



# **The Prologue to John's Gospel. Translation – Literary Analysis – Exegesis <sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction**

The four canonical Gospels about the life and public ministry of Jesus Christ each begin differently. Mark writes first about the coming forth of John, who prepared the people for the advent of the Messiah (1:2-8; Malachi 3:1.23)<sup>2</sup>, and when this John, guided by the sign he had received from God, recognized the Messiah as already being among the people (Mark 1:11; John 1:32-34), he gave public witness of Him before Israel (Mark 1:7.8, par. Matthew 3:1 et seq.; Luke 3:1 et seq.), also to the official delegation of the leaders of the people (John 1:19–28) and subsequently to his own disciples (John 1:29-35). Later, Jesus confirmed to His disciples that this John had been sent by God and his witness was true (Mark 9:13). Mark more frequently attests that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah (Mark 8:29) and Son of God (Mark 1:11; 9:7; 14:61; 15:39). Thus in Mark's Gospel all of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is encompassed in Jesus's highest title, which God the Father had given Him.

Matthew begins with Jesus's lineage (1:1-17) and so he gives proof, in Biblical form, of Jesus's origin from Abraham, hence that Jesus is of the chosen people. Hence promises God had given to Abraham refer to Him also and He, in accordance with Nathan's prophecy (2 Samuel 7:13), is also

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<sup>1</sup> First published in Polish: Franciszek Sieg, „Prolog Ewangelii według św. Jana. Przekład – analiza literacka – egzegeza”, *Studia Bobolanum* 28, nr 2 (2017): 143-188.

<sup>2</sup> The first verse of Mark does not appear in earlier manuscripts but only later ones from around 200 AD, in which its character is that of the title of the entire book of Mark's Gospel.

the heir to the throne of David<sup>3</sup>. Next the author gives some information about Jesus's childhood and subsequently the extensive testimony of John [the Baptist] (3:1 et seq.). In this way Jesus of Nazareth was deeply inscribed by Matthew into the history of the chosen people and the narrative of the fulfilment of God's plan for salvation of His own people and of the nations — as foretold by the prophets.

Different was the path taken by Luke, who, having followed all things carefully (1:1-4), begins his account by setting out the circumstances in which the Son of God entered the history of Israel and the human world (1:5 et seq.). After extensive descriptions of Jesus's childhood, he also recounts the acts and witness of John, His forerunner. Luke also cites the witness of God the Father about His Son (3:22, par. Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:17). In laying out Jesus's genealogical descent all the way from Adam (Luke 3:23–38), this particular evangelist emphasizes the special significance of the coming of the Messiah for all human beings. The Son of God, in taking up human nature, became Man and<sup>4</sup> is the new Adam, thanks to whom all who believe in Him will receive new life (cf. John 1:4.12; 1 Corinthians 15:21 et seq.).

The Gospel of John starts with a concise lecture, delivered in poetic form, on the pre-existence of a specific Person: the *Logos* (1:1.2). Next, the author proclaims His role and work: through Him all things were made. Those who respond positively to God's new initiative, accepting Him whom He had sent, and believing in His name, will become the children of God (1:12). The hymn lists historical witnesses and emphasizes that they fulfilled their role as such: John (1:6-8.15), disciples of Jesus of Nazareth (1:14.16) and the author of the hymn's current version himself — the evangelist John, who besides the joint witness with the other disciples (1:14bc), also gives his own, separate testimony (1:15-18).

### **1.1. Structure and theological framework of John's Gospel**

In John's, these are different than in the other three Gospels, in which Jesus's public ministry is described over the span of one year. John's account testifies to more than two years of it, as the mentions of multiple Passovers suggest (John 2: 13 et seq.; 6:4; 13:1 et seq.). It also makes more frequent mentions of His having been sent from the Father (John 3:2.16.17;

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph, the bridegroom of Mary, came from the royal line. When at the behest of God's messenger (Matthew 1:18-24) he accepted Jesus and Gave Him His name, Joseph became Jesus's father in the eyes of Judaic law. This legal title also supplied the basis for Jesus's inheritance of the throne of David.

<sup>4</sup> Franciszek Sieg, „Jezus Chrystus – Syn Boży, Syn Maryi Dziewicy (Łk 1, 26-38)”, *Bobolanum*, nr 6 (1995): 56-67.

5:23 et seq.)<sup>5</sup>, of His fulfilment of His mission, and of human reactions to him. After coming back to the Father, He is glorified with the glory He had already had before (John 17:1 et seq.). Hence, the motive of Jesus's path is entirely different in John from the path described by the Synopticists. From all of Jesus's public ministry John chooses to describe only select episodes. Not infrequently those have no parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, after the events he describes John recounts long speeches by Jesus that are in connection with them. In the Prologue the evangelist tells of Jesus's path: from God, through the human world, and back to the glory of God the Father. Verses 1, 1.2 and 1:18 set the inclusion for this poetic work.

### **1.2. Historical background of studies on the Prologue**

The text of 1:1-18 has been studied by numerous exegetists, and especially the relationship between the *Logos* in the Prologue of John and the *Sophia* in Judaic wisdom tradition<sup>6</sup>. It is a commonly held opinion that a message of hymnic nature underlies the Prologue, one that originates

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im Johannesevangelium* (Tübingen: WUNT, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), I, 347 et seq.; Johannes Beutler, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder KG, 2013), 87; Lech Stachowiak, *Bogiem było Słowo (J 1,1). Pochodzenie i sens Janowego określenia Logos, w Studia z filozofii Boga*, red. Bogdan Bejze (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1977), 121-133; Bogdan Ponizy, „Uosobiona Mądrość w Sophia Salomonos (7,22-8,1)”, *Zeszyty Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Biblistów Polskich*, 13 (2016): 391-400. Hugolin Langkammer, „Pieśń o Logosie w Prologu św. Jana, jej tło i jej teologia [J 1,1-14]”, *Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego*, nr 4 (1975): 41-57; Henryk Witczyk, „Jezus Chrystus Świątynią chwały i prawdy (J 1,14)”, w *W posłudze słowa Pańskiego*, red. Stanisław Bielecki, Hubert Ordon, Henryk Witczyk (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność, 1997), 242–268; Michael Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos. Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu I Joh*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988); Eugen Ruckstuhl, Peter Dschulnigg, *Stilkritik und Verfasserfrage im Johannes-evangelium. Die johanneischen Spruchmerkmale auf dem Hintergrund des Neuen Testaments und des zeitgenössischen hellenistischen Schrifttums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 44 et seq.; Stanisław Mędała, *Chrystologia Ewangelii św. Jana* (Kraków: Instytut Teologiczny Księży Misjonarzy, 1993), 192 et seq.; Klaus Scholtissek, „Er kam in sein Eigentum und die Eigenen nahmen ihn nicht auf” (J 1,11)“, *Geist und Leben* 72, nr 6 (1999): 436-451.

from Christian tradition<sup>7</sup>. Literary reconstruction of it, however, remains a contentious matter<sup>8</sup>. Neither is there a consensus as to the demarcation of the structural units of the current text<sup>9</sup>. Literary figures in the original: parallels, chiasmi, antitheses, inclusions, and the thematic connections and catenations cause the sense of the “Logos” designation to become gradually explained with increasing fullness, substantiating the conclusion that the entire text of 1:1-18, despite certain differences of style, constitutes one work of poetry. There is also the need to bear in mind the Semitic style of poetic composition, in which, having introduced the subject generally, the author usually keeps returning to it and highlighting the various aspects of it, as well as narrowing down previous utterances in a new form, with the use of suitable literary devices<sup>10</sup>.

### 1.3. Marginal notes

Given how in the consecutive verses of the hymn the author interprets his own previous utterances and poetically unfolds new content, explanation of the intended sense of the term *Logos* should be searched for in literary analysis of the Prologue itself, paying heed to the context of John’s Gospel. This is because if the author had borrowed the expression from a certain cultural environment and put it in the context of his own composition, then he himself has interpreted it, that is, he leaves certain clues as to how he understands it. In this light, interpretation of the term *Logos* in this text should not stop at hypotheses about the source of origin and what sense the term had there, to transfer that same sense hastily into its new context; rather, it ought to be interpreted in the context in which it was placed by the author.

Besides, bearing in mind the Prologue’s poetic form, one should not hold to the author to an expectation of precise utterances but instead con-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Helmut Merklein, *Geschöpf und Kind. Zur Theologie der hymnischen Vorlage des Johannesprologs*, w *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments*, red. Rainer Kampling, Thomas Söding (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder KG, 1996), 101-183.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Martinus C. de Boer, „The Original Prologue to the Gospel of John”, *New Testament Studies* 61, nr 4 (2015): 448-467.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict T. Viviano, „The Structure of the Prologue of John (1:1-18)”, *Revue Biblique* 105, nr 2 (1998): 176–184; Ignace de la Potterie, *Struttura letteraria del Prologo di S. Giovanni* (Genova 1986), 31-57; Giuseppe Segalla, „Il prologo di Giovanni (1,1-18) nell’ orizzonte culturale dei suoi primi lettori”, *Teologia (M)* 22, nr 1 (1997): 14-47; Henryk Witczyk, „Logos wcielony – Światłość prawdziwa”, w *Nowy Testament a religie*, red. Ireneusz Sławomir Ledwoń (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2011), 287-317.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Thorleif Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*, wyd. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 165.

sider the poetic inspiration that followed from his deep personal religiosity underlain by experience grounded in the historical circumstances referred to in the Prologue itself and the rest of John's Gospel, as well as the Synoptic Gospels.

The Greek term *Logos* – in the word sense – denotes a graphic or phonetic representation that belongs to a language system. This word appears in non-Biblical sources dating from the Antiquity, especially Greek philosophers and Judaic literature<sup>11</sup> that remained under the influence of Hellenistic culture. The term was adopted into the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) and especially the sapiential books (Wisdom 1–5; 7:22 et seq.; 9:1; 16:12; 18:14-16; Proverbs 8: 27.30; Ecclesiasticus 24), as well as the Prophets (Jeremiah 23:29; Isaiah 55:10) and Psalms (119:89; 147:15-19). The term *logos* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *dabar*, which appears frequently in the expression *dabar Yahweh* = “word of Yahweh”/“word of God” (Numbers 22:38; 23:5; Amos 3:1; 5:1; Micah 4:1). In various situations the God of Israel allowed Himself to be known and spoke to His people, especially through the prophets (Deuteronomy 18:22; Isaiah 55:10.11; Hebrews 1:1.2a).

In early Christian writings the term *logos*, in the context of Jesus's name, often means “the word of Jesus”, His teaching, transmitted by the Apostles and first Christian missionaries as the “word of salvation”. It was to be accepted and faithfully observed (cf. Mark 2:2; 10:17-22; Matthew 7:24; Luke 11:28; Apocalypse 1:3). In John's Prologue the term *Logos* denotes an individual Person, of which various pronouncements are made, namely in His relationship to God in pre-existence (1:1.2), of what was made through Him (1:3ab) and of His various functions toward humans (1:4.5.9-12.13c.14a.16-17). These words and works were confirmed by numerous witnesses, who are listed already in the Prologue, namely by John, by Jesus's disciples, and by the author of the text (cf. John 1:6-8.14b-18).

The term *Logos* in this text, as noted by Henryk Witczyk, is infinitely superior to the character of the Old-Testament wisdom, created by God<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Stachowiak, *Bogiem bylo Slovo (J 1,1)*; Gianantonio Borgonovo, „Incarrazione del Logos. Il Logos giovanneo alla luce della tradizione giudaica”, *La Scuola Cattolica* 130, nr 1(2002): 45-75; Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory. On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (Sheffield 1993), 83-99; Giovanni Salmeri, „Człowiek i jego życie słowem. W nawiązaniu do Prologu Ewangelii według św. Jana”, *Ethos* 25, nr 1-2 (2012): 41.

<sup>12</sup> Henryk Witczyk, „Bóg – Słowo w relacji do świata i ludzi (J 1,3-4)”, w *Mów, Panie, bo słucha sługa twój*, red. Waldemar Chrostowski (Warszawa: „Vocatio”, 1999), 261 et seq.

The *Logos* as a “Person” in John 1:1-3ab already differs substantially from the non-homogeneous concepts of Philo of Alexandria. Philosophical ideas of Plato and Philo of Larissa, on the other hand, were altogether foreign to the author<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. The text of the Prologue and an *a-tergo* perspective

### 2.1. *The text*:<sup>14</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.
- <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him was made  
nothing that has been made.  
[The Word] was made [Flesh] –
- <sup>4</sup> In Him was life,  
and the life was the light of men.
- <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness  
grasped it not.
- <sup>6</sup> There was a man, one sent from God, whose name was John.
- <sup>7</sup> This man came as a witness, to bear witness concerning the light,  
that all might believe through him.
- <sup>8</sup> He was not the Light, but was to bear witness to the Light.
- <sup>9</sup> It was the true Light  
that enlightens every man who comes into the world.
- <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and  
the world knew Him not.
- <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own received him not.
- <sup>12</sup> But to as many as received Him  
He gave the power of becoming sons of God;  
to those who believe in His name:
- <sup>13</sup> Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,  
nor of the will of man,  
but of God.
- <sup>14</sup> And the Word was made flesh,  
and dwelt among us,

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 269.

<sup>14</sup> Translation from: *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Herausgegeben von Barbara und Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger. 28. revidierte Auflage. Herausgegeben vom Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung Münster/Westfalen unter der Leitung von Holger Strutwolf. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (Stuttgart 2012).

And we saw His glory –  
glory as of the Only Son (*monogenes*) of the Father – full of grace  
and truth.

<sup>15</sup> John bore witness concerning Him, and cried, “This was  
He of whom I said,  
»He who is to come after me has been set above me,  
because He was before me«”.

<sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, grace for grace.

<sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses,  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> No one has at any time seen God.  
The Only Son (*monogenes*), who is in the bosom of the Father,  
He has revealed him.

## **2.2. Atergo perspective**

Verse 1:17 contains two statements: a/ the Law was given through Moses; and b/ grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. These statements provide the basis for certain conclusions. Only in this one place in the Prologue does the author refer to the Law that had been given through Moses. On the other hand, grace and truth “came through” (*egeneto di*) Jesus Christ (17b). This verb form + *di* is identical to the one in 1:3a.

In terms of content, 1:17b is a reference to 1:14.16. When speaking about the witnesses of Jesus's public ministry (1:14ab), the author uses the first person singular; hence he counts himself among them. From this it follows that he too was a disciple of Jesus. In 1:15, on the other hand, he recalls the witness role of John [the Baptist], relativizing John's existence to the “existence” of the One to whom John bore witness (1:6-8). This way John the evangelist confirms the historical role of John the Baptist as witness to Jesus Christ, a mission he received from God (1:6.7.15). Furthermore, the author emphasizes that John “was not the light” but had been „sent from God” (1:6) and “was to bear witness concerning the light” (1:7-8). The author, therefore, knew John [the Baptist] and knew a lot of the latter's ministry. The question begs to be asked, does he identify with the anonymous disciple who, together with Andrew, came over from John to Jesus (John 1:29-40)? The author of this account of John and Jesus Christ (1:6-8.9) probably witnessed the public ministry of first the former and then the latter.

Having asserted that John “was not the light” but “was to bear witness to the light” (1:8), the author transfers his focus to “the true light” (1:9a). Jesus spoke of John and John's ministry thus “he was the lamp” (John 5:35). The words about “the light” in the Prologue invite further conclusions based

on this poetic text. The One in whom there was “the life”, and that “life” was “the light of men” (4) was “the true Light” (9a). In coming to the world, He “enlightens every man” and makes it so that those who receive Him and believe in His name receive the status of “the children of God” (1:12). They have been “born ... of God” (1:13c). The context includes reference to those who have not received and who have not believed (1:5.11), and hence cannot attain to this status. In the face of this, 1:4.5.9-12 already speaks of the “Word Incarnate”. Indeed, the entire text of 1:4-17 speaks of the “Word Incarnate”, that is of Jesus Christ, though in different words and using a different style in 1:4-13 than in 1:14-17. Verse 1:18 closes the great scene of the earthly ministry of the One described as “the true Light” that “enlightens all men” (1:9b) and brings salvation to those who believe (1:12.13c).

In 1:3ab speaks generally about one great “event” that occurred through the “Word Incarnate”<sup>15</sup>. Later, he writes first of the fact of incarnation: “was made” (*ho gegonen* 1:3c), and subsequently asserts: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (1:4). The text in 1:1.2 about pre-existence and the one in 1:18 concerning the going back to the Father create inclusion for the Prologue, that is, they establish the framework for all that the Son of God, having taken human nature, has done for humans.

### 3. The Logos in pre-existence (1:1.2)

The first verse (1:1) contains three statements: a/ “In the beginning was the Word”; b/ “the Word was with God”; c/ “the Word was God”. The text refers three times to the same subject: the *Logos* = “the Word”. Also the verbs take three times the same form: “was” (*en* – impf.). The adverbial “in the beginning” and the complements “with God” and “God” import more information about the subject, defined by the author as being the *Logos* (1:1.2). The fact that in the original this word takes the definite article gives the basis to conclude that the author refers to a subject that is a specific, individual Person known to the audience – probably from the kerygma (J:1-17) and the liturgy used in John’s commune<sup>16</sup>. Also pairing the term “God” (1:1b) with the definite article indicates that the reference is to the know “God”, namely the “God of Israel”. On many occasions and in different historical contexts, especially through Abraham, Moses and the prophets, God spoke to His

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 4, 5 below.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium* (Freiburg im Breisgau-Basel-Wien: Verlag Herder KG, 1966), I, 257 et seq. According to Benedict Schwank, the fact that the text of John 1:1 has been rendered without error in about 4000 manuscripts testifies to singular diligence and reverence in the writers of the Antiquity and of the Middle Ages (*Evangelium nach Johannes*, 19).



people and led them to the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1.2a). In John's Gospel the term "God" (with the article) not infrequently denotes "God the Father" (3:16.17; 6:27; 8:42).

Due to the context, the expression "in the beginning" (John 1:1a) should not be understood in parallel to Genesis 1:1a, as some exegetists would have it<sup>17</sup>, since John 1:1.2 does not speak about God's act of creation or the relationship between the Logos and all creation, but instead the author proclaims His everlasting pre-existence with God. The expression "in the beginning" (1a) has the sense of preceding all creation; before any creation existed, any entity in time or together with time, the Logos "was ever with God", hence the author refers to His pre-existence<sup>18</sup>.

The preposition "with" (*pros*) in this context means the Logos "was with God" (1b). In pre-existence, He persisted in strict unity with God (1:1.2), which was underscored in 1:1c: "the *Logos* was God". In the second verse the author, referring to 1:1ab, renews his assertion of the relationship of the *Logos* to God. This aspect will be further expounded in 1:18, in John's Gospel's recollection of Jesus's own testimony about Himself (John 8:58) and the evangelist's testimony in the first Epilogue (John 20:30.31).

The thrice-repeated verb form "was" (*en – impf.*) in 1:1.2 denotes existence in the past without marking any beginning or duration. This utterance does not have an abstract sense; rather, the author speaks of real and specific pre-existence, given how in the context of the preposition "with" the verb form "was" (1:2) emphasizes His existence and persistence with God. Hence, the expression "was with" ought to be understood in the context of His everlasting existence in unity with the God who "IS" (Exodus 3:14). So it follows, besides, from 1:1c: "the *Logos* was God". The verb phrase about the *Logos*: "was with God" (1b) was therefore interpreted and substantiated by the author in 1:1c. In the pre-existence, however, according to the text of the hymn, the Logos differs from God, being a separate subject and actor (cf. 1:3 et seq.). John's Gospel makes frequent mentions of the personal relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son of God (1:14d.18b; 3:16 et seq.; 5:19 et seq.; 10:29.30; 14:23.24; 17: 1–26; 18:6.9.30; 19:30). Nonetheless, the Scripture does not define a person strictly but refers thus to an entity with its own existence and the attributes of knowing and acting.

The demonstrative pronoun "this" (*houtos* – 1:2a) marks a reference to 1:1.2. This pronoun, however, does not refer to an abstract idea but to a specific, individual subject, one that just been mentioned, which is the Logos

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung des Logos*, 227 et seq.; Evans, *Word and Glory*, 77-79.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Edward Chat, „Logos – Słowo Odwiecznym Bogiem w Trójcy Świętej”, *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne*, nr 7 (2008): 7 et seq.

always turning toward God (1:1), always persisting in unity with God. This is because “the *Logos* was God” (1:1c). Hence, in 1.2 the author affirms the thesis of His pre-existence with God (1:1). The text at hand speaks therefore of a separate Person and His everlasting existence “with” God, which is that Person’s pre-existence. Further discourse in this work of poetry gradually reveals to whom the author refers as the *Logos*. Some matters, on the other hand, will be expounded in a broader context in the following chapters of John, such as Jesus’s statements about His pre-existence (John 8:58; 17:5). The author’s thesis about the *Logos* does not diminish the truth of the One God as revealed in the Old Testament, but, based on the Revelation Jesus Christ brought from the Father (1:17.18), confirms it and supplements it.

As discussed here, the first two verses of the Prologue, treating about the pre-existence of the *Logos* (1:1.2), and the already mentioned first epilogue (John 20:30.31) set, according to the evangelist John, the inclusion for this Gospel of Jesus Christ, who brought to humans the Good News of the great salvific love God the Father has for them. (John 3:16.17).

#### 4. All things were made through Him (1:3ab)

In “through Him” (*di’ autou* – 1:3a) the author once again indicates that same subject – the *Logos* referred to in 1:1.2. According to the interpretation of numerous exegetists<sup>19</sup>, the author of 3ab speaks about the Mediator in God’s creation of all things, and, referring to Genesis 1:1, proclaims the Everlasting *Logos* (1.2). In this way the *Logos* is brought to the fore as a separate subject from the Creator. Also in upholding the world continually in its existence He acts together with the Creator (Hebrews 1:2.3; Colossians 1:16.17). The aforementioned role of the *Logos* as Mediator in the creation and preservation of the world does not diminish the dignity or restrict the authority of God the Creator (Colossians 1:16 et seq.). Numerous exegetists, however, do not interpret 1:3ab as speaking of a Mediator in the creation of the world but refer it instead to the renewal of all things through Jesus Christ<sup>20</sup>.

##### 4.1. Remarks about the text

The original expression *ho gegonen* (3c) poses some interpretative difficulties<sup>21</sup>. It is often counted in unit 1:3ab in translations. Likewise Remi-

<sup>19</sup> Concise overview of their opinions can be found in Witczyk, „Bóg – Słowo”, 256-282.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 273-282.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Kurt Aland, „Eine Untersuchung zu Joh 1, 3-4. Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes“, *ZNW*, nr 59 (1968): 174-209; Ignace de la Potterie, „De interpunctione et interpretatione versuum Joh 1, 3.4”, *Verbum Domini*, nr 33 (1955):

giusz Popowski: *cokolwiek się stało* [anything that was made]<sup>22</sup>. The issue relates to punctuation. In the Vulgate, the full stop follows after *quod factum est* (3c). In manuscript P 75, dating about 200 AD, the full stop is placed after 3ab. This version, after plenty of studies, was accepted in *Novum Testamentum Graece*<sup>23</sup>. Henryk Witczyk's<sup>24</sup> philological and semantic analysis of the text shows that the expression *ho gegonen* (3c) should be counted as part of the next unit, that is joined with 1:4a.

The verb form in 1:3. The reiterated 'was' in reference to the pre-existence of the *Logos* (1:1.2) stands in opposition to the thesis of everything being made 'through Him' (3ab). This is because while the "was" (*en – impf.*) predicates in 1:1.2 are general statements concerning the *Logos*'s existence in the past without marking a beginning, the verb form "was made" (*egeneto – aor.*) in 3ab denotes a completed past activity, and in 1:3c "was made" (*gegonen – perf.*) denotes the current state of things, which is the consequence of an action completed in the past and emphasizes the persistence of its outcome. Hence, the "was" of the pre-existence and the "was made" of what was done in the past (completed activity) refer to different realities the poetic author speaks about.

#### 4.2. Interpretation

Identification of the "through Him" (*di' autou – 3a*) with the *Logos*, as Mediator in God's creation of the world, refers to Genesis 1:1 and corresponds with wisdom tradition, but the closer context of the Prologue supplies the basis for a different interpretation. Namely, context analysis leads to the conclusion that the pronoun *dia* (*di' autou – 3a*) should be understood in a causal sense<sup>25</sup>: "all things were made through Him" (*panta*). The term *panta* (no article) in John's Gospel means "all things": The Father has given "all things" into Jesus's hands, and Jesus was aware of that on His way through the world doing the Father's will through His works (John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; 21:17; 19:30). The evangelist looks at "all things" (*panta*) done by Jesus from a post-resurrection perspective and speaks of all of Jesus's work "all that was made through Him". As regards the renewal, "without Him

193-208; Otto Hofius, „Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus in Joh 1, 1-18“, *ZNW* 78, nr 1-2 (1978): 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Nowy Testament. Przekład na Wielki Jubileusz Roku 2000.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. above footnote 13.

<sup>24</sup> Witczyk, „Bóg – Słowo”, 256 et seq. Likewise Beutler, *Johannesevangelium*, 82, 84, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Likewise in Paul: 1 Colossians, 15:16.19.20; Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, red., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1990), II, 64-68.

was made nothing that has been made” (1:3b; 1:17)<sup>26</sup>. The meaning of *panta* as “everything” done by the “Word Incarnate” is closer to the context contained in the Prologue and in John’s Gospel. This showed itself already during the *a-tergo* glance at the text of the Prologue<sup>27</sup> and will find confirmation further on.

### **4.3. Conclusions**

In putting this term in the theological context discussed here, the author probably, irrespective of where he borrowed the term *logos* and what sense the latter had at its source of origin, did not understand it in the sense of abstract speculation as in Hellenistic philosophy or Judaic and Biblical wisdom tradition, but as an individual, personal entity who persisted with God in pre-existence and thanks to whom, when “the Word was made Flesh” (the Man), everything became new.

## **5. “In Him was life” – “the light of men” (1:4)**

### **5.1. Remarks about the text**

In verse 1:4 the poetic author makes two proclamations about the entity referred to with the pronoun ‘in Him’ (4a): a/ in Him was life; b/ the life was the light of men. The former speaks of an essential attribute of His, the latter of His action concerning humans. There is no direct explanation as to whom the author understands by ‘in Him’. It is only the context, in which more utterances appear about the light, about the witness and about human responses to the Light (John 1:4.5.7.8.9.11.12), which provides the basis for certain conclusions.

The “life” that was “in Him” fulfilled the function of the light for those who chose a positive response to Him: “received Him” and “believe in His name”. Hence they receive “the power of becoming sons of God” (12b). These are the functions fulfilled with regard to believers by the “Word Incarnate” that brought God’s life to humans. Hence the attributes “life” and “the light of men” (4), as well as the assertion of “the true light that enlightens every man” (1:9) assume that the pronoun phrase “in Him” (4a) refers to an entity that already has the status of “Word Incarnate”. This is because in that condition the entity could fulfil the functions regarding humans that

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<sup>26</sup> It cannot be excluded that the disciples of John [the Baptist], who formed a sect after the martyrdom of their master, sustained certain claims about him. Perhaps those came from different sources, especially ones that safeguarded Mosaic traditions. To such like opinions the author of the text at hand was opposed.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 2 above.

are mentioned in the text. It is for this purpose that He came to “the world” (1:9 et seq.) and to – precisely defined – “his own”. Also the utterances about humans’ various responses to this “Light” assume that the Person came to be known by them, i.e. allowed Himself to be known by them, so that they could make their decision, a choice, acceptance or rejection, incurring also the consequences of their choices. Things being so, also the elaboration in 1:4.9 et seq. supplies the basis for the conclusion that the expression “in Him” refers to the “Word Incarnate”.

There remains, however, the question of what the relationship of that entity (4a) is to the *Logos* in 1, 1.2 and 3ab? As 1:4 et seq. contains utterances about specific human beings in earthly reality, it should be accepted that those involve not the *Logos* in pre-existence (1:1.2) but rather a Person present in the world, among humans, fulfilling such exalted functions with regard to them. The Person can be known by them, and they can choose a response to the Person and to His activities in the world, incurring all the consequences of their choices. Thus the “in Him” cannot refer to the status of the *Logos* in pre-existence (1:1.2), nor to the “Mediator in the creation of the world”, but it refers to the *Logos* already having the status of “World Incarnate”<sup>28</sup>.

Now the following issue comes up: What is the relationship between the entity mentioned in “in Him” and the expression used in 1:3c? If in 1:3ab the author speaks of the “Word Incarnate”, then the same entity (*di’ autou, charis autou*) appears also in 3c (*ho gegonen*). From 1:3 begins a new unit, one which speaks generally of the specific functions of the entity – first using the positive (3ab) and then the negative form (3c). Only as late as 1:4a is the entity designated with the personal pronoun: “in Him”, without being identified by name, but in subsequent verses the author proclaims the principal function He fulfils with regard to humans. The Author also recounts the name of him whom God sent to His people as His witness, i.e. John (1:6-8), and later speaks about human responses. After the general statements of 1, 3ab and 3c, the author speaks about the Person Himself, that “in Him was life”, and that life “was the light of men” (4a). There are therefore reasons to interpret 3c in strict connection with the “Word Incarnate”, similarly as 3ab<sup>29</sup>. This explanation is justified by the context (1:6-8 et seq.)<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Biblical foundations for the role of the *Logos*, i.e. the second Person of the Holy Trinity, in the creation of the world by God, have to be sought in other sources of Divine Revelation. Saint Paul writes extensively on the subject.

<sup>29</sup> It appears that already the original version of the verse discussed now (3c) did not contain the words: *logos, sarks*. A version without these two terms would correspond to the derivation of this text from a commune moved by wisdom tradition.

<sup>30</sup> The literary aspect of 1:3c has already been discussed above (item 4).

It seems telling that in the original text, from 1:3-13 onward, the term *Logos* does not appear, and the substantive pronouncements made about the entity designated in “in Him” that appear in this part of the Prologue correspond to the assertions formulated clearly in 1:14-17. As follows from the above analysis, the terms *ho gegonen* (3c) and “in Him” refer to the same Person mentioned in 1:14<sup>31</sup>. Subsequent verses therefore explain the matter of whom the author designates with the pronoun phrase “in Him” (4a) and whom he calls *ho gegonen* (3c). Those refer to the new status of the *Logos* relative to 1:1.2, namely when He “was made Flesh”. Verses 1:4.5.9.12.13c, on the other hand, move on to proclaim the principal functions He fulfilled regarding humans, as well as their responses to Him. John’s Gospel elaborates more broadly on these subjects in different contexts.

### **5.2. Analysis of the text at hand gave rise to a new hypothesis about the literary origin of the entire Prologue**

Verses 1, 1-18 contain elements of two early Christian hymns about the “Word Incarnate”. One is composed of verses 1:1.2 + 1:3-13, the other of 1:1.2 + 1:14-18. The former references wisdom tradition and was sung in the Judeo-Christian community; the origin of the latter also derives from the same tradition but later proclaims clearly the history of the “Word Incarnate” – this one was said or sung during the liturgy in the Christian community of converted pagans. To distinguish these primitive hymns in the Prologue and determine the time they were combined appears no longer to be possible at this stage. References to the historical testimony of John (1:6-8.15) also link both parts of the Prologue, where the “Word Incarnate” is spoken of in different forms and contexts. For both the central character is God, who sent His Son to humans with a wealth of salvific gifts, and the Son fulfilled His mission, i.e. completed the work (John 19:30) and returned to the glory of the Father (John 1:18)<sup>32</sup>.

### **5.3. Interpretation**

The assertion “in Him was life” (1:4a) is in absolute form, as the original indicates with the article used in 4b. Neither *bios* nor *psyche* appear in the text but only *dzoē*. The former denotes biological life on earth in gener-

<sup>31</sup> Cf. item 2 above.

<sup>32</sup> On the foundation of his own study of the structure of the Prologue, different conclusions occurred to Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 104 et seq. Cf. also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland: Doubleday, 1966), I, 21-23.

al; the latter, *psyche*, in John's Gospel, denotes "the life of the soul" (13:37; 10:11.15.17.18); *dzoe*, on the other hand, more often denotes "Divine life" (3:16; 5:24.26; 17:3)<sup>33</sup>.

In the Scripture (in the Septuagint) the term *dzoe* appears in many utterances made about God: He is a "living God" (Daniel 6:21.27; 12:7; Osee 2:1); the source of all life (1 Samuel 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7; Jeremiah 2:13; 10:10; Psalm 36:10). The term *dzoe* appears in the oath formula: "as the Lord lives" (1 Samuel 14:39.45; Isaiah 49:18; Jeremiah 4:2) and when He spoke to His people through the prophets: "As I live" (Jeremiah 22:24; Esdras 14:16). And then the texts that contraposition the God of Israel, as a "living" God, to the various deities (Joshua 3:10; 23:1; 24:1; 1 Samuel 17:26). Experience of the presence of the "living God" with His people, for whom He did great works (Exodus 14; Psalm 66), as well as the awareness that without Him humans could not live with dignity (Psalm 36:10; 80:19; 103:4), was of incredible significance in the religious life of the chosen people. This "living God" repeatedly, through the prophets, called on the people to convert and foretold the judgment and the renewal of all things. The Old Testament's witness to the "living God" was confirmed and made more complete in the Divine Revelation brought to us by Jesus Christ (Mark 12:24 et seq.).

In John's Gospel the motif of "life" is found among the most important pronouncements made of Jesus Christ: He is "the life" (John 11:25; 14:6; 6:20, 6:30.31). "For as the Father has life in Himself, even so he has given to the Son also to have life in Himself", (John 5:26). "The Word", which, "was made flesh", is the source of "life" and of knowledge of the "living God" to believers. This is how, according to the author of the text at hand, Jesus Christ appeared (John 1:16.17b) and what He taught of the God of Israel (John 1:18; 6:57). In the mystery of Incarnation, He brought into the world of humans "the life" from God and from that point onward He fulfils His salvific function of giving "the life" to those who are obedient to His invitation and "believe in His name" (1:12). The concept of life (*dzoe*) in John's Gospel diverges wholly from the earthly temporal life and refers to supernatural and eternal life, the life God gives to those who believe in Him Whom God had sent so the world "may have life" (John 3:15.16.36; 5:21.24.26.29; 6:33; 11:25; 12:50; 14:6; 17:2; 20:30.31; 1 John 3:16; 5:20)<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> For interpretation of immanence in John 1:4a see: Klaus Scholtissek, *In Ihm sein und bleiben. Die Sprache der Immanenz in den johanneischen Schriften* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien-Barcelona-Rom-New York: Verlag Herder KG, 2000), 184-189.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Charles Harold Dodd, *L'Interpretation du Quatrième Evangile* (Paris: Cerf, 1975), 188 et seq.

#### 5.4. "The life was the light of men" (1:4b)

Expressions "life" (*dzoē*) and "light" (*phos*) in 1:4 denote the same reality, since God Himself is the source of "the life", which is also "the light" to humans in their temporal reality (4). In the light of the Old Testament (*LXX*), God was the source of life and of light (Psalm 36:10). He, "clothed with light" (Psalm 104:1.2), was Himself the light to His people (Exodus 13:21; 24:17; Micah 7:8, Isaiah 60:1.3; Psalm 89:16) and to individual persons (2 Samuel 22:29; Psalm 27:1) on whom the light of His countenance was signed (Psalm 4:7), that is His presence, so they could fulfil the tasks placed before them (Isaiah 6:1 et seq.). Also the Law (the Torah) that He gave through Moses, and especially its summary in the Decalogue, is the light (*phos*) for the nations (Psalm 119:105). Throughout the history of His people, God in various ways granted to His chosen participation in His light<sup>35</sup>.

The motif of the light referred to God in the verbal, metaphoric and symbolic sense appears with especial frequency in the New Testament: God is the "Father of Lights" (James 1:17); "God is light" (*phos*) (1 John 1:5). In Jesus and His works showed the brightness of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3). The light in which God revealed His presence is unlike any earthly light (Mark 9:2 et seq., par. Matthew 17:1-8). After resurrection Jesus Christ appeared with light around Him (Acts 9:3; 22:6.9.10; 26:13), though probably not in His full light, which humans in their earthly condition could not have survived.

God's "life" is a flame of fire (Exodus 3:2; Hebrews 12:29) and love, which, shining, spreads and saves (1 John 1:2). For humans on earth, open to God's gifts, participation in God's life becomes "the light" (John 1:4.5) in which walks he (1 John 1:7) who abides in the vine (John 15:1-8) and abides in the Christ's love (John 15:9-17). The believers who walk in his "light" have passed from death to "life" (John 5:24; cf. 1 John 3:14). Hence it is one's response to the salvific initiative of God unfolded through Jesus Christ that one's participation in God's "life" depends (cf. Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; Apocalypse 2:10), as well as in God's "light" (John 8:12; cf. 9:5; 12:35.36.46)<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Concerning the light in Judaic tradition see: Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium I*, 223-226.

<sup>36</sup> Henryk Witczyk writes: "It is only God the Word who fully and perfectly mediates between the world and God and fulfils all the expectations of the people of the Old Covenant concerning life and salvation. This is St John's correction of the Jewish faith in the Law and Wisdom as the sources of life. »All things were made« through the mediation of God the Word. And life full and everlasting — eternal — has its source only in the Word, the Only-Begotten Son of God who became man"; id., „Bóg – Słowo”, 280.



### 5.5. "The light shines in the darkness" (1:5a)

The text does not refer to physical light or to darkness that falls in the absence of it. In John's Gospel only once does the term *phos* denote physical light (John 11:9.10). Neither does it reference the motif of war between light and darkness known from myths and various traditions. Darkness here means the absence of the supernatural "light" of God.

In the Bible, the terms "light" and "dark" often refer, as B. Schwank notes<sup>37</sup>, to moral or ethical, or historical, dualism. That dualism, however, takes its source not from God or from the creation itself but instead has formed and still forms as the consequence of the good or evil choices made by humans and their conduct. The problem of evil, and especially its origin in Biblical light, is broader and requires separate treatment. In turn, the pairing of "lightness" and "darkness" in the prophets points toward eschatological salvation or reprobation (Amos 5:18; Isaiah: 42:6; 49:6; 50:10; 60:1 et seq.). However, their juxtaposition in the sense of dualism appears no earlier than Judaic writings of the deuterocanonical period, especially the Qumran documents, which mention the struggle of the "sons of darkness", by which the godless are understood, against the "sons of light", that is the just, which the members of that community considered themselves to be<sup>38</sup>. The notion of the light in John's Gospel is clearly personal<sup>39</sup>, while the statements about darkness that can be found in there need to be understood in the context of its soteriology and in connection with its ethical propositions. Any imagination of cosmic or metaphysical darkness, as in the religions of the antiquity, are foreign to this Gospel.

The "light" (*phos*) in 1:5 does not present itself as the light of the new Law against the Torah, which wisdom had been identified with since approximately 100 AD (4 Esdras 3:1; 14:21). The "life" and the "light" that are referred to in John 1:4.5.9, came to life in the "Word Incarnate" (1:3c.4.14.17). To humans He brings a new "life" and a new "light". Those not receiving (1:5b.10c.11b) remain outside the sphere of God's "light" and God's "life", as they do not receive the supernatural gifts God gives to those

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<sup>37</sup> Benedikt Schwank, *Evangelium nach Johannes* (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 2007), I, 25 et seq.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1 QS 1:3.9-10.20-22; 1 QM 1,1 et seq.; 13:5.16. Cf. Lech Stachowiak, *Ewangelia według św. Jana* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2008), 111 et seq.; Hartmut Stegemann, *Esseńczycy z Qumran. Jan Chrzciciel i Jezus* (Kraków-Mogilany: The Enigma Press, 2002), 81 et seq.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Otto Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis: ein metaforisches Paradigma in den johanneischen Schriften* (Freiburg i. Br.: Verlag Herder KG, 1995); Lech Stachowiak, „Odwieczne pochodzenie Słowa (J 1,1-5)”, *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 25, nr 3 (1973): 156-168.

who are obedient to His invitation and with faith join Him of whom John [the Baptist] testified according to divine revelation (1:6–8.15.32–34; Mark 1:10.11. par.) and also Jesus’s disciples bore witness (1:14cd).

The phrase “the darkness grasped him not” (1:5c – *aor.*) refers, on account of its proximate context (1:10c.11b), to those human beings who did not recognize and receive the “Light”, the “Word Incarnate”. This interpretation is confirmed by the context, which refers to those who recognized Him, received Him and believed in Him<sup>40</sup>. Regarding those, the “Light”, fulfils its functions: they receive the “power of becoming sons of God” (1:12). Humans, remaining in their natural condition and relying solely on their natural strengths and earthly means cannot enter the sphere of the “life” and “light” that God opened to them through the “Word Incarnate” (1:14), that is Jesus Christ (1:17).

As 1:4 mentions God’s life and God’s light, also the verb “to shine” (1:5a) refers to the resplendence of God’s light in the world of humans, who, depending on their response to God’s salvific initiative, bear the consequences of their decisions and attitudes. The grammatical form of the verb “shines” (*praes.*) points toward continual permanent fulfilment of its function by the “Word Incarnate” (1:5a.9b). Jesus’s appeal: “Walk [believe] while you have the light” (John 12:35) remains current for humans till the end of the world.

Verses 1:3c.4.5 in the context and against the background of the Old-Testament references to the “living God” who is the “Light” become understandable in full once their context in the Prologue and in all of John’s Gospel becomes the guide. This text constitutes a separate poetic unit in which the author proclaims how God, through the “Word Incarnate”, unfolds a new initiative directed to humans. It is also He who calls and prepares humans to be witnesses to His new salvific initiative toward them, full of mercy and love (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16.17).

## 6. John’s testimony to the “Light” (1:6-8)

### 6.1. Prefatory remarks

The style of 1:6-8 is indeed distinctive, but the unit is coherent thanks to the motif of testimony, as well as the antithesis of “he was not the light” and “it was the true light”; it is also connected closely with the preceding (1:4.5) and the following (1:9 et seq.) verses<sup>41</sup>. The current version of this

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Beutler, *Johannesevangelium*, 86.

<sup>41</sup> Christoph G. Müller, „Der Zeuge und das Licht. Joh 1,1 – 4,3 und das Darstellungsprinzip der Synkrisis“, *Biblica* 84, nr 4 (2003): 479-509; Beutler, *Johannesevangelium*, 88 et seq.

text provides the basis for the conclusion that these verses were written with the motif of the light in 1:4.5.9 in mind. In no other place throughout the Prologue would it be appropriate and fulfil its function<sup>42</sup>. The text of John 1:6-8.15 refers to a specific historical person – John, later called the Baptist – and his task to “bear witness to the Light” (1:7-8).

### **6.2. The witness whose name was John**

The text of 1:6-8 contains three statements: a) “there was a man”, through which the author speaks of a specific, historical person (6a); b) “one sent from God” (6b.7b.8b), hence not coming forth in his own name and with his own agenda, therefore not self-appointed; and c) designated by name: “John” (6c). This name derives from the Hebrew Yehohanan or Yohanan and means: “Yahweh is Gracious”<sup>43</sup>. Verses 7.8 provide information about his task: he is to bear witness concerning the light, so that all may believe. Himself, however, he was not the Light but witness to Him who was the Light (8). Behind this specific man, the witness whose name is John, stands therefore the authority of the God of Israel who called him, prepared him as a witness, and sent him forth to His people. This entire block of information about John closes with the statement: he was not the Light, which emphasizes John's role as witness to the Light (8).

Statements about John in 1:6-8 are emphasized by the structure itself of the text, in which three pairs of assertions are made concerning him: a/ two that he was not the light; b/ two that he had been sent; c/ twice mention is made of his role as witness to the Light, which he discharged on the grounds of mandate received from God and the sign foretold to him, by which he knew “him who was to come” (Matthew 11:3; John 1:32-34).

The purpose of John's mission had been strictly set: to bear witness concerning the Light “that all might believe in Him” (1:7). John was sent to Israel and bore witness, be it by preaching sermons and calling the people to

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums. Der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 81; Schwank, *Evangelium nach Johannes*, 27; Franciszek Mickiewicz, *Świadkowie zbawczego posłannictwa oraz mesjańskiej i boskiej godności Jezusa w pismach św. Łukasza i św. Jana* (Ząbki: Apostolicum, 2003), 76 et seq.; Tomasz Hergesel, Mariusz Rosik, „»Posłany, aby zaświadczyć o światłości« (J 1, 8). Postać Jana Chrzciciela we współczesnej literaturze egzegetycznej”, *RBL* 55, nr 2(2002): 146-152; Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, w *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, red. Andreas Lindemann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 78 et seq.

<sup>43</sup> Stachowiak, *Ewangelia według św. Jana*, 113.

repentance and baptizing them (Mark 1:2 et seq.), be it by answering questions posed the members of the delegation sent to him by the leaders of Jerusalem (John 1: 19-28), or be it by speaking of Him to his disciples (John 1:29 et seq.). Later, during the polemic, Jesus reminded His interlocutors that their had not believed John and had not accepted his witness (Luke 7:29.30).

The sense of the verb “to believe” is here, similarly to the Hebrew *haamim*, is to put full confidence in God. John proclaimed to Israel that He whose coming God had announced through the prophets was already present among the people and of Him he bore his testimony. In this way the God of Israel, through the prophet John, inaugurated the messianic ministry of “Him who was to come” (Matthew 11:3).

This John was therefore, according to the author of the text (1:6-8), the second witness to Jesus’s commencement of His public ministry. After John, witness is borne by the disciples of Jesus and by the author of the Prologue himself (1:14 et seq.). The “Light” came into the world of humans from God and requires them to choose a response to God with all the consequences of so doing. The appeal for faith is made here for the first time in John’s Gospel, later to be renewed in varied context, particularly in the first Epilogue (John 20:30.31).

The author of the text, placing the historical character of John and his role as witness in the context of the individual Person who is the “Word Incarnate”<sup>44</sup> and speaking of His functions regarding humans (cf. 1:4.5.9), provides the basis for the conclusion that He to whom John bore witness had already been advancing His ministry in historical circumstances contemporary to John. The author of the hymn, therefore, continues with consequence his interpretation of the Logos from John 1:1 et seq. and His functions regarding humans and identifies Him with Him who was to come as foretold by the prophets (Luke 7:20 par.), who had been expected in Israel and various hopes had been attached to His coming, and to whose presence John testified among the people.

The concise text of John 1:6-8 about the role of John, as witness to the Light, assumes the first audience of the Gospel to have known much about him and his ministry (cf. Mark 1:2 et seq.; Matthew 3:1 et seq.; Luke 3:1 et seq.). With the information in John 1:19-28.32-34 John the Evangelist supplements the Synopticists’ accounts. From God’s initiative John [the Baptist]’s historical ministry had been linked closely to the Christ, who accepted and confirmed John’s witness of Himself (Mark 9:11-13; Luke 7:24-30). The motif of the light and the subject of bearing witness inevitably lead the way to the next unit in the hymn.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. explanation to John 1:3-5 above.

## 7. "The true Light that enlightens every man" (1:9)

### 7.1. Remarks about the text

Literary consistencies and the subject of the light (*phos*) in 1:4.5.9 testify to certain links between these verses, as well as with 1:6-8, due to the motif of the light denied John, confirmed in his role of witness to the "Light". After the pronouncement of John not having been the light (8a), in verse 9a the author states, emphatically: "it was the true light", and in 9b he refers to 4.5. Also the predicate "the true Light" in 9c confirms the statement made in 1:5.

The assertion about John, that "he was not the Light" (8), taken in the context in 9a, may support the hypothesis that after John [the Baptist]'s death his disciples believed their master to have been the light, which opinion the author opposed with his assertion about the "true Light" (9a). This hypothesis, however, is not sufficiently backed by sources. The predicates referring to John in 1:6.7.8bc and the context (1:4.5.9a) clearly concentrate on the person who, in 1:9a, was called the "true Light". Besides, in John's Gospel the term 'light' refers consistently to Jesus (8:12; 9:5; 12:35.36). John's sermons and his witness were probably considered luminous by many (John 1:19 et seq.; 5:35), but the Prologue brings to the fore his role as witness to the "True light".

### 7.2. The structure of 1:9-13

The author makes three groups of statements about the Person whom he refers to as the "true Light": a) the first: "He was in the world" (10a); "He came to His own" (11a); b) the second is made up of a parallel description of human responses to Him: "the world knew Him not" (10b), "His own received Him not" (11b); c) the third outlines the consequences for those who "received Him" and "believe in His name" (12.13c). Verse 1:13 is an interpretation of 1:12. Thus, the text of 1:9-13 constitutes a cohesive unit in poetic form that remains in close connection with 1:3-8.

The predicate "true Light" becomes understandable in the context of neither 1:4.5 nor verses 6-8, but only when considering the function that this Light fulfils regarding humans: a) "enlightens every man" (9b); b) gives the power, to those who have "received him" and who "believe in his name", of "becoming sons of God" (12). The question arises how to understand "who comes" (the participle *erchomenon* – 9b)? In Andrzej Oczachowski's opinion<sup>45</sup>, grammatically, the *erchomenon* may be linked correctly to either "the true Light" (9a) or "every man who comes into the world" (9b). Considering

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<sup>45</sup> Andrzej Oczachowski, „Chrystologiczny tytuł *erchomenon* w czwartej Ewangelii”, *Studia Paradyjskie*, nr 11 (2001): 179-192.

this issue in its context, it is proper to conclude the *erchomenon* refers to the *phos* (9a)<sup>46</sup>. This is because the “true Light”, in coming into the world, displays imperious activity (1:9c, cf. John 3:19; 12:46.47), which is not attributed to a human being in John’s Gospel. About John, the author proclaims not: “comes into the world” but “became” or “was” (1:6, cf. 16:21). The verb “was” (*en*) in the context of 9a does not connect with the *erchomenon*, as Benedict Schwank writes<sup>47</sup>, but instead it refers to the pre-existence of the Logos, since the text speaks of His existence prior to coming into the world; hence “was” (*en* – 9a) is a reference to the pre-existence (1:1.2), and “who comes” (*erchomenon* – 9b) to 1:3.4.5. From the pronouncement that the “true Light” „enlightens every man” (9c) it can be inferred to exceed the natural talents and functions of a human being existing in this world, and, furthermore, it emphasizes the universal character of this function, that is one which regards all human beings.

The adjective attribute of “true” gives the Light an exclusive sense that also occurs from 1:9b. In the light of the foregoing context, the Person who has such great authority over humans is identified with Him who has renewed all things (3ab), and in 1:3c a new status is attached to His existence: [the Word] “was made flesh” = “man”<sup>48</sup>. In the following verses the author asserts: “in Him was life”, and “light”, and describes His functions toward humans (4.5). In 9ab, on the other hand, he writes about His function, which is that He “enlightens” every human being in this world, and of human responses to Him. The attribute “true” opposes this “Light” to any claims being raised in Biblical and later times by all sorts of self-styled claimants who had not been sent from God and who deceived people with their false teachings.

The grammatical form of the verb “enlightens” (*photidzei, praes.*) (9b, cf. 1.5a) emphasizes that the “Word Incarnate”, since His coming into the world, performs this function by always currently “enlightening every man” so the latter could make the decision concerning his own salvation. The Everlasting God (1:1.2) shows people the authentic path to salvation. This text is in full parallel to Titus 2:11. This part of the Prologue describes the persistent salvific operation of the “Word Incarnate” as the “true Light”<sup>49</sup> that has come into the world and “enlightens every man” (9b). Things being so, this “true Light”, is the only Mediator through whom humans can

<sup>46</sup> Similarly Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 81 et seq.

<sup>47</sup> Schwank, *Evangelium nach Johannes*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. items 4 and 5 above.

<sup>49</sup> This subject was elaborated further in Adam R. Sikora, „Była Światłość prawdziwa (J 1, 9a). Jezus jako światłość w Prologu czwartej Ewangelii”, *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne*, nr 23 (2009): 77-88.

achieve eternal salvation. From this text one can also infer that those who are His servants and witnesses should have in themselves “God’s life” and His “light” (cf. John 12: 36; Matthew 5:16.48).

The “true Light” is not of this world. His enlightening function (9b) is altogether different from the creations of human culture. It is a gift from God that shows higher perfection and leads the way to it (Matthew 5:16.48). To humans it brings authentic Revelation from God and confronts every human being with the need to make choices and bear the consequences. The “true Light” about which the author testifies is backed by the authority of God Himself, who had sent His own Son into the world and called humans to be His witnesses (cf. John 1:14 et seq. 32-34; 3:16.17; 9:5; Mark 1:9-11; 9:7 par.).

## **8. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not (1:10)**

### **8.1. Remarks about the text**

From 1:10 onward we no longer encounter the “light” (*phos*) in the Prologue, but the relative pronoun *auton* (*masc.* in 10c et seq.) refers to the same subject, which is the “Word Incarnate”. The integrity of this unit in the Prologue and its connected with the preceding verses are preserved, since the same subject appears here that is denoted variously, be it as the “Logos” (*implicite* in v. 3), be it as the “light of men” (v. 4), or be it as the “true Light” (v. 9), after which the author includes a reference to His name (12c) and proclaims His identity (1:17b).

Verse 1:10 contains three statements made about the same person, whom the author again does not identify clearly but indicates through reference to the preceding statements: a) “He was in the world” – among humans; b) the world – “was made through Him”; c) the world – humans – “knew Him not”, and 10c alludes to 1:5 – they neither knew Him nor received Him.

### **8.2. The term *kosmos***

This term appears three times in 1:10: In 10a, similarly to 9a, mention is made of the world, wherein human beings endowed with intelligence exist and build their culture<sup>50</sup>. In this meaning it also appears in 10c, i.e. the author refers back to 10a. It is to those humans He has come from God and brings the gift of “life”, which is their “light” (1:4.9). By many, however, He was not recognized and was not received (1:5.11). They did not heed

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<sup>50</sup> For the meaning of the term *kosmos* in John's Gospel see: Branislav Kluska, *Odpowiedzialność chrześcijanina za świat według czwartej Ewangelii, w Moralność objawiona w Biblii*, red. Wojciech Pikor (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2011), 147-167.

Him and did not accept His gifts. This interpretation fits John's Gospel, which makes more frequent mentions of His having been sent from God and recognized and received by humans (3:16; 12:47-49). It also makes more frequent mentions of those who rejected Jesus Christ (12:31.37; 15:18; 17:15).

### **8.3. The verb "to know"**

This verb in 10c stands for not only intellectual cognition according to the categories of thought developed by Greek philosophers or cognition in the sense of experience of the initiation rites practised in Hellenistic times, or gnostic cognition, but in that Semitic sense which is the personal experience of the presence of God<sup>51</sup>, who has revealed Himself to His chosen or to the people. This experience leads to personal belief, understanding and conviction, as well as to the decision to respond to God's initiative full of mercy and love. Man is constantly provoked to give God a worthy answer, fulfil His will and be grateful for gifts received.

The source of the "true Light's" power is God. The Logos is God (1:1.2). Entering into human history, He offers humans participation in a new life and in the light (1:3c.4.5). Co-operating with His gifts shapes the religious personality of a human person believing in Jesus Christ (1:12.17) and guarantees the entrance to the life eternal (John 11:25; 20:30.31). From the position and in the light of the "true Light", the traditions of divine revelation in the Old Testament are fully explained.

### **8.4. "The true light that enlightens every man" (1:5.9)**

The term used in the original, *panton* (every) emphasizes how the Light fulfils its functions universally with regard to all human beings for their salvation. The condition for participation in the "life" and the "light" thus brought to humans, however, is that one must respond to Him with faith (1:12), accept His gifts and safeguard them in one's own changing existential conditions (Apocalypse 2:10c). Humans have been endowed with intelligence, and God requires them to enter on a path of responsible collaboration in the shaping of their relations with Him, so that, according to their choices and attitudes in time, they prepare their own fate for eternity. Those who respond to Him with faith and trust He leads to the eternal life, which is at the same time the "true Light" of God's.

In primitive Christianity, the everlasting beatific reality was spoken of descriptively as the "eternal life", "everlasting light", "happiness without end" or in similar terms. Saint Paul described it thus:

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ernst D. Schmitz, „ginosko“, w *Theologisches Begrifflexikon zum Neuen Testament*, red. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuthen, Hans Bietenhard (Wuppertal 1986), I, 245 et seq.



„Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man,  
what things God has prepared for those who love Him”  
(1 Corinthians 2:9).

### **9. He came to His own, and His own received Him not (1:11)**

Verse 1:11 contains two assertions: a) He came to His own (11a); b) His own did not receive Him (11b). Phrases: “came into the world” (9b) and „came to His own” (11a) are parallel and, in poetic form, speak of specific realities. This style is proper to Semitic thought: a general expression comes first, then attention is focused on explaining a detailed element<sup>52</sup>. The general statement: “He was in the world” (10a) contains in itself also the narrower determination: “He came to His own”, and accordingly also the next one: “the world [humans] knew Him not” – “His own received him not” (11b). This style also provides the basis for a conclusion about the author himself, who, from a greater perspective, evaluates a historical situation – Jesus Christ's rejection by the leaders of the chosen people. He, however, speaks also of a situation contemporary to himself, namely a world in which the Gospel was already preached but by many not received with faith.

The general sense of the statement “came into the world” or “was in the world” (9b.10a) was narrowed down in the assertion that “He came to His own” (11a), that is to those whom God, in the light of the Old-Testament Biblical tradition, had chosen, led and prepared for His coming (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6, Ezeckiel 11:20; 37:27; Isaiah 49:21; Malachi 3:17; cf. Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Many a time, speaking through His prophet, God had claimed them as “my own”. That people belongs to God but also to Him for whom God the Father had called it and led it until the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1.2a). The prophets passed on to it the words they had received from God and His promises and sustained its hopes until the coming of Him who was to come (Matthew 11:2-6; 21:33 et seq.) and to whom the sceptre belongs (Isaiah 9:1).

The predicate “His own received Him not” (11b)<sup>53</sup> is parallel to “the world knew Him not” (10c). This determination (11b), when taken in its own context, can supply the basis for the conclusion that they “knew not” the testimony of the prophets about Him who was to come and that they “knew not” and did not accept the testimony of John the Baptist of Him as being reliable, nor did they recognize the testimony of God the Father about Him,

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken*.

<sup>53</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg identifies them with the representatives of the chosen people of Jesus's time; id, *Johannsevangelium*, I, 236.

which the same John cited (1:32-24; Mark 1:10.11 par.), or Jesus's testimony about His mission from God, which Jesus Himself invoked on multiple occasions. Thus they did not accept the testimony of God Himself about Him, borne through the prophets and through Jesus's works (John 5:17.36). These testimonies, too, they failed to "know" in a way consistent with the intention of God Himself who was conducting the initiative of Revelation and implementing plans for the salvation of humans. In disobeying John's call, as forerunner to the Messiah, they rendered God's intention futile in respect of themselves (Luke 7:30 par.). Things had been similar before, when God called out to His people through the prophets. These testimonies, so deeply inscribed into the history of the chosen people, are backed by the authority of God Himself (Matthew 23:37; John 1:32-34).

### **10. Those who received Him and believed became children of God (John 1, 12)**

The text of 1:12 contains predicates closely linked to the preceding verses: a) 12a mentions that some did receive Him; b) hence they too could accept God's gifts and "become sons of God"; c) these persons have fulfilled the condition of being able to acquire this new identity, that is they "believe in His name", that is in His Person, as sent from God<sup>54</sup>. The reference in 1:12a is to the same person as in 10c.11b. In 1:10c He was not "known", while in 11b "not received by His own". After these general statements about negative responses to Him, verse 12a introduces information about those who responded to Him positively. In keeping with his style, the author contrapositions them to those who "received Him not". With regard to those who "knew" Him, "received" Him and "believe in His name", the subject described in the preceding verses of the Prologue (1:3c-5.9) unfolded His ministry that is not limited to "enlightening" them (9b) but has caused them to acquire a new status in relation to God: they 'become the sons of God' (12b) – spiritually, they are "born ... of God" (13c).

In the Bible, the nation of Israel is referred to by God, on the basis of His own election, as "my son" (Exodus 4:22.23). Later, this reference, in a metaphorical sense, attached to individual persons: the judges (Ecclesiasticus 4:10) and kings (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7), and the downtrodden (Psalm 68:6-7), and the just (Wisdom 2:13; Ecclesiasticus 51:10). Also the Prologue's subsequent verses reference the status of "sons of God", which is granted to those who believe, as a gift from God but coming through the mediation of the "Word Incarnate" (1:14a), that is through Jesus Christ (1:17b), who gave His life for the salvation of humans (John 10:17; Hebrews 5:3).

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. item 10 above.

No one can of his own power enter into this special relationship with God (1 John 3:1). God, however, expects people to put their confidence in Him and accept the invitation to “believe in the name” of the One He had sent to them (1:12c) and to persist in faith and in His love (John 14:21.23).

In this text both groups are the progeny of Abraham, that is members of the chosen people. The initiative of human salvation is conducted by God the Father through His Son (John 3:15.16; 6:37 et seq.). From humans, He requires obedience to Him whom He had sent to them (Mark 9:7) and acceptance of the Revelation He has brought from the Father (John 3:18; 1 John 3:23; 5:10 et seq.). This “new birth” is effected in historical circumstances, which already assumes having received and believed in a historical and personal Mediator of salvation, sent from God<sup>55</sup>. As those who have not received Him (1:11b) are contrapositioned to those who have received Him (12a.13c), the conclusion is that both groups are “His own” (1:11a), that is members of the chosen people; some “received Him”, and some “received Him not”. Hence also the consequences of their responses to God's new initiative are different.

In not accepting Him whom God had sent and whose “glory” God revealed in His teaching and in His acts as the “true Light”, humans remain in their natural, temporal condition. Compared to the perspectives God opened before humans through the “Word Incarnate”, that is darkness. In their earthly existence they seek solutions to their own problems, and particularly the sense of life, but they cannot find the ultimate explanation for it, nor can they achieve the eternal life through their own means.

Gifts a human being receives from God in being constituted as a “son of God”, are altogether different from anything that is earthly. The “true Light”, in enlightening every human being (1:9), faces the human with the need to make responsible decisions, where choices have consequences that reach into eternity.

### **11. Those who “were born ... of God” (1:13c)**

On the authority of manuscripts, the verb form in 1:13c has been passed down the centuries in the plural number. When in 1953 R. Boismard published his commentary on John's Prologue, Donatien Mollat's translation of this Gospel also came out<sup>56</sup>. Relying on their study of manuscripts, both exegetists render 1:13c in the singular: “was born of God”. This form also appears in some Fathers of the 2nd century. In that translation the

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<sup>55</sup> Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, I, 238, 508-524.

<sup>56</sup> *La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem*. Paris 1955. Also: Paris 1961.

words refer to Jesus Christ: “was born of a Virgin”<sup>57</sup>. The singular, however, does not appear in any early Greek manuscript of the New Testament but only in a later one from the 5th century, the *Codex Veronensis*, as well as translations and quotations in some Fathers<sup>58</sup>. In 1956 and 1966 manuscripts (*codices*) P 66 and P 75 of John’s Gospel were published, which originate from approximately 200 AD. Both use the plural version, which was also adopted by *The Greek New Testament*<sup>59</sup>. That Greek text of the New Testament accepted after plentiful study provides the basis for future research and translation into modern languages. Also the broader context of John’s Gospel supports the plural in 1:13c. Cf. 3:3 et seq.).

In verse 1:13 the author interprets his own statement from verse 12, so that the status of “sons of God” was attained not through natural birth (13ab) but is a gift from God<sup>60</sup>. Although the author radically contrapositions being “born of God” (13c) to biological birth, he does not judge the “flesh” (*sarks*) negatively. Not one such negative judgement appears in John’s Gospel, unlike Paul (Galatians 5:17). Neither should one read the text at hand (1:13ab) as an intentional allusion chastising the Israelites’ attachment to their biological descent from Abraham (John 8:39a).

The text refers to a real new birth, which the evangelist John describes as being “born of God”, “from above”, or “from the Spirit of God” (John 3:3 et seq.)<sup>61</sup>. This, in turn, has happened thanks to God’s new initiative in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), when there came He who was to come (Matthew 11:3). He fulfilled His mission, even though many did not receive Him; God, however, accepted His work and clothed Him with glory.

Biblical authors, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, with words and images derived from their own cultural environment, write about God’s new initiative in the history of the world, which creates great

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Ignace de la Potterie, „La Mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu”, *Marianum*, nr 40 (1978): 41-90; Antonio V. Cernuda, „La doble generacion de Jesucristo segun Jn 1,13-14”, *Estudios Biblicos*, nr 40 (1982): 49-117, 313-244.

<sup>58</sup> Schwank, *Evangelium nach Johannes*, 34 n.; Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 88.

<sup>59</sup> Edited by Kurt Aland et al. (Stuttgart 2012). Cf. above footnote 13. Beutler, *Johannesevangelium*, 92,93.

<sup>60</sup> Joachim Kügler, „Denen aber, die ihn aufnahmen ...“ (*Joh 1,12*). *Die Würde der Gotteskinder in der johanneischen Theologie und Geschichte* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002), 163-179.

<sup>61</sup> Henryk Witczyk, „Stawać się »dzieckiem Boga« mocą daną przez Słowo Wcielone (J 1, 10-13)”, w *Moc Słowa Pańskiego. Adhortacja Apostolska „Verbum Domini” w refleksji biblijno-teologicznej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012), 101-111.

opportunities for humans but requires them to respond positively in obedience, faith and love. As God was with John [the Baptist] and behind his testimony, so when “Word Incarnate” [Jesus Christ – 1:17b] fulfilled His mission among humans on earth God was with Him and testified of Him (John 5:17.26). Also with those who “were born of God” and continue to exist in this changing world there is God (John 1:12.13c; 16:5-15; 1 John 4:4; 5:4). This is because they, in accepting with faith the gifts brought from God by the “World Incarnate”, that is Jesus Christ (1:17b), receive participation in God's life and in His light. In this world, however, the greatness and magnificence of these gifts remains hidden, even to many who believe in and love God.

## **12. “The Word was made flesh” (1:14)**

### **12. 1. Prefatory remarks**

The text of 1:14-18 diverges clearly from 1:1-13 both in form and in content. Using the Greek term *Logos* in 14a, the author refers to the statement made in 1:1.2 of His pre-existence and strict unity with God. In the first part of the Prologue, the author proclaimed, though in a veiled way, the fact of the Word's incarnation and the work of Jesus Christ, also mentioning the role played by His witness whose name was John, as well as recounting the responses of many to God's new initiative (1:10c.11b.12ac.13c). In 1:14 et seq. the author professes openly that “the Word was made flesh” and then proclaims the great work of God<sup>62</sup>, done through Jesus Christ, and enumerates the witnesses in the profession formulas rendered in the plural number (14c). These and other facts have given rise to hypotheses concerning different redactions of the relevant texts in the Prologue. According to Lech Stachowiak, verse 14 belonged not only to the evangelist's own first rendition of the Prologue but also to the original Christological hymn<sup>63</sup>.

### **12.2. The structure of 1:14**

The text contains two principal thematic units with two recognized subordinates: the former proclaims the fact of incarnation (14a), with the description “dwelt / put up His tent / among us” (14b); the latter mentions multiple witnesses of the event and the accounts in the form of a profession (14c; *plur.*); the subject matter of the testimony also is identified: “glory as of the only-begotten of the Father” (14de). Hence, this part of the hymn clearly refers to a new initiative by God, from the perspective of the Reve-

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Czesław S. Bartnik, „Chrystologia świata w Prologu Ewangelii według św. Jana”, *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 48, nr 2 (2010): 11-19.

<sup>63</sup> Stachowiak, *Ewangelia według św. Jana*, 121.

lation in the Old Testament, and those who have recognized and believed in it have become participants in great spiritual gifts, of which they also give testimony (14c).

### 12. 3. *The conjunction kai*

Verse 14 starts with the conjunction “and” (*kai*), the sense of which differs depending on the context. Because of the contents of 1:14a, C. Dietzfelbinger<sup>64</sup> translates this *kai*: *ja, ja, wahrhaftig, in der Tat*, that is: “yes”, “yes, verily”, or “yes, in fact”<sup>65</sup>. With such an interpretation of this conjunction in 14a, also the predicates in 1:3c-13 find confirmation as referring to the historical facts connected with the “Word’s” incarnation. This sense of the conjunction is also confirmed with the realistic description: “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (14ab).

Here, in keeping with Biblical anthropology, the term *sarks* means the whole “man” in specific earthly existence (Isaiah 40:5; Matthew 16:17), that is human nature<sup>66</sup>. On the other hand, the phrase “the Word was made flesh” (14a) means the “Word” (*Logos*), being God and having everlasting pre-existence (1:1.2), took up human nature and become the real “Man”, who is the historical Jesus of Nazareth (1:17b). A gnostic or docetic understanding of the term *sarks* in this text is excluded (2 John 7). The antidocetic interpretation of 1:14a was developed only in later times. The expression *sarks* in the sense of a human being also appears in Romans 1:3; 8:3; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18. This fact bears witness to the existence of an early Christian tradition in which this word had already had a fixed sense. On the other hand, the various predicates referring to the Risen and Living Jesus of Nazareth were included, in the form of professions, in the primitive hymns that were sung or said in Christian communities during the liturgy.

The verb (*im pf.*) means “to put up one’s tent”, and metaphorically also “dwell” (Exodus 24:15–18). In the Old Testament God was present among His people, spiritually, in the “Tent of meeting” (Exodus 33:7.9; 34:9; 40:34) and later in the temple<sup>67</sup>. The “Tabernacle” was the sign and guarantee of God’s presence with His people, through its varying fortunes. The assume, by the Divine *Logos*, the *sarks*, that is human nature, was necessary so that

<sup>64</sup> Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Evangelium nach Johannes* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), I, 30.

<sup>65</sup> This is *kai consec.*; Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, Friedrich Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen 1984), clause 442, 2, 15.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. TWNT t. VII, 105-141; Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. also: Tadeusz Brzegowy, „Mieszkanie Boga na ziemi w świetle psalmów”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 113, nr 1 (1989): 14-24.

the “Word” being God (1:1.2), that is the second Person of the Trinity<sup>68</sup>, could fulfil His mission to humans, and so that humans could recognize Him and respond responsibly to God's new initiative through His Son, bearing the consequences of their choices and attitudes.

#### **12.4. “Dwelt among us” (14b)**

Due to the context this phrase refers to the chosen people. The “Word” (*Logos*) that was God (1:1.2) was present not only, as God in the Old Testament, in the “Tent of meeting”, and later in the temple, showing His presence through His works for His chosen people, but this time as a real Man, known by those around Him. This is because the “Word” (*Logos*) inhabited with the chosen people and many of the people received Him and believed in His name (1:12). John [the Baptist] recognized Him on the basis of the sign previously foretold to him by God and openly bore witness of Him before Israel, and before the delegation from the leaders of the people (John 1:19-28; 3:25 et seq.; Mark 1:2-8 par.), and before his own disciples (John 1:29-35). When the “Word Incarnate” – “Jesus Christ” (1:17) began His public ministry and revealed His “Glory” from the Father, His disciples saw it. Those witnesses are referenced in 14c with a personal pronoun in the plural: “we saw”. Here, the author speaks of himself and also relies on the witness accounts of other disciples (cf. also 1 John 1:1 et seq.; Hebrews 1:12a). On the other hand, those who saw the signs Jesus made, or who had heard of them but did not receive Him and did not believe in Him, could not see His glory (Mark 8:27-30; Matthew 16:15-17).

#### **12.5. The term “glory” (1:14c)**

This term, which appears frequently in the Septuagint, is the equivalent of the term ‘kabod’ in the Hebrew Bible, with its multiple applications to the God of Israel (Exodus 24:16; 40:34; Isaiah 6:3). He Himself frequently revealed His glory in the works He did in the history of His people. In a singular way He revealed it through Him whom He sent in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1.2a; John 1:14c.16.17b.18). The disciples, seeing the glory He received from the Father (John 17:4), also came to know the Father (John 14:9.10). This is because the Father was always present with His Only Son (monogenes) when that Son went through the Holy Land doing the Father's will and implementing God's plan for the salvation of humans (John 3:16.17; Titus 2:11). As the full revelation of the glory of the Only Son

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<sup>68</sup> Theological issues concerning the mutual relationship between the Divine and the human nature in the Person of Jesus have been examined by numerous theologians through the perspective of Divine Revelation, of which the results were adopted in 451 AD at the Council of Chalcedon.

(monogenes) came in the hour of His elevation on the cross and His resurrection, this statement in the beginning of John's Gospel (1:14) is in close connection with Jesus's mission from the Father, encompassing all of His life and ministry.

### **12.6. The term "Only Son" (monogenes) (1:14c)**

This term speaks more than "only Son". In this text it also connotes a singularly 'beloved Son' (Mark 1:11; 9:7 par.), as shows in the attribute "full of grace and truth", which signifies great Revelation of God the Father, as well as Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the Person of Jesus and in His ministry, God allowed Himself to be known to humans in a new way (1 John 1:1 et seq.; John 2:11; 12:45; 20:30.31).

The consequence of Jesus's being the "Only Son" (monogenes) is that only in Him could the glory of God reveal itself<sup>69</sup>. He is the Only One who could bring humans true Revelation about God. In Him – the "Word Incarnate", that is Jesus Christ (John 1:17) – by the will of God the Father revealed itself the "fullness of grace and truth" (1:14.16.17b). These attribute, in its current context, interprets the magnitude of the historical event of God's Revelation through His "Only Son" (monogenes). In verse 14c the author indicates the witnesses of these events, who confirm them. It is on the testimony of witnesses that Semitic evidentiary procedure is based.

The expression "full of grace and truth", in the context of the "Only Son (monogenes) of the Father" also emphasizes how He brings authentic and final Revelation from God the Father. From now on only through Him can humans achieve "God's grace" and find access to "God's truth". Only through Him can they know God, who calls humans to participation in the eternal life and in the light that brings happiness (1:9.12). All who have "received Him" and "believed in His name" have received participation in His life and in His light, as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is how they can now fulfil their mission of witnesses (Luke 24:45-48; Acts 1:8; 2:3, 2) and the role of the light in the world (John 12:35, cf. Matthew 5:16: 1 John 1:5 et seq.)<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, I, 31; Wolfgang Thüsing, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1979).

<sup>70</sup> The theological aspect of John 1:14, further elaborated in all of John's Gospel, is discussed in Pascal-Marie Jerumanis, „Et le Verb advint chair. ... Une relecture de l'Évangile de S. Jean” , *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 134, nr 2 (2012): 177-187.



### 13. Again about the testimony of John the Baptist (1:15)

#### 13.1. Remarks about the text

In verse 15 the author recounts John [the Baptist] as witness and in John's own words casts his relationship to Jesus (Mark 1:2 et seq., par.). The close context, on the other hand, contains the witness of John the Evangelist – also on behalf of the commune – about gifts received from Jesus Christ (1:16.17). The text contains three occurrences of the conjunction *hoti* = as, because, which connects the verses 15d.16.17a. This sort of arrangement, too, is characteristic of the Semitic style. Here, because of the context, the grammatical form of the *perfectum* may be understood as the *praesens*<sup>71</sup>.

#### 13.2. John's testimony 1:15

The text cites utterances of John: “this is He of whom I said”; “who has been set above me, because He was before /prior to/ me” take, in the light of John 1:30, the nature of his testimony about “Him who was to come” (Matthew 11:3 par.). The same John appears precisely as the last in the line of the prophets who foretold His coming, and confirmed His presence among the people (John 1:26).

The author of the Prologue refers the historical testimony John [the Baptist] gave publicly about Jesus Christ before Israel (Mark 1:7.8; Matthew 3:1 et seq.; Luke 3:1 et seq.) and before the official delegation from the leaders of the people (John 1:19-28) to the Logos (1:1.2) who took up human nature, that is to the “Word Incarnate” (1:14). Indeed, he makes this testimony still current for the recipients of his Gospel. At the same time, in 1:15, the author shows a similar polemical tendency as in 1:8, namely he sustains John [the Baptist]'s assertion that Jesus is greater than he. This text therefore shows a certain sign of the polemics between John the Evangelist and the disciples of John [the Baptist], who probably considered their master to have been greater than Jesus of Nazareth. John the Evangelist contradicts their opinion with the words of John [the Baptist] himself: *emprosthen mou gegonen* = “He was before me” (1:15c). On the basis of this John's testimony of himself, the Evangelist speaks of him as a messenger from God and witness to the “true Light” (1:6-9).

The author therefore put John [the Baptist]'s historical account in the context of his utterance about the “Word Incarnate” (1:14) and the history of salvation recounted in the Old Testament (1:15.17a), and with the words of John [the Baptist] (1:15b.30c) he confirms his assertion of the pre-existence of the “Word” (*Logos*) before His taking up human nature. By quotation

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<sup>71</sup> Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin-New York 1988), 909, 2a.

(15ba'), he refers back to John's previous testimony about the greater dignity of Jesus, which finds justification in His pre-existence (15cd). Things being so, the Christology of the *Logos* that the author unfolds in the Prologue has strict Biblical foundations in Divine Revelation and is not an elaborate reflection based on wisdom tradition.

In recounting John [the Baptist]'s testimony in that John's own words (1:15b) and using the grammatical form of the present tense: "testifies" (*martyrei*), the evangelist John emphasizes how the historical testimony of that John about Jesus, behind whom stands God Himself (1:32-34; Mark 1:11, par.), is still current when John uses these words to address his commune. He writes in a similar way (in *praes.*) in the first part of the Prologue: *photidzei* = enlightens (1:9b).

Thus the author, having made his proclamation that "the Word was made flesh" (1:14a) and recounted the witnesses who "saw His glory" (14bc), also recounts for his audience the testimony John [the Baptist] gave about Him (15). Hence it appears that the verses at hand speak of the same subject who, in the Prologue, is first referred to with the term *Logos* (1:1.2), then as the "true Light" (1:9), and then *Logos* = "the Word [that] was made flesh" (14a), followed by witnesses of His glory (14bc), and then the author professes the richness of the gifts (14e.16.17b.18) that are received by those who "believe in His name" (1:12) and "were born of God" (1:13c, cf. John 3:3 et seq.).

#### 14. Of His fullness we have all received (1:16)

Through the conjunction *hoti*, which I translate here in the consequential sense of "so that", the author refers directly to the cited word of John the Baptist of Jesus's greater dignity (1:15cd), and indirectly to verse 14bde. The expression "of His fullness" (1:16a) is the interpretation of the gifts and the "glory as the Only Son (*monogenes*) of the Father" (14de) revealed to those who believe in Him (12), hence also His own disciples (14c). One of those renders offers his testimony in the first person plural: "And of his fullness we have all received, grace for grace" (16). This last expression remains in parallel to: "full of grace and truth" (*pleres charitos kai aletheias*) (14e), which speaks of the "fullness" of God's gifts in the "Word [that] was made flesh" (14a). The verb "we have received" (*elabomen* – v. 16) is parallel to "we saw" (*etheasametha* – v. 14c). Both responses assume belief "in His name" (12c) and a new birth that is "of God" (13c). Through the *pluralis* form in 1:14c the author refers to himself and other disciples of Jesus, and in 1:16 to the disciples and the Christian commune he is addressing. No similar interpretation of the fullness of gifts of "grace and truth" that Jesus Christ

brings from the Father to those who believe (Colossians 1:19) is found in the Synoptic Gospels.

In John's Gospel, the term *charis* appears only in the Prologue (1:14c.16/bis/.17b). This fact shows the theology of the author of the text, who understood all of Jesus Christ's ministry as one great work of God's graciousness and revelation of the truth of God (John 1:14e; 3:15.16.17; 1 John 1:5 et seq.). In the Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) the term *charis* was used to render multiple expressions from the Hebrew Bible<sup>72</sup>. The conjunction *kai* in the expression *kai charin anti charitos* is an *explicativum*<sup>73</sup>, that is, it has an explanatory sense for the context in which it appears: from His fullness we have "received" a gift after gift<sup>74</sup>. However, as the "grace and truth" were brought from God by the "Word Incarnate" (v. 14), that is by Jesus Christ (1:17b), the expression *charis anti charitos* cannot be interpreted the way Hartwig Thyen proposes<sup>75</sup>: *Gnade anstelle Gnade* – "in the place of the grace given through Moses the fullness of grace through Jesus Christ". This is because the expression discussed here speaks only of new gifts that become the share of those who believe in Jesus Christ. The evangelist John, referring in 1:17b to v. 16, makes reference to a historical event and its witnesses (1:14). These gifts have become the share of the disciples and of the Church through Jesus Christ (1:16.17b). From the fullness that the "Only Son" (*monogenes*) has brought from the Father, receive without measure all who have the appropriate internal attitudes (John 1:12; 3:34). Thus the author, in reference to the ministry of John [the Baptist], gives evidence of having known the sources of information about him, and, in recounting the testimony of that same John about the public ministry of Jesus Christ, confirms the historical relationships between John [the Baptist] and Jesus of Nazareth; at the same time the evangelist John testifies that the same John, the Messiah's forerunner, perfectly understood the great dignity of Him who went after him (John 1:26.27). This greatness of the Person of Jesus has its foundation in His pre-existence (1:1.2.15).

<sup>72</sup> Hans-Helmut Esser, *Charis*, TBLNT, I, 590 et seq.

<sup>73</sup> Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zum NT*, καί, I, 3.

<sup>74</sup> For the various interpretations of this expression see: Ignace de la Potterie, *La vérité dans Saint Jean* (Roma 1977), 117-241. Christian Blumenthal, „Charis anti charitos (John 1:16)“, *ZNW* 92, nr 3/4 (2001): 290-294; Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 94 et seq.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, 103 et seq.

## 15. The “Word Incarnate” and the “Law” (the Torah) (1:17)

The verse 1:17b has a relationship with v. 16 and, in the original text, constitutes a single literary figure with it – a chiasmus (with reduplication of the term *charis* in 1:16). The text contains three specifications of the gifts that come from God: the “Law” (*Thora, Nomos* LXX), “grace” and “truth”. Grace was discussed in general while analysing v. 16. The phrase “the Law was given” (17a) is characteristically Semitic<sup>76</sup>. The term “law” originally had the sense of specific indications, norms (Exodus 16:28 et seq.; 18:16.20; Isaiah 1:10; Micah 4:2; Jeremiah 6:19). After the deuteronomic reform, one can encounter expressions “the law of Yahweh”, “in the law of the Lord God of Israel” (2 Kings 10:31)<sup>77</sup>. Moses supplied indications for an ordered life according to the will of God. The Law, as Paul writes, had been a tutor (Galatians 3:24.25). The “Word Incarnate”, in coming from God into the world (1:9c), revealed to humans the graciousness and the truth of God (*charis kai aletheia* – 1.17b).

The terms corresponding to the *aletheia* (LXX) – the “truth” – in the Hebrew Bible were discussed by Hans-Georg Link<sup>78</sup>. In John’s Gospel, this term, taken in a broader context, denotes the Revelation Jesus Christ brought from the Father. As the “grace and truth” (17b) it is contrapositioned to the Law (17a). The text at hand reverberates the echo of the evangelist’s polemics with those members of the Christian commune in Ephesus that came from the Jews and, having received the Gospel of Jesus Christ, wanted to preserve certain norms of Judaic traditions from before their conversion to Christianity. It is possible, however, provided one assumes the text’s origin after John’s time, that the author deals in general terms with the Synagogue’s hostile attitude to the Christian commune. Also for the evangelist John did the Torah contain revelation of God’s will and God’s wisdom that leads to Christ. Who does not abide by the Law will neither heed Jesus (John 5:39.40.45-47; 7-19). A true Israelite, on the other hand, finds the way to Jesus (John 1:47 et seq.). In juxtaposing the grace and truth to the Law (1:17), the evangelist does not diminish the Law (the Torah). The “grace” and “truth” are the gifts of God, who conducts initiative and, during the new stage of unfolding the Revelation, when He has sent his Son down, desires all humans to be saved (Titus 2:11).

The juxtaposition Moses – Jesus Christ was used more frequently in early Christianity (1 Corinthians 10:2-4; Hebrews 3:1-3). God, who gave gifts to humans in the Old Testament, was rich in grace and faithfulness

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, I, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hans-Helmut Esser, *Nomos*, TBLNT, I, 521 et seq.

<sup>78</sup> Hans-Georg Link, *Aletheia*, TBLNT, II, 1345 et seq.

(Exodus 34:6). According to His promise, which God made to Abraham and of which He reminded His people on multiple occasions through the prophets, in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4) He sent His “Only Son” (monogenes) and through Him unfolded a new initiative for the salvation of humans. Things being as they are, the fact the Law was given by God to Moses cannot form the basis for any arguments against the thesis formulated in 1:17b. This text must be read and interpreted not from the perspective of the recipients of God's Revelation – as an antithesis – but from the position of God, who has revealed His loving plans and wants to save everyone. Grace and truth have become full humans' part not in the Torah, as many had previously believed (Psalm 119:76.77.159.160), but in God's new gracious initiative through Jesus Christ (John 5:45-47; Romans 3:21-26.29–31; Hebrews 7:19;10:1.10).

### **16. The “Only Son” (monogenes) has revealed God the Father (1:18)**

The text of 1:18 is composed of two statements in which, in the original, one can recognize elements of antithesis and the figure of chiasmus. The former has the form of absolute negation: “No one has at any time seen God”; the other positive: “The Only Son (monogenes), who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him”. In the latter, the agent who has revealed the Father (18b) has been identified more narrowly from the position of His relationship with God the Father in two aspects: firstly as the *monogenes theos*<sup>79</sup>, and secondly: *ho on eis ton kolpon tou patros*. The former marks a clear reference to 1:14d: ‘we saw His glory – glory as of the “Only Son (monogenes) of the Father”, provided that the preposition *para* also speaks, albeit in a general way, of His relationship to the Father. The predicate in 14d, taken in the context of 14abc and 1:16.17b, refers to the relationship of the *Logos* = “Word Incarnate” to the Father, that is during the *Logos*'s earthly ministry. This is indicated by the “glory” (*doksa*) that revealed itself in Jesus and was seen by His disciples and others (1:14b).

The assertion that “no one has at any time seen God” (18a) does not contradict the data from the Biblical traditions about Abraham (Genesis 18:1-16), Jacob (Genesis 32:30) and Moses (Exodus 33:20) or the prophets having seen God sitting on His throne: Micah ben Jimla (1 Kings 22:19), Isaiah (6:11 et seq.), Ezeckiel (1:23 et seq.). No one, however, had seen God Himself directly. Moreover, no human being can see His face and live (Exodus 33:20). The recalled accounts from Biblical tradition speak of human

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<sup>79</sup> Matters relating to the various versions of the manuscripts were discussed by: Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 103 et seq.

experience of the closeness of God and His presence. That, in turn, fits within human religious experience in the history of God's Revelation of Himself to humans in this world, without seeing Him directly just as He is. The assertion made by the author of the Prologue that no one has seen God (18) finds parallels in Jesus's utterances in John's Gospel (5:37; 6:46; 14:9). Only Jesus Christ, the "Only Son" (monogenes), has seen the Father and revealed Him to humans.

The "Only Son" who is in the bosom of the Father and has been sent by the Father into the world could speak of Him to humans what He had seen in the Father and what He had heard from Him. Jesus Christ – the Son of Man – taught of Him during his ministry in the Holy Land. Besides Him no one can speak of the graciousness of God as He can and convey the full truth from Him<sup>80</sup>. The exclusive formulation in 1:18a in the context of the positive assertion of the "Only Son (monogenes) God" (18b) vests this utterance with extraordinary gravitas that is transferred onto the *Logos* = "Word Incarnate" that is proclaimed in the entire hymn (cf. 1:1.2). No one, besides the "Only Son", has seen God. Only He – Jesus Christ (1:17b) – has seen God and for this reason gives reliable testimony of Him<sup>81</sup>.

In verse 1:18b the relationship of the "Only Son (monogenes) God" to God the Father is interpreted with the phrase *ho on eis ton kolpon*<sup>82</sup> *tou patros*. The term *kolpon* = womb, lap, bosom, appears frequently in the Septuagint in a varied context, denoting especial love, particularly between parents and their children. Besides, the image of a son or child kept in the bosom or arms of either parent was universally understood as an expression of love and close friendship<sup>83</sup>. The author of the text at hand used it in refer-

<sup>80</sup> Por. Otto Hofius, „»Der in Vaters Schoss ist« Joh 1,18“, w *Johannesstudien. Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums*, red. Otto Hofius, Hans-Christian Kammler (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 24-32.

<sup>81</sup> Christian Dietzfelbinger is of the opinion that the text at hand (1:18) is evidence of the showdown between John's commune and the Synagogue. (*Evangelium nach Johannes I*, 33 n.). Mirosław Stanisław Wróbel writes in a general way that: "Jesus's controversies with His Jewish interlocutors concerning His Divine Sonhood may reflect the situation of the discourse between John's community and rabbinical Judaism"; id, „»Ja i Ojciec jedno jesteśmy« (J 10, 30), Chrystologia Ewangelii św. Jana wobec żydowskiego monoteizmu”, w *Jezus jako Syn Boży w Nowym Testamencie i we wczesnej literaturze chrześcijańskiej*, red. Henryk Drawnel (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007), 53-62.

<sup>82</sup> The form of the accusative has the sense of the dative here: Cf. Blass, Debrunner, Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, clouse 205; Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 107 et seq.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Bianca Lataire, „The Son on Father's Lap. The Meaning of *eis ton kolpon* in John 1 : 18“, *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*, nr 22 (1997):

ence to the singular relationship, full of mutual love, between the “Only Son (monogenes) God” and “God the Father” (18b). While 1:14d speaks of the glory of the “Only Son” (monogenes) from the Father, which Jesus revealed to humans in showing His divine attributes and revealing His glory in making His works (14c), the term in 1:18ba’ is *monogenes theos*, that is He is directly termed “God”, “Only Son (monogenes) God”. Hence the predicate in 18ba’ refers to 1:1c. The expression “in the bosom of the Father” (18b) is an interpretation of His relationship to God in 1:1b.2.

In its context (1:18a), the phrase “no one has seen” (*oudeis heoraken – perf.*) has a certain parallel relationship to “we saw His glory” (*etheasametha ten doksan autou – aor. med.*) and makes reference not to seeing God Himself but His “glory” (1:14c.16.17b) that the “Only Son” (monogenes) who had become Man had received from God and revealed to His disciples and others (John 17:4 et seq.; 1 John 1:1 et seq.). Verse 18b, however, speaks not of the act of knowing God and seeing, by humans, the glory revealed by His ‘Only Son’ (monogenes) as in 1:14c, but of the revelation of God Himself through His ‘Only Son’ (monogenes). His relationship to God the Father is, in 18b, defined with the participle *ho on*. This participle, taken in its closer context, poses interpretative difficulties. In the broader context of John's Gospel, however, especially the theology of descent and ascension, it marks a reference to the pre-existence with the Father (1:1.2; cf. John 17:4.5). During the “Word Incarnate's” – Jesus of Nazareth's – stay among humans in the world this relationship between the “Only Son (monogenes) God” and “God the Father” was revealed, according to the Father's will, to those who had received the “Only Son (monogenes) of God” and believed in His name (John 1:12.14c.16.17b; 5:17 et seq.). After fulfilling His mission, the “Only Son” (monogenes) is with the Father, who has accepted the work the Son did in the world. In John's Gospel the Divine Sonhood of Jesus Christ was attested on multiple occasions (5:19 et seq.; 11:4.27; 14:13; 17:1 et seq.).

Hence, the text of 1:18b summarizes all of the Revelation Jesus Christ has brought to humans from God the Father<sup>84</sup>. This verse also has a certain relationship with the testimony of the evangelist John in the first epilogue (20:30:31). In the hymn the author, in poetic form, therefore introduces the Christology that unfolds throughout the entire Gospel of John. He proclaims the pre-existence of the “Only Son” (monogenes) with God the Father, his descent and coming into the world, to humans, and how through Him “all”

125-138. Various examples in other than Biblical literature were gathered in: Joachim Kügler, „Der Sohn im Schoss des Vaters. Eine motivgeschichtliche Notiz zu Joh 1,18”, *Biblische Notizen*, nr 89 (1997):76-87.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15 et seq.; Ephesians 1:3 et seq.

was made new (1:3ab) and, having “done the work”, He returned to the Father (1:18)<sup>85</sup>.

The text of 1:14-18 therefore bears the characteristic marks of a liturgical hymn that is based on the kerygma of John the Evangelist. In it, one can recognize the role of the leader and of the community. A Christian commune, persisting in unification to its Lord and chanting Christological hymns during liturgy, reaffirms its attitude of faith and shapes the awareness of its Christian identity. The members of the community, persisting in the solidarity of faith, distance themselves also from erroneous opinions and foreign views. On the other hand, the categories of responses to the “Word Incarnate” and the richness of God’s gifts to those who believe urge them to persist in faithfulness so that they could achieve participation in the fullness of the “life” and “light” of Him whom God had sent to humans as the “true Light” during their earthly life, that is on their way to the House of the Father.

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<sup>85</sup> Ulrich Wilckens interprets the intention of John the Evangelist thus: „er wollte, »daß der ganze Hymnus als Zeugnis für Jesus, Gottes Sohn und Gottes einziger Offenbarer« gelesen werde“; id, *Evangelium nach Johannes* (Göttingen 1998), 23.



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## **The Prologue to John's Gospel. Translation – Literary Analysis – Exegesis**

### SUMMARY

Analysis of John 1:1-18 gave rise to the hypothesis that John's Prologue came to life as a combination of two very early Christian hymns. The former in 1:1.2 + 3-13, and the latter in 1:1.2 + 14-18. Both were Christological in nature, and the differences between them were conditioned historically and environmentally. The former was ground in the wisdom tradition of the Old Testament; the latter linked to it too but clearly developed New-Testament theological reflection. The former was sung in the Christian commune

composed of the Jews who had received the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in His name, the latter in the commune made up of Christian converts from paganism. The merger of both hymns, based on the traditions of these communes, was effected by the author, or editor, of John's Gospel. To separate them so as to leave no room for controversy, is no longer possible. Both express the principal theological themes of the Christian *Credo*, unfolded in the Gospel according to St John.

**Keywords:** St John, Prologue, Translation, Literary Analysis, Exegesis

## Prolog Ewangelii według św. Jana. Przekład – analiza literacka – egzegeza

### STRESZCZENIE

Analiza J 1,1-18 prowadzi od sformułowania hipotezy, że Prolog Ewangelii wg św. Jana powstał jako wynik połączenia dwóch bardzo wczesnych hymnów chrześcijańskich: wcześniejszego 1,1.2 + 3-13 i późniejszego 1.1.2 +14-18. Obydwa miały charakter chrystologiczny, a różnice między nimi spowodowane były okolicznościami historycznymi oraz miejsca. Wcześniejszy wyrastał z tradycji mądrościowej Starego Testamentu, a późniejszy – choć miał podobne korzenie – wyraźnie rozwinął nowotestamentalną refleksję teologiczną. Pierwszy śpiewany był we wspólnocie chrześcijańskiej złożonej z Żydów, którzy przyjęli Ewangelię Jezusa Chrystusa i uwierzyli w Jego imię; późniejszy – we wspólnocie chrześcijan złożonej z nawróconych pogan. Połączenia tych hymnów wywodzących się dwóch odmiennych tradycji dokonał autor lub wydawca Ewangelii Jana. Oddzielenie ich jest niemożliwe bez wywołania kontrowersji. Obydwa wyrażają główne teologiczne tematy chrześcijańskiego *Credo* rozwinięte następnie w Ewangelii św. Jana.

**Słowa kluczowe:** św. Jan, Prolog, przekład, analiza literalna, egzegeza