By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity

Ronald Cox

Walter de Gruyter

Ronald Cox
By the Same Word

Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

Ronald Cox

By the Same Word

Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism
and Early Christianity

To Hugh and Elaine Gainey,
Eric and Rikka Stewart,
And, especially,
Shelly Evans Cox

Acknowledgements

Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. The Fusion of Creation Myth and Salvation History

To envision the future of exiled Israel, the prophet turns to the past in Isaiah 51:9–10 and in so doing brings together an intriguing combination of mythological and historical elements of ancient Israelite cultus.

> Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago! Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?[1]

With its mention of the conquest of Rahab the Sea Dragon, the passage alludes to the *Chaoskampf* of pre-Yahwistic West Semitic religion that understood cosmogony as a result of the struggle between the creator God and Sea. On the other hand, the drying of the sea to form an avenue of escape just as clearly alludes to the Exodus event, where at a defining moment in their history Moses led the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. The prophet correlates cosmic myth and salvation history to illuminate how God will yet act.

Frank Moore Cross studies this correlation in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, seeking to explain how and why Hebrew Scriptures weave together myth and history. A passage like Isa 51:9–10 shows how the historical Exodus event can be given "cosmic or primordial meaning" by an association with the creator God's defeat of Rahab.[2] From a history-of-religions perspective, Cross argues one must account for how religious tradition appropriated the mythical to explicate the historical.

---

1 Hebrew Bible translations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version.

2 Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1973), 87.

> The movement from dominantly mythical to dominantly historical patterns
> is not a natural or inevitable tendency, as is evidenced by the perennial
> resurgence of mythic forms and language in biblical religion: in the royal
> ideology, in apocalyptic, in Gnosticism, in Qabbalah. … The thrust of
> historical events, recognized as crucially or ultimately meaningful, alone
> had the power to displace the mythic pattern. Even then we should expect
> the survival of some mythic forms, and the secondary mythologizing of
> historical experiences to point to their cosmic or transcendent meaning.[3]

Cross here contends it is the "crucially or ultimately meaningful" historical events that are able not only to shift aside deep-rooted mythology but to pull mythic forms into the interpretive orbit of those events. In this way, myth serves "to give a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning to the historical."[4]

While both the mythical and historical elements are different, a similar fusion of creation myth and salvation history takes place in four New Testament passages: John 1:1–18; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15–20; and Hebrews 1:1–4. These texts all refer to the same "historical" event, i.e., Jesus' death and resurrection, construing it as having salvific significance (though they interpret this significance differently). At the same time, and in a manner that distinguishes them from the rest of the NT, these four passages tie this historical event to Jesus' role as divine agent of creation. In strikingly similar language, all four passages claim that Jesus is the one "through whom" (δι' οὗ)[5] the world came to be and all but 1 Cor 8:6 (the shortest) claim that he is responsible for its continuation.[6] Furthermore, all four associate Jesus' creative feat with his close relationship with God: he is God's "image" (Col 1:15), his "effulgence" and "representation" (Heb 1:3), who is not only with God but is himself divine (John 1:1), and whom all should confess as the "one Lord" (1 Cor 8:6).

The relatively uniform manner with which these passages describe Jesus' divine nature and the cosmological activity it generates suggests a common tradition. The likelihood of such a common tradition is

---

3   Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 87.
4   *Ibid.*, 90. The full sentence reads: "In Israel, myth and history always stood in strong tension, myth serving to give a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning to the historical, rarely functioning to dissolve history."
5   John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2.
6   In Col 1:17, "all things hold together" in Jesus and in Heb 1:3, "he sustains all things." In John 1:4–5, he is the source of life and light that continues to shine in the darkness. See the discussion of these passages in chapter four.

increased when one considers that these four texts are the sole New Testament evidence for early Christian claims about Jesus as divine agent of creation.[7] Even the contexts wherein we find these four passages evince little of their cosmology. The remainder of the Gospel of John, 1 Corinthians, Colossians and Hebrews have nothing to say about Jesus as agent of creation.[8] Contrast this with the fact that when all four passages focus on the historical Christ event (as noted above), they do so in a manner consistent with their respective literary contexts.[9] In other words, while John 1:1–18, 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, and Heb 1:1–4 attest a common cosmological tradition (cosmic agency grounded upon divine ontology), this tradition itself does not seem to have been a prominent aspect of early Christianity. Given the staccato fashion in which it appears and that it is in all four of its appearances associated with the more prominent theme of Christ's salvific role, this cosmological tradition comes to us in much the same manner that the pre-Yahwistic *Chaoskampf* myth came to the readers of Second Isaiah. That is, it shows up as a surviving mythic form which gives "a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning" to the historical Christ event. The question is: From where did this cosmological tradition, this Hellenistic era creation myth, come?

---

7   While there are a number of texts that assert Jesus' pre-existence (i.e., his existing before taking human form; see 1 Tim 3:16 and Phil 2:6 for instance), the four passages discussed here are the only four that describe him as having a role in creation. Hebrews 1:10–12, which is a quotation of LXX Psalm 101:26–28, describes Christ as the one who "established the earth and the heavens are the works of [his] hand." As we discuss in chapter four, this quotation (Christologically interpreted) parallels the cosmological claim made about the Son in Heb 1:2 and should not be viewed as separate from that verse.

8   This is not to say that the cosmological language cannot occur elsewhere in those writings, only that when it does recur it does not function cosmologically. For instance, the claim the Son is the image (εἰκών) of the invisible God in Col 1:15 has an echo in 3:10, but in a soteriological context (the Colossians "have put on the new [ἄνθρωπος], which is being renewed in knowledge according to the εἰκών of its creator"). NT translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

9   E.g., the Son making purification for sins in Heb 1:3 parallels his role as perfect sacrifice in Heb 9–10, while the Son's role in creating the world (1:2) finds no such parallel.

1.2. Identifying the *Vorleben* of the
Christological Creation Myth

1.2.1. A Liturgical Vorleben

It is commonplace to view 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue as arising out of early Christian worship. This is because, in addition to Christological content, these four passages may be grouped together on the basis of their formal qualities.[10] Their terse, elevated language, which they convey via parallelism and other rhetorical devices, has generated much discussion as to whether these passages are liturgical texts (hymns, confessions, prayers, etc.) or fragments of liturgical texts.[11]

---

10 For detailed consideration of the formal aspects of 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue, see chapter four.

11 Since the beginning of the last century, scholars have exerted considerable effort in developing criteria for identifying and assessing early Christian liturgical texts. For a review of scholarship on the study of liturgical texts (hymns about God, hymns about Christ, prayers and confessions) prior to the mid-1960's, see Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen*, SUNT 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1967): 11–21.

   In terms of research, the greatest emphasis has been on so-called "hymns" that focus particularly on Christ: John 1:1–18; Phil 2:6–11; Eph 2:14–16; Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:2b–4; 1 Peter 2:14–16; and 3:18, 22. See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Wisdom Mythology and the Christological Hymns of the New Testament" in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Robert Wilken, ed.; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 17–41 (the list above comes from 19–20). Schüssler Fiorenza observed (30 years ago!) that "A discussion of these hymns encounters a vast amount of scholarly research, an enormous diversity of hypotheses, and a larger variety of methodological and theological questions" (17). She then noted that between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, ten new monographs on Christological hymns appeared as well as, in the same period of time, five reprints of seminal works on the subject from earlier in the century, not to mention numerous articles on individual hymns within the group (38). Of course such study has continued in the thirty years since Schüssler Fiorenza wrote this and many more books and articles have been published.

   The seminal works on early Christological hymns remain Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig, Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1913), and Josef Kroll, *Die christliche Hymnodik bis zu Klemens von Alexandria*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1968;

Even if we accept these passages as to some degree liturgical (which seems probable), it is unlikely that all four of them are of the same literary *Gattung*.[12] Colossians 1:15–20 and John 1:1–18, the most elaborate of the four passages, come the closest to fully developed "hymns."[13] First Corinthians 8:6 appears to be a "confession" and as such is similar to the *Shema* (Deut 6:4).[14] While not a distinct liturgical unit, Heb 1:1–4 is modeled on traditional material and in fact may contain portions of different "hymn" fragments.[15] We should also note that each of these four passages serves to introduce the material that follows them. In Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4, and John 1:1–18, we have three passages either at the beginning or near the beginning of the document which introduce the themes with which those documents

---

reprint of *Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen an der Akademie zu Braunsberg*, Summer 1921: 3–46, and Winter 1921/22: 47–98).

12 As the previous note suggests, these four passages are not the only liturgical texts in the NT. Clearly there are other appropriations of liturgical material (e.g., Rom 11:36; Eph 4:6; Heb 2:10). And in fact there are a number of texts that are both liturgical in nature and have a Christological focus, most notably Phil 2:6–11 and 1 Tim 3:16. These latter two are often included alongside the texts in Col 1, Heb 1 and John 1 in analyses of early Christian hymnody (1 Cor 8:6 is considered a confession and not a hymn). This is because, in addition to their liturgical nature and focus on Christ, Phil 2 and 1 Tim 3 are similar to our four texts in that they refer to some kind of pre-existent aspect to Christ's identity and they rehearse events in Christ's life (especially his suffering and vindication), events associated with his salvific function. However, what differentiates the passages in our study from Phil 2:6–11 and 1 Tim 3:16 are the cosmological aspects which are in the former but not in the latter. The closest, Phil 2:6–11, comes to cosmology is its claim that before Christ emptied himself and took the form of a human being, he was in the form (μορφή) of God (which may echo εἰκών θεοῦ in LXX Gen 1:27). First Timothy 3:16 hints only at pre-existence when it says Christ was revealed in flesh (ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί). In the passages of our study, Christ does not simply exist before his human manifestation but has an important cosmological function, one (apparently) distinct from that human existence.

13 For the Johannine prologue as hymn, see Gérard Rochais, "La formation du prologue (Jn 1,1–18) (1st part)," *ScEs* 37 (1985): 5–44. For Colossians, see Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (trans. W. Poehlmann and R. Karris; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 41–46.

14 See Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (trans. James W. Leitch; Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975): 144–145.

15 Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989): 41–48.

deal. Though 1 Cor 8:6 does not introduce 1 Corinthians as a whole, it does appear as part of the introduction to the discussion in 1 Cor 8–10 on eating meat dedicated to idols. These texts appear then to be traditional material (or at least passages styled after traditional materials) that, as such, provide a rhetorical entrée into more prosaic discourses.

The primary difficulty with designating our passages as liturgical texts is how little is known about early Christian liturgy. In spite of the consensus that exists among scholars that these (and other) passages are liturgical in nature, there has yet to develop a consensus view concerning the forms of early Christian hymns, prayers or confessions, not to mention the nature of early Christian worship in general. The lack of knowledge about how turn-of-the-era Jewish synagogues or non-Jewish Hellenistic religions influenced early Christian worship only exacerbates the situation. To claim these four Christological passages are likely liturgical in nature and origin hints at the possibility they receive their distinctive cosmological traditions from a suspected liturgical *Sitz im Leben*. Unfortunately, by itself, this claim offers nothing more definitive.

1.2.2. A Hebraic Sapiential *Vorleben*

What is definite is that we have before us four passages that are distinct both for their cosmological content and their elevated literary form. This combination of content and form has prompted many to find parallels to these texts in Jewish wisdom literature (which speaks, in poetic form, of personified Wisdom's presence at creation), and it is now a commonplace to see the biblical sapiential tradition as the source of our passages' common cosmological myth.[16] By appropriating Jewish

_____

16 J. T. Sanders (*The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1971]) argued that most Christological liturgical texts draw from the same myth, a redeemer myth which is mediated to early Christians through Jewish wisdom, itself influenced by other religions. The same myth appears in later Gnostic writings. Schüssler Fiorenza disputed this single myth notion, stating that instead what we have in these NT texts is "reflective mythology." That is, the NT texts borrow mythic elements ("patterns, motifs, configurations") from pre-existing mythological materials (i.e., sapiential traditions) for their author's own theological concerns. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Wisdom Mythology," 29: "Such a theology is not interested in reproducing the myth itself or the mythic materials as they stand, but rather in taking up and adapting the various mythical elements to its own

wisdom concepts, it is thought that these NT passages sought to give voice to the pre-eminent status which early Christians ascribed to Christ.[17] This is done primarily through the application to Jesus of the pre-existence that sapiential traditions afford personified Wisdom (חכמה in Hebrew, the Greek translation of which is σοφία). Like personified Wisdom (in Prov 8:22–36; Sir 1:1, 4–10; 24:9; Bar 3:29–4:4; cf. Job 28:23–28), the NT passages suggest that Jesus existed before creation with God and/or was present at creation. They also present Jesus in Sophia's garb in other ways. In particular, Wisdom's humanly appearance, rejection by humans and exultation, as gleaned from various wisdom texts, parallel the description of Jesus' experience in a number of NT Christological texts.[18]

In *Jesus the Sage*, Ben Witherington reaches a number of conclusions about the relationship between Jewish wisdom and early Christological "hymns" which we can take as reflecting the current *consensus communis*.[19] Witherington sees a preexistence-earthly visitation-exultation progression (he calls it the "V" pattern) as the basic framework of the different Christological hymns and he claims this framework arises out of biblical sapientialism.[20] That he considers the "Christological

<hr />

theological goal and theoretical concerns." The NT Christological passages are not unique in this, according to Schüssler Fiorenza; rather, they are a part of a "trajectory" of reflective mythology, which includes Jewish wisdom and Gnosticism (37).

17 While Sanders and Schüssler Fiorenza have differing perspectives on the role of myth in early Christological hymnody (note 16), they both concur that the function in the NT texts is the same. See Sanders, *Christological Hymns,* 143–44, and Schüssler Fiorenza, "Wisdom Mythology," 37–38.

18 For a list of characteristics (with citations) of the wisdom myth in Jewish wisdom texts see Schüssler Fiorenza, "Wisdom Mythology," 27, and Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life*: *An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1990): 145–46. We will discuss many of these sapiential passages in chapter four, especially when discussing the Johannine prologue.

19 Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 1994). I am not suggesting that all are in agreement with every aspect of Witherington's analysis of the subject. Rather, I highlight those conclusions in Witherington (whose analysis is among the most recent) which are representative of the consensus view

20 Ibid., 255. Witherington is influenced here by Ralph Martin ("Some Reflections on New Testament Hymns," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* [ed. Harold H. Rowdon; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982], 37–49). Scholars do not all agree on the nature of this transference from wisdom to Christian venues. In addition to the

hymns [to be] a further development, with some novel elements thrown in," of the sapiential tradition reflects Witherington's conviction this sapiential tradition forms a consistent trajectory that extends from the Hebrew Bible (namely Proverbs 8) through the Diaspora Jewish wisdom writings (Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and "to a lesser degree" Philo) to the New Testament.[21] The "novel elements" in the Christian texts have to do with a greater emphasis on history: "in one way or another there was a felt need to say more of an historical nature than had been said in previous wisdom hymns, all the while still appropriating a considerable amount of the form and content of those hymns."[22] However, Witherington considers this historical emphasis as actually part of the trajectory, an "increasing particularization of wisdom" begun already in the later Jewish wisdom texts.[23]

It does appear to be the case that there is a relationship between the biblical sapiential tradition and 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue. In fact, the combination of cosmology and soteriology which the NT passages evince adds further substance to this notion. In Proverbs 8:22–36, Wisdom (חכמה) claims that because she was there from the beginning and witnessed God's creative work, she is able to benefit humanity.

---

issue of whether there is one underlying myth (Sanders) or a "reflective mythology" (Schüssler Fiorenza), we might also consider the argument of James Dunn. In *Christology in the Making* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1996), Dunn agrees that Jewish wisdom traditions influence the Christological hymns. However, Dunn argues against the notion that Sophia (or the *Philonic* Logos, discussed below) is an hypostasis. He prefers to see Sophia/Logos as a personification of divine attributes, a metaphorical construct. Dunn raises an interesting question about whether early Christian hymn writers truly understood Jesus as pre-existing creation or even his humanly form. However, Dunn does not take seriously enough the Middle Platonic and more general philosophical context of Wisdom of Solomon and Philo and too easily dismisses Sophia and the Logos in these writings as metaphorical (Thomas Tobin ["Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish speculation," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 266] shares this criticism of Dunn). But with respect to the Christological hymns, his thesis, even if correct, is only secondary to the issue of whether and how there is an influence by wisdom traditions.

21 Witherington, *Jesus the Sage,* 291.
22 Ibid., 289.
23 Witherington claims this "particularization" is especially seen in the equation of Wisdom and Torah in Sirach 24 (*Jesus the Sage*, 96).

When he set the heavens in place, I was there,
 when he fixed the horizon upon the deep.
When he made firm the vault of heaven above,
 when he established the springs of the deep,
when he fixed the foundations of earth,
 I was at his side, a sage.
 I was daily taking delight,
 rejoicing before him at all times,
rejoicing in his inhabited world;
 I take delight in human beings.
And now, O children, listen to me … .
For whoever finds me finds life,
 and wins favor from Yahweh.[24]

Similarly, Sirach bases personified Wisdom's ability to benefit humanity on her cosmic primogeniture.

Wisdom was created before all other things,
 and prudent understanding from eternity.
The root of wisdom – to whom has it been revealed?
 Her subtleties – who knows them?
There is but one who is wise, greatly to be feared,
 seated upon his throne – the Lord.
It is he who created [Wisdom];
 he saw her and took her measure;
 he poured her out upon all his works,
upon all the living according to his gift;
 he lavished her upon those who love him.[25]

Like Jesus Christ, Wisdom's close relationship with God (being with him at the beginning of all things) and her witnessing his creative activity are combined with (and connected to) her ability to illuminate humankind.

---

24   Proverbs 28:27–32, 35. Translation from Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 92. See below for a discussion of the term Clifford translates "sage" in Prov 8:30.

25   Sirach 1:4–10 (NRSV). Cf. Sir 24 which describes Wisdom's heavenly origins followed by her taking up residence (as Torah) on Zion. From there she calls: "Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. For the memory of me is sweeter than honey, and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb. Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more. Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, and those who work with me will not sin" (24:19–22).

However, it is not altogether clear that even if there is a general influence from one to the other that there is a *consistent trajectory* from biblical Wisdom to our Christological passages. What Witherington calls "a further development" of Jewish sapiential thinking with "some novel elements thrown in"[26] seems upon closer scrutiny to be more of a substantive departure marked by radical particularization. For one thing, in contrast to the NT passages which claim that everything came to be "through" Christ (δι' αὐτοῦ), the Hebrew Bible presents *personified* Wisdom as not so much an agent of creation as simply a witness to it. In Proverbs 8:27–31 (quoted above), Wisdom describes how she was present when *Yahweh* created the world ("… *he* set … *he* fixed … *he* made … *he* established … ," etc.). Wisdom delighted in creation and attended during it as a "sage" (אמון), but she is not herself instrumental in creation.[27] The same can be said of Sirach's presentation of Wisdom.[28]

Furthermore, while both the biblical sapiential texts and the four NT passages highlight the close relationship between Wisdom/Christ and God, they describe that relationship quite differently. In Prov 8:22–25 Wisdom claims she was created (קנה; LXX κτίζω) by God,

------

26 See note 22.

27 The standard translation of אמון is "master worker" (NRSV) or "craftsman" (NAB, NIV). Concerning this difficult word, Clifford writes: "The most satisfactory interpretation is that 'āmôn in 8:30 is a loanword from Akkadian *ummānu*, 'scribe, sage; heavenly sage,' and vocalized 'ommān in Hebrew. An *ummānu* is a divine or semidivine bringer of culture and skill to the human race…. Like the Akkadian *ummānu*, Wisdom lives with God and in her role as sage brings to human beings the wisdom and culture they need to live rightly and serve God. Proverbs combines traditions of the heavenly mediator of wisdom with its own literary personification of Wisdom as foil to the forbidden woman" (*Proverbs*, 101).

28 See Sir 1:1–20 and 24:1–7. There are a number of Hebrew Bible passages that claim God created by means of wisdom (as well as knowledge, understanding, and God's word): Prov 3:19; Psalm 32:6; 104:24; 136:5; Jer 10:12; 51:15. In Prov 3:19, for instance, we read that "Yahweh by wisdom (בחכמה) founded the earth and by understanding (בתבונה) established the heavens." The LXX translates בחכמה as τῇ σοφίᾳ and בתבונה as ἐν φρονήσει, using the dative of means and the related ἐν c. dative prepositional phrase (cf. Wis 9:1–2). While these passages may have contributed to the development of the notion of cosmological agency in Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity, they do not appear to provide any concrete evidence of a personified (or hypostatic) cosmological agent.

being brought forth before all other things.[29] Similarly Sirach says Wisdom was created (1:4, LXX κτίζω) before all other things. However, the NT passages focus not on Christ's origin but on his ontological relationship with God. As we saw, he is the divine εἰκών (Col 1:15), God's ἀπαύγασμα and his χαρακτήρ (Heb 1:3) who is himself divine (θεός, John 1:1). He is even the one Lord (εἷς κύριος, 1 Cor 8:6). Nothing in the Hebraic sapiential tradition anticipates as grand a nature as what these NT passages afford the Son.

Finally, Witherington sees a similarity between Wisdom who was present at creation taking on the identity of Torah and dwelling in Zion (cf. Sirach 24 and Baruch 3:29–4:4) and the Son through whom everything came to be dying on the cross. It is unclear, however, how Wisdom becoming Torah is "particularization," especially anywhere near the degree of the cosmically instrumental Son becoming a human (John 1:14) or dying on the cross (Col 1:20). Unlike the human Jesus, Wisdom *qua* Torah remains a universal force that is not bound by time (let alone mortality). Even if the incarnation, death and resurrection (the centerpiece of NT Christologies) were the culmination of a trajectory of particularization, they must be understood as something far more extreme than "some novel elements thrown in[to]" the sapiential mix.

While we willingly accept some relationship between the biblical wisdom tradition and our four NT passages, that relationship does not adequately account for the ontologically-based cosmological agency the NT texts express. There is of course more to Jewish sapientialism then the texts we have so far discussed. In particular, we have yet to consider the affinities between the NT passages and Wisdom of Solomon and the writings of Philo of Alexandria (see below). However, it is important to note the ontological and cosmological disparity between the Hebraic wisdom tradition (i.e., those sapiential texts originally composed in Hebrew and/or originating in Palestine) and the four NT passages in our study.[30] We need to be aware of this disparity if the NT texts have

---

29 For a discussion of this terminology, especially קנה, which some (cf. NAB) translate as "beget," see Clifford, *Proverbs*, 96.

30 Obviously, Proverbs and Job are part of the Hebraic sapiential tradition. We also include the deuterocanonical Sirach (see Alexander A. Di Lella, "Wisdom of Ben Sira," *ABD* 6:932, 35) as well as Baruch (Doron Mendels, "Baruch, Book of," *ABD* 1:619–20). The Qumran sapiential material should also be included in this grouping (for an overview, see Daniel J. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* [The Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls; New York: Routledge, 1996]).

greater affinity with the later, more Hellenistic representatives of the sapiential tradition (which they do) because it would suggest this affinity likely stems from someplace other than Witherington's biblical wisdom trajectory.

1.2.3. A Hellenistic Jewish *Vorleben*

1.2.3.1. Hellenistic Sapiential and Exegetical Traditions

The strongest arguments that 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue are related to Jewish sapientialism rest on how these texts describe the Son's relationship to God and his cosmological agency. Yet, while the biblical sapiential tradition seems to provide the NT texts the general framework of combined cosmic pre-existence and soteriology, the specific parallels of ontology and cosmology we find in the NT occur only in a specific sub-set of that tradition, namely Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's writings. Both writings (apparently unrelated to each other) date to around the turn of the era, were composed in Greek, and in a diaspora setting (Alexandria for Philo and probably for Wisdom as well).[31]

The pseudonymous author of Wisdom ascribes personified Sophia (σοφία, Greek equivalent to חכמה) an explicit role in the creation of the cosmos when he calls her "the fashioner of all things" (ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις, 7:22).[32] Like Col 1:17 ("everthing holds together in him") and Heb 1:3 ("he bears all things"), Sophia's cosmological role is ongoing: "She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders (διοικέω) all things well." And as the NT passages do, Wisdom grounds Sophia's cosmological roles in her essential connection to God. Wisdom and the NT passages even share the same ontological terminology, as Wis 7:25–26 shows:

> For she is a breath of the power of God,
>> and a pure emanation of the glory of the almighty;
>> therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.
> For she is a reflection (ἀπαύγασμα) of eternal light,
>> a spotless mirror of the working of God,
>> and an image (εἰκών) of his goodness.

---

31 See chapter three for details on Philo of Alexandria and Wisdom of Solomon.

32 My translation. Unless otherwise noted, translations from Wisdom of Solomon are those of the NRSV.

Furthermore, Wisdom of Solomon holds that Sophia functioned as a competent guide for human beings precisely because of her divine nature and cosmological experience. This is the basis for Pseudo-Solomon's desire to attain Sophia:

> I loved her and sought her from my youth; I desired to take her for my bride, and became enamored of her beauty. She glorifies her noble birth by living with God, and the Lord of all loves her. For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God, and an associate in his works. If riches are a desirable possession in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things (ἡ τὰ πάντα ἐργαζομένη)? And if understanding is effective, who more than she is fashioner of what exists (τῶν ὄντων τεχνῖτις)? (Wis 8:2–4)

Sophia's ability to make "holy souls" into "friends of God" (Wis 7:27) is consistent with the ways of personified Wisdom in Proverbs or Sirach. That this ability rests on her status as divine εἰκών and ἀπαύγασμα (7:26) and her status as "the active cause of all things" (ἡ τὰ πάντα ἐργαζομένη) and "fashioner of existing things" (τῶν ὄντων τεχνῖτις) is not.

This conception of Sophia is not unique to Wisdom of Solomon. Philo also describes her as the divine εἰκών (*Leg.* 1.41) and says that δι' ἧς τὰ ὅλα ἦλθεν εἰς γένεσιν (*Fug.* 109, using διά cum genitive to denote instrumental agency, a phrase the NT passages use but not Wis). Philo, however, transfers (or preserves a prior transference of) these descriptors to the divine Word or Λόγος.[33] We shall consider the significance of this transference momentarily, but at present we should observe how Philo applies to the Logos the same ontologically-based cosmological agency Wis applies to Sophia and the NT passages apply to the Son.

While Philo's writings are voluminous and the evidence of his Logos doctrine diffused throughout, we can see in two passages key examples of his thinking. In *Leg.* 3.96, an allegorical exegesis of the figure of Bezalel in Exod 31:2–5, Philo speaks of the Logos as God's instrument (ὄργανον) in creation as well as God's image (εἰκών).

> …Bezalel means "in the shadow of God," and the shadow (σκία) of God is his λόγος, which he used as an instrument when he made the world (ᾧ καθάπερ ὀργάνῳ προσχρησάμενος ἐκοσμοποίει). But this shadow, a representation (ἀπείκοσμα) as it were, is [itself] the archetype (ἀρχέτυπον) for other things. For just as God is the pattern (παράδειγμα) of the image (ἡ εἰκών) – what has been called "shadow" – thus the image (ἡ εἰκών) becomes the pattern (παράδειγμα) of other things. This he (Moses) made clear when he starts his law by saying, "And God made the human

---

33   For concise yet authoritative introduction to the Logos concept, see Thomas Tobin, "Logos," *ABD* 4:348–56.

being after the image of God" (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωον κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ; LXX Gen 1:27); thus on the one hand that the image had been modeled after God, while on the other that the human being was modeled after the image when it undertook its paradigmatic function (ὡς τῆς μὲν εἰκόνος κατὰ τὸν Θεὸν ἀπεικονισθείσης, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα λαβοῦσαν δύναμιν παραδείγματος).[34]

It is immediately clear that Philo writes in a manner completely different than Wis or the NT passages. While Philo resonates with these other writings, his use of εἰκών and his discussion of the Logos' role in creation (both cosmological and anthropological) are considerably more detailed and represent a more nuanced, intellectual approach. Another example of his more nuanced approach is his use of the simple prepositional phrase τὸ δι' οὗ, which we saw in all four of the NT passages denoting Christ's cosmological agency. While Philo himself frequently uses the term to denote the Logos' agency, he also provides a lengthy discourse (*Cher.* 125–127) explaining the philosophy behind this phrase.

Still, in spite of his sophistication, Philo is trading in the same fundamentals. In *Sacr.* 8 we find a relatively concise description (for Philo) of the Logos' ability to benefit humanity. Note how, once again, this benefit is connected to cosmological agency.

> There are those whom God leads still higher; causing them to exceed every form and genus, he sets them next to himself. Such a one is Moses to whom he says "you stand here with me" (Deut 5:31). Hence, when Moses was about to die, he neither left nor was he added … there was no room in him for adding or taking away. Rather, he was removed "through the word" (διὰ ῥήματός; Deut 34:5) of the (Supreme) Cause, that through which also the whole world was created (δι' οὗ καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο). Thus you might learn that God values the wise person as much as he does the world since by the same word that he makes the universe he also leads the perfect person from things earthly unto himself (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν).[35]

Here in Philo, as with Wisdom of Solomon and the NT writings, we oberve not just recurring terminology but a recurring conceptual pattern: a divine agent, essentially related to the Deity and functioning in creation, who benefits humanity. In fact, Philo's claim that "by the same λόγος that [God] makes the universe he also leads the perfect from

---

34 My translation. We discuss both this passage (*Leg.* 3.96) and the following passage (*Sacr.* 8) in greater detail in chapter three.

35 My translation.

things earthly unto himself' provides succinct expression of the phenomenon we are considering in this study.

The general framework of the sapiential tradition (Witherington's "V" pattern) persists even in Philo's writings. However his focus on the Logos instead of Sophia makes us aware that we are encountering something that is not limited to the biblical wisdom tradition. First of all, were it not for Philo, we might be inclined to consider the NT passages as innovative in applying the sapiential myth to Christ. This is clearly not the case as Philo describes both Sophia and the Logos, also a masculine entity, in the same terms (cf. *Leg.* 1.41 with *Conf.* 146–147). That Philo does this suggests a degree of fluidity in this kind of speculation, fluidity that likely pre-existed his own efforts and certainly those of the NT.

More significantly, Philo's focus on the Logos invites us to consider the possibility of other influences apart from Jewish wisdom tradition. In particular, Philo's presentation of the λόγος as instrument of creation rests (at least in part) on Genesis 1, which describes how God brought everything into existence by means of *speech* (λέγω). It seems quite likely that a similar exegetical tradition informs the Johannine prologue, especially vv. 1–5 which focus on the Logos and creation and which has a number of verbal echoes of Gen 1:1–5 (e.g., ἐν ἀρχὴ, φῶς, σκοτία).[36] Furthermore, as we saw in *Leg.* 3.96 (quoted above), Philo bases his construal of the Logos as both cosmic and anthropological paradigm on the phrase κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ in Gen 1:27.[37] Philo's movement from the Genesis anthropogony to cosmogony via the term εἰκών makes explicit the type of exegesis that probably underlies the cosmological uses of εἰκών in Wis 7:26 and Col 1:15 (and perhaps χαρακτήρ in Heb 1:3).[38]

All of this suggests that, in addition to biblical wisdom, exegetical traditions dealing with the Genesis cosmogony are also a common

---

36 For more on Genesis interpretive traditions, see the brief discussion on Aristobulus in the introduction to chapter three and the excursus on "Logos-centric Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Philo of Alexandria and the Prologue to John" in chapter four. See also Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," 252–268; and Gregory E. Sterling, "'The Second God': The Exegetical Tradition of Genesis 1:1–5 in Philo and John," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, San Antonio, Tex., Nov. 20–23, 2004).

37 See the discussion of "The Paradigmatic Use of the Logos: The Logos as εἰκών" in chapter three (§ 3.2.5.3).

38 See the discussions of εἰκών in chapter three (Wisdom) and chapter 4 (Colossians and χαρακτήρ in Hebrews).

influence on these writings (especially on Philo's work and the Johannine prologue). These interpretative traditions nonetheless appear to cohere rather well with sapiential cosmology. For one thing, while there is no mention in the Genesis text itself of a divine agent involved in the creation, the exegesis appears to assume such an agent and highlights the terminology in the text that best explains this assumption. It is as if the concept of the Logos pre-existed the exegesis and the interpreter sees in the divine speech act (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29) supporting evidence for it. A similar phenomenon must be at play when Philo (or his source) considers the biblical claim that humanity was created κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ as a warrant for perceiving a third thing between God and humanity, namely the paradigmatic εἰκών. We have then an exegetical *Tendenz* that posits an intermediate reality between God and creation, a reality that takes quasi-personal shape in the Logos and that has a instrumental/formative role. While such an intermediary is similar to personified Wisdom there remains the same, distinctive ontologically-based cosmological agency that unites Philo, Wisdom of Solomon and the four NT texts as at least a special sub-set within the larger Sapiential tradition.

1.2.3.2. "Gnosticism"

In our effort to determine the *Vorleben* for 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue we have found that they share key characteristics with Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's writings. These characteristics include a general debt to the biblical wisdom tradition, especially that tradition's focus on a pre-existing figure as well as its combination of cosmology and soteriology. However, in contrast to the biblical wisdom, these writings emphasize a figure that is divinely related (God's Word, Image, Son; i.e., not a creation) and that is instrumental in bringing "all things" into existence.[39] Furthermore, these writings reflect (to varying degrees) the influence of speculative exegetical traditions that find in the Genesis cosmogony biblical warrants supporting this divinely related cosmological agent.

    Most, if not all, of these characteristics find expression in two other documents, both originating around the second century CE and both

----

39 Though the use of πᾶς is ubiquitous in ancient Greek writings, it is worth noting that all of the texts in our study use some form of this term (e.g, τὸ πᾶν, τὰ πάντα) when referring to the product(s) of creation.

associated with the erstwhile rubric "Gnosticism."[40] One is *Poimandres*, the first treatise in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which is a set of religio-philosophical texts united in part by their espousal of salvation through knowledge (γνῶσις).[41] *Poimandres* relates a revelation from a divine figure, the eponymic Poimandres, to an unidentified recipient (traditionally known as Hermes). The revelation recounts the creation of the cosmos with particular focus on the divine origin of humankind. The purpose of this revelation is to illuminate humankind about their true nature and thereby prompt them to choose their divine source over the physical world.

A close analysis of Poimandres' revelation reveals that, while it is neither Jewish nor Christian, it draws heavenly from the biblical cosmogony and anthropogony found in Genesis 1.[42] However, the *Hermetic* version involves considerably more complexity and drama. Most importantly, there are a number of intermediary super-sensible forces bringing the material cosmos and humanity into being. Among these are ὁ Λόγος, who is υἱὸς θεοῦ (*CH* 1.6) and is responsible for ordering the supersensible world (which is an "archetypal form, the prior source to an unending beginning" (1.8)).[43] The creation of the physical world falls to (apparently) another intermediary, ὁ Δημιουργός ("the Craftsman"). Poimandres refers to this one, who also is born of God, as "the god of fire and spirit" (1.9). Yet another intermediary is responsible for the creation of material humanity, ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. Also born of God and bearing his image (εἰκών), the Ἄνθρωπος has a

---

40 While its defining elements have of late become less tenable, "Gnosticism" remains the easiest terminological entrée into discussing texts loosely affiliated by their common emphasis on redemption through self-knowledge. Earlier in the last century, many considered "Gnosticism" as a large factor in the *Vorleben* of the NT and Wisdom passages already mentioned (see the discussions concerning the origin of the different NT passages in chapter four). Our approach here is to view the "Gnostic" texts we study as arising out of Hellenistic Judaism. See the introduction to chapter five as well as the discussion later in that chapter of the *Sitz im Leben* of the texts studied.

41 Scholars have usually situated the *Corpus Hermeticum* on the periphery of "Gnosticism." See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (trans. ed. R. McL. Wilson; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 25–26. For a more detailed discussion of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and *Poimandres* in particular see chapter five.

42 Chapter five provides the details regarding Poimandres' use of Genesis 1.

43 Translations of *Corpus Hermeticum* 1 (*Poimandres*) are my own, unless otherwise noted.

powerful effect on all who look upon him (1.12). It is when the
Ἄνθρωπος and creation (φύσις) come together (in a lover's embrace, no
less) that earthly humanity as we know it comes into existence.

Though obscured by the multiple intermediary figures, we find in
Poimandres the familiar motif of ontologically-based cosmological
agency. Furthermore, we see evidence of traditions reminiscent of
those preserved by Philo (εἰκών referring to a third thing between God
and creation; the creation having a super-sensible "archetype"). That
there might be some relation (not necessarily *Poimandres* drawing from
Philo) seems all the more possible given the echoes of Gen 1 in the
Hermetic revelation. The missing component is Sapientialism (in
particular, there is no explicit reference to personified Wisdom in the
treatise). However, *Poimandres* shares with Sapientialism a similar
soteriological *Tendenz* in that the intermediate reality (however multi-
plied) provides the basis for human fulfillment. In particular, this
fulfillment comes from being aware that the Ἄνθρωπος is both akin to
the Deity and the source of human life. Hence, Poimandres says: "If
you learn that he (i.e., ὁ Ἄνθρωπος) is from life and light and that you
happen to be from them [as well], then you will advance again into life"
(*CH* 1.21).

The other document is the Sethian treatise known as *The Apocryphon
of John*, a document purporting to contain a revelation to John the
Apostle by the Savior and in which the Savior details the divine origin
of humankind.[44] The primary vehicle of these details and the heart of
Ap. John is a two-part reworking of the biblical creation story. The first
part takes place before Genesis 1:1 and relates how both the heavenly
universe and its earthly copy came into existence. The second part
retells the story of the first several chapters of Genesis not as a
cosmogony but as salvation history.

What makes this retelling germane to our discussion is the
Apocryphon's positing of an elaborate intermediary sphere between a
hyper-transcendent deity (the Monad) and earthly reality. This sphere,

---

44 Unlike *Poimandres*, *Ap. John* (or parts of it) appears to have been foundational to
    "Gnosticism." As we discuss in chapter five, even among those who are most
    skeptical about this rubric, *Ap. John* still receives pride of place in "Gnostic"
    literature.

which defies simple explanation, contains within it all the aspects of the intermediary figure we discussed above though in kaleidoscopic form.[45]

Ontology: The ultimate expression of this intermediate reality is a female figure known as the Barbēlō. She is a product of the Monad's self-contemplation and as such is "the perfect Providence (πρόνοια) of the All, the light, the likeness of the light, the image (εἰκών) of the invisible One, the perfect power, Barbēlō, the perfect aeon of glory…."(*Ap. John* 11,4–12).[46]

Cosmological Agency: *Ap. John* 17,7–16, which relates some of the inherent complexity of the text with its multiple and continuous emanations, describes how the heavenly creation ("the All") came into existence: "And the Mind wanted to make something through the Word (ϩⲓⲧⲛ̅ ⲡⲱⲁⲭⲉ = διὰ λόγου?) of the invisible Spirit. And his will became actual and came forth with the Mind and the Light glorifying him. And the Word followed the Will. For because of the Word, Christ, the divine Self-Generated, created the All."

Speculative Exegesis: While *Ap. John* is infamous for its inverse reading of the Genesis text, it also preserves exegetical traditions of a somewhat more conventional nature. In particular, similar to Philo's view of the Logos qua εἰκών as cosmic archetype (cf. *Leg.* 3.96 above), *Ap. John* describes heavenly reality as an (unwitting) archetype for the physical creation. "And everything he (Yaldabaoth) organized according to the model of the first aeons which had come into being so that he might create them in the pattern of the indestructible ones. Not because he had seen the indestructible ones, but the power in him which he had taken from his Mother (i.e., Sophia) produced in him the likeness of the cosmos" (*Ap. John* 33,13–34,2).

Sapiential Soteriology: As in the biblical tradition, personified Wisdom plays an important role in *Ap. John*. While some of this role is implicit (e.g., the Barbēlō is styled after pre-existent Wisdom), the *Apocryphon* explicitly mentions a (lesser) heavenly being named "Sophia" who, as mother of the malevolent Yaldabaoth, is responsible for the creation of the physical world. Repenting of this, Sophia seeks to undo the damage, thereby becoming an agent of salvation. "And our sister Sophia (σοφία) (is) she who came down in innocence in order to rectify her deficiency. Therefore she

---

45 The following presentation highlights similarities between *Ap. John* and the earlier documents and does so with little discussion of the context of the passages cited. Chapter five provides a full discussion of the *Apocryphon* as well as a careful explanation of these and several other texts.

46 Translations of *Ap. John* are from *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II, 1; III, 1; and IV, 1 with BG 8502,2* (eds. M. Waldstein and F. Wisse; Coptic Gnostic Library; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Citations are based upon the pagination and lineation of that synopsis while the text provided is usually NHC II, 1. In this case, the text is BG 8502, 2.

was called 'Life' (ζωή), which is the 'the Mother of the living,' by the Providence (πρόνοια) of the sovereignty (αὐθεντία) of heaven. And through her they have tasted perfect (τέλειος) knowledge (γνῶσις)" (*Ap. John* 62,3–11).

All of this strongly suggests that *Poimandres* and the *Apocryphon of John* are moving along the same conceptual currents as the Hellenistic Sapiential and NT writings we have been discussing.[47] However, it also seems likely that, given their emphasis on salvation through self-awareness, these writings may be of a different religious quality than either Hellenistic Judaism or the NT. Furthermore, *Poimandres* and *Ap. John* are different from these other writings in that they both provide a much more congested and dramatic depiction of the cosmos' origins, giving the sense that their authors were convinced the world and/or humanity came about in less than divinely ordered (or ordained) fashion.[48] This is perhaps why these two writings (especially *Ap. John*) appear to be more suspicious of the Genesis story.

1.2.4. A Middle Platonic *Vorleben*

Nevertheless, these Gnostic writings share with their Jewish and Christian counterparts the same basic approach to cosmology. All of them posit that between God and the cosmos there is a third thing, an intermediate entity that is ontologically related to God, that serves as agent of cosmology, and that somehow provides ultimate benefit to humankind. They use (though with varying degrees of sophistication) a consistent set of terms (λόγος, εἰκών, διὰ c. genitive), which shows their reliance upon the same traditions. These traditions include biblical sapientialism and Genesis exegesis. Sapientialism provided a model intermediary in personified Wisdom as well as the general scope of her activity. Genesis provided the context of a cosmological ur-myth as well as code words for concisely invoking that myth. Still, neither

---

47   This realization is not new. As chapter five details, a number of other scholars have recognized the Hellenistic Jewish aspects of both the *Apocryphon of John* and *Poimandres*.

48   It is true, as we discuss in chapter three, that at times Philo's cosmological views are rather complex (e.g., Philo also can envision multiple cosmic intermediaries). Yet the Alexandrian's writings do not come near the complexity or the drama of the cosmically enthralling presence of the Ἄνθρωπος in *Poimandres* or the foolish malfeasance of Yaldabaoth in *Ap. John*.

sapientialism nor Genesis is able to account sufficiently for the cosmological *specifics* espoused by the writings we are discussing.

What does account for them is Middle Platonism, a philosophical tradition that began in the early first century BCE and continued through the second century CE (i.e., contemporaneous with the composition of all the writings, from Wisdom of Solomon to *Ap. John*).[49] Having inherited from Plato a view of the universe as divided between a transcendent, noetic reality and its sense-perceptible copy, Middle Platonists sought to connect the two by positing an intermediary entity. They conceived of this entity as combining the formative aspect of Plato's ideas with the imminent presence of the Stoic active principle (the Λόγος). As such, the Middle Platonic intermediary was an immaterial force responsible for shaping the material universe. A school handbook, employing the technical style we should expect from philosophers, provides a summary of this view.

> If the world is not such as it is by accident, it has not only been generated *from* something [ἔκ τινος], but also *by* something (or someone) [ὑπό τινος], and not only this, but also *with reference to* something [πρός τι]. But what could that with reference to which it is generated be other than form (ἰδέα)? So forms (αἱ ἰδέαι) exist.[50]

With respect to the technical style, note especially the use of prepositional phrases as metaphysical shorthand, a trait shared by Philo and probably behind the prepositional phrases (especially δι' αὐτοῦ) that pepper the four NT passages.

Hence, Middle Platonism had its own divinely related cosmological agent. What is more, in addition to technical treatments like the one above, Middle Platonists could express this philosophical view in religious terms as shown in the following quotation by the first century BCE writer "Timaeus Locrus."

---

49 The following summary finds its detailed articulation in chapter two. Some kind of intermediary principle is a consistent attribute among Middle Platonists, though the conception of that principle was by no means monolithic. See John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (revised edition; New York: Cornell University Press, 1996).

50 Alcinous, *Ep.* 9.3 (143.40–164.1). The translation is from *Alcinous, The Handbook on Platonism* (trans. with commentary by John Dillon; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). We discuss the use of prepositions in this passage in chapter two.

> Before the heaven … came into being, the idea and matter already existed, as well as God, the maker of the better (δαμιουργὸς τῷ βελτίονος). Because the elder (τὸ πρεσβύτερον) is better than the younger (τὸ νεώτερον) and the ordered than the disordered, when God who is good (ἀγαθὸς ὢν ὁ θεός) saw that matter received the idea and was changed in all kinds of ways but not in an orderly fashion (ἀτάκτως), he wanted to order it (ἐδήλετο εἰς τάξιν αὐτὰν ἄγεν) and to bring it from an indefinite to a defined pattern of change, so that the differentiations of bodies might be proportional and matter no longer changed arbitrarily.[51]

Certainly this religiosity was not unique to Middle Platonists as philosophers. However, for Diaspora Jews seeking to preserve the transcendence of their God and yet articulate his relevance to their Hellenistic world, the Middle Platonic system would have been considerably more amenable then the monism of the Stoics. The Jews even had a ready-to-hand vehicle in personified Wisdom for co-opting the Platonic intermediary doctrine.[52]

Furthermore, the quote by "Timaeus Locrus" also has the ring of cosmological myth to it. We in fact find such mythical language to be fairly common among Middle Platonists, a phenomenon owing in part to Plato's own cosmological myth, *Timaeus* (the similarity of names not being accidental). But Middle Platonists, like the Stoics before them, were also involved in philosophical interpretation of religious myths, as Plutarch demonstrates with respect to the Isis and Osiris myth (*Is. Os.* 53–54) and the Eros myth (*Amat.* 764–65).[53] This predilection toward the mythical would likely find the Genesis cosmogony attractive and Middle Platonic interpretation provides a reasonable explanation for how the Logos as cosmological agent and the divine paradigm could be found in Genesis.

Finally, we have seen that the Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writings above all afford the intermediary figure a salvific role. While "salvation" may be a misnomer with respect to Middle Platonism, that philosophy too is concerned with humans achieving their *telos*. So the school handbook mentioned above says: "Philosophy is a striving for wisdom,

---

51 *On the Nature of the World and of the Soul* 206.11–17. This is Thomas Tobin's translation (*The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* [CBQMS 14: Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1983], 17). See chapter two for further discussion of this passage.

52 This is how we read Wisdom of Solomon in chapter three.

53 See chapter two for more on Plutarch's philosophical interpretations of these myths.

or the freeing and turning around of the soul from the body, when we turn towards the intelligible (τὰ νοητά) and what truly is (τὰ κατ᾿ ἀλήθειαν ὄντα)."[54] As this passage implies, the intermediary realm (here a plurality, τὰ νοητά) may serve as the goal of humanity.[55] The intermediary may also serve as the guide who makes such philosophical achievement possible, as Numenius says regarding the intermediate ὁ δημιουργιὸς θεός: "Through this one also is our journey" (διὰ τούτου καὶ ὁ στόλος ἡμῖν ἐστι).[56]

---

54 Alcinous, *Epit.* 1.1.

55 Cf. *Epit.* 9.1

56 Numenius, frg. 12. Διὰ τούτου possibly has an instrumental sense here. See the full passage and the discussion concerning it in chapter two.

1.3. One Cosmology, Three Soteriologies:
A Study of the Appropriation of Middle Platonic Intermediary Doctrine by Hellenistic Sapientialism, Early Christianity and Gnosticism

1.3.1. The Question behind this Study

We began with a question: From where came the cosmological tradition attested by 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4, and the Johannine prologue? To answer this question we made a brief survey of the *Vorleben* of these passages, beginning with the generally accepted views and moving to less familiar possibilities. This survey allows us to make three assertions. First, the NT writings were not alone in claiming such an agent. The Hellenistic Jewish writings of Philo and Wisdom of Solomon as well as the Gnostic writings of *Poimandres* and *Apocryphon of John* conceive of their respective intermediaries in similar fashion and in fact shed light on the language employed in the comparatively more terse NT passages. Second, while biblical sapientialism provided all of these writings a valuable paradigm in personified Wisdom and while Genesis provided the warrant of a cosmogonical myth, neither can adequately explain the phenomenon of a divinely related agent of creation.

Our third assertion is that Middle Platonism provides a reasonable explanation for this type of an agent. As we saw, Middle Platonism espoused an intellectual system that would explain how a transcendent supreme principle could relate to the material universe. The central aspect of this system was an intermediary, modeled after the Stoic active principle, which mediated the supreme principle's influence to the material world while preserving that principle's transcendence. Furthermore, Middle Platonism exhibits a religious sensitivity and a compatibility with mythological constructs that would make its conceptual system quite conducive to Hellenistic Jewish self-definition.

1.3.2. The Thesis of this Study

This last assertion is the foundation of the study that follows. In this study we shall examine how, having similar concerns as Middle Platonism, writings from three religious traditions from the turn of the

era (Hellenistic Jewish sapientialism, early Christianity, and Gnosticism) appropriated Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine as a means for understanding their relationship to the Deity, to the cosmos, and to themselves. Part of the purpose of this study is to improve the general understanding of the relationship between Middle Platonism and those biblically derived writings. This will be accomplished by focusing on the ontological and cosmological motifs and terminology common to both.

However, there are substantial differences between Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and Gnosticism and these writings reflect those differences when it comes to the topic at hand. In particular, each of these traditions varies in their adaptation of Middle Platonic doctrine as a result of their distinctive understanding of creation and humanity's place therein. This study will show that Hellenistic Jewish sapientialism (Philo of Alexandria and Wisdom of Solomon) espoused *a holistic ontology*, combining a Platonic appreciation for noetic reality with an ultimately positive view of creation and its place in human fulfillment. The early Christians who speak in 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:15–20, Hebrews 1:1–4, and the Johannine prologue, however, provide an eschatological twist on this ontology when their intermediary figure finds its final expression in the death and resurrection of the human Jesus Christ. Finally, the γνῶσις-oriented *Poimandres* and the *Apocryphon of John* draw from Platonism to describe how creation is antithetical to human nature and its transcendent source.

1.3.3. Methods and Methodological Caveats

In the second chapter, we provide a foundation for the rest of the study by carefully explaining Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine. Hence, chapter two is a synchronic description of Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre* (doctrine of three principles), in which we canvass 250 years of philosophical writings to consider how Middle Platonists envisioned the intermediary's relationship with the Supreme Principle, with the material cosmos, and with humanity in particular.

Chapters three through five are basically a series of textual studies whereby we will explicate the conceptual patterns and language the different texts use to describe their divinely-related cosmological agent(s). Chapter three focuses on Hellenistic sapientialism and speculative biblical interpretation. Hence we introduce the chapter with a brief discussion of Aristobulus followed by extensive treatments

of Wisdom of Solomon and Philo. Chapter four focuses on the NT texts. After introducing the chapter by means of a study of 1 Cor 8:6, we proceed to analyze Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4, and the Johannine prologue. Chapter five begins with an introduction to (the problem of) Gnosticism. Then we describe and analyze the salvation oriented cosmogonies of *Poimandres* and *Ap. John*.

It is important to note that while the cosmological patterns and terminology are relatively consistent in the material we are studying, the texts themselves are formally diverse. We cannot approach the voluminous and conceptually diffused writings of Philo in the same fashion that we approach the brief and contextually isolated Christo-logical passages. *Poimandres* and *Ap. John* are both revelatory narratives that lend themselves to section-by-section analysis. On the other hand, while Wisdom of Solomon confines its Sophialogy mostly to chs. 6–10, it tends to move back and forth in these chapters between Sophia's cosmic and anthropological roles. Hence, we will ask the same questions of each text: How is the intermediary related to the Deity? How does it function in creation? How does it provide for human fulfillment? However, we must answer these questions in a way that both highlights the commonality of these writings while respecting the integrity of each.[57]

Additionally, chapters three, four and five give the sense of being diachronic in nature. While this ordering is not accidental, it should not be taken as a fully developed argument for how Middle Platonic influence was disseminated among these writings. Though we cannot prove it in this current study, it seems feasible to propose that Middle Platonism first came into contact with Hellenistic Judaism (probably in Alexandria) in the first century BCE. The philosophical Judaism that arose out of this contact finds early expression in the writings of Wisdom and especially Philo (who trades in philosophical traditions as much as he does exegetical ones). Chapters four and five would then represent different trajectories for philosophical Jewish influence. In the NT passages we are probably encountering philosophical Jewish traditions as mediated through the Diaspora synagogue and its liturgy. As far as the Gnostic texts, we do not claim that *Poimandres* and *Ap. John*

---

57 Philo's writings, because they are so many and diffused, are the most difficult to analyze. The study of Philo in chapter three attempts a systematic presentation of Philo's intermediary doctrine with the recognition that such is an academically perilous endeavor.

are necessarily "protest exegesis." However, they do seem to represent some kind of failure in the Jewish tradition, with the communities that generated both texts falling back on philosophy (among other things) as a means of dealing with that crisis. Perhaps by ordering our study according to this hypothetical progression we can test it by how well it helps to explain our texts.

The study will conclude with a synthesis of the cosmological and soteriological approaches we have encountered in chapters three through five. This synthesis will help us to understand and appreciate the influence that Middle Platonism had on the formation of Jewish, Christian and Gnostic views about creation and salvation. By placing writings from these three religious groups against the same backdrop we will also be able to understand better their similarities and differences.

1.4. Summary of Introduction

In short, this is a study of how three sets of writings share a common cosmological tradition but appropriate that tradition in thee distinctive ways. The method of this study is to explain the source tradition and then describe its appropriation in the three sets of writings. The thesis of this study is two-fold: first, Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine persists as "a surviving mythic form" in Hellenistic Jewish sapientialism, early Christology, and Gnostic creation myths; and second, its presence provides "cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning" to their differing salvific schemes.

Chapter Two

Middle Platonic Intermediary Doctrine

Perhaps in Alexandria, a revival of Platonism began in the first century BCE.[1] This revival would continue for the next three hundred years, laying the foundation for Neoplatonism – the more thoroughgoing renovation of Platonic thought which began in the third century CE.[2] The interim phase, suitably titled Middle Platonism, involved the reassertion of important Platonic doctrines, especially in physics, which had fallen out of favor with the end of the Old Academy, the school established by Plato. Newer Academicians espoused Socratic skepticism over against the more positivistic philosophy of Socrates' most distinguished student. Subsequently, Peripatetic and then Stoic philosophies posited their own doctrine which came to hold sway in the Hellenistic period. However, in this first century BCE revival, Plato's presence in philosophical debates again became increasingly palpable.[3]

---

1 For a description of the philosophical scene in Alexandria in the first century BCE, see P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1:485–494. For a discussion of the advent of Middle Platonism and its likely roots in Alexandria see also John Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 54–55, 61–62, 115–117.

2 The most comprehensive description of Middle Platonism is found in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*. Several of the defining characteristics of Neoplatonism actually began taking shape in the Middle Platonic period. For the Latin tradition there is also volume 1 of Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition* (2 vols.; Notre Dame, Ind.; University of Notre Dame Press, 1986). See also John Whittaker, "Platonic Philosophy in the Early Centuries of the Empire," *ANRW* 36.1:81–123.

3 The revival appears to begin with a renewed concern for Platonic dogma by Antiochus of Ascalon, a member of the New Academy. However, though Antiochus may have thought himself as such, we cannot actually credit him with being an "evangelist of true Platonism" (so dubbed by Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* 487; cn. also W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung Des Neuplonismus* [Berlin: Weidmann, 1934]). Antiochus' efforts to rehabilitate Platonism came largely through reinterpreting the Athenian's doctrine from a Stoic stance (see Sextus

The foci of Hellenistic and early imperial philosophy are usually classified as logic, ethics and physics. The revival of Platonism centered on physics. While Middle Platonists used Platonic dialogues and *termini technici* to describe their logic and ethics, their logical and ethical concepts (if not purposes) often tended to be essentially either Peripatetic or Stoic.[4] It is with respect to physics, however, the Middle Platonists most reflected their namesake.[5] Plato himself had posited two principles, the intelligible and the material. The Middle Platonic view, though slightly more complex than Plato's *Zweiprinzipienlehre* (two principle doctrine), preserved this dichotomy, though they now averred three principles: an incorporeal, transcendent first principle ("god") on one side and matter on the other, and in between an intermediate reality, the ideas (or forms).

While the specifics change from Platonist to Platonist in this period, the basic tripartite rubric of god–idea(s)–matter remains consistent.[6] The

---

Empiricus, *Pyr.* 1.235). On Antiochus' Stoic monism see Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 105–106. We will discuss Antiochus further below.

  The earliest evidence we have for uniquely Platonic doctrine comes from Eudorus of Alexandria who likely was within the sphere of influence of Antiochus but who represents a clear break with Stoic monism. On Eudorus and his position as earliest known Middle Platonist, see H. Dörrie, "Der Platoniker Eudoros von Alexandreia," *Hermes* 79 (1944): 25–38, reprinted in *idem.*, *Platonica Minora* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976), 297–309. Also see Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 115–135.

4 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 113: "In ethics and logic there was much room for diversity, and the Platonists oscillated between the poles of Stoicism and Aristotelianism, but in their metaphysics they were quite distinctive."

5 A substantial impetus in this emphasis on physics is Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*. Already in the second century we see signs of renewed interest in this cosmopoetic discourse, namely by Stoics. Eudorus himself wrote a commentary on the dialogue and it is serves as the foundational text for subsequent generations of later Platonists. For a discussion of the *Timaeus*, see A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (New York: Garland, 1987); Richard D. Mohr, *The Platonic Cosmology* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) and *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (translation and commentary by Frances MacDonald Cornford; London: Routledge, 1937). For the history of interpretation of this text see Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's* Timaeus (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); *idem.*, ed. *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon* (Notre Dame, In.; University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); and Matthias Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des Platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpreten* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1976–1978).

6 Cf. H. Dörrie, "Ammonios, der Lehrer Plotins" in ibid., *Platonica Minora*, 342 ("Die Drei-Prinzipein-Lehre, wonach Gott, Idee und Materie dir Ursachen der

intermediate reality is the most supple of the three in terms of how different philosophers present it. It may be described as a single entity (νοῦς or λόγος) or as multiple ideas (ἰδέαι) or forms (εἴδα). It may be more closely associated with the supreme principle (e.g., the ideas are located in the mind of god) or the material principle (e.g., the intermediate realm is often associated with the world soul of the *Timaeus*).[7] It may even be in some manner divided between the two.[8] What is clear is that this intermediate entity is that by which the transcendent first principle and the material principle are related.[9]

As we discussed in chapter two, we operate with the assumption that Middle Platonism influenced Greek-speaking Judaism, 1st century Christianity and "Gnosticism." There are two questions that stem from this assumption which we must answer here: first, what is it about Middle Platonism that opened the possibility for it to influence Greek-speaking Judaism and its religious antecedents? Second, what aspects of Middle Platonism have the greatest significance for our current study? Hence, in what follows we first discuss the transcendent principle of Middle Platonism, which is likely the central feature that made Middle Platonism attractive to Hellenistic Jews. For those Jews who wished to recast themselves and their beliefs in Hellenistic terms, Middle Platonism afforded a way of doing this that preserved key tenets of their ancestral religion about the transcendence and sovereignty of God. The Middle Platonists preserved the transcendence of the first principle with respect to the cosmos by means of an intermediate entity (variously understood). It is the various functions of this intermediate entity which greatly inform divine intermediaries in Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism. After discussing the first principle, we spend the rest of this chapter describing the intermediate entity and its functions, thereby laying the foundation for the rest of this study.

     Welt sind, ist der Kernsatz des Mitteplatonismus."). See also Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 15.

7   The world soul is the aspect of the created order which is living and itself gives shape to matter (ὕλη), a passive entity which Plato calls a "receptacle" in *Timaeus* 49a.

8   Cf. Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 373AB, discussed below.

9   We discuss the functionality of the intermediate realm, especially in relating the supreme principle and the material principle, below.

2.1. A Transcendent Supreme Principle[10]

After the demise of the Old Academy, we know of no other philosophers in the Hellenistic period who espoused a transcendent principle akin to Plato's until Eudorus of Alexandria. Eudorus himself contended "that the Pythagoreans postulated on the highest level the One as a First Principle" who is "the principle (ἀρχή) of everything." Below this "supreme God" (ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός) there is "on a secondary level two principles of existent things, the One and the nature opposed to this"; that is, a second One (the "Monad") and the Unlimited Dyad.[11] It is unlikely that Eudorus is forthright in his appeal to the Pythagoreans as the source for his philosophical teaching since we do not know of any Pythagoreans before his time who held to a supreme principle that resided above both a second Monad and Dyad. Whatever his influences, Eudorus' emphasis on a transcendent first principle provides us with a watershed in the self-definition of Middle Platonism over against other Hellenistic philosophies.[12]

---

10 Unless otherwise noted, translations of Middle Platonist texts come from Dillon, *Middle Platonists*.

11 Eudorus explains that the Pythagoreans "call these two elements by many names. One of them is called by them ordered, limited, knowable, male, odd, right, and light; the one opposed to this called disordered, unlimited, unknowable, female, left, even, and darkness. In this way the (supreme) One is a principle, but the One [or Monad] and the Unlimited Dyad are also elements, both 'Ones' being then principles. It is clear then that the One which is the principle of everything is other than the One [the Monad] which is opposed to the Dyad." The quotation is from Simplicius, *In Phys.* I. 5 The translation is from Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 14, part of which comes from Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 126–127. The whole text is preserved in *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria* (Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca 9; Berlin: G. Reimeri, 1882), 181.7–30.

12 Simplicius, *In Phys.*, I.5, preserves certain quotations from Eudorus which discuss the metaphysics of "the Pythagoreans." The attribution of these ideas to the Pythagoreans is questionable and it would appear that they are Eudorus' own ideas that he is putting forward in a Pythagorean guise. See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 127–128, and Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 14–15. While Eudorus' supreme God is alien to what we know of Pythagoreanism, we may reasonably assume a Pythagorean influence present in the contrast between the Monad (Eudorus' second One) and the Indefinite Dyad. (Whether this comes from a tradition mediated by Plato himself or separate from him is difficult to say). See also Dörrie, "Eudorous von Alexandria", 304. With respect to this quotation in Simplicius, Dörrie says "So ist der Gedankenaustausch zwischen Platonikern und Pythagoreern wieder aufgelebt." This is in fact pivotal for later Platonism,

Plutarch is more like Plato or even the old Pythagoreans in that he holds to two principles instead of three (like Eudorus). One of Plutarch's two principles is an eternal, indivisible divine principle that he refers to as the One (*De E* 393BC) and the Good (*Def. Or.* 423D). In other words, his first principle is the same as Eudorus'.[13] Alcinous posits again three principles, with the foremost being "the primary god" who is "eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect' (that is, deficient in no respect), 'ever-perfect' (that is, always perfect), and 'all-perfect' (that is, perfect in all respects); divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, <beauty>, good" (*Epitome doctrinae platonicae*, 10.3, 164.32–35).[14] Such a god is "ineffable and graspable only by the intellect."[15] Indeed such a god is intellect (or mind; Grk: νοῦς) itself.[16]

"daß sie durch den Austausch mit dem Pythagoreismus erwachten und wurchen."

With respect to the development of a transcendent supreme principle, Dillon (ibid.) says: "The postulation [by Eudorus] of a supreme, utterly transcendent First Principle, which is also termed God, is a most fruitful development for later Platonism. If we may take Philo into evidence, Eudorus saw his supreme God as transcending all attributes whatever. Since the monad and the dyad were respectively Limit and Limitlessness, the One necessarily transcends both."

13   The substantive difference between Eudorus and Plutarch will lie in Plutarch's understanding of the other principle (discussed below) and how it relates to this first principle. Atticus' *Prinzipienlehre* is similar to Plutarch, With respect to Atticus' understanding of the supreme principle, Proclus (*In Tim.* I 305, 6ff.) says, "Atticus made the Demiurge [of the Timaeus] his supreme God, identifying him with The Good, and calling him also Intellect (*nous*)" (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 254).

14   Translations of Alcinous' *Epitome doctrinae platonicae* (or *Didaskalikos*) are from Dillon, *Alcinous*. The most recent edition, upon which Dillon bases his translation, is J. Whittaker, *Alcinoos, Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990). In *Epit.* 10.3, Dillon supplies "beauty" between "commensurability" and "good" on the basis that when Alcinous deals with these characteristics separately in the section immediately following, he includes "beauty." See *Alcinous*, 105.

15   *Epit.* 10.4 (165.5). He is graspable only by intellect "since he is neither genus, nor species, nor differentia, nor does he possess any attributes, neither bad (for it is improper to utter such a thought), nor good (for he would be thus by participation in something, to wit, goodness), nor indifferent (for neither is this in accordance with the concept we have of him), nor yet qualified (for he is not endowed with quality, nor is his peculiar perfection due to qualification) nor unqualified (for he is not deprived of any quality which might accrue to him). Further, he is not part of anything, nor is he in the position of being a whole which has parts, nor is he the same as anything or different form anything; for no attribute is proper to him, in virtue of which he could be distinguished from

Moderatus of Gades claims that this first principle, "the first One," is "above Being and all essence." What for him is the "second One" (equivalent to the Forms) "is the 'truly existent' (ὄντως ὄν) and the object of intellection (νοητόν)."[17] We will discuss second (and third) principles further in a moment, but we note that Moderatus calls the *second* One ὄντως ὄν and νοητόν. Does this mean that his First Principle is not only above being (as he says) but also supernoetic?[18] If so, Moderatus takes a step beyond his fellow Platonists and represents already in the second century one of the defining characteristics of Neoplatonism.[19] Numenius, who comes after Moderatus, does not go so far; his first principle, "the First God", must be an intellect of sorts since the second god attains intellect status through communing with it. Still, this First God is clearly transcendent: "existing in his own place, [he] is simple and, consorting as he does with himself alone, can never be divisible" (frag. 11).[20] He is One and the Good who is "inactive in respect of all works, and is King" (frag. 12).

The development (or resurgence) of a transcendent principle appears to have been a watershed not only for Middle Platonism but Greek-

---

other things. Also, he neither moves anything, nor is he himself moved" (ibid., 165.6–17).

　Apuleius is similar to Alcinous, with the primary of three principles being incorporeal, "one, unmeasurable, blessed (*beatus*) and conferrer of blessedness (*beatificus*), excellent, lacking nothing, conferring everything" (*De Plat.* 5; see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 312).

16　*Epit.* 10.2 (165.19–28): "Since intellect (νοῦς) is superior to soul, and superior to potential intellect there is actualized intellect, which cognizes everything simultaneously and eternally (πάντα νοῶν καὶ ἅμα καὶ ἀεί), and finer than this again is the cause of this and whatever it is that has an existence still prior to these, this it is that would be the primal God (ὁ πρῶτος θεός), being the cause of the eternal activity of the intellect of the whole heaven. It acts on this while remaining itself unmoved as does the sun on vision, when this is directed towards it, and as the object of desire moves desire, while remaining motionless itself. In just this way will this intellect move the intellect of the whole heaven (οὕτω γε δὴ καὶ οὗτος ὁ νοῦς κινήσει τὸν νοῦν τοῦ σύμπαντος οὐρανοῦ)."

17　Simplicius, *In Phys.* p. 230, 34 ff. Diels

18　See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 348.

19　Moderatus is part of the Neopythagorean group of Middle Platonists which also included Nichomachus of Gerasa and Numenius of Apamea, both of whom come after Moderatus. All three are discussed in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 341–383. Nichomachus designated his first principle the Monad and considered him a Nous. See below for Numenius.

20　See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 366–372. Numeration of Numenius' fragments is based on *Fragments* (ed. by E. des Places; Paris: Budé, 1973).

speaking Judaism, especially in Alexandria. While we have some evidence that Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jews presented their religion in philosophical terms before the advent of Middle Platonism, the relationship must have been an uneasy one.[21] Stoicism in particular likely presented a problem to those Jews interested in presenting their religion in Hellenistic terms. They could not fully appropriate Stoicism without diminishing a defining aspect of their ancestral religion, their transcendent God. While Stoicism reverenced a divine entity, it identified its god with the physical order. Though of different consistency, god and the world were of the same material. Therefore, while aspects of Stoicism were appropriated,[22] Stoic materialism made it an ultimately unacceptable system for explaining Judaism.

The Middle Platonic understanding of the divine first principle as transcendent appears to have resonated with at least a few Jews in Alexandria. As we shall see, Philo of Alexandria and Wisdom of Solomon (which was probably written in early imperial Alexandria) both appeared to imbibe heavily from the Middle Platonic drought as they described God and his relationship to the creation. The basic contours of this relationship are preserved in early Christian texts and in Gnostic writings as well, though they have different perspectives about the principles then Philo and Pseudo-Solomon. However, the Jewish God is not simply a transcendent deity removed and uninvolved in creation. Yet, neither is the Middle Platonic supreme principle.

----

21   The self-presentation of certain Greek-speaking Jews in Hellenistic terms is a phenomenon established by considerable evidence, much of it coming from Alexandria itself. A much more daunting issue is why. Did such self-presentations function *ad extra* or *ad intra*, to make the religion more inviting to outsiders or to shore it up so as to keep adherents from abandoning it for Hellenism? For any given text this is a difficult question, let alone for the phenomena in general. See Victor Tcherikover, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered," *EOS* 48 (1956): 169–193.

22   Aspects of Stoicism appropriated by the Jews include, for example, the anti-anthropomorphic understanding of god in Aristobulus (discussed in the introduction to chapter three) or the use of *Allformeln* in Synagogues (about which see the discussion of 1 Cor 8:6 in the first part of chapter four).

2.2. Demiurgic Activity and the Intermediate Principle

While Middle Platonists could describe their supreme principle as being in repose and contemplating itself,[23] they were also clear that this principle was involved in bringing about the existence of the whole cosmos. Hence, Eudorus says of his supreme god, that "the One was the principle of everything, even of *matter and of all existent things born of it* (τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων)."[24] The phrase ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων is suggestive of two things: first, the Supreme One has a qualitatively different relationship with τὰ ὄντα πάντα than with matter (ὕλη); and second, this distinctive relationship may be characterized as essentially parental (the use of the perfect passive participle of γίγνομαι).

The different relationships are also presented by "Timaeus Locrus" who provides a more expansive description of the One's efforts vis-à-vis the physical world. In *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*, section 7, he writes:

> Before the heaven … came into being, the idea and matter already existed, as well as God, the maker of the better (δαμιουργὸς τῷ βελτίονος). Because the elder (τὸ πρεσβύτερον) is better than the younger (τὸ νεώτερον) and the ordered than the disordered, when God who is good (ἀγαϑὸς ὢν ὁ ϑεός) saw that matter received the idea and was changed in all kinds of ways but not in an orderly fashion (ἀτάκτως), he wanted to order it (ἐδήλετο εἰς τάξιν αὐτὰν ἄγεν) and to bring it from an indefinite to a defined pattern of change, so that the differentiations of bodies might be proportional and matter no longer changed arbitrarily (206.11–17).[25]

---

23 See Alcinous, *Epit.* 10.3 (164.29–31) (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 12.7, 1074b 33–34).

24 The whole line reads: ἀρχὴν ἔφασαν εἶναι τῶν πάντων τὸ ἓν ὡς ἂν καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων (Simplicius, *In Phys.* 181.18–19 Diels). What "all existent things" refers to is obscure. Just previous to this quote, Simplicius says: " It must be said that the Pythagoreans postulated on the highest level the One as a First Principle, and then on a secondary level two principles of existent things, the One and the nature opposed to this. And there are ranked below these all those things that are thought of as opposites, the good under the One, the bad under the nature opposed to it" (*In Phys.* 181.10–14 Diels).

25 Tobin's translation (*Creation of Man*, 17). The critical edition is Timaeus Locrus, *De natura mundi et animae* (ed. W. Marg; Leiden: Brill, 1972).
    On *the Nature of the World and of the Soul* is a Neopythagorean writing alleged to come from the hand of *the* Timaeus who is the namesake of Plato's dialogue and the main expositor within that dialogue of its creation myth. Based on several parallels between this pseudonymous document and Eudorus, it is

This passage, which echoes the mythical style of the *Timaeus*, takes up Eudorus' notion that god is not as closely related to matter as to another, older entity (τὸ πρεσβύτερον). This entity is clearly identified as the "idea" (ἰδέα), for which god is directly responsible; being its maker (δαμιουργός). Matter, on the other hand, apparently has no origin.[26] Out of his beneficence God orders the chaotic mixture of idea and matter, promoting a defined pattern and not an arbitrary one.

We see something similar to this in Alcinous' handbook. He, however, adds the element of paternity which Eudorus' γεγενήμενα suggested. For Alcinous, the first principle

> is Father (πατήρ) through being the cause of all things (τῷ αἴτιος εἶναι πάντων) and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect (ὁ οὐράνιος νοῦς) and the soul of the world (ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ κόσμου) in accordance with himself and his own thoughts (πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἑαυτοῦ νοήσεις). By his own will he has filled all things with himself (ἐμπέπληκε πάντα ἑαυτοῦ), rousing up the soul of the world and turning it towards himself (εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστρέψας), as being the cause of its intellect (τοῦ νοῦ αὐτῆς αἴτιος ὑπάρχων). It is this latter that, set in order by the Father, itself imposes order on all of nature in this world (ὃς κοσμηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διακοσμεῖ σύμπασαν φύσιν ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ) (*Epit.* 10.3, 164.40–165.4).

There are a number of significant parallels between this passage and the one from "Timaeus Locrus." First, God/the Father acts intentionally to order a disorderly cosmos.[27] Second, God relates foremost to a noetic entity which in turn has responsibility for ordering πάντα. In the case of "Timaeus Locrus," the ἰδέα is the better in part due to its being

---

arguable it comes from the same late 1st century Alexandrian setting. See M. Baltes, *Timaios Lokros, Über die Natur des Kosmos und der Seele* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 23.

26 With respect to the use of "older" and "younger", Baltes (*Timaios Lokros*, 50) says "τὸ πρεσβύτερον ist das ontologisch frühere, τὸ νεώτερον das ontologisch spätere."

27 Cf. "By his own will (κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτὸν βούλησι) he has filled all things" (*Epit.* 10.3) with "he wanted to order it (ἐδήλετο εἰς τάξιν αὐτὰν ἄγεν) and to bring it from an indefinite to a defined pattern of change" ("Timaeus Locrus," 206.15). Baltes (*Timaios Lokros*, 52) notes ἐδήλετο dor. = ἐβούλετο. These two passages reflect Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a: "The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible, and so he took over all that was visible – not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion – and brought it from a state of disorder to one of order." (English translations of Plato are from *Plato: Complete Works* [ed. John M. Cooper; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], unless otherwise noted.)

"ordered" (τὸ τεταγμένον) while matter is "disordered" (τὸ ἄτακτον).[28] With Alcinous, the Father works with the οὐράνιος νοῦς, which once ordered by him itself orders (διακοσμέω) the whole of nature. In both "Timaeus Locrus" and Alcinous, the ἰδέα/οὐράνιος νοῦς is actually part of the world soul[29] and is quickened by the supreme One and thereby makes the world soul effective in shaping the sensible world.

Can we say then that Middle Platonism postulated a creator god in the fashion of Yahweh of the Hebrew Scriptures? As we have seen, the answer is "yes" but with a significant caveat. For "Timaeus Locrus" and Alcinous, God/the Father directly wills the ordering of the cosmos while at the same time employing a noetic instrument in the imposition of that order. The instrument, or noetic intermediary, is necessary for the Middle Platonic system since it keeps in tact the transcendence of God.[30] Numenius, who classifies the first principles as gods, is most emphatic when he says that the First God does not create, but should instead be considered the father of the creator god (fr. 12, lines 1–3: καὶ γὰρ οὔτε δημιουργεῖν ἐστι χρεών τὸν πρῶτον καὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦντος δὲ θεοῦ χρὴ εἶναι νομίζεσθαι πατέρα τὸν πρῶτον θεόν).[31]

In other words, while the Supreme One is the ultimate cause of all things, the locus of demirugic activity is actually beneath that One.[32] The source of this activity is variously named; so far we have seen ὁ δημιουγῶν θεός by Numenius, the ἰδέα by "Timaeus Locrus," ὁ οὐράνιος νοῦς by Alcinous. Again, there is considerable fluidity with respect to how Middle Platonists construe this intermediate reality, even within their own systems.

What accounts for this demiurgic sphere of activity? If we accept Eudorus' testimony, its origin lies with the "Pythagoreans," with their conception of a Monad and the nature opposed to it, the unlimited

---

28 Baltes, *Timaios Lokros*, 50.

29 I take "Timaeus Locrus" to be speaking of the world soul, or something phenomenally similar when he says "matter received the idea and was changed in all kinds of ways but not in an orderly fashion."

30 Cf. Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 15: "The emphasis on the transcendence of the Supreme One creates the need for an intermediate realm in which one finds the proximate principles or causes of existing things."

31 See Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 368. We will discuss the creator God, who is for Numenius the second-and-third god to the first God, the supreme One.

32 The title "Demiurge" is not exclusively reserved among Middle Platonists for the intermediate principle. Atticus for instance refers to the First Principle as Demiurge.

Dyad. But this monad is a secondary One; the Pythagoreans, and the Old Academy for that matter, did not conceive of both a transcendent Monad and an immanent Monad. For them there was only a Monad and a Dyad or, in Platonic terms, the intelligible and the sensible. Eudorus culls from the Pythagoreans and the Old Academicians their notion of a transcendent Monad but reduces their Monad-Dyad duo to a secondary level, the level at which demiurgic activity takes place.

The origin may in fact pre-exist Eudorus and lie with Antiochus of Ascalon. Antiochus started the Platonic revival in the early 1st century BCE, about which we spoke at the beginning of this section. He did so by affirming Platonic dogma precisely in this area of demiurgic activity. Yet while his topic was Platonic physics, and one of his authorities was the *Timaeus*, his interpretation of these was thoroughly Stoic. What in the *Timaeus* are distinct entities, the Demiurge and the World Soul, Antiochus has merged into one force, immanent in the world, a quality (*qualitas*=τὸ ποιοῦν) which permeates matter, vibrating back and forth.[33] This force is equivalent to the active creative principle of the Stoics, which they often referred to as ὁ λόγος.[34] Everything in the world is held together by this λόγος,

> …a sentient being, in which perfect Reason (*ratio* = λόγος) is immanent, and which is immutable and eternal since nothing stronger exists to cause it to perish; and this force they [the Platonists] say is the Soul of the World, and is also perfect intelligence (*mens perfecta*=νοῦς τέλειος), and wisdom, which they entitled God…(Cicero, *Acad.* 1.28).[35]

It is less than clear whether Antiochus held this force was immaterial.[36] What is important is that he considers the force immanent and not transcendent. He bequeaths this immanent force to later Platonists, who retain its functionality while making it an immaterial yet subordinate principal to the transcendent supreme One.

---

33 Cf. the Stoic idea of τονικὴ κίνησις. See the discussion in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1987), 1:286–289.

34 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 83. Cf. *Diogenes Laertius* 7.134. See also Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 1.101–119. For a survey of Stoic cosmology, see Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," in *The Stoics* (ed. J. Rist; Berkely: University of California Press, 1978), 161–86.

35 Translation from Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 82.

36 Dillon (*Middle Platonists*, 83–84) claims Antiochus considered this active principle material; Gersh (*Middle Platonism and NeoPlatonism*, 1.116–118) thinks it possible Antiochus considered the principle immaterial.

Plutarch preserves a Middle Platonic exegesis of the Osiris/Isis myth that may date back to turn-of-the-era Alexandria.[37] The passage, part of a larger treatise dealing with the Egyptian divine couple, is pertinent to the discussion of how Middle Platonists appropriated the active and passive elements in Stoic cosmology and reworked them into a more clearly Platonic (i.e., transcendent) perspective. We see this in *Is. Os.* 53 where Isis, having taken on the identity of the receptacle in the Timaeus (which since the Stoics had been understood as ὕλη),[38] is said to be transformed by reason (λόγος; i.e., Osiris) and receives all forms and ideas.[39] This transformation is likened to procreation (γένεσις). "For procreation in matter is an image of being, and what comes into being is an imitation of what is" (εἰκὼν γάρ ἐστιν οὐσίας ἐν ὕλῃ γένεσις καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ὄντος τὸ γιγνόμενον). As with Stoicism, the λόγος is a demiurgic force. However, the vocabulary used to describe this force (εἰκών, μίμημα) suggests that we do not have one material agent working on another agent. Rather the active agent is immaterial and its creative force comes through forms and ideas which are reproduced in Isis/the Receptacle as "an image of being" and a "copy" of what is.

Plutarch continues by noting how in the myth, Osiris' soul is eternal and indestructible while his body suffers recurring dismemberment and dispersion by Typhon. Isis searches for the dispersed body parts and upon finding them reforms the body. The philosophical interpretation follows:

> For what is and is spiritually intelligible (νοητόν) and is good prevails over destruction and change; but the images (εἰκόνας) which the perceptible and

---

37   See Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 53–54. See the discussion of this passage in Tobin, *Creation of Man* 74–76 and the commentary in J. G. Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970), 41–48. See also Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 200, 204–206.

38   *Tim.* 51a: "In the same way, then, if the thing that is to receive repeatedly throughout its whole self the likenesses of the intelligible objects, the things which always are – if it is to do so successfully, then it ought to be devoid of any inherent characteristics of its own. This, of course, is the reason why we shouldn't call the mother or receptacle of what has come to be, of what is visible or perceivable in every other way, either earth or air, fire or water, or any of their compounds or the constituents. But if we speak of it as an invisible and characterless sort of thing, one that receives all things and shares in a most perplexing way in what is intelligible, a thing extremely difficult to comprehend, we shall not be misled."

39   *Is. Os.* 53: She is the myriad-named διὰ τὸ πάσας ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου τρεπομένη μορφὰς δέχεσθαι καὶ ἰδέας.

corporeal nature (τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ σωματικόν) fashions from it, and the
ideas, forms and likenesses which this nature assumes, are like figures
stamped on wax (ἐν κηρῷ σφραγῖδες) in that they do not endure forever.
They are seized by the element of disorder and confusion which is driven
here from the region above and fights against Horus, whom Isis brings forth
as an image (εἰκόνα) of what is spiritually intelligible (τοῦ νοητοῦ), since he
is the perceptible world (κόσμος αἰσθητός). This is why he is said to be
charged with illegitimacy by Typhon as one who is neither pure nor
genuine like his father, who is himself and in himself the unmixed and
dispassionate Reason (λόγος), but is made spurious by matter through the
corporeal element (ἀλλὰ νενοθευμένος τῇ ὕλῃ διὰ τὸ σωματικόν). He
(Horus) overcomes and wins the day since Hermes, that is, Reason (λόγος),
is a witness for him and points out that nature produces the world after
being remodeled in accordance with what is spiritually intelligible (τὸ
νοητόν).[40]

Admittedly, this is not the clearest interpretation.[41] Still, the philosoph-
ical characterization of these mythic characters is most important to us.
The soul of Osiris is here portrayed as the "unmixed and dispassionate"
λόγος, being ὄν, νοητόν, and ἀγαθόν. Isis, though not explicitly
mentioned, appears to be "the perceptible and corporeal nature" who
fashions images from it, ideas, forms and likenesses – all of which are
subject to change and decay. The interpretation refers to these images
collectively as Horus, the child of Isis and Osiris. In other words, the

---

40 *Is. Os.* 53–54 (translation from Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 73–74; cf. Griffiths, *De
    Iside et Osiride*, 202–05). The passage continues: "For the procreation of Apollo
    by Isis and Osiris, which occurred when the gods were still in the womb of
    Rhea, suggests symbolically that before this world became manifest and was
    completed by Reason, matter, being shown by its nature to be incapable of
    itself, brought forth the first creation. For this reason they declare that god to
    have been born maimed in the darkness and they call him the elder Horus; for
    he was not the world, but only a picture and a vision of the world to come."

41 See Antonie Wlosok, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis: Untersuchungen zu
    Geschichte und Terminologie der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung* (Heidelberg: C.
    Winter, 1960), 56, and Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 74. The "element of disorder
    and confusion which is sent here from the region beyond" is obscure. Is it Isis
    qua receptacle which is disorderly and confused? If so, this is comparable to
    Timaeus Locrus, 207, where ὕλη is described as ἀτάκτως. On the other hand, in
    Is. Os. 53 Isis, though "a possible sphere material" for good or evil, shuns the
    one and yearns for the other. Perhaps Typhon is this element from regions
    above sent to accuse Horus, though his philosophical function isn't clear. Also
    unclear is the reference to Hermes, also designated λόγος, who testifies on
    behalf of Horus.

progeny of Osiris and Isis refers (so the exegesis goes) to the product of the noetic and material spheres, namely the κόσμος αἰσθητός.[42]

Hence, Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* claims for Osiris/λόγος the status of Demiurge. While much of the action is given Isis (which may simply be the result of consistency with the myth that is being interpreted), it may also be clearly stated that the world became manifest and was completed by Reason (ἐκφανῆ γενέσθαι τόνδε τὸν κόσμον καὶ συντελεσθῆναι τῷ λόγῳ τὴν ὕλην).[43]

In *Is. Os.* we also see that the forms and ideas are not independent of but closely associated with the λόγος. Similarly, in Alcinous' handbook we find the Platonic forms (τὰ ἰδέαι) presented collectively as the Form (ἡ ἰδέα).[44] The Form, he says, is "considered in relation to God, his thinking; in relation to us, the primary object of thought; in relation to Matter, measure; in relation to the sensible world, its paradigm; and in relation to itself, essence" (*Epit.* 9.1). God's thinking (νόησις, or with respect to the plural "forms," his νοήματα) is an immaterial, eternal, unchanging force which gives to unmeasured matter its measure. Atticus, a student of Plutarch, sees the same function for the ἰδέαι. Yet he avers the independent nature of these νοήματα; they are a product of the divine intellect and yet "subsisting by themselves," lying outside that intellect.[45]

Numenius, writing two and a half centuries later than Antiochus, presents his ὁ δημιουργῶν θεός in much the same fashion. While the First God is at rest and is concerned with the intelligible realm (τὰ νοητά), the demiurge is in motion (κινούμενος) and is concerned with both the intelligible and sensible realms (τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητά).[46] As such the Demiurge serves as an intermediary who relies on one to affect the other. He is, says Numenius, a kind of helmsman (ὁ κυβερνητής) who,

> …binding (συνδησάμενος) matter fast by harmony, so that it may not break loose or wander astray, himself takes his seat above it, as if above a ship

---

42 This is the same schema as "Timaeus Locrus," *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*. There, ἰδέα and ὕλη have as their offspring αἰσθητόν.

43 *Is. Os.* 54.

44 In *Epit.* 9.1, Alcinous identifies the three primary principals of Platonic physics. "Matter constitutes one principle, but Plato postulates others also, to wit, the paradigmatic, that is the forms, and that constituted by God the father and cause of all things" (Dillon, *Alcinous*, 16). But in the discussion that follows Alcinous alternates between the forms (pl.) and the Form (sg.).

45 Proclus, *In Tim.* I 394, 6.

46 Numenius, fragment 15.

upon the sea, and he directs the harmony, steering it with the Forms (ταῖς ἰδέαις οἰακίζων), and he looks, as upon the heavens, at the God above (ὁ ἄνω θεός) who attracts his eyes, and takes his critical faculty from this contemplation (λαμβάνει τὸ κριτικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς θεωρίας), while he derives his impulsive faculty from his desire (τὸ ὁρμητικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐφέσεως) (frg. 18).

As the last part of this passage suggests, the relationship between the Demiurge and matter is not without its consequences. Indeed, we may say that Numenius' Demiurge is bifurcated, torn between its contemplation of the First God and its desire for matter.

> The Second and Third God is one (ὁ θεὸς ὁ δεύτερος καὶ τρίτος ἐστιν εἷς); but in the process of coming into contact (συμφερόμενος) with Matter, which is the Dyad, He gives unity to it, but is Himself divided (σκίζομαι) by it, since Matter has a character prone to desire and is in flux (frg. 11).[47]

Numenius expresses here a tainting aspect of matter with respect to the Demiurge that may extend beyond orthodox Middle Platonism.[48] At the same time, he captures the importance of the Demiurge to Middle Platonists. Related as it is to the noetic sphere, especially to its Father the First God, the Demiurge serves to bring the intelligible (τὰ ἰδέαι or τὸ νοητόν) to bear on the sensible (τὸ αἰσθητόν). In the process however, the Demiurge must interact with matter, which is in flux and which necessitates that unlike the First God, the Demiurge cannot be selfcontemplating. Its bifurcation, its being the Second *and* Third God, is the result of its having to have a dual orientation.[49]

We may summarize the demiurgic function in Middle Platonism thusly. While Middle Platonists viewed the First Principle as transcendent, they also admitted that this principle played an ultimate role in the creation and continuation of the cosmos. In order to preserve the

---

47   Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 367–68. Fragment 11 continues: "So in virtue of not being in contact with the Intelligible [τὸ νοητόν] (which would mean being turned in upon Himself), by reason of looking towards Matter and taking thought for it, He becomes unregarding of Himself. And He seizes upon the sense realm (τὸ αἰσθητόν) and ministers to it and yet draws it up (ἀνάγω) to His own character, as a result of this yearning towards Matter (ἐπορεξάμενος τῆς ὕλης)."

48   Given that the Demiurge has desire for Matter and that desire gives the Demiurge an impulsive faculty, we will be interested to compare Numenius with *Poimandres* (*CH* 1) and *Apocryphon of John* that present (semi-) supersensible beings in a similar way.

49   The dual orientation of Numenius' Demiurge, his Second-and-Third God, is a logical result of the melding of the Demiurge and the World Soul that took place already in Antiochus and his Stoic forebearers.

transcendence, they claimed an intermediary principle. This principle, largely adapted from the Stoic active principle and even designated a second god by some, related both to the First Principle and to Matter. The intermediary principle itself does not have consistent characteristics among Middle Platonists. For some, the principle may be the thoughts within God's mind, for others forms that exist independent of the mind of God, and for still others an independent singular entity that had within itself these thoughts (or forms). What is clear is that, whether explicitly or implicitly, the intermediary is cosmologically instrumental, the active element that gives shape to the passive and/or chaotic element.

2.3. Prepositional Metaphysics

Middle Platonists were not limited to perceiving only one cause for the world. Already Aristotle (who was another major impetus for Middle Platonic thought) had determined there were four distinct causes (αἴτια); the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause.[50] It appears that Middle Platonists appropriated this framework in developing their three principles (ἀρχαί): God (First Principle) is the efficient cause; ideas/forms are the formal cause, and matter is the material cause. In fact, it may very well be in response to Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Zweiprinzipienlehre* that the Athenian's later disciples introduced a Stoic inspired intermediate principle and thus a *Dreiprinzipienlehre*.[51] Varro (116–27 BCE), a Roman student of Antiochus, thus interprets the divine triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva who represented sky, earth and the ideas respectively. "The sky is that by which (*a quo*) something came to be, the earth that from which (*de*

---

50 See Aristotle, *Phys.* 2. 3–9 (194b–200b), especially 2.3 (194b–95a). The standard illustration which ancients used to explain these causes was a bronze statue: "the bronze is the material cause; the specific shape which the statue takes is the formal cause; the artist is the efficient cause; and the purpose of [creating the statue] is the final cause" (Gregory E. Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts," *SPhA* 9 [1997]: 220–21).

51 See Dillon, *Alcinous*, 94. He thinks it possible the Middle Platonic "three-principle system" was "only formulated in response to criticisms by Aristotle, in such passages as *Metaphysica* 1.992a25–9 and *De Generatione et Corruption* 2.9.335a24ff., to the effect that Plato [with his two-principle system] ignores the efficient cause, and appears to think that the forms can do the job by themselves."

qua) something came to be, and the pattern (*exemplum*) that according to which (*secundum quod*) something came to be."[52]

Antiochus' student impresses us not only by mentioning a third principle (contra Stoicism) which he refers to as "pattern" (= ἰδέα) but also by assigning prepositional phrases to the different principles: *a quo fiat, de qua fiat, secundum quod fiat*. Varro is perhaps our earliest witness to the use of prepositional phrases to describe different causes, though we cannot be sure when the advent of so called prepositional metaphysics occurred.[53] While the Stoics had used prepositional formulations in describing the divine (i.e., active) principle in the cosmos, their monistic perspective did not allow for multiple causes. Their cause was one, the active principle which shaped the passive (i.e., ὕλη) and thereby made the cosmos.[54]

------

52 English translation of Varro, *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum*, frg. 206 (from Augustine, *Civ.* 7.28) from Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics" 226. A larger portion of the passage reads in Latin: *in simulacris aliud significare caelum, aliud terram, aliud exempla rerum, quas Plato appellat ideas; caelum Iovem, terram Iunonem, ideas Minervam (vult intellegi); caelum a quo fiat aliquid, terram de qua fiat, exemplum secundum quod fiat* (CCSL 47, 210–211). Matthias Baltes, in H. Dörrie and M. Baltes, eds., *Die Philosophische Lehre des Platonismus* (vol. 4 of *Der Platonismus in der Antike*; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), provides the Greek equivalents to Varro's prepositional phrases: *a quo fiat* = ὑφ' οὗ; *de qua fiat* = ἐξ οὗ; and *secundum quod fiat* = καθ' ὅ (390).

53 Prepositions defined causes previous to Varro (who may have inherited his teaching from Antiochus). For instance, Aristotle had described the material cause as τὸ ἐξ οὗ and the final cause as τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα in *Phys.* 2.3. However, the use of prepositions for this purpose was not systematic until the post-Antiochus (i.e., Middle Platonic) period. Scholarly discussion of this phenomenon began in earnest with W. Theiler, *Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, 17–34. See also H. Dörrie, 'Präpositionen und Metaphysik," *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969) 217–28 (= idem, *Platonica Minora*, 124–126), Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 137–139, and Baltes, *Philosophische Lehre des Platonismus*, 110–201 (texts) and 377–538 (commentary). Most recently see Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 219–38.

54 Seneca, *Ep.* 65.2: "The cause, however, that is reason (*ratio*), forms matter and turns it wherever it wants, thus producing various products. … Therefore there must be that from which (*unde*) something is made, then that by which (*a quo*) something is made. The latter is *causa*, the former is the *materia*" (Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics* 222).

Sterling discusses the Stoic use of prepositional formulations and provides a number of examples (ibid., 222–24). We shall discuss these formulas in chapter three when we examine 1 Cor 8:6 and other passages that employ prepositional phrases to describe the functioning of God and his Son. At present, Sterling's conclusion provides the basis for the lack of discussion in this introduction of

After Varro, we find a number of Middle Platonists who make use of prepositional phrases to characterize the different principles/causes of the cosmos. Indeed, the evidence suggests that such categorization of prepositions becomes a topos in the scholastic formulations of Platonic doctrine from the early imperial period to the mid-second century CE. In Alcinous' handbook, which itself in large measure derives from a 1st century BCE work by Augustan's court philosopher Arius Didymus,[55] we find the following use of prepositional metaphysics to describe the three causes. In the third in a series of arguments for the existence of forms, Alcinous says:

> If the world is not such as it is by accident, it has not only been generated *from* something [ἔκ τινος], but also *by* something (or someone)[ὑπό τινος], and not only this, but also *with reference to* something [πρός τι]. But what could that with reference to which it is generated be other than form (ἰδέα)? So forms (αἱ ἰδέαι) exist (*Ep.* 9.3 [163.40–164.1]).[56]

---

the Stoic formulations, however similar to and even in dialogue with the Middle Platonic phenomenon of "prepositional metaphysics." According to Sterling, the Stoic use of prepositional phrases for the divine was ubiquitous, but these different phrases refer only to a single cause, emphasizing the unity of the cosmos.

55 Dillon, *Alcinous*, xxix, refers to the *Didaskalikos* as a "new, *revised* edition" of Arius Didymus' work, or at least an edition of Arius' work some generations removed. John Whittaker (*Alcinoos*, xvi–xvii) agrees that Alcinous work is not original but is based 'entirely on the work of his predecessors."

56 Dillon, *Alcinous*, 16 (italics his). Dillon comments on this passage (p. 99): This "argument, broadly an argument from design, introduces both the Aristotelian distinction, found in *Metaph.* 7.7.1032a12 ff., between things generated naturally (*physei*), artifically (*technēi*) and spontaneously ["accidentally"] (*apo t' automatou*). Since the cosmos is not of the last type (and certainly not of the second), it must fulfill the conditions which Aristotle identifies for the first, which are that it must have something *in accordance with which* (*kath' ho*) it is generated, something *from which* (*ex hou*), and something by which (*huph' hou*). For Aristotle's *kath' ho*, [Alcinous] substitutes *pros ho*, and makes that form, whereas Aristotle had identified the cause *kath' ho* as nature, and the agent (*huph' hou*) as form." Aristotle only mentions ὑφ' οὗ and ἐξ οὗ explicitly in *Metaph.* 7.7. For the four Aristotelian causes (material, efficient, formal, and final), later Peripatetics developed corresponding prepositional formulae. Simplicius, for example, writes: "The principle (ἀρχή) is fourfold according to Aristotle: there is the out of which (τὸ ἐξ οὗ) such as matter, the in which (τὸ καθ' ὅ) such as form (εἶδος), the by which (τὸ ὑφ' οὗ) such as the agent (τὸ ποιοῦν), and the for which (τὸ δι' ὅ) such as the purpose (τέλος)" (*Metaph.* 1.1 [Diels 10.35–11.2]; Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics* 224–225).

This passage is similar to what we found in Varro above, though it also attests to certain liquidity in the choice of prepositions, especially with respect to the intermediate principle. Instead of Varro's *secundum quod* (= καθ' ὅ), Alcinous uses πρὸς ὅ to describe the function of the ἰδέα.[57]

Taking into consideration the evidence from the Stoic philosopher Seneca, the variation in Middle Platonic prepositional metaphysics extended to the number of causes. Where Varro and Alcinous mention only three causes, Seneca says "Plato" had five causes (*Ep.* 65.8).[58] These are:

> that from which (id *ex quo* = τὸ ἐξ οὗ), i.e., matter;
> that by which (id *a quo* = τὸ ὑφ' οὗ), i.e., the maker;
> that in which (id *in quo* = τὸ ἐν ᾧ), i.e., the immanent form;[59]
> that towards which (id *ad quod* = τὸ πρὸς ὅ), i.e., the paradigm (*exemplar*);[60]
> and that for the sake of which (id *propter quod* = τὸ δι' ὅ), i.e., final cause (*bonitas*).[61]

All but one of these causes Platonists shared in common with Peripatetics. The one that stands out is "that towards which" (τὸ πρὸς ὅ).

Seneca speaks about this cause in *Ep.* 65.7 when he says:

---

57 Cf. the doxographer Aetius (*Plac.* 1.11.2 [Diels 309a14–17]): "Plato held there were three causes (τριχῶς τὸ αἴτιον). He says: 'by which (ὑφ' οὗ), out of which (ἐξ οὗ), to which (πρὸς ὅ).' He considers the by which (τὸ ὑφ' οὗ) to be the most important. This was that which creates, that is the mind (τοῦτο δ' ἦν τὸ ποιοῦν, ὅ ἐστι νοῦς)" (quoted from Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics* 226). These three causes match up with Aetius' three principles (ἀρχαί): τὸν θεὸν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἰδέαν respectively (see Aetius, *Plac.* 1.3.21 [Diels 287a17–288a6]).

58 For the text of Seneca, *Ep.* 65, see Baltes, *Philosophische Lehre des Platonismus*, 136. For comments on this text and its significance to Middle Platonism, see ibid., 414–21; Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 225–231; Gersh, *Middle Platonism and NeoPlatonism*, 1.188–194; Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 137–139; Theiler, *Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, 15–34.

59 The immanent form = *forma*, i.e., *habitus et ordo mundi, quem videmus* (Seneca, *Ep.* 65).

60 For Seneca's *id ad quod*, Sterling provides the Greek equivalent τὸ πρός ὅ ("Prepositional Metaphysics" 229). Dillon prefers τὸ ἐφ' ὅ (*Middle Platonists* 138).

61 For Seneca's *id propter quod*, Sterling provides the Greek equivalent τὸ δι' ὅ. Dillon prefers τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα.

To these four, Plato adds as a fifth cause the model (*exemplar*), which he himself calls the "Idea." For it is to this that the artist looked when he accomplished what he was planning. However, it makes no difference whether he had this model outside himself, to which he might turn his eyes, or within himself, having conceived and placed it there himself. God has these models of all things (*exemplaria rerum omnium*) within himself, and has embraced the numbers and measures of all things which are to be accomplished in his mind. He is filled with those shapes which Plato calls "Ideas" immortal, immutable, indefatigable. Therefore, although men may perish, humanity itself according to which a man is moulded remains, and, although men may be afflicted and die, it suffers no change.[62]

Seneca's source for Platonic dogma views the Idea(s) as the thoughts of God, numbers and/or shapes which are incorporeal and eternal yet instrumental in the forming of all things (i.e., the cosmos).[63] So, even though Seneca's take on Platonism includes two more causes/prepositional phrases than most Middle Platonists, the true point of departure from Peripatetic views of causation is consistently Middle Platonic. Seneca too emphasizes the intermediate cause, namely form(s), as the incorporeal paradigm for corporeal reality.

2.3.1. Excursus #1: The Prepositional Phrase τὸ δι' οὗ

In our treatment of prepositional metaphysics, it will be noted that τὸ δι' οὗ (discussed in chapter one) is absent from the different phrases mentioned. Philo of Alexandria is the first (that we know of) to use this phrase systematically among Greek-speaking Jewish writers.[64] The phrase occurs in all four NT passages that combine the cosmological and soteriological functions of the Son and appears as well in certain "Gnostic" writings that discuss cosmological and anthropological intermediacy. Evidence of its use among Platonists apart from Philo (or his sources) is limited until the second century and beyond and is more a phenomenon of Neoplaton-ism.[65]

---

62 Translation from Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 1.190.

63 See Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 138.

64 In *Cher.* 125–127 Philo provides an extemporaneous discussion of prepositional metaphysics and includes the ὄργανον through which (δι' οὗ) the world came to be, namely the divine Logos. See chapter three.

65 The phrase δι' οὗ does not occur in many metaphysical schemata among Middle Platonists. It does not appear in those of Aeitus or Alcinous. Varro's *secundum*

Still, there is reason to think that Philo's use of τὸ δι' οὗ has its origin in prepositional philosophy. Alcinous, a 2nd century CE cipher of early Platonist sources, includes in his *Didaskalikos* an epistemological use of prepositions that may reflect a stage in the development of Middle Platonic prepositional metaphysics.[66]

> Since there is something that judges (τὸ κρῖνον), and there is something that is judged (τὸ κρινόμενον), there must also be something that results from these and that may be termed judgement (ἡ κρίσις). In the strictest sense, one might declare judgement to be the act of judgement (τὸ κριτήριον), but more broadly that which judges (τὸ κρῖνον). This may be taken in two senses: (1) that by which (τὸ ὑφ' οὗ)[67] what is judged is judged, and (2) that through which (τὸ δι' οὗ) it is judged. Of these the former would be the intellect in us (ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦς), while that 'through which' is the physical instrument (ὄργανον φυσικόν) which judges – primarily truth, but consequently also falsehood; and this is none other than our reasoning faculty working on the physical level (λόγος φυσικός).

> To take a clearer view of the matter, the judging agent (κριτής) might be said to be the philosopher, by whom (ὑφ' οὗ) things are judged, but equally

---

quod fiat most likely equals τὸ πρὸς ὅ, as does Seneca's *id ad quod* (see the discussion above).

  δι' ου does occur in the *Prinzipienlehren* of later Platonists, namely Galen (*De usu part.* I [Helmreich 338.20–339.18]), Proclus, (*In Plat. Tim.* I [Diehl 357:12–23]) and Basil of Caesarea (*De spiritu sancto* 3.5 [PG 32,76]). See Baltes, *Philosophische Lehre des Platonismus* 138–140, 112–114, 140–142, respectively. Cf. also Simplicius (*Metaph.* 1.12 [Diels 3.16–19]; 1.2 [26.5–7]) and John Philoponus (*De aeternitate mundi* 6.12 [Rabe 159.5–12]) who also discuss the instrumental cause. Sterling suggests that such discussion in the Neoplatonic tradition demonstrates "the recognition of the instrumental cause in the Platonic tradition" which, given the evidence in Philo, must extend back to or before his time ("Prepositional Metaphysics," 228). (We shall discuss Philo's use of the phrase and its relation to Middle Platonic thought at greater length in chapter three.)

66 On the development of prepositional formulae in philosophical discourse see Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 230–231. Sterling thinks the Stoics most likely were the first to use such formulae systematically, though in the discussion of epistemology. For an example of this epistemology of prepositions among the Stoics, see Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.35–37, who identified three criteria for knowing: the ὑφ' οὗ (i.e., the person); the δι' οὗ (i.e., sense perception); and the application (προσβολή, i.e., an impression or φαντασία). The Stoics would not have much use for prepositional metaphysics per se since they acknowledged only one cause. Middle Platonists may well have adopted Stoic epistemological prepositions and then reworked them to highlight the distinctives of their physics.

67 Dillon: "by the agency of which."

well it (i.e., κριτής) could be taken to be the reason (λόγος), through which (δι' οὗ) the truth is judged, and which was what we declared to be the instrument (ὄργανον) of judgement. Reason in turn takes two forms (διττὸς δ' ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος): the one is completely ungraspable (ἄληπτος) and unerring (ἀτρεκής), while the other is only free from error when it is engaged in the cognition of reality (ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων γνῶσιν ἀδιάψευστος). Of these the former is possible for God, but impossible for men, while the second is possible also for men (*Epit.* 4.1–2).

Initially, what we should find interesting here is the relationship between "the intellect in us" (ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦς) and "natural reason" (λόγος φυσικός) or, similarly, that between the philosopher (ὁ φιλόσοφος) and reason (ὁ λόγος). The former in either relationship is that "by which" (ὑφ' οὗ) judgement occurs and the latter that "through which" (δι' οὗ) judgment occurs. In both cases, τὸ δι' οὗ is referred to as an instrument (ὄργανον) which – at the human level – appears bifurcated. Though its primary focus may be truth and knowledge of what is real (ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων γνῶσις), the λόγος φυσικός must also deal with falsehood and error.

What would it look like if Alcinous' epistemology of prepositions were to have a metaphysical counterpart? God, or the supreme principle, would be τὸ ὑφ' οὗ reality comes to be. The intermediate reality, elsewhere in Alcinous presented as τὸ πρὸς ὅ, here would not be the paradigm but the instrument, the ὄργανον δι' οὗ reality comes to be.[68] Such a leap from prepositional epistemology to prepositional metaphysics is not merely hypothetical. The turn of the era eclectic philosopher Potamon of Alexandria appears to have made just this transition.[69] According to Diogenes Laertius, Potamon

takes as criteria (κριτήρια) of truth (1) that by which (τὸ ὑφ' οὗ) the judgement is formed, namely the ruling principle (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν); (2) the instrument used (τὸ δι' οὗ), for instance the most accurate perception (ἡ

---

68 In *Epit.* 4.2, Alcinous says λόγος has two forms, basically that associated with God and that which humans only may attain. That associated with God, which he calls "ungraspable and unerring" reason may be comparable to Form in *Epit.* 9.2. In that section, the intermediate principle (ἡ ἰδέα or αἱ ἰδέαι interchangeably) is referred to as the thinking of God (νόησις θεοῦ). If so, λόγος corresponds to ἡ ἰδέα and τὸ δι' οὗ corresponds to τὸ πρὸς ὅ.

69 Potamon describes himself as an "eclectic." The Alexandrian, who flourished during the reign of Augustus, appears to have blended Platonism, Stoicism and Peripatetic doctrines to form his eclecticism. This would likely mean that if he was different from Middle Platonists, he was so only in degree. See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 138, 147, and idem, "Potamon" in *OCD* 1235.

ἀκριβεστάτη φαντασία). His universal principles are matter and the active principle (τὸ ποιοῦν), qualities and place; for that out of which (ἐξ οὗ), and that by which (ὑφ' οὗ) a thing is made, as well as through which (δι' οὗ) and the place in which (ἐν ᾧ) it is made, are principles. The end to which (ἐφ' ὅ) he refers all actions is life made perfect in all virtue, natural advantages of body and environment being indispensable to its attainment. [70]

Potamon clearly draws from Stoic influences here.[71] Still, his instrumental use of δι' οὗ in epistemological *and* metaphysical contexts promotes the utility of the phrase for those who are interested in intermediate principles – namely Platonists flourishing in an early imperial Alexandrian milieu.[72]

Our discussion of prepositional metaphysics is important for two reasons. It reiterates the nature of Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre*. This emphasis of an intermediate principle in addition to the active and the passive principles both assumes and advances (or refutes) moves made in Stoic and Peripatetic physics. The use of prepositional formulae, the phenomena of which likely preexisted Middle Platonism, comes to play in physics as Middle Platonists sought ways to articulate their understanding of this intermediate cause and its role as an active buffer between the transcendent first principle and the material cosmos. This is a response to Aristotle's arguments against Plato's *Zweiprinzipienlehre* and an appropriation of the Stoic logos/pneumatic concept. Secondly, prepositional metaphysics appears to provide a shorthand manner for referring to the different causes and their functions (active, passive, and intermediate). To be sure, the evidence for the use of such shorthand outside the philosophical topos of prepositional metaphysics is limited. We shall see that Philo of Alexandria is practically our singular example of one who employs both this topos and the resultant prepositional "shorthand" (i.e., the phrases and their antecedents) in non-philosophical discourse. Significantly, Philo is our primary source

---

70 Diogenes Laertius 1.21 (Hicks, LCL).
71 See n. 57 above and the discussion of Sextus Empiricus, *Math*. 7.35–37. Potamon and Sextus Empiricus' Stoic material both denote φαντασία as τὸ δι' οὗ. See also Sextus Empiricus, *Math*. 7.10, where we see that like Potamon, Stoics used τὸ ἐν ᾧ to denote place.
72 Tobin, *Creation of Man* 70, explains the similarities (and the important Stoic vs. Platonic differences) between the Potamon excerpt and Alcinous as arising from the likelihood Alcinous' *Epitome doctrinae platonicae* is a reworking of Arius Didymus' *On the Doctirnes of Plato* – Arius' work being more or less contemporary with Potamon's.

for identifying the explicit influence of Middle Platonism on Judaism and its religious tributaries, Christianity and Gnosticism. In addition to the works of Philo, we find prepositional formulae, especially those which denote the role(s) of a cosmic intermediary, in Jewish, early Christian and Gnostic writings.

2.4. The Anagogic Function of the Intermediate Principle

Alcinous' discussion of epistemology is important for our discussion in another way. We should recall from *Epit.* 4.1–2 that human reasoning (i.e., λόγος φυσικός) is distinguishable from the ἄληπτος and ἀτρεκὴς λόγος of God in that the human λόγος is capable of focusing on error as well as truth. Alcinous explains that human reasoning "has two aspects: one concerned with the objects of intellection (ὁ περὶ τὰ νοητά), the other with objects of sensation (ὁ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητά)." The aspect of human reasoning concerned with objects of intellection is "scientific reasoning" (ἐπιστημονικὸς λόγος) and due to its subject matter possesses stability and permanence. The aspect concerned with objects of sensation, namely "reason based on persuasion and opinion," also may be characterized by its subject matter; i.e., "it possesses a high degree of (mere) likelihood." (See *Epit.* 4.3.)

We may take as the philosophy's goal the overcoming of this bifurcation in human reasoning. Alcinous says at the outset of his handbook, "Philosophy is a striving for wisdom, or the freeing and turning around of the soul from the body, when we turn towards the intelligible (τὰ νοητά) and what truly is (τὰ κατ' ἀλήθειαν ὄντα)."[73] The reasoning that has as its object sensation has a bodily orientation (and limitation). Scientific reasoning has, on the other hand, a noetic orientation. The philosopher may have to be concerned with πρᾶξις, which is pursued through the body, but the ultimate concern should be scientific reasoning, or as Alcinous also calls it, contemplation (ἡ θεωρία).[74]

> Contemplation is the activity of the intellect when intelligizing the intelligibles (ἡ θεωρία ἐνέργεια τοῦ νοῦ νοοῦντος τὰ νοητά). … The soul

---

73 Alcinous, *Epit.* 1.1: φιλοσοφία ἐστὶν ὄρεξις σοφίας, ἢ λύσις καὶ περιαγωγὴ ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος, ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ ἡμῶν τρεπομένων καὶ τὰ κατ' ἀλήθειαν ὄντα.

74 In *Epit.* 4.4, Alcinous says science (ἐπιστήμη) relates to the objects of intellection (τὰ νοητά). Cf. *Epit.* 4.6 (see below).

engaged in contemplation of the divine (τὸ θεῖον) and the thoughts of the divine (τὰ νοήσεις τοῦ θείου) is said to be in a good state, and this state of the soul is called 'wisdom' (φρόνησις), which may be asserted to be no other than likeness to the divine (ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁμοίωσις). For this reason such a state would be a priority, valuable, most desirable and most proper to us, free of (external) hindrance, entirely within our power, and cause of the end in life which is set before us (*Epit.* 2.2).

In other words, scientific reasoning is the manner by which one achieves one's τέλος, namely likeness to the divine.[75]

Underlying the epistemological and ethical issues in this reasoning is the physical principle that enables it. In his discussion of Form, the second of the three physical ἀρχαί, we will remember that Alcinous laid out the significance of ἡ ἰδέα for all that relate to it.

Form is considered in relation to God, his thinking; in relation to us, the primary object of thought; in relation to Matter, measure; in relation to the sensible world, its paradigm; and in relation to itself, essence (*Epit.* 9.1).

Of these relationships, note the one which has to do with us (πρὸς ἡμᾶς). Our primary object of thought (νοητὸν πρῶτον) is Form. This corresponds directly with his statement in *Epit.* 4.6 that "Intellection is the activity of the intellect as it contemplates the primary objects of intellection" (νόησις δ' ἐστὶ νοῦ ἐνέργεια θεωροῦντος τὰ πρῶτα νοητά).[76] In other words, Form (or the Forms), the intermediate physical principle, is the entity which makes possible philosophy, linking the human mind with the ineffable divine mind.

In Alcinous' construal of contemplation, Form (or τὰ νοητά) has a rather static function – it is the object of human intellection. Plutarch presents a different perspective, one where a noetic agent has a more active role in philosophical contemplation. In the *Dialogue on Love* (*Amatorius*), a work modeled after Plato's *Symposium*, Plutarch discusses the god Eros.[77] Plutarch says we may compare Eros to the sun in that

---

75 For the ethical dimension of this claim see also *Epit.* 28.4. Physics and Ethics combine as well in Plutarch, *Sera* 550D.

76 See n. 74.

77 It may be that the essential difference between Alcinous' discussion and Plutarch's is the context. Alcinous is presenting his information in the form of a scholastic handbook, one for the most part devoid of mythic dimensions. Plutarch is reinterpreting the mythic character of Eros in the light of Platonic notions. Perhaps the mythic nature of Plutarch's approach breathes an activity into the intelligible that he would disavow in a more scientific discourse. Still

both bring illumination. However, this comparison breaks down quickly since the sun illumines sense-perceptible objects (τὰ αἰσθητά) and Eros illumines the intelligible (τὰ νοητά; see *Amat.* 764D, E). Under the influence of the sun

> …the soul is persuaded that beauty and value exist nowhere but here [sensible world], unless it secures divine, chaste Love (Ἔρος) to be its physician, its savior, its guide (ἰατρὸς καὶ σωτὴρ καὶ ἡγεμών). Love, who has come to it through the medium of bodily forms, is its divine conductor to the truth (ἀγωγὸς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν) from the realm of Hades here; Love conducts it to the Plain of Truth where Beauty (κάλλος), concentrated and pure and genuine, has her home. When we long to embrace and have intercourse with her [i.e., Beauty] after our separation, it is Love who graciously appears to lift us upward, like a mystic guide (μυσταγωγός) beside us at our initiation (*Amat.* 764F–65A).

As with Alcinous, one must take one's mind off the physical ("Hades") and put it on things above ("the Plain of Truth where Beauty lives"). However, beyond Alcinous' object of intellection, Plutarch provides an agent active (ἰατρὸς καὶ σωτὴρ καὶ ἡγεμών) as divine assistance for the contemplative. This is Eros, though mediated through bodily forms (διὰ σωμάτων ἀφικόμενος), is a guide away from such things to truth (ἀγωγὸς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν).[78] Eros facilitates the relationship (συγγίγνομαι) between the soul and the beautiful, or by extension, between human νοῦς and τὰ νοητά, in the same manner a mystagogue would guide an initiate into certain mysteries.[79]

Numenius directly ascribes this anagogic role is to his intermediate principle, the Second or Demiurgic God. We will recall that in frg. 18, Numenius presents this Second God (or Demiurge) as the helmsman for the cosmos, holding the material world in harmony by contemplating the First God as a helmsman steers his craft well by fixing upon the stars. In frg. 12 Numenius again uses naval imagery as he discusses the Demiurgic God who operates from a heavenly observation tower.[80]

---

there is the mediation that both basically own which is the focus of our survey here.

78 Cf. Alcinous' λόγος φυσικός which must be turned away from error to truth.

79 Dillon, *Middle Platonists* 200–201, discusses this passage from *Amat.* He suggests that we consider Eros, in its comparison with the sun, to be both the Good of the *Resp.* 6 and a guide to the intelligible. "Eros is thus the Middle Platonic Logos in its anagogic aspect, presiding over the noetic cosmos, the realm of Ideas, but also exerting its influence upon our souls to lead us up to that realm" (ibid., 201).

80 The imagery appears to be inspired by Plato, *Pol.* 272E.

…the First God (ὁ πρῶτος θεός) is inactive in respect of all works, and is King, while the demiurgic God (ὁ δημιουργιὸς θεός) 'takes command in his progress through heaven.'[81] And it is through him that our journey takes place also (διὰ τούτου καὶ ὁ στόλος ἡμῖν ἐστί), when νοῦς is sent down through the spheres to all those who are ready to participate in it (πᾶσι τοῖς κοινωνῆσαι συντεταγμένοις). When the God looks and directs himself towards each one of us (βλέποντος καὶ ἐπεστραμμένου πρὸς ἡμῶν ἕκαστον), it then comes about that bodies live and flourish, since the God fosters them with his rays; but when the God turns back into his observation tower (περιωπή), these things are extinguished, and νοῦς lives in enjoyment of a happy life (τὸν δὲ νοῦν ζῆν βίου ἐπαυρόμενον εὐδαίμονος).[82]

We cannot mistake here the involvement of the Demiurgic God in individual human lives. He "sees and directs himself toward each one of us'" causing our bodies to flourish like flowers receiving sunlight. But the opaque use of νοῦς suggests we have here something more than simple providential care by the Second God.[83] The Second God fosters a journey (διὰ τούτου ὁ στόλος ἡμῖν ἐστί) for humans ("us") by sending νοῦς down to those ready and willing to participate in it. It would appear that participation in νοῦς is of significant value since when the God is finished caring for bodily things and returns to his observation tower, they are extinguished (ταῦτα ἀποσβέννυσθαι). Νοῦς however (and those who participate in it?) continues on afterwards "reaping the fruits of a βίος εὐδαίμων."

Alcinous, Plutarch and Numenius, the three of which we may take as representative of Middle Platonists in general, make the case for a noetic reality that is available to the human soul for its benefit. In Plutarch and Numenius, this reality is an active agent that both participates in the intelligible realm itself and guides the soul to that place from the sense-perceptible sphere. All three philosophers suggest that humans avail themselves of this reality through a contemplative process. Furthermore, all three make room for the involvement of that reality in shaping and benefiting (temporarily) physical bodies while causing souls to flourish in a more lasting fashion.

---

81 Plato, *Phaedr.* 246e: "Now Zeus, the great commander in heaven, drives his winged chariot first in the procession, looking after everything and putting all things in order."

82 Numenius, frg. 12, translated by Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 370–71 (modified).

83 On the difficulty interpreting νοῦς see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 371.

2.5. Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter we have focused on how Middle Platonists rehabilitated the physics of their Athenian master. Adhering to Plato's postulation of a transcendent principle but making adjustments in the light of his subsequent critics, his followers formulated a second, intermediary principle between the Monad and physical creation. While they construed this intermediary principle differently (from the thoughts in God's mind to a separate, divine entity), the Middle Platonists were consistent in affirming its two primary qualities: it shared in the Monad's transcendent, noetic character while mediating that character to the material creation.

Furthermore, the Middle Platonists articulated these qualities in a couple of noteworthy ways. One is the common motif of the intermediate principle as a copy, a paradigm of the First Principle. In this capacity, the intermediate principle served as divine εἰκών or *exemplar* for the material world, which was thus a copy of a copy. Additionally, a number of Middle Platonists used prepositional phrases as another way to denote the different roles of the three principles. This metaphysics of prepositions functioned as philosophical shorthand to reinforce the distinctiveness of Middle Platonic doctrine over against Peripateticism and Stoicism. These ways of describing the intermediary principle were very effective, as they became a major means by which the doctrine spread into popular religious discourse.

Finally, as concerned as they were about protecting the transcendence of the Supreme Principle, Middle Platonists were also concerned about humanity achieving its τέλος. While the evidence is less abundant, it appears once again the intermediate principle plays the indispensable role. Whether it is as the object of contemplation or as an active anagogue, the intermediary fosters the liberation of the rational soul from the body and its return to its transcendent source.

In the chapters to come, we shall see how Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writers appropriated this conceptual framework built by the Middle Platonists in their own efforts to bridge the gap between transcendent being and material universe.

Chapter Three

Salvation as the Fulfillment of Creation: The Roles of the Divine Intermediary in Hellenistic Judaism

Also in Alexandria, although a century before the Platonic revival, a Jewish author named Aristobulus wrote about the significance of his ancestral religion for the formation of Greek philosophy. According to him, not only had Plato and Pythagoras read the Jewish Law, but Plato had "followed it," and Pythagoras, "having borrowed many of the things in our traditions, found room for them in his own doctrinal system."[1] Aside from his zeal, what is intriguing about Aristobulus' claim is that he sees the Law and philosophy as compatible. One might wonder, given this perspective, how Aristobulus himself read the Law.

What we find among the remnant of his writings, most notably preserved by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio evangelica*, is that Aristobulus reflects a philosopher's sensitivity in his approach to Scripture. So, in one fragment, Aristobulus explains that language that appears to describe God in anthropomorphic terms actually has a more "natural" sense, that is, a non-literal meaning that conforms to the standards of those with "keen intellectual powers."[2] This sensitivity, however, allows Aristobulus to do more than simply defend his religion from its more cultured despisers. In a number of places, we see Aristobulus form bridges between the biblical and philosophical worldviews, a feat particularly evident in his reading of the Genesis cosmogony.

> For it is necessary to understand the divine 'voice' (ἡ θεία φωνή) not in the sense of spoken language but in the sense of creative acts (οὐ ῥητὸν λόγον, ἀλλ᾽ ἔργων κατασκευάς), just as Moses in our lawcode has said that the

---

1 Aristobulus, frg. 3 (*Praep. ev.* 13.12.1). Translations of Aristobulus are from Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors: Volume III Aristobulus* (SBLTT 19; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995). In addition to Holladay's translation, notes and analysis of secondary literature, see A. Yarbro Collins, "Aristobulus: A New Translation and Introduction" in *OTP* 2: 831–42.

2 Aristobulus, frg. 2 (*Praep. ev.* 8.10.2–5).

entire beginning of the world was accomplished through God's words (καθὼς καὶ διὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἡμῖν ὅλην τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ κόσμου θεοῦ λόγους εἴρηκεν ὁ Μωσῆς).[3] For invariably he says in each instance, "and God spoke, and it came to be" (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, καὶ ἐγένετο).[4] Now since Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato investigated everything thoroughly, they seem to me to have followed him in saying that they hear God's voice (φωνὴ θεοῦ) by reflecting on the cosmic order as something carefully created by God and permanently held together by him (τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν ὅλων συνθεωροῦντες ἀκριβῶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ γεγονυῖαν καὶ συνεχομένην ἀδιαλείπτως).[5]

Aristoblus here understands the common refrain in Genesis ("And God spoke, and it came to be") as referring not to a literal speech act (note the anti-anthropomorphism) but as the metaphysical framing principles (ἔργων κατασκευάς, θεοῦ λόγοι) that brought the world into being and continue to hold it together.

Much can be said about Aristobulus' approach to interpretation. We should note for our purposes that while his reading does not suggest a specific intermediary, it does hint at a potential for a third thing (things really, i.e., θεοῦ λόγοι) between God and earth that does the work of cosmology. What is more, Aristobulus sees this cosmological force as beneficial to human enlightenment.

For [the Mosaic Law] signifies that "in six days he made both the heaven, the earth, and everything in them," that he might show the times and proclaim the order by which one thing precedes another. For, once he arranged all things, he thus holds them together and presides over their movements. Our law code has clearly shown us that the seventh day is an inherent law of nature that serves as a symbol of the sevenfold principle (ἕβδομος λόγος) established (καθίστημι) all around us through which we have knowledge of things both human and divine (ἐν ᾧ γνῶσιν ἔχομεν ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ θείων πραγμάτων).[6]

Note how Aristobulus, in addition to interpreting the "seventh day" of Genesis 2:2 as a symbol of the cosmic ordering principle (λόγος, in the singular), designates that principle as the means for human knowledge (γνῶσις) of "things both human and divine."[7] Previously, he made a

---

3   See Holladay, *Aristobulus*, 218. Collins translates this line: "Just so Moses called the whole genesis of the world words of God in our Law" (*OTP*, 840).

4   Cf. Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29.

5   Aristobulus, frg. 3 (*Praep. ev.* 13.12.3–4).

6   Aristobulus, frg. 5 (*Praep. ev.* 13.12.12).

7   See Holladay, *Aristobulus*, 230–31.

similar claim, though here he understood the seventh day as referring to wisdom (σοφία).

> Following on this is the fact that God, who made and furnished the whole universe, also gave us as a day of rest – because of the toilsome life everyone has – the seventh day, but which in a deeper sense, might also be called first, that is, the beginning of light through which all things are seen together. And the same thing could be applied metaphorically to wisdom (σοφία) as well, for all light issues from it. And some members of the Peripatetic school have said that it occupies the position of a lamp; for by following it continually, they will remain imperturbable their entire life. But Solomon, one of our ancestors, said more clearly and more eloquently that it was there before heaven and earth. And this is actually in harmony with what was said above.[8]

Aristobulus' use of λόγος and σοφία (apparently in a somewhat interchangeable fashion) anticipates figures that loom large in later religious thought. While his conception of these entities is not as elaborate as what will come, it provides evidence in second century BCE Alexandria of the melding of Jewish and philosophical world-views. The catalyst for this melding appears to have been philosophical interpretation of Scripture, though it is not clear toward which if any particular philosophy Aristobulus gravitated. He cites Plato, Pythagoras, and the Peripatetics explicitly and his use of Stoic cosmological principles is barely implicit.[9] Perhaps we have in Aristobulus not just an early representative of a philosophically minded Jewish exegete, but of a faithful Jew in search of a suitable philosophy for his exegesis. We turn now to Pseudo-Solomon and Philo of Alexandria, two writers who seem to have benefited from Aristobulus' efforts and who may have found in Middle Platonism what he was looking for.

3.1. Wisdom of Solomon

3.1.1. Introduction

Pseudo-Solomon expressed the Hellenistic *Geist* well when he penned "Wisdom of Solomon." This treatise, written around the turn of the era in a diaspora setting, is in many ways a faithful descendent of the biblical wisdom tradition. But to carry the sapiential standard forward, Pseudo-

---

8   Aristobulus, frg. 5 (*Praep. ev.* 13.12.10–11a).
9   Holladay, *Aristobulus*, 74.

Solomon turns to Hellenistic culture (not against it, like his Palestinian counterpart Ben Sira).[10] It is at present well understood that Pseudo-Solomon heavily appropriates the philosophy, religion, and culture of his Hellenistic milieu. But his is neither a pure eclecticism nor a haphazard dressing up of Jewish traditions. Arguably, underlying the author's notion of σοφία is a thought-out (though not erudite) Middle Platonic framework.[11] This is important because the author's notion of Sophia itself undergirds the whole of his treatise.

As we have seen, Israelite and Jewish sapiential traditions emphasize personified Wisdom's presence at Creation in order to explain her value for humanity in the present. What makes Middle Platonism such an interesting influence for Pseudo-Solomon is that it too does not limit itself with cosmology. Middle Platonism shows a concern about the progress of the soul from the sense-perceptible world to the intellectual realm of the transcendent One, a process referred to as ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ. As Tobin notes, such a process "places the philosophical thought of the Middle Platonists in a highly religious context."[12] The process is accomplished through philosophical reflection, an endeavor made possible through an awareness of and involvement with the intermediary between the sense perceptible world and the One.

A Jewish author would likely resonate with this effort both to affirm the transcendence of the deity and the effort to comprehend how humanity relates to this deity. In addition, such an author would have an

---

10 Cf. James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 117: "Ben Sira's purpose seems to have been to convince his audience, presumably Jewish, that true wisdom was not to be sought in the books and teaching of the Greeks but in the writings and instruction of the Jewish tradition."

11 David Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 3, 33–34, and John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 200–201, are among those who place Wisdom of Solomon in the milieu of Middle Platonism. In an early work ("Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic in the Hellenistic age," *HR* 17 (1977): 121–142) Collins argued for the "eclecticism" of Wisdom of Solomon's appropriation of Hellenistic Philosophy. The differences that he marked between Stoicism and Wisdom, however, were in large measure the differences between Middle Platonism (also at times accused of eclecticism) and Stoicism. Without altering the details of his argument and his analysis (about which see below), in his later analysis Collins presents Wisdom as a Middle Platonic (inspired) author.

12 Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 19.

intermediary ready to hand, namely personified Wisdom. Proverbs 8 even emphasizes that before anything else was created, God brought forth חכמה, "wisdom." And in Proverbs 3:19–20 (cf. Ps 104:23), Wisdom appears to have a role in the creation of the cosmos. Like the Middle Platonic intermediary principle, Wisdom's cosmological status also affords her an important role in the fostering of human relationship with God. Pseudo-Solomon appears to do precisely this, to reconfigure the longstanding sapiential traditon by means of Middle Platonic philosophy.

Although Sophia is important to the whole of Wisdom of Solomon, Pseudo-Solomon deals with her explicitly and at length only in Wis 6:22–10:21.[13] We will focus primarily on these chapters in our study as they represent a complete unit within the treatise and are the center of the work. Their immediate context is set up early in Wis 6, when Pseudo-Solomon urges his audience (6:1: "kings", "judges of the earth") to pursue Wisdom and thereby escape judgment:

> To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed,
> > so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress.
> For they will be made holy who observe holy things in
> > holiness,
> > and those who have been taught them will find a defense.
> Therefore set your desire on my words;
> > long for them, and you will be instructed (6:9–11).

He tells them that Wisdom is easy to find for her radiance (v. 12), that she makes herself available to those who desire her (v. 13–15), that she in fact seeks out those worthy of her and "appears" in their "paths" and even in their "thoughts" (v. 16). To enter into relationship with Wisdom is to begin a process with the *choicest* of consequences:

> For her beginning is the most sincere desire for instruction,
> > and concern for instruction is love of her,
> > and love of her is the keeping of her laws,

---

13 Outlining Wisdom of Solomon is somewhat difficult. I follow the majority who see chapters 6:22–9:18 as a self-contained unit. I add to this ch. 10 since it too considers Sophia's role explicitly. After Wis 10, Sophia recedes to the background (as in chs 1–5). Ch. 6:1–21 is transitional, setting up 6:22ff. Wisdom of Solomon 6:22 makes an appropriate starting point because the author tells us from this point on he is explaining what Wisdom is and how she came to be.

> and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality,
> and immortality brings one near to God;
> so that desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom (17–20).[14]

So in his espousal of Wisdom, Pseudo-Solomon commences to explain her character and activities. He tells his audience that he will trace Wisdom's course out from the beginning of her creation, boldly communicating all her specifics. He has nothing to gain from keeping such information to himself; beyond the fact that to do so is untruthful and a sign of "sickly envy", he recognizes "the multitude of the wise is the salvation of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of any people" (v. 24). What follows in Wis 7–10 is at once an "autobiographical" account of how Pseudo-Solomon received Wisdom as well as an inspired description of her different attributes.

These chapters contain a number of distinct rhetorical moves. However, there is no reason to question their integrity as a literary unit. They were penned by the same author who will at times speak "autobiographically," in praise of Wisdom, in prayer, and even by recounting *Heilsgeschichte*.

3.1.2. Sophia as Cosmological Agent in Wisdom of Solomon 6–10

To understand the cosmological perspective in Wis 6–10 we should first attend to the cosmological view in chs. 1–5 and 11–19. We may point out three important aspects of the Cosmos from these chapters. First, the Cosmos is a creation of God: "For he (God) created all things that they might exist (ἔκτισεν γὰρ εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα)" (Wis 1:14a). His creative activity can be assigned to a personification: "your all-powerful hand (ἡ παντοδύναμός σου χείρ) … created the world (κόσμος) out of formless matter" (Wis 11:17).[15]

The second aspect is that creation is a positive event and that the cosmos continues to exist as an orderly entity. This is evidenced in the lines which immediately follow our quote above from Wis 1:14: "God

---

14 NRSV, modified.
15 The all-powerful (cf. Wis 7:23) hand by which God created all things also had the power to raise up all sorts of beasts (similar to the kinds the Egyptians worshipped) in order to attack them. But this is not in keeping with measured force God is wont to use (Wis 11:20).

created all things … the generative forces (αἱ γενέσεις) of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth" (v. 14b–c). In fact, God has a high regard for his creation. "For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it" (11:24). The creation even points to God, though the Egyptians were unable to grasp this because of their unrighteousness. "They were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works" (13:1).

Third, from beginning to eschatological end, the cosmos operates on behalf of God in his blessing the righteous and in his judgment of the wicked. Pseudo-Solomon tells us (in 1:7–8): "Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the world and that which holds all things together knows what is said, therefore those who utter unrighteous things will not escape notice and justice, when it punishes, will not pass them by." Or again: "The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies … creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes" (5:17, 20).[16] While the Israelites were blessed with provisions in the wilderness, the Egyptians,

> refusing to know you,
>> were flogged by the strength of your arm,
>> pursued by unusual rains and hail and relentless storms,
>> and utterly consumed by fire.
> For – most incredible of all – in water, which quenches all
>> things,
>> the fire had still greater effect,
>> for the universe (ὁ κόσμος) defends the righteous (16:16–17).

Creation (ἡ κτίσις), discerning the wicked from the righteous, "exerts itself to punish" the former and "in kindness relaxes" on behalf of the latter (v. 24).

---

16 Wis 5:21–23 clarify how creation participates in judgment: "Shafts of lightning will fly with true aim, and will leap from the clouds to the target, as from a well-drawn bow, and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; and the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them; a mighty wind will rise against them, and like a tempest it will winnow them away. Lawlessness will lay waste the whole earth, and evildoing will overturn the thrones of rulers."

Sophia herself does not hold a prominent place in cosmological activity outside of chapters 6–10. Her role in the cosmos is mentioned at the beginning of the book in 1:6–7, which refers to her as "a kindly spirit" (φιλάνθρωπον γὰρ πνεῦμα σοφία). Although as such she does not bring mercy to the guilty, but rather lays bare their blasphemy: "the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things (τὰ πάντα) together knows what is said, … ."[17] If we take the divine λόγος mentioned in Wis 18 as synonymous with Sophia (cf. 9:1–2), we see our intermediary carrying out judgment in a fashion similar to creation in 16:17, 24:

> For while gentle silence enveloped all things (τὰ πάντα),
>   and night in its swift course was now half gone,
> your all-powerful word (ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος)[18] leaped
>   from heaven,
>   from the royal throne,
>   into the midst of the land that was doomed,
> a stern warrior
> carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command,
>   and stood and filled all things with death,
>   and touched heaven while standing on the earth (18:14–16).

The divine logos straddles heaven and earth and works judgment that fills τὰ πάντα.

Were we to limit ourselves to all but Wis 6:22–10:21, Sophia would be at best a minor player in the Wisdom of Solomon. But in these central chapters, she has the prominent place. Examining the cosmological language in these chapters, we surmise three categories that will help us better understand Sophia's function.[19] The first is *Ontology*, by which we mean Pseudo-Solomon's description of what Sophia is and of her relationship to the deity and to the cosmos. The second is *Cosmogony*, by which we mean the description of Sophia's role in the

---

17 Wis 1:7 in Greek reads: πνεῦμα κυρίου πεπλήρωκεν τὴν οἰκουμένην, καὶ τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα γνῶσιν ἔχει φωνῆς.

18 Cf. 7:23 where Sophia is said to have in her a spirit that is παντοδύναμος and 11:17 where the term describes God's hand.

19 By cosmological language, we mean descriptions of Sophia's involvement in creation or explanations for that involvement. Such descriptions may be in the form of a word or phrase or may be complete sentences. See chapter two for the rationale behind this systematic treatment of Wis.

origination of the cosmos. The third is *Administration* (Grk: *Dioikēsis*), the description of Sophia's role in maintaining the cosmic order.

3.1.2.1. Sophia's Ontology

Pseudo-Solomon reserves his best rhetorical flourishes for describing Sophia's ontology (τί ἐστιν σοφία καί πῶς ἐγένετο; – Wis 6:22). What may very well be the structural and theological center of the whole treatise, namely Wis 7:22b–8:1, gives evidence to this. The first part of this section contains a list of 21 characteristics that describe the πνεῦμα which is in Sophia. According to 7:22–23, that spirit is:

> intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure and altogether subtle.[20]

The number of epithets (21=7X3) suggests Sophia's "absolute perfection."[21] There are a number of instances in antiquity where a deity or similar cosmic figure is ascribed such a list, whether 21 or more. Many of these terms can be found in descriptions of gods and goddesses, including Isis, and especially in various philosophical writings (including descriptions of the *Logos*, *Nous*, or other world-pervading entities).[22] It is not as necessary to focus on the individual terms as on the general picture they present of Sophia (since it seems unlikely the author was aiming for metaphysical accuracy as much as an artistic sketch of Sophia's spirit). The picture that comes through is that Sophia is both completely uninfluenced by the physical world (e.g., intelligent, holy, unique, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, steadfast, sure) and yet the world is completely at her disposal (manifold, mobile, keen,

---

20 In Greek, these characteristics are: νοερόν, ἅγιον, μονογενές, πολυμερές, λεπτόν, εὐκίνητον, τρανόν, ἀμόλυντον, σαφές, ἀπήμαντον, φιλάγαθον, ὀξύ, ἀκώλυτον, εὐεργετικόν, φιλάνθρωπον, βέβαιον, ἀσφαλές, ἀμέριμνον, παντοδύναμον, πανεπίσκοπον, καὶ διὰ πάντων χωροῦν πνευμάτων νοερῶν καθαρῶν λεπτοτάτων.

21 A. Wright, "Wisdom," *NJBC* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 516.

22 See Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 178–182. For the philosophical language of Wis 7:22–27 see also Hans Hübner, "Die Sapientia Salomonis und die antike Philosophie," in *Die Weisheit Salomos Im Horizont Biblischer Theologie* (H. Hübner, ed.; Biblisch-Theologische Studien 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993), 55–81.

humane, all-powerful, overseeing all). Although herself unique, there is nothing she does not permeate, including the most rarefied spirits.

In Wis 7:24, Pseudo-Solomon emphasizes a couple of these attributes above the others, attributes which highlight Sophia's proximity to the cosmos: "For Wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things." This theme reoccurs in v. 27: "although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things." Sophia is everywhere and is her own being at the same time. This is very similar to Stoic thinking which assigned such capacities to the divine πνεῦμα or λόγος.[23]

In the next two verses, the author explains how Sophia came by these attributes. They are hers by virtue of her relationship to God. Wisdom of Solomon 7:25–26 says of Sophia:

> ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστιν τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως
> > καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής·
> > διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲν μεμιαμμένον εἰς αὐτὴν παρεμπίπτει.
> ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστιν φωτὸς ἀιδίου
> > καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνεργείας
> > καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ.

> For she is a breath of the power of God,
> > and a pure emanation of the glory of the almighty;
> > therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.
> For she is a reflection of eternal light,
> > a spotless mirror of the working of God,
> > and an image of his goodness.

With terms such as breath, emanation, reflection, mirror and image the author defines Sophia's relationship to God. These terms are more than what we expect if we are looking for affirmation that Sophia is simply a personification of a divine attribute. In this mixture of passive and active

---

23 See SVF 2.416; 2.1021; 2.1033; D.L. 7.139 and see Winston, *Wisdom* 182–183, for further references related to Wis 7:24. See also Philo, *Gig.* 27 (referring to a spirit not unlike the one Sophia is said to have here) and also *Conf.* 136–138 (referring to God).

qualifiers, it is clear that Sophia does more than simply reflect God; she is an effluence and an effulgence from him.[24]

The author at one and the same time uses bold language to characterize the relationship between Sophia and the deity and yet speaks of that deity through circumlocutions. Notice that it is not a breath of God but the *power* of God, not an emanation of the Almighty but the *glory* of the Almighty. Similarly, "eternal light," "the working of God" and "his goodness" are all indirect references to the Deity.[25] It may just be poetic embellishment or it may be an effort, in the midst of a cosmically immanent Sophia, to preserve the transcendence of God. Notice that in vv. 24 and 27, Sophia pervades, penetrates, renews τὰ πάντα (i.e., the physical world) while at the same time remaining mobile, pure, one and within herself. In between these references to Sophia/τὰ πάντα, in vv. 25–26, our author maintains that Sophia is an emanation and reflection of the deity while at the same time protecting the deity's essence (at least rhetorically, through circumlocutions). Pseudo-Solomon keeps the physical world at arm's length from the deity, with the figure of Sophia very much in the middle.[26] Hence, we are not dealing with a simple transference of language ascribed to the Stoic πνεῦμα/λόγος/νοῦς. Stoicism, even the Middle Stoa that wanted to emphasize God as distinct from creation, would not be as protective

---

24 Cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 199: "the language of this passage vacillates between dynamic (effluence, *apporroia*) and passive (mirror) images." Cf. also C. Larcher, *Le livre de la sagesse, ou, La sagesse de Salomon* (3 vols.; *Ebib* 1, 3, 5; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1983–85), 2:498, discussing only the term ἀτμίς: "Quelle que soit l'interprétation adoptée, l'auteur a voulu à la fois affirmer une dépendance très étroite, 'substantielle', entre la Sagesse et la Puissance et évoquer une réalité infiniment pure ou éthérée. Il ne nous semble pas mettre l'accent sur l'activité terrestre de la Sagesse …ou avoir pensé à un effluve quelconque se détaachant de sa substance pour mener une existence indépendante at agir à titre d'intermédiaire sur le plan créé. La Sagesse demeure en relation immediate avec la Puissance de Dieu envisagée dans sa source. Ajoutons, au sujet de la traduction elle-même, que la fonction attributive de *atmis* légitime l'emploi de l'article défini."

25 See Hübner, "Sapientia Salomonis" 69–70. We will notice in chapter four how Col 1:15–20 and Heb 1:2–3 also employ circumlocutions to reference God; this is particularly interesting since these two NT passages are most evidently indebted to Hellenistic Sapientialism of the kind in Wis.

26 With respect to the negative aspect of the physical world, consider the well known statement in Wis 9:15: "a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind." See below.

of the divine nature as this.[27] In fact, the emphasis on the transcendence of the deity and the presence of an intermediary is Middle Platonic in shape.[28]

The descriptors of wisdom in Wis 7:25–26 appear weighted toward luminescence ("l'irradiation" – Larcher) as the mode that best explains Sophia's relationship to the deity. Collins reminds us that "Plato used the analogy of light and the sun to explain the relationship between the good as present in the world and the Idea of the Good."[29] Plato's analogy may even be at play in Pseudo-Solomon's praise of Wisdom in vv. 29–30:

> She is more beautiful than the sun,
> and excels every constellation of the stars.
> Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
> for it is succeeded by the night,
> but against wisdom evil does not prevail.[30]

In addition to illumination, our author presents the relationship between God and Sophia in anthropomorphic terms. For instance, in a couple of passages, he presents God as a master teacher and Sophia his apt student. In Wis 7:15, Pseudo-Solomon asks God to grant him just speech and worthy thoughts for "for he is the guide (ὁδηγός) even of

---

27 See Winston, *Wisdom* 185, who cites E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1963). Winston says that "in describing Wisdom's unique capacity for a cosmic efficacy which is self-abiding," Pseudo-Solomon foreshadows Neoplatonism and its notion "that within the so-called process of emanation, in giving rise to the effect, the cause remains undiminished and unaltered." Dodd suggests that this concept "seems to be a product of the Middle Stoa, and to have originated in the attempt to give God a real place in the Stoic system over against the cosmos." (See Winston for citation of primary sources.) Cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 200–201; and consider in particular p. 200: In a "cosmic analogy, Wisdom is the mind or spirit of the universe. In effect, Wisdom embodies the Stoic concept of the Pneuma or Logos, but subordinates it to a transcendent God, who is affirmed as its source."

28 See Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 15, and Collins, *Jewish Wisdom* 201. See Winston, *Wisdom*, 185, for Philo's concept of emanation (though Philo does not explicitly use the language of emanation to describe the Logos' relationship to the Deity [ibid., 184]).

29 Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 200. See Plato, *Resp.* 508.

30 Philo holds the sun is only an image of Wisdom (*Migr.* 40), and Aristobulus, speaking of σοφία, says τὸ γὰρ πᾶν φῶς ἐστιν ἐξ αὐτῆς ("for all light comes from her," frg. 5 [*Praep. ev.* 13.12.10]).

wisdom and the corrector of the wise."[31] In Wis 8:3–4, Pseudo-Solomon tells us that:

> She glorifies her noble birth (εὐγένεια) by living with God,
>   and the Lord of all loves her.
> For she is an initiate (μύστις) in the knowledge of God,
>   and an associate (αἱρετίς) in his works .

These lines are similar to Proverbs 8:22–31, which may be an influence here.[32] In Prov 8:22 we read that Yahweh begot (קנה; LXX: κτίζω) Wisdom before anything else and in v. 25 Wisdom says "I was brought forth" (חוללתי; LXX: γεννᾷ με). Then in v. 30 Wisdom tells us she was an אמון (LXX: ἁρμόζουσα),[33] delightful to God and delighting in God's creatures (v. 31).[34] Whether intentionally or not, Proverbs and Wisdom of Solomon bring together wisdom's daughter (like) status to God, their mutual affection, and her subsequent involvement in his works.[35] In Wisdom, μύστις and αἱρετίς take the place of אמון/ἁρμόζουσα in describing Sophia's role vis-à-vis God. To speak of wisdom as a μύστις, "initiate", in the knowledge of God, expresses what we have already witnessed in the biblical and Palestinian wisdom traditions, namely that

---

31 Contrast P. Oxy. 1380, 122, where it is said of Isis: ἐπίτροπον καὶ ὁδηγὸν θαλασ<σ>ίων καὶ ποταμίων στομάτων κυρίαν ("guardian and guide, lady of the mouths of seas and rivers"; translation from *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* [vol. 11; B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, eds. and trans.; London: Oxford University Press, 1915], 202). This citation (referenced by Winston, *Wisdom*, 173) illustrates a difference between Sophia and Isis. It is out of place in the invocation of many-named Isis to speak of her as having a guide; however, Sophia's utility for humanity is predicated on her dependence on God.

32 Clifford, *Proverbs* 98.

33 ἁρμόζουσα may be translated "in harmony with, suitable to; arranger, joiner" according to Clifford, *Proverbs* 99. See LSJ, 243.

34 Prov 8:30–31 (LXX): καθ᾿ ἡμέραν δὲ εὐφραινόμην ἐν προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ, ὅτε εὐφραίνετο τὴν οἰκουμένην συντελέσας καὶ ἐνευφραίνετο ἐν υἱοῖς ἀνθρώπων.

35 Winston, *Wisdom* 194, discussing συμβίωσις (NRSV: "living with"; Winston: "intimacy") provides a striking Hellenistic parallel from Aelius Aristides. "In his second oration addressed to Athena (his name for personified Sophia), [he] speaks of her as begotten of God the Father in the beginning, 'the Only One of the Only One,' and as 'always cleaving to his side and sharing his life.'" (Winston takes his quote from E. Bevan, *Later Greek Religion* [London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927], 157.)

wisdom was privy to God's cosmogonical/cosmological workings.[36] But αἱρετίς goes further: Sophia is not just a spectator, she is one who "chooses" God's works (τῶν ἐργῶν αὐτοῦ).[37] Winston considers this a substantial claim on Sophia's behalf. "Our author is saying in effect that Wisdom is essentially synonymous with the Divine Mind, and thus represents the creative agent of the Deity."[38] We will consider 8:4 further when discuss Sophia as cosmogonic agent below, but suffice it to say the author continues to find ways to communicate both Sophia's divine efficacy while showing her as subject to the transcendent θεός.

Finally, in Wis 9 Solomon asks God to send him the help necessary to fulfill the tasks God has given him, namely to rule God's people and to build the earthly copy of the heavenly temple (vv. 7–8). He asks: "give me σοφία who sits by your throne" (v. 4, my translation). He elaborates on her heavenly location and why it makes her desirable to him in vv. 9–12.

> With you is σοφία, she who knows your works
>   and was present when you made the world;
> she understands what is pleasing in your sight
>   and what is right according to your commandments.
> Send her forth from the holy heavens,
>   and from the throne of your glory send her,
> that she may labor at my side,
>   and that I may learn what is pleasing to you.

---

36 The term μύστις is rather rare (Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:523). That one needs "initiation" into such knowledge, see Philo, *Sacr.* 60: "It is well that these three measures should be as it were kneaded and blended in the soul, that she, convinced that God who is above all exists – God who overtops His potencies in that He is visible apart from them and yet is revealed in them – may receive the impression of His sovereignty and beneficence. Thus too, being admitted into the inmost mysteries (μύστις γενομένη), she will learn not to blab or babble them thoughtlessly, but to store them up and guard them in secrecy and silence. For it is written 'make buried cakes,' because the sacred story that unveils to us the truth of the Uncreated and His potencies must be buried, since the knowledge of divine rites is a trust which not every comer can guard aright" (PLCL).

37 Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:519, translates Wis 8:4 thus: "c'est elle qui décide de ses oeuvres." He notes (p. 524): "C'est pourquoi elle a pu jouer un rôle déterminant en 'choisissant les oeuvres de Dieu'. … Son sens s'éclaire par les mot *hairetès, haireteos, hairetistès,* où l'idée de 'choix' est fondamentale."

38 Winston, *Wisdom*, 194. He adds "The similarity of this conception with Philo's Logos doctrine is unmistakable." On "la participation active de la Sagesse à la création et au gouvernement du monde" see Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 524.

> For she knows and understands all things,
>> and she will guide me wisely in my actions
>> and guard me with her glory.

This is a different approach to describing Sophia's nature, more mythological and discursive. The author does not tell what Wisdom is or what her functions are per se (cn. 7:22–27). The description of Wisdom as God's "throne-companion" is the most anthropomorphic picture Pseudo-Solomon uses for Sophia. In our "soteriological"/anthropological section we will focus on how Wisdom's relationship to God is reciprocated in her relationship to Solomon. She was at God's side, now she is to be at his. God was her guide, she is Solomon's. She will initiate him into the knowledge into which she has been initiated. Ontologically speaking, the prayer in chapter 9 mostly affirms what we have already read: a) Sophia's heavenly origin/status, b) her presence at creation and (perhaps) involvement in it (9:1–2; see below), and c) that she serves God and is not independent of him.[39]

3.1.2.2. Sophia's Cosmogonic Function

The fact that Sophia is described as a witness to God's creative actions in Wis 9:9 recalls the images of חכמה as attendant to Yahweh during his creative work. From our discussion of Sophia's nature above, it should be clear that her position vis-à-vis the deity is more than a spectator, even a μύστις. In Pseudo-Solomon's prayer in chapter 9 we may have in fact a claim for Sophia's instrumentality in creation. In Wis 9:1–2 we read:

> O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy,
>> who have made all things by your word,
> and by your wisdom have formed humankind
>> to have dominion over the creatures you have made.

The key phrases here are in vv. 1b and 2a: ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον. While v. 1b certainly

---

39 Wis 9 is curious because, in terms of its descriptions of Sophia, it is more congruent with the biblical and Judeo-Palestine Wisdom traditions than with chapters 6–8. The author may have chosen to be anachronistic here since he is putting forward his own version of Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 3:6–9, 2 Chr 1:8–10 (see Winston, *Wisdom* 200).

draws from Genesis 1 and God's creation by speech recorded there, the equivalence in vv. 1b–2a of λόγος and σοφία and the instrumental dative applied to both is suggestive.[40] We have already seen a number of parallels between how Wis describes Sophia and how Stoics and Middle Platonists describe the Logos and Pneuma, these also being cosmogonic agents. Furthermore, Philo uses the instrumental dative to describe the Logos' cosmogonic function (e.g., in *Sacr.* 8; see below). But by themselves, these two lines may be insufficient to prove Wisdom of Solomon posits an actual cosmogonic intermediacy on the part of Sophia.[41]

Fortunately, the author is quite explicit about such intermediacy elsewhere. In fact, we already mentioned one of those instances when

---

40 λόγος also appears in Wis 18:15 (also cited above). With respect to the instrumental dative see *Sprachlicher Schlüssel zur Sapientia Salomonis (Weisheit)* (Sprachlicher Schlüssel zu den Deuteronkanonischen Schriften [Apokryphen] des Alten Testaments; P. Artz and M. Ernst, eds.; Salzburg: Institut für Neutestamentaliche Bibelwissenschaft, 1995), 74; and for parallel references see D. Georgi, *Weisheit Salomos* (*JSHRZ* 3; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980), 434. For a grammatical discussion of the instrumental dative (of means) see Smyth §§ 1503–1511.

41 Winston, *Wisdom*, 38, notes that these two lines are "ambiguous" since "it is by no means clear that 'word' or 'wisdom' here refer to Logos-Sophia." See Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 565. Biblical passages similar to this are Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19; Jeremiah 10:12 – passages where we should not take wisdom as personified let alone as an independent agent. So it may be that in Wis 9:1–2, "word" and "wisdom" only serve to describe God's creative effort and do not refer to any kind of personification or hypostasization (Cf. Larcher, 566).

There is some basis in taking σοφία in Wis 9:2 as a reference to personified Sophia and not just a divine attribute. M. Kolarcik ("Creation and Salvation in the Book of Wisdom" in *Creation in the Biblical Traditions* [CBQMS 24; R. Clifford and J. Collins, eds.; Washington, D.C.; CBA, 1992], 102–103) draws attention to the fact that, structurally, σοφία encloses the prayer of Solomon in Wis 9 (vv. 1–2 and 18). In v. 18 as well as in v.10a (the structural center of the prayer) the referent is personified Sophia. Kolarcik relies upon M. Gilbert, "La Structure de la prière de Salomon (Sg 9)," *Bib* 51 (1970): 301–31. Kolarcik's analysis of 9:1–2 is worth repeating: "This opening verse of the prayer of Solomon duplicates the double notion of creation in Genesis 1; that is, the creation of the cosmos and of humanity. However, it would be incorrect to separate the creation of the cosmos from the creation of humanity within the author's presentation. They are presented together as a continuum, just as the Genesis 1 creation account exemplifies. There is no underlying idea present here of a creation of the cosmos that is separate from the creation of humanity" (102–103, n. 10).

discussing Wis 8:4 above. There, Wis refers to Sophia as αἱρετίς, a term that suggests she has an active role in the creation process. Here is the verse and the two that follow it.

> For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God,
>   and a chooser of his works.
> If riches are a desirable possession in life,
>   what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things?
> And if understanding is effective,
>   who more than she is fashioner of what exists? (8:4–6)[42]

The author enhances our understanding of Sophia as αἱρετίς τῶν ἐργῶν αὐτοῦ with the parallel phrases ἡ τὰ πάντα ἐργαζομένη ("active cause of all things")[43] and τεχνῖτις τῶν ὄντων ("the fashioner of all that is").[44]

τεχνῖτις appears again in Wis 7:22. There it comes at the end of a catalogue of the instruction God has given Pseudo-Solomon, which may be summed up as "unerring knowledge of what exists."[45] The scope of the catalog is intended to be comprehensive; Solomon has received a truly universal education. And while he ultimately attributes what he learned to God (vv. 15–16), the mediator of that knowledge is Sophia. He explains: "I learned both what is secret and what is manifest, for σοφία, the fashioner of all things (ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις), taught me."[46]

These verses in the aggregate make a claim that is familiar to us from Proverbs, Job, Sirach and Baruch. Wisdom is a very valuable presence in one's life because she has a commanding knowledge of everything that

---

42 NRSV, modified; I prefer Winston's "chooser of his works" over the NRSV's "associate in his works" in v. 4b. See the discussion of αἱρετίς above.

43 Winston translates "maker of all things" (*Wisdom* 191); Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:524: "elle qui opère tout." For a similar use of ἐργαζόμενος see Philo, *Sacr.* 8.

44 For a defense of this translation of the τεχνῖτις τῶν ὄντων, which is "une sorte de brachylogie," see Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 2:526. The term τεχνῖτις is the feminine form of τεχνίτης (LSJ: "artificer," "craftsman"). Larcher (*Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:466) translates the term "l'artisane" while Georgi (*Weisheit Salomos,* 427) translates it "Architektin" ("oder 'Bildnerin'").

45 Wis 7:17: τῶν ὄντων γνῶσιν ἀψευδῆ. See vv. 15–21 for the catalog of knowledge which includes information about the structure of the cosmos and the workings of the elements, the beginning, middle, end of times, astronomical occurrences, and the nature of animals, humans, and plant life.

46 What follows after this in Wisdom of Solomon is a description of Sophia's nature, which we addressed in the ontological section.

exists.[47] But Wisdom of Solomon differs from its sapiential forbearers in its specifying Sophia as the cosmological artificer.[48]

This picture of Sophia is rather interesting. Just like in Wis 7:15–22a, where our writer does not perceive a conflict in claiming that his knowledge comes from God and from Sophia alike, he does not have a problem throughout chapters 6–9 claiming that both God and Sophia are the creators of the cosmos. As we saw in Wis 9, God is ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα (9:1; cf. v. 9; 8:4).[49] The only thing that he does not appear to "make" is σοφία, though according to Wis 7:25–26 she clearly comes from him. But σοφία also is the fashioner, the chooser, the "active cause" of everything. How can these two things hold at the same time?

The best explanation is "God created the world by Wisdom." David Winston explains:

> Although his statement that "God made all things by his 'word' (*logō*), and through his 'wisdom' (*sophia*) formed man" (9:1–2) is in itself ambiguous, since it is by no means clear that 'word' and 'wisdom' here refer to Logos-Sophia, the matter is, I think settled by the descripion of Wisdom as "chooser of God's works" (8:4), which clearly implies that Wisdom is identical with the Divine Mind through which the Deity acts. In the light of this, the assertion that "with you is Wisdom who knows your works and was present when you created the world" (9:9) must signify that Wisdom contains the paradigmatic patterns of all things (cf. 9:8) and serves as the instrument of their creation.[50]

Winston says this while trying to make a larger point, namely that Sophia in Pseudo-Solomon's writings functions the same as Philo of Alexandria's Logos. When we examine the Philonic evidence, we will evaluate this claim. However, as Winston is aware, there lies behind

---

47 Notice that over against Sirach and Baruch, Wisdom of Solomon sides with Proverbs and Job in holding that Sophia's instruction is completely generic. Pseudo-Solomon does not make a claim that Sophia has special insight about Israelite religion or that she is a key to or equivalent with the Torah. Even when she helps Solomon in the building of the temple (Wis 9), it is by virtue of the fact that her residence is the throne of God in heaven; she knows the universal original of which the particular earthen temple is only a copy.

48 Recall our judgment about אמון in Prov 8:30. Pseudo-Solomon may be drawing from this verse, either directly or most likely through its LXX translation (where אמון = ἁρμόζουσα). Still, no other Jewish Wisdom writer we have dealt with is as explicit in describing wisdom's cosmogonical function.

49 Also recall the passages in Wis 1–5, 11–19 that affirm God as creator.

50 Winston, *Wisdom*, 38.

both Philo and Wisdom of Solomon an intellectual framework that permits both a transcendent cause and a more immediate cause, namely Middle Platonism.[51]

3.1.2.3. Sophia's Administration of the Cosmos

The final aspect of Sophia's cosmological functionality is her administration of the cosmos. For this analysis we return to a number of the texts we have already analyzed. First, Sophia's status as ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις in Wis 7:22a makes her an ideal teacher for Solomon. This is so not just because she was instrumental in the creation, but as the *Architektin/artisane* of all things, she understands how they function. So, we are not surprised when Solomon tells us the knowledge he has acquired emphasizes the machinations of the cosmos: the ἐνέργειαν στοιχείων, the τροπῶν ἀλλαγὰς καὶ μεταβολὰς καιρῶν, as well as the ἐνιαυτοῦ κύκλους καὶ ἄστρων θέσεις (7:18–20). This includes the microcosmic realm of animals, plants, and humans, too (v. 20). To be able to teach Solomon about all these things, Sophia must have understood their operation. She must have been able to grasp not only what the cosmos has done, but what it is doing and what it will do as well. The reason he can know "the beginning and end and middle of times" (7:18) is because she does as well.

> … she knows the things of old, and infers the things to come;
>   …
> she has foreknowledge of signs and wonders
>   and of the outcome of seasons and times (Wis 8:8).

While being the artificer of all things means she understands (perhaps even embodies) the schematics of the cosmos, we should recall also that, like the Stoic Logos/Pneuma, she is universally present. "For wisdom is more mobile than any motion, because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things" (7:24). Hers is a firsthand knowledge of the cosmos because she is present to every part of it.[52] Furthermore, her

---

51 Regarding Middle Platonism, see our discussion in chapter two. See Winston, *Wisdom*, 33–34 for his thesis about the Middle Platonic backdrop to Wisdom of Solomon. For Philo, see our discussion of him below.

52 Σοφία is present to even the most rarefied parts of the cosmos. Cf. 7:20 ("powers of spirits") with 7:23de ("she penetrates through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle").

presence has an effect on that which she pervades and penetrates. "Although she is but one, she can do everything, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things" (7:27).[53] The omnipotence of Sophia has already been mentioned (v. 23). τὰ πάντα καινίζει expresses her effect on the cosmos. In what way she "renews" everything is a bit obscure, though we should probably take it in the sense of a generative force keeping the cosmos progressing. Larcher explains it thus: "elle est la cause des renouvellements et des changements qui se produisent sans cesse dans l'univers et assurent la permanence de celui-ci."[54]

Sophia's ability to sustain the cosmos is more clearly expressed in Wis 8:1: "she reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well." There can be little doubt that our author is drawing from Hellenistic philosophy to describe Sophia's function-ality. To say that Sophia διατείνει εὐρώστως, "reaches mightily," the whole of creation[55] is explicitly to equate her again (as in vv. 22–23, 24, 27) with the Stoic *Pneuma*. Specifically, this concept expressed here draws from the Stoic doctrine of τονικὴ κίνησις, namely that "there is a continuous outward–inward pneumatic motion, either form the center of the cosmos to its extreme boundaries." The significance of this for the cosmos is that "the pneuma must be everywhere continuously since nothing can hold together without it."[56] The adverb εὐρώστως suggests that Sophia performs this function ably.[57] In Wis 8:1b (διοικεῖ τὰ πάντα χρηστῶς), we see that the cosmos depends not only upon Sophia's powerful presence but her intellect as well, since Pseudo-Solomon is

---

53 Wis 7:27 in Greek: μία δὲ οὖσα πάντα δύναται καὶ μένουσα ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ πάντα καινίζει. For a review of possible parallels to this passage, see Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:506–507. One should look more toward Greek philosophy (Plato, *Timaeus* 42E; Aristotle, *Physics* 256b25) to explain these concepts than the OT (Ps 102:25–27; Deut 6:4; Ps 104:30).

54 Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 2:506.

55 The NRSV translates ἀπὸ πέρατος ἐπὶ πέρας in 8:1 as "from one end of the earth to the other", supplying "earth." (Cf. Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:506: "du monde"). Winston (*Wisdom* 184) opts for the more general with "pole to pole" as does Georgi (*Weisheit Salomos*, 429) "von einem Ende zum anderen." (Cf. Colson, PLCL 6.333 [*Mos.* 1.112] and PLCL 5.155 [*Mut.* 22].)

56 Winston, *Wisdom*, 190. See also Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:514 and Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," 170–174, esp. 174. See *SVF* 2.33, 450–453, 480, 551, 826, 1021 for the Stoic attestation as well as Philo, *Conf.*136; *Plant.* 9; *Mig.* 181; *Deus* 35–36; *Mut.* 28; *Det.* 90. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 34B.

57 LSJ, s.v. εὔρωστος ("robust", "strong").

here describing Sophia as the cosmic administrator.[58] Cosmic gover-
nance is both a Platonic concept (Plato, *Phaedr.* 246C; *Leg.* 896D, 905E)
and a Stoic one (D.L. 7.133; *SVF* 1.87, 98; 2.528, 416, 912–913, 1063).
Philo uses διοικέω to refer to the Logos' administration of the cosmos
when he writes in *Mos.* 2.133 of one who "holds together and
administers all things" (τοῦ συνέχοντος καὶ διοικοῦντος τὰ σύμπαντα).
Furthermore, Philo's use of the term for God's cosmic governance in
Opif. 3 and *Conf.* 170 parallels Pseudo-Solomon's use in Wis 12:18 and
15:1:

---

58   The verb διοικέω may refer to managing a house, governing or administration.
     LSJ, s.v. διοικέω.

Wisdom 12:18 – Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness (ἐπιείκεια),
and with great forbearance (πολλὴ φειδώ) you govern (διοικέω) us.

Wisdom 15:1 – But you, our God, are kind and true, patient, (χρηστός, ἀληθής, μακρόθυμος)
and ruling all things in mercy (ἐλέει διοικῶν τὰ πάντα).

The qualifiers the author uses in these passages, such as mildness, forbearance, kindness, and mercy, suggest we translate the adverb χρηστῶς in 8:1b in a similar fashion.[59] If so, Sophia's powerful extension form pole to pole is balanced with her "merciful" rule.[60]

3.1.3. Sophia, Salvation and Anthropological Fulfillment

3.1.3.1. "She makes them friends of God"

Wisdom 6:22–10:21 is an exhortation for Pseudo-Solomon's audience to "get" Sophia (6:22–25). The authority for this exhortation comes from Pseudo-Solomon's own experience, his own acquisition of Sophia, which he details in two autobiographical sections (7:1–22a and 8:2–21).[61] The basic thesis of these two sections is that Sophia, the source of human prosperity and flourishing, comes only from God. The proverbial maxim "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10) finds expression in Wisdom of Solomon thus:

> I perceived that I would not possess wisdom unless God gave
>   her to me –
>   and it was a mark of insight to know whose gift she was –
> so I appealed to the Lord and implored him [to give me
>   wisdom] (Wis 8:21).

Pseudo-Solomon then proceeds to reenact the prayer with which he solicited God for wisdom (ch. 9).

---

59 See LSJ, s.v. χρηστός, where, in reference to the gods, the term relates qualities such as "propitious, merciful, bestowing health or wealth."

60 At play with these adjectives ("mightily," "well") in 8:1 is a continuation of the thought from 7:29–30. The adjectives add to the picture of Sophia's potency/beauty, she against whom neither darkness nor evil can prevail.

61 Wisdom 7:22b–8:1 is a separate entity since it is not about Solomon but describes Sophia's essence as well as what she does.

At the start of the first autobiographical section (7:1–6) as well as toward the end of his prayer (9:13–17), Pseudo-Solomon describes the human condition sans Sophia.[62] The two passages present a clear picture of human limitation, which is both physical ("mortal," "molded in flesh," the frailty of infancy, "perishable body," "earthly tent") and consequently intellectual ("we can hardly guess at what is on earth" let alone "trace out what is in the heavens"). In this we find a theme similar to that expressed by the ungodly in Wis 1:16–2:5.[63] But unlike the ungodly, who use their fatalism as a license for unrighteousness (e.g., 2:6–9), Pseudo-Solomon sees human limitation as the basis for turning to God, who will supply Sophia – the cure for this "mortal coil."[64]

It is for this reason Pseudo-Solomon uses soteriological language to characterize the manner in which Sophia assists humanity against its limitations. In 6:24, he tells his audience that he is not reluctant to share what he knows about Sophia since "The multitude of the wise is the salvation (σωτηρία) of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of any people." And he ends his prayer in ch. 9 by noting that when God has given Sophia, "thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved (σῴζω) by wisdom" (9:18).[65] Wis 10 follows Solomon's prayer with brief review

---

62 Wis 7:1–7 and 9:13–17 have similar themes and a very similar ending.

63 In Wis 1:16–2:5, the ungodly opine (2:1): "Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end." When their breath is extinguished, "the body will turn to ashes and the spirit will dissolve like empty air" (v. 3). Again: "For our allotted time is the passing of a shadow, and there is no return from our death, because it is sealed up and no one turns back" (v. 5).

64 Pseudo-Solomon's argument has weight because among mortals he had a most advantageous entrance (Wis 8:19-20: "As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body.").

It is worth noting that Pseudo-Solomon appears to espouse here the pre-existence of the soul. So Winston, *Wisdom*, 26 (see his detailed discussion, pp. 25–32). C. Larcher disagrees (*Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse* [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969], 270–279, and idem, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:556–557). He argues Pseudo-Solomon only holds to the priority of the soul over the body and that any pre-existence comes from the soul being created immediately before its being joined to the (embryonic) body. However we take this, it is significant that the author of Wis accepts as well a dualism where soul and physical body are somehow at odds. Wis 9:15, echoing Plato (*Phaedo* 66B), says the "perishable body weighs down the soul, the earthly tent burdens the mind." This dualism is not presented in moral terms (Pseudo-Solomon does not claim the body is evil).

65 Σῴζω appears here for the first time in Wisdom of Solomon. It occurs again four times: 10:4; 14:4; 16:7; and 18:5. σωτήριος occurs in 1:14 and σωτηρία in

of salvation history. The author recasts episodes from the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, and the people of Israel at the Exodus so that Sophia now has a prominent role in the salvation of each.[66] We will discuss this passage further in a little while, but first we must ask what "salvation" might mean for Solomon's audience.

Sophia certainly affords humanity, at least Solomon, with the ability to reason as well as with a storehouse of knowledge (7:15–21b; 8:8). But she does more than impart reason and knowledge. She also provides wealth and well-being:

> All good things came to me along with her,
>   and in her hands uncounted wealth.
> I rejoiced in them all, because wisdom leads them;
>   but I did not know that she was their mother (7:10–12).[67]

However, these benefits are ancillary to Sophia's true value.[68] The "unfailing treasure" she provides via her instruction is "friendship with God" (7:14). Along with cosmological administration, she also has this as her continuing task. For "in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets" since nothing is more pleasing to God than "the person who lives with wisdom" (7:27–28). "Friendship with God" is a commonplace in Judaism as well as among Hellenistic philosophers.[69] Part of being such a friend to God,

---

5:2, 6:24, 16:6. (Cf. διασώζω in 14.5 and 16:11) The noun σωτήρ occurs in 16:7. Only 6:24, 9:18 and 10:4 (and possibly 16:5) have to do with Sophia.

66 Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:605. In these events, Sophia "délivre, certes, des dangers temporels jusqu'à préserver l'humanité d'une extermination radicale (v. 4), mais son influence s'exerce également sur un plan spirituel." E.g., she delivers Adam from his transgression (10:1) and she preserves Abraham "blameless before God" (v. 5). In fact, except Adam, all those she helps in Wis 10 are described as righteous.

67 Wis 7:12: εὐφράνθην δὲ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἡγεῖται σοφία, ἠγνόουν δὲ αὐτὴν γενέτιν εἶναι τούτων.

68 As Wis 7:7–12 makes clear, Solomon (for the passage refers to 1 Kings 3) only desired wisdom. Even though he did not opt for material wealth and success, these came in addition to (even because of) his choice for wisdom.

69 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 188–189, for copious references.
    De Vita Moysis 1.156 is an interesting parallel in that Moses' status as prophet/ friend of God is mentioned with respect to his mastery of the elements. In the section just previous (155) we read that "God judged him worthy to appear as a partner of His own possessions" and so "gave into his hands the whole world as a portion well fitted for His heir." Philo is explaining Moses' ability to work

especially in philosophical circles, no doubt entails living the virtuous life. So, "if anyone loves righteousness, [Sophia's] labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these" (8:7).[70]

Sophia's task of making friends with God is not just something she does alongside of cosmic governance but the two appear to be connected.[71] Pseudo-Solomon speaks of this when he prays in Wis 9:9–10:

> With you is wisdom, she who knows your works
>   and was present when you made the world;
> she understands what is pleasing in your sight
>   and what is right according to your commandments.
> Send her forth from the holy heavens,
>   and from the throne of your glory send her,
> that she may labor at my side,
>   and that I may learn what is pleasing to you.

Michael Kolarcik is certainly right when he says that these verses show a clear "lineage between creation and salvation."[72] He says that, "since wisdom was present when the world was made, she knows the hidden plans and ways of God in the world." This is important because

> salvation, for the author of Wisdom, is understood as God's effort to bring humanity to the point of realizing the original intentions at creation. Therefore, it is through the gift of wisdom, who was present at creation, that the unnamed Solomon will be guided wisely (9:11), whose works will be acceptable and who will be able to judge justly (9:12). Solomon will be able to put into practice the intention of the creator through the gift of wisdom who was present at creation.[73]

---

miracles by saying that his status as God's friend affords him control of cosmic elements.

70 On the use of the cardinal virtues in Wis 8:7, see Winston, *Wisdom* 196, and Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:527–530. Winston notes that, like Pseudo-Solomon, Philo derives the cardinal virtues from the Wisdom or Logos of God (see Philo, *Leg.* 1.63–65).

71 Wis 7:27 begins with "Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls, etc." That Sophia grants the cardinal virtues (Wis 8:7) is an example of the order she brings (cf. 8:1) but at a micro-cosmic level (she imparts "harmonie de l'âme" – Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 2:527; cf., Plato, *Resp.* 443D–E).

72 Kolarcik, "Creation and Salvation" 103.

73 Ibid.

However, Kolarcik does not go far enough. Sophia's salvific efficacy is based on more than her having been a witness of creation. Wis 9:9–10 must be understood in the light of 7:22–8:1 where Sophia's status as τεχνῖτις τὰ πάντα and her cosmic διήκουσα and διοίκησις (pervasion and administration) are predicated on her ontological relationship with God (vv. 25–26) and also characterize her relationship to humanity (7:27, and perhaps 7:23 – if we take πνεύματα there as referring to human spirits). She is the governor of all things cosmic and human; she knows well the "beginning and middle and end" of things.

The relevance of this for our study is that it issues a caveat with respect to the term "salvation." When we study the NT documents in chapter 3, we see that the divine Son, through his death, "saves" humanity as well as the cosmos from their ruination. (This is most clear in Colossians 1:15–20, but it's a notion operating in all four "intermediary" texts we examine there.) Is the salvation spoken of by Pseudo-Solomon similar to this? Does Sophia put a stop to the cosmos' descent down a destructive path? Does it make sense to say that she rescues humankind by removing them from a cosmos that is run amok because of sin or daemonic forces?

3.1.3.2. Sophia and the Unity of Creation and "Salvation"

The truth of the matter is that Wis suggests no antipathy between the cosmos and of human salvation. Recall the third of the three fundamental aspects of Pseudo-Solomon's view of the cosmos, namely that the cosmos operates on behalf of God in his blessing the righteous and in his judgment of the wicked. That the cosmos participates in the divine plan, whether for blessing or judgment, is key for our discussion here. Wis 5:17, 20 says "The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; … and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes"[74] and 16:17 says ὑπέρμαχος γὰρ ὁ κόσμος ἐστιν δικαίων ("the world is a champion of the righteous"). Furthermore, John Collins points out this is a different kind of salvation by creation from that witnessed in such passages as Josh 10:12 or Judges 5:20 where creation appears to alter its normal functions. In Wisdom of Solomon, "miracles conform to regular natural

---

74 Wis 5:21–22 depicts creation's involvement in divine judgment with the language of a thunderstom.

laws."[75] Collins's assessment of the significance of this view of creation seems correct.

> In all, then, the Wisdom of Solomon clearly goes beyond the earlier wisdom books by attempting to give a consistent conceptual and even scientific account of the world and of human destiny. The universe or cosmos is the context of all human experience, so even religious experience and hopes are expressed in terms which make cosmological sense.[76]

Collins also says the consistent and coherent theology of Wisdom of Solomon is that "God is encountered through the cosmos." He explains:

> History illustrates the structure of the universe, and eschatology is also built in to that structure. The human way to salvation is by understanding the structure of the universe and adapting to it in righteousness. Human destiny is not predetermined by the structure of the universe but it is framed by the fixed and limited options provided by that structure.[77]

This is why Sophia is so important. Her commanding knowledge of creation and its machinations makes her the ideal, in fact the only guide by which human kind can understand "the structure of the universe" and "adapt to it in righteousness." This is why Solomon asks what is "richer", more "effective", teaches "virtues" better, and is more experienced than she? (cf. Wis 8:5–8).

But the salvation she extends has to do with her cosmological function as much as it does her cosmic awareness. Notice how Pseudo-Solomon describes creation's involvement in God's salvific work. "For creation (κτίσις), serving you who made it, exerts (ἐπιτείνω) itself to punish the unrighteous, and in kindness relaxes (ἀνίημι) on behalf of those who trust in you" (Wis 16:24). The idea of the cosmos exerting ("tightening")[78] itself and relaxing itself, here applied in the context of punishing the Egyptians and providing for the Israelites,[79] is a philosophical one. Using categories we find in Plato and Stoicism, as

---

75 Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation," 131. The emphasis on miracles working within the rules of nature is made by Philo as well (cf. *Mos. 1.212–213*).

76 Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation," 132.

77 Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation," 128. On the issue of freedom and determinism in Wisdom, see Winston's detailed discussion (*Wisdom*, 47–58).

78 LSJ, s.v. ἐπιτείνω. Winston (*Wisdom*, 297) translates Wis 16:24: "For creation, serving you its maker, tenses itself for punishment against the unrighteous, and slackens into benevolence on behalf of those who trust in you."

79 The Egyptians and the Israelites represent types of the unrighteous and righteous respectively.

well as in Philo, Pseudo-Solomon explains how the elements can adjust to accommodate the purposes of God.[80] Moreover, this is not the only mention of the concept of cosmic ἐπίτασις and ἄνεσις in Wisdom of Solomon. Recall that Pseudo-Solomon ascribes similar activity to Sophia, namely in Wis 8:1 where he says "she reaches (διατείνω) mightily from one end of the earth to the other and orders all things well." One need not extrapolate much to see that creation's participation in divine judgment and providence is rooted in the presence of Sophia as the one who administrates (perhaps even governs) the cosmos.

3.1.3.2.1. Excursus #2: Sophia and "Salvation History" in Wisdom of Solomon 10

Sophia's role as savior is given further definition in the *Beispielreihe* in Wis 10.[81] As we have already noted, in this text Pseudo-Solomon presents a list of people in Israelite history who receive salvation. The primary character is Sophia who, in contrast to the ahistorical presentation of her in chs. 6–9, now operates in history.[82] Sophia protects, delivers, steers, acknowledges, strengthens, guides on straight paths, imparts knowledge, prospers, provides victory, accompanies, causes to reign, honors, rewards, shelters, and causes to praise. These are in keeping with how Pseudo-Solomon describes Sophia in chs. 6–9 and so summarize his point. But we should also pay attention to those for whom she does all these things. A reader familiar with Israelite history, especially Genesis and the beginning of the Exodus narrative, will know that she assists Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph and the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. But Pseudo-Solomon does not provide their names. In fact, though he provides much information about these figures, he manages to present them in the most generic sense possible while still retaining familiarity. What unites all these people is not that they share the same narrative or ancestry; what unites them is that they

---

80 See Winston, *Wisdom*, 300. Again, we see that Pseudo-Solomon is arguing nature works within its own regulations in service to God, not "super-naturally".

81 On the Hellenistic convention of listing examples, see Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 213, and the study he draws from, A. Schmidt, "Struktur, Herkunft und Bedeutung der Beispielreihe in Weish 10," *BZ* (1977): 1–22.

82 This chapter actually serves as a bridge between the encomium of Sophia (6:22–9:18) and a rehearsal of the Exodus (chs. 11–19).

are all "righteous" (δίκαιος in vv. 4, 5, 6, 10, 13 and cf. v. 15 – "holy and blameless people"). To solidify the notion that Wisdom rescues the righteous, our author provides negative examples (interlaced through the positive characters).[83] Again, though one familiar with Jewish Scripture would know them, he does not provide their names. The only way he describes them is "unrighteous," "passing by wisdom," "covetous," "makers of false accusations," and "ungodly."

Wisdom of Solomon 10 is most interesting because, though it appears to operate as a rehearsal of biblical history, it in fact substantially changes that history, even removes its historicity. First, it changes it by presenting Sophia as the primary agent of salvation. Indeed, she is not just the one who saves but appears to be the touchstone for who will be saved. The "ungodly" and "wicked", the "unrighteous" are described as those who lack virtue (v. 3; cn. 8:7), who are covetous (v. 11; cn. 6:23) and who "pass wisdom by" (v. 8). Second, she only rescues the δίκαιοι. Missing is any explicit reference to God's covenant people. In fact, though in an historical guise, the text actually presents an ahistorical perspective. Those who are rescued are only a type, exemplars of the righteous. In other words, Wis 10 does not reflect salvation-history per se; rather, it relates a pattern of rescuing the righteous who accept Sophia, as Pseudo-Solomon both claims to have done himself and exhorts his readers to do as well.

3.1.3.2.2. Excursus #3: The Mystical and Philosophical Aspects of "Friendship with God"

The list of Sophia's saving roles given in Wis 10 suggest a plethora of services. However, her saving role is more monolithic.[84] The goal is not simple provision in the midst of life, whether protection, prosperity or honor, but rather a right relationship with God. Our author describes it as "friendship with God" (7:27). In another place, he says seeking Sophia leads to "assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God; so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom" (6:18–20).

---

83 Cain (v. 3) and his offspring (v. 4), those constructing the tower of Babylon (v. 5), Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6–8), Jacob's in-laws (v. 11), the Egyptians who "accused" Joseph (v. 14), and the Egyptians who enslaved Israel (v. 15–20).

84 This holds true at the cosmic level as well. Wis 16:24 presents the cosmos as tensing and slackening almost on an ad hoc basis while 8:1 suggests a much more orderly, consistent activity. The difference is that of distinguishing the trees (former) from the forest (latter).

This passage is important both because it fills out the picture of Sophia's primary anthropological task, but also adds to it the dimension of human involvement. One must desire wisdom, must pursue her. This process ultimately starts with faithfully asking God for her.[85]

The quest to be "near to God" is a mystical one that has its foundation, not surprisingly, in philosophy. Before we address the mystical and philosophical issues about pursuing Sophia, a reasonable question is: Why should one seek her when she is already dispersed throughout the cosmos, including within those spirits that are themselves "intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle" (Wis 7:23)? Winston answers this question by pointing to Sophia's status as both transcendent and immanent, that she remains both in union with God and pervades the universe. He points to a simile which the Stoic Seneca uses to explain this.

> When a soul rises superior to other souls … it is stirred by a force from heaven. A thing like this cannot stand upright unless it be propped up by the divine. Thereafter, a greater part of it abides in that place from whence it came down to earth. Just as the rays of the sun do indeed touch the earth, but still abide at the source from which they are sent; even so the great and hallowed soul, which has come down in order that we may have a nearer knowledge of divinity, does indeed associate with us, but still cleaves to its origin; on that source it depends, thither it turns its gaze, and strives to go, and it concerns itself with our doings only as a being superior to ourselves (*Ep.* 41.5)

Winston explains: "From the human viewpoint, the Divine Wisdom enters man and departs; from the eternal perspective of God, however, it is ever present to man, though its consummation in any particular case is conditioned by the fitness of the recipient."[86] Hence, the pursuit of Sophia is grounded in the notion that one can have "a nearer knowledge of the divinity," that one can in fact grow closer to God through Sophia. The author of Wis makes this nearness parallel to "immortality," by which he means more than simply not dying. It is a sublime quality of existence (cf. 8:16–17) since union with Sophia results in union with the deity. Beyond this our author does not venture much in describing the experience. He lacks the specificity when

---

85 Hence, "righteous" is not simply a moralistic term for Pseudo-Solomon, but has to do with faithfulness. It is a mark of righteousness to recognize God and a mark of unrighteousness to deny God's presence, even when creation clearly communicates it (Wis 13).

86 Winston, *Wisdom*, 41–42.

describing the mystical union that we find in Philo or Plotinus. Rather, it is as if the author's mystical thinking remains inchoate, what Winston calls "an incipient movement along the road to mysticism."[87]

There is another way to characterize "nearness to God," namely from within a philosophical context. This is not necessarily to be dissociated with mysticism. But it is a concept that stands on its own and provides a distinct lens by which to appreciate Pseudo-Solomon's understanding of immortality/friendship with God.[88] In his dialogue *Theatetus* (176b), Plato speaks of ὁμοίωσις Ͽεῷ, "assimilation or likeness to God."[89] This concept was appropriated by Middle Platonists to characterize a more spiritual understanding (*contra* the Stoics) of the human τέλος.[90] A fragment from Eudorus of Alexandria is the earliest known expression of this.

> Socrates and Plato agree with Pythagoras that the τέλος is assimilation to God (ὁμοίωσις Ͽεῷ). Plato defined this more clearly by adding: 'according as is possible' (κατὰ τὸ δύνατον), and it is only possible by wisdom (φρόνησις), that is to say, as a result of virtue.[91]

Eudorus' quote is strikingly similar to the idea expressed in Wisdom of Solomon, though for Solomon it is not φρόνησις or Virtue, but Sophia who makes it possible. Alcinous, in *Epit.* 28, subscribes to the Platonic concept of ὁμοίωσις Ͽεῷ in much the same fashion as Eudorus. But he adds an interesting twist: "By 'God' is obviously meant the God in the heavens (ἐπουράνιος), not, by Zeus, the God above the heavens (ὑπουράνιος), who does not possess virtue, but is superior to it." Dillon suggests that

> This has the appearance of a reservation entered by [Alcinous] himself to what he must have regarded as an insufficiently exact traditional formulation. The God in the heavens is necessarily the Demiurge or Mind of the World, Alcinous' second God. To bring the supreme God, as discussed in [*Epit.*] 10, into a relationship of "likeness" with Man would be to compromise his transcendence.[92]

---

87 Ibid., 42.
88 Philo's mysticism is at least in part grounded in his Middle Platonism. See David Winston, "Philo's Mysticism," *SPhA* 8 (1996): 74–82.
89 See Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 18.
90 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 44, 122.
91 Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.49, 8–12. Translated by Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 122. Cf. Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 18.
92 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 299–300.

Though Alcinous' second God is not an exact parallel to Sophia, it is at least significant that both he and Pseudo-Solomon hold to an intermediary who provides a buffer for the transcendence of the supreme God, who has the responsibilities of cosmic demiurge, and with whom humanity seeks union.

3.1.4. Conclusion to "Wisdom of Solomon"

Drawing from the heady currents of contemporary religious and philosophical trends and combining these with an authoritative sapiential tradition, Wisdom of Solomon renders an engaging portrait of Sophia, she who is both God's throne companion and humanity's boon. Sophia's status as throne companion we find to be much more involved than earlier renditions of personified Wisdom. For one thing, Sophia is not one of God's creations but an entity closely related to him; she is his breath, his emanation, his image. For another, she does not just witness creation but has a preeminent role in the event; she fashioned all things and, while essentially distinct from them, she continues to pervade and order all things. Furthermore, while Wisdom of Solomon may call Sophia "savior," we saw it was precisely this cosmic artisanship and ubiquitous presence that makes her companionship desirable for achieving fulfillment. Hence, when "Solomon" sets the wise example in entreating God for Sophia, we find that she will come not just to guide the soul back to its divine source but to bring the cosmos to its intended τέλος as well.

3.2. Philo of Alexandria

3.2.1. Introduction

Philo's philosophical program, especially in the allegorical commentary, as well as the exposition of the Law, is pragmatic.[93] That is, it centers on issues related to the advancement of the soul, or psychagogy.[94] On

---

93 Philo presents his cosmology in its most straightforward fashion in *De Opificio Mundi*. However, while not subservient to psychagogy, cosmology finds expression in that work only in the process of a philosophical exegesis of Genesis 1, an exegesis itself under the influence of Plato's *Timaeus*.

occasion, he provides glimpses of the ontological and/or cosmological framework upon which his psychagogy rests. Such glimpses are not as frequent or as detailed as we might hope and Philo allows them only as they help illustrate his views on psychagogy. Hence, to inquire about Philo's views on a divine intermediary's role in cosmology and anthropological fulfillment[95] is to inquire of material that is infrequent in occurrence, illustrative in purpose, partial in extent, and unsystematic in presentation. Fortunately, given the volume of Philo's writing, such qualifiers are relative and we may still ascertain enough data to provide a useful if inherently inchoate sketch of the cosmological and anthropological system(s) underlying Philo's work.

Ascertaining whose system(s) these are – Philo's or his "teachers", be they actual educators or textual encheiridia – is more difficult. Scholarship has moved beyond Wolfson's view that Philo was a philosophical savant or the opposing thesis that his writings represent a disorganized treasure trove of testimonia that say of Philo himself only that he was a philosophical eclectic.[96] Truly, the key to understanding

---

94   David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinatti: Hebrew Union College Press and Hoboken, N. J.: KTAV House, 1985), 36: "The central thrust and fundamental aim of Philo's biblical commentary is to trace the return of the human soul to its native homeland by means of the allegorical method of interpretation." (Discussed below, § 3.2.6.2).

95   The phrase "anthropological fulfillment" functions in the place of "salvation." Soteriological language is problematic in that Philo and the Middle Platonists do not view the world as "damaged" (à la early Christians – see the conclusion to ch. 4) or "hostile" (as the "Gnostics" purportedly held). Fulfillment has a more holistic sense and coheres with the conviction of this chapter that Middle Platonically inspired Judaism viewed human teleology as a natural process that occurs not in spite of or against nature. As we saw earlier (§ 3.1.3), while Wisdom of Solomon uses soteriological language with respect to σοφία, it still views σοφία's role in terms of this holistic/natural view of fulfillment.

96   See Harry Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2 vols.; revised edition; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948). Those who view Philo as an eclectic include E. R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One,'" *CQ* 22(1928): 132; A. J. Festugière, *La revelation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (4 vols.; *Ebib*; Paris: Gabalda, 1949–54), 2.534; and Henry Chadwick, "Philo and the Beginnings of Christian Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (A. H. Armstrong, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 141, 155. More recently, Richard Goulet, in *La philosophie de Moïse: essai de reconstruction d'un commentaire philosophique préphilonien du Pentateuque* (Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 11; Paris: Vrin, 1987), argued that Philo's writings preserve a pre-existing commentary, the central presuppositions of

the Alexandrian is accepting his place somewhere in between. Since Philo's primary concern is psychagogical exegesis, this is where he is most likely to be (if ever) innovative.[97] Thomas Tobin argues persuasively that Philo preserves in his own works multiple layers of exegetical and philosophical traditions, traditions he works and reworks

---

which Philo works (less than successfully) to overturn. See the review of Goulet's *La philosophie de Moïse* by David Runia in *JTS* 40 (1989) 588–602.

97   In this study we focus on Philo's commentaries, which may be divided into three main groups: the exposition of the law (which loosely includes *De vita Moysis*), *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim* and *Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum*, and the Allegorical Commentary. Given its relatively basic tone, the Exposition must have a more general audience in mind – whether Gentile or Jew; the *Questions and Answers*, being more practical and less aesthetic in their presentation, deal with more nuanced issues and so suggest the school room in some fashion; the allegorical commentary speaks to similar concerns as the *Questions and Answers* but with greater artistry and restraint. I see the three works as representing concentric circles of awareness about the Law that Philo intends to move his readers through, the heart being the Allegorical Commentary. See also Gregory E. Sterling's "The Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series: General Introduction" in David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Indroduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001), xi–xii.

For a detailed introduction to the study of Philo see Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria: a critical and synthetical survey of research since World War II," *ANRW* 21.1:98–154; and David Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 7–27. For a general introduction, see Kenneth Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: an introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Henry Chadwick, "Philo and the Beginnings of Christian Thought," 135–57. Earlier studies include Erwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (2nd ed.; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963); J. Daniélou, *Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Fayard, 1958); Emile Bréhier, *Les idées philosophique et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (3rd ed.; Etudes de philosohie médiévale 8; Paris: Vrin, 1950); Wolfson, *Philo*; W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien: eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit* (TUGAL 49.1; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1938). For a comprehensive bibliography, see H. L. Goodhart and E. R. Goodenough, "A general bibliography of Philo Judaeus," in E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1938), 125–321 (up to 1937); Roberto Radice and David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography, 1937–1986* (Supplements to VC 8; Leiden: Brill, 1988); and idem, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography, 1987–1996, with Addenda for 1937–1986* (Supplements to VC 57; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

into his psychagogy.[98] Differentiating those traditions from Philo's own thought is not easily done, though Tobin has provided a valuable reconstruction in terms of what Philo says about the creation of humanity. While our enterprise is distinct from Tobin, his work shapes how we approach Philo's writings in the following ways. First, this study presumes that Philo's psychagogy rests most immediately on a Middle Platonic foundation. We will not try to prove this, though it will be evident as we treat Philonic passages that they share much with Middle Platonism.[99] Second, this study presumes that Philo honors previous exegetical traditions by preserving them even if he has moved beyond them. This is how we account for Philo's presentation of Sophia vis-à-vis the Logos. Philo will describe Sophia and the Logos in strikingly similar language at times and thus raises the question of their relationship. The answer is that Philo is aware of and preserves traditions that view Sophia as occupying the same place as the Logos, i.e., that of divine intermediary (such traditions were likely responsible for Wisdom of Solomon). The Logos surpasses Sophia in Philo in much the same way as (according to Tobin) the double creation of man surpasses the single creation; Philo preserves the one even while he moves beyond it. Such preservation is in keeping with Philo's exegetical efforts; it is probably less a demonstration of the evolution of the thoughts he now owns as it is an expression of the viable traditions present to him and from which he fashions his own approach.

---

98 T. Tobin, *The Creation of Man*. For a more extreme view on Philo's use of traditions, see Goulet, *La philosophie de Moïse*. For an alternative perspective, see the indepth study of Philo's interpretive method by V. Nikiprowetzky (*Le commntaire de l'Écriture chez Philo d'Alexandriee: son caractère et sa portée; observations philologiues* [ALGHJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977]).

99 See chapter two for our discussion of Middle Platonism. For Philo's relationship with Middle Platonism, see the *Studia Philonica Annual* 5 (1993) which contains a special section on Philo and Middle Platonism. The section includes articles by Gregory E. Sterling ("Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism," 96–111), David T. Runia ("Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited," 112–40), with responses to Sterling and Runia by David Winston (141–46), Thomas H. Tobin (147–50) and John Dillon (151–55). See Sterling, "Platonizing Moses," 97–98 for a detailed review of literature on Philo's relationship with Middle Platonism and philosophy in general.

3.2.2. The Questions of Intermediary Activity as they are Raised by Philo – *Sacr.* 8

One passage that demonstrates how Philo's cosmological and anthropological views are subservient to his concerns about psychagogy is *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 8. This passage comes at the end of a section (*Sacr.* 1–10) where Philo is interpreting the lemma καὶ προσέθηκε τεκεῖν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν Ἄβελ (LXX Gen 4:2) so as to show how one perspective, δόξαν ἄτοπον (represented by Cain), is replaced by another, καλὸν δόγμα (Abel), within the soul. To illustrate this advancement, Philo connects προστίθημι in Gen 4:2 with the descriptions of the deaths of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. We learn from the Scriptural accounts of Abraham and Jacob that upon death they were added (προστίθημι) to the people of God (Gen 25:8, 49:33 LXX). Philo claims in *Sacr.* 6–7 they thereby represent those "who learn by hearing and instruction," those angelic souls whom God "calls a people." For Isaac, "to whom was granted the higher gift of self-learned knowledge," God goes one further and adds him not to a people but to "the genus of the imperishable and fully perfect" (*Sacr.* 7; cf. Gen 35:29: προσετέθη πρός τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ). Philo interprets the similarity in these accounts (the use of προστίθημι) as demonstrating the advancement of the soul; he interprets the dissimilarity (the difference between ὁ λαός and τὸ γένος) as denoting a gradation of advancement where certain few souls advance further still through heightened rational ability.

The apex of this gradation finds its exemplar in Moses. Philo explains:

> There are those whom God leads still higher; causing them to exceed every form and genus, he sets them next to himself. Such a one is Moses to whom he says "you stand here with me" (Deut 5:31). Hence, when Moses was about to die, he neither left nor was he added like the others - there was no room in him for adding or taking away. Rather, he was removed "through the word" (διὰ ῥήματός; Deut 34:5) of the (Supreme) Cause, that through which also the whole world was created (δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο). Thus you might learn that God values the wise person as much as he does the world since by the same word that he makes the universe he also leads the perfect from things earthly unto himself (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν).[100]

---

100 My translation. The *Editio maior* for Philo's extent Greek writings is *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* (L. Cohn, P. Wendland, and S. Reiter, eds.; 6

The primary function of this passage is to describe the fate of the highest quality of soul. Where Abraham, Jacob and Isaac represent those who leave things earthly and are added to either a people or a genus (so εἴδη καὶ γένη πάντα), there is a type, the σόφος, who is intended for the highest position, namely to stand alongside of God.[101] This is Moses to whom God said σὺ δὲ αὐτοῦ στῆθι μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ (Deut 5:31). Since he is perfect (τέλειος) and as such is not capable of addition or being taken away, his transition to that highest status must come by means of an altogether different method.[102] Hence, when Moses died he is not said to be added to anything or taken away from anything; rather, Deut 34:5 reads καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν Μωυσῆς… διὰ ῥήματος κυρίου. Philo interprets the fact that Moses' transition (μετανίστημι) is by means of the divine word (διὰ ῥήματος τοῦ αἰτίου) as a claim about Moses' superior status. After all, the divine word has no mean résumé given its role in the creation (δημιουργέω) of the whole world (ὁ σύμπας κόσμος).[103]

---

vols.; Berlin: George Reimer, 1896–1915; repr. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962). For a Greek index, see Peder Borgen et al., *The Philo Index: A Complete Greek Word Index to the Writings of Philo* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000). The standard translations are *Philo in Ten Volumes (and Two Supplemntary Volumes)* (F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and R. Marcus; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962) (=PLCL below); *Les œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie* (R. Arnaldez, J. Pouilloux, and C. Mondésert, eds; Paris: Éditions du CERF, 1961ff.); and *Philo von Alexandria: die Werke in deutscher Überstzung* (L. Cohn, I. Heinemann, and W. Theiler, trans.; 7 vols.; Breslau: Marcus Verlag, 1909–38 and Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964 [vol.7]). See also F. Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation," *SPhA* 10 (1998): 1–10.

When not using my own translation, I will employ PLCL (occasionally with minor modifications) and the more recent Philonic anthology by David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative, the Giants and Selections* (CWS; New York: Paulist, 1981). For translations of *De opificio mundi* that are not my own, I rely on the Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, from the new *Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series* (see n. 97).

101 See my discussion of this passage while dealing with the soteriology of the Johannine prologue (§ 4.4.3.4.3).

102 In *Sacr.* 9, the characteristic of not being susceptible to addition or being taken away from is attributed to the Deity. That Moses could share this characteristic, Philo claims, is implied in the statement "I give you as a god to Pharaoh."

103 Clearly, Philo has in mind Gen 1 which describes the creation of the world as a result of divine speech. On the interpretation of Gen 1 see below and in chapter four ("Excursus #5: Logos-centric Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Philo of Alexandria and the Prologue to John", § 4.4.2.4). Regarding ῥῆμα, cf. Heb 1:3 and 11:3 (discussed below on § 4.3.2.2).

For Philo this line of reasoning results in the following moral (so ἵνα μάθῃς): God regards the wise person as highly as he does the κόσμος. For clarity, Philo restates the basis for this conclusion. He writes τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν. Notice that Philo makes an interesting alteration; it is no longer διὰ ῥήματος but τῷ λόγῳ. Otherwise, the ideas are the same. This alteration, which seems unnecessary, suggests that what underlies Philo's interpretation is an understanding of the function of the divine Logos. For Philo, this mentioning of the Logos is a passing reference that serves only to clarify how the biblical lemma (Deut 34:5) sets Moses off at his death from the patriarchs. More germane to his discussion is the moral, God's high value of a wise person, which moves his overarching thesis about the value of the Abel perspective (καλὸν δόγμα) over the Cain perspective (δόξαν ἄτοπον).

For our study, this passing reference is of considerable interest. It raises precisely the questions we would like answered. How does Philo relate the creation of the cosmos with the final fulfillment of humanity? What does the use of the preposition διά or the dative case imply about the role of the word (ῥῆμα or λόγος) in these two areas (creation and fulfillment)? When Philo substitutes λόγος for ῥῆμα, may we take the Logos as more than a figurative alternative but an intellectual reality to which ῥῆμα refers? Depending on how we answer these questions, we go a long way in showing the similarities between Philo's thinking and the Middle Platonists. Even though *Sacr.* 8 does not answer these questions, it does show us that the questions are not inappropriate.

With the questions inspired by *Sacr.* 8, as well as the caveats it confirms (Philo's ontological system is incomplete, unsystematic and subservient to his psychagogy), we may turn to Philo's writings as a whole. In the explication of *Sacr.* 8 above, we were careful to note the context as fully as possible so as to illustrate concerns about mining Philo's works for our particular purpose, i.e., the caveats listed above. In what comes below, the approach will be substantially different. The concern will be systematizing data rather than explicating passages. The information about the Logos and its roles in creation and anthropo-logical fulfillment are usually ancillary to Philo's exegetical campaign; *Sacr.* 8 represents the norm in Philo's writings with respect to this matter. The questions we will ask are the following: what is the ontological relationship between the Logos and God? What is the cosmological (cosmogonical and sustaining) function of the Logos?

What function does the Logos have in Anthropology, especially in terms of humanity reaching its telos? How are the two functions interrelated?

3.2.3. God?

In chapter one, we noted that NT writers tie the Son's role as instrument of creation with his role as savior of humanity.[104] We saw in chapter two that Middle Platonists also posited a divine intermediary, a second principle responsible for creation as well as having anagogical significance for humanity. We wish to see from Philo's writings whether and how the same may be said of him: is there an intermediary serving both as instrument of creation and as human anagogue? If so, how? *Sacr.* 8 provides a positive answer to the first question: the divine Λόγος, by which God created all things, is also that by which God raises the wise to himself. What remains is for us to show that *Sacr.* 8 is not an anomaly – it is in fact representative of persistent (if often ancillary) themes in Philo. We must also accentuate in the Philonic evidence what may be said about the principal characters (God, the Logos, creation, and the wise) and their roles.

Philo has at the same time very much and very little to say about the Deity.[105] There is little that can be said since the Deity (who for Philo is the Jewish God) is completely transcendent and hence ultimately unknowable: he is the unnamable, unutterable, and inconceivable-by-any-means God (ὁ ἀκατονόμαστος καὶ ἄρρητος καὶ κατὰ πάσας ἰδέας ἀκατάληπτος Θεός, *Somn.* 1.67). And this is not only an epistemological phenomenon, it is also an ontological reality. Indeed, he alone truly is (ὁ μόνος, ὁ ἔστιν ἀψευδῶς),[106] not subject to any change whatsoever (ὁ ἀκλινὴς καὶ ἄτερπτος Θεός).[107] Indeed, he simply is (ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν).[108]

---

104 For the detailed discussion of the NT on this matter, see chapter four.

105 For a discussion of the transcendence of God in Philo, see David Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?" in *The Ancestral Philosophy: Hellenistic Philosophy in Second Temple Judaism, Essays of David Winston* (Gregory E. Sterling, ed.; BJS 331; SPhilo Monograph 4; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001), 151–154.

106 *Fug.* 101.

107 *Conf.* 96.

108 Both epitaphs occur frequently throughout Philo's writings, especially the latter (τὸ ὄν). For Philo's caveat that even ὁ ὤν says too much, see *De Deo*, ch. 4 (Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment," 5, 12).

Philo consistently chides idolaters (which includes anyone who has an inadequate view of God by his standards) for limiting the Deity.

> But those who have concluded a treaty and a truce with the body are unable to doff the garment of the flesh and see a nature uniquely simple and self-sufficient in itself, without admixture and composition. They therefore conceive of the universal Cause precisely as they do of themselves, not taking into account that while a being that comes into existence through the union of several faculties needs several parts to serve the needs of each, God being uncreated and bringing all the others into being had no need of anything belonging to things generated.[109]

This passage from *Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit* alludes to what Philo will say positively about the Deity, namely while he is ἀγένητος he brings everything else into existence (τὰ ἄλλα ἀγωγὼν εἰς γένεσιν). He is the source of all things, ὁ ὅλων πατήρ (*Conf.* 63), or most simply stated, he is ὁ αἴτιος.[110] Philo treats this information as if it were a commonplace; so in *Fug.* 12 he says γέγονέ τε γὰρ ὁ κόσμος καὶ πάντως ὑπ' αἰτίου τίνος γέγονεν ("For the world came to be, and certainly it came to be by some cause"). Furthermore, the Deity continues to be involved in creation and is quite present to it. Explaining the passage "Here I stand there before you" (Exod 17:6), Philo says that God

> shows that his subsistence is before all created being, and that he who is here is also there and elsewhere and everywhere, since he has filled everything through and through and has left nothing empty of himself. For he does not say, "I will stand here and there," but even now, when I am present here, I stand at the same time also there. My motion is not one involving change of place, so as to occupy one place while leaving another, but it is a tensional motion (ἀλλὰ τονικῇ χρώμενος τῇ κινήσει).[111]

Philo preserves the notions of the Deity's transcendence and role in creation, at times in the same sentence. For instance, in *Somn.* 1.63 God may be understood as a place (τόπος) since he contains all and is contained by nothing at all (τῷ περιέχειν μὲν τὰ ὅλα περιέχεσθαι δὲ πρός μηδένος ἁπλῶς).

> For not even the whole world would be a place fit for God to make His abode, since God is His own place, and He is filled by Himself, and sufficient for Himself, filling and containing all other things in their

---

109 *Deus* 56. Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria,* 139.
110 See above *Sacr.* 8.
111 *Sacr.* 68. Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria,* 132.

destitution and barrenness and emptiness but Himself contained by nothing else, seeing that He is Himself One and the Whole.[112]

Yet this combination creates a paradox. How can a God who fills all things (πεπληρωκὼς τὰ πάντα, *Deus* 56) be truly transcendent?

3.2.4. Between God and Creation: An Intermediary Nexus

3.2.4.1. The Many Names of the Intermediary

Though at times Philo appears to assert that God is present to creation in unmediated proximity, his tendency is to posit an intermediate reality between the Deity and the physical world. In *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* 51–69 Philo addresses the issue of anthropomorphic descriptions of God in Scripture. In *Deus* 57 he explains how it is the God who lacks any physicality whatsoever can be involved with creation.

> For what are we to think? If he makes use of bodily organs, he has feet to go forward. But whither will he go, since he fills everything? To whom will he go, when none is his equal? And to what purpose? For it cannot be out of concern for his health as with us. Hands too he must have both to receive and to give, yet he receives nothing from anyone, for aside from his lack of need, all possessions are his, and he gives by employing as minister of his gifts the Logos through which also he created the world (δίδωσι δὲ λόγῳ χρώμενος ὑπηρέτῃ δωρεῶν, ᾧ καὶ τὸν κόσμον εἰργάζεται).[113]

In juxtaposition of the impious notion that God has hands, Philo contends that God does need hands for himself since he lacks nothing and all are his possessions, again striking the note of God's transcendent self-sufficiency.[114] And when it comes to what God gives, the other use of hands, God does not need them for he has his Λόγος, whom he employs (χράομαι) as minister of his gifts and by whom (ᾧ) he also made (ἐργάζομαι) the world.[115] This passage captures the essence of Philo's views about the intermediate reality between the Deity and the κόσμος; it serves the transcendent Deity by providing the active link between it and everything else.[116] It is both God's instrument in his worldly

---

112 *Leg.* 1.44. Trans.: Colson, PLCL 1.175.

113 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria,* 139.

114 Cf. Aristobus, frg. 2 (in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.9.38–8.10.17).

115 Cf. *Sacr.* 8 (τῷ λόγῳ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος).

116 Notice that in *Deus* 57 the Logos continues to dispense God's gifts, functioning in the same capacity as it did at creation. Philo does not clarify what these gifts

dealings and at the same time a buffer from the inherent limitations of the world.

Before we explore and substantiate these two functions we must consider more carefully the nature of Philo's intermediate reality. Some of the difficulty of this topic should already be apparent. Philo assigns to the Supreme God actions he at other times assigns to the intermediate reality. Above we saw that in *Sacr.* 68 Philo describes the Deity as existing everywhere at once by means of his "tensile motion" (τονικὴ ἡ κίνησις). In *Plant.* 9 he describes the Logos as having a similar cosmic ubiquity and purpose.

> The Logos, extending himself from the center to its furthest bounds and from its extremities to the center again, runs nature's unvanquished course joining and binding fast all its parts. For the Father who begat him constituted him an unbreakable bond of the universe.[117]

One must ask when comparing *Sacr.* 68 with *Plant.* 9 how Philo reconciles the two. Is it that they represent two distinct traditions and Philo preserves them both? Or is it that *Plant.* 9 (the Logos as bond) somehow explains the mechanics of *Sacr.* 68 (God as having tensile motion), providing additional information meant to preserve the notion of the Deity's transcendence? Or is it that the Logos is merely a metaphorical attribute of the Deity, a way among many of describing God's presence to creation?

The conundrum only becomes more complicated as we consider that Philo does not limit the intermediate reality to the Logos alone. Consider *Cher.* 27–28 where Philo interprets the two cherubim and the flaming sword standing sentry at the garden in Gen. 3 thus.

> …with the One God who truly is (ὁ ἕνα ὄντως ὄντα θεός) are two all-high and primary powers (δύο τὰς ἀνωτάτω εἶναι καὶ πρώτας δυνάμεις), Goodness (ἀγαθότης) and Sovereignty (ἐξουσία). Through his goodness (ἀγαθότητι) he engendered all that is, through his Sovereignty (ἐξουσία) he rules what he has engendered, but a third uniting both is intermediating Logos, for it is through Logos that God is both ruler and good (λόγῳ γὰρ καὶ ἄρχοντα καὶ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι τὸν θεόν). Of these two powers, Sovereignty and Goodness, the cherubim are symbols, but of Logos, the flaming sword is the symbol. For exceedingly swift and of glowing heat is Logos, and especially so the Logos of the primal Cause, for this it was that preceded

_____

are, though we reasonably may take them as running the gamut from the administration of creation to the dispensing of human enlightenment.

117 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 93.

and outstripped all things, conceived before them all, and before all manifest.[118]

In addition to the Logos, Philo also includes as intermediaries the Deity's goodness (ἀγαθότης, denoted for Philo by the divine name ὁ Θεός) and his authority (ἐξουσία, denoted by ὁ Κύριος). Of the two, the former (which Philo also considered to be ontologically prior) is the Deity's creative power while the latter is the Deity's ruling power.[119] Both are subordinate to and subsumed under the Logos. What *Cher.* 27–28 (and similar passages) shows is that even while pride of place must certainly be given to the Logos, the intermediate realm is in fact a complex nexus of entities or powers. In many ways, the Philonic intermediate realm is akin to Russian *matryoshka* (nested) dolls in that the powers appear at times to be nestled together, one within another.[120]

We should also include in this catalog of principle intermediaries Σοφία.[121] While it is inadequate simply to equate Σοφία and the Logos (they do after all occur together as distinct entities in some passages), there is considerable overlap in terms of their nature and roles in Philo's writings. Philo uses the same language to describe the two.[122] In another

---

118 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria* 89.

119 Cf. *QE* 2.62. These powers recall *Timaeus* 41a–d where the demiurge has the lesser gods create mortal beings so as to safeguard his deity. Philo's powers, as part of the intermediate reality between God and the sensible world, serve a similar purpose. However, in *Fug.* 68–72 (discussed below, § 3.2.6.1) Philo describes how God relies on his lesser powers for the construction of all *but* the rational aspect of humanity. "God formed the rational in us, thinking it fit that the ruler should make the ruling faculty in the soul, while the subject faculty should be made by his subjects (i.e., his powers)" (*Fug.* 69).

120 See *Fug.* 94–99, where Philo interprets the six cities of refuge as a gradation of six intermediate entities between the Deity and humanity. Winston says the different entities represent the same being (the Logos) seen from the perspective of six different levels of cognition (*Philo of Alexandria*, 24). See also Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 159–181.

121 For a detailed account of Sophia in Philo's writings, see Burton L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum* (SUNT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 108–95.

122 Cf. *Leg.* 1:41 ("the lofty and heavenly wisdom is many-named; for he calls it 'beginning' and 'image' and 'vision of God'" [Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 92]) with *Conf.* 146–147 ("Many names are [the Logos'], for he is called , 'the Beginning,' and the Name of God, and His Word, and the Man after His Image, and 'he that Sees,' that is Israel. … The Word is the eldest born image of God." [Trans.: PLCL]). For a discussion of these titles, see below.

place Philo calls Sophia the mother of the Logos.[123] In yet another place he claims the Logos dispenses Sophia.[124] This semi-conflation is instructive if not overly satisfying to systematizing minds. There does not appear to have been a generally accepted view about this realm and its inhabitants. In other words, given the lack of clarity in Philo's descriptions of this intermediate realm, it seems the concept was in flux. We have seen this to be the case in Middle Platonism; Plato's revivalists were committed to the presence of an intermediate reality, a second principal, though they do not ever seem to have come to a consensus about the form or nature of that reality. It is interesting that despite a strong religious heritage and its textual traditions, neither Philo nor Hellenistic Judaism in general could shake this deficiency of Middle Platonism.[125]

3.2.4.2. The Ways of Being of the Philonic Intermediary

Beyond the many ways of describing this nexus, or denoting its sundry parts, we must inquire as to what it is. We shall focus from this point on the Logos since for Philo, the Logos exists as the most prominent intermediary entity, the one that subsumes in itself all other interme-diaries.[126] In fact, this subsumption is helpful to understanding the nature

---

123 *Fug.* 109.
124 *Fug.* 137–138.
125 Wisdom of Solomon, as we saw, is consistent (far more so than Philo) in its discussion of Sophia as the divine intermediary. However, that may be due to the genre of the document as much as to any dogmatic view about the issue.
126 The title ὁ Λόγος has a storied philosophical past dating to Heraclitus and was especially prevalent among the Stoics as a name for the active principle of the cosmos (*Diogenes Laertius* 7.134; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.36). We discussed at the beginning of this chapter its use in Aristobulus. Though for the most part Philo assumes the association, the Logos was rooted in the Biblical tradition by the fact that it was the speech act by which God brought creation into being (see, e.g., Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; Psalm 33:6; cf. Sirach 39:17, 31; 43:10, 26; Aristobulus, frg. 4 [Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.13.3). The creative speech act comes to the foreground in *Fug.* 95 where Philo refers to the Deity as ὁ λόγων ("the one who speaks"; see also *Somn.* 1.75, as well as the notes by Colson on both texts, PCLC 5.60 and 337). For an introduction to the concept of the Logos, see Thomas Tobin, "Logos," *ABD* 4.348–56. For a detailed discussion of the Logos in Philo, see David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, and Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 446–451. For a discussion the Logos' role in Hellenistic Jewish cosmology, see H. F. Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums* (TU 97; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 216–282.

of the Logos. In Philo's exposition of Gen 1, he discusses the role of the Logos in the creation of the intelligible world.

> The conception we have concerning God must be similar to this, namely that when he had decided to found the great cosmic city, he first conceived (ἐννοέω) its outlines (οἱ τύποι). Out of these he composed the intelligible cosmos (κόσμος νοητός), which served him as a model (παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ) when he completed the sense-perceptible cosmos (ὁ αἰσθητός) as well. Just as the city that was marked out beforehand in the architect (ἡ ἐν τῷ ἀρχιτεκτονικῷ προδιατυπωθεῖσα πόλις) had no location outside, but had been engraved (ἐνσφραγίζω) in the soul of the craftsman, in the same way the cosmos composed of the ideas (ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν κόσμος) would have no other place (ὁ τόπος) than the divine Logos (ὁ θεῖος Λόγος) who gives these (ideas) their ordered disposition. After all, what other place (τόπος) would there be for his powers (αὐτοῦ οἱ δυνάμεις), sufficient to receive and contain, I do not speak about all of them, but just any single one in its unmixed state?[127]

The comparison between God and the architect who mentally prefigures his city makes the divine Logos out to be the mind of God. As such, the Logos becomes the locus, ὁ τόπος, where reside the preconceived forms (τύποι) or ideas (ἰδέαι) that in the collective constitute the κόσμος νοητός, the noetic world.[128] We will discuss later how God puts this noetic world to use. Here, however, notice that when Philo's analogy between the architect's thinking and God's slips into an encomium of the Logos, Philo switches from the τύποι/ἰδέαι of the noetic world to the divine δυνάμεις.[129] Philo will say more about these powers in the following sections of the treatise; at the least, they suggest that there is a potency associated with the ideas/forms within the divine Logos. Here, however, he does not clarify the exact nature of the relationship between the powers and the Logos.

Though the details change some, this description of the Logos vis-à-vis the Deity and the individual ideas or powers is true to Philo's

---

127 *Opif.* 19–20. Trans.: Runia, *On the Creation*, 50–51.

128 Cf. *Opif.* 24: οὐδὲν ἂν ἕτερον εἴποι τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον εἶναι ἢ θεοῦ λόγον ἤδη κοσμοποιοῦντος. See the discussion of *De opificio* 15b–35 in Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 132–173; and his discussion of κόσμος νοητός in idem, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, 159–165 (and in n. 181 below).

129 Philo explains the "powers" of *Opif.* 20 in the sections 21–23 of the treatise. See Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 145. See also Wolfson, *Philo*, 226, who claims the terms "ideas" and "powers" express "two aspects of the Platonic ideas – one their aspect as mere patterns of things and the other their aspect as causes of things."

understanding presented elsewhere. The Logos is itself a noetic entity (it is ἀσώματος).[130] However, it stands apart from all other νοηταί due to its being the first conception of the Deity (πρὸ πάντων νοούμενον).[131] This primacy is complete in every way. Hence, the Logos is the beginning (ἡ ἀρχή), the first born (ὁ πρωτόγονος), the eldest (ὁ πρεσβύτατος), terms that refer to logical priority as opposed to temporal priority.[132] As Philo says in *Fug.* 100, with respect to the other powers, the divine Logos is far above them (ὁ ὑπεράνω τούτων λόγος θεῖος) being "the eldest one of all intellectual beings (τῶν νοητῶν ἅπαξ ἁπάντων ὁ πρεσβύτατος), the one established nearest the Alone truly existent one (ὁ μόνος, ὁ ἔστιν ἀψευδῶς = God), no distance whatsoever lying between them. "[133]

Ontologically speaking, Philo holds the Logos to be the closest thing to God that is not God himself. Within the Logos are all the creative potencies of the Deity, which when considered in the aggregate make up the noetic cosmos. In this position, not God yet most proximate to God, the Logos serves the function as divine intermediary between God and the sense perceptible world. Philo describes the significance of the Logos' position in *Her.* 205–206.

> To his chief messenger and most venerable Logos, the Father who engendered the universe has granted the singular gift, to stand between and separate the creature from the Creator (ἵνα μεθόριος στὰς τὸ γενόμενον διακρίνῃ τοῦ πεποιηκότος). This same Logos is both suppliant (ὁ ἱκέτης) of ever anxiety-ridden mortality before the immortal and the ambassador (πρεσβευτής) of the ruler to the subject. He glories in this gift and proudly describes it in these words, "And I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut 5:5), neither unbegotten (ἀγένητος) as God, nor begotten (γένητος) as you, but midway between the two extremes (ἀλλὰ μέσος τῶν ἄρκων), serving as a pledge for both; to the Creator as assurance that the creature should never completely shake off the reins and rebel, choosing disorder rather than order (ἀκοσμίαν ἀντὶ κόσμου ἑλόμενον); to the creature warranting his hopefulness that the gracious God will never disregard his own work.[134]

This passage depicts the functions of the Logos quite generally. What appears here to be the least of its functions is to serve as a buffer between the ἀγένητος and the γένητος, though it does do that. This is not a point

---

130 *Conf.* 62.

131 *Cher.* 28.

132 Philo uses all three of these terms of the Logos in *Conf.* 146. See also *Conf.* 63.

133 Though *Fug.* 100 makes the Logos out to be spatially most proximate to the Deity, see *Somn.* 1.67 which describes the place of the Logos as possibly quite far from the first cause.

134 *Her.* 205–206. Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria* 94.

Philo belabors much elsewhere, which suggests that his doctrine of the intermediary nexus had a more positive purpose. More importantly then, in the language of *Deus* 57, the Logos serves as minister of God's gifts, preserving cosmic order (κόσμος) as well as being a suppliant (ἱκέτης) on behalf of the creature (τὸ γενόμενον). In the next section we will explore the function of the Logos in preserving order in the creation, in particular in terms of cosmology (cosmogony and διοίκησις). In the following section, we will explore the function of the Logos as representing (being a πρεσβευτής for) God to humanity, particularly in terms of the Logos as anagogical agent.

3.2.4.3. The Functions of the Intermediate Nexus: The Logos of Cosmology

As we have seen, Philo considers the Deity (τὸ ὄν) the originating cause (αἴτιος) of all reality. He brings everything else into existence (τὰ ἄλλα ἀγωγὼν εἰς γένεσιν) and is thereby the father of all (ὁ ὅλων πατήρ). Without diminishing the magnitude of this claim, Philo also holds that the father of all created everything by means of an intermediary reality. Philo identifies all of the members of the nexus we discussed above as the specific creative force, including the benevolent δύναμις (ἀγάθοτης or ὁ Θεός, responsible for cosmogony), the soverign δύναμις (ἐξουσία or ὁ κύριος, responsible for διοίκησις), Sophia, the forms (ἴδεαι) in general, and the Logos. Most frequently it is the Logos who functions cosmologically in Philo's writings, and in keeping with our matryoshka analogy, what is said about the other members of the nexus in their cosmological function is said of the Logos.

Describing the cosmological function of Philo's intermediary nexus, represented chiefly by the Logos, is a complicated task. While Philo sees the Logos as involved in all of aspects of cosmology (the originating, ordering, governing and preserving of things not God, i.e., the cosmos) ,[135] he appears to separate his involvement into distinct functions. As with the functions of the two powers (benevolence bringing about creation and sovereignty governing creation), Philo keeps the differing functions of the Logos, cosmogony and administration, separate.

---

135 Of course, the cosmos itself is not monolithic in Philo, as *Opif.* 19–20 demonstrated. The cosmos entails both a noetic aspect (νοητός, which is supersensible) and a material aspect (αἰσθητός, sense-perceptible). The difference between the two κόσμοι (νοητός and αἰσθητός) and their interrelationship has relevance to our study, which we discuss below.

Speaking of the powers, we should also recall that Philo could create a gradation of intermediacy among those powers, a gradation that extended from most transcendent to most immanent.[136] In what follows we will consider the *cosmogonical* function of the Logos first, paying attention to Philo's different modes of description. Then we will consider the Logos' administrative function, asking how the Logos influences the continuing existence of the κόσμος. Finally, we will segue to a discussion of the anagogical function of the Logos by sketching the differences between the transcendent and immanent Logos.

3.2.5. The Logos as Agent of Creation

True to form, Philo does <u>not</u> use *an* overarching scheme to discuss the Logos' role in cosmogony. Rather, he makes use of at least three basic metaphors: the Logos as image (εἰκών), as instrument (ὄργανον), and as divider (τομεύς).[137] The first two (instrument and image) are prevalent throughout Philo's corpus, especially in the Allegorical Commentary, occurring by themselves as well as together. The last metaphor (divider) stands by itself and is found mostly in *Quis rerum divinarum heres* (130 ff.).[138] We will consider it briefly as a distinct form of instrumentality.

A good foray into Philo's understanding of cosmogony is *Leg.* 3.96, a passage where the Logos is described as both instrument and image. The passage not only introduces us to the two metaphors, it also uses some of the terminology distinctive to each. At the outset of this passage

---

136 *Fug.* 94–101. Even when Philo conflates the multiple powers into the Logos, we cannot ignore the two poles of this gradation, what Wolfson termed the "transcendent Logos" and "immanent Logos" (see *Philo*, 1.327).

137 Translating τομεύς is awkward. "Divider" comes from LSJ, 1803. "Cutter" also is a possibility. Winston makes the noun an adjective, modifying the Logos ("all-incising Logos" in *Her.* 140, see *Philo of Alexandria*, 97). In *Her.* 130 he refers to it as "the severer" while in 140 he too opts for the adjectival "all-cutting Word" (PLCL 4.347, 353). The problem with such terms is they capture the function but do not serve well as names for a tool. While I use the traditional "divider," perhaps the term "scissor" (not in the plural) would work best in capturing the sense of a tool used to cut in twain; this term preserves the since that we have here a *tool* for a specific function (not simply the function).

138 Τομεύς occurs elsewhere in Philo only at *Det.* 110 where it is associated with λόγος and serves as a tool for excising vice (λόγῳ τομεῖ τῷ κατ᾽ ἐπιστήμην τέμνεται).

the Alexandrian interprets the name of the chief artisan of the sanctuary (see Exod 31:2–5).

> …Bezalel means "in the shadow of God," and the shadow (σκία) of God is his λόγος, which he used as an instrument when he made the world (ᾧ καθάπερ ὀργάνῳ προσχρησάμενος ἐκοσμοποίει). But this shadow, a representation (ἀπείκασμα) as it were, is [itself] the archetype (ἀρχέτυπον) for other things. For just as God is the pattern (παράδειγμα) of the image (ἡ εἰκών) – what has been called "shadow" – thus the image (ἡ εἰκών) becomes the pattern (παράδειγμα) of other things. This he (Moses) made clear when he starts his law by saying, "And God made the human being after the image of God" (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωον κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ; LXX Gen 1:27); thus on the one hand that the image had been modeled after God, while on the other that the human being was modeled after the image when it undertook its paradigmatic function (ὡς τῆς μὲν εἰκόνος κατὰ τὸν θεὸν ἀπεικονισθείσης, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα λαβοῦσαν δύναμιν παραδείγματος).

Philo starts off this passage by referring to the Logos as an instrument (ὄργανον) that God uses in the act of creation (κοσμοποιέω). He then moves to discuss the Logos as εἰκών or παράδειγμα. The connection between the two (instrument and image) is not necessarily obvious in this passage, though there is no reason to see them as disjointed. If there is a distinction, it is that the function of the Logos as instrument is a more generic topic while its function as image has greater specificity. We will first consider the Logos as instrument.

3.2.5.1. The Instrumental Use of the Logos: The Logos as ὄργανον δι' οὗ τὸ πᾶν ἐκοσμοποιεῖ

In terms of cosmogony, Philo starts off *Leg.* 3.96 with the statement: ᾧ (λόγῳ) καθάπερ ὀργάνῳ προσχρησάμενος ἐκοσμοποιεῖ. Κοσμοποιέω is one of several verbs the Alexandrian uses for the creative (cosmogonic) action; others include ἐργάζομαι, δημιουργέω, γεννάω, and ποιέω.[139] These verbs function generically and do not suggest any particular method of creation. Philo most often uses them with the Deity as subject.[140] The other terms in *Leg.* 3.96, ὄργανον ("instrument") and προσχράομαι ("to use") along with the dative case of the relative

---

139 Philo often uses the verb γίγνομαι to refer to the process from the perspective of the creation. See *Cher.* 125. The cognate noun ἡ γένεσις can refer to the creation event (an echo of Gen 1:1 LXX) or to created things (often αἱ γενέσεις, see *Migr.* 6).

140 On occasion, Philo has the Logos as subject of the creative verbs.

pronoun (ᾧ, "by which"), are more telling. Such language affords the Logos a specific role in cosmogony, namely as an instrument which the Deity employs in his crafting of the creation.

Philo refers to the Logos qua instrument a number of times. Consider the following examples.

> *Sacr.* 8: …since by the same word that he makes the universe he also leads the perfect from things earthly unto himself (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν

> *Deus* 57: …He employs as minister of his gifts the Logos by which also he made the whole world ([ὁ θεὸς] δίδωσι δὲ λόγῳ χρώμενος ὑπηρέτῃ δωρεῶν, ᾧ καὶ τὸν κὸσμον εἰργάζετο.)[141]

> *Migr.* 6: [Interpreting "house of God" in LXX Gen 28:17] Who, then, can this house of God be, save the Word who is antecedent to all that has come into existence (ὁ Λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν γίνεσιν)? The Word which the Helmsman of the Universe grasps as a rudder to guide all things on their course (οὗ καθάπερ οἴακος ἐνειλημμένος τῶν ὅλων κυβερνήτης πηδαλιουχεῖ τὰ σύμπαντα)? Even as when he was fashioning the world (κοσμοπλάσσω), He employed it as His instrument (χρησάμενος ὀργάνῳ), that the fabric of His handiwork might be without reproach.[142]

Note that these three passages not only use the metaphor of the Logos as instrument that we find in *Leg.* 3.96, they also use a number of the same terms to denote that instrumentality. It is in fact possible to isolate an "instrumentality vocabulary cluster," a group of terms Philo consistently draws upon to refer to the Logos. The tabel below provides the different items found in this cluster along with where they appear in Philo's writings.

---

141 Trans.: PCLC 3.39.
142 Trans.: PCLC 4.134.

Instrumentality Terminology in Philo's Writings

Term	Philonic Passage(s)
ὄργανον	*Migr.* 6, *Leg.* 3.96, *Cher.* 125–127
ἐργαλεῖον	*Cher.* 125
χράω	*Deus* 57, *Migr.* 6
προσχράομαι	*Leg.* 3.96
instrumental dative (ᾧ)	*Leg.* 3.95, *Sacr.* 8, *Deus* 57, *Fug.* 12, 95, *Somn.* 2. 45, cf. *Cher.* 27–28 (δυναμεῖς)
instrumental use of διά c. gen. (δι' οὗ)	*Sacr.* 8, *Spec.* 1.81, *Cher.* 125–127, *Somn.* 2.45; cf. *Fug.* 108 (σοφία)

The idea of the Logos as instrument in creation has a limited exegetical foundation for it. As I have said, the use of the term λόγος appears to have its warrant in the cosmogonic speech acts of Gen 1, though the exact term is not used there. Psalm 33 (LXX 32):6 is also suggestive: τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν ("by the word of the Lord the heavens were secured and all their host by the breath of his mouth"). Similar language is used in the LXX for Σοφία's involvement in creation, which we discussed earlier when discussing Wisdom of Solomon. Though these texts may support the "Logos as instrument" metaphor, none of them however provides enough support to suggest any strong *biblical* impetus for Philo's language. Such an impetus must lie elsewhere.

Fortunately, Philo assists us in determining a probable *Vorleben* for this idea of the Logos as instrument of creation. As I have said, most of the passages that we rely upon to reconstruct the cosmological roles of the Logos address the issue only secondarily and briefly. However, in *Cher.* 125–128 we have what appears to be an instance of philosophical self-indulgence when Philo spends a number of paragraphs discussing the technical function of prepositions. The reason for this digression is precisely the question of the Deity's relationship to instrumentality. Philo takes issue with the claim of Adam (allegorically, νοῦς) in Gen 4:1 that he has gotten himself a human διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.[143] The Alexandrian

---

143 Gen 4:1 LXX: Αδαμ δὲ ἔγνω Ευαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν τὸν Καιν καὶ εἶπεν ἐκτησάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ("Adam knew Eve, his

contends such language with respect to the Deity is inappropriate. "For God is a cause, not an instrument; what comes to be does so through an instrument but by a cause (ὅτι ὁ Ͽεὸς αἴτιον, οὐκ ὄργανον, τὸ δὲ γινόμενον δι' ὀργάνου μὲν ὑπὸ δὲ αἰτίου πάντως γίνεται)."[144]

Philo interprets Adam's use of διά c. gen. as implying instrumentality. Philo apparently felt this gross misstatement (διαμαρτάνω) needed further explanation since he embarks on a prepositional excursus in *Cher.* 125–127 to show how the origin of a thing is the result of manifold causality, as signified by the phrases τὸ ὑφ' οὗ, τὸ ἐξ οὗ, τὸ δι' οὗ, τὸ δι' ὅ.[145] Philo explains curtly the different causes to which each of these prepositional phrases refers. Respectively, "The 'by which' is the cause (τὸ αἴτιον), the 'from which' is matter (ἡ ὕλη), the 'through which' is the instrument (τὸ ἐργαλεῖον), the 'on account of which' is the motive (ἡ αἰτία)" (*Cher.* 125). He illustrates the relevance of these causes by providing their cosmic application in *Cher.* 127. With respect to the cosmos,

> you will find its cause to be God, *by whom* it came to be, its substance the four elements (αἱ τέσσαραι στοιχεῖαι) *from which* it was mixed (συγκεράννυμι), its instrument (ὄργανον) the Logos of God *through whom* it was constructed (κατασκευάζω), and the motive of its construction the goodness of the maker (ὁ δημιουργός).

Clearly, this cosmological application is ancillary to Philo's agenda in *De cherubim* since he immediately transitions to something more akin to prepositional epistemology.[146] Yet that Philo can provide this nuanced

---

wife and, becoming pregnant, she bore Cain and (Adam) said: 'I have gained a human through God").

144 *Cher.* 125.

145 Thomas Tobin (*Creation of Man*, 67) and before him, W. Theiler (*Vorbereitung*, 29–31) claim rightly that the excursus in *Cher.* 125–127 is only loosely related to Philo's topic. It would appear that there is an umbrella topic having to do with prepositions and causality and that beneath that topic you have different spheres wherein such causality plays out. Philo's immediate concern is epistemology, in keeping with his noetic allegorical reading of the Adam narrative. The excursus, as we shall see, also involves metaphysics.

146 Epistemology is the subject at hand when Mind/Adam thinks he is the cause of what he has acquired by union with Sense-Perception/Eve and that God is only the instrument (as Philo interprets LXX Gen 4:1 διὰ τοῦ Ͽεοῦ). The prepositions (qua termini technici) denote causality (*Cher.* 125: πρὸς τήν τινος γένεσιν), in its diverse forms, a causality that can be applied to epistemology or to metaphysics. After a digression wherein Philo establishes the technical function of these prepositions by way of an artistic illustration

metaphysical sketch even as an aside is informative. In fact, the complexity of this excursus and its resemblance to similar discourses in Hellenistic philosophy make it quite likely Philo is drawing from an established philosophical topos, if not lifting his material directly out of an encheiridion.[147] We saw in chapter two that this philosophical use of prepositional phrases has its origins in Aristotle's positing four distinct causes (the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause). It appears to have been at the advent of Middle Platonism that prepositional phrases were formally associated with these different causes. Philo's treatment of prepositions in *De cherubim*, written a generation or so removed from this advent, resembles well that association and the distinctively Middle Platonic *Tendenz* that underlies it. This *Tendenz* is the three-principle doctrine (*Dreiprinzipienlehre*) where God (the first principle) is the efficient cause (the ὑφ' οὗ), matter is the material cause (the ἐξ οὗ), and an intermediary principle bridges the gap as the formal cause (the καθ' ὅ or πρὸς ὅ).[148]

(itself a standard trope) and a cosmic illustration (our primary concern here, the prepositional metaphysics), the Alexandrian returns to epistemology. Hence in *Cher.* 127–128 he writes: "It is thus [a proper understanding of prepositions] that truth-lovers distinguish, who desire true and sound knowledge. But those who say that they possess something through God, suppose the cause, that is the Maker, to be the instrument, and the instrument, that is the human mind, they suppose to be the cause (οἱ δὲ φάσκοντες διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τι κεκτῆσθαι τὸ μὲν αἴτιον ὄργανον τὸν δημιουργόν, τὸ δ' ὄργανον αἴτιον τὸν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν ὑπολαμβάνουσιν). Right reason too would not hold Joseph free from blame, when he said that through God would the true meaning of dreams be found (Gen 40:8). He should have said that by Him as a cause the unfolding and right interpretation of things hidden would fitly come to pass. For we are the instruments, wielded in varying degrees of force, through which each particular form of action is produced; the Craftsman it is who brings to bear on the material the impact of our forces, whether of soul or body, even He by whom all things are moved" (PLCL).

   On prepositional epistemology, see our discussion of Alcinous and Potamon in chapter two (§ 2.3.1).

147 We discuss the topos of prepositional metaphysics and provide examples in chapter two (§ 2.3). In addition to Tobin (see previous note), see also the other secondary literature discussed there. For a discussion of Philo's use of this topos in particular, see Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 227; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 138–139, Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 67; and Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 171–174. (On pg. 172 Runia erroneously attributes the Gen 4:1 quote to Cain [twice] instead of Adam.)

148 On the fluctuation of prepositional possibilities for the intermediate principle see chapter two (§ 2.3) as well as below.

In Philo's presentation in *Cher.* 127, particular notice should be given to his description of the λόγος θεοῦ through whom creation is constructed. The Logos comes not unexpectedly as the intermediary principle between the efficient cause (ὁ θεός/δημιουργός) and the formal cause (ὕλη/αἱ τέσσαραι στοιχεῖαι). In fact, the hypothesis that Philo is drawing from traditional material for this passage is quite helpful in explaining the presence of the Logos, since this is the singular reference to the Logos qua divine intermediary in this section of the treatise (*Cher.* 124–130).[149] At the same time, the presentation of the Logos here is typically Philonic: it serves as cosmopoetic instrument (note ὄργανον c. κατεσκευάσθην) with the distinctive prepositional descriptor, τὸ δι' οὗ. We saw in chapter two already that Philo's positing the Logos as metaphysical instrument and specifically his use of διά c. genitive is not attested in Middle Platonism before him.[150]

The question that comes from all of this is how we assess the status of the Logos as divine instrument in creation in Philo's writings. Is the Logos as ὄργανον θεοῦ part of received philosophical tradition that Philo appropriates wholly or is it an innovation infused into that tradition? If it is an innovation, is it Philo's or does it lie further back in the Jewish/ exegetical traditions he appears to rest upon? The place of the Logos in Jewish philosophical speculation (and/or exegesis) clearly precedes Philo, as Aristobulus makes clear. Yet, the "Logos as instrument" development seems closer to Philo if not original to him. It seems likely that Philo, and in a less sophisticated way, the Wisdom of Solomon, are in the right place at the right time. The rise of Middle Platonism in turn-of-the-era Alexandrian and its emphasis on transcendence of the first principle and immanence of the second principle created an opportunity for Greek-speaking Judaism to articulate itself philosophically without compromising its key tenet, the absolute transcendence of God.

Philo, like Wisdom of Solomon, shows how Middle Platonism and Judaism can coalesce by means of a previously established intellectual apparatus, the relatively ancient Wisdom tradition. Philo is clearly aware that Sophia plays the intermediary role not only in a philosophical reading of Prov 8 but also in more recent speculation. No doubt for a

---

149 The divine Logos is last mentioned prior to *Cher.* 127 in sections 35–36.
150 See the discussion "The Prepositional Phrase τὸ δι' οὗ" (§ 2.3.1) in chapter two. There we considered evidence from Alcinous and Potamon whether Philo's use of this phrase is not *sui generis*.

number of reasons, Philo adopts a scheme that emphasizes the Logos over Sophia; yet, he still retains not a little a bit of the Wisdom tradition in his description of the Logos.

It is interesting to consider *De providentia* 1.23 from this perspective. It is one of the two other places where Philo ventures into prepositional metaphysics while discussing the causes of the cosmos.

> By whom: God. Out of which: matter. Through whom: the instrument. The instrument is the Logos of God. And towards what was it made: the model (…*nempe Deum, A quo: materiam, Ex quo; instrumentum, Per quod. Instrumentum autem Dei est Verbum. Ad quid denique? Ut sit* παράδειγμα).[151]

There are two aspects of these prepositions of metaphysics that stand out. First, instead of the final cause, the motive, Philo provides the *id ad quod,* the that towards which, in reference to the paradigm. This is consistent with prepositional schemas preserved in Seneca and Alcinous and suggests that we may supply the Greek phrase τὸ πρὸς ὅ to this cause.[152] However, the *exemplar*/παράδειγμα of which Seneca and Alcinous speak is their intermediate principle. Philo either perceives a different intermediate principle in the *instrumentum* which is the *Verbum Dei*, or he bifurcates that principle into transcendent (*ad quid*) and an immanent (*per quod*) aspect. In either case, the Logos must carry out its instrumental function in creation through relying on a model.

Where *Cher.* 125–127 provide for only one intermediary principle, *Prov.* 1.23 provides two and seems to suggest (at least to the later interpreter of Philo) a dichotomy between them. I am not sure the dichotomy is real or at least substantive. A comparison of these two passages with each other and with the numerous instances in Philo

---

151 Translation of *Prov.* 1.23 from Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 173. The Latin translation of the Armenian is from J. B. Aucher, though I have provided Runia's emendation of παράδειγμα for Aucher's *argumentum*. According to Runia, the word Aucher "translates as '*argumentum*' is also the Armenian equivalent for παράδειγμα" (ibid., 172).

  Philo explicitly discusses prepositional metaphysics three times in his oeuvre, *Cher.* 125–127, *QG* 1.58 and *Prov.* 1.23. The Greek text of the latter two are lost to us; we have them preserved only in Armenian translation. These three passages do not appear to differ very much. In *QG* 1.58 he is providing an exegesis of Gen 4:1 and does not catalog the different causes and their respective prepositions. See the discussion of these other two passages and their relationship to *Cher.* 125–127 in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 172–173

152 See § 2.3.

where the Logos has instrumental and paradigmatic functions (not to mention the instrumental function of Sophia) suggests that the manner of describing the intermediate principle was in considerable flux when Philo was writing. Furthermore, we saw above in *Leg.* 3.96 that Philo brings the instrumental and the paradigmatic functions together. There the Logos serves both functions, though again their interrelationship is not clear. Yet if we take *Leg.* 3.96 as representative, the language of instrumentality is straightforward and introductory; the "image" terminology that dominates the remainder of the passage is rich, varied and substantive.

In summary, I understand the instrumental function of the Logos, its role as ὄργανον through whom (δι' οὗ) the cosmos is created, to be a generic way of describing the Logos's cosmic function, a form of philosophical shorthand about which Philo does not provide much elaboration. The origin of this shorthand lies with the development of the Middle Platonic intermediate principle. Yet while it seems likely Philo received his terminology of instrumentality from this philosophical milieu, the evidence is sparse. Perhaps Philo has an exegetical or religious reason or making use of language that itself will not be common among Middle Platonists until the second century CE. But Philo's frequent use of this terminology should not detract from the fact that Philo's greater valuation of the Logos lies with its paradigmatic function, and it is for that function that he reserves the greatest variety and complexity of language when dealing with the Logos. What is more, in his emphasis on the Logos as model, he is in unquestionable harmony with the Middle Platonism of his day.

3.2.5.2. The Logos as Divider: The Logos as ὁ τομεὺς τῶν συμπάντων

The passage in *De cherubim* treats causality in terms primarily of epistemology and secondarily (illustratively) of metaphysics. The mention of the Logos belongs to the latter, the illustrative. This of course does not mean that the divine Logos is not connected with Philo's epistemology; the Logos is after all the essence of rationality. Furthermore, Philo does not ultimately separate the two (epistemology and metaphysics); they share the same causality because they are part of the same universe, originating with the same one God, who is consistent across his actions. This is clear already in *Cher.* 127 where Philo's criticism of Adam/Νοῦς is not just that he confuses God as instrument but sees himself as the cause. This reverses the matter.

Those who affirm they acquire something through God (διὰ τοῦ ϑεοῦ) suppose that the cause, the maker, to be the instrument (τὸ μὲν αἴτιον ὄργανον τὸν δημιοργόν) while the instrument, the human mind, they suppose to be the cause (τὸ δ' ὄργανον αἴτιον τὸν ἀνϑρώτινον νοῦν).[153]

Though Philo does not state it explicitly in *Cher.* 124–130, his juxtaposition of prepositional metaphysics and epistemology demonstrates a correspondence between the Divine Logos and the human mind; both are the ὄργανον δι' οὗ something occurs (creation or thought). This correspondence remains even if the language of instrumentality shifts.

In *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, Philo employs a unique metaphor to describe the Divine Logos, a τομεύς or divider.[154] The Alexandrian devotes the middle part of the treatise (129–236) to interpreting one verse from Genesis 15, a chapter that describes the covenantal ceremony between Abraham and God. In that ceremony God tells Abraham to take "for me a three year old heifer, a three year old goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. He took for him all of these and he divided them in the middle and he placed each half facing one another; but the birds he did not divide" (vv. 9–10).[155] Philo understands the subject of "he divided" (διεῖλεν from διαιρέω) in verse 10 to be God, not Abraham. He sees in this division an allegorical key to understanding reality in all its dimensions, as he explicates exhaustively in *Her.* 129–236. The principle of division helps to explain everything from the

---

153 This is given further explanation in *Cher.* 128 when Philo says: "For we are the instruments, wielded in varying degrees of force, through which each particular form of action is produced; the Craftsman it is who brings to bear on the material the impact of our forces, whether of soul or body, even He by whom all things are moved." (ὄργανα γὰρ ἡμεῖς, δι' ὧν αἱ κατὰ μέρος ἐνέργειαι, ἐπιτενόμενα καὶ ἀνιέμενα, τεχνίτης δὲ ὁ τὴν πλῆξιν ἐργαζόενος τῶν σώματός τε καὶ ψυχῆς δυνάμεων, ὑφ' οὗ πάντα κινεῖται) (PLCL 2.85).

154 For a discussion of the Logos as τομεύς in Philo see David M. Hay, "Philo's Treatise on the Logos-Cutter," *SPhilo* 2 (1973): 9–22. See also U. Früchtel, *Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen bei Philo von Alexandrien : ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Genesisexegese* (ALGHJ 2; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 51–52. See also the introduction to *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit: Introduction, Traduction et Notes* (Marguerite Harl, trans.; vol. 15 in *Les œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie*; ed. by R. Arnaldez et al.: Paris: CERF, 1966), 71–88.

155 LXX Gen 15:9–10: εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ λαβέ μοι δάμαλιν τριετίζουσαν καὶ αἶγα τριετίζουσαν καὶ κριὸν τριετίζοντα καὶ τρυγόνα καὶ περιστερὰν ἔλαβεν δὲ αὐτῷ πάντα ταῦτα καὶ διεῖλεν αὐτὰ μέσα καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὰ ἀντιπρόσωπα ἀλλήλοις τὰ δὲ ὄρνεα οὐ διεῖλεν.

intricacies of the cosmos to the workings of the soul, from metaphysics to epistemology.[156]

At the center of God's activity in both fields, again serving an instrumental function, is the Logos. Philo's cosmological reading of Gen 15:10 shows itself in *Her.* 133–140, which he summarizes thus:

> Thus did God sharpen his Logos, the divider of all things, and divide the formless and qualityless universal being, and the four elements of the world that had been separated off from it, and the animals and plants constituted from these.[157]

While this passage does not employ prepositional metaphysics, it evinces the same basic cosmology that lay behind *Cher.* 127. God is the efficient cause, matter (ἡ ἄμορφος καὶ ἄποιος τῶν ὅλων οὐσία = ὕλη) is the formal cause, and the instrumental cause is again the Logos (τομεύς = ὄργανον/ἐργαλεῖον). However, where ὄργανον is a generic term ("tool" or "organ"), τομεύς relates in itself something of the process being described (a "divider" used in the process of division).[158] This process of division is not limited to cosmology but, as I said, is the means whereby all reality is delineated – whether in its inception and by the creator (ὁ τεχνίτης) or in its conception by the human mind. Similarly, the λόγος itself is not limited as a divider operating metaphysically; it also has a corresponding epistemological role.

In much the same way that *De cherubim* provides two ὄργανα, one "through which" the world is constructed (the divine Logos) and one through which intellection takes place (the human mind), so *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* provides two τομεῖς.[159] Philo brings this correspond-

---

156 Consider Hay's conclusion ("Logos-Cutter," 19): "Philo's concept of the Logos-Cutter as an agent of creation as well as redemption seems to be original with him. He probably developed it in conscious dependence on a Jewish tradition regarding the divine Word as a sword to preserve the faithful and punish the godless. In extending that soteriological image, he was presenting a Jewish solution to a problem often discussed in Greek philosophy, the existence of endless differences and sources of conflict within the universe."

157 *Her.* 140. Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 97.

158 The cognate verb τέμνω occurs 17 times (with God as subject of the verb) in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, all of them in the section of the treatise where Philo is explicating Gen 15:10 (secs. 130–236).

159 Philo does not explicitly use τομεύς for human reason; but as wes hall see presently, human reason serves as such a tool. See also *Her.* 225; in this passage Philo provides the following interpretation of the seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle: "We have shown, too, its resemblance to the soul. For the soul is tripartite [see *Her.* 132], and each of its parts, as has been shown is divided

ence to the fore by interpreting why the two birds were not divided in
Abraham's covenant ceremony (see Gen 15:10, quoted above). In *Her.*
230 he says Moses "gives the name of birds to the δύο λόγους, both of
which are winged and of a soaring nature. One is the archetypal reason
above us, the other the copy of it which we possess (ἕνα μὲν ἀρχέτυπον
<τὸν> ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς, ἕτερον δὲ μίμημα τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς ὑπάρχοντα)."

Philo explains the differences and similarities of these two λόγοι by
referring to the two birds set out by Abraham, the pigeon and the
turtledove.

> Our mind (ὁ ἡμέτερος νοῦς) is likened to a pigeon, since the pigeon is a
> tame and domesticated creature, while the turtledove stands as the figure of
> the mind which is the pattern (παράδειγμα) of ours. For the θεοῦ λόγος is a
> lover of the wild and solitary, never mixing with the medley of things that
> have come into being only to perish, but its wonted resort is ever above
> and its study is to wait on One and One only. So then the two natures (αἱ
> δύο φύσεις), the reasoning power within us (ἡ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῦ λογισμοῦ) and the
> divine Logos above us (ἡ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τοῦ θείου λόγου), are themselves
> indivisible yet they divide other things without number (ἄτμητοι δὲ οὖσαι
> μυρία ἄλλα τέμνουσιν). The divine Word separated (διαιρέω) and
> apportioned (διανέμω) all that is in nature. Our mind deals with all the
> things material and immaterial which the mental process brings within its
> grasp, divides them into an infinity of infinities and never ceases to cleave
> them.[160] This is the result of its likeness to the Father and Maker of all (διὰ
> τὴν πρὸς τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τῶν ὅλων ἐμφέρειαν). For the Deity is
> without mixture or infusion or parts and yet has become to the whole
> world the cause (αἴτιος) of mixture, infusion, division and multiplicity of
> parts. And thus it will be natural that these two which are similar (ὥστε
> εἰκότως καὶ τὰ ὁμοιωθέντα), the mind within us and the mind above us
> (νοῦς τε ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς), should subsist without parts (ἀμερεῖς) or
> severance (ἄτμητοι) and yet be strong and potent to divide (διαιρέω) and
> distinguish (διακρίνω) everything that is.[161]

Philo presents two minds in this passage, a macrocosmic mind in service
to God, and a microcosmic mind within us. The minds are different in
scale but similar in nature and function. They are invisible entities by

---

into two, making six parts in all, to which the ἱερὸς καὶ θεῖος λόγος, the τομεὺς
ἁπάντων, makes a fitting seventh" (PLCL 4.395).

160 Compare *Her.* 235, where Philo speaks of human rationality (ὅ τε ἡμέτερος νοῦς,
ἅττ' ἂν παραλάβῃ νοητῶς πράγματά τε καὶ σώματα, εἰς ἀπειράκις ἄπειρα
διαιρεῖ μέρη καὶ τέμνων οὐδέποτε λήγει) with sec. 130 where he speaks of the
divine Logos (ἵνα τὸν ἄδεικτον ἐννοῇς θεὸν τέμνοντα τὰς τῶν σωμάτων καὶ τὰς
τῶν πραγμάτων … τῷ τομεῖ τῶν συμπάντων ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ, ὃς εἰς τὴν ὀξυτάτην
ἀκονηθεὶς ἀκμὴν διαιρῶν οὐδέποτε λήγει).

161 PLCL (modified).

which *all* other things are divided. The division wrought by the heavenly mind is cosmogonic as the ὁ θεῖος λόγος distinguishes and distributes everything (τὰ ἐν τῇ φύσει πάντα). The division worked at the microcosmic level is one of intellectual apprehension (παραλαμβάνειν νοητῶς), whereby the human mind (ὁ ἡμέτερος νοῦς) perceives the created order in the very multiplicity that the divine mind conceived it.[162] The process of understanding things is hereby directly connected to the process of creating things, epistemology to meta-physics, because the instrument necessary to the former is of like kind (the allegorical ὄρνις) with the instrument necessary to the latter. Still, there is the obvious substantive difference between these two; the human mind is a pigeon, a domesticated creature which operates from within the created order, while the mind above, the divine Logos, is a wild and soaring turtledove that exists free from the created order and is constrained only by service to the Supreme One.

This supreme One, ὁ θεῖος, establishes by his nature the natures of the δύο λόγους. Philo specifically claims this for the microcosmic mind in *Her.* 236 when he says it has its function as a result (συμβαίνω) of its likeness (ἐμφέρεια) to the ποιητὴς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. The association between the macrocosmic mind and the Deity is less explicit in the passage above, though clearly they are related: the mind above us is ὁ λόγος θεοῦ and ὁ θεῖος λόγος and it serves as an attendant (ὀπαδός) to the εἷς μόνος. Philo is clear that the mind within us and the mind above us function as they do because the simple and singular Deity is the cause (αἴτιος) of the complex and diverse universe.

Cosmologically, we again find, lying just beneath the surface of *Her.* 234–235, a tripartite causality pointing to a supreme cause (the cause of all), an intermediate instrumental principle (the divine Logos who determines reality via division) and a passive object which comes to be τὰ ἐν τῇ φύσει, ὁ κόσμος. Anthropologically, we again find a tripartite epistemological causality that mirrors the cosmological, with the only change being that the instrumental principle is the mind who discerns reality via division. In the passages we have so far treated, the basis for this interrelationship of cosmology and anthropology in terms of an intermediate principle is clear though unsubstantiated. What we now

---

162 See n. 158. Note how *Her.* 130 describes the divine Logos as never ceasing to divide (διαιρῶν οὐδέποτε λήγει) cosmologically and *Her.* 235 describes the human mind as never ceasing to separate (τέμνων οὐδέποτε λήγει) in terms of intellection.

must observe is the basis for this interrelationship, the basis for the correspondence between the mind within us and the mind above us, between cosmology and anthropology.

3.2.5.3. The Paradigmatic Use of the Logos: The Logos as εἰκών

What we have seen thus far is that Philo reproduces the Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre* when presenting his cosmology. In Philo, the three principles are the efficient cause, the instrumental cause, and the material cause. In the evidence we have considered, Philo's writings demonstrate a modification of earlier Middle Platonic tradition in focusing on the intermediate principle as instrumental as opposed to formal cause. The comparison of the Logos as τομεύς and as ὄργανον demonstrates that while the metaphor might change, the basic function of the intermediary remains. Furthermore, this comparison has shown that Philo's cosmological speculation is closely aligned with and exists in support of his anthropological/epistemological speculation.

The metaphor of the divider expresses the common function shared by the mind above us and the mind within us, the δύο λόγους, in *Her.* 230–236 and as such suggests an ontological relationship between the two. However, when Philo wishes to substantiate this suggestion, to define the relationship between the heavenly and earthly minds, he does not rely on τομεύς language. Instead, he bases the relationship between the heavenly and earthly minds on something else. Notice in the quotation of *Her.* 230–31 above that Philo sees the relationship between the two as one of ἀρχέτυπος and μίμημα, a model and its copy.[163] Philo explains the basis of this terminology further in *Her.* 231, again speaking of the δύο λόγους.

---

163 The relationship of archetype and copy is introduced originally in *Quis rerum divenarum heres sit* in 126–127 where Philo is explaining the significance of the pigeon and turtledove sacrifices (cf. Gen 15:9): "And further take for me a turtledove and a pigeon, that is divine and human wisdom (ἡ θεία καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία), both of them winged creatures, skilled by practice to speed upwards, yet differing from each other, as the genus differs from the species or the copy from the archetype (ἣ διαφέρει γένος εἴδους ἢ μίμημα ἀρχετύπου). For divine wisdom is a lover of solitudes, since loneliness is dear to her because of the solitary God whose possession she is, and thus in parable (συμβολικῶς) she is called the turtledove. The other is gentle and tame and sociable, frequenting the cities of men and pleased to dwell with mortals. They liken her to a pigeon." (PLCL 4.347 modified).

One is the archetypal reason above us, the other the copy of it which we possess. Moses calls the first the "image of God" (εἰκὼν Θεοῦ), the second the cast of that image (τῆς εἰκόνος ἐκμαγεῖον). For God, he says, made man not "the image of God" but "after the image" ("ἐποίησε" γάρ φησιν "ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον" οὐχὶ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ ἀλλὰ "κατ᾽ εἰκόνα"; cf. Gen 1.27 LXX). And thus (ὥστε) the mind we each possess, which in the true and full sense is the "ἄνθρωπος," is an expression at third hand (τρίτος τύπος) from the Maker, while the mind in between is a model (παράδειγμα) for our own while being itself a representation (ἀπεικασμός) of God.[164]

In its context in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, this turn to Gen 1:27 and the paradigmatic understanding of the two λόγοι which Philo develops from it provides the exegetical warrant that underlies the presentation of the two minds that we discussed in the last section.[165] They may be understood as having similar functions, as indivisible τομεῖς, because the one is a copy of the other. Furthermore, the qualitative differences between the two, the turtledove and the pigeon, rests with the fact that one is once removed, the other twice removed from the Deity. Hence, divine reason creates reality while human reason perceives it; divine reason exists above reality while human reason exists within reality, i.e., within us.

This association between an instrumental metaphor and a paradigmatic metaphor to discuss the relationship between the intermediary principle and the physical (i.e., anthropological) realm is noteworthy in that we have seen it before, namely in *Leg.* 3.96. Recall that it is this passage which follows the description of the Logos as ὄργανον, the instrument δι᾽ οὗ the world came to be, with another image, the Logos as παράδειγμα and εἰκών. And as with *Her.* 231, this imagery is specifically tied to Gen 1:27. In other words, *Leg.* 3.96 and *Her.* 231 both present the instrumentality of the Logos as resting on its iconic status.

The Logos as εἰκών is, one may argue, the most resilient and the fullest of Philo's multiple modes of discourse about the intermediary principle.[166] The origin of this metaphor is difficult to state definitively,

---

164 *Her.* 231.

165 Philo's chief concern in *Her.* 129–236 is the allegorical explication of διαιρέω as it is used in Gen 15:10. When he addresses the two birds that are not divided, the text affords him the basis for speaking of two indivisible things that stand in contrast to the divisible. But from the outset (see *Her.* 126) the paradigmatic construal of the divine λόγος/human λόγος is operating.

166 The classic studies on εἰκών are Friedrich-Wilhelm Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament* (BZNW 23; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958); and Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei:*

though it seems to have as its two foci Middle Platonic interpretations of Plato's *Timaeus* and Moses' account of the creation of ἄνθρωπος in Gen 1:27. We will first consider how Philo employs this biblical passage to explain the cosmological role of the Logos. We then consider how the framework of that explanation coheres with Middle Platonism.

3.2.5.3.1. "This teaching is Moses', not mine."

In *Her.* 231, the Logos is the intellectual paradigm for human reason. In other words, it serves as an intermediary of rationality. Philo interprets Gen 1:27 in this manner elsewhere, including *Plant.* 20, *Spec.* 1.171, and 3.83.[167] In passages such as these we have our three Middle Platonic principles as they relate to rationality. While the human mind is rational and not material (and hence not the material principle), these passages make clear the locus of human rationality is within the context of the

---

    Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

167 *Plant.* 18–20: "… the great Moses … claimed [the λογικὴ ψυχή] to be a genuine coin of that divine and invisible Spirit, signed and impressed by the seal of God, the stamp (ὁ χαρακτήρ) of which is the ἀίδιος λόγος; for he said "God inbreathed into him a breath of Life" (ἐνέπνευσε ὁ θεός εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, Gen 2:7); thus it must be that the one who receives is modeled after the one who sends. This is why it also says that the human being has been made after the Image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ τὸν ἄνθρωπον γεγενῆσθαι, cf. Gen 1:27), though surely not after the image of anything created (οὐ μὴν κατ' εἰκόνα τινὸς τῶν γεγονότων). It followed then, as a natural consequence of man's soul having been made after the image of the Archetype, the Word of the Cause, that his body also was made erect, and could lift up its eyes to heaven, the purest portion of our universe, that by means of that which he could see man might clearly apprehend that which he could not see" (my translation of *Plant.* 18–19; PLCL translation of 20).

    Spec. 1.171: "Incense offerings serve as thanksgivings for our dominant part, the rational spirit-force within us which was shaped according to the archetypal form of the divine image (ὡς εἶναι τὰ μὲν ἔναιμα εὐχαριστίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῶν ἐναίμων, τὰ δὲ θυμιάματα ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ, τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν λογικοῦ πνεύματος, ὅπερ ἐμορφώθη πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον ἰδέαν εἰκόνος θείας)."

    Spec. 3.83: "…of all the treasures the universe has in its store there is none more sacred and godlike than man, the glorious cast of a glorious image, shaped according to the pattern of the archetypal form of the Word (διότι τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ κτημάτων καὶ κειμηλίων οὐδὲν οὔτε ἱεροπρεπέστερον οὔτε θεοειδέστερόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπου· παγκάλης εἰκόνος πάγκαλον ἐκμαγεῖον ἀρχετύπου λογικῆς ἰδέας παραδείγματι τυπωθέν)."

sense perceptible and that its role is the most passive or derivative.[168]
Again, like the material principle, the human mind is an entity twice
removed from the Deity, a copy of a copy.

We can understand Gen 1:27 playing a role in Philo's discussion of
humanity and in particular humanity's relatedness to the Deity (where
ἄνθρωπος is made κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ). Yet, Philo's *Dreiprinzipienlehre*
extends beyond principles of rationality and interests us for how he
relates it to cosmology. Still, this does not make Gen 1:27 and its focus
on the origin of humanity irrelevant beyond anthropology. What we
find is that Genesis 1:27, or more precisely the phrase κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ,
serves as a kind of warrant for Philo for finding the Platonic three
principles in Moses' teaching on cosmology as well. Gen 1:27 serves as
nexus between Philo's philosophical anthropology and cosmology.

The nexus of Gen 1:27, anthropology and cosmology may be seen
in *Spec.* 1.81 where Philo writes concerning the perfection of the soul
(using the purity of the priest's body as an analogy).

> For if the priest's body (σῶμα), which is mortal by nature (τὸ φύσει
> θνητόν), must be scrutinized to see that it is not afflicted by any serious
> misfortune, much more is that scrutiny needed for the immortal soul (ψυχὴ
> ἡ ἀθάνατος), which we are told was molded according to the image of the
> Self-existent (ἥν φασι τυπωθῆναι κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ὄντος). And the
> image of God is the Word through whom the whole universe was framed
> (λόγος δ' ἐστὶν εἰκὼν Θεοῦ, δι' οὗ σύμπας ὁ κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο).[169]

This passage provides a more subtle reference to Gen 1:27 than *Her.*
231. Yet we notice that the passage promotes the same anthropological
view found in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*: the soul is analogous to the
human λόγος or νοῦς in its relationship to the εἰκών Θεοῦ in as much as
ἐκμαγεῖον in *Her.* and τυποῦμαι in *Spec.* are semantically the same.[170] We
notice also that Philo again highlights the authoritative nature of Gen
1:27 in our passage's conclusion. As in *Her.* 231 where it is Moses who
calls the archetypal reason the εἰκών Θεοῦ, so here in *Spec.* 1.81 Philo's

---

168 Philo allows for various kinds of rational beings that exist at third hand from the
     creator; some are embodied souls with hopes for ascension, some are
     unembodied souls which never have been held down, and still others are
     embodied souls which will never ascend. See *De plantatione* and *De gigantibus*.
     We discuss ascension later when treating Philo's anagogy.

169 PLCL 7.147, modified.

170 See *Spec.* 3.83 where ἐκμαγεῖον and τυπόω are used together and in relationship
     to Gen 1:27.

use of the verb φημί calls attention to how the information is not original to him.

Philo finishes the passage by identifying the εἰκών that forms the soul as the Logos, the demiurgical instrument (δι᾽ οὗ) of creation. This identification, with its cosmological bent, is unanticipated. [171] The question arises: what exactly does Philo intend his readers to deduce from the claim that the human soul is shaped by the very entity through which the world is created? Is the Logos' relationship to the soul (that of image to its copy) similar or dissimilar to the Logos' relationship with the cosmos? Or is it that the soul has a noble quality to it since it has an affinity with the very instrument of creation? Both are possible. The latter scenario, the shared qualities of the earthly and heavenly λόγοι, is the subject of *Her.* 231 as we discussed above. The former scenario, that both the individual soul and the world are copies of the Logos, is Philo's point in *De opificio* 24–25.

Opif. 24–25 is the culmination of a section (15–25) wherein Philo discusses the creation of the intelligible cosmos, which he sees as the necessary precursor to the creation of the sense-perceptible world. Philo introduces in section 16 the language of model and copy (παράδειγμα and μίμημα) to explain the necessity of an intelligible cosmos preceding a material one. The physical cosmos is a copy of the intelligible cosmos, which God uses as "an incorporeal and most god-like paradigm to produce the corporeal cosmos."[172] Philo explains this relationship further by means of an analogy in *Opif.* 17–20: God's use of an intelligible cosmos upon which to model the physical cosmos is akin to the development of the plans for a city in an architect's mind prior to its actual construction. For God, the plan in all its detail is located in the divine Logos. Philo summarizes these views in sections 24–25 as well as provides the scriptural basis for them.

> If one desires to use more revealing language, he might say that the νοητὸς κόσμος is nothing other than the λόγος of God as he is actually engaged in creation of the world (ἤδη κοσμοποιῶν). For ἡ νοητὴ πόλις is nothing other than the reasoning of the architect (ἀρχιτέκτονος λογισμός) actually engaged in planning (διανοέω) to found the city. This teaching is Moses', not mine (τὸ δὲ δόγμα τοῦτο Μωυσέως ἐστίν, οὐκ ἐμόν). When describing

---

171   The cosmological information provided at the end of the passage appears somewhat gratuitous. Later in *Spec.* (84–94), Philo will interpret the priestly garments in such a way that cosmology will come to the fore; in section 81, however, it serves to emphasize the Logos concisely.

172   Translation from Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 50.

the creation of the human being later on, he will expressly state that the human being was molded after the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα διετυπώθη; Gen 1:27). And if the part (τὸ μέρος) is an image of an image (εἰκὼν εἰκόνος), it is evident that the whole is as well; and if this whole sense-perceptible world (σύμπας ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος), which is greater than the human image, is a copy of the divine image (μίμημα θείας εἰκόνος), it is also evident that the archetypal seal (ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς), what we claim to be the intelligible world (νοητὸς κόσμος), is the model (παράδειγμα) and archetypal idea of ideas (ἀρχέτυπος ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν), the Logos of God (ὁ Θεοῦ λόγος).[173]

Noteworthy is how Philo substantiates his understanding of the νοητὸς κόσμος as model for the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος. While in his exegesis he has yet to treat Gen 1:1 (see section 25), Philo moves all the way to Gen 1:27 and claims that in that passage Moses establishes the doctrine which the Alexandrian is now expounding. By saying that the human being is molded (διατυπόω) κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ, Moses reveals the divine modus operandi when it comes to creation in general. After all, if it can be said that the part (τό μέρος) of creation is formed this way, the same must be claimed for the whole (σύμπας).

Philo's move is not as obvious as we might wish. First, does Gen 1:27 really have in view the kind of three-principle causality common to Middle Platonism? Is it from the text that Philo deduces the εἰκών as an intermediate entity that gives shape to cosmos and human alike? Or – as it seems more likely – does the presence of the phrase κατ' εἰκόνα in Gen 1:27 recall for Philo (or an exegetical predecessor) its use elsewhere, perhaps in a philosophical context? Second, Philo often understands ἄνθρωπος in Gen 1:27 as referring not to corporeal man as much as to the intelligible aspect of humanity, the human mind, soul or reason. This is the case in *Her.* 231, *Plant.* 19–20, *Spec.* 1.171, and 3.83. Yet for his logic to work in *Opif.* 25, he would have to be speaking of corporeal humanity as the copy of the divine image, since he sees it as parallel to ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος. Here we might recall the differences between *Leg.* 3.96 to *Spec.* 1.81. In the former, the world and human beings are both corporeal representations of the Logos; in the latter, the incorporeal human soul and the corporeal σύμπας ὁ κόσμος both rely on the Logos for their origination. Third, Philo takes it as commonplace to conclude that the εἰκών is the Logos, even though there appears to be no explicit textual reason for this conclusion in *Opif.* 25 (or in *Spec.* 1.81, or *Leg.* 3.96). The identification of the Logos with the εἰκών is also made in

---

173 *Opif.* 24–25.

Fug. 101 and *Conf.* 147. At the least, Philo's persistent allusion to Gen 1:27 and the tri-partite interpretation that verse represents functions as a "proof-text," an authority external to himself, associated with Moses, and which appears to need no support of its own.

3.2.5.3.2. The εἰκών and the Form of Reason

Regardless whether Philo believed Moses to have been the originator of this doctrine, he places considerable weight on the tri-partite schema he finds in Gen 1:27. As we have seen, Philo employs the schema in several expositions of anthropology and/or cosmology. Many of these involve other images, such as the intelligible cosmos/city of *De opificio mundi*, the τομεύς in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, the cosmic plant of *De plantatione*, or the ἱερὸν θεοῦ described in *De specialibus legibus I* and *De vita Mosis II*.[174] However, Philo's understanding of Gen 1:27, given its ubiquity and his appeals to it as the dogma of Moses, encapsulates the essence of his understanding about the intermediate principle and so it remains our focus.

The use of εἰκών in Gen 1:27 refers to both the intermediate agent, the Logos, and to the mode of agency, the way the εἰκών shapes humans and the cosmos. εἰκών evokes the process of imitation where one thing serves as a paradigm for another, producing in the second its copy. There appears to be a distinctive cluster of vocabulary associated with this paradigm/copy relationship.[175] Recall in *Her.* 230 where the human mind is a μίμημα of a heavenly ἀρχέτυπος. Philo explains that "Moses calls the first the εἰκὼν θεοῦ, the second the cast of that image (τῆς εἰκόνος ἐκμαγεῖον)." What is more, the heavenly mind serves a παράδειγμα for the earthly only because it itself is an ἀπεικασμός, a representation, of God. The same relationship is also discussed in *Leg.* 3.96: "For just as God is the pattern (παράδειγμα) of the image (ἡ εἰκών) … thus the image (ἡ εἰκών) becomes the pattern (παράδειγμα) of other things." In *Plant.* 18–20, Philo describes the human soul as coin, "impressed (τυπόω) by the seal (σφραγίς) of God, the stamp (ὁ χαρακτήρ) of which is the ἀΐδιος λόγος."

---

174 For a detailed presentation on these different cosmological metaphors, see Früchtel, *Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen*; for a concise survey, see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 60–61.

175 On Plato's *Timaeus* the origin of this terminological cluster, see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 56–101, esp. 58–62, and Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 158–74.

The following table summarizes the different elements of this paradigm/copy terminology cluster with the Philonic references where they occur. Note that the cosmological texts are set in bold.

Paradigm/Copy Terminology in Philo's Writings.(Cosmological Texts in Bold)

Term	Philonic Passage
εἰκών	***Opif.* 25**; ***Leg.* 3.96**; *Det.*86; *Her.* 230; *Mut.*223; ***Spec.* 1.81**, 3.83
ἀπεικόνισμα	***Leg.*3.96**; *Plant.*20; *Her.* 231
ἀρχέτυπος	***Opif.* 25**; ***Leg.* 3.96**; *Det.* 86; *Plant.* 20; *Her.* 230; *Spec.* 1:171, 3.83
παράδειγμα	***Opif.* 25**; ***Leg.* 3:96**; *Her.*231
μίμημα	***Opif.* 25**; *Her.*230
ἐκμαγεῖον	Opif. 146; Her. 231; Mut. 223; Spec.3.83
σφραγίς	***Opif.* 25**; *Det.* 86.
τυπόω/διατυπόω	***Opif.* 25**; *Plant.* 18; ***Spec.* 1.81**

Philo turns to Gen 1:27 in several places, whether explicitly or by echo, to convey what he calls the philosophy of Moses.[176] This philosophy posits three principles (θεός, εἰκὼν θεός, εἰκὼν εἰκόνος) and Philo applies it to anthropology as well as to cosmology. In anthropology, there are two further trajectories. Most often, the rational aspect of the human being (whether this asomatic entity is called the soul, the mind or the reason) is a copy of the εἰκὼν θεοῦ, which itself is a copy of the original rational archetype, God.[177] Less frequently (*Opif.* 25, *Leg.* 3.96, *Spec.* 1.81) it is not human rationality but the human being itself, a sense-perceptible entity, to which Gen 1:27 is referring. The cosmo-logical implication of Gen 1:27, as Philo reads it, is associated with this second trajectory, where one may deduce that if the part (τὸ μέρος = the human being) is a copy of the εἰκὼν θεοῦ, how much more is the whole (ὁ σύμπας = the sense-perceptible world).

---

176 Regarding the philosophy of Moses, cf. *Mut.* 223: "Now 'reasoning' as a name is but a little word, but as a fact it is something most perfect and most divine, a piece torn off from the soul of the universe, or, as it might be put more reverently following the philosophy of Moses (τοῖς κατὰ Μωυσῆν φιλοσοφοῦσιν), a faithful impress of the divine image (εἰκόνος θείας ἐκμαγεῖον ἐμφερές)."

177 Cf. *Her.* 230 where Philo says that "the mind we each possess" is, in the "true and full sense," that to which the term ἄνθρωπος in Gen 1:27 refers.

The two anthropological trajectories are rather different. The rational trajectory stresses the common function between the divine Logos and the human mind. The human being trajectory stresses the paradigmatic relationship between the Logos and the human, where the human is a corporeal copy of an incorporeal archetype. These do not sit easily along side each other: is the εἰκὼν θεοῦ a paradigm of human reason or of the whole human, body and all? While it is both in Philo, it is not clear if he ever accounts for the difference. What is clear is that Philo wishes to stress the pardigmatic nature of the εἰκών, whether in terms of rationality or more general reality, and that it is the intermediate reality that mediates divine influence in corporeal (-bound) reality.[178]

3.2.5.3.3. Philo's Cosmological Ideas

It should be manifest by now that Moses' philosophy is also that of the Middle Platonists. Like the cosmological interpretation of Gen 1:27, the Middle Platonists posited three pinciples: a transcendent first principle ultimately responsible for creation, but only by means of an intermediary second principle. Like Philo's Logos qua εἰκών, Middle Platonists held that this intermediary mediated divine formation of the physical world. The third principle is passive matter, receiving the impression of the divine Word upon itself and so taking shape.[179] Hence, Alcinous says, "Matter constitutes one principle, but Plato postulates others also, to wit, the paradigmatic, that is the forms, and that constituted by God the father and cause of all things."[180] Compare this with Philo in *Somn.* 2.45:

> when the substance of everything (ἡ τῶν πάντων οὐσία) was without shape (ἀσχημάτιστος) God shaped it (σχηματίζω); it was without figure

---

178 It is interesting to note how in at least a couple of occasions, Philo provides the εἰκών as rational archetype to adjust an interpretation that human minds or souls are of a piece with the divine mind (*Plant.* 18–19, *Det.* 86).

179 As Runia shows (*Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 158–165), there is no concise way of presenting the ways Middle Platonists construed the intermediary as model for the material world. Runia concurs with what we observed in chapter two, that "The heart of the Middle Platonic system is the doctrine of the three principles – θεός, ἰδέα, ὕλη – in which the world of ideas is subsumed into fulfilling the function of perfect pattern for the creation of the cosmos, …."

180 *Epit.* 9.1 (Trans.: Dillon, *Alcinous*, 19). Alcinous alternates between ἰδέα and ἰδέαι in his treatise. See § 2.2.

(ἀτύπωτος) and he gave it figure (τυπόω), and it was undefined (ἀποιός) and he gave it form (μορφόω); and perfecting it, he stamped the whole world with his image and form, even his own Logos (τελειώσας τὸν ὅλον ἐσφράγισε κόσμον λόγῳ).

This association is sealed by *De opificio mundi* 24–25, which provides the most elaborate development, conceptually speaking, of Philo's cosmological application of Gen 1:27. The εἰκὼν θεοῦ represents the νοητὸς κόσμος, which itself is – as Philo makes clear earlier in the treatise – an amalgam of the νοητὰ γένη, or ἰδέαι.[181] Philo's system even attests to the characteristic fluidity of Middle Platonism in dealing with the intermediate principle. It is both a plurality (ἰδέαι) and a singularity (ὁ νοητὸς κόσμος) and in either case exists within a noetic mind. Though this mind is less closely associated with God; it is a distinct entity, the Logos.[182]

_____

181 Runia sees Philo as sharing the Platonist notion of the κόσμος νοητός (equivalent to the "entire structured world of the ideas"), where "the whole process of creation [is] regarded as taking place when the creator looks to or employs a noetic design" (*Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*162–63). See also *Opif.* 20: "Just as the city that was marked out before hand in the architect had no location outside, but had been engraved in the soul of the craftsman, in the same way the cosmos composed of the ideas would have no other place than the divine Logos who gives these (ideas) their ordered disposition." Also, *Opif.* 16: "Therefore, when he had decided to construct this visible cosmos, he first marked out the intelligible cosmos, so that he could use it as a incorporeal and most god-like paradigm and so produce the corporeal cosmos, a younger likeness of an older model, which would contain as many sense-perceptible kinds as there were intelligible kinds in that other one." (Translations are from Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 50–51). Runia provides a parallel passage from *Aet.* 15 where Philo is speaking of Plato: "throughout the entire treatise he describes that moulder of divinity (θεοπλάστης) as the father and maker and demiurge, and this cosmos as his product and offspring, a visible imitation of the archetypal and intelligible model, containing in itself all the objects of sense-perception which the model contains as objects of intelligence, a wholly perfect imprint for sense-perception of a wholly perfect model for mind" (ibid., 139)

182 In *Opif.* 16–20, 24–25, Philo appears to see the Logos of God as parallel to the mind of the architect wherein the noetic plans for the city reside. Still the Alexandrian views the Logos as an entity more distinct from God than the mind from the architect.

3.2.5.4. The Stoic Aspect: The Logos and Cosmic διοίκησις

The previous section has shown how the Philonic Logos is the divine agent of creation. Philo understands the Logos as an instrument that God uses and/or as a God-shaped paradigm which informs the created world. In ontological terms, the Logos *qua* agent shares the intelligible (νοητός) nature of the Deity and yet is directly involved with the formation of the sense perceptible (αἰσθητός) realm. This is only part of the story of the Logos. We shall see below that, both functionally and ontologically, the Logos' relationship to the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος is not limited to creation in the cosmogonical sense. Rather, Philo also attributes the sustaining of the cosmos, its administration or διοίκησις, to the Logos.

We may understand the Logos' role in cosmic διοίκησις Platonically. In *Fug.* 12, for instance, Philo again uses paradigmatic language and makes reference to the intelligible and material realms, Platonic standards that he used in *Opif.* 16–25 to describe the creation of the world. Now, however, they also explain the world's continued existence.

> For the world has come to be (γίγνομαι) and indeed it has done so by some cause (αἴτιος τις); and the Logos of the maker is himself the seal, that by which each thing that exists has received its shape. This is why (παρό) from the beginning perfect form (τέλειον τὸ εἶδος) attends closely these things which come to exist (παρακολουθέω τοῖς γινομένοις), seeing that it is an impression and image of the perfect Word (ἅτε ἐκμαγεῖον καὶ εἰκὼν τελείου λόγου).

In this passage there appear to be four components to creation: the "maker" (ὁ ποιῶν) who is first referred to by the circumlocution αἴτιος τις; the Logos of that maker who functions as a σφραγίς, providing every created thing its shape (μορφόω); an immanent representation of the Logos which Philo terms τέλειον τὸ εἶδος, synonymous with the shape or impression (ἐκμαγεῖον) that the Logos deposits; and the things that have come to be (οἱ γινόμενοι), recipients of the Logos' shaping and hence bearers of his εἰκών.

What concerns us from among these four is the immanent εἶδος which remains with (παρακαλουθέω and μένω) existing things from the beginning on. We are familiar with the three principles, God–intermediate Logos–matter; the immanent εἶδος appears to be a fourth principle. That it is perfect (τέλειος) suggests it is intelligible and not material. Philo stresses the difference when, following the above

excerpt, he contrasts the quantity (πόσον) and quality (ποιόν, ποιότης) of an existent being (τὸ γενόμενον ζῷον). Where the quantity of such a being is imperfect (ἀτελής), subject to flux (i.e., growth with age), its quality is perfect (τέλειον). Philo says "the same quality remains since it is an impress of the abiding and unchanging divine Logos" (μένει γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ ποιότης ἅτε ἀπὸ μένοντος ἐκμαγεῖσα καὶ μηδαμῇ τρεπομένου θείου λόγου) (*Fug.* 13).

In *De fuga et inventione* 12–13, Philo provides an alternative to the one who "fashions material forces as divine and believes there is nothing apart from them that can be efficacious" (*Fug.* 11). In other words, Philo provides an alternative to Stoic cosmology, which posited a divine force (often called ὁ λόγος) that provided form to reality; a force however that was itself ultimately material.[183] Philo's alternative, rather than providing a strong Platonic contrast, represents well the rapprochement of Stoicism and the old Athenian school that is Middle Platonism.[184] After all, the Stoic Logos yielded the same result as Philo's immanent εἶδος: the provision of abiding quality to existing things.[185] The

---

183 Cf. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.270: "The Stoics … propose to explain all the formal or identifying characteristics of objects by reference to the presence, within their matter, of a divine principle that activates and shapes them." They provide this summation from Diognes Laertius (7.134; *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.268): "They [the Stoics] think that there are two principles in the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon. That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e., matter; that which acts is the reason [λόγος] in it, i.e., god. For this, since it is everlasting, constructs every single thing throughout all matter … They say there is a difference between principles and elements: the former are ungenerated and indestructible, whereas the elements pass away at the conflagration. The principles are also bodies ['incorporeal', in the parallel text of the Suda] and without form, but the elements are endowed with form."

184 In a real sense, the Middle Platonists are bringing the issue full circle. The Stoics must have been inspired by Plato's World Soul (described in the *Timaeus* and other dialogues) in their development of their active, material principle. What the Middle Platonists did was reclaim that World Soul as an intelligible entity. They also perceived a transcendent first principle above the World Soul, equivalent to Plato's demiurge in the *Timaeus*. For the most part, Philo does not use the language of the World Soul; though his Logos (a Stoic name) is all that in function. See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato,* 204–208, 448–449; and Wolfson, *Philo*, 325–28, 360–61.

185 Cf. *Fug.* 13 with Simplicius, *In Ar. De an.* 217,36–218,2 (SVF 2.395): "if in the case of compound entities there exists individual form (εἶδος) – with reference to which the Stoics speak of something peculiarly qualified (ποιόν [or ποιός]), which both is gained, and lost again, all together, and remains the same

mechanics of course are quite different and Stoic universals are by no means equivalent to Platonic forms.[186] Furthermore, Philo insists there is, apart from this immanent εἶδος, "some cause," namely the transcendent "maker" (ὁ ποιῶν) of the cosmos. Indeed, *Fug.* 12–13 presents the Logos itself as relatively transcendent. Still, "form in perfection" as the Logos' byproduct that "attends" existing things allows Philo to draw a connection between the intelligible and material realms.

In analyzing *Fug.* 12–13, we must be careful, recalling the earlier observation that Philo's intermediate reality has the characteristics of Russian *matryoshka* dolls. Hence, we should not be surprised that the distinction made in *Fug.* 12 between λόγος and εἶδος is blurred in *Fug.* 110–112. In this passage Philo interprets the High Priest as the Divine Logos. Where the priest puts on special clothing according to Leviticus, "the most ancient ὁ τοῦ ὄντος λόγος puts on the world as clothing; for he enwraps himself in earth and water and air and fire and the things that come from these" (*Fug.* 110). The metaphor of clothing applied to the world in both its elemental and complex state stresses the immanence of the Logos. In this position, the Logos serves an important service as "the bond of everything (δέσμος τῶν ἁπάντων); it binds and keeps every part together, preventing them from disbanding or separating (συνέχει τὰ μέρη πάντα καὶ σφίγγει κωλύων αὐτὰ διαλύεσθαι καὶ διαρτᾶσθαι)" (*Fug.* 112).

We find similar imagery in *De plantatione* 8 and 9. Philo again takes a swipe at the Stoics ("nothing material is so strong as to be able to bear the burden of the world") but then concedes that something immanent is necessary. That thing is "the everlasting Logos of the eternal God" who is "the most secure and steadfast prop of the whole." Though such language belies a static nature, Philo adds that the Logos is "that one who, extending (τείνω) from the middle to the ends and from the outermost edges back to the middle, traverses the length of nature's unconquerable course and gathers (συνάγω) and holds together (σφίγγω) all its parts" (*Plant.* 9). This extension (τείνω) is identical with the τόνος the Stoics afforded their active principle. As Nemesius relates it, the Stoics say "there exists in bodies a kind of tensile

throughout the compound entity's life even though its constituent parts come to be and are destroyed at different times" (Trans.: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.169; Greek text, 2.173).

186 See the discussion of Stoic Universals in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.181–183.

movement (τονικὴν κίνησιν) which moves simultaneously inwards and outwards, the outward movement producing quantities and qualities and the inward one unity and substance."[187] For the Stoics, the provider of this τόνος is material and to be associated with the active side of the four elements. "They say that earth and water sustain neither themselves nor other things, but preserve their unity by participation in a breathy and fiery power (πνευματικῆς δὲ μετοχῇ καὶ πυρώδους δυνάμεως); but air and fire because of their tensility (εὐτονία) can sustain themselves, and by blending with the other two provide them with tension (τονός) and also stability and substantiality."[188]

3.2.6. The Anthropological Role of the Logos

3.2.6.1. A Page from Stoic Anthropology

Earlier, we saw that Philo makes Moses' statement in Gen 1:27 (ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ) programmatic for both his understanding of anthropology and cosmology. The εἰκών of God works as paradigm that informs both the creation (i.e., the relationship of the κόσμος νοητός to the αἰσθητός κόσμος) and, more specifically, human rationality (i.e., the relationship between the "mind above us" and the "mind within us" in *Her.* 230–31). Anthropology and cosmogony are interrelated inasmuch as they both depend on the same εἰκών, the Logos. More immediately, we have been observing how Philo presents the Logos (or its "extension," εἶδος) as an immanent power responsible for the διοίκησις of the world. As in cosmogony so in διοίκησις, the paradigmatic function of the Logos plays a part. We also saw that there is an immanent aspect of the Logos which functions cosmologically. This aspect, what Wolfson called a "stage of existence of the Logos,"[189] may be a product of the paradigm (the εἶδος of the Logos) attending closely to material things. It also may be the Logos itself, clothed in the material world. Philo presents both and both conceptions can exist together for Philo given his fluid understanding of the Logos.

Finally we saw that, while clearly not adopting Stoic theology, Philo appropriates Stoic conceptions of an immanent force that inhabits, forms

---

187 Nemesius 70,6–71, 4 (Trans.: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers,* 1.283).
188 Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1085 c–d (SVF 2.444); (Trans.: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers,* 1.282).
189 Wolfson, *Philo,* 327.

and preserves the material world.[190] Though God remains in his noetic heaven, untouched by things corporeal, he still has ultimate responsibility for the world. His governance however is indirect, taking place through an intermediary. God may be the steersman of the universe, but he steers by means of a tiller, namely his Logos.[191] Hence, along with Middle Platonism, Philo sees that it is the responsibility of the intermediate principle to be involved with the physical world, both in terms of cosmogony and cosmic διοίκησις.

We have seen that Philo draws a parallel between the Logos and the human mind. For him, Genesis 1:27 is a statement both about the origins of the universe and the origins of human rationality. When Philo reads Gen 1:27 anthropologically, it points to the common nature of the "mind above us" and "the mind within us." This is the argument of *Her.* 230–31. Having seen that the Logos has a cosmological nature that is (or engenders things that are) immanent and yet still intelligible, we might ask whether Philo's anthropology corresponds to this.[192]

It does. For instance, Philo speaks of mind (νοῦς) as "sowing into each of the body's members abilities from itself and distributing to them their actions, taking charge of and responsibility for them all" (*Migr.* 3).[193] Indeed, what Philo considers to be truly human is one's rational

---

190 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De mixtione* 225, 1–2 (SVF 2.310): It is the Stoics who "say that god is mixed with matter, pervading all of it and so shaping it, structuring it, and making it into the world" (Trans: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.173).

191 In *Migr.* 6 (see § 3.2.5.1 above), Philo speaks of ὁ λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν γένεσιν when he says it is he οὗ καθάπερ οἴακος ἐνειλημμένος ὁ τῶν ὅλων κυβερνήτης πηδαλιουχεῖ τὰ σύμπαντα. Cf. Numenius, frg. 18, who likens his second god to a helmsman (ὁ κυβερνητής) who guides and governs the cosmos (see § 2.2).

192 The Stoics linked human rationality to the same cosmic principle which brought about and preserved reality. See Diogenes Laertius 7.128–9.

193 *Migr.* 3: ὁ νοῦς σπείρων εἰς ἕκαστον τῶν μερῶν τὰς ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεις καὶ διανέμων εἰς αὐτὰ τὰς ἐνεργείας ἐπιμέλειάν τε καὶ ἐπιτροπὴν ἀνημμένος ἁπάντων. In its context, the human mind corresponds not with the Logos but with God, ὁ τῶν ὅλων νοῦν (*Migr.* 4).

This coheres with the Stoic view of such things. "That the world is ensouled is evident, they say, from our own soul's being an offshoot of it" (Diogenes Laertius 7.143 [Trans: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.319]. The Stoics claim "that the ψυχή has two meanings, that which sustains the whole compound, and in particular, the commanding faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν). For when we say that man is a compound of soul and body (ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος), or that death is separation of soul and body, we are referring particularly to the

faculty (*Her.* 231: ὁ καθ' ἕκαστον ἡμῶν νοῦν, ὃς δὴ κυρίως καὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπός ἐστι). He speaks of Gen 1:27 in *Opif.* 69 when he says "image" refers not to the body but to the mind, "the ruling part of the soul, for with one mind, even that mind of the whole universe as an archetype, the mind in each individual human being was impressed."[194] This faculty alone is directly related to God, whereas all other aspects of human nature are of inferior origin. In *Fug.* 68–72, Philo explains God's call to "let us make a human" (ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον) in LXX Gen 1:26 as referring to his reliance on his (lesser) powers in the construction of all parts of humanity save one, human rationality. God "formed the rational in us, thinking it fit that the ruler should make the ruling faculty in the soul, while the subject faculty should be made by his subjects (i.e., his powers)."[195] A little later, Philo repeats this: "for the true human, who is purest mind, one, God alone, is maker; but for what is usually called human and is blended with the sense-perceptible, the multitude (powers) are the maker" (*Fug.* 71).[196]

Given all of this, we can consider the Philonic view of humanity as a microcosm, the nature and activity of which mirrors the nature and activity of the Divine Logos in the κόσμος. The activity of the human mind imitates the Logos in two ways. The first is ontological: the mind governs the body as the Logos governs the universe. This ontological function is what we have just seen described in *Migr.* 3 above, where the human mind takes charge of and responsibility for the human body. The second is epistemological: the mind discerns things in the same fashion as the Logos "discerned" things. Though in the Logos' case, its discernment of things is identical with their genesis. This epistemological patterning is what Philo discusses in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, when he refers to the Logos and the human mind as τομεῖς.

---

commanding-faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν)" (Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* [Trans: Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.315]). Philo preserves interpretations of Gen 2:7 that argue the soul is an offshoot of the divine. Sometimes he provides a Platonic correction to this.

194 A little later in *Opif.* 69, Philo says: "For it would seem that the same position that the Great director holds in the entire cosmos is held by the human intellect in the human being" (Trans.: Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 64).

195 Fug. 69: τὸ λογικὸν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐμόρφου, δικαιῶν ὑπὸ μὲν ἡγεμόνος τὸ ἡγεμονεῦον ἐν ψυχῇ, τὸ δ' ὑπήκοον πρὸς ὑπηκόων δημιουργεῖσθαι.

196 Remembering that Philo does not invite systematization, we should note a difficulty here: the rational mind is not just a god to the body, but to the irrational soul as well. See *Leg.* 1.39–41.

Indivisible are the two natures, the reasoning ability (λογισμός) within us and the divine Logos (θεῖος λόγος) above us, though being indivisible they divide myriads of other things. The Divine Word divides and distributes (διαρέω and διανέμω) all things, while our mind, whatever things material or immaterial it ascertains intellectually (παραλάβη νοητῶς), it divides (διαρέω) them into parts well beyond numbering and never ceases to separate (τέμνω) them.[197]

3.2.6.2. The Logos and Psychic Anagogy

The Λόγος speaks not just to the origin, nature and function of the human mind (our true self), it also speaks to its end. We keep in view here the purpose of Philo's writings, especially his allegorical commentaries. "The central thrust and fundamental aim of Philo's biblical commentary is to trace the return of the human soul to its native homeland by means of the allegorical method of interpretation" says David Winston. He adds, "The greater part of his allegory is devoted to the psychic ascent of the soul."[198]

The process of ascent is one of disengagement from an inferior environment (sense-perceptible reality, especially the body) by means of intellection. The ascendant soul rises according to the level of intellection it achieves, the stronger or purer intellection being that most free of sense-perceptible or irrational influences. Because not all souls are equally gifted or of equal stamina, Philo posits a graded ascent; there are different levels a soul can aspire to, with the highest being reserved for the most uncommon of souls. First we will consider the passages that provide the backdrop for this description of Philo's ascent of the soul. Then we will consider how the Logos is both the means and the goal of the ascent, corroborating Philo's statement in *Sacr.* 8. "Thus you might learn that God values the wise person as much as he does the world since by the same word that he makes the universe he also leads the perfect from things earthly unto himself (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν)."

---

197 *Her.* 235. See nn. 161 and 163.

198 David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, 36. For more on Philo's use of allegory, see Jean Pépin, "Remarques sur la théorie de l'exégèse allégorique chez Philon," in *Philon d'Alexandrie. Lyon, 11–15 septembre 1966* (Colloques nationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique; Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1967): 131–67; Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 135–154; and David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992).

In his treatise *De Gigantibuş* Philo teaches that souls (also known as δαίμονες and ἄγγελοι), originating from the same purely rational origins, may be placed in three classifications.[199] Some souls descend into bodies, while others never do. The latter are what we tend to refer to as angels proper and exist as servants and assistants to God. The former, "descending into the body as though into a stream, have sometimes been caught up in the violent rush of its raging waters and swallowed up; at other times, able to withstand the rapids, they have initially emerged at the surface and then soared back up to the place whence they had set out."[200] The buoyancy of a soul is determined by its relationship to bodily (i.e., irrational) things. If a soul cannot wield its innate intellect over such things, it remains perpetually bemired in them.[201] However, those souls that can – αὗται εἰσι ψυχαὶ τῶν ἀνόθως φιλοσοφησάντων – do so, even though it means they consistently "practice dying to the life in the body."[202] What they obtain by this is a "portion of incorporeal and immortal life in the presence of the Uncreated and Immortal."[203]

What this tells us is, for Philo, the human soul's hegemony over the physical body is not simply descriptive, it is prescriptive. Philo espouses the philosophical life, which eschews "the reasoning that voluntarily abides in the prison of the body" in favor of that which "loosed from its bonds and liberated has come forth outside the walls, and if we may say so, abandoned its own self" (*Her.* 68).[204] This type of life involves a

---

199 In the universe of *De Gigantibus*, souls start out as stars. See Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, 33–34.

200 *Gig.* 13 (Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria,* 12).

201 The physically bemired soul experiences a kind of death which is not a separation of body and soul but "an encounter of the two, in which the worse, the body, gains mastery, and the better, the soul, is overmastered." This is death qua penalty, the soul dying to virtuous life and alive only to wickedness. (*Leg.* 1.106–107; Winston, *Philo of Alexandria,* 121).

202 Cf. *Leg.* 1.108: "When we are living, the soul is dead and is entombed in the body as in a sepulcher; but should we die, the soul lives its proper life, released from the pernicious corpse to which it was bound, the body" (Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 121–22). See our discussion of Wis 9:15 above.

203 *Gig.* 14 (Ibid.).

204 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 169. Philo continues: "If then, my soul, a yearning comes upon you to inherit the divine goods, abandon not only your land, that is, the body; your kinsfolk, that is, the senses; your father's house, that is, speech, but escape also your own self and stand aside from yourself, like persons possessed and corybants seized by Bacchic frenzy and carried away by

conscious repudiation of the desires and ways of the body, an asceticism that extends beyond the relationship between the Logos and the world. While the Logos does have to enforce order in the cosmos, even aggressively (*Opif.* 33), generally the Logos preserves and even fosters the creation.[205] The relationship between body and soul leans more toward the negative; preservation is a necessary hindrance, but ultimately the body is a thing kept in check until it becomes unnecessary. At death, the philosophical souls ascend, free and pure and ready for immortality. Souls that are not philosophical remain so much flotsam and jetsam in the sense-perceptible currents.

What does it take for a soul to be genuinely philosophical? As we have already seen, it is the negation of the body and things sense-perceptible; i.e., asceticism.[206] This negation is necessary because of the inherit irrationality of the body; the mind, to be most rational, must subdue and ultimately sever its irrational accoutrement. The process of negation yields a positive result for the soul. The human soul abandons things irrational so as to be filled with the divine. "Let everyone indeed on whom God's loving goodness has fallen as rain pray that he may obtain the All-ruler as his occupant who shall exalt this paltry edifice, the mind, high above the earth and join it to the ends of heaven" (*Sobr.* 64).[207] This is accomplished by making the soul a suitable receptacle for

_____

some kind of prophetic inspiration. For it is the mind that is filed with the Deity and no longer in itself, but is agitated and maddened by a heavenly passion, drawn by the truly Existent and attracted upward to it, preceded by truth, which removes all obstacles in its path s that it may advance on a level highway…."(*Her.* 69–70). Cf. *Migr.* 1–4.

205 See the excursus on "Logos-centric Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Philo of Alexandria and the Prologue to John" (§ 4.4.2.4). See also Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, 31.

206 Here I am condensing all things that might entangle the soul into the phrase "the body and things sense-perceptible." As *Her.* 68–70 and *Migr.* 1–4 suggest, Philo presents a more complex view of what obstacles the mind (or rational soul) must overcome (especially note his focus on the three-tiered advancement from body-senses-speech in these passages).

On Philo's asceticism, see Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?", 162–65, esp. 162–63: "In Philo's view, the body is by no means to be neglected, nor is its well-being deliberately to be compromised in any way. … Better to indulge in the various pursuits after external goods, but to do so with skillful moderation and self-control … [so long as the body is not] allowed to become the central focus of human concern or to usurp the higher dignity reserved for the rational element."

207 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 165.

the Deity, that is, by shoring up its inherent rationality through the purification process of bodily negation.

Now, among souls capable of migration from the body back toward their original nature (their "homeland"), there is yet another gradation. In *De Fuga et Inventione* (discussed above), Philo discerns in the six cities of refuge to which a homicide may flee (Numbers 35) six different levels of ascent. These cities are, in descending order, the sovereign Logos (ὁ ἡγεμόνος λόγος), the creative power (ἡ ποιητικὴ δύναμις), the ruling power (ἡ βασιλικὴ δύναμις), the gracious power (ἡ ἵλεως δύναμις), the legislative power (ἡ προστακτικὴ τῶν ποιητέων), and the prohibitive power (ἡ ἀπαγορευτικὴ τῶν μὴ ποιητέων). The city reached, i.e., the level achieved, depends on the "swift-footedness" of the ascendant. Such swift-footedness is determined by the degree to which a soul is free from error (or "sinfulness").

> He, then, that has shown himself free from even unintentional offence – intentional is not to be thought of – having God Himself as his portion, will have his abode in Him alone; while those who have fallen, not of set purpose but against their will, will have the refuges which have been mentioned, so freely and richly provided.[208]

Of these cities, the latter three are closer to and more easily attainable to humankind. The other three are "on the other side" of the river, which is to say they are well removed from our kind (αἳ μακρὰν ἡμῶν τοῦ γένους ἀφεστᾶσι).[209]

Recall from the beginning of our discussion of Philo that *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 6–10 also evinces a gradation in the psychic ascent, seeing in the varying descriptions of the deaths of the patriarchs and Moses the different levels achieved by differently abled souls. Those for whom it is said "he was added to the people of God" (προσετέθη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ – Abraham, Gen. 25:8; Jacob, Gen. 49:33), we should understand as the ones who "inherited incorruption and have became equal to the angels." Angels here are "unbodied and blessed souls" that are "the host of God."

---

208 *Fug.* 102, PLCL 5.65.
209 See *Fug.* 103–104. Recalling the earlier example of the matryoshka (nested) doll, the process described in *De fuga* is like working with such dolls in reverse. Unlike in real life, one begins with the innermost and smallest first and move to the next largest, and so on, according to one's abilities.

Isaac's fate is differently apprehended, for he was added not to "his people" but to a γένος (Gen 35:29: προσετέθη πρὸς τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ). Philo explains:

> For genus is one, that which is above all, but "people" is a name for many. Those who have advanced to perfection as pupils under a teacher have their place among many others; for those who learn by hearing and instruction are no small number, and these he calls a people. But those who have dispensed with the instruction of men and have become apt pupils of God receive the free unlabored knowledge and are translated into the genus of the imperishable and fully perfect. Theirs is a happier lot than the lot of the people, and in this sacred band Isaac stands confessed as a chorister.[210]

Where Abraham and Jacob represent those who achieve worthy heights by means of discursive reasoning, Isaac represents those who achieve even worthier heights by eschewing such reasoning for a more innate knowledge.

There remains yet a higher rung, represented by Moses, whose death – if such it were – is shrouded in mystery.

> There are those whom God leads still higher; causing them to exceed every form and genus, he sets them next to himself. Such a one is Moses to whom he says "you stand here with me" (Deut 5:31). Hence, when Moses was about to die, he neither left nor was he added like the others – there was no room in him for adding or taking away. Rather, he was removed "through the word" (διὰ ῥήματός; Deut 34:5) of the (Supreme) Cause, that through which also the whole world was created (δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο).

Moses represents the apex of intellectual achievement, a lot reserved for the very few in Philo's system of thought.

It is worth comparing this summit achieved by Moses in *Sacr.* 8 with the best of the cities of refuge in *Fug.* 94–105 since both are associated with the λόγος of God. In *De Fuga*, the λόγος is the pinnacle because of its proximity to God and its sovereignty over the other powers.[211] Philo says the Divine Word "is himself the image of God, chiefest of all beings intellectually perceived, placed nearest, with no intervening distance, to the Alone truly existent One" and is "the charioteer of the Powers" to

---

210 *Sacr.* 7. Trans.: PLCL 2.99.
211 See *Fug.* 101 where Philo says the Divine Word "is himself the image of God, chiefest of all beings intellectually perceived, placed nearest, with no intervening distance, to the Alone truly existent One" and is "the charioteer of the Powers" to whom God gives directions "for the right wielding of the reins of the Universe" (Trans.: PLCL 5.65).

whom God gives directions "for the right wielding of the reins of the Universe." The one who comes to this topmost divine Word (ὁ ἀνωτάτω λόγος θεῖος) comes to "the fountain of Wisdom" and, drawing from that stream, is released from death and gains eternal life (97). In *De sacrificiis*, the λόγος is not the goal but the means of perfection. Philo explains that when Moses is translated by means of the word (διὰ ῥήματός) we "learn that God values the wise person as much as he does the world since by the same word that he makes the universe he also leads the perfect from things earthly unto himself (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν)."

The Logos, which functions in the creation and guidance of the universe, is in both these passages shown to be integral to the successful ascent of the soul. The Logos provides the psychic ascent its ultimate destination, for in its proximity to the Deity it gives the soul the best of vantage points to see God.[212] The Logos also provides the ascent its means, namely rationality. The soul ascends only by its intellect, especially in its purest and innate form. This intellectual capacity it receives from the Logos, whether we say that it is because the human mind is a fragment of the Logos or because it is a copy molded after the Logos *qua* εἰκών. As we have seen, Philo claims both. This combination of goal and means is well presented by Philo in *Somn.*2.249.

> And into the happy soul, which holds out the truly holy chalice, its own reason, who is it that pours the sacred measures of true gladness but the Logos, the Cupbearer of God and Toastmaster of the feast, who differs not form the draught he pours, but is himself the undiluted drink, the gaiety, the seasoning, the effusion, the cheer, and to make poetic expression our own, the ambrosian drug of joy and gladness?[213]

3.2.7. Conclusion to "Philo of Alexandria"

Hence, we come full circle – both in Philo's anthropology and in our description of his Logos doctrine. In terms of Philo's doctrine, we began by discussing *Sacr.* 8, a Philonic passage that combines the Logos' cosmological and anthropological roles. What we sought to do was to

---

212 See *Conf.* 95–97. See also the analysis by Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?", 165–170.

213 Trans.: Winston, *Philo of Alexandria*, 95.

canvass Philo's Logos doctrine to see whether this passage was anomalous or whether we could take it as representative of Philo's views generally. Philo's treatment of the Logos is both diffuse and complex; he says many things in many places, and sometimes they do not cohere as well as we would like. Hence, we had to cast our net strategically, understanding that the limitations of this chapter would not allow us to unpack fully Philo's teachings about the Logos.

From this condensation, we see that the Logos is an entity between God and matter, an intermediary which brings the divine image to bear on matter and thereby produces and sustains the sense-perceptible world. The Logos has both a transcendent and an immanent status; it is both very close to the Supreme One, God, and very close to the κόσμος. It is both purely rational and asomatic as well as filling all things and providing for their διοίκησις. We noticed that Philo's descriptions of the Logos' cosmological roles often make recourse to its anthropological roles as well. Indeed, the scriptural passage which serves as the foundation for so much of Philo's cosmological doctrine is actually anthropological in scope, i.e., Gen 1:27. For Philo, this passage encapsulates the *modus operandi* of the λόγος θεῖος in the descriptive phrase κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ. This close association of cosmology and anthropology is essential to understanding what Philo means in *Sacr.* 8, when he says that God employs the same word by which he created the universe to deliver the wise and perfect person from things earthly to the presence of the divine. So we have spent the latter part of this section spelling out the ways that the Logos brings the human mind into existence, providing that mind with its own intellectual nature and its role and status vis-à-vis the body, giving it its proper orientation, and guiding it back unto himself. Again, just as when Philo describes the cosmological function of the Logos he could not help but refer to the human mind, so when he describes the anthropological nature and specifically the form and future of the soul/rational mind, Philo cannot help but refer to the Logos. Anthropology and Cosmology are of a piece in Philo of Alexandria and that piece is the all-encompassing Logos.

3.3. Summary of Chapter Three

Middle Platonism, with its positing of an intermediary between the Supreme Principle and the physical cosmos, accounts well for Wisdom of Solomon's Sophia and the Logos of Philo of Alexandria. Despite the numerous qualitative differences between Wis and Philo's writings, we find they both use of Middle Platonic terms and concepts to present an intermediary that is ontologically related to God, that is responsible for creating and governing the cosmos by God's power, and that fosters humanity finding its ultimate fulfillment in God. Furthermore, we observed that in both writings, the intermediary's roles in creation and human fulfillment were "of a piece." That is to say, physical creation, even though obviously and woefully inferior to noetic/divine reality, has a positive place (if only as a starting place) for the soul's ascent to God.

Chapter Four

Salvation as the Reparation of Creation: The Roles of the Divine Intermediary in New Testament Christology

4.1. Ontology and Eschatology in Conflict 1 Corinthians 8:6 – An Introductory Case Study

4.1.1. The Origin and Nature of 1 Cor 8:6

4.1.1.1. Function of Text

First Corinthians 8:6 is in the middle of a conversation. The letter of 1 Corinthians as a whole represents Paul's response to issues raised by the Christians at Corinth.[1] Chapters 8–10 in particular are a discussion about eating meat sacrificed to idols (εἰδωλόθυτον), an issue about which the Corinthians were divided.[2] Some Corinthians appear to have adopted the bold stance of eating such food without concern for its idolatrous connections. Their stance is in contrast to and disregard for other Corinthians who are more sensitive to idolatry. Paul feels obliged to address the boldness of the former group both in terms of its theological validity and its effects on the Christian community in Corinth.

The Corinthians' confidence in their eating liberties appear to stem from their monotheistic awareness. First Corinthians 8:4 provides two slogans which epitomize this confidence: "We know that 'there is no idol in the world' and that 'there is no God but one'" (οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν

---

[1] It is now a commonplace to acknowledge Paul writes what he does in 1 Corinthians as responses either to reports he has heard about the Corinthians' actions (see 1:11; 5:1) or from a letter he has received from the Corinthians wherein they themselves raise issues which invite (intentionally or not) Paul's response (cf. 7:1).

[2] Presumably, εἰδωλόθυτον refers to meat that people ate in the temple. See 1 Cor 8:10 and consider 10:25–29 where Paul endorses eating meat in someone's home as long as its origin is not questioned.

εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς Θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς).[3] Paul certainly has no qualms with monotheism, so how could he take issue with "there is no God but one"?[4] The stance that "an idol is nothing in the world" is the basis for the Corinthians' boldness in claiming that food will not separate them from God. It appears they consider such boldness a mark of piety, of spiritual strength. To ingest meat in the temple of an idol is to make clear that sound knowledge and not superstitious weakness motivates one's faith in God.

The next verses, 1 Cor 8:5–6, provide Paul's gloss on the Corinthian's position, a gloss that allows Paul to agree with the Corinthians and yet show what is missing in their reasoning.[5]

> For even if there are so-called gods (λεγόμενοι Θεοί), whether in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords (ὥσπερ εἰσὶν Θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί) – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we are unto him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we are through him.[6]

The λεγόμενοι Θεοί of v. 5 functions pejoratively, expressing the falsity of Greco-Roman conceptions of Deity. But immediately following this concession is a parenthetical caveat (ὥσπερ εἰσὶν Θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί) which suggests Paul sees idolatry as something not completely vacuous: there *are* many gods and many lords. This comment seems directly opposed to the statement "there is no god but One" in v. 4. Paul will show that, subjectively, for some idolatry is still an issue (v. 7ff)

---

3   "There is no idol in the world" and "there is no God but one" are possibly slogans the Corinthians use to substantiate their consumption of εἰδωλόθυτον. On Paul's use of the Corinthians' own quotations and slogans, see Birger Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and its Relation to Gnosticism* (SBLDS 12: Missoula, Mont.; SBL, 1973; reprint, Scholars Press, 1976); Gregory Sterling, "'Wisdom Among the Perfect:' Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity," *NovT* 37 (1995): 355–384.

4   For Paul's own expressions of monotheism see Gal 3:20; Rom 3:29–30; cf. also 1 Tim 2:5.

5   Against Wendell Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (SBLDS 68; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 83–84, I cannot take 1 Cor 8:5–6 as a continuation of the Corinthian citation begun in v. 4, with or without the parenthetical comment of 5b ("as in fact there are many gods and lords"). Without v. 5b, anacoluthon still exists between 5a and 6. Additionally, the contrast between "many gods and many lords" is needed to set up v. 6's "one God … one Lord."

6   The Greek for verse 6 is provided below.

and also that there is a spiritual aspect of idolatry which must not be ignored (10:12–22). Here he only hints at these upcoming discrepancies as he moves quickly to the confession in verse 6.

In Greek, verse 6 reads:

ἀλλ᾽ ἡμῖν
εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ
ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν
καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι᾽ αὐτοῦ

In an abrupt and anacoluthic transition, ἀλλ᾽ ἡμῖν in verse 6 sets up a contrast between the non-Christian perspective (v. 5) and the Christian (v. 6). Paul states positively what 1 Cor 8:4 had stated negatively, namely that there is no god *but the One God the Father*. He moves beyond this by including the "one Lord, Jesus Christ," forming a complete counterbalance to the "many gods (θεοὶ πολλοί) and many lords (κύριοι πολλοί)" mentioned in v. 5b.

Two issues immediately face us about Paul's statement in verse 6. First, what kind of statement is this? Is it an ad hoc comment "penned" by Paul as he composed the letter? Or is it an established, independent confession which Paul selected (or appropriated from the Corinthians) for his argument? Second, how does this statement address the Corinthians' convictions? Does it simply reiterate their γνῶσις or does it augment, even reorient their theology?

4.1.1.2. Origin of the Text

It is highly unlikely Paul created 1 Cor 8:6 ad hoc as he formed his argument in chapters 8–10.[7] The evidence for this is primarily grammatical and cumulative. First, there is an undeniable syntactical break (anacoluthon) between verses 5 and 6. Second, in contrast to all other sentences in chaps. 8–10, 1 Cor 8:6 is marked by ellipsis of the verb. Furthermore, this ellipsis highlights the rhythmic quality and parallelism of verse 6, qualities which stand out in the midst of the prose

---

7   Contra Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 374, and André Feuillet, *Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1966), 79.

of vv. 1–5 and vv. 7–13.[8] Similar to the slogan "there is no God but one" in 1 Cor 8:4, verse 6 (after ἀλλ' ἡμῖν) stands on its own. Finally, 1 Cor 8:6 introduces new information to the discussion, most of it unanticipated and nonrecurring (e.g., "the Father," the prepositional phrases) in Paul's current arugment.[9]

If 1 Cor 8:6 was not written for this occasion, can we say that Paul wrote it in the first place? While the evidence can never be conclusive, some of the language is anomalous with respect to Paul's undisputed writings.[10] This makes it unlikely, as Thüsing suggests, that it represents

---

8   The parallelism of 1 Cor 8:6 shows itself in the syntax of the verse's phrases.

εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ	A ("one" + generic noun + personal noun)
ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν	B (prep. phrase + noun / pronoun + prep. phrase)
καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς	A' ("one"+ generic noun + personal noun)
δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ	B' (prep. phrase + noun / pronoun + prep. phrase)

Note also that both B and B' form the same, fairly complex chiasmus:

ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα   δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα
    καὶ   καὶ
ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν   ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ

a (preposition + relative pronoun [οὗ]) then b (a pronominal adjective [τὰ πάντα])
                    -conjunction-
b' (personal pronoun [ἡμεῖς]) then a' (preposition + personal pronoun [αὐτόν/αὐτοῦ]).

9   See Jürgen Habermann, *Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament* (European University Studies, series XXIII, Theology; vol. 362; Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1990), 159, who catalogs the stylistic distinctive characteristics of 1 Cor 8:6 vis-à-vis its literary context. See also Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor 8:6, Cosmology or Soteriology," *RB* 85 (1978): 254.

10   Murphy-O'Connor, "Cosmology or Soteriology," 254–255. Nowhere in his writings does the apostle use the phrase εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ. While Paul uses the διά c. genitive prepositional phrases in reference to Christ, such Pauline phrases are more elaborate than the simple δι' αὐτοῦ here. Paul's use of διά in reference to the *mediation* of Christ in his undisputed writings appears in more developed phrases: διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Thes 5:9; Rom 5:1, 11; 15:30; 1 Cor 15:57) or διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (Rom 5:21; cf. 7:25). Finally, in the undisputed Pauline writings, Christ's relationship with τὰ πάντα is mentioned only in 1 Cor 15:25–28 and Phil 3:21. In both cases, Paul does not say through Christ everything exists (δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα) but rather that Christ subjects "all things" to himself.

a self-sufficient distillation of the apostle's missionary preaching.[11] More germane to the context of 1 Cor 8, some have perceived in our passage affinities with Deut 6:4 and suggested it is Paul's Christianized rendition of the *Shema*.[12] The passage does stand by itself, and its heightened language and rhythmic quality give the impression of a kind of confession or acclamation.[13] As such, a better parallel than the *Shema* would be Paul's doxology to God in Rom 11:36: "From him and through him and to him are all things" (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα). Romans 11:36, along with Eph 4:6 and Heb 2:10, share with 1 Cor 8:6 the use of terse prepositional phrases describing the relationship between (at least) the Deity and "all things" (τὰ πάντα).[14] Eduard Norden, who noticed similar traits in Greek philosophical writings, especially those with a religious bent as in the case of certain Stoic authors, posited that NT passages such as these ultimately derive

---

For those writings of Paul whose authenticity is questioned, see below and my discussion of Col 1:15–20 in the next section.

11 See Wilhelm Thüsing, *Gott und Christus in der paulinischen Soteriologie, vol. 1: Per Christum in Deum* (3d ed.; NTAbh; Münster: Aschendorff, 1986), 225, where he compares 1 Cor 8:6 with 1 Thes 1:9–10.

12 N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 129–130; cf. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 314; and Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 180. Compare the Greek of Deut 6:4 (LXX) and 1 Cor 8:6:

Deut 6:4	1 Cor 8:6
ἄκουε Ἰσραηλ	ἀλλ᾽ ἡμῖν
κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν	εἷς Θεὸς ὁ πατήρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα
κύριος εἷς ἐστιν	καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς
	Χριστός δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι᾽ αὐτοῦ.

13 While some have debated whether 1 Cor 8:6 is a confession (Hans Lietzmann, *Symbole der alten kirche* [4th ed.; KlT; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935]; Conzelmann, *1st Corinthians*) or an acclamation (Klaus Wengst, "Der Apostel und die Tradition : zur theologischen Bedeutung urchristlicher Formeln bei Paulus," *ZTK* 69 (1972): 145–162; Rainer Kerst, "1 Kor 8:6: ein vorpaulinisches Taufbekenntnis," *ZNW* 66 (1975):130–139; Murphy O'Connor), the truth is we have too little information about early Jewish and/or Christian liturgies to say conclusively which – if either – our passage is.

14 Eph 4:6 "one God and Father of all, the one who is over all things and through all things and in all things" (εἷς Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ

from Stoic doxologies or *Allmachtsformeln* (omnipotence formulas).[15] Unfortunately, as Norden himself recognized, 1 Cor 8:6 breaks with the monism expressed in Stoic *Allmachtsformeln* by focusing on two active principles – the primary principle "from whom" *and* a secondary principle "through whom."[16]

To account for the difference between 1 Cor 8:6 and Stoic *Allmachtsformeln* it is important to remember from our previous chapters that the type of prepositional predications found in Paul's statement are not limited to Stoicism. They also appear "in another group of texts which are less doxological and more speculative in form and function, largely the products of Platonic (school) philosophy."[17] These philosophical texts are involved in metaphysical speculation about the causes (ἀρχαί) of the universe and assign different prepositions to different causes.[18] In the case of 1 Cor 8:6, the application of ἐξ οὗ to God the Father but δι' οὗ to the Lord Jesus Christ would then arise from different metaphysical functions: for instance, where God is the originating or efficient cause of τὰ πάντα, Christ is the instrumental cause (the Middle Platonic ὄργανον) through which everything came into be being.[19]

πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν); Heb 2:10 "on account of whom all things are and through whom all things are" (δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα).

15 Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 243. For an example, cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23: ὦ φύσις· ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα.

16 Given the lack of concrete parallels, Norden (*Agnostos Theos*, 243) sees 1 Cor 8:6 as a "paraphrase" of a Stoic formula. See Murphy 0'Connor ("Cosmology and Soteriology," 261) for a criticism of this conclusion. Rom 11:36, Eph 4:6 and Heb 2:10 all refer solely to God and in *Meditations* 4.23 Marcus Aurelius refers solely to φύσις.

17 Richard Horsley, "Background of the Confessional Formula in 1 Kor 8:6," *ZNW* 69 (1978): 132.

18 See chapter two and our discussion of Middle Platonism, especially prepositional metaphysics. See as well Horsely, "Confessional Formula" 130–135, and Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 219–238 for discussions of these texts with respect to 1 Corinthians.

19 In contrast to 1 Cor 8:6, ἐξ οὗ among Middle Platonists represents the material cause, i.e., matter. To designate efficient cause, Middle Platonists used ὑφ' οὗ. The Stoics could use both ἐξ ου and ὑφ' ου for the efficient cause.

Gregory Sterling ("Prepositional Metaphysics," 235–236) points out that the first half of the 1 Cor 8:6 statement, which uses the prepositional phrase for material cause (ἐξ οὗ) with reference to God, is more akin to a Stoic formulation. On the other hand, the use of διά in reference to Christ in the second half suggests a distinction (i.e., between ἐξ οὗ and δι' οὗ) that is – as we just discussed – Platonic. Sterling attempts to explain this combination by suggesting "an early Christian – whether it was Paul or the author of a

There is yet another deviation from Stoic *Allmachtsformeln*. While the cosmological use of prepositional metaphysics in 1 Cor 8:6 (ἐξ οὗ and δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα) is consistent with such formulae, the soteriologcial use (εἰς αὐτόν and δι' αὐτοῦ) is not. The use of εἰς αὐτόν in application to God is not uncommon in Stoic formulae and may suggest some form of cosmological *apokatastasis* when combined with τὰ πάντα.[20] But in 1 Cor 8:6 it is combined with the 1st person plural pronoun (ἡμεῖς), as is δι' αὐτοῦ in the second part of the statement. This combination (as we will see in the next section) suggests a much more overt soteriological theme and therefore distances the statement further from a typical Stoic doxology. On the other hand, inasmuch as certain Greek-speaking Jewish writers appropriated Middle Platonic *Prinzipienlehren* in their discussion of religious anthropology, in particular ascribing to the cosmological intermediaries Sophia and the Logos soteriological significance, it is at least possible 1 Cor 8:6 represents a Christian permutation of this phenomenon.

How did these philosophical constructions find their way into Paul's first letter to the Corinthians? Since we have evidence from Wisdom and especially from Philo of similar uses (where God is the efficient cause and Sophia and/or the Logos is the instrumental cause), it is

---

confession he was citing – used the Stoic formula for God and then balanced it with the Platonic formula for Christ." If Sterling is correct, we would have with "One God the Father from whom are all things and we to him" a Stoic doxology (an "omnipotence formula"); and affixed to it an agency formula, "one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him." Sterling claims "The presence of a mixed orientation is not surprising. We [see] it in Hebrews [1:2 and 2:10]. Similarly, Philo can use Stoic as well as Middle Platonic formulations. The only thing that is surprising here is the close proximity of the two" (236).

It is also possible that we have in 1 Cor 8:6 the product (maybe somewhat removed) of philosophical eclecticism. Recall our discussion of Potamon of Alexandria in chapter two who in a discussion of both epistemology and metaphysics employs prepositional phrases that appear to have been culled from Stoicism *and* Platonism.

Finally, compare also Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (trans. B. Hardy; Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1966), 95–96, who also sees the statement as a combination of Jewish (first two lines) and Christian (second two lines) statements.

20 Cf. Romans 11:36 and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23 (both cited above). With respect to Middle Platonism, εἰς αὐτόν may perhaps parallel the phrase for the final cause – δι' ὄν. See our discussion of prepositional metaphysics in chapter two.

plausible that it is a form of Greek-speaking Judaism which mediates this phenomena to early Christianity.[21] In particular, Christians must have had such speculation ready-to-hand in the Jewish synagogues of the Diaspora and specifically their liturgies.[22] Yet was it Paul who appropriated this language first or was it the Corinthians?

4.1.2. Whose Soteriology? Corinthian vs. Pauline Soteriology in 1 Cor 8:6

4.1.2.1. The Difficulty with Crediting Paul for Creating 1 Cor 8:6

As terse as they are, the prepositional phrases represent the most distinctive aspect of 1 Cor 8:6. As we have noted, different prepositions refer to different entities: ἐκ and εἰς for God, διά for Christ. Ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν is unified in motion – all things are *from* God and we *to* him. "From whom are all things" must be cosmological (even cosmogonic) in reference, emphasizing that whatever there is on heaven or earth (cf. v. 5) ultimately originates with the Father.[23] The cosmological focus falters – as just discussed – with the second half of the line. Where we expect "from whom are all things and *all things* are to him" (the recurring τὰ πάντα common in Norden's *Allformeln*), we have instead "*we* are to him" (ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν). This phrase, which along with the corresponding ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ is without parallel within or outside the NT,[24] personalizes the statement in a way the Corinthians' slogans in 1 Cor 8:4 had not.[25] It surpasses the claim that *we know*

---

21 See § 3.2.5.1 for the discussion of prepositional metaphysics in Philo's writing.

22 Stoic doxologies likely found their way into Jewish worship long before the first century. With the Platonic revival (discussed in chapter two) that emphasized a transcendent first principle and made the Stoic active cause an intermediate, immanent force, philosophically astute Jews likely appropriated these friendly developments into their own thinking and into their worship (for evidence, see chapter three).

23 Cf. 1 Cor 11:12: "But all things come from God (τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)." See the discussion of this verse below.

24 Searching the *Thesauraus Lingua Graecae* (Irvine, Calif.: University of California, TLG Project 2001–), neither ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν or ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ turn up in any literature from the 4th century BCE to 1st CE. From the 2nd century CE on, either phrase only occurs in materials citing or indebted to 1 Cor 8:6.

25 Cf. Fee, *First Corinthians* 375: "The emphasis is on the 'we,' which is the unique feature of this present expression of the creed. The preposition here has

(οἴδαμεν, cf. ἀλλ' ἡμῖν) idols are nothing and there is no God but one by emphasizing we somehow exist unto that One God. In other words, where ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα is cosmological, ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν is soteriological (i.e., personally teleological).[26]

With respect to Christ, two prepositional phrases with διά (plus the genitive) occur: first, with the third person singular relative pronoun and τὰ πάντα; and second, with the third person singular personal pronoun and ἡμεῖς. Unfortunately, there is not much within the Pauline corpus, let alone 1 Corinthians, to explain what Paul might mean by these occurrences of διά in reference to Christ.[27] Since the previous use of τὰ πάντα makes the most sense as cosmological in reference (i.e., God is the source of all things), it is appropriate to suggest that "all things are through Christ" is also cosmological. However, Paul does not explicitly refer to Christ's role in creation anywhere else in his undisputed letters.[28]

The only other place we have the use of διά in a cosmological sense in Paul's writings is in 1 Cor 11:12: ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς γυναικός· τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. This is an interesting passage, since both διά and ἐκ appear together (as in 1 Cor 8:6). The woman is *from* the man and all things are *from* God; but the

---

a kind of built-in ambiguity to it. Ordinarily in such a creedal formula it is an eschatological term, expressing the fact that God stands at the beginning and end of all things. But precisely because the creed has been personalized, that goal has a very strongly telic (purpose) force to it. God is not only the one to whom we are ultimately heading, along with the whole created order, but our very existence is for this purpose. Thus Paul's concern is not with philosophical theology, but with its practical implications for the matter at hand. Although he does not directly refer to it again, this is the ground of the entire argument that follows. By this phrase he places all of them – the Corinthians, both 'gnostic' and 'weak,' as well as himself – under God's ultimate purposes, which will be spelled out more precisely in the next clause and especially in v. 11."

26 Cn. Murphy-O'Connor, "Cosmology or Soteriology?" 264–65.

27 Since Paul uses prepositions in a formulaic sense in reference to God in Rom 11:36, we have a framework for understanding the first part of the statement. Paul does not use them in a formulaic way in reference to Christ (assuming Colossians 1:15–20 is non-Pauline in origin).

28 The one exception could be Col 1:15–20, but even if Colossians is genuine the apostle did not likely compose Col 1:15–20 (see below and in the next part).
    Paul does discuss Christ in relation to τὰ πάντα (with τὰ πάντα referring to the universe) in 1 Cor 15:27–28 and Philippians 3:21. In both cases, "all things" are placed in subjection to Christ not mediated "through" him (again, see below).

man comes *through* the woman.[29] While consigned to an unfortunately obtuse pericope, we must note that Paul's use of prepositions clearly suggests a difference between ἐκ and διά. When one compares 1 Cor 11:12 with v. 8 (οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀνὴρ ἐκ γυναικὸς ἀλλὰ γυνὴ ἐξ ἀνδρός), there appears to be a prepositional hierarchy at work. Both the ἀνήρ and God are the source from which (ἐκ οὗ) something (γυνή, τὰ πάντα respectively) comes. The woman's role, indispensable though it is (v. 11), is distinct in that she is not the source but the medium ("through"). The distinction also lies in the fact that the man has primacy, since the woman came from him before he came through her. This hierarchy casts some light on 1 Cor 8:6, both in terms of the functions expressed via prepositions and in terms of how the passage relates to monotheism (God's role has primacy; Christ's role is secondary).[30]

Beyond this, we do not have anything else from Paul to explain the prepositional phrases in reference to Christ. In the previous section, we established that 1 Cor 8:6 is formally similar to Greek-speaking Jewish writings, which use similar language in reference to both God as well as other entities, namely Sophia and the Logos. But if the Jewish writings are truly parallel (even ancestral) to 1 Cor 8:6, then our passage must be ascribing a function to Christ on a par with Wisdom's Sophia or Philo's Logos. Where Sophia is the τεχνῖτις of all things (Wis 7:21) or the Logos is that through which the whole world came to be (δι' οὗ σύμπας ὁ κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο, *Spec.* 1.81), 1 Cor 8:6 appears now to call *Christ* the agent of creation (δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα). The fundamental difficulty here is that Paul himself does not have an overly speculative *Tendenz*. Why would he even broach an issue such as Christ as agent of creation, when that role has no explicit relevance to his Christological thinking elsewhere?[31]

---

29 In 1 Cor 11:12 Paul says "just as the woman is from the man so the man is through the woman" to make the point that there is an interdependence between the two and to mitigate possible abuse of an earlier statement (in vv. 8–9).

30 The primacy is ontological rather than chronological with respect to both the man and God, though in the former it has a chronological aspect to it as well.

31 Cf. Horsley, "Confessional Formula" 132. Perhaps the closest we come to such a speculative *Tendenz* (excluding, as we said, Col 1:15–20) is Phil 2:6 (where Christ is said to be in the form of God [ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ]). Even if we set aside the possibility the hymnic text in vv. 6–11 does not originate with Paul, no role is associated with Christ's exalted status. It is the fact that he humbled himself from this status which concerns Paul as he calls on the Philippians to follow suit.

4.1.2.2. The More Suitable Context: How 1 Cor 8:6 fits with the Corinthians' Thought

If it is so peculiar to Paul, to where shall we turn to explain this curious confession? In particular, how can we account for a view of Christ that would explain, let alone allow for the claim δι᾽ Χριστοῦ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι᾽ Χριστοῦ? The source of this statement would have to be familiar with and open to influence by Greek-speaking Jewish speculation of the same order. Furthermore, unlike Paul, that source would have to have a speculative *Tendenz* in which Christ or a similar entity figured prominently. In other words, to explain 1 Cor 8:6 we should look toward an individual or group similar to the Christians with whom Paul converses in 1 Corinthians.[32]

Especially from chapter 8:1–4, 7–11 we can ascertain the Corinthians' position. They believe they possess certain knowledge (γνῶσις, vv. 1 [bis], 7, 10, 11) which affords them the liberty (ἐξουσία, v. 9) to eat temple meat. The content of that knowledge is summed up in the following slogans: "there is no God but one," "idols are nothing in the world" (v. 4) and "Food will not bring us close to God" (v. 8).[33] These slogans point to the fact that it is the possession of knowledge that appears to matter to the Corinthians (rather the content of that knowledge). This comes out in Paul's response to them (vv. 7, 9–11) where he calls attention to those who lack such knowledge, referring to them as "weak" (ἀσθενεῖς).

This spiritual stratification of believers is also the issue the Apostle addresses in 1 Cor 1–4. From what we can ascertain from Paul's polemic, it appears that some of the Corinthians believed they had achieved a spiritual enlightenment, which magnified their self-appreciation. They referred to themselves as the spiritual ones (πνευματικοί, 1 Cor 2:13, 15; 3:1), as well as the mature (τέλειοι, 2:6) and the strong (ἰσχυροί, 1:27; 4:10) and differentiated themselves from those who were, spiritually speaking, infantile (νήπιοι, 3:1) and weak (ἀσθενεῖς,

---

See the thorough discussion of this passage by Gordon Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995).

32   For a reconstruction of the Corinthian community which ties them to the speculative Greek-speaking Judaism similar to Wisdom of Solomon or Philo, see B. Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*.

33   We may assert vv. 4 and 8 to be Corinthian slogans since immediately following these statements (in vv. 5, 9) Paul counters them. Similarly, v. 1a (οἴδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν) is countered by vv. 1b–3.

4:10).[34] They developed this enlightenment through a relationship with wisdom (διὰ τῆς σοφίας, cf. 1:21), a relationship that apparently yielded esoteric knowledge of God (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:10).[35]

Richard Horsley has referred to what the Corinthians experienced as an "exaltation Sophialogy."[36] Sapiential traditions from Greek-speaking Judaism help to make concrete what this "Sophialogy" might entail. Pseudo-Solomon sings of the scope of insight Sophia provides and the benefaction she delivers to those who associate with her. "She passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God (φίλοι θεοῦ), and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom (ὁ σοφία συνοικῶν)" (Wis 7:27–28). The rewards of such friendship involve heavenly insight that far surpasses what mere mortals know.

> We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens (οὐρανοί)? Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom (σοφία) and sent your holy spirit (τὸ ἅγιον σου πνεῦμα) from on high? And thus the paths of those

---

34 Paul frequently responds to the Corinthians by "using the opponents' terminology and turning it back against them." (Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, 27). In 1 Corinthians 1–2 Paul appropriates the term "Sophia," likely an important notion to the Corinthians, and applies it to Christ (vv. 24, 30) and subsequently presents his "own version of the wisdom of God": "the salvatory crucifixion of Christ as the center of God's salvific plan." (Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, 31). Or again in chapter 15:44–49, Paul adopts the exegesis of Genesis 2:7 favored by his opponents and alters it to express his differing view. As Sterling suggests, "Paul co-opted [the Corinthian's exegesis], but shaped it by his temporal eschatological perspective" (Sterling, "Wisdom Among the Perfect" 361). Both of these cases involve passages which use a number of terms and concepts that are not found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus and are hard to square with Paul's views elsewhere presented. This appears to be the result of Paul's pattern of adopting his opponents' language and altering it to prove his case over against theirs.
35 See Sterling, "Wisdom Among the Perfect" 371. We need to set aside the important issue of "wisdom in speech". For a treatment of both wisdom as a means of knowing God and persuasive speech in 1 Cor 1–4, see Richard Horsely, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," *CBQ* 39 (1977) 224–239.
36 Richard Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1–6," *NTS* 27 (1980): 46. Horsley himself is inspired by H. Koester (review of Ulrich Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, *Gnomen* 33 (1961): 590–95) who argues that the Corinthians focused on Sophia and that Paul replaced Sophia with Christ as part of his polemic (see 1 Cor 1:21, 24, 30, 2:6, 7).

on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by wisdom (τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐσώθησαν) (Wis 9:16–18).

The sage tells us in this prayer to God that that true enlightenment, even unto salvation, depends on the acquisition of Sophia for she grants knowledge of celestial things.[37]

Philo of Alexandria expresses a similar sentiment in *Migr.* 39–40. Making an allegorical interpretation of the transforming vision which Jacob had of God in Gen 32:25–31, Philo writes:

> For the current coin of learning and teaching from which Jacob took his title is reminted into the seeing Israel. Hereby comes to pass even the seeing of the Divine light (φῶς τὸ θεῖον), identical with knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), which opens wide the soul's eye (τὸ ψυχῆς διοίγνυσιν ὄμμα), and leads it to apprehensions distinct and brilliant beyond those gained by the ears. For as the application of the principles of music is apprehended through the science of music (διὰ μυσικῆς), and the practice of each science through that science (διὰ τέχνης), even so only through wisdom comes discernment of what is wise (διὰ σοφίας τὸ σοφὸν θεωρεῖται). But wisdom is not only, after the manner of light, an instrument of sight (ὄργανον τοῦ ὁρᾶν), but is able to see its own self besides (ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴν ὁρᾷ). Wisdom is God's archetypal luminary (αὕτη θεοῦ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον φέγγος) and the sun is a copy and image of it.[38]

In this passage the divine light, or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), is both content and guide in that its possession yields greater illumination. Philo explains how this is so by pointing to σοφία (being synonymous in this passage with φῶς and ἐπιστήμη), through which (διὰ σοφίας) one discerns (θεωρέω) whatever is wise (τὸ σοφόν) as well wisdom itself (since αὐτὴν ὁρᾷ).

In chapter three we discussed how Wisdom anchors the illuminative (or anagogical) capacity of Sophia in her cosmological function. Pseudo-Solomon tells us he desired Sophia as a companion because "she is an initiate in the knowledge of God (τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιστήμης), and an associate in his works" (Wis 8:4) and it was in her capacity as ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις that Sophia instructed him (7:21). Philo preserves traditions that

---

37   That σοφία is synonymous with τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα in Wis 9:17 recalls Paul's discussion of σοφία θεοῦ (1 Cor 2:6–16). In that discussion, Paul speaks of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:7, 9) and how God has revealed such things to us "through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (v. 10).

38   PLCL. Cf. Wis 7:28–30.

assign similar cosmological functions to Sophia. For instance, in *Det.* 54, Philo says:

> If you accord a father's honor to Him who created the world (ὁ γεννήσας τὸν κόσμον), and a mother's honor to Wisdom (Σοφία), through whom the universe was brought to completion (δι᾽ ἧς ἀπετελέσθη τὸ πᾶν), you yourself will be the gainer. For neither God, Who is full, nor supreme and consummate knowledge (ἡ ἄκρα καὶ παντελὴς ἐπιστήμη), need anything.[39]

Philo is not explicit about any anagogical function for Sophia here, though his substitution of ἐπιστήμη for σοφία is suggestive.

In *Sacr.* 8, the Alexandrian is more explicit in tying the Logos' cosmological and anagogical functions together. In the prior sections (*Sacr.* 5–7) Philo interprets the biblical descriptions of the deaths of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) as representing the types of ultimate ascent possible for differently endowed intellects. He culminates with Moses, a breed of intellect all his own, who ascended to the height of companionship with God. Philo says that the lawgiver was translated to such heights "through the word of the (Supreme) cause, that through which also the whole world was created" (διὰ ῥήματος τοῦ αἰτίου μετανίσταται, δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο) (*Sacr.* 8). From this we are to learn "that God values the wise person (ὁ σοφός) as much as he does the world, since by the same Word (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ) that he makes the universe (τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος) he also leads the perfect from things earthly unto himself (τὸν τέλειον ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν)" (ibid.). Moses' ascent is of the purest kind because it comes by divine command – the same power which spoke creation into existence speaks to Moses and says "stand with me" (cf. Deut 5:31). Significantly, Philo interprets "the word" (τὸ ῥῆμα), itself an allusion to Moses' death in Deut 34:5 LXX, as the Λόγος, the divine intermediary who functions in this text as both cosmological and anagogical agent.[40]

De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini 8 is an important passage for our discussion of 1 Cor 8:6. First, it reminds us that for Philo language that traditionally applied to Sophia is transitory. We saw in chapter three that Philo describes the Logos in terms he at other times uses to describe Sophia. Here, Philo can write of the Λόγος δι᾽ οὗ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος

---

39   PLCL. In *Det.* 54, Philo most likely gives expression to a tradition he has inherited rather than something original to him. Σοφία is nowhere discussed in the surrounding context of this passage. Furthermore, in the same passage, Philo appears to substitute ἐπιστήμη for Σοφία.

40   See our discussion of this passage in chapter three (§ 3.2.2).

ἐδημιουργεῖτο or τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος, when at *Det.* 54 he wrote the same about Sophia (δι' ἧς ἀπετελέσθη τὸ πᾶν). In 1 Corinthians, we see a similar transition: in 1:21, the question is whether God could be known διὰ σοφίας; while in 8:6 (in the middle of a discussion about knowledge [γνῶσις]) we read ἡμεῖς δι' Χριστοῦ.

Second, Philo's use of the prepositional phrase δι' οὗ to refer to both the cosmological and anagogical agency of the Λόγος qua ῥῆμα is similar to δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ in 1 Cor 8:6. Furthermore, the transition from cosmology to anagogy in *Sacr.* 8 is similar to the transition in 1 Cor 8:6: while in both cosmology affects everything (ὁ σύμπας κόσμος and τὸ πᾶν = τὰ πάντα), the soteriological/angaogical mediation appears limited to particular persons (ὁ σόφος = ἡμεῖς). We should also note that in *Sacr.* 8 δι' οὗ corresponds to the instrumental dative τῷ λόγῳ. This reminds us that even though Wisdom's Σοφία is not described as one δι' ἧς things happen, she is still a suitable parallel for discussion.[41]

Finally, it is important to note how Philo describes the beneficiary of the Logos in *Sacr.* 8. That person, the σοφός/τέλειος, is drawn by God "from things earthly to Himself," i.e., in Philo's Platonic *Weltanschauung*, from the sense perceptible to the noetic sphere. In 1 Corinthians, there also appears to be a devaluation of the physical reality in favor of intellectual enlightenment. Whether we speak of sexual issues (chs. 6–7), worship issues (chs. 11–14), the question of a physical resurrection (ch. 15), or eating temple meat (chs. 8–10), the implications of this devaluation of the physical oscillated at Corinth between asceticism and physical liberty. The Corinthians who possessed this understanding, this γνῶσις, about physical vs. spiritual reality claimed the high ground for themselves. This resulted, as we have already seen, in their improved self-understanding. By virtue of having σοφία and the resultant γνῶσις, they considered themselves the spiritual ones (πνευματικοί) and the mature (or perfect) ones (τέλειοι).[42] They may have even referred to themselves as σοφοί (cf. 1 Cor 1:26, 3:18).

If we change Λόγος to Σοφία in *Sacr.* 8, it seems likely the Corinthians would have been comfortable with the transition as the

---

41 Recall Wis 9:1, which uses the instrumental dative for both σοφία and the λόγος in a cosmological context (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον).

42 For a discussion of the Corinthians' different categories for humanity, see Sterling, "Wisdom Among the Perfect" 368–371.

sentiment in Philo's passage well expresses their own perspective. Interestingly, the same holds true for the statement in 1 Cor 8:6: if Σοφία replaces Χριστός, if we could say there is One God ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν and One Σοφία δι᾽ ἧς τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι᾽ αὐτῆς, this may well have been an appropriate summary of the Corinthian perspective.[43]

4.1.2.3. Seeking a Solution to the Question: From Whence Comes 1 Cor 8:6?

Richard Horsley has suggested just this: what originally lay behind 1 Cor 8:6 is a statement which confessed the unique status of God and Sophia and credited her, not Jesus, with the mediation of creation and salvation. He explains the current form of the statement as stemming from Paul's revision of the Corinthians' theology to reflect the apostle's own Christ oriented perspective.[44]

Circumstantial evidence lends itself to Horsley's claim. We have just seen that 1 Cor 8:6 thus altered would reflect well our reconstruction of the Corinthian "exultation Sophialogy." It is linguistically and phenomenologically similar to Wisdom and Philonic presentations of Sophia and/or the Logos, and the speculative theology which Wisdom and Philo exemplify illumine several other aspects of the Corinthian situation. While we cannot prove the Alexandrian Apollos introduced this speculative influence to the Corinthians, we can be relatively confident that the currents that would have carried him to Asia Minor and Greece carried others who did espouse this enlightened (or philosophical) Jewish thought.[45]

---

43 Cf. Philo's statement in *Det.* 54 where honor (τιμάω) is reserved for the one Father, God, and the one Mother, Σοφία.

44 Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth" 47: "What we find in 1 Cor 8:6 is Paul's christological transformation of this Hellenistic Jewish formula concerning God and Sophia/Logos. As in 1 Cor 1:24, Paul has replaced the Corinthians' Sophia with Christ. We can thus discern directly behind Paul's formulation in 1 Cor 8:6 another of the 'strong' Corinthians' principles of *gnosis*, another very fundamental theological statement concerning the one god as Creator and final Cause and his consort Sophia as the agent (efficient cause) of creation and salvation."

45 Apollos is mentioned by Paul as one having considerable influence among the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4, 5, 6, 22; 4:6; 16:12. Apparently the same person is introduced by the author of Acts as being from Alexandria, an expert

Furthermore, Paul's response to the Corinthians about their γνῶσις in chapter 8 is similar to how he responded to their views elsewhere in the letter. Throughout, Paul appears quite interested with how the Corinthians articulate their beliefs. As we already noted, Paul quotes their slogans and their terminology frequently. Often He will cite a quote and then immediately correct it (as in 1 Cor 8:1–3).[46] Often, however, his method is more subtle. He will co-opt the Corinthians' language for his own purposes. He does this in chapter 1, where he identifies Christ with σοφία in 1:30.

> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (τοὺς σοφούς); God chose what is weak (τὰ ἀσθενῆ) in the world to shame the strong (τὰ ἰσχυρά); God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. You are of him in Christ Jesus (ἐξ αὐτοῦ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), who became for us wisdom from God (ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ), and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Cor 1:27–31, NRSV)[47]

The emphasis here is that over against the haughty *wisdom* of the world, the lowly, crucified Christ represents the true *wisdom* from God, that which truly brings salvation.

Paul's tone in 1 Cor 8 is similar; there he says the Corinthians were "puffed up" (φυσιόω) because of their γνῶσις with respect to temple meat.[48] Paul's response is similar to his construal of God in 1:27–31 in that, like God, the apostle sides against the knowledgeable (read "the wise" or "the strong") and with the weak (οἱ ἀσθενεῖς), namely those still accustomed to idolatry (see 8:7).[49] Paul argues his stance better conforms to the love (ἀγαπή) of God (vv. 1–3), the love best expressed in the sacrificial manner of Christ.

> For if anyone sees you, who has knowledge (τὸν ἔχοντα γνῶσιν), eating in the temple of an idol, might he not, since his conscience is weak, be

---

in the Scriptures and a persuasive speaker (Acts 18:24–28). Acts says Apollos went to Corinth (19:1) after preaching in Ephesus.

46 Cf. also 1 Cor 8:1 (οἴδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν) with v. 7 (Ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνῶσις).

47 Cf. 1 Cor 1:24

48 φυσιόω appears in 1 Cor 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4 and in all these cases denotes spiritual pridefulness. Cf. the only other NT occurrence of the word in Col 2:18.

49 οἱ ἀσθενεῖς = ἡ συνείδησις αὐτῶν ἀσθενὴς οὖσα (cf. 1 Cor 8:7 and 9).

encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? For by your knowledge the weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died (ἀπόλλυται γὰρ ὁ ἀσθενῶν ἐν τῇ σῇ γνώσει, ὁ ἀδελφὸς δι' ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν). But when you thus sin against your brothers, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to fall, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause my brother to fall. (1 Cor 8:10–13)

Paul counters the Corinthians' confidence in their spiritual enlighten-ment by emphasizing how the death of Christ causes one to forego his or her liberties for the sake of another, weaker person.

In this context of refutation and reorientation, it makes sense that Paul would wish to replace Σοφία, the powerful matron through whom the Corinthians gained knowledge of God, with Christ, the crucified Lord through whom all believers gained δικαιοσύνην τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸν καὶ ἀπολύτρωσιν (1 Cor 1:30). And if 1 Cor 8:6 was a Corinthian statement about God and his Σοφία, we can imagine that while Paul would agree with the claim about God (ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν), he would be constrained to shift the focus from Σοφία to the real (i.e., the εἷς) κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Such a redirection would account for δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, a cosmological claim anomalous in genuine Pauline writings but relatively common in religious literature similar to his Corinthian opposition. Paul may have believed Christ held such a role (though we cannot be sure).[50] Just as likely, if he did take the 1 Cor 8:6 statement and apply it to Christ, he may have simply accepted its cosmological aspect uncritically so as to focus on what he clearly considered the more important issue. Namely, the way "we" (ἡμεῖς) come to God (εἰς αὐτόν) is not δι' αὐτῆς, i.e., Sophia, or knowledge or any related intellectual feat. Rather, it is δι' αὐτοῦ, through Christ and in particular his death which secures our place with God.

---

50 The role of Christ in cosmology is distinct from the question of Christ's pre-existence. If we take Phil 2:6 as in fact referring to Christ's pre-existent divine status (there are strong arguments for and against this interpretation), it still does not state any positive role Christ had in the formation and preservation of the cosmos.

4.1.3. Eschatological vs. Ontological Anthropology

Unfortunately, as was mentioned at the outset of this section, the evidence is *only* circumstantial. We lack the hard data necessary to identify the source of 1 Cor 8:6 definitively. However, though we cannot prove Paul appropriated a Sophialogical statement for his Christological purposes, the suggestion points to important factors for evaluating 1 Cor 8:6. First, Paul does not elsewhere posit Christ's role as cosmological agent, let alone connect it to his role as savior. Second, the association between the cosmological and anagogical (i.e., soteriological) functions of divine intermediaries (namely Sophia and the Logos) is a move made by Greek-speaking Jewish sapiential writers, who themselves appear to have been influenced to some extent by Middle Platonism. The prepositional phrases and the ideas they express in 1 Cor 8:6, were they applied to God and Sophia or God and the Logos, can easily be construed as coming from these writers.

Third, believing it unlikely this language is original to Paul since he uses it only here, we must account for how he came to use it in application to Christ. We suggested above that it came from the Corinthians since it appears these Christians embraced intellectual positions similar to, if not in fact related to the aforementioned Jewish sapientialists. Whether 1 Cor 8:6 came from the Corinthians or not, a transition must have taken place at some point where Christ was credited with functions previously ascribed to Sophia and/or the Logos. Be it from Paul, the Corinthians, or some other Christian group, this representation of Christ, so succinctly articulated, becomes quite suggestive for later Christology.

Fourth, Paul's use of 1 Cor 8:6 to reorient the Corinthians toward a Christ-centered ethic (such is what 8:7–13 articulates, and v. 6 introduces Christ into the conversation) makes clear that this is not a simple extension of Jewish Wisdom speculation. Horsley, Sterling, Pearson and others have all argued (persuasively) that the Corinthians were influenced by a Jewish theology similar to what we read in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo of Alexandria. Even if this is not the case and the Corinthians were not so influenced, the argument would still hold merit for evaluating any possible relationship between Paul and this type of Jewish thought. Where Philo and Pseudo-Solomon espoused human illumination via a divine agent who had received his/her bona fides from his/her cosmic involvement (to put it simply), Paul

espoused a human transformation via a divine agent who had received his bona fides from his ignoble death.

There are in fact fundamentally different anthropologies at play here, as Sterling has already articulated.[51] Philo and the author of Wisdom, as well as the Corinthians, represent an ontologically-based anthropology. They view the human–divine relationship as a matter of radical circumscription of the physical world and an intellectually based ascent to intelligible/divine reality, an ascent facilitated by an angagoge (Sophia or the Logos). Though assisted by an intermediary, this feat is ultimately only achievable by οἱ σοφοί, those who are the τέλειοι or πνευματικοί.

Opposite of this view is Paul, who represents a wholly different anthropology, an anthropology that is historically conditioned by the Christ event. Those who are τέλειοι and πνευματικοί, Paul argues, are such not by virtue of their own wisdom but by virtue of the Spirit of God.[52] The Spirit itself comes to a person as an eschatological gift, a gift made possible by the eschatological catalyst of Christ's death. Consequently, the hallmark of those who are truly πνευματικοί is the mind of Christ (νοῦς Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor 2:16), a mind that is not puffed up with γνῶσις but is built up by ἀγαπή Θεοῦ (1 Cor 8:1–3).[53] The mind of Christ manifests itself in believers not in liberty that comes from knowledge but self-sacrifice in accordance with Christ's sacrifice (8:7–13).

First Corinthians 8:6 is at the heart of this conflict of anthropologies with the claim ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ being the center of the soteriological maelstrom. Paul's use of the statement points to the incomplete nature of the Corinthians' γνῶσις (articulated in 1 Cor 8:4) since they did not factor in the Lord Jesus Christ in their claims of liberated monotheism. The claim that "we are through *Christ*" cuts at the notion that their knowledge, most likely gained through some type of sophialogy, sufficiently determined their spiritual status. The reality Paul reorients

---

51 Sterling, "Wisdom Among the Perfect," 372.

52 This is Paul's argument in 1 Cor 2:6–16. Cf. Sterling, "Wisdom Among the Perfect," 372: "*In nuce,* for Paul there is a chasm between human existence and pneumatic existence which can only be crossed by the eschatological gift of the Spirit; for the Corinthians there is no gulf, only a bridge to cross as their own pneumatic existence is illuminated until they experience the divine."

53 The notion of the love of God (objective genitive) is a more than passing part of Paul's refutation of the Corinthian position (cf. 1 Cor 8:1–3 with 2:9 and 13:1–13).

the Corinthians toward is that they stand along side the weak as being equally indebted to Christ and his death for their status before God and with each other. To say ἡμεῖς δι᾽ Χριστοῦ alters how they must understand themselves and how they treat one another. The claim δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα, lost in the fray of this conflict, hints at a common starting point – if not theologically, at least traditionally – from which the two anthropologies and their adherents' have now diverged.

4.1.4. Conclusion to "1 Corinthians 8:6"

We established that 1 Cor 8:6 is best understood as representing the intersection of two religious milieus, both arising out of Judaism. One focuses on human enlightenment and is thus ontologically oriented, favoring a divine agent whose instrumental functions in cosmology and soteriology are of a piece. The other focuses on the Christ event and is thus eschatologically oriented, favoring a divine agent whose instrumental function in soteriology is of greater significance than any possible cosmological function. As we proceed, we shall see that this intersection is common to the other NT passages which bring together Christ as creator and savior. Our analysis of these texts (Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:2–3, John 1:1–18) will show they stand at greater distance from their literary contexts than 1 Cor 8:6, though they are more robust in their terminology and ideology. Hence, we have spent more time with the literary context of 1 Cor 8:6 than we will with the other three passages. Not only has our study of the context helped explain the terse statement in Paul's letter, it is also quite helpful for establishing a paradigm of converging worldviews that will help us in the remainder of this chapter.

4.2. Colossians 1:15–20

A move from 1 Corinthians to Colossians is not as abrupt as it may seem. We saw that 1 Cor 8–10 and the concern about eating temple meat are part of the larger issue of inflated egos and myopic spiritual bravado stemming from "Sophialogical exultation." The letter to the Colossians also addresses a somewhat similar environment where human

wisdom results in "inflated" spiritual standing in the community.[54] However, instead of Corinthian liberty, some Colossians appear to have espoused a biblically contrived asceticism ("Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch." Col 2:21; cf. 2:16–17), an asceticism that appeased supernatural elements (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, 2:8, 20) and elevated individuals to angelic visions (2:18).[55] As with 1 Cor 8:6 so with Col 1:15–20, we find a passage – marked by elevated speech and (apparently) poetic construction – that functions to further an argument by coalescing significant phrases and concepts from differing perspectives. The result is a text that begins with a sapiential perspective on the

----

54 The "Colossian problem," the attempt to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* of the letter, is notorious among NT scholars. With more than 45 such reconstructions out there, it is fair to say one may construe Colossians as fitting just about any context (including that of 1 Corinthians). However, it is worth noting that after 1 Corinthians, Colossians has the most occurrences of the term σοφία in the NT (6x to 1 Cor's 15x: Col 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5) and is the only other NT text where the term φυσιόω appears (2:18; cf. 6x in 1 Cor, in 4:6, 18, 19, 5:2, 8:1, 13:4). In both letters σοφία and φυσιόω appear connected (the latter arises from some abuse of the former). Compare also Colossians' concern about believers being deceived by πιθανολογία (2:4, also known as φιλοσοφία καὶ κενὴ ἀπάτη in 2:8) with issues of persuasive speech in 1 Cor 2 (v. 2, ὑπερχὴ λόγου ἢ σοφίας). In both 1 Cor and Col, such speech is refuted by testimony about the crucified (and risen) Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 2:1–5 with Col 2:8–15). For two studies which argue that the Colossian situation is akin to that attested by 1 Corinthians, i.e., both demonstrate the influence of Hellenistic Jewish sapiential speculation, see Gregory Sterling, "A Philosophy According to the Elements of the Cosmos: Colossian Christianity and Philo of Alexandria" in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie* (ed. Carlos Lévy; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 349–373; and P. Turner, "Wisdom and Law in Colossians" (Ph.D. diss., Murdoch University, 1999). As we discuss below such sapiential speculation best accounts for the Col 1:15–20; however, since this passage is likely an independent unit within Colossians, it is not necessary to contend here for any reconstruction of the setting of the letter as a whole. For a thorough treatment of the "Colossian problem" see J. D. G. Dunn, *Colossians*, 23–35.

55 For how this Colossian asceticism may be explained in the light of philosophically-oriented Hellenistic Judaism, see Sterling, "A Philosophy According to the Elements." Notice also that where the "knowing" Corinthians disparaged the existence of other gods and lords (cf. 1 Cor 8:4–5), the Colossians had a heightened concern about such beings (consider Col 1:16 and 2:15).

cosmos and its origination but shifts midway to a distinctly Christian understanding of cosmic reconciliation and pacification.[56]

4.2.1. Structure and Origin of Colossians 1:15–20

4.2.1.1. Structure

Colossians 1:15–20, part of the introductory thanksgiving (vv. 12–23) of the letter, lauds the Son of God as one[57]

15a[58]   who is the image of the invisible God,
15b   firstborn over all creation,
16a   since in him were created all things
16b   in the heavens or upon the earth,
16c   the visible things and the invisible things,
16d   whether thrones or dominions,
16e   whether rulers or authorities,
16f   all things have been created through him and to him.

17a   And he is before all things
17b   and all things hold together in him
18a   and he is the head of the body, the church;

18b   who is the beginning,
18c   firstborn from the dead,
18d   so that he might become in all things preeminent,
19   since in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell
20a   and through him to reconcile all things to him,

---

56 There is still considerable debate about whether Colossians is pseudonymous. Given the evidence, it seems unlikely Paul is the author. However, it does not alter our thesis if Paul did in fact write Colossians, since we saw the same basic polemic "against" Wisdom speculation in Colossians already existed in the undisputed Pauline letter of 1 Corinthians (see § 4.1).

57 The subject of 1:15–20 is first introduced in v. 13: ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ [i.e., πατρός, see v. 12].

58 I lay out Col 1:15–20 according to the lineation found in NA[27] (though I have placed additional spaces between lines 16f and 17a and lines 18a and 18b to highlight structural and thematic breaks that are discussed below). When discussing individual lines I will refer to the number (=verse) and letter (=line) to the left of the text.

> 20b   making peace through the blood of his cross,
> 20c   through him[59] whether things upon the earth
> 20d   or things in the heavens

Verses 15–20 are set off from what comes before and what comes after by a change in person: where vv. 12–14 are written in the second person and 21–23 in the first and second person, vv. 15–20 are only in the third person. The structure of 1:15–20 is also offset from its immediate context in having the following formal characteristics: parallelism (see below), chiasm (e.g., cf. vv. 16a with f and 16b with 20dc), and increased repetition of terms (e.g., πᾶς appears 8 times, πρωτότοκος twice, the prepositions ἐν, διά, εἰς, ἐπί at least twice).[60] Perhaps most illuminating for how this passage stands apart from its context is the way the author refers to, even cites portions of 1:15–20 throughout the remainder of the letter.[61] All of this suggests that the author of Colossians did not write 1:15–20 when he penned the letter. Rather, he appears to be quoting a text, probably a hymn, which must have been familiar to, and even favorably regarded by the letter's audience.[62]

---

59 NA[27] includes brackets around "through him" (δι' αὐτοῦ). The textual evidence (see the apparatus in NA[27]) points to syntactical dissonance in Col 1:20 which copyists tried to account for by either adding or (more likely) deleting this phrase. See below for discussion of v. 20b. See also Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 43.

60 The Greek text is provided below.

61 For example, cf. the terms (or cognates) integral to Col 1:15–20 that appear elsewhere in the letter: εἰκών (Col 3:10), κτίσις (1:23), κεφαλή (2:10, 19), σῶμα (1:22, 24; 2:11, 17, 19, 23; 3:15), πλήρωμα (2:9), ἀποκαταλλάσσω (1:22), σταυρός (2:14), and πᾶς (22x in Col apart from vv. 15–20).

62 For a recent review of the scholarship on the question of the form and function of this passage and an argument that Col 1:15–20 is a pre-existing prose-hymn wherein both Jewish and Greco-Roman conventions for praising an exalted figure are represented, see Matthew E. Gordley, "A Prose Hymn of Christ: The Language, Form, and Content of Colossians 1:15–20 in its Greco-Roman and Jewish Contexts and in the Context of the Epistle to the Colossians" (Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2006). Recall also the chapter one of this study where we briefly discussed the liturgical nature of Col 1:15–20, 1 Cor 8:6, Heb 1:2–3, and John 1:1–18.
    E. Lohse's argument (*Colossians,* 41–46) for Col 1:15–20 as an independent text that pre-existed the letter remains the most astute and appropriately conservative to this day. P. T. O'Brien makes a case for taking the passage in its whole as originating with the letter itself (*Colossians and Philemon* [WBC 44;

Taking Colossians 1:15–20 as an independent unit itself, it is possible to discern a number of structural aspects in the text. The following highlights only those few structural aspects that are germane to the relationship between soteriology and cosmology in the passage.[63] Taking into consideration both content and formal matters, we perceive two separate sections, or strophes, in the passage: vv. 15a–18b and 18b–20d. In addition, the first strophe also has two sub-sections: vv. 15a–16f and 17a–18a.[64] We lay out below the Greek text of Col 1:15–20 according to these sections and sub-sections. To demonstrate structural affinity between the different parts, the parallels between the two strophes are set in bold and the parallels between the first strophe's two sub-sections are underlined.

Waco, TX: Word, 1982], 40–42). Both provide bibliography and analysis of previous arguments about the origin of the text.

63 The following is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of the structure of Col 1:15–20. For a more indepth study of structure, see Gordley, "A Prose-Hymn of Christ," 7–22, 236–242, 252–261.

64 Cf. Lohse, *Colossians,* 43–44. Eduard Schweizer (*The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982], 56–57) has been influential in suggesting Col 1:15–20 is comprised of not two strophes but three (vv. 17–18a is the middle strophe that bridges vv. 15–16 and 18b–20).

Strophe 1 (vv. 15a–16f, 17a–18a)	Strophe 2 (vv. 18b–20d)
ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν <u>τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ</u> <u>ἀοράτου</u>, **πρωτότοκος** πάσης κτίσεως,	ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, **πρωτότοκος** ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη **τὰ πάντα** ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, **τὰ** ὁρατὰ καὶ **τὰ** ἀόρατα, **εἴτε** θρόνοι **εἴτε** κυριότητες **εἴτε** ἀρχαὶ **εἴτε** ἐξουσίαι **τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν** ἔκτισται	**ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ** εὐδόκησεν **πᾶν** τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι καὶ **δι' αὐτοῦ** ἀποκαταλλάξαι **τὰ** **πάντα εἰς αὐτόν**, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι' αὐτοῦ] **εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς** **εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.**
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν <u>πρὸ πάντων</u> καὶ <u>**τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ**</u> συνέστηκεν, καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν <u>ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ</u> <u>σώματος</u> τῆς ἐκκλησίας	

In terms of content, the repetition of κτίσις and its cognate κτίζω in vv. 15 and 16 suggest these two verses deal with cosmogony. Verses 17–18a, with their repetition of the conjunction καί (3x), mark a formal shift (see below). However, it appears these lines preserve the basic focus on cosmology (except for the curious τῆς ἐκκλησίας, which is most likely an authorial gloss).[65] The change from κτίζω to the verb συνίστημι

---

65   The mention of "the church" in Col 1:18a is perplexing, since the parallelism between vv. 15a and 18b is so defined. One would expect a reference to the church to come after mentioning the resurrection and/or death of Christ (i.e., in the second strophe). On the other hand, the author stresses the equivalence between σῶμα and ἡ ἐκκλησία in Col 1:24: "I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions in my flesh for the sake of the body, which is the church" (ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὅ ἐστιν ἡ ἐκκλησία). Furthermore, in Col 2, the author uses κεφαλή twice, in ways that appear to contradict each other. In 2:10, the Son is the "head" of every ruler and authority (cf. 1:16e) while in 2:19 he is the head of the "whole body" (by which the author means the church). The rulers and authorities and the church cannot be two subsets within the same body, since the author's point is that those who are part of the Son's body are elevated above and protected from these "rulers and authorities" (2:10–15). It is quite possible the Colossians understood σῶμα as the cosmos (a commonplace in Hellenistic thought; see Eduard Schweizer, "σῶμα κτλ.," *TDNT* 7:1037–38)

suggests the concern in v. 17 is now the continuance of the creation (i.e., τὰ πάντα). On the other hand, verses 18b–20 represent a dramatic shift from these cosmological concerns. There is greater specificity about the hymn's subject, especially his temporally-located experience; note especially the reference to resurrection (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, v. 18c), to dwelling (κατοικέω, v. 19) and to death (τὸ αἷμα τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, v. 20).[66] While the cosmic concern continues into the second strophe (note the continued use of πᾶς), the focus is now the reparation of all things (note the important verbs in v. 20, ἀποκαταλλάσσω and εἰρηνοποιέω). Hence, it appears that the first strophe has a cosmological focus (itself divided between cosmogony and cosmic continuation); the second strophe has a soteriological focus. We will discuss the content of the strophes in detail when we discuss the cosmology and soteriology of the passage below.

    With respect to the formal structure of the two strophes, we note considerable parallelism (see especially bold sections above). Both strophes begin by clarifying the identity of the Son (cf. vv. 15 and 18bc: "He is the image … firstborn over all creation" // "He is the beginning … firstborn from the dead"). After the subject is properly identified, the basis for the identification is provided (note the causal ὅτι in vv. 16a and 19). The basis for the Son's identity is established by the use of prepositions: first generally, by the use of ἐν αὐτῷ (cf. 16a, 17b and 19: "*in him all* things were created" // "*in him all* things hold together" // "*in him all* the fullness was pleased to dwell"); and then more specifically with δι᾿ αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν (cf. 16d and 20a: "all things were created

---

which they shared with capricious heavenly forces. The author, wishing to bolster their faith in Christ, reinterprets σῶμα (in Pauline fashion) to refer to the Son's body, i.e., the church, a group set apart from and beyond the influence of such forces. It makes sense to read 1:18a as originally implying σῶμα = κτίσις (cf. 2:10); the author, preparing for his emphasis later in the letter, adds "the church" (so that now σῶμα = ἡ ἐκκλησία).

66 Lohse, *Colossians,* 43, mentions only τῆς ἐκκλησίας in v. 18a and τὸ αἷμα τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in v. 20 as historically grounding the hymn (he sees both as authorial insertions). However, the phrases πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν and ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι in vv. 18c and 19 respectively are no less temporally oriented, even referring to historical occurrences. Such orientation we may also infer in v. 18d ("so that he might become [γένηται] preeminent in all things"). We discuss all of these further in the soteriological analysis below.

through him and *to him*" // "*through him* to reconcile all things *to him*").[67]
Finally, a chiasm demonstrates that the scope of the Son's activity is
comprehensive with respect to both cosmology and soteriology (cf. 16b
and 20cd: "in the heavens and upon the earth" // "whether on the
earth or in the heavens"). Hence, where we saw that the concepts shift
abruptly between the first and second strophe, the form and much of
the terminology remains consistent between the two.

We differentiate the two sub-sections of the first strophe (vv. 15–16
and vv. 17–18a) by the presence of καί at the beginning of each
statement in vv. 17–18a. This is distinct from vv. 15–16, where καί
simply conjoins opposites (earthly/heavenly, visible/invisible). At the
same time, as the underlined sections above denote, vv. 15b–16a appears
parallel to v. 17ab ("the firstborn over all creation, since in him all things
were created" // "and he is before all things, and all things hold together
in him"). Furthermore, v. 15a and v. 18a are parallel in that they have
matching grammatical structures.[68]

The above comparison highlights a few lapses in the parallelism that
are worthy of mention. First, v. 18d (ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς
πρωτεύων) does not have a formal parallel in the first strophe. In fact, in
terms of content, v. 18d appears to contradict the absolute sense of vv.
15b (πρωτότοκος) and 17a (αὐτὸς ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων).[69] Second, v. 20b
(εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ) also has no parallel
in the first strophe. This line appears to disrupt the flow from τὰ πάντα
in v. 20a to τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς and τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς in v. 20cd. Given
how the author stresses the physical death of Christ later in the letter
(see 1:22 and 2:14) and the resumptive δι' αὐτοῦ at the beginning of
20c, verse 20b is likely a gloss by the author.[70] We will discuss how this

---

67 Note that except for v. 20a, all these prepositional phrases are linked to passive
    verbs. The verb in v. 20a is an aorist active infinitive.

68 The grammatical structure of vv. 15a and 18a matches word for word (except
    for the initial καί in v. 18a): subject (ὅς, αὐτός), verb (ἐστιν, ἐστιν) predicate
    nominative (εἰκών, κεφαλή), possessive genitive (τοῦ θεοῦ, τοῦ σώματος) , and a
    2nd genitive (τοῦ ἀοράτου, τῆς ἐκκλησίας). Note that the grammatical purpose of
    these last two genitives is different; the first ("invisible) describes the noun
    "image" while the second ("the church") specifies "body" (not – as we might
    expect – "head"). (See n. 65.)

69 We discuss whether vv. 15b and 17a refer to temporal or ontological primacy
    below. Either way, v. 18d is problematic.

70 See n. 59. Lohse (*Colossians*, 43) argues δι' αὐτοῦ is original to the hymn and
    that it immediately followed εἰρηνοποιήσας in v. 20c (that which comes
    between the two, i.e., διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ, being an authorial gloss).

gloss might function when we analyze the soteriology of Col 1:15–20 below.[71]

4.2.1.2. Origin

As we observed, Col 1:15–20 has several characteristics that lend to it an air of being an independent text, whether a hymn or similar kind of traditional material. The analysis of soteriology and cosmology below will raise some questions about the possible integrity of this text, though the formal parallelism above has shown it would be hard to separate any substantial part of the passage from another.[72] Part of the reason for asserting the independence of Col 1:15–20 is how phrases and concepts from the "hymn" appear later in the letter. It is indisputable that Col 1:15–20 informs at some level the rest of the letter, and yet curiously the letter author ignores cosmological issues mentioned in the first strophe (vv. 15–18a).[73] Even when he makes use of terminology from the first strophe, his concern is not cosmology but soteriology (e.g., compare the uses of εἰκών in 3:11 or αἱ ἀρχαί καὶ αἱ ἐξουσίαι in 2:15 with 1:15a, 16e respectively). In terms of soteriology, the letter and the hymn are in greater alignment.[74] However, even this alignment has its incongruities. For example, the term ἀποκαταλάσσω ("reconcile") occurs in Colossians only in 1:20 and 1:22,[75] and in both verses this reconciliation is graphically associated with the death of Christ. However, the

---

We should see εἰρηνοποιέω as part of the gloss and δι' αὐτοῦ is the author's (less than successful) attempt to preserve the flow of the hymn.

71 The words ὁρατά, ἀόρατα, θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, and ἐξουσίαι in v. 16c–e are without parallel in the second strophe (though note the multiple occurrences of τά and εἴτε in both strophes). Some have argued that v. 16c–e is a gloss since it disrupts the "balance" of the hymn. We do not know enough about liturgical texts of the period to know whether balance was characteristic among them. What is clear is these lines function the same whether they are a gloss or not: they specify what τὰ πάντα entails.

72 τῆς ἐκκλησίας (Col 1:18a) and εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, δι' αὐτοῦ (v. 20b), if they are glosses, are relatively minor and their absence would not call into question the integrity of Col 1:15–20 as a whole.

73 On the relationship between Col 1:15–20 and the letter see n. 61 above.

74 On the affinity between Col 1:18b–20 and the rest of the letter, compare 1:18c (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν) with 2:12 (ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν·). Compare 1:19 (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι) with 2:9 (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς).

75 ἀποκαταλάσσω occurs in the NT only in 1:20, 22 in Colossians and Eph 2:16 (a passage shaped by Col 1:22). It is not found in *any* Greek text before these. See *BDAG* 112.

universal focus of v. 20 (denoted by τὰ πάντα) shifts to an ecclesial focus in v. 22 (denoted by ὑμεῖς), in the space of only two verses.[76] If Col 1:15–20 originated with the rest of the Colossian letter, one would expect more coherence between the two.

We may address the origin of Col 1:15–20 from another angle, one that applies whether we take the passage as written with the letter or pre-existing the letter. A survey of the terminology in Col 1:15–20 reveals considerable affinity with Hellenistic Jewish literature and in particular Wisdom speculation.[77] The table below highlights many of the important terms and phrases in the Colossian hymn that have

---

76   The shift in focus from cosmic to churchly reconciliation in 1:20, 21 is best grasped by reading 1:20–22 as a whole. Recall that all of Col 1:15–20 is in the third person while vv. 21–22 are in the second person. "… and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him . . ." (Col 1:20–22, NRSV). Verses 21–22 are an application of v. 20 to the lives of the Colossians.

77   A consensus now exists which takes Col 1:15–20 as most closely related to Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom texts, though how this relationship is understood varies from scholar to scholar. There are two other major attempts at reconstructing the origin of Col 1:15–20. C. F. Burney argued that Col 1:15–20 represents Paul's reflection on the first words of the Bible (בראשית). Burney's reconstruction presumes the use of the Hebrew version of Genesis as the primary impetus for the Col passage, a notion that seems unlikely in light of the passage's allusion to Greek-speaking Jewish texts (see below) as well as non-Jewish Hellenistic parallels. See Lohse, *Colossians,* 46–47. For a recent attempt at rehabilitating Burney's thesis, see N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1:15–20," *NTS* 36 (1990): 444–468. (A slightly modified version of this article appears in idem, *The Climax of the Covenant,* 99–119.)

Ernst Käsemann ("A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy" in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SBT 41; Naperville, Ill: Allenson, 149–168) argued that Col 1:15–20 was originally a pre-Christian gnostic text which spoke of the Gnostic Redeemer. The difficulty with his contention is (a) v. 18 speaks of "the firstborn of the dead", which is not usually a "Gnostic" topos; and (b) the text presents the creation as having a positive relationship with "Christ" from the beginning (in the first strophe, esp. vv. 15b and 17–18a) and as ultimately reconciled to him (in the second strophe, v. 20ab). (Note especially the use of the preposition εἰς in vv. 16 and 20. See more about this preposition in our discussions of both cosmological agency and soteriological agency below.) See Lohse's critique of Käsemann in *Colossians*, 45. For a discussion of "gnosticism," see chapter five of this study.

parallels in LXX wisdom literature, especially Wisdom of Solomon, and in the writings of Philo of Alexandria.[78]

Terminology Common to Colossians, Wisdom and Philonic Writings

Col 1:15–20	LXX	Wisdom of Solomon	Philo
εἰκών		Wis 7:26	*Leg.* 1.43; 3.96; *Conf.* 97, 146–147; *Fug.* 12, 101; *Somn.* 2.45; *Spec.* 1.81.
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως	cf. Prov 8:22, Sir 24:9	Wis 6:22	*Agr.* 51; *Conf.* 146
ἐν αὐτῷ		cf. Wis 9:1–2, 18	
δι' αὐτοῦ			*Cher.* 125–127; *Sacr.* 8; *Somn.* 1.81
τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν	cf. Sir 43:26	Wis 8:1	*Her.* 23; *Fug.* 108–112
ἀρχή	Prov. 8:22, cf. Sir 24:9		*Leg.* 1.43; *Conf.* 146

There have also been recent studies of Colossians that identify broader thematic and literary parallels between the letter (not just the

---

78 Using the same criteria of common terms and phrases, we should also note the similarity between our passage and Romans 8:18–39. Especially noteworthy is Romans 8:28–30 ("For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image [εἰκών] of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn [πρωτότοκος] among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."). With respect to the powers canvassed in Col 1:16, Rom 8:38–39 stands out: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." It is possible that some or all of the Colossian hymn is influenced by this Pauline discussion of the suffering of creation and salvation by Christ in Rom 8, or perhaps both passages are influenced by a common tradition.

hymn) and this speculative milieu.[79] The analysis of cosmology and soteriology below will help further establish and clarify the possible relationship between Col 1:15–20 and Hellenistic Jewish Sapiential writings. We shall see that our passage makes sense as an independent statement of the Son's efficacy that arises out of and at the same time reacts against this particular religious environment.

4.2.2. Cosmological Agency in Col 1:15–20

Three moves comprise the first strophe. First, v. 15 identifies the subject of the text: he "is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation." Second, v. 16 provides the basis (ὅτι, "since") for this identification: "in him everything was created in the heavens or on the earth … everything has been created through him and for him." Third, vv. 17–18a explain the continuing significance of this identification: "he is before everything and everything holds together in him and he is the head of the body the church."[80]

4.2.2.1. The Son's Ontological Status in Col 1:15

Our text begins with the relative pronoun ὅς, which in its present context refers back to God's "beloved son" (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, v. 13).[81] It is the Son who is the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, "the image of the invisible God." With respect to God, it is important to observe that this is the only explicit mention of him in 1:15–20; after this, the activity or presence of God is only inferable through passive verbs (v. 16, see below) or circumlocution (v. 19, πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα). Even in this one explicit reference to God, he receives the appellation ἀόρατος ("invisible").[82] Placing God in the background in this way brings to the

---

79 See the references to Sterling and Turner in n. 54 above.

80 Our analysis of these three moves will include numerous comparisons to *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo. For the reasons that I focus principally on Wisdom and Philo, see chapter one where we saw that these alone of the Jewish sapiential literature speak to the issue of divine intermediaries with cosmogonic and cosmological agency.

81 ὅς also appears in v. 13 but there refers to ὁ πατήρ (v 12).

82 Ἀόρατος qualifies God in 1 Tim 1:17 and Heb 11:27. Cf. Rom 1:20: "From the creation of the world, his invisible attributes [τὰ ἀόρατα] – his eternal power and divinity – have been clearly understood and perceived in what he has made." See also Dunn, *Colossians*, 87.

fore the intermediary role of the Son. It also has the effect of demonstrating how, through the Son, God is ultimately responsible for creation while completely distinct from it.

The Son is the divine image, or εἰκών. As such, the Son is no mere copy (impossible, given an invisible original) but a "living image," "embodiment," or "manifestation" of God.[83] Of NT texts, it is only here in Col 1:15 and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 (ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) that εἰκών expresses Jesus' relationship to God.[84] In the latter instance, Paul is speaking of Christ's revelatory function conveyed by the gospel.[85] Any revelatory significance of εἰκών in Colossians must be inferred from the context, which might suggest that the Son reveals God cosmologically (vv. 16–17) and then by the Son's death and resurrection (vv. 18b–20).[86]

It is more likely, however, that εἰκών is an established technical term for denoting the relationship of the Son vis-à-vis God, a term the Colossians passage received from its Hellenistic Jewish *Vorleben*. Recall that Wisdom of Solomon includes εἰκών among the list of metaphors with which it describes Sophia's relationship to God in 7:25–26.[87] When Wis refers to Sophia as an "image of his goodness" (εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ, v. 26) it is part of an effort to highlight her strong ontological link with the Deity. Similar to the Colossians passage, Wisdom then presents her as acting from that ontological position in her role as "fashioner of all things" (ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις).

Though Philo also knows of Sophia as God's εἰκών (*Leg.* 1.43), his understanding of the Logos as such is much more significant for our

---

83 See "εἰκών," BDAG 282 and H. Kleinknecht, "εἰκών," *TDNT* 2.388–89.

84 Other NT passages refer to the Son/Jesus as εἰκών in the sense that he is the paradigm to which believers will (or should) conform. In Rom 8:29, 1 Cor 15:49, 2 Cor 3:18, Col 3:10, the εἰκών of Christ is the paradigm for his followers. In other occurrences in the NT εἰκών refers to an engraving on a coin (Matt 22:20//Mark 12:16//Luke 20:24) or to a statue (i.e., idol; Rom 1:23; Rev 13:14, 15; 14:9, etc.). In 1 Cor 11:7 εἰκών is part of an allusion to Gen 1:27 (LXX), where it is said the male is an εἰκών of God.

85 2 Cor 4:4: "… the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ)" (NRSV).

86 It is possible that vv. 18b–20 represent a completely new claim about the son that parallels v. 15a (since the ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή in v. 18b is formally parallel to ὅς ἐστιν εἰκών in v. 15a). In which case, his revelatory function is limited to the first strophe.

87 See discussion of this passage and of the ontology of σοφία in chapter three (§ 3.1.2.1).

study. In chapter three, we discussed how Philo drew from Gen 1:27 (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ ἐποίησεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον) to develop the Logos' role as paradigm for both humanity and creation as a whole.[88] The Logos qua εἰκών serves as the intermediary that mediates divine influence over corporeal reality.[89] The capacity to do so arises from the Logos' ontological proximity to the Deity, a proximity that makes it pre-eminent above all other things. Philo expresses this quality in *Conf.* 146–47, a passage that resonates considerably with Colossians.

> … if there be any as yet unfit to be called a Son of God, let him press to take his place under God's First-born (πρωτόγονος), the Word (λόγος), who holds the eldership (πρεσβύτατος) among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called, "the Beginning" (ἀρχή), and the Name of God (ὄνομα Θεοῦ), and His Word (λόγος), and the Man after His image (ὁ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος), and "he that sees" (ὁ ὁρῶν), that is Israel. … For if we have not yet become fit (ἱκανοί) to be thought sons of God yet we may be sons of His invisible image (τῆς ἀειδοῦς εἰκόνος), the most holy Word. For the Word is the eldest-born image of God (Θεοῦ γὰρ εἰκὼν λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτατος).[90]

While Colossians 1:15 evinces little of Philo's sophistication, the terminology and concepts in *Conf.* 146–47, all centered around the Logos as εἰκών, are quite familiar.[91] *De confusione linguarum* emphasizes the superiority of the Logos over reality (πρωτόγονος, πρεσβύτατος, and ἀρχή), basing such on the Logos' essential proximity to God (Θεοῦ γὰρ εἰκὼν λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτατος). It is the Logos' quality as εἰκών that drives Philo's call in this passage ("let him press to take his place under…the Word"), for it is as the divine εἰκών that the Logos mediates the divine nature, making the transcendent immanent to humanity.[92]

---

88 Cf. *Opif.* 24–25.

89 See the discussion of the εἰκών in Philo in chapter three (§ 3.2.5.3).

90 Translation from PLCL.

91 With respect to the common motifs in *Conf.* 146–47 and Colossians, note the terms πρωτόγονος, πρεσβύτατος, ἀρχή have conceptual (and in the last case, literal) parallels in the Colossian "hymn". Also, Col 1:12–13 point to God's beloved son (cf. "son of God," "first-born," "eldest-born" in the Philo passage) as the subject of the "hymn". Also, compare the use of the verb ἱκανόω in Col 1:12 and the noun ἱκανοί in *Conf.* 147. The mention of ἄγγελοι and ὁ ὁρῶν recall Col 2:18 as well as possibly the invisible powers alluded to in 1:16 and 2:10, 15. Taken individually, most of these verbal parallels are insignificant; but the constellation of terms centered around a character who is the "image of God" is suggestive.

92 See the discussion of this passage later in the chapter when we address the soteriology of the Johannine prologue (§ 4.4.3.4.3).

In the same way Philo understands the Logos, as εἰκών, to be πρωτόγονος among the angels, Col 1:15b views the Son to be πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.[93] Like πρωτόγονος, πρωτότοκος literally means "first born" and often refers to something or someone that is first in a sequence (as in Col 1:18b, where the Son is the ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν).[94] A less common use of πρωτότοκος is to refer to someone's uniqueness and superiority. In Heb 1:6, "firstborn" refers to Jesus' Messianic status: "When [God] leads the firstborn into the world (εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην), he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"[95] Notice here both the suggestion of pre-existence and that πρωτότοκος more likely represents Jesus' superior status over the angels as opposed to his temporal priority.[96] Of the two uses of πρωτότοκος, the latter ("unique and superior") best fits; the ontological difference between the εἰκών and creation is manifest in the next verse where the εἰκών is instrumental in the formation of the latter (v. 16).

4.2.2.2. Cosmogonic Functions of the Son in Col 1:16

Immediately following the ontological claim (v. 15) is the conjunction ὅτι, "because", making clear that what follows explains how the Son is the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως. He is such *because* ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα … τὰ πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται (Col 1:16a,f).[97] These two lines ground the identification of God's beloved Son as image and firstborn in his cosmogonic functions.

Κτίζω, passive in both v. 16a (aorist) and v. 16f (perfect), refers to the creative effort of God the father (v. 12).[98] The use of the passive

---

93   Where *Conf.* 146–47 the Logos is "first born" and "eldest among the angels," the range of πᾶσα κτίσις in Col 1:15 includes both earthly (corporeal) and heavenly (incorporeal) reality (v. 16bc), which apparently includes angels (cf. v.16de).

94   See "πρωτότοκος," *BDAG* 894. See also LSJ under both πρωτόγοκος and πρωτότοκος.

95   Heb 1:5 quotes Ps 2:7, where God says of Israel's king "he will be a son to me".

96   Cf. LXX Ps 88:28: "And I will make him firstborn (πρωτότοκος), exalted before the kings of the earth."

97   Col 1:16b–e (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι) qualify τὰ πάντα, showing "all things" to be exhaustive in reference.

98   "To create" translates κτίζω in the NT (see BDAG 572). The term itself is a staple among creation terms in the LXX (65X [23 in Sirach, 5 in Wis]) and the OT Pseudepigrapha (35X). It does not frequently have this usage in other

moves the emphasis away from the creator to his Son, "in", "through" and "for" whom all things are created. These prepositions express cosmogonic function since they explain how it is "all things" were created. The use of τὰ πάντα with ἐν, διά, and εἰς resemble the terminology we find in Stoic Doxologies (Marucus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23) and related NT *Allformeln* (cf. Rom 11:36, Heb 2:10, Eph 4:6).[99] But even more than 1 Cor 8:6, which at least mentions explicitly God ὁ πατήρ, Col 1:16 is distinct from such doxologies because of its sole emphasis on God's *agent*.[100] Thus, the use of prepositions in v. 16 (as in later verses of the hymn) are important because they provide the basis (recall ὅτι) for the claims made about the Son.

Unfortunately, explaining the use of prepositions in Col 1:15–20 is difficult since their use here to describe Christ's cosmological function is almost without parallel (only διά plus the genitive appears elsewhere in the NT for this purpose).[101] The sense of ἐν αὐτῷ may be locative, instrumental or relational ("with respect to").[102] The locative is least

---

Hellenistic writings (see "κτίζω" in LSJ 1002–03), including Philo's works. (Philo uses the term 14 times: 4 times he uses it for "to create" [the world]; the other 10 times, he uses the verb for "to found" a city. See Borgen et al., *The Philo Index*, 201.)

99 See the discussion of such formulas in the previous section on 1 Cor 8:6. Also see Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 250–54.

100 God himself is only mentioned explicitly in Col 1:15a.

101 As noted above, διὰ Χριστοῦ has similar usage only in John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; and Heb 1:2. "In Christ" occurs often in the NT, but without the cosmological context it has here (but see our discussion on John 1:4 later in this chapter [§ 4.4.2.3], where we will take ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν as having specifically anthropological significance). About the peculiar use of the phrase εἰς αὐτόν, which does not refer anywhere else to Christ's cosmological role, see below.

102 See A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Some Observations on Paul's Use of 'In Christ' and 'With Christ,'" *JSNT* 25 (1985): 83–97, esp 84–86, for a review of how different grammars categorize the senses of ἐν.

The prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ occurs twice more in the hymn (vv. 17b, 19), but these *ultimately* cannot help us determine the sense in v 16b. In verse 17b, the sense is also ambiguous. Does τὰ πάντα hold together (συνίστημι) in (the sphere of) the Son or by the Son's agency? With respect to Col 1:19, the sense of ἐν may be locative: πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα dwells (κατοικέω) in the Son (see below). As we discussed in the introduction to this section, v. 19 parallels 16a structurally (as does v. 17b). Hence, if the second strophe is consistent with the first, ἐν should function the same in both cases. However, on the chance that the second strophe might be a later addition, or the author of the hymn may have been less than precise with his use of prepositions, we cannot rely on the two later occurrences of ἐν to illuminate the first.

plausible; since everything would have to exist within the Son physically, this would imply a kind of filial panentheism that seems unreasonable in this context.[103] We may take ἐν αὐτῷ as instrumental, though as we shall see, the use of δι' αὐτοῦ in v. 16f also portrays the Son as the instrument "through which" God creates τὰ πάντα.[104] While such redundancy is not impossible (it is, in fact, rather Philonic), the place of ἐν αὐτῷ at the beginning of the cosmogonic section (v. 16a)

---

103 Εἰκών recalls the paradigmatic role of the Philonic Logos (discussed in greater detail in chapter three and below). In *Somn.* 2.45, Philo says God "stamped the entire universe with His image and an ideal form (τὸν ὅλον ἐσφράγισε κόσμον εἰκόνι καὶ ἰδέᾳ), even His own Word (τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ)"; and in *Leg.* 3:96 he says "just as God is the Pattern of the Image (παράδειγμα τῆς εἰκόνος), … , even so the Image (ἡ εἰκών) becomes the pattern (παράδειγμα) of other beings." In such a context, Philo uses ἐν in a locative sense: "Now that the incorporeal cosmos (ὁ ἀσώματος κόσμος) had been completed and established in the divine Logos (ἐν τῷ θείῳ λόγῳ), the sense-perceptible cosmos began to be formed as a perfect offspring, with the incorporeal serving as model (ὁ αἰσθητὸς πρὸς παράδειγμα τούτου ἐτελειογονεῖτο)" (*Opif.* 36; trans.: Runia, *On the Creation*, 54). It seems unlikely, however, that Philo would find room "in the divine λόγος" for anything besides the incorporeal or intelligible. If ἐν is taken as locative in Col 1:16, both incorporeal entities (τὰ ἀόρατα, if this can be taken as such) and corporeal (τὰ ὁρατά, τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) would come to exist in the Son. This goes well beyond ἐν αὐτῷ referring to the Son (i.e., "image") as a location for the paradigms of creation. See the discussion of εἰκών in Philo in chapter three (§ 3.2.5.3).

104 Jewish sapiential literature does make use of both ἐν αὐτῷ/αὐτῇ and the dative (ᾧ/ᾗ) to denote instrumentality. For references and discussion of this by one who takes ἐν αὐτῷ in Col 1:16 as instrumental, see Lohse, *Colossians*, 50–51.

Wisdom of Solomon inherits from the Hebraic sapiential tradition (mediated through Greek translation) the conviction that Wisdom (Heb., חכמה; Grk., Σοφία) was present and active when God created the world (Prov 3:19; 8:22–31; Job 28; Sirach 1:4; 24:3–6). But as we saw in chapter three, Wis reconfigures Sophia's cosmological role along Hellenistic philosophical and religious lines, especially those prevalent in Middle Platonism. Uses of the instrumental dative, including the phrase ἐν αὐτῇ, make most sense coming out of that milieu (as opposed to the Hebraic). See § 3.1.2.2.

Similarly, Philo also describes the cosmological function of the Logos by means of the instrumental dative (*Leg.* 3.95, *Sacr.* 8, *Deus* 57, *Fug.* 12, 95, *Somn.* 2. 45). In *Somn.* 2.45, for instance, Philo uses the instrumental dative to describe the Logos' cosmogonic function as εἰκών: When "the substance of the universe was without shape and figure God gave it these; when it had no definite character God molded it into definiteness, and when He had perfected it, stamped the entire universe with His image and an ideal form (τὸν ὅλον ἐσφράγισε κόσμον εἰκόνι καὶ ἰδέᾳ), even His own Word (τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ)" (PLCL). See § 3.2.5.1.

suggests it has a broader focus than the more nuanced δι' αὐτοῦ in v. 16f. Hence, it is perhaps best to take ἐν αὐτῷ as functioning relationally; i.e., creation takes place "in relation to the Son." This, after all, appears to be the point of the entire strophe.[105]

If we take ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ("the creation of all things depends upon him") as a general claim about the Son, verse 16f ("all things through him and toward him have been created") provides specificity to that claim.[106] The phrase δι' αὐτοῦ in v. 16f suggests the Son is the *instrument* "by which" or "through which" (δι' αὐτοῦ receives both translations) everything has been created. Recall that for Philo, this phrase functioned as technical shorthand for the Logos' instrumental role in creation and that its origin lay in Middle Platonic prepositional metaphysics.[107] Such metaphysics underlie *De cherubim* 125, where Philo writes "For God is a cause, not an instrument (ὄργανον); what comes to be does so through (διά) an instrument but by (ὑπό) a cause." As with εἰκών, the Colossian passage (and the other NT passages in this study) applies this technical phrase to Christ to denote his role as cosmogonic agent, appropriating for its own purposes language that had been part of a sophisticated attempt at explaining the divine origin of creation while preserving the Deity's transcendence.[108]

---

105 O'Brien, *Colossians* 45, suggests that while ἐν includes the instrumental sense, it suggests much more: "…the preposition 'in' (ἐν) points to Christ as the 'sphere' (cf. 'in him' of v. 19) within which the work of creation takes place." Furthermore, "the phrase 'in him' has the same force as in Ephesians 1:4; God's creation, like his election, takes place 'in Christ' and not apart from him. On Christ depended … the act of creation so that it was not done independently of him … ." O'Brien appears to conflate the relational and locative senses of the preposition. Verse 19 does not make as easy a parallel as O'Brien suggests. While the verb κατοικέω naturally assumes the locative ("sphere" as place), κτίζω with ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 16 causes some dissonance (is it the Son as place of creation or creation within the Son's "sphere of influence"?).

106 Cf. Schweizer, *Colossians*, 70. While in Col 1:16, lines b–e illuminate τὰ πάντα in v. 16a, line f illuminates ἐν αὐτῷ.

107 See § 3.2.5.1. While Wis does not use this phrase per se, we know from Philo that δι' αὐτῆς functioned similarly for σοφία (see *Fug.* 108).

108 The phrases ἐν αὐτῷ and εἰς αὐτὸν allow for the *possibility* that only the idea (or notion) of the Son existed at the point of creation. See Dunn, *Colossians*, 91, where he argues that the language of the Colossian hymn is only metaphorical, that Christ (or Sophia or the Logos, for that matter) is not to be understood as an actual hypostasis active at creation. However, we saw that the Middle Platonists posited an intermediary principle that was certainly more than a metaphor (unless we wish to reduce the Stoic active principle to such as well).

The more difficult problem that arises from verse 16f. is how εἰς αὐτόν can refer to the Son. Even if we take verse 20b (ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν) as an organic extension of v. 16, our task would not be eased. Εἰς αὐτόν, whether in vv. 16f or 20b, appears to refer to the *Son* as the eschatological goal of creation, something for which there is no parallel outside of this passage.[109] The force of εἰς αὐτόν suggests that

---

While Philo and Wis may have appropriated this figure for metaphorical reasons (which does not seem likely), we must still take seriously the conviction concerning the reality of the intermediary by those who were its ultimate intellectual source (i.e., the Middle Platonists). Philo's use of διά c. gen to denote cosmic instrumentality clearly comes from this milieu (see our discussion of *Cher.* 125–127 in § 3.2.5.1). In terms of the Colossian passage, while a metaphorical understanding of τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἔκτισται is possible, there is no explicit reason in the passage to suggest it says anything other than that the Son existed at and was actually active in the creation of all things.

109 Cf. Lohse, *Colossians*, 52 and O'Brien, *Colossians*, 47. Jewish sapiential traditions do not apply this phrase to Sophia, nor does Philo apply it to the Logos. Sophia is instrumental in leading humans to God; she is not herself the goal. Philo does hold the Logos up as the goal *for human beings* (i.e., in an anthropological sense only; see § 3.2.6.1). The phrase εἰς αὐτόν occurs in Stoic formulas (cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23; cf. Philo, *Spec.* 1.208) and even in the NT (Rom 11:36), but its referent is the Deity. First Corinthians 8:6 makes the statement "we are εἰς αὐτόν" in reference to God the Father, while "we are δι' αὐτοῦ" refers to Christ. What is interesting about these Stoic, Philonic and NT passages is that in all of them ἐκ serves as a counterpart to εἰς. In the Col hymn, ἐκ is absent, a fact we explain in the same way we explain the use of the passive forms of κτίζω: the hymn de-emphasizes the Father's cosmological (and soteriological, cf. v. 19) role to emphasize the Son's. (Note also that Middle Platonists did not use ἐκ for the transcendent principle, but for the material principle.)

Many have sought to explain εἰς αὐτόν in v. 16f by its use in v. 20 (which we should read as "to him" [i.e., the Son] and not "to himself" [i.e., God ὁ πατήρ]). For instance, J. D. G. Dunn, (*Colossians*, 92) writes: "If the prepositional sequence was simply adapted from the wider philosophic usage [εἰς] need not be indicative of eschatological purpose … . Even as christianized, the two strophes seem to be structured on a protology/eschatology, old cosmos/new cosmos distinction, with the future eschatological emphasis limited to the second. Nevertheless, because of the hymn's present context, the redemptive work also accomplished 'in Christ' (1:14) is presented as the key that unlocks the mystery of the divine purpose. 'In Christ' creation and redemption are one. In the cross, both past and future find the clue to their ultimate significance." In other words, even though Dunn perceives the clear difference in emphasis (and even origin) between the first strophe and the second, he interprets the εἰς of v. 16f in the light of v. 20. Not only does this not solve the problem, but εἰς αὐτόν occurs nowhere in the NT to

in the same way as the Son is instrumental to the creation of τὰ πάντα, so he also plays a pivotal role in the consummation of τὰ πάντα.[110] I take this proleptic quality (however understood) to be the reason for the use of the perfect of κτίζω in v. 16f. Creation was always to have its goal in the Son.[111]This is rather more optimistic than verse 20, where God needs to *reconcile* all things to the Son, *making peace* through the Son's death.

To review, the cosmogony of Col 1:16 is as follows. We can say the Son is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, *because* God has made him the basis for the creation of all things (ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα). In particular, this means he is the "beginning and end of the creation process," the instrument through which all things have come to be and the goal to which all things are directed (τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται).

4.2.2.3. The Son as Continually Sustaining the Cosmos

Colossians 1:17a, αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων, can either imply that the Son precedes all things temporally or is preeminent over all things ontologically. The former is redundant in light of vv. 15–16. This, combined with the use of the present tense of εἰμί, promotes the latter reading: the Son has greater status than the created order. Verse 17b (τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν) also has two possible readings: either the

---

communicate the sense that the Son is the (eschatologcial) goal of *Creation* (although, see Rev 1:8, where Jesus is the "alpha and the omega"). The Son is clearly the dominant, or sole, mediator of Salvation, but his task is to surrender all to God (cf. 1 Cor 15:24–28).

110 That we cannot discern further nuance for εἰς αὐτόν in Col 1:16 may have more to do with the limited understanding of prepositions on the part of the author of Col 1:15–20. We have no reason to expect that the author knew as well as Philo or Seneca the details of prepositional metaphysics. He could even be conflating liturgical traditions he learned from the liturgy of a Diaspora synagogue. Or we might have a less successful attempt at uniting two types of formulas than what we found in 1 Cor 8:6.

111 While we cannot say what the exact sense of εἰς αὐτόν is in the Colossian hymn, it is interesting to note that Col 3:1–4 attests to the close proximity of God and the Son (Χριστός) in the heavenly realm (i.e., τὰ ἄνω): Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε, οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος· τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Ἀπεθάνετε γάρ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ· ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῇ, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ. This may account for εἰς αὐτόν in Col 1:20, if not for its occurrence in the first strophe.

created order holds together within the place of the Son (the locative sense of ἐν αὐτῷ) or the created order's holding together depends upon the Son (the relational/instrumental sense of the phrase). We best solve this dilemma by consulting the next line (v 18a): αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος.[112] Assuming σῶμα refers to the cosmos, κεφαλή ("head") brings together both the notion of Son's superior status in v. 17a and the continued dependence of all things on him in v. 17b. This is especially so since, while the notion of "head" may depend on its antecedent, I find its use precludes the locative sense of ἐν αὐτῷ.[113] For it to be the otherwise, the body would have to inhabit the head.

The thrust of this part of the Colossian hymn is to show that the cosmological activity of the Son is not limited to the beginning of creation, but that he is continually active in the cosmos. Similarly, Sophia also has a continuing presence in the cosmos. In the description of her cosmic attributes (Wis 7:22b–8:1), Pseudo-Solomon tell us that "because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things" (7:24) and "although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself she renews (καινίζω) all things" (27). The result of this activity is that of all things, Sophia is the most valuable; she is what Solomon desires most and prays God will give him.

> If riches are a desirable possession in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things (τῆς τὰ πάντα ἐργαζομένης)? And if understanding is effective, who more than she is fashioner of what exists (αὐτῆς τῶν ὄντων μᾶλλόν ἐστιν τεχνῖτις) (Wis 8:5–6).

Hence, like the Colossian Son, it may be said of Sophia, αὐτὴ ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων.[114]

We may say the same about the Logos, in that it is "considered to hold the cosmos together and to prevent its dissolution" and as such is "the instrument of God's never ceasing creative activity and maintenance of the cosmos."[115] As Philo himself says, "the Father … constituted his Λόγος such a bond (δεσμός) of the Universe as nothing can break" (Plant. 8, PLCL). The Alexandrian develops this idea further in Fug. 112: "for the Word of Him that IS is, as has been stated, the

---

112 We are taking τῆς ἐκκλησίας as a gloss and so do not include it here. See n. 65.
113 See 1 Cor 11:3 which says Christ is the head of every man; man the head of woman; and God the head of Christ. See also Col 2:19 which says Christ is the head of the body, the church.
114 See § 3.1.2.2.
115 Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 364.

bond of all existence (δεσμὸς ὢν τῶν ἁπάντων), and holds and knits together all the parts, preventing them from being dissolved and separated."[116] The ontological primacy of the Logos is implicit in these passages given the essential function the Logos carries out.[117]

4.2.2.4. Summary of the Cosmology of the Colossian Hymn

Colossians shares with Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's writings the desire to extol each author's respective intermediary. Although Wisdom does so over several chapters instead of only a few verses, with Philo's treatment of the Logos being even more diverse, appearing as it does in several distinct portions of his corpus, the three have in common the same basic *modus operandi* for doing so. They each identify the ontological primacy, cosmogonic agency and current cosmological mediation of the intermediary. Their language, their method, and their purpose overlap when it comes to the cosmological context of their subjects. However, the Colossian hymn sets off on a different path with the second strophe, a strophe that focuses on historical events, events that comprise the Son's soteriological role.

4.2.3. Soteriological Agency in Col 1:15–20

The second strophe of the Colossian hymn begins, like the first, with an ontological declaration about the Son (18a,b): he is the ἀρχή, who is once again the πρωτότοκος but this time from the dead. There follows a ἵνα clause, of which the first strophe lacks a counterpart. The final section, mirroring 1:16, begins with the conjunction ὅτι, and proceeds

---

116 Cf. *Her.* 187–188: "The drachma is a unit, and a unit admits neither of addition nor subtraction, being the image of God who is alone in His unity and yet has fullness. Other things are in themselves without coherence, and if they be condensed, it is because they are held tight by the divine Word, which is a glue (κόλλα) and bond (δεσμός), filling up all things with His being (πάντα τῆς οὐσίας ἐκπεπληρωκώς)." Also see *QE* 2.89, 90 and consider 2.118: The divine Logos is a "mediator", "the strongest and most stable bond of all things, in order that it might bind and weave together the parts of the universe and their contraries, and by the use of force bring into unity and communion and loving embrace those things which have many irreconcilable differences by their natures." This passage is also interesting in light of the verbs "to reconcile" and "to make peace" in Col 1:20. PLCL translations.

117 See § 3.2.5.4.

to ground the Son's identity in his functions as *soteriological* agent. There are two sub-sections for this last part: a) the "indwelling" of the πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in the Son and b) the reconciling of all things to "him" through "him" by making peace through the "blood of his cross". We will now explicate these three main sections.

4.2.3.1. The Son's New Ontological Status

We are not surprised to read here that the Son is the ἀρχή. We have already seen above with respect to Sophia and the Logos, who both receive this title, that such a descriptor is transitory.[118] Since like his Hellenistic Jewish counterparts, the Son (in the first strophe) is also the εἰκών through whom God creates and/or sustains the cosmos, we should expect now a continuation of the Son's cosmological status in the second strophe.[119] After all, ἀρχή has this cosmological sense in the Philonic and Wisdom passages.[120] But instead of being πρωτότοκος of all creation, we read that the Son is firstborn ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν. This is arguably the first *explicitly* Christian acclamation in the Colossian hymn.[121] We should read "beginning" here as both an allusion to the Jewish sapiential tradition from which εἰκών originated (thus preserving an apparent continuity) as well as an effort to redirect the focus of the hymn toward soteriology. We should also consider ἀρχή, which appears to dangle without sufficient qualification in its present place (cn. the fuller v. 15a), as somehow connected to τῆς ἐκκλησίας in v. 18a. It appears to be an assumption of the second strophe that the Son is the beginning of the church by virtue of his resurrection of the dead.[122]

---

118 Cf. *Leg.* 1.43 with *Conf.* 146, discussed above.

119 The relative pronoun (ὅς) and the parallelism between v. 18b and v. 15a show this to be the beginning of the second strophe.

120 This likely arises out of early Jewish Wisdom traditions; see, e.g., Prov 8:23. Of course, the cosmological sense of the term is not limited to these traditions. Cf. Rev 3:14, where Christ is described as ὁ Ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ.

121 See Acts 26:23, 1 Cor 15:23, and Rev 1:5. The phrase in Col 1:18b recalls in particular Rom 8:29; there Paul says God predestined those whom he foreknew "to be conformed (σύμμορφος) to the εἰκών of his Son, in order that he might be the πρωτότοκος among many brothers." It is possible that the term σύμμορφος and εἰκών function together to give the sense that, like the Logos, the Son is the seal or paradigm which shapes the children of God.

122 Could τῆς ἐκκλησίας originally (or previously) have sat at the end of v. 18b, so that it would read: ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας? Cf. the ℵ* variant of Rev 3:14: Christ is the ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ. See nn. 65, 112.

Implicit in Col 1:18bc, especially when we contrast these lines with v. 15ab, is the sense of the Son having an ontological status founded on an experience he underwent: he is the "beginning" *because* he was first to rise "from the dead."[123] In the light of this, we may identify two important developments in the second strophe over against the first. First, there can no longer be any substantial question regarding to whom the relative pronoun ὅς refers. Unlike the first strophe, the language of which we saw is transitory and is applicable to the Logos or Sophia as easily as the Colossian "Son," the second strophe uses language applicable only to Jesus Christ. This one is an historical person who experiences, according to Christian kerygmata, resurrection from the dead. The second development is the question begged by the event of the resurrection, namely what does the event signify. We should expect the impetus for the resurrection event to have something to do with creation, at least if we are to preserve the connection between the first and second strophes of the Colossian hymn.[124]

4.2.3.2. The Purpose (Clause) of the Second Strophe

The impetus is made explicit in v. 18d: ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων. Here we have a purpose clause (ἵνα) that is unmatched in the first strophe, and even appears contradictory to it.[125] We saw that the Son held preeminence over creation both because he had to be temporally prior for all things to be created in, through and unto him (v 16) and because his existence preserved the continuing state of all things (hence, he is πρὸ πάντων in v. 17a and the sustainer and head of the cosmos in v. 17b–18a). Verse 18d tells us however that the Son rose from the dead *in order that he might come to have first place in all things.* Where the first strophe presumes the Son's ontological and temporal preeminence, the second strophe *accounts* for it with a reference to an historical event, the Son's resurrection.

---

123 We cannot read v. 15 similarly. To say the Son is the image of the invisible God because he is the "first born" of all creation does not make sense.

124 There should not be any doubt that the second strophe, if its origination is distinct from the first, was at least informed by that earlier passage and was meant to supplement it. This is seen in v. 18bcd in the parallelism between lines bc with v. 15ab and the use of the neuter (not masculine) ἐν πᾶσιν (cf. τὰ πάντα in the first strophe) in line d.

125 See the chart in the introduction to this section as well as the explanation for the formal differences between the first and second strophes of Col 1:15–20.

The ἵνα clause explains the significance of "firstborn from the dead," suggesting that the Son's resurrection was an act of gaining primacy over "all things." Such an affirmation suggests a time when the Son was not pre-eminent over "all things," or at least a period before such preeminence became complete. We read in the following lines of the hymn about the reconciliation between the Son and the cosmos through the pacification of all things by blood. This language brings to the fore the significance of πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, and the "beginning" this inaugurates; we are no longer dealing so much with cosmology as with soteriology. And this is why the isolated ἵνα clause of the second strophe is so important. It assigns a purpose not just to the second strophe but to the first as well. In the first strophe, only the εἰς αὐτόν, with the preposition denoting final cause, gave any suggestion (albeit opaque) of a cosmic telos.[126] Verse 18d, though it may be drawing from this εἰς at some level, appears actually to be playing off the language of primacy in the first strophe (cf. πρωτεύω with πρωτότοκος in v. 15b, πρό in v. 17a). This primacy finds completion only in the Son's resurrection from the dead. Again, however, such a move creates dissonance for there is nothing in the first strophe, including the mention of the Son as final cause, to suggest any lack in the Son's primacy.

4.2.3.3. The Son's Reparation of the Cosmos

The ὅτι of v. 19 tells us that, as verses 16–17 provided the bases for the claim(s) made in v. 15 in the first strophe, so vv. 19–20 will provide the bases for the claims made in v. 18bcd. Verses 19–20 also mirror vv. 16–17 in the use of prepositions, the use of πᾶς, and the qualification of τὰ πάντα as having exhaustive cosmological reference (v. 20cd, τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). The stylistic and content differences are, however, substantial.

In verse 19 we find the enigmatic statement: ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι. The enigma of this line is at least tri-faceted: a) to what does πλήρωμα refer?; b) who is the subject of the verb εὐδοκέω?; and c) what is the sense of the preposition ἐν (locative,

---

126 It is possible that εἰς αὐτόν in Col 1:16f is an insertion that came with the later addition (if such were the case) of the second/soteriological strophe. This would address the irregular aspect of the phrase appearing along side Hellenistic Jewish/philosophical cosmologic terminology (see the discussion of 1:16f above). This seems unlikely given the parallelism between vv. 16f and 20a; it would be more likely that the two strophes were written at the same time.

relational, instrumental)? Perhaps the earliest extent commentary on Col 1:19 is Col 2:9: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς.[127] The problem is we do not know whether the Col author's commentary fairly represents his source. One has to accept, at the least, that either "all the fullness" or its referent ("the fullness of *x*") is the subject of εὐδοκέω. Because this verb is active (contrast ἐκτίσθην in v. 16a) and its use points toward a conscious decision on the part of the subject ("he/she/it was pleased"), it is likely that πλήρωμα is either a circumlocution for God or that we are to assume God as subject.[128] Such subtlety in referring to the Deity is in keeping with the first's strophe solitary emphasis on the Son (again note the use of the passives for κτίζω). While we might take the sense of "in him" as locative (i.e., the fullness was pleased to dwell in the Son's body/person), at the least the preposition functions relationally: the Son's earthly existence facilitates the temporal/spatial habitation of the divine fullness.[129]

In verse 20, the infinitive of ἀποκαταλλάσσω points to another action besides "dwelling" which occurs at the pleasure of the divine pleroma, namely the reconciliation of all things.[130] The choice of the

---

127 The Col author appears to have understood a) "fullness" as an euphemism for the divine presence ("all the fullness of Deity"); b) it is that Deity whom we would assume was the one "pleased" to dwell; and c) the ἐν functions relationally ("in the existence of the Son God dwelled bodily [on earth or among us]"), since the adverb σωματικῶς would make the locative redundant.

128 In other words, "all the fullness" cannot refer to the cosmos, especially since the dwelling of the πλήρωμα contributes to the reconciliation of all things.

129 Cf. 2 Cor 5:18–19: τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς, ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. See also John 1:14, 16: ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, ... ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν. At best, to say "all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him" is to speak generally of the incarnation of the Son. It is doubtful whether we can speak specifically of his birth, his baptism or any other particular event as being the referent of the "dwelling." Furthermore, the dwelling should not be associated with the resurrection; verse 19 appears to support the claim of verse 18, as we have said, which would suggest that the Son's resurrection rests in the dwelling of the pleroma, not the other way around.

130 It is not clear whether v. 20 represents a continuation of the thought that begins in verse 19 or a new step in the soteriological process (i.e., is the "reconciliation" and the "dwelling" the same action, or is it a sequence of actions, one after the other?). The addition of εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος κτλ in v. 20b suggests a distinction between the dwelling and the reconciliation

term "reconcile" confirms the intuition drawn from verse 18 that something is amiss or inadequate in the cosmos such that the Son's preeminence needs to be reestablished.[131] That this reconciliation is incongruent with the first strophe is clear in the use of the phrase τὰ

---

in that the former occurs so as to result in the latter. However, if v. 20b is an addition to the hymn by the Col author (see below), then the dwelling may in fact be the very reconciling event itself (Cf. John 1:14, 16). It is also important to note that whether we speak of a reconciliation by means of the dwelling of the pleroma "in" the Son or a reconciliation which culminates in the crucifixion of the Son, neither notion is a necessary or even an expected continuation of the actions described in the first strophe.

Though James Dunn perceives the incongruity between the two strophes, he also points out that the motif of God's reconciling the world to himself is common in Jewish literature (*Colossians*, 103). He identifies a number texts from a broad swath of Jewish literature, including Isa 11:6–9; 65:17, 25; *Jubilees* 1:29; 23:26–29; *1 Enoch* 91:16–17; Philo, *Spec.* 2:192; *Plant.* 10; and *Her.* 206. The Philonic passages are most interesting given the cosmological parallels we named above, especially the *Plant.* and *Her.* passages which suggest that the Logos himself plays a reconciling role between God and the cosmos. These might suggest that reconciliation is an expected extension of the first strophe and thus vitiate the dissonance that exists between the two strophes. First, it is important to note that we ought not think that the Judaism influenced by Middle Platonism (namely Philo and Wisdom of Solomon) is devoid of soteriological aspects. (See, in addition to the Philonic passages just mentioned, Wis 7:27–28; Wis 10; plus the analysis of anthropological fulfillment in Wis and Philo in ch. 3). Yet, the process of reconciliation is as (if not more) important for our study than the language. For instance, Philo (and/or those traditions he appropriates) melds together Jewish religious motifs and Hellenistic philosophy. Hence, we are not surprised to find mention of the Day of Atonement in Philo's works just as we are not surprised to find Middle Platonic descriptions of the ascent of the soul or Stoic ethics. Furthermore, even if the second strophe is a continuation of the first conceptually, we must acknowledge that the first does not prepare us for the second. We must also accept that the second strophe employs decidedly Christian terminology (as opposed to the absence of such in the first). And finally, the notion of God as "peacemaker" (*Spec.* 2.197) and that in Col of making peace through the blood of the Son's cross represent entirely different views about the type of peace needed and the manner it is achieved.

131 Ἀποκαταλλάσσω appears only three times in the NT: here and in Col 1:22 (which is most likely citing 1:20) and Eph 2:16 (which arguably is relying on or responding to Colossians). The less intensive καταλλάσσω occurs five times in the NT: Rom 5:10, 1 Cor 7:11, and 3x's in a passage that has several affinities with the second strophe of our hymn, 2 Cor 5:18–20. Still, since the hymn is probably pre-Colossians as well as non-Pauline, it is difficult to know whether 2 Cor 5 is the impetus for its presence here. They may independently draw from the same tradition(s).

πάντα; we have here a cosmic (not just a human, i.e., the νεκροί) reconciliation.[132] This incongruity makes striking the parallelism in the use of prepositions (cf. v. 16d with v. 20a). Once again, the prepositions provide the parameters for divine action: the action takes place δι᾽ αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν. In the first phrase, αὐτός clearly refers to the Son (cf. the use of 3rd person masc. pronoun in vv. 18, 19). In contrast to his cosmogonic agency in v. 16, speaking of reconciliation occurring "through" or "by" the Son is a touchstone of early Christian thought.[133]

The second phrase, εἰς αὐτόν, presents greater difficulty to the expositor. Does the pronoun refer to the Son ("to him") or to the Father ("to himself")?[134] The difficulty with making the pronoun reflexive ("to himself") is twofold: first, we would have to supply "God" or the "Father" which is not explicitly mentioned in verse 19 (see above). Second, all other occurrences of αὐτός in both strophes refer unambiguously to the Son. To say that εἰς αὐτόν now refers to the Father, when in v. 16f the same phrase refers to the Son and in v. 20 the pronoun already occurs with the same filial referent, is to suggest a radical shift in emphasis. If we could say authoritatively that the second strophe came from a later hand than the first, such a shift might seem plausible; there would be less expectation for conformity under that

---

132 Note again, like in verse 16, τὰ πάντα entails everything on earth and in heaven (see v. 20cd).

133 For instance, Paul often uses the διά c. gen. construction in reference to Christ's soteriological agency. In Romans 5:2 he says it is Christ δι᾽ οὗ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἑστήκαμεν. In verse 9 he says σωθησόμεθα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς. Cf. also 1 Thess 4:14 (εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ) and 5:9 (ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In 1 Cor 15:21, Paul contrasts Christ with the first human Adam: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ δι᾽ ἀνθρώπου θάνατος, καὶ δι᾽ ἀνθρώπου ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν. God has given us the victory διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (v. 57). In addition to Christ's own person, Paul may isolate a specific aspect of the Christ event which mediates salvation, e.g., Christ's death (Rom 5:9) or his body (7:4). Salvation may also come through faith "in" the event (Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16, Phil 3:9). The communication of Christ (or the Christ event) may also mediate salvation, "since faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ" (Rom 10:17; see also 1 Cor 15:2).

134 The NRSV, TNIV and NASB translate εἰς αὐτόν in 1:20 as reflexive, "to himself," the antecedent of which is God the Father (which all three translations supply in v. 19). There is no textual evidence to suggest the passage originally read εἰς ἑαυτόν. See Dunn, *Colossians*, 83.

circumstance. However, even if the strophe is a later development, the use of the circumlocution πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα to refer to the Deity in v. 19 suggests that the one which might have added the second strophe to the first wished to preserve the sole emphasis of the hymn on the Son. Though unparalleled in early Christian literature, we must assume our verse asserts the Son is the one to whom the Deity reconciles creation.[135]

To understand both these prepositions in these ways shows that v. 20a mirrors v. 16f. However, it also underscores the incongruity in that the reconciling through the Son to the Son hints at a limitation to the creation process which also took place through the Son to the Son. Why, if all things were created toward the Son (i.e., he is their final cause), do all things need to be reconciled to the Son? Our text leaves this question unanswered.[136]

However, when it comes to the manner by which reconciliation occurs, our text is unusually precise and in fact quite graphic. Reconciliation is the result of εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ.[137] Εἰρηνοποιέω is a hapax legomenon in the NT, though the two terms which combine in it suggest its obvious sense: to make peace.[138] The phrase "blood of the cross" is also *sui generis* in the NT, though it echoes an established Pauline motif.[139] There are reasons to think that v. 20b is an addition to the passage by the Col author. First, the line has no parallel in the first strophe. Second, the line separates τὰ πάντα in v. 20a from its qualifiers in v. 20cd (which may explain the awkward δι᾽ αὐτοῦ at the beginning of v. 20c, the author inserting the phrase to reconnect v. 20cd with 20a). Third, the notion of reconciling *all things* is not picked up again in the letter (v. 22, only humans are reconciled) while in 2:14–15, τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας are not reconciled but vanquished and made spectacle of (i.e., pacified) precisely by means

---

135 Cf. the words of Jesus in Rev 22:13: ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

136 The Col author understands ἀποκαταλλάσσω as reconciliation between humans and God, as we see immediately following the hymn (v. 20–21). As far as other cosmic entities, namely the "rulers and authorities" (see Col 1:16de, 2:10, 15), the author speaks not of reconciling these but of pacifying them (2:13–15).

137 Again, note the use of the 3ʳᵈ person pronoun in reference to the Son and which follows εἰς αὐτόν.

138 The verb appears elsewhere only in LXX Prov 10:10. The cognate adjective appears in Matt 5:9 and Philo, *Spec.* 2.192. Note that Col 1:20b again begs the question: why and wherefrom the absence of peace in the first place?

139 Cf. Lohse, *Colossians,* 60.

of the cross (so we should take ἐν αὐτῷ in 2:15). The purpose of the
addition (if such it is) is to make clear the historical point at which
reconciliation takes place. The author reiterates this clarification in Col
1:22 with different language that makes the same claim: νυνὶ δὲ [ὑμᾶς]
ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου.

4.2.3.4. Summary of the Soteriology of the Colossian Hymn

To summarize the soteriological section of the passage (i.e., the second
strophe) we should again point out that over against the transitory
language of the first strophe, the language of the second can only take as
its referent Jesus Christ. Indeed, the elements of the second strophe as it
has come to us represent the central elements of the early Christian (or
at least Pauline) kerygma with its emphasis on the death and resurrection
of God's Son. Should we accept v. 20b ("making peace through the
blood of the cross") as an insertion by the letter author, we still have in
vv. 18b–20acd both a clear Christian focus ("firstborn from the dead")
as well as a clear soteriological focus (ἀποκαταλλάσσω). The insertion of
v. 20b specifies the historical point and manner of reconciliation and
thereby makes explicit what must have been implicit already in the
strophe. This is so since it makes no sense to call the Son "firstborn of
the dead" without at least an implicit recognition of the Son's death.
The second strophe identifies the Son specifically as Jesus Christ and
points to his salvific function vis-à-vis the cosmos. The letter author's
appropriation and emendation of the hymn only serves to intensify this
focus in the second strophe.[140]

Furthermore, we should not dissociate the second strophe from the
first. Whether we say that the same hand that penned the first penned
the second or (as seems likely) a later (Christian) hand added the second
strophe to a pre-existing (Jewish) hymn, the second clearly relies on and
assumes the first. We see this in the obvious parallelism between verses
18b–20 (apart from vv. 18d and 20b) with the first strophe (or at least
vv. 15–16). We also see the reliance in the unparalleled v. 18c (ἵνα
γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων) which makes sense only in its
function of explaining the purpose of the second strophe *over against* the
first. In fact, this line is determinative for understanding the Christian-
ization of the first strophe as well as the appropriation of the complete

---

140 Again, note that it is soteriological, not cosmological, concerns that bracket the
     passage in Col 1:12–14, 20–23.

hymn by the letter author. It alerts us to the inadequacy of the cosmological picture in the vv. 15–18a by denoting that more was necessary for the Son's maintaining preeminence, namely a cosmic reconciliation that involved the advent of the divine fullness with the Son, a reconciliation finalized in the Son's resurrection. The author of the letter makes use of the hymn both for its clear presentation of the Son's ontological primacy and for its demonstration that such primacy comes (finally) by virtue of the historical Christ event (which he clarifies in his own way with the addition of v. 20b). It is, as such, a suitable instrument for refuting those who advocate austere religiosity as a means of appeasing malevolent supernatural forces and attaining a vision of the divine.

4.2.4. Interrelationship of Cosmology and Soteriology in Col 1:15–20

Cosmology and soteriology comprise the respective foci of the Colossian hymn's two strophes.[141] We observed above that the cosmological language of the first strophe (and perhaps the first strophe itself) originates in Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom traditions, especially those influenced by Middle Platonism. The purpose of such language is to identify and laud the cosmological agent for its temporal and ontological primacy. Such language is transitory, easily affixed to different entities, and the current recipient is "God's beloved Son" (Col 1:13). We noted a substantially different origin for the language of the second strophe, namely early Christian proclamation about the person of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. The purpose of the second strophe, and its inclusion of Christian proclamation, is to amend the praise of the Son in the first strophe (v. 18c) so that his preeminence is founded not only on his cosmological agency but on his soteriological agency as well. Formally, the reliance of the second strophe on the first in terms of structure and terminology substantiate this intended relationship.

––––––––––––––

141 The compartmentalization of cosmology to the first strophe and soteriology to the second is nearly complete. The only caveats are: in the first strophe, the use of εἰς αὐτόν to denote final cause in v. 16f (which may be perhaps soteriological) and the mention of ἐκκλησία in v. 18a (which is likely a gloss); in the second strophe, the use of the term ἀρχή, which may ultimately derive from Jewish language about the creation of the cosmos, but which now refers to the beginning of the church or at least of the salvation the Son brings.

The problem is that the relationship between the two strophes, though clear in the language and structure of the second, is not clear from the perspective of the first. The second strophe speaks, as we have discussed, of a need for reconciliation and pacification to which the first strophe does not allude. In fact, it is arguable that the first strophe is in itself a unity and that it established preeminence for its subject entirely on cosmological grounds. The notion of a final cause expressed in v. 16f's εἰς αὐτόν need not imply a soteriological focus, only that creation is a process with a fixed beginning and a fixed ending (a notion acceptable to Stoicism, for instance). True, we are at a loss to explain how this phrase comes to describe a cosmological agent as opposed to the Deity (or an equivalent, like Nature) as it most often does in Hellenistic religio-philosophical doxologies.

However, even if we claim εἰς αὐτόν points to soteriological function of the cosmological agent (an equally unprecedented move), we still receive no explanation for how discord came to exist. The first strophe tells us simply that the Son is πρὸ πάντων and the "head" of the (cosmological) body; no exceptions are made. The second strophe tells us – as simply – that in order to become preeminent in the cosmos, the Son had to mediate reconciliation through his death (at least implied) and his resurrection. We might understand that between the two some type of fall is implied, involving rebellion by supernatural forces or human beings (or both). This is a standard motif in Jewish apocalyptic literature but is less common in Jewish wisdom and even less so in the philosophically inspired Jewish texts most akin linguistically and conceptually to the first strophe.

Alternatively, it may be that we have in the first strophe a preexisting hymn like those we would presumably find in Diaspora synagogues or within their orbit, hymns which praised the Deity by focusing on the preeminence of his agent(s).[142] The second strophe represents a stage in the Christianization of such Diaspora language, to facilitate worship by Jewish Christians or for similar "apologetic" purposes (whether *ad extra* or *ad intra*). If so, it is significant that the first strophe was not simply appropriated as is, but was augmented (see v.

---

142 It seems to me probable that God's agents (Logos or Sophia) were acclaimed as a manner of competing with similar entities from the non-Jewish Hellenistic world, Isis or the Middle Platonic Logos (or its equivalents), for instance. The audience at stake was likely Hellenized Jews being drawn away from Judaism to Hellenism.

18c) to make room, as it were, for the historically rooted Christ event. The Paulinist's insertion of v. 20b only intensifies this move.[143] The end result is the relatively uncritical combination of two different religious traditions, one stemming from philosophically oriented Greek-speaking Judaism, the other coming from an eschatologically oriented early Christian milieu.

This "uncritical combination" may account for the less than precise use of prepositions as well as some of the other textual oddities of the passage. More importantly, this combination shows that the marriage of cosmological and soteriological motifs found in Col 1:15–20 is not as intentional as is usually suggested. The cosmological picture is complete in itself, and this includes whatever soteriology we might expect from a philosophically oriented Jewish sapientialism. The soteriological picture, stemming from Christian ideas about the reconciling and pacifying nature of Christ's earthly existence, dying and rising, assumes a different cosmology, one in which the cosmos is in need of reparation and that is hence either incomplete or broken. We may speak of a Wisdom Christology in the first strophe then, understanding that the language of Jewish Wisdom has a tradition of being transitory. But we cannot call the second strophe evidence of the same. It must either be Wisdom Christology reoriented or Wisdom language used in support of non-Wisdom, but eschatological Christology.

4.3. Hebrews 1:1–4

4.3.1. Origin and Nature of Hebrews 1:1–4

It is clear the Hebrews author, while not aware of Philo of Alexandria directly, appears to have many affinities with the Alexandrian and with other Jewish religious writers of that region, especially the author of Wisdom of Solomon. While we cannot place the Hebrews author in any particular geographical location, it is likely given his use of the Old Testament, Hellenistic popular philosophy, rhetorical strategies that belie both solid Hellenistic education and homiletical training, he

---

143 Again, v. 18–20a,cd *could* be associated with a Christian perspective similar to John 1:14,16, one that does not push forward the death of Christ per se. The insertion of Col 1:20b pushes the crucifixion into the foreground, a Pauline (at the least) motif to be sure.

belongs among the more intellectually and culturally established Jews of the Diaspora.[144]

Hebrews 1:1–4 represents this well. Though brief, this four-verse exordium prepares the reader not only for the theme and tenor to be encountered thereafter but for the complexity of the letter's argument as well.[145] The exordium is meant to bring to light the difference between lesser functionaries in the divine economy (οἱ πατέρες, οἱ ἄγγελοι) and the Son. Most interesting for our purposes is the six-line presentation of the Son's unique characteristics in vv. 2b–3. The extent to which the author employs traditional materials in the exordium continues to be a matter of debate, with v. 3 in particular receiving considerable scrutiny as a possible fragment of a Christological hymn.[146] Our analysis will

---

144 For an orientation to the literary *Sitz im Leben* of Hebrews, with bibliography, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 28–31. For an assessment of the author's possible relationship with Philo of Alexandria, see Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ALGHJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 1970), who decides against such a relationship. Kenneth L. Schenck ("Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years," *SPhA* 14 [2002]: 112–135) contends that Williamson "overstate[s] his case in many instances." Schenck affirms "a number of things with confidence. First of all, the author of Hebrews and Philo had much in common. Both were Greek speaking Jews of the Diaspora who had enjoyed the privilege of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. Both were reliant on the LXX and used similar textual traditions, perhaps even some particular to the synagogues of Alexandria. Both were heirs of various elements from the philosophical traditions we usually associate with Alexandrian Judaism." Schenck also avers "the author of Hebrews knew of the Wisdom of Solomon" (134). Our analysis below reveals a similar stance to Schenck's (though perhaps not as confident in the particulars as he) and especially with his conclusion: "Yet the author is thoroughly and fundamentally Christian; whatever pre-Christian views he might have had, the matrix of an eschatologically oriented Christianity has transformed them" (ibid.). See also idem, "Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JSNT* 66 (1997): 91–117.

145 For a bibliography on the Hebrews exordium see Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (vol. 1; EKKNT; Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 46–47. For an analysis of the structure of Hebrews, and the role of Heb 1:1–4 as an exordium, see A. Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), 23.

146 Those who argue for a traditional hymn, or hymn fragment, somewhere in Heb 1:1–4 include E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 386; G. Bornkamm, "Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief," *TBl* 21 (1942): 56–66; U. Luck, "Himmlisches und irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief," *NT* 6 (1963): 200; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (6th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 94; Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus*, 137–40; Sanders, *New Testa-*

focus on these filial characteristics with an eye to how they interrelate. That analysis will afford us something to say about the question of traditional material at play in Heb 1:1–4. More germane to our task, we shall see that the roles of cosmological and soteriological agent again intersect in reference to Jesus.

4.3.1.1. Structure

The Hebrews exordium is notorious for its well-developed rhetorical style and its structural complexity. The following reconstruction ought not be viewed as definitive but as one viable approach (among others) to analyzing the exordium. The exordium structurally, may be broken up into three sections. The first section contains a period with two balanced clauses followed by two relative clauses. The balanced clauses read:

verse 1	verse 2a
πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ Θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις	ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ

The parallelism between the two presents a contrast in bold relief: the "many and various ways of old" contrast with "in these last days" (with the notion of one absolute occurrence implied here); God spoke to the fathers but now he speaks to "us" (i.e., directly); and finally, while in

---

ment Christological Hymns, 19; K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (SNT 7; Gerd Mohn: Gutersloher Verlaghaus, 1972), 166–167; O. Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines ürchristlichen Psalms* (WUNT 17; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1976), 80–87; G. Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (SNTSMS 36; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 6; J. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982), 129; and Attridge, *Hebrews*, 36.

Those who argue against the presence of a traditional liturgical fragment include D. W. B. Robinson, "The Literary Structure of Hebrews 1–4," *AJBA* 2 (1972): 178–86; J. Frankowski, "Early Christian Hymns Recorded in the New Testament: A Reconsideration of the Question in the Light of Hebrews 1,3," *BZ* 27 (1983): 183–94; J. Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in Heb 1,5–14," *Bib* 66 (1985): 528; and D. Ebert, "The Chiastic Structure of the Prologue to Hebrews," *TJ* 13 (1992), 176.

the past he spoke by means of (many) prophets (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις), now he speaks by means of one Son (ἐν υἱῷ).

The last word, υἱός, provides the subject matter for the two relative clauses that finish out the first section and introduce the next. Note how the two relative clauses parallel each other: v. 2b – ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων // v. 2c – δι᾿ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας. Their parallelism includes the anaphoric use of the relative (with the υἱός as referent), God as the grammatical subject, and use of complementary terms referring to the created order (πάντα, οἱ αἰῶνες).

The second section is a period with four clauses, all of which find their grammatical subject in v. 3's initial relative, ὅς, which along with the relatives in v. 2bc refers back to υἱός in v. 2a.

> ὅς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ
>   φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ
>   καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος
>   ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς

The first two of these four lines form a pair, indicated by their parallelism; i.e., the anaphoric present participles and the antistrophic αὐτοῦ.[147] The enclitic particle τε in v. 3b also appears to function consequentially.[148] We shall see below that in spite of assertions by others that v. 3a has to do with the Son's eternal relationship to God, the sense of this line finds its fulfillment in line b, and that together they express the Son's continuous activity in (or on behalf of) the cosmos.[149] The third and fourth lines of v. 3 also appear to form a distinct pair. Syntactically, the aorist middle participle in line c modifies the aorist active indicative in line d, ποιησάμενος καθαρισμόν denoting the event which resulted in the Son's ascension to the divine throne (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξίᾳ κτλ).

When we combine the two clausal pairings in verse 3 with the two preceding relative clauses in v. 2bc, a chiasm surfaces which binds the six lines together. We can outline the chiasm thus:

---

147 We should also note that the antistrophe extends as well to the grammatical case endings of the penultimate terms: τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ//τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.

148 See Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 2967.

149 If ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ are passive in sense, we may wish to speak not of the Son's "activity" on behalf of the cosmos as much as the effect of his presence. See below.

A. the Son is appointed heir of all things by God (v. 2b, one line)
B. the Son is that by which God creates the worlds (v. 2c, one line)
B'. the Son, closely related to God, sustains creation (v. 3ab, two lines)
A'. the Son, making purification for sins, sits at God's right hand
     (v. 3 cd, two lines)

Notice in the following table that A' and B' rephrase and add to A and
B, a progressive aspect seen structurally in the fact that while A and B are
one line, their prime counterparts are two lines. In terms of A/A', the
divine appointment as heir (v. 2b) is mirrored by the Son's sitting at the
Deity's right hand (v. 3d); both lines refer to the attainment of the
(pen)ultimate cosmic position.[150] Where v. 3d appears only to rephrase
v. 2b, v. 3c (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος) provides new
information about the Son's appointment/enthronement – it is the
direct result of the historical event wherein he expiated sins. If we are
correct that v. 3d parallels v. 2b, then v. 3c qualifies both.

A (v. 2b)	A' (v. 3cd)
ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων	καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς
B (v. 2c)	**B' (v. 3ab)**
δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας	ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

With respect to B/B', the Son's role as medium by which God creates
τούς αἰῶνας (v. 2c) finds a parallel in v. 3b's φέρων τε τὰ πάντα κτλ. The
use of φέρω here is ambiguous; it may refer either to the Son's role in
creating the universe (τὰ πάντα//οἱ αἰῶνες) or his involvement in
sustaining that universe. The former simply would rephrase v. 2c (though
now the Son is the grammatical subject), while the latter would
augment v. 2c to include the ongoing status of the Son vis-à-vis
creation.[151] Whichever it is, we are afforded insight into how the Son

_____

150 Verse 4, which we discuss below, supports our perception of a link between v.
     2b and v. 3d.
151 On the use of φέρω here see n. 184 below.

can have such a prominence in the origin/continuation of the cosmos in
v. 3a: the Son is both the ἀπαύγασμα of God's glory and the χαρακτήρ
of his substance (the pronoun at the end of line a applies both to δόξα
and ὑπόστασις). Again, whether v. 3b rephrases or augments v. 2c, v. 3a
qualifies both.

The result of this chiasm is that vv. 2b–3d express two themes: the
Son's exaltation, hinging on his sacrifice for sins; and the Son's
cosmological activity, hinging on his ontological proximity to God. The
exact relationship between the two is not immediately clear and is an
issue we will address in the subsequent sections on the cosmology and
soteriology of this passage. For the purpose of Hebrews as a whole, and
for the exordium in particular, the more important of the two themes
would appear to be the exaltation of the Son. This is so at least when we
consider verse 4, the third and final section of the exordium.

Verse 4 contains two lines:

> τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων
> ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παῖΌ αὐτοῖς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα

The aorist participle of γίγνομαι continues the progression which had
begun in v. 3cd: after *having made* purification for sins and then *sitting*
down at God's right hand, the Son *has become* as much better than the
angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.[152] But
conceptually it is difficult to explain v. 4 as simply a continuation of the
thought process begun in the previous section, since while the mention

---

152 The terms set in italics represent the aorist forms of ποιέω, καθίζω, and
γίγνομαι, respectively. John Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1–4,"
Bib 66 (1985): 168–89 and idem, "Symmetry and Theology in Heb 1, 5–14,"
504–33, argues in these two articles that Heb 1:2b–4 form a ring of seven points
that correspond with the seven biblical citations in Heb 1:5–14. The ring,
according to Meier, begins with the Son's exaltation (v2b, which takes place at
the last days) and moves back to creation (v. 2c), then further back to the Son's
eternal status vis-à-vis God (v. 3a), then forward to the Son's involvement in
the continuation of creation (v. 3b), then to the Son's death (v. 3c), then to his
enthronement (v. 3d), and finally back to exaltation, this time above the angels
(v. 4). The conclusion of the ring is marked by κληρονομέω (v. 4b), a cognate of
κληρονόμος in v. 2b. Meier is correct that v. 4 creates the seventh point and that
these correspond with the citations in the catena of vv. 5–14; however this ring
does not exhausts explanations of either the structure of the exordium (esp., vv.
2b–4) or of the functions of verse 4 within that structure.

of angels is new, their inferiority to the Son is already implied in the Son's appointment as κληρονόμον πάντων of v. 2b and the Son's place (ἐν δεξιᾷ) next to God. Rather than taking the verse as an advancement of the thought process within the exordium, it is perhaps better to understand the verse as recapitulating the previous verses while providing a transition to the first phase of the argument of Hebrews.

Verse 4 completes the whole exordium in at least three ways. First, it forms an *inclusio* with v. 2b. The cognate terms κληρονόμος (v. 2b) and κληρονομέω (v. 4b) provide the *inclusio's* structural markers. Verses 2b–4 focus on characteristics of the υἱός mentioned in v. 2a, beginning and ending with the Son's status as heir. Given that five of the eight lines in vv. 2b–4 have to do with either exaltation of the Son (vv. 2b, 3d, 4ab) or the action that results in that exaltation (v. 3c), this would appear to be the primary point the author wishes to communicate about the Son here. Second, v. 4 also forms an *inclusio* with vv. 1–2a. Note that vv. 2b–3 do not mention the Son explicitly. While "Son" does not appear in verse four, the term ὄνομα ("name") likely refers to that title. Verse 5 will make this explicit when it begins the next section with a citation from Ps 2:7: "For to which of the angels did he (God) ever say: Υἱός μου εἶ σύ." Third, v. 4 shares with verses 1–2b another motif not found in vv. 2b–3, namely a contrast between the Son and other prominent entities. In the first two verses, the Son surpasses (such is the implication) the προφῆται, while in v. 4 he surpasses the ἄγγελοι. The use of the contrasting motif and the introduction of the "angels" are also the manner by which verse 4 provides the transition from the exordium to the argument proper of Hebrews. The contrast with the angels is the ostensible subject of Heb 1:5–2:18[153] while the use of contrast, i.e., a fortiori argumentation, is a leitmotif of the work as a whole.

4.3.1.2. Source(s)?

Thus far, we have analyzed the structure and content of Heb 1:1–4 without addressing whether the author employed traditional material in the composition of this exordium. As noted above, many have suggested that in fact some kind of hymn underlies all or part of the exordium.[154] Given that the analysis of the structure of the exordium

---

153 For a discussion of both the "superficial" subject matter and actual purpose of Heb 1:5–2:18 see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 50–51.

154 See note 146.

shows it to be a complex but cohesive unit, one which its author must have spent considerable time in crafting, it is in fact very difficult to prove the existence of a hymn in Hebrews 1:1–4. Unless we say the author borrows the whole of vv. 1–4, which is unlikely if for no other reason than v. 4 presents a clear bridge to the next section, we must look for a relatively small hymn or hymnic fragment(s) imbedded in the exordium. This proves rather difficult when we consider that any traditional material the author may have used likely underwent substantial reworking. The author of Hebrews shows himself both in the first four verses as well as in the λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως as a whole to be a skilled writer and we should expect him capable of writing in a lyrical, even hymnic style, especially at the outset of a major literary undertaking.

While we must excuse Heb 1:1–2a and 4 from the discussion, vv. 2b–3 afford significant data to warrant raising the question of traditional material.[155] In fact, it is precisely a product of the exordium's close relationship to Hebrews as a whole that helps to surface some of these data. For when the author spends such considerable time crafting a prologue to a major literary work, we should expect that all the characteristics of that prologue point to and prepare the audience for what they will hear next. Any material, even if it is structurally connected to the exordium, that appears anomalous in terms of the larger writing should raise flags for us.

---

155 In the exordium, we have already pointed out that verses 1–2a contrast God's speaking by the prophets with his speaking by a Son. This is a very suitable beginning to the work since the author will return again and again to the motif of oral exhortation. Indeed, these opening lines creates a nice balance with the summation of the author's exhortation: "See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking (λαλέω); for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth [Moses, a "prophet"], how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven [via a Son]!" (Heb 12:25). This verse mirrors the a fortiori argument with which the author began his work in Heb 1:1–2a. So both the action of God (speaking) and the contrast in the medium (prophets vs Son, earth vs heaven) frame and define the manner in which Hebrews operates rhetorically. The first two lines of the exordium are part of the whole.

    While some contend verse 4 draws from traditional material, it is more likely a construct of the author's. This is seen in its use of a fortiori argumentation and in particular its contrasting the Son with angels, since that will be the concern of Heb 1:5–2:18.

While the two relative clauses in Heb 1:2bc complete the first period of the exordium, it is best (since they do not involve a contrast) to group them with verse 3 in terms of the question of traditional material. Recall that we perceived a chiastic structure in vv. 2b–3 and delineated A/A' as vv. 2b, 3cd and B/B' as vv. 2c, 3ad. Let us address the potential traditional nature of each of these pairings separately.

Verse 2b speaks of God's appointing the Son as heir of all things. By itself this line has no strong affinities with the larger Hebrews text,[156] though as we observed above, the link between v. 2b and v. 4 is clear. The chiastic complement to v. 2b, lines c and d of v. 3, have a more integral connection with the rest of Hebrews. In fact, these lines appear to express the essence of the Son's distinctiveness in the work as a whole.[157] We should associate the Son's action of καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος with the author's description of him as high priest.[158] Note also that this action of the heavenly High Priest precedes his exaltation in Heb 10:11–13:

> And every priest stands day after day at his service, repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take a way sins. But when this one [Jesus

---

156 The author uses τίθημι with respect to God's actions on behalf of the Son twice more, Heb 1:13 and 10:13. The first of these is a citation of LXX Ps 109:1: κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποδόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου. The second (10:13) is a reference to that Psalm: … ἕως τεθῶσιν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ. (Cf. LXX Psalm 8:7 [vv. 5–7 of the psalm are cited in Heb 2:6–8]: πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ. Note that πάντα encompasses angels, both in the Psalm and in Heb 2:8–9. Also, compare 1 Cor 15:25–27, which brings together the ἐχθροί of LXX Ps 109 and the πάντα of Ps 8.) However, the Son is not the direct object of the verse in ether Heb 1:13 or 10:13, as he is in 1:2b.

Κληρονόμος also occurs twice more in Hebrews (6:17 and 11:7) but in reference to persons other than the Son. The cognate κληρονομέω occurs four times; it refers to the Son in 1:4 but to others in the remaining instances (1:14, 6:12; 12:17).

157 Consider Heb 8:1–2 (NRSV): "Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up."

158 On how Jesus deals with sin as High Priest see Heb 2:17; 4:15 (cf. 5:1–5); 7:27; 9:26; 10:12. We might explain the significance of ποιέω having the middle voice in v. 3c by the fact that Jesus offers himself as the sacrifice for sin, a point dealt with at length in Heb 9. The high priests of old are the ones who offered sacrifices for sin, but now the Son has offered himself as a sacrifice (see also Heb 13:12).

Christ] had offered a single sacrifice for sins for all time, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then he has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet."

As in this passage, v. 3c, the Son's making purification, leads to his sitting at the right hand of God (v. 3d, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ κτλ).[159] At one level, Heb 10:12 actually constrains us to detect traditional material at work in Heb 1:3: the phrase ἐν δεξιᾷ in line d must originate with LXX Psalm 109:1.[160] But whether the echo of the psalm appears here because it was a part of a hymnic *Vorlage* or whether the author himself places it here, we cannot be sure.[161] It seems, since LXX Psalm 109 has such a prominent place in the Hebrews argument, we must be more skeptical of the former possibility. Regardless, Heb 1:2b and 3cd correlate with Hebrews in general and are not anomalous.

The B/B' part of the chiasm, vv. 2c–3b, is different. Verse 2c, δι' οὗ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας, at first glance foreshadows the cosmological function of the Son mentioned in Heb 1:10–12 as well as the use of the διά c. genitive construction to denote cosmological agency in 2:10. But in the first case, while the Psalm cited (LXX 101:26–28) is applied to the Son, its language is standard biblical discourse for describing Yahweh's creative activity.[162] Applied to the Son, the Psalm citation appears to claim that the Son is the primary force behind creation. Verse 2c presents a different image, one where God works δι' υἱοῦ, i.e., the

---

159 Cf. Heb 12:2: "… fixing our eyes upon Jesus the pioneer and perfector of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God."

160 The Psalm may have an even greater influence on v. 3 since the mention of a high priest in the order of Melchizedek (i.e., a non-Levitical priest) in LXX Ps 109:4 provides a likely impetus for the purification language in line c of the exordium verse.

161 LXX Psalm 109:1 has a prominent role in early reflection on Christ, as the number of allusions to it in the NT suggest: Mark 14:62 (and pars.); Acts 2:25, 33, 34; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:22, not to mention its use in Hebrews itself.

162 In Greek, LXX Psalm 101:26–28 reads: Σὺ κατ' ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σού εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί· αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις, καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἑλίξεις αὐτούς, ὡς ἱμάτιον καὶ ἀλλαγήσονται· σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν. The NRSV (Heb 1:10–12) translates: "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end."

Son is the instrument by which God creates. This is a construction more suited to Hellenistic philosophy and Greek-Speaking Jewish wisdom speculation. Also suitable to these milieux is Heb 2:10 (δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα) which is indeed quite similar to Heb 1:2c. However, the relative pronouns in Heb 2:10 refer not to the Son but to God.[163]

The only other cosmological language (i.e., cosmogonic language) in post-exordium Hebrews is Heb 11:3:

> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God (κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ), so that what is seen is made from things that are not visible.

This verse brings together two phrases which are connected in the exordium, τοὺς αἰῶνας in Heb 1:2c and ῥήματι αὐτοῦ in 3b. This is a curious parallel since, though the language is so similar, the pronoun in Heb 1:3b almost certainly refers to the Son and not to God.[164] The two passages agree that God is the final creator (*contra*, at least ostensibly, Heb 1:10–12), but where the exordium mentions the Son as his agent, Heb 11:3 is silent on the presence of an agent.[165] Finally, it should be said that while the Son's making purification for sins and his exaltation are key themes recurring throughout and indeed shaping the message of Hebrews, the Son's cosmological functions are limited to only the

---

163 Curiously, while the relative pronouns of Heb 2:10 refer to God and not the Son, a similar combination of cosmology and soteriology operates there as in the exordium. "It was fitting that God for and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Notice also that like Heb 1:2bc (where it first says the Son is appointed heir of all things and then says God makes the ages *through* him), 2:10 says that all things exist *for* God first and, second, *through* him. Notice also that following this "for/through him" verse is a comment on the sacrifice of the pioneer Son (τελειόω denotes at least this and perhaps even the Son's exaltation), comparable to 1:3cd following vv. 2b–3b.

164 Identifying the antecedent of the pronoun in Heb 1:3b is somewhat complicated by the fact that v. 3a ends with the same pronoun, but with God as its clear referent. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 45, n. 126.

165 Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 315. The use of ῥῆμα in Heb 11:3 may refer to Gen 1 (the basis for the role of the λόγος) and so may not be completely distinct from Heb 1:3b (which is quite similar to Philo's writings). On Philo and Hebrews, see below. On the interpretation of Gen 1, see the next section on the prologue to John.

exordium, and the citation of Ps 101 (LXX) in 1:10–13.[166] It is not a major theme of the λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως in general.

While we cannot prove the presence of, let alone the original content of a hymnic *Vorlage* to Heb 1:1–4, we can at least make the case that Heb 1:2c, 3ab are substantially distinct and *appear* to play less than even a cursory role in the argument of the letter as a whole. The coupling with vv. 2b, 3cd is clear and so we should not analyze vv. 2c, 3ab apart from these lines. Whether they were originally a part of the same hymn (or, more generically, traditional material) we cannot know; however, the author of the exordium intends the two to be mutually illuminating. Hence within these verses (and not in vv. 1–2a and 4) we have the same conjoining of cosmology and eschatology as we saw in 1 Cor 8:6 and Col 1:15–20.

4.3.2. Cosmology in Heb 1:2c and 3ab: The Son in relation to God and the Cosmos

The cosmology of Hebrews as a whole is at one level quite complex. Should we speak of the Platonic contrast between the shadowy world of the senses verses the real world of the intelligible; or should we speak of contrasting αἰῶνες, one an earthly age associated with the past, the other a heavenly age associated with the eschaton?[167] But when we speak in

---

166 There is one other possible reference to the Son's cosmogonic role, namely Heb 3:3. This text is less clear than the two in Heb 1, however. Heb 3:3–4 read: "Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God)". While v. 3 seems to suggest that Jesus is τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας, v. 4 clarifies that ὁ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός. While it may appear that this passage identifies Jesus and God, verse 6 makes clear that there is a distinction between God and the Son. I think here the most that can be said is that Jesus' status as Son identifies him more with the builder than the building. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 109–110.

167 It is a continuing debate whether Hebrews expresses an ontological or temporal understanding of the cosmos (i.e., realized eschatology vs. apocalyptic). For a review of these views see G. W. MacRae, "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 179–199; reprinted in idem, *Studies in the New Testament and Gnosticism* (GNS 26; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 80–97. See most recently Gregory E. Sterling, "Ontology Versus Eschatology: Tensions between Author and Community," *SphA* 13 (2001): 190–211. We will discuss this debate further in the final part of this section when we discuss the interrelationship of cosmology and soteriology.

terms of cosmogony, there is more clarity. After Hebrews 1, the clear artificer of all things is God (understood as the proper name of the Deity, synonymous with "God the father"). We see this in Heb 2:10, 3:4, and 11:3. Chapter one of Hebrews presents a different picture of the source of the cosmos. The citation of Psalm 101:26–28 (LXX), which originally addressed Yahweh's creative function, now in Heb 1:9–12 describes the Son's cosmogonic function:

> In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.

This citation likely is that portion of Heb 1:5–13 the author intends to be a counterpart to the very first cosmongonic lines of the work, those found in the exordium.[168]

4.3.2.1. Heb 1:2c: "through whom he made the ages"

The analysis of the structure and origin of Hebrews 1:1–4 suggests we confine the cosmology of the exordium to the three consecutive lines in vv. 2c, 3ab.[169] They read:

δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας
ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ
φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

The grammatical subject of of the first of these three lines is Θεός, whom the author explicitly names in the exordium only at Heb 1:1. So, if we confine ourselves to the second half of the phrase, "he made the worlds" the cosmogony is congruent with the rest of Hebrews (apart from 1:10–12): God is clearly the primary cause of creation.[170] Of course, this

---

168 See Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in Heb 1,5–14," 517–518.

169 Based upon our structural analysis, we will discuss the first line (v. 2c) independently from the second two (v. 3ab), which we will study as a pair. However, given that we found these lines to form the B/B' part of a chiasm, we will need to be aware that the second and third lines in effect rephrase and/or enhance the first. Along the way, we will consider passages from Wisdom of Solomon and Philo which ascribe the same function we find in Heb 1:2c, 3ab to Sophia and/or the Logos.

170 The use of ποιέω to describe the action of a Deity creating the cosmos or part of it (e.g., human beings) is common. It occurs frequently in the LXX (often translating the Hebrew ברא) and other Greek speaking Jewish writings, the

stance is also commonplace within Jewish and Christian scriptures and related religious texts.

However the first two words, which combine to make the prepositional phrase δι᾿ οὗ ("through whom"), provide a substantial twist when prefixed to this axiom of Jewish monotheism. The antecedent of the relative pronoun is the υἱός mentioned in Heb 1:2a: "God spoke to us by a Son … through whom also he made the ages." The phrase does not deny God's status as creator; rather it establishes a medium, an intermediary, through whom God created. As in 1 Cor 8:6 and Col 1:16, as well as in Philo's writings, the διά c. gen. construction functions here as shorthand for describing the Son's instrumental role in the Deity's cosmogonic action.[171] Conceptually, this creates an interesting parallel to the Son's status as agent of revelation (the ἐν υἱῷ of v. 2a).[172] The Son is, in both types of agency (revelation and cosmogony), the instrument of God. This clarifies the qualitative

---

NT, and non-Jewish Hellenistic literature. (See "ποιέω," BDAG for references.)

    The term αἰών, here in the plural, is ambiguous, but appears to refer to the entirety of things created, as is the case in Heb 11:3. It may refer to eternity, periods of time ("ages"), or to spatial dimension ("worlds"). The fact that τοὺς αἰῶνας creates an antistrophic link with τὰ πάντα in the prior relative phrase (v. 2b), and the fact that τὰ πάντα again appears in v. 3b may suggest at the least spatial dimension. In the context of the exordium, the contrast between πάλαι in v. 1 and ἐπ᾿ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν in v. 2a could mean the author wants us to think in chronological terms as well. Whether ages or worlds, the creation of the αἰῶνες has already taken place (cf. the aorist tense in Heb 1:2c and the perfect tense in 11:3). The notion of "eternity", a prevalent use of αἰών in the LXX and elsewhere (cf. Heb 1:8), is unlikely given the τὰ πάντα parallels. Even more unlikely is that αἰών here has a personal referent, namely the Aeon(s) so prevalent in Gnostic writings. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 41 and our discussion of the Sethian treatise *Apocryphon of John* in chapter five.

171 For the discussion of the διά c. gen. construction as shorthand for cosmogonical intermediacy see § 2.3.1 and § 3.2.5.1.

172 In Heb 11:3, we read κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, pointing to God's word as instrumental when he created the world. This is an established motif in Judaism, originating with Gen 1:3. That verse (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς γενηθήτω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς) does not however appear to point to an actual agent of creation as much as mode (speech) by which creation took place. Of course, such mode may be the object of personification; this is a likely impetus for the Logos traditions. See our description of Aristobulus' teachings at the beginning of chapter three as well as the discussion of Genesis 1 interpretive traditions in our discussions of Philo (chapter three) and on the Prologue of John later in this chapter.

distinction between the Son and the "prophets of the past"; to address
humanity in the last days God speaks by the very same entity through
which he created the world. But whether revelation or cosmogony, the
Son may be the instrument but the primary actor is God.

> 4.3.2.2. Heb 1:3ab: "he who is the effulgence of his glory and
> impression of his nature bears all things by his powerful word"

This primacy shifts, at least grammatically, when we come to the next
two lines (v. 3ab) of the exordium.

> ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ
> φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

This is loaded and robust imagery – especially in a context that demands
concision. The first line (v. 3a) says that the Son "is" (the present active
participle, ὤν, denotes ontological status) both the radiance of *his* glory
and the imprint of *his* essence. The antecedent of the pronoun is θεός,[173]
suggesting that while the first line has shifted the focus to the Son's
ontology, the de facto primacy is still God's. The phrases are parallel in
that they both join descriptors (ἀπαύγασμα, χαρακτήρ) of the Son with
circumlocutions (δόξα, ὑπόστασις) for the Deity, and we should read
both phrases as expressing the same sentiment.[174] Arguably, the singular
effect of this line is the illumination of the Son's eternal status by
accentuating his closeness to God.

However, the author describes the Son's intimate connection with
God with two distinct, even antithetical, metaphors (light and
impression). While we cannot know with what precision the author
writes, it is noteworthy that he employs intellectually freighted
terminology.[175]Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποσάσεως
αὐτοῦ seems to echo Wis 7:26, which says of Sophia, ἀπαύγασμα ἐστιν

---

173 Though the pronoun (αὐτοῦ) occurs only after the second phrase, it qualifies
    both δόξα and ὑπόστασις.
174 Cf. Wilckens, *TDNT*, "χαρακτήρ," 9.421: "The two members of the first
    statement (v. 3a) are in parallelism. They thus intentionally say the same thing.
    As δόξα and ὑπόστασις are synonymous to the degree that God's glory is His
    nature, so the same function of the Son is expressed by ἀπαύγασμα and
    χαρακτήρ." While structurally this is right, there is some conceptual tension
    between the Son as radiance and as impress. See below.
175 The terms ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ are hapax legomena both in Hebrews and
    the NT. See the excursus below on these terms in Philo's writings.

φωτὸς ἀϊδίου καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνεργείας καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ.[176] Both texts use multiple descriptors that characterize their respective intermediary (the Son, Sophia) as a divine emanation while indirectly referencing the Deity.[177] While in doing so they reflect their biblical influences (δόξα is a common designation for the Deity in Jewish scripture and related writings),[178] Wisdom and Hebrews also likely reflect a Middle Platonic *Vorleben*. Χαρακτήρ and εἰκών in particular call to mind the paradigmatic motif Platonists used to describe their intermediate principle.[179] Alcinous' and Philo's use of ὑπόστασις to denote intelligible reality (though not necessarily the supreme principle itself) strengthens the case.[180]

Philo also provides an interesting parallel with respect to the bringing together of the apparently mismatched metaphors. Recall from chapter three that Philo combines light and impression metaphors in *Somn.* 1.75.

> God is light, for it is sung in the Psalms, 'the Lord is my illumination (φωτισμός) and my Saviour (Ps. 26:1).' And he is not only light, but also the archetype of every other light, rather is anterior and superior to every archetype, having the relationship of a model <of a model>. For the model (παράδειγμα) is his Logos in its plenitude, light (φῶς) in fact, for as he (Moses) says, 'God said: let light come into existence,' whereas he himself is similar to none of the things that have come into existence.[181]

In addition to casting the Logos as both the divine model and light (both of which he grounds in the Genesis 1:4 speech act), notice that Philo also speaks of the Deity with a care reminiscent of the circumlocutions which Heb and Wis employ. God "is similar to none of the things that have come into existence" and is "anterior and superior to every

---

176 Attridge (*Hebrews*, 42) suggests Wis 7:26 ("a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of God's power, and an image of his goodness") is "ultimately … the specific source" for Heb 1:3a.

177 In Hebrews, it is not the reflection or impress of God, but the reflection of God's glory and essence. In Wis, also, it is not "of God" but "of God's power, glory, light, working and goodness." See our discussion of 7:25–26 in chapter three (§ 3.1.2.1).

178 Cf. LSJ, s.v. "δόξα."

179 See our discussion of the Middle Platonic intermediary as paradigm in chapter two (§ 2.3).

180 See Alcinous, *Epit.* 25.1, and Philo, *Somn.* 1.188. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 44.

181 Trans.: Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 168; see his analysis of this passage while discussing *Opif.* 31, where the intelligible light is called the εἰκών of creation.

archetype." That the transcendent God is able to be our illumination (Ps 26:1) only by means of the divine Logos expresses in effect what Hebrews 1:3 and Wis 7:25–26 express.

Which is to say that to limit the significance of Heb 1:3a to a focus only on the Son's ontology is to discount its relationship to its context.[182] Structurally, we discussed above how verse 3a connects to verse 3b by means of parallelism (both in anaphoric and antistrophic terms) and the use of the conjunctive τε.[183] The question is not so much whether line a of verse 3 reports the Son's eternal status vis-à-vis the Deity (it does) but how that status informs the Son's cosmological function. In particular, the Son's status as divine reflection and representation has direct bearing on his ability to hold all things by his powerful word.

Unfortunately, the sense of the second line in verse 3 is ambiguous. First, the use of φέρω is nebulous: it could refer to sustaining all things (cf. Col 1:17: τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν) or to creating all things (reiterating the claim of Heb 1:2c, though now with the Son as actor), or perhaps a combination of both.[184] As we saw, a phrase similar to τῷ

---

182 This is what is concerning about John Meier's analysis of this line. In his "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1–14" (see esp. 179–182) he argues that the author steps backward from creation (v. 2c) to the Son's place in eternity (v. 3a) and then forward to the Son's continuing role in sustaining the cosmos (v. 3b), before moving to the Son's incarnation/death (v. 3c) and exaltation (v. 3d). (Cf. E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 60–62). While Meier is correct that v. 2b and v. 4 form an inclusio, we perceive the structure of vv. 2b–3 differently than he does (see above for details). Specifically, the notion that v. 3a represents a step "backward" into "eternity" discounts the structural connections v. 3a has with v. 3b. It especially should not be discounted that while the present active participle ὤν likely does refer to the Son's eternal status (cf. Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1–4" 180), it has a counterpart in the present active participle φέρων, which is an activity of immanence (see below).

183 The counterparts to lines a and b of verse 3, namely lines c and d, have a clearer relationship – the Son makes purification for sins and then sits down at the right of the majesty on high. Still, that lines c and d are so well connected suggests a similar connectedness between lines a and b.

184 For φέρω in a cosmogonic sense see Philo, *Her.* 36, *Mut.* 192 and 256. For the sense of sustaining or administrating all things, see e.g., *Mos.* 2.133: "Thus is the high priest arrayed when he sets forth to his holy duties, in order that when he enters to offer the ancestral prayers and sacrifices there may enter with him the whole universe, as signified in the types of it which he brings upon his person, … the twelve stones on the breast in four rows of threes of the zodiac, the reason-seat of that Reason which holds together and administers all things (τοῦ συνέχοντος καὶ διοικοῦντος τὰ σύμπαντα τὸ λογεῖον)."

ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ in v. 3b occurs in Heb 11:3, where the worlds are said to be prepared by the word of God (κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ).[185] But in verse 3b, it is the Son's word (not God's) that has cosmic effect.[186]

But if we set these ambiguities aside, we at least must acknowledge that the author claims here for the Son a determining role in the existence of the cosmos, a role not unlike God's in terms of power. Furthermore, if we take seriously v. 3a as the logical precursor to v. 3b, than the Son's role is grounded in his relationship with God; it is because the Son is the ἀπαύγασμα of God's glory and the χαρακτήρ of his essence that he does in fact φέρων τὰ πάντα. The Son wields divine power because of his proximity to divinity. Indeed, this proximity sheds light on how it is the Son can be God's instrument in creation. That is, vv. 2c–3b appear to claim God creates and sustains the cosmos ("the ages" // "all things") through the one (δι' οὗ) who is God's radiance and the image of God's essence.

This is similar to Wisdom of Solomon, where the description of Sophia as an emanation of God has a broader cosmological context.[187] In Wisdom 7:24 (just preceding the fivefold list of metaphors for Sophia), the pseudonymous author tells us that because of her pureness, Sophia "pervades and penetrates all things well" (διήκει καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων). And immediately following the metaphors, the author tells us in verse 27 Sophia can do all things (πάντα δύναται) and that she renews all things (τὰ πάντα καινίζει).[188] There should not be any doubt, especially given the three substantival uses of πᾶς, that Sophia plays a prominent role in the cosmos. But is there a connection between the bookends (Wis 7:24, 27) and what comes between them – namely the metaphors of emanation?

―――――――――――

It may be best to concede that it is impossible to decide for one (sustaining) or the other (creating) and allow for the possibility of both. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 45; J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1952), 7–8.

185 See n. 166.

186 It is possible that the antecedent of the pronoun in τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ is God. This does not help much as the subject of φέρων remains the Son. How does the Son bear all things by a word (his or God's)?

187 See the discussion of Sophia's ontology and cosmology in chapter three (§ 3.1.2.1).

188 This same sentiment finds expression again just a few verses later (8:1): Sophia "reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things (τὰ πάντα) well."

Recall Wis 7:25 where we read that since Sophia is both breath of God's power and effluence of the Almighty's glory "therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her" (διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲν μεμιαμμένον εἰς αὐτὴν παρεμπίπτει). Verse 26 continues to espouse the reasons for this claim with metaphors of representation (reflection, mirror, image). In other words, the emanationist language of both verses pivot around this notion that Sophia lacks defilement, an ontological claim that also finds expression in verse 24: "for Sophia is more mobile than any movement; she pervades and penetrates all things *because of her pureness* (διὰ τὴν καθαρότητα)." Hence, verses 25–26 are an explanation of how it is possible for Sophia to be cosmically efficacious and yet pure: it is by her relationship to God, more specifically to attributes of his potency.

4.3.2.3. Excursus #4: ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ in Philo and in Hebrews

Given the brevity of Hebrews 1:3a, it is difficult to asses how the ontological description of the Son as ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ coheres with Philo's understanding of the ontological status of the Logos. However, a study of the key terms ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ as they appear in Philo (ἀπαύγασμα occurs 3 times; χαρακτήρ occurs 53 times) yield some illuminative results.[189] In the three occurrences of ἀπαύγασμα in Philo's writings, none of them refer to the Logos or Sophia (at least not in their present condition). However, they are still worth our attention. The passages where the term occurs are *Opif* 146:

> Every man, in respect of his mind, is allied to the divine Reason (λόγος), having come into being as a copy (ἐκμαγεῖον) or fragment (ἀπόσπασμα) or ray (ἀπαύγασμα) of that blessed nature, but in the structure of his body he is allied to all the world, for he is compounded of the same things, earth, water, air, and fire, each of the elements having contributed the share that falls to each, to complete a material absolutely sufficient in itself for the Creator to take in order to fashion this visible image.

Spec. 4. 123:

> For the essence or substance of that other soul is divine spirit, a truth, vouched for by Moses especially, who in his story of the creation says that

---

189 For a study of these terms and other terminology and characteristics in common between Hebrews and Philo, see Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, esp. 36–41 (ἀπαύγασμα) and 74–80 (χαρακτήρ).

> God breathed a breath of life upon the first man, the founder of our race, into the lordliest part of his body, the face, where the sense are stationed like bodyguards to the great king, the mind. And clearly what was then thus breathed was ethereal spirit, or something if such there be better than ethereal spirit, even an effulgence of the blessed, thrice blessed nature of the Godhead (ἅτε τῆς μακαρίας καὶ τρισμακαρίας φύσεως ἀπαύγασμα).

And *Plant.* 50:

> And mark how well the epithets that follow harmonize with that which was put first. The world, we read, is God's house in the realm of sense-perception, prepared and ready for Him. It is a thing wrought, not, as some have fancied, uncreated. It is a "sanctuary" (ἁγίασμα), a *reflection* of sanctity (οἷον ἁγίων ἀπαύγασμα), so to speak, a copy of the original (μίμημα ἀρχετύπου); since the objects that are beautiful to the eye of sense are images of those in which the understanding recognizes beauty. Lastly, it has been prepared by the "hands" of God, his world-creating powers.[190]

Note that the general context of these three passages is the same: the process of creation. Philo makes the same point in both *Opif.* 146 and *Spec.* 4.123 regarding the creation of human beings. Humans are really the combinations of two types of being. On the one hand, they are earthly (denoted by the elements in *Opif.* 146) or animalistic (see the significance of "blood" in *Spec.* 4.122); on the other hand, they are of divine origin ("a copy or fragment or ray of that blessed nature [τῆς μακαρίας φύσεως]" or again, "what was then thus breathed [cf. Gen 2:7] was … an effulgence of the blessed, thrice blessed nature [τῆς μακαρίας καὶ τρισμακαρίας φύσεως] of the Godhead.") Ἀπαύγασμα ('ray' or 'effulgence') expresses the sense in these two passages that the human νοῦς originates in the Deity.[191]

---

190 Translations of Philo in this excursus are from the PLCL, unless otherwise noted. I have modified Colson's translation in two of these three passages. He translates ἀπαύγασμα as "ray" (an active sense) in *Opif.* 146 and *Plant.* 50, but "effulgence" in *Spec.* 4.123. However, the sense is passive and hence "reflection," which concurs with the parallel phrase (μίμημα ἀρχετύπου). (Cf. "effulgence" in Runia's translation of *Opif.* 146 in *On the Creation of the Cosmos* and his discussion on p. 345).

191 The notion that the human mind is part of the same substance as the divine or world mind is Stoic and is likely what lies behind the term ἀπόσπασμα ("fragment"). If so, ἀπαύγασμα may appear in *Opif.* 146 as a mitigation of this notion. This is corroborated by the downplaying of the elements as earthly in contrast to mind and the Divine Logos. This distinction also appears in *Spec.* 4.123, where the human spirit or νοῦς is ethereal being or "something if such there be even greater than ethereal spirit (καὶ εἰ δή τι αἰθερίου πνέματος

The last of these three passages, *Plant.* 50, also has a cosmological context. However, where ἀπαύγασμα expressed the quality of human origination from the divine in the first two passages, the third passage uses the term to express the world's relationship to the divinity. The sense of the term is as we have translated it, "reflection," i.e., the created world is a reproduction of an ideal form. What we have in created things, which are beautiful to the eyes, are copies of intelligible objects beautiful to the understanding (τὰ αἰσθήσει καλὰ τῶν νοήσει καλῶν εἰκόνες). This is not, as Colson's translation suggests, an active participation in the intelligible realm (a "ray"), but a passive participation.[192]

For Philo, ἀπαύγασμα only refers to created entities, whether humans or the cosmos. To be sure, it refers to that aspect of the created object which derives from or is shaped by the intelligible realm (whether we speak of the generic "blessed nature" or the divine Logos with respect to the human mind or τῶν νοήσει καλῶν with respect to the world). The contribution of this analysis is to note that in Philo's three uses of this term, the context is cosmological and that the term often occurs along side terms in the same semantic field as χαρακτήρ, i.e., image (εἰκών), copy (μίμημα), impression (ἐκμαγεῖον).[193]

This second of our two terms, χαρακτήρ, does not always have a cosmological context in Philo.[194] However, when it does have such a context, the parallels with Hebrews 1:3a are instructive. First, in *Det.* 82–83 χαρακτήρ is part of the same contrast between the animal and intelligible aspects of humanity as ἀπαύγασμα in *Opif.* 146 and *Spec.* 4.123.

> Each one of us, according to the primary analysis, is two in number, an
> animal and a man. To either of these has been allotted an inner power akin
> to the qualities of their respective life-principles, to one the power of
> vitality, in virtue of which we are alive, to the other the power of
> reasoning, in virtue of which we are reasoning beings. Of the power of

---

κρεῖσσον), even an ἀπαύγασμα κτλ." See Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 85; for an opposing view, see Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 345.

192 On whether ἀπαύγασμα has an active or passive sense in Hebrews, see Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 37–38.

193 About these terms as a semantic cluster see below as well as our discussion of the Logos as εἰκών in Philo in chapter three.

194 Of the 53 occurrences of χαρακτήρ in Philo's writings, the term most frequently refers to impressions made upon the soul by virtue or other divine qualities (see e.g., *Opif.* 151; *Sacr.* 60; and *Conf.* 102).

vitality the irrational creatures partake with us; of the power of reasoning
God is, not indeed partaker, but originator, being the Fountain of eldest
reason (ἡ τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου λόγου πηγή). To the faculty which we have in
common with the irrational creatures blood has been given as its essence;
but of the faculty which streams forth from the fountain of reason (λόγος)
breath (πνεῦμα) has been assigned; not moving air, but, as it were, an
impression and stamp of the divine power (ἀλλὰ τύπον τινὰ καὶ χαρακτῆρα
θείας δυνάμεως), to which Moses gives the appropriate title of "image" (ἣν
ὀνόματι κυρίῳ Μωυσῆς εἰκόνα καλεῖ), thus indicating that God is the
Archetype of rational existence, while man is a copy (μίμημα) and likeness
(ἀπεικόνισμα).[195]

As with ἀπαύγασμα, Philo uses χαρακτήρ in his description of how
human rationality originates with the Deity (θείας δύναμις). Philo makes
use of the same scriptural context as well, namely Gen 2:7, now
combining it with Gen 1:27. [196] While in *De specialibus legibus*
ἀπαύγασμα interprets (or, really, redefines) αἰθέριον πνεῦμα, in *Quod
deterius potiori insidiari solet* χαρακτήρ (along with τύπος, in a hendiadys)
interprets πνεῦμα. The source of the impression, the θεῖα δύναμις, Philo
understands as the very same εἰκών of which Moses speaks (in Gen 1:27,
understood). How it is exactly that God is the archetype to the human
copy is unclear, though we shouldn't ignore the earlier ascription of the
Logos as source for the πνεῦμα and God as ἡ τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου λόγου
πηγή. However, the Logos is that which makes the impression (the
εἰκών or divine power) and not the impression itself (not the τύπος or,
especially for our purposes, the χαρακτήρ).[197]

Another interpretation of Gen 2:7 which uses χαρακτήρ occurs in
Plant. 18–19. Here, however the role of the Logos as intermediary is
clearer.

Now while others, by asserting that our human mind is a particle of the
ethereal substance (τῆς αἰθερίου φύσεως), have claimed for man a kinship

---

195 This modification of Colson's translation (PLCL 2.259) comes from Tobin,
Creation of Man, 88.

196 On the use of Gen 2:7, compare *Spec.* 4.123 (Moses, "in his story of the
creation says that God breathed a breath of life upon the first man … what was
then thus breathed was ethereal spirit (αἰθέριος πνεῦμα), or something if such
there be better than ethereal spirit, even an effulgence of the blessed") with *Det.*
83 ("to the faculty which streams froth from the fountain of reason breath (τὸ
πνεῦμα) has been assigned; not moving air, but, as it were, an impression
stamped by the divine power"). Note how "effulgence" (ἀπαύγασμα) and
"impression" (χαρακτήρ) both qualify or even surpass the term πνεῦμα.

197 On the ambiguity of the term λόγος in *Det.* 83 see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 88.

with the upper air; our great Moses likened the fashion of the reasonable soul to no created thing, but averred it to be a genuine coinage of that dread Spirit, the Divine and Invisible One, signed and impressed by the seal of God (σημειωθὲν καὶ τυπωθὲν σφραγῖδι θεοῦ), the stamp of which is the Eternal Word (ἧς ὁ χαρακτήρ ἐστιν ὁ ἀΐδιος λόγος). His words are "God in-breathed into his face a breath of life" (Gen 2:7); so that it cannot but be that he that receives is made in the likeness (ἀπεικονίζω) of Him Who sends forth the breath.

Philo contrasts a Stoic anthropology (οἱ ἄλλοι τῆς αἰθερίου φύσεως τὸν ἡμέτερον νοῦν μοῖραν εἰπόντες) with the one espoused by the "great Moses." In Moses' account, says Philo, the Logos acts as a stamp which impresses on human beings the "seal of God," namely rationality. As with our previous discussion of εἰκών (see the discussion in chapter three and above on Col 1:15), here we have a three tiered relationship: the Logos is to human beings as God is to the Logos.[198] We saw already with respect to *Det.* 83 that the evidence points to a similar tri-level relationship, but that it was not explicit enough to be sure.

In *Leg.* 3.95–96 the use of χαρακτήρ, the use of εἰκών, and the God-Logos-human relationship all converge again, and in a manner more explicit than the previous two passages. Philo says that in this reference to Bezalel from Exodus 31 we have a σχῆμα which God has stamped (ἐντυπόω) on the soul.

> Therefore, we will know what the impression is (τίς οὖν ἐστιν ὁ χαρακτήρ) if we first carefully inquire about the interpretation of the name. Bezalel means "in the shadow of God," and the shadow (σκία) of God is his λόγος, which he used as an instrument when he made the world (ᾧ καθάπερ ὀργάνῳ προσχρησάμενος ἐκοσμοποίει). But this shadow, a representation (ἀπείκοσμα) as it were, is [itself] the archetype (ἀρχέτυπον) for other things. For just as God is the pattern (παράδειγμα) of the image (ἡ εἰκών) – what has been called "shadow" – thus the image (ἡ εἰκών) becomes the pattern (παράδειγμα) of other things. This he (Moses) made clear when he starts his law by saying, "And God made the human being after the image of God" (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωον κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ; LXX Gen 1:27); thus on the one hand that the image had been modeled after God, while on the other that the human being was modeled after the image when it undertook its paradigmatic function (ὡς τῆς μὲν εἰκόνος κατὰ τὸν θεὸν ἀπεικονισθείσης, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα λαβοῦσαν δύναμιν παραδείγματος).[199]

---

198 On this tri-level relationship (God:Logos:humanity/creation), see our discussion of *Her.* 230–231 in § 3.2.5.3 and Tobin's discussion of that passage (*Creation of Man*, 96–97).

199 My translation. See the discussion of this passage in § 3.2.5.

To discern the χαρακτήρ of this σχῆμα it is necessary to interpret the name Bezalel allegorically. According to Philo's etymology the name means in the shadow of God, which Philo claims is God's λόγος. This appears to be based on the shadow's status as representation (ἀπεικόνισμα) of something, which is the Logos' status vis-à-vis God. The remainder of the passage describes this status and its inherent functioning by means of the tri-level relationship: paradigm (God)–εἰκών (Logos/Shadow)//paradigm (Logos/Shadow)–εἰκών (ἑτέρων/ἄλλων). The warrant for this rests with Gen 1:27: ὡς τῆς μὲν εἰκόνος κατὰ τὸν θεὸν ἀπεικονισθείσης, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα λαβοῦσαν δύναμιν παραδείγματος.

For our purposes, there are two attributes of Philo's analysis in *Legum allegoriae* 3 worthy of note. First, χαρακτήρ expresses the function of the Logos as a stamp on the human soul. It does not simply capture the ontological status of the Logos with respect to God, but the effect of that status with respect to a part of the created order. Philo clarifies this effect by transitioning from the χαρακτήρ/σχῆμα relationship to the παράδειγμα/εἰκών relationship.[200] Second, though Philo's primary concern is the quality of the soul given its divine stamp,[201] the underlying context is cosmological. This is not just because of the mention of Gen 1:27, but also because of the description, provided almost in passing, of the Logos, ᾧ καθάπερ ὀργάνῳ προσχρησάμενος

---

200 For an instance where Philo equates εἰκών and χαρακτήρ see *Ebr.* 133: "For since the Creator made both the pattern and the copy in all that He made, virtue was not excepted: He wrought its archetypal seal, and He also stamped with this an impression (χαρακτήρ) which was its close counterpart. The archetypal seal is an incorporeal idea, but the copy (εἰκών) which is made by the impression (χαράσσω) is something else - a material something, naturally perceptible by the senses, yet not actually coming into relation with them; just as we might say that a piece of wood buried in the deepest part of the Atlantic ocean has a natural capacity for being burnt, though actually it will never be consumed by fire because the sea is around and above it."

201 The summary of the discussion began in *Leg.* 3.95 is *Leg.* 3.104: "Seeing then that we have found two natures created, undergoing molding, and chiseled into full relief by God's hands, the one essentially hurtful, blameworthy, and accursed, the other beneficial and praiseworthy, the one stamped with a counterfeit, the other with a genuine impression (δόκιμον χαρακτῆρα), let us offer a noble and suitable prayer, which Moses offered before us, 'that God may open to us His own treasury' (Deut 28:12) and that sublime reason pregnant with divine illumination, to which He has given the title of 'heaven'; and that He may close up the treasuries of evil things."

ἐκοσμοποίει.[202] Thus, it appears in this passage that a connection exists between the Logos as ὄργανον of divine creation and as χαρακτήρ/ἀπεικόνισμα/παράδειγμα of God.

Our analysis of Philo has found that ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ are both terms Philo uses to express the relationship between the (rational) soul and God. Indeed, the two terms occur in passages with several other recurring words (εἰκών, μίμημα, ἀρχέτυπος, ἀπεικόνισμα, ἀπεικονίζω, σφραγίς, τύπος, εντυπόω, παράδειγμα) that together form a thematic cluster. Philo draws from this cluster when he wishes to describe the origin of the sensible realm based on the intelligible realm, whether at a microcosmic level (the human soul) or the macrocosmic level (the creation as a whole).[203] The function of the Logos, at either level, is to provide the impression it itself received from God. The ontological status of the Logos determines the functionality of the Logos.

While ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ do not appear together in Philo's writings, and even while ἀπαύγασμα never refers in Philo to the Logos, the Philonic use of these terms still may inform our understanding of Heb 1:2c–3b. As with the use of ἀπαύγασμα in Wis 7:26, we find again that the terms have cosmological import. The terms play a key role in Philo's reconfiguring the creation of humanity (in particular) away from a Stoic interpretation toward a Platonic interpretation (ἀπόσπασμα or πνεῦμα become ἀπαύγασμα or χαρακτήρ, respectively). Now, while Philo never says that the Logos is the ἀπαύγασμα of God (cn. Heb 1:3 or Wis 7:26), he does say humanity (or rather the human νοῦς) is an ἀπαύγασμα of the Logos. He uses χαρακτήρ in a similar fashion (the human mind is/receives an impression from the divine stamp, the Logos). He can however say that the Logos is a χαρακτήρ which itself makes an impression. In this sense, εἰκών also can do double duty, being at one time both stamp and the stamped impression. Since ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ function the same way in Philo (Platonizing the creation of humanity), which reflects a broader cosmological construct, and since ἀπαύγασμα can be used of an intermediary figure (Sophia, whom Wis 7:26 also refers to as an εἰκών), we should not be surprised to read in

---

202 Tobin (*Creation of Man*, 97–98) claims that the interpretation of Gen 1:27 where the Logos is the εἰκών according to which (κατά) humanity was created arises from a broader Platonic interpretation of the biblical account of the creation of the world. See also our discussion of εἰκών in § 3.2.5.3.

203 See the discussion in § 3.2.5.3.

Heb 1:3a where the two words a) refer to an intermediary figure (υἱός) in his relationship vis-à-vis God (effulgence τῆς δόξης, impression τῆς ὑποστάσεως); and b) are part of a string of cosmological descriptors (1:2c, 3b).

There is, however, a problem. How do the terms actually function cosmologically in Heb 1:3a. In Philo's writings, we can determine the theoretical construct within which ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ function. They are part of the Alexandrian's Middle Platonic interpretation of Mosaic cosmology, especially seen in their use to counter Stoic interpretations of the same as well as their implementation alongside the "sensible as model of the intelligible" terminological cluster. In Wisdom, ἀπαύγασμα serves a similar purpose. The cosmological language of Wis 7:24, 27, 8:1 is Stoic in origin– as is the imagery in 7:22b–23; however, vv. 25–26 function so as to show how Sophia has divine efficaciousness but is herself not equivalent to the Deity.[204] Furthermore, that ἀπαύγασμα is one of several metaphors of emanation the Wisdom author uses to address the divine origin of Sophia's cosmological efficaciousness is a phenomenon similar to Philo's thematic clustering of terms (but in a more concise, homogenous fashion).

Of course, Heb 1:1–4 is a brief text that posits cosmological information in both an elevated and staccato fashion, either due to its alleged liturgical origin or (and) its function as exordium. Attridge may be correct that the author of Heb 1:3 has before him the Wisdom of Solomon.[205] What he does then in the exordium is craft an epitome based on the cosmological functionality Wis 7 expresses. However, we cannot prove this. What we can do is to look to both Wis 7 and the passages from Philo, especially Leg. 3.95–96, since they share many similar characteristics. The evidence gleaned from this comparison at least suggests that there is a relationship, that Son is the one δι' οὗ the world was made and the one φέρων τὰ πάντα because he is the ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. Further, it is also possible that the underlying theoretical framework is the same, namely a Judaized Middle Platonic cosmology (or a Platonized Jewish

---

204 Admittedly, Wis 7:25–26 is a positive presentation of Sophia's relationship to the Deity and does not openly espouse an apologetic stance (like Philo's opposition to Stoic panentheism). Still, the language clearly prohibits an identification of Sophia with the Deity. See our discussion in § 3.1.2.1.

205 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 42.

cosmology). Such would entail an active intermediary agent who functions as the tool by which the Deity creates the cosmos and thereby remains free from direct involvement in that sensible realm.

4.3.3. Soteriology

The soteriology of the Hebrews exordium finds expression in the following three lines (vv. 2b, 3cd):

> ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων
> καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος
> ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς

We showed above that these lines represented the opening and closing portions of a chiasm (v. 2b=A and v. 3cd=A'). The B/B' counterpart is the cosmological content we just discussed. Again, we begin with one line (v. 2b) that is then strengthened and/or enhanced by two lines (v. 3cd).

4.3.3.1. Heb 1:2b: "whom he appointed heir of all things"

This statement is the first of a string of qualifiers for the υἱός mentioned in v. 2a. Before this we know only that God has spoken in these last days by a Son; beginning with v. 2b, we find out about that Son. It is not immediately obvious why we should classify ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων as soteriology; at the most, it is eschatological. To say the Son is heir of all things picks up on the theme already suggested with ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων. God's decisive revelation/revealer also obtains prominence over all things.[206] More than this, all things find their end with him. The origin of this claim may be messianic expectation.[207] In Heb 1:4, the cognate κληρονομέω denotes the Son's preeminence over the angels. In the remainder of the letter, both κληρονόμος and κληρονομέω refer not to the Son but to the reward of

---

206 That "whom he appointed heir of all things" follows "in these last days" both contextually and grammatically suggests that v. 2c refers to the actual eschatological event (Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1–4," 176–177) and not just its preordination.

207 Since Psalm 2 has a prominent role in Hebrews, both in the exordium (v. 3d) and as a structural pillar for the document as a whole (1:5, 5:5), it may be that Ps 2:8 is the impetus for v. 2b: αἴτησαι παρ' ἐμοῦ καὶ δώσω σοι ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου καὶ τὴν κατάσχεσίν σου τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς.

those who faithfully persevere.[208] The notion of inheritance as such has a soteriological angle elsewhere in Hebrews and in Jewish and Christian literature in general.[209] To determine whether there is such an angel in Heb 1:2b, we must look at this line's chiasmic counterpart.

4.3.3.2. Heb 1:3cd: "when he made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high"

In Heb 1:3cd we have a two-step process: the first step expressed by an aorist participle (ποιησάμενος), the second by an aorist finite verb (ἐκάθισεν). The soteriological weight appears to rest with the first – making purification for sins. However, the emphasis of the two lines is with the second, the culmination that is the Son's enthronement "at the right hand of the majesty on high."

Structurally, this move is similar to Philippians 2:6–11, where Christ empties himself, taking the form of a human, and dies on the cross. God then exalts him (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα) so that all entities (whether ἐπουράνιοι καὶ ἐπιγείοι καὶ καταχθόνιοι) bow before him and confess his lordship.[210] Curiously, the two texts differ not in terms of exaltation but in what precedes that exaltation. In Philippians, the manner of death (θάνατος σταυροῦ) is clear, but its soteriological significance is not. In Hebrews, the soteriological significance is clear (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος), but the manner by which this took place is not.

From the comparison with the Philippians hymn, we may be inclined to see traditional Christian kerygma, if not hymnology, behind these two lines of the Hebrews exordium. The comparison also allows us to see how the notion of inheritance fits with exaltation. The key here is the use of ὄνομα both in Phil 2:9 and Heb 1:4. In Phil 2:9, we read that God bestowed on Jesus the name above all names. Similarly, in Heb 1:4, the Son has "become as much better than the angels as the name he has inherited is better than [theirs]." We saw above that the use

---

208 The noun occurs in Heb 6:17 and 11:7; the verb in 1:14, 6:12, and 12:17.

209 See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 39–40.

210 Note the resonance between ὑπερυψόω in Phil 2:9 and ὑψηλός in Heb 1:3. Also, the claim that God "gave to him the name that is above every name" in Phil 2:9 is similar to Heb 1:4: "having become as much better than the angels as the name (ὄνομα) he has inherited is better than they (i.e., theirs)." If we take the sense of receiving the name in Phil 2:9 and inheriting a name in Heb 1:4 as parallel, it is interesting that both are connected to exaltation "on high."

of κληρονομόω in v. 4 links back to κληρονόμος in v. 2b. The Son's status as heir of all things (v. 2b) is specifically applied to his status with respect to the angels (v. 4). How he attains the status of heir, whether in v. 4 or, by means of extrapolation, v. 2b, is explained in v. 3cd.

However, we should not be too quick to see in Heb 1:3cd simply a Christian (liturgical?) tradition which has been placed in the exordium. As we discussed above when considering the origin of the exordium, these two lines have great affinity with the rest of the Epistle itself. The most telling of the passages we discussed is Heb 10:12–13:

> … when he [the Son] had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet."

This passage provides a valuable lens for interpreting Heb 1:3cd. It points to how the Son made purification for sins: by means of the sacrifice of his own self.[211] It also stresses here an emphasis on the singularity, or finality if you will, of the sacrificial act: μίαν θυσίαν εἰς τὸ διηνεκές. This coheres with the use of the aorist participle ποιησάμενος in Heb 1:3c (and contrasts with the present active participles in v. 3ab [ὤν, φέρων]). It fills out the literary reference of ἐν δεξιᾷ in Heb 1:3 (i.e., Psalm 110:1) and thereby adds to the temporal dimension of the event that verse describes. That the Son ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ shows the exaltation/enthronement of the Son followed immediately after the sacrifice (death) and is hence both a past event and a continuing circumstance. However, the author continues with Ps 110:1b, writing τὸ λοιπὸν ἐκδεχόμενος ἕως τεθῶσιν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ. That the Son waits (ἐκδέχομαι) for this subjugation to be fulfilled points both to the eschatological efficacy of his sacrifice/ enthronement and to the fact that there remains still a period before the end.[212]

---

211 See Heb 10:10: "And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

212 Cf. also Heb 9:26–28: The Son "has appeared once (ἅπαξ) for all at the end of the age (ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων) to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once (ἅπαξ) to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting (ἀπεκδέχομαι) for him." On the hortatory purpose of defining this gap between the sacrifice and the end consider the homily on Ps 95 in Heb 3–4.

Whether we see Heb 1:3cd as traditional material appropriated by the author or as material that is part of the same whole cloth out of which he forms the remainder of his λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως (indeed it may even be a bit of both), our analysis reveals two important things. First, the dominant theme of vv. 2b, 3cd is not – explicitly – soteriology, but exaltation. The soteriological step (making purification for sins) is the means by which the Son attains the end of enthrone-ment/inheritance. We should not be surprised with this, for it is congruent with the remainder of Hebrews. The argument of the whole text is that the Son has attained – by his sacrifice –the position to which the "Hebrews" aspire, namely access to the inner sanctuary (variously understood as either the heavenly temple or the intelligible world).[213] In other words, the author appears to shore up the (eschatological) hope of his audience by pointing to the fact that the Son already has achieved the goal. As he says, "we have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered" (Heb 6: 19–20). Or again, "therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach …" (10:19–22). The focus of the exhortation is the current location of the Son, namely enthroned at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary.

This is not dissimilar to Wisdom of Solomon which places Sophia also alongside God on the throne. The author, in the guise of Solomon, prays:

> You have chosen me to be king of your people and to be judge over your Sons and daughters. You have given command to build a temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your habitation, a copy of the holy tent that you prepared from the beginning. With you is σοφία, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. Send her forth from the holy heavens (ἁγίων οὐρανῶν), and from the throne of your glory (θρόνου δοξῆς σου) send her, that she may labor at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory (Wis 9:7–11).

---

213 See below for the different ways of construing the inner sanctuary.

The ability of Sophia to benefit "Solomon" is her residence on the ϑρόνος δοξής in the ἅγιοι οὐρανοί. But notice that it is her proximity to God by which she learns all things and thereby is so capable a tutor for the king. Sophia's place at the throne is a given and her efficacy lies with her being "sent" down to "guide" and "guard" the king. This is really the reverse of Hebrews, where the process begins with the Son's salvific act (his own sacrifice) which is the catalyst for his ascent to the divine throne. Once there he then benefits humanity.

There is another way Hebrews is different from this perspective in Wisdom, one that underlies the above difference. The soteriological emphasis in Hebrews is chronological; that is, the focus is on the "one-time" sacrificial event followed immediately by enthronement of the Son. In Wisdom, Sophia might be said to enter time so as to assist both the king and others (Wis 10 is a catalogue of Sophia's saving actions)[214]; but really her status both as divine *aide-de-camp* and human guide is continuous:

> Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with σοφία (Wis 7:27–28).

The emphasis in Hebrews is the timeliness of the sacrificial event and the Son's subsequent enthronement. The emphasis in Wisdom is the timelessness of Sophia's cosmological agency and psychagogy.[215]

4.3.4. Interrelationship of Cosmology and Soteriology

We must be careful, however, with this contrast. Both on the broader scale of Hebrews and within the exordium, time is not as it appears. In "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews," George MacRae addressed a divisive issue in the recent history of Hebrews interpretation. In Hebrews 8–9, the author makes a sustained argument concerning the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice over that offered by the Israelites in the sanctuary. Jesus' sacrifice is better in that it takes place once for all in a heavenly sanctuary and not the earthly copy (9:4). Hebrews 8:5 expresses the difference between the two:

---

214 On the ahistorical presentation of biblical history in Wis 10, see § 3.1.3.2.1.
215 On soteriology in Wisdom of Solomon, see § 3.1.3.

> They worship in a shadowy copy (ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ) of what is in heaven; for when Moses was about to erect the tent (σκηνή), he was warned: "Take care that you make everything according to the pattern (τύπος) that was revealed to you on the mountain."

The question raised by this argument is: Is the understanding of the heavenly temple put forward by the Hebrews author one that comes out of an apocalyptic worldview or out of the worldview of a realized eschatology?[216] In particular, is the sanctuary that the Son enters located in heaven in the fashion described by apocalyptic texts such as *1 Enoch* 14, 90:18–29; *T. Levi* 5:1, or the *Sib. Or.* 1:423–27?[217] Or is the temple a symbol of the cosmos with the sanctuary being an allegorical representation of the intelligible world as in Philo, *QE* 2.91–96?[218] In other words, whether we speak of the exordium or a central argument in the body of Hebrews, we are at odds to explain evidence of two contrasting worldviews. As Sterling states:

> The major issue for those who attempt to make sense of the intellectual background of Hebrews is the relationship between Platonic ontology with its vertical/spatial orientation and Christian eschatology with its linear/temporal orientation.[219]

The solution to this issue is not an "either/or" choice. With regards Hebrews 8–9, *both* an apocalyptic view and a "cosmic temple" view

---

216 MacRae, "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews" (in *Studies*; see n. 172); see also idem, "A Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken: The Heavenly Jerusalem in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Tantur Yearbook* (1979–1980): 27–40; reprinted in idem, *Studies*, 98–112. Also see Sterling, "Ontology versus Eschatology"; and Schenck, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews."

217 Cf. also Wis 9:8. C. K. Barrett (in "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* [W. D. Davies and D. Daube, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954]: 363–93) argues for an apocalyptic background for Hebrews' temple imagery.

218 H. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (HNTC; New York: Harper, 1964) argues that Hebrews expresses the Philonic view that heaven=the sanctuary of the cosmic temple. On Hebrews as having a Platonic worldview, see C. Spicq, *L'epître aux Hebreux* (2 vols.; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952–53); L. K. K. Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Hebrews* (SBLDS 25; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975); and Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*. For an analysis of the sanctuary in Philo, see Sterling, "Ontology versus Eschatology," 199–204.

219 Sterling, "Ontology versus Eschatology," 192.

inform this NT author's concept of the sanctuary.[220] MacRae, accepting the imagery of the sanctuary in Hebrews as Platonic, notes that there is also an added dimension of time.

> In this perspective, the two parts of the tabernacle can represent not only the created world and the uncreated heaven, but also the present time and the eschatological future. Heb 9:8–9 provides an explicit example of this mingling of spatial and temporal imagery. After describing the Old Testament tabernacle and the uses of its two parts, the author continues:
>
> By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tabernacle (ἡ πρώτη σκηνή) is still standing (which [ἥτις, i.e., ἡ πρώτη σκηνή] is symbolic [παραβολή] for the present age).
>
> What is striking here, and possibly quite original with the author to the Hebrews, is the fact that he has combined an apocalyptic time scheme with the Hellenistic mode of heavenly temple symbolism.[221]

MacRae contends that the reason for this melding of these different temporal and spatial perspectives is that the author is addressing an audience that operates from the apocalyptic framework. The author himself however operates from the realized eschatological framework we associate with Alexandria and especially Philo. In the homily that is Hebrews, the author is using his realized eschatological (i.e., a Platonized) understanding of the Christ event to shore up the apocalyptic hope of his audience.[222]

Sterling accounts for the combination of Platonic and eschatological perspectives with the opposite assertion. He contends that the audience was already familiar with a Platonized interpretation of the Sanctuary in as much as the author argues *from* not toward this interpretation.[223] The eschatological dimension was a product of the author.

---

220 The apocalyptic notion is expressed in Heb 4: 14, 8:1–5; 9:11–12, 23. One finds the cosmic temple structure, however, in Heb 9:24 and 10:19–20. See MacRae, *Studies,* 85–88 and Sterling, "Ontology versus Eschatology," 193–199, for discussion of these texts.

221 MacRae, *Studies*, 88–89.

222 A significant aspect of MacRae's thesis is how he understands the function of πίστις (as opposed to ἐλπίς, an apocalyptic construct) in the Epistle to the Hebrews. According to MacRae, "faith provides the assurance gained from insight into the realm of true reality in heaven where Christ has already entered" (*Studies*, 93; for his whole argument, see 91–94).

223 See Sterling's argument in "Ontology versus Eschatology," 209.

> The thrust of the argumentation in Hebrews is the imposition of an eschatological perspective on Platonizing exegetical traditions. The eschatology was probably driven by a Christian perspective. The introduction of Jesus Christ radically changed the static worldview presumed in these exegetical traditions by imposing an eschatological understanding of history. People who had thought in terms of the greater worth of a heavenly over an earthly reality, now had to come to grips with a temporal dimension in which the old is not better than the new. The author tried to give them this by showing that the new is the heavenly and the old is the earthly.[224]

From our analysis of Heb 1:2b–3, it should be clear that the exordium combines Platonic ontology with Christian eschatology. While we could contrast Heb 1:2b, 3cd (the exaltation/soteriological lines of the exordium) with the perspective of Wisdom, we saw above that the cosmological lines (vv. 2c, 3ab) ascribe to the Son an ontologically-based functionality very much a part of Wisdom and Philo's milieu. The contrast is more complex than this but the use of *present* tense in lines 3a and b versus the *aorist* tense in lines 3c and d points to the essence of the matter. The Son's cosmological function, though it may be described with the past tense (v. 2b – δι' οὗ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας), is a result of his ontological relationship to God (ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ), a relationship that has continuing cosmological effect (φέρων τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ). The Son's exaltation as Son/heir is predicated on a point in time when he made (ποιησάμενος) purification for sins (by his death understood) and then sat down (ἐκάθισα) at the right hand of God. We saw that whether we analyze v. 3cd through the lens of non-Hebrews Christian tradition (Phil 2:6–11) or as a construct of the Hebrews author himself, that these lines express a view at home in Christian eschatological understanding of the death of Christ.

In terms of explaining this combination, Sterling's account of an author arguing from Platonized traditions to an eschatological view appears to better explain Hebrews 1:2b–3 than MacRae's view of an author shoring up a weak eschatology with Platonism. This is because the ontological-based cosmology of the Hebrews exordium plays little if any role in the author's argument while the exordium's eschatological elements reflect the key tenets of that argument (see the introduction to this section). Still, as with the sanctuary interpretation, the author is not replacing one tradition with another, but combining them. From this

---

224 Ibid., 209–210.

view, the purpose of the exordium's cosmological lines is to establish the identity and efficaciousness of the Son who makes purification through his death and receives the cosmos as an inheritance. This overture to the audience's accepted tradition demonstrates that the Son is no stranger to exaltation but one ontologically prone to it. Now, when the author depicts the Son as having entered into the heavenly sanctuary, his residence there is not a violation of the intelligible world by a sense-perceptible entity, but the restoration of a natural fixture in that sphere. Still, as we have seen already in 1 Corinthians and Colossians, while Hebrews does not repudiate Platonized biblical traditions (both exegetical and sapiential), it reorients those atemporal ontological traditions to focus on the historical/eschatological Christ event.

4.4. The Johannine Prologue

4.4.1. Origin and Nature of the John Prologue

John 1:1–18 serves as a prologue to the fourth Gospel. About this, there is unanimous agreement. Beyond this, there is near unanimous dissent. While some consider the Johannine prologue the original work of the evangelist, who penned all eighteen verses himself, most scholars consider the text to have come about in a more complicated fashion. Much of what we say beyond this depends on how we reconstruct the redaction process that produced the prologue as we have it. Unfortunately, such reconstruction is no simple task. In his study on *Präexistenzaussagen* in the New Testament, Jürgen Habermann lists 69 attempts between 1856–1987 to account for how the Johannine prologue developed.[225] This list is not exhaustive for that period and further attempts continue.

Among those put forward, the reconstruction of the prologue's development put forward by Gérard Rochais is most plausible.[226]

---

225 J. Habermann, *Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament* (Frankfurt; Bern; New York; Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), 406–414. On these pages, Habermann provides a table that shows the verses each of the 69 reconstructions uses. For another helpful listing, see Rochais, "La formation du prologue (1st part)," 7–9.

226 See Gérard Rochais "La formation du prologue (1st part)," 5–44 and "La formation du prologue (Jn 1,1–18)(2nd part)," *ScEs* 37 (1985): 161–187. See Rochais' articles for bibliography and for the argument in detail. His reconstruction of the final form of the hymn is similar to R. Brown's (in his

Rochais argues that the prologue to John has four developmental stages. The first stage, represented by John 1:1, 3–5, 11, preserves "un fragment d'hymne judéo-hellénistique." We can assert the Jewish provenance of the hymn fragment because of the many conceptual and linguistic parallels between the prologue and Jewish sapiential literature. The Logos of the Prologue shares with the sapiential figures of חכמה/Σοφία the following: temporal and ontological primacy (John 1:1//Prov 8:22–23), proximity to God (John 1:1//Prov 8:29–30, Wis 9:9), cosmogonic agency (John 1:3//Wis 7:22), the provision of life (John 1:3–4//Prov 8:35, Wis 8:13) and light (John 1:4//Wis 6:12, 7:29–30), a historical presence (John 1:10–11//Prov 8:30–31, Sir 1:15, 24:10), rejection by humans (John 1:10–11//Prov 1:20–30; Bar 3:3),[227] anagogical assistance (John 1:12//Wis 7:27), and earthly cohabitation with mortals (John 1:14//Wis 1:14).[228]

While these texts are very similar, they address personified Lady Wisdom while the prologue addresses the masculine Logos. This difference actually lends support to a Hellenistic Jewish milieu for the prologue. As we discussed in chapter three, Philo (writing three quarters of a century before John's gospel was finished) attests to the recasting of Wisdom descriptors to the Logos. In fact, the parallels listed above exist between John's prologue and Philo and are even more substantive.[229] The similarities between Philo and the Johannine prologue include the following: both understand the *logos* as a reality which existed with God before creation (John 1:1–2//*Opif.* 17, 24); both use the anarthrous Θεός (God) to refer to the logos (John 1:1//*Somn.* 1.228–30); both connect the Logos with the "beginning" (ἀρχή) (John 1:1// *Conf.* 146); both think of the Logos as the instrument through which (δι' οὗ) the universe was created (John 1:3//*Cher.* 127); both associate the Logos with light (John 1:4//*Somn.* 1.75; *Opif.* 33; *Conf. 60–63*); and both connect the Logos with becoming sons or children of God (John 1:12//*Conf.* 145–46). Although John's prologue is not as philosophically oriented and informed as the works of Philo and there is no reason

---

The Gospel According to John [AB 29; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966], 22), though Rochais omits v. 2 which Brown does not.

227 Cf. also *1 Enoch* 42:2.

228 See also Rochais, "La formation du prologue (2nd part)" 175–80. See also T. Tobin, "Logos," 353–354. The last two examples (John 1:12 and vv. 14, 16) are from later adaptations of the hymn in Rochais' reconstruction. See below.

229 See Rochais, "La formation du prologue (2nd part)," 175–80 and Tobin, "Logos," 354.

to think the Alexandrian influenced its composition, the prologue's description of the Logos in John 1:1, 3–5, 11 is best understood as part of the same religious/intellectual milieu.[230]

The second stage Rochais posits occurred when the evangelist took this fragment and placed it at the beginning of his gospel. The fragment's description of the Logos as originally existing in heaven (v. 1, πρὸς τὸν θεόν), bringing life and light, and meeting rejection by people (v. 11b, οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον) express in non-Johannine terminology[231] the gospel's understanding of Jesus. The evangelist did modify the fragment to express the mystery of salvation realized in Jesus Christ, an adaptation most likely represented by vv. 10, 12ab.[232] Note however that this modification, though replete with Johannine terminology, does not represent a substantial break with Hellenistic Jewish sapiential thought.[233]

John 1:1, 3–5, 10–12ab formed the original prologue of the Gospel. A later polemical situation likely brought about the third stage, in which an anonymous member of the Johannine community added vv. 14, 16 to clarify that the salvific event was tied to Jesus Christ, "Verbe de Dieu *incarné*." This stage is important for our study in that it enhances the

---

230 Other possible literary/religious contexts that may explain the prologue include Jewish targums and midrashim on the one hand and "Gnosticism" on the other. For the former, see M. McNamara, "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and the Memra of the Palestinian Targum (Ex 12:42)" *ExpTim* 79 (1968): 115–117, and Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 16 (1970): 288–95. For the latter, see R. Bultmann, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium," in ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ: *Studien zur religion und literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Hermann Gunkel zum 60. geburtstage, dem 23. mai 1922 dargebracht von seinen schülern und freuden, und in ihrem namen* (H. Schmidt, II, ed.; 2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 1–26; and C. Evans, "On the Prologue of John and the Trimporphic Protennoia," *NTS* 27 (1980): 395–401. There are a number of problems with either suggestion, a major one for both being that they rely on literary evidence which most likely came after the prologue was written.

231 For example, the οἱ ἴδιοι of 1:11b has a different referent than the οἱ ἴδιοι of John 13:1.

232 Rochais, "La formation du prologue (2nd part)," 183–184, argues John 1:10, 12ab reflect terminology found in the gospel proper. See also Brown, *John*, 1.29 and C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 161–63, for discussions of this terminology.

233 Recall the lists above that showed the parallels between John 1:10, 12ab with Jewish Wisdom and Philonic texts.

Christian reworking of the original fragment. It does this by using a conception which (unlike vv. 10, 12ab) has no parallel in Jewish Wisdom speculation, namely ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (v. 14a). With this claim, the Logos has not only a historical presence (à la Sophia or the Logos assisting humanity), but is himself an historical (i.e., sense-perceptible) entity. The fourth and final stage came when a redactor (also from the Johannine community) added vv. 2, 6–9, 12c–13, 15, 17–18 to the prologue in order to correlate the Christologies of the gospel and prologue.[234]

For this study, we are most concerned with what the prologue looked like after Rochais' first three stages of development, for these capture the originally Jewish presentation of the Logos and a two-tier Christian appropriation of that presentation.[235] The text that existed after the third stage may be broken up into three strophes: the first strophe (vv. 1–5) describes the Logos' relationship to God and to creation; the second strophe (vv. 10–12b) describes the relationship between the Logos and humanity; and the third strophe (vv. 14, 16) describes the relationship between the Logos and the community (note the use of the first person plural).[236] The prologue thus reconstructed reads:

---

234 Rochais, "La formation du prologue (2ⁿᵈ part)," 187. Most of "La formation du prologue (part 1)" (esp. pp. 9–41) provide Rochais' argument for what constitutes the latest redaction (his stage four) of the prologue. He says in his summary of part 1 (p. 40): "Le rédacteur johannique aurait ajouté les versets 2. 6–9. 12c–13. 15. 17–18. Les raisons de ces ajouts sont de divers ordres, mais la rasion essentielle quie explique l'addition de tous ces versets, sauf 12c–13, est le changement de destination de l'hymne, sa transformation de chant cultuel en introduction à l'évangile." Regarding vv. 12c–13, "l'auteur veut simplement prévenir une fausse compréhension de l'expression 'Il leur *a donné pouvoir* de devenir *enfants de Dieu*'," possibly a "Gnostic" understanding in particular (22).

235 The fourth stage does not add anything substantive to the way the Logos is presented in vv. 1, 3–5, 10–12ab, 14, 16.

236 Rochais delineates the same three strophes ("La formation du prologue [2ⁿᵈ part]," 161): "L'hymne, que nous pouvons maintenant reconstituer, est composée de trois strophes. La première (vv. 1, 3–5) expose, sous forme symbolique en partie, le dessein éternel et salvifique de Dieu réalisé en son Fils. la seconde (vv. 10–12b) décrit l'accomplissement de ce dessein dan l'histoire. La troisieme (vv. 14, 16) fait écho à l'acclamation de foi et d'action de grâce de la communauté devant l'épiphanie du Verbe dans la chair et les bienfaits reçus." Cf. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* (3 vols.; trans. K. Smyth; New York: Crossroad, 1987), 1.227, who says there are three sections of the prologue: "vv. 1–5, the pre-existent being of the Logos; vv. 6–13, the coming

1   In the beginning was the Word,
    and the Word was with God,
    and the Word was God.
3   All things came to be through the Word,
    and without him not one thing came to be.
4   What has come to be[237] in him was life,
    and the life was the light of humanity;
5   and the light shines in the darkness,
    and the darkness did not overcome it.

10 He was in the world,
    and the world came to be through him,
    and the world did not know him.
11 Unto his own (things) he came
    but his own (people) did not receive him.
12 As many as received him,
    to them he gave power to become children of God.

14 And the Word became flesh
    and dwelt among us,
    and we saw his glory,
    glory as of the unique one from the father,
    full of grace and truth.
16 For from his fullness
    all of us received,
    and grace upon grace.

If Rochais' reconstruction is correct, these stages produce the type of phenomena we have found in 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:2–3: an initial Hellenistic Jewish acclamation about a divine intermediary with cosmic functions which is then applied to Christ and augmented to reflect his salvific role.[238] The progression from heavenly/eternal to

---

of the Logos to the world of men, the Incarnation being already hinted at, and his incomprehensible rejection; vv. 14–16 or 18, the event of the Incarnation and its meaning for the salvation of believers."

237 There is considerable debate whether "what has come to be" (ὃ γέγονεν) should be connected to what comes before (v. 3b) or what comes after (v. 4a, as we have it). See below and also Brown, *John* 1.6.

238 Even if we are mistaken about this, we may be confident we can use this reconstruction as the basis for our discussion on the prologue's cosmology and soteriology. The lines excised did not contain any cosmological language and

increasingly specific historical circumstances is also significant. The third strophe (vv. 14, 16, Rochais' third stage) represents a culmination of this progression by intensifying the claim about Christ. It asserts that his salvific role is inextricably tied to the historical event of his incarnation (and, perhaps, even more specifically to his resurrection).[239]

4.4.2. The Prologue's Cosmology: John 1:1–5

We divide our analysis of cosmology in the prologue to John into three foci: a) ontology, or the Logos' divine status (John 1:1); b) cosmogony, or the Logos as agent of creation (John 1:3, 10b); and c) cosmic sustenance, or the Logos as locus of life and light in opposition to darkness (John 1:4–5).[240] Apart from v.10b, the prologue's cosmology finds expression only in the first strophe.

Strophe 1

John 1: 1a Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
1b καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,
1c καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
3a πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
3b καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν.
4a ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν,
4b καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων·
5a καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει,
5b καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

There are three moves within this first strophe, v.1, v.3, and vv.4–5. Each one begins with a proposition (vv. 1a, 3a, 4a) which is followed by qualifying lines (respectively, 1bc, 3b, 4b–5). The qualifying lines are set apart by the use of the conjunction καί at the beginning of each.

---

only emphasized the soteriological perspective of the lines kept. Furthermore, the majority of attempts at reconstruction accept some or all of the cosmological lines (especially vv. 3 and 10) as part of the original source. The thesis that this is a text which marries a Hellenistic Jewish sapiential (Middle Platonist) cosmology with early Christian (eschatological) soteriology should still stand even if the specific reconstruction we adopt is not accepted.

239 See the discussion of John 1:14, 16 below.
240 Notice that we analyzed the cosmology of the Colossian hymn with the same three foci.

4.4.2.1. Ontology: the Divine Status of the Logos (John 1:1)

In the beginning was the Logos,
and the Logos was with God,
and the Logos was God.

The first movement (v. 1abc) introduces us to the hymn's subject, "the word" or ὁ λόγος. Although we shall come to see that the λόγος is another name for the Son of God (cf. John 1:14 and 18), we have no hint of this in vv. 1–5. Furthermore, the evangelist uses this particular title for the Son only in the prologue and ὁ λόγος refers to Jesus elsewhere in the NT only twice. (1 John 1:1 and Rev 19:1, texts from the Johannine corpus and which likely postdate the gospel). Λόγος, the use of which is ubiquitous in Greek literature, must be associated here with two spheres of reference. First, the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος appears to be an allusion to Gen 1:1 (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, about which see below), in which case the mention of a λόγος at the beginning of creation would correlate with the speech act by which God creates everything.[241] Second, Hellenistic philosophies such as Stoicism and Middle Platonism used λόγος (among other terms) to refer to a principle which ordered the cosmos and which had divine status.[242] Hence, we are alerted to the possibility that John 1:1 represents a context similar to Philo's where Septuagintal and philosophical traditions coalesce.

John 1:1abc employs a cascading structure as it establishes the Logos' ontological pre-eminence in three areas, i.e., temporal, relational and substantial.[243] As just noted, ἐν ἀρχῇ echoes Gen 1:1 and posits that the Logos existed from the very beginning. The prologue does not account for how the Logos came into existence, only that it existed before all

---

241 Note Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29, where God speaks the creation into existence. See our discussion of the Philonic λόγος in chapter three.

242 Because v. 1bc note a differentiation between ὁ θεός and ὁ λόγος, the use in John 1 is closer to Middle Platonism (ὁ λόγος=the demiurgic second principle) than Stoicism (ὁ λόγος=the panentheistic Deity). See our discussions of Middle Platonism in chapter two and Philo of Alexandria's use of λόγος in chapter three.

243 Below is a diagram of the cascading structure. Notice 1b and 1c form a chiasm.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ	ἦν ὁ λόγος	A	
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν	πρὸς τὸν θεόν	A	B
καὶ θεὸς	ἦν ὁ λόγος.	B	(A)

things.[244] This apparently eternal existence is clarified by two assertions
in v. 1bc: ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. The use of the
preposition πρός in v.1b denotes the proximity of the Logos to ὁ θεός;
the Logos shares the same sphere of existence as the Deity and does so
from the beginning (note the repetition of ἦν in v. 1a and 1b).[245] At the
same time, verse 1b "implicitly distinguishes" the two.[246] Beyond this,
however, v. 1b does not provide enough information to characterize the
relationship between Logos and God.[247]

    As we might expect, given the cascading structure of John 1:1, v. 1c
adds definition to the claims made in v. 1a and 1b while at the same time
providing its own climactic revelation: θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, "the Word was

----

244 See Brown, *John*, 1.4, where he says the use of εἰμί in v. 1a refers to existence.
    Compare 1:3 ("everything [else] came to be through him," πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ
    ἐγένετο); Col 1:15b (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) and 1:17a (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν
    πρὸ πάντων, if this refers to temporal primacy).

245 For the use of πρός here see BDAG 875, BDF § 239.1, and Brown, *John*, 1.4–5.
    This also gives expression to an implicit characteristic of the evangelist's
    Christology. Cf. 1:1b with the use of ἀποστέλλω, "I send", in the gospel
    proper, where God sends the Son into the world. For example, 3:17 says "God
    did not *send* the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the
    world might be saved through him." See also 5:36, 7:29, 8:42, 10:36, 11:42,
    17:3–25, 20:21. These all assume the Son existed with the Father before
    coming into the world. John 13:3 (ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπάγει)
    highlights a difference between John 1:1b and the rest of the gospel in that in
    1:1 πρός refers to "nearness" (i.e., "in company with") someone while in 13:3
    and John 1:19–21:25 as a whole πρός refers to action toward something (either
    someone says something *to* another or someone goes *to* another). A few
    exceptions, such as 18:16, 20:11, and 20:12, have to do with being near
    something (a gate, the tomb, or the "head" and "feet" of where Jesus body once
    laid).

246 Brown, *John*, 1.5.

247 Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.233–234, shows how the line is interpreted later in
    John as well as in 1 John. With respect to the verse itself, Schnackenburg is too
    emphatic about there being a clear difference between the prologue's Logos and
    biblical Wisdom. He says (1.234): "Wisdom (Sophia, *hokmah*) is pictured as
    God's companion and partner in the creation of all things, but the Logos is
    really there before creation, in personal fellowship with God." He cites LXX
    Prov 8:27, 30. John 1:1, as terse as it is, does say more about the "pre-creation"
    relationship between God and the Logos than Prov says about Wisdom and
    God, but only minimally so. (How does "companion" differ from "personal
    fellowship"?) Further, Wisdom of Solomon 7:24–27 demonstrates an inter-
    pretation of Prov 8 that shows how Sophia may be related more directly to the
    Deity in "pre-creation" context.

God."[248] The anarthrous θεός, the predicate of ὁ λόγος, explains the latter's existence before creation and companionship with the Deity in terms of the Logos' innate divinity. Verse 1c suggests not so much identification between God and the Logos as a joint participation by the two in the same nature.[249] The reservation of the definite article for God (ὁ θεός, later identified as ὁ πατήρ in v. 14) points to the Logos' subordinate position. From this position the Logos is poised to serve as instrument of creation and light for humanity.

4.4.2.2. Cosmogony: the Creative Agency of the Logos (John 1:3, 10b)

> *Everything through him came to be,*
> *and without him came to be not one thing, …*
> *and the world through him came to be.*[250]

Structurally, the two lines of the second section form a chiasm with the verb γίγνομαι as a pivot.

| πάντα | δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο | A | B |
| χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο | οὐδὲ ἕν | Not B | Not A |

The lines in v. 3 follow immediately on the claim of the Logos' eternal existence and relatedness to the Deity. The use of the pronoun (αὐτός) in v. 3 has the Logos of verse 1 as its antecedent, suggesting that the ontological claims of the first verse are the logical precedent for the claim of v. 3. While the concision of the passage prevents us from proving this, it is at least the case that the predications of the Logos made

---

248 Schnackenburg (*John*, 1.234) calls v. 1c the "climax."

249 Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.234: "The Logos is God as truly as he with whom he exists in the closest union of being and life. Hence θεός is not a genus, but signifies the nature proper to God and the Logos in common."

250 Verse 3a has the first of six occurrences of γίγνομαι in the hymn (9, if we include the excised vv. 6, 15, 17). All of the hymnic uses (vv. 3 [3x], 10, 12, 14) refer to something coming into being (or becoming). Verse 6 uses γίγνομαι in a LXX construction (see Judg 13:2; 19:1; 1 Sam 1:1; cf. Rochais, "La formation du prologue (1st part)," 16). Brown suggests γίγνομαι qualifies John as a creature, apparently in contrast to the Logos (*John*, 1.8); this does not take into account that the Logos himself becomes (γίγνομαι) flesh. The use of the term in verse 15 (ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν) does not correspond with 'becoming', but rather functions as εἰμί in v. 1. In v. 17, "grace and peace come to be (γίγνομαι) through Jesus Christ."

in v. 1 are conjoined with the predication of the same entity made in v. 3. What is this new predication?

Verse 3 claims that everything came to be through him. Πάντα introduces a new set of realities into the discussion. In v. 1 there had only been God and the Logos; now we have "everything" else. As the second line of the verse emphasizes, the inclusiveness of πάντα is exhaustive (ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν).[251] The use of the verb γίγνομαι in v. 3 contrasts with the use of ἦν in v. 1. In verse 1, the Logos did not come to be at the beginning but already "was"; in verse 3, everything else "came to be". If we take seriously the background of Gen 1 which ἐν ἀρχῇ suggests, we should not be surprised to see an emphasis on cosmogony. In LXX Gen 1:1, we read ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. Note that this opening line to Genesis includes the same emphases we have already delineated in John 1:3: that everything (πάντα, οὐδὲ ἕν = τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν) came to be (γίγνομαι = ποιέω).

The other feature of Gen 1:1 is the activity of God in the creation: it is ὁ Θεός who makes the heaven and earth. In John 1:3, the creative activity of God receives no such direct mention. Rather, what we read is that everything came to be δι' αὐτοῦ, i.e., through the Logos. This prepositional phrase does not replace the ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεός of Gen 1:1 as much as recasts it. In John 1:1, the Logos' close relationship to ὁ Θεός is clearly established. Hence, to speak of the Logos (himself Θεός) as involved in the creation of all things is not far afield of Gen 1:1's claim. As we saw above, we may attribute to Genesis the impetus for appropriating the Logos concept into a Jewish cosmological framework since the divine speech act is a significant part of the Genesis creation account. But δι' τοῦ λόγου involves more than a simple rephrasing of "and God said." The first strophe establishes the distinctiveness of the Logos from ὁ Θεός as much it does his close relationship with him.[252]

---

251 The emphatic quality of v. 3b is interesting in the light of Col 1:16, which states positively what v. 3b states negatively; τὰ πάντα which was created in/through/for the Son also has exhaustive reference (everything "in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities").

252 As Tobin points out, "the use of the preposition διά" ought not be viewed as "simply an insignificant variant of the instrumental dative (λόγῳ) which is found in descriptions of the creation of the world by God's word (λόγῳ) in Jewish wisdom literature" ("Prologue of John," 254). For such uses of the

The use of γίγνομαι with πάντα as its subject coupled with the δι' αὐτοῦ phrase appears to emphasize the instrumentality of the Θεός-but-not-ὁ Θεός Logos. Though this does not deny the involvement of ὁ Θεός in creation, it does keep ὁ Θεός a step removed from the event.

The only other cosmogonic line in the prologue is v.10 b: καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. In its context between v. 10a and c which deal with the Logos' relationship with ὁ κόσμος, it functions almost as a parenthetical reminder to the reader of the first strophe's cosmogonic claims.[253] We might read the lines thus: "The Logos was in the world (the world which came to be through him) and that world did not know him." Given the "world's" ability to "know" (γιγνώσκω), κόσμος must not be equivalent to πάντα (in v. 3); rather it refers to that portion of the "all" which is capable of knowing, perhaps specifically the world of human beings.[254] The presence of line b in v. 10 emphasizes the paradox inherent in the notion of the Logos being in the world and even that world's failure to "know" him, since he is the one δι' οὗ that world came to be.

---

instrumental dative λόγῳ see Ps 33:6; Sir 39:17, 31; 43:10, 26 in the LXX as well as *Sib. Or.* 3.20.

253 I deal with v. 10 in C. Soteriology below (along with vv. 11–12b).

254 Compare the way the evangelist uses the term κόσμος in John 3:16–21 and 16:7–11. Cf. John Ashton, "The Transformation of Wisdom: A Study of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 32 (1986): 173–74.

4.4.2.3. Anthropological Sustenance: the Logos as Locus of Life and Light (John 1:3c–5)

> *What **has come to be** in him was life,*
> *and the life was the light of human beings,*
> *and the light shines in the darkness,*
> *and the darkness did not overcome it.*

The third section of the first strophe has a cascading structure, as illustrated in the following.

ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ	ζωὴ ἦν	A	B
καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν	τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων	B	C
καὶ τὸ φῶς	ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει	C	D
καὶ ἡ σκοτία	αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν	D	(A?)[255]

The section begins with the proposition ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν. The tense of γίγνομαι shifts from aorist (in v3a and b) to perfect (what *has come to be*) and marks a shift in topic from cosmogony to the continuing efficaciousness of the Logos (the antecedent of αὐτῷ).[256] The first stage dealt with the ontology of the Logos, the second his agency in creation; this third stage now deals with the Logos' ongoing role. Furthermore, there appears to be a "narrowing down" in scope, as we are not concerned with the origination of πάντα but ζωή. The following lines will qualify further the notion of this "life," though note that ζωή does not come about δι' αὐτοῦ but ἐν αὐτῷ. The two prepositional phrases may refer to two different functions of the Logos, one having to do with cosmogony while the other is less clear. To clarify, we must determine what ζωή signifies; i.e., is it natural life or spiritual (eternal) life?[257]

---

255 The antecedent of αὐτό in v. 5b is τὸ φῶς in v. 5a. However, what prevented the author from repeating τὸ φῶς? Instead, he chooses the neuter pronoun which *possibly* links back to the neuter relative ὅ at the beginning of v. 4a (end of 3b in NA[27], see n. 241). If so, this would form an *inclusio* between the first and last lines of the section.

256 See Brown, *John*, 1.6 on the temporal significance of the perfect of γίγνομαι. There Brown also presents the various options for translating the phrase ὃ γέγονεν (whether as a part of v. 3ab or a part of v. 4a). With him, it makes the most sense to locate the phrase with v. 4a. See Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.239–240, for an argument against this.

257 Ζωή in John's Gospel usually refers to eternal life which God gives (see Brown, *John*, 1.505–508).

In v. 4b, the ζωή is explained thus: ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. The reduction of scale is made clearer: we are not dealing with how the Logos relates to everything but how it relates specifically to humankind (οἱ ἄνθρωποι). What has come to be in the Logos was life, and that life was the light of humanity. The next lines (v. 5ab) tell us that the light shines in the darkness, but that the darkness did not overtake it. Curiously, φαίνω in v. 5a is present tense (the only present tense verb in the hymn) while καταλαμβάνω in v. 5b is aorist. The contrast between light and darkness may suggest some sort of conflict. If so, it is one that is already decided (οὐ κατέλαβον).[258]

There are two important points that set the context for John 1:3c–5. First, we have already discussed how Genesis 1 provides the likely backdrop for vv. 1 and 3. We may say the same for these four lines here with their invocation of the relationship between light and darkness, a relationship dealt with in Gen 1:2–5. Second, there appears to be a narrowing of scope from πάντα to the specific arena of οἱ ἄνθρωποι. These two points are at odds since Gen 1:2–5 does not deal with humans specifically. We will address these points in reverse order.

First, does the narrowing of scope suggested by the reference to "the light of human beings" actually begin in v. 4a's "what has come to be in him was life"? Brown suggests that the clause ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν "represents a narrowing down of creation; vs. 4 is not going to talk about the whole creation but a special creation in the Word."[259] The writer of the prologue calls this "special creation" life (ζωή) and claims its existence depends upon the Logos (though it is unclear whether ἐν αὐτῷ is instrumental or locative).[260] Although we cannot verify that this

---

258 Cf. Wis 7:29–30.

259 Brown, *John*, 1.7. Given this narrowing of scope, we cannot say that the continuing efficaciousness of the Logos is like what we find in Col 1:17b or in Heb 1:3b where both claim the Son sustains all things (τὰ πάντα). The other way of reading ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν is "what has come to be was life in him." "What (or that which) has come to be" is then equivalent to πάντα, and that is "life" in the Logos.

260 See the discussion of ἐν αὐτῷ above in our treatment of Col 1:16. Could there be a relationship between the status of the Logos as θεός (see John 1:1c) and the

ζωή is the "eternal life" about which the gospel proper speaks,[261] the fact that it functions in v. 4 as a light specifically for human beings suggests that ζωή is not equivalent to πάντα. Rather, it is some kind of principle which stems from the Logos and is determinative for human beings.

If Gen 1:1 influences John 1:1, 3, this discussion of ζωή appears to be a departure from that influence. But immediately following the introduction of ζωή in the first strophe is the discussion of light and darkness, which is also discussed in Gen 1:2–5. While the evidence is not substantial, it is at least noteworthy that in John 1:1, 3 we have a discussion of an apparently non-Genesis concept, the Logos, which is followed by an explicitly Genesis concept, the creation of the world (πάντα ἐγένετο). Again in vv. 3c–5, we have discussion first of an apparently non-Genesis concept (ζωή) followed by the explicitly Genesis concepts of light and darkness. It may be that v. 1 and v. 4 present λόγος and ζωή as the interpretive keys by which Gen 1 is to be interpreted (in v. 3 and v. 5 respectively).

Actually, the key for interpreting the light/darkness relationship in Gen 1:2–5 is the whole v. 4b line: "and the life was the light of humanity." We should read v. 4 as a claim to the special nature of the Logos on behalf of humanity. The claim, that the Logos contains/ promotes life and as such is a light for humans, is supported both by what comes before and what comes after the verse. What comes before v. 4 is the claim that everything came to be through the Logos (without any exception). This feat itself stems from the Logos' relationship to the Deity. Hence, vv. 1 and 3 make possible the claim that the Logos is the source of life: "what came to be in him was life," vv. 3c–4a.

The function of the ζωή as τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων appears to be a claim that the Logos somehow has illuminative value for humanity. The nature of this illumination is obscure, though vv. 10–12b may help us with it (see below). By rooting the illumination in ζωή, the writer shows that it stems from the creative (i.e., divine) power of the Logos (vv 1, 3). In v. 5, the writer then shows the enduring quality of this

---

fact that in him ζωὴ ἦν? Note the fact that both are anarthrous (and that in v. 1b and v. 4b, the same terms have definite articles).

καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς **τὸν θεόν**
    καὶ **θεὸς ἦν** ὁ λόγος …
    ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ **ζωὴ ἦν**
    καὶ **ἡ ζωὴ** ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων

illumination. Καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβον. There are three things to point out about these lines. First, as we have said, Gen 1:2–5 appears to be the instigation of the light/ darkness relationship here.

> The earth was ἀόρατος and ἀκατασκεύαστος and darkness (σκοτία) was over the deep and a wind of God (πνεῦμα ϑεοῦ) was borne above the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light (γενηϑήτω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς). And God saw that the light was good; and God separated (διαχωρίζω) the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night (LXX Gen 1:2–5, my trans.).

But note that there is no significant antipathy between light and the darkness in this passage while in John 1:5 there is opposition between the two. The light shines in the darkness in John 1:5a, whereas in Gen 1:4, God separates the two. Furthermore, in John 1:5b the opposition becomes explicit with the term καταλαμβάνω. At some point, the light had tried to "overtake" the darkness.[262] The temporal framework for verse 5 is peculiar when compared to the previous verses in that φαίνω is present and suggests continuing action into the present.[263] The third point then is that the light continues to shine in the darkness and without opposition from the darkness. Which is to say, since the φῶς is the ζωή, and ζωή is in (ἐν) the Logos, the Logos continues to have a presence in the world of human beings.

If we take seriously the narrowing of scope in John 1:1–5 from eternity (v. 1) to the creation in general (v. 3) to the sphere of humanity (v. 4–5), it appears that this passage functions to identify the Logos vis-à-vis humanity. It does this by establishing the efficacy of the Logos on behalf of humanity by asserting three claims: 1) the Logos' close relationship to the Deity, 2) the Logos' cosmogonic efficacy, and 3) the Logos' abiding presence. The backdrop for this progression is an

---

261 See n. 257.

262 Καταλαμβάνω as "overtake" is how the Evangelist understands the term (see John 12:35).

263 Verse 1 uses the imperfect of εἰμί which suggested to us ontological status. Verse 3ab uses the aorist of γίγνομαι which points to the creation event (cf. the aorist of ποιέω in Gen 1:1). Verses 3c– 4 have two tenses. The perfect of γίγνομαι in v. 3c suggests that what began with the creation event abides continuously, namely life, because of its origin in/by the Logos. The imperfect of εἰμί in v. 4 may contribute to this sense of the abiding status of life. In verse 5, the light "shines" (present of φαίνω) in the darkness. Yet, the darkness did not overtake (aorist of καταλαμβάνω) it.

interpretation of Gen 1:1–5. John 1:1–5 takes seriously that passage's cosmogonic setting while at the same time moves beyond that setting by applying the concepts of light and darkness not to the taming of cosmic chaos but to the human predicament in particular. In addition, John 1:1–5 moves ὁ θεός into the background, explicitly placing the onus of cosmic and anthropological industry on ὁ λόγος. In all these ways, the section sets up the claim about the Logos in v. 10: ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν. The question is: to what affect?

We are by now familiar with several of the cosmological motifs which appear here in the Johannine prologue. Structurally, we perceived a tripartite approach to cosmology which has parallels in the three other NT texts we discussed above: the ontological status of the intermediary (the Son in Col and Heb, the Logos in John 1); the intermediary's cosmogonic function (in particular, the use of the δι' αὐτοῦ phrase to denote instrumentality appears in 1 Cor 8:6b, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2 and John 1); and the continuing function of the intermediary in the world (the Son sustains all things in Col 1:17; the Son bears all things by his powerful word in Heb 1:3; and the light's shining in the darkness in John 1:5). We have also examined parallels with all three parts of this structure as they exist in Jewish sapiential traditions. Noticeable is the use of δι' αὐτοῦ (or δι' οὗ) for instrumentality which all four NT passages share with the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Most significantly, the notion of cosmogonic instrumentality rooted onto-logically in the relationship of the intermediary with the Deity looms large in both Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's writings. Finally, driving much of this is a developed appreciation of the intermediary's status as link between the material cosmos (τὰ πάντα) and the transcendent Deity (ὁ θεός) consistent with Middle Platonism (note especially the recasting of Genesis 1 traditions to focus on λόγος and not God).

4.4.2.4. Excursus #5: Logos-centric Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Philo of Alexandria and the Prologue to John

It is this use of Genesis 1 that most distinguishes the cosmological section of the John prologue from the other NT texts we have analyzed.[264] We have seen that the use of ἐν ἀρχῇ in v. 1, the coming to

---

264 Heb 1:3a may echo Wis 7:25–26 and 1:3d certainly echoes LXX Ps 109:1, but the Hebrews exordium itself does not appear to be founded on any particular text. Col 1:15 may allude to Gen 1:27 with its use of εἰκών and has a number of

be of all things in v. 3, and the distinctions between light (φῶς) and darkness (σκοτία) in vv. 4–5 mirror Genesis 1:1–5. This is born out by comparing Philo of Alexandria's interpretation of the day one of creation in his *De opificio mundi* (sections 7–35).[265] While Philo's interpretation of Genesis 1 is much more elaborate, there are a number of common motifs between *De opificio mundi* and John's Prologue, motifs which suggest the two share a common interpretive tradition.

Philo calls attention in *De opificio mundi* to how Moses describes day one of creation with the cardinal number (ἡμέρα μία, Gen 1:5), while the second through seventh days he describes with ordinal numbers (see Gen 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 29; 2:2).

> To each of the days he assigned some of the parts of the universe, making an exception for the first, which he himself does not actually call first (πρῶτος), in case it be counted together with the others. Instead he gives it the accurate name one (μία), because he perceived the nature and the appellation of the unit (μονάς) in it, and so gave it that title.

> We must now state as many as we can of the things that are contained in it, since it is impossible to state them all. It contains as pre-eminent item the intelligible cosmos, as the account concerning it (day one) reveals. For God, because he is God, understood in advance that a beautiful copy (μίμημα) would not come into existence (γίγνομαι) apart from a beautiful model (παράδειγμα), and that none of the objects of sense-perception would be without fault, unless it was modeled on the archetypal and intelligible idea. Therefore, when he had decided to construct this visible cosmos, he first marked out (προεκτυπόω) the intelligible cosmos, so that he could use it as an incorporeal and most god-like paradigm and so produce the corporeal cosmos, a younger likeness of an older model, which would contain as many sense-perceptible kinds as there were intelligible kinds in that other one.[266]

Philo argues from the difference between the cardinal μία and the following ordinal numbers that the first day of creation was the formation of the intelligible world, while the second through sixth days involve the creation of the sense perceptible world. The sense-perceptible world is dependent on the noetic world inasmuch as "a

---

verbal parallels with sapiential literature (see the table in § 4.2.1.2), but on the whole it is not founded on any particular text.

265 For similar arguments, see Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," 252–268, and Sterling, "The Second God." For a detailed analysis of Philo's interpretation of *De opifiico mundi*, see Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*.

266 *Opif.* 15–16. Translation: Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*.

beautiful copy (μίμημα) would not come into existence (γίγνομαι) apart from a beautiful model (παράδειγμα)." In other words, before the creation of the sense perceptible world, God formed the νοητὸς κόσμος to serve as "an incorporeal and most god-like paradigm" to "produce the corporeal cosmos."

The temporal difference between the first and remaining days of creation appears similar to the temporal differences between John 1:1 and 3. Recall that John 1:1 refers to a state before creation where the Logos existed in relationship with God. John 1:3 marks the beginning of creation proper when it says "all things come to be through the him (i.e., the Logos)." That Philo associates the pattern (παράδειγμα) formed on day one with the Logos makes the apparent similarity even weightier.

To develop this association of ὁ λόγος as παράδειγμα, Philo draws off the analogy of an architect who before he builds a city "first designs within himself a plan of virtually all the parts of the city that is to be completed" (*Opif.* 17). Philo then extrapolates from this.

> The conception we have concerning God must be similar to this, namely that when he had decided to found the great cosmic city, he first conceived its outlines (οἱ τύποι). Out of these he composed the intelligible cosmos (κόσμος νοητός), which served him as a model (παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ) when he completed the sense-perceptible cosmos (ὁ αἰσθητός) as well. Just as the city that was marked out beforehand in the architect had no location outside, but had been engraved in the soul of the craftsman, in the same way the cosmos composed of the ideas (ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν κόσμος) would have no other place than the divine Logos who gives these (ideas) their ordered disposition (τὸν θεῖον λόγον τὸν ταῦτα διακοσμήσαντα).[267]

With this passage, Philo establishes the significance of "day one" of creation. It is not just that it is the noetic staging ground for the creation of the sense-perceptible world. Rather, as such, its location is in the Divine Reason in the same way that the plans for the city are "engraved in the soul of the craftsman." We have here not just an affirmation of the intelligible origin of sense-perceptible reality but an affirmation of its divine origin in particular.

---

267 *Opif.* 19–20. Cf. *Opif.* 24: "… the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the Logos of God (θεοῦ λόγος) as he is actually engaged in making the cosmos (κοσμοποιέω). For the intelligible city too is nothing else than the reasoning of the architect as he is actually engaged in the planning of the foundation of the city" (Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*).

This is similar to the first two moves we detailed above in John 1:1, 3. John 1:1 describes the relationship between the Logos and God while 1:3 describes the relationship between the Logos and the created world. In the progression from the first to the third verses (again, considering John 1:2 a gloss), the hymn makes clear that the Logos serves as the link between God and πάντα. In fact, John 1:3 is emphatic about the integral function which the Logos serves: "everything came to be through him *and* without him not one thing came to be." Such emphasis clearly functions to extol the Logos. However, it also has the implicit affect of buffering God from the created world.

While in *De opificio mundi*, Philo is less concerned about removing God from physical matter, he expresses this concern elsewhere in his writings.[268] In *Spec.* 1.329, he says

> when out of that confused matter God produced all things, He did not do so with His own handiwork (ἐξ ἐκείνης γὰρ πάντ᾽ ἐγέννησεν ὁ θεός, οὐκ ἐφαπτόμενος αὐτός), since His nature, happy and blessed as it was, forbade that He should touch the limitless chaotic matter (ἀπείρου καὶ πεφυρμένης ὕλης). Instead he made full use (καταχράομαι) of the incorporeal potencies (ταῖς ἀσωμάτοις δυνάμεσιν) well denoted by their name of Forms (αἱ ἰδέαι) to enable each kind to take its appropriate shape.[269]

Αἱ ἰδέαι, in the aggregate, are equivalent to the παράδειγμα mentioned in *Opif.* 19, which God made use (χράομαι) of to form the sensible world (ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος). This παράδειγμα, Philo further clarifies, is "the intelligible cosmos" which "is nothing else than the Logos of God (θεοῦ λόγος) as he is actually engaged in making the cosmos (κοσμοποιέω)" (*Opif.* 24; cf. *Opif.* 20).

It should not hinder our comparison between the hymn and Philo that *De opificio mundi* construes the Logos as a παράδειγμα for the physical world while John 1:3 presents the Logos as the instrument in the world's coming to be (πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο). Philo brings these two ideas together.[270] First, note that in *Opif.* 25, Philo extrapolates from the creation of the first human in Gen 1:27 an explanation for the creation of the whole world. The first man, he says,

> was molded after the image of God (ὡς ἄρα κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ διετυπώθη). Now if the part is an image of an image (εἰκὼν εἰκόνος), it is manifest that

---

268 See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 440 for a description and explanation of Philo's presentation of God as creator in *De opificio mundi*.

269 Translation: PLCL.

270 See our discussion of Philo in § 3.2.5.

the whole is so too, and if the whole creation, this entire sense-perceptible world … is a copy of the Divine image (ὁ σύμπας αἰσθητὸς οὑτοσὶ κόσμος … μίμημα θείας εἰκόνος), it is manifest that the archetypal seal (ἡ ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς) also, which we claim to be the noetic world (νοητὸς κόσμος), would be the model, the archetypal idea of ideas who is the Word of God (αὐτὸς εἴη τὸ παράδειγμα, ἀρχέτυπος ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν ὁ θεοῦ λόγος).

This passage employs the *technici termini* of Middle Platonism when it describes the Logos as a seal (σφραγίς) or an image (εἰκών) that serves as an archetypal pattern (παράδειγμα) which God uses to form the sensible world (κόσμος αἰσθητός).[271] Philo consistently uses this metaphorical language in his writings to describe the Logos, finding biblical warrant in the phrase κατ' εἰκόνα of Gen 1:27.[272]

There are instances, however, where Philo augments this description by means of another metaphor, namely instrumentality.[273] In *Spec.* 1.81, for instance, Philo considers the stringent requirements Moses sets up for the priests to represent the perfection of the soul:

If the priest's body, which is mortal by nature, must be scrutinized to see that it is not afflicted by any serious misfortune, much more is that scrutiny needed for the immortal soul, which we are told was fashioned after the image of the Self-existent (τυπωθῆναι κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ὄντος). And the image of God is the Word through whom the whole universe was framed (λόγος δ' ἐστιν εἰκὼν θεοῦ, δι' οὗ σύμπας ὁ κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο).[274]

Philo assigns value to the soul in this passage in terms of its relation to its paradigm, the Logos. The use of τυπόω and the phrase κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα bring to mind both Gen 1:27 and its interpretation in *Opif.* 25, a passage which prepared us for the apparent leap in *Spec.* 1.81 from psychogony to cosmogony (the framing of σύμπας ὁ κόσμος). What is important for our discussion of John's prologue is the linking of the λόγος as εἰκών

---

271 For a discussion of the this Middle Platonic language see chapter three, where we discuss Philo's use of it in his depiction of the Logos. See also Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 159–64, and idem, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 132–155, and Tobin, *Creation of Man* 57–66. Note that in *Opif.* 25, the verb διατυπόω (to form) carries over by extension to the relationship between the λόγος qua εἰκών and the sense-perceptible world qua μίμημα θείας εἰκόνος.

272 See our discussion of εἰκών in Philo in § 3.2.5.3.

273 This is an independent and substantive mode of describing the Logos in its own right. See § 2.3.1, § 3.2.5.1, and the discussions of the phrases δι' οὗ and δι' αὐτοῦ in 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2 in chapter four.

274 Translation: PLCL. The phrase κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ὄντος clearly alludes to Gen 1:27. Cf. *Leg.* 3.96 which makes a similar connection between Gen 1:27 (citing it explicitly) and the Logos' instrumentality.

θεοῦ and the his status as that through which (δι' οὖ) the world was made (δημιουργέω).[275] In other words, though Philo's explicit interpretation of Gen 1:1–5 in *De opificio mundi* lacks the instrumental language of John 1:3, the Alexandrian elsewhere describes the Logos as the one "through whom" the world is created. What is more, he associates the Logos' instrumental function with its paradigmatic function, the latter consistently being tied back to Gen 1:27, the textual impetus for the paradigmatic construal of the Logos in *Opif.* 25. This suggests that the Philonic and Johannine understanding of the Logos' cosmogonic function, though they appear different with respect to the interpretation of Gen 1:1 (i.e., παράδειγμα vs. δι' οὖ), are grounded in similar interpretations of that passage.[276]

In John 1:4–5 we see the second of the prologue's two phases in interpreting Gen 1, namely the discussion of light and darkness. Recall from above, where the key to interpreting the creation of the world (Gen 1:1) is the λόγος (John 1:1, 3ab), the key to interpreting the differentiation of light and darkness (Gen 1:2–5) is the ζωή (John 1:3c–5). Thomas Tobin argues persuasively that the prologue's approach to light and darkness in terms of life makes the most sense in the context of the Hellenistic Jewish speculative tradition witnessed to by Philo, especially (again) in *De opifico mundi*.[277]

Like John 1:3c–4, Philo also introduces ζωή into his interpretation of the biblical Day One,. In *Opif.* 24 Philo identifies the κόσμος νοητός with ὁ λόγος and in *Opif.* 29–31 he relies on Gen 1:1–5 to isolate seven different aspects of the noetic world.[278] Of these incorporeal things created on that day, two stand out: πνεῦμα and φῶς.

---

275 As we discussed in § 2.3 and § 3.2.5.1, paradigmatic and instrumental language with respect to the intermediate principle are topoi of Middle Platonism which Philo appropriates. However, the combination of the two, expressed in this passage from *Spec.* 1.81, is uncommon among Middle Platonists and likely represents a development by Philo. See § 3.2.5.3.

276 We should not think that John is drawing directly from Philo, but that they share "the same Hellenistic Jewish tradition of interpretation and speculation" (Tobin, "The Prologue to John" 262).

277 See Tobin, "The Prologue to John" 262–65.

278 According to *Opif.* 29, the seven incorporeal things fashioned (ποιέω, cf. Gen 1:1) on the first day were: heaven, earth, air, void, spirit, water, breath (πνεῦμα) and light. See Wolfson, *Philo*, 306–07. In *Opif.* 36, Philo reiterates that the completed ὁ ἀσώματος κόσμος was situated ἐν τῷ θείῳ λόγῳ (cf. ἐν αὐτῷ in John 1:4)

Both **spirit** (πνεῦμα) and **light** (φῶς) were considered deserving of a special privilege. The former he named **of God**, because **spirit** is highly important for life (ζωτικώτατον τὸ πνεῦμα) and God is the cause of life (ζωῆς Ѳεὸς αἴτιος). Light he describes as exceedingly beautiful (ὑπερβαλλόντως καλόν, cf. Gen 1:4), for the intelligible surpasses the visible in brilliance and brightness just as much, I believe, as sun surpasses darkness, day surpasses night, and intellect, which gives leadership to the entire soul, surpasses its sensible sources of information, the eyes of the body. That invisible and intelligible **light *has come into being*** as image of the divine Logos which communicated its genesis (τὸ δὲ ἀόρατον καὶ νοητὸν φῶς ἐκεῖνο Ѳείου λόγου γέγονεν εἰκὼν τοῦ διερμηνεύσαντος τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ). It is a star that transcends the heavenly realm, source of the visible stars, and you would not be off the mark to call it "all-brightness" (*Opif.* 30–31).[279]

First, considering life, notice that Philo ascribes to πνεῦμα (in Gen 1:2) a life-giving capacity (ζωτικώτατον), explaining that God is the source of ζωή. This ζωή-giving πνεῦμα is to be associated with the λόγος in as much as it a part of the κόσμος νοητός. Furthermore, this supersensible ζωή-breath benefits human beings since, as *Leg.* 1:31–35 explains (interpreting Gen 2:7), it is the means by which they are ensouled with a rational/supersensible soul.[280]

Immediately associated with life in *Opif.* 31 is light, as is the case in John 1:4. Unlike the prologue, the association between ζωή and φῶς is not linear in Philo. The life is not the light; rather, they relate to each other in that they both are parts (the choicest parts, in fact) of the noetic cosmos. Furthermore, the Philonic light has an explicit association with the Logos which communicated its genesis (*Opif.* 31: τὸ δὲ ἀόρατον καὶ νοητὸν φῶς ἐκεῖνο Ѳείου λόγου γέγονεν εἰκὼν τοῦ διερμηνεύσαντος τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ). The Logos communicating (διερμηνεύω) light in this passage recalls for us John 1:4 where the Logos is the source of the light of humanity.[281] Both πνεῦμα and φῶς exist as noetic concepts which

---

279 Translation: Runia, *On the Creation of the World* (emphasis, his).

280 *Leg.* 1.31–32: "The earthly man is a molded work of the Artificer, but not His offspring. We must account the man made out of the earth to be mind mingling with, but not yet blended with, the body. But the earthlike mind is in reality also corruptible, were not God to breathe into it a power of real life (εἰ μὴ ὁ Ѳεὸς ἐμπνεύσειεν αὐτῷ δύναμιν ἀληϑινῆς ζωῆς); when He does so, it does not any more undergo molding, but becomes a soul … endowed with mind and actually alive; for he says, "man became a living soul" (PLCL)

281 On the difficulty of *Opif.* 31, see Runia, *On the Creation of the World*, 168. He cites *Somn.* 1.75 as a possible parallel: "God is light, for it is sung in the Psalms, 'the Lord is my illumination (φωτισμός) and my Saviour (Ps. 26:1).' And he is not only light, but also the archetype of every other light, rather is anterior and

benefit humanity by providing access to noetic reality, existence and activity that takes place under the umbrella of the Logos.

Philo follows the description of light with a discussion of its relationship with darkness in *Opif.* 33–34, expounding upon the references to darkness in Gen 1:2 and the separation of the light and darkness in Gen 1:4.

> As soon as the intelligible **light**, which existed before the sun, was ignited, its rival **darkness** proceeded to withdraw (ὑπεχώρει τὸ ἀντίπαλον σκότος). God built a wall between them and *kept* them *separate*, for he well knew their oppositions (τὰς ἐντατιότητας) and the conflict resulting from their natures (τὴν ἐκ φύσεως αὐτῶν διαμάχην). Therefore, in order to ensure that they would not continually interact and be in strife with each other, and that war would not gain the upper hand over peace and bring about disorder in the cosmos (τὴν ἀκοσμίαν ἐν κόσμῳ τιθείς), he not only separated light and darkness, but also placed boundaries in the extended space between them, by means of which he kept the two extremes apart. For if they were neighbors, they would produce confusion in the struggle for dominance and would strip in readiness for a great and unceasing rivalry, unless boundaries were fixed in between them to restrain and resolve their confrontation. These (boundaries) are **evening** and **morning**, … ."

Like John 1:5, Philo's interpretation introduces an antipathy between light and darkness that does not exist in Gen 1:2–5. Philo does explain how darkness is light's ἀντίπαλον by claiming it is a natural enemy (τὴν ἐκ φύσεως αὐτῶν διαμάχην). In order to preserve the order of the creation, it is necessary for God to keep the two separated; otherwise ἡ ἀκοσμία would arise. Although God does prevent conflict by erecting the barriers of evening and dawn, we may still perceive a losing side. It is darkness that must recede (ὑποχωρέω), must move out of the way and retire (ὑπεξέχω and ἀναχωρέω in *Opif.* 35). Which is to say that Philo articulates at length what John 1:5 claims succinctly: "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overpower it."[282]

---

superior to every archetype, having the relationship of a model <of a model>. For the model is his Logos in its plenitude, light in fact, for as he (Moses) says, 'God said: let light come into existence,' whereas he himself is similar to none of the things that have come into existence" (Runia's translation). See our discussion earlier in this chapter on Heb 1:3.

282 Tobin, "The Prologue to John" 263–64, claims that perspectives of the prologue and Philo are at odds with respect to the conflict between light and darkness. "In the passage from Philo [*Opif.* 33–34], the separation seems to have been motivated by God's desire to avoid any actual conflict between light and darkness. In other words, the separation is to prevent potential conflict from

There are differences between John 1:4–5 and Philo's *De opificio mundi*. Philo understands life and light as noetic entities, part of the ἀσώματος κόσμος; the prologue gives no such indication. Philo's concern is primarily with creation at large while John 1:4 narrows the scope of discourse to the human world (οἱ ἄνϑρωποι). These differences perhaps have more to do with the different purposes of the two texts, a case of writers applying in distinct contexts a common interpretive tradition, a product of Hellenistic Jewish speculation on the λόγος.

4.4.3. Soteriology

There are two soteriological sections in the Johannine prologue, 1:10–12a and 1:14, 16. We refer to these sections as "soteriological" because they deal specifically with the benefits that come through accepting (λαμβάνω in vv. 12, 16) the Λόγος. However, though they share the same concern, they are different and their relationship one to the other is difficult to explain. The insertion of 1:6–9 highlights the complexity of this relationship since it promotes the understanding of vv. 10–12 (13) as referring to the historical Jesus.

> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, he gave to them power to become children of God, to those who believed in his name; these were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (John 1:6–13 NRSV modified).

---

becoming actual conflict. In John 1:5 ("and the darkness did not overcome it"), the conflict seems to have been not only potential but also, in some unspecified way, actual." However, the verbs Philo uses to describe the recession of darkness (ὑποχωρέω, ὑπεξέχω and ἀναχωρέω) suggest that darkness is being displaced by God to make room for light. In other words, as in John 1:5b there is in *De opificio mundi* an "unspecified" yet "actual" loss on the part of darkness. Cf. *Plant.* 9–10 (PLCL): "For the Father Who begat Him constituted His Word such a Bond of the Universe as nothing can break. Good reason, then, have we to be sure that all the earth shall not be dissolved by all the water which has gathered within its hollows; nor fire be quenched by air; nor, on the other hand, air be ignited by fire. The Divine Word stations himself to keep these elements apart…."

If we take the progression here as anticipating 1:19–51 (which tells the story of John the Baptist as predecessor to Jesus), the true light of verse 9 refers to the Logos/the Son. His "coming into the world" must refer to the Son's incarnation or at least the beginning of his earthly ministry. However, 1:14 also introduces the incarnation. This line mentions the name of the prologue's subject (ὁ λόγος) for only the second time, which emphasizes the rhetorical moment in the claim that the divine Logos became flesh. In the prologue's final stage, vv. 10–12ab and vv. 14, 16 work in tandem; the first is a third person description of the Son's incarnation and its effects while the second is a first person confession of the same. However, in terms of the tradition history that lies behind the prologue, we must distinguish these two strophes from each other. This is especially the case when comparing vv. 10–12ab and vv. 14, 16 with Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom traditions. The former (vv. 10–12ab) makes claims about the Logos' earthly presence that are *consistent* with certain Second Temple Wisdom traditions, namely those which articulate an historical presence for Sophia/*Hokma* herself. The latter (vv. 14, 16), though indebted to such traditions, represents a *radical departure* from them in its claim that ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. It is this historical aspect of the Logos, doubly presented, which is the catalyst for its salvific affect; whether in a general historical presence or a radically acute one, the Logos benefits those who accept (λαμβάνω) him.

4.4.3.1. Soteriology in Strophe 2

John 1: 10a   ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν,
       10b   καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
       10c   καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.
       11a   εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν,
       11b   καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
       12a   ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν,
       12b   ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι.

The structure of the second strophe may be broken up into three sections (v. 10, v. 11, and v. 12ab). Verses 10 and 11 each begin with a spatial claim about the Logos and are followed by subordinate lines (v. 10bc follows v. 10a; v. 11b follows v. 11a).[283] The subordinate lines do not qualify their primary counterpart as much as explain the results of

---

[283] As in the first strophe, note the presence of the conjunction καί at the beginning of the subordinate lines vv. 10bc, 11b.

the Logos being in or coming to certain locations (ἐν κόσμῳ, εἰς τὰ ἴδια). The third section is structurally dissimilar to the first two, being more prosaic in form.[284] The vocabulary of vv. 10, 12ab is Johannine; that of v. 11 is not (see below).

In terms of content, one may detect a progression from one verse to the next that suggests a kind of narrative. Verse 10 describes a situation (the Logos unknown) which intensifies in verse 11 (the Logos not accepted) and finds resolution in verse 12 (some accept the Logos and are transformed). Note that what drives this progression is movement from a more general to a more specific frame of reference, a narrowing of scope from verse to verse to verse (ὁ κόσμος/οἱ ἴδιοι/ὅσοι). Whether we consider verses 10–12ab as originally composed together or as representing the melding of distinct traditions, they form in their current state a functional unity.[285]

4.4.3.1.1. The Logos in the World (John 1:10)

He was in the world
and the world came to be through him
and the world did not know him.

The subject of the verb εἰμί in v. 10a is the λόγος (who receives explicit mention only in v. 1 and v. 14 of the prologue).[286] The term κόσμος refers not to creation in general but to that part of the creation that is capable of cognition (γιγνώσκω), namely humanity.[287] The thrust of the verse comes from the tension between its first two lines (v. 10ab) and its third line (v. 10c). Although the Logos was in the human world and although that world came to exist through his agency, still it does not

---

284 Cf. Brown, *John,* 1.10.

285 Recall from the discussion on the origin of the prologue in the first part of this section that vv. 10, 12ab come from the evangelist while v. 11 pre-existed the prologue.

286 The grammatical subject of v. 10a must be the Logos. It cannot be τὸ φῶς which is mentioned in v. 9 since that term is neuter and the pronouns in v. 10 are masculine (line c would read ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔγνω). In vv. 8–9, τὸ φῶς refers to Jesus (the one about whom John testifies). In vv. 4–5, τὸ φῶς is the predicate of ἡ ζωὴ which is "in" the Logos but is not the Logos himself. Rather than account for a transfer from neuter to masculine at v. 10 when the subject does not change, it seems better to say that the focus returns to the Logos (after being on the light in v. 5).

287 See the remarks on v. 10b above.

know him. Verse 10b repeats the cosmogonical claim made earlier (v. 3) but specifying κόσμος rather than πάντα serves to heighten the irony of the world's incognizance.[288]

This verse invites two questions: first, how did the Logos come to be in the world? Verse 10a simply posits that the Logos was (already) in the world. Second, why did the world not know him? If we take v. 10 as originally following verse 5 (or verse 9), we would answer both these questions by referring to τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων (v. 4/v. 9 would parallel v. 10a) and its attempted rejection by ἡ σκοτία (v. 5 would parallel v. 10c). However, the subject of v. 10 is – as we saw – the Logos (a masculine noun), not the Light (a neuter noun). Verse 10 in fact makes the most sense as anticipation of the Gospel narrative, even using similar vocabulary (κόσμος, γίγνωσκω).[289] Following Rochais' suggestion that v. 10 is an insertion by the evangelist at the time he affixed the prologue to the Gospel, it appears the evangelist thereby shifted the focus of the hymn away from the Hellenistic Jewish context to a Christian context. This is not to say that v. 10 sits uneasily in the prologue. Rather, it sets up a narrowing of scope: v. 10 refers to the world of humanity in general, v. 11 refers – perhaps – to a specific subset (οἱ ἴδιοι), namely Israel (cf. the narrowing of scope from v. 3 to v. 4)

4.4.3.1.2. The Logos Among its Own (John 1:11)

He came to what was his own
and his own people did not receive him.

The Logos (again, note the masculine pronoun in v. 11b) came unto his own environs (neuter plural τὰ ἴδια). The people who inhabit these

---

288 Note the possible symploce in these lines: καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. The first three words are identical in each and the last two words share assonance; there is also the use of the masculine singular pronoun in the middle of each line.

R. Schnackenburg, *John* 1.256, argues that v. 10b is an addition by the evangelist to v. 10. If it were an addition, its function would appear to be as a reminder that we are speaking of the Logos spoken of in vv. 1, 3–5. An editor's insertion of this reminder might be necessary if s/he felt vv. 6–9 somehow disrupted the flow of the prologue by taking away the focus on the Logos.

289 See n. 232 above. See also Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 55.

environs (οἱ ἴδιοι), however, did not accept (παραλαμβάνω) him. At first
glance, vv. 10 and 11 appear redundant: both describe the Logos as
existing in a particular setting and subject to a sort of rejection while in
that setting. Furthermore, both make subtle allusion to the irony in this
rejection: it is the world made through the Logos which does not know
him in v. 10; it is "his own people" who do not accept the Logos in
v. 11.[290]

Yet there are important differences, all of which confirm there is a
narrowing of scope from verse 10 to verse 11 (assuming for the moment
they belong together). First, the terminology is different. Τὰ ἴδια and/or
οἱ ἴδιοι represent at best a sub-set of ὁ κόσμος in verse 10, although the
sense of the former two terms is somewhat ambiguous (see below).
Second, where v. 10 simply posited the Logos' place ἐν κόσμῳ, v. 11
claims an actual entrance. The combination of εἰς and ἔρχομαι in εἰς τὰ
ἴδια ἦλθεν is dynamic. Third, where the κόσμος was guilty of
incognizance (which at best implies tacit rejection), the Logos' own
people "do not accept him" (οὐ παρέλαβον). Παραλαμβάνω in the
negative is more active than simply "not knowing." Not to accept
implies a conscious rejection.[291] Such negative response parallels the first
use of a compound verb with the root λαμβάνω in the prologue, i.e.,
καταλαμβάνω in v. 5.

Hence, verse 11 appears to heighten the dramatic sense of the Logos
in the world by focusing on the Logos' rejection by his own people.
From the standpoint of the gospel narrative, this would have to refer to
Jesus' coming to Galilee and Judea (τὰ ἴδια) and being rejected by the
Jewish establishment (οἱ ἴδιοι). However, the evangelist does not use the
terminology of ἴδια/ἴδιοι to refer to Jesus' relationship with the land/the
Jewish people.[292]

4.4.3.1.3. The Children of the Logos (John 1:12ab)

But as many as received him,
he gave to them authority to be come children of God.

---

290 On the phrases τὰ ἴδια and οἱ ἴδιοι, see ἴδιος in BDAG.
291 See BDAG, s.v. "παραλαμβάνω." The Johannine use of γιγνώσκω is complex
and it is possible that the ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω refers to a more conscious
rejection (see BDAG, s.v. "γίνωσκω"). It is certainly a pejorative comment
with respect to the world.
292 Contrast John 1:11b with 13:1: "having loved his own who were in the world"
(ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ).

Verses 10 and 11 set up the Logos as unknown and unaccepted by the world and especially by – one would assume – Israel. While structurally dissimilar from vv.10–11, v.12ab still affords a suitable ending for the narrative developed by the two previous verses. This is so because it resolves the tension created by the claims that the Logos was unknown in the world and unaccepted by his own. Verse 12a tells us that this is not a necessary condition, suggesting there are some ("whoever," ὅσοι) who can receive (λαμβάνω) him. When any of these (unidentified ones) do, they are afforded the privilege and ability (ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν) to become (γίγνομαι) children of God. Note that the use of λαμβάνω resolves both the οὐ καταλαμβάνω of v.5 and the οὐ παραλαμβάνω of v.11. Note also that γίγνομαι reaffirms the generative capacity of the Logos mentioned in vv. 3 and 10.

Like verse 10 (but not v. 11), v. 12ab reflects Johannine terminology and style. The verse exhibits the *casus pendens* construction which occurs frequently in John's gospel (27x, 21x in the Synoptics).[293] The evangelist uses λαμβάνω to speak of accepting Jesus in, for example, John 5:43–44, 13:20, and 14:17. Finally, the phrase τέκνα θεοῦ in v. 12 may also reflect Johannine thought. For the evangelist υἱοὶ θεοῦ would not be an option as he reserves the title of υἱός for Jesus.[294]

4.4.3.2. Soteriology in Strophe 3

John 1: 14a   καὶ ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο
       14b   καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν,
       14c   καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,
       14d   δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός,
       14e   πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.
       16a   ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς
               πάντες ἐλάβομεν
       16b   καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος

This strophe is structurally distinct from the previous two. Recall that in strophes 1 and 2 the pattern was to make a claim (v. 1a, v. 3a, v. 4a, v. 10a, v.11a) and follow that claim with one or more qualifiers (v. 1bc, v. 3b, v. 4b–5b, v. 10bc, v. 11b). The qualifying lines each began with καί, while the primary lines did not. In the first two strophes there is also the use of chiasmus, cascading structure, and/or parallelism. The only

---

293 See Brown, *John,* 1.10.
294 Barrett, *John,* 163.

exception is v. 12ab, the prosaic, quasi-paraenetic conclusion to the two strophes.

While not prosaic (the lines, or clauses, progress in relatively staccato fashion), there is no chiasmus, no cascading structure and no parallelism in strophe 3. The primary line of the third structure, the first line (v. 14a), begins with a καί. The next two lines (b and c) are less qualifiers than continuations of the event which began in v. 14a; these lines also begin with καί. Lines 14d and e qualify only line 14c, in particular τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; neither begins with a καί or has a controlling verb. What structural linkage there is in verse 14 is due to the threefold καί in the first three lines and the use of the same word (δόξα) which links the third and fourth lines of the verse.

Verse 16 begins with ὅτι, a subordinate conjunction which suggests we are about to receive an explanation for something in the previous lines.[295] That verse 16 continues from verse 14 is suggested by the use of πλήρωμα, an echo of v. 14e's πλήρης as well as by the use of first personal plural (compare v. 16b with v. 14bc). The presence of the first person plural in the third strophe also sets it off from the first two strophes.

The presence of the 1st person plural is formally suggestive. The elements that cause many to regard the first two strophes as poetic or hymnic in structure and origin are missing in the third strophe. But when we consider grammatical number, another literary classification asserts itself. Note that v. 14ab make a claim about the enfleshment (σάρξ ἐγένετο) of the Logos and his dwelling (σκηνόω) among "us." Verse 14c–d then provide the community's testimony to this event, stating that "we" have seen this glory, "glory as of the unique son from the father."[296] Verse 14e makes an additional claim that this glory was "full of grace and truth," a claim again grounded in the community's experience in v. 16: "for from his fullness we all have received, and grace upon grace". In terms of designating a literary form, we may speak

---

295 Many MSS have καί instead of ὅτι; however, the latter remains better attested and is preferable as the *lectio difficilior*. Schnackenburg, *John,* 1:275, suggests, while the original hymn may have had καί, the "evangelist probably put [ὅτι] in on the same principle as in v. 17, intending to illustrate the glory of the Logos from the fullness of the gifts given by him."

296 The ἡμῖν in v. 14b and ἡμεῖς in v. 14c both refer to the community of believers in general. *Contra* Brown, *John,* 1.13, who says the "us" of v. 14b refers to humanity in general while the "we" of v. 14c refers to the "apostles" (cf. 1 John 1:1–3).

of v. 14a–b and 14e (both in third person singular) as proclamations and vv. 14c–d and v. 16 (both in 1st person plural) as attestations.[297]

4.4.3.3. From Cosmology to Radical Historicization

Although there are elements of narrative related to the first strophe, its function of interpreting Gen 1:1–5 limits the scope of that narrative. The Logos existed at the beginning in close relationship with ὁ θεός, was the instrument through which πάντα came to be, was the source of ζωή and φῶς for humanity, and it continues to be so despite opposition (already completed, κατέλαβον) from ἡ σκοτία. We have explained this as three tier progression, changing in function and narrowing in scope as it progresses: first, ontology (essence is described and not function) at the divine (or heavenly) level (θεός); second, cosmogony at the level of creation (πάντα); and third, sustenance at the human level (ἄνθρωποι). While liberties are taken with the Genesis passage (the Logos is introduced, "life" and light are applied to the human level), the basic concern with the origins of cosmic order over against any historical activity of the Logos is consistent with Genesis.

The second strophe (vv. 10–12ab) parallels this narrowing of scope, though now the question is initially not the activity of the Logos but the response to the Logos at different levels. First, in v. 10 the whole κόσμος does not know (γιγνώσκω) him; second, in v. 11 the subset of the cosmos identified by τὰ ἴδια/οἱ ἴδιοι does not receive (παραλαμβάνω) him; and third, there are those (few?) who do receive (λαμβάνω) him. It is primarily on behalf of those who do receive him that the Logos functions, granting them to become τέκνα θεοῦ. At the same time, verses

---

297 Rochais articulates the basis for a designation of a "proclamation-attestation" literary form here in vv. 14, 16 ("La formation du prologue (2nd part)," 162–165). He appeals to Acts 5:31–32; 1 John 1:2; Col 2:9–10; and especially Acts 2:32–33. This last reference has a double proclamation-attestation form like John 1:14, 16 (proclamations in vv. 32a and 33a–c; attestations in vv. 32b and 33e).

Proclamation (Acts 2:32a):	This Jesus God raised up,
Attestation (v. 32b)	and of that all of us are witnesses.
Proclamation (v. 33ac)	Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,
Attestation (v. 33d)	he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

10–12ab present something that the vv. 1, 3–5 do not: the Logos has a historical presence – he is ἐν κόσμῳ, he comes εἰς τὰ ἴδια.[298] This is why we should designate this strophe as soteriological as opposed to cosmological: the Logos comes near and is received.

At first glance, the third strophe (vv. 14, 16) appears to lack the progressive nature of the first two; it does not narrow in scope over its seven lines. Rather, it begins with a most radical delimitation: καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (v. 14ab). After this, it only explains the effect this incarnation and dwelling have for "us" (ἡμεῖς) (vv. 14c–e and 16).

However, if we understand the strophes themselves as representing a narrowing of scope, we can appreciate the significance of vv. 14, 16 vis-à-vis what comes before them. Strophe 1 is cosmological and anthropological at a general level. Strophe 2 is historical and soteriological, but with the emphasis on the spheres of influence of the Logos (from κόσμος to "his own" to "as many as"). Strophe 3, which begins with the first mention of the Logos since verse 1, is also soteriological and historical, but the emphasis is on the Logos (made flesh) and what emanates from him (grace and truth).

4.4.3.4. Excursus #6: The Extent of Historicization of Hellenistic Sophialogical Intermediaries

4.4.3.4.1. Evidence from Proverbs, Sirach, *1 Enoch*, Matthew, *Gospel of Thomas*

Biblical Wisdom (חכמה) has a relationship with humanity in the Hebrew Scriptures that is similar to the Logos' relationship with humanity. For instance, Proverbs 1:20–33 describe חכמה roaming earthly streets, pursuing humans, calling to them, and being rejected by them. "I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded" (v. 24). Because of her presence and (possibly) her role in creation (Prov 8:22–31), Wisdom says she is particularly valuable to humanity: "whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD" (v. 35). There is nothing in Proverbs however that suggests Wisdom actually has an historical presence; rather, she is part of the

---

298 In verses 3–5, there is if anything a buffering between the Logos and the world of humanity: what was in the Logos was life and the life was the light of humanity and the light continues to shine in the darkness.

fabric of creation, discernible to those sagacious enough to detect her and thereby learn from her. Indeed, in terms of Lady Wisdom, Prov 1–8 is in substance metaphorical and atemporal.

In Second Temple Judaism, Wisdom receives a more concrete presence among humanity, in particular Israel. Sirach 24 appropriates several aspects of Wisdom in Prov. 1–8, in particular her presence at and knowledge of creation as well as her pursuit of humanity. However, Ben Sira goes well beyond Proverbs by situating Wisdom in a specific historical location.

> From the mouth of the Most High I came forth, and mistlike covered the earth. In the highest heavens did I dwell, my throne on a pillar of cloud. The vault of heaven I compassed alone, through the deep abyss I wandered. Over waves of the sea, over all the land, over every people and nation I held sway. Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose inheritance should I abide? "Then the Creator of all gave me his command, and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent (σκηνή), Saying, 'In Jacob make your dwelling (κατασκηνόω), in Israel your inheritance.' Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me, and through all ages I shall not cease to be. In the holy tent I ministered before him, and in Zion I fixed my abode. Thus in the chosen city he has given me rest, in Jerusalem is my domain (ἡ ἐξουσία μου) (Sir 24:3–11, NRSV).[299]

Notice that like the Johannine prologue, there is a narrowing of scope with respect to Wisdom's wanderings, beginning with the great expanse of creation and ending with (by God's decree) "Jacob"/"Israel." By having Wisdom pitch her tent (Grk: σκηνή, κατασκηνόω) among the Israelites and in particular in Zion, Ben Sira recasts the Proverbial חכמה as essentially related to, even identifiable with, תורה (cf. Sir 24:23). Hence, we may speak of a historicizing of Wisdom in Sirach, but it is an historicization by association.[300]

---

299 Sirach 24, like the work as a whole, was originally composed in Hebrew. Chapter 24 is part of the 32% of Sirach for which an original Hebrew text remains lost. The Greek translation dates to early 2nd century BCE and would likely have been available to the evangelist and his community. See Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987).

300 Baruch 4:1 appears to make the same equivalence (Wisdom/Knowledge = Law).

Perhaps we may include in the same vein *1 Enoch* 42, though its context is considerably more ambiguous. The Ethiopic apocalypse presents this mini-narrative of Wisdom almost in passing:

> (1) Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell; but a place was found (for her) in the heavens. (2) Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people, but she found no dwelling place. (So) Wisdom returned to her place and she settled permanently among the angels (*1 En.* 42:1–2).[301]

There is no link with the Law in this passage, which also does not share Ben Sira's optimistic perspective. Unlike Sirach 24:10, 11 which claim Wisdom made her abode (στηρίζω) and found her rest (καταπαύω) in Zion, *1 Enoch* claims Wisdom could find no earthly dwelling place and "settled permanently" in the heavens among the angels.[302]

While the subject of the Johannine prologue is ὁ λόγος and not ἡ σοφία, it is not difficult to draw comparisons between it and Proverbs, Sirach and *1 Enoch*. All tell a similar narrative of a divine intermediary who seeks to take up residence among mortals. The intermediary's effort meets with mixed results, depending on which account you follow. The Johannine prologue's appropriation of this tradition (if such it is) is not distinct with early Christian literature. The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as Sophia, especially in Sirach's terms. In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus calls people to follow him in a way similar to Wisdom's entreaties in Sir 24:18–22 and 51:23–30.[303] Matthew 11:29, where Jesus speaks of his "yoke", likely echoes Sir 51:26 ("Submit your neck to her [Wisdom's] yoke, that your mind may accept her teaching."). In so doing, the Matthean evangelist (or perhaps Q) may have conscripted a link between Wisdom and Torah and redirected the link to Jesus.[304]

Another possible case of Christian appropriation of this tradition, and one that is quite similar (and possibly related) to John's Prologue is *Gospel of Thomas* 28. There we read that Jesus said:

> I took my place in the midst of the world (κόσμος), and I appeared (ὤφθην, ⲞⲨⲰⲚⲒ̅) to them in flesh (ἐν σαρκεί). I found all of them intoxicated; I

---

301 *OTP* 1:33.

302 See the note on "permanently" in *OTP* 1:33 (fn. 42 a).

303 Sir 51:23–30 is a discussion of Wisdom's benefits in the 3rd person; whereas Sir 24:18–22 is part of a Wisdom monologue.

304 Rabbis often referred to the "yoke of Torah." See B. Viviano, "Matthew," *NJBC,* 53.

found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind (τυφλοί, Ⲃⲗⲗⲉⲉⲅⲉ) in their hearts and do not have sight ([οὐ] βλέπ[ουσιν], Ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲂⲟⲗ ⲁⲛ); for empty (ⲱⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ) they came into the world (ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ), and empty (ⲱⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ) too they seek to leave the world (ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ). But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, they will repent (ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ).[305]

The domain of Jesus' activity is the κόσμος (cf. John 1:10), the mode of appearance is σάρξ (cf. John 1:14), and the manner of apprehension (or lack there of) is sight (βλέπω, ⲛⲁⲩ; cf. Ѳεάομαι in John 1:14). Though not explicit, there is also the sense that Jesus has a heavenly origin, one that he aspires to see humanity attain – perhaps even with fullness (the opposite of ⲱⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ). Notice, however, the inability to see (not necessarily Jesus) comes from intoxication, a temporary ailment that will wear off and the "sons of men" will then repent. Unlike John 1:14, 16 where the Logos is the source of glory and his dwelling as flesh a catalyst for fulfillment, *Gos. Thom.* 28 affords Jesus a less essential role in human enlightenment.

4.4.3.4.2. The Advent of Sophia in Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon portrays Sophia in terms consistent with this narrative, which is not surprising given the explicit ties between this turn of the era document and the biblical wisdom tradition. However, Wis is more like Proverbs and less like its sapiential siblings in one important way: the narrative it tells about divine Wisdom and her relations with humans is not historically oriented. Pseudo-Solomon does not identify Sophia with Torah in the fashion of Sirach or Baruch, nor does he claim she dwells in an historical locale (like Zion or Israel).[306] Furthermore, as we shall see, Sophia would not take her place "in the midst of the world" in the fashion of Jesus, since an appearance ἐν σαρκί (as in the *Gos. Thom.* and John 1:14) would be antithetical to her nature.

The claim that Wisdom of Solomon does not present Sophia as an historical character appears to contradict the evidence. Especially worth noting is the litany of Sophia's salvific endeavors on the part of Israel's

---

305 NHC II.2 38.22–30 (Coptic and English, CGL 2:64–65; Greek, CGL 2:118–119).

306 In Wis 9:8, Pseudo-Solomon mentions the temple and its mountain. He does not mention that this is where Sophia is to dwell per se. He in fact says that the Jerusalem temple is but a copy (μίμημα) of the heavenly tent.

"heroes of the faith" in Wis 10.[307] It is in this chapter, after all, where the sage claims Sophia assisted Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. However, Pseudo-Solomon is clearly reworking the biblical narrative to showcase Sophia's value to every human, not just these few. In other words, Wis 10 is an extended example (or set of examples) which illustrates the claim made earlier in 7:27–30:

> Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets (κατὰ γενεὰς εἰς ψυχὰς ὁσίας μεταβαίνουσα φίλους θεοῦ καὶ προφήτας κατασκευάζει); for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom (ὁ σοφίᾳ συνοικῶν). She is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

What this passage implies about Wisdom 10 is that Sophia's activities on behalf of the patriarchs is not unique or reserved for a few. Rather, her activity is for any who may be designated ψυχαὶ ὅσιαι. Notice that in Wis 10 historical names are not used. In fact apart from Adam (πρωτόπλαστος πατήρ, v. 1) and Moses (θεράπων κυρίου, v. 16), the same title is used for the rest of the patriarchs; each is a δίκαιος, a "just" person.[308] The people whom Sophia leads in the Exodus (in Wis 10:15–21) are not called the Israelites but, more generically, the λαὸς ὅσιος (vv. 15, 17). The justness and holiness of each person is determined by their relationship to Sophia, as Wis 10:9 makes clear: σοφία τοὺς θεραπεύοντας αὐτὴν ἐκ πόνων ἐρρύσατο.[309] These acts of deliverance are Sophia's consistent mode of operation with human beings. The effect of such acts is that Sophia has an ubiquitous historical presence, so ubiquitous that it is best to refer to it as super-historical or even non-historical. Her activity is part of the framework of creation and so one can not describe it as having any real particularity. Pseudo-Solomon thus understands the story of Israel as representative (perhaps allegorical) for the human condition in general.

    For these reasons, we cannot view Sophia's salvific role in Wisdom of Solomon as historically oriented. Still, her role is important to our understanding of John's prologue. Recall that Wis 7:27–30, quoted

---

307 Recall our discussion of this passage in § 3.1.3.2.1.

308 Wis 10:4, 5, 6, 10, 13.

309 Οἱ θεραπεύοντες αὐτήν in Wis 10:9 compares to ὁ σοφίᾳ συνοικῶν in 7:28.

above, follows a discussion of Sophia's role in creation (7:24–26).[310] In this, John 1:10–12ab is similar to Wis 7:27–28, as it follows a cosmological discussion and makes a claim for the presence of the Logos ἐν κόσμῳ (which refers to the human world; cf. γενεαί in Wis 7:27). Where in Wisdom of Solomon a relationship with Sophia (ὁ σοφίᾳ συνοικῶν) makes one a φίλος θεοῦ, accepting the Logos makes one a τέκνον θεοῦ in John 1:12ab. These are strong affinities that suggest John 1:10–12ab and Wisdom of Solomon are appealing to the same religious tradition.

However, this affinity ends with the start of the third strophe and the claim that the Logos became flesh. To appreciate the difference between Wisdom of Solomon and John 1:14, consider Pseudo-Solomon's prayer for Sophia in Wis 9. In this prayer, the sage calls upon God to send Sophia from his side to assist in his kingly duties. Because she was present at creation, Sophia knows God's works as well as what God finds pleasing and upright (see vv. 9–11). Her presence is essential since "even one who is perfect among human beings will be regarded as nothing without the Wisdom that comes from you" (9:6). Pseudo-Solomon elaborates on the limitations of human beings who lack Sophia in 9:13–16:

> For who can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? For the reasoning of mortals (θνητά) is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail; for a perishable body weighs down the soul (φθαρτὸν γὰρ σῶμα βαρύνει ψυχήν), and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind (βρίθει τὸ γεῶδες σκῆνος νοῦν πολυφρόντιδα). We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens?[311]

This passage links the limitations of human effort and understanding to the physical nature of human existence. It is the "perishable body" (φθαρτὸν σῶμα) which prevents the human soul from "tracing out what is in the heavens." This passage makes it impossible to conceive of Sophia along the lines of the Johannine Logos who became σάρξ and dwelt (σκηνόω) among us. After all, it is from the "earthly tent" (τὸ γεῶδες σκῆνος), which holds the human mind down, that Pseudo-Solomon seeks to be "saved" (cf. σῴζω in 9:18). He prays Sophia will

---

310 See our discussion of Wisdom of Solomon in § 3.1.2.1 for in-depth analysis of this passage.

311 NRSV.

assist him in overcoming the very limitation which the Logos in John 1:14 assumes.

4.4.3.4.3. Can the Philonic Logos Come Unto His Own?

Either Wisdom of Solomon is aware of the traditions about Sophia's historical activity and it dehistoricizes these traditions or Wisdom of Solomon makes use of Sophia directly to dehistoricize the biblical narrative. Either way, the purpose appears to be to demonstrate how *Heilsgeschichte*, reinterpreted to focus on Sophia, is in fact the story of everyone who lives with her (ὁ σοφίᾳ συνοικῶν). This interpretive scheme is quite similar to, though not nearly as sophisticated as Philo of Alexandria's.

The most noticeable difference, of course, between Philo and Wisdom of Solomon is the focus by the former on the Logos and not Sophia. We discussed in chapter three how Philo's Logos represents a highly developed marriage between Jewish Wisdom and Hellenistic philosophical traditions, a marriage that was long established before Philo.[312] This pre-Philonic marriage is most likely responsible for the presentation of the Logos in John's prologue as well. In both Philo's writing and the prologue, the Logos clearly assumes Wisdom's role. In both writings, however, the Sophialogical dimension is only one aspect of the Logos. We have already seen that Philo and the prologue share an interpretive tradition with respect to Genesis, a tradition which also involves an assumption (or interpolation) of roles by the Logos. In other words, the Johannine Logos functions very much along the lines of the Philonic Logos, if in a less sophisticated fashion. Again, however, John 1:14ab represent the decisive break between the Johannine (Christian) Logos and the Philonic (Sophialogical) Logos.

In *De confusione linguarurm*, Philo discusses the status of certain "sons of one man" (υἱοὶ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου, LXX Gen 42:11).[313] He interprets ἄνθρωπος here as referring to the Logos when he says of these "sons" that they "have enrolled yourselves as children of one and the same Father (ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐπιγεγραμμένοι πατέρα), who is not mortal but immortal – God's Man (ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ), who being the Word of the Eternal (τοῦ αἰδίου λόγος) must needs himself be imperishable

---

312 See the introduction to chapter three.
313 In Gen 42:11, those who say they are "sons of one man" are Joseph's brothers, Jacob's sons, who respond to the Egyptian Vice Regent's accusation that they are spies.

(ἄφθαρτος)" (*Conf.* 41).[314] This passage is interesting in comparison with John's prologue because of the emphasis *Conf. 41* places upon the selection ("enroll", ἐπιγράφω)[315] of the ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ (i.e., ὁ λόγος) as πατήρ. Recall that in John 1:12, the Logos grants authority to become children of God to those who accept him.

Philo elaborates on this selection later in his treatise when he writes:

> But if there by any as yet unfit to be called a Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ), let him press to take his place under God's First-born, the Word (πρωτόγονος αὐτοῦ λόγος), who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called "the Beginning" (ἀρχή), and the Name of God (ὄνομα θεοῦ), and His Word (λόγος), and the Man after His image (ὁ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα), and "he that sees" (ὁ ὁρῶν), that is Israel.
>
> And therefore I was moved a few pages above to praise the virtues of those who say that "We are all sons of one man" (Gen 42:11). For if we have not yet become fit to be thought sons of God yet we may be sons of His incorporeal image, the most holy Word (καὶ γὰρ εἰ μήπω ἱκανοὶ θεοῦ παῖδες νομίζεσθαι γεγόναμεν, ἀλλά τοι τῆς ἀειδοῦς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ, λόγου τοῦ ἱερωτάτου). For the Word is the eldest born image (εἰκὼν ὁ πρεσβύτατος) of God (*Conf.* 146–47).[316]

We discussed this passage previously (see the section on Colossians). Recall that Philo's claim that the Logos has many names points to the fluidity within Hellenistic Judaism in terms of describing the divine intermediary; hence, titles such as ἀρχή can be applied to the Logos or Sophia or Christ. In our current discussion, however, we should pay attention to the primary point Philo is making here.[317] First, like John 1:12b, Philo acknowledges that there is the potential for attaining the status of divine sonship, though for Philo this apparently is an

---

314 Trans: PLCL. For a discussion of Philo's understanding of the ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ and his relationship to the Logos in *De confusione linguarum*, see Tobin, *Creation of Man* 140–142.

315 Ἐπιγράφω may have a legal connotation here (see "ἐπιγράφω," III in *LSJ* 628). If so, it may correlate with ἐξουσία in John 1:12b. For a similar usage of this term, see *Leg.* 31. Discussing two views about the divine mind, Philo describes the view that accepts this mind thus: that "one turns its back on the particular being, created and mortal mind, and whole-heartedly puts itself under the patronage (ἐπιγράφομαι) of the universal Mind, uncreated and immortal (PLCL)."

316 PLCL 4.90, modified (Colson translates ἀειδής as "invisible." I translate it here as "incorporeal.")

317 Note that in *Conf.* 146–47, Philo's comments about the "many-named" Logos is a digression, as can be seen by his redundancy before and after the digression.

exceptionally lofty goal.[318] What is more accessible, what takes less
fitness as it were, is becoming "sons of the incorporeal image," i.e., the
Logos. This is no meager "consolation prize," since the Logos is the
highest of all entities next to God. Philo clarifies this exaltedness with
respect to the angels (the Logos is their ἀρχάγγελος) and, more germane
to our study here, with respect to God. The Logos is the "eldest" (ὁ
πρεσβύτατος) on account of being God's First-born (ὁ πρωτόγονος
αὐτοῦ λόγος). This superiority is not simply (if at all) chronological but
ontological; the λόγος is the εἰκών of God. Thus, drawing close to the
Logos is quite literally the next best thing to drawing close to God.

　　Elsewhere Philo does claim that there are those of a superior
character who may attain more directly to God's presence. In *De
sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, Philo says that in contrast to lesser but still noble
characters symbolized by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there is Moses,
whom God invited to "stand with me" (LXX Deut 5:31).[319] Philo finds
in Moses' ascension to God's side a paradigm for anyone who, in the
language of *Conf.* 146, is "fit" to be a υἱὸς θεοῦ.

> Thus you may know that God prizes the wise man as the world, for that
> same Word, by which He made the universe, is that by which He draws
> the perfect man from things earthly to Himself (ὅτι τὸν σοφὸν ἰσότιμον
> κόσμῳ ὁ θεὸς ἡγεῖται τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενος καὶ τὸν τέλειον
> ἀπὸ τῶν περιγείων ἀνάγων ὡς ἑαυτόν, *Sacr.* 8).

These passages show that Philo's construal of the Logos as an anagogue
compares favorably with the prologue's description of the Logos in the
following ways. First, the Logos' efficacy on behalf of humanity relates
to his ontological relationship with God and his preeminence over and
involvement in creation.[320] In particular, the Logos in both Philo and
the prologue has a filial role: in Philo, he is πρωτόγονος and in the
prologue, he is μονογενής. Second, one's acceptance of the Logos means
one receives a filial status all his or her own. We should not overstate the
contrast between Philo's υἱοί ἀνθρώπου/ παῖδες εἰκόνος with the
prologue's τέκνα θεοῦ. In both cases, the status of childhood is an
artificial construct that has to do with spiritual (or noetic) illumination.

318　John 1:12b uses the phrase τέκνα θεοῦ; as I said above, this is most likely because
　　the Johannine literature prefers to use υἱός for Jesus.
319　See the discussion of *Sacr.* 8 in § 3.2.2 as well as in § 3.2.6.2.
320　*Sacr.* 8 is clear about the Logos' cosmological instrumentality; *Conf.* 146–47
　　may allude to this with the term εἰκών.

The Logos facilitates this illumination in Philo's writings and the prologue.

As to the differences between Philo's presentation of the Logos as anagogue and the prologue's, we find most interesting the lack of narrative in the former. Above, we saw that many sapiential writers present Wisdom as having an historical presence. Even Wisdom of Solomon, which prefers to highlight Sophia's consistent presence on the part of humanity, construes her soteriological activity as a (recurring) narrative. The Philonic presentation of the Logos is much more static then any of his Jewish counterparts. Certainly there is the story of those who are υἱοὶ ἄνθρωποι, i.e., children of the Logos. But Philo generally does not describe the Logos as descending into the realm of mortals in order to assist them in ascending to the noetic/divine realm. Rather, the activity rests with the human mind which strives to apprehend the Logos and thereby is transported to the supersensible sphere.[321]

The absence of soteriological narrative about the Logos in Philo does not of course diminish the strong similarities with the prologue. Furthermore, it is important to note the narrative presented in John 1:10–12ab does not have to be understood only in the context of Jewish Wisdom traditions. C. K. Barrett acknowledged this about v. 11a (εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν) in particular, when he commented:

> He came to his own property (cf. Thucydides 1.141), his home. The aorist points to a unique coming, the incarnation, and the 'home' to which Jesus came was Israel. But it must be observed that it would be possible to speak of a coming of the Logos in the Platonic sense to the created world, which was his natural counterpart, or in the Stoic sense to rational men, who were peculiarly λογικοί.[322]

As we discussed in chapter two, Middle Platonists understood the intermediate reality (the form(s), the Second God, the Demiurge, etc.) between the First Principle and humanity as one which in some manner effected the physical realm and the human condition in particular. It did so in such a way that it facilitated the ascent of the human soul or mind (i.e., the noetic aspect of humanity) to the supersensible realm.

---

321 See Philo, *Conf.* 95 and *Ebr.* 152, both of which place the onus on the human soul in the effort to apprehend the divine Logos. In *Sacr.* 8, it is the σοφός who is τέλειος whom God leads by the Logos (ἀνάγων τῷ λόγῳ) to himself; in other words, the perfect one is rewarded for efforts already expended.

322 Barrett, *St. John,* 163.

In particular, we focused on Plutarch and Numenius as examples of Middle Platonists who described this intermediary as an active agent which served to facilitate the relationship between the human νοῦς and τὰ νοητά. In *Amat.* 764D–765A, Plutarch does this by recasting the Eros myth so that it tells the story of an intelligible entity ("Love") which is mediated to the human mind by means of bodily forms (διὰ σωμάτων ἀφικόμενος). It thereby becomes for humans a guide (ἀγωγός) to lead them to the "plain of truth" (i.e., τὰ νοητά) where Beauty (κάλλος) resides. Numenius speaks (in Frg.12, des Places) of ὁ δημιουργιὸς θεός as the one "through whom our journey takes place also (διὰ τούτου καὶ ὁ στόλος ἡμῖν ἐστι), when νοῦς is sent down through the spheres to all those who are ready to participate in it (πᾶσι τοῖς κοινωνῆσαι συντεταγμένοις)." The end result of this visitation is that while the physical aspect of human reality eventually dissipates, the Demiurgic God causes the noetic aspect to flourish in perpetual happiness (τὸν δὲ νοῦν ζῆν βίου ἐπαυρόμενον εὐδαίμονος).

The link between human and supersensible reality is the νοῦς in both these writings (Plutarch's *Amat.*, Numenius' fragments). The intermediate agent relates to the human νοῦς because they are of a piece, they are both noetic. In this way, we might possibly speak of the Eros or the Demirugic God coming εἰς τὰ ἴδια (cf. John 1:11a), understanding their "own" as things noetic.[323] Though neither text claims the intermediate makes a person a "child of God" (as in John 1:12b), it is clear that humans (or rather the intellectual aspect of humans, the νοῦς) are much better off because of that entity.

The parallels between John 1 and these Middle Platonist authors, who admittedly postdate the prologue, helps us appreciate the fluidity of the interpretative traditions which Philo and the prologue share. Philo's presentation of the Logos is more theoretical and discursive, along the lines of Alcinous (see ch. 2). Still, whether by using the narrative approach or the discursive approach, all of these writers attest to the essential Middle Platonic claim that the intermediate principle links the divine/noetic and human/sense-perceptible spheres and does so in a way that benefits the human soul.

---

323 Οἱ ἴδιοι in John 1: 11b tends to obfuscate any parallels between John 1:11 and this Middle Platonic narrative.

4.4.3.4.4. The Problem of the Σάρξ

Philo affords Sophia a role in the ascent of the soul. However, Sophia is not a guide but the way, the path, upon which the soul makes its ascent. "For wisdom is a straight, high road, and it is when the mind's course is guided along that road that it reaches the goal (τέρμα) which is the recognition (γνῶσις) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of God" (*Deus* 143).[324] In spite of Sophia's passive function here, the notion of a "way" for the mind to travel until it reaches its goal is relevant to our study. The destination should sound somewhat similar. Recall that the prologue envisions those who do not know the Logos in v. 10c (ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω). In 1:12ab, the antithesis of this unknowing world is those few who receive (λαμβάνω) the Logos; such "reception" appears to be a synonym for "knowing." Furthermore, in John 1:14 the Logos discloses the divine glory to those who have accepted him (ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός). In other words, the Johannine Logos is a means to knowledge of the divine in a fashion similar to the Philonic Sophia.

However, Philo's description of Sophia in *Quod Deus* as the way is more telling for how it differentiates the Alexandrian's *Weltanschauung* from the prologue's. Just prior to the passage quoted above, Philo discusses Gen 6:12. That verse says (in the LXX): "It [the earth] was corrupted (καταφθείρω) because all flesh (πᾶσα σάρξ) corrupted his way (τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ) upon the earth." Philo comments:

> Some will think that we have a here mistake in diction and that the correct phrase in grammatical sequence is as follows, "all flesh destroyed its way" (ὅτι κατέφθειρε πᾶσα σάρξ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτῆς). For a masculine form like "his" (αὐτοῦ) cannot be properly used with reference to the feminine noun "flesh" (σάρξ). But perhaps the writer is not speaking merely of the flesh which corrupts (φθείρω) its own way, thus giving reasonable grounds for the idea of a grammatical error, but of two things, the flesh which is being corrupted, and Another (ἑτέρου), whose way that flesh seeks to mar (λυμαίνομαι) and corrupt (φθείρω). And so the passage must be explained thus, "all flesh destroyed the perfect way of the Eternal and Indestructible, the way which leads to God (κατέφθειρε πᾶσα σάρξ τὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου καὶ ἀφθάρτου τελείαν ὁδὸν τὴν πρὸς θεὸν ἄγουσαν)." This way, you must know, is wisdom (σοφία). (*Deus* 140–143, PLCL)

Philo describes here an antipathy between σάρξ and σοφία, the way that leads to God. This antipathy lies in the corruptive (καταφθείρω, φθείρω)

---

nature of the former and the association of the latter with ὁ αἰώνιος καὶ ἄφθαρτος θεός.[325]

This antipathy is a consistent theme in Philo's writings.[326] For instance, speaking of the different types of souls in *De gigantibus*, Philo again discusses the negative influence of σάρξ on σοφία.

> Nothing, however, so thwarts [wisdom's] growth as our fleshly nature (ἡ σαρκῶν φύσις). For this is the primary and main underlying foundation of ignorance and the diseased condition of an unknowing mind, … For souls unfleshed and disembodied (ψυχαὶ ἄσαρκοι καὶ ἀσώματοι) pass their days in the theater of the universe and enjoy unhindered sights and sounds divine, possessed by an insatiate love for them. But those who bear the load of the flesh (σάρξ) are unable, thus weighed down and oppressed (βαρυνόμεναι καὶ πιεζόμεναι), to gaze (βλέπω) upward at the revolving heavens, but with necks wrenched downward are forcibly rooted to the ground (ἡ γῆ) like four-footed beasts (*Gig.* 30–31, PLCL).

In this passage, we find two types of souls. On the one hand, there are those "unfleshed and disembodied" souls who exist in an ethereal state, enjoying "sights and sounds divine." On the other, there are those souls who can not see or hear such things because they are "weighed down" by σάρξ, reduced thereby to a bestial nature. Later in *De gigantibus*, Philo discusses these two types of souls (the heaven-born and the earth-born)

---

325 In *Deus* 143–151, he describes this antipathy in terms of Israel, "the race endowed with vision" and who travel along the "king's highway," and Edom, representing what is earthly. Edom confronts Israel on its journey to the promised land, saying that Israel may not pass through Edom on threat of war (see Numbers 20:17–20). For Philo this conflict illustrates how what is earthly undermines the soul's ascent; the successful soul will pass by the earthly and move onto the divine. "Ventures such as these betoken a celestial and heavenly soul, which has left the region of the earth, has been drawn upwards (ἀνέλκω), and dwells with divine natures. For when it takes its fill of the vision of good incorruptible and genuine, it bids farewell to the good which is transient and spurious" (*Deus* 151, PLCL). This passage illuminates the Platonic perspective that undergirds Philo's thinking. In particular, the earthly he views as "transient", "spurious." Σάρξ is part of this realm and hence it is both subject to ruin and ruinous (φθειρόμενα and φθείρουσα, cf. *Deus* 142). The "celestial and heavenly soul" is the one that is able to move beyond the lesser good which is this corporeal region to the true and lasting good of the noetic/divine region. See Mack, *Logos und Sophia*, 133–140.

326 In addition to the passages dealt with here, see *Ebr.* 69; *Migr.* 14; *Her.* 56–57; *Abr.* 164; and *QG* 2.22. See Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?", 163–64, and our discussion of the Philonic Logos' anagogy in § 3.2.6.2

and adds a third, the God-born.[327] The God-born souls are those who have "transcended the sensible sphere and have migrated to the intelligible world and dwell there enrolled as citizens of the Common-wealth of Ideas, which are imperishable and incorporeal" (*Gig.* 61).

Philo's allegory of the soul illustrates again how this is a journey away from the flesh. In the allegory, the human mind must overcome pleasure mediated to it by sense-perception in order to attain virtue and wisdom.[328]

> "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and the twain shall be one flesh" (Gen 2.24). For the sake of sense-perception (ἡ αἴσθησις) the mind (ὁ νοῦς), when it has become her slave, abandons both God the Father of the universe, and God's excellence and wisdom, the Mother of all things, and cleaves to and becomes one with sense-perception and is resolved into sense-perception so that the two become one flesh (σάρξ) and one experience (πάθος). Observe that it is not the woman that cleaves to the man, but conversely the man to the woman, Mind to sense-perception. For when that which is superior, namely mind, becomes one with that which is inferior, namely sense-perception, it resolves itself into the order of flesh (τὸ σαρκὸς γένος) which is inferior, into sense-perception, the moving cause of the passions. But if Sense the inferior follows Mind the superior, there will be flesh no more (οὐκέτι ἔσται σάρξ), but both of them will be Mind (*Leg.* 2.49–50, PLCL).

Again, as in *Deus* 140–143 and *Gig.* 30–31, we find here in *Leg. 2* the tainting nature of the flesh, how it hinders noetic illumination and naturally thwarts the ascent of the soul. In other words, rather than aligning with the Johannine prologue which affords σάρξ some type of revelatory significance (John 1:14), Philo's views align with Pseudo-Solomon who says: "For a perishable body (φθαρτὸν σῶμα) weighs (βαρύνω) down the soul and this earthly tent (τὸ γεῶδες σκῆνος) burdens the thoughtful mind" (Wis 9:15).

Absent from all these texts is explicit mention of the Logos. However, we can safely infer from Philo's writings that the Logos is even less conducive to fleshly association than σοφία. We discussed in chapter two and early in this chapter how the Logos is the catalyst by which the soul is drawn up. This catalysis stems from the noetic aspect

---

327 Philo refers to these three as οἱ οὐρανοῦ, οἱ γῆς, and οἱ θεοῦ. *Gig.* 60–61 spells out the three classes of souls.

328 In terms of Gen 2–3, Philo interprets Adam as the mind, the serpent as pleasure, and Eve as sense-perception. Philo's "Allegory of the Soul" is described concisely and compared with similar Hellenistic allegoresis in Tobin, *Creation of Man,* 145–54.

inherent to humanity. Humans have both a rational component and an irrational component.[329] Philo ontologically associates the rational component, the νοῦς, with the Logos. David Winston writes that "The Logos is God immanent, holding together and administering the entire chain of creation (*Mos.* 2.134; *Her.* 188), and the human mind is but a tiny fragment of this all-pervading Logos" (see *Det.* 90; *Gig.* 27; *Leg.* 1.37).[330] This appears to be to some degree consistent with John 1:1–5 where the Logos is associated with God, then the cosmos and finally with human illumination. We have seen that the Logos does facilitate enlightenment and that as many as receive this enlightenment "transcend" and become "heavenly citizens" (cf. *Deus* 140–43 and Gig. 60–61 with John1:10–12ab). However, it appears truly antithetical to Philo's views about the nature of the human mind, its manner of illumination and the source of illumination (the Logos), to claim that any of these three have a positive relationship with ἡ σάρξ. In other words, its not possible from Philo's perspective to say ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο (John 1:14).

4.4.4. Interrelationship of Soteriology and Cosmology in the Johannine Prologue

Perhaps what distinguishes the Johannine prologue most from Col 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:2–3 is the seamless integration of its cosmology and soteriology. This quality is the more remarkable if we accept the likely possibility that the prologue developed in stages. The passages in Colossians and Hebrews were notable because they held the Son's cosmological and soteriological functions together without accounting for how the cosmos or humanity in particular came in need of salvation. Col 1:15–20 assumes all things need reconciliation and pacification; Heb 1:2–3 assumes that sins exist which necessitate purification.

In John there is a fuller (if still incomplete) narrative that develops over three stages. The first of these stages itself contains three foci: the Logos' ontological relationship with God (v. 1); the Logos' instrumental

---

329 See *Det.* 84. For a detailed discussion of Philo's view of human psychology, see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 467–75.

330 Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?", 157. The mind as "fragment" of the Logos is just one manner of description Philo uses in presenting the relationship between the human νοῦς and the Divine νοῦς/λόγος. See § 3.2.6.1 above.

role in creation (v. 3ab); and the Logos' illuminative role with respect to humanity (vv. 3c–5). An interpretation of Genesis 1:1–5 (or based thereon), these verses depict the Logos in primordial relations that are of ongoing relevance. Where John 1:4–5 describe how the Logos influences humanity by means of the life and light which he generates, John 1:10–12ab, the second stage, represents the Logos himself directly entering into the human sphere. We saw above that this stage marks the first of two soteriological sections of the prologue since the concern of these sections is human reception of the Logos and its benefits. We also observed how the second stage parallels the first by narrowing its scope as it precedes (ὁ κόσμος: τὰ ἴδια/οἱ ἴδιοι: ὅσοι), emphasizing again the efficacy of the Logos for humanity (cf. v. 4) and especially that segment of humanity which receives him.

The prologue after the second stage (the stage where it was affixed to the Gospel, according to G. Rochais), is similar enough to Jewish sapiential narratives about Sophia as well as to the basic framework of Philo's Logos speculation to claim that it is within the same general religious traditions as these. As illustrated above, it is a loose affiliation rather than a tight one. For one thing, Philo's depiction of the Logos lacks the narrative nature of Wisdom of Solomon and the other sapiential texts. Furthermore, the sapiential texts associated with Semitic origins (Sirach, *1 Enoch*, *Baruch*) lack the philosophical complexity of Philo's Logos.[331] Wisdom of Solomon lays somewhere in between the two poles, vacillating between them at times. We should place the Johnnine prologue in a similar position; it shows just enough affinities with Middle Platonism in particular that we cannot exclude a more direct, but still secondary (through Judaism) influence.

The third stage in the prologue, represented by John 1:14,16, is both a fitting climax to the previous two stages and a substantive departure from their ostensible milieu of Jewish sapientialism. It is a fitting climax in that it finalizes the move to particularity that began in the first section and preceded into the second; the Logos does not just give humanity its light and life or even dwell alongside humanity, but assumes the human condition – ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο. The first-person reaction to this "incarnation" testifies to how the enfleshed Logos elevates human being: "we have seen his glory, glory of the Father's

---

331 This is not to say that the Semitic sapiential texts are not influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, only that in comparison to Philo's writings, that influence is relatively simplistic.

only one, full of grace and truth … for from his fullness we have all received and grace upon grace." We might construe this as simply restating in personal terms what was expressed in third person in v. 12ab: "to as many as received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God."

However, as the comparisons between John 1:10–12ab and other sapiential texts suggested, it could have been sufficient for the prologue to end at 1:12ab. The Logos becoming flesh, whether a later development or an original summation, does not carry a sapiential trajectory through to its expected outcome. Rather, in the light of the texts that are the strongest parallels with the prologue (Philo's work and Wisdom of Solomon), we must accept that the Johannine prologue shatters that trajectory. For these Jewish authors, the flesh weighs down and stifles the soul; for the Christian author, the flesh is a vehicle which communicates divine glory.

In his analysis of John 1:14, 16, Rochais sees specifically a testimony about the resurrected Lord. If this is the case, the flesh is the transformed flesh of the resurrected Lord and the divine glory is to be associated with the overcoming of death. Even so, flesh remains flesh, even if rehabilitated.

There is another way to appreciate the complex relationship between the second stage of the prologue (John 1: 10–12ab) and the third stage (1:14, 16). John 1:10–12ab by itself appears to follow the sapiential and Philonic tendency of placing the soteriological onus on human apprehension. The Prologue's Logos, like Wisdom's Sophia or Philo's way of wisdom, is readily available to humanity in its own historical context; the question is, will humanity overcome that context? Will "they" (ὅσοι) break with the unknown κόσμος and the unreceptive οἱ ἴδιοι to receive the Logos and from it ἐξουσία? This same question arises, as we saw above, in Wisdom and Philo.

In John 1:14, 16, we are clearly speaking of a group about which reception of the Logos is a *fait accompli*. Still, the catalyst is different. It is not the human mind coming to know the ethereal Logos as in Philo or receiving Sophia as its bride-guide in Wisdom. The divine agent of the prologue, the Logos who is God's μονογενής, brings about this transformation through his own incarnation and dwelling with humanity. In other words, the actor is not the human receptor (as in Philo or Wisdom or even John 1:10–12ab) but the human Word, the Logos who is Jesus Christ. Human transformation comes not by a conquest of the

flesh and an ascent to a realm apart but by an acceptance of a specifically "enfleshed" entity.

Hence, while there is no mention of sin or the need for pacification, we find that the soteriological emphasis – like in 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, and Heb 1:2–3 – remains on the action of God's agent. Without his becoming flesh, human transformation would not take place. The Logos's becoming flesh, his becoming an historical entity, is as much a catalyst for that transformation as the Son's death in Colossians and Hebrews is a source for reconciliation and purification. In a sapiential context, the Johannine Logos is fulfilling its illuminative purpose; but to do so finally, the prologue goes well beyond its sapiential context.

4.3. Summary of Chapter Four

The 1 Corinthian confession, the Colossian hymn, the Hebrews exordium and the Johannine prologue each attest to the fusion of Platonized Jewish traditions and Christian eschatological conviction. The former (Jewish traditions) contributes the uniform cosmological perspective and terminology that permeates all four passages wherein we see a divinely related intermediary (εἰκών, ἀπαύγασμα, χαρακτήρ, λόγος, Θεός) responsible for creating (δι' αὐτοῦ) and sustaining (συνίστημι, φέρω) the existence of all things (τὰ πάντα). The latter (eschatological conviction) underlies four distinct views about the significance of Jesus Christ. Whether he is the κύριος whose sacrifice redefines human perfection (1 Cor) or the υἱός who pacifies and reconciles rebellious creation (Col); whether he is the exalted heir who has made purification for sins (Heb) or the λόγος who has become flesh (John), Christ in an historical moment altered reality. The combination of the two underscores the fulfillment of creation through an unlooked for, unimaginable expression of divine presence.

Chapter Five

Salvation as the Undoing of Creation:
The Roles of the Divine Intermediary
in "Gnosticism"

> And the Mind wanted to make something through the Word of the invisible Spirit. And his will became actual and came forth with the Mind and the Light glorifying him. And the Word followed the Will. For because of the Word, Christ, the divine Self-Generated, created the All (*Ap. John* 17,7–16).

> And everything he (Yaldabaoth) organized according to the model of the first aeons which had come into being so that he might create them in the pattern of the indestructible ones. Not because he had seen the indestructible ones, but the power in him which he had taken from his Mother (i.e., Sophia) produced in him the likeness of the cosmos (*Ap. John* 33,13–34,2).

> And our sister Sophia (σοφία) (is) she who came down in innocence in order to rectify her deficiency. Therefore she was called 'Life' (ζωή), which is the 'the Mother of the living,' by the Providence (πρόνοια) of the sovereignty (αὐθεντία) of heaven. And through her they have tasted perfect (τέλειος) knowledge (γνῶσις) (*Ap. John* 62,3–11).

The three passages above come from the same treatise, *The Apocryphon of John*, a second-century CE work originally written in Greek but preserved now only in four Coptic manuscripts (about this treatise, see below).[1] The first passage makes use of language which should be familiar by now, namely that "he created everything through the Word." But as immediately as we note the familiarity, we observe differences. There are at least three additional entities besides the word: the invisible Spirit (ἀόρατον πνεῦμα, the *Apocryphon's* Supreme

---

1 What follows in this introduction is explained at greater length in the second section of this chapter where we discuss the *Apocryphon* of John as a product of Sethian Gnosticism.

Principle), Mind, and Light. The Light is also referred to as the anointed or Christ (Χριστός), the Self-Generated (αὐτογενής). While we are prepared to see multiple intermediate entities (as in Philo), this is not the Matryoshka (Nested Doll) effect we have previously observed.[2] Mind is a co-worker of the Light/Christ, and together the two make use of the Word in creation.[3] It must also be noted that what is meant by "everything" here does not refer to the material world (as in Philo, Wisdom of Solomon or the NT). Rather, it refers to supersensible reality. The creation of the material universe has a less respectable origination. Yaldabaoth, mentioned in the second passage above, is responsible for this creation, and as NHC II, 12,33–13,5 makes clear, he does so ignorantly and without the involvement of any other noetic (or spiritual) beings. Again, we have an "intermediary" (of sorts) responsible for creation. However, his intermediacy appears to be almost accidental, the power working through him toward creation as if he cannot help it ("the power in him which he had taken from his Mother produced in him the likeness of the cosmos").

Yaldabaoth's existence itself is the result of the misdeed of his mother, Sophia, who acted independently of her own coworker and of the rest of the heavenly realm when she gave birth to him. In the third passage, however, we see her as one having repented her giving birth to that ignorant imitator. Now she is "Life" and "Mother of the Living," rectifying "her deficiency" when, on behalf of the heavenly authority (i.e., not on her own initiative), she provides perfect (or complete) knowledge to humanity (namely, Adam and Eve).

These passages are but snippets in the larger drama of the *Apocryphon of John*, a myth about the origins and destiny of humanity within the wider framework of the heavenly and material cosmos. It is apparent that the traditions which contribute to this myth, traditions evinced in these brief passages, belong in some manner to the religious and philosophical phenomena we have investigated heretofore. It is also apparent that these traditions "march to the beat of a different drummer" from any we have heretofore discussed.[4]

---

2 See § 3.2.4.1.

3 Again, one might recall Philo's presentation of the two powers in *De cherubim*, goodness and sovereignty. However, these are responsible for different activities (creating and ordering, respectively) and the Word resides over and apparently employs them (not vice versa, as in the *Ap. John*). See § 3.2.4.1.

4 Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (ABRL; New York; Doubleday 1987), xviii, refers to Gnostic scripture as "bizarre."

"Cacophonous" is the term which best describes an initial encounter with the literature classically labeled "Gnostic." Not only is one introduced to new names and nuances about both supersensible and material realities at the turn of every page, but these names and nuances frequently seem to shift. Certainly, at least, in comparison with the writings we have assayed thus far from Hellenistic Judaism and first century Christianity, one must strain to find consistency within, let alone among different works of "Gnostic" literature. The reasons for this are numerous. Primary reasons must include the fact that the remains of the literature are sparse and fragmented.[5] Also, as the saying goes, "history belongs to the victor," in that what came to be "orthodox" Christianity successfully eclipsed the ultimately failed movements which sired this literature.[6] This second reason is of course not unrelated to the first. Third, the esoteric nature of the literature itself creates formidable obstacles to systematization or even anything but the most general of categorizations.

In spite of such difficulties, there has been considerable scholarly effort in explicating the Gnostic writings, especially since the discovery

---

5   Before 1945 most of what was known about "Gnosticism" was through the teachings of Patristic writers. Especially noteworthy are the *Heresiologists*: Irenaeus of Lyons (*Adversus haereses,* Bk. I; c. 180 CE), Hippolytus (*Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Bks. 5–9; early 3rd cent. CE), Pseudo-Tertullian (*Adversus omnes haereses*; mid 3rd cent. CE), and Epiphanius (*Panarion*; c. 370s CE). There is also Clement of Alexandria (c. 130–c. 215 CE) and Origin of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 254 CE), as well as the pagan Neoplatonist Porphyry of Tyre (233–c.305 CE). There were also a few manuscripts that had been uncovered prior to 1945, though these amounted to only 14 works on 5 codices (see Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, xxvi). In December 1945, 13 codices containing about 51 Coptic works were discovered at Nag Hammadi in southern Egypt, works dating from just before 350 CE. Layton notes "The variety of handwritings, codex sizes, writing materials, and even dialects in the codices suggests that they had come from several places along the Nile Valley and had been collected (at no small cost) by an interested person or group" (xxvii). These codices contain Coptic translations of Greek documents, documents obviously composed sometime earlier than the mid-fourth century CE. Though the Nag Hammadi codices, commonly referred to as the Coptic Gnostic Library, are in relatively fine quality, they still are not in perfect condition; there are a number of lacunae in the texts as a result of the fragmentation that comes from being ancient documents.

6   See Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003) and Pheme Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945. A conference in Messina, Italy, in 1966 sought to establish some generally accepted common ground. From Messina came a formulation of the central myth of Gnosticism:

> the idea of the presence in man of a divine "spark"…, which has proceeded from the divine world and has fallen into this world of destiny, birth and death, and which must be reawakened through its own divine counterpart in order to be finally restored. This idea … is ontologically based on the conception of a downward development of the divine whose periphery (often called *Sophia* or *Ennoia*) has fatally fallen victim to a crisis and must – even if only indirectly – produce this world, in which it then cannot be disinterested, in that it must once again recover the divine "spark" (often designated as *pneuma*, "spirit").[7]

The significance of this myth is that it contains knowledge of an "otherworldly" origin, knowledge that has a powerful function in the process of redemption.[8]

> The content of this knowledge or understanding is primarily religious, in so far as it is circles around the background of man, the world and God, but also because it rests not upon one's own investigation but on heavenly mediation. It is a knowledge given by revelation, which has been made available only to the elect who are capable of receiving it, and therefore has an esoteric character. This knowledge freely bestowed can extend from the basic insight into the divine nature of man, his origin and his destiny, up to a complete system. All Gnostic teachings are in some form a part of the redeeming knowledge which gathers together the object of knowledge (the divine nature), the means of knowledge (the redeeming gnosis) and the knower himself.[9]

---

7   Quoted in Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 57. For the conference papers, see Ugo Bianchi, ed. *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina, 13–18 Aprile 1966* (Studies in the History of Religions; Supplements to *Numen*; Leiden: Brill, 1970); the quotation above is located on p.12.

8   See Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 55–56.

9   Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 55. Cf. the Messina working definition of Gnosis: "The type of *gnosis* involved in Gnosticism is conditioned by the ontological, theological, and anthropological foundations [of the Gnostic myth]. Not every *gnosis* is Gnosticism, but only that which involves in this perspective the idea of the divine consubstantiality of the spark that is in need of being awakened and reintegrated. This *gnosis* of Gnosticism involves the divine identity of the *knower* (the Gnostic), the *known* (the divine substance of one's transcendent self), and the *means by which one knows* (gnosis as an implicit divine faculty is to be awakened and actualized. This *gnosis* is a revelation-tradition of a different type from the biblical and Islamic revelation tradition)" (Bianchi, *Colloquio di Messina*, 12, quoted in Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An*

Any cursory review of the secondary literature will demonstrate that, save for these rather general statements, scholarly understandings about the origins, contexts and beliefs of "Gnosticism" remain in flux.[10]

Recently, Michael Allen Williams has stepped into the fray with his study *Rethinking "Gnosticism."* Williams contends that what consensus there is about "Gnosticism" is misguided and that this term carries with it too much "baggage" to be serviceable.[11] In its place, Williams posits a new category to encompass most (though perhaps not all) of what is currently considered "Gnostic" literature. *Biblical demiurgical myth*, as he calls the category, "would include all sources that made a distinction between the creator(s) and controllers of the material world and the most transcendent divine being, and that in so doing made use of Jewish or Christian scriptural traditions."[12] Though it remains to be seen the degree to which Williams's criticisms of "Gnosticism" as a scholarly construct and his alternative proposal will have an impact on the study of what heretofore has been called "Gnostic" literature, his *biblical demiurgy* provides what many will accept as a basic (perhaps *the* basic) common denominator of most such literature.[13]

    Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996], 28).

10 In addition to Rudolph, *Gnosis*, King, *What is Gnosticism?*, Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, and Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Bentley Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*; volume 1: *The School of Valentinus* (vol. 1; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980); and volume 2: *Sethian Gnosticism* (vol. 2; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981); and Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (3rd ed.; Boston: Beacon, 2001). For a comprehensive bibliography see David M. Scholer, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1949–1969* (NHS 1; Leiden: Brill, 1971); idem, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1970–1994* (NHS 32; Leiden: Brill, 1997); as well as recurring supplements to these bibliographies in *Novum Testamentum* (esp. 1995 and on).

11 Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*. Much of Williams' book is the working through of the generally accepted characteristics of "Gnosticism," such as "inverse" or "protest" exegesis, anti-cosmic dualism, rejection of the body (either through asceticism or libertinism), and deterministic understandings of salvation. He argues that these characteristics are "at best misleading caricatures and at worst completely unjustified as characterizations of the actual texts normally placed in the 'gnostic' category" (52).

12 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 265.

13 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* ibid.

So what use is William's definition? In part, his assertion that these myths make use of biblical traditions is significant in itself because it places Williams among those scholars who perceive some sort of continuity between the "Gnostic" writings and the biblical traditions. Even though the existence of such traditions interspersed among the "Gnostic" writings is manifest, their place there is differently understood. However, at first glance, Williams's definition of *biblical demiurgical myth* might be too broad, since it could be construed as incorporating the writings of Philo, Wisdom of Solomon and the New Testament. These all – as we have discussed – posit a distinctive intermediate agent responsible for creating and controlling the material world.[14] What is more, demiurgy itself is not tied to the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition alone. Our study in fact began with a review of the presentation of the intermediate principle and its cosmological functions in Middle Platonism. We shall see – in our treatments of the individual treatises below - that this philosophical "system" contributes as much as it does to the "Gnostic" writings as it does to Philo's and Pseudo-Solomon's works, and certainly more than it does to the NT.[15]

The value of Williams's categorization rests, finally, on how much emphasis one places on the word "distinction." The "Gnostic" writings and any underlying phenomena to which they point gain our attention as *distinguishable* from other demiurgical traditions, be they religious or philosophical, inasmuch as the "Gnostics" draw a more dramatic line between the creative/controlling forces of the material world and the transcendent divine being and its supersensible domain. It is the starkness of this line, which results in a "radical dualism," that prevents

---

14 For example, consider the following affinities Philo has with "Gnosticism": "(1) emphasis in both on the complete transcendence of the supreme God, (2) interposition of a series of intermediaries between the supreme God and our world, (3) a general disparagement of the sense-perceptible world." These are listed in Birger Pearson, "Philo, Gnosis, and the New Testament" in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Minneapolis; Fortress, 1990), 172. Cf. R. M. Wilson, "Philo of Alexandria and Gnosticism," *Kairos* 14 (1972): 213–19.

15 On the relationship between Platonism and "Gnosticism," see John Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Études" 6; Québec: Les Presses de l'Unversité Laval, 2001), 1–54; J. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 384–392; and Pearson, "Gnosticism as Platonism" in *Gnosticism*, 148–164.

one from considering Philo as Gnostic.[16] It is the starkness of this line that causes one to relegate the "Gnostic" writings (at least those with manifest Platonic tendencies) to "the 'Platonic' Underworld."[17] In both cases, the starkness comes across in how the Gnostic writings contrast in their use of authoritative traditions. The Gnostic myth, as a rule, reworks the Jewish scriptures in a "revolutionary" or "parasitic" fashion.[18] It represents a "paraody" of Plato's *Timaeus*.[19]

Williams makes a strong case in *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* for eschewing the generally accepted stereotypes of Gnosticism and he is perhaps correct that, consequently, the terms "Gnosticism" and "Gnosis" should be jettisoned. His alternative category of "biblical demiurgical myth" is useful for our study though we should put more stress than he does on the nature of the distinction between the creative agents and the transcendent being. The use of the biblical tradition in the exposition of the demiurgical myth (or vice versa) in a fashion that is both contiguous with and divergent from Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity makes such writings a logical object for our study.

We begin this study with a treatise that, under the old rubric, was "only partially … claimed for Gnosis," namely *Corpus Hermeticum* 1, *Poimandres*.[20] Bentley Layton lays out the significant affinities between *Poimandres* and "the classic Gnostic myth," which include mythic plot/ structure, use of the biblical cosmogony, stress upon self-knowledge or *gnosis*, and dualism. However, Layton finally rejects the treatise as "Gnostic" since it does not espouse an explicitly ignorant or malicious creative agent, is not revisionist in its use of Genesis, and is not sufficiently sectarian.[21] Yet we shall see that *Poimandres* fits comfortably within Williams's broader categorization of a demiurgical myth that employs Jewish scriptural traditions and that makes a distinction

---

16 Pearson, "Philo, Gnosis and the New Testament," 172. Cf. Wilson, "Philo of Alexandria and Gnosticism," 219.

17 See Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 384–389. Dillon uses the title "The 'Platonic' Underworld" to mark the section in his "Some Loose Ends" chapter (ch. 8) which deals with Valentinian Gnosticism, "Poimandres" (*CH* 1) and the Chaldean Oracles. Dillon does not give a precise reason for labeling these documents thus other than the fact that they represent a "murky area" of research (384; his view is unchanged in the afterword of the second edition [*Middle Platonists*, 450–451]).

18 Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 8–9.

19 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 388.

20 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 26.

21 *Gnostic Scriptures*, 449.

between the creative agents and the transcendent Deity. Furthermore, while our analysis will concur with Layton that *Poimandres* is not as extreme as other "Gnostic" writings (including *Ap. John*, which we study next) in its appropriation of Scripture or its exclusivist soteriology, it does present a more negative view of the cosmos and a more complex understanding of the resulting human predicament than what we have so far encountered.

5.1. Corpus Hermeticum 1: "Poimandres"

5.1.1. Introduction

The world that produced *Poimandres* is a familiar one. This is so at least if we claim familiarity with the world(s) that produced Philo and Middle Platonism. The first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which appears to be chronologically among the earliest within that corpus, may have originated in first century CE Alexandria, only a generation or so removed from the Platonic revival that occurred there.[22] But even if its place of origin is not Alexandria, its circumstances of origin, along with the rest of the corpus, is very similar to the intellectual and religious amalgamation that took place there. Just as the Stoic Posidonius and the Pythagaorizing Platonist (or Platonising Pythagorean) Eudorus before them, "the Hermetists followed these figures in using philosophical language to express fundamentally religious teachings."[23]

The *Hermetica* comprise documents ascribed to (or similarly associated with) "Hermes Trismegistus," a mystagogical figure who represents a blending of the Egyptian god Thoth (the "thrice-blessed") with the Greek god Hermes. Thoth was a significant figure in Egyptian

---

22   On the origins of Middle Platonism, see chapter two. On the *Sitz im Leben* of *CH* 1 (Poimandres) see below. On the *Sitz im Leben* and nature of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in general, see Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek* Corpus Hermeticum *and the Latin* Asclepius *in a new English translation, with notes and introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1992). In addition to a translation of *CH* and *Asclepius*, Copenhaver provides a concise treatment of the *Hermetica*, their interpretation, and the modern scholarship they have engendered (along with bibliography). See also G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and J. A. Trumbower, "Hermes Trismegistos" in *ABD* III, 156–157. The classic treatment of *CH* is A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégistes*. The critical edition of the CH, *Asclepius* and the Stobaeus fragments is *Hermès Trismégiste: Corpus Hermeticum* (A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, eds. and trans.; 4 vols.; 2nd ed.; Paris: *Belles Lettres,* 1972–73). The edition by W. Scott (*Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus* [vols. 1–4; London: Dawsons, 1924–36; reprinted by Oxford University Press, 1985]) provides suggestive commentary in its latter two volumes as well as testimonia. A more recent translation is *The Way of Hermes* (trans. Clement Salaman et al.; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1999). I use my translation in what follows, unless otherwise noted.

23   Salaman et al., "Introduction" to *The Way of Hermes*, 10.

religious thought, associated with among other things the creation of the world and the guidance of souls.[24] He shares with Hermes a subservient status to other gods, functioning as their messenger. This, in Hermes' case, "prepared him as well for his characteristic function in the Hellenistic period, as the *logos* or 'word', the interpreter of the divine will to mankind."[25] Garth Fowden suggests that it may have been Egyptian influence (in particular, Thoth's cosmogonical role) that prompted the Stoics to assign Hermes a central role in their theology, "magnifying his function from the merely expressive to the creative, and regarding him as both *logos* and demiurge."[26] The affinities, accidental or otherwise, between Hermes Trismegistus and the Middle Platonic intermediate principle should be evident.

The Hermetic body of writings consists of 17 intact Greek documents in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (*CH*), the Latin *Asclepius*, fragments preserved by the 5th century Stobaeus, as well as a few texts from Nag Hammadi.[27] These texts, along with evidence culled from *testimonia* from the Church Fathers, suggests that Hermetic writings divide along two lines, religious and philosophical (or technical and theoretical), though both divisions share the same early to mid-imperial Greco-Egyptian cultural milieu.[28] The center of the theoretical/philosophical type writings is "a theory of salvation through knowledge or *gnōsis*."[29] The *CH* themselves are of the philosophical/theoretical type, though what other impetus there was to their being bundled together is uncertain.

----

24 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 23.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 24.
27 Trumbower, "Hermes Trismegistos" in *ABD* III, 156–157.
28 Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, xxxii. It is important to note that the culture that produced *CH* did not make a "clear, rigid distinction between *religion* [i.e., theory] as the province of such lofty concerns as the fate of the soul and *magic* as a merely instrumental device of humbler intent" (ibid., xxxvii). Copenhaver cites Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, xvi, 76–79. He also provides here passages from *CH* that are more magic-oriented, including *CH* 1.9, 11, 13, 25, 27.
29 Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, xxxvii. He adds: "Salvation in the largest sense – the resolution of man's [sic] fate wherever it finds him – was a common concern of theoretical and technical *Hermetica* alike, though the latter texts generally advertised a quotidian deliverance from banal misfortunes of disease, poverty and social strife, while the former offered a grander view of salvation through knowledge of God, the other and the self" (ibid.).

5.1.1.1. The Content of Corpus Hermeticum 1

The first treatise of the *CH* bears the heading ἙΡΜΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΥ ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ ("Of Hermes Trismegistus: Poimandres"). "Poiman-dres" is the name of the revealer in the text (*CH* 1.2) and the name has come to function as the title for this treatise (the *CH* are typically untitled).[30] The standard edition of the Greek text divides the treatise into 32 chapters, of which the following is a summary.[31]

● Chapters 1–3 set the stage, a revelation by *Poimandres* to an unidentified human (who, given the heading and its placement among the other *CH*, is presumably Hermes).[32]

● Chapters 4–7 are a vision (θέαν ἀόριστον) of the beginning of the cosmos, with chapter 6 being an interlude where *Poimandres* interprets the vision anthropologically.

● Chapter 8 is a transition from the vision (which terrified the seer) to an account of creation by Poimandres. This transition is important because Poiamandres claims that the seer's vision is not of creation itself but "of the archetypal form, the prior source to an unending beginning."[33] Poimandres claims the natural elements (στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως) arise from the divine will (ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ), "which having taken in the Word and having seen the beautiful cosmos, imitated it (ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν καλὸν κόσμον ἐμιμήσατο)." This apparently refers to the creation of the physical world patterned after the formal one.

● Chapters 9–15 are Poimandres' more detailed explanation of the formation of the sense-perceptible world, as modeled after the paradigm

---

30   The name "Poimandres" occurs twelve times in *CH* 1, but only twice elsewhere in the Corpus, namely *CH* 13.15. The meaning of the name is obscure: if derived from Greek, it may be a combination of ποιμήν (shepherd) and ἀνήρ (man). If derived from Egyptian it may mean "the knowledge of Re" or "the reason of sovereignty" (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 95).

31   For a simpler outline, see B. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Corpus Hermeticum I" in *Gnosticism*, 136–137.

32   Whether the reader of *CH* 1 was originally supposed to understand the narrator as Hermes cannot be determined from the text itself. The humanity of the narrator seems evident from *CH* 1.24 where *Poimandres* assumes it of his interlocutor. Such humanity does not preclude Hermes as the narrator's implied identity; there appears to have been, on the Hellenistic side, some association of Hermes Trismegistus with divinized humans. (See Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 27–28.)

33   The sentence reads: Εἶδες ἐν τῷ νῷ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου.

seen in the seer's vision; the formation begins with the seven "governors" (διοικητάς, probably referring to the planets) and culminating with an anthropogony that accounts for the dual nature (θνητὸς καὶ ἀθάνατος) of human kind.

• Chapters 16–19, which begin with a statement of wonder by the seer, are again transitional (see ch. 8), taking the reader from the cosmological section to an exhortative section, whereby the dual nature of humanity (body and mind) becomes by extension the two possible fates of humankind.[34]

• Chapters 20–21 speaks to how those who love the body deserve death (τί ἄξιοί εἰσι τοῦ θανάτου οἱ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὄντες) and how those who know themselves advance toward God (τί ὁ νοήσας ἑαυτὸν εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ). One's fate depends on whether one aligns oneself with "the hateful darkness" from which one's body came to be or one aligns oneself with "life and light" which are "God and father, from whom the man (ὁ Ἄνθρωπος) came to be."

• Chapters 21b–23 describe Poimandres qua Νοῦς as being a boon to the blessed though absent to the thoughtless wicked.[35]

• Chapters 24–26b map out the way up (ἡ ἄναδος) to the heavenly realm(s) from the current physical realm, a trek taken by the worthy presumably at or after death.

• Chapters 26c–29 – Poimandres commissions the seer, based upon what the seer has learned, to become a guide "so that the human race

---

34   The means of the transition from cosmogony to exhortation lies in Poimandres' explanation of how an originally androgynous and exalted humanity was divided, that is, "when the bond of all things was sundered by the counsel of God." This set in motion, via providence working through εἱμαρμένη καὶ ἁρμονία, intercourse and births and the subsequent multiplication of kinds. It also apparently established *two ways*, the way of physical desire (ὁ ἀγαπήσας τὸ ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα) and the way of self-recognition (ὁ ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτόν). Cf. *CH* 1.19:"The one who recognized himself attained the chosen good, but the one who loved the body that came from the error of desire goes on in darkness, errant, suffering sensibly the effects of death" (Copenhaver's translation).

35   The thoughtless wicked are turned over to an "avenging demon" (ὁ τιμωρὸς δαίμων) that appears to be responsible for turning the wicked over to their ever insatiable desires. For the blessed, those who are good, pure, merciful and reverent, they spend their remaining time in the sense-perceptible world by praising god. Furthermore, they are protected from the effects of the body by Poimandres/Νοῦς.

might be saved through you by God" (ὅπως τὸ γένος τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος διὰ σοῦ ὑπὸ θεοῦ σωθῇ).

● Chapters 30–32 – The seer reflects on his own happy transformation due to his being "receptive of mind – of Poimandres, that is the word of sovereignty."[36] Then he hymns the father (ch. 31) and, in a closing prayer, entreats him for the power to carry out his commission (ch. 32).

In sum, *CH* 1 relates the revelation by a divine figure to an apparently human figure (or apotheosized one). Cosmology and anthropology are the substance of the revelation and the purpose of the revelation is to promote human self-understanding, to the end that those who become self-aware will "undo" (or fulfill the purpose of) the primordial human descent.

5.1.1.2. The Religious and Intellectual Provenance of *Corpus Hermeticum* 1

Before we discuss the multiple intermediary agents in this revelatory treatise and their functions, this cursory outline brings forth a number of interesting characteristics. First, phenomenologically and literarily, there is much in this treatise that is similar to what we have already seen in Philo's writings, Wisdom of Solomon, and, to a lesser degree, the NT. Like Philo, *CH* 1 attests to a formal world upon which the material world is modeled (ch. 8). It also attests to a two-tiered origination of the Ἄνθρωπος, the first as εἰκών of God (ch. 12),[37] the second as material human (ch. 14). This compares with Philo's understanding of Gen 1:27 and 2:8 as two different ἄνθρωποι, one formal and one material.[38] Indeed, the cosmogony of *CH* 1 appears itself to have some sort of literary relationship with the biblical cosmogony in Genesis. Not only does the Ἄνθρωπος have God's image, but as in Gen 1:28 God provides the human being with something like dominion (παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ

---

36 Copenhaver's translation.

37 *CH* 1.12: "Mind, the father of all, being life and light, gave birth to a human like himself, one whom he loved passionately as his own child. For he was very beautiful, having the father's image. For truly, god loved passionately his own form and (so) gave (to the human being) all his craftworks" (ὁ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν Ἄνθρωπον αὐτῷ ἴσον, οὗ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλὴς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα).

38 Cf. Philo, *Opif.* 134–35. See the discussion in Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 108–112.

πάντα δημιοργήματα) and instructs the creation to multiply (though this does not appear to be as much of a blessing as in the Bible).[39]

Sophia's affinity with the Stoic active principle in Wisdom of Solomon compares with the δημιουργός in *CH* 1.9, who is referred to as a secondary mind and as θεὸς τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος ὤν and is responsible for Creation. Furthermore, Sophia's role in making people friends of God (Wis 7:27) is akin to Hermes' role as preacher, calling those who hear to repent and to come to (self) knowledge. With respect to the NT, the trajectory of the ἄνθρωπος seems similar to the path of the pre-existent Christ who comes to earth and returns to heaven, somewhat in evidence in all four of the passages treated in ch. 4. There are especially interesting parallels between John 1:1–18 and *Poimandres*, including the use of Genesis traditions and the role of the Logos as one among mortals empowering those who receive him to become children of God (John 1:12–13).[40] Finally, the exhortative aspect of the treatise, the division of humanity into two groups progressing along two ways and the call for repentance (see the use of μετανοέω in ch. 28) also resonate with Jewish literature of the same period.[41]

These and similar characteristics, long acknowledged, have caused a number of scholars to posit Jewish influences at work in *CH* 1.[42]

---

39 *CH* 1.19: "And God immediately spoke a holy speech: 'Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, every creature and craftwork, and let the mindful one recognize that he himself is immortal, that desire is the cause of death, and (let him recognize) all things that exist'" (ὁ δὲ θεὸς εὐθὺς εἶπεν ἁγίῳ λόγῳ, Αὐξάνεσθε ἐν αὐξήσει καὶ πληθύνεσθε ἐν πλήθει πάντα τὰ κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα, καὶ ἀναγνωρισάτω ‹ὁ ἔννους ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα.). On whether it is a blessing or curse, see Ernst Haenchen, "Aufbau und Theologie des 'Poimandres,'" *ZTK* 53 (1956): 177; and Hans Dieter Betz, "The Delphic Maxim ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ in Hermetic Interpretation," *HTR* 63 (1970): 467–68.

40 Note the interrelationship between light, life, and darkness in John 1:4–5 and *CH* 1; cf. Philo's *De opificio mundi*. See the excursus on Genesis traditions in Philo and John in § 4.4.2.4.

41 On the Jewish nature of μετανοέω, see Pearson, "Jewish Elements," 140 (he references E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 134–139, as further support) and Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 120. Copenhaver translates μετανοέω as "think again," which is how most Greek speakers would have typically used the term. However, he mentions "to repent" as an alternative; see his discussion and references there.

42 See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935); and H. L. Jansen, "Die Frage nach Tendenz und Verfasserschaft im Poimandres," in G. Widengren, ed., *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on*

Recently, Birger Pearson, focusing on chapters 27–32, has cataloged a number of other substantive parallels with Jewish literature, parallels having to do with both moral transformation and with Jewish liturgical language.[43] Pearson considers the text to be, formally, of the same kind as a Jewish apocalypse (a thesis he bases on interesting parallels between *CH* 1 and *2 [Slavonic] Enoch*).[44]

At the same time, one cannot finally consider *CH* 1 to be Jewish. After all, the treatise exists within (not to mention at the front of) a collection of Hermetic writings. While it has its distinctions from the rest of the *Hermetica*, the Jewish characteristics included, it still shares their central tenet: the Hermetic call to self-knowledge.

> For all the obvious Jewish elements in the *Poimandres*, it is, in fact, a Hermetic document, …. And when all is said and done, the Hermetic "creed" differs radically from the Jewish. This "creed" is best summarized in those places in the text in which are found examples of a Hellenistic, gnosticizing reinterpretation of the ancient Delphic maxim, γνῶθι σαυτόν; "Let the man who has mind (νοῦς) recognize himself as immortal" (chap. 18); "He who recognizes himself departs into him (God)" (chap. 21); "Let the man who has mind recognize himself" (chap. 21). The whole burden of the Poimandres, from beginning to end, is that knowledge of God is really knowledge of one's inner divine self.[45]

Pearson is surely correct here that the adherent of *Poimandres*, no matter how indebted to Judaism, is not a disciple of Moses but of Hermes. While this is not the place to speculate regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of the treatise, the reader of *CH* 1 cannot help but notice an interesting phenomenon: the use of Jewish traditions to advance an apparently non-Jewish religious perspective, one centered on self-knowledge.[46]

Gonsticism, Stockholm August 20–25, 1973 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977) 157–63.

43 Pearson, "Jewish Elements," 140–45.

44 Ibid., 138–139.

45 Ibid., 146.

46 On *Sitz im Leben*, see Pearson, "Jewish Elements," 147, who posits the composition of *CH* 1 as taking place after the Jewish revolt in Egypt (115–118 CE), when Judaism was clearly on the wane. A more "Egyptian" religious philosophy – such as Hermeticism – not only would arise to fill the void but could appropriate disabused Jewish traditions. "In the case of *Poimandres*, as once the lore of the god Hermes-Thoth had served the cause of the religion of Moses (Artapanus is an obvious case in point!), so now Mosaic religion is utilized to serve the cause of 'Thrice Greatest Hermes'" (ibid.).

This use of Jewish biblical traditions to advance self-knowledge is akin to what we find in "Gnosticism." Indeed, treatises in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and especially *Poimandres*, have long been held as having a relationship of some sort to the more generally accepted "Gnostic" writings.[47] After all, they share the likelihood of an Egyptian provenance, an influence by Jewish traditions,[48] an emphasis on *gnosis*, a complex cosmology, and some kind of debt to Greco-Roman philosophy (see below).

On the other hand, *Poimandres* and the rest of the *CH* are distinct from "Gnosticism" due to the centrality they afford Hermes Trismegistus.[49] Perhaps the best way to understand the relationship is to refer again to the wide umbrella of "demiurgical myths" and to count *Hermetism* among the systems beneath that umbrella, along with Sethian, Valentinian and Thomas traditions. Certainly there is influence among these (hence, the presence of Hermetic treatises at Nag Hammadi); their distinctiveness, however, prevents easy assimilation.

Finally, as we have already alluded to and as will become more evident in the forthcoming analysis, *Poimandres* shares with other "Gnostic" texts, and with the aforementioned Jewish writings as well, a reliance upon Greco-Roman philosophical terminology. Quantifying the relationship between *Poimandres* and philosophy is, however, somewhat difficult. The terminology itself is eclectic, showing influences by Stoicism (an active principle associated with fire and air), Peripateticism (the structure of the heavenly sphere(s)) and Platonism (creation having an archetypal εἶδος). Still, a closer look indicates that if *CH* 1 tilts in any direction it is toward Platonism, specifically the *Dreiprinzipienlehre* of Middle Platonism. The analysis below suggests there is evidence of a transcendent first principle not directly involved in and to some degree antagonistic with physical creation; there are intermediate entities, at least two, which are related to ("birthed by") the first principle and which are directly responsible

---

47   Consider the discussion of *CH* in Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 25–26.

48   The use of the Old Testament is more akin to the deconstructive tendencies of "Gnostic" interpretation (again note how in *CH* 1.19 [cf. n. 39 above] the "blessing" of humanity by the Deity is ambiguous and not overtly positive, not to mention the rather negative depiction of the material and cosmic spheres).

49   See Fowden's discussion of the relationship between Hermetism and "Gnosticism" in *Egyptian Hermes*, 113–115 (though he understands "Gnosticism" as "primarily a Christian phenomenon" and he focuses primarily on Valentinian Gnosticism and does not speak to Sethianism).

for cosmogony and anthropogony; and there is a material principle (φύσις) that is disparaged. Furthermore, similar to what we have seen with respect to Philo and the Johannine prologue, *Poimandres* connects these Platonist concepts to biblical interpretive traditions.[50]

In our analysis, we are less concerned with the distinctiveness of *Poimandres* than we are with its affinities with these other writings. The confluence of philosophy and Jewish biblical interpretive traditions, even if *CH* 1 is not finally a part to either, are of interest. They, together, frame and color its discussion of cosmology and anthropology. And it is to how *CH* 1 employs these traditions to familiar ends (yet with some important twists) that we now turn.

5.1.2. Theology, Cosmology and Anthropology in the *Corpus Hermeticum* 1

5.1.2.1. Who is the First Principle in *Poimandres*?

The revelation that is the content of *CH* 1 is brought to Hermes (the assumed identity of the seer) by *Poimandres*, who appears to be intricately associated with, if not identical to, a preeminent principle in the treatise. He introduces himself as "the mind of authority" (ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς) who knows the seer and is with him everywhere (*CH* 1.2).[51] However, it is difficult to assess whether αὐθεντία resides with Poimandres (i.e, he is the sovereign mind) or he serves it as its νοῦς ("the *nous* of the Highest Power").[52] In favor of the former is Poimandres'

---

50   There is an important caveat here. *Poimandres* (like the NT writings and Wisdom and unlike Philo) lacks philosophical rigor. This lack of rigor prompts Bentley Layton to refer to the *Hermetica* as a whole as "pseudo-philosophical." He says they "are of course not real philosophy, any more than astrology is the same as astronomy," for the Hermetica "claim to be based not on observation and reason but on revelation" (*Gnostic Scriptures*, 447). On the relationship between *CH* and philosophy, also see Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 112–113.

51   In *CH* 1.30, Hermes calls Poimandres "the word of authority" (ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγος).

52   "The *nous* of the Highest Power" is Garth Fowden's translaton of ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς (*Egyptian Hermes*, 105). In *CH* 1.9, "the mind who is god" gives birth to "a second mind"; see below on the intermediate principle. For a discussion of αὐθεντία see J. Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen" im hellenistischen Ägypten: Eine Studie zum "Poimandres" (=CH I), zu Valentin und dem gnostischen Mythos* (Bodenheim: Athenaüm, 1994), 19.

explanation of Hermes' vision in *CH* 1.6. There he claims about himself that he is the primordial φῶς, νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός that existed before the material world (ὁ πρὸ φύσεως ὑγρᾶς τῆς ἐκ σκότους φανείσης). After this, however, Poimandres speaks of the transcendent principle in the third person and not self-referentially. When Poimandres is finished with his revelation in 1.27, the seer claims he (Poimandres) "mingles with the powers" (ἐμίγη ταῖς δυνάμεσιν). It is not clear if Poimandres should be numbered among those powers, or if he ranks above them as the θεός whom they hymn.[53]

Not only is Poimandres' relationship to the transcendent God confusing, the language he uses is perhaps equally so. As has already been noted, the transcendent principle is both Νοῦς (e.g., 1.6, 9, 12) and θεός (e.g., 1.6, 21, 31). That these refer to a preeminent Deity seems likely, especially since they occur often alongside the titles ὁ πατήρ or ὁ πάντων πατήρ (1.6, 12, 21, 31). The father God has his preeminence by virtue of his being responsible for generating the Δημιουργός, the Ἄνθρωπος, and probably the Λόγος (all of which are discussed below). The introduction of these beings however does not bring clarity about the preeminent principle since *CH 1* also uses both θεός and νοῦς to refer to the demiurge (see 1.9, 11).[54] This creates confusion when ὁ θεός speaks in 1.18, saying "Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, all you creatures and craftworks, and let him <who> is mindful recognize that he is immortal, that desire is the cause of death, and let him recognize all that exists."[55] Is this the God who is the father of all or "the second mind …the god of fire and spirit" (1.11), i.e., the demiurge?

Perhaps what we have here is a worldview that provides less than rigorous lines between the preeminent principle and lesser entities. There is considerable liquidity at the spiritual heights. After all, when disembodied persons pass to (through) the eighth level they have the potential to become not only powers but to enter into God (ἐν θεῷ γίνονται; 1.26).

---

53 In *CH* 1.26 the δυνάμεις exist both at the eighth level (ἡ ὀγδοατικὴ φύσις) and beyond. At the higher level, Poimandres claims they "enter into god" (ἐν θεῷ).

54 Regarding confusion concerning titles, consider that in 1.6 there appears to be a distinction between νοῦς and λόγος, yet Poimandres can be referred to both as ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς (1.2) and ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγος (1.30).

55 Translation from Copenhaver, *Hermetica*.

Still, there are some distinctive qualities we can discern from *CH* 1 about the Supreme Being, the θεός who is ὁ πάντων πατήρ. First, he is an intellectual being. Indeed, he is the intellectual being par excellence, the Νοῦς to which every other νοῦς is indebted (or perhaps connected). Second, "he" is androgynous (ἀρρενόθηλυς), though apart from the corresponding original androgyny of the primordial Ἄνθρωπος this characteristic is not elaborated upon.[56] Furthermore, the Deity is light and life (φῶς καὶ ζωή; 1.9, 12, 17, 21, 31).[57] This couplet is associated with the generative power of the supreme principle in birthing (ἀποκυέω) the Δημιουργός (1.9) and especially the Ἄνθρωπος (1.12, 17, 21). The latter has eschatological (or soteriological) merit for human beings since any who learn that they are from light and life (ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ὄντα) advance (back) to these (εἰς ζωὴν καὶ φῶς χωρῶ; cf. 1.21 and 31). This couplet is also significant because it puts the supreme Deity in juxtaposition to the material realm (φύσις), which is described as arising from darkness (σκότος) and resulting in death (θάνατος). Again, this is not just about cosmology, it is also about the human condition. Poimandres says in 1.20 that "what gives rise to each person's body is the hateful darkness, from which comes the watery nature [see 1.4], from which the body was constituted in the sensible cosmos [see 1.14], from which death drinks" [see 1.17].

Φῶς, furthermore, has to do with another aspect of the supreme Deity, namely its being the source of the archetypal form. In his vision, Hermes sees a light – clear and joyful – and he comes to love (ἐράω) it (1.4). Poimandres explains that he himself is that light and he instructs Hermes to understand (νοέω) the light and recognize (γνωρίζω) it (1.6).[58] By looking upon Poimandres, Hermes regains his vision; this time though "I saw in my mind (θεωρῶ ἐν τῷ νοΐ) the light of powers beyond number and a boundless cosmos that had come to be" (1.7). The clear and joyful light has become the manifold radiance of infinite powers and unlimited universe. But these are not physical entities

---

56 See 1.15: The Ἄνθρωπος is "androgynous because he comes from an androgynous father" and 1.16 where the first seven men are androgynous (apparently like the seven governors).

57 "Light and life" may reflect the influence of Genesis as it does in the Johannine prologue and in Philo, *De opificio mundi*. See the discussion in the excursus on "Logos-centric Interpretation of Genesis 1 in Philo of Alexandria and the Prologue to John" in § 4.4.2.4.

58 Cf. the BG manuscript of the *Ap. John* 6,7, which speaks thus of the true "god, the father of all": ΟΥΟΪ ΠЄ ("He is light").

Hermes sees, as Poimandres explains (in 1.8): "in your mind you have seen (εἶδες ἐν τῷ νῷ) the archetypal form (τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος), the prior source (τὸ προάρχον) to an unending beginning." In other words the light is, or contains within it, the intellectual archetype of the universe.

As we shall see momentarily, this εἶδος of the universe will serve as the pattern for the creation of the material universe. That there exists an eternal paradigm that is a noetic reality and that is associated with (in some way) the supreme God is obviously similar to, and – the language used suggests – indebted to Platonism. It seems appropriate to cast the supreme being of *CH* 1 along the lines of the Middle Platonic first principle (especially as we consider the intermediate principles in the next section). The transcendence of this principle must be inferred from its lack of direct involvement with the material universe, even its antipathy to the created order (light and life vs. darkness and death). However, we must come short of asserting that Poimandres' ὁ πάντων πατήρ is a purely Platonic idea. If the supreme Deity is identical to Poimandres, then he apparently has personality. What is more, he is capable of desire (ἐράω, 1.12). Since ἔρως is the cause of death (1.18: τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα), this only returns us to our initial confusion.

5.1.2.2. Cosmogony in CH 1 and the Committee of Intermediaries

Confusion follows confusion as we turn to *Poimandres'* presentation of the intermediary reality between the supreme Deity and physical creation. Again, we find that *Poimandres* uses the standard philosophical appellations to denote this reality (especially note λόγος and δημιουργός) and does so through a biblical lens (a heavenly/ideal ἄνθρωπος similar to the interpretation of Genesis in Philo). The confusion lies with the fact that instead of one figure, these appellations represent two, three, or maybe more figures assigned to the intent, form, non-human and human aspects of creation.

5.1.2.2.1. The Will of God and Forethought

As we saw in the outline above, *CH* 1.8 is a transition from Hermes' vision to the Poimandres' description of the "actual" creation of the cosmos. In this chapter, Hermes asks from where the elements of nature (τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως) arose, by which he means the physical universe. Poimandres responds: "From the will of God, which received the Word (λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον) and seeing the beautiful world (ὁ καλὸς κόσμος) imitated it." The process of imitation (μιμέω) is familiar to us

from Philo, especially if we take the καλὸς κόσμος as equivalent to the Alexandrian's κόσμος νοητός.[59] The formal paradigm serves as a stamp by which the material universe receives its shape. This process takes place at the initiative of the βουλὴ Θεοῦ, the will or plan of God. The fact that the βουλὴ Θεοῦ acts (it receives and it sees) suggests that it is an entity distinct from the supreme Deity, i.e., a "hypostasis."[60] Clearly it functions, one way or the other, as a buffer between that Deity and the φύσις.

Βουλή occurs thrice more in *CH* 1, but only in 1.18 does it appear to have this distinctive sense.[61] In that chapter, the Will of God is responsible for undoing the bond of all things, i.e., dividing previously androgynous creatures (including humans) into two genders. In the next chapter (19) we find the introduction of intercourse and childbirth by "providence" (or "forethought," πρόνοια), which may be the βουλή in another guise.[62] In either case (1.18 and 1.19), these actions do not appear to be positive, at least with respect to the natural world. Given the negative view of the physical world, the sundering of the androgynes and the introduction of intercourse and child birth help only by clearly marking physical existence as limited.

5.1.2.2.2. The Λόγος and the Creation of the Formal Universe

The Will of God does not act alone in its physical imitation of the archetypal world. It brings about the physical copy only after it "receives the Logos" (λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον, *CH* 1.8).[63] To understand this opaque idea we must first move back to Hermes' vision where the Logos was first mentioned. In this vision (1.4–5) we behold first the light and then, as if in antithesis, the darkness. From the darkness, initially fearful, gloomy and snakelike, arises a watery nature. The watery nature is

---

59 See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 127.

60 See Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 102–103 for a discussion of this phrase and his suggestion that "God's Counsel (*boulē*) may be understood as hypostasized." Cf. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 453, who translates βουλὴ Θεοῦ as "god's purpose" and provides a note: "I.e. forethought (cf. 19), here treated as a distinct personage."

61 Βουλή seems to refer to simple inclination or will in 1.14 (of Ἄνθρωπος) and 1.31 (of god).

62 Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 453, thinks so (see note 38 above).

63 The capitalized lambda in Λόγον is in the Nock and Festugière text. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 453, translates λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον as 'receives reason.' Is it possible for the βουλὴ Θεοῦ to be devoid of reason?

agitated and smoking and produces a "wailing roar" and an "inarticulate cry like the voice of fire." Something comes from the light (the text has a lacuna in 1.5 after ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς) and then "a holy logos comes to nature" (λόγος ἅγιος ἐπέβη τῇ φύσει). There appears to be a qualitative difference between what happens in the darkness before the advent of the Logos and after it. If we may take Genesis 1 as the interpretive key, there is chaos before and there is order after the divine word.[64] Once the Logos arrives, we have the two active elements (fire and air) separated from the passive elements (water and earth, which, incidentally, remain mixed). The water and earth are somehow subsequently kept in their place by the πνευματικὸς λόγος, the spiritual Logos.[65]

According to Poimandres' interpretation in 1.6, Hermes is meant to focus on two entities in his vision, the light (which is Νοῦς and Θεός) and the shining Logos which comes from the Νοῦς (ὁ ἐκ Νοὸς φωτεινὸς λόγος) and which is its son (υἱὸς Θεοῦ). These are particularly relevant to Hermes as they have anthropological dimensions. "Know this," says Poimandres to Hermes, "that which sees and hears in you is the λόγος κυρίου; while (your) mind is πατὴρ Θεός. But they are not divided from one another; rather, their union is life."[66] What we discern from *CH* 1.6 is that the Logos has a close and apparently ontological relationship to God/Mind; it is φωτεινός to the divine φῶς and it is itself a divine

----

64 Though, as Dodd notes in *The Bible and the Greeks*, 113–114, *CH* 1 clarifies (or fixes) Gen 1 by introducing the light before the darkness and chaos.

65 The last sentence of *CH* 1.5 is difficult to translate. The Greek is κινούμενα (γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ) δὲ ἦν διὰ τὸν ἐπιφερόμενον πνευματικὸν λόγον εἰς ἀκοήν. Copenhaver (*Hermetica,* 1) translates this sentence "And they were stirred to hear by the spiritual word that moved upon them." Layton (*Gnostic Scriptures*, 453) translates "And they were in motion because of the spiritual reason that 'moved' in obedience" followed by the note "I.e. in obedience to god's directive activity in the creation of the world as recorded in Gen 1:1f." Clearly Gen 1:2 (LXX: πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος) is influential here.
    The use of πνευματικός to describe the Logos is also interesting. Πνεῦμα appears earlier in the *CH* 1:5, though at that time it seems to be synonymous with πῦρ (fire). It would appear that we have a complex conflation taking place where fire and spirit are viewed as the same (or very similar) active elements (a Stoic idea) and where the Logos is viewed as pneumatic (again, similar to Stoic thought). There may even be a connection between the fire/air elements and the Logos (the Logos appears after the "fire-like cry" in 1.4). Without question and regardless of how strained, there is clearly a (quasi) philosophical interpretation of Genesis 1 underlying *CH* 1:4–5.

66 *CH* 1.6: Οὕτω γνῶθι· τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ Θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή.

offspring. Furthermore, in its anthropological guise, the Logos ("the word of the Lord" must refer to the divine speech act in Gen 1) has the ostensibly active role (it is the seeing and hearing) while the (its?) father has the ostensibly removed role of Νοῦς. However, they are a unity (ἕνωσις) which cannot be separated and which produces ζωή.[67]

5.1.2.2.3. The Δημιουργός and the Creation of the Material Universe

The above clarifies for us what *CH* 1.8 is referring to when it speaks of the Logos that is appropriated (λαμβάνω) by the Will of God at the physical creation. A possible explanation of the appropriation itself comes in the next section (1.9–11) and the introduction of a new intermediate entity, the Demiurge. Chapter 8 provides a terse introduction to what follows in 1.9–11, namely the creation of the physical universe. Where 1.8 uses the motif of archetypal form and imitation, the subsequent account of creation has a different perspective, one that is more pedestrian due to its mythical (the demiurge) and technical nature (the planetary governors).[68]

In *Corpus Hermeticum* 1.9, Poimandres begins to walk us through the process by which the physical creation took place. The first step involves the introduction of a crafting agent.

> Now the Divine Mind (ὁ Νοῦς ὁ θεός), being androgynous, existing as life and light, gave birth rationally (ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ) to another mind as craftsman (ἕτερος νοῦς δημιουργός). He, being the god of fire and spirit, crafted seven governors. In circles these encompass the sense-perceptible world (ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος), and their government is called destiny.

With the introduction of a crafting agent, Hermes' vision is made corporeal; the ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος yields its μίμημα.[69] Given our earlier

---

67 Note that in *CH* 1.6 we have a foreshadowing of the φῶς καὶ ζωή couplet (discussed above).

68 The use of two cosmogonical images right next to each other should be familiar to us; Philo uses both paradigmatic and instrumental imagery in, for instance, *Leg.* 3.95–96.

69 While this presentation may give an impression throughout that *CH* 1 adheres to a literally temporal creation, Holzhausen is probably correct when, speaking of what he calls the *vorkosmische Phase* in *CH* 1.4–7, he says: "Die Kosmogonie ist lediglich ein Mittel der Darstellung einer Kosmologie. Die geistige Prägung der Materie durch den Logos ist kein Ereignis der Vorzeit, sondern untrennbar mit der Existenz des Kosmos, der keinen Anfang im zeitlichen Sinne hat, gegeben" (*Der "Mythos vom Menschen,"* 14).

discussions of Middle Platonism (see ch. 2), we find here a fairly familiar approach to cosmogony. For the first time in the treatise we have an *explicit* account of a first principle (an intellectual entity – ὁ Νοῦς) drawing upon an intermediate principle (also an intellectual entity, though of a derivative nature – ἕτερος νοῦς) to fashion the physical principle (now quite clearly material, i.e,. αἰσθητός). That Poimandres identifies the intermediate principle as the δημιουργός, that he refers to him as (another or second) θεός, and that he associates him with the (Stoic) active element(s) πῦρ καὶ πνεῦμα also resonate with Middle Platonism.[70]

The relationship between the supreme Deity and the demiurge is one of kind; both are minds. However, it is not immediately evident what Poimandres means when he says that ὁ Νοῦς ὁ θεός gave birth to the νοῦς δημιουργός by means of reason.[71] This is probably not a reference to the λόγος ἅγιος. Rather, the use of the dative (λόγῳ) points to the means by which the birthing process takes place, emphasizing the intellectual quality of the Demiurge's origination.[72] This reading makes sense given that in 1.12, when the supreme Deity engenders the Ἄνθρωπος, the affective aspect of his birth is emphasized (see below).

The divine Logos makes a clearer entry in *CH* 1.10: "Immediately, ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος leaped from the sunken elements to the pure creation of nature (τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιούργημα) and was united with the

---

70 See chapter two for the discussion of the intermediate principle in Middle Platonism. With regards to the intermediate principle as demiurge and god, there are interesting parallels between *CH 1* and Numenius of Apamea. Cf. the Numenius fragments collected in Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 366–372.

71 Ἀποκυέω ("to bear young, to bring forth." So LSJ, see "ἀποκυέω") occurs also in *CH* 1.12 where the supreme mind gives birth to ὁ Ἄνθρωπος (see below). Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks,* 138, thinks that the mention of the supreme mind's androgyny in 1.9 is to subvert the idea that ἀποκυέω implies sexual generation.

72 The appearance of λόγῳ in *CH* 1.9 has been problematic since Reitzenstein. According to Dodd (*The Bible and the Greeks*, 133; approvingly) Reitzenstein omitted the term. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, translates it as "by speaking." My translation follows Layton, *Gnostic Scritpures.*

   Regarding λόγῳ probably referring to the intellectual process by which the first mind sired the second mind and not to the divine Logos in 1.4–6, 8, 10–11, see Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen"*, 17: "Der λόγος ist das Mittel, durch das sich göttliche Νοῦς der zu gestaltenden Materie zuwendet, wobei λόγος hier sicherlich nicht als Hypostase aufzufassen ist, weil sich Gottes λόγος hier als Νοῦς δημιουργός hypostasiert." We address whether the Logos = the Νοῦς Δημιουργός below.

Demiurgic Mind – for they were ὁμοούσιος.”[73] We find that as in 1.6, in 1.10 there is a union of λόγος and νοῦς (1.6 uses ἕνωσις; 1.10 uses ἠνώθη). The parenthetical statement ὁμοούσιος γὰρ ἦν serves to emphasize this unity. In spite of this emphasis, it is still important to note that the Logos arises from the sunken elements (τὰ κατωφερῆ στοιχεῖα// "the downward tending darkness" in 1.4) and joins to the Demiurgic Mind, resulting in (as 1.10 goes on to say) the reduction of the στοιχεῖα to "mere irrational matter" (ἄλογα and ὕλη μόνη). This seems to suggest that before the birth of the second mind, the Λόγος already existed and functioned as a rational agent.

Where the unity of νοῦς and λόγος in *CH* 1.6 meant life (apparently in an anthropological and rational sense), the union of the two divine hypostases (ὁ δημιουργὸς Νοῦς σὺν τῷ Λόγῳ) result in ζῷα ἄλογα. These arise from the irrational elements through the efforts of the Demiurgic Mind and the Logos in moving the planetary governors (διοικηταί) along their orbits. The language of 1.11 suggests strong parallels with Gen 1 and the calling forth of the different type of creatures, from air, water and land. That they were ἄλογα precludes the creation of humankind. The arrival of humanity comes by means of yet another intermediate figure.

5.1.2.2.4. Ὁ Ἄνθρωπος and Anthropogony

As in Genesis 1, the arrival of humanity follows the creation of land creatures in *CH* 1.[74] However, unlike Genesis 1 which presents God as the direct creator of both animal life (and the rest of the physical universe) and humanity, *CH* 1 at this point draws a contrast between the origin of the ἄλογα ζῷα and humanity. Poimandres turns from the creative activity of the Demiurgic Mind and the Logos and returns his focus to the supreme Deity. In *CH* 1.12 God acts alone and he does not create (ποιέω; cn. Gen 1:27) but rather gives birth (ἀποκυέω) to ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Poimandres says ὁ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν Ἄνθρωπον αὐτῷ ἴσον ("The Father of All, the Mind, being life and light, gave birth to a human being equal to himself."). This line

---

73 This is an apparent enactment of Hermes' vision of the advent of the Λόγος in 1.5. Alhough there the Logos does not ascend upward, he does appear to propel the fire and air (or πνεῦμα) upwards.

74 Cf. Gen 1:25, 26 with the description of the animals created in *CH* 1.11: καὶ ‹ἡ γῆ› ἐξήνεγκεν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῷα τετράποδα ‹καὶ› ἑρπετά, θηρία ἄγρια καὶ ἥμερα.

is similar to the description of the birth of the Demiurgic Mind above and in fact we find out later that the two are "siblings" (ἀδελφοί).[75] The primary significance of this is to note that the Ἄνθρωπος is not a physical entity at its inception but an intellectual one.

A number of things develop in quick succession after this as *CH* 1 rehearses Genesis 1, though rewriting it along the way so as to have the biblical narrative conform to *CH's* anthropological understandings. The heart of this rewriting appears to be the formal beauty of the Ἄνθρωπος and how everything, from the Supreme Being down to φύσις, seems to be enthralled by him. It is beyond the scope of our present study to consider every step of this descent (for it is just that, a descent from a purely intellectual to a physically enmeshed entity that takes place in 1.13–14). In what follows we will focus on the following: the reactions of the Ἄνθρωπος and the supreme being to each other and the result of the mixing of the Ἄνθρωπος with cosmic framework and φύσις.

The supreme being's response to the generation of the Ἄνθρωπος paints an interesting picture. Upon giving birth to one "equal to himself", Poimandres tells us that the Father of All "loved him as his own child" (οὗ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου). The affection of the supreme being for his offspring is somewhat surprising (since in *CH* 1.17, ἔρως results in death) and requires some explanation. This Poimandres provides by telling us the son was "very beautiful, having the image of the father" (περικαλλὴς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα; 1.12). It seems likely all of this is based upon Gen 1:27 (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ), though it must be said that the Ἄνθρωπος' in *CH* 1 seems surprisingly more beguiling than in Moses' version. Indeed, he is so beguiling that the Father of All hands over (παραδίδωμι) to him all of his creation as well as the ability to create (δημιουργεῖν).[76] Poimandres further explains: what God really loved was his own form (ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς).

---

75 Recall *CH* 1.9 discussed above: ὁ Νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυς ὤν, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν κτλ.

76 *CH* 1.12 (παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα) and 1.13 (κατανοήσας τὴν τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ κτίσιν…, ἠβουλήθη καὶ αὐτὸς δημιουργεῖν, καὶ συνεχωρήθη ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρός) provide the foundation for the authority (ἐξουσία) that the Ἄνθρωπος has as he makes his descent. All of this parallels the dominion granted humanity in LXX Gen 1:26 and 28 (ἀρχέτωσαν). The use of ἑαυτοῦ in *CH* 1.12 alludes to the notion that while the Demiurgic Mind (with the Logos) was actively involved in forming the δημιουργήματα, these still owe their ultimate origination to ὁ πάντων πατήρ.

The possession of the divine form is essential for understanding what happens to the Ἄνθρωπος as he makes his descent. As he passes down among and through the seven διοικηταί in 1.13, they too are beguiled by him (οἳ ἠράσθησαν αὐτοῦ) and each shared with (μεταδίδωμι) him some of their own power (lit. "rank" or "order", τάξις; ἐνέργεια in 1.14). Thus endowed, the Ἄνθρωπος breaks through to the lowest level and in so doing reveals to the sunken nature the beautiful form of God (ἔδειξε τῇ κατωφερεῖ φύσει τὴν καλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ μορφήν, 1:14). The result is rapturous. Φύσις, seeing the glory of the Ἄνθρωπος, smiles upon him with desire (ἐμειδίασεν ἔρωτι). The Ἄνθρωπος, seeing the reflection of his form upon the water (and apparently not understanding reflections) "loves it and wishes to inhabit it" (ἐφίλησε καὶ ἠβουλήθη αὐτοῦ οἰκεῖν). Acting immediately upon his wish he inhabits the unreasoning form (ᾤκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν). In response, "nature took hold of her beloved, hugged him all about and embraced him, for they were lovers."[77]

What remains in Poimandres' account of the anthropogony is outside of the control of Ἄνθρωπος. Nature, mixing with him, gives birth (ἀποκυέω) to seven androgynous ἄνθρωποι (after the seven διοικηταί), forming them by means of the four natural elements as well as from ζωὴ καὶ φῶς (apparently the contribution from the original Ἄνθρωπος). Because of the later, the corporeal humans were endowed with ψυχή (from life) and νοῦς (from light) (1.16–17). This remains the state of things for a time (περίοδος) and then the βουλὴ θεοῦ sunders all things (ending androgyny) and the πρόνοια (working through fate and the cosmic framework) introduces intercourse and childbirth (1.18–19).

Though these developments may explain the way things are to this day, the initial mixture of Ἄνθρωπος and Φύσις appears to have been what originally doomed humanity. As Poimandres explains in 1.15:

> And because of this and in contrast to all other living things upon the earth, humankind is twofold; on account of the body it is mortal but immortal on account of the essential human being (οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπος). Although humankind is immortal and has all authority, it suffers mortality because it is subject to fate. And although humankind is over the cosmic framework, it is has become a slave to that framework.

Fortunately, the human predicament does not appear to be hopeless. In 1:18, after the Will of God sunders all things, creating male and female

---

77 *CH* 1.14, Copenhaver's translation of ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν· ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν.

of every kind, God (simply ὁ θεός) responds with a holy word (ἀγίῳ λόγῳ) that parallels the divine command to be fruitful and multiply in Gen 1:28.[78] But while he instructs everything that has been created or crafted (πάντα τὰ κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα = ζωὰ ἄλογα) to increase and multiply, his instruction for humankind is different. "And let the one who is thoughtful recognize himself as being immortal; let him recognize that desire is the cause of death; and let him recognize the things that truly are" (καὶ ἀναγνωρισάτω ‹ὁ› ἔννους ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα).

It is clear, given the negative view of φύσις in *CH* 1, that the commandment to increase and multiply would not be a positive injunction for humankind. While this command is not a blessing but a curse (in contrast to its Genesis parallel), it seems that the call to recognition (ἀναγνωρίζω) made to those with intellect (ἔννους implies being capable of thought) serves as a blessing. It is such in that it points out that humankind can, through the intellectual process, find a remedy for their physical predicament. Indeed, as he finishes this part of his narrative, Poimandres tells us this is what happens *for some*. "The one who recognizes himself has attained the choicest good. But the one who loves the body, which comes from the error of desire, this one remains deceived and in darkness, experiencing sensibly the effects of death" (1.19).[79]

5.1.3. Salvation in *Poimandres*: The Two Ways

5.1.3.1. Identifying the Ways

These two ways, the way of self recognition and the way of desire, are the subject of the rest of the conversation between Hermes and Poimandres. Neither of these paths is mysterious if we have followed the cosmogony and anthropogony of our text. The way of desire rests on the understanding that the body is a part of the sense perceptible

---

78 As I noted above, it is not clear which θεός (ὁ πάντων πατήρ or ὁ δημιουργὸς νοῦς). On the resemblance to Gen 1:28 (or Gen 8:15–17) see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 112.

79 My translation of *CH* 1:19: ὁ ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν, ὁ δὲ ἀγαπήσας τὸ ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα, οὗτος μένει ἐν τῷ σκότει πλανώμενος, αἰσθητῶς πάσχων τὰ τοῦ θανάτου.

world (ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος) and so is a product of the gloomy darkness.[80]
To be desirous is to embrace this darkness. It is insufficient to say that
the one who chooses this way is subject to death. Rather, what life that
one has becomes the torment of the damned as this path produces only
vice and leaves no desire satisfied.[81]

On the other hand, the way of self recognition is the sure path back
to God. Poimandres succinctly repeats the divine saying of *CH* 1.18 in
1.21: "The one who contemplates himself advances into him" (ὁ νοήσας
ἑαυτὸν εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ). Hermes responds in the same section with yet
another paraphrase of the saying: "Let the thoughtful human recognize
himself" (ὁ ἔννους ἄνθρωπος ἀναγνωρισάτω ἑαυτόν).[82]

In Poimandres' version the pronoun αὐτόν is ambiguous: it could
refer to the one contemplating (so "advances into himself") or to God
(so "advances into God").[83] The ambiguity is in fact appropriate since
recognizing one's true self (qua Ἄνθρωπος) means knowing God. After
all, Hermes "speaks well" when he says "It is from light and life that the
Father of the Universe is composed, from whom ὁ Ἄνθρωπος comes to
be" (1.21).[84] In other words, in spite of mixing with φύσις, humankind
has not lost its association with the divine nature that originally sired the
Ἄνθρωπος.

---

80 *CH* 1.20. The darkness is στυγνός, which according to LSJ could be "gloomy"
     (so Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 456) or "hateful" (so Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 5).

81 Cf. *CH* 1.23 (Layton's translation, *Gnostic Scriptures,* 26): Poimandres says "I am
     distant from those who are foolish, evil, wicked, envious, greedy, murderers,
     and impious. I give them over to the avenging demon (ὁ τιμωρὸς δαίμων), who
     with its point of fire attacks and perceptibly pricks them: it gets them all the
     more ready to do their lawless deeds, so that they may receive even worse
     retribution. And they never stop focusing their desire on boundless yearnings,
     insatiably struggling in the dark; and that is what tortures them, and it increases
     even more the fire directed against them."

82 *CH* 1.21 is a very repetitive section. Poimandres makes a statement. Hermes
     responds. Poimandres repeats Hermes response. Hermes repeats Poimandres'
     original statement. Given this repetition, the content of this section must be
     central to the message of the text. See the excursus on this passage below.

83 Again, contast Layton who translates *CH* 1.21 as "those who think about
     themselves advance into themselves" (*Gnostic Scriptures*, 18) with Copenhaver's
     "he who has understood himself advances toward god" (*Hermetica*, 5; see his
     note on p. 113).

84 The use of συνίστημι with respect to the Deity is a bit perplexing (along the
     lines of the use of ἐράω with respect to the same). Contrast Col 1:17 (καὶ αὐτός
     ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν).

The value of Hermes' confession is that it has within it the essential details for how human beings can solve the problem of their duplicitous nature. Self-discovery is discovery of the divine that gave birth to one's essential humanity (recall ὁ οὐσιωδῆ ἄνθρωπος in 1.15, discussed above). Poimandres makes it clear for his student: "If you learn that he (i.e., ὁ Ἄνθρωπος) is from life and light and that you happen to be from them [as well], then you will advance again into life" (1.21).[85] The only question is: "How shall *I* advance into life?" (πῶς εἰς ζωὴν χωρήσω ἐγώ;)[86]

5.1.3.1.1. Excursus #7: Structure and Prepositional Phrases in *CH* 1.21

Before we look at Poimandres' answer to this question, which is of central importance to our topic, we should first stop to note the use of prepositions in *CH* 1.21. Above I gave the essence of the conversation; the actual give and take of the conversation proceeds as follows.

A   Poimandres asks Hermes a question about the meaning of God's statement in 1.18 ("let the thoughtful one recognize he is immortal").
B   Hermes responds with an explanation.
B'   Poimandres repeats Hermes' response and adds some elucidation.
A'   Hermes asks how he can advance, and in the process of doing so he provides another version of the 1.18 statement.

The use of chiastic inclusion (note the ABB'A' pattern) emphasizes the importance of this dialogue to the author. Another way the author makes this emphasis is through prepositions. Using the above structure we note the following use of prepositional prhases.

A   εἰς αὐτόν
B   ἐκ αὐτοῦ
B'   ἐκ αὐτοῦ
B'   ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτός
B'   ἐκ τούτων

---

85   *CH* 1:21: ἐὰν οὖν μάθῃς αὐτὸν ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ὄντα καὶ ὅτι ἐκ τούτων τυγχάνεις, εἰς ζωὴν πάλιν χωρήσεις. Again, αὐτός is ambiguous. See Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 113.
86   This question is Hermes' at the close of *CH* 1.21.

Β᾽ εἰς ζωήν
Α᾽ εἰς ζωήν

Again we find the use of inclusion. The senses of the phrases are consistent: ἐκ marks origination in the Deity and εἰς, used in conjunction with χωρέω (advancement), marks a return to the Deity. This is, *in nuce*, the argument of the document.

Of course, these phrases do not represent the sophisticated prepositional metaphysics we find in Philo. It is even arguable whether these phrases are as sophisticated as what we found in the NT.[87] It is important to observe them and their presence in what is arguably the heart of the document. Furthermore, these prepositional phrases are tied to an intermediary. Again, it is not as explicit as other texts we have studied, but the central character in 1.21 is not the Father of All or somatically-bound humankind. The central character is ὁ Ἄνθρωπος, the entity that brings the two together and thereby mediates their relationship. *CH* 1.21 makes it clear, formally and in its content, that humans are from the Father of All only on account of their being from ὁ Ἄνθρωπος. Their aspirations (those that have them) of returning to the Father are possible, again, only through ὁ Ἄνθρωπος.

5.1.3.2. The Presence of Mind and the Ascent of the Soul

Hermes asks how one makes this advancement toward life because he has the mistaken conception that "All human beings have νοῦς." Poimandres is quick to divest him of this idea, which is not consistent with the two ways set out above. He says: "I myself, the Mind, am present to the holy and good and pure and merciful, those who are pious, and my presence is a boon." Yet for those who are "foolish, evil, wicked, envious, greedy, murderers, and impious" Poimandres says: τοῖς πόρρωθέν εἰμι ("I am distant from these"). Not surprisingly the two ways are defined by virtue and vice lists. More importantly, Poimandres (returning to the use of the first person when speaking about the divine mind; cf 1.6) asserts that the two ways are defined in terms of where

---

87 If not the texts we examined in John 1, 1 Cor 8, Col 1 and Heb 1, the most similar to the use of prepositional phrases in *CH* 1.21 is 1 Cor 11:9, 12 where Paul uses such phrases to highlight the differences and similarities between men and women (about which, see the discussion in § 4.1.2.1).

human beings stand in relation to him. His presence assures blessing for the εὐσεβής, his absence damnation for the ἀσεβής.[88]

In terms of blessing, he highlights the following in 1.22 as the benefits of his presence. Because of his presence the pious immediately know all things (εὐθύς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι). This results in genuine worship and thanksgiving appropriate to the Father (πατήρ). Furthermore, his presence affords the pious a strong defense against their bodies.

> Before handing over the body to its own death, they feel disgust toward their senses for they know their activities; rather, I myself, the Mind, will not allow the attacks of these bodily activities to be accomplished. As a gatekeeper I shut out these evil and shameful activities, cutting off any consideration of them.[89]

It is interesting to note that Poimandres renders both these services, enabling worship and warding off the attacks of the flesh, to the pious while they are yet in the body. Furthermore, both these services would be highly valued in ascetical, even monastic circles.

But what of life after the body is handed over? Hermes implores Poimandres to speak to him concerning ἡ ἄνοδος ἡ γινομένη ("the process of rising").[90] To which Poimandres responds with a detailed description of an ascent that reverses the descent of the Ἄνθρωπος described in 1.12–14.[91] The τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑλικόν is discarded and then the human moves up through the cosmic framework, discarding at every level what it had picked up from the seven διοικηταί.

> Then, stripped from the effects of the cosmic framework, he comes upon the eighth order (ἡ ὀγδοατικὴ φύσις), under (only) his own power, and along with *those who are* he hymns the father. Those present rejoice at this one's presence, and becoming like them, he also hears certain powers above the eighth order who hymn god with a sweet voice. And then in order they rise up to the father, and they themselves hand themselves over to the powers, and becoming powers they enter into god. This is the noble fulfillment for those who posses knowledge, to become god.[92]

---

88   In what follows I focus only on the pious. For the fate of the impious, see note 81.

89   My translation of *CH* 1.22.

90   This is Layton's translation of the phrase.

91   In describing the ascent in 1.24–25, Poimandres provides more detail about what Ἄνθρωπος acquired in the descent and he catalogs the different items removed.

92   My translation.

What stands out here is the absence of Poimandres as a guide in the afterlife. While in the body, he was present to the human to enable and to protect. Once the human hands over his body, Poimandres does not mention himself. Neither does he mention νοῦς in any fashion. It would appear that once the human has stripped off the physical body it is the essential Ἄνθρωπος which remains. As such, he would not need assistance for he would within himself have the wherewithal for his own ascent (hence, when he gets to the eighth level, he does so "under his own power").

5.1.4. Conclusion: Shades of Νοῦς

Corpus Hermeticum 1.26–27 marks the conclusion of Poimandres' revelation to Hermes. First, Poimandres calls the seer to become a guide (καθοδηγός) for humanity. Then Hermes describes how Poimandres, having finished his revelation, mixes with the powers (the δυνάμεις, ostensibly, those of the ὀγδοατικὴ φύσις). Save for a note of gratitude from Hermes in 1.31, this ends the discussion of intermediate agents in the treatise – both in terms of cosmology and anthropology. In the next and final section we will look briefly at the significance of Hermes' calling. Presently, we should review what we have learned about these agents and their roles.

5.1.4.1. Summary of *Poimandres'* Presentation of Intermediaries

There are some hindrances to trying to systematize the presentation of intermediary agents in *CH* 1. First, there appear to be multiple intermediaries and their interrelationship is far from clear. Second, Poimandres himself is enigmatic: in 1.6 he claims to be ὁ Νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός, which in the context seems to be the supreme God; yet, in 1.27 he joins with the δυνάμεις (the powers are first mentioned in 1.7 as part of the archetypal universe). Third, while our analysis really is not concerned with whether the author of *CH* 1 meant any of this literally, we do not know how much of it he meant figuratively. Does the author seriously employ the Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre* (or something analogous to this) or are his intermediaries just mythic constructs to highlight a simpler dualism (there is mind and matter and that is all)? There are three moves in *CH* 1 by which the cosmos is explained and each has it corresponding intermediary. The first is shown in Hermes' vision and is the ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος that existed before creation (1.4–7,

8a). The intermediary is the Λόγος Ἅγιος. The second move is the cosmogony, the creation of the sense perceptible universe (1.9–11). There are either two intermediaries here, or one with two aspects: the transcendent ὁ Δημιουργός Νοῦς and the immanent Λόγος. The third move is the anthropogony, the creation of somatically-bound humanity (1.12–19). The intermediary is ὁ Ἄνθρωπος, though his agency occurs more by how different cosmic entities react to him. The first principle, the supreme Deity, is the same in all three: ὁ Νοῦς, ὁ Θεός, ὁ πάντων πατήρ. The third principle, φύσις, is also the same for all three. Finally, there appear to be a couple of rogue intermediaries, the βουλὴ Θεοῦ and the πρόνοια – one cannot be sure whether they are positive agents or negative, and whether they are truly distinct from each other, from the other intermediaries, or from the supreme Deity.

Poimandres' Three Moves of Creation With Corresponding Intermediaries & Corresponding Results

Pre-Creation	Cosmology	Anthropology
ὁ Νοῦς, ὁ Θεός, ὁ πάντων πατήρ, ὤν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς		
Λόγος Ἅγιος, ὁ φωτεινὸς υἱὸς Θεοῦ	ὁ Δημιουργός Νοῦς (ὁ Θεός τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεῦμα) σὺν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος	ὁ Ἄνθρωπος, ὁ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα (or μορφὴν) ἔχων,
Φύσις, τα κατωφερῆ στοιχεῖα, σκοτία		
The Distinct Result Produced by Each Intermediary		
τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, δυνάμεις?	δημιουργήματα, ἁρμονία (διοικηταί), ζωὰ ἄλογα	ὁ διπλοῦς ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς καὶ ἀθάνατος

These moves are not distinct from one another but represent a development. The pre-creation and cosmogonic movements correspond to each other, the latter being the "temporal" version of the former archetype. We see this in the details common to the two, for instance the use of the στοιχεῖα, especially fire, in both (cf. 1.4–5 with 1.9–10) as well as in the peculiar movements of the λόγος in both (cf. 1.5 with 1.10). The relationship between the cosmogony and anthropogony is not one of correspondence but of progression. The anthropogony builds upon the cosmogony as the Ἄνθρωπος encounters

and/or mixes with the δημιουργήματα of his ἀδελφός, ὁ Δημιουργὸς Νοῦς.

For our study, the most pressing question that arises out of this is how exactly the three principle intermediaries are related. It may be there is only one intermediary which has three different manifestations. This is what Jens Holzhausen contends, saying the Logos, the Demiurgic Mind and the Ἄνθρωπος are the same entity viewed at different phases (*Vorkosmische* Phase, *Schöpfung* and *Anthropogonie*).[93] While this might be correct, Holzhausen does not adequately account for the emphasis *CH* 1 places on the distinctiveness of the three. Furthermore, in our studies of Middle Platonism and of Philo of Alexandria we have seen that there are number of examples of multiple intermediary principles.

For instance, as we have already noted, there appears to be some similarity between the appearance at the *Schöpfung* of the Logos and what Wolfson refers to as the transcendent and immanent Logos in Philo.[94] That the Logos "leaps up from the sunken elements" (1.10; cf. 1.5) suggests immanence. Furthermore, though the Logos and the Demiurgic Mind unite and are in fact ὁμοούσιος, Poimandres still keeps them separate (1.11).

That the Logos and Demiurgic Mind are both distinct and yet of the same substance is not problematic. Recall the manner in which the intermediary realm in Philo unfolds. In chapter 2, we compared it to a *Matryoshka* (nested) doll, except instead of finding a smaller doll at each level, we find a more and more immanent intermediate principle. There may in fact be something like this going on in *CH* 1.

The problem is that *CH* 1 is not a philosophical treatise. Though it certainly appears to be influenced by Middle Platonism and Hellenistic Judaism, it is not a technical treatment of either. One has a difficult time imagining any Middle Platonist (not to mention the majority of Hellenistic and early Imperial era intellectuals in general) being comfortable with a supreme Νοῦς that experiences desire (ἐράω), even of its own μορφή. With respect to Judaism, Dodd is right to see a contrast in how Philo and the writer of *CH* 1 view the Deity. Dodd suggests that where Philo is careful not to identify φῶς too closely with

---

93   Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen"*, 15–16.
94   Wolfson, *Philo*, 226–282, 325–331.

God, *CH* 1 has no such compunction.[95] As Pearson says, our author is not a disciple of Moses but of Hermes.

5.1.4.2. διὰ σοῦ! The Calling of Hermes

Looking at the chart above we note that, structurally, the result of this progression is to focus on Ἄνθρωπος qua ὁ διπλοῦς ἄνθρωπος (bifurcated human being). Clearly the essence of *CH* 1 is its explanation of this human predicament. What is more, as our analysis of 1.21 above makes clear, the explanation is itself the solution of the human predicament. So Poimandres says "If you learn that he (i.e., ὁ Ἄνθρωπος) is from life and light and that you happen to be from them [as well], then you will advance again into life" (1.21).

The treatise plays off of this in two ways. First, and obviously, it makes available the explanation. "To know the stages of the creative process is also to know the stages of one's own return to the root of all existence."[96] To any who read it they access the potential for salvation. Secondly, especially given its position as first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, it functions as validation of Hermes' role as mystagogue. Before Poimandres returns to the eighth level to join the powers (though he must still be present as Νοῦς in some sense – see 1.22), he calls Hermes not to advance along this way but to become a herald of it. "What are you waiting for? Having learned all this, should you not become a guide to the worthy so that through you the human race might be saved by God?" (1.26)

Corpus Hermeticum 1.27–29, written in the first person, describes Hermes carrying out this calling. To all people he makes clear the two ways Poimandres revealed to him, asking: "Why have you surrendered yourselves to death, earthborn men, since you have the right to share in immortality? Repent, you who have journeyed with error, who have partnered with ignorance: escape the shadowy light; leave corruption behind and take a share in immorality." While some reject his call, others desire to be taught. About them he says: "I became a guide to my race, teaching them the words – how to be saved and in what manner – and I sowed the words of wisdom among them, and they were nourished from the ambrosial water."

---

95 See Dodd, *The Greeks and the Bible*, 107–108.
96 Gerhard Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 20.

The treatise ends with Hermes retiring at the end of the day, following his own instructions to his followers (1.29) by offering praise and thanksgiving to God (1.31) as well as praying for his ongoing ministry.

5.2. The Apocryphon of John

5.2.1. Introduction

The *Poimandres* treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum* reads as an appropriation of certain philosophically oriented Jewish exegetical traditions by a disciple of the Greco-Egyptian Deity Hermes-Thoth. This Hermes disciple (or disciples) seems to privilege the scripture (especially Genesis 1) underlying these traditions even while applying it in an apparently non-Jewish setting.

Hence, in our study so far we have seen that certain passages in the NT and the *Poimandres* function as tributaries stemming from the same philosophical/religious river, namely a Greek-speaking Judaism influenced by Middle Platonism. The Jewish aspect is evident through the use of Sophialogical speculation and/or Genesis exegetical traditions, traditions that have their clearest presentation in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and in the Wisdom of Solomon. In turn, the language of these traditions and of Philo and Wisdom reverberates with Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre* and its positing of an intermediate intellectual principle existing and operating between a supreme first principle and the material third principle. Both tributaries redefine these traditions by their unique theological stances, the NT in terms of the Christ event, *Poimandres* in terms of its Hermetic context.

The presence of the same religious and philosophical influences in these two spheres is particularly noteworthy. Though we are not privy to many of the details of the religious and social contexts of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, it seems likely there is no Christian influence at play there. In other words, the likely *Sitz im Leben* of *Poimandres* is an environment distinct from early Christianity and yet it evinces similar traditions. In fact, when it comes to cosmology and anthropology, *Poimandres* is closer to those traditions (at least as they are found in Philo) than Christianity; its use of the Genesis exegetical traditions is certainly more explicit and elaborate than even the Gospel of John prologue (not to mention the Colossian hymn and the Hebrew prologue).[97] The presence of a non-Jewish text that presents Platonist Jewish traditions independent of early Christianity is important for us to keep in mind as we move into our study of Sethianism.

---

97   Unlike with the NT texts, there does not appear to be any direct use of the
     Sophia traditions in *Poimandres*.

5.2.1.1. Sethianism

"Sethianism" or "Sethian Gnosticism" refers to a religious system that finds expression in a number of Nag Hammadi texts, namely the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1;III,1;IV,1), *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4), *Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Invisible Spirit*, NHC III,2; IV,2), *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII,5), *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3), *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1), *Marsanes* (NHC X,1), *Melchizadek* (NHC IX,1), *Thought of Norea* (NHC IV,1), and *Trimorphic Protenoia* (NHC XIII,1). From these primary texts and from descriptions preserved in the writings of their Patristic opponents, we can deduce the basic contours of a Sethian system.[98] Characteristics of such a system are

> a self-identification … with the spiritual 'seed' of Seth, their spiritual ancestor, who intervened twice in the course of primordial history to save his progeny from the clutches of an angry world creator and had appeared for a third time in recent history bearing a revelation and saving baptism which would secure their final salvation. Also characteristic of Sethian doctrine is the teaching concerning a supreme divine trinity of Father, Mother and [Son], the Four Luminaries established by the Son as heavenly dwellings for the seed of Seth, and the sacred baptism of the Five Seals by which the earthly seed of Seth is elevated into the light.[99]

Of course, these characteristics must be viewed with some sobriety. The evidence for them is generally fragmentary (or in the case of that gleaned from patristic opponents, negatively disposed). Furthermore, some characteristics appear in some documents and not in others. It is in fact unlikely that we can identify a "normative" Sethian tradition so much as a series of Sethian developments ("innovations") that happened at

---

98   The Patristic opponents of the Sethians (who were also called "Gnostics," "Barbeloites," "Ophites," "Archontics," etc.) were Irenaeus of Lyon (*Adversus Haeresis* 1.29–31), Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* 39–40), Ps. Tertullian (*Adversus omnes haereses* 2), and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 1.13).

99   Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 4–5. See also Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Sethian Gnosticism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Vol. 2: Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. B. Layton; Studies in the History of Religions 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 588–616. The list of Sethian treatises comes from Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 61. See also Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, viii. Layton considers *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* possibly to be Sethian (see *idem*, "The Riddle of the Thunder [NHC VI, 2]," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* [eds. C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986], 37–54).

different points of time and different places. Still, as a working hypothesis, they present a viable though very basic description of beliefs associated with the Sethian movement.[100]

As their namesake might suggest, Sethian texts are familiar with Jewish exegetical traditions. However, unlike *Poimandres*, "privilege" does not quite get at their stance vis-à-vis the Jewish scriptures. As we shall discuss below (see the introduction to the *Apocryphon of John*), the Sethians practice something like a hermeneutics of suspicion (or even "revolt") with respect to the biblical narrative. This suspicion is rooted in the Sethian rejection of the god responsible for physical creation and manifests itself in an exegetical method somewhere between zealous correction and outright repudiation of the biblical narrative.

The rejection of the creator god (and by extension, his craftsman-ship, the physical world) differentiates Sethianism not only from Judaism but from Christianity as well. Most of the Sethian texts do have Christian elements; though again, with the skepticism directed at both the Jewish scriptures and at physical reality, Christian traditions are construed differently than in the NT. So, for example, Sethian Christology is (not surprisingly) docetic and does not associate salvation with the crucifixion. In fact, the place of Christ (as Christ) in the Sethian writings (along with much of the Nag Hammadi library) is varied and usually ancillary to the primary narrative and theological concepts being communicated.[101]

While there can be no denying a relationship among Sethianism, Judaism and Christianity, an explanation for that relationship is not so apparent. Currently, there are two prevailing views. One view traces Sethianism "to a Jewish matrix independent of Christianity."[102] In which case, Christianity and Sethianism represent two relatively contemporaneous trajectories arising out of Judaism. Another view has it that Sethianism was a heretical development originally arising from within Christianity.[103] Either position relies on hypothetical

---

100 See Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 90–93, who approaches the Sethian hypothesis with restrained optimism.

101 See Pheme Perkins, "Gnostic Christologies and the New Testament," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 590–606.

102 Birger Pearson, *RelSRev* 13.1 (1987): 6.

103 A recent articulation of the position that Sethian Gnosticism arises out of Christiantiy is Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 1996). See also Simone Pétrement, *Le Dieu séparé: Les origines du gnosticisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1984); Edwin

reconstructions based upon literary evidence from primary and patristic sources. One of the reasons we should be inclined toward the former option (i.e., Sethianism independently arising independently from Judaism) is because Sethian exegetical efforts with respect to the Jewish scriptures appear to be rooted in philosophical considerations more than in any distinctively Christian perspective. In fact, they have more in common with clearly non-Christian Jewish exegesis found in the writings of Philo and Wisdom of Solomon as well as in the non-Christian Hermetic *Poimandres*.[104]

The philosophical considerations that inform Sethian treatises are primarily Middle Platonic in nature. In fact, the relationship between Sethianism and Platonism was a rather dynamic and complex one and addressing its nuances is beyond the scope of this study. John Turner has divided the Sethian treatises into two groups, basically distinguishable by how they approach soteriology. One group of texts focuses on the descent of a saving figure; Turner views these as earlier and less directly involved (intellectually speaking) with Platonism. Another group of

---

M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983), and *idem*, "The Issue of Pre-Christian Gnosticism Reviewed in the Light of the nag Hammadi Texts" in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. J. Turner and A. McGuire; Brill, Leiden, 1997), 72–88.

104 The relationship between Sethianism and Hellenistic philosophy, especially Platonism, is manifest even if difficult to describe. For a general survey of the issue, see Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 9–54. The bulk of Turner's study is on the Platonizing Sethian treatises (*The Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos, Allogenes,* and *Marsanes*), texts that focus on psychic ascent in terms of contemporary (3rd century CE) Platonic metaphysics. These texts are set off from other Sethian writings "by the apparent absence of certain prominent Sethian themes, such as the apocalyptic schematization of history according to the periodic descent of a divine revealer or redeemer. They exhibit a greatly attenuated (*Zostrianos*) or even absence of (*Allogenes, Steles Seth, Marsanes*) a narrative of the cosmogony of this world including the downward inclination of Sophia and the origin and activity of her demiurgical offspring. They also lack any exegetical speculation on the Genesis story of the creation of mankind [sic] and his [sic] primeval history; only the names of Adam (Adamas, Pigeradams) and Seth (Setheus, Seth Emacha Seth) remain, but as exclusively heavenly beings. Furthermore, these texts show no manifest evidence of Christianization or of concern with issues raised by Christianity. In these texts, Sethianism has become a form of mythological Platonism" (109). On *Marsanes* as a Platonic text, see Pearson, "Gnosticism as Platonism" in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egytpian Christianity*, 148–164.

texts focuses on the ascent of the soul and emphasize an internally oriented soteriology; Turner sees these as later and more directly in conversation with Platonism.[105] Of the two groups, we are interested in the literature that focuses on the descending saving figure. As we shall see, this figure (variously understood and named, even within specific treatises) receives its definition through Jewish exegetical and Sophia-logical traditions (the "descent" texts relate cosmogonical and anthropological myths shaped by these traditions; these myths are not expressed in the "ascent" texts). Furthermore, while the "descent" texts are to some degree less philosophically technical than the "ascent" texts, they are still substantially indebted to Middle Platonism and not just as mediated through inherited exegetical traditions. In fact, this debt to Platonism is integral to understanding the descending figure, an intermediary who functions cosmologically and soteriologically.

5.2.1.2. The Apocryphon of John

There is no easy entrance into the Sethian corpus. Nearly every word of the previous introduction is subject to some debate, and there we were speaking only in generalizations. Once we endeavor to focus on specifics we find the reason: the Sethian texts, like much of the Nag Hammadi corpus, are fragmentary, obtuse translations of poorly attested, esoteric Greek writings, the authorship and editing of which is mired in a religious-historical fog. In his discussion of the Middle Platonic interpretations of religious texts (namely, as relayed in Plutarch and Philo), Thomas Tobin at one point describes scholarship in that field as (by necessity) a "poorly written detective story."[106] This is the case even more so with respect to Sethian and other NHC writings.

Still, if we accept the general reconstruction of Sethianism as presented above – literary phenomena arising from within and responding to Platonized Judaism, Sethian texts may likely contribute

---

105 See J. Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom," *NovT* 22 (1980): 324–351; and idem, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 93–125.

106 Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 76: "All of this may seem like a poorly written detective story. Unfortunately, the history of Middle Platonic philosophy is so fragmentary that it is very much like a detective story. The difference is that in a detective story the clues, when properly understood, clearly establish that the butler did it. But in the study of the various strands of Middle Platonism, no such clarity emerges."

something to our thesis. Given the scope of this study, it would be ideal to focus on a representative text. Among the Sethian texts listed above, the *Apocryphon of John* comes as close to a systematic presentation of Sethian thinking as the nature of the literature allows.[107]

5.2.2. The Content and Composition of *Ap. John*

The *Ap. John* has long been valued as "the clearest and therefore the most important text representing mythological Gnosticism."[108] Originally written in Greek, the treatise is now only extent in four Coptic manuscripts (a large number by comparison to other NHC documents).[109] The final form of the treatise begins and ends with a narrative frame: an encounter between John, the son of Zebedee, and the

---

107 John Turner refers to *Ap. John* as the "Sethian Revelation *par excellence*" (*Sethian Gnosticism*, 69). Michael Williams considers it plausible that *Ap. John* may represent an attempt "to establish a definitive myth for a defined sectarian community" (*Rethinking Gnosticism,* 92; cf. his remarks on 13).

108 Frederik Wisse, "John, Apocryphon of," *ABD* 3:899.

109 While there is yet no critical edition of *Ap. John*, there is a Coptic/English synopsis of the four extent copies in *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II, 1; III, 1; and IV, 1 with BG 8502,2* (eds. M. Waldstein and F. Wisse; Coptic Gnostic Library; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Other English translations available are: F. Wisse, "The Apocryphon of John (II,1, III,1, IV,1, and BG 2502, 2): Introduced and Translated by Frederik Wisse," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. James M. Robinson; revised ed.; New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 104–123; and by B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures,* 28–51. For citation, we will use the Waldstein and Wisse *Synopsis* and we use their translation of NHC II,1 unless otherwise noted.

    Three of the Coptic manuscripts of *Ap. John* are in the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC II,1; III,1; IV, 1) and date to the first half of the fourth century CE. A fourth manuscript, *Papyrus Berolinensis gnosticus* (BG) 8502, dates to the fifth century CE. Two of these (NHC III, 1 and BG 8502, 2) are independent translations of a short Greek recension of *Ap. John*. The other two (NHC II, 1 and IV, 1) represent the same translation of a longer recension. The long recension of *Ap. John* includes two sizable interpolations (the fist is from "The Book of Zoroaster" in II 15,27–19,10 par. IV 24,19–29,18); the second is from the monologue of Πρόνοια in II 30,11–31,25 par. IV 48,13–49,6) (See Waldstein and Wisse, *Synopsis*, 1–4, and Wisse, *NHL*, 104.)

    On the issue of a critical edition of *Ap. John*, see F. Wisse, "After the Synopsis: Prospects and Problems in Establishing a Critical Text of the *Apocryphon of John* and Defining its Historical Location" in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years*, 138–153.

resurrected Christ wherein the apostle receives from Christ a secret revelation (*Ap. John* 1,1–5,2; 82,4–83,8). The content of the revelation is provided between the frame and may be divided into two parts.

Part one (5,3–34,12) provides two cosmogonies, one spiritual (or heavenly), the other earthly. The heavenly cosmogony describes several emanations arising from a first principle, the "Monad." The emanations, or αἰῶνες, are simultaneously spheres of existence and actors; hence, each emanation is both a personality and contains within it a complex of activity and even derivative personalities.[110] The first principle (the "Monad") and the first two emanations (Barbēlō and the Self-Generated [Ἀυτογενής]) form a "primal triad": Father, Mother, and Son. Next comes a spiritual cosmos, the All (ΠΤΗΡϤ=τὸ πάν) or Fullness (πλήρωμα) of Light.[111] The All, a creation of the Self-Generated, consists of numerous aeons. Chief among them are four luminaries (Harmozēl, Oroiaēl, Daveithai, Ēlēlēth), each of which in turn produces three additional αἰῶνες. Upon its emanation, every spiritual entity, from Barbēlō on, praises and glorifies the first principle (the rest praise Barbēlō as well). *Ap. John* thus construes the spiritual realm as a heavenly court where all beings are involved in praise of the Monad.[112]

The earthly cosmogony begins when the third αἰών of Ēlēlēth, Σοφία, acts in disjunction from the All and gives birth to an ill-begotten offspring named Yaldabaoth. Yaldabaoth (who is the πρωτάρχων, *Ap. John* 26, 7), having his mother's divine power but denying the realm

---

110 See Layton, *Gnostic Scripture*, 14. This dual nature of aeons, as personalities and spheres of being, may account in part for the confusing array of entities in the *Ap. John*. Apart from the Monad, no one of the spiritual entities seems to be a single being: Barbēlō consists of a pentad of beings (*Ap. John* 13, 14–15; see ibid., 31 n. 6a); the Self-Generated is made up of Mind, Word and Will (*Ap. John* 16,18–17,16); and so on. For a discussion of Aeons, see Michael M. Waldstein, "The Primal Triad in the *Apocryphon of John*" in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years*, 158.

111 In translating Coptic terms this study relies mostly upon Richard Smith, *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon* (2d ed.; Atlanta: Society of biblical Literature, 1999), and the "Index of Coptic Words" in Wisse and Waldstein, *The Apocryphon of John*, 213–232. Both are dependent upon W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939). For Coptic grammar, see Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983) and Bentley Layton, *A Coptic Grammar*, (Porta Lunguarum Orientalium: Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000).

112 See Michael M. Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus in John: Probes into the 'Apocryphon of John' and the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1990), 134–35.

from which she came, ignorantly and selfishly recreates that spiritual realm in the material sphere, even producing his own demonic derivatives (called "powers" and "angels," ἐξουσίαι and ἄγγελοι). In other words, the physical cosmos, with its primary ruler surrounded by ancillaries, is an unintended copy of the heavenly one.

Part two of *Ap. John* (34,12–82,3) provides an anthropogony that is from the outset soteriological. Earth-bound Humanity comes into existence not in a pre-fallen state but as part of a plan, a ruse really, by Sophia and her heavenly superiors to regain the divine aspect from Yaldabaoth. The contours of the narrative describing this ruse are set by the text of Genesis. The *Ap. John* reinterprets Moses' creation account as a cosmic battle between the forces of the heavenly Father (the Monad) and the earthly divine father, Yaldabaoth. Yaldabaoth is presented as an incompetent and malevolent form of the Mosaic creator God (i.e., Yahweh). While Yaldabaoth and his associates create the first human, the impetus for this comes when the holy mother-father (i.e., Barbēlō) allowed the divine image to be seen by them (cf. Gen 1:27). Yaldabaoth is then tricked into placing ("blowing", cf. Gen 2:7) into the human his power that he had received from his mother. What follows is a series of episodes, mirroring those in Gen 2–6, where Yaldabaoth tries to get his power back and where spiritual beings (especially Πρόνοια, a form of Barbēlō) continue to protect that power initially in Adam and then in Adam's son, Seth, and his progeny, the immovable race. This race is that part of humanity that persists through history having within them the divine aspect that had originally been in Yaldabaoth.

The revelation portion of the *Ap. John* ends with an account of the saving activity of Πρόνοια, i.e., Barbēlō (79,5–82,4; only present in NHC II and IV). Rendered in the first person, the account reads like a poem in three strophes, each describing a descent of Πρόνοια into the material realm.[113] The purpose of the descents (made clear in the third and longest strophe) is to awaken one of the immovable race and to guide that one back to his source. This poem appears to be a recapitulation of the theme of the whole work.

> [S]alvation for humans lies in the recollection effected by the hearing of this mythic narrative itself. To know this whole story is to remember what being human is all about, to understand, to awaken, to be streetwise, to

---

113 For a detailed discussion of the monologue see Michael M. Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue in the Apocryphon and the Johannine Prologue," *JECS* 3 (1995): 369–402.

have power to resist the devices of the evil creator, and to be restored to the divine household of Perfection after leaving the body.[114]

There are some suggestive data, internal and external to the treatise, which allow a likely reconstruction of the literary history of the *Apocryphon of John*. The narrative frames, which are clearly Christian in nature, bear little on the actual content of the revelation and so seem to be a result of subsequent Christianization of that material. The poem of Πρόνοια, which only occurs in NHC II and IV (copies of the same translation), would appear to be an addition, though the poem may in fact be as old or older than the rest of the myth.[115] Irenaeus of Lyon provides a synopsis of the teachings of *multitudo Gnosticorum Barbēlō* (*Haer* 1.29), a synopsis that follows the dual cosmogony in the first part of *Ap. John* (5,3–34,12) so well it seems likely that Irenaeus had before him a version of that work. The second part, the midrashic anthropology in 34,12–82,3, must have come later, though (more modest) parallel elements in the next chapter of *Haer.* (1.30) suggest that some form of this material was also available to Irenaeus. Allowing Irenaeus to provide the *terminus ad quem* for portions of the *Ap. John*, Turner conjectures its literary development took place primarily in the second half of the 2nd century CE.[116]

5.2.2.1. Similar Themes, Dissimilar Results

To develop its myth, the *Apocryphon of John* employs a number of terms and concepts with which we are already familiar from previous chapters in this study. We find here Jewish exegetical and wisdom traditions, Platonic terminology, and a concern for the relationship between creation and salvation. Any sense of familiarity is short lived however, as the *Ap. John* appears to appropriate these themes more for parody than promotion. Philo and Wisdom of Solomon witness to a confidence in

---

114 Williamson, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 12.

115 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 130. The Πρόνοια poem clearly does not fit with the Christian frame since it focuses on a feminine savior as opposed to Christ. Turner's argument for the dating of the poem as earlier than the rest of *Ap. John* is based upon affinities between the poem and the prologue to the Gospel of John and the Nasasene Hymn (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V.10.2) (see *Sethian Gnosticism*, 129–30).

116 Ibid., 143. He claims the shorter recension (BG and NHC III) came into being around 150 CE while the longer recension "may have been completed by the last quarter of the second century."

both their religious tradition and a turn-of-the-era Platonic *Zeitgeist*; they (or their sources) saw both as coherent with each other. The NT writings we surveyed suggest that early Christians preserved these traditions for the innovation of intermediacy, seeing in it a means to communicate the transcendent nature of the Son, i.e., Christ. However, the early Christians augmented this earlier innovation with their own, an emphasis on the historical Christ event. This augmentation may have been for corrective purposes, but Christians saw these inherited traditions (like the creation itself) as redeemable through Christ's earthly experience.

When it comes to the traditions it shares with both these Jewish and Christian writers, *Ap. John* does not share Philo's and Ps. Solomon's confidence nor does it make the same charitable efforts at rehabilitation as the early Christians. The creator god of Genesis is both malevolent and a fool, lacking transcendence in every possible way except parentage, and even with respect to that he is ill begotten. His mother, Σοφία, clearly related to personified Wisdom of Jewish tradition, is characterized by her lack of wisdom. (This is true for the figure who goes by that name – see below about how the personification of Jewish Wisdom looms large in the *Apocryphon* and is not constrained to just the αἰών of Ēlēlēth.)[117] Platonic traditions are not immune from these treatments either; the creator god so pilloried by *Ap. John* is also a parody of the demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*.[118]

What motivates this parody, this hermeneutics of suspicion from the late classical period? The answer to this question lies in the fact that even as *Ap. John* appears to undermine established (even authoritative) traditions with one hand, it embraces those same traditions with the other. This is clearly the case with respect to Platonism, since well before *Ap. John* maligns the demiurge it employs Platonic theological methodology to contemplate the Monad.[119] Furthermore, *Ap. John* uses paradigmatic constructs (εἰκών, ἰδέα, etc.) to discuss positively the creation of humanity; it even construes the material creation as a copy

---

117 For the influence of Jewish Wisdom on "Gnostic" writings in general, see George MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," *NovT* 12 (1970): 86–101.

118 See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 15–16.

119 See Michael M. Waldstein, "The Primal Triad in the *Apocryphon of John*," 155–162; *idem*, "The Apocryphon of John: A Curious Eddy in the Stream of Hellenistic Judaism" (Unpublished Manuscript from 1995, used here by author's permission, April 19, 2004), Part 2, chapter 2, 1–21. See below.

of the heavenly cosmos in somewhat positive (though only accidental) terms.[120] However, *Ap. John* also does the same thing with Judaism. In spite of the parodies of Yahweh and Σοφία mentioned above, the Sethian treatise positively appropriates the biblical tradition when (to name only a few instances) it construes the Monad as having the finer qualities of the Israelite God, his spiritual entourage as the equivalent of the biblical heavenly court, Barbēlō as the biblical Σοφία (with wisdom retained), and Seth and his progeny as bearing the divine image/spark. In other words, *Ap. John* is not involved in a wholesale repudiation of its Jewish and/or Platonic antecedents.

If it is not to every aspect of Judaism and Platonism, to what then is *Ap. John* negatively reacting?[121] Scholars have tended to see *Ap. John* as being anti-cosmic. However, as we have already discussed, its presentation of the material creation is not completely negative: Yaldabaoth unwittingly patterns it after the image of the heavenly cosmos. What makes physical existence so negative is not its material makeup but rather that it exists under the influence of the creator god and his powers. Notice that the same idea in both Judaism and Platonism is attacked, namely the quality of character of the creating god (the God of Genesis/the Demiurge of the Timaeus). Yaldabaoth's maleficent character is communicated in his claim to be the only divine being. *The Apocryphon of John* draws from Isaiah 45:5 (cf. 45:21, 46:9) when he speaks to his attending powers.

> For he [Yaldabaoth] said, "I am God and there is no other god beside me," for he is ignorant of his strength, the place from which he had come. (30,6–8)

Ap. John views the foolishness to be self-evident when Yaldabaoth claims to be a jealous god (cf. Exod 20:5, Deut 5:9). Again speaking to his powers,

---

120 For the creation of man in the divine image, see *Ap. John* 37,12–39,1. For the creation of the material cosmos, see 33,13–34,2: "And everything (N̄KA NIM = τὰ πάντα) he organized according to the model (ⲈⲒⲚⲈ) of the first aeons which had come into being so that he might create them in the pattern (ⲤⲘⲞⲦ, BG τύπος) of the indestructible ones. Not because he had seen the indestructible ones, but the power in him which he had taken from his Mother produced in him the likeness (ⲈⲒⲚⲈ) of the cosmos."
121 This does not assume that the *raison d'etre* for *Ap. John* is "protest exegesis" (see Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 54–79).

> he said to them, "I am a jealous God and there is no other God beside me."
> But by announcing this, he indicated to the angels who attended him that
> there exists another God. For if there were no other one, of whom would
> he be jealous? (34,5–12)

If, as we said above, the soteriological emphasis of *Ap. John* is the human
recollection of the divine aspect that exists within them, one could see
how these claims to singularity and (paradoxically) to jealousy would be
bothersome. What is more, this poser god claims sole divinity even
while he is enmeshed in managing the *physical* world (and doing so
intentionally to the detriment of humanity).

Michael Waldstein posits that the *Ap. John* operates from a different
experience of the divine.

> Here lies the key to the manner in which *Ap. John* re-interprets the
> traditions of Israel. The key lies in a new experience of the divine: the
> divine is new both in its radical transcendence as the unknowable Monad
> beyond being and divinity, and in its radical immanence as one in being,
> one in essence with the entire heavenly world, including the power, spirit
> or essence present in the seed of Seth.[122]

The experience Waldstein describes preserves both the transcendence of
the Deity and the divine origin of humankind, a sort of metaphysical
"having one's cake and eating it too" – though at the expense of the
creator god.

Our interest is in how the two, the transcendent Monad and the
earthly seed of Seth, are related (ontologically and historically) in the
Ap. John. We shall see that, in keeping with other writers who exist in
the trajectory of Middle Platonically inspired Judaism, the *Apocryphon*
relies on an intermediate spiritual reality to facilitate both the origins and
final destiny of humankind. As we might expect given the usual clarity
of the Nag Hammadi literature, this reality is so polymorphous it is
nearly amorphous. Still, we shall see that lying beneath her numerous
manifestations, divine Wisdom is present and active, following her
conventional role despite rather unconventional garb.

---

122 Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus in John," 140.

5.2.3. Intermediate Reality and the Cosmology of *Ap. John*

5.2.3.1. The Unknowable Monad Knows Himself

Irenaeus of Lyon begins his account of "the main tenets" of the *multitudo Gnosticorum Barbēlō* by saying:

> certain ones of them propose that there is a certain unaging aeon in a virginal Spirit whom they call Barbēlō. They say that a certain unnameable Father also exists there; and that this Thought came forth and attended him … .[123]

This introduction is interesting because it starts differently than the revelation in *Ap. John*. After the narrative frame, the revelation of *Ap. John* begins (5,3) with a discussion of the first principle and Barbēlō is not introduced until 10,18, anywhere from 2–5 pages later (depending on the version).[124] We cannot know whether Ireaneus did not have material describing the monad (5,3–10,17) in the version before him or just chose to reduce it to "a certain unnameable Father" (*Patrem quendam innominabilem*). What appears to be the case is that Irenaeus (or his source) focused on the character of Barbēlō, suggesting that in comparison a transcendent first principle was either unremarkable or an afterthought.[125]

Before we can assume this focus on Barbēlō ourselves it is worthwhile to note how *Ap. John* 5,3–10,17 describes the Monad.

---

123 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29. Translation is that of Wisse and Waldstein in *Apocryphon of John*, 189–93. They provide there (pp. 188–192) the Latin text (with modifications) from Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les Hérésies* (eds. A. Rousseau and L. Doutrelau, S. J.; 2 vols.; SC 263–264; Paris: Cerf, 1979), 358–64.

124 *Ap. John* 5,3–10,18 is approximately 2 pages of NHC II, 3 of NHC IV, 4(?) of NHC III and 5 of BG.

125 The section describing the monad may have been independent material added later to the *Ap. John*. Parallels exist between 5,4–8,4 and the 3rd century *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3) 62, 27–63,25. For a synopsis of theses parallels, see Wisse and Waldstein, *Apocryphon of John*, 184–187. For a discussion of Allogenes, see Antoinette Clark Wire "Introduction: NHC IX,3: Allogenes, 45,–69,20" in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 173–191, esp. 185–191 on the philosophical context of Allogenes.

The description involves a paradoxical combination of negative theology and a kind of *Allmachtformel*.[126] It begins:

> [The Monad,] since it is a unity (μοναρχία) and nothing rules (ἄρχειν) over it, [is] the God and Father of the All (ΠΝΟΥ[ΤЄ ΠЄ ᲐΥⲰ] ΠЄΙⲰΤ ΜΠΤΗΡϤ ΠЄ), the holy One, the invisible One, who is above the All (ᲒΪⲬΜ ΠΤΗΡϤ), who [exists as] his incorruption (ἀφθαρσία), [existing in] the pure light into which no light of the eye can gaze. He is the Spirit (πνεῦμα). It is not right to think of him as a god (Ν†) or something similar, for he is more than a god (Ν†) (5,3–14: BG).[127]

This introduction is typical of what follows. There are numerous names for the First Principle (Monad [supplied from NHC II], God, Father, Holy One, Invisible One, Spirit).[128] The names themselves hint at the paradox of the first principle as both source (ЄΙⲰΤ, "father") and beyond apprehension ("invisible" = ἀόρατος in NHC II; "exsiting in pure light into which no ... eye can gaze"). The First Principle is both associated with the All and yet distinct from it (it is "father of the All" yet "above the All"). Finally, the first principle can be called "God and Father" and yet we must understand that it is "more than a god" (ϤΟΥΟΤΒ ЄΝ†). This is followed by similar claims to the first principle's preeminence.

To explain the first principle, *Ap. John* employs well-developed argumentation that is "sophisticated and disciplined" and belongs to "mainstream Middle Platonic philosophy."[129] The argumentation first takes place in the *via negativa*: the first principle is "illimitable," "unreachable," "immeasurable," "invisible," "ineffable" and "unnamable" (*Ap. John* 6,8–19).[130] As with the claim that the first principle is not a god but more than a god, the argumentation continues in the *via eminentiae* (7,7–14) with claims such as:

---

126 See the discussion of *Allmachtformeln*, omnipotence formulae, in chapter four (regarding 1 Cor 8:6) as well as Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 243.

127 Ν†, one of the *nomina sacra*, is an abbreviation for ΝΟΥΤЄ (Wisse and Waldstein, *Apocryphon of John*, 218). Note also that when quoting from the Wisse and Waldstein Synopsis, we preserve their manner of referring to Greek terms in the singular nominative or (for verbs) infinitive.

128 Other names for the first principle occurring frequently are "the virginal Spirit" and "the invisible Spirit." See Waldstein, *Curious Eddy*, II.2 4.

129 Waldsetin, "Primal Triad," 161. Waldstein provides numerous philosophical parallels with *Ap. John*'s description of the first principle, most coming from Middle Platonism (ibid., 156–161).

130 For more on the *via negativa*, its philosophical origins and Philo's place as its first witness among Hellenistic Jews, see Winston, "Was Philo a Mystic?", 151–154.

He is neither (οὐδέ) pefection nor (οὐδέ) blessedness nor divinity, but (ἀλλά) he is something far superior to them. … He is not at all someone who exists but (ἀλλά) he is something superior to them not as (οὐχ ὡς) being superior, but (ἀλλά) as (ὡς) being himself.

This last claim makes it clear that the first principle is superior not in kind but in being something wholly different ("himself"); in other words, it remains beyond comprehension.[131] Even when *Ap. John* wishes to speak positively about the first principle (in the *via positiva*), it falls back on the *via negativa*. The first principle is "the eternal One, the One who gives eternity; the light, the One who gives the light, the life, the One who gives the life," etc (*Ap. John* 8, 14–16: BG). There is a whole cluster of such positive predicates (8,14–9,6), but in the middle of that cluster (9,4) we read that the first principle is these things "not on the basis that he possesses (them) but on the basis that he gives (them)." His essential nature, being more than all of these attributes, remains elusive.[132]

The result of this argumentation is the firm establishment of the transcendence of the first principle. Such a strong statement of transcendence sits awkwardly in the larger context of *Ap. John*. As the story transitions into the discussion of the emanation of Barbēlō and the Self-Generated and the subsequent creation of the All, we find all the heavenly host interacting with the first principle, petitioning and praising him.[133] The first principle's ineffable nature appears to be rather accessible to them as he answers their petitions and fosters their development: "All things ($\overline{\text{NKA}}$ NIM = τὰ πάντα) were established through the will of the holy Spirit (ⲈⲂⲟⲗ ⳟⲒⲦⲟⲦⳘ ⲘⲠⲟⲨⲱⳠ ⲘⲠⲈⲡⲛⲁ ⲈⲦⲟⲨⲁⲁⲃ)" (21,8–9: BG).

---

131 Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 159: "That Father … lies beyond membership in a larger whole. His superiority is not a relation inherent in him as a positive attribute. He is superior simply by being himself. He is a principle which is *sumus exsuperantissimus*, 'superior,' not in degree, but beyond and outside all that might encompass it."

132 Ibid., 161: "To say the Father is eternal, light, living, blessed, knowing, and good does not mean that these attributes belong to the Father in the primary sense. It means that the Father causes them in the beings of the cosmos. Only the particular beings of the cosmos possess the attributes in the primary sense; the Father does not. The point is not that the Father is defective, that he lacks eternity, light, life, blessedness, knowledge and goodness, but that his plenitude is more eminent than all particular instances of these attributes. The *via positiva* is, therefore, a particular instance of the *via negativa*."

133 Cf. Waldstein, "Primal Triad,"162.

5.2.3.2. From Transcendent Monad to Father of the All

How might the *Ap. John* reconcile the transcendence of the first principle with its involvement in the establishment of the All. An answer suggests itself in the next line (21,10): all things were established through the will of the holy Spirit *"through the Self-Generated"* (ⲈⲂⲟⲗ ϩⲒⲦⲟⲦϤ ⲘⲠⲀⲨⲦⲟⲄⲈⲚⲎⲤ). In other words, the first principle is involved in the development of the All by means of an intermediary. This is confirmed by the archetype of Adam (BG; NHC II: Piger-Adamas) who is established in the aeon of the first of the four luminaries, Harmozel. He praises the invisible Spirit, saying:

> It is because of you that the All has come into being, and it is to you that the All will return (ⲈⲦⲂⲎⲦⲔ ⲀⲠⲦⲎⲢϤ ⲱⲱⲠⲈ ⲀⲨⲱ ⲈⲢⲈⲠⲦⲎⲢϤ ⲚⲀⲚⲀⲨϩϤ ⲈⲢⲟⲔ). I shall praise and glorify you and the Self-Generated (αὐτογενής) and the triple aeon (ⲚⲀⲒⲱⲚ ⲠⲒϢⲟⲘⲚⲦ) – the Father, the Mother, the Son, the perfect (τέλειος) power (22,9–14).[134]

This statement by Piger-Adamas employs an All formula to denote the relationship of the (spiritual) cosmos with the first principle, a formula that appears to be similar to statements made in Romans 11:36 and 1 Cor 8:6a.[135] The claim for origination ("because of you the All has come into being") is balanced by a claim for return: "and it is to you that the All will return."[136] The balanced statement has a traditional ring. We are not surprised to hear that the All comes into being as a result of the first principle; this point was just made (see 21,8–9 above). However, the notion of the All returning to the first principle lacks any elaboration in the treatise. The statement was probably a liturgical piece

---

134 Translation modified. See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 34. Wisse and Waldstein, *Apocryphon of John*, reads in 22,13: "…and the three aeons (αἰών): the Father, the Mother and the Son,…." Layton says that the "triple aeon" (not "three aeons") refers to Πρόνοια "the Barbēlō; cf. [NHC II,]2:13f, 5:6f, and note 2b. "the triple aeon" is found in MS NHC III, the other MSS here have lit. 'the aeons, the three'" (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 34–35, n. 9b.).

135 Rom 11:36: ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα; 1 Cor 8:6a: εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν.

136 The fullest form of 22,10 is NHC II 9,8 (cited above): ⲈⲢⲈⲠⲦⲎⲢϤ ⲚⲀⲚⲀⲨϩϤ ⲈⲢⲟⲔ. BG 35,16 reads ⲚⲔⲀ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲈϩⲟⲨⲚ ⲈⲢⲟⲔ; NHC III 13,13 simply has ⲈϩⲟⲨⲚ ⲈⲢⲟⲔ. The three are relatively the same in 22,9 (except that for "the All" NHC II has ⲠⲦⲎⲢϤ while BG and NHC III have ⲚⲔⲀ ⲚⲒⲘ). If the shorter recension with its more terse second line is earlier, we could deduce even more clearly an All formula (usually pretty terse themselves) beneath it.

incorporated into *Ap. John* in a manner similar to the NT passages cited above.[137]

One notices that the All formula is part of a larger doxology, the praise of which is extended not only to the first principle ("the invisible Spirit") but to the Self-Generated (αὐτογενής) and "the triple aeon." These latter two are the third and second parts (respectively) of the divine triad, the Son and the Mother,[138] and they serve as the primary agents in bringing about the All. While it does not employ the prepositions similarly, this addition of intermediate agents in this doxology strengthens the similarity between *Ap. John* 22,9–14 and 1 Cor 8:6: "for there is one God the Father from whom are all things and unto him we are and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things and through him we are."

5.2.3.3. The Ontology of Barbēlō

Before we can describe the roles of Barbēlō and the Self-Generated in the creation of the All, we must first ask from whence these entities that bridge transcendence and the cosmic plenitude come. In short, they come from the thinking of the Monad.

According to *Ap. John* 9,14, the first principle exists "at rest, reposing in silence." Yet the first principle ("the Father" in 10, 3:NHC II) is not inactive for it thinks about itself. Again we find a paradox: the thinking of the first principle about itself is an extroverted activity. The *Apocryphon* provides a rather complex description of this paradoxical activity.

> It is he who contemplates (νοεῖν)[139] himself in his own light
>   which surrounds him,
> namely, the spring of living water,
> the light full of purity (εἰλικρινής)[140];

---

137 Compare the explicit liturgical elements (underlined) in Rom 11:36 (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ <u>ἡ δόξα</u> εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, <u>ἀμήν</u>) with *Ap. John* 22,8–10 (BG: I <u>glorify</u> you and <u>praise</u> you invisible Spirit. For it is because of you that the All has come into being and [it is] into you [that] the All [returns]).

138 The Mother, i.e., Barbēlō, is the "triple aeon." See n. 134 above.

139 Greek terms in this passage are in all extent copies unless otherwise noted. νοεῖν in *Ap. John* 10,5 occurs in NHC III and BG; NHC II has ϭⲱϣⲧ (look).

140 εἰλικρινής in *Ap. John* 10,8 occurs only in NHC III; NHC IV has ⲧⲃⲃⲏⲩ (purity).

> [and] the spring (πηγή) of the Spirit,
> which poured forth living water from itself.
> And he provided all aeons (αἰών) and worlds (κόσμος).
> In every direction he perceived his own image (εἰκών) by
>   seeing it in the pure (καθαρόν)[141] light-water which
>   surrounds him (*Ap. John* 10,5–17).[142]

The Spirit's thinking about itself is understood as literal reflection. An inexplicable spring (πηγή) of living (i.e., running) water comes forth from the Spirit and casts back its reflection in every direction it looks. Three aspects stand out about this process. First, the self-contemplation of the first principle has a substantive manifestation:: "the light full of purity (εἰλικρινής)" and "living water." *Ap. John* 10,16 combines the two into a compound, ⲡⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̅ⲕⲁⲑⲁⲣⲟⲛ, "pure luminous water" (lit: "pure water-light"). Second, this spring of luminous water provides the medium by which the reflection, i.e., the εἰκών, of the first principle is cast back at him. Third, the pouring forth of the luminous water is also associated with the first principle's provision of "all aeons (αἰών) and worlds (κόσμος)."

The self-contemplation of the Deity takes separate physical form (noted for its purity), produces a reflection of the Deity, and is associated with the provision of the All.[143] All of this is quite comparable to the description of Σοφία in Wis 7:24b–26.

> …and Σοφία pervades and penetrates all things (τὰ πάντα) because of her pureness (καθαρότης); for she is a breath (ἀτμίς) of the power of God and a pure emanation (ἀπόρροια εἰλικρινής) of the glory of the all mighty…; for she is a reflection (ἀπαύγασμα) of eternal light, a spotless mirror (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον) of the working of God, and an image (εἰκών) of his goodness.

As in the *Apocryphon*, Wisdom describes Σοφία as substance originating from the divine (ἀτμίς, ἀπόρροια), a substance, by the way, noted for its purity (καθαρότης, εἰλικρινής). Furthermore, Σοφία is a reflective entity

---

141 Καθαρός in *Ap. John* occurs in NHC III and BG; NHC II has ⲧⲃⲃⲏⲩ.

142 Translation of *Ap. John* 10,5–17 comes from Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 162–63. The line "which poured forth living water from itself" (10,10) follows NHC III 7,7 (II 4,20–21 has "poured forth from the living water of the light").

143 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 12.7, 1074b 33–34: "Therefore, Mind (i.e., God) thinks of itself, since it is what is best, and its thinking is the thinking of thinking (ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις)"; and Alcionous' Middle Platonic handbook (*Epit.* 10.3 (164.29–31): "Therefore it must be everlastingly engaged in thinking of itself and its own thoughts, and this activity of it is Form" (Trans: Dillon, *Alcinous*).

(ἀπαύγασμα) that serves as a medium (ἔσοπτρον) to cast the divine image (εἰκών).[144]

As we can see, Wisdom of Solomon has in a view a specific entity, Σοφία, who serves the role of cosmological agent, i.e., an intermediary between τὰ πάντα and ὁ Θεός. There is also a specific entity for *Ap. John.*

> And his thought (ἔννοια) became actual and she came forth and attended him in the brilliance of the light. She is the power before the All, who came forth. She is the perfect Providence (πρόνοια) of the All, the light, the likeness of the light, the image (εἰκών) of the invisible One, the perfect power, Barbēlō, the perfect aeon of glory,… (10,18–11,12: BG).

The passage describes an entity, female in gender, that is a product of divine thought; she is in fact that thought (ἔννοια) "made actual" (P̄ ΟΥϨΩΒ). Sharing qualities of the first principle (light, perfection, etc.) she attends it (ΩϨΕ ΕΡΑΤ⸗, perhaps "stands before it") and is its εἰκών.[145] At the same time, she is described in juxtaposition to the All; she is that which precedes the All, the first thought (or "providence", πρόνοια, a term suggesting subsequent thoughts to come). Finally, we note that this entity is named, suggesting it has some kind of personality. She is called ΒΑΡΒΗΛΩ,[146] though she is also referred to as πρόνοια, εἰκών,[147] the light, the perfect power, the perfect aeon.[148] While the meaning of Barbēlō is obscure, all of these other appellations point especially to her high ontological status.[149]

---

144 See the discussion of *Wisdom* 7:24–26 in § 3.1.2.1. Cf. Waldstein, "Curious Eddy," II.2 22.

145 See Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 165.

146 The meaning of the name Barbēlō remains a mystery. See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 15. For a review of the different hypotheses about the meaning of this name, see Michael Goulder, "Colossians and Barbēlō," *NTS* 41 (1995): 603–607 and Waldstein, "Curious Eddy," II.2 24–26.

147 We discuss the significance of Barbēlō as εἰκών below when dealing with her soteriological role.

148 Though her numerous descriptors are to a degree discombobulating, we ought not be surprised that *Ap. John* should introduce its intermediary thus. Recall that Philo uses multiple appellations in passages describing Σοφία (*Leg.* 1.43) and the Λόγος (*Conf.* 146). See my discussion of these Philonic passages in chapter three. In what follows we will, as often as possible, use the name Barbēlō to designate the second member of the primal triad.

149 Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 167: "The list of titles and attributes begins [in *Ap. John* 11,2–12] with Barbēlō's role as a mediator between the invisible Spirit and the All. Although she is such a mediator, she is not, the text insists, less than the

Clearly, Barbēlō shares characteristics with Jewish Σοφία. The question is whether we might say they are in some way related, perhaps even equivalent. The issue is obfuscated by the fact that a lesser aeon by the name of Σοφία is guilty of wrongly birthing the malcontent Yaldabaoth. We saw earlier that the *Ap. John*'s representation of the Israelite God is bifurcated; the transcendent aspects of Israel's God are retained for the first principle while his immanent aspects (with respect to his creation of the physical cosmos and his dealings with somatic humanity) are assigned to Yaldabaoth. It has been proposed that this is the case with *Ap. John*'s representation of Σοφία as well, again with the purpose of protecting the transcendent aspects of the divine attendant while positing her immanent aspects on a lesser entity.[150]

5.2.3.4. The Barbēlō and (Celestial) Cosmogony

Bifurcation extends to cosmogony as well in the *Apocryphon of John*. As with the first principle, Barbēlō's transcendence (her being ontologically related to the first principle, i.e., emanating from it and sharing its appearance and attributes) does not impede her relationship with the cosmos, at least in its celestial manifestation.[151] In fact, according to *Ap. John* 11,18–20, Barbēlō, the first thought (ΠϢΟΡΠ ⲘⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ) of the Monad, his εἰκών, "became the womb (μήτρα) of everything (ΠΤΗΡϤ), for it is she who is prior (ΠϢΟΡΠ) to them all, the Mother-Father (μητροπάτωρ)" (NHC II). In what ways is Barbēlō the source of the All?

---

invisible Spirit. She is not a first dimming of the invisible Spirit's light. Such dimming is affirmed only of the third member of the heavenly Triad, the Son (see *Ap. John* 15.12). Although she comes forth from the invisible Spirit's thinking, she is his very thought of himself. Although she comes forth from the invisible Spirit's providence (πρόνοια), she does so as his very own providence for the All. The immediacy of the invisible Spirit's presence in her implies that she is 'the perfect power' and 'the perfect aeon of glory.' For this reason she can receive one of the invisible Spirit's own distinctive attributes, 'virginal Spirit' [12,3: BG]."

150 MacRae, "Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," 89. It is interesting that with respect to the bifurcation of both Yahweh and Sophia that the more explicit characteristics (names, actions) are connected with the lesser manifestations.

151 Barbēlō's transcendent nature is evident by virtue of her relationship to the first principle. However, Waldstein rightly notes that *Ap. John* does not employ the rigorous argumentation and negative theology for describing her nature that it does for the first principle ("Curious Eddy," II.2 24).

Barbēlō's status as "womb" of the All is associated with her being the first thought (ἔννοια in BG). That is, she is a noetic entity in which resides (or from which derives) the entirety of the noetic cosmos. In Sethianism in general, Barbēlō, often referred to as πρόνοια, ἔννοια and the like, is the perfect aeon in which all other aeons exist, "the cosmic entity which contains the entire heavenly world apart form the Invisible Spirit."[152] Influencing this association is the Middle Platonic distinction between the transcendent first principle and its mind (νοῦς). In Middle Platonism, the νοῦς of the Monad often is a distinct place wherein are located the "ideas of god", the host of the cosmic ἰδέαι.[153]

Recognizing this influence is helpful in contemplating the whole of the heavenly cosmos apart from the first principle. We find ourselves again dealing with intermediate reality, the complexity of which is expressed in terms of layers of reality, one within another. There are several examples of this metaphysical layering. The first follows Barbēlō's emanation; she requests from the invisible Spirit and it consents in providing her foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις), indestructibility (ἀφθαρσία), eternal life, and truth. Barbēlō, as πρόνοια, along with these four, form a pentad. "This is the pentad of aeons of the Father, which is the first Man, the image (εἰκών) of the invisible (ἀόρατον) Spirit (πνεῦμα)" (14,13–15). A few lines later we see that the pentad (made up of androgynous aeons) is actually a decad.[154] Still, whether there are five or ten distinct abstractions, they all comprise basically one entity.[155]

The next example involves the emanation of the Self-Originate, the third member of the primal triad. Through a process of gazing one at the other, the invisible Spirit (i.e., the first principle) and Barbēlō give birth to a spark (σπινθήρ) of light (15,5–10).[156] This spark is the "unique

---

152 John H. Sieber, "The Barbēlō Aeon as Sophia in *Zostrianos* and Related Tractates" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 2:794.

153 See the discussion of Middle Platonism in § 2.2. See also the discussion of the λόγος as τόπος in Philo's *De opificio mundi* (§ 3.2.4.1).

154 Cf. *Ap. John* 15,2–3: "This is the androgynous pentad (πενάς) of aeons (αἰών) which is the decad (δεκάς) of aeons (αἰών)."

155 Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 31 n. 6a: "The quintet is made up of 'forethought' [πρόνοια] and its four emanations. The four emanations are here considered to be mere aspects of their source, so that also the quintet as a whole can be spoken of as 'the image of the invisible spirit,' i.e., as being forethought, the Barbēlō."

156 NHC II/IV say the spark is begotten when the invisible Spirit gazes at Barbēlō while BG and NHC III basically say the opposite, the spark is begotten when Barbēlō looks at the invisible Spirit. See the discussion of Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 170–71, who argues for the NHC III reading.

one" (μονογενής, 13), the "first born son" (16), who is also called the "divine self-generated" (αὐτογένητος, 15).[157] Unlike the aeons that comprised Barbēlō, there is a qualitative difference between her and the Self-Generated: "he is not equal in greatness" (15,12: NHC III). It is only after the Spirit anoints the Self-Generated with Christhood (or kindness) that "he became perfect, not lacking any Christhood (or kindness)" (16,4–5).[158] In this state of improvised perfection, the Self-Generated follows Barbēlō's example and requests from the invisible Spirit "Mind" (νοῦς).

> And when the invisible Spirit had consented, the Mind came forth, and he stood in attendance together with Christ [=Self-Generated], glorifying him and Barbēlō. And all these came to be in silence (17,1–5: NHC II).

Νοῦς here appears to be an aeon within the Self-Generated. This passage provides a note of completion to the process; certainly the primal triad has taken shape. What comes after, the All, appears to be a whole other level of spiritual being. We will address this in the next section.

The last example of the metphysical layering comes by way of noting the process of differentiation. When Barbēlō comes into existence, she immediately attends the first principle and praises him (11,14–16). Next, Barbēlō does not simply divide herself into the pentad. She first petitions the invisible Spirit for each aeon. Once the Spirit consents, the desired aeon comes into being. Upon arrival, each aeon praises both the invisible Spirit and Barbēlō (12,16–14,12). After the Self-Genearted is anointed (as if to emphasize his innate limitedness compared to Barbēlō), he attends and glorifies the invisible Spirit and Barbēlō (16,12–13). Again, when he desires Νοῦς, the Self-Generated petitions the Spirit. The Spirit consents, Νοῦς comes into being and immediately attends and glorifies Barbēlō and the Spirit (17,4–5). Thus,

---

157 On the title "Self-Generated" see Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 172: This term is used because "the coming forth of a divine hypostasis is the self-externalizing of a power already inherent in the origin; no causality foreign to or outside of the emerging figure is at work…. *Ap. John* may use the term αὐτογενής to underline that the Son does not passively receive himself from his origin, but actively comes forth form the origin."

158 In 16,3–18 and following, X̄P̄C̄ or X̄C̄ probably refers to the *nomen sacrum* (χριστός) but may refer to χρηστός. Both were pronounced the same. See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 32 n. 6h and Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 173–75. The Self-Generated is called Χριστός in *Ap. John* 17,2.

as Waldstein says, "Barbēlō establishes a pattern of three elements: emergence, ceremonial–liturgical attendance and glorification."[159]

The basis of the praise in this pattern is generation; subsequent aeons praise the entity(ies) responsible for their emanation. What is more, the recipients of praise ("glorification", δόξα/δοξάζω) increase as the spiritual universe expands. Barbēlō praises the first principle; her aeons praise both the first principle and Barbēlō. The Self-Generated and his aeons also praise Barbēlō alongside of the invisible Spirit.[160] And so on until we come to the archetypes inhabiting the four luminaries, the last emanations to be described before Σοφία's fall. Here we recall Piger-Adamas' statement in 22,9–14 (discussed above) that includes praise for all three members of the primal triad (the invisible Spirit, the Self-Genreated, and the triple aeon).

This depiction of heavenly reality combines Middle Platonic and Jewish conceptions of spiritual reality. Platonism contributes the notion of intermediate reality as a locus in which reside noetic entities. Judaism contributes the heavenly court imagery, associating the process of emanation with the liturgical activities of prayer, attendance and praise. By bringing these together it would appear that *Ap. John* has married Platonism and Judaism (at least in terms of its otherworldly aspects). But for all of its seeming variety, the picture of the spiritual realm is relatively simple. The simplicity lies with Barbēlō: she unites all things within her as noetic womb and she establishes the way of all things by her heavenly pattern.

This simplicity is of course not easy to grasp in the esoteric minefield of the *Apocryphon*. But to appreciate the function of intermediate reality as a cosmogonic force, a simple focus on the uniting figure of Barbēlō is imperative. When we focus on Barbēlō, instead of on lesser aeons, recognizing that she is the essence of emanative reality, we are of course led back to the first principle. Where we might easily see a distinction between Σοφία (the twelfth aeon) or Ēlēlēth (the fourth luminary) and the Monad, we have seen that the distinction between the Monad and Barbēlō is much less clear. The result of this is that we must recognize that in the cosmology of the *Ap. John*, because of Barbēlō's divine

---

159 Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 169.
160 *Ap. John* 17,17–20: "Eternal Life <with> his Will, and the Mind with Foreknowledge attended and glorified the invisible Spirit and Barbēlō, since they had come into being because of her" (NHC II).

nature, the ineffable One is not so removed from the lesser aeons. Waldstein's description of the intermediate reality is quite helpful.

> The system of emanations in which the Monad or the Father unfolds must thus not be conceived as a fixed system of distinct beings, each of which maintains its own irreducible identity. Quite on the contrary, figures emerge from the first depth with which they also are identical; remaining themselves, they encompass others like receptacles or general categories; they come to dwell in others and thereby identify themselves with them. The heavenly world is thus characterized by a highly varied iridescence, like the elusive play of colors on a soap-bubble or in an opal.[161]

5.2.3.5. The Self Generated and the Origin of the All

Even if the *Ap. John* sums up all heavenly reality in the person of Barbēlō, herself an ontologically related consort of the first principle, it does appear some parts of the "soap-bubble" are thinner than others. We have already seen that the Self-Generated is "not equal" to the "greatness" of Barbēlō (*Ap. John* 15,12).[162] This is particularly of interest because the Self-Generated is responsible for the creation and governance of the All. The following takes place after the Self-Generated petitions for and receives Mind.

> And the invisible Spirit[163] wanted to make (ⲉⲣ̅ⲟⲩϩⲱⲃ) something.[164] And his will became actual, and came forth, and stood in attendance together with the Mind and the Light, glorifying him. And the Word (λόγος) followed the Will. For through the Word (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲙ̅ ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ), Christ (Χριστός), the divine Self-Generated, created the All (ⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲕⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ) (17,7–16).

While there is some question whose desire it is to bring about the All, there can be no question that the process is different than any before or after in the heavenly cosmology of *Ap. John*. We have departed from emanationist language and here are dealing in making (ⲣ̅-ϩⲱⲃ) and creating (ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ).[165] Also distinct here is the use of a prepositional phrase

---

161 Waldstein, "The Mission of Jesus," 125–26.
162 *Ap. John* 15,12, discussed above, could be a claim that the Self-Generated is not equal to the invisible Spirit, but that would be obvious and not need expression.
163 NHC III/BG. NHC II/IV have "Mind" instead of "Inivisible Spirit".
164 NHC II/IV add "through the Word" (ϩⲓⲧⲛ̅ ⲡϣⲁϫⲉ).
165 In their "Index of Coptic Words", Wisse and Waldstein list the occurrences of ⲣ̅-ϩⲱⲃ and ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ in the different copies of *Ap. John* (*Synopsis*, 222–23, 229). ⲣ̅-ϩⲱⲃ, which describes the origination of both Barbēlō (*Ap. John* 10,18) and Yaldabaoth (25,7), most often refers to the process of creation, brought about

denoting instrumental agency (ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ϨⲒⲦⲘ̅ ⲠⲖⲞⲄⲞⲤ = διὰ λόγου), a construction that does not occur elsewhere in the *Ap. John*.[166]

To say the All was "created through the Word" is reminiscent of language we found in the Gospel of John (1:3: πάντα δι᾿ αὐτοῦ [i.e., τοῦ λόγου] ἐγένετο) and in Philo (e.g., *Spec.* 1.81: λόγος δ᾿ ἐστὶν εἰκὼν Θεοῦ, δι᾿ οὗ σύμπας ὁ κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο). However, there is a key difference. In John and Philo, the Λόγος was equivalent to the intermediate reality and had a strong association with ὁ Θεός. In the *Ap. John* "there is a further division of hypostases" since "the act of creation originates in the invisible Spirit, is assisted by the Triad of Mind, the Will and the Word and finally carried out by the Self-Generated through the Word."[167]

The cumulative result of this passage appears to be the diminishment of the creative process. There appears to be a bias at work here against demiurgic activity, even when that activity takes place in the heavenly realm. While not as severe as its treatment of Yahweh qua Yaldabaoth and his cosmogonic enterprise, the contrast with the Philonic and Johannine parallels mentioned above show that the *Ap. John* evinces a degradation of Jewish cosmogonic traditions in the creation of the All.

Furthermore, a correspondence between Yaldabaoth and the Self-Generated creates an interesting reading of the following passage (part of the larger pericope in *Ap. John* on the Self-Generated).

> [Χριστός, the Self-Generated] came forth through Providence (πρόνοια). And the invisible, virginal Spirit installed the divine true Self-Generated over the All. And he subjected to him every authority (ἐξουσία) and the

---

first by the Self-Generated who creates the All through his Word (17,7–8 and 14–16) and then (and most frequently) by Yaldabaoth and his powers (e.g., see NHC II 19,4, 10, 31 and 28,33) who create the physical human being. ⲦⲀⲘⲒⲞ refers to the same two events, the creation brought about by the Self-Generated via his agent (see above) and the creation, both of the lower cosmos and of earthly humanity in particular, brought about by Yaldabaoth and his powers (e.g., NHC II 10,24; 11,22, 24; 15,2ff.; 22,34; 29,23, and parallels). Hence, these two terms used in *Ap.John* 17,7–16 almost always refer to the creative (as opposed to the emanationist) process of origination.

166 A similar construction occurs in *Ap. John* 37,17–18: the invisible Spirit "is the Father of the All, through whom everything came into being (ⲠⲀⲒ̈ ⲈⲚⲦⲀⲠⲦⲎⲢϤ ϢⲰⲠⲈ Ⲛ̅ϨⲎⲦϤ)." The preposition ϨⲚ̅ can denote agency and so is similar to ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ϨⲒⲦⲘ̅, but the use of ϢⲰⲠⲈ ("become, be, exist"; see Smith, *A Concise Coptic English Lexicon*) does not suggest the same kind of demiurgic activity as Ⲣ̅-ϨⲰⲂ and ⲦⲀⲘⲒⲞ.

167 Waldstein, "Curious Eddy," 3.

truth which is in him, that he may know the All, he who had been called
with a name exalted above every name (18,11–17).

This passage echoes traditions about Christ as pantocrator (cf. 1 Cor
15:27–28; Phil 2:9, 3:21). At the same time, the passage could be read
as a view of creation the way it should be in contrast to the way it ends
up under the influence of Yaldabaoth. The insertion of "true Self
Generated" and "the truth which is in him" make particular sense read
against Yaldabaoth's folly.

To sum up the findings of this excursus on the relationship between
the Self-Generated and the All, the *Ap. John* has a mixed view on
creation. As we mentioned in the outline of the document, *Ap. John*
views the physical cosmos as having the positive attribute of being
modeled on the spiritual cosmos. Its problems lie with its creator,
Yaldabaoth, and the manner in which he creates (his selfish motiva-
tions). On the other hand, *Ap. John* views the spiritual cosmos ("the
All") as a natural part of the heavenly realm and connected with the
Monad via Barbēlō. But once again, its creator (who is "not equal in
greatness") and the manner of creation (increased division of labor) have
a vitiating effect on the quality of the All. All of this is communicated
through a negative reworking of established religious (and philosoph-
ical) traditions (e.g., Christianity, Hellenistic Judaism, and perhaps
Platonic *Timaeus* mythology).

5.2.4. Intermediate Reality and the Soteriology
of the *Apocryphon of John*

Recall from the synopsis provided earlier that there are two cosmologies
that comprise the first part of *Ap. John*, one spiritual and one physical.
We have discussed above the spiritual cosmos and the role of the
intermediate reality in its production. The creation of the physical
cosmos is patterned after the spiritual one, the key difference lying not
in the process of creation but in the causes. The intermediate characters
responsible for the physical creation (Σοφία, Yaldabaoth and his powers)
are distinguishable *only* in their improper motivations and thinking. This
being the case we will not explore the physical cosmology in our study.
Of course, that decision alone points to a key difference between this

and previous texts we have studied. Physical creation is not a work
(intentionally) of Barbēlō but a problem for her to solve.[168]

The problem physical creation presents is the reacquisition of the
divine power stolen by Yaldabaoth from his mother (see 26,6–15). A
detailed account of the heavenly effort to procure back this power is
beyond the scope of our study. Instead,we will focus on two specific
aspects of this effort, both facilitated by Barbēlō and both involving
humanity. First, we will consider how she employs her status as εἰκών of
the first principle to reacquire the divine power. Second, we will
consider the πρόνοια monologue for what it has to say about Barbēlō's
efforts to rescue humanity. The reason for focusing on Barbēlō should
be obvious; our study has shown her to be the primary agent of creation
in the (heavenly) cosmology of *Ap. John*. Hence, we will now consider
two ways she serves as its primary agent of salvation.

5.2.4.1. Recasting the Anthropology of Genesis

We pick up the story after Σοφία repents and confesses to the holy spirit
and is placed on a path of penitence (36,3–37,5). Barbēlō then begins
her effort at reclaiming the stolen power.

> And a voice came forth from the exalted aeon-heaven: "The Man exists
> and the Son of Man." And the Chief Ruler, Yaltabaoth, heard (it) and
> thought that the voice had come from his Mother. And he did not know
> from where it came. And he taught them (the powers), namely the holy
> and perfect Mother-Father, the perfect Providence, the image (εἰκών) of
> the invisible One, who is the Father of the All, through whom everything
> came into being,[169] the first Man, for in a human (ἀνδρέος) form (τύπος) he
> revealed his appearance. And the whole aeon of the Chief Ruler trembled,
> and the foundations of the abyss shook.
>
> And of the waters which are above matter (ὕλη), the underside was
> illuminated by the appearance of this image which had been revealed. And
> when all the authorities and the Chief Ruler looked, they saw the whole
> region below illuminated. And through the light, they saw in the water the
> form (τύπος) of the image (εἰκών) (37,6–38,14).

Barbēlō's strategy for reclaiming the stolen power centers on the
revelation of the divine εἰκών. The nature of this revelation is
anticipated in the heavenly announcement: "The Man exists and the

---

168 We should understand Yaldabaoth to be qualitatively different from, if still
     related to, Barbēlō.

169 See the discussion above concerning instrumentality and the Self Generated.

Son of Man."[170] The εἰκών that is shown down upon the waters, the revelation that causes the physical creation to tremble and shake, is the form (τύπος) of a man (ἀνδρεῖος). However, in this story the human form belongs preeminently to the Monad, "the Father of the All," who is "the first Man."

The ruse worked. Yaldabaoth and his powers were smitten by this image and decided to "create (ΤΑΜΙΟ) a man according to the image of God and according to our likeness, that his image may become a light for us" (38,16–19; cf. Gen 1:26). Their creation, a psychic (ψυχικός) human body, remains inanimate until emissaries of Barbēlō again trick Yaldabaoth. They persuade him to "Blow into [the inanimate human's] face something of your spirit (πνεῦμα) and body will arise" (52,6–7; cf. Gen 2:7). When he does this, Yaldabaoth unwittingly passes along to the human body the divine power he had stolen from his mother. The human body quickens and becomes luminous with an intelligence greater than Yaldabaoth or his powers (see 52,16–53,9), causing them to cast him even further down "into the lowest region of all matter (ὕλη)" in a fit of jealous rage (53,12).

Before the powers can accomplish this, however, Barbēlō again intercedes.

> But the blessed One, the Mother-Father, the beneficent and merciful One … sent, through his beneficent Spirit and his great mercy, a helper (βοηθός) to Adam, a luminous reflection (ἐπίνοια), who comes out of him, who is called 'Life' (ζωή) (Gen 3,21 LXX). And she assists the whole creature (κτίσις) by toiling with him, and by restoring him to his perfection (πλήρωμα) and by teaching him about the descent of his seed [or defect][171] and by teaching him about the way of ascent, (which is) the way he came down (53,11–54,14: NHC II).[172]

Positively interpreting the provision of Eve in Gen 2, Barbēlō, whose graciousness is not understated, provides ἐπίνοια as a helper to Adam. In a nod to the general anagogic purpose of the *Apocryphon*, ἐπίνοια assists the first human by teaching him about his descent and the way of ascent. What is more, even as Adam is "brought into the shadow of death" and burdened down by earth, water, fire and the spirit that "originates from matter, which is the ignorance of darkness and desire" and so becomes

---

170 This may be a response to the claim by Yaldabaoth that "there is no other god beside me" in 34,7.
171 NHC III/BG have ὑστέρημα instead of σπέρμα (in NHC II/IV).
172 Modified translation according to Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 44.

"a mortal man," ἐπίνοια remains hidden within him (55.15–56,10). She is "the one to awaken his thinking."

Though the story continues, the above provides us with enough material to contemplate the saving ways of Barbēlō. We find that *Ap. John* works out its anthropology using the standard texts from Genesis (1:26; 2:7; 2:21). The method of interpretation is *in nuce* familiar. From our study of Philo we are not surprised to see philosophically suggestive terms in the text, such as εἰκών, πνεῦμα, ζωή, co-opted for allegorical interpretation. Unlike Philo, however, the philosophical interpretation of Genesis in *Ap. John* is from the beginning focused on soteriology.

5.2.4.2. Soteriological Anthropogony

In *Ap. John* anthropology is soteriology. Anthropology is soteriology in that the creation of earthly humanity is part of an effort to regain Σοφία's lost power. If we are permitted to speak of a "fall" in the *Ap. John* it is with this loss of power and it is an event that takes place *before* Genesis 1:1. The *Apocryphon* reinterprets the Genesis texts describing Adam's and Eve's creation, their encounter with the forbidden fruit, and the experiences of their progeny so that they are all about efforts on the part of Barbēlō to regain that power. The intriguing result of this way of reading Genesis is that it allows the advent of humanity to retain its nobility even as the creator God succumbs to parody.

The nobility of humanity, in either way of reading Genesis, is in its having the *imago dei*. Hence, anthropology is also theology. In *Ap. John* the introduction of the εἰκών into the physical universe is a reenactment of the introduction of the εἰκών into the spiritual universe (10,4–16). In both cases, there is the reflection of the divine εἰκών upon water. Where Yaldabaoth and his powers see the εἰκών reflected off "waters which are above matter," (38,4–5), the invisible Spirit looks upon his own image reflected upon water that originally came from him (10,13–17). However, the effect is the same. The invisible Spirit reacts similarly to Yaldabaoth and his powers by acting upon his "desire" (ΟΥΩϢ) for what he sees.

> And in every direction he [perceives] his image (εἰκών) by seeing it in the spring of the [Spirit]. It is he who puts his desire in his [water]-light [which] surrounds him. And [his thought became] actual and she came forth, namely she who had appeared before him in the shine of his light (10,13–11,1: NHC II/IV).

The captivating nature of the divine εἰκών is reminiscent of the intermediary Ἄνθρωπος in the *Corpus Hermeticum* who beguiles both the supreme God (1.12; he "loves" [ἐράω] him) and the cosmic διοικηταί (1.13; again οἱ ἠράσθησαν αὐτοῦ). The key difference in *Ap. John* is what comes from this desire. The invisible Spirit brings forth Barbēlō while Yaldabaoth and his powers only produce an inanimate copy

The production of an inanimate body may seem anticlimactic. However, the creation of humanity is a process in *Ap. John* and the casting of the divine image and the creation of the body are but first steps in this process. Furthermore, it is a process where Barbēlō is involved from the beginning and what she provides is not simply direction but her own self. She is herself the εἰκών that shines down upon the physical waters and becomes the paradigm for earthly humanity.

Furthermore, her anthropogonical role is tied up with (not ancillary to) her divine nature; she is the paradigm for humanity inasmuch as she is the divine εἰκών. Hence, in the account of Barbēlō's emanation from the invisible Spirit, she is described thus:

> This is the first thought, his image, she became the womb of everything, for it is she who is prior to them all, the Mother-Father, *the first Man*, the holy Spirit, the thrice-male, the thrice-powerful, the thrice-named androgynous One, and the eternal aeon among the invisible ones, and the first to come forth (*Ap. John* 11,18–12,11; emphasis added)

Now, when the heavenly voice is heard by Yaldabaoth and his associates we read:

> And he taught them (the powers), namely the holy and perfect Mother-Father, the perfect Providence, the image (εἰκών) of the invisible One, who is the Father of the All, through whom everything came into being, *the first Man*, for in a human (ἀνδρεῖος) form (τύπος) he revealed his appearance (37,13–38,1; emphasis added).

In both instances, Barbēlō's emanation and her worldy manifestation, we see that among her descriptors is the claim that she is "the first Man,"[173] or the image thereof. In other words, human nature is associated with the divine nature. In her efforts to reclaim the divine essence lost by Σοφία, Barbēlō brings about an earthly counterpart to the divine form to serve as a suitable receptacle for that essence. This results

---

173 "First Man" translates ⲡⲉϩⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ in NHC III/BG and ⲡϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ in NHC II/IV.

in humanity that has both a transcendent and an immanent manifes-
tation, with Barbēlō serving as the connection between the two.[174]

But Barbēlō's task is not completed with the production of the
human body. As we saw, its production only results in a suitable
receptacle for the divine power stolen by Yaldabaoth. Hence, it is when
Yaldabaoth blows his stolen power into the human body that the body
comes to life. It is then that image and substance meet and Adam
becomes a luminous, living being. Furthermore, we might recall that
Barbēlō is not just an image of the first principle. Like Pseudo-
Solomon's Σοφία who is the breath and emanation of God, Barbēlō is
the luminous water that comes from the Invisible Spirit and all of
heavenly reality that comes after her shares (somehow) in her essence.
Hence, the divine power that enters into the human body is part of
Barbēlō herself. She thereby comes to inhabit her own form.

5.2.4.3. Barbēlō as Anagogue

It must again be repeated that this is only the beginning of the process of
reclaiming the lost power of Σοφία. Even though Adam becomes a
living, luminous being he remains at the mercy of Yaldabaoth and his
powers. We recall that, out of jealousy, they cast the human down into
the lower regions of the material universe (*Ap. John* 53,8–12). However,
Barbēlō provides him with ἐπίνοια, "reflection" or "afterthought," who
works "to awaken his thinking."Ἐπίνοια is the human's βοηθός, his
helper (cf. LXX Gen 2:18, 20); she toils alongside the human, seeking
to restore him to his πλήρωμα by teaching him about his descent and
the way of ascent (53,19–54,10).[175] Since ἐπίνοια comes out of the
Mother-Father, i.e., Barbēlō, we may understand her as an immanent
manifestation of Barbēlō, her purpose being to foster the return of that
which is truly human to the "First Man."

---

174 Cf. Philo, *Her.* 231; and *Poimandres* (*CH* 1): 12–14. In Philo, *CH* 1, and *Ap.
John* we observe that the creation of sense-perceptible humanity is brought
about on the basis of a noetic precursor, the essential and quite divine human
being.

175 Ἐπίνοια's mission is similar to Σοφία's as described in Wis 9 and 10 and to
Poimandres in *CH* 1.24–26.

This is supported by the πρόνοια monologue toward the end of the longer recension of *Ap. John* (79,5–82,3; NHC II/IV).[176] The monologue, which most likely existed separate from the *Apocryphon* and perhaps predates it, relates the experiences of a heavenly being who "entered into the realm of darkness," "the middle of the prison," i.e., the physical cosmos.[177] While in the setting in the longer *Apocryphon* the identity of πρόνοια is Jesus Christ, this seems to be only a product of later redaction. The actual identity of πρόνοια is obscured by the alternation of gender in terms of the titles and grammar that occur in the monologue, though the consistent reference to herself as πρόνοια (79,4, 24, and 80,35) suggests the speaker is ultimately female. This, combined with πρόνοια's description of her entry into and return from the physical realm, "strongly resembles Jewish stories about the descent and re-ascent of pre-existent Wisdom."[178] Of course, it also resembles the efforts of Barbēlō (frequently identified as or associated with πρόνοια elsewhere in *Ap. John*)[179] to rescue the lost divine power.[180] It is this association between πρόνοια and Barbēlō that makes the monologue an appropriate recapitulation to Barbēlō's salvific efforts.

---

176 The most complete analysis of the Pronoia monologue in *Ap. John* is Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue."

177 On the date of the monologue and its relationship to the composition of the *Apocryphon of John* see Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 388–393. See also Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 130–136.

178 Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 394. If, as Waldstein believes, Sophialogical traditions underlie the πρόνοια monologue, we are not surprised to find gender confusion with respect to the corresponding intermediary. As with Philo and the NT passages, the longer *Ap. John* rescribes a female intermediate entity as a male intermediary. On the other hand, the alternation of gender that exists *within* the monologue resembles the alternation of gender with respect to Barbēlō. On the descent of Wisdom, see Excursus #6 in § 4.4.3.4.

179 Waldstein points out that the longer version of *Ap. John* includes references to πρόνοια at several places (NHC II 6,5; 7,22; 14,20; 23,24; 23,29; 24,13; and 28,2) that are not included the shorter recension. He explains: "In each of these cases it is probable that the longer version inserted a reference to Providence consistent with the Monologue," all of which creates "a general pattern of emphasis on Providence as the prime agent of revelation in the longer version" ("The Providence Monologue," 392).

180 The Monologue account of πρόνοια's descending into the physical world resembles but is not identical to the narrative of Barbēlō and/or her agents from early in the *Ap. John*. In particular, the monologue makes no mention of Yaldabaoth or his powers (see below).

The monologue describes the revelatory nature of πρόνοια by means of three strophes (79,5–17; 79,18–80,8; 80,9–82,3). These strophes, which each appear to describe three separate descents by πρόνοια, have the same basic structure: they each relate πρόνοια's going forth as a representation of heavenly reality and the results of her journeys.[181] At the same time, the strophes work together to form a progression so that πρόνοια's mission of revelation comes to fruition (and receives its clearest articulation) in the third strophe.[182]

We will focus on this third strophe below, but before doing so it is worthwhile to note two aspects all three strophes share. First, they focus on πρόνοια as being simultaneously the embodiment of divine reality and its immanent expression. She is "the richness of the light" (79,10) and "the light which exists in the light" (80,10); she is the "perfect πρόνοια" (79,5) while at the same time being "the remembrance of the πλήρωμα" (79,11) and "the remembrance of the πρόνοια" (79,20). In the second strophe, πρόνοια makes her re-ascent by means of "my root of light" (80,7). However, in the third strophe, she exhorts her human initiate: "follow your root, which is I, the merciful One" (81,11–12).

The second aspect all three strophes share is a negative view of the physical creation. Recall that in the *Ap. John* proper, the physical creation is not viewed negatively in itself but by virture of its relationship to Yaldabaoth and his powers. (The physical creation is in fact a copy, however imperfect, of the heavenly realm.) Where earlier in the *Apocryphon* Yaldabaoth and his powers were the culprits, the monologue instead more clearly focuses its ire on the physical cosmos (πρόνοια refers to physical creation as "darkness," "Hades" and a "prison"). The antipathy is mutual and the natural forces (epitomized as "the foundations of χάος") react violently when πρόνοια makes her descent.[183] This recation causes her to abort (seemingly) her efforts, for a second time, lest her "seed" suffer harm (cf. 80,5–6).[184]

----

181 Specifically, the three elements of the strophes are: 1) πρόνοια makes a general reference to her goings forth (79,5–9//79,18–23//80,9); 2) she provides a description of herself (79,10–11//79,20//80,10–11); and 3) she provides the specifics of her journeys (79,12–17//80,1–8//80,12–82,3).

182 Multiple attempts at illumination is a motif of Jewish Wisdom and related literature (cf. *1 Enoch* 42, Wis 7–10 [esp. 7:27], and John 1:1–18 and see the discussion of the latter two references in chapters three and four).

183 These forces may in fact be the Yaldabaoth's powers but the monologue stresses their affinity with nature more than the *Apocryphon* narrative. This identification seems justified given the warning that comes later in the monologue

It would seem that the first two attempts at revelation contribute to πρόνοια's success on her third try, like waves which have greater effect with each fall upon the shore.[185] Her third descent is her revelatory *coup de grâce*.

> Still for a third time I went – I am the light which exists in the light, I am the remembrance of Providence (πρόνοια) – that I might enter into the midst of darkness and the inside of Hades. And I filled my face with the light of the completion (συντέλεια) of their aeon (αἰών). And I entered into the midst of their prison which is the prison <of> the body (σῶμα).

> And I said, "He who hears, let him get up from the deep sleep." And he wept and shed tears. Bitter tears he wiped from himself and he said, "Who is it that calls my name, and from where has this hope (ἐλπίς) come to me, while I am in the chains of the prison?"

> And I said, "I am the Providence of the pure light; I am the thinking of the virginal Spirit, who raises you up to the honored place. Arise and remember that it is you who hearkened, and follow your root, which is I, the merciful One, and guard (ἀσφαλίζειν) yourself against the angels

---

about the "angels (ἀγγελός) of poverty and the demons (δαίμων) of chaos (χάος)" (81,14–15), especially given that the latter parallels "foundations of χάος."

Some have argued that the monologue is referring to Yaldabaoth's powers in 79,15–17 ("And the foundations of chaos shook. And I hid myself from them because of their wickedness, and they did not recognize me") and 80,4–6 ("And the foundations of the chaos shook, that they might fall down upon those who are in chaos and might destroy them.") See George MacRae, "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts," in *Le origini dello gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13–18 Aprile 1966* (ed. Ugo Bianchi; SHR 12; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 500. Waldstein counters that Πρόνοια appears to be concerned about avoiding "their" destruction and so must be thinking of her own seed, currently suffering the effects ("wickedness," lack of recognition) of their physical environment ("The Providence Monologue," 376). In other words, "the foundations" and "they" (the ones who are wicked and unrecognizing and who "in chaos") refer to two different groups.

184 Πρόνοια aborts her first journey because of the "ill-prepared wickedness of her potential followers" (Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 133) and her second journey because the natural forces were on the verge of imploding, taking those potential followers (her "seed") with them.

185 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 135: "Although the Pronoia monologue is somewhat ambiguous on this point, it seems that each successive descent takes Pronoia more deeply into the realm of darkness: at first unnoticed by the powers of chaos, then noticeably shaking the foundations of chaos, thus alerting the powers of the impending end of their aeon, and finally entering the body of her seed who recognize her and raising them beyond the grip of death by means of the Five Seals." On the "Five Seals" see below.

(ἄγγελος) of poverty and the demons (δαίμων) of chaos (χάος) and all those who ensnare you, and beware of the deep sleep and the enclosure of the inside of Hades.' And I raised him up and sealed (σφραγίζειν) him in the light of the water with five seals (σφραγίς), in order that death might not have power over him from this time on. And behold, now I go up to the perfect aeon (80,9–17, 81,5–82,3).

This portion is considerably longer than the previous two strophes, having, in addition to an aretalogy (the same form as the previous strophes), an exhortative "call to awakening."[186] The action of the monologue centers on πρόνοια's now successful approach to her seed (represented by a singular initiate) in its prison, reassuring the jubilantly tearful prisoner that she is available to him as an anagogue.[187] Her activity on his behalf involves revelation: she exhorts him to "arise" to remember, to follow and to be on guard. She also performs a more concrete action on his behalf, "sealing him in the light of the water with five seals," thereby protecting him from death.[188] Hence, πρόνοια is both a guide and a redeemer to wayward humanity.

What stands out in this passage is how πρόνοια, tied so closely to transcendent reality, employs those ties in her efforts on behalf of humankind. The ties with transcendent reality are in fact very strong: "I am the Providence of the pure light; I am the thinking of the virginal

---

186 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 133. Turner argues that the call to awakening was an originally independent tradition. On the call to awakening see also MacRae, "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts," 497. Compare Ephesians 5:14 ("Wake up, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you.") as well as the words of the newly commissioned Hermes in *CH* 1.27: "People, earthbound men (ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς), you who have surrendered yourselves to drunkenness and sleep and ignorance of god, make yourselves sober and end your drunken sickness, for you are bewitched in unreasoning sleep" (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 6).

187 The coming of πρόνοια into the physical cosmos appears to parallel the incarnation of Jesus, especially as presented in the prologue to the Gospel of John. While there are affinities between the two, there is no clear literary relationship. Waldstein is probably correct that what the two have in common is a shared religious *Vorleben*, specifically the same Jewish Sophialogical and exegetical traditions ("The Providence Monologue," 398–402). On whether the monologue has in mind an incarnation of πρόνοια see below.

188 The background to the sealing with the five seals in the light of the water (*Ap. John* 81,20) is probably a Sethian baptismal liturgy. See Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 386–87; and John Turner, "Ritual in Gnosticism," in Eugene H. Lovering, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 139–47.

Spirit" (81,6–7). These attributes remind one of Barbēlō who was the Monad's thought made actual (10,18) and who came to be in a flood of light (10,16). Yet this "light which is in the light" enters into "the midst of darkness and the inside of Hades" (80,12–13). Barbēlō, or a figure of her stature, is here making a journey into what amounts to her ontological antithesis. This journey is more controversial than the anagogic activity of Σοφία in Wisdom of Solomon or the Λόγος in Philo's writings. Physical creation may be severely limited or even a hindrance for Philo and Pseudo-Solomon, but the corporeal cosmos that the monologue describes is inhospitably hostile.

Yet is this the same kind of controversy we espied in the NT where the λόγος becomes flesh (John 1:14) or πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα dwelt willingly in the Son (Col 1:19)? In other words, does the monologue envision an incarnation of πρόνοια similar to (if not identical with) Jesus'? If so, the monologue is woefully short on details about this. The third strophe does make the claim that πρόνοια "entered into the midst of their prison which is the prison <of> the body (σῶμα)" (80,16–17). Yet this does not need to imply incarnation; πρόνοια had entered into the prison of physical creation twice before in the monologue (79,14; 80,1–2) without herself being imprisoned.[189] This is more akin to what occurs in *Ap. John* 54,7 when Barbēlō assigns ζωή a place with the first human even as he is cast down into the "lower regions of matter."

There is further evidence that a myth similar to the *Apocryphon* (if not that same one) underlies the monologue when it comes to πρόνοια's message to her initiate. Even though she makes a great and perilous

---

189 Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 380. The introduction to the monologue is suggestive: "I turned myself into my seed" (79,5). Waldstein, who does not see this statement as belonging to the monologue originally ("The Providence Monologue," 389–91), does not see it as necessarily implying incarnation. He appeals to the shorter version of *Ap. John* 79,7 (NHC III and BG) which has ϫⲓ ⲘⲞⲢⲪⲎ ("take form, be formed") instead of ϢⲒⲂⲈ ("change" or "transform" in Smith, *Concise Coptic-English Lexicon,* 42; "turn" in Wisse and Waldstein's translation). ϫⲓ ⲘⲞⲢⲪⲎ "appears in a number of Gnostic writings, both Valentinian and non-Valentininan, as a synonym of 'being perfected, restored, rectified'…." The first line (79,5) of the monologue can be read as "affirming that Providence takes form in her seed. Providence's opening statement need nto be understood as, 'I changed myself into my seed,' in the sense of 'I underwent an incarnation.' 'I changed,' ⲁⲓ̈ⲰⲂⲦ, can be a translation of the Greek ἐμορφώθην, equivalent to ⲁⲓ̈ϫⲓ ⲘⲞⲢⲪⲎ: I, therefore, the perfect Providence of the all, took form in my seed; I perfected and rectified it" (Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 381–82).

journey from the light, the revelation πρόνοια provides the prisoner is something not wholly alien to this human. In fact, her revelation is really one of self-recognition: the initiate is told to "remember that it is you who hearkened" (81,9–10) and to "follow your root" (81,10). In other words, the monologue *presupposes* that this is a mission of reclamation and not implantation. The initiate need only become aware of his situation (to wake up) and then to engage in the way of ascent, a way that involves "following his root," that is, coming to an awareness of what he truly is. What is presupposed here is spelled out in the earlier narrative of *Ap. John*, namely how it is the root came to be locked up in this prison.

Also spelled out in the *Apocryphon* narrative is the violent reaction of Yaldabaoth and his powers. It is likely this reaction that spawns πρόνοια's warning that acompanies her call to wake up. The initiate must "guard yourself against the angels of poverty and the demons of chaos and all those who ensnare you" (81,13–16). As we know from earlier in the monologue, there are physical forces hostile to πρόνοια and especially to her seed ("And the foundations of chaos shook, that they might fall down upon those who are in chaos and might destroy them." [80,4–6; cf. 79,15]). Yet, in spite of this warning, the monologue also suggests that πρόνοια's third and successful advent signals the final defeat of these forces: "And I filled my face with the light of the completion of their aeon" (80,14–15). Waldstein explains:

> When she fills her face with "the light of the completion of their aeon," i.e., when she openly reveals herself as the light of the divine world [*Ap. John* 79,10; 79,23; 80,10], Providence brings about the end of the aeon in which her potential followers are imprisoned. Her self-revelation not only shakes the foundations of chaos…; it destroys the power of the material cosmos altogether and thereby liberates those imprisoned in it.[190]

The destruction of the worldly aeon comes from undoing the efforts of its forces to keep the divine power, here "the root," to themselves. The warning concerning "the deep sleep and the enclosure of the inside of Hades" (81,17–18), which follows on warnings regarding the angels of poverty and demons of chaos, may in fact refer to the work of those forces to secure the luminous root. When πρόνοια arouses her prospective follower with the words "He who hears, let him get up from the deep sleep" (80,19) she is simultaneously ending the reign of the forces of darkness and reclaiming what was once lost: "Arise and

---

190 Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 380.

remember that it is you who hearkened, and follow your root, which is
I."

By raising the human up and sealing him with luminous water
(81,20; recalling her own origin), πρόνοια makes it so "that death might
not have power over him from this time on." Then, with a sense of
completion she says: "And behold, now I shall go up to the perfect
aeon" (82,2–3). Having liberated humanity, πρόνοια departs. One
wonders whether this ascent is meant to leave the illuminated and sealed
human in the physical cosmos for a time (as Poimandres leaves Hermes
in *CH* 1.27). This is what happens in the narrative frame immediately
following the monologue: "I have completed everything in your
hearing. And I have said everything to you that you might write them
down and give them secretly to your fellow spirits, for this is the
mystery of the immovable race" (82,4–9; cf. 82,14–16; 83,4–6;).

It may also be that πρόνοια's ascent somehow marks the salvation of
her human followers; certainly, her goal was to raise them up "to the
honored place" (81,8). As they become aware of what she has taught
them, they are able to know themselves, that they are in fact part of
πρόνοια. Thus are they enabled to follow her up her "root of light"
(80,7) to that "honored place" which is the "perfect aeon" of the
"perfect πρόνοια." The human being is thereby restored to its rightful
place alongside (inside?) the "virginal Spirit."[191] Left behind are the
ruinous remains of worldly forces that were never meant to be.

---

191 Cf. Waldstein, "The Providence Monologue," 397: Πρόνοια's "revelation
brings the listener to a knowledge of the self, described as awakening, and this
knowledge coincides with knowledge of the divine. It is on the basis of this
understanding of salvation as awakened identity of the inner self with the
divine, that one can interpret Providence's relation to the 'virginal Spirit,' the
highest divine principle. She functions as the bond of continuity which reaches
from the 'virginal Spirit' all the way into the self of the listener…. All her true
listeners become aware that their inner identity, concealed and imprisoned in
their bodies, is nothing but Providence herself. Their salvation consists in
coming to know their inner unity of being with her, 'Follow your root, which
is I … .'"

5.3. Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter began by referencing Michael Williams's definition of "biblical demiurgical myths" (né "Gnosticism") as writings that "made a distinction between the creator(s) and controllers of the material world and the most transcendent divine being, and in so doing made use of … scriptural traditions." For *Poimandres* and *The Apocryphon of John*, exemplars of such myths, the Genesis cosmogony and anthropogony provide a narrative framework the authority of which they can neither deny nor abide. Hence, their own narratives simultaneously deconstruct and rebuild the biblical ur-myth, remodeling it to better reflect their convictions about the nature of God and humanity. The conceptual tools by which they perform this remodeling are familiar to us; they stem from Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine mediated largely through Platonized Jewish interpretive traditions. While the manner in which they use them are is familiar, like the NT passages of ch. 3, *Poimandres* and *Ap. John* distinguish themselves by the extremes to which they employ these traditions. Furthermore, in contrast to the NT passages that use the interpretive to emphasize the radical immanence of the divine presence, the "Gnostic" writings use them to emphasize the radical remoteness of the transcendent Deity. The result is a complex of intermediary forces simultaneously responsible for the creation of an inherently flawed physical universe and the salvation of the (divinely derived) humans therein.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1. Thesis Statement

This is a study of how three sets of writings share a common cosmological tradition but appropriate that tradition in three distinctive ways. The method of this study was to explain the source tradition and then describe its appropriation in the three sets of writings. The thesis was two-fold: first, Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine persists as "a surviving mythic form" in Hellenistic Jewish sapientialism, early Christology, and Gnostic creation myths; and second, the presence of this intermediary doctrine provides "cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning" to their differing salvific schemes.[1]

6.2. First Move – The Source Tradition: Middle Platonic Intermediary Doctrine

In a move *ad fontes*, the study began by considering how the Middle Platonists rehabilitated the physics of their Athenian master. Although they adhered to Plato's postulation of a transcendent principle, subsequent criticism (especially from the Peripatetics and Stoics) constrained the Middle Platonists to explain how that transcendent principle could have cosmic efficacy and not lose its transcendence. Hence, Plato's Hellenistic followers formulated a second, intermediary principle between the Monad and physical creation. While they construed it differently (ranging from the thoughts in God's mind to a separate, divine entity), the Middle Platonists were consistent in affirming that the intermediary principle shared the Monad's transcendent, noetic character while mediating that character to the material creation. They articulated the transcendent character and mediating

---

1   The quotations are based upon Cross, *Caanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 87. See the beginning of chapter one.

function of the intermediary in two noteworthy ways. One is the common motif of the intermediate principle as a copy, a paradigm of the Monad. In this capacity, the intermediate principle served as divine εἰκών or *exemplar* for the material world, which was thus a copy of a copy of the Monad. Additionally, a number of Middle Platonists used prepositional phrases as another way to denote the principle's character and function. This metaphysics of prepositions served as philosophical shorthand to reinforce the distinctiveness of Middle Platonic doctrine over against Peripateticism and Stoicism.

Finally, as concerned as they were about protecting the transcendence of the Supreme Principle, Middle Platonists were also concerned about humanity achieving its τέλος. While the evidence is less than abundant, it appears once again the intermediate principle played the indispensable role here. Whether as the object of contemplation or as an active anagogue, the intermediary fostered the liberation of the rational soul from the body and its return to its transcendent source.

6.3. The Second Move – Hellenistic Jewish Sapientialism: The Divine Intermediary and the Fulfillment of Cosmology

The next move of the study was to show how, despite the numerous qualitative differences between Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's writings, they both used Middle Platonic concepts and terms to present an intermediary that is ontologically related to God, that is responsible for creating and governing the cosmos by God's power, and that fosters humanity finding its ultimate fulfillment in God.

Wisdom of Solomon, drawing from the heady currents of contemporary religious and philosophical trends and combining these with an authoritative sapiential tradition, renders an engaging portrait of Sophia, she who is both God's throne companion and humanity's boon. Pseudo-Solomon presents Sophia's role as throne companion as being much more involved than earlier renditions of personified Wisdom. For one thing, Sophia is not one of God's creations but an entity closely related to him; she is his breath, his emanation, and his image. For another, she does not just witness creation but has a preeminent role in the event; she fashioned all things and, while essentially distinct from them, she continues to pervade and order all things. Furthermore, while

Wisdom of Solomon may call Sophia "savior," we saw that it was precisely this cosmic artisanship and ubiquitous presence that makes her companionship desirable for achieving fulfillment. And this fulfillment is not just anthropological in scope; Wis says that Sophia serves not just to guide the soul back to its divine source but to bring the cosmos to *its* intended τέλος as well.

As with the Middle Platonic intermediary principle and Pseudo-Solomon's Sophia, the Philonic Logos is an entity between God and matter, an intermediary which brings the divine image (εἰκών) to bear on matter and thereby produces and sustains the sense-perceptible world. This Logos has both a transcendent and an immanent status; it is both very close to the Supreme One, God, and very close to the sense-perceptible world. The Logos is purely rational and asomatic as well as filling all things and providing for their administration. What is more, Philo sees the Logos as playing a pivotal role in human fulfillment; as he says, it is by this same Logos that God formed the world that he raises the perfect mind to himself. This is because the Logos brings the human mind into existence, providing that mind with its own intellectual nature and its role and status vis-à-vis the body, giving the mind its proper orientation, and guiding it back unto himself. Anthropology and Cosmology are of a piece in Philo of Alexandria and that piece is the all-encompassing Logos.

6.4. Third Move – Early Christianity: The Divine Intermediary and the Reparation of Creation

Wisdom of Solomon and Philo give voice to traditions of appropriating Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine for biblical speculation, traditions that appear to have come to early Christians through Greek-speaking Jewish liturgy. The 1 Corinthian confession, the Colossian hymn, the Hebrews exordium and the Johannine prologue each attest to the fusion of these Platonized Jewish traditions with Christian eschatological conviction. The Jewish traditions contribute the *uniform* cosmological perspective and terminology that permeates all four passages wherein we see a divinely related intermediary (εἰκών, ἀπαύγασμα, χαρακτήρ, λόγος, θεός) responsible for creating (δι' αὐτοῦ) and sustaining (συνίστημι, φέρω) the existence of all things (τὰ πάντα). As for the eschatological conviction, it underlies four distinct views about the

significance of Jesus Christ. In 1 Cor 8:6, Jesus is κύριος whose shameful death redefines human perfection; in Col 1:15, he is the υἱός in whom the πλήρωμα dwells and who pacifies and reconciles rebellious creation through the blood of his cross; in Hebrews 1:2–3 he is the exalted heir who has made purification for sins; and in John 1:14, he is the λόγος who became flesh and as such the revelation of divine glory. In all four views, the conviction is that Christ altered reality in an *historical* moment. When combined with the Platonized Jewish traditions, this eschatological conviction underscores the fulfillment of creation through a surprising and unimaginable expression of divine presence.

6.5. Fourth Move: Gnosticism – The Divine Intermediary and the Undoing of Creation

Since the fourth movement in the study involves the maelstrom of "Gnosticism," we hold for the moment to Michael Williams's definition of such as "biblical demiurgical myths" that "made a distinction between the creator(s) and controllers of the material world and the most transcendent divine being, and in so doing made use of … scriptural traditions."[2] *Poimandres* and *The Apocryphon of John* are exemplars of such myths. For both treatises, the Genesis cosmogony and anthropogony provided a narrative framework the authority of which they could neither deny nor abide. Hence, their own narratives simultaneously deconstruct and rebuild the biblical ur-myth, remodeling it to reflect better their convictions about the transcendent nature of the supreme Deity and of humanity. The result is a complex of intermediary forces, such as the Logos, Demiurge and Anthropos in *Poimandres*, and the Barbēlō and Yaldaboath camps in *Ap. John*, that are simultaneously responsible for the creation of an inherently flawed physical universe and the salvation of the (divinely derived) humans therein. The conceptual tools by which they performed this remodeling are familiar to us; they stem from Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine mediated largely through Platonized Jewish interpretive traditions.

---

2   Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 265. See the introduction to chapter five above.

6.6. Synthesis

We synthesize the findings of this study by first noting that there is remarkable coherence in the manner in which the Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writings attest to a divine intermediary, at least as it finds expression in their cosmological perspectives. They all appear to have accepted the tri-partite view of reality put forward in Middle Platonic *Dreiprinzipienlehre*, with its transcendent One, its cosmologically active yet essentially noetic intermediary, and its material realm. In particular, all of the writings focus on the intermediary figure in their efforts to explain the relationship between the Deity and the physical cosmos.

However, at another level, it is clear that the Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writings "take up" this *Prinzipienlehre* to different ends, reflecting their distinctive views about creation and humanity's place therein. Coming the closest to the Middle Platonic perspective, the Hellenistic Jewish writings of Philo of Alexandria and Wisdom of Solomon view the physical world as ultimately good, even if it is a good of the lowest order. With respect to humanity, both Wisdom and Philo aver that human nature is essentially of a higher order, a soul that should not be weighed down by the body and a νοῦς that should rise to stand along side the divine Νοῦς. The world then is "a good place to have come from," though one's emphasis should be on the psychic ascent made possible διὰ τοῦ λόγου/τῆς σοφίας.

Poimandres and *Apocryphon of John* have a somewhat similar, if more radical perspective about humanity and creation. What is similar is the high view of human nature and the need for putting distance between humanity and the physical world. However, these writings hold more extreme views about both this nature and this need than anything we saw among Middle Platonists, Philo or Pseudo-Solomon. The stereo-typical Gnostic perspective about humanity finding salvation through self-knowledge is apropos for both writings and they both appear to ground this on humanity's divine *identity*. Indeed, revealing this identity and the ability to know it is the purpose of these treatises. With respect to the physical world, it becomes a casualty of this exaltation of human nature, since something other than that nature is needed to explain manifest deficiencies that humans experience. Whether it is because of the smoking, howling, chaotic substance at the beginning of *Poimandres* or the foolish malfeasance of Yaldabaoth in *Ap. John*, creation (even if divinely patterned) is a lamentable thing that ought not to have

happened. For these writings, the world is a bad dream from which humanity, prompted by its divine source, must awake.

If the Gnostic writings may be characterized as intensifying the distinction between transcendent and material reality, 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Heb 1:1–4 and the Johannine prologue should be characterized as going in an opposite direction. While these passages too suggest that something is wrong with creation, their solution is not to remove any trace of divine presence and leave the world to its ruin. Also not present is any sense of hagiographic anthropology as in the Gnostic (and even the Jewish) writings we studied; if anything, the NT passages emphasize the culpability of humankind for the world's ills or at least their own share in them. What the NT passages focus on instead is how transcendent reality (κύριος, εἰκών, ἀπαύγασμα καὶ χαρακτήρ, λόγος) solves the problem of creation by becoming part of it in Jesus Christ. The kerygmatic aspect of this becoming part of creation, though obviously significant, is not surprising since the Christ event – Jesus' life, death and resurrection – is something the NT passages share with their literary contexts and with rest of the NT. Rather, what is intriguing to us is that these NT passages adopt a conceptual framework (i.e., Platonic intermediary doctrine) the *raison d'être* of which is to preserve the transcendence of the Deity, and they use it to make claims about that Deity's radical immanence. For the NT writers, the world, because of a particular moment in space and time, is where one meets God.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Alcinous [Albinus], *Didaskalikos ton Platonos Dogmaton: Enseignement des Doctrines de Platon*. Introduction, editing and commentary by John Whittaker and translated by Pierre Louis. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1990.

———, *The Handbook on Platonism*. Translated with an introduction and commentary by John Dillon. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Arnim, H. von, ed., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1905–24.

Charlesworth, James, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983.

Copenhaver, Brian, *Hermetica: The Greek* Corpus Hermeticum *and the Latin* Asclepius *in a new English translation, with notes and introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The Coptic Gnostic Library, Edited with English Translation, Introduction and Notes. 16 vols. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies. Edited by J. M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit. Leiden: Brill, 1975–1995.

Diels, Hermann, ed., *Doxographi Graeci*. 3rd ed. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1958.

Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Translated by R. D. Hicks. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925.

Holladay, Carl, ed., *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*. 4 vols. Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983–1998.

Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les Hérésies*. Edited by A. Rousseau and L. Doutrelau, S. J. 2 vols. Sourcees chrétiennes 263–264. Paris: Cerf, 1979.

Layton, Bentley, *The Gnostic Scriptures*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987.

Long, A. A. and D. N. Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Emperor of Rome, Together with His Speeches and Sayings*. Translated by C. R. Haines. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1916.

Nock, A. D. and A. J, Festugiére, eds., *Hermès Trismégiste*. 4 vols. 2nd ed. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973.

Novum Testamentum Graece. Edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland et al. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.

Numenius, *Fragments*. Edited by E. des Places. Paris: Budé, 1973.

The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Edited with translation and notes by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt. London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–.

Philo of Alexandria, *Opera quae supersunt*. 6 vols. Edited by L. Cohn, P. Wendland and S. Reiter. Berlin: George Reimer, 1896–1915. Repr., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962.

———, *Philo with an English Translation*, Translated by F. H. Coloson, G. H. Whitaker, and R. Marcus. 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–62.

———, *Les oeuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie*. 35 vols. to date. Edited by R. Arnaldez, J. Pouilloux, and C. Mondésert. Paris: Cerf, 1961–.

———, *The Contemplative Life, the Giants and Selections*. Translation and introduction by David Winston. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist, 1981.

———,"The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation." Translated by F. Siegert. *Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998): 1–10.

Philoponus, John, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*. Edited H. Rabe. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1963.

Plato, *Opera*. 6 vols. Edited by J. Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900–13.

———, *Plato's Cosmology: The* Timaeus *of Plato*. Edited and translated by Frances MacD. Cornford. London: Routledge, 1937.

———, *Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Plutarch, *Moralia*. 7 vols. Edited by W. R. Paton et al. Leipzig: Teubner, 1925–1960.

———, *Moralia*. Translated by Frank C. Babbitt et al. 16 volumes. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984–1991.

———, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*. Edited and translated by J. G. Griffiths. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972.

Robinson, James M. and Richard Smith, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Salaman, Clement, *The Way of Hermes*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1999.

Scott, W., *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. 4 vols. London: Dawsons, 1924–36. Repr., Oxford University Press, 1985.

Septuaginta, 2 vols. Edited by A. Rahlfs. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935.

Sextus, Empiricus, *Opera*. Edited by Herman Mutschmann. Leipzig: Teubner, 1958–62.

Simplicius, *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria*. Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca 9. Edited by H. Diels. Berlin: G. Reimeri, 1882.

———, *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor posteriores commentaria*. Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca 10. Edited by H. Diels. Berlin: G. Reimeri, 1882.

Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*. Translated by R. M. Gummere. 3 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917–1925.

Thesauraus Lingua Graecae, Irvine, Calif.: University of California, TLG Project 2001–.

Timaeus Locrus, *De natura mundi et animae*. Philosophia antiqua 24. Edited by W. Marg. Leiden: Brill, 1972.

Secondary Sources

Artz, P. and M . Ernst, eds., *Sprachlicher Schlüssel zur Sapientia Salomonis (Weisheit).* Sprachlicher Schlüssel zu den Deuteronkanonischen Schriften [Apokryphen] des Alten Testaments. Salzburg: Institut für Neutestamentaliche Bibelwissenschaft, 1995.

Ashton, John, "The Transformation of Wisdom: A Study of the Prologue of John's Gospel." *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 161–186.

Attridge, Harold W., *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

Bevan, E., *Later Greek Religion*. London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927.

Baltes, Matthias, *Timaios Lokros, Über die Natur des Kosmos und der Seele*. Philosophia antiqua 21. Leiden: Brill, 1972.

———, *Die Weltentstehung des Platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpreten*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1976–1978.

Barrett, C. K., "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews." Pages 363–93 in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*. Edited by W. D. Davies and David Daube. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.

———, *The Gospel According to Saint John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1978.

Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Betz, Hans Dieter, "The Delphic Maxim ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ in Hermetic Interpretation." *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970): 465–84.

Bianchi, Ugo, ed., *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina, 13–18 Aprile 1966*. Studies in the History of Religions. Supplements to *Numen*. Leiden: Brill, 1970.

Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Borgen, Peder, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John." *New Testament Studies* 16 (1969–70): 288–295.

———, "Philo of Alexandria: a critical and synthetical survey of research since World War II." *ANRW* 21.1:98–154. Part 2, *Principat*, 21. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1984.

———, et al. *The Philo Index: A Complete Greek Word Index to the Writings of Philo*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000.

Bornkamm, Günther, "Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief." *Theologische Blätter* 21 (1942): 56–66.

Bréhier, Emile, *Les idées philosophique et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*. 3rd ed. Études de philosophie médiévale 8. Paris: Vrin, 1950.

Brown, Raymond E., *The Gospel According to John I–XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Bultmann, Rudolf, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium." Pages 1–26 in ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ: *Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstage, dem 23. Mai 1922 dargebracht von seinen Schülern und Freunden, und in ihrem namen*. Edited by H. Schmidt, II. 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923.

———, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray et al. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971.

Chadwick, Henry, "Philo and the Beginnings of Christian Thought." Pages 137–57 in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. Edited by A. H. Armstrong. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Clemons, Ronald E., "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28 (1985): 36–44.

Clifford, Richard J., *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and the Bible*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 26. Washington, DC: CBA, 1994.

———, *Proverbs*. Old Testament Library. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

Collins, John J., "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic in the Hellenistic age." *History of Religions* 17 (1977): 121–142.

———, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. Old Testament Library. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Conzelmann, Hans, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Hermenia. Translated by J. W. Leitch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.

Cross, Frank M., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Crum, W. E., *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1939.

Daniélou, J., *Philon d'Alexandrie*. Paris: Fayard, 1958.

Deichgräber, Reinhard, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühen Christlichen Hymnen*. Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 5. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967.

Dey, L. K. K., *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 25. Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1975.

Di Lella, Alexander A. "Wisdom of Ben Sira." Pages 931–45 in vol. 6 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Dillon, John, *The Golden Chain*. Hampshire: Variorum, 1990.

——, *The Middle Platonists*. Rev. ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Dodd, C. H., *The Bible and the Greeks*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935.

——, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955.

Dodds, E. R., "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One.'" *Classical Quarterly* 22(1928): 129−42.

——, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Dörrie, H., "Der Platoniker Eudoros von Alexandreia." *Hermes* 79 (1944): 25−38.

——, "Präpositionen und Metaphysik." *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969): 217−228.

——, *Platonica Minora*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976.

—— and M. Baltes, eds., *Die Philosophische Lehre des Platonismus*. Vol. 4 of Der Platonismus in der Antike 4−6. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996−2002.

Dunn, James D. G., *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996.

——, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996.

Ebert, Daniel J., IV, "The Chiastic Structure of the Prologue to the Hebrews." *Trinity Journal* 13 (1992): 163−179.

Eltester, Friedrich-Wilhelm, *Eikon im Neuen Testament*. Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958.

Evans, Craig A., "On the Prologue of John and the Trimorphic Protennoia." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 395−401.

Fee, Gordon D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987.

——, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995.

Festugière, A. J., *La revelation d'Hermès Trismégiste*. 4 vols. Études bibliques 38. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1949−54.

Feuillet, A., *Le Christ sagesse de Dieu d'après les Épîtres Pauliniennes*. Études bibliques 38. Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et Cie Éditeurs, 1966.

Filoramo, Giovanni, *A History of Gnosticism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Fowden, G., *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Frankowski, J., "Early Christian Hymns Recorded in the New Testament: A Reconsideration of the Question in the Light of Hebrews 1,3." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 27 (1983): 183−94.

Fraser, P. M., *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.

Früchtel, U., *Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen bei Philo von Alexandrien: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Genesisexegese*. Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums 2. Leiden: Brill, 1968.

Georgi, D., *Weisheit Salomos*. Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 3. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980.

Gersh, Stephen, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*. 2 vols. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

Gilbert, M., "La Structure de la prière de Salomon (Sg 9)." *Biblia* 51 (1970): 301–31.

Goodenough, E. R., *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*. 2nd ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963.

Goodhart, H. L. and E. R. Goodenough, "A general bibliography of Philo Judaeus." Pages 125–321 in E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1938.

Goulder, Michael, "Colossians and Barbēlō." *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 603–607.

Goulet, Richard, *La philosophie de Moïse: essai de reconstruction d'un commentaire philosophique préphilonien du Pentateuque*. Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 11. Paris: Vrin, 1987.

Grässer, Erich, "Hebräer 1,1–4. Ein exegetischer Versuch." *An die Hebräer*. 3 vols. Evangelisch-katholischer Kommenter zum Neuen Testament 17. Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1990.

Habermann, Jürgen, *Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament*. Vol. 362. European University Studies, series 23, Theology. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1990.

Haenchen, Ernst, "Aufbau und Theologie des 'Poimandres'" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 53 (1956): 149–91.

Harrington, Daniel J., *Wisdom Texts from Qumran*. The Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Hay, David M., "Philo's Treatise on the Logos-Cutter." *Studia philonica* 2 (1973): 9–22.

Hedrick, Charles W. and Robert Hodgons, Jr., eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986.

Hofius, O., *Der "Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 17. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1976.

Holzhausen, Jens, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen" im Hellenistischen Ägypten: Eine Studie zum "Poimandres" (=CH I) zu Valentin und dem gnostischen Mythos*. Athenäums Monografien Theophaeia 33. Bodenheim: Athenäum-Hain-Hanstein, 1994.

Hornblower, S. and A. Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Horsley, Richard A., "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status Among the Corinthians." *Havard Theological Review* 69 (1976): 269–288.

———, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 223–239.

———, "The Background of the Confessional Formula in 1 Kor 8.6." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 69 (1978): 130–135.

———,"Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1–6." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980–81): 32–51.

Hübner, H., "Die Sapientia Salomonis und die antike Philosophie." Pages 55–81 in *Die Weisheit Salomos im Horizont Biblischer Theologie*. Edited by H. Hübner. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993.

Hughes, G., *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Jansen, H. L., "Die Frage nach Tendenz und Verfasserschaft im Poimandres." Pages 157–63 in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gonsticism, Stockholm August 20–25, 1973*. Edited by G. Widengren. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977.

Jervell, J., *Imago Dei. Gen. 1.26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960.

Jonas, Hans, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*. 3rd ed. Boston: Beacon, 2001.

Käsemann, Ernst, *Essays on New Testament Themes*. Translated by W. J. Montague. Studies in Biblical Theology 41. Naperville, Ill: Allenson, 149–168.

Kerst, Rainier von, "1 Kor 8:6 – ein vorpaulinisches Taufbekenntnis?" *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 65 (1974): 130–139.

King, Karen L., "Sophia and Christ in the Appocryphon of John." In *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*. Edited by K. King. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

———, *What is Gnosticism?* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003.

Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

Kloppenborg, J. S., "Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom," *Harvard Theological Review* 75 (1982): 57–84.

Koester, H. Review of Ulrich Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*. *Gnomen* 33 (1961): 590–95.

Kolarcik, Michael, "Creation and Salvation in the Book of Wisdom." Pages 97–107 in *Creation in Biblical Traditions*. Edited by Richard J. Clifford and John J. Collins. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 24. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1992.

Kramer, Werner, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*. Translated by B. Hardy. Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1966.

Kroll, Josef, "Die christliche Hymnodik bis zu Klemens von Alexandria." In *Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen an der Akademie zu Braunsberg* (Summer 1921): 3–

46; (Winter 1921/22): 47−98. Repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968.

Lambdin, Thomas O., *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983.

Lapidge, Michael, "Stoic Cosmology." Pages 161−85 in *The Stoics*. Edited by John M. Rist. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Larcher, C., *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse*. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969.

———, *Le livre de la sagesse, ou, La sagesse de Salomon*. 3 vols. Études bibliques 1, 3, 5; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1983−85.

Layton, Bentley, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale*, New Haven, Connecticut March 28−31, 1978. 2 vols. Studies in the History of Religions 41. Leiden: Brill, 1980−81.

———, "The Riddle of the Thunder [NHC VI, 2]." Pages 37−54 in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity*. Edited by C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986.

———, *A Coptic Grammar*. Porta Lunguarum Orientalium. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000.

Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with rev. supplement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Lietzmann, Hans, *Symbole der Alten Kirche*. 4th ed. Kleine Texte. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935.

Logan, Alastair H. B., *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996.

Lohse, Eduard, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Hermeneia. Translated by William P. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.

Luck, U., "Himmlisches und irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief." *Novum testamentum* 6 (1963): 192−215.

MacRae, George W. "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts." Pages 496−507 in *Le origini dello gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina, 13−18 Aprile 1966*. Edited by Ugo Bianchi. Studies in the History of Religions. Supplements to *Numen*. Leiden: Brill, 1970.

———, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth." *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 86−101.

———, *Studies in the New Testament and Gnosticism*. Edited by Daniel Harrington and Stanley Marrow. Good News Studies 26. Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987.

McNamara, M., "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and the Memra of the Palestinian Targum (Ex 12:42)." *Expository Times* 79 (1968): 115−17.

Mack, B. L., *Logos und Sophia. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum*. Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 10. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973.

Martin, Ralph P., "Some Reflections on New Testament Hymns." Pages 37−49 in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*. Edited by Harold H. Rowdon. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982.

Meier, John P., "Structure and Theology in Heb 1, 1–14." *Biblica* 66 (1985): 168–189.

———, "Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1, 5–14." *Biblica* 66 (1985): 504–533.

Mendels, Doron, "Baruch, Book of." Pages 618–20 in vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Michel, O., *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. 6ᵗʰ ed. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testament 13. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966.

Moffatt, J., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1952.

Mohr, Richard D., *The Platonic Cosmology*. Leiden: Brill, 1985.

Montefiore, H., *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Harper's New Testament Commentaries. New York: Harper, 1964.

Murphy, Roland E., *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome, "I Cor VIII, 6: Cosmology or Soteriology?" *Revue biblique* 85 (1978): 253–267.

Nikiprowetzky, Valentin, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: son caractère et sa portée, observations philologiques*. Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums 11. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977.

Norden, Eduard, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1913.

O'Brien, P. T., *Colossians and Philemon*. Word Biblical Commentary 44. Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982.

Pearson, Birger, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and its Relation to Gnosticism*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 12. Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973; repr. Scholars Press, 1976.

———, Review of Simone Pétrement, *Le dieu séparé: Les origines du gnosticisme*. *Religious Studies Revue* 13 (1987): 4–6.

———, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*. SAC. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.

Pearson, Birger A. and James E. Goehring, eds., *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity 1. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

Pépin, Jean, "Remarques sur la théorie de l'exégèse allégorique chez Philon." Pages 131–67 in *Philon d'Alexandrie: Lyon, 11–15 septembre 1966*. Colloques nationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique. Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1967.

Perkins, Pheme, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*. New York: Paulist, 1980.

———, "Gnostic Christologies and the New Testament." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 590–606.

Pétrement, Simone, *Le Dieu séparé: Les origins du gnosticisme*. Paris: Cerf, 1984.

Radice, Roberto and David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography, 1937–1986.* Supplements to *Vigiliae christianae* 8. Leiden: Brill, 1988.

———, *Philo of Alexandria: An Annotated Bibliography, 1987–1996, with Addenda for 1937–1986.* Supplements to *Vigiliae christianae* 57. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Reydams-Schils, Gretchen, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's Timaeus.* Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999.

———, ed., *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon.* Notre Dame, Ind.; University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.

Robinson, D. W. B., "The Literary Structure of Hebrews 1–4." *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 2 (1972): 178–86.

Rochais, Gérard, "La formation du Prologue (Jn 1, 1–18) (1st part)." *Science et Esprit* 37 (1985): 5–44.

———, "La formation du prologue (Jn 1,1–18) (2nd part)." *Science et Esprit* 37 (1985): 161–187.

Rudolph, Kurt, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism.* Translated and edited by R. McL. Wilson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.

Runia, David T., *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato.* 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1986.

———, Review of Richard Goulet, *La philosophie de Moïse. Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1989): 588–602.

———, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited." *Studia Philonica Annual* 5 (1993): 112–40.

———, *Philo of Alexandria On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Sanders, Jack T., *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background.* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Sandmel, Samuel, *Philo of Alexandria: an introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

———, "Philo Judaeus: An Introduction to the Man, his Writings, and his Significance." *ANRW* 21.1:3–46. Part 2, *Principat*, 21. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1984.

Schenck, Kenneth, "Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 66 (1997): 91–117.

———, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years." *Studia Philonica Annual* 14 (2002): 112–135.

———, *A Brief Guide to Philo.* Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Schenke, Hans-Martin, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Sethian Gnosticism." Pages 588–616 in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Vol. 2: Sethian Gnosticism.* Edited by B. Layton. Studies in the History of Religions 41. Leiden: Brill, 1981.

Scholem, Gerhard, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.* New York: Schocken Books, 1961.

Schmidt, A., "Struktur, Herkunft und Bedeutung der Beispielreihe in Weish 10." *Biblische Zeitschrift* (1977): 1−22.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *The Gospel of St. John*. 3 vols. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Scholer, David M., *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1949–1969*. Nag Hammadi Studies 1. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

———, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1970–1994*. Nag Hammadi Studies 32. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elizabeth, "Wisdom Mythology and the Christological Hymns." Pages 17−41 in *Apsects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*. Edited by R. L. Wilken. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

Schweizer, Eduard, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*. Translated by Andrew Chester. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982.

Segal, Alan F., *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*. Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 25. Leiden: Brill, 1977.

Sieber, John H., "The Barbēlō Aeon as Sophia in *Zostrianos* and Related Tractates." Pages 788−95 in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Vol. 2: Sethian Gnosticism*. Edited by B. Layton. Studies in the History of Religions 41. Leiden: Brill, 1981.

Skehan, Patrick W. and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Anchor Bible 39. New York: Doubleday, 1987.

Smith, Richard, *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: Society of biblical Literature, 1999.

Smyth, Herbert W., *Greek Grammar*. Revised by G. M. Messing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.

Spicq, C., *L'épître aux Hebreux*. 2 vols. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952−53.

Sterling, Gregory E., "Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism." *Studia Philonica Annual* 5 (1993): 96−111.

———, "'Wisdom Among the Perfect:' Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity." *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 355−384.

———, "Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts." *Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997): 219−238.

———, "A Philosophy According to the Elements of the Cosmos: Colossian Christianity and Philo of Alexandria." Pages 349−73 in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le Langage de la Philosophie: Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre d'études sur la philosophie hellénistique et romain de l'Université de Paris XII–Val de Marne*. Edited by Carlos Lévy. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998.

———, Introduction to *Philo of Alexandria On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, by David T. Runia. Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

———, "Ontology Versus Eschatology: Tensions between Author and Community." *Studia Philonica Annual* 13 (2001): 190−211.

"'The Second God': The Exegetical Tradition of Genesis 1:1−5 in Philo and John." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, San Antonio, Tex., Nov. 20−23, 2004.

Taylor, A. E., *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. New York: Garland, 1987.

Tcherikover, Victor, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered." *Eos* 48 (1956): 169−193.

Theiler, W., *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1934.

Thompson, James, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 13. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982.

Thüsing, Wilhelm, *Gott und Christus in der paulinischen Soteriologie, vol. 1: Per Christum in Deum*. 3rd ed. Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. Münster: Aschendorff, 1986.

Tobin, Thomas H., *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 14. Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1983.

———, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 252−269.

———,"Logos." Pages 348−56 in vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Turner, John D., "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom." *Novum testamentum* 22 (1980): 324−351.

———,"Ritual in Gnosticism." Pages 139−47 in *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers*. Edited by Eugene H. Lovering. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.

———, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*. Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi: Section "Études" 6. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001.

Turner, P., "Wisdom and Law in Colossians." Ph.D. diss., Murdoch University, 1999.

VanderKam, James C., *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001.

Vanhoye, A. A., *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989.

Viviano, B., "The Gospel According to Matthew." Pages 630−74 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Edited by R. E. Brown et al. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Völker, W., *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien: eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 49.1. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1938.

Waldstein, Michael, "The Mission of Jesus in John: Probes into the 'Apocryphon of John' and the Gospel of John." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1990.

———, "The Apocryphon of John: A Curious Eddy in the Stream of Hellenistic Judaism." Unpublished Manuscript from 1995, used with author's permission, April 19, 2004.

———, "The Providence Monologue in the Apocryphon and the Johannine Prologue." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 369–402.

———, "The Primal Triad in the Apocryphon of John." Pages 154–87 in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of biblical Literature Commemoration*. Edited by J. Turner and A. McGuire. Brill, Leiden, 1997.

Wedderburn, A. J. M., "Some Observations on Paul's Use of 'In Christ' and 'With Christ.'" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (1985): 83–97.

Weiss, H. F., *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums*. Texte und Untersuchungen 97. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966.

Wengst, Klaus, "Der Apostel und die Tradition : zur theologischen Bedeutung urchristlicher Formeln bei Paulus." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 69 (1972): 145–162.

———, *Christologische Formeln und Leider des Urchristentums*. Studien zum Neuen Testament 7. Gerd Mohn: Gutersloher Verlaghaus, 1972.

Whittaker, John, "Platonic Philosophy in the Early Centuries of the Empire." *ANRW* 36.1:81–123. Part 2, *Principat*, 36.1. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. New York: de Gruyter, 1987.

Williams, Michael Allen, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Williamson, Ronald, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Arbeitern zur Literatur und Geschichte des Hellenistischen Judentums 4. Leiden: Brill, 1970.

Willis, Wendell, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 68. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985.

Wilson, Robert McL., "Philo of Alexandria and Gnosticism." *Kairos* 14 (1972): 213–19.

Winston, David, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 43. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979.

———, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Plato of Alexandria*. Cincinatti: Hebrew Union College Press and Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV House, 1985.

———, "Wisdom in the *Wisdom of Solomon*" in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*. Edited by L. Purdue et al. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbraun's, 1990.

———, "Philo's Mysticism." *Studia Philonica Annual* 8 (1996): 74–82.

———, *The Ancestral Philosophy: Hellenistic Philosophy in Second Temple Judaism, Essays of David Winston*. Edited by Gregory E. Sterling. Brown Judaic Studies 331; Studia Philonica Monograph 4. Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001.

Wisse, F., "The Primal Triad in the Apocryphon of John." Pages 138–53 in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of biblical Literature Commemoration*. Edited by J. Turner and A. McGuire. Brill, Leiden, 1997.

Witherington, Ben, III., *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.

Wlosok, Antonie, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Terminologie der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1960.

Wolfson, Harry A., *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. 2 vols. Revised ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948.

Wright, A., "Wisdom." Pages 510–22 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Edited by R. E. Brown et al. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Wright, N. T., "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1:15–20." *NTS* 36 (1990): 444–468.

———, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. *Minneapolis*. Fortress, 1992.

Yamauchi, Edwin M., *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983.

———, "The Issue of Pre-Christian Gnosticism Reviewed in the Light of the Nag Hammadi Texts." Pages 72–88 in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of biblical Literature Commemoration*. Edited by J. Turner and A. McGuire. Brill, Leiden, 1997.

Index of Modern Authors

Index of Ancient Sources

Biblical Sources

Old Testament

New Testament

Extra-Biblical Jewish and Christian Sources

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Philo of Alexandria

Coptic Gnostic Literature

Patristic Sources

Other ancient Sources