

JOHN 3:13--THE TEXT AND INTERPRETATION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Gospel of John contains many profound and vital truths concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike the synoptics, John's Gospel omits such events as Christ's baptism, His temptation in the wilderness, and His transfiguration. New material is added, however, including fourteen private conversations, six miracles, and Christ's prayer to the Father (chapter 17). One of Christ's private conversations which John records is with Nicodemus. In this dialogue, found in the third chapter, Christ begins telling Nicodemus about the new birth. In verse twelve Christ indicates that He has been dealing with heavenly truths. Verse thirteen then continues, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (KJV). The purpose of this study is to interpret John 3:13, in light of its context, and determine its doctrinal significance.

THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The initial problem in interpreting John 3:13 is determining the wording of the original Greek text. As Morris indicates, "The words 'who is in heaven' are absent from some of the most reliable manuscripts" (E.g., P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ X B L) (Morris, The New International Commentary on the

New Testament, The Gospel According to John, 1971, p. 224). Before interpreting John 3:13, the text must be established using the principles of textual criticism.

The second problem involved with interpreting John 3:13 is determining who is doing the speaking--are these words part of a continued narrative by Christ to Nicodemus, which John merely records, or are these words a Johannine comment, inserted by him as a parenthetical message to the reader of his Gospel? Once the narrator of this verse is determined, only then can it be integrated with New Testament Christology and a sound interpretation made.

Upon determining the proper text and the narrator of John 3:13, the remaining problem deals with interpreting the verse on the basis of grammatical and historical principles, and then incorporating the findings to determine the theology of this verse. The conclusion should be inspected to see if it harmonizes with established teachings of the attributes of Christ, and determination should be made whether this verse either strengthens present evidence or perhaps adds new truth concerning the question of the nature of Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

When discussing the Person of Christ, there is much disagreement among theologians as to the attributes which He possesses. The disagreement becomes more intense, though, when Christ's attributes during His earthly ministry are discussed. John 3:13, when the KJV is followed, is used by many to support the idea that Christ was omnipresent during His earthly ministry. If this idea can be substantiated, then the teaching of Christ "emptying Himself" when He became man must harmonize

with the teaching of this verse. This possibility of His omnipresence during His earthly ministry would also provide more solid evidence as to the Divine character of Christ, underscoring the idea that He, being God, has always possessed the attributes of God.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In establishing the text of John 3:13, it is quite impossible to hope to include every bit of extant evidence which might apply to the problem. Without writing an exhaustive treatise on textual criticism though, it is possible to cover adequately the principles from which a textual decision can be made. As far as interpretation, it is within the scope of this study to attempt to harmonize the teaching of this verse with established teachings on the attributes of Christ, and to present the different interpretative possibilities. Once this has been done, then a final decision can be made as to which interpretation is most likely. Finally, the impact of this study can be presented, showing how the procedure followed might help solve textual and theological problems.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In determining the original text of John 3:13, there must be a gathering of external (manuscript) evidence, and a discussion of the internal factors which apply to this particular textual problem. After this has been done, the external and internal evidence will be summarized, and a textual decision made. Upon determining the proper text, then the question of the narrator will be discussed, and a decision made on the basis of the evidence. Finally, the grammatical

and theological questions will be explored, bringing out the force of the verse, and then a correlation will be made with parallel subjects. The conclusions and discoveries of this study will finally be summarized in the final chapter, reviewing the procedure which led to these findings.

Chapter 2

THE TEXT OF JOHN 3:13

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM

Significance of the Problem

The importance of any verse of Scripture cannot surpass its textual validity. Many remarkable readings have been caused by scribal insertions and errors in transmitting the text. Usually, however, these insertions and errors can easily be detected as not being part of what the author originally wrote. To formulate a doctrine on the basis of one of these spurious readings would be meaningless. For example, what theologian would base his doctrine of the nature of God on the reading of manuscript 109, whose scribe, in copying the genealogy of Jesus in Luke chapter three, obviously misaligned the list, making God the son of Phares (Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, 1968, pp. 195-196)? It seems evident then that an adequate textual study must be made of a passage or verse before any exegesis and interpretation can take place. This is even more important where the textual problem contains doctrinal significance. One place where such doctrinally significant textual variation occurs is in John 3:13.

In John 3:13 the KJV, following the Textus Receptus,¹ renders this verse, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came

¹The Greek New Testament of Erasmus, based on a few minuscule manuscripts, none older than the twelfth century.

down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The final clause of this verse, "which is in heaven" (ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ), is omitted by some manuscripts and is changed by others, altering its meaning from that of the Textus Receptus.

If the Textus Receptus reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is the original reading, and if one determines that verse thirteen is part of Christ's continued narrative to Nicodemus, then there appears to be a statement by Christ of His own omnipresence during His earthly ministry. This possibility undergirds the importance of initially establishing the text before wrestling with the narrative and theological questions.

The Task of the Textual Critic

The task of the textual critic is not to make biased judgments, neither to make judgments based purely on subjective grounds, nor to merely count manuscripts. As Greenlee notes:

To disregard external evidence and depend too completely on internal evidence may lead to unduly subjective decisions. At the same time, one must not depend upon external evidence without proper regard to internal considerations, since no manuscript or text-type is perfectly trustworthy (Greenlee, An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism, 1964, p. 119).

The task of the textual critic then is to weigh the evidence, both internal and external, and using established rules and principles of textual criticism make evaluations of the significance of the evidence, forming conclusions based on these evaluations. Textual decisions, therefore, are based on internal and external factors, making textual criticism not only a technical science but also a delicate art.

DELINEATION OF THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM

Preliminaries

The preliminaries involved in a textual study include listing the biblical reference--John 3:13, the Textus Receptus (T.R.) reading of the portion involved in variation-- ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, the KJV rendering (based on the T.R.) --"which is in heaven," and the literal rendering (of the T.R. reading)--"the one who is in (the) heaven." The reason for using the T.R. reading for comparison is solely for the purpose of having a standard by which to indicate the different variations. Below are the preliminaries of the textual problem put into list form:

Preliminaries

- A. Biblical reference: John 3:13
- B. T.R. reading of portion involved in variation: ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ
- C. KJV rendering (based on the T.R.): "which is in heaven"
- D. Literal rendering: "the one who is in (the) heaven"

Variant Readings

The textual problem will now be indicated by (1) listing the variant readings (those readings differing from the Textus Receptus), (2) labelling the nature of each variation as compared with the T.R., and (3) translating each variant in such a way as to bring out the difference in force and meaning each would convey. The following

chart provides this data on the variations of John 3:13:¹

Variant Readings		
<u>(1) Variants</u>	<u>(2) Type of Variation</u>	<u>(3) Translation</u>
(omit ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ)	omission	-----
ὅς ἦν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	substitution	"he who was in heaven"
ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	substitution	"who is out of heaven"

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Accumulation of External Evidence

Each reading, including that of the T.R., is listed on the following page with the manuscripts which support its text. The evidence is taken from Tischendorf's Novium Testamentum Graece (editio octava critica major, vol. 2, 1869), von Soden's Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt (vol. ii., Abteilung, Die Textformen, A. Die Evangelien, 1907), Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece (25th auflage, 1963), and the United Bible Society Greek New Testament (2d edition, 1968), and its converted to the Gregory system for classification of manuscripts. Support from the early church fathers is also given.

¹Two minor variations exist which shall only be mentioned here, due to their want of external evidence. Manuscript Ia^q alone gives the reading τις σου ην ουρανῳ ἀλλ' ἡ λογος σαρκος, ἀποσταλεις ἵνα δεῖξη αὐτον ἐπὶ γῆς ὄντα εἶναι καὶ ἐν οὐρανῳ. This variant literally means "who therefore was in heaven, but the word, without flesh, you sent in order to glorify him upon the earth while also being in heaven." The other minor variant, found only in manuscript 063, substitutes θεου for ανθρωπου as the word immediately preceding the clause ο ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῳ ("son of God which is in heaven").

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Support</u>
ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	(A* ^{vid} omit ὤν) A ^c E G H K M S U V Γ Δ Θ Λ Π Ψ 050 063 (Θεοῦ for ἀνθρώπου) fam 1 fam: 13 28 565 579 700 892 1009 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1242 1253 13 ⁴⁴ 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz 1 ^{69s,m} 70m, 76s, m, 184s, m, 211s, m, 883m, 1579m it ^a , aur, b, c, f, ff ² j, l, q, r ¹ vg syr ^{p,h,pal?} cop ^{bo^{mss}} arm geo Diatessaron ^a Hippolytus Novatian Origen ^{lat} Dionysius Eustathius Jacob-Nisibis Aphraates Hilary Lucifer Basil Amphilochius Didymus Epiphanius Chrysostom Nonnus Cyril Theodoret

omit ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	p ⁶⁶ p ⁷⁵ X B L w ^{supp} 083 086 0113 33 1010 1241 cop ^{sa,bo^{mss},ach²,fay} eth Diatessaron e ^{arm} Origen ^{lat} Apollinaris Didymus Cyril
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ὅς ἦν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	it ^e syr ^{c,pal?}
--------------------	---------------------------------------

ὁ ὤν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	0141 80 syr ^s
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Distribution of External Evidence *

To indicate the geographical distribution of manuscripts supporting each reading, the evidence is segregated in the chart below according to the various text-types. The text-type designations for the manuscripts are based on von Soden's classifications and are listed in Aland's Kurzgefasste Liste Der Griechischen Handschriften Des Neuen Testaments (1963).

Text-Type Distribution of Important Witnesses

Reading	(Syrrian) Byzantine	(Egyptian) Alexandrian	Western	Caesarean	Other
ὅ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	A E G H K M S U V Γ Δ Θ Λ Π Ψ 050 063 pl lect	579 892 cop ^{bo} mss	700 1071 1074 1216 1242 1253 1365 it ^a ,aur,b, c,f,ff ² ,j,l,q, l r vg syr,ph	fam 1 fam 13 28 565 geo arm syr, pal	1009
omit ὅ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ		P ⁷⁵ 2 B L 083 33 1241 cop	1010		p66 eth
ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ			0141 syr ^s		
ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ			it ^e syr ^c , pal		

Evaluation of External Evidence

The external evidence for each reading, as given in the previous list and chart, consists of all Greek manuscripts, manuscript versions, and quotes from early Church Fathers which support the particular reading. Rather than counting the witnesses for the readings, there are three basic considerations in evaluating external evidence: (1) the date of the text-type supporting the reading, (2) the geographical distribution of the witnesses to each reading, and (3) the genealogical relationship of individual manuscripts and families of witnesses.

In applying the three basic considerations given above, there should be an understanding as to the relative weight of each principle. The date of the text-type is important in establishing the age of the tradition which supports a particular reading. Because of this, the date of the text-type is more important than the age of individual documents. A problem arises, however, in the assessing of dates to the various text-types which exist. Many textual scholars, following the theory advanced by Westcott and Hort, postulate a recension of the Western, Alexandrian, and "Neutral" text-types, done by Lucian of Antioch at approximately 300 A.D. The result of this theoretical recension was the Byzantine text-type. G. B. Kilpatrick shows the improbability of such a recension, raising the question as to whether there are any readings which can be demonstrated to be later than A.D. 200:

. . . by the end of the second century A.D. Christian opinion had hardened against deliberate alteration of the text, however harmless the alteration might be. The change of opinion was not connected with the canonical status of the New Testament but with the reaction against the rehandling of the text by second century heretics (Kilpatrick, "Atticism and the Text of the Greek New Testament," Neutestamentliche Aufsätze, 1963, p. 151).

Kilpatrick emphasizes the certainty of his point by citing the attempt of Origen, who flourished early in the third century, to introduce changes into the text.

Origen's treatment of Mt. 19:19 is significant in two other ways. First he was probably the most influential commentator of the Ancient Church and yet his conjecture at this point seems to have influenced only one manuscript of a local version of the New Testament. The Greek tradition is apparently quite unaffected by it. From the third century onward even an Origen could not effectively alter the text.

This brings us to the second significant point--his date. From the early third century onward the freedom to alter the text . . . can no longer be practised. Tatian is the last author to make deliberate changes in the text of whom we have explicit information. Between Tatian and Origen Christian opinion had so changed that it was no longer possible to make changes in the text whether they were harmless or not (Kilpatrick, pp. 129-130).

Based on the findings of Kilpatrick and others,¹ there exists many distinctive readings in the Byzantine text-type which can be shown to have come from well within the second century. The safest and most objective scholarly approach in assessing dates to text-types would then be to consider all major text-types (i.e., Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine) as going back into the second century.

In evaluating external evidence, of more importance than the age of a text-type is the geographical distribution of witnesses. "A wide distribution of independent witnesses that agree in support of a variant are to be preferred to those having closer proximity or relationship" (Geisler and Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, 1968 p. 367). Geographical distribution is a key factor in determining how widespread the support for each reading is within each of the major

¹Vogels, Zuntz, Sturz

text-types. "Readings supported by good representatives of two or more text-types are to be preferred to single text-types" (Geisler and Nix, p. 368).

The genealogical relationship of individual manuscripts and families of witnesses should be considered in the evaluating of external evidence. However, the entire genealogical method, including its canon that "identity of reading implies identity of origin", (Westcott and Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek, 1896, p. 46) has come under attack, making the entire system suspect. Leon Vaganay states, concerning the genealogical method, that "applied to the New Testament texts this system is useless" (Vaganay, Initiation a la critique textuelle neotestamentaire, 1934, p. 71). Ernest Colwell cautiously states concerning this method that

the genealogical method is not of primary importance. . . . It can chart the history of transmission in an area narrowly limited in time and space. . . . But in the larger area where the larger questions are settled, it still has to demonstrate its value for the reconstruction of the original text of the Greek New Testament (Colwell, "Genealogical Method: its Achievements and its Limitations", Journal of Biblical Literature, 1947, p. 132).

Therefore it appears to be more intelligent to use the genealogical relationship method of evaluating external evidence with extreme caution, placing more weight upon the more objective and established principles of evaluating evidence.

Taking the four variants in the order they appear in the external evidence list above, the Textus Receptus reading $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ is the first to be evaluated. Without question, it can be seen from the text-type distribution chart that this variant has the bulk of manuscript support, as well as the most widespread distribution among the text-types. All four major text-types contain this reading, including

the honorable Alexandrian text-type, although, admittedly, the major manuscripts of this latter text-type omit it. Manuscript 579, a thirteenth-century copy of the Gospels, in Mark, Luke and John "preserves an extremely good Alexandrian text" (Metzger, pp. 64-65), but interestingly enough this manuscript supports the inclusion of ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ against the older Alexandrian witnesses P⁷⁵, X, and B, which omit it. With the Byzantine, Western, and Caesarean text-types agreeing in the almost exclusive support of ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, and with even minor Alexandrian attestation, the Textus Receptus reading ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ seems logically to be the preferred reading on the basis of external evidence.

The omission of ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is supported almost exclusively by the Alexandrian text-type. The two oldest extant witnesses of John 3:13, P⁶⁶ (A.D. 200) and P⁷⁵ (A.D. 200), along with the two oldest extant uncial manuscripts, X (4th century) and B (4th century), support the omission. To many commentators and textual critics these four manuscripts alone make the omission the preferred reading. C. E. Luthardt suggests such a conclusion, saying that "since, however, these words (ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) are lacking in B L as well as in the Sinaitic manuscript, the right thing certainly is to leave them out" (Luthardt, St. John's Gospel, 1877, vol. 2, p. 31). The editorial committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, on the basis of external evidence, gave a majority decision in favor of the omission, regardless of the realization that the omission is supported almost exclusively by Egyptian witnesses:

On the other hand, the majority of the Committee, impressed

by the quality of the external attestation supporting the shorter reading, regarded the words $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\nu\nu\acute{\omega}$ as an interpretative gloss, reflecting later Christological development (Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 1971, p. 204).

The omission of $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\nu\nu\acute{\omega}$, judged on the basis of external evidence, must be rejected as being the preferred reading. The impressive "quality" of the external attestation supporting the omission is in actuality exceedingly lacking, when evaluated on the basis of the objective principles of evaluating external evidence. This is especially true in light of the fact that "all the strands of tradition attest it (the longer reading) except the rather closely-knit Alexandrian group" (Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to St. John, 1968, p. 394).

The reading $\delta\varsigma\ \eta\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\nu\nu\acute{\omega}$ is exceedingly lacking in regards to external evidence, having one later Greek manuscript and one version supporting its text. The reading $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\nu\nu\acute{\omicron}\upsilon$ is equally lacking in external support, having no Greek witnesses at all supporting its text. Although these two readings are virtually eliminated by their extremely weak support, they both are of great importance in the following discussion of internal evidence.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

There are two varieties of internal evidence--transcriptional (depending on the habits of the scribes), and intrinsic (depending on the characteristics of the author). The importance of internal evidence is clearly revealed by William Hendriksen, who happens to be one of the commentators regarding the external evidence of the textual problem of John 3:13 as favoring the omission of $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\nu\nu\acute{\omega}$.

After providing his external arguments, concluding that the textual evidence supports the shorter reading, he states:

It is my own opinion that stronger internal-evidence arguments will have to be presented than have been presented thus far, before the majority of experts in the field of Textual Criticism will be convinced that these arguments are of sufficient weight to offset the textual evidence (Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, vol. 2, 1954, p. 501).

In light of this writer's different conclusion regarding the external evidence, Hendriksen's statement provides an interesting situation--can the internal evidence be shown to support the longer reading? If the internal evidence supports the omission, then there can be no reasonably certain textual conclusion made, and judgment should therefore be suspended. When there is no conclusive decision, then both variants should be covered when interpreting John 3:13, for either one could possibly be original. If, on the other hand, the internal evidence does indeed support the longer reading, then $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega}$
 $\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\pi\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ should be considered the probable original reading, and only this reading need be considered when interpreting John 3:13.

Transcriptional Probabilities

There are four basic assertions which apply to the transcriptional probabilities of the variants of John 3:13. (1) Prefer the more difficult reading, especially "when the sense appears on the surface to be erroneous, but on more mature consideration proves itself to be correct" (Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, p. 209). The "more difficult" reading means more difficult to the scribe, who would be tempted to make an emendation. (2) Prefer the shorter reading, except where (a) parablepsis caused by homoeoteleuton may have occurred;

or where (b) the scribe may have intentionally omitted material on grammatical, liturgical, or doctrinal grounds. (3) Prefer the more verbally dissonant reading of parallel passages, since there was a scribal tendency to harmonize divergent accounts of a scriptural event. (4) Prefer the reading which best explains the other variants.

Prefer the more difficult reading. It appears to be quite obvious that the addition of ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is the more difficult reading. If one regards this longer reading as original, and if one regards John 3:13 as being part of Jesus' narrative to Nicodemus (as most do), then Christ must be saying that He is in heaven at the very moment He is speaking to Nicodemus! This, of course, is much more difficult than Christ saying He "was in heaven," or that He "is from heaven." A minority of the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament preferred the reading ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, arguing on the basis of preferring the more difficult reading:

If the short reading, supported almost exclusively by Egyptian witnesses, were original, there is no discernable motive which would have prompted copyists to add the words ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ resulting in a most difficult saying (Metzger, A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament, p. 203).

Therefore, it seems consistent to say, on the basis of this first principle of transcriptional probabilities, that ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is to be preferred, being difficult enough to cause a scribe to change it.

Prefer the shorter reading (except with intentional omissions, or parablepsis). The Alexandrian-supported omission is the shorter reading. This is the preferred reading, unless either the scribe committed

parablepsis, and accidentally omitted material, or else he had reason to intentionally omit material. There is no justification to suppose parablepsis has occurred, for homoeoteleuton is possible only with the **ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ** which occurs earlier in verse thirteen, and is (1) hardly in a place to cause parablepsis, and (2) has no Greek manuscripts supporting this particular reading.

The possibility of intentional omission, however, is a quite viable option. Since the manuscripts which support the omission are almost all of the Alexandrian text-type, there must be a logical reason given for this phenomena, or else the shorter reading must be preferred. Such a reason appears to exist, and is based on the tendency of the school at Alexandria to make emendations in the text.

"It is widely agreed that the Alexandrian text was prepared by skilful editors, trained in the scholarly traditions of Alexandria" (Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, p. 215). When the Alexandrian writers were faced with difficulties in the Old Testament Scriptures, Jews like Philo (first century A.D.), and Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria (second century) and Origen (third century), who were versed in Greek learning, "met these difficulties by resorting to the allegorical solution, the doctrine of the hidden meaning" (Butcher, Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects, 1904, p. 210). One of the canons for allegorizing literature in the Alexandrian school included "manipulation of punctuation, words, and new combinations of words" (Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 1970, p. 28) to extract new truth from passages.

Besides this allegorical manipulation of the text, there was a tendency by the Alexandrian scholiast to perform textual criticism on

the basis of conjectural emendation. The Homeric scholia abound with examples. In Odyssey xi. 524 Odysseus narrates the story of the Trojan horse within which he and his comrades were concealed: "The charge of all was laid on me both to open the door of our close ambush and to shut the same." These lines, says the scholiast, must be deleted "as unseemly: that is the work of a hall porter." Butcher gives another example, showing how Aristarchus deletes material on the basis of his own emendations, due to the material being contrary to his idea of what is appropriate:

In Odyssey vi. 244 Nausicaa, on first meeting with the shipwrecked Odysseus, utters the wish: "Would that such a one might be called my husband, dwelling here, and that it might please him here to abide! To Aristarchus the wish appeared indecorous and unmaidenly. A little later (Od. vii. 311) Alcinous exclaims: "Would that so goodly a man as thou art and like-minded with me, thou wouldst wed my daughter and be called my son-in-law, here abiding!" Again the critic's sound principles fail him; that is not how marriages were made in the court of the Ptolemies. He therefore rejects the verses containing Nausicaa's unmaidenly wish, and places his mark of doubt against the six lines that tell of Alcinous' offer of marriage. But he has some misgivings. The lines, he admits, have a Homeric flavor; still they can hardly be genuine; for who would think of engaging his daughter to a stranger of whom he knew nothing, and who moreover had not even asked for her hand (Butcher, pp. 211-214)?

With this type of erudite heritage, it seems quite easy to postulate Alexandrian scribes emending the text of the Scripture in much the same fashion.

Near the end of the second century Clement of Alexandria complains of certain ones who tamper with (or metaphrase) the Gospels for their own sinister ends (Stromata, IV. 6), citing an example of their practice. Scrivener cites Tregelles as pertinently remarking that "Clement in the very act of censuring others, subjoins the close of

Matt. v. 9 to v. 10, and elsewhere himself ventures on liberties no less extravagant" (Scrivener, A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of The New Testament, 1894, p. 262). The importance of this information is that Clement, who lived in Alexandria, has knowledge of such liberties being taken with the text, which the Alexandrian scribes were supposed to be transcribing without change.

Based on the previous data concerning the tendencies of the Alexandrian scribes, it seems quite likely that the reading $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\acute{\omega} \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$, being the original reading, was omitted because of the difficulty, or because of its doctrinal teaching. This would explain why the omission exists almost solely in Alexandrian witnesses to the text. This conclusion would be consistent with the transcriptional principles developed by textual scholars, such as Griesbach, who gave the exceptions to the general principle of "preferring the shorter reading" as including situations where material that was omitted "could have seemed to the scribe to be obscure, harsh, superfluous, unusual, paradoxical . . ." (Metzger, citing Griesbach, The Text of the New Testament, p. 120). The reading $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$, in the context of John 3:13, must certainly be considered "unusual."

Prefer the more verbally dissonant reading of parallel passages. This principle of transcriptional probability needs to be discussed here, for some conclude that "a gloss could easily have been composed on the model of (John) 1:18" (Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to St. John, p. 394). However, Metzger strongly states that "the statement in 1:18, not being parallel, would scarcely have prompted the addition" (Metzger,

A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, pp. 203-204).

Although some do suggest that John 1:18 served as a basis for composing the longer reading (Cf. Westcott and Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek, 1882, p. 75), there seems to be insufficient evidence to disregard the stand of Metzger.

Prefer the reading which best explains the other variants. Although considered by some as a secondary tool in determining transcriptional probabilities, this principle of preferring the reading which best explains the others sometimes provides an accurate reconstruction of how the variants arose. This is seemingly the case in John 3:13.

Metzger states concerning the variants of this verse that

the diversity of readings implies that the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, having been found objectionable or superfluous in the context, was modified either by omitting the participial clause, or by altering it so as to avoid suggesting that the Son of man was at that moment in heaven (Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, p. 204).

This would intelligently explain the readings ὁ υἱὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ and ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Besides explaining the cause of these two variants, this fact would also show that these variants are based on the Textus Receptus reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. Since the manuscripts which change ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ seem to reveal that their scribes considered this reading to be necessary of correction, it takes no great effort to conceive, based on the tendencies of some of the Alexandrian scribes, that this reading was altogether omitted in some manuscripts. Therefore, using the principle of preferring the reading which best explains the other variants, the reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ stands out as the most likely original reading. To

conclude otherwise would necessitate explaining how the three longer variants arose, and why a scribe would gloss a manuscript with such a difficult, yet profound, saying.

Intrinsic Probabilities

In considering what John the Beloved Disciple was most likely to have written, there are two important considerations which apply: (1) the harmony of a reading with the author's teaching elsewhere (as well as with other scriptural teachings), and (2) the style and vocabulary of the author throughout the book.

Harmony with the author's teachings and other biblical teachings. It is quite evident that the variants ὅς ἦν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ and ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, having been inserted to make the reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ more acceptable, are themselves consistent with Johannine and biblical theology. To say that Christ "was in heaven," or that He "is from heaven" is clearly taught in John 1:1, 2. But to consider Christ as being "in heaven" while He is talking to Nicodemus provides a much more difficult problem. A simple solution to those who feel that ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is original is to consider these words as being a comment from John, rather than words from Christ. This question concerning the identity of the narrator will be discussed in chapter three of this work, and it will be sufficient for now to say that this writer rejects the idea that these words are a Johannine comment.

Since this writer rejects the notion that ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is a Johannine comment, then these words, if they were spoken by Christ, speak of His omnipresence during His earthly ministry.

Although there are ways of avoiding this interpretation by those who consider these words to be from Christ (Cf. the New English Bible's translation of this--"whose home is in heaven"), the most practical procedure would be to determine if the teaching of the omnipresence of Christ during His earthly ministry is consistent with Johannine and biblical theology. If this teaching can indeed be supported, then any simpler interpretation of $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \omicron\upsilon\ \rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ could surely be shown to fit into the theology of John and the rest of the Scriptures.

To consider the possibility of John recording Christ's statement of His omnipresence, it is necessary to determine if the New Testament ascribes divine attributes to Christ, and more particularly, if John himself elsewhere ascribes divine attributes to Christ. If these attributes are ascribed to Him, then theoretically a statement of Christ's omnipresence in John 3:13 would fit into the Johannine pattern.

Thiessen covers the New Testament teaching of the nature of God, and in doing so determines that the Son is recognized as God. He gives evidence for this conclusion by stating:

Divine attributes are ascribed to Him and manifested by Him. There are five distinctively divine attributes. These are eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability. Christ possesses all these (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, 1949, p. 139).

He continues his argument by providing Scripture for each divine attribute being ascribed to Christ:

He is eternal. He was not only before John (John 1:15), before Abraham (John 8:58) . . . but He is the "firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15), being in existence "in the beginning" (John 1:1).

He is omnipresent and omniscient. He was in heaven while on earth (John 3:13, A.V., A.S.V.), and is on earth while He is in heaven (Matt. 18:20; 28:20). As for His omniscience, we read that He knows all things (John 16:30; 21:17).

He is omnipotent. Jesus says: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing, for what things soever he doeth, these the Son doeth in like manner" (John 5:19).

He is also immutable (Heb. 13:8, 1:12) (Thiessen, pp. 139-140).

The majority of these "proof-texts" are taken from John's Gospel. It does not seem to be too speculative, then to suppose that Christ actually spoke of His omnipresence to Nicodemus. G. C. Berkouwer confirms this possibility by citing John 3:13 (with the longer reading "who is in heaven"), and commenting, "Repeatedly Christ asserted that his existence was not exhausted by his being a man on earth" (Berkouwer, Studies in Dogmatics, The Person of Christ, 1954, pp. 163-164). Although specifically Berkouwer is referring to the pre-existence of Christ, his statement can well be taken to apply to omnipresence as a divine attribute of existence. Based on the Johannine and entire New Testament teaching, to consider $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ as original is in harmony with the established doctrine of Christ's attributes.

Style and vocabulary of the author throughout the book. Even though the primary longer reading $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ consists of but five Greek words, it is possible to determine if these words fit John's style by examining the vocabulary and construction.

The vocabulary of the longer reading contains no unusual words, but rather very common biblical terms. Not including this variant, John uses some form of the word $\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ nineteen times in his Gospel. The remaining words are found throughout John's Gospel. No real identification of the vocabulary can be made which would either support or reject the longer reading, due to the common nature of the words.

The construction of the longer reading, however, provides

critically important information. Moulton and Geden, in their Concordance to the Greek Testament, 1897, pp. 279-281, list all the places in the New Testament where $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu$ is used before a prepositional phrase. The results are most impressive:

- Mt. 12:30 $\acute{\omicron}\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau'\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon$
 Lu. 11:23 $\acute{\omicron}\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau'\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon$
 Jn. 1:18 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \kappa\omicron\lambda\pi\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\varsigma$
 Jn. 3:31 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \tau\grave{\eta}\varsigma\ \gamma\grave{\eta}\varsigma$
 Jn. 6:46 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \pi\alpha\rho\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$
 Jn. 8:47 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$
 Jn. 12:17 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau'\ \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$
 Rom. 9:5 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\nu$
 II Co. 11:31 $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\iota\omega\nu\alpha\varsigma$
 Eph. 2:4 $\acute{\omicron}\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}\ \pi\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\iota$

Of these eleven usages of $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu$ with a prepositional phrase, the first two listed, found in Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23, are parallel accounts of the same event. This would cut the number of usages of this construction to ten. With only ten of these constructions in the entire New Testament, it is highly instructive that six of these occur in the Gospel of John. Having the bulk of this seldom-used construction located in this fourth Gospel, the obvious conclusion one is driven to is that this construction is nearly peculiar to John's style.

To further the point that the construction $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu$ with a prepositional phrase is a Johannine characteristic, upon examination three of the four non-Johannine usages of this are not parallel to the longer reading $\acute{\omicron}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\omega\ \sigma\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\omega\grave{\iota}$. The phrase $\acute{\omicron}\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \grave{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau'\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon$

(Matthew 12:20 and Luke 11:23) contains the negative μή, and thus is not precisely the same construction as ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. The phrase ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας (II Corinthians 11:31) has its preposition in a different position, and ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει (Ephesians 2:4) has the noun (θεός) modified by the substantive (ὁ) in a different place entirely. This evidence would leave only the construction in Romans 9:5 and the six constructions in John as being exactly parallel to the variant ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. On the basis of style, the variant ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ should not only be declared Johannine in style, but should probably be considered the original reading of John 3:13. To suppose otherwise would be to refute astronomical odds in favor of this reading by saying either (1) the scribe who originally inserted this reading accidentally struck on this construction which is almost uniquely Johannine in style, or (2) that the scribe was familiar enough with John's style to insert a gloss which would correspond to his usage.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM

The reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ appears to have the best external attestation, due to its support by three of the four major text-types--the Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine. The omission of this reading is confined primarily to Alexandrian witnesses. As Geisler and Nix state, "readings supported by good representatives of two or more text-types are to be preferred to single text-types" (Geisler and Nix, A General Introduction, p. 368). Therefore, externally, ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ seems to be the original reading.

As Hendriksen so aptly said, "stronger internal-evidence

arguments will have to be presented than have been presented thus far . . . to offset the textual evidence" (Hendriksen, p. 501). The author feels that this has been done. The transcriptional probabilities have shown that $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ is the preferred reading because it is the more difficult reading, it probably was intentionally omitted by the emendation of Alexandrian scribes, and it best explains the other variants. The intrinsic probabilities dictate that this longer reading harmonizes with John's teachings and other biblical teachings, and on the basis of style stands out as being peculiarly Johannine. As Tasker likewise concludes:

It is assumed by many scholars that the words $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$, absent from $\mathcal{N} B W$, were an early interpolation. On the other hand, the translators considered that they are Johannine in style and that their presence in $A \Theta$ fam. I fam. 13 579, most late Greek Mss., and the Latin versions, justified their retention in the text (Tasker, The Greek New Testament, p. 425).

It would appear even to those who consider $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ as a gloss that there is more evidence to support this reading than first catches the eye. This is evident from the decision of the United Bible Society Greek New Testament, in their first edition, to give the omission of $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ (the shorter reading) an "A" rating, signifying that this reading "is virtually certain" (Metzger, Textual Commentary, p. xxviii), but in their second and third editions the omission is given a "C" rating, signifying that "there is a considerable degree of doubt whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading" (Metzger, Textual Commentary, p. xxviii).

In conclusion, the reading $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\acute{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omega}$ commends itself as being the original reading, based on the combined sound

principles of textual criticism. Therefore, when interpreting John 3:13, the textual weight for this longer reading determines that it alone must be discussed, for these words are indeed inspired Scripture.

Chapter 3

THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 3:13

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERPRETATIVE PROBLEM

After establishing the proper text of a verse or passage of Scripture, hermeneutics is employed. Hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, establishes the principles of procedure to be used in the interpretation of a verse. Once hermeneutics has defined these principles of procedure, then these are applied through the process of exegesis. The primary goal of biblical hermeneutics is to determine what God has said in the Scripture, and to determine the meaning and application of the Scripture. The secondary goal of hermeneutics is to bridge the gap between our minds and the minds of the biblical writers. This is necessary due to linguistical, cultural, geographical and historical gaps which separate us from understanding the context of biblical situations.

The grammatical-historical method of interpretation is the foundational principle in the exercise of sound hermeneutics. This method interprets the Bible by the same principles as all other books are interpreted. It seeks to arrive at the precise meaning which the writers of Scripture intended to convey (Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, 1893, p. 173). The principles of procedure involved in grammatical-historical hermeneutics begin with observation of the text. The historical background is checked, and facts about the author gathered. It is already assumed that John is the writer of the Gospel which bears

his name. The problem arises, however, when one tries to determine whether John 3:13 is part of Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus, or whether this should be taken as part of the commentary which John subjoins. If Christ is still conversing with Nicodemus in verse thirteen, then there appears to be a statement by Christ of His own omnipresence during His earthly ministry. On the other hand, if John the Apostle is the narrator in this verse, and is merely commenting on the life of Christ from a historical perspective, then the interpretation of John 3:13 would be greatly different. Therefore, the initial problem in interpreting John 3:13 is the determining of whose words these are. Only after the narrator of this verse is identified can the Greek text be analyzed, the context studied, related passages discussed, and a sound interpretation made.

THE PROBLEM OF DETERMINING THE SPEAKER

Christ's conversation with Nicodemus in John chapter three is centered around man's need for a new birth. In verse five through eight Jesus tells him that a man must be born of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. Verses nine through sixteen read as follows:

⁹Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?
¹⁰Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?¹¹Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive our witness.¹²If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

¹³And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:¹⁵That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In this conversation Jesus begins speaking to Nicodemus in verse ten, and obviously continues at least through verse twelve. As Morris notes, "John does not tell us where this speech ends. The dialogue form simply ceases. Most agree that somewhere we pass into the reflections of the Evangelist" (Morris, p. 228). Morris also notes,

All are agreed that from time to time in this Gospel we have the meditations of the Evangelist. But it is difficult to know where these begin and end. In the first century there were no devices such as inverted commas to show the precise limits to quoted speech. The result is that we are always left to the probabilities, and we must work out for ourselves where a speech or a quotation ends (Morris, p. 228).

Some scholars, like Schnackenburg and Bultmann, feel that the words of Christ end with verse twelve, the rest being a Johannine commentary. Schnackenburg comments:

The dialogue with Nicodemus, as the evangelist wished to present it, comprises only vv. 1-12. The Gospel narrative is resumed in 3:22-30. Immediate evidence of this is the fact that Jesus addresses Nicodemus and his fellows in the second person up to the end of v. 12, but not after that (Schnackenburg, p. 361).

Although the observation concerning the manner in which Jesus addressed Nicodemus is correct, Schnackenburg must explain why verse thirteen begins with the copulative *καί*, which indicates a continuity. His attempt to reconcile this can be equated to a type of "textual gymnastics" in which he rearranges the text to fit his conclusions:

Verses 13-21 do not form part of the Gospel narrative, but come from a kerygmatic exposition of the evangelist which was originally independent, very like the kerygmatic parts of 1 John. It is easy to imagine that the evangelist composed a summary of the "message" of Jesus in conjunction with the Nicodemus dialogue, and that this summary was incorporated into the Gospel itself by the disciples of the evangelist during the redaction. But, as the *καί* at the beginning suggests, 3:13-21 is probably not the beginning of this "kerygmatic discourse, but the displaced passage of vv. 31-36, which is totally foreign to the Baptist, but suits admirably the preacher who speaks in vv. 13-21 (Schnackenburg, p. 361).

Therefore, it seems that Schnackenburg needs a hypothetical "redaction"

by the disciples to support his theory of verses 13-21 being a kerygmatic discourse" from John. It is with suspicion that this present writer views the conclusions of Schnackenburg, for the question is raised as to where he received such tremendous insight which enabled him to reconstruct the text in the manner which he does. Schnackenburg's usage of such terms as "it is easy to imagine" lead one to conclude that his argument is based on what is technically called a "conjectural emendation," but nontechnically is called a "guess."

Schnackenburg summarizes his position by first conceding that verses 13 ff. could fit with verse 12 in the context of a proclamation of salvation, but this is not very probable. Next he provides another possible way which might validate the linking of verse 12 to verses 13 and following as words from Jesus:

Other commentators understand the context to mean that Jesus now begins to disclose the "heavenly things" which were mentioned in v. 12--his own entry into the heavenly world and the ensuing possibility of believers' following him there. The perfect ἀναβέβηκεν ("ascended") is taken either as the perfect in a general statement ("can ascend") or as an anachronism due to the standpoint of the evangelist. But it cannot be a general statement, since the aorist καταβάς makes the contest historical, and the Johannine Jesus never speaks anachronistically as a rule (the only possible exception is 4:38) (Schnackenburg, p. 393).

Interestingly enough, however, Schnackenburg concludes his discussion by supporting the possibility of the immediate collocation of vv. 12 and 13 as Christ's continued discourse. He feels that this would be the correct explanation, were it not for what he considers to be a more likely explanation:

Nonetheless, the explanation is correct for v. 13, except that a later redactional collocation of v. 12 and v. 13 (due to the association between τὰ ἑπουράνια and "ascending," εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) is more likely than a revelation of the "heavenly things" in the setting of the Nicodemus episode, especially after the sceptical question of v. 12 (Schnackenburg, p. 393).

Here again Schnackenburg not only exposes his highly subjective reasons for rearranging the text, but seemingly adds support to the position that verse 13 is from Christ, if one rejects the idea of a "redactional collocation" of verses 12 and 13.

The only real strength of Schnackenburg's argument seems to be in his observation that a revelation by Christ of the "heavenly things," in light of the skeptical question of verse 12, appears unlikely. Smith also notices this difficulty, and on this basis concludes that verse 13, which he considers belongs immediately after verse 12, is a reflection of John:

After Jesus' questioning of Nicodemus' ability to understand **τὰ ἐπουράνια** in verse 12, there follows immediately the disclosure of just such heavenly things (verses 13-21). Jesus no longer seems to be speaking to Nicodemus, but the evangelist to his readers (Smith, The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel, 1965, p. 127).

This point made by Smith and Schnackenburg does have validity, but it appears that there is more internal evidence which would make the comments of John begin later, either with verse 16 or with verse 22.

There does not seem to be any problem in linking verse 12 with verses 13 ff., considering these as words from Jesus. Although it is true that Jesus questioned Nicodemus' ability to understand heavenly things, it would seem quite logical to conclude that Jesus followed this by making it clear that He can speak authoritatively about things in heaven, though no one else can (Morris, p. 223). This type of interpretation would appear to fit the context without taking liberties with the facts at hand.

The internal evidence which supports the position that Christ continues speaking at least through verse 15 is taken from the usage of

the term "Son of man." This term, which appears in verses 13 and 14, is used seventy-nine other times in the Gospels, and in all seventy-nine occurrences it is Christ Himself who uses the term. Mathematically speaking there is a one hundred per cent consistency in these seventy-nine instances that the term "Son of man" is only used by Christ. To anyone who has an appreciation for probabilities, this evidence would drive one to the conclusion that John 3:13, 14, which use the term "Son of man," must be words from Christ. Although this does not "prove" the notion that Christ is still speaking to Nicodemus in verses 13-15, it seems more probable that this is correct than to postulate a "redactional collocation" of verses 12 and 13 as being the answer to the problem. Furthermore, the likelihood of verses 13-15 as being from Christ on the basis of the usage of the term "Son of man" is much greater than the objection which questions Christ revealing things to Nicodemus after He had exposed his inability to understand such heavenly things.

There is other possible internal evidence which would support the continued dialogue of Christ through verses 15. The final question which Nicodemus asked was "How can these things be?" He wanted to know how a man can have a spiritual birth. If the conversation is cut off at verse 12, then Christ never answers him. But if Christ continues at least through verse 15, then he is told the basis for this new birth--faith in the Son of man.

To summarize the question of who is speaking in verse 13, it would appear that the best supported position is the one which considers Christ to be the speaker in this verse. Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus changes to a discourse in verse 11 (Hendriksen, p. 135). As

Morris notes, "Perhaps the dividing point comes at the end of v. 15. We are on fairly safe ground in maintaining that these are His words" (Morris, p. 228). Since this does seem to be true, the question is still raised as to where Christ's discourse ends. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to cover this question in detail, there seems to be solid evidence that the break in Christ's dialogue with Nicodemus is between verse 15 and 16. This also is not certain, but if there were any break between verses 12 and 22, here would be the most likely place, not between 12 and 13. As Morris states, "in verse 16 the death on the cross appears to be spoken of as past, and there are stylistic indications that John is speaking for himself" (Morris, p. 228). Other commentators, such as Westcott, Milligan and Tholuck, agree with this idea which was first conceived by Erasmus. Whether it is an accurate assumption or not, the importance of their conclusions shows that the only strong evidence for holding to a Johannine commentary in this passage is limited to verses 16 and following. To conclude this question of the speaker, Bernard summarizes by saying:

It may be doubted whether vv. 13-15 really belong to the discourse of Jesus to Nicodemus, or whether they should not rather be taken as part of the commentary which Jn. subjoins. If the latter alternative be accepted, the report of the discourse ends quite naturally with the question of v. 12. But the title "the Son of Man" is never used in the Gospels in narrative, or in evangelistic comment, being found only in the report of words of Jesus Himself. This consideration is conclusive for taking the comment of Jn. as beginning with v. 16, and not with v. 13 (Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, International Critical Commentary, p. 112, 1929).

THE PROBLEM OF THE GRAMMAR

Having concluded that Christ is the speaker in John 3:13, the Greek text must now be analyzed to secure a sound interpretation. The

complete Greek text of this verse reads as follows: *καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.* The verb *ἀναβέβηκεν* is a third person singular, perfect active indicative from *ἀναβαίνω*. The verb *καταβάς* is a second aorist active participle, nominative masculine singular, from *καταβαίνω*. The verb *ὢν* is a present active participle, nominative masculine singular, from *εἰμί*.

The lexical meaning of the word *ἀναβαίνω* is "go up, ascend," and is used of living beings, referring to an actual going up, or of any upward movement, and is also used of things, such as smoke or prayers going up (Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, 1957, pp. 49-50). The verb *καταβαίνω* means "to go or come down, descend" (Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, 1936, p. 232).

The problem faced in interpreting Christ's words in John 3:13 begins with how to understand *ἀναβέβηκεν*. Is it to be concluded that He is anachronistically speaking of His future ascension (in anticipation), or is Christ teaching about His unique position of possessing perfect communion with God? Can Christ be telling of a time in His past life in which He was carried away into heaven (as the Socinians believe), or possibly is He referring to His baptism, when "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matthew 3:16)? These possibilities must each be carefully considered, for within them must lie the truth of John 3:13.

To hold that *καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν* ("and no one has ascended up to heaven") is spoken in anticipation of

Christ's future ascension (cf. Acts 1:9) is to embrace many problems. This position, held by Calvin, Bengel, Hengstenberg and Augustine, is diametrically opposed to the fact that "Jesus never speaks anachronistically" (Schnackenburg, p. 393). By this fact alone this view can be rejected. To escape such an obvious flaw, those who propound this view might take ἀναβέβηκεν as a future idea, "will ascend." But Luthardt comments, "It does not mean: will ascend to heaven (Bengel), the tense is against that" (Luthardt, St. John's Gospel, vol. 2, 1877, pp. 30-31).

Another problem inherent in the view that ἀναβέβηκεν refers to Christ's physical ascension into heaven is in reference to what the Scripture teaches concerning Enoch and Elijah. In Genesis 5:24 it says, "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (NASB). Hebrews 11:5, commenting on what happened to Enoch, says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him." In II Kings 2:11 the writer records, "Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven" (NASB). To hold that John 3:13 teaches Christ's bodily ascension into heaven following His resurrection seems to contradict the historical accounts of Enoch and Elijah going up into heaven bodily, for John 3:13 says that no one has done this (ascended) except the Son of man. Pink tries to avoid this contradiction by saying,

It is to be noted that Christ did not say, "no man hath entered into heaven," but, "no man hath ascended up to heaven." This is an entirely different thing. "Ascended" no man had, or ever will. What is before us now is only one of ten thousand examples of the minute and marvelous accuracy of Scripture, lost, alas, on the

great majority who read it so carelessly and hurriedly. Of Enoch it is recorded that he "was translated that he should not see death" (Heb. 11:5). Of Elijah it is said that he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:11). Of the saints who shall be raptured to heaven at the return of Christ, it is said that they shall be "caught up" (I Thess. 4:17). Of Christ alone it is said that He "ascended" (Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, 1945, p. 127).

Although from the standpoint of the English text Pink seems to have a point, there needs to be some clarification made. Because of the different verbs used when referring to Christ's ascension into heaven, the importance of His ascension is not the manner in which He ascended, but rather in the simple fact He went up to heaven after His resurrection. In I Peter 3:22 the word *πορεύομαι* is used instead of *ἀναβαίνω* when referring to Christ's ascension. *Πορεύομαι* merely means "to go, or proceed." Luke 24:51 uses the word *ἀναφέρω* when speaking of the ascension, which literally means "to carry or lead up." In Acts 1:8 the word *ἐπαίρω* is used, meaning to "lift up, or raise." Also, in Mark 16:19 the word *ἀναλαμβάνω*, "to take up, raise," is used for Christ's ascension. Interestingly enough, this word *ἀναλαμβάνω* is the same one used in the Septuagint in II Kings 2:11, referring to Elijah's being taken up to heaven. Hence, it seems that Pink's attempt to reconcile John 3:13 with the accounts of Elijah and Enoch does not fit the facts. His position not only demands an anachronism in Christ's speech, which as a rule is foreign to His pattern, but also demands embracing a contradiction by holding that no man has bodily ascended into heaven as Christ did.

Regarding the Socinian view that at sometime during His life Christ was literally taken up to heaven Milligan comments, "there is no foundation for the view held by some, that within the limits of His

ministry on earth He was ever literally taken up to heaven" (Milligan, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, 1898, p. 35). Besides not having any evidence for supporting their position, the Socinians also have the contradiction mentioned above within their viewpoint. If Elijah and Enoch did indeed go up into heaven, then any view which interprets John 3:13 as teaching Christ's bodily ascension embraces a contradiction.

Since all positions which regard ἀναβέβηκεν as referring to Christ's post-resurrection ascension into heaven contain a contradiction of the accounts of Enoch and Elijah, then all of these positions must be ruled out in the interpreting of ἀναβέβηκεν. As Robertson comments concerning John 3:13, "There is no allusion to the ascension which came later" (Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 5, 1932, p. 49). Since the post-resurrection ascension of Christ must be rejected as an interpretation, and since the Socinian view of an ascension during Christ's lifetime is erroneous, therefore the truth must lie in an interpretation which is compatible with the biblical record, yet must do justice to the grammar of John 3:13.

There are seemingly two possible interpretations of οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν which avoid the difficulty involved in interpreting this as the future ascension of Christ. The first, postulated by Godet, sees ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν as referring to Christ's baptism, when the "heavens were opened unto him" (Matthew 3:16). As Godet concludes,

We know a positive fact which is sufficient to explain the "has ascended" when we apply it to Jesus Himself; it is that which occurred at His baptism. Heaven was then opened to Him; He penetrated it deeply by His gaze; He read the heart of God, and knew at that moment everything which He was to reveal to men of the divine plan, the "heavenly things." (Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, vol. 1, 1886, p. 389).

This particular interpretation understands ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν as being spiritual rather than physical. To bring out the significance of this interpretation Godet translates John 3:13 accordingly: "No one has entered into communion with God and possesses thereby an intuitive knowledge of divine things, in order to reveal them to others, except He to whom heaven was opened and who dwells there at this very moment" (Godet, p. 390).

Godet's interpretation, understanding the primary reference of ἀναβέβηκεν to be spiritual rather than physical, avoids the contradiction of those noted above. But the biblical account of Christ's baptism, which Godet thinks John 3:13 refers to, does not provide sufficient information to substantiate Godet's theory. In Matthew's version of the baptism of Christ the heavens were indeed opened, but Christ is not said to have ascended into heaven, rather the Spirit is said to have descended upon Christ. With a little imagination, however, one could conclude that the reference to the heavens opening to Christ (Matthew 3:16) could include an ascension into heaven. The "heavens" in this particular interpretation would incorporate both the world of heavenly spiritual revelations and the world of the heavenly glory of God. Christ's ascension would be a spiritual ascension, an attaining of the knowledge of the eternal. As Godet says, "He read the heart of God, and knew at that moment everything which He was to reveal to men of the divine plan, the "heavenly things" (Godet, p. 389). Although this interpretation does resolve the contradiction of holding to Christ's physical ascension, there seems to be another grave inconsistency. The Scripture teaches that in Christ "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). This has been interpreted by

orthodox Christian theologians to mean that from His birth Christ was the God-man, having two natures (human and divine), but remaining one Person. This position was originally set forth in 451 A.D. at the council of Chalcedon, and has remained the orthodox position ever since (Christian, "Early and Medieval Church History," unpublished classroom notes, 1974). Godet's position appears to have Christ "becoming" enlightened to the plan of God, inferring that prior to His baptism He was lacking knowledge. This is inconsistent with the attributes of Christ. As Walvoord notes, "Frequently in the Scriptures Christ is portrayed as having omniscience. As a child of twelve in the temple, He astounded the teachers of His day with His wisdom" (Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, 1969, p. 28).

To attempt to reconcile Godet's position with the biblical record and with orthodox Christology, one might appeal to the humanity of Christ, asserting that within His humanity He did not know everything. If this were the case, then Christ could indeed be spoken of as "becoming aware of the divine plan." Luke 2:52 seemingly supports this, saying that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature." It is true that within the humanity of Christ were the limitations of humanity, yet at the same time He possessed the attributes of deity. "He had an infinite intelligence and will and a finite intelligence and will" (Thiessen, p. 305). Thus Christ at the same moment, had seemingly contradictory qualities. He could be weak and omnipotent, increasing in knowledge and omniscient, finite and infinite. These qualities can be traced to their corresponding nature, whether human or divine (Walvoord, pp. 116, 117). But the question at hand goes further than ascribing certain qualities to their corresponding nature. Since

Godet's position interprets John 3:13 as referring to Christ's ascending into heaven spiritually at His baptism to be enlightened concerning His part in the divine plan, the divine self-consciousness of Christ enters into the discussion.

There has been much speculation over the problem of the self-consciousness of Christ during His term on earth. In His own self-consciousness was He aware of His deity and humanity at all times? Liberals generally postpone any recognition of divine self-consciousness until some point during His public ministry. The orthodox position is that Christ in His divine self-consciousness was aware of His deity at all times. There was no point in His life in which He suddenly became aware that He was God. His divine self-consciousness was as fully operative while He was a babe in Bethlehem as it was in His most mature experience (Walvoord, p. 118). If this is true, then there could not have been an enlightenment" at His baptism which revealed to Him everything which He was to reveal to men of the divine plan, since the divine plan is inseparable from his divine self-consciousness. Evidence of this is when Christ was twelve years old, and He and His parents went to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover. Joseph and Mary left, supposing Jesus was with their caravan on this return trip. But Jesus remained behind, and it was three days later that His parents found him in Jerusalem, sitting in the midst of the teachers in the temple. When they found Him Mary told Him how anxiously they had been looking for Him. Jesus asked them why they had been looking for Him, and said to them "did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). The result of this question posed by Christ was that His parents "did not understand the statement

which He had made to them" (Luke 2:50). It could be concluded from this account that Christ was aware of what His place was in the divine plan, the "heavenly things" of John 3:12.

Another problem which undermines the strength of Godet's view is the experience of the prophet Ezekiel. Godet concludes that the heavens opening at Christ's baptism is what Christ refers to in John 3:13. This verse clearly teaches that whatever is meant by the term "ascended" is only true of Christ, for no one has experienced this except the Son of man. Yet in the very first verse of Ezekiel's prophecy he says that "the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). Unless someone wants to contend for the fact that Christ was also Ezekiel, then there appears to be at least two persons who had the heavens opened unto them. Since John 3:13 teaches that "no one has ascended into heaven . . . except the Son of man," then it is impossible to say that "ascended" here refers to the heavens opening unto Christ at His baptism, for the heavens were also opened unto Ezekiel.

Since Godet's position seems to be ruled out, there must be a position which avoids the contradictions of the others, yet adequately explains the meaning of "And no one has ascended into heaven." There seems to exist such an interpretation. By understanding "ascended into heaven" as "gained the heights of heaven," that is, "reached the lofty mysteries of heaven and become acquainted with its high and holy truths," an interpretation is derived which does not enter into the pitfalls of the others. No man has spiritually ascended into the complete knowledge of the heavenly things except the Son of man, whose origin is heaven. As Ellicott says, "He had that knowledge which a

man could obtain only by ascending to heaven, and He came down from heaven with it" (Ellicott, A New Testament Commentary for English Readers, vol. 1, 1892, p. 401). The emphasis is not that Christ at some point in time received complete knowledge of the "heavenly things," but rather that the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, had a pre-existence in heaven even before His incarnation, in which He existed in a state of knowing heavenly things.

To hold to an interpretation of "and no one has ascended into heaven, except He who came down from heaven" as meaning that Christ is the only person who has attained the knowledge of heavenly things, one must explain the possibility of there being a time when Christ did not have complete knowledge of heavenly things. As has already been discussed with Godet's position, any view which has Christ lacking in knowledge of the divine purpose seems to be in conflict with His consciousness of His deity. This would eliminate the chance of Christ literally attaining knowledge at some point in time. The conflict seems to arise, however, when the tense of the word ἀναβέβηκεν is mentioned. This word is in the perfect tense which generally has the idea of past completed action with present existing results. To regard ἀναβέβηκεν in this way would cause one to conclude that Christ's "ascension" into the knowledge of heavenly things was indeed an event in the past which was preceded by a time in which He had not "ascended" into the knowledge of heavenly things. But the perfect tense does not always demand a past completed action. Sometimes the entire punctiliar aspect of the perfect tense can be missing from the intended meaning of a verb. Robertson calls this the intensive present perfect. He says "In reality they are perfects where the punctiliar force is dropped

and only the durative remains" (Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, 1934, p. 894). This must be the case in John 3:13, where ἀναβέβηκεν is emphasizing the present reality of having complete knowledge of heavenly things.

To put the above interpretation in its proper context, the comment by Jesus in John 3:12 should be reiterated: "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" After this Christ seems to tell Nicodemus, "And no man has been up to heaven and attained the knowledge of these 'heavenly things' except the one who abides in the knowledge of 'heavenly things,' because He came down from heaven." This idea would interpret ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς as referring to the incarnation of Christ, as seemingly everyone does. This interpretation would also fit the teaching of Proverbs 30:3-4 which says "I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?" This verse appears to teach that knowledge of the holy could only come from someone who has been in heaven, and has come down with this knowledge. The thought is quite similar to what is expressed in John 1:18 in which Christ teaches that there can be no other means of receiving truth except through Him. Christ is the one who is able to declare "heavenly things" because He is in a state of communion with God, and because He came down from heaven. As Ellicott says, "From the human point of view He was as one who had already ascended and descended" (Ellicott, p. 401).

Concerning the final clause of John 3:13, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ("the Son of man who is in heaven"), there are differences as to its interpretation. Some understand these words from

Jesus as meaning "who was in heaven," and quite graciously substitute the imperfect ὅς ἦν for the present ὁ ὢν. Luthardt remarks: "The phrase 'which is in heaven' is not to be taken as a present, and to be referred to his internal relation of communion with God . . . It must be understood as an imperfect, and resolved into ὅς ἦν" (Luthardt, St. John's Gospel, 1877, p. 31). Erasmus, the Socinians, and Semler translate this in the same manner. Others take this clause to mean that Christ is teaching His omnipresence while He was on earth, telling Nicodemus that at the very moment of their conversation the Son of man, who had come down from heaven, was in heaven.

To take Christ's words in this final clause of John 3:13 and interpret them as referring to a time before the incarnation ("who was in heaven") is to totally abuse the tense of ὢν. This verb exists in relation to the principal verb of the sentence, ἀναβέβηκεν, which emphasizes the present state of being ascended into heaven. The verb ὢν explains how the Son of man can be continually ascended into heaven, being in communion with the "heavenly things" of verse 12. This is possible because He is in heaven at that very moment and continually exists there. This is the idea of the present tense verb ὢν.

There is another interpretative translation of ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ which should be discussed. The New English Bible translates this by "whose home is in heaven." Here is another instance of what appears to be an abuse of the Greek text. If a commentator wants to interpret ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ as "whose home is in heaven," then that is his prerogative. But if a translation, which claims to be "a faithful rendering of the best available Greek text" (New English Bible, Introduction, 1961) translates ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ as

"whose home is in heaven," then that is an abomination. Whether a translation or an interpretation, "whose home is in heaven" does not fit into the pattern of thought in John 3:13, for this would be a seeming reference to Christ's prior existence in heaven, and this idea is taught immediately preceding $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\hat{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ by the words "he who descended."

It would appear then from the language of John 3:13 that Christ tells Nicodemus of His existence in heaven at the moment they are speaking. This indicates the omnipresence of Christ during His ministry on earth. Walvoord notes that "the clause 'which is in heaven' is an explicit statement of this (omnipresence) doctrine" (Walvoord, p. 28). As Morris properly observes, "Only a crassly literal localization of heaven would require us to think that Jesus had to leave heaven to come to earth" (Morris, p. 224). Whereas this is true, the emphasis of John 3:13 is not an omnipresence of heaven, but rather an omnipresence of Jesus Christ.

To summarize the evidence gathered from examining the Greek text of John 3:13, an amplified translation, meant to bring out what this present writer feels is the actual meaning, would read as follows: "No man has attained the knowledge of heavenly things except the Son of man who abides in the knowledge of heavenly things, having come down from heaven and who even now is present in heaven." Regarding the perfect tense $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\beta\acute{\epsilon}\beta\eta\kappa\epsilon\nu$, "This tense does not signify 'has accomplished at a given moment that the act of ascending' (this would be the sense of the aorist), but He is there, He lives there, as having ascended thither" (Godet, p. 390). The word $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ refers to the incarnation of Christ, and $\acute{\omicron} \acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\hat{\omega} \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ refers to the

omnipresence of Christ while He was on earth.

THE PROBLEM OF THE CHRISTOLOGY

There are two significant teachings which come from this present writer's exegesis of John 3:13. The first is the pre-existence of Christ, and the second is the omnipresence of Christ. These Christological issues need to be examined in light of the biblical record to determine if they can be harmonized and incorporated with the teachings of Scripture. When this has been done, the results need to be compared with the findings of established orthodox Christology to see if there is harmony or conflict, and to see if this writer's interpretations can be used to strengthen the position of orthodox Christology. Finally, it should be determined whether or not the exegetical conclusions can be used to refute Christological errors regarding the pre-existence and omnipresence of Christ.

The Pre-existence of Christ

One of the interpretative conclusions of this study of John 3:13 has been that Christ had a knowledge of heavenly things before His incarnation. This would be grounds for holding to the pre-existence of Christ. The question is: does the pre-existence of Christ fit into the biblical teachings concerning Christ, and is this doctrine an established position within orthodox Christology?

The pre-existence of Christ is a teaching closely related to the eternity of Christ. Although not the same, the pre-existence of Christ has been used as evidence of His eternity. As Walvoord notes,

Although technically the affirmation that Christ was pre-existent, that is, existed before His birth in Bethlehem, is

not precisely the same as to state that He is eternal, for all practical purposes proof of His pre-existence has been accepted by theologians as evidence of His eternity (Walvoord, p. 25).

The importance of the eternity of Christ, which His pre-existence would support, is discussed by Walvoord:

The doctrine of the eternity of the Son of God is the most important doctrine of Christology as a whole because if Christ is not eternal then He is a creature who came into existence in time and lacks the quality of eternity and infinity which characterizes God Himself. If on the other hand it is held that Christ is eternal, it is immediately affirmed that He is not dependent upon another for His existence, but is in fact self-existent (Walvoord, p. 22).

To determine if the pre-existence of Christ is a biblical teaching, an inductive method of examining particular related verses to arrive at a general conclusion must be used. This is important, for it would be easy to commit circular reasoning by starting with the fact of the deity of Christ, then reasoning that since Christ is God, and God is eternal, therefore Christ is eternal; and if Christ is eternal, therefore He is pre-existent. As has already been noted in the comments of Walvoord, the proper theological method is to prove the pre-existence of Christ from the biblical record, use the proof of His pre-existence to support His eternity, and use the proof of His eternity to support His self-existence and deity.

The pre-existence of Christ is clearly taught in Colossians 1:16-17: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." This passage clearly shows Christ as the creator, who prior to His incarnation created all things, making Him before all things.

A verse which incorporates both the pre-existence and eternity of Christ

into one verse is Micah 5:2, a prophecy concerning the birthplace of the Messiah: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." As A. R. Fausset has said concerning this verse, "The terms convey the strongest assertion of infinite duration of which the Hebrew language is capable" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, vol. 4, 1945, p. 600).

The Gospel of John has quite a number of passages where the pre-existence of Christ is apparently taught. One of the clearest of these is John 1:1, 2, and 14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. . . ." The phrase "in the beginning" seems to refer to some point in time in eternity past. The verb is also chosen to state eternity as the word "was" (הָיָה) implies continued existence (Walvoord, p. 24). These verses in John seem to emphatically teach the pre-existence, and probably the eternity of Christ. Therefore to interpret John 3:13 in such a way that the pre-existence of Christ is taught would be perfectly compatible with other biblical teachings on the nature of Christ. The pre-existence of Christ is also the orthodox position in regard to the nature of Christ. As Walvoord notes: "The doctrine that Christ existed from all eternity past has been the orthodox theology of the church clearly annunciated as such ever since the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.)" (Walvoord, p. 24).

The Omnipresence of Christ

Besides the pre-existence of Christ, another interpretative conclusion from this present study of John 3:13 is that the omnipresence of Christ during His earthly ministry is taught. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus He said that the Son of man was at that moment in heaven, showing how He not only came down from heaven but that He continually abides there. The doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ is very profound, and the biblical record and orthodox theology must be carefully checked to determine if this doctrine is in harmony with the scriptural teachings of Christ's attributes.

Seemingly it should be easy enough to assume that Christ was omnipresent during His earthly ministry, for omnipresence is regarded as an attribute of deity, and Christ was divine, therefore He must have been omnipresent. This type of reasoning might be accurate, yet there needs to be much more biblical and logical elaboration on the subject of Christ's omnipresence, for there has been considerable disagreement on this subject. The entire area of the incarnation of Christ has produced many interpretations as to what actually took place. In general, the act of the Son of God in the incarnation is described first by the word "condescension," in that He, the eternal God, condescended to become Man. As a Man He submitted to death on a cross, which is described by the term "humiliation." After His passion Christ rose from the dead and later ascended into heaven. In heaven He was exalted to the right hand of God the Father. The theological question is raised, therefore, as to whether the process of condescension, humiliation and exaltation involved any change in the divine nature of Christ.

To understand how the eternal God could take upon Himself human limitations while retaining His eternal deity, the classic passage of Philippians 2:5-11 must be considered. Some interpret this passage as meaning that Christ emptied Himself of His relative attributes--omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence--while retaining His immanent attributes--holiness, love, and truth. Those who hold to this position are called Kenotic theologians, derived from the Greek word *ἑκένωσεν* which is translated "emptied" in Philippians 2:7 (KJV). One of these Kenotic theologians, David Forrest, declared that Christ had wide and deep knowledge, but that He was not omniscient; that He still more plainly was not omnipresent; and that He did not retain His omnipotence, but wrought His miracles "by virtue of the power committed to Him by the Father, received in answer to prayer, and conditioned in its exercise by the Higher Will to which He submitted His own" (Forrest, The Christ of History and Experience, 1903, p. 194).

The orthodox position, however, on the humiliation of Christ as taught in Philippians 2:5-11 is that Christ, in becoming man, did not diminish His deity, but added a human nature to the divine nature. He continued to be God in the flesh, and all the fulness of the Godhead resided in His body (Colossians 2:9). This would mean that all the attributes of deity, including omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, were continually possessed by Christ even during His earthly ministry. This present writer's interpretation of John 3:13 supports this orthodox position as it relates to the omnipresence of Christ while on earth. But to say at this point that John 3:13 proves the omnipresence of Christ during His earthly ministry is again begging the question. Before this verse can be used as "proof" of this doctrine

the biblical record must be considered. If the totality of Scripture is found in support of Christ's omnipresence during His ministry on earth, then John 3:13 can be harmonized with these other passages to strengthen the orthodox position. If, on the other hand, no biblical support for this position can be found, then the conclusions of this paper must be considered the sole biblical evidence for Christ's omnipresence while on earth.

Many verses and passages seem to contribute information which relates to the question of Christ's omnipresence while on earth. In the concluding verse of the Gospel of Matthew, Christ tells His disciples "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This verse seems to implicitly teach the omnipresence of Christ by means of His promise to His disciples. In John chapter 14 there seems to be other reference to His omnipresence. Christ promises to indwell believers (14:18, 20, 23), which would be impossible if He were not omnipresent. Verse twenty seems to specially relate to Christ's omnipresence while He was on earth: "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

In John 1:47-50 Jesus seems to reveal His omnipresence during His earthly ministry. Verse 48 is indicative of this: "Nathaniel said to Him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Phillip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'" In this passage there is no further explanation as to how Jesus saw Nathaniel when he was under the fig tree, but it must be inferred that there was more than human knowledge involved. It is quite possible that the reason Christ knew the thoughts and character of Nathaniel was because He was omniscient, and the way He knew that he was under the fig tree

was because He was present there.

In Matthew 18:19-20 Jesus says: "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them. . . . For where two or three have gathered together in His name, there I am in their midst." The teaching here seems to be that Christ is present wherever two or three have gathered together in His name, revealing the omnipresence of Christ. Some regard this passage as a promise for the future church, but the tenses of the verbs, perfect (συνηγμένοι - "have gathered") and present (εἰμί - "I am"), are against this. There seems to be no reason to understand this passage as only referring to a future time. If indeed the meaning refers also to the time in which Christ was speaking to His disciples, which the verbs indicate to be the case, then here is a record of His omnipresence during His earthly ministry.

The verses mentioned above provide a biblical basis for holding to the omnipresence of Christ after His incarnation. The scriptural account implicitly teaches that Christ's presence was not confined to His earthly body, but was manifest everywhere. The fact that Christ is omnipresent does not contradict the concept that He has locality. In regard to the orthodox position of the omnipresence of Christ, with the exception of Lutheran theologians, most interpreters regard Christ as omnipresent in His deity and local in His humanity. It was the deity of Christ which continued to be present everywhere even after the incarnation. This conclusion, based on the biblical record, would seem to defeat the notion of the Kenotic theologians who claim that Christ surrendered His relative attributes at His incarnation. John 3:13 then harmonizes with the biblical record, and appears in itself to

be strong supporting evidence for the omnipresence of Christ during
His earthly ministry.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION ON THE PROBLEM OF JOHN 3:13

The initial problem involved in the interpreting of John 3:13 is determining the wording of the original Greek text. Because of the amount and quality of textual evidence, this present writer has concluded that the final clause of this verse originally read $\acute{\omicron}\ \upsilon\acute{\iota}\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\hat{\omega}\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \omicron\upsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ ("the Son of man who is in heaven"). The geographical distribution of manuscript evidence makes the reading $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \omicron\upsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ by far the most well attested one on the basis of external evidence. Likewise, the internal evidence supports this reading as being the original one. It seems that its omission in some manuscripts was made by scribes who felt the reading was too difficult to keep in the text. Other scribes merely changed the words to avoid the reading which would seem to make Christ tell Nicodemus that He was in heaven at the moment in which they were conversing. Probably the strongest single reason for considering $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \omicron\upsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ as the original reading is that it is perfectly consistent with John's style and vocabulary. Of the seven occurrences in the New Testament of the construction $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu$ followed by a prepositional phrase, six of these are found in the Gospel of John, making this not only Johannine in style, but almost uniquely so. Therefore, on the basis of internal and external evidence, the reading $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \omicron\upsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}$ commends itself as being the original reading.

Having determined the original wording of the text of John 3:13, the speaker of this verse had to be identified. If John was commenting in verse thirteen upon the conversation of Jesus and Nicodemus, then the final interpretation of this verse would be based on this important fact. If, however, Christ was still speaking in verse thirteen, then the interpretation would be exceedingly more significant, though admittedly more difficult. For several reasons it appears that Christ is doing the speaking in verse thirteen. First, the word indicating continuity, begins verse thirteen. This is evidence for Christ continuing His reply to Nicodemus which He began in verse ten. Secondly, verses 13-15 contain the first explanation which answers the question asked by Nicodemus in verse nine, "How can these things be?" Nicodemus wanted to know how one attains the "new birth" which Jesus talked to him about, and the answer comes in verses 14-15. If Christ's narrative is cut off at verse twelve, then He fails to answer Nicodemus' important question. Finally, and perhaps most convincing, excluding John 3:13-14 the term "Son of man" is used seventy-nine times in the four Gospels, and in all of these seventy-nine occurrences it is Christ Himself who uses the term. Since there is the question of who is speaking in John 3:13-15, mathematics seems to provide the most probable solution. The term "Son of man," appearing in both verse 13 and 14, is elsewhere in the Gospels used only by Christ, and should therefore be attributed to Him in these two places in question.

Concluding that Christ Himself is the speaker in John 3:13, the next problem is securing an interpretation. The words "and no one has ascended into heaven . . . except the Son of man" provide quite a challenge to an interpreter. To consider these words as referring to

Christ's post-resurrection ascension into heaven is to embrace a contradiction, for the Scripture quite clearly teaches that both Elijah and Enoch also went bodily up to heaven. And John 3:13 clearly teaches that no one has gone up to heaven (or "ascended") except the Son of man. Another inappropriate interpretation is the Socinian position that at sometime during His life Jesus of Nazareth was taken up to heaven and was enlightened concerning the "heavenly things," becoming the Christ as a result of this adventure. This particular interpretation of "and no one has ascended . . . except the Son of man" has no biblical support, and is a heretical and fanciful teaching which also contradicts the biblical record of Elijah and Enoch. Another interpretation of "and no one has ascended . . . except the Son of man" is that of Godet, which essentially says that this refers to the baptism of Christ in which the "heavens were opened unto Him." This position divorces the divine self-consciousness of Christ from His knowledge of the divine plan, assuming Godet admits the former. To say that prior to His baptism Christ was unaware of the extent of His message and mission is to seemingly contradict what appears to be His special knowledge of God's will, clearly revealed in Luke chapter two. In this instance He told His parents that He must be about His Father's business, from which can be concluded that He already knew at the age of twelve who His Father was, and what His Father's business was. Also, Godet's position contradicts the testimony of Ezekiel that he too had the heavens opened unto him (Ezekiel 1:1). Since John 3:13 says that no one except the Son of man has ascended into heaven, then to say, like Godet, that "ascended into heaven" here means having the heavens opened up unto one means either that Ezekiel was actually Christ, or

else there is a contradiction.

There is an interpretation of "and no one has ascended into heaven . . . except the Son of man" which appears to avoid the contradictions of the other ones, and still fits the context of the passage. This particular interpretation understands these words as meaning that no one has attained the knowledge of the "heavenly things" which Christ referred to in verse twelve, except the Son of man. The reason that only Christ has attained the knowledge of these "heavenly things," and abides in them, is because He came from heaven with this special knowledge and insight. Christ continually abides in communion with God the Father, and therefore possesses an exclusive relationship.

Supporting evidence for the idea that "ascended into heaven" refers to Christ's unique possession of knowledge of the "heavenly things" is the fact that the Son of man "came down from heaven." This reference to the incarnation alludes to the pre-existence of Christ, and to the fact of His pre-incarnate possession of perfect communion with God the Father. The fact of Christ's pre-existence has been shown to be in harmony with the biblical evidence of the nature of Christ.

Finally, the final words of this verse spoken by Jesus make John 3:13 much more profound and beautiful: No one has ascended into heaven except the Son of man "which is in heaven." This clause clearly teaches that Christ did not empty Himself of all of His relative attributes, for He was omnipresent during His earthly ministry. He did not cease being God when He became man. This truth enforces the orthodox position that indeed Christ retained all of His divine attributes while on earth. The same God who became a man to die on the cross of Calvary could tell Nicodemus the Pharisee that He never ceased to be fully God,

and His presence remained in heaven while He was on earth.

In conclusion, John 3:13 harmonizes well with the rest of the Gospel of John, emphasizing the deity of the One who came down from heaven. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is in a position to teach one about heavenly things, for He alone has experienced the heights of heavenly knowledge, being in perfect communion with God. Earthly things tell of the creation and power of God, while heavenly things tell of a pre-existent, omnipresent Saviour who, while remaining fully God, took upon Himself a human body, and gave His life as a ransom for all mankind. Some of the most profound and vital truths of the Christian faith are centered in the Person and work of Christ, yet it is no wonder. For God Himself has revealed to us that Christ was God from the beginning, continued to be God while He lived and died for the sins of the world, and even now remains as God--the exalted Lord Jesus Christ who always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him.

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