

# TRANS- HUMANITIES

---

**Title : Crossing the Sacred-Profane Divide in Gnosticism and  
John's Gospel**

Author(s) : Horace Jeffery Hodges

Source : *Trans-Humanities*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (2011), pp. 163–176.

Published by : Ewha Womans University Press

URL : <http://eiheng.ewha.ac.kr/page.asp?pageid=book10&pagenum=060600>

Online ISSN : 2383-9899

---

All articles in *Trans-Humanities* are linked to the Homepage of KCI and  
Ewha Institute for the Humanities and can be downloaded:  
[www.kci.go.kr](http://www.kci.go.kr) & <http://www.trans-humanities.org/>



이화여자대학교  
EWHW WOMANS UNIVERSITY

---

# Crossing the Sacred-Profane Divide in Gnosticism and John's Gospel

---

Horace Jeffery Hodges (Ewha Womans University)

## I. Introduction

Perhaps, as has been said, we live today in a fast-changing world in which cultural boundaries undergo rapid deconstruction and reconstruction. But in our emphasis upon the radical transformations that occur in our present age, we might forget that boundaries have always been contested. Such forgetfulness draws a line between our time and the past, but a drawn line presents a challenge. This paper will attempt to cross that implicit, temporal boundary, along with some disciplinary boundaries, e.g., anthropology and religious studies, and thereby offer a new horizon on boundary-crossing in some ancient texts. The boundary in question is the one between the profane and the sacred, and a few things need to be said here by way of introduction. This border between the profane and the sacred identifies a division between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Although the sacred realm is generally considered to contain dynamic power, each of these two realms can be understood as having a power of its own. Particularly in Gnosticism, due to its radical substance dualism, the profane realm has significant power at odds with the sacred realm. Similarly, canonical Christianity presupposes a power within the profane realm. The opposition of these forces poses problems for anyone or anything moving across the sacred-profane border. An earthly descent by a sacred being thus constitutes a precarious excursion, particularly if this involves an encounter with earthly nourishment, and especially if this nourishment is presented as a gift, as we shall come to see through applying the insights of Marcel Mauss on reciprocity and ambiguity in gift-giving. To understand the danger better, consider the social role that food and drink play. In an

anthropological study on the role of drinking, Mary Douglas notes how drinks can “act as markers of personal identity and of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion” (“Distinctive” 8). Much the same holds for food, which, as Douglas notes, “actually delivers good fellowship” (“Standard” 12). Food and drink as gifts increase the force of this bonding and reciprocity, and when nourishment as a gift crosses the sacred-profane border, some very interesting consequences result that depend upon the difference between the sacred and the profane and upon the intention of the giver or recipient. In Gnostic systems, with their substance dualism of good spirit and evil matter, genuine gift-giving cannot occur, for neither true bonding nor actual reciprocity is possible between two intrinsically antithetical realms. Such gifts are pseudo-gifts intended for subverting the power of the one accepting them. This contrasts with systems based upon an ethical dualism of good and evil, where genuine gift-giving across the sacred-profane divide is possible. To illustrate this difference, this paper will focus upon the descent of heavenly figures in Gnostic texts and the purportedly ‘Gnostic’ Gospel of John, their encounter with gifts of earthly nourishment, and their own gifts of heavenly nourishment.

## II. Gnosticism

Generally speaking, Gnostics presupposed a dualism of matter and spirit, with the former as the active principle of evil and the latter as the active principle of good. Classical Gnosticism of the second century C.E. often portrayed this power as an “erotic lust to possess the divine” and understood the material universe as “the darkness” that, in the form of the body, had sufficient power to trap and fetter fragments of the spiritual realm (Layton 16:18). In this type of Gnosticism, the original movement of spirit across the sacred-profane divide to the realm of matter had resulted from an error on the part of the subordinate spiritual entity Sophia (Layton 35). The Secret Book According to John (21:16-22:2) describes this spiritual element, trapped in the material bodies of human beings, encountering food offered by the rulers of the material realm:

[T]he rulers brought ...[Adam] and put him in the garden .... And they said, “Eat,” namely, at leisure. For in fact their food is bitter,

---

www.kci.go.kr

...their trees are impiety, their fruit is incurable poison, and their promise is death. (Layton 45)

The wording here and in the context might suggest to a modern reader a purely metaphorical use of "food." I think that such an understanding would constitute a mistake.

For Gnostics, the material world's physicality itself constituted a real danger for the trapped spiritual element. This is explicit in a couple of Gnostic texts from nonclassical Gnosticism. The *Kephalaia*, a synopsis of Manichaean teachings, describes material food's effect on an otherwise enlightened Gnostic:

[W]rath becomes greater in him, and desire multiplies[,] ... and sadness and grief [also,] because of the food ... he has eaten and the water ... he has drunk ... (Polotsky, *Kephalaia* 215:13-17)

Manichaeans recognized the problematic of material food and attributed a lowered spiritual state to food eaten and water drunk. The author of the *Pistis Sophia* likewise denigrates material food and drink:

Renounce the whole world and all the matter in it, for he who ... eats and drinks of its matter ... gathers to himself still further matter. (*Pistis Sophia* 251:4-10, my translation; cf. Schmidt and MacDermot)

A Gnostic who accepts material food and drink binds the spirit that has crossed the sacred-profane boundary ever more strongly to matter and the profane material realm.

These passages describe the danger posed by nourishment for the Gnostic. The danger is the same for spiritual envoys who cross the boundary from sacred to profane by descending to oppose the rulers of the material realm. Two examples will demonstrate this, the first by implication, the second explicitly. In the *Ginza*, the Mandaean revealer Hibil-Ziwa undertakes a pre-cosmic descent into the dark underworld to spy upon the machinations of the children of darkness, who are planning to attack the realm of light. While in the underworld, Hibil-Ziwa is offered food by the children of darkness:

Sie rühren einen Brei ein, bringen ihn vor mich, halten ihn und sprechen: “Herr, iß und trink Wein” ... Ich sprach zu ihnen: “Fürwahr, ich habe gegessen und getrunken.” (Lidzbarski, *Ginza* 161:1-8.)

They prepare a brew, bring it to me, hold it, and say, “Sir: eat, and drink wine”... I spoke to them, “Indeed, I have eaten and drunk.”  
(My translation from German)

Nothing in the context shows that Hibil-Ziwa has eaten or drunk, so this passage leaves unexplained why Hibil-Ziwa really declines the nourishment offered. The second Gnostic text, however, specifies the corrupting effect of material food. In “The Hymn of the Pearl,” a Gnostic revealer descends to liberate a ‘pearl’ (i.e., a spirit) from its imprisonment within the material world. However, something goes badly wrong when the denizens of the material world sense the revealer’s difference:

They perceived that I was not one of them,  
And they mingled with me in their guile.  
Moreover, they made me eat of *their food*.

...

And by the weight of their food,  
I fell into a deep sleep (vv. 31-36). (My translation, cf. Preuschen 35)

Unlike Hibil-Ziwa in the Mandaean passage above, the Gnostic revealer here mistakenly accepts earthly food and dies as a result — what Gnostic terminology refers to as a deep sleep. In effect, his ‘somnolent’ state parallels that of the spiritual particles that the Gnostics described as lost, scattered, and trapped within bodies in this material world.

To understand the significance of these passages describing material nourishment offered to Gnostics and heavenly envoys, recall that these offerings of material sustenance constitute ‘gifts’ of a very special category. The great French anthropologist Marcel Mauss notes two things that characterize normal gift-giving: 1) reciprocity and 2) ambiguity (Mauss 1 and 58-62). The former refers to the economy of gift-giving, namely, that the gift must circulate. The latter refers to the promise and danger of a gift, namely, that a gift brings either life or death. Mauss implies that almost any

sort of gift can become poisonous, even bringing death — if the recipient does not ultimately return the gift to the economy of gift-giving or if the giver presented it with ill intentions — but gifts of nourishment pose the greatest danger (Mauss 125), for nourishment crosses the border between the world and the self, in that we become what we eat. Such a gift binds one to life or to death — the life or death both in the nourishment itself and in the intention of the giver. The material food offered by the cosmic rulers to human beings and to spiritual envoys brings death through its materiality and through the intention of those giving it (cf. Polotsky, 26; *Kephalaia* 18-20), for by forging an intimate bond to the material world and its material rulers, this food corrupts the spiritual essence of humans and the envoys. Such a 'poisonous' gift also subverts the cycle of gift-giving and steals the life of the recipient. The poisonous gift thus constitutes a pseudo-gift intended to mask a grasp for power.

Envoys from the spiritual realm must also sometimes play this power game. In the Manichaean myth of origins, the divine Primal Man and his five sons descend to fight the material forces of darkness, but lose and become food for the rulers of the material realm. Seemingly a setback, this loss of divine substance initiates the process that will end in matter's defeat. The loss sometimes gets portrayed as a kind of Trojan Horse 'gift':

[T]hen Primal Man gave himself and his five sons as food to the five sons of Darkness, just as a man who has an enemy mixes deadly poison in a cake (and) gives (it) to him. (Reeves 190)

In effect, this 'gift' of food acts upon matter like a slow-working *poison*. One might wonder why spirit, the source of genuine life in the Manichaean system of Gnosis, should bring death. I suggest that the gift acts as a poison because it serves not to bring spirit and matter into communion but to ensure their ultimate separation. As such, *this act of giving* — as with that of the material rulers' to humans and spiritual envoys — *subverts the economy of gift-giving by ensuring that the cycle never genuinely begins*. Yet, a gift seeks to return to its giver (Gasché 109) — if not by bringing the recipient into the cycle of gift-giving, to the mutual advantage of giver and receiver, then by wreaking havoc upon the recipient (Mauss 8) and forcefully returning to its rightful owner.

### III. John's Gospel

Johannine thought has often been characterized by scholars as 'Gnostic', though this designation is hotly debated. Much depends upon what is implied by the so-called Johannine dualism. I contend that although John's Gospel, like Gnosticism, exhibits dualism, it presupposes ethical rather than substance dualism. The fourth evangelist divides everything into flesh and spirit, earthly and heavenly, darkness and light, death and life, and below and above, respectively. Although such binary oppositions can reflect Gnostic substance dualism, they do not do so in John's Gospel. One should note that the fourth evangelist does not specify a matter-spirit dualism and never once even mentions matter in his gospel. Rather, he puts forward a flesh-spirit dualism. One could imagine that "flesh" stands for "matter" here, but this would constitute a misunderstanding. Gnostic "matter" is essentially evil; Johannine "flesh" is essentially neutral. John's Gospel presents Jesus as having a body of flesh filled with the holy spirit (cf. John 1:32-33; 6:69). If flesh were inherently evil, the incarnation would be impossible. Nevertheless, John's Gospel presents a world filled with evil and sin, an impure world.

The Johannine redeemer's movement across the sacred-profane divide thus presents a situation structurally similar to the one in Gnosticism: the sacred comes into dangerously close proximity to the profane. As in Gnostic texts, the world attempts to exert control over the emissary from the realm of the spirit (John 14:30)—a desire for control that the prologue to John's Gospel traces even to the time of origins (John 1:5). The world's attempts to gain control over Jesus assume various forms, but I will focus entirely upon food. Jesus is explicitly offered food twice, in John 4:31-34 and John 19:28-30, which provide intriguing parallels to the passages from the *Ginza* and *The Hymn of the Pearl*, respectively. In John 4:31-34, the disciples, bearing food from a nearby Samaritan village, confront Jesus shortly after he has revealed his messianic role to a Samaritan woman:

4,31 In the meantime, the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know." 33 Therefore, the disciples said to one another, "Surely, no one has brought food to him." 34 Jesus says to them, "My food is that I might do the will of the one who sent me and (that I might)

complete his work.”

In John 19:28-30, Jesus has just relinquished his responsibility for his mother to the beloved disciple and now readies himself for death:

19:28 After this, Jesus — knowing that everything had now been completed — in order that scripture might be fulfilled, says, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar was standing (there) full of vinegar. Thus having put a sponge full of the vinegar on a hyssop, they brought (it) to his mouth. 30 Then, when Jesus received the vinegar, he said, “It has been completed,” and bowing (his) head, he handed over the spirit.

Jesus resembles Hibil-Ziwa in declining food in 4:31-34 and the prince in accepting food and dying in 19:28-30, but the resemblances are superficial for two reasons. By resembling *both* Hibil-Ziwa and the prince, Jesus actually resembles neither. More significantly, Jesus *willingly* accepts the vinegar during his crucifixion, unlike the prince, whom the ‘guileful’ denizens of the world trick into accepting worldly nourishment.

Yet, why does the Johannine Jesus reject the gift of worldly food in John 4:31-34 but accept it in John 19:28-30? Maussian theory implies that accepting a gift of food signifies the recipient's acceptance of communion with the giver. This implies that by rejecting food in John 4:31-34, Jesus rejects communion not only with his disciples but with the world that is the source of the food, and by accepting food in John 19:28-30, Jesus accepts communion both with those crucifying him and with the world that is the source of the food. Moreover, by taking in food, he takes in the world. In Johannine terms, this means that Jesus is accepting communion with death, for the world can offer him nothing else. Indeed, from the world's perspective, the gift could only have been intended as a trick gift proffered for the purpose of trapping Jesus in the world by profaning his sacred nature.

In a sense, the gift does its ‘poisonous’ work, for Jesus dies. He has allowed the profane in to mix with the sacred, and he suffers the consequences. However, a very important form of Johannine irony is working here. Recall from John 4:34 that Jesus's food is to do the will and complete the work of the one who sent him. In John 19:28, one sees that Jesus has now completed all that he was intended to do except for one last

thing, namely, proclaiming his thirst and accepting the vinegar (verses 29-30). This means that Jesus is simultaneously receiving profane and sacred nourishment. While this might seem peculiar since it exacerbates the mixing of the profane with the sacred, the fact that it constitutes the will of the one who sent him and that it is *willingly* sought by Jesus means that something significant is occurring through this mixing here that could not occur through such mixing in a Gnostic system. This significant thing, I think, is the redemption of the cosmos. The Johannine Jesus accepts the profane into himself in order to transform this profane realm.

To understand how this can take place, one needs to know the Jewish background to Johannine thinking about the sacred and the profane. Judaism clearly distinguishes between the sacred and the common and the impure and the pure (cf. Leviticus 10:10). As I understand biblical and early Jewish thinking on this, the common is the inherently pure substance of the world, and the sacred and the impure are forces locked in dynamic opposition to one another. This opposition between the two manifests itself in conflict over the realm of the common, with both forces seeking to extend their influence and control over it (Milgrom 732). Early Christians seem to have used the terms “common” and “impure” as synonyms (cf. Toombs 663b). This suggests that they saw the impure as having completely extended its influence and control over the entirety of the common, which means that the boundary between the sacred and the profane that the Johannine redeemer must cross is a border between the sacred and the impure. This border, however, is a moveable one, for the force of the impure can be pushed back, and the common realm can regain its normal state of purity and even come to be imbued by the power of the sacred.

I propose that this is what the Johannine Jesus is doing when he accepts the vinegar, for by taking the impurity of the world into himself, he internalizes the conflict between the sacred and the impure in a way that determines the defeat of the impure and its purgation from the realm of the common. He can win because he has been sanctified by God prior to coming into the world (John 10:36) and because he is the sacred one of God acting in the world (John 6:69). In other words, the Johannine Jesus is a being of extraordinary sacredness, which means that he is a being of extraordinary power. Defeating the force of impurity does not come automatically, however. What Jesus performs within himself, he also performs outside of himself within the world — through those who accept

him. Again, this takes place through gifts of sustenance. Two great miracles of nourishment occur in John's Gospel: the wine at Cana (John 2:1-11) and the bread on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1-14). The latter miracle, and perhaps the former as well, receives an interpretive gloss in John 6:51-58:

6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone should eat from this bread, he will live forever, and the bread, moreover, that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. 52 Therefore, the Jews disputed among themselves, saying, "How is this one able to give us his flesh to eat?" 53 Therefore, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. 54 The one gnawing my flesh and drinking my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day, 55 for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 The one gnawing my flesh and drinking my blood remains in me and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live through the Father, so also that one gnawing me will live through me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; the one gnawing this bread will live forever."

This eucharistic passage explicitly interprets the bread miracle and, given the reference to drinking blood, implicitly interprets the wine miracle. The Johannine Jesus identifies himself as the gift of bread come down from heaven. More specifically, his flesh as this bread, the eating of which brings eternal life. Note how this works: Jesus is sent by and lives through the Father, and anyone "gnawing" Jesus will live through Jesus. I think that the passage alludes here to John 4:34, i.e., Jesus's food being the act of doing the will of the one who sent him. Since Jesus is constantly doing the will of the one who sent him, then he is constantly receiving nourishment, which makes Jesus himself an inexhaustible source of true nourishment. Thus, when Jesus offers sacred food to the world, he is inviting the world into communion with him and with God, who sent him. This gift of sacred food also effects reciprocity, for by accepting this gift from the divine, one gives oneself to the divine in return. By effecting the bonding and reciprocity characteristic of genuine gift-giving, the Johannine Jesus is thus

breaking down the barrier between the sacred and the profane and allowing the sacred to infuse the realm of the common. Such can only occur at the expense of impurity, which retreats from the common.

But this defeat of the force of impurity does not come automatically. Belief also plays a role. In Johannine terms, belief presupposes a special receptivity to Jesus and the one who sent him. Without this receptivity, no genuine communion in good fellowship exists, and the result is exclusion rather than inclusion. Jesus's offer of nourishment therefore comes as an ambiguous gift, for it can bring either life or destruction. Let us look at an instance of this. In John 13:21-30, Jesus offers nourishment to his betrayer:

13:21 Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray me." 22 The disciples looked at one another, being in doubt of whom he spoke. 23 One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to Jesus. 24 Simon Peter therefore nods to this one to inquire who it might be of whom he speaks. 25 So leaning back thus to Jesus's breast, he says to him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus answers, "It is he for whom I will dip the morsel and give to him." Having dipped the morsel, he takes and gives it to Judas (son of) Simon Iscariot. 27 And after the morsel, then Satan entered into him. Therefore, Jesus says to him, "What you do, do quickly" ... 30 Thus, having received the morsel, he immediately went out. And it was night.

The morsel offered by Jesus is, I argue, eucharistic. First, by virtue of being a gift, the morsel functions as an extension of Jesus's being. Second, and more specific to a textual argument, the morsel serves as a fulfillment of the prophecy given in John 13:18, which states that the one "gnawing" Jesus's bread will betray him. The prophecy uses the Greek term for "gnaw" (*trogein*), the same term used in the eucharistic passage already discussed (John 6:51-58), and since this term is used only in these two places in John's Gospel, it strongly suggests a link between the two. Consequently, Jesus offers Judas a eucharistic morsel, and Judas accepts it, but because Judas has already chosen to stand in the camp of God's adversary, thereby refusing the bonding of communion with the sacred and the reciprocal giving of himself to the divine, then the otherwise life-giving gift becomes a poisonous gift. The sacred power, consequently, does not purify and sanctify Judas but,

instead, leaves him to possession by the most impure spirit of all, Satan. Judas's subsequent status as a "son of destruction" (John 17:12) shows the result of his external acceptance of a gift that he inwardly rejects.

#### IV. Conclusion

In contrast to a Gnostic dualism of substances, John's Gospel presents an ethical dualism. Because evil does not essentially inhere in the world but, rather, has contrived to imbue it, then bonding and reciprocity can still come to characterize the relations of the divine and the world. For this to occur, however, the impurity of evil must retreat from the world. The Johannine Jesus causes evil's retreat by taking into himself what the evil-imbued world could only have intended as a pseudo-gift, i.e., the vinegar, and transforming it into a genuine gift by overcoming the impurity of evil through his own holiness. He carries this process further by offering himself in the form of the eucharistic bread and wine to deliver the inclusive, good fellowship noted by Douglas. In this case, however, the Maussian ambiguity characteristic of the true gift means that the eucharist's effect depends upon the intention of the recipient. For those who accept it, the eucharist effects bonding to the sacred and reciprocity with the divine, i.e., eternal life. For Judas, who inwardly rejects what the eucharistic morsel signifies, the eucharist becomes a poisonous gift, leaving him in the impurity of evil and excluded from eternal life. In systems presupposing an ontologically grounded binarism of good and evil as substances, 'gift-giving' crossing the boundary between the sacred and the profane can only serve the ulterior purpose of diminishing or destroying the power of the recipient. Gift-giving here constitutes a zero-sum game that characterizes the extreme limiting case of gift-giving, namely, giving in order to retain the gift without forging bonds of communion. In systems presupposing an ethically grounded binarism of good and evil as moral choices, gift-giving crossing the boundary between the sacred and the profane opens the possibility of drawing the recipient into the life-giving power of the divine. Gift-giving here, rather than being a zero-sum game, characterizes the ideal case of gift-giving, namely, giving in order to forge bonds of communion and a reciprocity of giving where the sacred gives itself to the profane in order for the profane to give itself to the sacred. This paper has also attempted to

cross some boundaries, but the moral to be drawn is not that every border should, or even can, be crossed. Some crossings would amount to transgressions and signify open hostility. Recall that the Roman Consul Gaius Popillius Laenas drew a line in the sand for the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV in 168 B.C.E., advising him not to cross it and attempt to conquer Egypt unless he wished to confront Rome. Like Falstaff, Antiochus decided that discretion was the better part of valor and wisely chose not to step across that particular line. Scholars engaged in transhumanities research perhaps need to practice a similar sort of prudence in recognizing zero-sum regions and determine whether a crossing is worth the consequences. I hope that this paper has displayed proper prudence and crossed boundaries into territories offering broader, peaceful horizons.

## Works Cited

- Douglas, Mary. "A Distinctive Anthropological Perspective." *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*. Ed. Mary Douglas. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Standard Social Uses of Food: Introduction." *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*. New York: Routledge 1984.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. "Heliocentric Exchange." *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*. Ed. Alan D. Schrift. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Layton, Bentley. *The Gnostic Scriptures*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1987.
- Lidzbarski, Mark. *Ginza: Der Schatz, Oder Das Grosse Buch der Mandäer*. Güttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. Ian Cunnison. London: Cohen & West Ltd., 1954.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- Preuschen, Erwin. "Das Lied von der Erlösung." *Zwei Gnostische Hymnen*. Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1904.
- Polotsky, Hans Jakob and Alexander Böhlig. *Kephalaia I*. Stuttgart 1940; II. ed. A. Böhlig. Stuttgart: 1966.
- Reeves, John C. *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of the Giants Traditions*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992.
- Schmidt, Carl. And Violet MacDermot. *Pistis Sophia*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.
- Toombs, Lawrence E. "Common." *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Volume 1. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.

## Abstract

Marcel Mauss and Mary Douglas together offer a theoretical understanding of gift-giving that enables us to draw a crucial distinction between the crossing of the sacred-profane boundary in Gnostic systems and the Johannine one. This distinction is particularly evident when such crossing leads to transactions involving the offer of nourishment. The sacred and the profane do not easily mix in any system, but in Gnostic texts and John's Gospel, the conflict between these dynamic forces of the two realms is presented as working itself out differently. This conflict is irresolvable in the former due to its substance dualism, but it is resolvable in the latter due to its ethical dualism. Gifts of nourishment accentuate this difference, such that the reciprocity and ambiguity that Mauss sees in gift-giving work out their implications differently. Conflict is shown to be accentuated in Gnostic systems, but ultimately resolved in the Johannine one.

**Keywords:** boundary, gift, Gnosticism, Gospel of John, nourishment, reciprocity

**Horace Jeffery Hodges** is a full-time lecturer in the EPO at Ewha Womans University. He obtained a history Ph.D from UC Berkeley.

Submitted December 31, 2010 Reviewed January 31, 2011 Accepted February 2, 2010
---