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About the Gospel of John: Considering P66: A Literary History, or a Categorical Hermeneutic

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ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

CONSIDERING P66:

A LITERARY HISTORY, OR A CATEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC

by

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

CONSIDERING P66:

A LITERARY HISTORY, OR A CATEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC

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New Testament text critics are fueled by a search for origins. But in the absence of an autograph, questions of origins are complicated at best. The fruit of that search for origins has resulted in the creation of hypothetical, eclectic texts—texts which have left us translating and interpreting the Bible in a form that no community in human history has before. Far from being failed projects, however, these eclectic versions aptly represent the problem of the One and the many, a problem not easily solved: When faced with hermeneutic duties, can we effectively speak of New Testament texts without speaking of their thousands of various and actual instantiations in the world? The answer, of course, is both *yes* and *no*; but the timid *no* has typically taken a back seat to the boisterous *yes*. This thesis develops a new literary historical hermeneutic based on the Categories of C. S. Peirce, a philosophical approach that will demonstrate the need for both an ideal (the *yes*) and a concrete (the *no*) approach to New Testament criticism. After this need has been demonstrated, the Gospel of John will then be under examination, both in its ideal and in one of its more concrete forms: P66, a second century Greek papyrus manuscript of the Gospel. The nature of the interpretive communities that have made use of the Gospel will also be considered.

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INTRODUCTION

New Testament text critics are fueled by a search for origins. But in the absence of an

autograph, questions of origins are complicated at best. The end result of this search—which

search manifests itself most patently in the task of collating thousands of manuscripts and

fragments, comparing their unique readings, and selecting, according to text critical

assumptions, the most likely original readings—is the creation of an eclectic text of the New

Testament upon which more detailed philological and narrative analyses, as well as modern

translations, are then based. That critical endeavor raises the question: When faced with

hermeneutic duties, especially those phenomenological and historical in nature, can we

effectively speak of New Testament texts without speaking of their various and actual

instantiations in the world? To quote Bruce Metzger on the problem:

> Most commentaries on the Bible seek to explain the meaning of words, phrases, and
>
> ideas of the scriptural text in their nearer and wider context; a textual commentary,
>
> however, is concerned with the prior question, What is the original text of the passage?
>
> That such a question must be asked—and answered!—before one explains the meaning
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> of the text [and, I would add, before one can begin to reconstruct possible sources for a
>
> text or to inductively reconstruct possible communities around which that text was

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[1] The purpose of the coloration and triadic nature of the title will be made clear through the course of the project. It conforms to the three Categories of C. S. Peirce, which Categories will constitute the organizing principle of this thesis.

situated] arises from two circumstances: (*a*) none of the original documents of the Bible is extant today, and (*b*) the existing copies differ from one another. (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], xiii.)

The lacunose and Protean state of our manuscripts, then, complicate our investigations of them. Nevertheless, many of the theories put forth about the NT over the past fifty years have relied heavily on structural analyses, which analyses themselves are based on the reliability of an apparatus criticus. Although it is an admirable achievement, the apparatus criticus of the NT commonly in use today—the Nestle-Aland 27th edition[2] and its sister the GNT 4th for translators[3]—is a reconstructed, eclectic text; an ideal text and the product of text-critical assumptions; a text which has never existed before now. But there is a tacit confidence in the textual reconstructions of the Nestle-Aland 27th. Rarely has one been so bold as to suggest that Eberhard Nestle, Kurt Aland or their coterie have actually reconstructed the texts as they came from the pen(s) or mouth(s) of the original author(s), yet the authority of the 27th is so uncontested that it is more often than not the text from which deeper structural theories are based. Moreover, the wealth of new translations which have been made over the last century as Bible dissemination has reached an unprecedented rate are almost universally based on the 27th (or, rather, its adapted version, the GNT 4th for translators) and its immediate predecessors.

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[2] Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

[3] United Bible Societies, *The Greek New Testament*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., corrected 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994).

Essentially we are translating and reading the Bible in a form that has never been used

before: it is a text that no community in human history has ever read besides our own.

This is not a new problem. In 383 CE, due to the large mass of translations and the

equally extensive variations of the Old Latin texts of the Bible, Pope Damasus asked Jerome to

make a new authoritative and reliable Latin translation of the Bible. In an epistle to Damasus,

Jerome replied thusly:

> You urge me to revise the Old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the
>
> copies of the Scriptures that are now scattered throughout the world; and, inasmuch as
>
> they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the
>
> original. The labor is one of love, but at the same time it is both perilous and
>
> presumptuous—for in judging others I must be content to be judged by all. . . . Is there
>
> anyone learned or unlearned, who, when he takes the volume in his hands and
>
> perceives that what he reads does not suit his settled tastes, will not break out
>
> immediately into violent language and call me a forger and profane person for having
>
> the audacity to add anything to the ancient books, or to make any changes or corrections
>
> in them?[4] (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions*, [Grand
>
> Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002], 32.)

Despite his admirable good sense and humility, Jerome conceded to papal injunction. In

another and later epistle to the pope, and in defense of his project, he added with some

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[4] This passage by Jerome elaborates a very interesting issue: those of us who accord a divine quality to the Bible often appropriate (in both a neutral and negative sense) it so thoroughly, that the words and form of the text themselves become essential parts of it. Jerome seems to be aware of the actual constructive and reconstructive acts that go into reading scripture. This same awareness will take a central role in my own investigation in reaction to what I will later call the Secondness Heresy.

consternation that there were "almost as many forms of text as there are manuscripts" (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the Vulgate—as many editions have since then, including the *textus receptus* and

the Nestle-Aland n^{th} editions—was derived from such an eclectic atmosphere. The *auctoritas*

accorded to these eclectic versions is not wholly unwarranted when one considers the twentieth

century trend toward specialized disciplines: unlike Paul, a single critic cannot be all things to

all people. Far from being failed projects in toto, however, these eclectic versions aptly

represent the problem of the One and the many, a problem not easily solved: and so I ask again,

since we do not possess any original manuscript, can we effectively speak of NT texts as ideal

texts in the face of so many different and particular instances of them in the world?

The answer, of course, is both *yes* and *no*; but the timid *no* has typically taken a back seat

to the boisterous *yes*. This project had its beginnings in a course I took at Brigham Young

University in 2004 under the direction of Steven Sondrup, entitled "The Possibility of Literary

History". For my final project I had done a literary history of the Gospel of John—much of

which appears in some form in the present work—with the intention of focusing on a single

manuscript—P66—, of tracing the history of its production and transmission, and of exploring

the problems inherent in those processes. What began then primarily as an investigation of the

no has since broadened to include more of the *yes*. At the time, being somewhat new to Biblical

studies and unaware of the freshest perspectives just beginning to be explored in the discipline,

I naively felt like a lone voice crying in the wilderness for more concentrated looks at particular

manuscripts of the NT, and consequently for a more cautious approach to Biblical exegesis.

These kerugmata had naturally sprung from my twin experience within the disciplines of

Classics and Comparative Literature: the latter immersing me in philosophical and twenty-first century literary historical sensibilities, the former providing minor forays into and acquaintance with papyrology when I worked as a research assistant on the Herculaneum Papyrus Project under Roger Macfarlane. Furthermore, I had had at the time a crash course in textual criticism as a research assistant under Thomas Wayment on his Joseph Smith Translation Project, which further awakened me to the deep problems inherent in the text critic's task. After subsequently spending time studying Early Christian Literature and Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School and being more formally inducted into the field of Biblical studies, my naive feelings of being a lone voice abated, despite my continued observation that it was primarily papyrologists who found any interest and use in studying individual manuscripts and in gleaning cultural and exegetic insights thereby.

However, I was and am clearly not a lone voice. In fact, in 2006 a new study forcefully calling for a manuscript-oriented critical sensibility emerged. In it Larry Hurtado calls for scholars—particularly budding young doctoral candidates—to become acquainted, if not fully familiar, with the kinds of data, problems, and curiosities papyrologists routinely deal with in their discipline:

> Part of the rationale for this book is to overcome an unwitting neglect of early Christian manuscripts. This lamentable neglect of manuscripts is most pointedly illustrated with reference to what New Testament scholars usually regard as the most important ones of all, the early manuscripts of New Testament writings. Even these are insufficiently considered, especially beyond those scholars who focus on New Testament textual

criticism. Of course, a wider circle of scholars know of key early manuscripts of the writings of the New Testament, and will have at least a general appreciation of their significance for the task of tracing the textual history of these writings and for constructing modern critical editions of them. Textual variants supported in early manuscripts appear in the apparatus of critical editions commonly used by New Testament scholars, such as the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament. But neither manuscripts of New Testament writings nor the many others that contain other early Christian texts have been given their due broadly in the field of New Testament and Christian origins. (*The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins*, [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company], 7)

Specifically relevant to studies of Christianity, and treated at length and with nuance by Hurtado, are such manuscript features as the *nomina sacra*, the staurogram and other iconographic monograms and representations found in manuscripts, and the peculiarly Christian preference for the codex. The manuscripts, Hurtado argues, in addition to their primary function of conveying Christian texts, become important witnesses to the broader culture of early Christianity, and Hurtado sees his book as "intended to contribute to a cross-specialty enrichment of the historical analysis of early Christianity" (15).

In his own kerugma, Hurtado succeeds in demonstrating the types of golden grains that can be gleaned from the study of early manuscripts: among other conclusions, he shows how the *tau-rho* combination as a semiotic figure for the crucifixion—found principally in papyrus texts—preceded by decades the *chi-rho*, which has been thought by many to be the first

discernible Christian icon (141-6); or how the codex, far from being more accessible than the

roll, may have developed as a conscious attempt by early Christians at setting themselves apart

from the larger culture, or simply as a way of marking certain texts—or versions or

compilations of texts—as scriptural;[5] or how the frequency of texts, and the kinds of texts they

are found with, can give us a clearer picture of pre-canonical collections and usages. He shows,

for instance, how even though Isaiah and the Psalms figure prominently in the Gospel

narratives far more than any other books of the Hebrew Bible, their presence as complete books

among early Christian collections is lacking when compared to the presence of Genesis and

Exodus, which may have had a more primary role, then, to the functions of these early Christian

communities (28).[6]

 Needless to say, mine is not a lone voice. However, I will not take precisely the same

tack Hurtado has argued for. While I will give great attention to a particular manuscript of the

Gospel of John—P66—, I will do so from theoretical grounds different from Hurtado's, though

it is my hope that the philosophical principles behind the organization and direction of this

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[5] Hurtado is much less interested in providing concrete answers of his own, however, and is much more interested in pointing out the quality and complexity of the fruits that could be harvested from manuscript investigation, and the check that material culture should place on the variety of solutions to early Christian historical problems that have been proposed. Speaking of the codex problem, he states, "It is not my primary purpose here to argue for a particular answer to the questions involved. I will admit, however, that I still find cogent Gamble's suggestion that an early edition of Paul's epistles in codex form could have provided the influential precedent that helped generate a subsequent appropriation of the codex by early Christians. The early high regard for Pauline epistles reflected in 2 Peter 3:15-16 could explain why, in particular, Christians so strongly regarded the codex as preferable for the texts that they used as scripture. In any case, my main emphasis in this discussion is that the early Christian use of the codex is an important matter worthy of attention by all scholars concerned with Christian origins" (80-81).

[6] Again, Hurtado's interest is not specifically to provide concrete answers, just a range of possibilities based on manuscript evidence: "I hope that this deliberately limited and somewhat preliminary analysis of the texts that are attested in Christian manuscripts of the second and third centuries will at least have demonstrated that it is worthwhile to give attention to these matters. My aim has been to show that the pattern of texts attested in earliest Christian manuscripts is an important subject for analysis and reflection, insufficiently noted in current discussion and debates about Christianity in the second and third centuries. If we take account of which texts are attested in the extant manuscripts, and the comparative numbers of copies of each text, we likely have some direct indication of what texts were read and their comparative popularity. More broadly, the evidence also confirms other indications that texts were an important feature of Christian circles in these early centuries" (40).

thesis might provide an interesting theoretical grounding for the kinds of arguments he and others like him—including myself—wish to make. It is also patently not my goal here, as it was in Hurtado, to explore early Christianity in general, though that will be a natural offshoot of the kinds of questions I will ask. I am primarily interested in the Gospel of John itself: in understanding and enjoying it.

A PRELIMINARY WORD ABOUT THE TITLE(S)

ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

> At the present time, virtually all explanations in literary histories are contextual. In other words, the historian places the text or textual feature that is to be explained in a set of other texts or circumstances that are said to have caused it or that help account for it. The context may be used to explain not only features of the text, but also its qualitative merit.
> —David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?*

Ultimately, this thesis is about the Gospel of John. In answering the question in the introduction as to whether or not we can speak of an ideal version of the Gospel of John, I suggested that the answer is a *yes* and a *no*. In fact, for philosophical reasons that will soon be delineated, it *must* be both a *yes* and a *no*. "ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN" evokes the *yes*. The simple fact that we can utter the phrase "Gospel of John" and expect any number of westerners, despite any potential differences in interpretation or variations in their manuscripts, to know what is meant by it is a testimony to the Gospel of John's Platonic presence. Hold a copy of the Gospel before their eyes, and they will all nod their heads in agreement that indeed before them hovers the Gospel of John, no matter the language or form it might take. While the semantic space filled by the words in that title may not be identical from person to person, each

respective semantic space will not be so foreign to the next that they will not overlap in

significant ways. So *yes*, we have a culturally shared assumption that there exists a literary

event that we commonly designate as the "Gospel of John". This we will consider.

CONSIDERING P66

> History and aesthetics do seem to have this vital fact in common, that
> they are concerned with events which are particular and individual
> rather than instances of the application of a scientific law.
> —Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*

If there is a *yes*, there also must be a *no*. What if, rather than privileging a hypothetical,

reconstructed text—the result of the pursuit of origins—the critic were to turn instead to the

actual, physical manuscripts we *do* possess; to their physical nature and their unique content?

Doing so would require the critic to be more historically cautious with his material. It would

also simultaneously restrict and open up fresh lines of inquiry into the nature of the literary

event in question, past and present. As has been said, ultimately the purpose of this thesis will

be to examine the Gospel of John; in doing so, however, I will pay attention not only to the ideal

notion of the Gospel, but also, in an effort to open up a more concrete approach to this piece of

literature, I will consider P66, a mid-second century papyrus manuscript of the Gospel of John.

"CONSIDERING P66" evokes this concrete consideration. I will be examining the physical

characteristics of the manuscript, its movement from place to place, and its provenance and use.

What will be useful to me at that point, then, will be to take the side of Hamilton's "history and

aesthetics" and to take up the particular instead of what was born out of "the application of law."[7]

A LITERARY HISTORY, OR A CATEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC

> Literary history differs from history because the works it considers are felt to have a value quite different from and often far transcending their significance as a part of history. In other words, literary history is also literary criticism. Its aim is not merely to reconstruct and understand the past, for it has a further end, which is to illuminate literary works. It seeks to explain how and why a work acquired its form and themes and, thus, to help readers orient themselves. It subserves the appreciation of literature. The function of literary history lies partly in its impact on reading. We write literary history because we want to explain, understand, and enjoy literary works.
> —David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?*

This thesis can be considered a literary history, as it will investigate the impact interpretive communities have on the Gospel, and vice versa. The mediatory function of the human touch cannot be overestimated. In considering the Gospel, then, we will be putting P66 in its historical context—which will affect the possibilities of interpretation—as well as illuminating several of the interpretive possibilities unique to the manuscript itself. To accomplish the latter, we will need to take into account the larger network of Gospels of John in order to pinpoint P66's idiosyncrasies. This call for a literary historical consideration of our texts is a variation upon a well-trodden theme. With Martin Luther and his slogan *scriptura sola*, a new era of authority based on the scriptural texts alone replaced the traditional emphasis on Papal and Rabbinic authority. This movement toward a text-based method of interpretation presented its own problems, as reasonable but contrary private and public interpretation

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[7] I say this somewhat tongue-in-cheek, as P66 blatantly exhibits the same sort of eclectic qualities, albeit on a much narrower scale, that our current text does. I refer you to §2.3 for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon.

proliferated. Luther's method of *scriptura sola* was taken over and developed more fully by the father of modern hermeneutics, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Taking his cue from early Protestant emphases on the texts themselves, Schleiermacher further demanded a more rigorous philological enquiry based on grammatical possibilities and the reader's ability to recreate—through a process he called Divination—the original experience of the first auditors.[8] His focus on linguistic possibility, and the nature of the author's world that would qualify that linguistic possibility—which is a kind of historicism—, was further enhanced by the reader's ability to make a now dead linguistic utterance come alive.

While many, being aware of the intentional fallacy and respecting the Postmodern ideal of the openness of a text, would steer away from Schleiermacher's emphasis on Divination—an emphasis no doubt made necessary by his role as both a theologian and a pastor—I will not; though I will qualify such an emphasis: the process of Divination has a kin in modern reader reception studies, and what it leads to is the phenomenon of a lived and living text. While Iser and the Constance School might find dubious the notion that we can somehow access literary texts without misprision, they would certainly recognize the attempt as inherent to the reading process, and would also applaud its creative results: interpretive communities, and their unique appropriation of texts, are by that route born. A literary historical approach must take into account the various ways in which communities have lived the text of the literary event in question. The context of the author's community should restrict the levels of interpretation one

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[8] See Paul Hamilton, *Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), Chapter 3, for a fuller discussion of the development of modern hermeneutics.

will take; but the agency and interpretive framework of other communities, ancient and modern, should open them back up.

This finally leads me to the philosophical groundwork of this thesis. I will take as my organizing and hermeneutic principle the Universal Categories of C. S. Peirce, which will, I hope, deductively illuminate and, I unabashedly suggest, legitimize the three levels of interpretation I have already approached above: the *yes* (ideal), the *no* (particular), and the literary historical principle that negotiates between the two (living, interpretive communities).

C. S. Peirce was a member of the Metaphysical Club at Harvard along with William James and John Dewey. His work has largely been untapped, though over the past 25 years he has begun to have a large impact on certain disciplines, namely Linguistics (Semiotics) and Theology.[9] The history of a semi-obscure, eccentric genius—as long as we are not referring to the Fourth Evangelist—is outside the scope of this project, however. His basic metaphysic, and its triadic nature, is not. A section of his *Collected Papers*[10] (hereafter *CP*) entitled "A Guess at the Riddle" contains some of the more succinct notions of Peirce's metaphysic, and I will be drawing from that essay to lay out his project and my own. We begin with the idea of three:

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[9] See Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948, reprint, 1964); John K. Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature* (Princeton University Press: 1989); Jessica Young, "Narrative Zoology: Peircean Structure of Grammatical Plot" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2003); John S. Robertson, "A Peircean Categorial Analysis of the English Inflectional Morphemes *-Ing*, *-Ed*, and *–S*," *Semiotica* 102 (1994): 179-223; Iris Gomez and Alan Manning, "The Continuity Paradox and Emergent Linguistic Structure: Discontinuous Sortal Concepts versus the Innate Syntax Hypothesis," *Lingua* 103 (1997): 195-223; Alan Melby, Alan Manning, and Leticia Klemetz, "Quality in Translation: A Lesson for the Study of Meaning," *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2006): 405-448; and Alan Manning and Nicole Amare, "Visual-rhetoric Ethics: Beyond Accuracy and Injury," *Technical Communication* 53, no. 2 (2006): 195-211. And, of course, Peirce himself: Nathan Houser and Christian J. W. Kloesel, eds., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1867-1893)* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press (Peirce Edition Project), 1992]; Nathan Houser, Jonathan R. Eller, Albert C. Lewis, Andre De Tienne, Cathy L. Clark, and D. Bront Davis, eds., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1893-1913),* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press (Peirce Edition Project), 1998].

[10] Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds., *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce,* Vols. I-VI (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935).

Perhaps I might begin by noticing how different numbers have found their champions. Two was extolled by Peter Ramus, Four by Pythagoras, Five by Sir Thomas Browne, and so on. For my part, I am a determined foe of no innocent number; I respect and esteem them all in their several ways; but I am forced to confess to a leaning to the number Three in philosophy. In fact, I make so much use of threefold divisions in my speculations, that it seems best to commence by making a slight preliminary study of the conceptions upon which all such divisions must rest. I mean no more than the ideas of first, second, third—ideas so broad that they may be looked upon rather as moods or tones of thought, than as definite notions, but which have great significance for all that. . . . If we are to make one single threefold philosophical distinction, it behooves us to ask beforehand what are the kinds of objects that are first, second, and third, not as being so counted, but in their own true characters. That there are such ideas of the really first, second, and third, we shall presently find reason to admit. . . . I believe that if my suggestions are followed out, the reader will grant that one, two, three, are more than mere count words like 'eeny, meeny, miny, mo,' but carry vast, though vague ideas. (1.355, 362)

In attempting to define the "vast, though vague ideas" behind "first", "second" and "third", Peirce develops his three basic Categories, which are, in short, as follows: Firstness (possibility; chance; potential), Secondness (reality; reaction; relatedness) and Thirdness (law; habit; mediation).[11] To put it more elaborately,

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[11] For the more lucid introductions to Peirce's categories, see the introductions of Robertson, Hartshorne and Weiss, and Houser and Kloesel as listed in the bibliography.

The first is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.

The idea of the absolutely first must be entirely separated from all conception of or reference to anything else; for what involves a second is itself a second to that second. The first must therefore be present and immediate, so as not to be second to a representation. It must be fresh and new, for if old it is second to its former state. It must be initiative, original, spontaneous, and free; otherwise it is second to a determining cause. . . . Just as the first is not absolutely first if thought along with a second, so likewise to think the second in its perfection we must banish every third. The second is therefore the absolute last. But we need not, and must not, banish the idea of the first from the second; on the contrary, the second is precisely that which cannot be without the first. It meets us in such facts as another, relation, compulsion, effect, dependence, independence, negation, occurrence, reality, result. A thing cannot be other, negative, or independent, without a first to or of which it shall be other, negative, or independent. . . . We find Secondness in occurrence, because an occurrence is something whose existence consists in our knocking up against it. A hard fact is of the same sort; that is to say, it is something which is there, and which I cannot think away, but am forced to acknowledge as an object or second beside myself, the subject or number one, and which forms material for the exercise of my will.

The idea of second must be reckoned as an easy one to comprehend. That of first is so tender that you cannot touch it without spoiling it; but that of second is eminently hard and tangible. It is very familiar, too; it is forced upon us daily; it is the main lesson of life. In youth, the world is fresh and we seem free; but limitation, conflict, constraint, and Secondness generally, make up the teaching of experience. . . . We have seen that it is the immediate consciousness that is preeminently first, the external dead thing that is preeminently second. In like manner, it is evidently the representation mediating between these two that is preeminently third. Other examples, however, should not be neglected. The first is agent, the second patient, the third is the action by which the former influences the latter. Between the beginning as first, and the end as last, comes the process which leads from first to last. (1.357-8, 362)

Firstness, then, represents the Category of being that precludes distinction. It is the undifferentiated mass from which all that is other and defined emerges. It is quality; feeling;[12] potential; origination; and immediacy. It is the field of possibility behind all phenomena; it is consciousness itself. Secondness, on the other hand, is, well ... the other hand. It is the category of being in actual fact, and the mode of being that includes physical reality. Thirdness is the process of mediation between the first and second; it is conjugative and binding. It is the element that creates relationships between all phenomena, and holds them to it. It is the law that governs facts in the future. Here is a diagram of these basic Categories:

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[12] "Furthermore, Peirce distinguished between the physical and psychical sides of each of these categories: 'Thus *qualities* occur in nature and *feelings* in the psyche, but they are both Firstnesses; *facts* occur in nature and *efforts* in the psyche, but they are both contextually different expressions of the same Secondness; *laws* occur in nature and *habits* in psyche, but both belong to the Category Thirdness'" (Robertson, 180).

1 **FIRSTNESS**
(QUALITY; FEELING; POTENTIAL;
ORIGINATION; POSSIBILITY;
IMMEDIACY)

3 **THIRDNESS**
(MEDIATION; LAW; HABIT)

2 **SECONDNESS**
(FACTS; EFFORTS;
OTHERNESS)
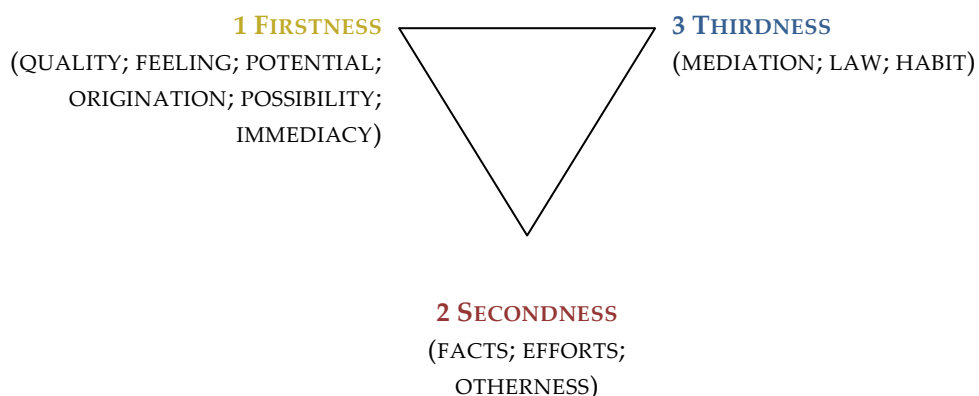
FIG. A: PEIRCEAN CATEGORIES

One of the more useful applications Peirce made of this system went toward analyzing language: the now common linguistic notions of Icon (Firstness), Index (Secondness) and Symbol (Thirdness)—which were brought to the fore primarily through Jakobson—have their roots in Peirce. This linguistic application has a bearing on the present work. But before launching into what I mean by that, a word must be said about Peirce's elaboration and expansion of his basic triadic system, which expansion will be needed for my analysis.

In addition to Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, Peirce spoke also of "degenerate" forms of the three basic Categories; that is, there are three para-Categories that are "generated from" the original three. The expanded systems, while containing numerically added nodes, will still be based on a valence of three:

Secondness is an essential part of Thirdness though not of Firstness, and Firstness is an essential element of both Secondness and Thirdness. Hence there is such a thing as the Firstness of Secondness and such a thing as the Firstness of Thirdness; and there is such

a thing as the Secondness of Thirdness. But there is no Secondness of pure Firstness

and no Thirdness of pure Firstness or Secondness. (*CP* 1.530)

This touches on one of the more salient features of Peirce's system, namely that Firstness

contains only itself, Secondness contains itself as well as Firstness, and Thirdness contains itself

as well as Firstness and Secondness. Firstness itself cannot split; it is by its very nature

incapable of segmenting; it contains only itself, and its essence is designated as Firstness of

Firstness (in shorthand, 1-1). Secondness, however, true to its nature can split in two, leaving its

very self, Secondness of Secondness (2-2), as well as a degenerate form, Firstness of Secondness

(1-2). Thirdness, likewise true to its nature, splits into thirds: Thirdness of Thirdness (3-3),

Secondness of Thirdness (2-3), and Firstness of Thirdness (1-3). Theoretically, this system could

be expanded by a valence of three indefinitely. That is, we could have a Secondness of

Secondness of Secondness (2-2-2) which could then split into Firstness of Firstness of

Secondness (1-1-2) and Firstness of Secondness of Secondness (1-2-2), etc. But the first systemic

expansion is all that will be necessary for this project.

Let me now turn to a more technical version of System 2: Peirce's own semiotics.

Robertson was the first, to my knowledge and his own, to systematically and fully lay out and

extend Peirce's system of Categories. His endeavor was directed toward the use of Peircean

Semiotics in an effort to explain English inflectional morphemes, but his structural analysis and

descriptions of the Categories are useful to all fields of study, and are no less than remarkable.

This second system is most readily apparent in Peirce's semiotic evaluation of the Sign, which

I give in summary here[13]:

> 1-1 Sign: a Cognizable that is determined by something other than itself (an Object), and
>
> > which in turn determines an Interpreting Mind (Interpretant); this is what
> >
> > actually gets said in response to the Object.[14]
>
> 1-2 Immediate Object: the idea intended to be communicated by the agent in response to
>
> > the Object; one's "train of thought"; the internal, experiential object.[15]
>
> 2-2 Dynamical Object: the event or occurrence that transpired that causes one to
>
> > speak; the physical world; the external object.[16]
>
> 1-3 Immediate Interpretant: "the idea the sign determines in the mind of the
>
> > interpreter, [it] 'is all that is explicit in the sign itself apart from its context and
> >
> > circumstances of utterance'" (Robertson, 187); the set of general, culturally
> >
> > shared instructions that guide interpretation.
>
> 2-3 Dynamical Interpretant: the interpretation that actually gets made (determined by
>
> > the Immediate Interpretant).
>
> 3-3 Final Interpretant: a logical outcome based on the actual interpretation.[17]

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[13] Adapted from Robertson, 184.

[14] "The linguistic Sign (11) is simply the phonological content—the *signans*" (ibid., 185).

[15] It should be noted that Peirce had no delusions about the probability that however hard any speaker might try, the equivalency between what one wishes to say, what gets said, and what is actually understood is only ever approximate.

[16] "Perhaps the best way to distinguish the Dynamical Object (22) from the Immediate Object (12) would be in terms of the difference between existence and experience. The existential world—the world of Secondness of Secondness (22)—is subject to scientific investigation; one might find the potassium content of a given potato or the calcium content of a glass of milk through careful chemical analysis. The experiential world, on the other hand— the world of Firstness of Secondness (12)—is not necessarily subject to such objective investigation; one could never know by chemical analysis the potassium content of ambrosia any more than he could know the calcium content of nectar. It is nonetheless fair to say that connoisseurs of Western civilization have non-tactile experience with ambrosia and nectar, just as they experience Santa Claus, Father Time, and Uncle Sam" (ibid.).

Let me further turn to a depiction of System 2, which system contains all the components I

will need in my analysis. If we were to map the expanded system, as described by Peirce and as

laid out by Robertson,[18] it might look like this:

SIGN **INTERPRETANT**

1.3 FIRST OF THIRDNESS — IMMEDIATE INTERPRETANT
(THE IDEA IN THE MIND OF THE INTERPRETER THAT THE SIGN CALLS UP BASED ON CULTURALLY SHARED RULES)

1.1 FIRSTNESS — SIGN
(QUALITY; FEELING; POTENTIAL; ORIGINATION; POSSIBILITY; IMMEDIACY)

3.3 THIRDNESS — FINAL INTERPRETANT
(MEDIATION; LAW; HABIT; LOGICAL INFERENCE BASED ON ACTUAL INTERPRETATION)

1.2 FIRST OF SECONDNESS — IMMEDIATE OBJECT
(INTENTION; AMBIVALENCE)

2.3 SECOND OF THIRDNESS — DYNAMICAL INTERPRETANT
(JUDGMENT; EVALUATION; ACTUAL INTERPRETATION)

2.2 SECONDNESS — DYNAMICAL OBJECT
(FACTS; EFFORTS; OTHERNESS)

OBJECT

FIG. B: PEIRCEAN SEMIOTIC: SIGN, OBJECT & INTERPRETANT

With System 2 (Fig. B), the problem—and the solution—become more complex. Three new

Categories (or para-Categories) have been added to the original three.[19]

---

[17] "Thus if I saw a physical fire in a room (Secondness of Secondness—Dynamical Object), it would produce an idea of that fire in my mind (Firstness of Secondness—Immediate Object), causing me to utter the Sign *fire* (Firstness of Firstness—Sign), which would immediately raise in the mind of the interpreter a very general notion of fire (Firstness of Thirdness—Immediate Interpretant), from which information a dynamic interpretation would be made given the particular context (Secondness of Thirdness—Dynamical Interpretant), which would be followed by a train of inferences: should I try to put it out? how should I get the kids out? should I call 911 before leaving? etc. It is this last train of consequential inferences that would be the Thirdness of Thirdness, which is the Final Interpretant" (ibid., 188).

[18] I refer you to his article, pp. 182-4, for the full system.

A fine example of an analysis based on the second, expanded system of Peircean Categories is Robertson's analysis of street signs. I give here a mapped summary of his observations,[20] which observations are also the origin of the coloration I and others like Young have used to further reference each of the Categorical nodes; it is a happy accident that not only do the street signs themselves lineup smartly along the Categories, but their colors too—from primary to secondary—also lineup without any need to resort to Procrustean measures:

SINGS OF POTENTIAL OCCURRENCE

1.1 YELLOW – CAUTION (E.G. PEDESTRIAN CROSSING)
SOMETHING MAY HAPPEN

1.2 ORANGE – CONSTRUCTION
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING, YOU MAY HAVE TO ACT

1.3 GREEN – LOCATION (E.G. STREET SIGN)
YOU ARE HERE

(STREET SIGNS)

SIGNS OF HABITUAL USE

3.3 BLUE – AMENITIES (E.G. HOSPITAL; GAS; FOOD)
YOU NEED THIS

2.3 PURPLE (OR BROWN) - ASSIGNED ACTION (E.G. ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY)
THIS PLACE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED FOR ACTION

2.2 RED – ACTION (E.G. STOP)
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING, ACT

SIGNS OF ACTION

FIG. C: PEIRCEAN ANALYSIS OF STREET SIGNS

This finally leads me to diagram and lay out the organization of my own project fully:

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[19] Peirce actually took his analysis of the Sign to an expanded third system, which gave a description of the Sign in terms of 27 essential components!

[20] I have adapted this from Young, 44. Young wrote a remarkable thesis entitled "Narrative Zoology: Peircean Structure of Grammatical Plot", where she used Peircean semiotics to effectively analyze and taxonomically categorize narrative structure. Her introduction also contains a solid discussion of Peircean semiotics.

THE IDEAL GOSPEL OF JOHN: *IN POTENTIA*

THE LIVED GOSPEL OF JOHN: *IN VITA*

1.3 THE GENERAL/INVARIANT[21] GOSPEL OF JOHN
"ALL THAT IS EXPLICIT IN THE [GOSPEL] ITSELF APART FROM ITS CONTEXT AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF UTTERANCE"
THE GOSPEL INTERPRETED BROADLY

1.1 THE PRE-THEMATIC GOSPEL OF JOHN
THE FIELDS OF POSSIBILITY BEHIND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE AS A PHENOMENON

3.3 THE LIVED GOSPEL OF JOHN
THE ANALYTICAL PURPOSES TO WHICH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS PUT; WHAT INTERPRETATION LEADS ONE TO DO

(GOSPEL OF JOHN)

1.2 THE INTENTIONAL P66
THE POINT AT WHICH THE PHENOMAL FIELDS OF POSSIBILITY GIVE BIRTH TO THEIR POTENTIAL MANUSCRIPTS; THE AGENT CULTURAL ENTITY THAT GIVES THEM BIRTH

2.3 THE RECEIVED P66
THE INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITIES THAT MAKE USE OF — THAT "LIVE" — THE PHYSICAL MANUSCRIPTS

2.2 P66
THE PHYSICAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
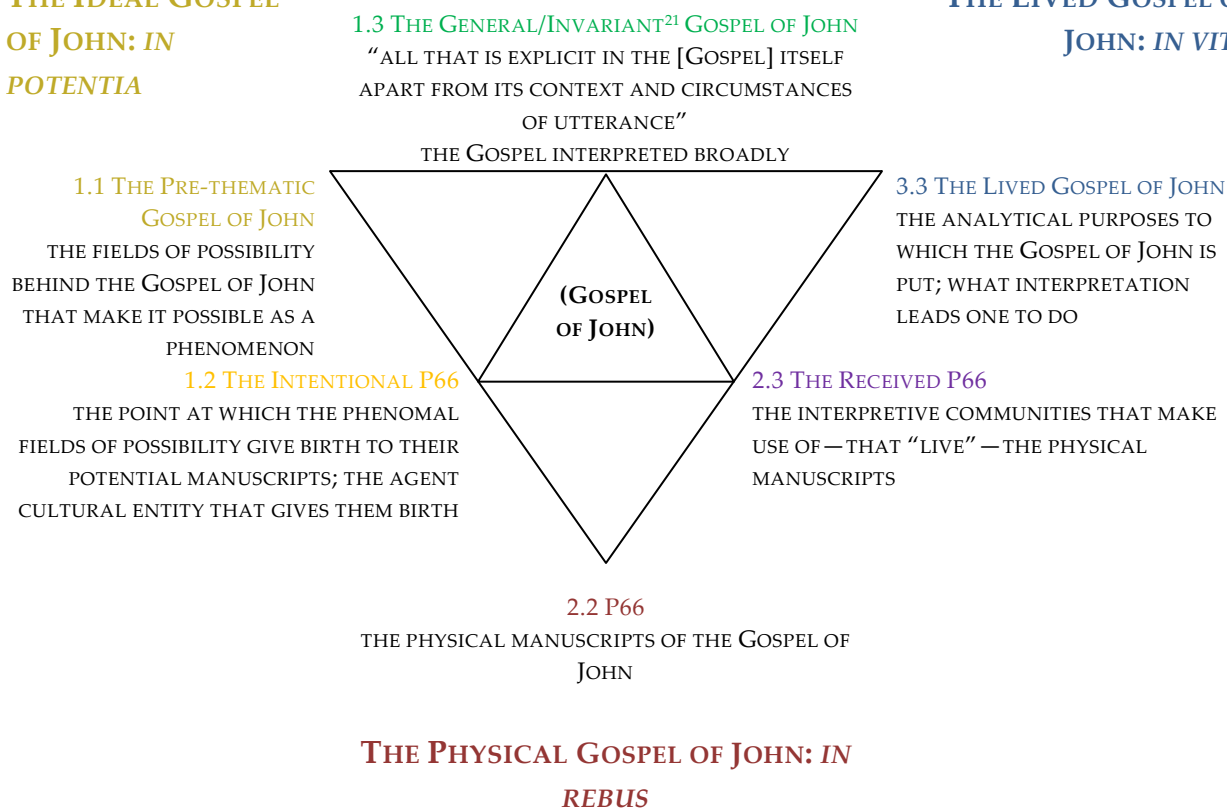
THE PHYSICAL GOSPEL OF JOHN: *IN REBUS*

FIG. D: PEIRCEAN ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE TITLE(S) REVISITED; A WORD ABOUT EACH SECTION

It should now be apparent why this project bears a tripartite title. "**ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**" refers to the First, potential and ideal nature of the Gospel; that *yes*. It includes a description or history of the matrix that gave birth to the autograph of the Gospel (1-1), its extant physical copies (1-2), as well as a general description of the "character" of the Gospel, regardless of physical manifestation (1-3), which is the node of interpretation upon which traditional narrative, thematic and "doctrinal" analyses are based. To be fully candid and

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[21] I have taken the words "General/Invariant" from Jakobson, who recognized that there was no better definition of it than Peirce's description of the Immediate Interpretant. In other words, they are synonymous. See Robertson, 187.

responsible, the obvious fact that no two manuscripts among the thousands of surviving fragments are so different from each other that they are unrecognizable as Gospels of John must be stated: this First sense emphasizes their common character.

"**CONSIDERING P66**" refers to the Second, existential Gospel; that *no*. Theoretically, if we were in possession of the autograph it would stand here and be the basis of all interpretation and historical inquiry. True to Secondness, the eclectic versions have traditionally sought to stand in for the autograph, seeking to fill that empty space. The grave authority such versions have enjoyed is what I will now refer to playfully as the Secondness Heresy: these eclectic texts have been accorded the status of the autograph—of being the true Secondness manifestation of the Gospel of John—while individual manuscripts have been largely set aside. This level stresses not only the differences between actual manuscripts, then, and the implications of those differences, but also the need to be more historically aware of where our manuscripts come from. Sensitivity to the cultural milieu of their birth (1-2), their physical characteristics and what they have gone through diachronically (2-2), as well as how they have been interpreted and mediated (2-3), sheds light on ancient and modern Christian communities, as well as on the Gospel itself. And for those who are invested in the eclectic search for origins, such a concrete sensitivity should also qualify the weight individual variants are accorded.

"**A LITERARY HISTORY, OR A CATEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC**" refers to the Third, mediating and living sense of the Gospel. How have the manuscripts been used (2-3), what is the general character common to all manuscripts (1-3), and finally, what do our interpretations of them cause us to do (3-3)?

In the end a project seeking to build a hermeneutic to its fullest around Peirce's Categories would fail. The scope of the categories themselves could ostensibly lead to an infinite variation and quantity of monographs. What I hope to achieve is the laying out of the system, the creation of sample exercises in the types of hermeneutic the system suggests, and finally to point to further roads of inquiry for the future. That said, let me now turn to each section.

§1.1 THE PRE-THEMATIC GOSPEL OF JOHN
THE FIELDS OF POSSIBILITY BEHIND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE AS A PHENOMENON

> What I am saying is that in a naive and prescientific way the historical past is *there* for all of us, that it *figures* in our ordinary view of things, whether we are historians or not. We have what the phenomenologists call a *non-thematic* or *pre-thematic* awareness of the historical past which functions as background for our present experience, or our experience of the present. The historian has this experience as well, of course, prior to becoming a historian. In a sense it is what the historian seeks to replace when he or she makes explicit and thematic claims about the past. Yet it is misleading to speak of replacing it, since this vague background awareness of the past does not, it seems to me, consist even implicitly in a collection of claims.
>
> —David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History*

The title of this section is drawn from phenomenology, and my understanding of it from David Carr's *Time, Narrative, and History*. The quality of historicity that Carr has referred to as a pre-thematic awareness is akin to the quality of Peirce's pure conception of Firstness in that technically speaking it is not something that can be linguistically contained:

It must be fresh and new, for if old it is second to its former state. It must be initiative, original, spontaneous, and free; otherwise it is second to a determining cause. It is also something vivid and conscious; so only it avoids being the object of some sensation. It

precedes all synthesis and all differentiation; it has no unity and no parts. It cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for assertion always implies a denial of something else. Stop to think of it, and it has flown! . . . That is first, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious, and evanescent. Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it. (*CP*, 1.357)

Strictly speaking, the pre-thematic background surrounding the Gospel of John would be impossible to describe explicitly through language, since, as Carr states, it does not "consist even implicitly in a set of claims" (4), but is rather a sense of the past that we all carry with us that makes experience in the present possible. But just as Firstness itself can be applied in practical ways, so can this pre-thematic background: here I would extend the measure of this background into the intelligible world and claim that the Firstness aspect of investigating the Gospel of John would be to lay out the cultural and linguistic field implicit in the Gospel itself. And yes, of course, on a practical level this would encompass what we typically refer to as its historical context.

Having said that, this section of the Categorical History will receive the least amount of treatment. For its sheer magnitude and scope it would be impossible for anyone to treat this area sufficiently without writing volumes. And indeed many histories along these lines have already been written. I give here a review of some of the more seminal works that ought to be consulted in coming to understand the cultural milieu that could have spawned both the

autograph of the Gospel of John as well as P66 specifically. (Please consult the Bibliography

for full references of all the works about to be discussed.)

The most direct, albeit tenuous, way of getting at the cultural field behind the Gospel

would be to examine the Gospel itself and the cultural assumptions inscribed therein. As I have

intimated above, and as I will demonstrate in §1.3 and §2.3 below, the absence of an autograph

makes any conclusive arguments based on a direct examination of the Gospel difficult, though

not unfruitful. This is what historical-narrative critics such as Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis

Martyn have done in an attempt to reconstruct the potential Johannine communities implicit in

the Gospel. (For a more detailed treatment of Brown and Martyn, see §1.3 below.) Most

commentaries on the Gospel of John take a similarly inductive stance toward the literary

background of the Gospel. Still one of the most comprehensive and thorough commentaries is

Raymond Brown's two volume (1966, 1970) Anchor Bible commentary. (His Anchor Bible

Introduction of the New Testament is also useful.) A not-as-comprehensive but more updated

commentary is Francis J. Maloney's *The Gospel of John*. The major drawback to Brown's and

Maloney's commentaries is their explicit, though entirely traditional, bias in favor of Jewish

antecedents: there is very little mention of the broader Hellenistic influence on contemporary

Judaism or the Christianity that rose from it. This is where Craig S. Keener's two volume 2004

commentary is superior. He has gathered and analyzed a vast array of Hellenistic literary and

epigraphic material, both antecedent and contemporary, and shown how it intersects with first

century Judaism and Christianity. My one criticism of Keener is that he did not go far enough:

there is still a noticeable bias toward Judaism—though it is brilliantly examined in its

Hellenistic forms—and not enough of an examination of specifically Greco-Roman material.

Something akin to Allen Brent's subtle *Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity Before the Age of Cyprian*, or Steven J. Friesen's illuminating *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*, is due for the Gospel of John. Even though Brent focuses primarily on Luke and Acts, and Friesen on Revelation, the reader of John would benefit immensely from reading the fruits of these two inquiries as they bring to the fore some of the more important dialogues between Greco-Roman religions and early Christian traditions. Although Keener's is a prolifically solid and admirable start, a commentary fully taking into account the Greco-Roman horizon of the Gospel of John has yet to be written.

Aside from the Gospel itself and the commentaries written about it, an examination of the rest of the corpus of first and second century Hellenistic literature would aid in understanding the field of possibilities surrounding the Gospel. I would recommend three literary histories/compilations, one each for Jewish, Roman and Christian literature.

There have been no recent attempts (to my knowledge) to create a comprehensive literary history of ancient Jewish literature. The best access we have to it, then, is directly through the Hebrew Bible, the works of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus (see Charles Duke Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, respectively), and James H. Charlesworth's two volume edition of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, which contains, among other literary jewels, the Jewish Apocalypses, Testaments, Psalms, Hymns, Odes and fragmentary Romances. For Roman

literature the interested reader will best be served by Gian Biagio Conte's 1999 *Latin Literature: A History*. Conte has created a literary history that is both comprehensive and enjoyable to read. In fact, one receives a great deal of satisfaction reading all 864 pages from cover to cover. Conte supplements our inherited nineteenth century literary historical "Life & Works" approach with literary criticism, genre theory and diachronic reception histories for each author. For early Christian literature, the 2004 *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* remains the best literary history. Like Conte, the Cambridge is eminently readable and fairly comprehensive.

More general cultural histories of the early Christian era are equally important in understanding the pre-thematic Gospel of John. Two of the oldest historical engagements remain two of the best: Eusebius' *History of the Church*, and Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (particularly volume one). Modern historiographic sensibilities have taught us to receive all narratives of the past (and present) critically as rhetorical discourses, but despite any possible suspicious rhetorical maneuvers, Eusebius' and Gibbon's versions of Roman antiquity are enjoyable to read, plausible and generally accurate. Recent narrative histories with similar levels of appeal, engagement and overall enjoyment to read include Ramsay MacMullen's *Christianizing the Roman Empire: (A. D. 100-400)*; W. H. C. Frend's *Rise of Christianity,* and his much less narratized compendium *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*; R. A. Markus' *The End of Ancient Christianity*; and Robert M. Grant's *Augustus to Constantine: The Rise and Triumph of Christianity in the Roman World*.

Historical inquiries in the wake of the French *Annales* school, and other general Postmodern studies, have opened the way for some astonishing exercises in alternative and problem-oriented historiography. I mention some of the more interesting and fair-minded examples. A compelling and daring feminist approach to early Christianity is Karen J. Torjesen's *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*. It has particular relevance to the Gospel of John, moreover, as it demonstrates that the role of women in early Christianity was at worst ambiguous, and at best equal to that of men—a role the Gospel of John could be enlisted to support. Torjesen treats the Gospel of John only briefly, but in doing so she establishes that the Johannine Jesus' treatment of women is the most exalted and potentially scandalous to any purely patriarchal interpretation of early Christianity. Robert L. Wilken's *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* is an equally intriguing alternative account of Late Antiquity examining Christianity from the outside. In Foucaultian fashion Averil Cameron's *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* analyzes the rhetorical discourses of the early Christians and how they came to identify and represent themselves over and against the more mainstream culture. Anything by Peter Brown is also highly recommended. In one of his more mature works—*The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*—he gives the reader a lesson in the anatomy of sexual renunciation during the first four centuries of Christianity. Arranged thematically by region, Brown's is a problem-oriented history—worthy of any Braudel— divided into three parts: part one deals with notions of celibacy in the west from Paul to Anthony, with an emphasis on sexual restrictions *within* a societal framework; part two presents

eastern notions of renunciation, specifically the uniquely eastern anti-social asceticism of the desert parents; and part three traces these developments in the Latin west. Gaining an appreciation of early asceticism is important to understanding the enigmatic figure of the Johannine Baptist.

And finally, the obvious must be stated: there is an infinite amount of appreciation and understanding to be had of the Gospel of John within any language or cultural tradition, but to fully understand the linguistic and semantic fabric behind the Gospel that makes it both possible and intelligible as a literary phenomenon, I recommend learning Koine and Attic Greek first and foremost, then Aramaic (and Hebrew), Latin, Coptic and Syriac—in that order—, as the first Christians and the earliest and most important manuscripts of John are found in these language traditions.[22]

§1.2 THE INTENTIONAL P66
THE POINT AT WHICH THE PHENOMAL FIELDS OF POSSIBILITY GIVE BIRTH TO THEIR POTENTIAL MANUSCRIPTS; THE AGENT CULTURAL ENTITY THAT GIVES THEM BIRTH

> Three initial questions are asked as we look at the literary event: Where did it take place? Why did it take place? and, How did it take place?
> —Mario J. Valdés, "Rethinking the History of Literary History"

Where §1.1 took into consideration the entirety of the cultural milieu surrounding the creation of the Gospel—autograph and copies alike—this section will focus on the agency that gave rise to P66. Typical of pre-Modern manuscripts, it is hard to assess how and under what circumstances P66 came about, but we will attempt to say something about P66's parent community.

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[22] I admit, alas, to knowing next to nothing of Syriac at this point in my career.

Because it was found in a cave only a few kilometers away from a Pachomian

monastery in Egypt, it is possible that P66 was once housed and used there. The company it

kept in its cave over the centuries—a collection named for Martin Bodmer, the man responsible

for acquiring these texts from Egyptian antiquities dealers in the 1950s and 60s—strengthens

this assertion: several books of Hebrew scripture; New Testament texts (in both Coptic and

Greek), including Luke, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude; other Early Christian texts such as 3rd

Corinthians, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the Protoevangelium of James, and some works of

Melito of Sardis; a Greek-Latin lexicon for the Pauline letters; a hexametric Christian poem, the

"Vision of Dorotheus"; Books V and VI of the *Iliad*; three plays of Menander; and, significantly,

several letters from the abbots of the nearby Pachomian monastery. [23] This last fact speaks in

favor of these texts once belonging to the monastery. Even if a direct tie to the monastery could

be secured, it is doubtful that the manuscript originated there. Because Pachomius did not

arrive on the scene until the late third century, at least a mid to late fourth century dating of the

manuscript would have to be accepted for the monastery to be the place of origination, and

since paleographers have dated the manuscript to between c. 125 and 250, a Pachomian

origination is implausible. Not to mention the fact that Pachomian monasteries were

particularly ascetic: they were cenobitic institutions—the first of their kind on a mass scale—

designed for ascetics who could not quite endure the rigors of a fully isolated life. The large-

scale operations, complete with scriptoriums, common in later monastic culture were

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[23] See James M. Robinson, "The Pachomian Monastic Library at the Chester Beatty Library and the Bibliothèque Bodmer," in *The Role of the Book in the Civilisations of the Near East*, Manuscripts of the Middle East 5, 1990-1991 (1993): 26-40, where he argues for the Bodmer Papyri as comprising the contents of one of the first Christian monastic libraries.

uncommon in these first communes. It is unclear whether the Pachomian complexes even had fully-functioning libraries. The Rule of Pachomius (Rules 82 and 101) mentions a small alcove or "hollow" within the Synaxis, or Meeting Hall, where manuscripts were kept. It was the job of the Abbot's right-hand man to monitor the use of these manuscripts and make certain they were all accounted for. Early records, including the Rule, mention public readings in a call and response type of format, but even they were likely done from memory. In any case, even though religious writings were certainly important to these Christians, the book-obsession which would characterize High Medieval monasteries and schools cannot be assumed for ancient ones. And given its scribal characteristics, which reveal the work of at least three professional scribes, it is safe to say that P66 was produced in a scriptorium, likely in Alexandria or one of her sister cities, then. How it came to reside in the desert, and who brought it there, is uncertain.

Taking cues from the manuscript itself, however, we can know something about the scribes who created it. P66 went through at least three phases[24]: the original scribe worked alone in the beginning from an exemplar. This scribe was likely a Christian himself, as he was invested in his material; Comfort has shown that this scribe already knew the scriptures well, including the Gospel of John, and he changed the text—probably inadvertently—in ways that echoed other verses in John, or, at least in one case, Luke.[25] He was his own corrector; possibly getting too absorbed in his material during the copying process, he needed to make several

---

[24] See Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts: A Corrected, Enlarged Edition of* The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), 384-7, for a fuller treatment of the history of scholarly theories about the various phases of the production of P66. I follow here Comfort's own theory, which includes the more sensible aspects of earlier theories.

[25] Ibid., 382. See §2.3 for a detailed discussion of these examples.

corrections as he went along. Shortly after the original copy was made, a proofreader, or

diorthotes, examined the copy against a different exemplar, as would be customary in a

scriptorium, and made several substantial changes. The proofreader also paginated the first 99

pages of the document.

But the text was not simply a professional copy: it was made with the purpose of public

reading in mind. As Comfort suggests, the large uncials indicated that the gospel as a whole

was meant to be read in public, the larger lettering being conducive to that standard Jewish-

Christian practice. Several of the verses in Chapter 13 were further marked heavily with

breathing marks, indicating a lectionary purpose. (I will return to the possible significance of

these verses shortly.)

Whatever group commissioned this work, or took it upon themselves to copy it, its

proximity to both a Pachomian monastery and the Nag Hammadi Corpus (hereafter NHC) is

interesting. It is still unclear whether the NHC was used by actual Gnostic groups,[26] whether it

was part of the library of a more "orthodox" group of Christians who might have kept the

writings of their "enemies" close at hand for purposes of study and refutation, or, perhaps,

whether it was used by a mixed group of Christians who would have felt at home both within

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[26] I will avoid entering here into the still very vibrant and polemical discussion surrounding the nature of "Gnosticism", whether that term means anything useful, and whether or not we can properly speak of "Gnostics", Christian or otherwise, without doing serious injustice to the groups so labeled. Despite any semantic difficulties in pinning down what exactly we mean by the term, there are nevertheless several common ideas and tropes underlying the NHC, for instance, that for the sake of intelligibility can be grouped together and called by one name. Whether we use "Gnosticism" or the bulkier "Biblical Demiurgical traditions" or something else is, well, academic. With this caveat in mind, I will use the traditional term "Gnostic". For lengthier and subtle treatments of this issue, see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1984); Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Origins and Teachings of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton University Press: 1996); Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Alastair H. B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006).

more mainstream Christianity as well as within various fringe groups. It is known that the

Gospel of John was a favorite among some Gnostic sects: in fact, the earliest extant commentary

on any New Testament writing was a commentary on the Gospel of John by Heracleon, a(n)

(in)famous Valentinian Christian of the second century, a formidable enough foe for Origen.

    A recent monograph by Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford

University Press: 2004) has called into question the connection between John and Gnostic

Christianity, as well as the assumption that because of that connection the Gospel of John must

have therefore been considered suspect by more "orthodox" ancient Christians, a position Hill

calls "The Orthodox Johannophobia Theory". As Hurtado states, speaking of Hill's argument,

> It has been frequently echoed that the Gospel of John was especially used in 'gnostic'
>
> Christian circles. But a recent and rather thorough study by Charles Hill seems to
>
> demand a major revision of opinion. Hill shows that heterodox Christians were not
>
> especially given to John, and made use of a number of New Testament writings.
>
> Moreover, early 'orthodox' manuscript evidence seems to be consistent with Hill's
>
> judgment. The numerous copies of John in the papyri from Egypt suggest a notable
>
> popularity of this text, and the copies of other texts from the same site and approximate
>
> time period as the manuscripts of John suggest that those among whom John was so
>
> popular also enjoyed a panoply of texts that reflect mainstream Christian tastes and
>
> preferences. (30)

Especially given Hurtado's manuscript evidence, both Hill and Hurtado are right to suggest—

and by doing so they correct two centuries of faulty assumption—that the Gospel of John was

loved and used without suspicion by mainstream Christians; but that fact, along with the fact

that heterodox Christians also used NT texts other than the Gospel of John with an equal

frequency, does not, however, mean that fringe groups were not as avid admirers of the Gospel.

In fact, rather than rejection or suspicion of a text, the approach has seemed to be—when faced

with an opponent who attributes the same authority to a text as you—to distance your

opponent from the text by giving a more "correct" or "authoritative" reading of it. As Rudolph

points out, "It is interesting to observe how Origen, with the same method of interpretation as

his opponent [Heracleon], namely that of discovering a deeper and esoteric meaning behind the

text, endeavours to accomplish an exegesis acceptable for the Church" (*Gnosis*, 17).

Furthermore, it would be difficult to claim that the range of texts discovered with P66—e.g. 3rd

Corinthians, a homily by Melito of Sardis, the *Vision of Dorotheus*, *Iliad* V and VI, to name a

few—suggest a "panoply of texts that reflect mainstream Christian tastes and preferences."

I will not give here the usual arguments concerning the connections between Johannine

and Gnostic thought—which are many and strong—,[27] but will instead offer up a concrete

example by way of comparison. Hans-Josef Klauck, in a lecture given in the Spring of 2007 in a

course on the Nag Hammadi texts at the University of Chicago, suggested a direct connection

between the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII). In the Apocalypse, there

appear to be four different kinds of Jesuses, all four of which line up with a particular aspect of

Jesus in John 1: [1] the physical, fleshly Jesus (σαρξ εγενετο, John 1:14); [2] the living, laughing

Jesus (John 1:4-5, but also the "Spirit" that entered the fleshly Jesus in the form of a dove in v.

32); [3] Jesus the narrator, the one who gives the revelation to Peter; the intellectual spirit Jesus

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[27] See especially Pétrement's introduction to *A Separate God*.

(and the Jesus who begins speaking in John 1:38); and [4] the Pleromatic Jesus, the one who

remains always in heaven (John 1:1-3, 18). In the following extract from the Apocalypse, I have

included the number in brackets next to the kind of Jesus being referred to:

[82]
4	And (δέ) I saw someone **[4]** about to approach
	us who looked like him **[3]**, even him
6	who was laughing above the cross **[2]**,
	and (δέ) he **[4]** was <filled> with a
8	pure spirit (πνεῦμα), and he (was) the
	Savior (σωτήρ). And (δέ) there was a great
10	ineffable light around them
	and the multitude
12	of ineffable and
	invisible angels (ἄγγελος)
14	blessing them. [Cf. John 1:51 and the angels ascending and descending.]

[I have omitted ll. 15-19.]
20	to know through revelation
	that he whom they crucified **[1]** is
22	the first-born, and the home
	of demons (δαίμων), and the clay vessel
24	in which they dwell, belonging to Elohim,
	and belonging to the cross (σταυρός)
26	that is under the law (νόμος).
	But (δέ) he **[2]** who stands near him **[1]**
28	is the living Savior (σωτήρ), the primal part
	in him **[1]** whom they seized.
30	And he **[2]** has been released.
	He **[2]** stands joyfully
32	looking at those who persecuted him.
	They are divided among themselves.

<div align="center">83</div>

	Therefore he **[2]** laughs
2	at their lack of perception, and he **[2]**
	knows that they are born blind [cf. John 9:1].
4	Indeed (ἄρα), therefore (ουν), the suffering one **[1]**
	must remain, since the body (σῶμα)
6	is the substitute. But (δέ) that which was
	released **[2]** was my incorporeal (-σῶμα)
8	body (σῶμα). But (δέ) I am **[3]** the intellectual (νοερόν)

spirit (πνεῦμα) filled with
10   radiant light. He [4]
     whom you saw coming to
12   me was our intellectual (νοερόν)
     pleroma, which unites
14   the perfect (τέλειος) light **[2]** with
     my **[3]** pure spirit.
(*The Coptic Gnostic Library*, NHC VII, 243-5)

There are clear Gnostic departures from John in this passage, notably the emphasis in 82.20-6 on the body of Jesus being the dwelling place of demons and of otherwise belonging to Elohim, the evil God of the Hebrew scriptures in Gnostic theology. However, John 1 remains a plausible source for each of the Jesuses mentioned, and from this small passage alone other thematic similarities to the Gospel of John are apparent: light and spirit; being born blind; and the concept of becoming one with God (in this case the Pleroma), to name a few.

But any possible connection between Gnostic Christianity and P66 is complicated not only by the fact that it is unclear who made use of either P66 or the NHC, but also by the fact that the NHC was bound[28] and used no earlier than the fourth century, about 200 years after P66 was made, if we accept Comfort's dating. Contrary to what ancient (and modern!) apologists might have wished, the distinction between what we can call "orthodox" and "heresy" among early Christians is convoluted at best. Although there were some attempts to control doctrine and to establish a canon of scripture, there never was a fixed canon in the ancient church.[29] Communities adopted, adapted and used manuscripts that spoke to them,

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[28] A date of 351 was found on one of the bindings. This date, of course, does not preclude the possibility that the manuscripts themselves could have been copied and used much earlier, and only bound together in the mid-fourth century.

[29] See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford University Press: 1997); and Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

and certain Gnostic scriptures that would later become officially condemned were routinely used by local communities. The almost reverential nature with which the NHC was hidden away, for instance—its preservation was not by accident—possibly indicates that a local clergyman or monk did not want to see these sacred manuscripts destroyed and so hid them away after they received official condemnation by Athanasius.[30]

However, another possible tie to Gnosticism emerges: after the original scribe made his copy and corrections, and after the *diorthotes* paginated the first 99 pages and proofed the copy against a second exemplar, a third "scribe" paginated the remaining 57 pages, making some very minor revisions in the process, then marked up sections of Chapter 13 for lectionary purposes. Chapter 13 as a whole deals with the Last Supper, but the actual passages that were marked up (rather sporadically) within that chapter are notable (vv. 18-31 in our current text), as they deal specifically with the identification of Judas as the one who would "hand over" Jesus. I have adapted the following from Comfort's transcription (442-3). It is unclear whether all the verses below would have been intended to be read; I give a conservative reading and have highlighted in bold only the verses that Comfort has shown the second paginator to have marked. My own translation of the highlighted verses will follow:

^{18}ου περι
παντων υμων λεγω· **εγω οι**
δα οὺς εξελεξαμην αλλ᾽ ινα
η γραφη πληρωθη ο τρωγων με
τ εμου΄ τον αρτον· επηρεν επ εμε
την πτερναν αυτου ^{19}του γενε
σθαι· **ινα πιστευσηται΄ οταν γε**
νηται΄ ο⟦ε⟧τι εγω μι· ^{20}αμην αμη
λεγω υμειν ο λαμβανων

---

[30] See Robinson's introduction to *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 4th revised ed. (New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997).

εαν τινα πεμψω εμε λαμβανει
ο δε εμε λαμβανων λαμβανει
[leaf 50 verso]
ρ [100]
⟦και⟧ τον πεμ⟦ε⟧ψαντα με· ²¹ταυτα ει
πων ο ις εταραχθη τω πνι και
εμαρτυρησεν και ειπεν· **αμη̈**
αμην λεγω⟦ν⟧ υμιν οτι εἰς εξ υμω
παραδωσει με ²²εβλεπον᾽ ουν
εις αλληλους᾽ οι μαθηται᾽ αυτου
απορουμενοι περι τινος λεγει
²³ην δε ανακειμενος εἰς εκ τω
μαθητων αυτου εν τω κολπω
του ιυ ον ηγαπα ὁ ις ²⁴νευ᾽ εἰ᾽ ουν᾽ του
τω σιμων πετρος᾽ πυθεσθαι τις
αν ειη᾽ περι οὑ᾽ ειπεν᾽· ²⁵επιπεσω
ουν εκεινος ουτως επι το στη
θος του ιυ λεγει αυτω· κε τις εστι
²⁶αποκρινεται ις εκεινος εστιν
ὡ εγω βαψας το ψωμιον επι
δωσω· **και᾽ εμβα᾽ψας το ψωμιον**
[leaf 51 verso]
ρᾱ [101]
διδωσιν ιουδα σιμωνος ισκαρι
ωτη· ²⁷και μετα το ψωμιον το
τε εισηλθεν εις εκεινον ο σατα
νας λεγει ουν αυτω ο ις ὁ ποιεις
ποιησον ταχειον· ²⁸τουτο δε ου
δεις εγνω των ανακειμενω
προς τι ειπεν αυτω· ²⁹**τινες δε ε**
δόκουν επι το γλωσσοκομον
ειχεν ὁ ιουδας ὁτι λεγει αυτω ὁ
ις αγορασον ὡν χρειαν εχομε
εις την εορτην· η τοις πτωχοις
ινα τι δω᾽ ³⁰**λαβων ουν το ψωμι**
ον εκεινος εξηλθεν ευθυς᾽ ην
δε νυξ ³¹οτε ουν εξηλθεν λεγει
ις νυν εδοξασθη ο υς του ανου
και ο θς εδοξασθη εν αυτω ⟦κ⟧
****

("I know whom I have chosen, but in order that the writing might be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with me.' In order that when it happens you might believe that I am (he). Verily, verily I say to you that one of you will hand me over." Therefore his disciples looked at each other wondering about whom he spoke. And there was leaning on his bosom one of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—and Simon Peter therefore beckoned him that he should ask him of whom he spoke. And dipping the sop, he gave

it to Judas, son of Simon, the Iscariot. And some thought that because Judas held the money bag that Jesus told him to buy the things needed for the feast; or to give something to the poor. Therefore when he had taken the sop, he left, and immediately it was night.)

Again, I have relied on Comfort's transcription, but assuming his is somewhat accurate, the verses here marked up for breathing refer primarily to Judas. Not only that, but the verses that portray Judas in a negative light—e.g., vv. 2, 10-11, 21, and 27—have not been marked up for reading.[31] The only exception is v. 18, which says, "I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen, but in order that the writing might be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with me, he has lifted up his heel against me.'" According to Comfort's transcription, however, not all of v. 18 was marked, only "I know whom I have chosen, but in order that the writing might be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with me,'" thereby omitting the negatively charged beginning, "I speak not of you all," and ending, "he has lifted up his heal against me." What emerges from the marked passages in Chapter 13, then, is a bare skeleton of the Judas story, divested of any overtly negative evaluation of his character.

These verses in and of themselves may not be that remarkable—could this particular reading simply have been part of an Easter festival, or even of a routine sermon?—but when one considers the unique role that Judas played in some Gnostic sects (as evidenced by the Gospel of Judas, for instance) and the fact that the verses and parts of a verse in P66 that portray Judas in a negative light were left out of the lectionary passages, the second paginator's emphasis on John 13 in general, and on the neutral verses about Judas in particular, could

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[31] I take παραδωσει—which appears in v. 21, a marked passage—in the more neutral sense of "hand over" rather than in the needlessly negative sense of "betray". After all, the Fourth Evangelist also used this word in 19:30 in reference to Jesus "handing over" himself to God; it would be difficult to assert that Jesus was his own Judas.

indicate a connection between a Gnostic sect and P66. The evidence is far too sparse to allow

one to come to any definitive conclusion, but the possibilities are there. If true, P66 was copied

and used by a group of late second/early third century Gnostic or mixed-sect Christians,

potentially the same Christians who would have later made use of the NHC. (I admit a leaning

toward P66 and the NHC being used by a mixed-sect group of Christians.)

§2.2 P66
THE PHYSICAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

> I urge that we take earliest Christian manuscripts seriously as historical
> artifacts, paying attention to their physical and visual characteristics as
> well as the texts that they contain.
> —Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts:*
> *Manuscripts and Christian Origins*

This section is an attempt at giving a sense of the physical manuscript of P66. Two

elements will be stressed: (a) the physical state of the manuscript, and (b) its physical

movement. Often we proceed as though our manuscripts fell from the sky as is, remaining

relatively unaware of the intriguing circumstances through which they have come to us. What,

then, actually goes into the discovery and acquisition of papyri? This section will seek to

answer such questions as where did P66 originate, how did it come into our hands, and where

is it now?

P66 is, comparatively speaking, in great physical condition and still very legible.[32] It

consists of 39 folios (78 leaves, 156 pages), the dimensions of which are 14.2 cm x 16.2 cm,

containing 15 to 25 lines per page. Its contents: John 1:1-6:11; 6:35-14:26, 29-30; 15:2-26; 16:2-4, 6-

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[32] See Appendix B for a sample page.

7; 16:10-20:20, 22-23; 20:25-21:9, 12, 17. Both *recto* and *verso* are paginated in the standard

form for post-Hellenistic codices, beginning with alpha and continuing on through omega (with

three additional letters, bringing the number to 27: stigma (ς), 6; koppa (ϙ), 90; and sampi (ϡ),

900).[33] The handwriting of the original scribe is characterized by Comfort as being "a practiced

calligraphic hand" (381). The letters are written in majuscule (uncial) fashion, with an overt

attempt at making them large, which suggests that the text was meant to be read aloud. Also,

when ν falls at the end of a line, it is omitted and a line extends from above and beyond the last

letter of the line into the margin. A line above is also used in abbreviations, as is standard in

Christian manuscripts, for the *nomina sacra*.[34] Such abbreviated *nomina* in P66 include: θεος,

Ιησους, κυριος, χριστος, ανθρωπος, πνευμα, πατηρ, and υιος. Paragraphs are indicated by

beginning the line out beyond the right margin. These are all typical manuscript traits.[35]

　　Not much can be surmised about P66's exemplar, except that it appears to have been a

rough text—proto-Alexandrian in the classification of Comfort (28)—later converted by the

scribes to read more mainstream Alexandrian.

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[33] These twenty-seven letters enjoy a tripartite division: the first nine letters represent 1-9, the second nine 10-90, and the third 100-900, with the sequence beginning again at 1000.

[34] See Hurtado, 95-134, and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its transmission, corruption and Restoration*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press: 1968), 13-14. For studies of the *nomina sacra* in P66, see Filson, "A New Papyrus Manuscript of the Gospel of John," 59.

[35] For further reference to scribal habits in antiquity, see Ernest C. Colwell, "Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt, 370-89 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965); Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press: 1993); and William A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). For a particular treatment of P66, as no two scribes exhibit the same characteristics, see Comfort and Barret, eds. *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts: A Corrected, Enlarged Edition of The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts*, 17-31, 381-8; Gordon D. Fee, *Papyrus Bodmer II (P66): Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics*, Studies and Documents 34 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968); ibid., "Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II and the Nestle Greek Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 1 (March, 1965): 66-72; and ibid., "The Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II and Early Textual Transmission," *Novum Testamentum* 7, no. 4 (1965): 247-257.

As little as we know about the original circumstances surrounding the creation and use of P66 (see §1.2 above), we know only a little more about how P66 came into the possession of the modern world.

* * *

Not far from their desert village, a couple of teenage *fellahin* are throwing rocks in or around an abandoned cave; a couple more are digging for *sabakh*, looking for dung to feed the home fires. While going about their business, these young men come upon ancient and apocryphal pots of various sizes. Excited puzzlement ripples through the group. Following the lead boy, the group opens the pots, believing—nay, hoping—that they will find jinn inside with all their Arabian powers, or at least some precious trinkets of gold to pawn. *Jewelry is measured to them by weight, not by aesthetics; wonder is measured to them by magic, not scholarly discovery.* To their dismay, no trinket or bauble is found, only sundry decaying sheets of what, in his wonder and awe, one boy surmises is the workmanship of a race of giants. The lead boy appropriates the material. He divides it among his crew: small rewards for their company, little evidences of his benevolence. They go public. Outside and nearby they begin handing out curios to passers-by. One boy, a straggler, in emulation of the lead boy picks up a fragmented board and carries it out. They return home and stow the material with the farm animals outside. After all, such material only belongs to the outside world; and much of it will be burned for the sake of both warmth and curiosity. *Papyrus is measured to them by utility, not by the symbolic order which it contains.* These villagers, who have never been taught to read—who have never and will never need to know how to read in order to work their farms—do not know the word *codex*; nor the

word *potsherd*; nor what the symbols ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ might mean. Nor

should they, one might object.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The basic elements of this story are common, generic even. All too generic, some

suggest, for the elements of these stories of discovery have remained constant over time

throughout the Nile region in Egypt, as well as along the Dead Sea in Palestine, extending even

in part to the stories surrounding the discovery of papyri in Herculaneum at Napoli.[36] Even

though the stories surrounding the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Herculaneum

papyri are quite different in many points than those surrounding the Coptic discoveries, the

initial carelessness on the part of the discoverers or the excavation crews, which almost always

includes burning the papyrus before one of its more valuable ontological potentials is realized,

remains the same.[37] In addition to including what always emerges as innocuous child-play on

the part of the discoverer at the time of discovery, these stories are also often riddled with

intrigue. Witness the story of the NHC in which the main middlemen are caught up in a blood

feud that eventually leads them to avenge the death of their father with a murder of their own;

or, in the case of P. Bodmer, witness the kidnapping of an agent's daughter over a proverbial

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[36] For further information regarding the history of eighteenth century excavations at Herculaneum, see Marcello Gigante, *Philodemus in Italy*, trans. Dirk Obbink (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[37] The burning of papyrus fragments is typical of these stories of provenance; in the P. Bodmer story, there was originally a rumor that the villagers used the papyri to heat up some tea; that rumor was debunked, but another took its place: the manuscripts had been used to light a water-pipe. The materials are seen by the discoverers as relatively useless pieces of rubbish, only worthy to be used for practical purposes. Sometimes an attempt to do something more with the manuscripts is made, but when no interest emerges for them, they are put to other uses. For example, there were some Arabs who discovered about fifty papyrus scrolls in the Fayum district of Egypt in 1778 who burned them because no one would buy them, and because they found the scrolls gave off a sweet aromatic smell as they burned [Martin H. Scharlemann, "Papyrus Sixty-Six," *Concordia* 28 (Aug., 1957): 573]. At that point, in the face of no interest for the scrolls, their burning becomes almost symbolic.

mess of pottage.[38] These are the stories and characters which have emerged as scholars and

archaeologists have probed and prodded to discover the provenance of the papyrus and vellum

manuscripts which have been found in the modern period.

In 1889-1890, an organized effort to search out and find papyrus fragments in Egypt was

first launched by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. When they began to excavate Oxyrhynchus in

1896, several New Testament fragments were found as early as the second day of the dig,

causing an academic stir.[39] Modern New Testament studies and the current version of its texts

began to take shape. Since then, other than the mounting number of scrolls being deciphered at

Herculaneum and the Orphic funerary text found at Derveni, the only papyrus scrolls we

possess have been found in the preserving sands of Egypt.

In 1968, E. G. Turner suggested that P. Bodmer had been found in Panopolis along with

the P. Beatty Panop. and the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, some of the more important finds of

the twentieth century.[40] Colin H. Roberts followed suit in 1979.[41] It was only in 1989 after James

M. Robinson, professor and researcher at Claremont and the one ultimately responsible for

bringing the NHC to the scholarly world, had done a thorough investigation by interviewing

many of the players involved in the discovery and eventual selling of the manuscripts, that P.

Bodmer was discovered to have been found in Abu Mana.[42] Up to that time, the circumstances

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[38] See James M. Robinson, "The Discovery and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri," passim.

[39] Scharlemann, "Papyrus Sixty-Six," 573.

[40] He later retracted this proposition. See Robinson, "The Discovery and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri," 2; particularly note 2.

[41] Ibid.

[42] For a further and fuller treatment of this subject, and for further references to much of what follows in this section, consult the volume put out by Studies In Antiquity & Christianity, *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*; see specifically James M. Robinson's contribution, "The Discovering and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag

surrounding the appearance of P. Bodmer had been kept hidden. As Martin Scharlemann

writes in 1957, the "people who are familiar with the circumstances [namely M. Martin Bodmer

himself] are keeping this a secret, possibly because some delicate negotiations with an Egyptian

agent are involved. But we do know that somehow this papyrus got to Switzerland, where it is

now owned by Martin Bodmer, founder of the Bodmer Library of World Literature" ("Papyrus

Sixty-Six", 573).

To speak further of the discovery of the Bodmer Papyri at this point would almost be

redundant, as the blurb at the beginning of this section is so typical. But what follows is a little

filling out of the particular; after all, we are eschewing the generic as much as possible in this

part of the history. But to fill in the particular is difficult, as a fully documented account of the

discovery of P. Bodmer, contrary to Robinson's lamentation in 1986 that it is yet to be published,

has never appeared.[43] The stories seem to be circulating amongst scholars in a very informal

way, so much so that only by reading the bits of scholarship which have been written about P66

can one glean from each piece a new bit or piece of the story. What follows is as good a

reconstruction as I can muster. I have left out fragments of the story that are so ambiguous or

special that my narratization cannot overcome or assimilate them; one such example of this is

Robinson's cryptic reference to "the fall of King Farouk"—Egypt's first President—which was

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Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri" and Henry A. Green's "The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt." See also Robinson's introduction to *The Sayings Gospel Q* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2006).
[43] Robinson, "The Discovery and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri," 3-4.

apparently an important event in the life of the village of the discoverer of P. Bodmer. The

gaps and unanswered questions will be dissatisfying.[44]

The name of the discoverer: Hasan. Robinson figures that Hasan was anywhere

between fifteen and twenty-six when he found the codices. Apparently Hasan and some of his

friends were looking for *sabakh* when they came across some large pots in a cave (or near a

cliff?). As Robinson reports, at such times as this, "There is a mythopoeic ingredient in the

experiencing of the find, Muhammad 'Ali [the discoverer of the Nag Hammadi codices]

thinking there might be a jinn in the jar, Hasan being told that the books are the books of giants,

which may be expressing the feeling that they are from a culture alien to and hence horrendous

to their own" (11). Hasan and his cohort gathered the material and went outside. One of the

other boys, seeking to emulate Hasan, picked up a stray board nearby, which was later assumed

by scholars to have been a mirror, a catalogue of the jar's contents, or a book cover, although the

true nature of this board and its whereabouts has not been determined. Supposedly the group

began sharing their enigmatic goods by handing bits and pieces out at random to passers-by.

Ultimately they returned to the village and deposited the codices in the farmyard. What

happened next is fuzzy. While Robinson was interviewing Hasan for the first time, a villager in

the back of the crowd, seeing the attention Hasan received, spoke up and suggested that he had

actually had the codices in his home. After the villager gave his own name and that of his

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[44] While many of the details surrounding the discoveries of the Nag Hammadi and Bodmer Papyri are certain, some of the stock elements are nevertheless quite suspicious, which suspicions also emerge not so clandestinely in Robinson's essay. One wonders whether the claim that teenage boys found these scrolls on accident and while innocently at play has become a stock element only used to lend authenticity to the story, much like the 'friend-of-a-friend' motif in popular culture; or perhaps these stock elements are used to mask the illegal nature of their real activity: "One really wonders why they are only looking for fertilizer and not for treasure. Put conversely, one may wonder whether the repeated claim that one is only looking for *sabakh* is not a cover for activities that are illegal in a way that *sabakh*-digging is not" (Robinson, 11).

father, Robinson promptly and to the amazement of the villagers, gave the name of the fellow's grandfather. As Robinson notes, this uncanny ability to spout off the family lineages of these people has established an aura of the supernatural about him in the eyes of the villagers. (In fact, while reading Robinson's account of his interviews with the villagers, one feels an atmosphere of the supernatural, as well as one of intrigue; his own account is as mythopoeic as any account of the discoveries of papyrus he reports.) After further inquiries, it was determined that the young man had indeed had the codices in his home.

It is unclear at this point how the manuscripts made it to Dishna. Typically papyri are transported to the larger cities through jewelers, as in the case of the NHC, since the goldsmiths not only possess the liquid assets and means to move the material but also the connections to deal in the bigger cities. In any case, the codices ended up in the mid-sized town of Dishna. Here is where intrigue enters the story of P. Bodmer. For it was in Dishna that the main middleman in the selling of P. Bodmer (not Hasan: one wonders where he had wandered off to) had become angry at his agent for having accurately reported the sale price to his partners, thereby eliminating the opportunity for him to skim funds off the top. In his frustration, he hired a couple of his agent's neighbors, who had already wanted to kill the agent anyway, to kidnap the agent's son instead so they might ransom him for the amount the middleman had felt he had lost in the deal.[45] The neighbors botched the job. In the darkness they mistook the daughter for the son, a much less valuable commodity in the Coptic world. She was eventually

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[45]Incidentally, when Robinson interviewed the middleman, the middleman explicitly suggested that he was the one who had convinced the neighbors to only kidnap the son and not to kill the agent himself, thereby making himself out to be a hero and the savior of his agent, rather than a thug (8-9).

released by a direct appeal to Nasser—Egypt's President at the time—, no ransom having

ever been paid.[46]

At least one Coptic priest was involved at some point, although it is unclear exactly in

what way. By the early 1950s, the Egyptian government had effectively put a stop to illegal

diggings and black-marketeering; these activities had become a nuisance and a bane. The

government was eager to maintain a peaceful relationship between the Islamic and Coptic

religions. A religious edifice or the home of a priest, then—which would only be searched by

the government under the most extreme of circumstances—, would be the natural place to hide

illegal materials from officials. The first to bring a Bodmer codex to Dishna showed it to a

Coptic priest, assuming that the priest would know whether or not it was valuable. In this case,

the man with the codex had known about the NHC, and he wanted to know whether his codex

was worth anything. This priest happened to be born in al-Qasr, the village where the

discoverer of the NHC had come from, and in fact had lived "across the street from his [the

discoverer of the NHC] blood relative, the al-Qasr priest who had given [Nag Hammadi] Codex

III to his brother-in-law, who had himself lived and taught at Dishna" (14). The owner of P.

Bodmer learned from the priest that the former owner of Nag Hammadi Codex III had sold his

book to the Coptic Museum. It seems that the owner of P. Bodmer also had a son, a teacher at

the same parochial school as the former owner of Nag Hammadi Codex III, who showed P.

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[46] He actually went to court over the kidnapping, and bribed the judge in order to obtain an appeal. Also, the Nag Hammadi codices had become so famous in the region by 1952 that the purchase prices for papyrus fragments and manuscripts had exploded. The middleman in the P. Bodmer story figured that his agent owed him LE 2,000. Robinson himself, in 1986, has said that the final purchase price of P. Bodmer is yet to be known (19).

Bodmer to the Museum, and with the help of a friend (the Coptic priest?), he was able to

avoid confiscation and intervention by the authorities.

Whatever truly happened, the codices eventually made their way into the hands of a

successful Cypriot antiquities dealer in Cairo (at least one P. Bodmer codex was sold to him for

LE 700), who happened to be the same antiquities dealer who had at one time possessed the

NHC—the recurrence of the same actors but in different stories does seem rather suspect!

Nevertheless, on we go. This dealer had learned his lesson; seven years earlier he had shown

the NHC to the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in an innocent attempt to help identify and

codify his find, but the Department of Antiquities, in what was to the mind of the dealer a

rather unethical act, confiscated the material. After being duped by the Department of

Antiquities, who had nationalized the NHC at the time of confiscation, the dealer, when faced

with the same potential situation with P. Bodmer, threatened, "If I get burnt, I'll burn them" (3).

Fortunately, the manuscripts remained intact.

It was at that point in 1952 that M. Martin Bodmer made contact with the antiquities

dealer and acquired the first of several manuscripts and fragments that would come to be

named after him. After purchasing the papyri he immediately turned P. Bodmer II (P66) over to

Victor Martin, president of the International Association of Papyrologists and professor of

classical philology at the University of Geneva, for editing and publication.[47] P. Bodmer

currently resides at the Bodmer Library in Switzerland.

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[47] It is unclear which manuscripts were included in the original purchase. P. Bodmer I (*Iliad* V, VI) and II (P66) were two of them. The others were acquired at various times throughout the 1950s and 60s.

§2.3 THE RECEIVED P66[48]

THE INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITIES THAT MAKE USE OF—THAT "LIVE"—THE PHYSICAL MANUSCRIPTS

> What happened in one part of the culture industry . . . was translated into another. . . . For what is so often opaque in the history of cultural transmission—the moment when the individual utterance becomes a collective, institutional project carried out in the individual's now mystifying name—is unexpectedly made visible in this case.
> —Jon Klancher, "Transmission Failure"

This section will deal with interpretive communities and how they mediate, for the sake of comprehension, the texts they receive. I will, of course, be focusing on P66. Two interpretive communities will be emphasized: (a) our own; that is, the twentieth/twenty-first century scholarly community, and (b) the potential ancient communities discussed in §1.2. I will discuss them in reverse chronological order, since any discussion of the past community—which discussions, due to a lack of information, must be based on the texts themselves, and which will therefore naturally be inductive and speculative—will of necessity be mediated through our own modes of discourse. An analysis of our own modes of discourse will ultimately affect the way I discuss the ancient interpretive community.

But first, a word about mediation: after (and while) conveying the history of the publication of P66—a central step in the mediation process—, I will turn to the assumptions and the nature of the apparatuses through which P66 is and has been transmitted to us, and what sorts of problems might arise from such mediations: my examination will approach a (non)sense of textual mediation. In an essay by Jon Klancher found in *Theoretical Issues in Literary History*, Klancher sets out the problematics surrounding the transmitting of a text from

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[48] The more logical route would put §1.3 before §2.3. However, in order to keep the three sections specifically dealing with P66 together—the Secondness, Red-corner sections—, I have flipped the order and will deal with §2.3 first.

the past to the present, as well as the inherent failure of the task. Especially glaring is the moment when an editor purports to provide an edition of some text un-mediated (*im*mediate), but then proceeds in a manner nevertheless which proves the impossibility of such a task: he will attempt to fill in all the gaps that inevitably arise when the culture of the reader is so distant from the culture in which the text first appears.[49] The editor ends up giving a sense of transmission through the tens of pages of introduction and the hundreds of editorial and critical notes which accompany the text, but the transmission itself, because of the mediation—because of the *need* for mediation—fails to recreate any sort of what may have been a primitive reading experience. Nevertheless, the transmission is necessary, and more often than not an ideological success. Operating from this observation, I have been aware, at times painfully so, that what is being transmitted even by me is not only a sense of history and transmission but also a *non*sense of history and transmission by mediation. In the end, I hope for as much as anyone can, that the project is an ideological success without being an ideological imposition.

In any case, after giving a history of publication and pin-pointing some complications in that process, I will then approach the ancient community by dealing with particular textual characteristics of P66. One of the more interesting features of P66 is that it demonstrates a readerly process in the minds of the scribes and correctors, as well as the tendencies of those scribes and correctors to appropriate and change scripture according to the needs of their

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[49] In Klancher's example of Coleridge's 1811 lectures on Shakespeare, the lectures were reproduced by reconstruction from shorthand notes, principally from those of John Collier. Klancher shows how these reconstructions, while ideologically successful, failed; far from recreating the original experience of the lectures un-mediated, the lectures were filtered through Victorian modes of discourse. Similarly, I will attempt to show how P66 has ultimately been filtered through late twentieth century discourse.

community. I will give examples of this along with a couple of the more interesting readings

(and non-readings) which P66 presents.

The *editio princeps* of P66 was published in 1956 by Victor Martin, [50] who gave it a

conservative dating of c. 200.[51] As was mentioned in §2.2, after Martin Bodmer had acquired

the codices in 1952 from the Cypriot antiquities dealer in Cairo, he immediately gave them over

to Victor Martin for editing. On the one hand, scholars applauded Martin for the speediness

with which he put out the edition—only four years after its acquisition[52]—but on the other hand

they were dismayed by the excruciating number of errors which the text contained and which

prevented a consistent and reliable textual analysis. Martin's conclusions were also

questionable. Though he was a renowned papyrologist and philologist, he was decidedly not a

New Testament scholar. He had regrettably used Souter's 2nd edition of the Greek New

Testament as the apparatus for comparison. Souter's edition was, simply put, dreadfully

outdated when compared to the Nestle-Aland 22nd edition (the edition which would have been

available to Martin). As a result, several of the singular readings which Martin reported to have

found in P66 were actually found in the apparatus criticus of the Nestle-Aland 22nd—302 of the

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[50] Victor Martin, "Papyrus Bodmer II, Evangile de Jean chap. 1-14," *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* 5 (1956).

[51] Until the mid-twentieth century, scholars were reluctant to date any manuscript before c. 200. In mid-century, though, a new generation of scholars emerged who produced convincing arguments for much earlier datings. They may have gone too far to the other side. Since then, datings have leveled off. The earliest accepted date for the earliest manuscript in possession—the John Rylands fragment of John 18—is between 110 and 125. Martin's dating of c. 200 for P66 has found agreement by almost every scholar since then, including Aland; Comfort disagrees and situates it at c. 150. See Comfort and Barret, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts:* A Corrected, Enlarged Edition of *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts*, 376-9.

[52] A feat even more impressive since he was also working to edit and publish P. Bodmer I, Books V and VI of the *Iliad*, which he did in 1954, two years after their acquisition and two years before the publication of P. Bodmer II.

380, to be exact![53] The number of *errata* in the *editio princeps* was a prominent setback for any

accurate analysis of P66.

Some pressure was released on December 28, 1956, though, when *The Times* printed a

photograph of the first thirteen lines of P66. But this only whetted the scholarly appetite. Many

were breathless in anticipation for the full 6 ½ x 5 ½ inch photostatic volume of the first 104

pages, which contained John 1:1-6:11, 6:35-14:26, and which was promised to be soon published.

Instead, a supplement was published in 1958 which contained much of the missing latter

portions of the Gospel of John.[54] Finally, in 1962, facsimiles were published.[55]

In the face of so many errors and so much lamentation at the time the *editio princeps*

appeared, it is surprising that so much of the scholarship and textual analysis of P66 available

today had actually been done before the 1962 facsimile edition. Before that time, as I mentioned

above, a flurry of scholarship was done under the painful and open awareness that the

statistical and textual analyses being compiled were assumed inaccurate even before they had

begun, simply because of Martin's errors. But after 1962, there was no rush of scholarship, not

even by the previous scholars who now had proof of their faulty statistics. Perhaps the

emergence of other Bodmer papyri, such as P72 and P75, had overshadowed P66, despite their

comparative incompleteness (only 51 leaves in P75 as compared to 78 in P66).

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[53] John J. Collins, "Papyrus Bodmer II," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (July, 1958): 281. Collins was quoting Kurt Aland's figures.

[54] Victor Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II. Supplément. Evangelie de Jean, chap. 14-21*, 1958.

[55] Victor Martin and J. W. B. Barns, *Papyrus Bodmer II. Supplément. Evangelie de Jean, chap. 14-21*, Nouvelle édition augmentée et corrigée, avec reproduction photographique compléte du manuscrit (chap. 1-21), 53 p. et 152 pl., 1962.

Between the 1962 facsimile edition and the 1999 transcription done by Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret (and their revised, corrected 2001 reprint),[56] no further attempt had been made to put out both a reliable and a critical edition of P66; nor has there been one since, though Comfort has done much work on this particular manuscript.[57] What is most striking about Comfort and Barret's edition, though, is what it purports to do[58]:

> This book provides a representative sample of the New Testament that was read by Christians in the earliest centuries of the church. These manuscripts were the "Bible" they read and revered; to them, these manuscripts were the New Testament text. Today's Greek New Testaments are critical editions produced by the eclectic method, where the preferred reading is determined on a case-by-case basis from among the many variants offered by the early manuscripts and versions. These critical editions of the Greek New Testament do not completely replicate the evidence of any one manuscript. . . . Thus, it is our desire to present the complete text of each early manuscript so that readers can study them for themselves. (17)

Barrett and Comfort's project seems to be to produce an almost un-mediated text, or at least a text as close to the original manuscripts as possible without actually having them in your lap. But this is far from the case. Just two pages later, they state:

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[56] Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret, eds, *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999). Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts:* A Corrected, Enlarged Edition of *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001).

[57] Aside from the volumes just mentioned, Comfort treated P66 at some length in his dissertation: "The Scribe as Interpreter: A New Look at New Testament Textual Criticism according to Reader-Reception Theory," (D.Litt. et Phil. Diss., University of South Africa, 1996). Also, one of his students, Karyn Berner, did her Master's thesis on P66: "Papyrus Bodmer II, P66: A Reevaluation of the Correctors and Corrections," (master's thesis, Wheaton College, 1993).

[58] All mention and use of Comfort and Barret is to their 2001 edition.

We have attempted to reconstruct the beginning and ending of several manuscripts, wherever we could determine original margins. These reconstructions, indicated by opening and closing square brackets, are conjectural. Bracketed portions within the transcriptions represent letters or words most likely to have been in the original manuscript. The supplied letters and words often, but not always, accord with the text printed in the twenty-seventh edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*. . . . Arabic numerals indicating chapter and verse divisions have been inserted in the transcriptions as an aid to the reader. Neither the numeral nor the gaps they create in the transcriptions appear in the original manuscripts. (14-15)

And a few lines later:

In the transcriptions, we have represented the text of the manuscripts as they actually read. (15)

Letters and words are being supplied, often in line with the Nestle-Aland 27th? None of the chapter and verse divisions, numerals or gaps appear in the original? It almost appears as though the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Comfort's text is actually quite remarkable. It is filled with a wealth of physical and textual information concerning each of the Biblical papyri that have been found up through 1998, such as contents, date and place of provenance, current residence, physical features, scribal and textual characteristics, as well as a solid bibliography for each manuscript. Most of this information is not obtainable anywhere else without much labor and frustration. A remarkable text indeed. Being an already renowned papyrologist himself, Comfort also gives

good evidence for the re-dating of several manuscripts, including P66, which he re-dates to c.

150. If only there were texts such as this for all manuscripts. Nevertheless, as I mentioned

above, these manuscripts, far from being un-mediated, are actually filtered. Returning to the

caption above, what has been done in one cultural sphere has been transferred into another, and

"the individual utterance [has] become[] a collective, institutional project carried out in the

individual's now mystifying name. . . [and it] is unexpectedly made visible in this case." Such a

mediation is typically desirable: if the manuscript is too foreign, the reader will become

frustrated. Had Comfort truly presented us with the texts as they actually were—sans verse

and chapter divisions, without supplying likely missing letters and words, and in a relatively

unpunctuated, un-spaced majuscule format—the reference points would be too few and too

general even for the most patient of scholars. I will attempt to display shortly, however, how

that mediation—that blessed mediation—could also skew results.

What sorts of readings, or lack thereof, can we find in this particular manuscript? I have

chosen four points for consideration.

First, almost from the moment of publication, scholars have taken up a discussion of the

obvious presence of at least two scribes in P66. If you will remember from §1.2, there appears to

have been an original scribe, slavish to his exemplar, who made corrections as he produced his

first copy. After the first copy was made, a *diorthotes* read it through, checking the orthography

and intelligibility of the text, paginating the first 99 pages, and making extensive changes,

grammatically and substantively, to the text, rendering it away from a rougher text toward a

more Alexandrian type text, according to Comfort (376). Then a second paginator/corrector

made very minor changes and heavily marked up John 13 with breathing marks in

preparation for an oral reading.[59] This multiplex process produced an interesting hybrid text of

its own, and some interesting readings.

Comfort and others have pointed out some of those interesting readings which show not

only how the text was changed over time to suit the needs of the reader, or possibly even the

community, but also how these readings show the various scribes' "reader-reception

processing. From these readings, we can see some of [their] unique receptions. On occasion,

[they] read into a present text a previous text" (382), or, they read into the Gospel of John what

appears to be a passage from a synoptic Gospel. One such instance occurred when the original

scribe copied John 21:6. Jesus, in disguise, had asked his disciples for some food, but they

replied that they had none. And so he commanded them to cast in their nets. Without saying a

word, they did so and were not able to draw in their nets because of all the fishes. But in P66,

after receiving the command to cast in their nets, they reply, ελαβ[ομεν επι δε τω] σω [ο]νομ[ατι

—"we shall cast in your name."[60] The scribe seems to have had Luke 5:5 in mind, where, in a

similar situation and after a night of no success as fishermen, Jesus commands his disciples to

cast in their nets, at which point Peter replies, ελαβομεν επι δε τω ρηματι σου—"nevertheless *at*

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[59] See §1.2 above for a discussion of the marked passages in John 13. For a fuller discussion of the scribes and correctors in P66 consult Ernest C. Colwell, "Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt, 370-89 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965); Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts:* A Corrected, Enlarged Edition of *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), 371-78; Gordon D. Fee, *Papyrus Bodmer II (P66): Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics*, Studies and Documents 34 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968); ibid., "Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II and the Nestle Greek Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 1 (March, 1965): 66-72; ibid., "The Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II and Early Textual Transmission," *Novum Testamentum* 7, no. 4 (1965): 247-257; and Erroll F. Rhodes, "The Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II," *New Testament Studies* 14 (Jan., 1968): 271-81.

[60] I must point out, as the existence of brackets demonstrates, this reading is dependent on a reconstructed text.

thy word we shall cast" (italics added). Here, according to Comfort, we have an instance of a

scribe reading and writing into John a similar episode from Luke.

Second, to the joy of many scholars worldwide, P66 does not contain the pericope of the

Adulteress (John 7:52-8:11), nor the stirring of the water by the Angel at the Bethesda pool (John

5: 4), making it the earliest witness to not contain these spurious, addendum passages.

Third, although there has been an unsettled debate over how this manuscript ought to

be classified in the Wescott and Hort system—whether it is Western, Alexandrian, 'neutral,' or

even Caesarean[61]—there are some typical Alexandrian readings, the most obvious of which is

found in John 1:18. P66 contains the more difficult reading—instead of μονογενης υιος, as in the

majority of the later texts, it has μονογενης θεος, revealing a unique Alexandrian Christology.[62]

For my fourth and final example, I have chosen a sticky one. It concerns the transition

between verses three and four of John 1. It has been difficult for scholars to agree on where the

verse should break. I give the verses here, using Comfort's transcription exactly as it appears—

including versification—for your convenience; any and all translations are my own:

> ³παντα δι αυτου εγενετο· και χωρις α[υτου
> εγενετο ουδεν ο γεγονεν ⁴αυτω ζωη ην
> και η ζωη ην το φως των ανθρωπω

Most of the manuscripts that contain punctuation show a punctuation mark before ο γεγονεν in

verse 3. The Nestle-Aland 27th, while putting the punctuation mark before ο γεγονεν in

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[61] See Floyd V. Filson, "A New Papyrus Manuscript of the Gospel of John," *Biblical Archaeologist* 20, no. 3 (Sept., 1957): 53-63; A. F. J. Klijn, "Papyrus Bodmer II (John I-XIV) and the Text of Egypt," *New Testament Studies* 3 (July, 1957): 327-334; and Howard M. Teeple and F. Allyn Walker, "Notes on the Plates in Papyrus Bodmer II," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78, no. 2 (1959): 148-152. Klijn's article is by far the best, but it should be noted that all three of these articles were written before the 1962 facsimile edition had been published.

[62] For an excellent argument that this Alexandrian reading is a deliberate corruption of the text within the early Egyptian church and not the original reading, contrary to what the Alands claim, see Ehrman, 78-82.

agreement with the majority of manuscripts, nevertheless divides the verse *after* ο γεγονεν—

and Comfort follows the versification of the 27th here despite there being no punctuation in

P66—which gives the following reading:

> 3 All things through him came to be; and apart from him did nothing come to be which
>
> came to be. 4 To him was life [or, perhaps, "He had life"[63]] and that life was the light of
>
> men.

If the punctuation were to be taken before ο γεγονεν, it would read instead:

> 3 All things through him came to be; and apart from him did nothing come to be. 4 That
>
> which came to be by him was life and that life was the light of men.

This may seem like a small point, but the theological ramifications could be significant: the

former suggests that the life itself of Jesus was the light of men—an idea played out in the Bread

of Life sermon or in the episode of the Woman at the Well, for example—, while the latter

presents a more abstract concept of Jesus bringing about light through various acts of creation.

The latter, more abstract reading may be correct, especially if one considers it relatively

implausible to begin a sense-unit like this with the dative αυτω. Starting the sense-unit with ο

γεγονεν, moreover, leaves a more elegant parallel structure to the passage. Unfortunately, as

you can see, though P66 has some punctuation, no punctuation mark occurs just before or just

after ο γεγονεν in Comfort's text. Here is a startling case of mediation: Comfort's accordance at

this point with the Nestle-Aland 27th has guided the reader, despite the text itself, to make a

verse break after ο γεγονεν. The mediation creates an interesting tension. But that is not all.

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[63] See also W. A. Wordsworth, "The Bodmer Papyrus and the Prologue of St. John's Gospel," *Novum Testamentum* 2, no. 1 (Jan., 1957): 1-7

Comfort's text may be incomplete. An online picture of this section[64] shows that there very

well may be a puzzling placement of punctuation—inside a word—between the ε and ν of the

word ουδεν, which suggests to me scribal error.[65] Most of the early manuscripts have ουδε εν

("not even one") where P66 has ουδεν, and εν αυτω where P66 simply has αυτω. [Although,

P66 does have support for ουδεν in the first scribes of both Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ) and Codex

Bezae (D).] The various presences and absences of the letters εν make for an interesting surmise

as to the original reading. But if scribal error is involved—a reasonable conjecture based on the

presence of a high colon between the ε and ν in P66, and on the frequency of ουδε εν in other

early manuscripts—the scribe may have accidentally truncated ουδε εν, indicating the following

reading for the exemplar:

> [3]παντα δι αυτου εγενετο· και χωρις α[υτου
> εγενετο ουδε[· [4]ε]ν ο γεγονεν αυτω ζωη ην
> και η ζωη ην το φως των ανθρωπω

> (3 All things through him came to be; and apart from him did nothing come to be. 4

> That which came to be in him was life, and that life was the light of men.)

If this is the reading of P66's exemplar, then the second, prepositional εν–before αυτω in other

early manuscripts–may have been moved and either conflated with the numerical εν in ουδε εν,

or it may contain the original reading; that is, a reading without the ugly homonymic

duplication.[66] The presence of punctuation would support a verse break before ε]ν ο γεγονεν,

then, contrary to Comfort's transcription and the reconstruction of the 27th, and would

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[64] Found at http://www.earlham.edu/~seidti/iam/tc_pap66.html

[65] The website further states, in defense of a break before ο γεγονεν, that there is an inordinate amount of space between the ν of the word ουδεν and the following ο. But if you will turn to Appendix C, you will see that "inordinate" is a relative term.

[66] I admit that this is a matter of taste, as a double εν—the numerical immediately followed by the prepositional— would create a clever chiasm.

leave an equally elegant bracketed line, emphasizing that "that which was created"

was indeed ε]ν ... αυτω; and it was life.

§1.3 THE GENERAL/INVARIANT GOSPEL OF JOHN
"ALL THAT IS EXPLICIT IN THE [GOSPEL] ITSELF APART FROM ITS CONTEXT AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF UTTERANCE"; THE GOSPEL INTERPRETED BROADLY

> In the complex dialectic of Adorno, for example, texts reflect social realities even—or especially—in their forms and structures. But as art, they also criticize and oppose society, preserving the utopian moment of reconciliation, though only as art's illusion.
> -David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?*

After spending time with the particularities of P66, and focusing on the illuminating differences the study of individual manuscripts can provide, our Categorical Ananke compels us to return to a more ideal sense of the Gospel. I will now be leaving P66 behind, as well as the complications that true Secondness—in this case the existential crisis created by the absence of an autograph—brings to the table. This section will emphasize, then, the general character of the Gospel. I will take up two parts: (a) the issue of structural (narrative) integrity (the 3 in 1-3), and (b) the issue of community provenance (the 1 in 1-3).

Two of the most important issues coming into their own over the past fifty years in Western Biblical scholarship are the twin issues of textual integrity (i.e. how do we deal with apparent aporias and discontinuities of a text?) and community provenance (i.e. what sort of community might have given rise to a particular text?).

Regarding the first issue, that of textual integrity, many theories have been propounded, not the least of which is the proposition that there is a common source behind the synoptic

gospels, a source which scholars have called the Gospel of Q. Associated primarily with the

University of Toronto and the group of scholars residing and practicing at the Claremont

Graduate School in California, the Gospel of Q is the hypothetical text behind Luke and

Matthew. These scholars have taken the texts of the synoptic gospels and searched for passages

that are identical in every way—syntactically and lexically—in order to prove that they drew

from a common source. Despite the claims of Q apologists, claims which are more often than

not founded on tautologies,[67] this is a delicate and tenuous endeavor with as equally delicate

and tenuous conclusions. It is an interesting avenue to pursue, but leaves one wondering how

much can actually be learned from such an approach.

More applicable than Q-studies to the textual integrity of the Gospel of John are the

theories set forth by Rudolf Bultmann and Robert Fortna. Prior to 1957, investigations of

possible sources for the Gospel of John had been ended by the work of Ernst Ruckstuhl and

Eduard Schweizer (1939), both of whom thought they had proved that there was such a unity

within the Gospel of John that no earlier source documents could be detected—much less

extracted—from it. But in 1957, John A. T. Robinson opened up what is now termed the New

Look Era.[68] Robinson's address centered around an obscure text written by Rudolf Bultmann in

1941, and it reopened the question of sources for the Gospel of John. Bultmann had posited that

each source for the Gospel of John had a distinct style from the Evangelist's style, which

included such things as vocabulary, grammar, poetic rhythm, dialogue and misunderstanding,

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[67] That is, the assumption of a Q leads to certain conclusions which are then turned back toward Q to prove its very existence.

[68] See Thomas Thatcher, "The Sings Gospel in Context," in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*, eds. Fortna, Robert T. and Tom Thatcher, 191-198 (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). The discussion of Rudolf Bultmann which immediately follows is based on this chapter.

as well as some theological tendencies that the Evangelist failed to change when he

incorporated them into his text, which resulted in theological tensions within the Gospel.

According to Bultmann, there are three sources for John: a Signs Source; a Passion Source; and

Offenbarungsreden—"revelation-discourses"—which formed the basis of Jesus' speeches. The

Signs Source gave rise to the narrative section (John 2-12, roughly), which consists of signs eight

in number: the Cana wedding; the Samaritan woman; the nobleman's son; the paralytic at

Bethesda; the miraculous feeding; Jesus at the feast; the man born blind; and Lazarus. These

signs were used to prove the divinity of Christ and were taken from the same primitive

traditions that gave rise to the synoptics. The Evangelist, so the story goes, combined this

source with others to produce a text which was later redacted into our current text.

Bultmann also suggests that these signs seem to be presented by the Evangelist or a

redactor as if Jesus were trying to prove his Messiahship and to teach thereby the people of his

Christological significance. Robert Fortna doubts that that is the intention behind Jesus'

miracles; instead, they arose, he suggests, only out of natural situations of someone in need.

With the Passion narrative we have the same principle at work: the redactors/authors imposed a

Hebrew Bible prophetic interpretation onto the Passion narrative to prove that Christ needed to

suffer and die in the ignominious manner in which he did in order to fulfill prophecy.

Likewise, the cleansing of the temple is 'justified' with a different Hebrew scripture in the

Gospel of John than in the synoptics.

Robert Fortna, on the other hand, who worked under J. Louis Martyn, posited a similar

source in 1965 and 1970—a Signs Gospel—which contained the miracle stories and a passion

narrative.[69] The Evangelist used this gospel to produce the current text. Fortna relies on the

existence of aporias—conspicuous seams and stylistic differences—, which many detect in the

surface texture of the Gospel of John, to prove the existence of a Signs Gospel. These aporias are

interruptions, doublets, passages with dense or overloaded wording, inconsistencies,

disjunctures and hard connections, repetitive resumptions, sequence problems, terminological

shifts, and theological inconsistencies. Furthermore, there are three categories of aporias:

stylistic (cross-textual inconsistencies in material, i.e., between John and 2 John or Revelation);

contextual (disruptions in the flow of the text); and ideological ["no two authors have precisely

the same point of view, so that anyone who adapts an earlier work . . . will nevertheless at times

exhibit disagreement with it" (Thatcher, 194)]. Later (1988), Fortna posited that the narratives of

the deeds of Jesus must be separated from the discourses of Jesus, the latter being the

Evangelist's commentary on the former, which were the earlier, more historical accounts of

what actually happened.

(Enter the Secondness Heresy: these are fascinating, elaborate and productive proposals,

and they do go far in giving us a sense of the character of the literary event we call the Gospel of

John, but one can see certain problems already: these arguments assume an extant autograph, or

something very close to it, when all we actually have are hypothetical reconstructions and

variant manuscripts of differing quality and age. It is difficult to argue for the character of the

Gospel of John by using aporias, conspicuous seams, and stylistic differences when the nature

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[69] See Robert T. Fortna, "Jesus Tradition in the Signs Gospel," in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*, eds. Fortna, Robert T. and Thomas Thatcher, 199-208 (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); and Thomas Thatcher, "The Signs Gospel in Context," in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*, eds. Fortna, Robert T. and Thomas Thatcher, 191-198 (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), for a further discussion of what follows.

of those aporias may change from manuscript to manuscript. Their very existence may be owing to a reconstructed or altered text. On the one hand, we ought not to allow the Protean state of our manuscripts to render us powerless to say anything about the Gospel, but on the other hand, the actual manuscripts we do possess ought to be more critically considered before anything more general is stated.)

Once these sources had been established and accepted as probable realities, scholars then began to put them to good use. They were even used to lend support to the idea of community provenance. In 1968, J. Louis Martyn posited a set of circumstances surrounding the genesis of the Gospel of John which had not hitherto been proposed. The idea was that the Gospel of John organically developed out of a particular community and according to particular phases through which the community ventured. Raymond Brown's book, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*—still the seminal work in this area of study—, sets forth more systematically and in quite some detail what those particular phases of the community might have consisted of, as well as what their respective needs might have been.[70] Brown posits a remarkable progression for the Gospel of John, a progression which reveals not only the various stages of community growth, but also the demographics of those stages.

Phase One of the community was the pre-Gospel phase that saw the origination of the community and its struggles against mid-first century Judaism, culminating notably in its expulsion by the Jewish authorities from the synagogues in 85. This phase probably took place from the 50s through the 80s. Phase Two, which took place c. 90, saw the main body of the

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[70] For a fuller discussion of community provenance, see Raymond E. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*; and J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

Gospel written. There was still a lot of antagonism from Jewish congregations at this time,

and Gentile conversions were slow. Phase Three took place c. 100 during the internal schisms

that divided the Johannine community—the schisms documented in the Johannine Epistles—

and Brown suggests that the main division was between two groups of Johannine disciples who

had come to interpret the Gospel in significantly different ways. And Phase Four saw the two

groups at last parting ways permanently, the one that wrote the Epistles merging with

mainstream Christianity, and the other more heterodox group moving "rapidly in the second

century toward docetism, gnosticism, Cerinthianism, and Montanism" (24). Demographically

speaking, Brown asserts that the community began with Jewish anti-Temple converts, then

moved through Samaritan converts to Gentile converts.

In general I find Brown's fundamental propositions appealing and plausible, and by

basing his examination of the Gospel around the history of a developing Johannine community,

he ascribes and inscribes a unique character to the Gospel, one not considered before. The

various structural and narratological theories put forth by Bultmann, Fortna, et al. are equally

appealing, and whatever level of plausibility one might attribute to their conclusions, their

investigations have at least demonstrated that there is indeed a general character of the Gospel

of John that deserves to be further attended to. Such attention to the Firstness of Thirdness

sense of the Gospel would continue to elucidate its consciousness and identity.

Further implications of "character" studies on the Gospel of John will be considered in

the Conclusion.

§3.3 THE LIVED GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE ANALYTICAL PURPOSES TO WHICH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS PUT; WHAT INTERPRETATION
LEADS ONE TO DO

> Whether literature is desirable is, [Samuel] Johnson agrees, debatable, for
> whatever may be a source of happiness can also be a cause of misery.
> But, says Johnson, if the debate is referred 'to *necessity*, the controversy is
> at an end.' So also with literary history. It has an indispensable role in
> our experience of literature and a broader social or cultural function as
> well. My opinion is, then, that we cannot write a literary history with
> intellectual conviction, but we must read it. The irony and paradox of
> this argument are themselves typical of our present moment in history.
> —David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?*

At last we have arrived at the Final Interpretant. In many ways this section could be just
as comprehensive as §1.1, and therefore undoable. To take fully into account the "lived" Gospel
of John, one would need to trace all the individual and communal appropriations, receptions,
and applications; and if it "should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself
could not contain the books that should be written."[71] Other approaches could be taken. This
thesis itself is a prime example of what the Thirdness node (3-3) contains: at some point the
Gospel of John became important and interesting to me on a personal level, and that interest—
born from my own religious and interpretive endeavors—led me on to study the Gospel in
greater depth and eventually to make it the subject of this thesis.

The writing of any critical work based on the interpretive tools of a discipline or
community fulfills the requirements of a 3-3 hermeneutic; to demonstrate the analytically
interpretive nature of this node, however, I give a critical exercise designed to illuminate minute
aspects of the Gospel of John. After all, "The function of literary history lies partly in its impact
on reading. We write literary history because we want to explain, understand, and enjoy

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[71] John 21:25.

literary works" (Perkins, 178). I hope what I have attempted will aid in understanding and

explaining, if not enjoying. It has been adapted and expanded from a previous study I did on

formulae in Revelation. Where there I focused on a repeated eschatology, including that

implicit in the formula ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, here I will focus on the third aspect of

this formula—ὁ ἐρχόμενος—in the Gospel of John. And with it I finish out A Literary History,

Or A Categorical Hermeneutic.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

> The Messiah was at the gates of Rome unrecognized, dressed in rags.
> But one man who recognized that this was the Messiah went up to him
> and asked him, "When will you come?" I think this is very profound. It
> means that there is some inadequation between the now and now. He is
> coming now; the messianic does not wait. This is a way of waiting for
> the future, right now. The responsibilities that are assigned to us by this
> messianic structure are responsibilities for here and now. The Messiah is
> not some future present; it is imminent.
> —Jacques Derrida

> καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ γνωρίσω, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ἥν
> ἠγάπησάς με ἐν αὐτοῖς η κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

> (And I have made known to them your name; and I will make it known,
> so that the love with which you have loved me might be in them, even as
> I am in them.)
> —John 17:26

SOME WORDS ON THE "DIVINE TITLE" IN REVELATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

When considering ὁ ὢν in the apparent divine title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος as

contained in Revelation, much is made of its connection to Exodus 3:14, especially its syntactical

resonance with the LXX: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν. Later in this same verse, יהוה tells Moses to tell the

people that "ὁ ὢν" sent him. Both ἐγώ εἰμι and ὁ ὢν are significant to the Johannine corpus.

The former occurs close to 50 times in the Gospel of John alone, the majority of which

occurrences are Jesus' own words and appear in contexts that display a conscious allusion to

Exodus 3:14.[72] The latter occurs twice in Matthew and four times in Luke; but only one verse

each in Matthew and Luke have ὤν along with the definite article ὁ, as in the LXX. The other

instances do not.[73] Beyond that, 21 of the 44 instances of ὁ ὤν in the New Testament occur in the

Johannine corpus: 16 times in the Gospel of John, and 5 in Revelation. 7 of the instances in John,

and all 5 in Revelation, contain the full formula ὁ ὤν instead of just the participle. Furthermore,

2 of the 7 instances in John do not refer to the Christ.[74] That leaves 5 important references in the

Gospel and 5 in Revelation. Given these few but significant references to Jesus as ὁ ὤν, as well

as the importance of ἐγώ εἰμι in the Johannine corpus, I think there is a direct reference to

Exodus 3:14 in the Revelation formula.[75] The origin of the second element in the formula, ὁ ην,

may or may not be problematic, but I will return to this phrase later when I discuss possible

structural meanings of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in the light of Peircean Categories.

    The neglected third element—ὁ ἐρχόμενος—and its function within the Fourth Gospel

is the subject of this study. I admit at the outset that my analysis here will only include the

passages in and out of the Fourth Gospel that explicitly contain the words ὁ ἐρχόμενος, and

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[72] It also occurs in the Gospel of John no less than five times in the negative in the mouth of John the Baptist. In John 1, when asking about the tenor of his mission, his interrogators invoke several Messianic traditions. In each case, John responds with some form of οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγώ, thereby directly denying any connection on his part to Exodus 3:14 or other Messianic traditions derived there from. In the same chapter, however, John the Baptist applies ὁ ἐρχόμενος to Jesus, which makes the resonance of Exodus in Revelation's tripartite formula all the more forceful. (In v. 27, ὁ ἐρχόμενος and οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγώ occur adjacent to one another.)

[73] Except for Matthew 12:30 [Luke 11:23]: ὁ μὴ ων μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ κατ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐστιν, καὶ ὁ μὴ συνάγων μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ σκορπίζει. This verse has nothing to do with any divine title, however.

[74] The first, John 10:12, is used in reference to the hired shepherd who flees at the first sign of trouble. The other, John 12:17, refers insignificantly to "the people who were with" Jesus.

[75] For a fuller discussion of ὁ ὤν as a reference to Exodus 3:14 in the Johannine corpus, as well as its use as a divine name in Hellenistic Judaism and as applied to magical amulets, see Aune 30-3.

will not touch on the manifold instances where the idea of ὁ ἐρχόμενος occurs. A full

analysis would need to consider also the idea. My goal is three-fold: I will first compare the

use of ὁ ἐρχόμενος as a name of God in the Gospel of John with other usages in the New

Testament—particularly in the Gospels and Revelation—and in possible LXX sources and/or

allusions. I will also touch on a similar and common Greco-Roman formulae that readers and

auditors of John would have known. This last point will lead directly to my second goal, which

will be to examine the occasional nature of this name and how it relates to the Tetragrammatic

sayings, morphologically and semantically. To do this, I will perform a short structural analysis

based again on the semiotics of C. S. Peirce. And finally, I wish to touch on the extra-textual

implications of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in the Gospel: not only is the name occasional, but it is also

perpetual; the Christ is always in the process of coming, even when He is *present*.

A. THE TEXTUAL ὁ ἐρχόμενος
The use of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in the Johannine corpus as compared to other textual instances in the LXX and New Testament; also, its connection to a Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Judaic formula, which exhibits a "tidier" construction of simple past, present and future.

The phrase ὁ ἐρχόμενος occurs 19 times in the gospels: 4 times in Matthew; once in

Mark; 6 times in Luke; and 8 times in John. (Please see Appendix A for a full list of ὁ

ἐρχόμενος verses in the NT, *Hermas* and the Hebrew Bible.) Beyond the Gospels it occurs only

7 times in the NT, 3 of which occur in Revelation. In other words, of the 26 times it occurs in the

NT, 11 are found in the Johannine corpus. Even more significant are the uses of it. Let us also

further narrow the scope to those instances in which the phrase refers specifically to Jesus

Christic.[76] Doing so leaves 19 NT occurrences that refer to Jesus Christ himself. These

occurrences are descriptive, and it is easy to see how the phrase could become a roaming

participle, destined to describe several facets of the Christ. Here is a breakdown of those verses,

as taken from Appendix A and grouped thematically:

1	Matthew 3:11; **John 1:15, 1:27**	Matthew 3:11 ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν· ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μού ἐστιν, οὐ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί· **John 1:15** Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. **John 1:27** ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος.
2	Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19, 20	Matthew 11:3 εἶπεν αὐτῷ, σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν; Luke 7:19 ἔπεμψεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον λέγων, σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; 20 παραγενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες εἶπαν, Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς ἀπέστειλεν ἡμᾶς πρὸς σὲ λέγων, σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν;
3	**John 3:31**	**John 3:31** Ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν· ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλεῖ.
4	**3:31**	ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν·
5	**6:14**	**John 6:14** Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτος ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.
6	**11:27**	**John 11:27** λέγει αὐτῷ, ναί, κύριε· ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.
7	Matthew 21:9, 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35, 19:38; **John 12:13**	Matthew 21:9 οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι οἱ προάγοντες αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἔκραζον λέγοντες, ὡσαννὰ τῷ υἱῷ Δαυίδ· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. Mark 11:9 καὶ οἱ προάγοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἔκραζον, ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· εὐλογημένη ἡ ἐρχομένη βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Δαυίδ· ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. Luke 13:35 ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν. λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἴδητέ με ἕως ἥξει ὅτε εἴπητε, εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου **John 12:13** ἔλαβον τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων καὶ ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐκραύγαζον, ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.
8	**Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8**	**Revelation 1:4** Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ

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[76] I will discard right away three instances: Luke 15:25, where it refers to the older brother of the Prodigal Son "coming" from the field after hearing music and dancing; and Luke 6:47 [John 6:35], where it refers to the "someone" who hears Jesus' words and does them: i.e., the Wise Man. These are the anomalies. The latter two are doctrinally significant, but they do not have any direct bearing on ὁ ἐρχόμενος as a name for deity. Since the use of ὁ ἐρχόμενος as a title of God seems to be unique to the Johannine corpus, we should not expect sayings that spring from an earlier tradition, such as the saying in Luke, to carry the same semantic value as the Johannine author(s) later invests them with.

| | [11:17; 16:5] | 8 Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ω, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

 4:8 καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῷα, ἕν καθ᾽ ἕν αὐτῶν ἔχων ἀνὰ πτέρυγας ἕξ, κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν· καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες, ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

 [11:17 λέγοντες, εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην [[καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος]], ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας·

 16:5 καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ ἀγγέλου τῶν ὑδάτων λέγοντος, δίκαιος ει, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην, ὁ ὅσιος, ὅτι ταῦτα ἔκρινας,] |
| 9 | Hebrews 10:37 | Hebrews 10:37 ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει· |

I have included Hebrews 10:37 here because it is the only non-Evangelistic (if we take Revelation to be "Evangelistic," whoever the author(s) may be) occurrence of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in the NT. A cursory glance at the table shows a marked bias toward the Johannine corpus: 9 Johannine to 3 Matthean, 1 Marcan, 4 Lucan and 1 Deutero-Pauline. Also significant, I think, is that every occurrence in the non-Johannine corpus has a direct counterpart in John, including Matthew 11:3 [Luke 7:19, 20], which can be connected thematically to John 11:27.[77] The exception is Hebrews 10:37, which does not have a direct Johannine counterpart. It seems rather to be an appropriation of Habakkuk 2:3. Hebrews 10:37 refers directly to the one who is coming:

ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει·

(For it is but a little while longer and the one who is coming will come and will not

delay.)

The one who is coming is doing so to finally give the faithful the reward they already know they have in heaven (vv. 34-6); the Pauline author in Hebrews is connecting the idea contained in Habakkuk's coming vision with the future coming of the Christ. Habakkuk's vision states,

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[77] Mary replaces John the Baptist (or, rather, his disciples) as Jesus' interlocutor in the latter episode. A crucial difference is that Martha confesses Jesus, something John does not—in this episode, at least.

διότι ἔτι ὅρασις εἰς καιρὸν καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν· ἐὰν

ὑστερήσῃ, ὑπόμεινον αυτόν, ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσῃ.

(Your vision is yet for an appointed time and at the end it will speak and not be empty;

even if it falls short, stand behind it, because when it comes it will surely come and will

not delay.)

The tenor of these verses in Habakkuk is one of earthly judgment: the Chaldeans are being

released on the Israelites in retribution for treachery. The vision is prefaced with the injunction

that Habakkuk write the vision so that whoever hears it might know to run (v. 2). In Hebrews,

however, the "one who is coming and not delaying" is connected with eschatological judgment

not earthly judgment, a connection that Revelation 16:5 also seems to make. And while the

verse in Habakkuk portends doom for the Israelites—though, as in Hebrews, there are a few

words of comfort for the faithful—, the verse in Hebrews is entirely one of comfort: the faithful

are to look forward to the end times and for the one who is coming *with their reward*.

This fact is reiterated by the Johannine author in the change in the Revelation formula in

Revelation 11:17 and 16:5. In 11:17, the formula changes to mimic the positive eschatological

tone in Hebrews:

εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν

δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας.

(We thank you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and the One who was, because you

have taken your great power and you have reigned.)

Presumably the absence of και ὁ ἐρχόμενος in this case is due to the fact that Christ has

stopped coming, at least for now, and that He is reigning with great power. The speaker is

giving thanks to God for it. But this reading depends upon the Nestle-Aland 27th. The

second hand of Sinaiticus and the Majority text contain καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος after ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην,

thereby maintaining the full divine title. (The Alands chose to leave out καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος

despite significant manuscript support ostensibly because it made more sense for the Christ to

no longer be "coming" if he had already come and was now reigning; they seem to have taken it

as a matter of theological consistency to omit καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. I will argue later, based on an

alternate system of theological consistency, that καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος should be there, not only

because it is part of a divine title, but more importantly because it is a Johannine peculiarity that

whether or not the Christ is present, he is always in the process of coming.)

Revelation 16:5, however, unequivocally changes the third element of the divine title—

that is, there are no extant variant readings that include καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, as in 11:17—but this

time the verse is more closely aligned with the negative eschatological sentiments in Habakkuk:

δίκαιος ει, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην, ὁ ὅσιος, ὅτι ταῦτα ἔκρινας.

(You are just, the One who is and the One who was, the Pious One, because you have

made these judgments.)

Here there is an interesting twist; properly speaking the third element has not been deleted, but

changed to suit the context. (A possible implication of this change will be considered below.)

Christ's judgment is over those who have "shed the blood of saints and prophets" (v. 6). These

are the two-fold results of Christ's coming: ruling in great power over the faithful (11:17), and

judging those who have martyred the prophets and saints (16:5).

The other relevant Hebrew Bible references are Daniel 7:13 and Psalms 118:26. In the

former, Daniel is describing the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.[78] The

resonances in Revelation to Daniel are extensive, and it is not surprising to see an important one

here:

> 13 ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτος καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς
>
> ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος ην καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφθασεν καὶ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ
>
> προσηνέχθη. 14 καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ ἀρχη καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ πάντες οἱ
>
> λαοί, φυλαί, γλῶσσαι αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν· ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἥτις οὐ
>
> παρελεύσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ οὐ διαφθαρήσεται.

> (13 I was in a vision of the night, and look: with the clouds of heaven, thus the Son of
>
> Man was coming, even until he came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before
>
> him. 14 And he was given the supreme power and the honor and the kingdom; and all
>
> peoples, tribes, and tongues will serve him; his power is eternal power that will not pass
>
> away, and his kingdom will not be destroyed.)

Again, ἐρχόμενος is linked in Daniel with eschatological power, and it evokes judgment and

dominion.

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[78] N.B. ἐρχόμενος only occurs in Theodotion's Greek translation—the translation I have used above—of Daniel 7:13. The LXX reads a little differently, though it still contains both a verbal form of "to come" as well as the idea of "coming":

> 13 ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἤρχετο, καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν, καὶ οἱ παρεστηκότες παρῆσαν αὐτῷ. 14 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένη καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῷ λατρεύουσα· καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἥτις οὐ μὴ ἀρθῇ, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, ἥτις οὐ μὴ φθαρῇ.

> (13 I was in a vision of the night, and look: upon the clouds of heaven, thus the Son of Man was coming, and thus the Ancient of Days was there, and those who had been raised up were brought to him. 14 And he was given power; and all the nations of the earth—according to their races—, and every glory, were serving him; and his power was eternal power that could never be carried off, and his kingdom one that could never be destroyed.)

Here, taken from Appendix A, is a list of the Hebrew Bible counterparts.

16	Psalms 117 [118]:26	Psalms 117 [118]:26 εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· εὐλογήκαμεν ὑμᾶς ἐξ οἴκου κυρίου.
17	Daniel 7:13, 14	Daniel 7:13 ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος ἦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφθασεν καὶ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ προσηνέχθη. 14 καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ πάντες οἱ λαοί, φυλαί, γλῶσσαι αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν· ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἥτις οὐ παρελεύσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ οὐ διαφθαρήσεται.
18	Habakkuk 2:3	Habakkuk 2:3 διότι ἔτι ὅρασις εἰς καιρὸν καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν· ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ, ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσῃ.

The final Hebrew Bible element I have not yet discussed is contained in Psalms 118:26. This Psalm is the source for the crowd's Hosanna shout during Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is a direct quotation of the LXX, the second half being an explicative expansion linking the one coming in the name of the lord to the King of Israel. It is laudatory of the King because he has saved the people:[79]

εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

(Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the lord, even the King of Israel.)

The context of the Psalm is a longing for redemption (vv. 21-25), a sentiment echoed in the Gospels in Jesus' mock-triumphal entry.[80] This last reference will be considered more fully below.

This brings me to the Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Judaic formula. (For a full discussion, see Aune, 30-2.) What suffices for the present study is that a standard formula for

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[79] The Harper-Collins bible also suggests this was a hymn to be sung during a penitent's ceremony of penance. The content of the hymn lends itself to such an interpretation (827-8).

[80] By "mock-triumphal entry," I do not mean to suggest that the crowd or the literary author of the account meant to poke fun of the Roman triumphal procession, and certainly not of Jesus, but there is a sort of peremptory—and for that reason inappropriate—sentiment of celebration for the reader, since the reader will know what is about to become of Jesus. The victory, of course, was paradoxically on the cross. Still, the perfection of victory was always seen in some future *coming* time, and it would be brought about by the ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

God, the gods and sometimes the primal elements in the Hellenistic world would be similar

to the following, which is a dedication to Zeus:

Ζεὺς ἠν, Ζεὺς ἔστιν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται.

(Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be.)

There is a temporal tidiness to this formulation that gets spoiled in the Johannine formula; as

Aune notes, "Instead of the phrase ὁ ἐρχόμενος, 'the one who will come,' one fully expects the

temporal expression ὁ ἐσόμενος, 'the one who will be' (Kraft, 31). This expression is found in

Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 5.6), who claims that the name of God is pronounced Ιαουέ,

which he interprets as 'the one who is and who will be (ὁ ὦν καὶ ὁ ἐσόμενος)'" (32). Aune

leaves it at that. I think his translation of ὁ ἐρχόμενος is disputable. To translate it as "the one

who will come" is not unreasonable, of course, but strictly speaking, it is "the one who is

coming," a decidedly more difficult construction, as it entails the presentness of the future as

opposed to a future present (a notion Derrida likewise opposes in the quotation above). But

what is the temporal significance of the present participle versus the future finite verb?

B.I. PEIRCE AND THE PARTICIPLE

Thus far I have taken up the Categories of Peirce as an organizing hermeneutic. C. S.

Peirce developed a triadic structure shortly before Saussure developed his dyadic one. It was

unfortunate that Peirce became lost for most of the twentieth century, as Peirce's model by its

very structure solved many of the problems the dyadic structuralist model gave rise to. As has

already been noted, Peirce's model, which he developed for many intellectual spheres, was

based on the proposition that there are three fundamental modes of being, which could be extended infinitely (one supposes) along triadic lines. The first mode is that of Possibility (Firstness; Sign); the second of Reality (Secondness; Object); the third of Law (Thirdness; Interpretant). Within the tidier Greco-Roman formula above, there is a precise perfect Peircean arrangement: "Zeus was" is Secondness, because it has passed and is static. "Zeus is" is Firstness, because the present is (as yet un)defined as immediate possibility; it is something of the now. "Zeus will be" is Thirdness, because it is the consequence of the nature of his being that Zeus has always existed, that he exists now, and that he will always exist in the future. The formula is a temporal net. There is no assertion to anything except the eternal ontology of Zeus.

The first two elements of the Revelation formula temporally match the first two elements in the Greco-Roman formula. ὁ ἐρχόμενος, however, differs from the third element in the Greco-Roman formula in that it semantically deprives God of his future absoluteness. That is, the Revelation title no longer refers to God according to his eternal, all-temporal modes of being, but rather He is semanticized in relation to a concrete, adaptable action: that of "coming". Within this free-floating participle—and in Peircean terms this would be Firstness of Firstness, that is, endocentric and non-analytic—the subject is contained by the verbal action, and *always* contained by it. Without any further modification, it is the nature of God to always be in the process of *coming*. It is the genius of the Fourth Evangelist that has given God a metaphoric name that could thereby give meaning to his community. After showing through comparisons with Hebrew and Christian scripture—and obliquely through the Greco-Roman formula—that ὁ ἐρχόμενος carries with it an eschatological expectation, and after demonstrating through

Peirce that ὁ ἐρχόμενος is itself carried by its context as much as it carries its text, it is to the progressive contextualization of this third element in the Gospel of John that I now turn.

B.II. THE CONTEXTUAL ὁ ἐρχόμενος
The occasional nature of the divine names in general as narrative results; the occasional nature of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in the Gospel of John.

Before examining the occasional nature of the divine name ὁ ἐρχόμενος, and perhaps its legitimacy as a divine name, I wish first to discuss the occasional nature of the names of God in general.

It is no secret that when a divine name is encountered, it is, for all intents and purposes, used descriptively: the Lamb of God; the Holy One of Israel; the Lord of Hosts; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the Messiah/Christ ("anointed one"); Son of God; and Son of Man— these are just a few. Not only are these names used by Biblical authors to reveal fundamental aspects of the divine character, but in revealing that character the relationship between the human and the divine is manifest. And all of these revelations are within a narrative setting. Paul Ricoeur in *Figuring the Sacred* states:

> The naming of God is thus first of all a narrative naming. The theology of traditions names God in accord with a historical drama that recounts itself as a narrative of liberation. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and is, therefore, the Actant of the great gesture of deliverance. And God's meaning as Actant is bound up with the founding events in which the community of interpretation recognizes itself as enrooted, set up, and established. It is these events that name God. (225)

A passage such as this could be written by any apophatic theologian. In this instance,

Ricoeur refers to the divine name "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". As he points out,

this name is established within the context of a soteriological narrative: the God of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob is the great deliverer of those patriarchs and their children, temporally and

spiritually. This remained the standard soteriological name of God even after the Exodus,

though the Exodus itself also became a central soteriological reference point for naming God.

A community's conceptual framework is incomplete, lingering between combustion and

collapse, without a great narrative episode to serve as a center. The community surrounding

the Johannine corpus, as well as most Christians, would have located one of their foundational

moments in the far-reaching, traumatic death of Jesus Christ. But this event does not fully

explain the ὁ ἐρχόμενος; the Evangelistic context of the advent is ambiguous: was his mortal

tenure and salvific death the event that defined ὁ ἐρχόμενος? Was it the Eschaton that defined

it? Or is it perhaps the nature of the Christ to always be coming? I suggest that these

possibilities are equally plausible, nor are they mutually exclusive. We can have one or all.

And indeed, the threefold coming—(a) mortal, (b) eschatological, and (c) perpetually

imminent[81]—may represent an interesting progression in the historical theology of Judeo-

Christian communities: the Hellenistic Jews (mortal); the first Christian communities after Jesus'

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[81] Again, a Peircean triadic structure can be observed to be at work here: (a) *mortal* would be a Firstness coming as it would entail the unequivocal and direct presence of the Messiah as prophet and king and would mark the beginning of a new history for Israel on earth; (b) *eschatological* would be a Secondness coming as it would entail the finality of judgment and the end of history on earth; and (c) *perpetually imminent* would be a Thirdness type of coming as it would entail the supreme relativity of God: there would be no beginning or end, only aspect. The Messiah's coming would always be in the process of occurring and would always be supremely individual and intimate. That would be its very definition.

death (eschatological); and Christian and Jewish communities decades and centuries removed from the destruction of Jerusalem (perpetually imminent).

The Messiah's mortal coming was the event that many Jews were looking for when Jesus made his appearance. To those of us who have now been immersed in Greek grammars, after such phrases as ὁ ἐρχόμενος—a verb (participle) of motion—there is an expectation for an immediately subsequent purpose clause.[82] I would then ask, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, yes, but for what purpose? John 3:16 would be the standard pop-Christian answer to this question, and indeed, if we were to use this one scripture as the pivot on which the gospel could swing, the whole body of New Testament scripture surrounding this verse would seem to confirm it. But setting this pivot aside, the question is never explicitly answered in the ὁ ἐρχόμενος passages themselves; that is, they do not give a readily apparent answer.

The questions posed, directly in John 6:14 and indirectly in other verses, presuppose that the interrogators have all been expecting someone to come *to do something*. This is an obvious observation. But as is also evident in these Johannine passages, there must have been disparate Messianic traditions, each one entailing a different purpose for the "coming". One possible referent to the phrase ὁ ἐρχόμενος, as can be gleaned from the interrogation of John the Baptist by the Sanhedrin in John 1:20-21, is to the Messiah (Christ). But after he denies the imputation that he is the Messiah, the Baptist was further asked whether he was instead Elias, who, according to the prophet Malachi (4:5), was to come and restore all things; or the Prophet—the new law-giver and teacher—whom Moses said the Lord would raise up unto Israel (the Prophet

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[82] Perhaps even a naked infinitive.

is also directly referred to in John 6:14).[83] The assumptions behind this interrogation betray a

general sense of expectancy in Israel at this time; there must have been several Messianic

traditions and several Messianic figures for which an eccentric figure like the Baptist could have

been mistaken. F. F. Bruce remarks:

> At the time when John commenced his public career as a preacher of repentance in the
>
> Jordan valley, there was a widespread sense of expectancy abroad, especially among
>
> those pious Israelites who were 'looking for the redemption of Jerusalem' (Luke 2:38). . .
>
> . [The] loss of independence and the failure of the hopes that had been pinned to the
>
> Hasmonaean priest-kings brought about a revival of the ancient hope of a Messiah from
>
> the line of David. [*The Gospel of John* (Cambridge, MA: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1983), 46]

The Baptist was not from the line of David, but he may have nicely fit other Messianic

traditions: nevertheless, he denies being ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

Another one of these Messianic figures is made evident in the ὁ ἐρχόμενος saying

common to all the Gospels: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." As opposed to

the Prophet-Teacher found in the John the Baptist references and in John 6:14, and as opposed

to the other Gospel usages of Psalm 118, John 12:13 adds a phrase that refers to ὁ ἐρχόμενος as

the King of Israel: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." It

is likely that the Fourth Evangelist purposely conflated these traditions in order to show that

Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of all prophecy. Nevertheless, it seems that Hellenistic Jews

expected the King of Israel to come and save the people in this mortal sphere, as is evidenced in

the Hosanna shout in verse 13.

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[83] See Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Jesus, however, did not free the Jews from the Romans. To Jesus' followers, this fact must have disrupted the mortal expectations of a Messiah and necessitated a looking forward to another coming, one that would contain both a spiritual and a temporal salvation. The Revelation formula bears out this new eschatological expectation. All three times ὁ ἐρχόμενος is used in Revelation—four if you count 11:17—it is used in the phrase ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἠν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. The phrase is always found in the nominative, even when it follows a preposition as it does in Revelation 1:4, marking it out as the perpetual subject and, ultimately, as a divine title.[84] Speaking of this title, Wallace states, "The Seer is no doubt alluding to Exodus 3:14 in the LXX (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν), a text well familiar to early Gentile Christians" (63-64). But we need not look to Revelation for Exodic reverberations; the Gospel of John carries these same words. To understand the references in the Gospel to ἐγώ εἰμι and ὁ ὤν—and the ὁ ἐρχόμενος Revelation uniformly binds to them—it behooves us to ask, What is the context for the revelation of the divine name in Exodus 3:14? In other words, what is the narrative framework, after the Ricoeurean fashion, which gives birth to this name? The answer, in keeping with what has already been said and what will continue to be said, is that it occurs in a redemptive narrative framework. Ricoeur points out:

> Tradition has rightly named this episode [Exodus 3:14] the revelation of the divine name. This name is precisely unnamable. To the extent that to know a god's name was to have power over that god, the name confided to Moses is certainly that of the being whom humanity cannot really name, that is, hold at the mercy of our language:

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[84]Speaking of Rev 1:4, Wallace says, "Few scholars would disagree with Charles' assessment: 'The seer has deliberately violated the rules of grammar in order to preserve the divine name inviolate from the change which it would necessarily have undergone if declined. Hence the divine name is here in the nominative.'" (63)

> Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'"

Thus the appellative "Yahweh"—he is—is not a defining name but one that is a sign of the act of deliverance. Indeed, the text continues in these terms. . . . Far therefore, from the declaration "I am who I am" authorizing a positive ontology capable of capping off the narrative and other namings, instead it protects the secret of the "in-itself" of God, and this secret, in turn, sends us back to the narrative naming through the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and by degrees to the other namings. (228)

So, the original revelation of the "I am" does not comfortably fit our semantic categories, no matter how grammatically correct it may function. Yahweh evades a positive assertion of being, thereby, in effect, *not* revealing his 'it-itself' name. The revelation is therefore recast into a narrative context; in the context of this Hebrew Bible reference, the name of God must be revealed in a redemptive setting, as Ricoeur says, to protect "the secret of the 'in-itself' of God."[85] The ὁ ὤν and the ἐγώ εἰμι in the Gospel restate the in-itself-cloaking assertion of the

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[85] "Properly speaking, the name YHWH was never disclosed. In Genesis 4:26 there is no mention of disclosure at all, merely a notice as to how early in history recourse was had by humans to the Tetragrammaton. In Exodus 3 and 4, where the Tetragrammaton figures as if for the first time, there is the implicit denial (Chapter 3) and the explicit denial (Chapter 4) that YHWH had revealed himself to Israel's patriarchs by that name. . . . For YHWH is a written sign, never pronounced, and in the absence of vowels quite unpronounceable; it is the true *mark* of the one God as properly conceived, no matter what vocable identified" [Herbert Chanan Brichto, *The Names of God* (Oxford University Press: 1998), 104-105].

LXX,[86] whereas ὁ ἐρχόμενος can then be seen as the redemptive, narrativized and conceptual branch springing forth from this Hebraic root. ὁ ἐρχόμενος is the Redeemer, the deliverer, the ἐγώ εἰμι *in context*. That is why it is removed in the Gospel of John from the first 2/3 of the Revelation title: redemption is emphasized, not the "in-itself" of God; God's contextuality—not his ineffability—is stressed, for God defines himself in relation to his people.

C. THE EXTRA-TEXTUAL ὁ ἐρχόμενος
And finally, the implications of ὁ ἐρχόμενος *beyond the text. Not only is the name occasional, but it is also perpetual. Christ is always coming, even when He is here.*

Of the three types of comings, I have considered above (a) the mortal (Hellenistic Jewish) coming, and touched on (b) the eschatological (early Christian) coming. I have also considered the importance of a narrative framework for a community's identity. Just as there must be a founding event for a community to make sense of its world, a community must also have some conception of its end in order for it to be able to make sense of all that happens in between. There is a yearning for a mythic, cyclic world, and fiction is the result of such a yearning; it is a way to cope with the demands of history. If each present, the *nunc stans*, can only be seen as a frozen constellation,[87] then to view our own time, or the eternal now, as the end—as the terminus of the great history, as the end of times—is to see the end always near at hand. As frightening as it may be to contemplate an end, especially an apocalyptic end, there is a type of comfort in doing so. Linda Hutcheon aptly observes this apocalyptic tendency of our

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[86] One of the ways John cloaks the naming of God found in Exodus 3:14 is by predicating ἐγώ εἰμι, something he does with great frequency. This was a way of contextualizing the name of God while still allowing Jesus to identify himself with the God of the Hebrew Bible.

[87] For a discussion on the monadic structuring and redemption of history, see Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, Adams, Hazard, and Leroy Searle, eds. (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University Press, 1986).

age, though she makes it clear that she does not support it, when she writes in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2000):

> Despite all the apocalyptic rhetoric of a Charles Newman, a Jean Baudrillard, or an Arthur Kroker, I see little . . . to warrant such statements as:
>
> > Ours is a *fin-de-millennium* consciousness which, existing at the end of history in the twilight time of ultramodernism (of technology) and hyperprimitivism (of public moods), uncovers a great arc of disintegration and decay against the background radiation of parody, kitsch, and burnout.
>
> This neo-Nietzschean celebratory lament grants to the present a status that almost any past age could also have argued for itself, if it tried. While a delight to read, such rhetorical flourishes may presume too much. (222-3)

I would like to posit a reason for this apocalyptic feeling of end-times of which every age boasts—indeed, it seems that every age has looked for the end of the world and almost always in its own time—and suggest concrete evidences in favor of ὁ ἐρχόμενος fulfilling this function for the Johannine community.

In "The Sense of an Ending," Frank Kermode argues that all fictions are an attempt to fix a beginning and an end and thereby endow duration and meaning on the middle:

> Let us take a very simple example, the ticking of a clock. We ask what it says: and we agree that it says *tick-tock*. . . . Of course, it is we who provide the fictional difference between the two sounds; *tick* is our word for a physical beginning, *tock* our word for an

end. We say they differ. What enables them to be different is a special kind of

middle. We can perceive a duration only when it is organized. (Adams, 74)

By establishing the two termini, in both directions, a community is able to concoct a sensible

structure.[88] Within Hellenistic Judaism this end was seen in the arrival of a Messianic King. For

the early Christians, this notion became concretized in the figure of Jesus. His mortal tenure,

especially the crucifixion, became the culmination of the *tock*. But fictions, when they do not

bear up against reality, need to be revised and altered; and some realities are more difficult to

narratize than others, for

> [Human beings] cannot grasp spontaneously the interval between the rhythmic groups,
>
> that is, between *tock* and *tick*. . . . The first interval is organized and limited, the second
>
> not. . . . The fact that we call the second of the two related sounds *tock* is evidence that
>
> we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal
>
> structure. . . . The clock's *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an
>
> organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and
>
> *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to

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[88] At this point the reader might also see once again the applicability of the Peircean Categories, Firstness being Kermode's *tick* and Secondness his *tock*; Thirdness then being the fictional force relating the two, whether through a *tick-tock* sequence or through the more difficult *tock-tick* sequence: "We have seen that the conception of the absolute first eludes every attempt to grasp it; and so in another sense does that of the absolute second; but there is no absolute third, for the third is of its own nature relative, and this is what we are always thinking, even when we aim at the first or second. The starting-point of the universe, God the Creator, is the Absolute First; the terminus of the universe, God completely revealed, is the Absolute Second; every state of the universe at a measurable point of time is the third. If you think the measurable is all there is, and deny it any definite tendency whence or whither, then you are considering the pair of points that makes the absolute to be imaginary and are an Epicurean. If you hold that there is a definite drift to the course of nature as a whole, but yet believe its absolute end is nothing but the Nirvana from which it set out, you make the two points of the absolute to be coincident, and are a pessimist. But if your creed is that the whole universe is approaching in the infinitely distant future a state having a general character different from that toward which we look back in the infinitely distant past, you make the absolute to consist in two distinct real points and are an evolutionist" (*CP*, 1.362).

humanize. . . . When *tick-tock* seems altogether too easily fictional, we . . . produce

plots containing a good deal of *tock-tick*; such a plot is that of *Ulysses*. (74-5)

And, I would add, such a plot is that of a community in relation to a God who has promised to

return but seems intent on delaying. The community is able to escape the fear and

meaninglessness that manifests itself between the *tock* and the *tick* only by establishing a more

difficult relationship to God that sees him as always in the process of coming. By the time the

Gospel of Mark was written down, for instance, it would have been clear to early Christian

communities that the world had not ended with—nor shortly after—the crucifixion; nor had the

saints received their reward. Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection, then, was not the end, but

became the founding *tick*, and, in Kermode's terms, a new *tock* was anticipated: the Eschaton.

But, as I will show shortly, even the Eschaton failed. And in the wake of a continuously failing

Eschaton, a more difficult *tock-tick* construction evolved. It is in the Johannine writings that we

see its culmination.

Mark wrote his Gospel in the late 60s, after the Jewish revolt had already begun and

when it was clear that Vespasian and Titus were about to sack Jerusalem and forcefully put

down the rebellion. Mark's eschatological discourse intimates the early Christian anticipation

that with the destruction of Jerusalem would come the destruction of the world and Christ's

return:

13:14 Οταν δὲ ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα της ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ

ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω, τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη.

(13:14 And when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not,

he who knows it clearly must understand: then those who are in Judea should flee to the

mountains.)

The Marcan abomination of desolation in the passage above is taken to be an oblique reference

to the erection of an Imperial cultic statue within the temple at Jerusalem, something that the

Jews expected the Romans would do once they had sacked Jerusalem. Immediately following

this verse, the Marcan Jesus describes the end of the world as a consequence of the destruction

of Jerusalem and the erection of an Imperial cultic statue inside the temple precincts, and what a

mercy God would show to his elect by shortening the time the world would have to endure its

death throes. In Mark, then, the Eschaton is bound up with the Roman menace; and with the

Romans already at the door, the Eschaton was imminent.

Needless to say, after Jerusalem was sacked in 70 and the Jewish rebellion had been

squashed, the world did not literally come to an end. Matthew and Luke, both of whom were

writing after the destruction of Jerusalem and in the midst of the diasporal 80s, took into

account the delay of the Eschaton when they adapted Marcan material. Matthew writes,

24:15 Οταν ουν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου

ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω, 16 τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς

τὰ ὄρη.

(24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the

Prophet, stand in a holy place—he who knows it clearly must understand—, 16 then

those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains.)

Matthew has used Mark—or the same source as Mark—but has made a small, significant

alteration. Whereas in Mark the abomination of desolation that would signal the end was

imminent, Matthew had to deal with the problem that the abomination had already occurred

and yet c. 15 years later the Eschaton had still not happened. Also, instead of mentioning the

abomination in connection with the erection of a cultic statue as Mark did, the Matthean

abomination is tied to the destruction of Jerusalem itself; and instead of the cultic abomination

"standing" in a place where it should not be, the Matthean Jesus transfers the notion of

"standing" to his disciples and commands them to stand in a holy place instead. The sense that

emerges from Matthew's Gospel is that the Eschaton, though it had been delayed for a time,

was still at the doors. Luke, however, writing shortly after Matthew, seemed more resigned to

an indefinitely delayed Eschaton. Possibly due to his overtly historiographic programme, his

formulation was drastically different and more concrete:

> 21:20 Οταν δὲ ἴδητε κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἰερουσαλήμ, τότε γνῶτε ὅτι
>
> ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς. 21 τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη. . . . 24
>
> καὶ πεσοῦνται στόματι μαχαίρης καὶ αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, καὶ
>
> Ιερουσαλὴμ εσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν.
>
> (21:20 And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by a camp, then know that its
>
> desolation is near. 21 Then those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains. . . . 24
>
> And they will fall by the edge of a sword, and they will be led away into all nations, and
>
> Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the times of the nations will be
>
> fulfilled.)

Luke expressly identifies the abomination of desolation with the destruction of Jerusalem,

something Matthew only alluded to. And rather than espousing a belief in a still imminent,

though temporally ambiguous, Eschaton like Matthew, he states flatly that the restoration will

not occur "until the times of the nations (Gentiles) will be fulfilled". But there is no indication

in Luke of what precisely that Gentilic fulfillment would entail, nor when that fulfillment might

ever take place. Where the Hellenistic Jews expected the mortal coming, Mark and the first

Christian communities were looking forward to an imminent and final eschatological coming.

Despite the delay of the Eschaton in his time, Matthew seems to be more aligned with Mark in

thinking the end was still imminent. Luke, on the other hand, distanced himself from either of

those comings and moved, albeit slightly, toward the third, Johannine coming: (c) perpetually

imminent. To this coming I now turn.

The Fourth Evangelist, writing well into the 90s or beyond, did not include in his Gospel

anything resembling the eschatological discourses that the synoptic writers did.[89] There are no

counterparts in John to Mark 13, Matthew 24, or Luke 21. As I have shown through the ὁ

ἐρχόμενος passages, however, an eschatological sensibility is not alien to John's discourses.

John's notion of an Eschaton is more theologically, figuratively and temporally bound. At least

60 years had passed since the crucifixion, and at least 25 since Jerusalem had fallen. By John's

day, it must have seemed even more concrete that God was intent on delaying his coming, and

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[89] One might object here, assuming a single author or set of authors for the entire Johannine corpus, that Revelation is the ultimate eschatological discourse, and so—especially if it had been written before the Gospel—there would have been no need for the Evangelist to include a discourse of that kind in his Gospel narrative. Revelation, however, which no doubt deals with a cosmic chronology that culminates in the return of Jesus, is ironically the most veiled of the eschatological discourses, especially when it comes to establishing concrete timetables. Revelation is mythic and therefore temporally impractical; its significance lies rather in cosmological and allegorical understanding, something the Johannine author excels in.

that faithful Christians needed to buckle down for the long haul. But vestiges of

expectations of the Eschaton nevertheless lingered in the Gospels that had already been written,

as well as in other early Christian texts and traditions and in their likely sources. Coming so

late on the scene, the Fourth Evangelist seems to account for these lingering expectations, as

well as their lack of fulfillment, by incorporating them into the ὁ ἐρχόμενος, and by making the

ὁ ἐρχόμενος theologically ring with a subtle perpetuity rather than a bombastic finality.

I have already remarked that it is a Johannine peculiarity that Jesus is always in the

process of coming, even when he is present. Another look at a couple of the ὁ ερχόμενος

passages reveals this principle. It is debatable whether this notion is contained in the John the

Baptist sayings (John 1:15, 27; 3:31). The Baptist figures prominently in the first few chapters of

John, and when he refers to Jesus as ὁ ἐρχομενος, he mentions him in conjunction with his own

decline; the Baptist passages seem to emphasize the Jewish expectation of the mortal coming.

They are ambiguous. John 6:14 and 11:27 are less ambiguous:

John 6:14 Οἱ ουν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὅ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτος ἐστιν

ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

(Therefore the people, when they saw the sign he had performed, said, "This man is

truly the prophet, the one who is coming into the world.")

****

John 11:27 λέγει αὐτῷ, ναί, κύριε· ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ ει ὁ χριστὸς υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.

(She [Martha] said to him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of

God, the one who is coming into the world.")

The sign Jesus had performed in the first verse was the multiplication of the bread and fishes. This caused the people to identify him with the Coming Prophet(-King) of Deuteronomy and Psalms, and to immediately (v. 15) try to accost him and make him their ruler. In the second verse, Martha, in response to Jesus' assertion that Lazarus would rise from the dead, had agreed that her brother would indeed rise from the dead in the resurrection "at the last day" (v. 24). On the surface Martha's response was indicative of faith and hope. Her confidence in the power of God to overcome death in the end was the comforting symptom of a true believer. However, the Johannine Jesus was not content with even that level of belief and felt the need to gently correct her by saying that *he* was resurrection and life, and that those who believed in him would *never* die (v. 25). He then asked Martha whether she believed this to be true, to which she readily replied with the meekly corrected confession of v. 27 above. She then ran out immediately to tell Mary both what had been revealed to her and what she had subsequently confessed. In both cases of John 6 and 11, Jesus is called the Coming One even though he is standing before his confessors. The episode with Martha is the more telling of the two, however: Martha was in essence instructed to disregard the public, delayed and eschatological semantic of the Coming One, and rather to see his life-giving role as private, perpetual and imminently effectual. The promise of the Coming One is a promise of the *now*. For Martha, the payoff and the proof was in the subsequent raising of her brother from the dead. Here is the theological subtlety of John, and it is reinforced in the triumphal entry passage:

> John 12:13 ἔλαβον τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων καὶ ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐκραύγαζον, ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

(They took the branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, and they cried out,

"Hosanna; blessed is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord, even the King of

Israel.")

Setting aside the question of whether or not this verse represents events that actually transpired,

every reader of John's Gospel would have been keenly aware of where the story was going and

of what was awaiting Jesus at the end of his procession. And every reader would know that a

Hosanna at that point in the narrative would be premature, but only if the mortal or

eschatological comings were emphasized. If the private, imminent sense were to be

emphasized, however, a Hosanna would be eminently applicable despite the fact that Jesus was

marching like the proverbial lamb to the slaughter; for the Hosanna would then depend entirely

on a perpetual and individual or small communal reception of the Coming One, and not at all

on a worldwide, final reception.

A community or an individual feels the presence of responsibility and meaning when

they feel the presence of something or someone coming. This sense of responsibility moves

them into action, for they also senses a revolution in ὁ ἐρχόμενος, and a predicament to be

solved by his semio-genic presence. It is a theology based on the reception of a message; and as

strangers and pilgrims on earth—as castaways waiting for a bottle from across the sea—the

community is searching for an answer to its predicament. To the Johannine community, that

answer was embodied in the very act of coming; and that embodiment was literally and

repeatedly the Word made flesh.

CONCLUSION

> We accept that the matter at hand presents itself historically in different
> ways at different times or when approached from a different standpoint.
> We accept that those ways are not simply cancelled (*aufheben*) in the
> continuity of progressive research, but are like mutually exclusive
> conditions that persist by themselves and are only united in us. Our
> historical consciousness is always filled with a multiplicity of voices that
> echo the past.
>
> —Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

In n. 88 above, I suggested briefly a connection between Kermode's notion of the *tick-tock* sequence and Peirce's Categories, Firstness being equivalent to the *tick*, Secondness to the *tock*, and Thirdness the fictional force relating the two. It is the latter force that takes center stage in hermeneutics. What began at the turn of the nineteenth century as an intriguing but rather naive assumption in Schleiermacher and the Schlegel brothers that the individual could somehow approach the past immediately and thereby directly divine one proper meaning behind a set of signs, matured in the hands of Dilthey and Nietszche, both of whom recognized the limits of perspective. An awareness of these limits, however, was also a liberating virtue, as self-awareness itself deepened the earlier, more facile understandings of the nature of experience (*Erlebnis*) and historical investigation and opened the way for more subtle philosophical inquiries that would emphasize ontological contingency rather than absoluteness: notions of temporal horizons—and their communal properties—were born. Peirce's own brand of pragmaticism is akin to a contingent hermeneutic:

> We have seen that the conception of the absolute first eludes every attempt to grasp it;
>
> and so in another sense does that of the absolute second; but there is no absolute third,

for the third is of its own nature relative, and this is what we are always thinking,

even when we aim at the first or second. (*CP* 1.362)

This last claim—that Thirdness "is of its own nature relative, and this is what we are always

thinking, even when we aim at the first or second"—situates Peirce well within hermeneutic

discourse: even when we attempt to grasp pure ideas (Firstness) and physical events and

realities (Secondness), in the end we are only ever thinking Thirdness (in its genuine Thirdness

of Thirdness form, or in its degenerate Firstness of Thirdness and Secondness of Thirdness

forms). Peirce's relativity of apprehension reminds this reader startlingly of more

contemporary philosophers like Paul Ricoeur and David Carr, or Martin Heidegger before

them, that it is the very nature of human experience to be narrative and aspectual. I have

suggested here a way of incorporating the narrative and aspectual nature of human experience

into a Categorical Hermeneutic based on systems derived from C. S. Peirce. My own

hermeneutic emphasizes the communal. Even though the significance of communal experience

(*Erfahrung*) to hermeneutic theory was present in Dilthey and other nineteenth century

philosophers, Gadamer latched onto the idea with vigor and saw *Erfahrung* as surpassing

Erlebnis as the principal form of hermeneutic involved in the fusion of horizons. Peirce's

Categories lend themselves to a similar process of *Erfahrung*, and that process has informed my

own approach to the Gospel of John, particularly in §1.3, §2.3, and §3.3: there will never be an

end to histories of the Gospel of John because it is a metaphysical reality that as long as human

consciousness and group phenomenology exist, perspective will never be exhausted.

Not only will such histories need to take into account communal readings, they also need to take into account pre-readings or pre-receptions of the Gospel; that is to say, the pre-thematic or pre-figurative matrices in which the Gospel was written and received. §1.1 has engaged this level. To do so, such histories would also need to take into account the material history (§2.2) and the material culture (§1.2) of each individual manuscript. And again, these absolute nodes—Firstness of Firstness, Firstness of Secondness, and Secondness of Secondness—can only be relatively apprehended: past fabrics of possibility, events and physical realities may never change, but our conceptual frameworks and our instruments and methods for examining them will; and so, then, will our histories change with them. Histories of this sort, when taken together, would give a greater sense of what the Gospel of John has actually done as a literary event, and would furthermore open up the opportunity to claim for ourselves in the present and future latent potentialities in the text. My particular history has, I hope, entered the realm of each of these conceptual categories.

APPENDIX A

|	ὁ ἐρχόμενος IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, *HERMAS* AND THE HEBREW BIBLE	
1	Matthew 3:11; **John 1:15, 1:27**	Matthew 3:11 ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν· ὁ δὲ ὀπισω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μού ἐστιν, ου οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί· **John 1:15** Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, οὗτος ην ὃν ειπον, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ην. **John 1:27** ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος.
2	Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19, 20	Matthew 11:3 ειπεν αὐτῷ, σὺ ει ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν; Luke 7:19 ἔπεμψεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον λέγων, σὺ ει ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; 20 παραγενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες ειπαν, Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς ἀπέστειλεν ἡμᾶς πρὸς σὲ λέγων, σὺ ει ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν;
3	**John 3:31**	**John 3:31** Ο ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν· ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλεῖ.
4	**3:31**	ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν·
5	**6:14**	**John 6:14** Οἱ ουν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὅ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτος ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.
6	**11:27**	**John 11:27** λέγει αὐτῷ, ναί, κύριε· ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ ει ὁ χριστὸς υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.

7	Matthew 21:9, 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35, 19:38; **John 12:13**	Matthew 21:9 οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι οἱ προάγοντες αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἔκραζον λέγοντες, ὡσαννὰ τῷ υἱῷ Δαυίδ· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. Mark 11:9 καὶ οἱ προάγοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἔκραζον, ὡσαννα· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· εὐλογημένη ἡ ἐρχομένη βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Δαυίδ· ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. Luke 13:35 ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οικος ὑμῶν. λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἴδητέ με ἕως ἥξει ὅτε εἴπητε, εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου **John 12:13** ἔλαβον τὰ βαία τῶν φοινίκων καὶ ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐκραύγαζον, ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ισραήλ.
8	**Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8** **[11:17; 16:5]**	**Revelation 1:4** Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ **8** Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ω, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. **4:8** καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῷα, ἕν καθ᾽ ἕν αὐτῶν ἔχων ἀνὰ πτέρυγας ἕξ, κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν· καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες, ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ην καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. **[11:17** λέγοντες, εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ην [[καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος[90]]], ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας· **16:5** καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ ἀγγέλου τῶν ὑδάτων λέγοντος, δίκαιος ει, ὁ ων καὶ ὁ ην, ὁ ὅσιος, ὅτι ταῦτα ἔκρινας,]**
9	Hebrews 10:37	Hebrews 10:37 ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει·

[90] Found in the Majority text and the second hand of Codex Sinaiticus.

10	Luke 6:47; **John 6:35** [Those who come and hear Jesus are like the Wise Man.]	Luke 6:47 πᾶς ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρός με καὶ ἀκούων μου τῶν λόγων καὶ ποιῶν αὐτούς, ὑποδείξω ὑμῖν τίνι ἐστὶν ὅμοιος· **John 6:35** ειπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς· ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρός με οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσει πώποτε.
11	2 Corinthians 11:4 [What to do if someone comes preaching another Jesus.]	2 Corinthians 11:4 εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὅν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε.
12	Luke 15:25 [The elder brother of the prodigal son coming in from the fields.]	Luke 15:25 ἦν δὲ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐν ἀγρῷ· καὶ ὡς ἐρχόμενος ἤγγισεν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, ἤκουσεν συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν,
13	Romans 15:29 [Paul declares that he is coming to one of his churches.]	Romans 15:29 οιδα δὲ ὅτι ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας Χριστοῦ ἐλεύσομαι.
14	2 Timothy 4:13 [Paul requests his cloak when he comes.]	2 Timothy 4:13 τὸν φαιλόνην ὃν ἀπέλιπον ἐν Τρῳάδι παρὰ Κάρπῳ ἐρχόμενος φέρε, καὶ τὰ βιβλία, μάλιστα τὰς μεμβράνας.
15	Hermas 24:5, 6 ["But the white portion is the coming age, in which the elect of God shall dwell; because the elect of God shall be without spot and pure unto life eternal."]	Hermas 24:5 τὸ δὲ λευκὸν μέρος ὁ αἰὼν ὁ ἐπερχόμενός ἐστιν, ἐν ᾧ κατοικήσουσιν οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ· ὅτι ἄσπιλοι καὶ καθαροὶ ἔσονται οἱ 6 ἐκλελεγμένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
16	Psalms 117 [118]:26	Psalms 117 [118]:26 εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· εὐλογήκαμεν ὑμᾶς ἐξ οἴκου κυρίου.
17	Daniel 7:13, 14	Daniel 7:13 ἐθεώρουν ἐν ὁράματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος ην καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφθασεν καὶ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ προσηνέχθη. 14 καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ πάντες οἱ λαοί, φυλαί, γλῶσσαι αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν· ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἥτις οὐ παρελεύσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ οὐ διαφθαρήσεται.

18	Habakkuk 2:3	Habakkuk 2:3 διότι ἔτι ὅρασις εἰς καιρὸν καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν· ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ, ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσῃ.

BLUE   ὁ ἐρχόμενος [With definite article, and relevant to the divine name.]
GREEN   ἐρχόμενος [Without definite article, but relevant to the divine name.]
RED   ὁ ἐρχόμενος [With definite article, but no relevance to the divine name.]
YELLOW ἐρχόμενος [No definite article. No relevance to the divine name.]

APPENDIX B
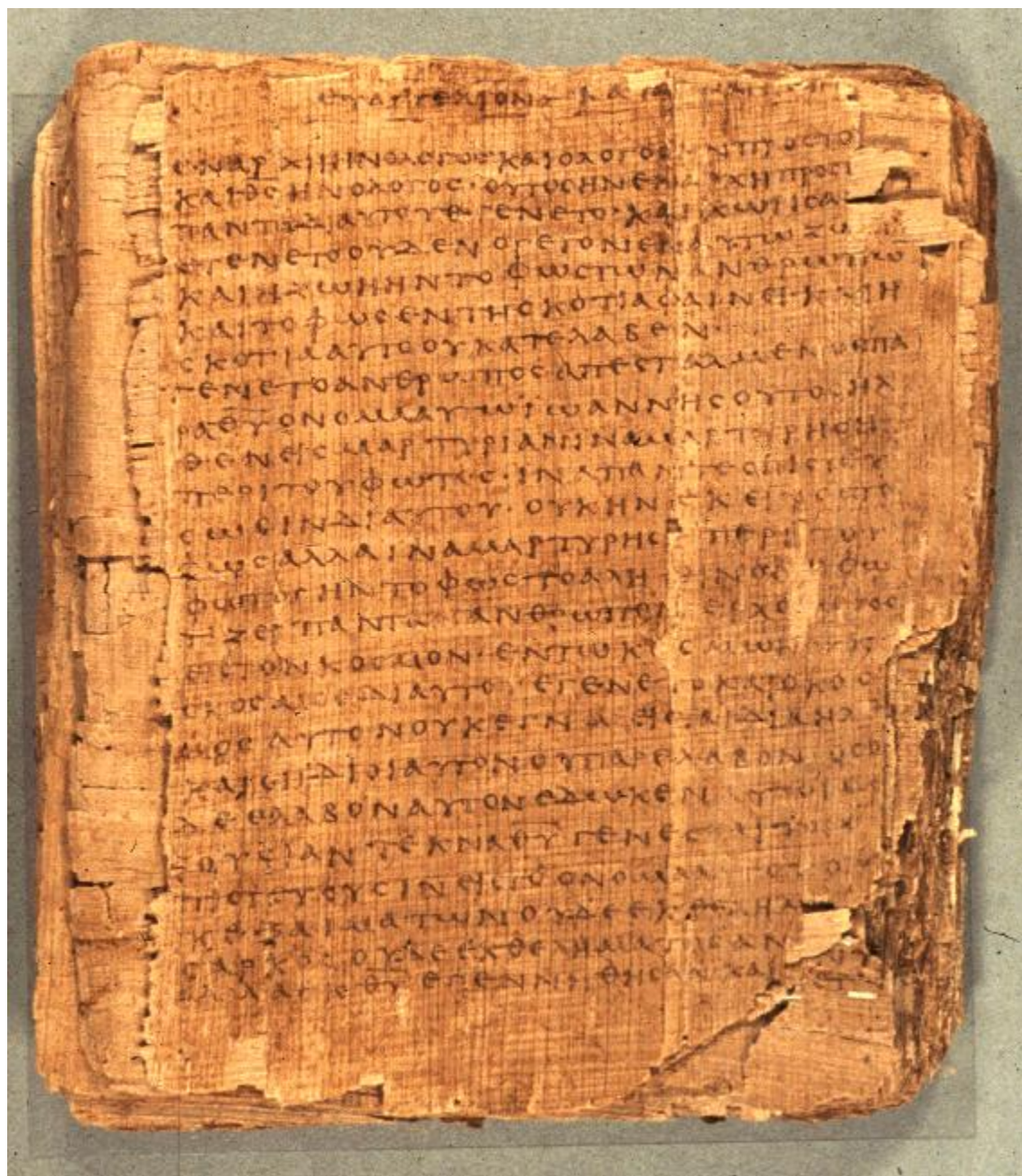
This picture shows the first page of P66. Taken from:
http://www.earlham.edu/~seidti/iam/tc_pap66.html

APPENDIX C

This is a magnified image of the disputed versification zone of John 1:3-4. As you can see, there appears to be a high colon in between the ε and ν of the word ουδεν. Our good friends at Earlam have suggested that there is an inordinate amount of space between the ν of ουδεν and the following ο. "Inordinate" is relative. This image is taken from the following website (last accessed on June 12, 2008): http://www.earlham.edu/~seidti/iam/tc_pap66.html

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