

Nota Bene: This chapter (which is subject to revision) complements Volume I of my translation - chapters 1-4 - which was published in July 2017 (ISBN 978-1548913670). Volume II - containing chapters 5-10 - is scheduled for publication in 2018.

This text last revised and updated 16.x.17

The Gospel According to John

Chapter Five

A New Interpretation

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Preface

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

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

To give just two examples. (i) In 8.7 and in respect of ἀναμάρτητος I have eschewed the common translation of ἀμαρτία by English word 'sin' and which English word, through centuries of Christian exegesis and preaching, has become a theological abstraction and a pejorative term, whereas the the

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

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

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

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

Introduction

A Question Of Interpretation

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

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

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

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

An interpretation intended to be unfamiliar, thirdly, because the Gospels were written at a time when Christianity was, in the lands of the Roman Empire, one small religious sect among many others and had yet to develop a standardized

doctrinal theology or a centralized ecclesiastical authority, with the Gospel of John not providing any theological explanation of what is meant by theos, by τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ, by οὐρανός, by ἁμαρτία, by τὸ πνεῦμα, and by many other terms. Thus, there is a natural tendency for us to project medieval, Renaissance, and modern meanings onto such terms with the inevitable consequence of us assuming that we understand the message of the Evangelist and thus comprehend at least something of Christianity itself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Five

Translation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 In response, Jesus said to them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that the son is

not able to do anything on his own: only that which he observes his father doing. For whatever the father does, the son also does,
20 For the father loves the son and reveals to him all that he does. And, beyond this, he will reveal to him greater works which shall astonish you
21 Since just as the father awakens the dead, and gives life, so also the son gives life by design to whomsoever,
22 For the father does not choose anyone, having accorded all choosing to his son
23 So that all might honour the son as they honour the father. And whoever does not honour the son, does not honour the father who sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you that whomsoever hears my Logos, and trusts who sent me, has life everlasting and is not entered into the choosing but passes from death into life.
25 Verily, verily, I say unto you that a season is arriving, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Theos and those who listen shall live.
26 Just as the father possesses Life within himself so he gifted the son with Life within him,
27 And also gifted him - as the son of a mortal - with the authority of choosing.
28 Do not be astonished at this, for a season is arriving when all those in their burial places will hear his voice
29 And proceed forth: those who have acted honourably to anastasis of life; those who have acted dishonourably, to anastasis of the choosing.
30 For I am not able to do anything on my own. When I have listened, I choose; and my choosing is fair since I do not seek my own design but rather the design of he who sent me.
31 If I am a witness about myself then my testimony is invalid,
32 But there is another as a witness for me, and I recognize that his testimony about me is valid.

33 You inquired after John, and he was evidential to the veritas.
34 And, although the testimony I receive is not from people, I say these things that you may be rescued.
35 He: a lantern, firefull and revealing; you: desirous to seasonably exult in his phaos.
36 I however have a testimony beyond that of John, for the deeds the father gifted me that I should accomplish them - the deeds which I do - are witness that the father sent me,
37 With the father - he who sent me - a witness about me: he whose voice you have never heard, whose likeness you have never observed,
38 With his Logos not remaining within you for you do not trust the one he sent.
39 You search the writings because you suppose that there is within them life everlasting and that they are a witness about me.
40 And yet have no desire to go to me so that you might have Life.

41 I do not receive honours from people,
42 But I have recognized you: for love of Theos is not within you.

43 I have arrived in the name of my father yet you do not accept me, but if another arrives in his own name you will accept him.

44 How are you able to trust when you accept honours from one another and yet do not seek the honour that is only from Theos?

45 Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the father, for it is Moses - on whom you rely - who is the one accusing you.

46 Had you trusted Moses, you would have trusted me for it was he who wrote about me.

47 Thus, since you do not trust what he wrote, how can you trust what I say?

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Commentary

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2.

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

named in the language of the Hebrews. ἐπιλεγομένη Ἑβραϊστὶ.

3.

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

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

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

Douay-Rheims.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18. *annulled the Sabbath*. ἔλυεν τὸ σάββατον. They were more determined to kill Jesus not because he himself had 'broken' the Sabbath but because they believed he had publicly 'annulled' (λύω) the Sabbath by telling someone to do

what the Judeans regarded as impermissible, and thus, by now equating himself to Theos, seemed desirous of replacing their Judean laws with new laws of his own.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27. *and also gifted him - as the son of a mortal - with the authority of choosing*. καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν. Literally, "and he gifted him with authority to undertake choosing because he is the son of a mortal." Which explains the following μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, "be not

astonished at this". In regard to υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου as 'son of a mortal' instead of Son of Man, qv. the comment on 1:51. Also, cf. 9:35, Σὺ πιστεύεις εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, which makes perfect sense if Jesus is asking "Do you trust the son of a mortal?" but is somewhat problematic if conventionally interpreted as "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

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

29.

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

τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλευσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἰρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]

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

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

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

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

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

33.

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

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

35.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Footnotes

[14] In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* Marcus Tullius Cicero, in criticizing Epicurus and others, presents his view of Summum Bonum, a term normally translated as 'the supreme good'. According to Cicero, honestum (honourable conduct) is the foundation of Summum Bonum which itself can be discerned by careful consideration (ratio) in conjunction with that knowing (scientia) of what is divine and what is mortal that has been described as wisdom (sapientia),

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

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

afforded by the honourable actions and motives of the finest of individuals:

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

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

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

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

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

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

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ νύξ φίλια
μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειρα,
ἦτ' ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις ἔβαλες
στεγανὸν δίκτυον, ὡς μήτε μέγαν
μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσεια
360μέγα δουλείας
γάγγαμον, ἄτης παναλώτου

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

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

τοῦ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀνθρώπου, ὃς δὴ νοῦς ἐστὶ καθαρῶτατος, εἷς ὁ μόνος θεὸς δημιουργός, τοῦ δὲ λεγομένου καὶ κεκραμένου μετ' αἰσθήσεως τὸ πλῆθος. οὗ χάριν ὁ μὲν κατ' ἐξοχὴν ἄνθρωπος σὺν τῷ ἄρθρῳ μεμῆνυται λέγεται

γάρ· ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὸν ἀειδῆ καὶ ἄκρατον ἐκεῖνον λογισμόν, ὁ δὲ ἄνευ τῆς τοῦδε προσθήκης· τὸ γὰρ ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον ἐμφαίνει τὸν ἐξ ἀλόγου καὶ λογικῆς συνυφανθέντα φύσεως.

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