From very early times the opening verses of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel have been taken to have a specific reference to the divine activity of creation 'in the beginning'. The earliest commentator on the Fourth Gospel, Heracleon, the friend of Valentinus the Gnostic, interpreted John 1 in the light of the typical Gnostic dualism; 'he said that it was the Logos who caused the demiurge to make the world'. Dr A. Orbe has shown how popular this text was with the Gnostics of the second century and how they interpreted it in support of their cosmological speculations. The first extant orthodox Christian use of the text is by Theophilus of Antioch in the context of an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian doctrine of creatio ex nihilo over the Platonic doctrine of creation as the fashioning of a cosmos out of pre-existent matter. Throughout his commentary Origen interprets the text as referring to creation, as also does Augustine.4

When we come to modern interpretation of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel the same emphasis on cosmology is apparent. Those commentators who read the Fourth Gospel in the light of the writings of Philo Judaeus naturally interpret the Logos-concept as having a close relationship with the cosmological intermediary who finds so prominent a place in Philo's thought. Even those who interpret the Prologue in the light of the Hebraic concept of the dehbar Yahweh emphasize the cosmological reference of John 1

1 Origen, Comm. in Johan., ii, 8.
2 En los albores de la exegesis Iohannea (John 1:3). (Estudios Valentini- anos, vol. ii).
3 Ad Autolycum, ii, 22.
4 Cf. Marie Comeau, St Augustin : Exégète du quatrième évangile, 295-298.
The *debhar Yahweh* is the creative Word of the Lord; ‘John begins his story of Christ with a story of creation *in nuce*.⁶

It would be foolish to deny categorically that, when he began his Gospel with the words ‘in the beginning’, the Fourth Evangelist had Genesis 1 in mind. Similarly it would be foolish to deny that the use of *είλθε* in verses 1-2 and *γένηθε* in verse 3 is intended to convey the contrast between the absoluteness of the being of God and His Logos and the contingency of the existence of everything other than God and His Logos. Nevertheless it is necessary to raise the question whether in fact John 1 has a specific reference to creation or rather a very wide general reference to the whole activity of God *ad extra*. If the latter is the case then the cosmology of the Prologue is reduced to a passing reference in verse 10: ‘the world was made through him’.

In the Gospel as a whole John is not interested in cosmology. His interest is in the saving activity of God in Jesus Christ, His only Son. He states his purpose in writing the Gospel quite explicitly when he says: ‘These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name’ (2031). The Gospel is John’s demonstration that Jesus of Nazareth is God’s *unique* Son (114, 18, 316, 18) through faith in whom men may receive salvation and become children of God (112). All the deeds which Jesus does and all the words that he speaks are evidence which demands that conclusion. Apart from Jesus no man can see God (118, 149). He and the Father are one (1036) not only in a moral sense but essentially,⁷ for Jesus says: ‘I am in the Father and the Father in me’ (1038, 1410, 11, 1721). He and the Father are also one in words and deeds; the deeds which he does are the Father’s (536, 94, 1025, 37, 38, 1410, 11), and the words which he speaks are the Father’s words (1410, 178). The Son is God’s Word of self-

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