unarticulated. I realize increasingly that my own sympathies towards Marxist historiography come ultimately from my grandfather. That said, I suspect I am more ambivalent about the Soviet Union than my grandfather. The terrible legacy of Stalin—a legacy understood in its entirety only with the fall of the USSR—surely outweighs a great deal of whatever positive aspects might have been present in the Soviet experiment. Of course, my experiences have been different from my grandfather's. I cannot recall a time when the Soviet Union were anything but the enemy or a memory. He can remember a time when the Soviet Union was an ally, a comrade-in-arms against Nazi Germany.

Despite my deep ambivalence towards the Soviet experiment, the moral failings of its leadership do not invalidate Marxist thought, any more than the moral failings of Christian leadership invalidate Christian thought. The intelligent, educated, Christian is well aware of the Crusades, the Inquisition and priestly pedophiles. He or she is grieved by these abuses, and rightly so. Yet he or she recognizes just as rightly that they are aberrations of Christian thought and practice, and is able to remain committed fully to

Christianity despite this terrible history. Likewise, the Marxist can be well aware and grieved by the actions of the Soviet regime, without rejecting Marxism. Both operate on the same principle: the abuses of a particular system of thought or practice do not necessarily invalidate that system. A failure to abide by one's own principles surely makes one hypocrite, but that hypocrisy does not mean that the principles are without merit.

At the age of 82, my grandfather was the only Canadian veteran to return to Texel Island to celebrate the 60th anniversary of VE-Day in June, 2005. The trip nearly killed him when the flight from Toronto to Holland and back caused an undiagnosed aneurysm to rupture. He made a full recovery, however. In fact, he has regained enough strength that, as I write this preface he is undergoing elective surgery to replace his hip and thus improve his mobility. In honour of his wartime service and his lifelong avocational commitment to learning, I dedicate this M.A. thesis to my grandfather, Joseph "Andy" Bernier. In addition to this dedication, I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Anders Runesson, my thesis supervisor, as well as Professors Stephen Westerholm and Annette Reed, the other members of my supervisory committee, for their guidance and feedback.

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1.   Introduction: Taking the Long View

"Always historicize!"[1] So opens the preface to *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric

Jameson's classic work on dialectical Marxist literary criticism. For the exegete, what

does it mean to "historicize"? Critical scholarship, for the most part, has always

recognized the relevance of a text's historical "background." Likewise, in Jameson's

words, "literary history has, of course, never excluded the investigation of such topics as

the Florentine political background in Dante, Milton's relationship to the schismatics, or

Irish historical allusions in Joyce...[S]uch information...does not yield interpretation as

such, but rather at best its (indispensable) preconditions."[2] As long as history remains in

the background, it becomes so much trivia that might shed light upon this or that

troubling term or phrase. The foregrounding of the text as something distinct from the

historical background induces a "properly antiquarian relationship to the cultural past,"[3]

one that abstracts a text from the greater story of human history. "[O]nly if the human

adventure is one,"[4] only if all human lives in all historical moments, all times and all

places, are subject to the same fundamental concerns, the same troubling questions, can

any interpretation do justice to both the cultural past and the cultural present. To

historicize means to search for these fundamental concerns, these troubling questions,

and to consider how they were worked out by various peoples. Extant cultural artifacts of

non-extant cultural contexts–such as texts from bygone eras–constitute the evidence that

allows us to carry out this endeavour.

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[1] Fredric Jameson, *The Politicial Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1981), 9.
[2] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 17.
[3] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 17.

The practice of historicizing a cultural artifact requires a commitment in both principle and practice to the development, evaluation and implementation of what we might call "grand theory." Adequate Grand Theory seeks to interpret not only the individual cultural artifact, but also the broad sweep of human history and existence. Today, many scholars are convinced that Grand Theory is unnecessary, impossible, even undesirable. Scholars continue to market monographs and produce papers, which allow the disciplines to survive and–in certain local areas–even advance knowledge. However, the disinterest and at times outright hostility towards Grand Theory robs scholarship of the ability to think rigourously about how the findings of these various monographs and papers relate to each other. Contemporary scholarship has produced a picture of human life that is more an unassembled puzzle than anything else, a fragmented landscape littered with countless disarticulated pieces of what should be a larger whole.

This thesis is, at its core, a plea for a return to Grand Theory in one particular discipline in the social sciences and humanities: namely Religious Studies, and–under that broader disciplinary heading–New Testament studies. It is also an attempt to relate a particular Grand Theory to New Testament studies: dialectical Marxism, as articulated by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*. As *dialectical*, Jameson's theory predicts and his method seeks to identify conflicts and tensions within any given cultural artifact. As *Marxist*, Jameson's theory predicts and his method seeks to demonstrate that these tensions within cultural artifacts are the product of tensions in the broader social world.[5] As Grand Theory, then, it begins from the premise that human life is shot through with

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[4] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 19.

tensions and conflicts, and that inevitably these tensions and conflicts will be evident in human cultural artifacts. As method, it seeks to identify conflicts and tensions within cultural artifacts, and sees in them evidence of social conflicts and tensions.

Jameson's theory and method will be outlined more fully in chapter two. In chapters three through five, the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (hereafter, abbreviated "FG") will be used as an example of how to read a New Testament text using Jameson's dialectical Marxist theory and method as a guide.[6] This is a first step towards a dialectical theory of early Christianity. Further steps would require the reading of further texts through Jameson. The ultimate objective would be to coordinate these various readings in such a way that we can begin to develop a Grand Theory of early Christianity, using Jameson's hermeneutics as our starting point. We are not there yet; this thesis marks a beginning, not an end. In the mean time, any Grand Theory worth its name must be able not simply to accommodate but in fact to coordinate other interpretative methods, which– as Jameson states–have authority precisely because they spring "from their faithful consonance with this or that local law of fragmented social life."[7] For Jameson, dialectical Marxism is the single best Grand Theory for drawing connections between the fragments–not simply those of social life, but also more precisely those of the social sciences and humanities.

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[5] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 74-79.

[6] "Fourth Gospel" is adopted here instead of the more typical "John" or "Gospel of John," in order to avoid a terminological trap frequent in Gospels studies. Often, both the text and the author are referred to by the traditional ascriptions. Thus, "John," "Matthew," etc., are made to refer to both text and author. In this study, a clear distinction is made between text and author; thus, it is imperative to use terms that will not confuse one with the other.

[7] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 10.

I am convinced that Jameson's dialectical Marxist theory offers the best theoretical and methodological starting point for developing an adequate Grand Theory of early Christianity. Nonetheless, I am not committed to it dogmatically. If a better theory and method presents itself, I will happily abandon this one in its favour. If you have that theory and method, please present it to me. I am committed to the development of Grand Theory for explaining not only early Christianity, but the "Adonayistic religions"[8] religious traditions overall and, indeed, religion in general. This latter commitment, I believe, reflects what should be the principal task of a discipline that calls itself "Religious Studies": the understanding of the various forms of religion practiced across time and place, not simply as discrete religious traditions but as part of the great story of humankind. If this thesis creates in the reader an increased awareness of the need for Grand Theory in Religious Studies, I will consider it a resounding success–even if the reader finds unconvincing my particular use of a particular theory and method to read a particular text. Thus, this study is at least as much about the theory and method of Religious Studies as it is about the New Testament.

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[8] Cf. Anders Runesson, "From Where to What? Common Judaism, Pharisees and the Changing Socio-Religious Location of the Matthean Community," in *Common Judaism Explored: Second Temple Judaism in Context. Essays in Honour of E.P. Sanders* (ed. by W. McCready and A. Reinhartz; forthcoming, 2007). In Runesson's usage, "Adonayistic religions" refer to all religions which derive ultimately from the religious traditions of ancient Israel. Thus, today and historically, they would include minimally Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity and Islam in all their varieties. Note that in Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (CB 37; Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 2001), 63, Runesson used the term "Yahwistic" in a similar fashion.

2.   Preliminary Considerations

2.1.   Welcome to Reality

Fernando Segovia describes the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel as an "entrée to Johannine reality."[9] Perhaps it could be described also as an entrée to all Christian reality, since its central theme–the en-fleshment, the incarnation, of *ho Logos* (the Word)–is a central theme in subsequent Christian thought.[10] If we want to understand the origins of Christian reality, we must understand also the origins of Johannine reality. An adequate understanding of Johannine reality is not achieved when we have stated what we believe the author of FG (hereafter abbreviated "FE," for "Fourth Evangelist") intended to say. In point of fact, we can only know what FE wrote, which is not necessarily identical to what he intended to write;[11] our own experiences confirm that what we mean to say and what we actually do say are often quite different. Despite our inability to read FE's mind, we can study the text itself, the product of FE's labours. We can translate FG into English, and we can paraphrase the English translation to elucidate what we believe the text says. We can use data derived from sources contemporary or near-contemporary to FE to give legitimacy to this or that particular paraphrase. Through this process, valuable contributions to Johannine scholarship can be made. If we stop at this point, we will have studied only *what FG looks like*, not *how FG came to look the way it does*. Description

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[9] Fernando F. Segovia, "John 1:1-18 as Entrée into Johannine Reality," in *Word, Theology and Community in John* (ed. by J. Painter, R.A. Culpepper and F.F. Segovia; St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002), 33-64.

[10] Cf. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon* (2 vols.; trans. J.S. Bowden; London: A.R. Mowbray, 1965), 1:127-133, 175-360; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100-600* (vol. 1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*; Chicago: Chicago, 1971), 256-266.

[11] Male pronouns will be used to refer to FE, as FG itself refers to its author as male (cf. 21:24).

must not be confused with understanding, although the former is certainly a necessary precondition for the latter; after all, if one does not know what something looks like, one can understand its appearance.

In order to move towards explanation, this study asks "How did FG come to look the way that it does?" Fredric Jameson's dialectical Marxist hermeneutics will be adopted as the theoretical and methodological starting point for addressing this question. Jameson's hermeneutic moves dialectically through successive readings of the same text, each operating in one of three "distinct semantic horizons":[12] the literary, the social and the historical.[13] In the first horizon the text is read as a cultural artifact, specifically a text, extracted as much as possible from the social and economic contexts that are properly the domain of the second and third horizons.[14] In the second horizon the text is located within the most immediate social context, which is constituted by social order and class discourses. In the third horizon, the social context is located in turn within the broader historical context, as this is constituted diachronically and synchronically by modes of production.[15] Through these readings, it will be argued that the literary genesis of the incarnation of *ho Logos* can be understood as the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Fourth Gospel Prologue; that this co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse can be understood as a result of the co-occurrence of lower and higher social strata within early Christ-believing communities; and that this co-occurrence of lower and higher social strata can be understand as the vestigial

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[12] Jameson, *The Politicial Unconscious*, 75.
[13] Jameson, *The Politicial Unconscious*, 74-77.
[14] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 76.
[15] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

presence of formerly dominant modes of production within the mode of production that was currently dominant in the broader historical context in which these communities were located.

Although Jameson is largely unknown in New Testament scholarship, over the last few years his hermeneutic has seen productive use in Hebrew Bible scholarship.[16] This study follows in the venerated tradition in New Testament scholarship of adopting and adapting methodologies that were employed previously by Hebrew Bible scholars.[17] One of the strengths of Jameson's hermeneutics is its ability to not only incorporate but also coordinate various methodologies, whether they were derived originally from Hebrew Bible scholarship, from New Testament scholarship itself, or from some other source entirely. Whether we are enamored with form, source, redaction, literary, psychoanalytic or any other critical method, Jameson presents dialectical Marxism as "that 'untranscendable horizon' that subsumes such apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself."[18]

As it turns out, something resembling what New Testament scholars have typically called "form criticism" takes on particular importance in Jameson's

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[16] Cf. Roland Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam* (Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Roland Boer, *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 180-203; David Jobling, "Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72," in *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 59; ed. D. Jobling and T. Pippin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 95-127; Mark Sneed, "Qohelet and His 'Vulgar' Critics: A Jamesonian Reading," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1/1 (2004).

[17] An example relevant particularly to the present study would be the development of form criticism by Hebrew Bible scholars such as Hermann Gunkel, and adopted for Synoptic studies by Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Martin Dibelius, and Rudolf Bultmann. Cf. Edgar McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 10-16.

[18] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 10.

hermeneutics.[19] By examining the multiplicity of literary forms in a given text, Jameson

is able to begin exegesis with a consideration of formal tension. Jameson's forms are not

identical to New Testament scholars' forms. It references not only something roughly

analogous to "literary genre" but also "forms of thinking," that is the cultural dominant

associated with a particular economic arrangement.[20] This is the primary task of

Jameson's first horizon, and it will be accomplished in chapter three. It will be argued

that two forms co-occur in the Prologue, which will be termed "mythic narrative" and

"metaphysical discourse": *ho Logos* is a mythic hero, as conceptualized in the

ethnological research undertaken by James Frazer and developed in Northrop Frye's

"myth criticism";[21] at the same time, *ho Logos* belongs also to the realm of metaphysical

narrative, as seen in the work of ancient thinkers such as Philo of Alexandria. This study

shall enter into Johannine reality through a consideration of the formal co-occurrence of

and tension between myth and metaphysics within FG's Prologue. In this third chapter,

we shall consider also the relationship in 1:9-13 between *ho Logos* on the one hand and

three groups of people–*ho kosmos* (the world), *ta idia* (his own) and *hosoi elabon auton*

(the ones who receive him)–on the other. The importance of these relationships might not

be immediately apparent in chapter three; however, the reader is assured that this will

become clear in chapter four.

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[19] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 105-107.
[20] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 89-91.
[21] Cf. esp. James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (abr. ed.; London: MacMillan, 1922); Northrop Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," *Kenyon Review* 13/1 (1951): 92-110.

In chapter four, the formal tension investigated in the first horizon is considered dialectically in relation to tension within its social context.[22] Textual tension is recast here as social tension. This recasting constitutes our implementation of Jameson's second horizon. Here, the focus is upon the most immediate *Sitz im Leben*, the "life situation...whether it be worship in its different forms, or work, or hunting, or war" from which a given literary form originates.[23] Relevant to the understanding of any *Sitz im Leben* is an analysis of social class, and an explicitly Marxist approach makes social class not only relevant but in fact central. Thus, in Jameson's second horizon, the

> cultural object has widened to include the social order...[and] the very object of our analysis has been thereby dialectically transformed, and...is no longer construed as an individual 'text' or work in the narrow sense, but has been reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole* or utterance.[24]

When reading a New Testament text within Jameson's second horizon, the relationship between higher and lower social strata[25] within the early Christ-believing communities becomes the "one chief problem of primitive Christianity,"[26] rather than the relationship between Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity, for example, as Bultmann asserted. Social strata relations take priority over linguistic or ethnic categories.[27]

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[22] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 85.

[23] Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (rev. ed.; trans. by J. Marsh; New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 4.

[24] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

[25] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76. Note that early Christian scholarship tends to use the term "social stratum" to describe phenomena analogous to what other scholars – including Jameson – tend to call "social class." Generally, this study will use "social class" when discussing the work of scholars who use this term, and "social stratum" when discussing either scholars who use this term or early Christianity as a subject.

[26] Bultmann, *History*, 5.

[27] The reader might dispute the priority of class or strata relations over linguistic or ethnic categories. In defense of this priority, the author would remind the reader of the aphorism "A language is a dialect with

As we address this one chief problem, we shall consider specifically the interaction between strata, literacy and form within early Christ-believing communities. Drawing upon the work of Eric Havelock and Walter Ong, we will argue for a positive correlation between mythic narrative and lower literacy on the one hand, and between metaphysical discourse and higher literacy on the other.[28] Lower and higher literacy correlate closely and respectively with lower and higher strata.[29] It will be argued that the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse results from the co-occurrence of lower and higher strata within early Christ-believing communities. The relationship in 1:9-13 between *ho Logos* and *ho kosmos*, *ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton*– discussed in chapter three–will be examined in light of the discourse of the various Jewish parties, whose membership came predominantly from the higher strata.[30] The presence of Jewish party discourse in the Prologue will constitute evidence that FE most likely belonged to the higher strata, rather than the lower. Yet, given the demographic predominance of lower strata individuals within early Christ-believing communities,[31] FE could not avoid presenting Jesus (himself a member of the lower strata)[32] in a form typical to the less literate lower strata: that is, mythic narrative. At the same time, FE

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an army and a navy." It is precisely those groups that have access to greater resources–especially coercive resources–that define linguistic and ethnic norms: in short, the higher strata.

[28] Cf. Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 2002), 47-49, 136-138.

[29] Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 5; Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of its First Century* (trans. by O.C. Dean, Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 185.

[30] Cf. Albert Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 42-51; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 157-162.

[31] Cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 227-233, 292-293, 314-316.

[32] Cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 199.

could not escape his tendency to think in the form typical to his higher strata background: metaphysical discourse. The textual tensions in the Prologue reflect the social tensions experienced by a particular higher strata individual–FE–participating in a religious community not only centered around the memory of a lower strata individual, but also dominated demographically by lower strata individuals who remembered Jesus in the form more typical to their background.

In chapter five, we will move into the third horizon. Here the social tensions considered in the second horizon will be related dialectically to tensions within and between the modes of production that constitute history conceived most broadly.[33] Defined succinctly modes of production are the ways in which humans arrange themselves (not always according to the individual's will, of course) in order to produce both their means of subsistence and their corresponding ways of life.[34] In Marxist historiography, they are used to define the epochs through which humanity has moved and continues to move.[35] Jameson retains this diachronic understanding. However, he adopts also a synchronic perspective, in which currently dominant modes of production contain within themselves vestiges of modes of production that were once but no longer are dominant.[36] Social class can be understood in part as a product of the processes by which one mode of production absorbs another. As this occurs, people who continue to make a living using the means of production associated with the previously dominant mode will become subordinate to those who make their living using the means of

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[33] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 88-90.
[34] Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 37.
[35] Boer, *Marxist Criticism*, 12.
[36] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 94-95.

production of the now dominant mode. It shall be argued that the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse results ultimately from the co-occurrence of means of production associated with previously and currently dominant modes of production within the first century context.

Using this approach, Jameson can move synthetically and dialectically from a single moment in human history–the production of a single cultural artifact; in the present study, FG–to a consideration of its place both in its immediate context and in the grand scope of history. Roland Boer suggests that, in Jameson's hermeneutic, "the dialectic moves continually to wider or higher levels in response to problems or difficulties faced at the level with which one begins."[37] The ultimate goal of the dialectical approach employed in this study is to open the literary to the social, and the social to the most broadly historical. Since each new horizon is broader than the previous one, it can encompass a broader range of approaches and material within itself. Boer states pointedly and correctly that "[i]t is one of the paradoxes of the continuing ban on master narratives that it is precisely a master narrative like Marxism that enables the inclusion rather than the exclusion of a whole range of issues and questions."[38] At this point, we must discuss some of the "issues and questions" that have been particularly significant in discussions of FG.

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[37] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 9.

2.2.   The Form of the Prologue

The form of the Prologue has held a particular fascination for Johannine scholars.
Rather than present an extensive history of research on the Prologue's form, I would
instead like to suggest that the fascination is derived precisely from the Prologue's
combination of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. That is to say, it is precisely
this combination that–and a methodological commitment to finding *the* single form of a
text or passage–has made the question of the FG Prologue's form so vexatious.

Let us turn to Rudolf Bultmann, without doubt one of the 20th century's most
influential interpreters of FG. What was "form," according to Bultmann? In *The History
of the Synoptic Tradition*–one of his (several) classic works–Bultmann argued that
literary form is a sociological category primarily and aesthetic category secondarily.[39]
Superficially, at least, this seems similar to Jameson's understanding of the aesthetic as a
political category,[40] as Jameson's "political" seems to mean something analogous to
Bultmann's means by "sociological."[41] Jameson differs from Bultmann in that the former
does not share the latter's apparent understanding of the sociological as prior
chronologically to the aesthetic.[42] Underlying this understanding is an apparent
assumption on Bultmann's part that sociological categories are functional and aesthetic
categories non-functional. The present author suspects that Jameson would have no part
of this. For him, the aesthetic is always already a resolution of social tensions, through

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[38] Boer, *Marxist Criticism*, 5
[39] Bultmann, *History*, 4.
[40] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 77-79.
[41] Throughout *Political Unconscious*, Jameson seems to use "political" and "social" more or less
interchangeably. It is difficult to see if or how he distinguishes between these terms.
[42] Bultmann, *History*, 4.

which we can identify a sociological or political "function" of the aesthetic.[43] It is a categorical, not temporal, priority: the sociological or political is prior to the aesthetic precisely because the aesthetic itself is a sociological or political category. Despite this difference, Bultmann and Jameson stand united in their conviction that we must subject literary form to social analysis.

In talking specifically about the form of the Prologue, Bultmann seemed unable to decide if it was myth or metaphysics. First, let us consider evidence that Bultmann considered the Prologue myth. He states explicitly "[a]t first sight one would call the Prologue *myth*, judging by its subject-matter. For it speaks of a divine being, his life and his destiny."[44] For Bultmann, the Prologue is understood most precisely as a Gnostic myth.[45] Keener observes that Bultmann presupposes the existence of a pre-Christian "Gnostic Redeemer" myth as background for the Prologue;[46] he points out, however, that there is no evidence for the pre-Christian existence of such a myth.[47] On this point, Keener seems to echo a general consensus in contemporary Johannine scholarship.[48]

If we will not find Gnostic myth in the Prologue, might we find *Sophia* "myth"? It has become a scholarly commonplace to interpret Johannine Christology against the background of Jewish *Sophia* traditions.[49] Certainly there are similarities between the

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[43] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 79.
[44] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. by G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 14, cf. 61. Emphasis in original.
[45] Bultmann, *John*, 28.
[46] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:168-169.
[47] Keener, *John*, 1:168-169.
[48] But see Stephen J. Patterson, "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and the World of Speculative Jewish Theology," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (ed. by R. Fortna and T. Thatcher; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 323-332, for a qualified endorsement of Bultmann's hypothesis.
[49] Cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (ABC 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:521-523; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1963), 274-277; James

activities ascribed to *Sophia* in these traditions and the activities ascribed to *ho Logos* in the Prologue. In particular, there is Sirach 24:8-12, in which *Sophia* comes to dwell with Israel, her inheritance. This is analogous to *ho Logos* coming to dwell with *hosoi elabon auton* (cf. FG 1:12). There is also Prov. 8:22, in which the Hebrew equivalent *hokhmah* (*Sophia* in the LXX) is said to have been an active partner in creation (cf. FG 1:3). In 1 Enoch 42:1-3, Wisdom is said to look for but not find a place on earth in which to dwell (cf. FG 1:9-10). Despite these similarities, Bultmann was properly wary about positing the presence of a *Sophia* "myth" in FG.[50] This wariness is justified in large part by Scott's observation that "no word of the *sophia/sophos* family appears in the text,"[51] even though Scott himself seems to think this a minor problem when he argues for a thorough-going Johannine *Sophia* Christology.[52]

Even as Bultmann argues for the presence of a Gnostic myth in the Prologue, he notes that *ho logos* is found in "parallel forms...in the religio-philosophical literature of Hellenism from the first century onwards."[53] The presence of metaphysical discourse is suggested immediately in FG 1:1, when *ho Logos* is identified as the figure central to the narrative. C.H. Dodd discusses at length the similarities in FG's usage of *ho Logos* with the usage in contemporary philosophy, particularly in the work of the Jewish philosopher

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D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 164; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Seabury, 1980-1982), 1:253; Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, (JSNTS 71; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 94-115; B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1891), 8.
[50] Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 23. Contra Dunn, *Christology*, 164; Scott, *Sophia*, 88.
[51] Scott, *Sophia*, 88.
[52] Scott, *Sophia*, 88.
[53] Bultmann, *John*, 26-27.

Philo of Alexandria.[54] It is likely that both drew upon Platonic ideas in developing their association between light and knowledge.[55] The parallels between the FG Prologue and Philo have led Tobin to argue

> that the hymn in the Prologue, like Philo of Alexandra, was part of the larger world of Hellenistic Jewish speculative interpretations of Biblical texts...Both were making use of similar structures of thought and were expressing these structures through the use of similar vocabulary.[56]

For our purposes, these "similar structures of thought" and "similar vocabulary"–which might be described as "forms of thought"–in FG and Philo is what is in this study termed "metaphysical discourse."

There are profound differences between the Prologue and Philo, of course.[57] Tobin observes that the Johannine idea that "the *logos* had become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth...would have been unimaginable for Philo."[58] In FG, *ho Logos* is an abstraction made concrete in the flesh of a historical figure of recent memory. This is a decidedly non-Philonic move. FG's incarnational 'mutation' of the Jewish thought represented by Philo leads us back to mythic narrative, as *ho Logos* is given human birth.[59] In the Johannine Prologue, the metaphysical *ho Logos* is embedded in concrete *mythos*. In this

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[54] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 54-55, 276-278.

[55] Cf. George H. van Kooten, "The 'True Light which Enlightens Everyone' (*John* 1:9): John, *Genesis*, The Platonic Notion of the 'True, Noetic Light,' and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's Republic," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-interpretations of Genesis in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (ed. by George H. van Kooten; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 149-194, esp. 153-155.

[56] Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (Apr 1990): 252-269, p. 268.

[57] Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 55; Tobin, 268.

[58] Tobin, "Prologue," 268.

[59] Understanding FG as a 'mutation' of Philo-like Jewish thought is not identical to saying that the author of FG knew of Philo's work. Rather, it is to say that they occupied similar thought worlds, and that FG developed that shared world in a very direction than Philo. Cf. Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94/3 (2001): 243-284.

way, *ho Logos* becomes not just a heroic figure, but in fact a *human* heroic figure. Metaphysics becomes myth. The problem for the exegete is not that the Prologue is either mythic narrative or metaphysical discourse. The problem is that it is both at the same time. There is, of course, no antecedent reason why such co-occurrence could not happen. However, it *did* happen, and this provides sufficient reason to searching for an understanding of the co-occurrence.

At this point, the reader might object, suggesting quite reasonably that the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical narrative in the Prologue constitutes evidence that the Prologue is neither mythic narrative nor metaphysical discourse. The same reader might suggest further that, in point of fact, the Prologue is something else entirely and that the problem resides not in the Prologue but in the very distinction between mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. Certainly–that reader might argue–they are heuristic devices, terms used to define phenomena evidenced by the cultural artifacts and ethnological data available to social scientists. The author's response to this objection is simple: the first clause in that previous sentence does not negate the second. Put otherwise, mythic narrative and metaphysical narrative are useful heuristic devices precisely because they define and organize pertinent extant evidence. When we find a text that does not fit clearly into either category–or, alternatively, fits into both–it could be that the categories need redefinition. It could be, however, that we are dealing with a

co-occurrence of these forms, a literary instance of "hybridity," or perhaps "synergy" (if we are permitted to borrow language from post-colonial studies).[60]

At the same time, from a particular perspective, the Prologue *is*, indeed, something other than mythic narrative or metaphysical discourse. That, in fact, is precisely the basis for the present investigation. Thinking dialectically, we might describe mythic narrative as thesis and metaphysical discourse as antithesis. Whatever "something other" the Prologue might be–something that is neither mythic narrative nor metaphysical discourse–it is a synthesis of these two forms. Moreover, both of these have significant depth in human consciousness and history (as will become more evident as the thesis progresses). The co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical as thesis and antithesis, and the resulting synthesis that is the Prologue, begs explanation. Biblical exegetes have long recognized that a single text can–and often does–contain different forms in different sections: one passage might be poetry, another might be prose. Once this is recognized, it opens the possibly that a single section can contain different forms: that a single section can be mythic narrative, and that same section mythic narrative. It could be described as some sort of third, new form, which incorporates within itself myth and metaphysics; however, that would not negate the co-occurrence of these other forms.

2.3   Source and Prologue

Discussions of textual forms are never far from discussions of textual sources. There has been a tendency in Biblical scholarship to see formal differences as evidence of

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[60] Cf. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London:

different source texts. Johannine scholarship has debated particularly whether FG 1:6-8

and 1:15 were original parts of FG and whether FE wrote the Prologue. Given that some

scholars have argued vigorously that the Prologue was not originally a unified text, we

must consider the possibility that the mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse entered

the Prologue through the conflation of two, originally distinct sources. Given that the

Prologue was selected as the focus of the present study because it is an "entrée into

Johannine reality,"[61] we must consider also the possibility that the Prologue was not the

original entrée into FG. This section shall argue that there is insufficient evidence for

either an ur-text of the Prologue that did not include 1:6-8, 1:15, mythic narrative, and

metaphysical discourse, or an ur-text of FG that did not include the Prologue.

On a straight reading, 1:6-8 and 1:15 do seem to interrupt the flow of the

Prologue. A number of scholars have read this apparent interruption as evidence that

these are an interpolation secondary to the Prologue.[62] In the following discussion, three

principles will be outlined and applied in order to evaluate whether interpolation is the

best explanation. The first principle concerns an assessment of the textual difficulty that

leads one to consider interpolations as a solution to said difficulty. The second principle

concerns the plausibility of interpolations as a solution to said difficulty, relative to other

plausible solutions. The third principle concerns the relative textual difficulty of plausible

textual variants.

Routledge, 1998), 118-121, 229.
[61] Segovia, "John 1:1-18 as Entrée into Johannine Reality," 33. Cf. Section 1.1, above.
[62] Cf. Brown, *John*, 27-28; Bultmann, *John*, 16; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:249.

The first principle states that, when considering the possibility of redactional interpolations, one must demonstrate that a difficulty exists within the text. The importance of this principle should be self-evident: before searching for a solution to a problem, it is necessary to establish that the problem exists. In the cases of FG 1:6-8 and 1:15, it has been argued that these create a chronological discontinuity within the narrative of the Prologue.[63] If one associates the Baptist's witness with the incarnation of *Logos*, then it follows on a strict chronological reading of the Prologue that the incarnation must occur either in 1:9 when it is stated that the true light (i.e. *ho Logos*)[64] was coming into the world or in 1:10 when it is stated that the true light was in the

[65] This is necessary, lest 1:9-13 disrupt the chronological ordering of the text by placing pre-incarnational activities prior to the incarnation. Perhaps Brown states this position most forcefully when he argues that the "view that [FG 1:9-13] is a reference to *ho Logos*' [pre-incarnational activity] means that the editor of the Prologue misunderstood the hymn in inserting the reference to John the Baptist before vs. 10."[66]

Unfortunately, reading FG 1:9-13 as a reference to the activities of the incarnate *Logos* does not resolve but merely relocates the chronological problem. Certainly, if we follow Brown, we would no longer have the problem of a witness to the incarnate *Logos* in 1:6-8 preceding the pre-incarnate activities of *ho Logos* in 1:9-13. However, now the

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[63] Cf. Brown, *John*, 27-28; Bultmann, *John*, 16; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:249.

[64] Cf. C.K. Barrett, *An Introduction to the Gospel of St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 160; Bultmann, *John*, 52; Keener, *John*, 1:393; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:254. Westcott, *John*, 7, suggests that *ho Logos* and *to phōs to alēthinon* are the same entity, but that *to phōs to alēthinon* describes *ho Logos* "only in a special relation towards creation and particularly towards men [*sic*]." This relation refers more specifically to *ho Logos*'s role enlightening all human beings truly; here, truth is not to be opposed to falseness, but rather the opposition is between perfect and imperfect lights.

[65] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 160-161; Brown, *John*, 1: 29; Keener, *John*, 1: 395; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1: 255.

activities of the incarnate *ho Logos* in 1:9-13 would precede the incarnation in 1:14. Consequently, either 1:6-8 disrupts the chronological flow from 1:1-13 by placing events that occurred during the incarnation before incarnation itself, or 1:14 breaks the chronological flow by narrating an event that occurred prior to 1:9-13. If we applied Brown's argument vis-à-vis 1:9 to 1:14, then we would be forced to conclude that FE did not understand that he had described the incarnation already in 1:9-13.

There is good reason to think that 1:14 flows directly from 1:13 as part of the narrative, for it begins with the conjunction *kai*.[67] Of course, if 1:14 were an interpolation, it is possible that the person responsible for the interpolation added *kai* as part of the interpolation. However, such an argument presupposes what is being argued: that the Prologue contains one or more interpolations. Moreover, it does not resolve the chronological problem; on this reading, 1:9-13 originally described the incarnational activity of *ho* Logos, and thus again 1:14 was inserted at the wrong place. It seems more likely that 1:6-8 disrupts the chronological flow from 1:1-13, and that 1:9-13 is meant to describe *ho Logos'* pre-incarnational activities.

Either way, these verses do seem to break up the continuity of the Prologue, insofar as we assume narrative chronology was the central compositional concern guiding FE. This meets the burden of proof demanded by our first principle, by presenting the exegete with a problem that begs for solution. On its own, however, this statement does not demonstrate that 1:6-8 and 1:15 are interpolations, insofar as it does not demonstrate that this is the most plausible explanation for the difficulty. This leads to the second

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[66] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:29.

principle: when considering the possibility of interpolations, one must demonstrate that the difficulty identified using the first principle can be explained most plausibly by positing an interpolation, conscious that hypotheses that propose readings attested in the manuscript evidence are more plausible than those that propose readings unattested in the manuscript evidence.

In applying this second principle to the Prologue, the first question to ask is whether there are variant readings within the extant manuscript witnesses for FG that exclude 1:6-8 or 1:15. P^{66} and P^{75} are the earliest extant manuscripts of the Prologue, and can be dated to the mid-2nd to mid-3rd centuries.[68] Both include 1:6-8 and 1:15, and thus any proposed readings that exclude these verses must posit the existence of non-extant textual variants. In short, they must assume the existence of evidence that has not been preserved. Although the absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence necessarily, the absence of evidence to support a specific reading does make one's reading less probable relative to a reading that does not suffer from such absence of evidence. Given this second principle, we may conclude the following: although readings that exclude FG 1:6-8 and 1:15 are not impossible, the lack of attestation for such readings in the extant manuscript evidence leads to the conclusion that they are less plausible relative to readings that do not exclude FG 1:6-8 and 1:15.

The third principle serves as a second test of the plausibility of excluding FG 1:6-8 and 1:15 from the original form of the Prologue. This principle states that any variant

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[67] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 164; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:266.

[68] For discussion and text of P66, see Philip Wesley Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Complete Texts of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 366-458. For discussion and text of P75, see Comfort and Barrett, *Complete Texts*, 491-598.

readings proposed through the practice of the second principle must be subjected to the concept of *lectio difficilior*, which states that the more difficult reading is to be preferred over the less difficult, except in cases where the more difficult reading is impossible or absurd.[69] At this point, one might object: *lectio difficilior* judges between manuscript variants, and thus cannot be used to judge between a manuscript witness and a proposed emendation. To this objection, the following might be said: proposed emendations are nothing other than hypothetical reconstructions of non-extant manuscript variants. In proposing an emendation, one is saying "This did exist in the earliest manuscripts, but has not been preserved." In other words, it could be argued that emendation is a kind of text critical exercise and a commitment to methodological consistency thus allows us to refer to the concept of *lectio difficilior*. As with any application of this *lectio difficilior*, we must acknowledge that there are cases in which the more difficult readings are impossible. When dealing with proposed emendations, this will occur in cases wherein the only extant variants are impossible or incomprehensible, thus suggesting textual corruption at a relatively early point in the transmission history of the text.[70] The Prologue as it stands is neither impossible nor absurd. It is just awkward. Consequently, this is not one such exceptional case.

Of course, textual criticism is not an exact science. Then again, few sciences are. Still, when empirical evidence is evaluated by textual criticism combined with other principles, we can make empirically grounded and methodologically consistent decisions

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[69] Cf. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (4th ed; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 303-304.
[70] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 226-231.

regarding whether a passage is secondary. Readings that exclude FG 1:6-8 and 1:1-15 are proposed most frequently with the express purpose of removing a formal or substantive discontinuity from the text of the Prologue. It follows from this that the reading that excludes 1:6-8 and 1:15 is less difficult than the reading that includes them, for it is precisely the elimination of textual difficulty that motivates the exclusion of these verses. Although the less difficult reading is not impossible, it is less probable relative to more difficult readings.

On grounds of both manuscript attestation and the textual critical principle of *lectio difficilior*, a reading that includes 1:6-8 and 1:15 seems more probable than a reading that excludes them. This suggests that in writing 1:6-8 FE had a concern more urgent than the chronological flow. Until a better answer can be found, we should prefer Bultmann's argument that

> [t]he *motive* for the insertion of vv. 6-8 is clear from their polemical character...: to dispute the claim that the Baptist has the authority of the Revealer. This authority must therefore have been attributed by the Baptist sect to their master; they saw in him the *phōs* and thus also the pre-existent Logos become flesh.[71]

The most likely explanation is that FE has made a parenthetical statement at this point to make clear that his mythic hero is not the Baptist. The most likely motivation is that certain of the Baptist's followers called the Baptist *phōs*. FE likely made this parenthetical clarification at 1:6-8 because he has just introduced the *phōs* imagery in 1:4-5. He wanted to be as clear as possible, as early as possible. That he was prepared to depart from the chronologically ordered story to correct a possible misunderstanding

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[71] Bultmann, *John*, 17-18.

suggests that he puts priority upon conveying the proper message clearly, even if the flow

of his story must suffer. This gives us some insight into his aesthetic preferences: he

preferred to produce a Prologue that is somewhat chronologically disrupted but factually

and theologically accurate over one that is chronologically seamless but factually and

theologically imprecise. Brown's argument from chronological disruption is perhaps

anachronistic, assuming that FE would be as concerned with chronology as Brown

himself would be. Moreover, Brown fails to consider that his proposed solution does not,

in fact, create a chronologically ordered text and thus does not resolve the chronological

problem.

As we turn from this discussion to the more specific question of the question of

the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue, we

already have strong reason to prefer readings that preserve its textual integrity over

readings that do not. Yet we would be remiss if we failed to ask whether a multiplicity of

sources can account for this co-occurrence. In order to obtain as much methodological

consistency as possible, we will apply to this question the same three principles as were

used in the above discussion of interpolations in the Prologue. It does seem that *ho Logos*

is both a mythic hero and a metaphysical concept, as has been argued already and will be

argued at greater length in chapter three. This is a textual problem, thus fulfilling the

conditions of the first principle. When the second principle is applied, however, it

becomes apparent that source criticism cannot account for this problem. The problem is

not that *ho Logos* is presented mythically in one verse and metaphysically in the next.

The problem is that *ho Logos* simultaneously assumes both mythic and metaphysical

characteristics in the Prologue, while also being a metaphysical concept in contemporary

discourse (e.g., Philo). *Ho Logos* becomes concrete in the flesh. This occurs in a single

statement, at FG 1:14. It is difficult to envision a source critical hypothesis that could

account for this simultaneity of mythic and metaphysical characteristics. The co-

occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical does not seem to indicate a diversity of

sources for the Prologue.

This does not establish whether FE wrote both the Prologue and the body of FG,

however. Frequently it has been supposed that there are significant differences between

the Prologue and the body of FG, and that these differences are explained best through

source-critical analysis. It is argued either that the Prologue had a pre-Johannine

existence as a discrete text that was incorporated by FE into FG, or was added to the text

subsequent to FG's initial composition.[72] In addressing this question, can we demonstrate

that a clear difficulty exists within the extant text? The source-critical arguments have

relied greatly upon the degree of dissimilarity between the forms and content of the

Prologue and the body of FG, respectively. Often, the poetic form and supposedly high

Christological content of the Prologue is seen as distinct from and incompatible with the

prose form and supposedly lower Christological content of the body.[73] This requires us to

ask whether the differences between the forms and contents of the Prologue and the body

constitute sufficient evidence of a textual difficulty that requires special explanation.

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[72] Brown, *John*, 1:20; Bultmann, *John*, 17-18; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 432; Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1:101-102; Keener, *John* 1:334-335; Schnackenburg, *John* 1:223; John A.T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gopsel of St. John," *NTS* 9 (1962-1963): 120-129; Schnackenburg, *John* 1:223.

In terms of form, it is interesting to note that even those who argue most strongly that the Prologue was independent of the body originally must acknowledge that the poetic qualities of the Prologue are present in the body of FG. The difference between the prose and poetry seems to be a difference of degree, not of kind.[74] Moreover, Keener notes that "[a]ncient writers were not shy about incorporating poetry, familiar to their audience, that could make a useful point."[75] Keener makes this statement in order to demonstrate the plausibility of the argument that FE used or incorporated a preexisting poetic source as the basis for the Prologue. However, if ancient writers would incorporate poetry familiar to their audience, one wonders why they would not incorporate poetry that they themselves composed?

Turning to content, Schnackenburg has argued that "[t]he preexistence and incarnation of the Logos…is scarcely reflected or recapitulated in the Gospel."[76] Even if this argument is granted, this still implies that the preexistence and incarnation of *ho Logos* are reflected in the Gospel. They may be scarcely reflected in the body, but they are reflected in the body nonetheless; scarcity is not total absence. Indeed, in citing as evidence of this scarcity three verses in which the preexistence and incarnation are to be found (1:30, 8:58 and 17:5),[77] Schnackenburg demonstrates the implied presence of these ideas in the body of FG. Further, although it is true that *ho Logos* does not appear in the

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[73] Cf. Brown, 1:19-20; Bultmann, *John*, 13-18; Haenchen, *John* 1:101-102, 125; Keener, *John* 1:333-335; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:222.

[74] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:19; Bultmann, *John*, 15; Keener, *John*, 1:334.

[75] Keener, *John*, 1:334.

[76] Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:222.

[77] Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:222.

body,[78] *ho huios*–which is identified with *ho Logos* in the Prologue (1:18)–does appear (cf. 3:16). Moreover, Jesus refers frequently to God as his father (cf. 2:16, 5:17-18), thus implying that he himself is the son. One can say with confidence that the term is not present in the body, and with almost equal confidence that the idea behind the term is not absent.

At this point, we need not use our second or third principles to test source-critical explanations for the relation between the Prologue and the body of FG. There is insufficient evidence of a textual difficulty to warrant said hypotheses in the first place. This suggests that the Prologue *can* be read as an entrée into both the Johannine Gospel and thus Johannine reality, as per Segovia.[79] At the same time, source criticism is unable to provide evidence of distinct sources underlying and creating the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue. Source criticism seems a blind ally in studies of the Prologue.

2.4.   Redaction Criticism and the Johannine Community

In 2.3, we concluded that source criticism cannot explain the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue and why this co-occurrence is found at the entry point to Johannine reality. Redaction criticism has become dominant increasingly in Gospels studies since the 1960s and 1970s. Redaction criticism might be defined as criticism that pays special attention to how the author modified and conflated his or her source material in a creative fashion, as well as added his or her own

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[78] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:19.

innovations to the text. New Testament scholars often use the term "composition criticism" to refer to readings of the final text, considering not only the changes introduced by the redactor as well as the material which is untouched but whose meaning is potentially altered by relocation to a different narrative context. In the current discussion, the distinction between redaction and composition criticism is unnecessary, and thus will not be followed.

As commonly practiced in Gospels studies, redaction criticism presupposes that each of the four canonical Gospels were written in and for a local Christian community in the late first century.[80] Consequently, "each Gospel addresses a localized community in its own, quite specific context and character."[81] Although a literary method, redaction criticism became a means to "get at" the respective communities: by asking how the respective evangelists redacted and composed their respective materials and Gospel, exegetes could ask questions about the respective communities to which the evangelists wrote. Due to redaction criticism's dominance since the 1960s and '70s, the idea of

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[79] Segovia, "John 1:1-18 as Entrée into Johannine Reality," 33.

[80] For examples in Johannine studies, cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Joseph Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd rev. ed.; Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox, 2003). In Matthean studies, cf. Stephenson H. Brooks, *Matthew's Community: The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material* (JSOT Supplement Series 16; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago Studies in Christianity and Judaism; Chicago: Chicago, 1994); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992). In Markan studies, cf. Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); Willi Marxsen, *Mark The Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (trans. by J. Boyce, D. Juel, W. Poehlmann and R.A. Harrisville; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969); Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). In Lukan studies, cf. Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1987).

Matthean, Markan, Lukan and Johannine communities has become a hermeneutic principle used widely in Gospels Studies.[82] Given this wide usage, it is reasonable to ask whether it can help us explain the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue. In this section, it shall be argued that a modified form of redaction criticism as practiced currently can aid us in considering the Prologue within Jameson's second, social, horizon.

J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968)[83] and Raymond Brown's *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979) served to establish redaction criticism most fully in Johannine studies. Most likely, there is a connection between the development of redaction criticism in Johannine studies and the development of redaction criticism in Markan studies around the same time.[84] Bauckham suggests that Martyn was influenced by Theodore Weeden's *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (1971), which he identifies as the best known redaction critical study of Mark.[85] Bauckham notes that Martyn does not refer to Weeden, and considers this evidence that Synoptic and Johannine scholars developed redaction criticism largely in isolation from each other.[86] However, it is to be expected that Martyn does not cite Weeden, since Martyn published *History and Theology* a full three years before Weeden published *Mark: Traditions in*

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[81] Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. by R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 9-48, p. 11.
[82] Cf. Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" 10-13.
[83] First edition published in 1968. Second edition published in 1979. Third edition published in 2003.
[84] Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" 17-19.
[85] Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" 17.
[86] Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" 19.

Conflict.[87] Further, Bauckham fails to note that in fact Weeden does cite *History and Theology* explicitly.[88] There is a clear line of influence, running not from Weeden to Martyn as Bauckham infers incorrectly; rather, it runs from Martyn to Weeden. It is not clear whether Martyn was influenced by Marxsen's earlier redaction critical work on Mark,[89] which Francis Watson identifies as a "particularly clear rationale for the application to the Gospels of a new approach, *Redaktionsgeschichte*, the aim of which would be to study the achievement of the evangelist as a creative theologian responding to the particular concerns of his own communities."[90]

Watson argues persuasively that allegorical reinterpretations of the Gospel texts are integral to redaction criticism as commonly practiced.[91] In such an approach, the Gospel writers are seen as "creative theologians" who speak directly to their communities through allegorical retellings of the Jesus story. Emphasis must be placed upon *story* in that last sentence, as this understanding indirectly but inevitably vitiates the quest for the *historical* Jesus: if the evangelists' overriding concern is the allegory subtext directed at their community then the text itself–that is, the story of Jesus–is little more than a literary trope serving the allegory's agenda. Thus, in Martyn, Jesus stands in for an anonymous Christian preacher, the *Ioudaioi* for late first century Rabbis under the influence of

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[87] Bauckahm, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" 17, dates the publication of *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* incorrectly to 1968. Even if this date was correct, there would be no reason to expect Martyn to cite Weeden, as *History and Theology* was published in the same year.

[88] Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*, 18.

[89] Marxsen, *Mark, the Evangelist*. Although published first in 1956, it was not translated into English until 1969–the year after Martyn published *History and Theology*.

[90] Cf. Francis Watson, "Toward a Literal Reading of the Gospels," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. by R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 195-217, p. 198-199. Note that Watson's claim that Marxsen provides rationale for a redaction criticism focused upon the Gospel communities undercuts somewhat Bauckham's claim that this approach has never been argued but rather assumed (cf. Bauckham, "For Whom?" 13).

Jamnia, and so on.[92] Brown extends this hermeneutic so that FG becomes an allegorical "autobiography" of the community.[93] For instance, Jesus calling the first disciples in Galilee (1:35-51) stands in for the earliest, formative, period of the Johannine community.[94] Through a sort of social allegory, Martyn and Brown rewrite textual figures and events in the FG as historical figures and events in the life of the Johannine community. The text becomes not a history of Jesus but rather a history of the Johannine community written in a code derived from the then-extant Jesus tradition.

Thus, Bauckham states polemically but nonetheless insightfully that "[i]t is difficult to avoid supposing that those who no longer think it possible to use the Gospels to reconstruct the historical Jesus compensate for this loss by using them to reconstruct the communities that produced the Gospels."[95] There are, of course, very good reasons for preferring to read the Gospels as stories about Jesus rather than stories about the local communities. The simple fact that they are stories about Jesus is one such reason. That said, there is no logical reason that scholarly interest in the formation and production of the Gospels within the context of local Christ-believing communities need exclude interest in the Gospels as stories and histories about Jesus. Watson suggests that a literal– as opposed to an allegorical–reading of the Gospels would focus upon the way that they "represent the early Christian *reception* of the life and person of Jesus..."[96] Samuel Byrskog's recent work on the relationship between story and history in the Gospels helps

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[91] Cf. Watson, "A Literal Reading," 207-217.
[92] Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, esp. 35-45.
[93] Cf. Brown, *Community*, 26.
[94] Cf. Brown, *Community*, 27.
[95] Bauckham, "For Whom?" 20.
[96] Watson, "A Literal Reading," 216.

overcome the dichotomy between the Gospels as a story told by the Christ-believing communities (as in redaction criticism) and a history of Jesus' life (as per Watson).[97] Reception of the Jesus traditions as redacted by the evangelists becomes precisely the place where story and history coalesce.

This place of reception is located solidly within local Christ-believing communities, in which Jesus was remembered through both story and history.[98] Philip Esler argues similarly, saying that "[t]he main point of the [redaction critical] exercise is not the recovery of anything 'behind' the text, such as the history of the evangelists' community, but the question of how the evangelists related the Jesus tradition to their local contexts at the time of publication."[99] In effect, Esler is arguing that we must investigate the sociology of the reception and redaction of Jesus traditions. It is difficult to disagree with Esler on this point, although it is fair to ask whether social allegory is the best way to proceed with this investigation. Once it is recognized that the evangelists were concerned with telling Jesus' story, it is more problematic to read the characters and events of the Gospels as allegorical representations of the Gospel communities. Yet, the Christ-believing communities in which Jesus traditions were received must not disappear. If they do, then early Christian history is no longer the history of early Christians.

Redaction criticism's methodological practice of studying each Gospel community as an isolated and discrete entity generally has failed to take seriously the

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[97] Cf. Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

[98] Cf. Philip Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's *The Gospels for All Christians*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51:2 (1998): 235-248, p. 239-240; cf. Georgia Masters Keightley, "Christian Collective Memory and Paul's Knowledge of Jesus," in *Memory, Tradition and Text* (Semeia Studies 52; eds. A. Kirk and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 129-150.

eventual reception of the Gospels beyond the originating communities.[100] Bauckham is to

be thanked for bringing this to our attention. Yet, Bauckham's alternative view goes too

far in the opposite direction, emphasizing continuity within the communication network

linking early Christ-believing communities while ignoring evidence of discontinuity in

said network.[101] In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, Paul speaks of factionalism in the Corinthian

church. In Galatians 2:12, he speaks of an ideological and practical conflict between

himself and a 'James faction' in Antioch. In Acts 18:24-26, we read of Apollos, a Jewish

Christ-believer who apparently knew nothing of the Pauline mission or theology. In 3

John 9, the Elder talks about how Diotrephes refused to accept his letter(s) to a church,

whose location remains unspecified. Presumably as an alternative strategy to be heard at

this church, he sent a private letter to Gaius (cf. 1). Cumulatively, these individual

incidences reveal a pattern of discontinuity within the network of early Christ-believing

communities, and point to a significant flaw in Bauckham's hypothesis. Bauckham

establishes clearly that all Christ-believing communities *could* have received each Gospel

as it entered circulation.[102] He does not consider seriously whether all Christ-believing

communities or even individuals *would* have received each Gospel as it entered

circulation. Moreover, he does not demonstrate that the authors *intended* such wide

circulation.[103] Thomas Kazen has noted pointedly that Bauckham's hypothesis rests

entirely upon an identification of audience reception with authorial intention. The implicit

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[99] Esler, "Community and Gospel," p. 239.
[100] Cf. Bauckham, "For Whom?" 30-31.
[101] Bauckham, "For Whom?"32-44.
[102] Bauckham, "For Whom?" 32-44.
[103] Cf. Thomas Kazen, "Sectarian Gospels for Some Christians? Intention and Mirror Reading in the Light of Extra-Canonical Texts," *NTS* 51 (2005): 561-578.

assumption is that if a Gospel circulated widely than its author *must* have intended this wide circulation.

Is this assumption valid? The New Testament evidence suggests that there were a multiplicity of early Christ-believing social networks that were distinct from each other and yet interconnected.[104] The interconnections cannot allow us to ignore completely the differences between these networks. The 'James network' was different from the 'Pauline network,' even if they did communicate conflictually at Antioch (cf. Gal 2:12). The idea of Jamesine and Pauline networks leads us to suspect that the various networks of "Christ-believers" *were* associated with certain communities in specific cities. James is associated with a community in Jerusalem (cf. Gal 2:9), and Paul with a community in Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1-4). At the same time, both seek to extend their own understanding of Christ-belief beyond these locales, as is evident from Gal 2:12 and possibly the larger conflict at Galatians. In Esler's articulation, "the links [between Christ-believing communities] can be seen in a socially realistic light–as the means for colonising communities further afield with the local way of understanding Jesus and the Gospels."[105] We should envision an intricately interrelated network of communities in which certain

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[104] "Social network" is a useful shorthand term to refer to the connections between oneself, the people one knows, and the people who know the people one knows. It can be extended to include the people who know the people who know the people one knows. These connections can be familial, vocational, religious or otherwise in nature. They are a way of measuring both direct and indirect relationships between people, as a means of establishing possible lines for communication, conflict and transmission of knowledge. For a detailed consideration of social network analysis in relation to early Christian studies, cf. L. Michael White, *Social Networks in the Early Christian Environment: Issues and Methods for Social History* (*Semeia* 56; Atlanta, Georgia; Society of Biblical Literature, 1992). White and several of the contributors to this volume employ more specialized sociological and anthropological language to describe social networks than the present study. Much of this specialized language is unnecessary for our purposes. I have avoided employing this specialized language that would seem so much jargon to most scholars of early Christianity.

[105] Esler, "Community and Gospel," 243.

leaders associated with particular communities seek to exert influence upon other communities, with varying degrees of success.

From Paul's polemic against Christ-believers associating themselves with specific leaders (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-13), it seems likely that a given Gospel's success in a given local community would be determined in large part by its association with a particular leader. We can expect Christ-believers who associated themselves with Peter (for instance) would be more likely to accept a Gospel associated with Peter (as, perhaps, Mark was). Likewise, Christ-believers who associated themselves with FE would be more likely to accept a Gospel associated with FE. It is quite reasonable to call these Christians the "Johannine community," or perhaps more accurately the "Johannine network." It was centered perhaps in Ephesus, but was not necessarily limited to this region.[106] FE wrote FG as a means of influencing other communities with his distinctive form of Christ-belief, whose final, redactional form was produced within the Johannine community: a geographically diffuse group of Christ-believers more sympathetic to FE than to other leaders of the Jesus Movement.

Thus, it seems unlikely that FE expected his Gospel to be received equally by all Christ-believers. At the very least, he could expect that his initial readers were Johannine Christ-believers. Elsewhere in his critique of redaction criticism as commonly practiced, Bauckham argues that "if any of the evangelists did envisage reaching non-Christian readers, they would surely have had to envisage reaching them via Christian readers, who could pass on copies of Gospels to interested outsiders through personal contact. So the

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[106] Cf. Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (trans. by John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1989), 14-34.

Christian audience would in any case remain primary."[107] Applying this same logic to the question of Gospels communities, it would follow that if the initial readership were Johannine Christ-believers that they were also the primary audience. Put otherwise, it seems reasonable to suppose if FE could not secure a positive reception among those Christ-believers who were most sympathetic to his Gospel, he probably could not secure a positive reception among less sympathetic Christ-believers. To paraphrase Bauckham, "So the [Johannine community] would in any case remain primary,"[108] insofar as FE would need to secure their support in order to circulate FG to non-Johannine Christ-believers.

In response to Bauckham, Esler has argued that "'all Christians,' the lynchpin of Bauckham's case, just did not exist as a category of persons capable of being addressed in this period. What existed was a network of cells, possibly [the present author would say almost certainly] in communication but if so probably troubled with division, which simply did not provide a basis for such a general communicative aim."[109] Differences between these "cells" led to conflicts, as the cells' leaders vied for power. Yet Esler's point is overstated. Although there may have been many ways of being a Christ-believing community in the first century, they were all ways of being a Christ-believing community. In section 4.2, we will sketch a rough picture of the social strata arrangement and ritual practices typical of Christ-believing communities in the first century. This is done with caution, as must be the case whenever generalizations are involved. However,

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[107] Bauckham, "For Whom?" 10.
[108] Bauckham, "For Whom?" 10.
[109] Esler, "Community and Gospel," 242.

in lieu of clear evidence that the Christ-believing communities were markedly different in their social strata constitution and ritual practice, it seems preferable to proceed from a typical picture than to not proceed at all due to a lack of evidence for the Johannine community specifically.

2.5.   Of Malina and Models: Social Scientific Criticism

The issue of generalization brings us to the so-called "social scientific" criticism that has dominated certain sectors of New Testament studies over the last 30 years. This "social scientific" turn has involved the use of generalizing "models" which seek to explain ancient phenomena in terms derived from anthropological and sociological studies. The work of Bruce Malina has been particularly influential.[110] Although perhaps Lawrence overstates the matter when she describes Malina as "the father of the use of cross-cultural insights in biblical studies,"[111] certainly he has helped put cross-cultural studies on the agenda for recent New Testament studies. Given that the present study draws in part on cross-cultural studies, the present author agrees in principle that cross-cultural evidence can provide useful insights for Biblical scholarship. That said, he is less convinced that social scientific criticism as articulated and advocated by Bruce Malina is a viable research programme for New Testament studies.

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[110] Cf. Louise Joy Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies* (WUNT 165; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1-3.

[111] Lawrence, *Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew*, 12. Cross-cultural studies have been present in Biblical studies since its emergence as a critical discipline. This is evident most clearly in William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, First Series: The Fundamental Institutions* (New York: Applegate; 1889).

Central to Malina's method is his assertion that cultural anthropologists work primarily by applying "models" to the ethnographic data they collect.[112] Through this assertion, he can frame his methodological application of social scientific "models" to the available evidence as identical, in principle, to that of cultural anthropology. This assertion and its concomitant method have influenced early Christian studies significantly. For instance, in a volume co-edited by Wolfgang Stegemann, Malina and Gerd Theissen, it is stated the "general question [of the meeting upon which the volume was based] was: What can one, with the help of historically informed *social-scientific models*, know about the 'historical' Jesus from the New Testament that cannot be known by other approaches?"[113] Perhaps an even clearer example of the influence of Malina's assertions about "models" upon social scientific approaches to the study of early Christianity is the title of a volume edited by Philip Esler: *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context.*[114]

Given the influence of Malina's assertion about the centrality of models in cultural anthropology, it is reasonable to ask whether this assertion is correct. It is difficult to determine the evidentiary sources that substantiate this assertion, as Malina tends not to cite sources directly but instead to offer short bibliographies at the ends of his chapters. This tendency decreases the clarity of Malina's scholarship and increases the work that the reader must undertake to confirm or refute his assertions. Without

[112] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 20-25.
[113] Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen (eds.), *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), vii. Emphasis not in original.
[114] Philip Esler (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (London: Routledge, 1995).

references directing the reader to specific pages, he or she must rely wholly upon tables

of contents and indices to consult the works in Malina's bibliography.

When one consults the bibliography listed at the end of the first chapter of

Malina's *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*[115]–the chapter

in which he asserts most explicitly the centrality of models in cultural anthropological

method[116]–one finds a lack of evidentiary support for said assertion. When books and

articles by Biblical scholars, theologians and Malina himself are excluded, one is left

with ten texts.[117] Of these, three texts are written by cultural anthropologists.[118] Only one

of these contains a reference to models in the table of contents or the index; however,

when one reads the discussion of models in the text itself, one finds that "models" are

u＿ ＿..ood there as the way in which symbolic systems organize reality. This is quite

different from Malina's understanding of models as the way that cultural anthropologists

organize ethnograpic evidence.[119] Of the other seven texts, four do not contain the word

"model" in either their table of contents or indices and are written respectively by two

psychologists,[120] a social anthropologist,[121] a sociologist[122] and a linguist;[123] one refers to

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[115] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 26-27.

[116] Malina, *New Testament World*, 20-25.

[117] The reason for excluding these texts is to focus upon texts from which Malina derived evidence for his assertion about "models," rather than texts that might have derived their concern with models from Malina's assertion.

[118] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952); L.L. Langness, *The Study of Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1974).

[119] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 93-95, 114, 118, 123. Malina, *New Testament World*, 18-20 seems to draw upon Geertz to demonstrate that humans make models by nature and that social scientific models are not different in principle from the models developed by the Balinese peasants studied by Clifford Geertz. This might be the case on a high level of abstraction, but if accepted as correct and left unqualified then the assertion that cultural anthropologists work with models becomes in effect meaningless. It would not speak to cultural anthropologists in particular, but rather to humans in general.

[120] George A. Miller and Philip N. Johnson-Laird, *Language and Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1976).

mathematical models and is written by a mathematician;[124] one refers to models for

understanding antiquity, but states explicitly that the author is not a social scientist;[125] one

refers to models but distinguishes them from paradigms and theories, and is written by a

political scientist.[126] In summary, not one of the texts included in Malina's bibliography

provides evidence that social scientists in general or cultural anthropologists in particular

either understand "models" in same way as Malina, or place them at the center of their

method as Malina asserts. Given the centrality of this assertion to Malina's social

scientific critical method,[127] we can suggest that said method is predicated upon an

unsubstantiated claim.

Malina might object reasonably that this is a matter of semantics. That is to say,

we all organize the evidence that we work with; whether we call the organizational

frameworks "models," "theories" or–indeed–"frameworks" matters little. This is not,

however, the view taken by Kenneth Hoover, whom Malina cites in the bibliography

discussed above. For Hoover, there is a critical distinction between theories, paradigms

and models.[128] In Hoover's definitions: "theory [describes] a collection of hypotheses

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[121] Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by Which Symbols are Connected* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1976).

[122] Jonathan H. Turner, *The Structure of Sociological Theory* (rev. ed.; Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1978).

[123] M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: University Park Press, 1978).

[124] Moshe F. Rubinstein, *Patterns of Problem Solving* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

[125] T.F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, KS.: Coronado Press, 1975), xviii.

[126] Kenneth R. Hoover, *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), ix, 64-65.

[127] Cf. Malina, *New Testament World*, 25.

[128] Hoover, *Social Scientific Thinking*, 64-65.

linked together by some kind of logical framework";[129] model "convey[s] an implication of greater order and system in a theory";[130] and paradigm "refers to a larger frame of understanding shared by a wider community of scientists that organizes smaller-scale theories and inquiries."[131] Each of Malina's purported cultural anthropological "models"–structural-functionalism, conflict theory, and the symbolic–are used typically to "organize smaller-scale theories and inquiries,"[132] a fact which Malina himself makes clear when he "applies" them to smaller-scale inquiries in his Biblical scholarship. This suggests that they are closer to paradigms than to models, following the definitions of these terms from Malina's own source, Kenneth Hoover.

Structural-functionalism and conflict theory are able to organize smaller-scale inquiries because they each offer a comprehensive understanding of society. Structural-functionalism assumes that societies operate harmoniously and looks for how that harmony is maintained systemically.[133] Conversely, conflict theory assumes that societies do not operate harmoniously and looks for the ways in which that disharmony is expressed systemically.[134] Malina describes conflict theory as the "flip side" to structural functionalism, suggesting that they work to complement each other.[135] Although not mutually exclusive necessarily, structural functionalism and conflict theory do start from very different places. The former assumes that all things social work together for good. In

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[129] Hoover, *Social Scientific Thinking*, 64.
[130] Hoover, *Social Scientific Thinking*, 65.
[131] Hoover, *Social Scientific Thinking*, 65. Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, *Structures of Scientific Revolutions* (3rd ed.; Chicago: Chicago, 1996).
[132] Hoover, *Social Scientific Thinking*, 65.
[133] George Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory* (5th ed.; Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 94-117.
[134] Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory*, 122-134.
[135] Malina, *New Testament World*, 22.

contrast, the latter assumes that not all things social work together, and that this failure to work together leads frequently to something other than good. Clearly, each paradigm entails judgments about the nature of society that operate at a level of analysis deeper than application. Although one might be able to bring them together in practice, Malina's work shows little or no reflectivity upon these deeper level judgments.

With these two "models"–more accurately, "paradigms," following Hoover–Malina has barely touched upon cultural anthropology at all. Rather, he has been dealing with ideas derived from sociology and social anthropology. A persistent flaw in Malina's work is a failure to distinguish between social and cultural anthropologies. This becomes problematic in a book sub-titled *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* and in a chapter sub-section entitled "Models in Cultural Anthropology." Social anthropology refers most properly to the "British" school of anthropology, whereas cultural anthropology refers most properly to the "Americanist" school. The British tradition tends more towards how different peoples organize themselves relationally (hence the "social"),[136] whereas the Americanist tradition tends more towards analyses of how different peoples view the world (hence the "cultural").[137]

This failure to distinguish between social and cultural anthropology is indicative of a more general tendency to conflate society, culture and religion. Of course, these phenomena do relate to each other integrally and intricately. However, they are not necessarily identical. This terminological conflation is evident when Malina presents his

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[136] Cf. Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* (3rd ed.; London: Routledge, 1996).

[137] Regna Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies: A History of Americanist Anthropology* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska, 2001).

third and last cultural anthropological "model," the "symbolic." Malina makes this model

into "another definition of a social system"[138] by adapting a quotation from the cultural

anthropologist, Clifford Geertz. Although he does not cite precisely the source of his

quotation from the Geertzian corpus (or indicate that it is a quote, using standard

conventions such as indentation or quotation marks), compare the following quotations

from Geertz and Malina. From Geertz:

> Without further ado, then, a *religion* is:
> *(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive,
> and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating
> conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these
> conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and
> motivations seem uniquely realistic.*[139]

And from Malina:

> A social system is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful,
> pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in people, formulating
> conceptions of value-objects, and clothing these conceptions with such an
> aura of factuality that the moods and motivations are perceived to be
> uniquely realistic (adapted from Clifford Geertz).[140]

Given that the first quote comes from the single Geertzian text cited in Malina's

bibliography, it seems clear that it is Malina's source for the second quote. Note what

Malina has done. He has changed Geertz's definition of a religion into a definition of a

social system, and has done so without informing the reader or providing direct citation

to the original quote. This gives his symbolic definition of social system an "aura of

factuality" which it might not have had otherwise. Since Geertz is the only cultural

anthropologist Malina cites to support this definition, and since he quotes from Geertz

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[138] Malina, *New Testament World*, 23.

[139] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 90. Italics in original.

only a definition of religion and not social systems, we can reject this definition out of hand as a "model" used by cultural anthropologists to describe social systems.

In summary, we might say the following about Malina's approach. He has not provided evidence to support his assertions about the centrality of models in cultural anthropology. The "models" he does describe might better be termed "paradigms," following definitions found in a text he himself presents as an authority. He has not provided evidence that cultural anthropologists use any of these models or paradigms as he presents them. Insofar as Lawrence is correct that Malina is the father of recent cross-cultural approaches to Biblical studies,[141] these approaches are rendered suspect immediately. This is not to say that individual studies working under Malina's "model" paradigm are by definition without value. Often, it is quite the opposite. However, they are valuable *inspite* of Malina's overall research programme, not because of it. Quite simply, the "model" paradigm is ill conceived.

A genuine social scientific Biblical scholarship will need by necessity to find another paradigm. Such a paradigm will need to include what Malina's paradigm lacks: active reflection upon Grand Theory. The absence of Grand Theory is the ultimate Achilles' Heel of Malina's method. His "social scientific" criticism is no more than one item on the market that is contemporary Biblical studies. It has no ability to coordinate systematically the insights of the great social-scientific traditions, particularly the conflict, the sociobiological, the structuralist-functionalist, the psychoanalytic, and the

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[140] Malina, *New Testament World*, 23.
[141] Lawrence, *Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew*, 12.

linguistic. It has no ability to relate these insights systematically to texts and other historical artifacts. Jameson's dialectical literary criticism offers just such a paradigm.

2.6. Dialectics and 'Second Wave' Social Scientific Approaches in Hebrew Bible Studies

Given that our primary sources for reconstructing early Christian history are predominantly textual, early Christian scholarship must be able to work closely and carefully with textual material. Leaving aside the questionable importance of "models" for contemporary anthropology and sociology, the textual scholar must remember that these disciplines do not work primarily with texts. This is not a critique of these disciplines in any way. Textual production is but one part of human existence; in the grand scheme of things, it is perhaps one of the less significant parts. It is a reminder, however, that the textual scholar must be very careful when working with theories and methods that were developed to make sense of non-textual phenomena. It seems far safer for a textual scholar interested in social questions to work primarily with theories and methods developed by other textual scholars interested in social questions. Of course, there will have to be interaction between scholars of textual phenomena and scholars of non-textual phenomena at some point; this is unavoidable. Nonetheless, we are better off picking up ideas developed by fellow textual scholars such as Fredric Jameson than, for instance, ideas developed by Edmund Leach or Clifford Geertz, in whose work the reading of texts was far less central.

Jameson's dialectical approach to texts allows us to recognize the literary character and qualities of the text while simultaneously asking social questions of the text. This is accomplished theoretically by recognizing that since textual production is itself a social and cultural act, texts are always already socio-cultural artifacts. Methodologically, Jameson locates the text within three semantic horizons: the more narrowly literary, the immediate social context and the broader economic context.[142] This allows the exegete to ever expand his or her perspective of the text, moving from a telescopic to a more panoramic view.

Through such a method, the exegete can fulfill Alan Culpepper's prediction in the introduction to his classic work of literary criticism on FG: "[q]uestions about how the story is told inevitably raise interest in why it is told and why it is told as it is."[143] Questions about why FG's story is told as it is–specifically questions about the co-occurrence of "mythic narrative" and "metaphysical discourse" in the Prologue, which is the primary concern of this thesis–can be taken in at least two basic directions. The first is diachronic, in which one asks about the genealogies of particular forms. This is the approach taken by Bultmann in arguing for a Gnostic myth underlying the Prologue,[144] by Scott when arguing for a *Sophia* Christology,[145] and by Tobin when discussing the Prologue in relation to the history of "Hellenistic Judaism."[146] The second direction is synchronic, and asks from which segment(s) of the Prologue's social context the different

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[142] Cf. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 74-102.

[143] Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 11.

[144] Bultmann, *John*, 27-29.

[145] Scott, *Sophia*, 36-82.

[146] Tobin, "Prologue," 255-256.

forms most likely derive. This is the approach taken when scholars discuss whether it comes from a "Jewish" context, a "Hellenistic" context, a "Palestinian Jewish" context, a "Hellenistic Jewish" context, a "Galilean" context or a "Judean" context.[147]

The approach taken in this study is closer to the synchronic approach. Whereas synchronic approaches to FG have tended to focus upon ethnic,[148] geographic[149] and/or religious[150] categories, the approach taken here focuses on the relationship between text, social strata and modes of production. This approach is similar to a tradition of Hebrew Bible scholarship represented by scholars such as Norman Gottwald and Roland Boer. Gottwald's work helped open the door for what Frick has called "Second-Wave" social scientific approaches to the Hebrew Bible,[151] and ultimately for the present study. Norman Gottwald has urged Biblical scholars to place social class on par with more traditional "analytical categories" such as ecclesiology and eschatology.[152] Gottwald's concern for social class as an analytical category relates closely to his concern for modes of production.[153] Gottwald himself was one of the first Biblical scholars to take social class and modes of production seriously, starting with *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1979) and continuing on to more recent work such as *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (2001).[154] In

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[147] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:140-233, for a discussion of the various contexts that have been argued.

[148] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:153-159, 160-175.

[149] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:175-194, 228-232.

[150] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:159-214.

[151] Frank S. Frick, "Norman Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh* in the Context of 'Second-Wave' Social-Scientific Biblical Criticism," in *Tracking* The Tribes of Yahweh: *On the Trail of a Classic* (JSOTS 351; ed. R. Boer; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002), 17-34.

[152] Gottwald, Norman. "Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutic Category in Biblical Studies," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112/1 (1993): 3-22.

[153] Cf. Gottwald, "Social Class," 5-9.

[154] Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: The Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1979); Norman Gottwald, *Politics of Ancient Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), esp. 32-112. Cf. Roland Boer, "Marx, Method and

Gottwald's work we see an emphasis upon what Jameson calls the second and third horizons: the social and the economic. Yet Gottwald does not ignore the content of the first, literary, horizon; indeed, a significant portion of *Tribes of Yahweh* is devoted to locating the literary artifacts–i.e., the Biblical texts–in their social and economic "matrices."[155] Although Gottwald published *Tribes* prior to Jameson's programmatic text, *The Political Unconscious*, his approach is similar to and resonates with a Jamesonian approach.

This resonance is evident in the work of Roland Boer. Boer was both the editor of a volume that assesses the legacy of Gottwald's *Tribes of Yahweh* and the first Biblical scholar to write a monograph-length study using Jameson's hermeneutics to read a Biblical text.[156] In Boer's work, we see a bridge between the work of Gottwald and Jameson. Similarly, David Jobling has used Jamesonian approaches to read Psalm 72, and was a contributor to Boer's edited volume on *Tribes of Yahweh*.[157] Moreover, Jameson himself has spoken directly and approvingly of Gottwald's work.[158] These interrelationships suggest that Jamesonian approaches to the Hebrew Bible have played an important and even integral role in Frick's "Second-Wave" of social-scientific criticism.

Gottwald,." in *Tracking* The Tribes of Yahweh: *On the Trail of a Classic* (JSOTS 351; ed. R. Boer; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002), 98-156, for a discussion of Gottwald's concern with social class.

[155] Cf. Gottwald, *Tribes of Yahweh*, 45-59, 88-176, 237-337.

[156] Roland Boer (ed.), *Tracking* The Tribes of Yahweh: *On the Trail of a Classic* (JSOTS 351; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002); Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*.

[157] Jobling, "Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts"; David. Jobling, "Specters of *Tribes*: On the 'Revenance' of a Classic," Pages in *Tracking* The Tribes of Yahweh: *On the Trail of a Classic* in *Tracking* The Tribes of Yahweh: *On the Trail of a Classic* (JSOTS 351; ed. R. Boer; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002), 10-16

In addition to these direct and indirect associations between Jameson and Gottwald, Jameson has encouraged Biblical scholars to use his approaches. At a 1990 session of the Society of Biblical Literature, he stated that he was

> very excited to have this chance to listen in on another discipline [Biblical studies], and to find out what it is that you talk about, particularly since these two disciplines [Biblical and literary studies] are historically very close. I think that yours is the elder predecessor in textual studies and exegesis of whatever it is that now goes on in what we now call literary theory.[159]

With this talk at the SBL one might even suggest that Jameson himself has made a direct contribution to the "Second-Wave" of social scientific approaches to the Hebrew Bible.

Although more prominent in Hebrew Bible scholarship, Jameson's work is not unknown among New Testament scholars. Of particular note is Tina Pippin. Pippin co-edited (with David Jobling) *Semeia* 59,[160] in which appeared the transcript of Jameson's aforementioned 1990 talk at the SBL.[161] In her own contribution to the same volume, Pippin uses Jameson's concept of "strategies of containment" to talk about certain practices within Biblical scholarship as a discipline.[162] Despite Pippin's usage of Jameson in this context, I am unaware of any New Testament scholarship prior to the current

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[158] Published as Fredric Jameson, "A Conversation with Fredric Jameson," in *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 59; ed. D. Jobling and T. Pippin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 227-238, p. 227-228.

[159] Jameson, "A Conversation with Fredric Jameson," 227.

[160] David Jobling and Tina Pippin, *Ideological Criticism of Biblical texts* (Semeia 59; Atlanta: Georgia, 1992).

[161] Jameson, "A Conversation with Fredric Jameson." Cf. Tina Pippin, *Apacolyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London: Routledge, 1999), 121, in which Pippin refers to comments Jameson made during this talk.

[162] Tina Pippin, "Eros and the End: Reading for Gender in the Apocalypse of John," in *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 59; ed. D. Jobling and T. Pippin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 193-210, p. 194.

thesis that has used Jameson's approach to read New Testament texts per se.[163] Thus, as mentioned in section 2.1., applying to New Testament exegesis a Jamesonian hermeneutic is but the latest example of New Testament scholars using methodology developed or applied first by Hebrew Bible scholars. In the balance of this thesis, we will see how Jamesonian hermeneutics can contribute to New Testament studies as productively as they have contributed to the Second-Wave social scientific criticism in Hebrew Bible scholarship.

2.7. Conclusion

As this introductory chapter comes to an end, we should restate succinctly how Jameson's hermeneutics relates to the structure of the present study, which aims at a dialectical understanding of the Johannine Prologue within its the literary, social and historical horizons. In Jamesonian dialectical criticism, "semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks."[164] These "three concentric frameworks" are the three horizons of Jamesonian hermeneutics, which we have described as the textual, the social and the historical. Each horizon will be treated in a separate chapter in the present study. In the third chapter, we shall focus upon the first horizon, the textual. Here we shall argue and discuss more fully the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical narrative

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[163] In a personal communication, Roland Boer stated that he too is unaware of any Jamesonian readings of New Testament texts.

[164] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 75.

in the Prologue. We shall consider also the relationships between *ho Logos* on the one hand and *ho kosmos*, *ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* on the other.

In the fourth chapter, we shall focus upon the second horizon, in which the text is located within the social order. The relationships between *ho Logos* and these three groups of people will be re-articulated in terms of strata conflict. As a result of this analysis, it shall be argued that FE was a member of the upper strata within Jewish society, that Jesus was a member of the lower strata and that the former's processes of remembering the latter took place within a predominantly lower strata cultic context. The co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the FG Prologue will be explained as a function ultimately of the upper strata FE's remembering the lower strata Jesus of Nazareth within the context of a predominantly lower strata religious movement.

In the fifth chapter, the discussions from the third and fourth chapters will be re-articulated in terms of the third horizon. The focus will be upon modes of production. The primary concern of this chapter is to examine modes of production as primarily the synchronic but also the diachronic cause of the ultimate division of FE's social context into lower and elite strata. Through this ever progressive move from the first through third horizon, this study will locate mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse within the social order as manifested within early Christ-believing communities; in turn, this social order will be located within the dominant mode of production.

3.   **The First Horizon: The Fourth Gospel as Literary Artifact**

Speaking of his first horizon–the literary–Jameson states

> it is only in the first narrowly political horizon–in which history is reduced
> to a series of punctual events and crises in time, to the diachronic agitation
> of the year-to-year, the chroniclelike [*sic*] annals of the rise and fall of
> political regimes and social fashions, and the passionate immediacy of
> struggles between historical individuals–that the "text" or object of study
> will tend to coincide with the individual work or literary artifact.[165]

In this horizon, history is understood as a sequence of events and the literary artifact (FG,

in the present study) is understood as one such event within this sequence. As an event,

FG is related to other events: economic, environmental, social and otherwise. The daily

praxis of obtaining subsistence and consuming nutrients, the yearly tasks of planting and

harvesting, the biographical moments of birth and death, the geographic movements of

migration and invasion, the social acts of speaking and writing – all these events are part

of this sequence.

In the first horizon, FG is abstracted partially from this sequence of events. It is

abstracted almost completely from the broader socio-historical concerns of Jameson's

second and third horizons. Through this abstraction, the "object of study will tend to

coincide with the individual work or literary artifact."[166] It is not a complete abstraction,

as literary analysis depends greatly on comparisons with other literary artifacts in order to

consider things such as form. Nonetheless, this abstraction allows us to focus narrowly

upon the text and its comparative and inter-textual relationships with other texts. Our first

task within this horizon is to identify mythic narrative within the Prologue; our second is

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[165] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76-77.
[166] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

to identify metaphysical discourse. A third task involves the consideration of the relationships between *ho kosmos*, *ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* on the one hand and *ho Logos* on the other, as described in the Prologue.

3.1.   The Prologue as Mythic Narrative

In section 2.2, we considered different arguments about the presence of a mythic form in the Prologue, particularly Bultmann's interest in Gnostic myth and a recurring scholarly interest in *Sophia* myth. Ultimately, deciding whether the Prologue is or contains "myth" of any sort depends greatly upon one's definition of "myth." The current study will follow Northrop Frye's definition, for three reasons. First, Fredric Jameson himself builds upon Frye's work. Thus, there exists already continuity between their respective works;[167] this continuity will make it easier to integrate Frye's work into Jameson's grand theoretical framework, precisely because that framework already integrates Frye's work to a large extent. Second, Frye's definition was developed specifically for use by literary critics; thus, it is more readily accessible to the textual scholar then other definitions might be. Third, Frye's definition is based upon the ethnological researches of James Frazer.[168] Few scholars have considered the same range of material as Frazer did in his classic study of world mythology, *The Golden Bough*. Certainly, the mere accumulation of data does not lead directly or necessarily to correct conclusions; however, it does produce more fully informed conclusions, and for this reason must be taken seriously. Fourth, Frye and Frazer were each influenced by and

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[167] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 106-119. Cf. Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 33-37.

contributed to Biblical scholarship,[169] and thus in turning to their work we are not so

much meeting a new friend as getting reacquainted with an estranged sibling.

Following Frazer, Frye argues that:

> [i]n the solar cycle of the day, in the seasonal cycle of the year, and the
> organic cycle of human life, there is a single pattern of significance, out of
> which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the
> sun, partly vegetative fertility, partly a god or archetypal human being.[170]

Frye's definition of myth seems to describe the Prologue well. There, we have "a central

narrative [1:1-5, 9-14, 16] around a figure [*ho Logos*, introduced first in 1:1] who is

partly the sun [*ho Logos* is *to phōs tōn anthrōpōn*, 1:4]...partly a god[171] [*theos ēn ho*

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[168] Cf. Robert A. Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 3, 219.

[169] The Semiticist William Robertson Smith—one of the founders of critical Hebrew Bible scholarship—encouraged Frazer personally to move into more ethnological areas of research. Cf. Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* (New York: Garland, 1991, 48-49. A minister in the United Church of Canada, Frye himself wrote a significant volume of literature on the Biblical texts. Cf. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981); Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1992); Northrop Frye, "Symbolism in the Bible," in *Biblical and Classical Myths: The Mythological Framework of Western Culture* (Northrop Frye and Jay MacPherson; Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), 1-270.

[170] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.

[171] Frye, *Great Code*, 7, states that "[t]he central expression of metaphor is the 'god,' the being who, as sun-god, war-god, sea-god, or whatever, identified a form of personality with an aspect of nature." As we shall see, FG's *theos* is identified less fully with nature than this definition suggests. Nonetheless, we must not overlook the fact the Prologue identifies *ho logos* as *theos*. That said, the relationship between *ho Logos* and God is disputed in contemporary scholarship, primarily because in 1:1 we learn that *theos ēn ho Logos*. The absence of the definite article before *theos* has led some to suggest that *ho Logos* cannot be identified fully with God (cf. Westcott, *John*, 3). Barrett, *John*, 156 suggests that "[t]he absence of the article indicates that the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true." Brown, *John*, 1:5, suggests that "for a modern Christian reader whose trinitarian background has accustomed him [sic] to thinking of 'God' as a larger concept than 'God the Father,' the translation 'The Word was God' is quite correct;" although somewhat unclear, this statement suggests that *theos* should be understood as the essence or nature shared by the three persons of the Godhead, whereas *ho Logos* should be understood as the personal identity of the Second Person of said Godhead. Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God* (BZNW 121; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 179, suggests that "the very carefully formulated first verse of the Prologue speaks of Logos as the dynamic relational face of God that still does not exhaust *ho Logos*." Schnackenburg, *John*, 1: 234 is also unclear on this point, arguing that "*theos* is not a genus, but signifies the nature proper to God and the Logos in common"; it is difficult to see the distinction between "genus" and "nature...in common" in Schnackenburg's description, however. My own position is that it is likely a Hebraism, for in the Hebrew Bible *Elohim* will appear frequently without the definite article; thus, the absence of the definite article in

Logos, 1:1] and archetypal human being[172] [*ho Logos sarx egeneto,* 1:14]."[173] Following Frye's definition, we can suggest that the Prologue is "myth," understood as a generalized category–a category which, for Frye, denotes a narrative form.

According to Frye, mythic narratives move through four phases cyclical phases: first, "[t]he dawn, spring and birth phase," which include "[m]yths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation and...of the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter and death";[174] second, "[t]he zenith, summer, and marriage or triumph phase," which include "[m]yths of apotheosis, of the sacred marriage, and of the entering into paradise";[175] third, "[t]he sunset, autumn and death phase," which include "[m]yths of fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice and of the isolation of the hero";[176] fourth, "[t]he darkness, winter and dissolution phase," which include "myths of floods and the return of chaos, of the defeat of the hero..."[177] It is crucial to note–as this will assume great significance in the second and third horizons–that these four phases are not historical accidents. They did not become associated with mythic narrative because someone somewhere made this association, and then others adopted that association through some sort of mimetic process of historical transmission. They are called

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reference to *theos* in a Jewish text should not be considered exceptional. Either way, given that Frye's definition states only that the mythic hero is "partly God" (cf. Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 106), for our purpose it is sufficient to say only that *ho Logos* is in some sense God. We need not clarify the relationship precisely.

[172] On the Johannine *logos* as the ideal male human being–and thus, in the contemporary understa
ndings of gender, the ideal human being–see Colleen M. Conway, "'Behold the Man!' Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel," in *New Testament Masculinities* (*Semeia* Studies 45; ed. by S.D. Moore and J.C. Anderson; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 163-180, esp. p. 179.
[173] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104-105.
[174] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[175] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[176] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[177] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.

archetypes for a reason, as they spring always from the human psyche, the recurring products of humanity's ongoing interactions with its physical environment.

The Prologue moves through these phases, beginning with the "dawn, spring and birth phase"[178] of mythic narrative. As mentioned above, this phase includes "myths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation."[179] The fundamental theme uniting birth, resurrection and creation is origin or beginning, and this is evident in 1:1 and 1:3. In 1:1, not only is *ho Logos*' origin disclosed – he is *pros theon* – but the story begins *en archē*. Swete observes correctly that Mark's *archē* is not FG's *archē*.[180] Mark's *archē* is the beginning of *tou euaggeliou Iēsou Christou*, for "Mark proposes to relate how the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God began."[181] Luke 1:2 seems to have a similar meaning in mind when he refers to teachings received from witnesses *ap' archēs* to *tou logou*. In contrast, FG's *archē* seems to refer either to a time before creation,[182] the beginning of creation,[183] a point beyond time itself,[184] or the sphere of God.[185] These readings are not necessarily exclusive, which is suggested by the very fact that most commentators will present more than one of these in their exegesis of 1:1. It is likely that each captures part of the intended meaning of *en archē* in FG 1:1. The salient point for the current discussion is that any narrative about what existed or was happening at the beginning of all things is an example of Frye's birth, dawn or spring phase.

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[178] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[179] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[180] Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (1913; repr. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977), 1.
[181] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2nd ed.; London: MacMillan, 1996), 152. Cf. Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 32-33; Swete, *Mark*, 1.
[182] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:4; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:232; Westcott, *John*, 2.
[183] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:365-366; Westcott *John*, 2.

This "dawn" continues in 1:3-5, as *ho Logos* begins to create *panta*. Life is in him and that life is a light that darkness cannot overcome or comprehend (*katelaben*).[186] 1:5 can be read as a movement into the "zenith," "summer" or "triumph" phase of the mythic narrative,[187] for here *to phōs* shines fully and victoriously in the darkness. The light that at creation burst forth in the dark–as does the sun at dawn–now enlightens all people.[188] The text presents this as an eternal function of the light; he is always that which enlightens the world. Nonetheless, the point at which it is mentioned in the narrative is not without literary significance: onto his creative function–an example of the "spring" phase–is added a description of his "warrior" function, driving back the powers of darkness. He is the mythic hero, creating life and battling the darkness that threatens to overwhelm that life he has created.

His victory over the darkness is not without opposition however, and the "summer" or "triumph" phase does not last. If 1:6-8 is read as a parenthetical statement that clarifies the identity of *ho Logos* in a negative sense by stating clearly that he is not John the Baptist (see section 2.3., above), then 1:9 resumes the mythic narrative that ran

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[184] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 152; Brown, *John*, 1:4; Bultmann, *John*, 32-33; Westcott, *John*, 2.

[185] Brown, *John*, 1:4; Bultmann, *John*, 32-33.

[186] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1: 8; Keener, *John*, 1:387.

[187] Cf. Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.

[188] Northrop Frye, "Symbolism in the Bible," 137, states that "In the Gospel of John, the Word of God is spoken of as a light shining in darkness [1:5], and of course a light shining in darkness suggests the moon." Against Frye, it should be noted that Genesis 1:3-4 describes the creation of light as occurring initially within a primordial darkness; this light is identified explicitly with day in Gen. 1:5. Given that most likely FG 1:1ff is in part an exegesis of Genesis 1 (cf. Barrett, *John*, 151; Boyarin, "Gospel of the *Memra*," 243-284; Brown, *John*, 1:4; Bultmann, *John*, 20; Haenchen, *John*, 1:109; Keener, *John*, 1:365; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:232; Westcott, *John*, 2), it seems likely *a priori* that any light imagery would be associated with day and sun. Nonetheless, this question matters less than it might seem initially: even if one identifies *ho Logos* with the moon rather sun imagery, one still sees an association of the hero with daily cycles (just lunar, instead of solar).

from 1:1-5.[189] 1:9 would then seem to herald the "sunset" or "autumn" phase.[190] The light

descends, as does the setting sun. *To phōs* becomes something unknown and unseen in

1:10, as the *kosmos* does not recognize him. In like fashion, Frye identifies in the sunset

phase "the isolation of the hero."[191] By 1:11, when *ta idia*–his own–do not recognize him,

the Prologue's mythic narrative enters the "darkness" or "winter" phase, in which the

hero is defeated and has but a small band of faithful followers.[192]

By 1:12, the light has disappeared almost entirely, precisely because *ta idia* have

not received it. Israel's failure to accept *ho Logos* indicates that we have entered fully

into Frye's "darkness, winter and dissolution phase."[193] The darkness is not complete,

however. There are still *hosoi elabon auton*, who can both perceive and accept the light.

As much as *ho Logos'* defeat may seem complete, *skotia auto ou katelaben* (cf. 1:5). No

matter how much the darkness might rage against the light, the former cannot overcome

the latter (cf. section 2.3, for a discussion of the incarnation's timing within the

Prologue). Just as "the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year, and the

organic cycle of human life"[194] are all cyclical, so too does the "single pattern of

significance"[195] in mythic narrative cycle back through its various phases.[196] Thus, the

movement   from   the   "dawn/spring/phase"   phase   in   1:1-4,   through   the

"summer/summer/triumph" phase in 1:5, the "sunset/autumn/death" phase in 1:9-11, to

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[189] Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 52; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:253. Brown, *John*, 1:28-29, locates the resumption of the narrative at 1:10.
[190] Cf. Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[191] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[192] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[193] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[194] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.
[195] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.

the "darkness/winter/dissolution" phase in 1:12-13, prepares the reader for a return to the

"spring" or "dawn/spring/birth" phase in 1:14. This phase of mythic narrative returns

with the incarnation of *ho Logos,* which is in fact the birth proper of the hero.[197] In effect,

this birth closes the mythic narrative in the Prologue. Simultaneously, it opens the

Prologue to the biography of Jesus told in the body of the Gospel; it begins with a new

dawn, the incarnation of *ho Logos.* This *Logos* experiences success (i.e. triumph;

summer), as he gathers his first disciples and builds up a following among people such as

Nicodemus or Mary, Martha and Lazarus of Bethany (cf. 1:19-11); opposition (i.e.

dissolution; fall), as the Jerusalem authorities oppose him and seek his death (cf. 11-18);

death (i.e. winter), with the crucifixion (cf. 19); and, once again, a new dawn with the

resurrection and reconstitution of his disciples as a community devoted to him (cf. 20-

21).

3.2.   The Prologue as Metaphysical Discourse

Already in the 5th-4th century B.C.E., Plato contended that narrative is a

fundamental characteristic of poetry (cf. *Resp,* 392d). Havelock has argued that for Plato

"the content of poetry is *mythos* as opposed to the dialectical *logos.*"[198] This contrast

leads us to our definition of "metaphysical discourse." As Greek language moved from

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[196] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 104.

[197] Strictly speaking, 1:14 refers only to the incarnation of *ho Logos,* not to a birth per se. However, 2:3 introduces Jesus' mother; this makes clear that Jesus became flesh in the same way as any other human. This would not exclude readings that have *ho Logos* descending upon Jesus when *to pneuma* came upon him (an incident reported by John in 1:32). This seems unlikely, however, given John's statement about Jesus being before him (cf. 1:15) and Jesus' statements about being before Abraham (cf. 8:58); this suggests that Jesus is self-identical to the pre-existent *ho Logos.*

[198] Havelock, *Preface to Plato,* 236.

the Homeric, through the Hesiodic and into the Platonic periods and onward, words such as *nomos* and *ethea* assumed increasingly abstract definitions. *Nomos* might have been connected originally with the distribution of pasture, but it developed in Hesiod into a reference to human customs and in Plato into written statutes.[199] Likewise, *ethea* seems to have referred originally to the "lair" or "haunt" of an animal, but developed in the Hesiodic period into a reference to "the way a human being lived in his [*sic*] 'haunts,'" and in Aristotle it provides the basis for the term "ethics."[200] Thus, Havelock concludes that "between Hesiod and Aristotle both *nomos* and *ethea* passed through a similar evolution out of the concrete and towards the abstract."[201]

The key word from Havelock is "abstract," in contrast to "concrete." For the present study, perhaps the most crucial element of Frye's definition of myth is its concrete-ness. Through its concern with daily, seasonal and biographical cycles, mythic narrative is related closely to the concrete, physical, world. Mythic narrative can be defined here as narrative organized around a figure that is understood in concrete terms which are related to the physical world. In the Prologue, that figure is *ho Logos*, who is made concrete (i.e., made *sarx*) and–at least for the duration of his incarnation– understood and described in concrete terms, terms which are used typically to describe the physical world. The opposite of a form constituted by a narrative around a figure that is understood in concrete terms would be a form abstracted from narrative and the concrete, physical, world. This we might call "metaphysical discourse," and it represents

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[199] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[200] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[201] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.

the increasing abstraction that Havelock identified in Plato and Aristotle.[202] It is *meta physin* in the precise, etymological, sense of being "beyond nature."

There is clear evidence of metaphysical discourse in the Prologue. The Prologue begins before the origin of *panta* through *ho Logos* (cf. 1:1-3). *Ho Logos'* existence is independent of the physical world, and thus we can say that he exists *meta physin*, beyond the physical. Moving through the Prologue, we see continuing evidence of this metaphysical orientation alongside the mythic narrative. In 1:4, as much as *to phōs tōn anthrōpōn* is sun imagery and thus associated with *ho Logos* as mythic hero, the understanding of *ho Logos* as a source of light resonates with certain philosophical themes contemporary to FG. In particular, Kooten argues that the FG Prologue "involves a particular Greek-philosophical understanding of light."[203] Similarly, the idea that *ho Logos* enlightens (*photizei*) all people seems related to an analogous idea current within Greco-Roman philosophy at the time.[204] Kooten sees this understanding evident in texts such as Plato's *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, as well in Philo.[205] Likewise, Dodd relates *ho Logos'* revelatory activity in the FG Prologue to Philo's Platonic cosmology, suggesting that "[t]he Logos is the *topos* of the archetypal life and light."[206] FE's *ho Logos* is presented in a metaphysical mode, even though he is presented also as a mythic hero.

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[202] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[203] Kooten, "The 'True Light,'" 150.
[204] Cf Kooten, "The 'True Light,'" 150. Barrett, *John*, 161 raises and dismisses this possibility.
[205] Kooten, "The 'True Light,'" 151-155.

3.3.   The Prologue as Mythic Narrative *and* Metaphysical Discourse

The identification of *ho logos* as mythic hero suggests that in FG's *ho Logos* we are confronted with the hypostasis of a metaphysical concept.[207] The reification of a metaphysical concept as a hypostasis is not unique in Jewish tradition.[208] We see this sort of reification in the *Sophia* literature,[209] and perhaps with *qol* in the Hebrew Bible.[210] What is unique to FG is that this hypostasis becomes flesh (cf. 1:14). Perhaps Westcott puts this most forcefully when he states that FE "transferred to the realm of history the phrases in which men before him had spoken of 'the Logos'–'the Word,' 'the Reason'–in the realm of metaphysics."[211] Crucial to the present study, however, is the recognition that FE's "realm of history" is represented mythically. Reformulating Westcott for the present study, it might be said that FE "transferred to [mythic narrative] the phrases in which [people] before him had spoken of 'the Logos'...in the realm of [metaphysical discourse]."[212] The abstract, metaphysical *Logos* becomes concrete, mythic flesh.

It is possible this merely reflects the working out of elements present already in Genesis 1, of which FG 1:1-5 is likely an exegesis.[213] Certainly, Genesis 1 contains elements of mythic narrative. Hermann Gunkel suggested famously that the creation narrative in Genesis 1 stood in inter-textual relationship with Babylonian creation

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[206] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 203.

[207] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:350-352; Westcott, *John*, xv.

[208] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:350-351.

[209] Cf. Ronald E. Murphy, "Wisdom in the OT," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:920-931, esp. 926-927.

[210] Cf. Azzin Yadin, "*Qol* as Hypostasis in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 122/4 (2003): 601-626.

[211] Westcott, *John*, xv.

[212] Westcott, *John*, xv.

[213] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 151; Boyarin, "Gospel of the *Memra*"; Brown, *John*, 1:4; Bultmann, *John*, 20; Haenchen, *John*, 1:109; Keener, *John*, 1:365; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:232; Westcott, *John*, 2.

myth.[214] However, if Gunkel is to be followed on this point, it must be recognized that Genesis contains–to borrow a term from the Bultmannian tradition–a "demythologizing" of the Babylonian tradition. We might agree with Von Rad when he suggests that although "[i]n the last analysis, all these statements have their terminological origin in the mythologies of neighboring religions...[t]he terms used in [Gen 1:2] are freed from every mythological context; in Israel they had long since become cosmological catchwords."[215] What, one might ask, were these "cosmological catchwords" describing? Sarna argues persuasively that Genesis 1's "quintessential teaching is that the universe is wholly the purposeful product of divine intelligence, that is, of the one self-sufficient, self-existing God, *who is a transcendent being outside of nature and who is sovereign over space and time*."[216] Thus, at the same time that Genesis seems to move away from mythic narrative through demythologizing Babylonian creation myth, we see a corresponding move toward metaphysical discourse; that is to say, a divinity separated from the very natural world to which myth relates is not a divinity in the mythic mode. That divinity might interact with the natural world, but he himself is *outside* that world. He is not part of it. This is a divinity in the metaphysical mode, a divinity beyond the physical (*meta physin*).

If Genesis 1 is already an Israelite demythologization of Babylonian creation myth, than insofar as the FG Prologue stands in inter-textual relation with Genesis 1 it can be said to "re-mythologize" the text. That is to say, the FG Prologue contains

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[214] Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. by Mark E. Biddle; Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 103-105.

[215] Gerhard Von Rad , *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. by J.H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 48.

[216] Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 3-4. Emphasis added.

material that is more clearly mythic than does Genesis 1. In exclusively literary terms, this is undoubtedly a result of FE's need to connect the metaphysical discourse with the biography of a real human being who lived in this world. This forces FE to bring the text down to earth, so to speak. However, this does not tell the whole story. It does not, for instance, explain why FG felt the need to retain any vestige of metaphysical discourse at the beginning of his Gospel. None of the Synoptic Gospels do this, even though each connects their story of Jesus at various points with metaphysical concerns. What was special about FG's context and FE himself that led to this retention of metaphysical discourse? Put otherwise, explaining the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse by reference to the demands of connecting Genesis 1 with the story of Jesus does not explain why FE would want to connect these two things at all.

3.4.   *Ho kosmos, ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton*

Before proceeding, we must consider the respective relationships between *ho Logos* on one hand and *ho kosmos, ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* on the other. This will become crucial in the second horizon, as it will provide key evidence for identifying FE's social strata membership. *Ho kosmos* in 1:10 should be identified closely, although perhaps not unequivocally, with *panta* in 1:3, with *ho kosmos* understood more precisely as a reference to the human world[217] and *panta* more precisely as a reference to the created world as a whole.[218] The statement that each was *di' autou egeneto* (1:3, 9)

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[217] Barrett, *John*, 161; Brown, *John*, 1:10; Bultmann, *John*, 54; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:255.

[218] Brown, *John*, 1:10 suggests that *ho kosmos* "is part of the creation of v. 3, but only that part of creation that is capable of response, the world of men [*sic*]." This is a plausible reading, and perhaps the most probable if we restrict discussion strictly to a semantic level. Pragmatically, however, it seems likely that

constitutes the strongest evidence for the identification if *ho kosmos* with *panta*.[219] Given

that *ho kosmos* refers most precisely to the world, it should be identified closely with

panta anthrōpon in 1:9-10;[220] these two terms will be used more or less interchangeably

throughout the ensuing discussion as references to humanity as a unit within the totality

of creation.

     Ta idia is introduced in 1:11. *Idion* (from whence *idia*, the accusative plural

thereof) bears the sense of being one's possessions, one's own property.[221] Although *ho*

kosmos was *di' autou egeneto* (*autou* being *ho Logos*), *ho kosmos* is never said to be the

property of *ho Logos*. This suggests a closer relationship between *ho Logos* and *ta idia*

th...een *ho Logos* and *ho kosmos*, which in turn implies that these two entities are

distinct from each other (at least in part).[222] If *ho kosmos* references the totality of

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FE already had the "sphere of men [*sic*]" in mind as early as his reference to *panta* in 1:3. This is indicated by the common use of *panta* in both 1:3 and 1:8 (*panta anthrōpon*), with former pointing towards the latter. It seems likely that FE has both meanings in mind in 1:3: he is referring to "all things," but in so doing prepares the reader already to identify "all things" more precisely with "all things human." Thus it seems correct to say with Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:238, that *panta* in 1:3 "cannot be restricted to the world of men [*sic*]." It seems correct, equally, to say that FE had the human world already in mind when he wrote about *panta* in 1:3. Here we can invoke the literary-critical concept of polysemy: the same word used in the same text can have multiple meanings and referents, even in the same instance of usage. On polysemy, cf. David Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 15-38. Bultmann, *John*, 36, comes closest to this reading when he refers to *panta* as "the world, the sphere in which men [*sic*] find themselves." It seems that Bultmann wants to maintain a clear semantic distinction between *panta* and *ho kosmos*; it seems more likely that FE's usage of each in 1:3 and 1:9, respectively, overlap significantly. One might suggest, further, that the multivalency that most likely is present in *panta* is present in *ho kosmos* in 1:10, also.

[219] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:10; Keener, *John*, 1: 395.

[220] Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 54.

[221] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 163; Brown, *John*, 1:10; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:259. Keener suggests that it is most properly understood as a reference to "his people" rather than to "his possessions." Again, we might here invoke the principle of multivalency and suggest that both meanings are present. Here, the idea of being "his people" might be thought to derive from the idea of possession; that is, *ta idia* is "his people" precisely because it is "his property."

[222] Contra Bultmann, *John*, 56: "[FG 1:11] is exactly parallel to v. 10, and each verse explains the other...*Ta idia* refers therefore to the world of men, which belongs to the Logos as its Creator, and the *idioi* equally are men." In this reading, *ta idia* are as much the totality of humanity as *ho kosmos*; indeed, *ta idia* are to be identified with *ho kosmos*. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:258, suggests something similar when he

humanity, we might ask: whom would FE consider likely to have a closer relationship with *ho Logos* than humanity as a whole? Who is this "own" that does not accept *ho Logos*?

The key to answering this question is found in 1:17: *hoti ho nomos dia Mōuseōs edothē, hē charis kai hē alētheia dia Iēsou Christou egeneto*. If any part of 1:9-13 is read as a reference primarily to the incarnational activities of *ho Logos*, then the reference to Moses in 1:17 appears without precedent in the narrative.[223] However, if 1:9-13 is read as a reference primarily to the pre-incarnational activities of *ho Logos*, then 1:17 becomes a summary of 1:9-16 (excluding 1:15). *Hoti ho nomos dia Mōuseōs edothē* is a summary, then, of *ho Logos*' activity in the world prior to the incarnation as described in 1:9-13; *hē charis kai hē alētheia dia Iēsou Christou egeneto* is a summary of *ho Logos*' activity in the world as *sarx* in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. 1:9-16 (excluding 1:15) can be understood as a description of two successive stages of *ho Logos*' coming into the world, initially through the law given through Moses and later in the flesh as Jesus Christ; 1:17 is a summary of what has been said already in 1:9-16.

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argues that in 1:11 "the hymn...repeated the thought of v. 10 and intensified it." Certainly, FG 1:10 and 1:11 do evidence a degree of formal parallelism, although it is not exact. *Kai ho kosmos di autou egeneto* in FG 1:10a lengthens the first sentence, and thus breaks the parallelism to a certain extent. Although one can acknowledge the parallelism readily, it does not follow logically from this formal characteristic that *ta idia* is identical to *ho kosmos*. Indeed, Westcott, *John*, 7-8, notes this same parallelism and argues that it evidences contrast between *ho kosmos* and *ta idia*.

[223] Brown, *John*, 1:16, suggests that 1:17 is an "editorial explanation of 16c;" Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:276-277, suggests that "V. 17 contains a new thought of which there was no hint throughout the hymn. The evangelist...ponders how the reality of divine grace only came upon earth with the incarnate Logos." Westcott, *John*, 14, suggests that here "the Law is represented as an addition to the essential scheme of redemption;" it seems likely that for Westcott it is a superfluous addition. The apparent inability of these scholars to interpret the reference to Moses in location at 1:17 suggests the difficulty that this verse presents for readers that exclude or minimize *ho logos*' pre-incarnate activity.

Returning to 1:10 with this reading in mind, it seems most likely that *ta idia* would refer to those who can be said most properly to possess *ho nomos* given through Moses (cf. 1:17). For this reason, we might suggest that *ta idia* is Israel.[224] This suggestion is consistent with the Biblical motif of Israel as the property of YHWH.[225] Frequently in the Hebrew Bible, Israel is depicted as YHWH's property or allotment (cf. Ex 19:5, Deut 7:6, 14:2, 32:8-9 and Ps 135:4). Might FG 1:11 echo and perhaps even evoke intentionally this idea known from the Hebrew Bible, with YHWH identified with *ho Logos*?[226] We should consider also Sir 24:8,[227] for here it seems that the idea of Israel as the possession of YHWH has been transposed to Israel as the inheritance of *Sophia*; this suggests that ancient Israelite literature could transform the idea that YHWH owns Israel into the idea that another entity with some sort of divine identity owns Israel.[228]

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[224] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 163; Brown, *John*, 1:10; Keener, *John*, 1:398; Westcott, *John*, 8. Contra Bultmann, *John*, 56; Schnackenburg, *John*, 258-259.

[225] Cf. Westcott, *John*, 8. Brown, *John*, 1:10 notes Ex. 29:5, but none of the other passages cited by Westcott.

[226] Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), has suggested that *ho Logos* in Jewish writings refers consistently to YHWH, who is to be understood as 'Israel's second God' (the first God being El, of whom Yahweh is a son). One could argue reasonably that FG 1:11 equates *ho Logos* with YHWH, and from this one might be able to argue that FG also identified *ho theos* with El. Although a reasonable argument, the identification of *ho Logos* with YHWH as opposed to El must remain hypothetical, insofar as it is not stated clearly in the text but must be inferred through inter-textual analysis. Also, it is difficult to reconcile her argument with that of Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), which is quite compelling on its own grounds.

[227] Cf. Westcott, *John*, 8.

[228] Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 25, has suggested that in Second Temple Judaism "[t]he uniqueness of the divine identity was characterized especially by two features: that the one God is sole creator of all things, and that the one God is ruler of all things." Thus, "the Judaism of this period was pervasively, self-consciously and strictly monotheistic, in the sense of having a clear concept of the absolute distinction between God and all other reality..." If we accept Bauckham's understanding of divine identity in Second Temple Judaism, it would follow that in Sir. 24:8 *Sophia* must be understood as part of this divine identity. We do not need to follow Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:259, and argue that in FG 1:11 *ho Logos* has replaced the *Sophia* of Sir. 24:8; given the evidence for the interchangeability of *Logos* and *Sophia* imagery presented by Scott, *Sophia*, 91, it seems more likely that FE has taken imagery applied in certain texts to YHWH and transposed it upon *ho Logos*, in a way that parallels the transposition of the same imagery to *Sophia* in Sir. 24:8. If we follow Bauckham's understanding of Second Temple Jewish concepts of 'divine

Unlike Israel's response to *Sophia* in Sir 24:8-12, however, in the FG Prologue Israel does not accept *ho Logos*. This is similar to 1 Enoch 42:1-2, in which *Sophia* seeks a dwelling among the sons of men, but is unable to find one.[229] This failure, of course, does not mean that *ta idia* is not meant to be Israel; it means merely that Israel is thought to have not accepted *ho Logos*.

If the incarnation does not indeed occur until 1:14, then *hosoi elabon auton* in 1:12 must be those individuals who believed *eis to onoma* of *ho Logos* before his incarnation. This might be understood as a "remnant" ideology, in which a remnant remains faithful to the God of Israel in practice and doctrine (see section 4.3, below).[230] They would not be the Johannine community or Christ-believers in the first instance,[231] as FG refers here to groups that existed prior to the incarnation; however, it is quite possible that FE understood either as the direct continuation or spiritual heirs of the pre-incarnational remnant.

3.5.   Conclusion

Using Northrop Frye's literary criticism, there is reason to identify in the Prologue the presence of mythic narrative. At the same time, there is reason also to identify in the Prologue the presence of metaphysical discourse. Once again, the literary

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identity,' we might want to add a third feature: that in addition to ruling all things God is more specifically the proprietor of Israel.

[229] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 182, suggests that "...the Wisdom poem in 1 *Enoch* 42 is in direct contradition to Sirach 24." Insofar as Sirach has Israel accepting *Sophia* and 1 Enoch has the world not accepting *Sophia*, Collins is certainly correct. One might read 1 Enoch's *Sophia* doctrine as a polemic against Wisdom traditions such as are found in Sirach.

[230] Cf. Westcott, *John*, 8.

problem is not deciding if the FG Prologue is either mythic narrative or metaphysical discourse, but rather accounting for the co-occurrence of both. Stated in this way, the problem can be subjected to analysis in Jameson's second horizon in the next chapter. This horizon requires the exegete to consider the text within "the great class and collective discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole* or utterance."[232] For our purposes, we must ask primarily whether mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse can be correlated formally with any particular social strata and whether these strata can be correlated with evidence from the Fourth Gospel. Tentatively at this point, the answer is "Yes."

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[231] Contra Barrett, *John*, 165-166; Keener, *John*, 1:399-404.
[232] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

4.   **The Second Horizon: The Fourth Gospel within the Social Order**

In the third chapter, we read the Prologue within Jameson's first, literary, horizon. It was argued that there is evidence in the Prologue for the presence of both mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. No attempt was made to explain this co-occurrence of forms. In the present chapter and the next, an explanation will be offered. This chapter shall focus upon the immediate social order in which FG was produced, and thus operates within Jameson's second horizon. The next chapter shall expand the focus so as to include modes of production, and thus relocates our discussion within Jameson's third horizon.

In our exegesis of the Prologue within the first horizon, the text was abstracted as much as possible from the larger sequences of events and processes of which it is but one part. In this way, we were able to centre discussion upon intra- and inter- textual concerns related specifically to the Prologue. In the second horizon, the FG will be returned to its immediate social context, thus reversing the process of abstraction that served as a methodological precondition for the first horizon. The second horizon is interested primarily in locating the text within "the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole* or utterance."[233] Through a dialectical movement from the first horizon, in the second horizon the text is re-articulated in terms of ongoing negotiation of social collectivity and conflict.

While reading the Prologue within the second horizon, this study shall have two primary tasks. The first shall be to consider whether mythic narrative and metaphysical

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[233] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

discourse correlate with any particular social strata. This will be addressed with special attention to the composition of early Christian communities. At this point, the previous discussion of redaction criticism (cf. 2.4.) shall become crucial. By locating FE within the context of Christ-believing communities, we can consider the immediate social factors which gave shape to his story of Jesus. By conceiving the community or communities with which FE was associated as networked with other Christ-believing communities, we can construct and draw upon a "typical" picture of such communities. Such generalizations are dangerous, of course. We risk homogenizing early Christ-believing communities through adopting such an approach. However, given the sparse information on first century Christ-believing communities, we must shine all available light upon the problem. Georgia Masters Keightley's recent work on the relationship between liturgical practices and remembrances of Jesus in Paul's letters will be crucial to the discussion at this point. The assumption adopted in this study is that Paul is representative of the typical practice and experience of Christ-believers in the mid- to late- first century.[234]

Our second task in the second horizon will be to consider FE's social location more specifically, relating to Jewish sectarianism his depiction of *ho kosmos*, *ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* in FG 1:9-13. The work of Albert Baumgarten and Stegemann and Stegemann shall be used to support the conclusion that FE's apparent engagement in inter-Jewish sectarian conflict suggests membership in the upper strata. By not using the presence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse as the primary evidence for locating FE socially, we minimize the risk of engaging in tautological argumentation in

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[234] Keightley, "Christian Collective Memory."

which the presence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse is used to draw conclusions about FE's social location, and those same conclusions used in turn to explain the presence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. At the same time, it allows us to locate mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse within a larger social context. When FE's social strata membership is established, he can be located more fully within the context of early Christ-believing communities.

4.1. Remembering Jesus: Social Strata and the Media of Memory in Early Christ-believing Communities

In *Jameson and Jeroboam*, Roland Boer states that he intends in part to bring out unfulfilled potential in Jameson's method.[235] Such unfulfilled potential (unexplored by Boer, also) is the possibility of relating Jameson's method to contemporary work on orality and literacy. Ong has argued persuasively that orality (alternatively, low literacy) favours narratological forms generally,[236] and that high literacy favours more abstract forms.[237] Ong relies heavily on the work of Eric Havelock, whose work was discussed above (cf. 3.2.).[238] Havelock demonstrated that terms such as *nomos* and *ethea* had more concrete meanings during the pre-literate or less fully literate pre-Homeric, Homeric and Hesiodic periods than they had by the time of Plato and Aristotle.[239] *Nomos* might have been connected with the distribution of pasture originally, but it developed in Hesiod as a

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[235] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 8.
[236] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 136-138.
[237] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 49-57.
[238] Cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 79-80, 102-103.
[239] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 62-63.

reference to human customs and in Plato into written statutes.[240] *Ethea* seems to have referred originally to the "lair" or "haunt" of an animal, but it developed in the Hesiodic period as a reference to "the way a human being lived in his 'haunts,'" and in Aristotle it provided the basis for the term "ethics."[241] Thus, Havelock concludes soundly that "between Hesiod and Aristotle both *nomos* and *ethea* passed through a similar evolution out of the concrete and towards the abstract."[242]

This evolution corresponds with and is indeed indicative of the spread of literacy in Greek society generally and education particularly.[243] As literacy rates expand over time, originally concrete terms are redefined in more abstract terms. However, the difference between low and high literacy contexts is not diachronic exclusively. It is equally synchronic. Low and high literacy vary not only across temporal space, but also across social space. In the first century context, lower literacy correlated closely with lower strata, and higher literacy with higher strata.[244] In large part, this was due to a greater reliance upon written documents in the practical affairs of the elite strata.[245] Given the correlation between mythic narrative and the concrete on the one hand and metaphysical discourse and abstraction from the physical world and narrative on the other, we can suggest that mythic narrative is more at home in less literate contexts than metaphysical discourse. Conversely, metaphysical discourse is more at home in more

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[240] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[241] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[242] Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 63.
[243] Cf. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 38-49.
[244] William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 190-191.
[245] Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 197.

literate contexts than is mythic narrative. Thus, it follows reasonably that mythic narrative was more at home in lower strata and metaphysical discourse in upper strata.

Early Christ-believing communities seem to have replicated the "social pyramid" closely,[246] with greater numbers from the lower strata than from the elite, remembering that already the lower strata outnumbered the higher demographically in the larger social context.[247] Thus, we can expect that within these communities there were significantly greater numbers of individuals with low literacy than individuals with high literacy.[248] If this expectation is valid, then we can predict also that the primary means by which memories about Jesus were conveyed were within the context of narrative. With this prediction in mind, it is with interest that we read Keightley's argument that Paul's primary knowledge of Jesus was mediated through the ritual observances of the Christ-believing communities, such as eucharist and baptism.[249] If we accept Keightley's argument and extend it as an accurate description of how knowledge of Jesus was mediated in early Christ-believing communities more generally, then we can expect that FE's knowledge of Jesus would have been shaped significantly by mythic narrative performed in the context of ritual activity.[250]

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[246] This study presupposes that first-century Christ-believing communities are understood best as instances of what Runesson, *Origins of the Synagogue*, 223-231, describes as "semi-public synagogues."
[247] Cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 5; Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1983), 72-73.
[248] Cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 5; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 185.
[249] Keightley, "Christian Collective Memory," pp. 140-145.
[250] This would not, of course, exclude the probability that texts had an early role in preserving and transmitting knowledge about Jesus. Given the low rates of literacy in early Christ-believing communities, the primary interaction with such texts would have occurred when these texts were read in ritual contexts. Cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 8-9. Even if FE had access to and read these texts independent of their use in ritual, most likely his interpretation of these texts were shaped largely by his participation in said rituals.

Keightley's association of narrative with ritual is reminiscent of the "myth and ritual" school, of which James Frazer is a representative.[251] Through Frazer, Frye too stands within this tradition.[252] We are led back to Frazer and Frye, then, and have reason to suspect that the ritual activities of the early Christ-believing communities were the most immediate *Sitz im Leben* for what Watson has called the "early Christian *reception of the life and person of Jesus.*"[253] Early Christ-believing communities can be understood then as "primary" or "cultic" religion, following Jan Assmann's suggestion that "[o]n the side of secondary [or book-based] religions we find writing and transcendance, while on that of primary [or cultic] religion we find ritual and immanence."[254] In the Prologue, immanence is expressed precisely as incarnation, *ho Logos* becoming flesh and dwelling with us. Incarnation is associated most naturally with myth and ritual.

It follows that the occurrence of mythic narrative in the Prologue is at least in part a product of FE's participation in the ritual acts with which it is associated. If we recall that narrative correlated closely with lower strata in the first century context, then it seems likely that these myth and ritual practices in the early Christ-believing communities were a product primarily of the presence of lower strata individuals in these communities. Perhaps we might understand this as a "lowest common denominator" communicative practice, in which a group selects media which are accessible to the widest range of its membership as possible. The positive correlation between narrative

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[251] Cf. Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, 3, 219.

[252] Cf. Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School*, 48-49.

[253] Watson, "A Literal Reading," 216. Cf. section 1.4., above.

[254] Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (trans. by R. Livingstone; Stanford: Stanford California, 2006), 123. It must be noted that as much as Judaism might have been a "religion of the book," it was a religion of the book *read primarily within the context of ritual performance.*

and lower strata suggests that the occurrence of mythic narrative in the Prologue is a product indirectly of the social strata present within early Christ-believing communities.

The conclusion that the mythic narrative in the Prologue is a product of the presence of lower strata individuals in Christ-believing communities is not sufficient to explain the co-occurrence of mythic and metaphysical discourse in FG, however. We can presume that the other Gospel writers were related to early Christ-believing communities which would have had similar social strata, yet none display this particular co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. There must be something unique to the context in which FG was written, unique to FE as author, or both. Recent treatments of FG's uniqueness have been concerned largely with redaction critical questions about the Johannine community,[255] wherein it is assumed that its unique qualities can be explained most readily by unique qualities of the community in which it was produced. In this particular case, however, perhaps the question can be approached more productively through a consideration of FE's own social background. Properly speaking, this would still be redaction criticism; however, it would be a redaction criticism focused more upon FE's creative work as an author than upon the community to which he belonged.

Similar to Hengel's approach in *The Johannine Question*, in the next section the primary object of study will be the unique biography of the author as opposed to the unique history of the local community.[256] The shift to a focus on the author is a logical consequence of working with a picture of the "typical" Christ-believing community. Such an approach wants to assume similarities between communities except where there is

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[255] Cf. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*; Martyn, *History and Theology*.

clear evidence of difference. Methodologically, the problem lies in recognizing such evidence clearly. A quick reading of the Pauline (particularly the Corinthian literature) is sufficient to demonstrate that Christ-believing authors did not always agree with the communities to which they wrote. If we cannot assume that an author is representative fully of the people to whom he or she wrote when we know both the name of the author and the location of the recipients, can we make this assumption when neither is known with certainty? At the same time, FG gives us both explicit and implicit clues about the identity of the author. Given these clues, it seems methodologically safer to assume a "typical" Christ-believing community and focus attention upon what we can learn about the author from the text. We start with both the known and more easily known, and move to the unknown and less easily known.

4.2.   Putting FE in his (Social Strata) Place

Boer describes the re-articulation of the texts in terms of Jameson's second horizon as an allegorical move, insofar as the text comes to stand for something that is not present in a literal reading.[257] As discussed in section 3.4, redaction criticism typically involves allegory readings also. However, in Jameson's second horizon it is not so much characters and events that are read allegorically–as in Martyn's or Brown's respective approaches[258]–but rather the tensions within the text.[259] The textual tension between mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse becomes evidence for social tension.

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[256] Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 1-2.

[257] Cf. Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 37.

[258] Cf. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*; Martyn, *History and Theology*.

[259] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76, 82-89.

This allegorical transformation of textual tensions into social tensions is accomplished largely through the consideration of what Jameson calls the *"ideologeme, that is, the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes."*[260] As defined by Jameson, the ideologeme is analogous to the phoneme or the morpheme, which are the smallest phonological or morphological units respectively (one presumes that this analogy is intentional on Jameson's part). As we proceed within this horizon, we shall consider the tension between ideologemes and real life as well as between differing ideologemes. The first tension that we shall consider lies between a specific ideologeme evidenced within FG 1:9-13 and FG's social context. The second tension lies between two ideologemes within FG 1:9-13 itself.

In FG 1:9's conception of *ho Logos* coming to *ho kosmos*, we have what we might call the "wide revelation" ideologeme. We might define this ideologeme succinctly as the idea that the God of Israel and his self-revelation are not only the God of and a revelation to Israel, respectively. Rather, God is God of and his self-revelation is given to the whole world. This ideologeme appears in the Israelite tradition by at least the time of Second Isaiah.[261] As articulated in FG 1:9-10, the "wide revelation" ideologeme suggests that *ho kosmos* should have known *ho Logos*, as *ho Logos* is its source of being and enlightenment.[262] Yet, FG 1:9-10 admits that *ho kosmos* had not recognized *ho Logos*.[263] Historically, the Israelite peoples and their Adonayistic religious traditions and practices were minor players on the world stage. Sometimes they were independent of direct

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[260] Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

[261] Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah – Prophet of Universalism," in *The Prophets: A Sheffield Reader* (Biblical Seminar 42; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 186-206, esp. 194-197.

[262] Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 52-55; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:253-254.

imperial control. Other times they were subject to direct colonial rule. Rarely if ever were

they free of socio-political influence from the various ancient imperial world systems.[264]

In the first century context, of course, the Adonayistic religions were located most fully

within the Roman imperial world system.

This persistently marginal position created what might be called an ideological

crisis for those who held that the God of Israel was not just one god among many but

rather the One God of *ho kosmos* and *panta anthrōpon*. As a result of this crisis, some

members of these Adonayistic traditions might have been inclined to abandon the "wide

revelation" ideologeme altogether. Apparently, FE did not want to do so. Instead, he

developed what Jameson would describe as a "strategy of containment."[265] Mark Sneed

defines strategies of containment more succinctly and clearly than Jameson himself,[266]

stating that

> Jameson views both art and literature as an aggressive response to relieve
> the underlying social tensions within hierarchical societies...[Each]
> aesthetically and imaginatively resolves social tension. Jameson draws on
> Freud and sees art and literature as a major means of a society repressing
> these underlying tensions. *Literature serves to smooth over these*
> *underlying tensions and enable both oppressor and oppressed to live*

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[263] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 162-163; Bultmann, *John*, 52-55; Keener, *John*, 1:395-396; Westcott, *John*, 7-8.

[264] Cf. Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. by J. Bowden; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 2:466-471; Jon L. Berquist, *Judah in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (SBL Monograph Series 19; Missoula, Mon.: SBL Press, 1974), 65-110; Gottwald, "Social Class," 7-9; Gottwald, *Politics of Ancient Israel*; Martin Hengel, *Hellenism and Judaism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. by J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1974), 6-31; Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1-19.

[265] Cf. Jameson, *Political Consciousness*, 10, 210-219, 266-268.

[266] Notoriously, Jameson is not a particularly clear writer. Cf. Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 4-5. This might constitute a problem for studies that use "models" derived from the social sciences and applied directly to the Biblical text without significant consideration of the philosophical, theoretical and methodological entailments in said "models." This is not a problem for the present study.

> *together more manageably.* The methods of repression Jameson calls
> 'strategies of containment'. This process is easier than actually changing
> the social reality, as it exists, which would be largely unthinkable.[267]

FE accounted for Adonayistic marginality within the imperial world system by claiming

that *ho kosmos* is unable to either recognize *ho Logos* as the source of its being and

enlightenment or identify *ho Logos* with the God of Israel in some way. In this way, FE

can affirm Israel's marginal position within the imperial world system (that is, *ho*

kosmos) while demonstrating that neither Israel nor the God of Israel is at fault. Rather

the imperial world system itself is to blame for Israel's marginal position, due to its

failure to recognize the relationship between *ho Logos* and the God of Israel.

FE follows this initial strategy of containment with the "narrow revelation"

ideologeme, which is manifested through the use of *ta idia* in FG 1:11. This ideologeme

contains the aforementioned idea that Israel is *ho Logos*' property (cf. Ex. 19:5, Deut.

7:6, 14:2, 32:8-9 and Ps. 135:4; cf. section 3.1. above).[268] It is precisely because *ho*

kosmos failed to recognize *ho Logos* that the latter came to *ta idia* (i.e. Israel). Thus,

chronology itself becomes a strategy of containment, as the failure of *ho kosmos* to know

ho Logos is but the first stage of a larger narrative.[269] Put otherwise, we might say that the

imperial world system's marginalization of Adonayistic religious traditions and practices

is presented as the precondition for the very revelation contained within those traditions

and practices.

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[267] Sneed, "Qoheleth and his 'Vulgar' Critics," 2. Emphasis added.
[268] On this theme in its ancient Israelite context, see Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Text* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001), 48-49, 100, 143-144, 165.
[269] Cf. Boer, "Marx, Method and Gottwald," 129, for a discussion of the relation between narrative and ideology.

FG 1:11 moves past this chronologically ordered and synthetic presentation of the wide and narrow ideologemes by adding a stage chronologically subsequent to *ho Logos* coming to *ta idia*. Just as *ho kosmos* did not know *ho Logos*, so too did *ta idia* reject him. Keener suggests that in 1:12 "John's message conflicts with Jewish tradition, which emphasizes that after the seventy nations had rejected Torah, Israel alone embraced it."[270] Yet, speaking still of Israel's rejection, Keener states correctly that "Jewish people recognized that their ancestors had not always kept Torah."[271] We might call the idea that Israel had rejected divine revelation a "backsliding" ideologeme. On its own, it is not evidence of a break with either Jewish or Israelite tradition. If it were, then the Biblical prophets too would have broken with Israelite religion. Rather, this ideologeme is perhaps one of the more enduring ideologemes in the Adonayistic tradition.[272]

The "backsliding" ideologeme is the first half of what Frye calls a "U-shaped pattern" in the Biblical narratives. The second half of this U-shaped pattern is the restoration of Israel.[273] In FG 1:12, the reader is told *hosoi elabon auton*. We might all this a "remnant" ideologeme: the idea that there are still Israelites who are faithful to the

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[270] Keener, *John*, 1:398.

[271] Keener, *John*, 1:398.

[272] Perhaps the earliest known instance of this theme can be found in the Deuteronomistic History. It is prominent particularly in Judges, in which Israel deviates repeatedly from exclusive loyalty to YHWH. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 126; J. Clinton McCann, *Judges* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 9. Judges most likely draws upon pre-state Israelite traditions (following Gottwald, *Politics*, 22); however, since it was most likely not completed until the post-exilic period (cf. Gottwald, *Politics*, 22; McCann, *Judges*, 8-12), it is difficult to determine when this theme was introduced into the collection. It is not impossible, however. It is commonplace to see a four-fold framework recurring throughout the smaller narratives that make up Judges (cf. Brueggemann, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 126-127; McCann, *Judges*, 9-10); the first of the four elements is analogous roughly with our "backsliding" ideologeme. Unless one assumes that these narratives were fashioned *de novo* with the composition of Judges as a collection or can account otherwise for the introduction of these elements into pre-existing narratives, one should assume that something resembling the four-fold framework – including the "backsliding" ideologeme – was present from the initial composition of the individual narratives.

Lord and the ways of the Lord, and thus potentially could constitute the basis of a restored Israel.[274] This ideologeme also can be found in the Israelite tradition more generally.[275] The "remnant" ideologeme allows one to state that Israel as a whole was backsliden but oneself was not. Indeed, without the "remnant" ideologeme, the "backsliding" ideologeme requires one to either identify oneself as an Israelite backsliden along with the rest of Israel, as an Israelite of a period or group other than that under discussion, or as non-Israelite completely.[276]

The "backsliding" and "remnant" ideologemes are understood best when located within the context of Second Temple Jewish party politics.[277] The "backsliding" ideologeme can be understood readily as a polemic levied by one party against another,

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[273] Frye, *Great Code*, 169-172; Frye, "Symbolism in the Bible," 22-23.

[274] Cf. Keener, *John*, 1:399. Keener argues that, if *de* in 1:12 contrasts *hosoi elabon auton* with Israel primarily, then *hosoi elabon auton* would focus more precisely upon "the Jewish remnant." Conversely, if *hosoi elabon auton* contrasts primarily with both *ho kosmos* and *ta idia* equally, then it would focus more generally upon the faithful among the totality of humanity, both Israelite and non-Israelite (cf. Westcott, *John*, 8). Given the parallelism between *parelabon* in 1:11 and *elabon* in 1:12 (cf. Barrett, *John*, 163), it seems most likely that the contrast is between *ta idia*'s non-acceptance and *hosoi elabon auton*'s acceptance; thus, the focus is primarily upon the acceptance of *ho Logos* by a limited number of Israelites.

[275] Perhaps one of the earlier and more dramatic instances of this "remnant ideologeme" can be found in 1 Kings 18:4, which states that 100 prophets of YHWH were hiding in two caves from Jezebel's anti-Adonayistic campaign. Without hyperbole, Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 85, describes this as a "purge."

[276] We might suggest that later Christian anti-Jewish polemics about Israel's abandonment of the covenant and the authentic worship of YHWH are instances in which the "backsliding" ideologeme is applied without the "remnant" ideologeme as complement and counter-balance. Alternatively, one might suggest that the "remnant" ideologeme is applied to Christ-believers, thus allowing Gentile Christians such as Justin Martyr to construct and articulate a self-identity as "true Israel." A fuller investigation of the relationship between "backsliding" and "remnant" in the Prologue could help clarify the question of anti-Judaism in FG; on the subject of anti-Judaism in FG more generally, cf. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, Frederique Vandecasteele-Vannueville (eds.), *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

[277] Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, uses the term "sects" and "sectarianism" to describe what phenomena that I think better described as "parties" and "party politics." "Sect" tends to imply that the group in question is cut off – voluntary or otherwise – from the larger society. In my view, groups such as the Pharisees were not for the most part cut off from society, but rather were ideologically oriented groups vying for political, religious, social and/or juridical power in late Second Temple Palestine. In the following discussion of Baumgarten's study, the latter terms should be read as equivalent to his use of the former.

as a way of defining the other as unfaithful to Israelite and Jewish tradition and heritage. The "remnant" ideologeme can be understood readily as a way to define one's own party as more faithful to the Israelite and Jewish tradition and heritage than another party or the "people of the land." The presence of these ideologemes in the Prologue suggests that we are in the world of Jewish party politics. This fits well with the conclusions of older and more recent studies on the Fourth Gospel. Cullmann argues that FE's religious background is to be found in "heterodox Judaism."[278] Hakola argues that FE is ambivalent about crucial Jewish identity markers such as the temple.[279] Both scholars want to locate FE within the realm of Jewish party politics, which seems altogether warranted by FG itself.

The suggestions of Cullmann and Hakola both presuppose an orthodox Judaism or common agreement about Jewish identity markers. We might refer to this agreement about Jewish identify markers as "Common Judaism," following E.P. Sanders.[280] It is perhaps best to read the concept of "Common Judaism" not simply as a set of characteristics, all of which must be present to qualify a group or text as Jewish. Rather, perhaps one should read "Common Judaism" as an arrangement of ideological sites for intra-Jewish conflicts. The more vehemently one engages in disputes at these ideological sites, the more likely one belongs to a party with distinctive views on Jewishness.

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[278] Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. by J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 41. It is unclear why Brown, *Community*, 27, says that Martyn's argument "that the Johannine Christians began among Jews who came to Jesus and with relatively little difficulty found him to be the Messiah they expected...challenges reconstructions of Johannine history which would place the origins among...heterodox Jews." Stating that FE was or the "Johannine Christians" were heterodox Jews does not stand in logical tension with the suggestion that he was or they were Jewish; indeed, it presupposes that he was or they were Jewish and asks further questions about the sort of Judaism he or they practiced.

Passionate disagreement over (as opposed to with) Jewish practice suggests that one is

passionately Jewish. The presence of "stock" ideologemes from Jewish historiography

suggests that FE was passionately Jewish, and that this passion was related to a

background in Jewish party politics.

Writing on Jewish parties, specifically the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes,[281]

Albert Baumgarten suggests the following:

> [M]embers of these groups were men likelier to come from the economic,
> social and educational elite–the "middling sort" (to the extent that there
> was such a class in antiquity) and better–who could afford the "luxury" of
> indulgence in affairs of the spirit, and who had sufficient background to
> become sensitive to and interested in issues of a certain character,
> appropriate to their status. These were people well integrated into the
> social structure, among its natural leaders, while also open to the
> possibility of criticizing it, and thus harboring a potential for
> disobedience.[282]

Although Baumgarten does not reference Marx in this passage–nor include Marx in his

[283]–his argument would fit quite well with the latter's suggestion that

> [t]he realm of freedom really only begins where labour determined by
> necessity and external expediency ends...The true realm of freedom, the
> development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond [the
> realm of necessity], though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity
> as its basis.[284]

For his part, Jameson cites precisely this quotation from Marx, arguing that human

history can be told "as the unity of a single great collective story...sharing a single

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[279] Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, the Jews and Jewishness* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 118; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 214-221.

[280] Cf. E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief: 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 45-303.

[281] Baumgarten treats the Essenes and the Qumran community separately. I tend to see the latter as a part of the former, and thus consider it more productive to consider Josephus' writings on the Essenes alongside the material from Qumran. However, as this discussion follows Baumgarten to a large extent, it will be necessary to treat them separately.

[282] Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 47.

fundamental theme–for Marxism, the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity."[285] Members of Jewish parties such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes seem to have come most frequently from social strata that allowed sufficient freedom from economic necessity to allow them "the 'luxury' of indulgence in affairs of the spirit."[286]

In thinking about specific strata, we may use the typology developed by Lenski,[287] and suggest that members of Jewish parties came most frequently from the upper two strata, the elite and retainer. Using this typology in their description of first century Jewish and Christian social history, Stegemann and Stegemann suggest that the Sadducees came most frequently from the elite stratum,[288] the Pharisees from the elite and the retainer strata,[289] and the Essenes from the elite, retainer and non-elite strata.[290] Even in the case of the non-elite among the Essenes, Stegemann and Stegemann argue that these never constituted a significant portion of the Essenes,[291] nor included members of those strata that lived below a minimal level of economic existence.[292] Baumgarten observes that the leadership at the Qumran community was restricted to members of the priesthood,[293] which suggests that the Qumran leadership came from the upper strata.

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[283] Cf. Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 209-223.

[284] Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1991), 959-960.

[285] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 19.

[286] Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 47.

[287] Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 243-280.

[288] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 157, 185.

[289] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 157-160, 185.

[290] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 160-162, 185.

[291] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 160.

[292] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 185.

[293] Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 46-47

Given Baumgarten's description of the social strata membership of the various Jewish parties, we can suggest that someone–such as FE–who engaged in Jewish party polemics was a member of the elite or retainer strata. This is not to say that FE enjoyed significant political dominance as an individual; Kelber observes that the Qumran community originated within the elite strata and used literary media to express their dissent from those who had more political dominance than themselves.[294] Nonetheless, the leadership of the Qumran community remained members of the upper strata, even if they were the losers of power struggles within those strata. Most likely, this was true equally for FE.

4.3.   When FE met Jesus

The argument that FE came from the elite or retainer strata of Jewish society sheds new light onto his identity and potentially to his relationship with mid- to late- first century Christ-believing communities. FG claims explicitly to have been written by someone who had not only met Jesus (21:24), but was in fact one of his closest associates, the Beloved Disciple (21:20; cf. 13:21, 19:26, 20:2). Given the argument that FE was a member of the elite or retainer strata, it is unlikely that he was one of the Galilean fishermen that were among the first disciples called by Jesus in each of the four gospels (cf. Matt. 4:1-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51). Consequently, it is not likely that FE was the apostle John, son of Zebedee, as claimed by Eusebius.[295] Still,

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[294] Werner Kelber, "Roman Imperialism and Early Christian Scribalism" in *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity* (*Semeia* Studies 47; ed. by J.A. Draper; Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 135-154, p. 135-136.
[295] Cf. *Hist. Eccl.* III.24.

there is good reason to suspect that he was a follower of Jesus during the latter's lifetime, and that he came from the elite or retainer strata.

In FG 18:15, it is stated that *ekolouthei de tō Iēsous Simōn Petros kai allos mathētēs*. There is good reason to identify *allos mathētēs* as the Beloved Disciple. He is associated here with Peter, which Raymond Brown describes correctly as "a mark of the BD [Beloved Disciple]."[296] Further, in 20:2, *ton allon mathētēn* is identified explicitly as *hon philei ho Iēsous*.[297] Admittedly, in this instance we have the verb *phileō* rather than the *agapaō* that appears in the other references to the Beloved Disciple. Logically it is possible that *ton allon mathētēn hon philei ho Iēsous* in 20:2 is not the same as *ton mathētēn...hon ēgapa ho Iēsous* in 13:23. Given that the semantic range of *phileō* and *agapaō* overlap, however, it seems more likely that these terms reference the same individual. If this is the case, we have good reason to suggest that both *allos mathētēs* in 18:15 and *ton allon mathētēn* in 20:2 are references to the Beloved Disciple.[298]

Objecting to this conclusion, Keener suggests that "the nearly uniform opposition of the Judeans, especially those of the Jerusalem elite, earlier in the Gospel makes an identification with one of Jesus' Galilean followers more difficult to conceive."[299] In short, Keener is arguing that it is difficult to believe that the high priest–the most elite of the Jerusalem elite–would admit a Galilean follower of Jesus into his home, given the opposition of the Jerusalem elite to Jesus and his followers from the Galilee. Therefore, Keener argues, *allos mathētēs* cannot be the Beloved Disciple. This presupposes, of

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[296] Brown, *John*, 1:xciv. Cf. Cullmann, *Johannine Circle*, 71-72.
[297] Brown, *John*, 1:xciv.
[298] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:xciv: Barrett, *John*, 525, suggests that this identification is possible, but not certain.
[299] Keener, *John*, 2:1091.

course, that the Beloved Disciple was a *Galilean* follower. However, FG 12:42 suggests that Jesus had followers among the Jerusalem elite, which means that we cannot assume *a priori* that the Beloved Disciple was from Galilee. Either way, if *allos mathētēs* in 18:15 is the Beloved Disciple, then the Beloved Disciple *hēn gnōstos tō archierei*. Apparently, the Beloved Disciple was not only known to the High Priest but he was the sort of man that the high priest let into his house when engaging in a nocturnal interrogation of a Galilean troublemaker.[300] The high priest was familiar personally with the Beloved Disciple, thus suggesting–against Keener's assumption that he must have been a Galilean follower–that the Beloved Disciple was a person associated with members of the elite or retainer strata. On this basis, we can suggest that he is himself a member of the upper strata.

This conclusion corresponds precisely with our previous conclusion about FE's social strata through a reading of the Prologue in Jameson's second horizon. This correspondence is significant. Anyone can make false claims about his or her own relationship to another person, or tell a story in which he or she inflate his or her social stratum. It is more difficult to write a text that reads like something that someone from that social stratum would write. Thus, we are left with two possibilities regarding FE's relationship with Caiaphas. It is possible that FE was a member of the elite strata who was not known to Caiaphas but who inserted himself into the story by saying that he was, thus leading us through false information to the correct conclusion that he was a member

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[300] Barrett, *John*, 525, suggests that FE placed this disciple in the narrative as a way to explain how Peter was able to enter the high priest's house. Certainly, he does fill that role in the narrative. This does not lead necessarily to the conclusion that this disciple was not actually present with Peter, did not know the high priest and did not arrange for Peter to enter the high priest's house.

of the elite strata. Alternatively, it is possible he was a member of the elite strata who was known to Caiaphas. As regards the former possibility, why should we assume that FE was giving false information when that information fits well with what we see implied unintentionally elsewhere in the text? Without a firm basis for this possibility, the latter reading is to be preferred. There seems little reason to doubt that FE was a member of the elite or retainer strata known to Caiaphas.

This leaves open the possibility that FE was a member of the elite strata known to Caiaphas, but that he did not know Jesus. However, it is important to note that the association of the Beloved Disciple with Caiaphas in 18:15 is related integrally to the Beloved Disciple's association with Jesus. In fact, without the association between the Beloved Disciple and Jesus, there would have been no reason to mention the association between the Beloved Disciple and Caiaphas. In accepting the likelihood that FE knew Caiaphas on the basis of the similarity between FE's social strata as reconstructed through an analysis of 1:9-13 and FG's explicit statement in 18:15, the likelihood that FE knew Jesus is increased significantly. If that was the case, then the genesis of FE's memories of Jesus came from a direct encounter between Jesus and FE.

Thus, we can begin to understand the origin of FE's mythic narrative about Jesus. Theissen argues that "the historical Jesus already lived in a myth,"[301] and given what we know about the correlation between mythic narrative, literacy and social strata, it makes sense that a lower strata individual like Jesus[302] would live in myth.[303] This is how FE

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[301] Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (trans. by J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1999), 22.

[302] Cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 199, on Jesus' social strata member as a *tekton*.

[303] Cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 199, on Jesus' social strata member as a *tekton*.

remembered him. FE's memory of Jesus was not static, however. Increasingly, New Testament scholars are aware of the dynamics of memory.[304] To use Byrskog's term, FG is predominantly "autopsy."[305] It relates what the author has seen with his own eyes. This autopsy was remembered and retold within the context of Christ-believing communities. It was also "social memory," constructed and recalled collectively and socially.[306] These Christ-believing communities were dominated numerically by numbers of the lower strata. FE's initial impression of Jesus as a man who lived in mythic narrative would have been reinforced through the tendency towards mythic narrative within these communities. His originally metaphysical understanding of *ho Logos* became more mythic as it was associated with a figure who had lived in myth and was remembered through mythic narrative. Although someone predisposed by his strata membership to think in metaphysical terms, FE found himself unable to escape his memories of the mythic Jesus. He had to assimilate his mythic understanding of Jesus to his metaphysical understanding of the world. Thus the Prologue was born.

4.4.   Conclusion

As a member of the elite or retainer strata, FE interpreted Jesus through the metaphysical discourse that his more literate background encouraged. At the same time, he knew Jesus as someone who lived in mythic narrative. It seems likely that he knew

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[304] Cf. Byrskog, *Story as History*, as well as the essays collected in Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (ed.), *Memory, Tradition and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (*Semeia* Studies 52; Atlanta: SBL, 2005).
[305] Cf. Byrskog, *Story as History*.

him through a direct encounter during Jesus' lifetime. Memory is as much social as it is personal. Since early Christ-believing communities were composed predominantly of lower strata individuals, they remembered Jesus through mythic narrative. FE was compelled to take account of mythic narrative in writing his biography of Jesus. At the same time, he could not escape his own tendency to think and express himself in terms of metaphysical discourse. There was thus a degree of ambivalence in his literacy production. Ambivalence should be taken not as a negative term, but rather as a productive term. FE associated at least two forms–mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse–with Jesus, and together these produced the form of the Prologue. These forms were derived from his experiences as an elite strata individual associating frequently and intensively with lower strata individuals, largely within a ritual context centred upon the memory of another lower strata individual. In this way, FE's abstract *Logos* became concrete *sarx* in the person of Jesus.

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[306] Cf. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, "Jesus Tradition as Social Memory," in *Memory Text and Tradition: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (ed. by A. Kirk and T. Thatcher; Semeia Studies 52; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 25-42.

5.   The Third Horizon: The Fourth Gospel and the Ultimate Horizon of History

In the third chapter, we read the Prologue from within the perspective of Jameson's first, literary, horizon. Focus was placed upon considering evidence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue. We considered also the relationship between *ho Logos* on the one hand and *ho kosmos, ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* on the other. In the fourth chapter, we read the Prologue again, this time in terms of Jameson second, social, horizon. The mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse were contextualized within the social strata composition of early Christ-believing communities. It was argued that Jesus was remembered primarily through mythic narrative within a ritual context. Based primarily upon the sectarian polemics evident in the relationship between *ho Logos* and *ho kosmos, ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton*, it was argued also that FE came from the upper or retainer strata. Given that mythic narrative correlates more closely with the lower strata and metaphysical discourse with the elite or retainer, it was argued that the co-occurrence of these forms stemmed largely from the elite or retainer strata FE remembering Jesus within a predominantly lower strata context.

Through this second reading, the second horizon became the context for the first, the social the context for the text. In this chapter, we shall read the Prologue in terms of Jameson's third, most broadly historical, horizon. In this horizon, "even the passions and values of a particular social formation find themselves placed in a new and seemingly relativized perspective by the ultimate horizon of human history as a whole, and by their respective positions in the whole complex sequence of the modes of production."[307] Thus,

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[307] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76.

the third horizon will become the context for the second, which is in turn the context for the first.

5.1.   Modes of Production: Marx, Ancient Israel and Beyond

Roland Boer describes modes of production as the primary or ultimate level at which history operates in Marxist historiography.[308] In a section from *The German Ideology* that deserves to be quoted at length, Marx and Engels argue that

> [m]en can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life.
>
> The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the means of subsistence they actually find in existence and have to reproduce.
>
> This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce.[309]

For Marx and Engels, to be human is to produce both one's means of subsistence and one's way–or "mode"–or life. The way one makes a living is inseparable from the way in which one lives, the former constituting the basis for the latter.

We can expect therefore a close relationship between mode of production and what we might call "mode of consciousness." For Jameson, this relation manifests itself as a "cultural dominant or form of ideological coding specific to each mode of

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[308] Boer, *Marxist Criticism*, 12.
[309] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 37.

production."[310] Jameson suggests that mythic narrative is the cultural dominant that correlates with what frequently is referred to as "the primitive mode of production."[311] Norman Gottwald refers to this same mode of production as the "Communitarian Mode of Production,"[312] which he abbreviates as CMP.[313] Since this discussion will follow closely Gottwald's reconstruction of Israelite history, this study will follow his terminology.

Marx describes what Gottwald and this study call the CMP in the following fashion:

> The spontaneously evolved tribal community, or, if you will, the herd–the common ties of blood, language, custom, etc.–is the first precondition of the appropriation of the objective conditions of life, and of the activity which reproduces and gives material express to, or objectifies (*vegegenständlichenden*) it (activity as herdsmen, hunters, agriculturalists, etc.). The earth is the great laboratory, the arsenal which provides both the means and the materials of labour, and also the location, the *basis* of the community.[314]

For our purposes, the key idea is that in the CMP the community stands in immediate relation to the environment. That is to say, the CMP is marked by an economics in which the members of the community as a whole make their living through exerting direct labour upon their natural environment. Thus, it is quite reasonable to expect–as Marx and

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[310] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 89. Cf. Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 86-90.

[311] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 89. Cf. Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 88.

[312] The "communitarian" aspect of the "primitive" mode of production perhaps is seen best as a corollary of the nature of subsistence farming. Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1988), 56-58 argues that in order to minimize risks stemming from environmental vagaries, subsistence farmers will exchange surplus product. He argues further that reciprocal exchange within the community would be preferable generally to the sale of cash-crops to the larger market, as "[t]oo close a relationship with a market would undermine [the individual producer's] subsistence base." Wide-spread practice of reciprocal exchange would encourage the development of a communitarian structure in which such exchanges become normalized.

[313] Cf. Gottwald, "Social Class," 7. Cf. Boer, "Marx, Method and Gottwald," 108-112.

Engels would predict–that the natural environment would become a major structuring theme in the mode of life generally of those living under the CMP, including its "cultural dominants." Quite simply, the natural environment will tend to exert a significant hold over the imagination of people making a living under the CMP, precisely because their lives are dependent upon an immediate relationship with the environment. With this in mind, we recall Frye's definition of mythic narrative: ˙

> In the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year, and the organic cycle of human life, there is a single pattern of significance, out of which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the sun, partly vegetative fertility and partly a god or archetypal human being.[315]

Mythic narrative, thus conceived, is exactly the sort of cultural production we would expect from people making their living through the CMP. We can suggest, then, that mythic narrative finds its most natural *Sitz im Leben* among such people.

According to Gottwald's reconstruction of Israelite history and tradition,[316] pre-state Israel was organized as a CMP.[317] Thus, mythic narrative lies at the beginning of the Adonayistic religious traditions descended ultimately from ancient Israel. Simultaneously, however, Israel was surrounded by various neighbours who functioned within the "Tributary Mode of Production" (hereafter abbreviated as TMP). This "Gottwaldian" term corresponds to Jameson's usage of the traditional (but quite

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[314] Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (trans. by J. Cohen; ed. by E.J. Hobshawm; New York: International Publishers, 1965), 68-69.

[315] Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," 226. Cf. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 110-119.

[316] We follow Gottwald's reconstruction primarily because no other Hebrew Bible scholar has attempted to articulate the history of Israel and Adonayistic religious traditions in terms of the history of the modes of production, as far as I am aware. Thus, at this point, his is the only framework to use as a basis for such a perspective.

[317] Gottwald, "Social Class," 6-7.

problematic) Marxist term "Asiatic mode of production."[318] In Marx's formulation, under

the TMP an

> *all-embracing unity* which stands above all these small common bodies
> may appear as the higher or *sole proprietor*, the real communities only as
> *hereditary* possessor. Since the *unity* is the real owner, and the real
> condition of common ownership, it is perfectly possible for it to appear as
> something separate and superior to the numerous real, particular
> communities...Part of [the small community's] surplus labour belongs to
> the higher community, which ultimately appears as a person. The surplus
> labour is rendered both as tribute and as common labour for the glory of
> the unity, in part that of the despot, in part that of the imagined tribal
> entity of the god.[319]

For our purposes, we should note the following points about the TMP that emerge from

this quote: a "higher community" or "unity" extracts surplus production as tribute from

various subordinate communities;[320] this leads to an ideological distinction between the

"unity" and the subordinate communities; this distinct "unity" becomes identified with a

divine entity that is abstracted significantly from the realities of the subordinate

communities. Since these subordinate communities are precisely the ones based

immediately in the natural environment, we see under the TMP an abstraction of the

divine from that environment. The transition from the CMP to the TMP is the genesis of

the transition from deities identified with nature in mythic narrative to deities abstracted

from nature in metaphysical discourse.

This movement is related closely to the expansion of literacy. We have discussed

previously the relationship between literacy and abstraction, with the former facilitating

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[318] Cf. Boer, "Marx, Method and Gottwald," 111.
[319] Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, 69-70.
[320] Cf. Gottwald, "Social Class," 6. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 58-63, argues that subsistence
farmers will enter into patronage relationships with greater wealth and power. Perhaps it would best explain

the development and elaboration of the latter. Drawing upon Eric Havelock,[321] Ong

identifies this movement from less to greater abstraction with the introduction and

expansion of literacy within a given social formation.[322] Assmann described this same

phenomenon as the transition from "cultic" religions emphasizing ritual and immanence,

to book-based religions emphasizing writing and transcendence.[323] For the purposes of

locating literacy within the ultimate horizon that are the modes of production, we can

note that the expansion of literacy seems to correlate frequently with the movement from

a mode of production related more immediately to the natural environment to one related

less immediately. Schmandt-Besserat argues that "[t]he study of the immediate

forerunners of the Sumerian script demonstrates that each stage of evolution from tokens

to writing corresponds to a new stage in dealing with economic data in increasingly

abstract terms..."[324] She notes also that these stages of formation correlate closely with

economic shifts: plain tokens emerge with agriculture, complex tokens with urbanization

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the development and maintenance of the TMP as a normalization and institutionalization of such relationships.

[321] Cf. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 38-49, 62-63.

[322] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 77-113. Frye, *Great Code*, xix, notes that he was influenced significantly by the work of Walter Ong. Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine precisely where this influence lies. Given that *Great Code* was published in 1981 and *Orality and Literacy* in 1982, it seems unlikely that the latter exerted significant influence on the former. More likely, Frye was influenced by Ong's earlier work.

[323] Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 123.

[324] Cf. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "From Accounting to Written Language: The Role of Abstract Counting in the Invention of Writing," in *The Social Construction of Written Communication* (ed. B.A. Rafoth and D.L. Rubin; Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1988), 119-131, pp. 128. Cf. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, *Before Writing: From Counting to Cuneiform* (2 vols.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), for a more recent synthesis of her thesis. Jean-Jacques Glassner, *The Invention of Cuneiform* (trans. by Z. Bahrani and M. van de Mieroop; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2003), 65, notes that Schmandt-Besserat's thesis on the origins of writing in the Middle East have been received widely and positively by Assyriologists, archaeologists and anthropologists. After acknowledging this reception, Glassner, *Invention of Cuneiform*, 66-83, proceeds to offer a detailed critique of the thesis. Ultimately, as a non-specialist in Assyriology, I chose to follow Schmandt-Besserat's thesis as the apparent consensus view within that discipline.

and writing proper with the state.[325] This begs a question, of course: did economic shifts

away from the natural environment drive the development and expansion of literacy, or

vice versa? Or, in fact, were both the product of other causes?[326] Regardless, there seems

a correlation between a less immediate relationship with the natural environment, literacy

and metaphysics. This is sufficient for our purposes. Where we see any one of these

phenomena, the other two are likely present. Where we see two, the presence of the third

is that much more likely.

For Gottwald, pre-state Israel reflects a conscious effort by certain subordinate

and marginal groups within Canaanite society to remain independent of the tribute

systems and the corresponding centralized politics.[327] Ultimately–perhaps inevitably–the

pre-state Israelite CMP gave way to an indigenous Israelite TMP (for "Tributary Mode of

Production") with the advent of the monarchy; later, this indigenous TMP was

incorporated into the tributary systems of successive imperial powers (i.e. Assyrian,

Babylon, Persian and Roman).[328] Yet, also according to Gottwald's reconstruction, there

was a continuing vestigial presence of the CMP, running from pre-state Israel through the

entire history of socio-religious traditions derived ultimately from the earliest Israelite

socio-religious contexts.[329] We come now to an idea central to Jameson: the

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[325] Cf. Schmandt-Besserat, "From Accounting to Written Language," 124-125.

[326] My own suspicion is that population increase led to a need to intensify economic production, which required more organized and efficient means of production; these requirements were met through the development of an organizing bureaucracy that no longer worked the land directly, and which developed literacy as part of its organizational method.

[327] Gottwald, "Social Class," 7-8; cf. Boer, "Marx, Method and Gottwald," 111.

[328] Gottwald, "Social Class," 7-8.

[329] Gottwald, "Social Class," 9-10.

synchronicity of multiple modes of production within a single social formation.[330] One

mode of production might dominate, but different segments of any social formation will

make their livings using different means. Frequently, one or more of these ways of

making a living will be the "vestiges or survivals of older modes of production, now

relegated to structurally dependent positions within the new..."[331] Thus, we might

suggest that the continuing presence within ancient Israel of elements derived from an

earlier CMP was not due primarily to a religious or ideological conservatism. Rather, it

was due primarily to the continuing presence of people who made a living within

economic sectors that constituted vestiges of the CMP.

Who were these people who made a living within the vestiges of the CMP? Most

likely, they were individuals within the lower strata–such as Jesus and his earliest

followers–who made their living through an immediate relationship to the physical

environment.[332] Thus, they were more inclined towards the mythic narrative form and its

close ideological relationship with the natural environment. The presence of mythic

narrative in the Prologue comes ultimately from the presence of lower strata individuals

in early Christ-believing communities and their mode of life under the vestiges of the

CMP. Conversely, individuals within the elite and retainer strata–to which FE appears to

have belonged–frequently made their living through owning land that they did not

themselves work, or through performing administrative duties for such landowners and

perhaps also for the state.[333] In this way, they either themselves extracted surplus

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[330] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 95.
[331] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 95.
[332] Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 70, 85-86.
[333] Cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 68-70, 77-78.

production from subordinate groups or received some of that surplus. As a result, they were more inclined towards the metaphysical form and its more distant ideological relationship with the physical environment.

The contradicting interests of the lower and upper strata becomes a foundation for tension throughout the social formation, as the interests of those who make a living through production directly from the natural environment will be at odds with those who make a living through the extraction of the former's surplus production. This tension manifests itself aesthetically in the Prologue, in the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse. In this way, economic and social tensions have been inscribed as literary tension. Read from the third horizon, the Prologue is a "strategy of [economic] containment."[334]

5.2. Conclusion

As a member of the elite or retainer strata, most likely FE lived off surplus extracted from local producers. Thus, he lived primarily within a metaphysical cultural dominant. Through encountering Jesus and commemorating him within Christ-believing communities, he interacted frequently and intensively with people who made their living through a more direct relationship with the natural environment. Due to this more immediate relationship, they lived primarily within a mythic cultural dominant. This interaction between FE and other people within early Christ-believing communities centered upon the person of Jesus. We might suggest that the ultimate cause of the co-

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[334] Cf. Jameson, *Political Consciousness*, 10, 210-219, 266-268. Cf. section 3.2., above.

occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Johannine Prologue was the tension between an author who lived within a metaphysical mode of life due to his location within the elite or retainer strata writing about a subject who lived within a mythic mode of life due to his location within the lower strata. This mode of life and strata tension stems ultimately from the differences in lifestyle and outlook between a person who lives off extracted surplus and the people who must produce surplus for extraction.

6.   Conclusion

6.1.   Of Mystery and Synthesis

The incarnation is a mystery. Any theologian worth his or her salt can tell you that. In declaring that *ho logos sarx egeneto* (FG 1:14), the Prologue became "ground zero" for the incarnation. The Prologue is not unlike the events that frame so many other mysteries. Often, mysteries–in book, on film–begin with a crime, frequently a murder. The story centers around a single question: Who did it? That question is the mystery. This mystery does not end but rather drives the story. Much like rules are meant to be broken, mysteries are meant to be solved. We might call this the Sherlock Holmes approach to mystery: it aims to solve a mystery, not merely identify its existence.

Thus, the statement that the incarnation is a mystery is not an end to the discussion. On the contrary: it is a beginning. The question for discussion, however, is not primarily that question which so vexes every detective: "Who did it?" Instead, the theologian might ask "What does it mean?" What does it mean to say that *ho Logos* became flesh? What does this mean for the nature of divinity? What does this mean for the nature of humanity? About salvation? About history? About language? Those are the theologian's questions. In contrast, the historian might ask "Why is it so?" Why is it that the incarnation became a way of remembering and speaking about Jesus? What were the conditions that gave rise to the incarnation? "Who did it?" might return as a question, but only in subordination to literary, narrowly social and wider historical questions.

This three-fold distinction between the literary, the social and the historical follows Fredric Jameson's three semantic horizons. This study has considered the Fourth

Gospel Prologue through each of these three semantic horizons successively. It coordinated the three horizons to each other dialectically. This was done in an attempt to solve the mystery of the incarnation through asking not "What does it mean?" primarily, but rather "Why is it so?" The study is historical, and it was through the historian's lenses that the mystery was approached.

In the third chapter, the Prologue was read within the context of the first, literary, horizon. It was argued that there is evidence of both mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue, particularly in the character and role of *ho Logos*. *Ho Logos* is a mythic figure, following Frye's definition of myth. Frye's definition of myth derives ultimately from Frazer's work on myth, and thus is rooted in ethnology and comparative religion. *Ho Logos* is metaphysical also, both in contemporary philosophical discourse and in his textual role as creator of *ho kosmos*. The mystery of the incarnation can be explained in part through the co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue.

In the fourth chapter, attention turned to the second, social, horizon. The co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse was explained by reference to social strata. Mythic narrative was correlated with lower literacy, which was in turn correlated with lower strata. Metaphysical discourse was correlated with higher literacy, which was in turn correlated with higher strata. The occurrence of mythic narrative in the Prologue was explained in two ways. First, Jesus lived within mythic narrative as a member of the lower strata. He was remembered in terms of mythic narrative because he lived his life in terms of mythic narrative. Second, this mythic quality of memories about

Jesus was reinforced through the reception and development of Jesus traditions within early Christ-believing communities populated predominately by lower strata individuals.

The occurrence of metaphysical discourse was explained by reference to FE's own social background. On the basis of Jewish sectarian polemic evident in the relationship described between *ho Logos* on the one hand and *ho kosmos, ta idia* and *hosoi elabon auton* on the other, it was argued that FE was a member of the elite or retainer strata. This was supported by a reading of John 18:15, which suggests that the Beloved Disciple came precisely from these strata. The co-occurrence of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in the Prologue can be explained by FE's encounter with the lower strata Jesus and the social processes by which his memories of Jesus were shaped through participation in predominantly lower strata Christ-believing communities. He was compelled to think mythically about Jesus. He could not turn off his metaphysical inclinations, however. Instead, he came to relate the mythic to the metaphysical. The mystery of the incarnation can be explained in part by interactions between people of different social strata in the early Jesus movement and Christ-believing communities.

In the fifth chapter, the discussions of social strata and its relationship to textual form and early Christ-believing community in the third chapter were set within the context of modes of production. It was argued that modes of production gave rise ultimately to both the social strata differentiation discussed in chapter three, as well as to the cultural dominance of mythic narrative and metaphysical discourse in specific segments of first century Jewish society. Mythic narrative was seen as native to the communitarian mode of production, which had been absorbed and incorporated into the

dominant tributary mode of production as the mode of life of the lower strata. Metaphysical discourse was seen as native to the tributary mode of production itself, and was the cultural dominant correlated most closely with the upper strata. The mystery of the incarnation can be explained in part by social differentiation created by a tributary mode of production that had absorbed a preceding communitarian mode of production.

6.2.   Running the Defrag

This study is about the Johannine Prologue. It is not about the Johannine Prologue only, however. It is an experiment, also, to consider the potential of dialectical criticism for early Christian studies. The ultimate motivation for this experiment is a conviction that New Testament Studies–indeed, Biblical and Religious Studies–exists currently in a state of fragmentation. Some scholars are engaged in textual criticism; some in what we might call theological criticism; some in source criticism; some in form criticism; some in redaction criticism; some in literary criticism; some in social scientific criticism. In their own way, each of these criticisms represents a fragment of a larger vision. If each fragment remains on its own, that larger vision is reduced to the fragments themselves. This is not a problem unique to Religious Studies, but rather an epidemic spread throughout the humanities and social sciences. "Grand Theory" has become a dirty phrase, and with that stigma has come a lack of unifying visions of early Christianity.

We need synthetic frameworks that can accommodate, incorporate and coordinate these criticisms into larger visions. The future of early Christian studies should not lie primarily in increased specialization in these various areas. Of course, such specialization

is a legitimate path for individual researchers or studies. No one should say otherwise. However, it should never be seen as an end on to itself. Focussing upon individual pieces will not put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The future of early Christian studies should lie in putting together the fragments. We are in desperate need of hermeneutical frameworks which can help us accomplish this task. Dialectical Marxism, such as is exemplified in the work of Fredric Jameson, is one such framework. It is capable of coordinating the literary, the social and the historical. It is possible that it is not the best method possible to accomplish the defragmentation of early Christian scholarship. However, a thorough-going critique of dialectical Marxism will by necessity have to propose a better method. If one refutes this methodology without proposing an alternative framework for coordinating these different exegetical areas, one has only done half the necessary work. That would contribute to our knowledge, certainly, insofar as it would tell us that dialectical Marxist approaches are a blind alley for studying early Christianity. That contribution remains negative, however, until one has offered a viable, alternative, vision for unifying our understanding of early Christian in its many dimensions.

I seek the best method to coordinate the literary, the social, the historical and all the other possible and legitimate ways in which early Christian literature can be read. My search has convinced me that a dialectical Marxist approach is the single best method for doing justice to each of these possible readings while organizing them scientifically into a synthetic whole that is consonant with social reality. If a better method can be found–and if there is a better method, I hope sincerely that it will be found–I will adopt it readily. Until then, I will remain steadfastly (some might say stubbornly) convinced that

dialectical Marxism is the single best available means for being together the fragments of

our discipline.

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