Divine Embodiment in Jewish Antiquity:
Rediscovering The Jewishness of John's Incarnate Christ

by

Deborah L. Forger

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Doctoral Committee:
      Professor Gabriele Boccaccini, Chair
      Associate Professor Ellen Muehlberger
      Associate Professor Rachel Neis
      Professor Ray Van Dam

Deborah L. Forger

dkforger@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1285-7880

For Danny, Daniel, and Olivia

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how the notion of divine embodiment presents an unexpected point of convergence between the emerging religions of Judaism and Christianity. In particular, it investigates ways that Jews, living around the first century CE, envisioned God in corporeal form and humans as divine. Part one, which comprises chapters 1 and 2, re-conceptualizes the concepts of incarnation and monotheism. The former demonstrates how the notion of divine corporeality within Jewish thought encompasses incarnation, while the latter reveals how ancient Jews had a hierarchical view of divinity, enabling many things, even created entities, to be considered divine. Building off this backdrop, part two examines a series of case studies in which ancient Jews envisioned humans as divine. Chapter 3 exhibits how Philo of Alexandria thought a spark of divinity could be implanted into the souls of humans, while chapter 4 reveals how various Jewish authors viewed the high priest as a deified human or the visible representation of God on earth. Part three illuminates how other Jews thought that part of Israel's supreme God could enter into corporeality, by focusing on the figures of Sophia (chapter 5) and the divine Logos (chapter 6). In making these claims, I situate the Gospel of John—and its description of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο)—within a particular moment of Jewish history. Although scholars have long pointed to John 1:14 as the moment where the Christian story differentiated itself from its Jewishness, I argue that the verse was one of many ways that Jews, around the turn of Common Era, understood that God could take on bodily form. My research demonstrates that God's embodiment was not antithetical to Jewish thought in antiquity but integral to the tradition. By focusing on a particular moment of Jewish history, instead of employing a lens that works backward from a later known outcome, my work resists an anachronistic reading of the evidence. In so doing it finds a place of commonality between Jewish and Christian traditions and opens up a potential point of contact for Jewish-Christian dialogue in the current day.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

1.1   Introduction

Replied Trypho [to Justin], "You are attempting to prove an untrustworthy (ἄπιστον) and nearly impossible (ἀδύνατον) thing, namely that God deigned to be born and to become human (θεὸς ὑπέμεινε γεννηθῆναι καὶ ἄνθρωπος γενέσθαι)."[1]

Trypho's terse response to his interlocutor, Justin Martyr, vividly depicts how Trypho the Jew reacted to the idea that God could become embodied on earth: for him, the idea was not only incredible but also preposterous. Yet over the years Trypho was far from the only Jew, whether real or rhetorically imagined, to express such incredulity.[2] In his famous disputation from the Middle Ages, Nahmanides asserts a similar claim in seeking to refute this teaching:

> [T]he doctrine in which you believe, and which is the foundation of your faith, cannot be accepted by reason, and nature affords no ground for it, nor have the prophets ever expressed it. Nor can even the miraculous stretch as far as this . . . The mind of a Jew, or any other person, cannot tolerate this; and you speak your words entirely in vain, for this is the root of our controversy.[3]

Yet that the author of this text depicts his Jewish counterparts as rejecting this concept ought not be surprising. From the early stages of the Common Era well into the Middle Ages, polemical rhetoric about whether God could become human, or embodied, helped members of the Jesus

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[1] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 68.1. The Greek text can be found in Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914). The translation is my own.

[2] Scholars have long debated whether Trypho represents a real person or a rhetorical construction. I do not take sides in this debate because either way the text creates the impression that Jews rejected the idea that God could become embodied on earth.

[3] Hyam Maccoby, ed. and trans., "The *Vikuah* of Nahmanides: Translation and Commentary," in *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages*, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1982), 119–20.

movement differentiate themselves from other Jews.[4] Yet in both the formative stages of what

would only later become two separate religions, the views of both Jesus-followers and other

[4] I employ the terms "members of the Jesus-movement" and "other Jews," because it was not straightforward to define who was a Ἰουδαῖος and who was a Χριστιανός in the early centuries of the Common Era. Likewise, it is not easy to determine when those terms began to align with the modern connotation of "Jew" and "Christian," or even more problematically with what has come to be known as the religions of "Judaism" and "Christianity."

With respect to the term Ἰουδαῖος, Steve Mason has argued that the word is better rendered as "Judean" rather than "Jew," because the former emphasizes the ethnic dimensions of the term over the religious, which only came into being in the third and fourth centuries CE. See "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38.4–5 (2007): 457–512; see also Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3, 69–106, who suggests religious connotations were first associated with the term in the second century BCE with the book of 2 Maccabees. By contrast, scholars such as Mark Nanos have chosen to translate Ἰουδαῖος as "Jew," arguing that first-century Jewish authors like the apostle Paul defined a Ἰουδαῖος as "being born to parents who are Jews, being circumcised if male (on the eighth day of life)," and, ideally behaving according to the standards that define that identity (Rom 2:9–11; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 1:14–14; 2:15–16; Phil 3:4–6)." See Mark Nanos, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' But Do They Become 'Jewish'?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 within Judaism, alongside Josephus." *JJMJS* 1 (2014): 26–53, esp. 27–28. See also Oskar Skarsaune, "Jewish Believers in Antiquity—Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources" in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrikson, 2007), 3–21, esp. 11–14. Throughout this dissertation I retain the use of the word "Jew" rather than "Judean" to describe the Ἰουδαῖοι in the years surrounding the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE. I am persuaded to do so by the arguments of Adele Reinhartz, who demonstrates that to employ the word "Jew" does not mean tacit acceptance of a fully formed religion of "Judaism." See Adele Reinhartz, "The Vanishing Jews of Antiquity." *Marginalia Review of Books*, 24 June 2014. Cited April 5, 2017. Online: http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/vanishing-jews-antiquity-adele-reinhartz/.

The focus on circumcision for Jewish identity derives from texts such as Genesis 17:9–14 and Leviticus 12:3, which establish the ritual on the eighth day as an important identity marker for Abraham and his male descendants (cf. Jub 15:26, which reifies this position). Starting in the second century BCE, however, there is evidence that some persons thought that circumcision later in life could enable non-Jewish males to become Jews (LXX Est 8:17; Josephus, *War* 2.454 [Metilius]; *Ant.* 20.38–47 [Izates]). See Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion. Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 67–89. Moreover, as Maren Niehoff has pointed out: "There have always been male Jews who were not circumcised," (cf. Philo, *Migr.* 89–93) and throughout the Second Temple period "this phenomenon appears to have increased as a result of acculturation to Hellenism," [see Maren Niehoff, "Circumcision as a Marker of Identity: Philo, Origen, and the Rabbis on Gen 17:1–14," *JSQ* 10 (2003): 89–123, esp. 89.] So views on the importance of circumcision in terms of male Jewish identity were not monolithic. In fact, by the fourth century CE, the author of the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* defines a Ἰουδαῖος not in terms of ethnic identity markers, such as circumcision, but in relation to a person's law-abiding practice (cf. *Hom.* 11.16).

With respect to the word Χριστιανός, although this term was first employed in Antioch to describe Jesus-followers in that city (Act 11:26), at least in that particular locale it was several centuries before a clear division between Christian-identity and Jewish-identity emerged. See Deborah Forger, "Interpreting the Syrophoenician Woman to Construct Jewish-Christian Fault-Lines: Chrysostom and the

Jews was often much more complex, especially with respect to whether God could take on bodily form.

The idea that God could become embodied has long been conceived of as the central and defining event of mainstream and orthodox Christianity,[5] but its significance for the Jewish tradition has only recently begun to be appreciated within scholarship.[6] With respect to the

Pseudo-Clementine Homilist in Chrono-Locational Perspective," *JJMJS* No. 3 (2016): 132–166; Annette Y. Reed and Lily Vuong, "Christianity in Antioch: Partings in Roman Syria," in *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became* Two, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archeological Society, 2013), 105–132, esp. 112–124; Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "The *Didascalia Apostolorum*: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," *JECS* 9.4 (2001): 483–509 (cf. Acts 15). Moreover, it would take quite some time before Christianity ultimately became vested with Roman imperial power. See Ellen Muehlberger, "Salvage: Macrina and the Christian Project of Cultural Reclamation," *CH* 81.2 (2012): 273–297, esp. 279

[5] Most often Christian theology discusses the centrality of God's embodiment for the Christian tradition in terms of the doctrine of the Incarnation, namely, that in the person of Jesus, God entered into human form. See, for instance, John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160–173; Richard Cross, "The Incarnation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas Flint & Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 452–476. For recent theological treatises that reflect on the centrality of this doctrine for the Christian faith, see Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Richard Swinburgh, *Was Jesus God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For a look at how popular novelists and poets like John Updike, Fredrick Buechner, and Marilynne Robinson have reflected on this doctrine in relation to their personal experience of Christianity, see Alfred Corn, ed., *Incarnation: Contemporary Writers on the New Testament* (New York: Viking, 1990).

However, it is important to keep that already among the earliest followers of Jesus not all persons agreed that the Gospel of John's claim that the divine *logos* had become flesh in the specific person of Jesus was an essential component of their faith tradition. Indeed, some streams of early Jesus followers explicitly rejected this notion and some followers of Jesus, even in the present day, ponder the feasibility of such claims.

[6] Studies by specialists of the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinics alike have underscored the multifaceted ways that both the ancient Israelite and early Jewish traditions depicted God in embodied form. See Jacob Neusner, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 4; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation: The Imaginal Body of God" in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 239–54; Yair Loberbaum, *The Image of God: Halakha and Aggadah* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2004); Esther J. Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men:" The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature,* BZAW 384 (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 2008); Esther J. Hamori, "Divine Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible and Some Implications for Jewish and Christian Incarnational Theologies," in *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. S. Tamar Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim, LHBOTS 465 (New York & London: T&T Clark, 2010), 161–83; Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–

Christian tradition, as James Dunn observed in his seminal work on this topic,[7] one should only remember the poignant words of Athanasius: "He became man that we might become divine (αὐτὸς ἐνηνθρώπησεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν)"[8] or the striking remarks of Gregory of Nazianzus, which claim that "What has not been assumed cannot be restored (τὸ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον); it is what is united with God that is saved,"[9] to recognize the centrality of God's embodiment for Christian theology—especially in relation to soteriological claims. For both of these ancient Christian intellectuals, salvation was dependent upon God becoming one with humanity. Without the explicit connection between the God and humanity in the specific person of Jesus of Nazareth, there was no hope of humanity's restoration. Moreover, though already in their own day these now famous assertions made a formidable mark upon the diverse religious landscape of early Christianity, the lasting legacy of their words is that even today many Christians continue to identify these formulations as pivotal for their faith.

With respect to the Jewish tradition, though certain strands imagine divine embodiment,[10] for many other Jews, such as is represented in the medieval Yigdal hymn based on Maimonides' theology [אֵין לוֹ דְּמוּת הַגּוּף וְאֵינוֹ גוּף (God has no likeness of a body, and no physical body)], the

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11, 38–57, 124–143; Rachel Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18–81; Anne K. Knafl, *Forming God: Divine Anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch,* Siphrut 12 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 72–157; Mark S. Smith, "The Three Bodies of God in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 134 (2015): 471–88.

[7] James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.

[8] Athanasius, *De Incarn.* 54:3, as quoted in Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 1.

[9] Gregory of Naziansus, *Ep.* 101:7, as quoted in Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 1.

[10] By way of example: for some Jewish thinkers, such as those associated with the rabbinic movement, the liturgical acts of prayer and Torah study enabled the imaginal body of God to become substantiated in the person of the rabbinic sage. See Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 239–254. For others, such as those associated with the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies,* it was enough to know that God had an actual divine body and that, accordingly, God patterned human bodies after God's own. See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature." *HTR* 87.2 (1994): 171–95, esp. 172–73.

God's utter incorporeality is emphasized. Yet since polemics such as those found in Justin Martyr's works and Nahmanides' famous disputations from the Middle Ages underscore the latter, they depict Jews and Christians as binary opposites, differentiated in large part based on their views of God's body. Thus, they create the impression that, for Jews, the absolute incorporeality of God was essential. As a result of these measures, as Wolfson notes, the "impression one gets from historians of religion is that Judaism has officially rejected incarnation as a legitimate theological position."[11] Indeed, operating under this imagined binary, some scholars cannot imagine that Jews ever conceived of God in corporeal, human form.[12]

Precisely because these arresting words have become so influential for both "Jews" and "Christians," it is difficult to imagine a time when there were not two distinct religious groups utterly polarized in their opinion about whether God could become embodied. As a result, scholars have not sufficiently explored how Jews outside of the Jesus movement in the first few centuries of the Common Era conceived that God could become embodied on earth.[13] Indeed,

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[11] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 239.

[12] Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963); Edward Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation* (London: Farber, 1970); Michael Wyschogrod, "A Jewish Perspective on Incarnation," *Modern Theology* 12 (1996): 195–209. Throughout this piece Wyschogrod notes how, following Maimonides and others, many Jews think of God as utterly incorporeal, although he does qualify this position in two main ways. First, he claims that for Jews "God enters the world of humanity, that he appears at certain places and dwells in them which thereby become holy" (204). And second that, in contrast to the Christian belief regarding the specific person of Jesus as God incarnate, for him "God is in all Jewish flesh, because it is the flesh of the covenant, the flesh of a people to whom God has attached himself, by whose name he is known in the world as the God of Israel" (207).

Although the assumption that Jews reject the notion of divine corporeality can arise from both Jewish and Christian scholars, it is particularly acute among New Testament specialists and Christian theologians and has long been a part of the scholarly tradition. In a personal e-mail exchange with Susannah Heschel, for instance, she pointed out to me that already in the middle of the nineteenth-century Heinrich Graetz employed this criterion in judging texts to be Christian.

[13] Since the field of New Testament studies often focuses on textual or hermeneutical issues that have relevance for later developments in Christianity, through this methodological approach scholars often confine their investigations to narrow debates regarding when this idea first arose among Jesus followers. See Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, xii, 213, although this is the focus of his entire book. For

even today, as Wolfon's quotation illumines, many scholars tend to impose the current religious scene back onto antiquity, reading ancient texts with an eye towards a later dating and a specific teleological end.

Yet the problem with this approach is that it imposes a false binary relationship onto these two traditions when in reality the religious beliefs and practices of Jews during the Second Temple Period, and of both those who would later identify as Jews and those who would identify as Christians in the early Late Antique period, were often much more complex. For these ancient religious thinkers who were the forebears of what today is known as Judaism and Christianity, there was a wide variety of ways in which God's presence became embodied in humans or in which humans themselves could become divine. To state the problem more succinctly: the narrow questions that specialists have raised about the origins of Judaism and Christianity, questions often driven by their knowledge of later theological outcomes, have severely limited the potential insights that can be gained.

This dissertation explores Jewish literature primarily from the first two centuries of the Common Era to demonstrate that the idea that God could become embodied in humans or that humans could be conceived of as divine surprisingly presents a point of convergence rather than

others scholars who debate at what point the human figure Jesus of Nazareth was first considered divine, see Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 9, 31–32, 35–36, 143, 156, 158; Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 1–8, 11–15; 99–128; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1–11; idem, *How on Earth did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–9; 42–53, 152–53, 177–78; Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), vii–x; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), ix–59; 182–85; Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014); Michael Bird, ed. *How God became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—a Response to Bart Ehrman* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

divergence between what would later come to be known as the religions of Judaism and Christianity. Through close readings of relevant extant literature from authors such as Philo, Josephus, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Wisdom of Solomon,* the *Book of the Parables*, and the Gospel of John, which are based on my own translations, I investigate various ways that this literature either depicts God becoming embodied in the world or presents created humans as divine. I then situate these close readings within the broader context of the Greco-Roman world out of which these Jewish religious developments emerged. The question that I ask throughout this dissertation is why these religious ideas developed at this particular time in history, among this particular type of people, and under these particular historical circumstances. In other words, I interrogate why Jews, in the years leading up to and in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple, sought these kinds of intellectual solutions about how God and humans can connect. Moreover, I intentionally read across the pre- and post-70 CE divide to emphasize that, though significant, the year that marked the destruction of the Jewish temple did not disrupt Jewish traditions, society, and ideology as significantly as has specialists have often assumed.[14] I

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[14] Recent scholarship has argued that the destruction of the temple in 70 CE was less disruptive of the religious make-up of Jewish society than has been heretofore appreciated. See, for instance, Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged. Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5. Moreover, others have emphasized how even post-70 CE, the religious landscape of "Judaism" continued to be quite diverse. See Martin Goodman, "Sadducees and Essenes After 70 CE," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. S. E. Porter, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 347–56; Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Rabbis, 'Jewish Christians,' and Other Late Antique Jews: Reflections on the Fate of Judaism(s) After 70 C.E.," in *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity, and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity*, ed. I. H. Henderson and G. S. Oegema (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 323–46; and Jodi Magness "Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 (2005): 1–52, whose investigation of ancient Palestinian synagogues has revealed priestly oriented images, suggesting the possibility of a continued presence of priestly-oriented Judaism, growing in prominence in the late fourth-century and early fifth-century CE. As a result, others have suggested that the fluidity of Jewish self-identity in antiquity was broad enough to include groups of persons who adhered to Jesus as the Messiah. See Karin Zetterholm, "Alternative Visions of Judaism and Their Impact on the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism," *JJMJS* 1 (2014): 127–153, esp. 147–48; Fonrobert, "The *Didascalia Apostolorum*," 483–509; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 17, 23.

describe the period of Jewish history that I explore as "Jewish Antiquity," rather than other alternatives such as late "Second Temple Period Judaism" or "Early Judaism,"[15] in large part because many—although certainly not all—of the primary, extant sources that I employ post-date the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and some may even potentially post-date the reign of Hadrian (117–138 CE) and the Bar Kokhba revolts (132–135 CE).[16] Moreover, I retain the use of the word "Jewish," in my title because I read the Gospel of John—like contemporaneous Jewish texts such as Josephus, *4 Ezra,* and *2 Baruch*—as a Jewish text. I discuss the topic of the Gospel of John's Jewishness at greater length in chapter 6. I argue that the various forms of divine embodiment that I uncover illustrate a point of commonality between what only later comes to be known as the religions of Judaism and Christian, a commonality that has long been considered a place of contention, even if such commonality may seem counterintuitive today.

At the heart of this dissertation is my definition of the notion of divine embodiment. Divine embodiment for my purposes encompasses a wide variety of ways in which an aspect, or

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[15] Scholars have labeled in a wide variety of ways the period in history that spans from Alexander the Great's conquests in the fourth-century BCE to the last Jewish revolts in the early second-century CE. These ways include: "*Spätjudentum*" [Schürer, Bousset], "Intertestamental," [Prideaux], "Middle Judaism" [Boccaccini]," "Second Temple Judaism" [Stone], the "Period between the Bible and the Mishnah" [Nickelsburg], and "Early Judaism" [Collins, Harlow]. See John J. Collins, "Early Judaism in Modern Scholarship," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 1–23. Because much, although certainly not all, of the evidence that I employ post-dates the destruction of the temple, and because my work also is deeply indebted to and, I hope, has great relevance for the fields of Late Antiquity Christianity and Rabbinics, I have chosen to employ the appellation "Jewish Antiquity" instead.

[16] In the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple, around the turn of the first century CE, the works of Josephus, *4 Ezra,* and *2 Baruch* took their final forms. With respect to Josephus, scholars typically date his lifetime from 37–100 CE. See Flavius Josephus, *Life of Josephus,* vol. 9 of *Josephus Flavius*, ed. and trans. Steve Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 49. With respect to *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra,* scholars date both to the end of the first-century CE, see Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1–18. With respect to the Gospel of John, many place its final form at between 90–110 CE, see Raymond E. Brown S.S., *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 199–215.

attribute, or personification of Israel's supreme God enters into the created world, though much of my work centers on how these manifestations became localized or mediated through humans. These entities are not synonymous with Israel's supreme deity, but they participate in the divinity of that ineffable and uncreated One, and thereby can also be considered divine. As a close corollary, I define human apotheosis as instances in which created humans, or human-like figures, either undergo the process of deification or are presented as being divine themselves. These figures, though created, also participate in the divinity of Israel's supreme deity, and thus can also be considered divine.

Throughout this dissertation I intentionally employ the phrase "divine embodiment," instead of "God's embodiment" or "incarnation." With respect to the notion of "God's embodiment," I draw a distinction between the words God and divine, because although Jews had a conceptualization of one supreme God who was uncreated himself, there were many other entities that could participate in that high God's divinity and thereby be conceived of as divine as well. I discuss this point at greater length in chapter 2. With respect to the notion of "incarnation," I prefer the notion of divine embodiment over that of incarnation because the notion of incarnation has become so deeply embedded in Christian theology that it is difficult to associate it with anything else.[17] If, for instance, I define the phenomenon that I am describing as it is intimated in the Gospel of John and developed further in later Christian theology to mean *solely* the divine, pre-existent, not-created word (λόγος) of God become flesh (σὰρξ), or perhaps even more provocatively, if I choose to retain the word incarnation at all, then my project's associations and connotations remain connected to Christianity alone. Indeed, as will soon

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[17] I thank Rachel Neis, in particular, for sharpening my thinking on these matters and for encouraging me to employ a different set of terms to describe the phenomenon that I unearth throughout this dissertation.

become clear from my brief foray into the history of research on divine embodiment, until quite

recently most scholars who have investigated this notion have done so within an exclusively

Christian framework. Yet in the period of investigation of my study, the distinction between

Judaism and Christianity did not yet exist, nor would it exist, at least in some locales such as

Roman Syria, for at least three to four centuries.[18] Accordingly, by defining these terms more

broadly, as Jacob Neusner, Elliot Wolfon, and Yair Loberbaum have done, I argue that more

fruitful conversations about the continuities and discontinuities of this idea in the various forms

of late Second Temple Judaism and the early Roman Period can be explored.[19]

Implicit in my definition of divine embodiment is also my understanding of the concepts

of "divine" and "divinity." Because the related notion of Jewish monotheism has been the source

of extensive scholarly debate, I address these points at greater length in chapter 2. Of particular

importance here is the observation that the ancients, even Jews, conceived of divinity differently

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[18] For scholars who have underscored how the Syrian milieu, and places like Antioch in particular, resisted an early parting between what has later become known as Judaism and Christianity and instead presented much more of a Jewish-Christian continuum, see Forger, "Interpreting the Syrophoenician Woman," 132–166; Reed and Vuong, "Christianity in Antioch," 105–32; Annette Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways': Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementine Literature," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Y. Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 189–232; idem, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-history? The Apostolic Past in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*" in *Antiquity in Antiquity. Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 123, ed. Gregg Gardner and Kevin L. Osterloh (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 173–216, esp. 191–94; idem, "Parting Ways over Blood and Water? Beyond 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in the Roman Near East," in *La Croisée des chemins revisitée*, ed. Simon Mimouni and Bernard Pouderon (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 227–59; idem, "Rethinking (Jewish-)Christian Evidence for Jewish Mysticism," in *Hekalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia*, ed. Raʿanan Boustan, Martha Himmelfarb, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 349–377; Zetterholm, "Alternative Visions of Judaism," 127–53; Emanuel Fiano, "From 'Why' to 'Why Not': *Clem. Recogn.* III 2-11, Fourth-Century Trinitarian Debates, and the Syrian Christian-Jewish Continuum," *Adamantius* 20 (2014): 343–365, esp. 343–346; Fonrobert, "The *Didascalia Apostolorum*," 488–89.

[19] Neusner, *Incarnation of God,* 4, rendered incarnation as God "represented in human form, as a human being, corporeal." Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 247, defined the term as God's form "rendered accessible through the liturgical imagination, which is expressed in Torah study and prayer" Moreover, Lorberbaum, *Image of God,* though not employing the term "incarnation" *per se*, has argued that, for the rabbis, there was a tangible divine presence within every human being.

than we think of it today. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, a pantheon of various deities populated the divine realm; indeed, even select humans could become exalted to the realm of the gods. The ancients (even ancient Jews) thus construed divinity in terms of degree and hierarchical power.[20] "As long as one god," or even in some instances, a group of equally powerful deities, "stood at the absolute apex of holiness and power," the ancients "could and did accommodate vast numbers of deities ranging beneath."[21] Surprisingly, then, even ancient Jews did not differ radically from their pagan counterparts in terms of their hierarchical conceptions of the divine realm.[22] Their worldview was broad enough to encompass superhuman angelic beings, exalted humans, and personified attributes of God, all of which could be described as "divine."[23] Even Jews "believed not only that divine beings (such as angels) could become human, but that human beings could become divine."[24] This paradoxical position occurred because the scriptures that Jews employed to describe who or what was "divine" derived from a polytheistic context which legitimatized the use of such an appellation.[25] What distinguished ancient Jews— particularly in the period of history that I investigate in this dissertation—from their pagan

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[20] Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 40.

[21] Paula Fredriksen, *Sin*: *The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 54.

[22] See Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism. Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond,* Vol. 1 (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015); Gabriele Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls. John Collins at Seventy. Vol. 1.* ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden and Boston; Brill, 2017), 185–208; M. David Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 1–27, esp. 6; Ronald Cox, *By The Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity.* BZNW 145 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 94–99; David T. Runia, "The Beginnings of the End: Philo of Alexandria and Hellenistic Theology," in *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its Background and Aftermath*, ed. Dorothea Frede and André Laks (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 281–312, esp. 289–99; David Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 21–23.

[23] Litwa, "The Deification of Moses," 6–7; Ehrman*, How Jesus Became God*, 4–5.

[24] Ehrman*, How Jesus Became God*, 5.

[25] Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 186–187.

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counterparts was that for them there was one supreme deity who was the creator of all else, himself uncreated.[26] Though many things, including certain righteous humans, could be considered "divine,"[27] only Israel's supreme deity was considered "uncreated."[28] This distinction is important because it illumines how the Gospel of John's version of divine embodiment is both similar to, yet also differs from, other contemporaneous forms of the same phenomenon in Jewish thought.

Throughout this dissertation, I posit the various types of divine embodiment that ancient Jews imagined in the early centuries of the Common Era. On the one hand, some of these figures, like God's "wisdom" and "word," were first perceived as attributes of Israel's supreme

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[26] Certainly, Philo's *logos* comes close to Israel's highest divinity, being described as "neither uncreated as God, nor created as you" [*Her.* 206; cf. his descriptions of the perfect man as being "on the boundary between the uncreated and the perishable nature" (*Somn.* 2.234), and the high priest, on the day of atonement, as belonging "as to his mortal nature to creation, but as to his immortal nature to the uncreated God" (*Somn.* 2.231)]. For scholars who employ this evidence to problematize the Creator-Created division, see Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 297–98; James McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in its Jewish Context* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 13. However, Philo never depicts these entities as being synonymous with Israel's highest divinity, the sole uncreated one. Although at times Philo does present God sharing a part of God's divine nature with them (as, for instance, I argue in Chapter 3 with respect to the implantation of God's spirit, or breath, into the souls of humans), that does not make them identical with the uncreated God. M. David Litwa's distinction between "primal deity" and "mediate deity" is helpful in this regard. Primal deity, for Litwa, consists *solely* of true Being (often called τὸ ὄν, the Existent one), or Philo's supreme deity. As such, this deity comprises the top of the divine hierarchy, and is "divine in an ultimate, unshareable sense" (cf. *Leg.* 2.1; *Legat.* 115; *Virt.* 65; *Sacr.* 91–92; *Mut.* 27). By contrast, for Litwa mediate deity is associated with the "world of becoming". Accordingly, it "can be and is shared by lesser (including created) beings," including God's "Logos," the "powers," the "stars, including the sun and moon," "heroes," "daimones," as well as "humans." Thus, says Litwa, while figures such as the logos, angel, Moses, and the other patriarchs "never becomes or threatens to become the primal God," they are "able to participate in the divinity of the supreme, Existent one, and thus, in this sense, are deified too. See, "Deification of Moses," 5–8; idem, *We are Being Transformed. Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 106–109.

[27] Litwa, "The Deification of Moses," 6–7; Ehrman*, How Jesus Became God*, 4–5.

[28] Richard Bauckham is the scholar who, in recent years, has most forcibly argued that ancient Jews viewed God as the sole creator, who was, himself, the creator of all else. See, for instance, Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 9–13; idem, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus" in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (ed. Carey Newman, James Davila, and Gladys Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43–69, esp. 44–48. Although he himself does not agree with this perspective, for a discussion of other specialists in early Christology who have similarly argued for this Creator-creature division, see Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 293–316. See also Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 188.

uncreated God that later became personified and even embodied within the material creation. On the other hand, others, like Moses and the Jewish high priest, were first clearly created as humans, but then later went through the process of apotheosis or embarked upon a mystical ascent into the divine realm to become more like Israel's supreme deity themselves. This is not to say that these figures are *precisely* the same as the latter notion of Jesus of Nazareth as God incarnate. Yet their presence in Jewish texts around the turn of the Common Era suggests that our historical understanding of the idea of divine embodiment, of which the Gospel of John's version is just one example, has been more limited by how we have defined the term with respect to a particular teleological end in Christian theology than by the paradoxical concept itself.

Accordingly, this dissertation makes four primary arguments:

First, I suggest that within the period of Jewish Antiquity which I investigate, there were a number of ways that the "divine" could became "embodied," and thus the notion of incarnation emerged out of the matrix of and not as a significant deviation from, other Jewish thought. Specifically, I claim that the description found in John 1:14 that the divine word became flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) was just one of the many ways that Jews in the early centuries of the Common Era understood that God, or an aspect of God, was embodied, or took on a corporeal form. Thus, in the first century CE, both immediately before and in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple, the notion of divine embodiment was not antithetical to Jewish religious thought, but rather integral to it.

Second, I argue that although much of the later Christian tradition—especially after Nicaea—adopted a theology in which God and a particular human are one, by focusing exclusively on the steps that led up to this development in Christianity, scholars, in particular New Testament and early Christian specialists, have not fully appreciated the many and

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multiform ways that early Jesus-followers and other Jews came to articulate and understand how the divine presence could be manifested on earth, or how they as humans could transcend the earthly realm to participate in the divinity instead. By exploring this question from an exclusive perspective, scholars have set "Christianity" in opposition to "Judaism." In reality, however, at least in some specific locales, the two religions were not distinct entities until at least the fourth century CE, if not well beyond.

Third, I suggest that these various forms of "divine embodiment" within the late Second Temple and early Roman period, like John's incarnate Christ, had significant soteriological implications. If adherents believed in the efficacy of the figure that was embodying or mediating the divine, then they also thought that this figure enabled their salvation.

Fourth and finally, though much of my work emphasizes the continuity between the formulation in the Gospel of John and these other forms of divine embodiment, by redefining the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism in terms of a distinction between the uncreated supreme deity and all other reality, I reveal why the claim of John 1:14 was still quite unprecedented and radical, even in its own day.

1.2   A Brief History of Research

My chief aim in this section of the Introduction is to demonstrate how, for much of the history of research on this topic, New Testament and early Christian scholars in particular have approached their inquiries into the notion of "divine embodiment" through an exclusively Christian lens. They have raised questions about how and when the notion of the Incarnation arose within Christian history and theology. My methodological approach differs quite radically from this, in that I explore instead how early descriptions of Jesus as the divine word made flesh

were part and parcel of a broader conversation in Jewish antiquity about how the divine could become embodied on earth. Rather than focusing on later theological doctrines, I offer close readings of extant Jewish literature, based on my own translations, in order to look at what was happening on the ground in Jewish antiquity in terms of this supreme deity-human interaction from approximately the late first century BCE until the early second century CE.

A. The Beginnings of Critical Scholarship

1) The Nineteenth Century: Critical Investigations Arise

A marked shift arose in scholarship related to God's embodiment on earth in the wake of the nineteenth-century Enlightenment, when scholars first began to inquire critically into the historical origins of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Emboldened by the Enlightenment and swept up in the fervor of intellectual positivism, these scholars applied historical-critical methods to their study and believed that human reason alone was enough to secure the certainty of their results. By way of example, in ostensibly the first work of this kind, the German theologian Ferdinand C. Baur revolutionized the study of incarnation by insisting that it—like all of early Christianity—could only be understood properly within the context of critical historical inquiry.[29] To demonstrate this point, Baur applied a Hegelian lens to his study of this topic to suggest that intimations of incarnation could be found in both pagan natural religion and Jewish theism. He argued that while pagan natural religion depicted God as ultimately equivalent to the material world, Jewish theism presented God as a transcendent creator, utterly separated from the

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[29] Ferdinand Christian Baur's most complete investigation of the Incarnation occurs in his *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Osiander, 1841–43), but precursors to this line of thinking in his work can also be found in his earlier monographs on Gnosticism. See, for instance, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835) and *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung von der ältesten Zeit bis auf die neueste* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1838).

material world. The struggle between these two poles of God's immanence, on the one hand, and God's transcendence, on the other, came to a climax in the Incarnation, in which God reconciled these two poles of influence in an unprecedented and salvific act. As a result, Baur envisioned Christianity, and especially the idea of incarnation, as the evolutionary climax of all religions.

A few years later, other scholars from the late nineteenth century, such as Adolf von Harnack and Robert L. Ottley, employed a similar critical approach, although this methodology led them to different conclusions than Baur's. For Harnack, the development of Christian dogma—and the notion of incarnation, in particular—did not arise out of a struggle between two opposing forces, but rather occurred *solely* through the progressive Hellenization of the gospel.[30] Regarding the notion of incarnation in particular, Harnack argued that early Christians understood the *logos* doctrine of the Gospel of John through their previous understanding of Greek philosophy.[31] In this manner, Harnack discounts the influence that the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexander, may have played.

For Ottley's part it was not Greek metaphysics or Jewish theism but scripture itself that provided the key to unlocking the origins of this doctrine.[32] Ottley identifies frequent intimations of the Incarnation throughout both the Old and New Testaments. From the Old Testament, to him everything from divine theophanies to theomorphic presentations of man provide "the loftiest doctrine of God's nature hitherto attained by mankind, and the clearest anticipations of a further self-manifestation."[33] Likewise, from the New Testament, everything from Jesus' own

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[30] Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1905); trans. of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1886-90, 3 vols).

[31] For more information, see Harnack, *History of Dogma,* 208.

[32] Robert L. Ottley, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 4th rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1908).

[33] Ottley, *Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 39.

incarnate consciousness to the way various epistles indifferently apply the title κύριος to God and Christ, and most specifically the resurrection provide for him "the final assurance that under the veil of mortal flesh the eternal Son of God Himself had tabernacled among men."[34] Despite his critical methodologies, he and the other scholars that I have highlighted began with the implicit assumption that the entire New Testament testified to the latter Christian notion of Jesus as God incarnate; consequently, the scope of their work was ultimately limited by a tacit bias that subtly, though not consciously, undergirded their entire work.

2) Twentieth-Century Scholarship: An Emphasis on New Testament Groundings

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the explicit agenda of several Christian scholars was to demonstrate that the doctrine of the Incarnation was already unequivocally embedded in the entire corpus of the New Testament.[35] The collective efforts of these scholars identified a group of key biblical texts—including but not limited to Philippians 2:6–11, Colossians 1:15–20, I Corinthians 15:44–49, Galatians 4:4–7, Romans 8:3, and John 1:1–14—which they argued either proved that Jesus himself thought he was the divine, incarnate word of God, or that already the earliest Christians believed in the Incarnation. Two primary characteristics typified the work of these scholars. First, while they conducted close exegetical readings of key scriptural texts, they did not always apply equal attention to the broader religious and cultural milieu of that time. Thus, in the process they often sidelined significant sociological or historical concerns. Second, though they attempted to conduct critical investigations, many had clear ecclesiastical connections and loyalties; indeed, some of their studies even originally

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[34] Ottley, *Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 83.

[35] For key examples, see the work of Edwin Hamilton Gifford, *The Incarnation: A Study of Philippians 2:5-11* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1897); Francis Ferrier, *What is the Incarnation?*, trans. Edward Sillem (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), trans. of *L'incarnation* (Paris: Cerf, 1960); George S. Hendry, *The Gospel of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958); Jacques Liébaert, *L'incarnation: Des origines au concile de Chalcédoine* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966).

took the form of homilies or served as the basis of the theological curriculum of future clergymen. A prominent example of this approach arises in the work of British scholar Edwin Hamilton Gifford, who sought to demonstrate how Philippians 2:5–11 witnessed to the notion of Incarnation. To make his case, he moved slowly, word by word, line by line, and verse by verse through this entire pericope to demonstrate how and why the apostle Paul had consciously used certain words and turns of phrase to show his readers that Jesus was both fully divine and human. In a certain sense this approach was not new, for it had ancient antecedents in the early Church Fathers. Nor was it uncritical, for historical-critical methods had long-since permeated the entire discipline. But the challenge of modernity and its attendant consequences greatly increased the urgency of these scholars' quests to prove that the doctrine of the Incarnation was already embedded in the earliest documents from the New Testament.

One notable exception to this trend of viewing the entire New Testament as testifying to the later Christian doctrine of the Incarnation arises in the work of the American scholar Charles A. Briggs.[36] Like other ecclesiastically minded scholars of his generation, Briggs attempted to couple modern critical methodologies with close readings of the biblical text. Yet, in a six-part sermon series, he made an unprecedented move by suggesting that the idea of incarnation *evolved* throughout the New Testament. Thus for Briggs, "it was not in the circle of the Twelve that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ first appeared," but rather through the gradual unfolding of the thought of the apostle Paul throughout his various epistles.[37] Since the twelve disciples knew the human Jesus intimately and Paul did not, it was difficult for the former but easier for the latter to begin to develop incarnational language. After closely examining the Pauline corpus,

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[36] Charles A. Briggs, *The Incarnation of the Lord: A Series of Sermons Tracing the Unfolding of the Doctrine of the Incarnation in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1902).

[37] Briggs, *Incarnation of the Lord*, 183.

Briggs then traces the further development of this doctrine from the pastorals, to the epistle to the Hebrews, to the Gospel of John, and finally to the Johannine epistles. He concludes that it was only in the Johannine corpus that this doctrine achieved its apogee.

3) Other Twentieth-Century Scholarship: A Focus on Second Temple Literature

At about the same time as these scholars from the twentieth century continued their quests to determine the point at which the doctrine of the Incarnation first arose in the New Testament, two other groups of scholars emerged. These groups intentionally employed Second Temple Jewish literature to address questions related to the study of incarnation. The first group of scholars asked how early Christians could have come to think of Jesus as divine within the matrix of Jewish monotheism. Their question was, in many respects, precisely the opposite of that of incarnation, albeit intimately related to it. For rather than asking how a divine entity could become human, they asked how a human being (Jesus) could become divine within the context of Jewish monotheism.

Ostensibly in the first work of its kind, the German protestant New Testament scholar and theologian Wilhelm Bousset investigated precisely this question.[38] Bousset drew upon Philo and other forms of Jewish literature, such as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, to distinguish between "Palestinian Judaism" and "Hellenistic Judaism." While the former preserved the

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[38] Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely, with an introduction by Larry W. Hurtado (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013); trans. Of *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921). Although the work of Bousset affected nearly the entire subsequent generation of scholars, recent archeological discoveries have made his sharp dichotomy between "Palestinian Judaism" and "Hellenistic Judaism" untenable. Instead, scholars now insist that the conquests of Alexander the Great and his promulgation of Greek culture affected *all* aspects of Second Temple Period Judaism. See Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of American, 1959); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. J. Bowden; 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

"pristine and exclusive monotheism" of the Old Testament, the latter represented an "aberrant" form of the religion. Bousset identified three primary factors that had corrupted Hellenistic Judaism: the "rising interest in angels"; the emergence of "dualism" and the attendant focus upon "demonology"; and the affirmation of divine attributes such as the λόγος (word) and σοφία (wisdom). These corrupting influences, argued Bousset, emerged within a Diasporic Jewish setting because these Jews, influenced by Greek philosophy and Hellenistic culture, increasingly envisioned God as transcendent and utterly removed from the material world. Accordingly, these intermediary figures emerged within the ideology of Hellenistic Judaism as a way to bridge the gap between God and the human realm. The presence of these figures weakened the strict monotheism of the Old Testament, and thus it was out of this Hellenized form of Judaism that Christianity and its belief in the divinity of Jesus emerged.

In marked contrast to Bousset, who assumed that the God of Apocalyptic and Hellenistic literature was remote, the British scholar Henry J. Wicks argued that these Apocalyptic and Hellenistic texts depict "a God who is in unmediated contact with His creation.[39] The unbroken line of prayer between humans and God served as one of Wick's primary examples to support this argument. For Wicks, the only exception to this rule arose from the corpus of Enochic literature. Wicks argued that in "1 Enoch 1–36, 72–82", and "two possible interpolations" in "Slavonic Enoch", the texts present a "distant God," or a "theology of such strong predestination that God is no longer needed to interact or effect change among humanity."[40] These texts aside, through the accumulation of this evidence Wicks implicitly suggested a strong and vibrant Jewish monotheistic belief throughout the Second Temple Period, and a tension between a belief

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[39] Henry J. Wicks, *The Doctrine of God in the Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature* (London: Hunter & Longhurst, 1915), 124.

[40] Wicks, *Doctrine of God,* 124–127.

in God's omnipotence and a belief in God's accessibility. Yet despite these discrepancies between Bousset and Wicks, both thought that it was only in a Hellenized form of Judaism that belief in Jesus' divinity could have emerged.

The second group of scholars asked how Second Temple Jewish literature might shed light on the origins and early development of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. In addressing this question, these works marked a significant breakthrough in the study of the Incarnation because they illumined the extent to which the makings of the Incarnation, and of early Christology more broadly, were dependent upon Judaism. We see the most notable example of this trend in the pioneering work of American Jewish scholar, Harry Austryn Wolfson,[41] the first Jewish American scholar to spend his entire career at an Ivy League institution. Wolfson's work had an impressive interdisciplinary focus. With respect to the Incarnation, in particular, Wolfson argued that Paul, John, and the early church fathers were all dependent upon "elements borrowed from current Jewish beliefs" in regard to how they articulated and expressed Jesus' identity.[42] Yet he saw the clearest affinity between the ancient milieu of Second Temple Judaism and what occurs in the Gospel of John, for he claimed: "Not exactly a departure from Philo but only an addition to him is the doctrine of the Incarnation, for in its ultimate formulation the Incarnation became a new stage in the history of the Philonic Logos—a Logos made immanent in a man after its having been immanent in the world."[43] Indeed, for Wolfson, the "incarnate Logos of Christianity" and the "immanent Logos of Philo" are similar to one other.[44] "In the former," he wrote, "the Logos is in a man; in the latter, the

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[41] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers: Faith, Trinity, and Incarnation.* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[42] Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers,* 156.

[43] Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, viii.

[44] Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 365.

Logos is in the world."[45] As a result of this logic, Wolfson surprisingly did not view the writer of

the Gospel of John as doing something entirely new, but rather as merely extending Philo's

logic. It was only in the writings of the early church fathers, argued Wolfson, that both a clear

dependence upon Philo and a more radical deviation from Philo's thought emerged; accordingly,

it was only in late antiquity that a clear separation of thought emerged between the rabbis and the

early church fathers in their conception of God.

4) The Controversy over Incarnation that Erupted in 1977

In 1977, the publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate* stirred a bitter controversy in

England, the likes of which had not been seen before.[46] As the foreword to its sequel,

Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continues notes,

> It provoked hostile reviews in most of the religious and secular press; it was answered
> within six weeks by *The Truth of God Incarnate*, and later by *God Incarnate*; it sold
> thirty thousand copies in the first eight months, twenty-four thousand of them in Britain;
> and a call was made by the Church of England Evangelical Council (*Truth, error, and
> discipline in the church*) for the five Anglican authors to resign their orders.[47]

As is quite clear from the above description, this highly controversial set of essays touched upon

a sensitive topic, and accordingly, ignited a fierce debate. This occurred for two main reasons.

First, many popular readers missed the double meaning of the book's title. A myth, according to

the definition established by the guild of biblical scholars, can have two very different, yet

interrelated meanings. On the one hand, a myth is "a story of profound meaning, by which men

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[45] Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers,* 365–366.

[46] John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977). For
rebuttals to the central argument of this volume, which were published within a year of Hick's edited
collection*,* see Michael Green, ed. *The Truth of God Incarnate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) and
George Carey, *God Incarnate: Meeting the Contemporary Challenges to a Classic Christian Doctrine*
(Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1978).

[47] Michael Goulder, ed., *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1979), vii.

guide their lives."[48] On the other hand, a myth is a "fairy-tale, not true."[49] Because the vast majority of non-academic readers who encountered this book assumed that the title asserted the latter and not the former definition, the book was instantly perceived as being more provocative than any of the contributing authors had anticipated. Second, the book arose out of the expressed need of each of the contributing authors to reconcile the exclusivity associated with the traditional articulation of incarnation in the Christian tradition with the pluralistic religious scene in England. As a result, they came to the conclusion that for them "Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts 2.21) 'a *man* approved by God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is a *mythological or poetic* way of expressing his significance for us."[50] Since many if not all of the contributors to the volume had ecclesiastical connections, the volume undoubtedly created quite a stir among proponents of the Christian faith.

The publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate* represented a watershed moment in the study of incarnation because each of the contributing authors assumed that the doctrine of incarnation was utterly foreign to the New Testament and instead argued that the teaching only became an official church dogma after a lengthy period of struggle in the early church. In fact, in another publication, the editor, John Hick, even went so far as to say that the incarnation was "a dogma that Jesus himself would probably have regarded as blasphemous."[51] Consequently, and not unexpectedly, after the publication of these books, controversy ensued both within and

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[48] Goulder, *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continues,* vii.

[49] Goulder, *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continues,* vii.

[50] Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ix, emphasis mine.

[51] John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 185.

outside of scholarly circles because the authors had rattled the very foundations of the Christian faith.

B. The Current State of Research

1) Sustained Arguments by NT Specialists

After the intense controversy over the *Myth of God Incarnate*, in more recent years there have been three primary ways that scholars have either responded to or continued to investigate ideas associated with God's embodiment in human form. First, primarily New Testament scholars have sought to demonstrate that the idea of Jesus as God incarnate—or more specifically the notion of "high Christology" or that the figure of Jesus was also God—was already embedded in the earliest documents of the New Testament. These specialists were not exploring the question of the incarnation *per se,* but rather were attempting to ask when the earliest Jesus followers began to conceive of Jesus as God. Prominent proponents of this trend, who place this development early, include Larry Hurtado, Richard Bauckham, John and Adela Yarbro Collins, and Bart Ehrman, albeit each does so via different means.

Larry Hurtado, for instance, asserts that the very early worship of Jesus by his followers was a unique and truly extraordinary innovation that could have occurred only if early Christians or Jesus followers, who themselves were Jews, conceived of Jesus as God. He develops his thesis around two primary foci. First, having surveyed the broader range of Second Temple Jewish literature, he asserts that the Jewish religious tradition included the concept of "divine agency," in which a "chief agent figure" was situated directly by God.[52] Second, employing evidence from the canonical gospels and the Pauline corpus, he contends that the religious experience of early

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[52] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord,* 17–39.

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Christians produced a "distinctive mutation" of this aspect of ancient Jewish belief; namely, early Christians began to worship and venerate "God's chief agent", Jesus, as their risen lord.[53] The constraints of Jewish monotheism necessitated that God alone was to be worshipped, while the worship of Jesus indicates that these early Christians also thought of Jesus as God.

In a similar vein, Richard Bauckham also argues that all New Testament documents articulate the very highest possible Christology right from the start, although he diverges from Hurtado on a few important points.[54] To begin with, he suggests that the "recent trends" that attempt "to find a model for Christology in semi-divine intermediary figures in early Judaism are largely mistaken."[55] As an alternative, he proposes that a better approach to this question is to focus on "who the one God is, rather than what divinity is."[56] For him, "early Judaism had clear and consistent ways of characterizing the unique identity of the one God and thus distinguishing the one God absolutely from all other reality."[57] For Bauckham, God's unique identity includes four key components.[58] First, God has a name, Yahweh, setting God apart from all other gods. Second, Yahweh is the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. Third, Yahweh is the "sole creator of all things", and fourth, Yahweh is the "sovereign ruler" of all things.[59] Consequently, he

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[53] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 2, 12, 93–124; Hurtado, *How on Earth,* 153–54, 178. Elsewhere he describes this as a "variant form" rather than a "mutation," see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 50, n. 70

[54] Bauckham, *God Crucified,* viii; idem, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58–59.

[55] *Jesus and the God of Israel,* ix; idem, *God Crucified*, vii.

[56] Richard Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1," in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North; London: T & T Clark, 2004): 167–185, quoted here at 167; idem, *God Crucified*, viii; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel*; x, 6–7, 30–31; idem, "Throne of God," 44–45.

[57] Quotation is from Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii. See also Bauckham, "Throne of God," 44–45.

[58] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 7–11

[59] For Bauckham's greater emphasis on the latter two components of God's identity, namely that he is *sole* creator and *sole* ruler of the universe, see *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 9–11, 18; idem, "Throne of God," 45–48; idem, "Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1," 167.

suggests that when "New Testament Christology is read with this Jewish theological context in mind, it becomes clear that, from the earliest post-Easter beginnings of Christology onwards, early Christians included Jesus, precisely and unambiguously, within the unique identity of the one God of Israel."[60] Thus, for Bauckham, an understanding of Jesus as God does not develop, since "the highest possible Christology—the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity— was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written, since it occurs in all of them."[61] In many respects, both Hurtado and Bauckham are on to something. The very observation that at one point Christians worshipped Jesus and included him in the divine identity *did* have implications for how Christians thought about God.[62] Yet, Hurtado's dismissal of other figures, such as Enoch, who were worshipped in the Second Temple Period,[63] and Bauckham's need to separate early Christian thought from potential connections to Judaism at that time, make both arguments difficult to sustain fully.

John Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins similarly argue that the early Christian understanding of Jesus as divine arose out of a Jewish context, but they arrive at this conclusion

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[60] Quotation is from Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii. See also Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 3–4, 18–21.

[61] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19

[62] This is the central point of Hurtado's work. For a similar discussion in that of Bauckham's, see also Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1980–81): 322–341, esp. 322, 335.

[63] Ezek 1:26, for instance, depicts one "like a human form (כמראה אדם)" being worshipped. *I En.* 48:5; 62:6–9 (cf. *I En.* 46:5; 52:4) portrays the Son of Man as being worshipped. Likewise, when describing the creation of man, Philo, *Opif.* 83 notes that all of the rest of creation, "as soon as they first saw him they [admired] and [worshipped] him." Moreover, *LA.* 12–16 depicts the angels worshipping Adam after his creation, but portrays the devil refusing to do so. See Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*. ed. Carey Newman, James Davila, and Gladys Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 115.

through a different route.[64] For them, Jesus was considered divine because of his presentation as the messianic king, or Son of God. By tracing evidence from the royal ideology in the ancient Near East all the way to its appropriation in the New Testament, they argue that there was a long-standing belief in the divinity of the king, most notably arising first in the Egyptian milieu, but transposed into the Jewish context, especially preserved through the Septuagint's Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Accordingly, rather than being a late development, solely possible within a Gentile or pagan milieu, the Collinses argue that the background for an understanding of Jesus as "pre-existent and divine" was already present within a Jewish milieu.[65]

Employing a similar methodology, yet in marked contrast to the conclusions of Hurtado, Bauckham, and the Collinses, the British New Testament scholar James Dunn also reinvestigated the New Testament evidence through a close, exegetical reading of the relevant texts. He concluded that the understanding of Jesus as divine occurred relatively late, not until the late first century/early second century CE. Ultimately, two revolutionary ideas emerge from his work. First, Dunn demonstrates how widespread "Adam Theology" was in the Second Temple period and uses that insight to show that the apostle Paul employed Adam rhetoric to create an antithesis between the first Adam (the Adam of Genesis) and the last Adam (Jesus of Nazareth).[66] Accordingly, for Dunn, an understanding of a pre-existent Christ, who was also incarnated, did not arise with the apostle Paul. Rather, it was a later development. Second, Dunn argues that it is only when we reach the Johannine corpus, and John 1:14 in particular, that we have the first

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[64] Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[65] Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah,* xiv.

[66] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 65–128.

unequivocal evidence for the origins of the incarnation in the New Testament.[67] Dunn's seminal work on this topic has drawn much criticism from other specialists in the field, particularly in relation to the first point above, with many questioning whether his thesis regarding Adam theology is viable. Yet his work has also prompted many—including Hurtado, Bauckham, and the Collinses—to reconsider when and out of which context the notion of Jesus as divine first emerged among Jesus's followers.

2) An Emphasis on the Bifurcation of God by Second Temple and Rabbinics Specialists

Second, a number of scholars, mostly specialists in Second Temple Judaism or Rabbinics, have illumined how the presence of divine intermediary figures in this literature might intimate a bifurcation in the Jewish concept of God around the time of the rise of Christianity. By way of example, Alan Segal in his groundbreaking work that stimulated much subsequent scholarship and debate argues that the roots of the heresy that the Rabbis labeled as "two-powers in heaven" derived from early biblical theophanies, such as Daniel 7:9, that pictured God as a man, or that viewed YHWH as an angel. Consequently, Segal suggests that the rabbis not only fought hard against Christianity and Gnosticism because they were conceived of a forms of this heresy, but that they also employed key proof texts, such as Deuteronomy 6 and 32, Exodus 20, and Isaiah 44 to engage in a sharp polemic. In particular, "whenever a second figure, either in the Pentateuch or in Dan., could be identified as a quasi-divine or independent angelic figure, the rabbis would fight vociferously against it."[68] Thus, Segal claims, though a

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[67] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* xiii.

[68] Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 51–52. In a later publication, Segal similarly emphasizes how in the first century "many, many Jews were willing to posit that some ordinary human beings were divine," and how "lots of Jews… thought that God could be divided into two different figures, an old and a young one (Dan 7:9–13)." See "Outlining the Question: From Christ to God," in *Jews & Christians Speak of Jesus*, ed. Arthur E. Zannoni (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 125–135, esp. 133.

belief in more than one divine agent in heaven existed within the broader social and cultural milieu of Second Temple Judaism, the rabbis endeavored to make this theological tradition heretical.

The scholarship of Christopher Rowland and Margaret Barker argues for a similar bifurcation in the understanding of God. With respect to the former, by comparing the divine theophanies found in Ezekiel 1:26, on the one hand, with Ezekiel 8:2, Daniel 7:9–13, Daniel 10:5–10, Rev. 1:13–17 and *Apoc. Ab.* 11.2–4, on the other hand, Rowland suggests that certain Second Temple Jews may have conceived of ways that God's divine attributes could be transferred upon a chief angelic agent as well as the inverse of this phenomenon.[69] Indeed, in many of these instances, as Rowland demonstrates, the divine throne of God is shared with another figure, whether with God's Glory, one like a son of Man, Christ, or the angel Yahoel, enabling those other figures to serve as divine agents on God's behalf. With respect to the latter, Margaret Barker argues that the polytheistic traditions of Ancient Israel never fully died out, but instead became reemployed in a modified way in Christianity.[70] In particular, she suggests that the Trinitarian division between Father, Son (Logos), and Spirit (Sophia) likely had its precursors in ancient Israel, wherein El Elyon (the high God) was distinguished from Yahweh (his son). In between, she traces how intermediary angelic figures, such as the Son of Man, but also, and most importantly, figures like Sophia and the Logos, served as conduits for preserving this tradition. The works of Philo of Alexandria, and especially his discussions of Sophia and the Logos, provide the crowning jewel of her argument: "Philo shows beyond any doubt that the

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[69] Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 94–113 in particular. See also Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord.* WUNT 36 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1985).

[70] Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel* (London: SPCK, 1992).

Judaism of the first Christian century acknowledged a second God."[71] By shedding light on the predominance of these divine intermediary figures in Second Temple Judaism, both of these scholars demonstrated the complexity of Jewish beliefs about God at this time.

The work of these scholars stimulated much discussion and debate, but it took an international conference at the University of St. Andrews on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus in 1998 to bring clarity to a complex set of issues in relation to the potential connection between the divine intermediary figures of Second Temple Literature and the question of Jewish monotheism and Christian origins.[72] In particular, at the beginning of the volume derived from this conference, one of the editors, James Davila, identifies five primary types of mediator figures from Second Temple Literature which in some way or another mediated between God and the human realm: 1) "Personified Divine Attributes," such as Philo's *Logos* or *Sophia*, 2) "Exalted Patriarchs," such as Enoch, Moses, and Jacob, 3) "Principal Angels," such as Gabriele, Michael, or even the *Metatron* of *3 Enoch*, 4) "Charismatic Prophets" and "Royal Aspirants," and finally, 5) "Ideal Figures," such as the Davidic king, the Mosaic Prophet, and the Aaronid high priest.[73] Clearly, Jewish literature at this time was rife with several types of figures that, in one way or another, played a mediatorial role. Consequently, using this rubric as a springboard, the various other authors who contributed to this edited volume strove to show—whether through the investigation of a particular text, a particular figure, or a combination of the two—how these divine mediatorial figures somehow pre-figured or

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[71] Barker, *Great Angel,* 131.

[72] Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds. *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism. Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[73] James Davila, "Of Methodology, Monotheism, and Metatron: Introductory Reflections on Divine Mediators and the Origins of the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 3–18.

anticipated Jesus' mediatorial role or his divinity. In this manner, these scholars now argued that the presence of these divine mediatorial figures in Second Temple Judaism stood as precursors to the developments that would occur in Christianity itself.

Daniel Boyarin is the scholar who, in recent years, has been most active in advancing scholarship on a possible binitarian understanding of God in pre-Christian Judaism. In his recent monograph *The Jewish Gospels*, Boyarin argues that a "divine Messiah" tradition was already present within the diversity of Jewish thought during the Second Temple Period.[74] To garner support for his position, Boyarin investigates the enigmatic figure of the "Son of Man" found in Daniel 7, the Enochic literature, and the Gospel of Mark. He concludes that by the early first century CE, some Jewish circles had already developed a high Christology. Moreover, in his article, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology,'" he makes a similar argument, but adds a significant discussion of 4 Ezra 15 as well.[75] In this work, he claims that "at least since Daniel and almost surely earlier, there had been a tradition within Israel that saw God as doubled in the form of an old man and a younger human-like figure, sharing the divine throne (or sharing, rather, two equal thrones)."[76] Though in Daniel 7 and 4 Ezra, he claims, this "second anthropomorphic divine figure has been 'suppressed'" to a certain extent, in the *Similitudes of*

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[74] Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012). Though it is on the rabbinic tradition, the work of Rachel Neis is also instructive here. Through an analysis of Hekalot Rabbati, a collection of early Jewish mystical traditions, Neis explores the imagery of a "divine iconic Jacob," whose image appears on the throne of God and who engages in an "ocular choreography" with God in such a way that this event in heaven parallels a similar liturgy in the synagogue on earth. What is surprising in this text is that *God venerates and adores* the iconic representation of Jacob/Israel in this text, in my estimation elevating the depiction of Jacob/Israel to a sort of divine status. See Rachel Neis, "Embracing Icons: The Face of Jacob on the Throne of God," *Images* 1 (2007): 36–54.

[75] Daniel Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology'" in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 164; eds. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013): 337–361.

[76] Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology,'" 337.

Enoch the binitarian nature of Second Temple Jewish ideas about God can be fully seen.[77]

Accordingly, Boyarin concludes that both works show that at its core the notion of "High Christology" was actually Jewish and that the notion of a divine, incarnate Messiah was already present in Second Temple Judaism before Jesus came onto the scene.

3) A Recent Emphasis on God's Body in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Tradition

Third, a number of Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic scholars have begun to devote attention to the prominence of God's body in both ancient Israel and the developing Jewish tradition. Although not the chief aim of their studies, one attendant consequence of their work has been to show that the notion of God's embodiment was also part and parcel of both the ancient Israelite and early Jewish traditions. To do so, these scholars have had to fight against two common misconceptions: First, in opposition to the assumption that Judaism is utterly non-anthropomorphic in character, they have sought to demonstrate the various ways in which in both the ancient Israelite and earlier stages of rabbinic Judaism, "God" is "represented in human form, as a human being, corporeal, consubstantial in emotions and virtues, alike in action and mode of action."[78] Second, in response to the vast majority of Christian thinkers throughout the centuries, they have had to dismantle the notion that God's embodiment was a phenomenon unique to Christianity alone.

With respect to the Hebrew Bible, the topic of God's body, as well as the related notion of the various anthropomorphic representations of God contained within, has elicited a proliferation of studies in recent years.[79] Of particular note is the work of Benjamin Sommers.[80]

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[77] Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology,'" 337.

[78] Neusner, *Incarnation of God*, 4.

[79] In addition to the works of Benjamin Sommer and Mark S. Smith discussed above, other recent articles and monographs include, but are not limited to Knafl, *Forming God*, 72–157; Hamori, *"When*

Although scholars have long noted how the God of the Hebrew Bible is often depicted in anthropomorphic ways,[81] Sommers complicates this notion by suggesting that, for some in ancient Israel, the corporeality of Israel's God reflected ancient Near Eastern understandings of divine "fluidity and multiplicity".[82] This fluidity allowed the gods, and Israel's God in particular, to manifest themselves as "fragmented selves," able to be in many different locations simultaneously. As a result, Sommers claims, the God of Israel did not have one body, but many bodies.

Mark Smith similarly complicates traditional understandings of God's body in the Hebrew Bible by suggesting that God's body manifests itself within this corpus of writings in three primary ways.[83] In the first set of texts, such as Genesis 2–3, 18, and 23, God takes on a "natural" body, described in anthropomorphic ways.[84] The texts present God doing tasks typically associated with humans, such as planting a garden, offering hospitality to visitors, and physically wrestling with Jacob. In the second set of texts, which include Exodus 24, 33-34, and Isaiah 6, God has a "superhuman" or "liturgical body".[85] Here God is depicted with a "superhuman-sized" body,[86] whose glory fills the entire temple, or is greatly larger than a typical

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Gods Were Men"; idem, "Divine Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible," 161–183; Neis, *The Sense of Sight*, 18–81.

[80] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 1–11, 38–57, 124–143.

[81] Some texts from the Hebrew Bible, for example, depict God in anthropomorphic terms, portraying God as acting in human-like ways (cf. Gen 3:8, Ex 15; 2 Sam 22; Is 6:1–3; Ps 18, 132:13, 135:21, Ps 18), or with concrete human-like attributes, such as fingers and a face (cf. Ex 31:18, Ps 8:3; Ex 24:10–12), or even with human-like emotions of anger, joy, and rage. See Moshe Reiss, "Adam: Created in the Image and Likeness of God," *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 39.3 (2011): 181–186, esp. 184.

[82] Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 10.

[83] Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 471–488.

[84] Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 473.

[85] Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 478.

[86] Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 479, 480.

human. In the last and final set of texts, which include Isaiah 66 and Ezekiel 1, God's body becomes a "cosmic" or "mystical" phenomenon.[87] This later category in many ways foreshadows the move to the transcendent, cosmic understanding of God present in later Greco-Roman texts. Although both Sommers and Smith complicate traditional understandings of God's body in the Hebrew Bible, their work underscores the predominance of God being represented as a corporeal being throughout this corpus of writings and has stimulated much discussion and debate regarding potential points of dialogue with Christianity.

With respect to the rabbinic tradition, though the idea was anticipated earlier in the work of Joshua Abelson, Jacob Neusner re-ignited interest in the question of whether the notion of God's embodiment, which he specifically describes as "incarnation," might have a place in the Jewish tradition as well.[88] In particular, in opposition to those who suggest that incarnational ideas arose *solely* within Christianity, Neusner argues that a similar phenomenon also appears in what he describes as the "formative" documents of Rabbinic Judaism, and he traces the development of this phenomenon in three main stages.[89] First, he examines evidence from the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Tractate Avot; second, he explores the Yerushalmi, Genesis and Leviticus Rabbah, and the Pesiqta deRav Kahana; and finally, he investigates the Bavli. In this process, he traces a gradual, though not always linear, process whereby each subsequent text presents God in an increasingly corporeal manner. This process, for Neusner, culminates in the Bavli, where the prior "incarnation of the Torah" becomes the full "incarnation of God" in the person of the

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[87] Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 482

[88] Neusner, *Incarnation of God,* 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 201, 202, 229, offer examples of where Neusner employs the term "incarnation," although the word recurs several times throughout the book. See also Joshua Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1912).

[89] Neusner*, Incarnation of God,* 2.

sage.[90] In particular, Neusner suggests that the Bavli presents a "truly striking story," which depicts God as the ideal sage, fully incarnate with respect to physical, emotional, and social aspects of humanity.[91]

Elliot Wolfson and Yair Lorberbaum have also explored the connection between God's embodiment in humans and Judaism.[92] Wolfson, for instance, explores rabbinic sources and suggests that the "embodiment of God in Judaism is not merely a rhetorical matter."[93] Instead, for him, "it implies an ontological investiture experienced concretely, albeit in human imagination."[94] In particular, it was through the liturgical acts of prayer and Torah study, he argues, that the rabbis suggested that God's form was "rendered accessible."[95] Through both of these activities, "the imaginal body of God assumes incarnate form," particularly in the form of the rabbinic sage.[96] Lorberbaum's central thesis is that according to the rabbis, the concept of *imago dei* from the book of Genesis suggests that there is a tangible presence of the divine within every human being. This concept impacts two areas of *halakhah*: the death penalty and procreation. Since humans are physical representations of God, execution is equivalent to deicide. Conversely, the rabbis highly encourage procreation because it increases God's physical manifestation in the world. Moreover, since human beings have been created in the "image" of

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[90] Neusner, *Incarnation of God,* 202 and 201, respectively.

[91] Neusner, *Incarnation of God,* 201–230, esp. 229.

[92] I have highlighted the work of Wolfson and Lorberbaum in this respect, but also instructive is that of Neis, *The Sense of Sight*, 18–81 and David Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam," *HTR* 90.3 (1997): 299–314.

[93] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 240.

[94] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 240–241. One should note here that, as Rachel Neis pointed out to me in private correspondence, Wolfson still places this embodiment in the "realm of the imaginary."

[95] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 247.

[96] Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 253.

the divine, they, like the idols of the pagan world, function in such a way that they draw God's presence into themselves, blurring the borders between the two and "embodying" the divine presence on earth.

The pioneering work of all these scholars has revealed how impulses of God's embodiment were deeply embedded within Israel's tradition from the time of ancient Israel to that of the rabbis. Until now, however, no study has provided a sustained analysis of these trends within the shared tradition of Second Temple Judaism out of which both religions emerged.[97] In doing so, my research demonstrates how the notion of God's embodiment presents an unexpected point of convergence between what only later come to be known as the religions of Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, it opens up fresh points of contact for Jewish-Christian dialogue, even in the current day.

1.3   Methodological Considerations

My methodology differs markedly from that of previous scholarship, since most scholars—especially New Testament and Early Christian specialists—attempt to understand questions related to divine embodiment vis-à-vis inquiries into how and when the earliest Christians came to understand the figure of Jesus as God. Most scholars in these subfields have attempted to investigate the intellectual steps that led early Christians to articulate that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Especially in relation to the latter part of this equation, these scholars have questioned when the origins of high Christology first emerged. They have

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[97] To my knowledge, the only potential exception to this rule arises in the work of Alan Segal, "Pre-existence and Incarnation: A Response to Dunn and Holiday," *Semeia,* Vol. 30 (1984): 83–95; idem, "The Incarnation: The Jewish Milieu," in *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116–139. These works, however, were merely initial forays into this topic and not a sustained analysis of this period in Jewish history in relation to the question of God's embodiment in human form.

employed as their starting point the fixed Christological formulas that first emerged in the fourth century CE and then have worked backwards by asking how and when the earliest followers of Jesus started to think of Jesus in this manner.

I find this teleological focus in past scholarship problematic for three distinct yet interrelated reasons. First, I think that this focus has obscured scholars' ability to see the many ways that Jews in antiquity articulated that God could be embodied in the world or that particularly righteous humans could undergo the process of apotheosis. I am suggesting that although the Gospel of John's presentation of the divine word made flesh, in the specific person of Jesus, presents a particularly striking example of how God came into the world, other contemporaneous Jewish authors also depicted God's embodiment in the world, albeit via different means such as through the souls of humans or the figure of the Jewish high priest.

Second, I find this teleological focus problematic because it sets up early Christology—and, by default, early Christianity—in opposition to Judaism.[98] In other words, these scholars are so interested in the *distinctiveness* of Christianity that they don't fully acknowledge the

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[98] In the early 1990s, James Dunn first popularized the notion that in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 CE Judaism and Christianity emerged as two distinct and separate religions out of a shared ancestry in Second Temple Judaism. See James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991); for a similar perspective, also see Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). Yet subsequent scholars have demonstrated how inherent methodological flaws and theological biases make this model insufficient, causing many to overlook the ongoing fluidity between these two developing traditions. See Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–19; Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 1–21; Annette Y. Reed and Adam H. Becker, "Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1–33; Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), esp. 17–33; Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 3–24; Megan H. Williams, "No More Clever Titles: Observations on Some Recent Studies of Jewish-Christian Relations in the Roman World," *JQR* 99.1 (2009): 37–55. Daniel Boyarin has even gone on to suggest that to impose an appellation like "Jewish Christianity" only reifies the boundaries between two religions, namely Judaism and Christianity, which did not exist as such, even in the fourth century CE. See Daniel Boyarin, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*)," *JQR* 99.1 (2009): 7–36.

significance of parallel phenomena in the broader religious milieu of Second Temple Judaism. As a result, they see John's Gospel, or even Paul's, as being radically different from contemporaneous Judaism, rather than considering the possibility that it is deeply embedded in the Judaism of its day. In my reading, I suggest that John's Gospel reflects just one of the many diverse ways that ancients Jews expressed how God could connect to humans and humans could connect to God.

Third, this teleological focus among New Testament specialists ignores the rich and multifaceted conversation that is happening in many areas of Jewish studies about God's body, from Hebrew Bible specialists to Rabbinic scholars. As my brief foray into the groundbreaking work of these scholars has demonstrated, the topic of God's body, or the way the divine could become embodied, has been part and parcel of Israel's tradition from ancient times through the time of the rabbis. While it is true that something distinctive occurs around the turn of the Common Era, namely that because of the focus on God's transcendence, God's embodiment occurs more and more through divine intermediary figures (and becomes focused within humanity itself), that does not mean that attention to God's body no longer exists during this period. It simply shows how the move to suggest that God could become embodied in a particular human figure, namely Jesus, made more sense within the current Jewish trends of that day.

There are several scholars who exemplify this teleological perspective. In *Christology in the Making,* for instance, James Dunn writes that his intent is "to trace the emergence of the Christian idea of the incarnation *from inside* (not the emergence of the concept of 'incarnation' *per se*); to follow the course of development (whether organic or evolutionary), as best as possible, whereby the concept of Christ's incarnation came to conscious expression in Christian

thought."[99] Likewise, James McGrath states that he intends to "offer a brief overview of [his] understanding of the processes that take us from the historical Jesus to the Council of Nicaea— focusing almost entirely on the snapshots of this unfolding Christological development that we have in the New Testament, but recognizing that there is both a before and an after."[100] The perspective of both of these scholars, then, is teleological. Knowing the historical outcomes of Nicaea and the later ecumenical councils, they attempt to trace the socio-historical factors and intellectual developments that led to this particular outcome at this particular time.

I have highlighted the work of these two scholars, but this interest in tracing the development of early Christology over time represents a major trend in scholarly thought that goes back at least as far as Wilhelm Bousset's classic work in *Kyrios Christos*.[101] Bousset, a German protestant theologian who was active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was a part of the history of religion(s) school (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), a school that was characterized by two main concerns. First, the history of religion(s) school sought to trace the evolutionary development of religion in relation to human history.[102] That is, their work pushed against the assumption that religions are fixed, static entities; instead, they underscored how religions are constructed, complex phenomena, deeply embedded in the socio-historical contexts out of which they emerge. Second, this school of thought attempted to investigate early Christian literature from a historical perspective, without concerns about later dating doctrines. Though its

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[99] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, xxii.

[100] James McGrath, "How Jesus Became God: One Scholar's View." *New Testament Seminar*, University of Michigan, March 19, 2015.

[101] Also see my discussions of Bousset above.

[102] For more information on the lasting legacy of Wilhelm Bousset's work, especially in view of recent developments in the field of Second Temple Judaism, see Kelley Coblentz Bautch, "*Kyrios Christos* in Light of Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Second Temple Judaism," *Early Christianity* 6.1 (2015): 30–50, esp. 31–32 for a discussion of the influence of the history of religion(s) School.

members self-identified as Christians, and thus knew the later outcomes of Christological debates, they attempted to read each text in its own socio-historical context, without reference to theological dogma. Bousset's classic monograph, *Kyrios Christos,* combined these two emphases by presenting "a schema for the *evolution* of Christology and worship of Jesus in the early church."[103] Although Bousset, like others from the history of religion(s) school, attempted to sidestep questions of dogma, an implicit theological perspective still undergirded his work. Since he saw high Christology as an endpoint, he sought to trace how later Christians arrived at that point.

Bousset may have initiated this teleological focus, but in recent years a proliferation of publications has followed a similar route. Despite intense disagreement on when and out of which context high Christology first emerged, as Andrew Chester points out in a recent review, the focus upon the evolution of early Christology persists.[104] In particular, Chester identifies four major trends in recent scholarship in relation to this topic. In the first, scholars such as Maurice Casey and Geza Vermes suggest that, because of the constraints of Jewish monotheism, an understanding of Jesus as divine could have emerged only relatively late in the development of Christianity and in a gentile context.[105] They propose that it was only within the Johannine community, which they claim had an increasingly Gentile composition, that the source of this divergence from Judaism first occurred.[106] Casey, in particular, argues that it was only after the Jewish members of the Johannine community were "kicked out the synagogue" (cf. John

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[103] Bautch, "*Kyrios Christos*," 32, emphasis mine.

[104] Andrew Chester, "High Christology—Whence, When, and Why?" *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 22–50.

[105] Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 9, 23–40, 141–161; Geza Vermes, *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), but see also his earlier work, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1981).

[106] Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* 156–159; Vermes, *Changing Faces of Jesus,* 6–54.

9.22,12.42–43) and thus started to self-identify as "Gentiles," that belief in Jesus's divinity emerged.[107] He thus reads John 9:22 and 12:42–43 as reflecting a reality that had already happened, rather than rhetoric that was encouraging such a separation.

In the second scholarly trend, scholars such as James Dunn and Gabriele Boccaccini also suggest that this development occurred relatively late, but within the confines of the Jewish tradition.[108] Like Casey and Vermes, they locate the understanding of Jesus as God in the Johannine community,[109] but Boccaccini in particular emphasizes that such a development does not suddenly make the Gospel of John "non-Jewish"; Johannine Christology merely reflects a variation of other forms of Jewish messianic expectation in its day.[110]

By contrast, in a third strand of scholarship, Larry Hurtado, John Collins, and Adela Yarbro Collins, among others, argue that the idea of Jesus as divine was an early development among the followers of Jesus, one deeply rooted in the Jewish context of its day. Hurtado, for instance, suggests that the early worship of Jesus marked a distinct "mutation" from how other divine intermediary figures in Judaism were conceived.[111] In particular, since Jewish monotheism demanded the worship of the one God of Israel alone, this development in religious

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[107] Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* 9, 31–32, 35–36, 143, 156, 158.

[108] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* xxiii; James Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D.G. Dunn.* 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3–54, 212–238, 270–423; Gabriele Boccaccini, "Jesus the Messiah: Man, Angel, or God? The Jewish Roots of Early Christology," Annali di Scienze Religiose 4 (2011): 193–220, esp. 214–18; idem, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 208.

[109] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* xiii, 249–50, 258–61; Boccaccini, "Jesus the Messiah," 215–16.

[110] This perspective has come up primarily in personal conversations with Gabriele Boccaccini, although he expresses a similar sentiment in his published work when he writes, "The rediscovery of the diversity of Judaisms in the Second Temple period makes it now possible to relocate Jesus and his movement within the Jewish world . . . There was not in fact a single normative Jewish messianism from which, or against which, the Christian messianism arose. In its origins, Christian messianism was nothing but one of the possible messianisms in competition with others." See Gabriele Boccaccini, "Jesus the Messiah," 207.

[111] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 2, 12, 99–124; Hurtado, *How on Earth,* 153–54, 178. Elsewhere he describes this as a "variant form" rather than a "mutation," see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 50, n. 70.

practice, based on the lived religious experiences of the early followers of Jesus, suggests that already the earliest followers of Jesus conceived of Jesus as God.[112] Adela Yarbro Collins and John Collins argue for a similar perspective to that of Hurtado, insisting on the Jewish context out of which belief in Jesus' divinity arose, albeit via a very different route. For them, the divinity of Jesus emerged out of the longstanding understanding of the divinity of the king, or messiah, as the son of God.[113] By tracing evidence from royal ideology in the ancient Near East all the way to its appropriation in the New Testament, they argue that there was a long-standing belief in the divinity of the king, arising first in the Egyptian milieu before being transposed into the Jewish context. As such, it was preserved especially through the Septuagint's Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Citing texts such as the LXX's version of Psalms 72:17, 110, and Isaiah 7:14; portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as 4Q174, 4Q246, and *11QMelchizedek*;[114] and texts like I Enoch 48:2–3, 6 and 62:7, Proverbs 8:22–31, and 4 Ezra 13, John Collins and Adela Collins argue that the background for an understanding of Jesus as "pre-existent and divine" divine was already present within a Jewish milieu, and thus that the understanding arose out of a Jewish context.[115]

The only exception to this approach, which for Chester comprises the fourth strand of scholarship, is the work of Richard Bauckham. In contrast to the other scholars, Bauckham argues that "early Christology did not develop" because all New Testament documents, and by extension, all early Christians who were associated with them, articulated the "highest

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[112] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 1–8, 11–15; 125, although this theme is evident throughout the entire work; Hurtado, *How on Earth,* 42–53.

[113] See Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah*, x–xiv for how they frame this perspective.

[114] Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah*, 56–74.

[115] Collins & Collins*, King and Messiah*, 75–100, but quoted here at xiv.

Christology" from the very start.[116] Rather, they included Jesus "wholly and unequivocally within the divine identity."[117] Jesus participates in God's role as creator and sovereign, thus subsuming his identity into that of God's own.[118] Bauckham thus argues that from the earliest moments after the Easter event, the early followers of Jesus always conceived of him as God.

Consequently, whether early or late, and whether within Judaism or outside of it, an implicit teleological focus and diachronic approach unites the efforts of all of these scholars. Since these scholars know the historical outcomes of various early church councils and early ecumenical debates, rather than recognizing that at any particular time in history innumerable alternative outcomes could have occurred, they attempt to work backwards. Thus, their work seeks to trace an unbroken line of intellectual development from one stage in history to another.

By contrast, by employing a synchronic (rather than diachronic) approach, my methodology aims to uncover a snapshot of Jewish history. I focus on Jewish Antiquity, and particularly, texts that date primarily from the end of the first-century BCE to the early second century CE. The period of history that I am interested in thus spans from the late Second Temple Period into the early Roman period. I have made this choice because I am focusing on Jewish texts that date close to the Gospel of John, that is, near the end of the first century CE or early second century CE.[119] Accordingly, rather than repeatedly writing "late Second Temple and early Roman periods," when I refer to Jewish Antiquity as a shorthand in this dissertation, that designation includes Jewish texts that date from the first century BCE to the early second century CE. My primary sources include: Philo, Josephus, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Book of the Parables* (as

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[116] Bauckham, *God Crucified,* vii; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19.

[117] Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 3–4, 18–21.

[118] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 20–30.

[119] For this dating, see Brown*, An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 199–215.

preserved in *1 Enoch*), *2 Enoch,* and of course, the Gospel of John. Why? Because I am looking for *other Jewish* texts besides the Gospel of John that date as close as possible to that Gospel. Although I also consider other texts that are now housed in the New Testament to be Jewish, my focus remains on the Gospel of John because there have been extensive debates regarding when the notion of incarnation first arose within the New Testament. Most scholars, however, agree that the Gospel of John provides the clearest evidence for it.[120]

The primary question that I ask throughout this dissertation is why it is at this particular time in Jewish history that so many Jewish texts present a manner by which God can become embodied or humans can become deified. I do not assume that the authors of these texts necessarily knew one another. Nor do I claim that they were dependent upon one another. What I do observe, however, is the wide variety of ways that Jews in this period thought about how God and humanity could be connected through embodiment. Thus, though I posit a number of different ways that first-century Jews conceived of divine embodiment, I demonstrate how the Gospel of John's description of this phenomenon both stands in continuity with other Jewish descriptions and is distinct from them as well.

I close with two cautionary notes as to why the Gospel of John's description of divine embodiment ought not to be considered the one and only way that ancient Jews conceived of God's embodiment on earth. First, from a purely historical point of view, during the first few centuries of the Common Era there was no "official" definition of what has later become known as the Christian concept of "incarnation." Thus, to employ the term "incarnation" at all is to

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[120] See Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* 23. Although, as Adela Yarbro Collins and John Collins have pointed out, even this assumption "is somewhat misleading… [because if] the proclamation of the Gospel were really unequivocal, it would be hard to explain the extended christological controversies in the early church" See *King and Messiah,* 175. Indeed, as I will argue for throughout, even John's Gospel represents a means by which the divine can become embodied, but this is not the same as suggesting that the second person of the trinity has become incarnated in the specific person of Jesus. Rather, it would take much time before such an ideology developed.

impose an ideology onto a period of time when no such definition or articulation yet existed. Consequently, if one can see the formula of John 1:14 as merely *one of many ways in which first-century Jews—including early Jesus followers—were articulating an ideology of divine embodiment,* then a historical snapshot of the various theologies of divine embodiment operative around the turn of the Common Era will start to emerge.

Second, I hope that this exploration will also provide readers with a clearer understanding of how other Jews, outside of the Jesus movement, conceived of God's embodiment on earth—even if the concept, because of its later connection to the Christian articulation of incarnation, now appears to be far removed from what we associate with Judaism. For to focus *only* on the Gospel of John's portrayal of divine embodiment sets up a fully formed "Christianity" in opposition to "Judaism," when the two did not become two distinct religious traditions for quite some time. Over the centuries, such an exclusive focus has led to the sharp Jewish-Christian polemics to which I alluded at the start of this chapter. Consequently, by illumining how profoundly Jewish the notion of divine embodiment originally was and continues to be, this project aims to ameliorate some of the tensions between two religious traditions that have long since been estranged from each other, thereby helping to promote more charitable exchanges surrounding religion.

1.4   Dissertation Outline

Recognizing that no idea emerges in isolation and that all novel insights are but new configurations of past understandings, my project brings together the previous conclusions of three major trends in scholarship in a new and innovative way. Although the pioneering work of scholars such as Segal, Dunn, and Boccaccini established the parallel growth of Judaism and Christianity as rival, sibling religions, emerging out of the same womb of Second Temple

Judaism in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE,[121] the more recent

work of scholars such as Daniel Boyarin, John Gager, Judith Lieu, Israel Yuval, Annette Reed,

and Adiel Schremer has nuanced this perspective in a significant way.[122] As Reed has pointed

out, these scholars have—employing her verb—eschewed "the sociological and methodological

simplicity of the idea of a single, early separation," and instead have demonstrated that "Jewish

and Christian efforts at self-definition remained intimately interconnected, charged with

ambivalence, and surprisingly fluid, long after the so-called 'Parting of the Ways.'"[123] As a

result, scholars now recognize the remarkable complexity and undeniable fluidity within this

shared religious tradition, which did not formally separate into the religions of Judaism and

Christianity until at least the fourth-century CE if not much later. Accordingly, my work puts

these insights in conversation with the most recent Jewish scholarship, which has recaptured a

sense of God's body within ancient Israel's as well as the early rabbinic tradition in Judaism. In

particular, if one can see the incarnational formula of John 1:14 as merely *one of the wide variety*

of ways that Second Temple Jews, of whom the early Jesus followers were just one subset, were

articulating an ideology of "divine embodiment," what will start to emerge is both a historical

snapshot of the various "divine embodiment" theologies operative during first-century of the

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[121] Segal, *Rebecca's Children*; Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*; Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

[122] See Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways," 101–19; Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 1–21; idem, *Borderlines,* 17–33; idem, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity," 7–36; Reed and Becker, "Introduction," 1–33; Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 3–24.

[123] Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 225. Schremer similarly challenges the simplistic model when he writes: "The assumption that the destruction of the Second Temple marks a rupture in Jewish history subscribes, in a deep sense, to a Christian theological claim, and it is not as simple as it sometimes appears," (see Schremer, *Brothers Estranged,* 5). Moreover, he argues that this scholarly perception of parallel developments between a fully formed Christianity and a fully formed Judaism has led several scholars to read anti-Christian polemics in rabbinic writings when the attacks are actually aimed at Roman imperial power.

Common Era, as well as an understanding of how these notions developed within the later Christian *and* Rabbinic movements.

My dissertation makes this argument in three primary parts. In the first part, which also comprises chapter two, I re-contextualize one pivotal term—namely, the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism—with respect to my broader investigation of divine embodiment in the Second Temple Period. Such re-contextualization enables me to move past debates that have stymied progress in this arena, particularly the question of how early Christians, who were Jewish monotheists themselves, could have believed in a Jesus who was also divine. Wouldn't that move have implied a step towards ditheism? My work in this chapter complicates and ultimately dismantles this assumption from two primary perspectives: First, I challenge the appropriateness of the term "monotheism" to describe Jewish belief during this period by showing that "monotheism" and its derived adjective "monotheistic" did not exist in antiquity. It was only in the midst of seventeenth-century CE philosophical debates that Henry Moore first coined the term. To impose it onto the ideological imagination of Jews living in the first-century CE is anachronistic and does not fully encapsulate the complexity of ancient Jewish beliefs about God. Second, I suggest that to use descriptors of a supreme uncreated God from whom all other reality flows is a better way of conceiving of God in the Second Temple Period, because this is the language that ancient Jews actually employed when describing God. I argue that though Jewish monotheism did not exist *per se*, since ancient Jews conceived of the oneness of the godhead in a complex and hierarchical manner, they did understand there to be a clear separation between the one uncreated God and all other reality.

Establishing this new description of God as the only uncreated entity from whom all other reality emerges sets the stage for my work in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation. It

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enables me to demonstrate how the Gospel of John's version of divine embodiment both stands in continuity with, yet is distinctive from, other first-century Jewish expressions of this phenomenon. On the one hand, there are many examples of particularly righteous humans, such as Moses (see chapter 3) and even the Jewish high priest (see chapter 4), who, though created, embody the divine on earth or become divinized because of their righteous actions. But these figures never become fully synonymous with Israel's supreme uncreated God. Though considered divine, because they participate in that high uncreated God's divinity, a part of them always remains grounded in the creation that God has made. On the other hand, there are several examples of God's attributes—such as God's wisdom (chapter 5) and God's word (chapter 6)— that though typically understood to be subsumed under the broader rubric of God's oneness, become personified and active in creation. Thus, in this way too, these figures also represent ways in which the divine becomes embodied in the world (and often in specific humans). The Gospel of John's version of divine embodiment thus stands in continuity with these other first-century Jewish descriptions of divine embodiment because in it we see the logos (which is considered divine, though not synonymous with Israel's supreme uncreated divinity) entering in created humanity. Yet the Gospel of John is also distinctive in that this extension of the *uncreated* supreme God (i.e. the logos) enters into a particular *created* individual (i.e. Jesus) and this particularity has supreme significance for later dating Christological developments. In its own day, however, it was simply one of a wide variety of ways that first-century Jews envisioned the divine becoming embodied on earth.

Having established this framework, the second part of my dissertation (chapters three and four) provides a close analysis of two ways that Second Temple Jewish literature presents particularly righteous humans, who, though created, embody the divine on earth. My third

chapter examines Philo of Alexandria's descriptions of how God implanted a spark of the divine into the souls of humans, so that created humans could return to God. By examining a passage from Genesis 2:7, which describes God breathing into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, I demonstrate that Philo interprets this to mean that the soul of the earthly man—in contrast to his body—proceeds directly from the uncreated God, imparted into the human mind through a direct in-breathing by God himself. Thus, Philo views the souls of humanity, though housed within the created bodies of humans, as being not-created like God himself. However, for Philo this form of divine embodiment is only a temporary accommodation. Its purpose is to help humans, through their philosophical reflections, to remove themselves from their created, bodily restraints, thereby ascending back towards God. In the later part of the chapter, I examine Philo's actual descriptions of mystical ascents, with a particular emphasis on his portrayal of Moses. I note the similarities between Philo's divinely embodied human soul and the incarnate Jesus of Christianity, since both become immanent in the created world in order to become the instruments or agents by which humans can be saved from this world to partake in the divine one instead.

My fourth chapter analyzes another created human figure, namely the Jewish high priest, whom several Jewish texts also depict as either embodying the divine on earth or present in an elevated, deified manner. To demonstrate this claim, I employ three case study examples that date to around the turn of the Common Era—from Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls 11QMelch, and Philo. I then compare how these Jewish texts presented the high priest with how the Greco-Roman culture venerated emperors as divine, in order to argue how and why many Jews from this period began to think of the high priest as though he were God himself. That is, I demonstrate why many Jews either began to conceive of the high priest as the visible presence of

God on earth, or as participating in the supreme God's divinity. With all of this evidence in hand, I then reveal how, by the middle of the first century CE, Philo can claim that the Jewish High Priest is "no longer a man (ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔσται)," being neither created like humans nor uncreated like God, but a sort of intermediary being between God and humanity. Thus the text portrays the high priest as being the perfect bridge between the two realms (*Somn.* 2.189; cf. *Somn.* 2.231).

The third and final part of my dissertation (chapters five and six) investigates how the figures of "wisdom (חכמה/σοφία)" (chapter five) and "word (λόγος)," (chapter six) were at times conceived of as extensions of the oneness of Israel's supreme uncreated God, and thus also divine themselves, but at other times were personified, and ultimately embodied into the created world. By focusing of the figure of wisdom in chapter five, I explore the implications of a female figure embodying the presence of a male deity in the world, thereby returning to themes first introduced in chapter 2 on Jewish monotheism. I show how there was an active debate throughout the broader Jewish tradition on whether wisdom was an extension of the divinity of Israel's supreme God or created as the first of God's works. Clearly, the ancients had an understanding of God as Creator and actively discussed what could or could not be conceived of as a part of that Creator God.

In chapter six, I examine the figure of God's *logos*. Philo of Alexandria and the Gospel of John serve as my primary examples. With respect to the former, I argue that Philo's *logos* illumines the radical extent to which certain first-century Jewish texts could accommodate a bifurcation in their conception of God, with a transcendent God and an incarnate God (or at the very least a very imminent divine intermediary figure), both of whom simultaneously were subsumed under the broader rubric of God's *oneness*. Thus, although Philo's descriptions of the

logos are not precisely the same as the doctrine of the Incarnation developed in Christianity, they do provide a striking example of a divine intermediary figure, much like the incarnate Jesus of later Christianity, who bridges the gap between the uncreated God and created humans, becoming imminent in the created world, and thereby playing a significant soteriological role.

With respect to the latter, I make two primary arguments. First, I posit that the Gospel of John's description of the divine word made flesh was quite similar to these other forms of divine embodiment. For in John we also have an attribute of God (i.e. the logos) and not the supreme uncreated God, that becomes fully embodied within a particular human being. Second, I show how, when the Gospel of John is read in light of Philo's two-fold allegorization of the *logos*, a new understanding of the Gospel's form of God's embodiment appears. For in the Gospel, Jesus not only embodies God's presence in the world in the moment in which he is identified as the "divine *logos* made flesh" (cf. John 1:14); he embodies God throughout the entire gospel through the words, or *logoi,* that he speaks. Indeed, it is only at the end of the Gospel, where Jesus is fully identified with Israel's supreme God (cf. John 20:28). In this manner, the chapter addresses a long-standing question that has vexed Johannine scholars regarding the relationship between the prologue of John's Gospel, which introduces the *logos* concept, and the rest of the Gospel, where the *logos* concept is ostensibly absent. I argue that it is not absent, but that the gospel writer subtly alludes to it throughout the Gospel by underscoring the significance of Jesus's words (i.e. *logoi*). Jesus is thus the one who embodies God in the world—not only through his identification with and as *logos*—but also and more significantly through the words (i.e the *logoi*) that he speaks. Moreover, I demonstrate that by attending to what Jesus says throughout the Gospel, readers come to a better understanding of the manner in which Jesus and God the Father share in the divine identity yet are distinct from one another. In particular, I show how

throughout the Gospel, Jesus is not only presented as God, the I AM (ἐγω εἰμι), but also as God, the one who speaks (ὁ λάλῶν). Through his words, Jesus makes the ineffable and unknowable Father God (i.e. Israel's supreme uncreated deity) both heard and known.

In making these claims, I situate the Gospel of John—and its description of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο)—within a particular moment of Jewish history. Although scholars have long pointed to John 1:14 as the point where the Christian story differentiated itself from its Jewishness, I argue that the verse represents just one of the many ways that late Jews around the turn of the Common Era understood that God could take on bodily form. This chapter demonstrates how, though it is distinctive, the Gospel of John's articulation of divine embodiment is still Jewish. For although it would later have a significant impact on the development of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, during its own period in history, the Gospel was still fully a part of the wide variety of ways that late first-century Jews conceived of how God could be embodied in the world. In this manner, John's description of divine embodiment, like other forms within the first- and second-centuries of the Common Era, was trying to address a specific soteriological question, namely, how it is that humans, though created and separate from God, could be saved by connecting or reconnecting with the uncreated supreme Creator God.

My research demonstrates that the notion of God's embodiment was not antithetical to Judaism, as past scholars assumed, but rather integral to the tradition. By focusing on a particular moment in Jewish history, my work resists the anachronistic reading of the evidence common among New Testament specialists. In so doing it finds a point of commonality between Jewish and Christian traditions and opens up a potential point of contact for Jewish-Christian dialogue today.

CHAPTER TWO: RE-CONCEPTUALIZING ANCIENT JEWISH MONOTHEISM

2.1   Introduction to the Debate

This chapter intervenes in a long-standing debate regarding the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism. Although ancient Jewish monotheism is secondary to my primary concern of how ancient Jews conceived of God's embodiment on earth, I address this topic at the onset of my study for a few interrelated reasons. First, it is difficult to talk about God's embodiment, or its close corollary, divine embodiment, without a precise understanding of how ancient Jews viewed the divine realm. Yet therein also lies the problem, which leads me to my second point; namely, that scholars of antiquity do not agree on how ancient Jews conceived of God. Without a basic sketch of how I understand ancient Jewish conceptions of God, as well as of how my work interacts with that of others in the field, I fear that many of the points that I make throughout the rest of the dissertation may be misconstrued or obfuscated. It is for these reasons that I address the contested topic of ancient Jewish monotheism at the beginning of my work.

Broadly speaking, scholars of antiquity fall into two different camps concerning how ancient Jews viewed the divine. In one camp a growing consensus claims that certainly by the first century CE if not well before then, most Jews were thoroughly monotheistic.[124] As evidence

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[124] See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 17–92, esp. 35–39; idem, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," *JSNT* 71 (1998), 3–26, esp. 3–4; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 29–52, esp. 29; idem, *How on Earth*, 111–133; idem, "Monotheism," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 961–964; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 60–126; idem, "Worship of Jesus," 322–341, esp. 322–23; idem, "Throne of God," 43–69, esp. 43;

for this position, these scholars point to the frequent assertions made by Jews that God is one

(θεὸς εἷς ἐστι) [Philo, *Opif.* 171; *Decal.* 64–5, 81 (cf. *Decal.* 52–81); *Leg.* 1.51; *Conf.* 144;

Josephus, *Ant.* 1.155, 3.91; *Aris.* 132; *Sib. Or.* 3.11–12; 4.30],[125] as well as the rabbinic prayer

ritual of reciting the Shema (Deut 6:4–9,[126] 11:13–21, Num 15:37–41) twice daily,[127] which

leads those scholars to assume that these first-century Jews must have been monotheists.[128] Often

this argument comes with two additional points: First, that there was a clear and absolute

dividing wall between Israel's creator God and all else that had been created; and second, that

the terms "God" and "divine" are synonymous. Drawing upon later Nicene definitions, these

scholars assume that since the ancients believed in one God, who was the sole creator of

everything else, only this entity and nothing else can be considered divine. However, ancient

Jews had a hierarchical conception of the divine realm, and this enabled them to label many

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James Dunn D. G., "Was Christianity a Monotheistic Faith from the Beginning?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982): 303–336, esp. 303–06; idem, *The Partings of the Ways*, 18–21; 163–229; idem, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 59–66, 93–98; N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; London: SPCK, 1992), 248–59.

[125] Note that the Roman historian, Tacitus, makes a similar observation (cf. *Hist.* 5.3).

[126] "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children, and recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut 6:4–9). Translation from Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "The Shema in the Second Temple Period. A Reconsideration," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6 (2015): 58–84, esp. 58.

[127] Sarit Kattan Gribetz has recently contested the "antiquity and ubiquity" of the Shema "prayer ritual composed of biblical verses from Deuteronomy and Numbers" (58). She argues instead that Second Temple sources such as the *Letter of Aristeas,* Philo, the *Community Rule,* and Josephus do not "refer to the practice of the Shema recitation that we know from later rabbinic tradition." Thus, to impose this ideological understanding on Jewish texts dating to the first century is anachronistic. Only in the rabbinic period does such a prayer ritual formally emerge. See Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "The Shema in the Second Temple Period. A Reconsideration," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6 (2015): 58–84, esp. 58.

[128] Examples of scholars who assume that the Shema was already a standardized Jewish prayer ritual in the first century CE include, but are not limited to: Dunn, *Partings of the Ways,* 19; idem, "Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?," 60; Wright, "New Testament and the People of God," 248.

different entities as "divine" without assuming that these beings were synonymous with Israel's highest divinity, the sole uncreated one. The presence of these various divine beings within the religious ideology of ancient Jews thus complicates what it means for these Jews to have believed in the *one* God of Israel.

Taking these points into consideration, other scholars have begun to question the appropriateness of the term "monotheism" to describe ancient Jewish beliefs about God.[129] These scholars have demonstrated how for these ancient Jews the oneness of God was a complex phenomenon, able to incorporate several different divine powers and attributes. Divine agents, whose specific purpose was to bridge the gap between the transcendent God and the immanent world that God had made, were subordinate to God, yet were simultaneously subsumed under the broader rubric of God's oneness. The difficulty with this perspective is that it often assumes that since there were various gradations of divinity within the ideological worldview of ancient Jews, one could simply slide up the scales all the way to Israel's highest divinity, the sole uncreated one. But ancient Jews *did* conceive of a clear separation between the highest divinity and all other reality. Their philosophical worldview holds in tension the belief in one supreme deity and a hierarchy of other divine beings that flow from that one uncreated one.

My primary aim in this chapter is to offer a third way between these two extremes. By reading the ancient evidence again with fresh eyes, the seeming incompatibility of these two scholarly positions is not as incongruous as it initially appears. One of the central problems with

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[129] Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 293–316; Fredriksen, "Gods and the One God," *Bible Review* 19.1 (February 2003): 12; James Waddell, *The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 19–22; McGrath, *The Only True God,* 12–15; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 30; Barker, *The Great Angel*, 1–3; Peter Hayman, "Monotheism: A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *JJS* 42 (1991): 1–15; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 36.

this scholarly debate is that specialists in the field often talk past each other, defining key terms such as God, divine, and even monotheism differently. My intention is to show how when these putative differences are removed a sharper articulation of how ancient Jews understood God emerges. In doing so, I am not advocating that scholars eliminate terms like "monotheism" or "divine" from their discourse *en toto.* Despite the anachronistic usage of the former and the attendant difficulties of the latter, these words have become so embedded in scholarly discussions that it would be nearly impossible to eradicate them completely. Instead, my chief objective is to attend to how ancient Jews described God in their writings. This chapter thus proceeds in three parts: a brief history of research constitutes the first; the second attends to how ancient Jews viewed the godhead in a hierarchical manner; and the third underscores their consistent conceptualization of God as the creator of all else. Because this is how ancient Jews described God in their own writings, and they themselves did not seem troubled by what only in retrospect seem like two irreconcilable options, I argue that by attending to their language a better understanding of ancient Jewish conceptions of the divine can emerge.

What the cumulative weight of the evidence suggests is that though there was never such a thing as ancient Jewish monotheism *per se* in that ancient Jews conceived of many entities as "divine," ancient Jews did conceive of a clear separation between the uncreated supreme God and all other reality. This is significant to the overarching aims of my dissertation because clarity on these issues has consequences for how we understand both the continuity and discontinuity of early Jesus followers and other contemporaneous Jews with respect to how ancient Jews conceived of God's embodiment on earth, as well as how they, as created humans, could become more God-like themselves. For, as will soon become clear in the subsequent chapters of my dissertation, there are many examples in the extant Jewish literature from the early centuries of

the Common Era where "divine," even at times "not-created" entities, entered into created bodily form (albeit temporarily). Thus, the Gospel of John's depiction of divine embodiment in the specific figure of Jesus stands in continuity with contemporaneous Jewish tradition. Though distinctive, and highly significant for the later development of Christianity, in the late first century CE John's depiction was only one of many ways that ancient Jews understood that God could take on bodily form.

2.2 Envisioning a Third View on Ancient Jewish Monotheism

Starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, a number of scholars interested in early Christology have assumed that by the first century of the Common Era if not well before most Jews were thoroughly monotheistic.[130] One of the classic texts employed to bolster this position comes from Philo of Alexandria: [131]

> Let us, then, inscribe in ourselves this as the first and most sacred of the commandments, to acknowledge and honor one God above all (ἕνα τὸν ἀνωτάτω νομίζειν τε καὶ τιμᾶν θεόν), and to let the opinion that gods are many (πολύθεος) never reach the ears of a man accustomed to seek truth in purity and guilelessness. (*Decal.* 65)[132]

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[130] See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord,* 35–39; idem, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 3–4; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 29; idem, *How on Earth,* 111–133; idem, "Monotheism," 961–964; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 60–126; idem, "Worship of Jesus," 322–23; idem, "Throne of God," 43; Dunn, "Was Christianity a Monotheistic Faith," 303–06; idem, *The Partings of the Ways*, 18–21; 163–229; idem, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (London: SPCK/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 59–66, 93–98; Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 248–59.

[131] See, for instance, Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*, 64.

[132] The critical edition of Philo's works is *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, ed. L. Cohn, P. Wendland, and S. Reiter, 6 vols. (Berolini, 1896–1915). Translations include F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and R. Marcus, 12 vols., LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929–62) and C. D. Younge, trans. *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, 4 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854–55). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Philo throughout this dissertation are my own, prepared in consultation with these works.

Scholars employing this statement and others like it (Philo, *Opif.* 171; *Decal.* 81; *Leg.* 1.51; *Conf.* 144; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.155, 3.91; *Aris.* 132; *Sib. Or.* 3.11–12; 3.629; 4.30) have begun with the assumption that Jews in this period of history were unequivocally monotheistic. Then they have tried to understand how the earliest followers of Jesus, who were also Jewish, could have thought of Jesus, like God the Father, as divine. By way of example: Larry Hurtado starts by acknowledging that the ancient Jewish religious tradition included a concept of "divine agency," in which a "chief agent figure" occupied a principle position next to God; then, however, Hurtado suggests that the religious experience of early Christians produced a "distinct mutation" of this position, causing them to worship and venerate "God's chief agent", Jesus, as their risen Lord.[133] This "binitarian" form of worship, he contends, did not violate Jewish monotheism, but it did exhibit a unique and truly extraordinary innovation within the worldview of Second Temple Period Judaism that could have occurred only if early Christians conceived of Jesus as God.[134] Similarly, Richard Bauckham argues that all New Testament texts demonstrate the highest possible level of Christology right from the start. Rather than trying to "find a model for Christology in semi-divine intermediary figures in early Judaism,"[135] he proposes that a better approach to this question is to focus on "who God is rather than what divinity is.[136] For him, "early Judaism had clear and consistent ways of characterizing the unique identity of the one

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[133] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 2, 12, 99–124; idem, *How on Earth,* 153–54, 178. Elsewhere he describes this as a "variant form" (see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 50, n. 70) or a "distinctive modification" (Hurtado, *One God, One Lord,* 12), rather than a "mutation."

[134] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, esp. 1–8, 11–15, 125, although this theme reverberates throughout the entire work; idem, Hurtado, *How on Earth,* 42–53.

[135] Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* ix.

[136] Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, x, 6–7, 30–31; idem, "Throne of God," 44–45.

God and thus distinguishing the one God absolutely from all others."[137] In particular, God is the "sole creator of all things", and the "sovereign ruler of all" things.[138] For Bauckham the divinity of Jesus did not compromise Jewish monotheism, because early Christians included "Jesus, precisely and unambiguously" within God's unique identity right from the start.[139]

Both of these scholars have contributed significantly to the study of early Christology. Yet their initial premise regarding the predominance of monotheism among Jews in the first century CE is problematic for two reasons: First, in thinking through ancient Jewish views of the godhead, they assume that ancient Jews understood the terms "God" and "divine" as synonyms. That is to say, *they presuppose that <u>only</u> Israel's highest divinity, that sole uncreated one, could be labeled as "divine."* But the early Jewish understanding of the divine realm was much more complex. While it is true that in this period of history many Jewish thinkers espoused an ideology in which they venerated the one unique God of Israel, an equal amount of evidence suggests that these Jewish thinkers conceived of God's *oneness* in a manner that differs radically from how we think of it today.[140] As I pointed out in Chapter one, ancient Jews conceived of the

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[137] Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii; idem, "Throne of God," 44–45.

[138] Quotation is from Bauckahm, "Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1," 167–85, esp. 167. Although Bauckham also describes how Israel's God is unique by having a name and bringing Israel out of Egypt, he places greater emphasis on the latter two components of God's identity, namely that God is "sole creator" and "sovereign ruler" of the universe. See *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 9–11, 18; idem, "Throne of God," 45–48; idem, "Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1," 167–85, esp. 167.

[139] Bauckham, *God Crucified,* vii.

[140] The work of Loren Stuckenbruck is particularly instructive in this regard, since he retains the use of the word "monotheism," yet also acknowledges the complexities of ancient Jewish thought with respect to the divine realm. See Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John.* WUNT 2.70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 15–21; idem, "'Angels' and 'God': Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism" in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 45–70, esp. 45, 69.

godhead in terms of a hierarchy,[141] which could incorporate several lesser "divine" entities,[142] which were not indentical with Israel's supreme deity, the sole "uncreated" one.[143]

Second, and perhaps more significantly, the term "monotheism" and its derived adjective "monotheistic" did not exist in antiquity.[144] It was only in the midst of seventeenth-century philosophical debates that "the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More (1614–87)" created the term to distinguish this idea from several other, supposedly lesser, ways of conceiving of the divine,[145] such as polytheism, monolatry, and henotheism.[146] In creating these terms, these philosophers, many of whom were also practitioners of monotheistic religions themselves, had an implicit agenda: they depicted polytheism as a degenerate and primitive form of belief, and monotheism as the purest and most advanced form of all religious development.[147] Vis-à-vis the

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[141] See Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 21–23; Runia, "Beginnings of the End," 281–312, esp. 289–99; Cox, *By The Same Word*, 94–99; Cristina Termini, "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95–123, especially 96–103; Fredriksen, *Sin*, 53–55; Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 1–27, esp. 6; Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 4–5; Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 186–187.

[142] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6–8.

[143] Richard Bauckham is the scholar who, in recent years, has most forcibly argued that ancient Jews viewed God as the sole creator, who was, himself, the creator of all else. See *God Crucified*, ix, 9; idem, "Throne of God," 43–69, esp. 46–48. For a similar emphasize see Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 188; Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels*, 229–31; Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* 254, 256. Although Crispin Fletcher-Louis does not agree with this perspective, for a discussion of other specialists in early Christology who have similarly argued for this Creator-creature division, see *Jesus Monotheism*, 293–316.

[144] Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 5–16, quotation is from page 5; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* 62–63; Hurtado, *How On Earth,* 7.

[145] MacDonald, *Deuteronomy*, 5–16

[146] Polytheism, as they demarcated it, applies to the belief in many gods. Henotheism refers to the belief in only one god, but it leaves open the question of whether there are other gods. As a close corollary, monolatry pertains to the worship of only one god, but it does not deny the existence of other gods. Monotheism, then, is the only belief system that excludes the possibility of any other god and thus is presented as the apogee of all religious belief.

[147] Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 15–21, esp. 16.

Enlightenment's emphasis on the progressive development of humanity in subsequent stages, an implicit bias thus crept into their definitions and undergirded their entire academic discourse. Their terminology created a subtle yet effective means of bolstering their own religious ideologies, depicting monotheism as the pinnacle of all religious belief. This tacit assumption continues to linger in the conceptual imagination of many scholars today as they persist in imposing this ideological framework upon ancient texts as a means of stressing both the antiquity and superiority of monotheistic faith.

Recognizing the anachronistic imposition of these pivotal terms, a number of other scholars have suggested that the boundaries of a strict, exclusive monotheism in Judaism from this period were a lot more permeable than some have previously been willing to admit.[148] In particular, they have drawn upon scholarship that has pointed to the presence of hypothesized divine attributes, the apotheosis of wise men, and the deification of principal angels within Second Temple and early Christian literature[149] to demonstrate the difficulties associated with describing the God of the Jews as one. In this stream of scholarship, others have demonstrated how ancient Jews viewed the godhead in a hierarchical manner, with a supreme deity standing above all else.[150] Accordingly, many scholars have questioned whether the term "monotheism" is

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[148] Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 293–316; Fredriksen, "Gods and the One God," *Bible Review* 19.1 (February 2003): 12; Waddell, *The Messiah*, 19–22; McGrath, *The Only True God*; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 30; Barker, *The Great Angel*; Hayman, "Monotheism: A Misused Word," 1–15; F. Gerald Downing, "Ontological Asymmetry in Philo and Christological Realism in Paul, Hebrews, and John," *JTS* 41.2 (October 1990): 423–40; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 36.

[149] Davila, "Of Methodology, Monotheism and Metatron," 3–18; Fossum, *The Name of God*; Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 94–113; Fredriksen, *Sin,* 53–55.

[150] Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 21–23; Runia, "Beginnings of the End," 281–312, esp. 289–99; Cox, *By The Same Word*, 94–99; Termini, "Philo's Thought," 95–123, esp. 96–103; Fredriksen, *Sin*, 53–55; Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 1–27, esp. 6; Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 186–187.

an appropriate way to describe the Jewish religion from that time period. In one of the first works

of this kind, Peter Hayman sums up this challenge when he writes:

> It will be my contention that it is hardly ever appropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God, that no progress beyond the simple formulas of the Book of Deuteronomy can be discerned in Judaism before the philosophers of the Middle Ages, and that Judaism never escapes the legacy of the battles for supremacy between Yahweh, Ba'al and El from which it emerged.[151]

Hayman, and other scholars after him, insist that the monotheism that we typically associate with

the modern religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, did not yet exist during the Second

Temple Period. By way of example, Margaret Barker argues that the distinct separation between

El Elyon (the high God), and his son Yahweh from ancient Israelite religion never became fully

eradicated from the religious tradition of Israel, but rather that these ideas were preserved in the

Second Temple Period in the form of intermediary angelic figures, such as the Son of Man,

Sophia, and the *Logos*. Consequently, she views Christianity's formulation of Jesus as God

incarnate as an extension of the way that Israel's religious tradition bifurcated the godhead from

the very start.[152] Likewise, James McGrath suggests that "monotheism in early Judaism and

Christianity meant something other than what it means to many today."[153] While he

acknowledges that early Jews did possess a "fervent, almost fanatical adherence to the worship

of the only God Most High, the one true God," he also shows that the literature from this period

attests to a certain blurriness between God and creation that is not typically acknowledged or

appreciated in contemporary discourse on this topic.[154] The God of Second Temple Period

Jewish literature often shared his agency with other divine beings. Since these other beings were

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[151] Hayman, "Monotheism: A Misused Word," 2.

[152] Barker, *The Great Angel*. See also Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[153] McGrath, *The Only True God*, 96.

[154] McGrath, *The Only True God*, 97.

not only depicted with divine language but also enacted divine functions, this complicates what it meant for there to be one God over Israel.

Two interrelated problems emerge from this second camp of scholars. First, in stressing the hierarchical nature of the godhead, and in stressing how the terms "divine" can be applied to a wide variety of beings, these scholars ignore the clear emphasis on God as creator in ancient Jewish texts. Second, in deconstructing the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism and in demonstrating how Jews during the first-century CE had a much more complex understanding of the divine realm than the terminology invented in the seventeenth century CE has allowed scholars to recognize, they have not yet constructed an alternative way of articulating what early Jews actually believed about God during the Second Temple Period. Two important questions remain: Can these two seemingly disparate opinions be reconciled with one another? And, have specialists of antiquity imposed a false binary onto the ancient Jewish tradition?

My argument is that, yes, of course the different opinions can be reconciled. But only when the two positions are brought together in dialogical relationship does their compatibility become clear. As my detailed analyses in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 will make clear, ancient Jews conceived of many different entities as "divine." For instance, though they are clearly humans, Moses (chapter 3) and the Jewish high priest (chapter 4) were thought of as divine. Granted, as created humans they stood at the bottom of the divine hierarchy, but they still participated to varying degrees in the divinity of Israel's supreme uncreated God. Likewise, though often conceived of as attributes of God, the figures of wisdom (chapter 5) and word (chapter 6) were also considered divine, but that did not make them synonymous with Israel's highest divinity. I will show that this ineffable, supreme deity was understood as the sole uncreated divinity from

whom all other divine reality emerged. The ancient Jewish hierarchical understanding of God's oneness is thus compatible with a perception of God as the sole uncreated One.

2.3   The Hierarchical Nature of God's *Oneness*

In this section I draw upon the writings of Philo of Alexandria to demonstrate further why scholars who have advocated for a complicated view of ancient monotheism, in which the high God shares his divinity with several other lesser yet still divine beings, have identified a key component of ancient Jewish conceptions of the divine. I employ Philo here because he is often depicted by scholars from the first camp, such as Hurtado, Dunn, and Bauckham, as the quintessential representative of a first-century Jew who was an ardent adherent of monotheism.[155] Yet a close analysis of his writings reveals that actually he had a rather complicated view of God's oneness. To Philo, the oneness of God could accommodate several different lesser beings. These lesser beings participated in the divinity of the high God, but they did not compromise his divinity or greatness. Thus, Philo's depiction of the *one* God illumines how ancient Jewish conceptions of God differ radically from what is typically associated with the term monotheism today.

Like his philosophical contemporaries, Philo maintains that there is one creator God (*Virt.* 97; cf. *Opif.* 171; *Decal.* 65, 81; *Leg.* 1.51; *Conf.* 144). But this oneness looks different than expected. Divine oneness for Philo does not mean a being that exists alone in a solitary

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[155] The chronology of Philo's life is obscure. But scholars consistently place his writing career in the first century CE, with his lifetime often spanning the years 20 BCE–50 CE. See Kenneth Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 9; Gregory Sterling, "The Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series General Introduction," in *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses – Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, ed. David Runia, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2001), ix–xiv. David T. Runia, however, suggests a broader range, with his birth being some time "between 25 and 10 B.C." and his death "in the decade after 40 A.D." See David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 3 n. 3.

fashion; instead, Philo envisioned the one God as being comprised of several constituent parts. If this notion seems counterintuitive to the idea of oneness, then an excerpt from Philo's *De Opificio Mundi* illustrates my argument:

> Second, [Moses teaches] that God is one (θεὸς εἷς ἐστι); [And]… fourth, that the world is one (εἷς ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος), since the Maker is one (εἷς), and he, having made the work like himself in its singleness, used up all existing matter for the creation of the whole. (*Opif.* 171)

Philo teaches that the oneness of the creation resembles the oneness of God. Just as the world contains many composite parts—such as earth and land, sky and water, plants and animals—but can still be thought of as a single entity, so too God, though containing several different constitutive parts, can also be thought of as a single entity. Divine oneness thus implies a composite unit, rather than a singular entity. This composite understanding of God's oneness explains why God's unique identity can incorporate several other lesser beings. These entities neither diminish God's essence nor call into question God's oneness; rather, they are integral to and even necessary for the identity of Philo's creator God.

With respect to this composite structure, Philo views the godhead in a hierarchical manner with a supreme creator deity at the top on whom all else depends.[156] This supreme transcendent being, who is ultimately beyond all description, is an ineffable deity that is immutable, unknowable, and utterly removed from the material realm (*Leg.* 2.1; *Sacr.* 91–92; *Mut.* 27; *Virt.* 65; *Legat.* 115).[157] Even though Philo ultimately views all names as but imperfect

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[156] Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 21–23; Runia, "Beginnings of the End," 289–99; Cox, *By the Same Word*, 94–99; Termini, "Philo's Thought," 96–103; Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6; Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 186–187.

[157] With respect to this point, some scholars have noted Philo's proclivity to describe God in terms of what God is not rather than in terms of what God is. Negative descriptors like *unnameable* (ἀκατονομάστου), *inexpressible* (ἀρρήτου), and *incomprehensible* (ἀκαταλήπτου), for instance, top his list (*Somn.* 1.67; *Mut.* 11–15). Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo,* 56–57; David T. Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," *Journal of Theological Studies* (1988): 48–75, esp. 55–56; Ronald Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road: The Soteriology of Philo of Alexandria," in *This World and the World to Come*, ed.

representations of the ineffable divine entity they seek to name (*Mut.* 14),[158] Philo typically

describes his high God as ὁ ὤν, or the Existent (*Mos.* 1.75). This is based on his exegesis of

Exodus 3:14 (*Abr.* 121), where God appears to Moses and tells him that his name is "I am that I

am (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν)." The grammatical feature of this name, a substantive form of the present

active participle of the Greek verb "to be (εἰμί)," implies that God is simply the one who *is,* an

entity who is the essence of being itself. Thus, Philo employs the name ὁ ὤν (or τὸ ὄν) to

intimate God's nature. Since this "high God is Being itself (*Fug.* 89)", Philo does not envision

that any other thing, including humans, "can become or even share the Existent's nature."[159] As

he puts it, "No existing thing is of equal honor to God" (*Conf.* 170); he is the "Primal God, the

Begetter of the Universe." (*Mos.* 2.205).[160] Indeed, as David Litwa has argued, Philo's Existent

appears to be "divine in an ultimate, unshareable sense" (cf. *Leg.* 1.36; 2.1; *Legat.* 115; *Sacr.* 91–

92; *Mut.* 27; *Virt.* 65).[161] Now if Philo's understanding of the godhead concluded with ὁ ὤν, then

this model would accord well with contemporaneous understandings of God as one. But Philo's

view of the godhead is much more complicated than that.

In accordance with the picture of God depicted in Plato's *Timaeus*, Philo also presents his

high deity, who is the creator of the world, sharing his divinity with a number of lesser beings,

including several other subordinate, yet constitutive, powers.[162] The first of these is God's divine

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Daniel M. Gurtner (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 167–80, esp. 177–78; idem, *By The Same Word*, 94–95; Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 23.

[158] In this passage, Philo explains that all names are part of the created order. They exist as concrete symbols of more abstract principles, but they are not synonymous with the ineffable divinity of the entity they name.

[159] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6.

[160] Translations from Philo here derived from the work of Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6.

[161] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6; Termini, "Philo's Thought," 97–101

[162] In addition to the references that I cite above, other notable examples of this trend arise in places where Philo interprets passages from scripture in which God describes himself with a plural

word, or λόγος, to whom Philo at times refers as the "most ancient" (*Fug.* 94), or the "charioteer of the powers" (*Fug.* 101), or even as a "second God" (*QG* 2.62). Because of this elevated status, more than any of the other powers Philo depicts this power as playing a pivotal role in mediating between Israel's supreme creator God and the material creation that God has made. Ranging beneath the λόγος are "an unspeakable number" of other powers (*Conf.* 171). Five in particular take on more prominent roles,

> Their leader being the creative power, according to which the Creator produced the world by a word; second is the royal power, according to which the one who has created governs that which has come into being; third is the gracious power, through which the Artificer takes pity and shows mercy toward his own work; fourth [is the legislative power, by which he prescribes duties upon us; and fifth is] that portion of legislation that prohibits that which should not be done. (*Fug.* 95)

Each of these powers performs an instrumental role in Philo's theology. The first enables Philo's supreme creator deity to create, the second to rule, the third to extend mercy, the fourth to legislate, the fifth to arbitrate between right and wrong. Since Philo's high creator God, ὁ ὤν, stands at the pinnacle of power and holiness, it is through these powers that the universe is held together (*Migr.* 181). They effect change in material creation in a manner the immaterial creator God cannot; they function as the hands by which God interacts with his creation.

Of these five powers, Philo specifically singles out the powers of God (θεός) and Lord (κύριος) within his divine hierarchy because they enable him to explain why evil persists in the world even though his supreme deity is both benevolent and omnipotent.[163] Since Philo presents

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referent, such as: "Let <u>us</u> make man (Gen 1:26; cf. Gen 3:22, Gen 11:7)." The presence of a plural referent with respect to God in these instances does not indicate the presence of multiple gods, nor does it compromise God's oneness. Rather, it refers to God's divine powers (*Conf.* 168–72; *Fug.* 68–72; *Opif.* 72–5; *Mut.* 30–2; *QG* 1.54).

[163] Termini, "Philo's Thought," 100–101.

the goodness that we find in humans as a direct derivative of God's own goodness,[164] the presence of these powers allows him to explain how evil emerges within the world. As he puts it: God "deemed it necessary to assign the origin of evil things to other makers, but reserving that of good things for himself alone." (*Fug.* 70; cf. *Opif.* 72–5; *Mut.* 30–2). Since these powers are a part of God, yet act independently of God, they buffer Philo's supreme deity from questions of theodicy; they also complicate what it means for Philo to have believed in one God.[165] The presence of these powers also achieves another affect. They enable Philo to explain the manner by which Israel's good God can punish those who perpetrate evil. Though at times he describes the former power, God (θεός), as creative (ποιητικὴ) (*Mos.* 2.99–100; *Abr.* 121; *Mut.* 29), beneficent (εὐεργέτις) (*Spec.* 1.307), or even good (ἀγαθότητα) (*Cher.* 1.27), regardless of the adjective employed, its role remains consistent. This is the power by which the good God of Israel created and arranged a good universe. Likewise, though at times Philo depicts the latter power, Lord (κύριος), with descriptors such as as kingly (βασιλικὴ) (*Mos.* 2.99-100; *Abr.* 121, *Mut.* 14–15), authoritative (ἐξουσίαν) (*Cher.* 1.27), or even punishing (κολαστήριος) (*Spec. Leg.* 307), in all instances this is the power by which God punishes those who perpetrate evil. Taken together, these two powers underscore God's goodness, but they also make God's powers, and not the high creator God himself, the instrument of wrath. In this manner, the hierarchical nature of Philo's godhead distances his supreme deity from challenges of theodicy.

Up to this point I have shown how Philo incorporates into his understanding of divine oneness several divine powers who are both a part of God yet act independently of God. But

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[164] See, for instance, *Opif.* 21, where Philo not only asserts that God, "the father and creator, is good (ἀγαθον εἶναι τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητήν)," but also that God "did not grudge the substance (of what God created) a share of his own excellent nature."

[165] In a similar manner, by interpreting places in scripture where God refers to himself with a plural referent as indications of God's powers, Philo also complicates what it means for him to have believed in one God.

Philo also presents a means by which several other lesser beings can participate in God's divinity too. These lesser beings are not "God" *per se.* But they can be described as "divine" because God works alongside them to accomplish God's will. In this manner, they participate in God's divine acts and they share in God's divinity. As David Litwa has argued: "The stars, including the sun and moon (*Prov.* 2.50), for Philo, are also divine. Under these cosmic divinities were the 'heroes' and 'daimones' of the Greeks, whom Philo calls 'angels,' in accordance with his scriptures (*Somn.* 1.140–41)."[166] Thus, "Philo repeatedly assumes and asserts that divinity can be and is shared by lesser (including created) beings."[167] Though not a part of Philo's godhead *per se,* these created entities can participate in the divine realm and they can be described as "divine" because God allows them to participate in God's own divinity. Thus, they too complicate what it means for Philo to have believed in *one* God.

In this section, I have added to the contributions of scholars from the second camp by further deconstructing the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism. In particular, I have shown how Philo's depiction of the divine is much more complex than the modern construction of monotheism implies. For though Philo certainly believed that there was only one creator God, he envisioned this high God as working with a number of accomplices. First and foremost, among these were a number of divine powers who were an integral and even necessary part of God's identity; yet simultaneously, they were subordinate to and independent of this one high God, performing roles and functions in the creation that the one creator God could not. Beneath them were a number of lesser created beings, including the stars, daimones, and even a number of select humans who participated in the divinity of Israel's high God. All of these lesser beings Philo considered "divine", thereby complicating what it meant for him to have believed in *one*

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[166] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 7.

[167] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6.

God. Although Philo conceived of the godhead in a hierarchical manner, comprised of several different "divine" beings, he understood how his supreme, ineffable deity was distinct from all else. Like his Jewish contemporaries in the first century CE, what separated this highest divinity from all else is that he was the sole uncreated entity out of which all other things emerged.

The first camp of scholars might call the hierarchical nature of the godhead that I have identified in Philo monotheism, and the second might argue for the decentering of the concept of God as Creator all together. I bring both approaches together here to show the nuance and complexity of the ancient Jewish conceptualizations of God in a single writer, Philo. I return to my discussion of the hierarchical nature of the Jewish godhead in chapters 5 (Sophia) and 6 (logos) to reiterate how the Gospel of John's articulation of divine embodiment is also dependent upon this hierarchical nature of the Godhead and thereby more akin to contemporaneous Jewish conceptualizations of God's embodiment than the later Christological formulas from the fourth century CE on.

2.4   The Uncreated God vs. All Other Reality

The hierarchical nature of the godhead was a key component of ancient Jewish understandings of God, but scholars who have argued for a clear line of separation between the creator God and all other reality have also identified an important aspect of ancient Jewish conceptions of the divine. To demonstrate how foundational the notion of God, the creator, was for Jews living in antiquity, here I turn my attention away from an exclusive focus on Philo and draw instead upon a collection of extent Jewish sources that date to the first century CE. These include Philo, Josephus, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Book of the Parables*, 2 Enoch, and the

Apocalypse of Abraham.[168] Earlier texts illustrate a similar phenomenon (cf. Isa. 40:26, 28; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; 51:16; Neh. 9:6; Hos. 13:4 LXX; 2 Macc. 1:24; Sir. 43:33; Bel 5; *Jub.*12:3–5; *Sib. Or.* 3:20–3).[169] Yet I conduct a close analysis of texts dating to the first century CE for two interrelated reasons. First, these Jewish sources date as close as possible to the time of the composition of the Gospel of John.[170] Since this dissertation traces lines of continuity and discontinuity between the Gospel of John and other contemporaneous Jewish texts, the employment of these sources enables me to situate the Gospel of John within a particular chronological framework. Second, I employ a wide variety of different Jewish voices rather than

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[168] All of these Jewish texts likely date to the first or second century CE. For Philo, see Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9; Sterling, "Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series," ix. For the placement of Josephus's lifetime between 37–100 CE, see *Life of Josephus*, 49. For a late first-century dating of the books of *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*, see Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 1–18. For a late first-century dating of the *Apocalypse of Abraham,* see R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham. A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 1 Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983), 681–88, esp. 683. For the dating of the *Book of the Parables* between the late first century BCE and early first century CE*,* see Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini, eds., *Enoch and the Synoptics: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 5–6; Loren Stuckenbruck, "The *Book of Enoch*: Its Reception in Second Temple Jewish and in Christian Tradition," *Early Christianity* 4.1 (2013): 7–40; George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch. A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 6; On the possible dating of 2 Enoch to the turn of the first century CE, see R.H. Charles and W. R. Morfill, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896); F.I. Anderson, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation with Notes," in James C. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Vol. 1—Apocalypses and Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 94–97. Admittedly, the dating of 2 Enoch remains a bit of an enigma. See Grant Macaskill, *The Slavonic Texts of 2 Enoch* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3. Even a date as late as the tenth century CE has been proposed. See J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 110–12; 114–15.

[169] For these citations, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* 9 note 8. Bauckham also lists examples from the *Sibylline Oracles* and *Joseph and Aseneth,* such as *Sib. Or.* 8:375–76; *Sib. Or.* frg. 1:5–6; *Sib. Or.* frg. 3; *Sib. Or.* frg. 5, and *Jos. Asen.* 12:1–2, but the dating of these texts is uncertain, with scholars proposing a range from the second century BCE until, in some instances, the fifth century CE or beyond. With respect to the *Sibylline Oracles,* see James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 1 Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983), 322, 416, 469. With respect to *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Tyson L. Putthoff, "Aseneth's Gastronomical Vision: Mystical Theophagy and the New Creation in *Joseph and Aseneth*," *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 24.2 (2014): 96–117, esp. 99.

[170] The final form of the Gospel of John likely dates between 90–110 CE. See Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 199–215.

the perspective of a single author to illustrate how pervasive the concept of God as creator was. Many scholars today conflate their insistence that ancient Jews viewed God as creator with an equally firm resolve that ancient Jews were unequivocally monotheistic. However, by separating these two concepts and focusing exclusively on the former, I demonstrate how the two are not inextricably linked. The description of God as the one uncreated entity from which all other reality flows is not incompatible with a hierarchical conception of the godhead.

Now, to a certain extent, the notion of God as creator was so ubiquitous within the ancient Jewish imagination that it would seem to need little comment. All extant Jewish authors from the first century CE use the term "creator" in reference to God and the descriptor appears more frequently than any other when they attempt to articulate who God is. Both Josephus and the author of 2 Baruch refer to God as our creator (*War* 3.369, 379; 5.377; 2 Bar 14.15, 44.4, 82.2).[171] The author of 4 Ezra describes God as the one who has created the world (4 Ez 6.55).[172] Josephus and the author of the Apocalypse of Abraham each respectively have the patriarchs refer to God as the creator of everything (*Ant.* 1.154–5, 271–2) and the one who created all things (*Ap. Abr.* 7:10). The author of Book of the Parables describes God as the sole creator of the universe (2 En 33.8).[173] Even Philo of Alexandria, who is typically reticent to describe God

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[171] The author of 2 Baruch also refers to God as the "who created the earth" (2 Bar 21.4); the one "who created the world" (2 Bar 21.25); the one who "created all things" (2 Bar 49.1); the one "who created us" (2 Bar 79.2; cf. 54.10, 79.2); the one who reigns "over all creation which [his] right hand has created" (2 Bar 54.13); and the one who "will renew his creation" (32.7).

[172] Elsewhere the text of 4 Ezra either explicitly or tacitly refers to God in similar ways, such as describing God as the "maker" of Israel (4 Ez 5.33); the one who has "created" (4 Ez 5.43, 8.7); the "creator" (4 Ez 5.44); the one present at the "beginning of creation" (4 Ez 6.38); the one who visits his "creation" (4 Ez 5.56); the one who will "deliver his creation" (4 Ez 13.26; cf. 7.75); and the one who "made all things" (4 Ez 16.63; cf. 7.70, 8.13, 8.44).

[173] Elsewhere the author of 2 Enoch describes God as the one who "created from non-being into being, and from invisible into visible" (2 En 24.2; cf. 65.1); the one who "has created" every living soul (2 En 61.1); and the one who "created all things" (2 En 66.4).

in terms of what God is (rather than is not)[174] consistently conceives of God as the creator (ποιητής) of the world. The appellation arises in every one of his treatises, occurring over two hundred and sixty times.

This remarkable consistency of language proves noteworthy because despite the chronological proximity of these Jewish works, they arise in response to different socio-historical concerns. The authors compose their work in different original languages. They pen their words in Palestine and the Diaspora. They respond to concerns prior to, and in the aftermath of, the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple. Despite these differences, they remain astonishingly consistent in their intellectual conceptualization of God as the one uncreated entity from which all other reality emerged. Employed far more often than any other appellation with respect to God, their frequency alone reveals how foundational was the notion of God as creator for the Jews living at this time.

The idea of God as creator of the world proliferates within the ancient Jewish imagination around the turn of the Common Era because of how pivotal the opening chapters of the book of Genesis had become. Since these creation narratives were some of the last parts of Genesis to be put into writing, interest in them emerges toward the end of the Second Temple Period.[175] A case in point of this trend arises with respect to the pseudepigraphical *Life of Adam and Eve*.[176] Composed in the first century CE, the work offers extended re-writings of the creation narratives. Considering the popularity of this rewriting and of the creation accounts from

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[174] Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo,* 56–57; Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," 55–56; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 177–78.

[175] See Lester Grabbe, "Adam and Eve Literature," in *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period. Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000), 95–97.

[176] M.D. Johnson, "Life of Adam and Eve," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 2.* James H. Charlesworth, ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983), 249–95; Gary Anderson, Michael Stone, Johannes Tromp, eds. *Literature on Adam and Eve. Collected Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Genesis from which it emerged, both the language contained within the and their conceptualization of God as the creator of the universe infiltrated other contemporaneous Jewish works. Yet more than merely labeling God as creator, these authors drew directly from Genesis to ensure that their audiences knew that it was their God—the God of the Jews, the God of Israel—who created the world. Jewish authors from the first century CE, for instance, consistently emphasize details such as the order in which the first chapter of Genesis presents the unfolding of creation (2 En 24.2–30.8; 4 Ez 6.38–54; *Ant.* 1.26–34; cf. Gen 1:1–2:3).[177] Or how the second chapter depicts God creating Adam from the dust of the ground (Ez 3.5–6; 4 Ez 7.62–63; 2 Bar 48.44–46; Philo, *Opif.* 135; *QG* 1.4; *Leg.* 1.33–37; cf. Gen 2:7). Or how God begets parts of the creation into existence by God's mere word (4 Ez 3.5; 6.38; 16.55–56; 2 Bar 14.17; 21.4; 2 En 25.2, 5, 26.1, 3; Philo, *QG* 1.4; cf. Gen 1). By referencing these specific details from their scriptures, these Jews established an inextricable link between *their* God and the creation of the world. Amid competing claims for authority, they retold stories of the world's origins by identifying their God as its creator. The consequence of these hermeneutical maneuvers is that just as the opening chapters of Genesis often refer to God as creator of the world (Gen 1:1, 16, 21, 25, 26, 17, 31; 2:2, 3), so too the most frequent appellation employed by Jews in the first century to describe God is likewise that of creator.

Yet more than merely conceiving of God as creator, these first-century Jewish intellectuals sought to articulate a clear separation between the creator God and all other reality.

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[177] By way of example, the entirety of Josephus's *Ant.* 1.26–34 is a close re-telling of Genesis 1 and 2 (cf. 2 En 24.2–29.8; 4 Ezra 5:56–6:6; 4 Ez 6:38–54; 2 Bar 14:13–19; 2 Bar 48:44–46). Though Josephus does not quote directly from the Septuagint's version of Genesis (for example: he employs the verb κτίζω rather than ποιέω to describe God's creative action), his words are so closely aligned to the biblical text that there can be no question that his writing is dependent upon it. He not only follows the precise order of events as they unfold in Genesis, but he also places the story of how God creates the world at the beginning of his *Antiquities*. This position indicates how central the image of God, as creator, was for his retelling of Jewish history (cf. *Ant.* 20.259).

Josephus, for instance, commences his *Antiquities* with an appeal not only to "regard God, and his construction of the world (τὴν τοῦ κόσμου κατασκευὴν)," but also to remember that humans are "the most excellent of the works [i.e. creatures] of God upon earth" (*Ant.* 1.21).[178] The author of 2 Baruch presents God as the one who governs all the creatures that God's right hand has created (2 Bar 54.13 and 2 Bar 48.9, respectively). The author of 2 Enoch underscores the omnipresent nature of God in order to chastise those tempted to worship created entities in lieu of the Lord of all creation (2 En 44.1; 65.1; 2 En 66.4–5; cf. 2 En 24.1–33.1, esp. 24.45; 49.1; 58.1–2; and 66.4–5). Yet Philo of Alexandria, despite his clear understanding of the hierarchical godhead, stresses the distinction between creator and all other reality more clearly than the others. He frequently describes God as the creator (ποιητής) and father (πατήρ) of all things (*Opif.* 7, 21; *Mos.* 2.48), for instance,[179] including other gods (*Spec.* 1.20), and he openly condemns those who assume that the world exists without a creator (*Opif.* 1.7).[180] Moreover, he regularly reminds his readers that the "world was created" by God and that humanity was the "last of all created things" which God had made (Philo, *Opif.* 171b and *Opif.* 83, respectively). These designations demonstrate the clear delineation that Philo and other contemporaneous Jewish authors draw between these two realms within their thought.

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[178] The Greek text can be found in Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish Antiquities, Books 1–19* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray et. al.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930–1965). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Josephus, including this one, are my own.

[179] Although Philo describes God as creator upwards of one hundred times, these citations are instances where he describes God as both creator (ποιητής) and father (πατήρ) simultaneously. For examples of where he refers to God as the Father (πατήρ) who has created (ὁ γεννήσας), or more simply as God (ὁ θεὸς) who has created (ὁ γεννήσας), see *Cher.* 23; *Deus.* 47; *Her.* 205; *Somn.* 76; *Spec.* 3.189. For places where Philo describes God as uncreated (ὁ ἀγένητος), see *Cher.* 44; *Sacr.* 66; *Gig.* 42; *Deus.* 56; *Plant.* 31; *Her.* 14; *Mut.* 22, 45; *Decal.* 41; *Praem.* 87.

[180] Elsewhere he even goes on to assert that those who doubt God's existence—and thus by default assume that the world itself is uncreated—commit the greatest of all vices (cf. *Spec.* 1.32) for, as he claims, such nonsensical positions can only be affirmed by those who have darkened the truth with fabulous inventions (Philo, *Opif.* 170, cf. Philo *Conf.* 114; *Leg.* 1.49; *Spec.* 1.32).

A closer look at some of Philo's philosophical sayings reveals that the distinction he makes between these two realms moves is more than mere semantics; rather, Philo draws an ontological distinction between his creator God and all other reality. On the one hand, Philo's conceives of his supreme deity, the creator God (to whom he often refers as τὸ ὄν, or the Existent) as immutable, unchangeable, atemporal, eternal, and utterly sufficient unto himself (*Mut.* 27; *Opif.* 100). This creator God comprises the top of Philo's divine hierarchy and is "divine in an ultimate, unshareable sense" (*Leg.* 2.1; *Sacr.* 91–92; *Mut.* 27; *Virt.* 65; *Legat.* 115).[181] While other entities, such as the λόγος, σοφία, and the δύναμις, come close to this supreme deity, they cannot properly be considered synonymous with this sole uncreated one. Philo depicts them as participating in the divinity of Philo's supreme creator God, often working alongside God the creator. Yet any one of these lesser divine entities "never become or threatens to become the primal God."[182] As an example: Philo presents the λόγος as neither uncreated nor created (*Her.* 206), but this language separates the λόγος from Philo's highest divinity, who alone can be considered uncreated.[183] This is because Philo's creator God, true Being itself, is immutable and an entity unto himself.

By contrast, everything else that participates in this supreme deity's divinity is mutable. This logic applies equally to entities such as λόγος, σοφία, and the δύναμις, who though separate from God are also subsumed under the broader rubric of God's oneness, and to entities that have been created, such as the celestial beings, heroes and daimones, and even humans. Since the purpose of God's powers is to enact change in the world in a manner that Philo's supreme

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[181] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 5–8, esp. 6; idem, *We are Being Transformed,* 106–109.

[182] Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 5–8, esp. 8; idem, *We are Being Transformed,* 106–109.

[183] James McGrath and Crispin Fletcher Louis have each, respectively, cited this example to suggest that among ancient Jews there was a clear bridging of the Creator-creature boundary. See McGrath, *Only True God,* 13; Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism,* 298.

creator deity cannot, and since created entities are, by their very definition, constantly in motion, they are subject to change, unlike the supreme Creator God. The key distinction between Philo's creator God and all other reality, then, is that while the former is immutable, all other reality is mutable. Accordingly, though Philo does frequently assert that God is one (*Opif.* 171; *Decal.* 65, 81; *Leg.* 1.51; *Conf.* 144), the primary way that he describes God is not in monotheistic terms. Rather, like his first-century Jewish contemporaries, he differentiates between the creator God and all other reality: while God is immutable, all other reality is mutable.

I have already established with my analysis of Philo that the ancient Jewish understanding of God as the sole creator from whom other reality flows is thus compatible with a hierarchical view of the godhead, but several other first-century texts also illustrate this argument. This is because first-century Jews envisioned the one God of Israel working alongside several different accomplices, even at times employing pre-existent materials to produce God's creation. Despite 2 Enoch's strong statements regarding God being the *sole* creator of the universe (2 En 33.3–8), for instance, 2 Enoch also depicts God employing pre-existent materials or even parts of God's own self to accomplish God's ends. Light emerges from the belly of Adoil, a mystical invisible being (2 En 25.1–5; cf. Gen 1:3–5). The firmament appears through Archas, another mystical invisible creature, who assists in the creation of lower things (2 En 26.3; cf. Gen 1.6–7). Moreover, personified wisdom functions as the principal agent by which humanity comes into existence (2 En 30.8). Consequently, rather than envisioning something akin to the construct of creatio ex-nihilo,[184] in which God creates the world from non-being into

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[184] 2 Macc 7:28 provides unequivocal evidence for the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* in Jewish thought. Thus, contra Gerhard May, this concept did not originally emerge in the late second century CE. See Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation Out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought.* trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), esp. 2. For a scholar who refutes May's position, see also Paul Copan, "Is Creatio Ex Nihilo a Post-Biblical Invention? An Examination of Gerhard May's Proposal." *Trinity Journal* 17.1 (Spring 1996): 77–93.

being, the author portrays God creating from the invisible things into the visible (2 En 24.2; cf. 2 En 65.1). These accomplices do not challenge the uniqueness of the supreme creator God, nor do they distract from God's oneness; rather these divine entities participate with Israel's highest divinity to create the world.

Likewise, despite the author of 4 Ezra's similar stress on the one God as sole creator of the universe, closer examination reveals that this notion is also more complicated than the word monotheism implies. On the one hand, the author envisions Israel's supreme deity existing alone prior to the creation of all other things. Note, for instance, how the author has Uriel, the angelic interlocutor in the text, explain to Ezra, the text's primary figure, the role that God played in the creation of the world.

> [Uriel] said to me, "At the beginning of the circle of the earth, before the portals of the world were in place, and before the assembled winds blew, and before the rumblings of thunder sounded, and before the flashes of lighting shone, and before the foundations of Paradise were laid, and before the beautiful flowers were seen, and before the powers of movement were established, and before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together, and before the heights of the air were lifted up, and before the measures of the firmament were named, and before the footstool of Zion was established, and before the present years were reckoned, and before the imaginations of those who now sin were reckoned, who stored up treasures of faith were sealed—then I planned these things, and *they were made through me and not through another*, just as the end shall come through me and not through another. (4 Ez 6.1–6)[185]

With an eleven-fold repetition of the word "before," the author stresses the pre-existent nature of God.[186] Since God—and God alone—was present prior to all else, God must be seen as the world's sole originator. On the other hand, the author re-writes the opening chapter of Genesis with a nod towards those who act as God's accomplices (4 Ez 6:38–54). Twice the author hints

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[185] See also 4 Ez 3.5, where the author asserts that God formed the earth "without help." Note that translation from 4 Ezra have been taken from B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* vol. 1 ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2011), 517–559.

[186] Elsewhere in the text the author asserts that "before the world was made for them to dwell in… no one opposed me then, for no one existed" (4 Ez 9.18).

that the "word of God" has its own autonomy. In the first instance, the author suggests that God's "word accomplished the work" of creating heaven and earth on the first day (4 Ez 6.38). In the latter, the verb "went forth" suggests that God's word can travel independently from the creator God (4 Ez 6.43). Though neither of these statements are overt claims regarding the independence of the word of God, especially vis-à-vis God himself, both hint in the direction of hypothesization. For both the author of 2 Enoch and that of 4 Ezra, Israel's highest divinity, the sole uncreated one, acts in concert with either invisible beings or personified attributes to create the world; and yet, paradoxically, collaboration with these accomplices in no way detracts from either God's oneness or from God's identity as sole creator. The ancient Jewish understanding of God as creator thus stands in continuity with, and not in opposition to, their hierarchical understanding of the godhead.

The purpose of this section of my chapter was to illumine how ubiquitous for Jews living in the first century CE the idea of God as the creator was, especially in contradistinction to all other reality. I demonstrated how this distinction is compatible with the ancient Jewish understanding of God's oneness, which viewed the godhead in a hierarchical manner. Moreover, I argued that this distinction is a more accurate way of articulating how ancient Jews conceived of the divine than our modern conception of monotheism, because this is the language that these Jews employed when describing God. Making this argument helps me to underscore why *this* way of conceiving of the God matters, not just for how scholars reconstruct ancient Judaism, but also for a more substantive understanding of what was really at stake for the ancients in early Christological debates.

2.5   Conclusion

At a very basic level and from a very practical perspective, shifting our scholarly rhetoric away from a focus on ancient Jewish monotheism and toward a discussion of God as the creator in opposition to all other reality is necessary because *this is the language that ancient Jews employed when they sought to describe who God was for them.* Unlike scholars today, ancient Jews did not debate whether the personification of divine attributes or the apotheosis of wise men compromised the nature of monotheism. Rather, they conceived of the godhead in a hierarchical manner, believing that many different "divine" beings, even if created, could participate in the divinity of Israel's creator God without compromising God's oneness. This observation reveals a fundamental difference between the concerns of the ancients and that of our own. Scholars today ask: How could Jesus be considered divine without compromising the basic tenets of Jewish monotheism? But the ancients wondered instead: How can we, as humans, become god-like ourselves? This discrepancy reveals how the questions scholars employ to interrogate ancient texts often reflect modern preoccupations rather than representing the worldview of the ancients themselves. Our modern knowledge does not absolve us scholars from trying to understand antiquity on its own terms. Rather, it ought to compel ancient historians to unearth again, with fresh insights, what was happening in ancient times. By attending more carefully to the language ancient Jews actually employed with respect to God and the divine realm, new breakthroughs in the study of ancient Jews can emerge.

One of the problems I see with the current focus on questions related to the nature of ancient Jewish monotheism is that it obscures important points of continuity between the earliest followers of Jesus and other Jews who lived at that time. In recent years, a number of specialists

interested in the study of early Christology have been preoccupied with the following problem: Given that the earliest followers of Jesus were Jewish, and Jews during the first century of the common era were ostensibly monotheists, how could these Jews have conceived of Jesus, alongside God the Father, as also being divine? When scholars begin their investigations with an anachronistic focus on the notion of ancient Jewish monotheism, and assume that divinity was the exclusive prerogative of Israel's supreme God, then early Jesus followers, with their belief in Jesus' divinity, are immediately singled out and presented in opposition to all other Jews at that time. Yet if the focus can shift to *the distinction between the uncreated God and all other reality*—a distinction that ancient Jews actually made—and *we can recognize that Israel's supreme uncreated divinity enabled other, lesser entities to participate in his divinity*, then the earliest followers of Jesus can be seen as a part of this ancient Jewish discussion rather than as a distinct bifurcation from it. Moreover, more attention can be devoted to how *not all Jews agreed on what could or could not be incorporated into the identity of that supreme uncreated God.* To put it simply, attending to this distinction between a supreme uncreated divinity and all other reality provides a better window into what was at stake in antiquity when the ancients thought, wrote, and spoke about God.

I have specifically devoted an entire chapter on ancient Jewish conceptions of God because without a clear understanding of how I have navigated this contested topic my broader discussion of divine embodiment in Jewish antiquity could easily be misconstrued. Shifting the focus in this manner also enables me to show how revolutionary certain ideas were, even in their own day, ideas such as those espoused in the prologue of the Gospel of John. Because much of past scholarship has focused on the question of Jewish monotheism, the attendant question of Jesus' divinity has also come up. The difficulty with this focus, though, as I have demonstrated

in this chapter and will unpack throughout the dissertation, is that there were several other entities within the worldview of ancient Jews that were also considered divine, such that Jesus' divinity, in and of itself, was not unique. Though there are many current scholars who see as unique the move that early Christians made of incorporating Jesus into the divine identity, as my brief exploration of Philo's understanding of God's divine powers has illustrated and my subsequent analysis of these themes in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 will make clear, similar ideologies were well established within Judaism prior to the rise of the early Christian movement. Indeed, As Paula Fredriksen has noted, "Ancient monotheism . . . addressed the issue of heaven's architecture, not its absolute population. As long as one god stood at the absolute apex of holiness and power, pagan, Jewish, and eventually Christian monotheists could and did accommodate vast numbers of deities ranging beneath."[187] Though I disagree with Fredriksen's focus on the term "Jewish monotheism", she makes an excellent point regarding the way that many ancient Jews conceived of the divine. There was not just one divine thing in the worldview of ancient Jews—even in the first century CE—but a number of different layers of divinity all participating in the divinity of their one supreme creator God.

This chapter on re-conceptualizing ancient Jewish monotheism complicates how ancient Jews viewed God. On the one hand, like their Greco-Roman counterparts they envisioned a world with many degrees of divinity, muddying modern definitions of monotheism; their worldview encompassed a belief that several entities (including certain select humans) could participate in the divinity of Israel's supreme God and thereby be considered "divine" themselves. On the other hand, ancient Jews articulated a clear separation between the creator God and all other reality. Thus, though many entities could be considered "divine," that did not

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[187] Fredriksen, *Sin*, 54.

make them synonymous with Israel's highest, and uncreated, God. This understanding of the ancient Jewish godhead serves as the backdrop to the rest of my study. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I apply this nuanced understanding to my close reading of Philo of Alexandria's work. In particular, I demonstrate how Philo—like the author of the Gospel of John (chapter 6)—also presents a means by which Israel's God could become embodied—though for him the nexus of that embodiment is not the person of Jesus but the souls of created humans. I then show how particularly righteous figures in Philo's thought exemplify this trend, with Moses serving as a primary example. This evidence suggests that scholarship on God's embodiment has been limited by knowledge of later developments in Christian theology.[188] Articulations of divine embodiment, like that found in John 1:14 with respect to the figure of Jesus, were not the only way that Jews in the early centuries of the Common Era understood that God could become embodied in human form.

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[188] The idea that God became embodied in the specific figure of Jesus has long been conceived of as the central and defining event of Christianity. This conception is typically framed vis-à-vis the later doctrine of the Incarnation. See, for instance, Cross, "The Incarnation," 452–476.

CHAPTER THREE: A JEWISH PHILOSOPHER'S RELUCTANT EMBRACE OF DIVINE CORPOREALITY

3.1 Introduction

Because, as I pointed out in the Introduction, later polemics established Jews and Christians as binary opposites, differentiated in large part based their views of God's body, scholars have not sufficiently explored how Jews, in the early Roman period, who stood outside of the Jesus movement, conceived of how the divine could become embodied on earth.[189] In this chapter, I employ the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria to illustrate my argument because scholars often point to him as the quintessential representative of a Jew who stressed the absolute incorporeality of God.[190] But if, so my logic goes, one can find an articulation of divine embodiment even within the writings of Philo, then perhaps there were

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[189] Since the field of New Testament studies tends to focus on textual or hermeneutical issues that have relevance for the later development of Christianity, through these methodological approaches scholars often confine their investigations to narrow debates regarding when this idea first arose among Jesus-followers. See Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, xii, 213; although this is focus of the entire book. For representative examples of scholars who debate a similar question, namely at what point the human figure, Jesus of Nazareth, was first considered divine, see Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 9, 31–32, 35–36, 143, 156, 158; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 1–8, 11–15; 99–128; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 1–11; idem, *How on Earth*, 1–9; 42–53, 152–53, 177–78; Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii–x; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, ix–59; 182–85; Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*. However, a proliferation of recent studies by specialists of the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinics alike has underscored the multifaceted ways that both the ancient Israelite and early Jewish traditions depicted God in embodied form. See Neusner, *Incarnation of God*, 4; Wolfson, 239–54; Lorberbaum, *The Image of God*; Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men,"* 150–155; idem, "Divine Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible," 161–183; Sommer, *Bodies of* God, 1–11, 38–57, 124–143; Neis, *The Sense of Sight*, 18–81; Knafl, *Forming God*, 72–157; Smith, "The Three Bodies of God," 471–88.

[190] The chronology of Philo's life is obscure. But scholars consistently place his writing career in the first century CE, with his lifetime often spanning between the years 20 BCE–50 CE. See Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo,* 9; Sterling, "Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series," ix (cf. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 3 note 3, for a broader range of possibilities).

other ways that Jews in the early Roman period understood that God could take on bodily form. Here I demonstrate one of the means by which Israel's God became embodied, according to Philo; granted, for him the nexus of that embodiment is not the person of Jesus but the souls of created humans. In particular, in his interpretation of the creation of humanity in Genesis 2:7, he portrays the bodies of humans as corporeal, earthly, and created, yet he presents their souls as proceeding directly from God—as a begotten or not-created thing—imparted into the human mind through a direct in-breathing by God (*Opif.* 135; *QG* 1.4; *Leg.* 1.33–37). Particularly righteous figures in Philo's thought exemplify this trend, with Moses serving as a primary example. This evidence suggests that scholarship on God's embodiment has been limited by knowledge of later developments in Christian theology. Incarnational formulas, like that found in John 1:14 with respect to the figure of Jesus, were not the only way that Jews in the first and second century CE understood that God could become embodied in human form.

3.2   How a Spark of God Became Embodied in Humanity

The theory behind how Philo envisions that a part of God became embodied in humans emerges out of both his exegesis and his engagement with the Greek philosophical tradition. Philo argues that God imbued a spark of God's own nature into humans at their creation; and, if they nourished that spark by their philosophical speculation, their ensuing mystical ascents could lead them back to God. Yet his suggestion that a part of God could enter into the realm of created materiality[191] seems incongruous with his repeated emphasis on the absolute incorporeality of

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[191] Richard Bauckham is the scholar who, in recent years, has most forcibly argued that early Jews, including Philo, articulated a clear line of separation between creator and creature, viewing Israel's God as the "sole creator" of all else. See *God Crucified*, 1–22; esp. vii, 9; "Throne of God," 1–17. For a similar perspective, see Boccaccini, "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 186–187.

God's being.[192] Taking his lead from the Greek philosophical tradition in which he was educated, Philo repeatedly underscores the utter transcendence of God.[193] He views God as the pinnacle of all of "qualities" he deems "most admirable": "the rational, the noetic-ideal and incorporeal, the heavenly, indivisible and unchanging, the active principle."[194] Accordingly, it seems unlikely that he would suggest that God could take on bodily form. In *De Opificio Mundi*, for instance, Philo portrays his creator God in a manner that strongly resembles the creator God of Plato's *Timeaus*.[195] Just as Plato's creator God is utterly transcendent, immutable, and incorporeal, so too is the creator God of Philo. Moreover, just as Plato's God does not create the world directly,

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[192] From a history of religion perspective, the problem that Philo deals with here, namely how to bridge the gap between god and humans, is not exclusive to him but constitutes a central question for all religions. However, as Anders Klostergaard Peterson has demonstrated, this problem becomes particularly accentuated from the sixth century BCE onward with the emergence of utopian forms of religion. As evidenced, particularly, in Platonic philosophy, utopian types of religion "emphasise (sic) the need for man to overcome the ontological difference [between himself and the gods] in order to attain a higher level of existence" (7). As such, though these types of religion also envision radical dualism between body and mind/soul, viewing the former as negative and the latter as positive, they also suggest that if persons learn to cultivate that part of themselves, namely the mind/soul, that originates with the godhead, then by imitating the gods, they can escape from this world, thereby undergoing the process of divinization. See "Attaining Divine Perfection through Different Forms of Imitation." *Numen* 60 (2013): 7–38.

[193] Philo's writings reveal that he received both a Greek and Jewish education. Cf. *Legat.* 182; *Anim.* 54. To acquire this training, Philo may have attended public lectures. See John Dillon, preface to *Philo of Alexandria. The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections*, trans. David Winston, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), xi–xiv, esp. xiii. Or he may have received his education alongside Greeks in the gymnasium. See Alan Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria*, HUCM 7 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), 25–46, esp. 29–33; John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 148–153, esp. 151–153; and Courtney J. P. Friesen, "Hannah's 'Hard Day' and Hesiod's "Two Roads": Poetic Wisdom in Philo's *De ebrietate*," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 46 (2015): 44–64, esp. 46–47. His Greek training was likely a "combination of Stoicizing Platonism with a Pythagorean-influenced view of the transcendence of God." Dillon, preface, xiii; John Dillon, "Philo of Alexandria and Platonist Psychology," in *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul: Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions*, ed. Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth and John M. Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17–25, esp. 17–18.

[194] Sharon Lea Mattila, "Wisdom, Sense Perception, Nature, and Philo's Gender Gradient," *Harvard Theological Review* 89.2 (1996): 103–129, esp. 106.

[195] For an English translation and basic introduction to this work, see Peter Kalkavage, *Plato's Timaeus* (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2001). For the influence of the *Timaeus* on Philo's works, see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* esp. 523–552.

since the very act of creating would necessarily cause an immutable God to change, neither does Philo's God interact directly with his creation. For both Plato and Philo, God remains in the realm of incorporeality; thus, God solicits the aid of divine intermediaries in order to bridge the gap to the realm of corporeality.[196] Demonstrably, Philo understands his God to be far removed from anything bodily or material.

Likewise, in *De Mutatione Nominum*, Philo underscores God's inaccessibility and self-sufficiency, thereby removing any intimation that his incorporeal deity could enter into corporeal form.

> For the Existent One (τὸ γὰρ ὄν) is existent and not relative. He is full of himself (αὐτὸ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ πλῆρες) and is sufficient for himself (αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ἱκανόν). He existed both before the creation of the world (πρὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως), and equally after the creation of everything (μετὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ παντὸς). He is immovable (ἄτρεπτον) and unchangeable (ἀμετάβλητον), having need of nothing else at all (χρῇρζον ἑτέπου τὸ παράπαν οὐδενός), so that all things are his, but properly speaking, he belongs to none. (*Mut.* 27b–28; cf. *Leg.* 2.1; *Sacr.* 91–2; *Post.* 14; *Virt.* 65)

Here Philo demonstrates how he understands God to be utterly transcendent and entirely sufficient unto himself. God stands outside of temporal constraints, existing prior to the creation of the world, yet equally after it (cf. *Post.* 14). He stands outside of bodily demands, having no need for anything, yet he supplies everything. He generates the entire corporeal world, yet he stands apart from it. This God is pure thought, pure rationality, pure essence, and pure totality. God stands far removed from anything that Philo deems lesser; that is, from "the irrational, the sense-perceptible and material, the earthly, divisible and changing, the passive principle."[197]

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[196] For the way in which the human soul, particularly in utopian forms of religion but Platonism in particular, often functions as a point of contact between god and humans, enabling humans to become like god themselves, see Peterson, "Attaining Divine Perfection," esp. 8, 27.

[197] Mattila, "Wisdom," 106.

Thus, when exegeting portions of Israel's scriptures, rather than embracing the anthropomorphic representations of God found therein,[198] Philo denies their validity. Indeed, he reiterates that God cannot take on bodily form. When reflecting on how God could communicate the Ten Commandments to Moses, for instance, Philo stresses that God did not utter these words with some kind of voice (*Decal.* 32; cf. *Post.* 2–4, 7; *Legat.* 118).[199] This tension in Philo's thought between his insistence on God's utter incorporeality and a soteriology that necessitates that God become embodied in the souls of humans, reveals that Philo's understanding of God's nature is more complicated than his officially sanctioned hermeneutics. His philosophical worldview holds in tension a vision of an utterly transcendent, incorporeal God and a spark of that same God being embodied within the souls of created humanity.

Philo's theory that a part of God could become embodied in the souls of humans arises in relation to another portion of his exegesis: his discussions of the "double creation" of humanity.[200] I have put quotation marks around the term because, despite its frequent

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[198] Several passages from the Hebrew Bible/Septuagint depict God in anthropomorphic terms, portraying him with concrete human-like attributes, such as fingers, a face, feet, or seated on a throne (cf. Gen 3:8; Exod 24:10–11, 31:18; Num 12:8; Is 6:1–3; Ps 132:13, 8:3, 135:21; Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:9–10), or in anthropopathic terms, depicting God with human-like emotions such as anger, joy, and rage. See Reiss, "Adam: Created in the Image and Likeness of God," 184.

[199] In *Decal.* 32, Philo underscores how God differs from humans in that God does not need a mouth, or tongue, or a windpipe. In *Post.* 2–4, 7 Philo emphasizes how τὸ ὄν has no need of body parts such as a face, neck, chest, hands, a belly, feet, generative organs, or any other internal or external faculties whatsoever. Moreover, in *Legat.* 118, Philo underscores the absolute distinction between created humans and Israel's uncreated high God.

[200] If Philo's exegesis seems contradictory—with several passages stressing how an incorporeal God cannot take on corporeal form and his interpretations of Gen 2:7 underscoring precisely the opposite—then it is important to note that Philo is not a systematic theologian. Instead, his hermeneutics read like case studies. They arise out of specific questions related to specific biblical texts, but are never presented as a systematic synthesis. For past scholars who have argued that that Philo was not a systematic theologian but an exegete of scripture and therefore the biblical text itself is what establishes a system of organization in his works, see Valetin Nikiprowetzky, "L'exégèse de Philo d'Alexandrie dans le *De gigantibus* et le *Quod Deus*," in *Two Treatises of Philo Alexandria*, ed. D. Winston, J. Dillon, BJS (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 5–75; Sze-Kar Wan, "Philo's *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim*: A

employment in scholarship, the designation is in fact a misnomer. Rather, Philo describes the creation of humanity, like that of the entire cosmos, as a two-stage process. Genesis 1:26–27 depicts the first part of the process of humanity's creation.[201] Here Philo claims that God creates the ideal heavenly human. As a being that exists only as an idea in the mind of God, and thus who is not-created, this human remains perceptible only to the intellect (*Opif.* 134). He is incorporeal and made according to the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ). As the similitude of the archetypal model (*QG* 1.4; cf. *Opif.* 25, 31) and the form of the principle character (*QG* 1.4), he is an incorporeal entity, generated according to the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ) (*Leg.* 1.31). Unalloyed and unmixed, he proceeds from a simple and transparent nature; and he exists, like an abstract idea in the mind of an architect, merely as an intellectual (i.e. incorporeal) reality (*QG* 1.4, cf. *Leg.* 1.33–42).[202] In contrast, Gen 2:7 relays the second part of this double creation, where God actually creates (not merely generates) the earthly human, who, being corporeal, is indeed perceptible to the senses. He is made in the likeness of a being that is only appreciable to the intellect, and he is a composite of two different parts, an earthly body and—note this—a divine soul (*QG* 1.4; 1.8; cf. *Leg.* 1.31–32; *Leg.* 1.33–42).[203] To stress his bodily existence, Philo

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Synoptic Approach," *SBL Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 32 (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1993), 22–53, esp. 33; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 167–80, esp. 169–70; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 3–5.

[201] For detailed discussions of a potential intersection and overlap between how Philo interprets the first and second accounts of humanity's creation in Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:7, respectively, see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 471–75; George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), esp. 62–69

[202] For detailed views on Philo's exposition of the creation of humanity and the various exegetical and philosophical traditions that influenced it, see Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* CBQMS 14 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), esp. 164; see also Wan, "Philo's *Quaestiones*," 49. For a contrasting perspective, see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, esp. 467–75.

[203] Following the Platonist bipartite division of the soul, Philo at times separates the soul into a rational and irrational parts (*Leg.* 2.6; *Spec.* 1.333). At other times he suggests a tripartite structure (*Spec.* 4.92). Indeed, elsewhere he even employs the Stoic seven physical faculties to describe the multifaceted

notes that God places this earthly human, whom he later identifies as Adam, within the Garden of Eden and that God entrusts him with the task of assigning names to all of the other animals there (*QG* 1.20, 1.22). The contrast between the two figures is clear: while Philo positions his heavenly human within the world of incorporeal ideas, he roots his earthly human firmly within the corporeal, material creation that God has made.

Based on Philo's exegesis of Gen 2:7, which presents God both crafting the first human from the dust of the ground and then breathing life directly into him, as well as his employment of similar themes found in Platonic philosophy, Philo presents this person as being a composite of two things: a human body and a divinely inspired soul. Philo's interpretation of this verse indicates how he understands the body of the earthly human as arising from mere dust and clay, namely from created, corporeal material substance, but he presents his soul as originating from an entirely different source: directly from the uncreated God (*QG* 1.4, 1.53; *Opif.* 134, 135, 139, 146; *Leg.* 1.31, 1.36, 1.37, 1.53). Note the contrast Philo paints between the origins of the earthly human's body and the origins of the earthly human's soul.

> For that the body (τὸ σῶμα) was created by the craftsman taking the dust (χοῦν), and molding the human form out of it; but that the soul proceeds from no created thing at all (τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀπ᾽ οὐδενὸς γενητοῦ τὸ παράπαν), but from the Father and Ruler of all things (ἀλλ᾽ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἡγεμόνος τῶν πάντων). For [the expression], "he breathed into," it means nothing other than the divine spirit (πνεῦμα θεῖον) [was] sent to settle here, from that happy and blessed existence, for the advantage of our race, in order that, even if it is mortal with respect to its visible part, with respect to its invisible part it may be rendered immortal. For this reason, properly speaking, one may say that humanity is on the boundary of a mortal and immortal nature (θνητῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου φύσεως . . . μεθόριον), partaking of each as much as is necessary, and that he was created at the same time mortal and immortal. Mortal as to his body (θνητὸν μὲν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα), but immortal as to his intellect (κατὰ δὲ τὴν διάνοιαν ἀθάντον). (*Opif.* 135)[204]

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nature of humanity's soul (*Opif.* 117). See Dillon, "Philo of Alexandria and Platonist Psychology," 17–25. In the passages that I examine in this chapter, however, Philo presents the soul as proceeding directly from the breath of Israel's uncreated divinity.

[204] For how Philo perceives the human soul, or intellect, within this particular interpretative stream, see *Opif.* 139, 146; *QG* 1:4; *Abr.* 207.

Sounding like a Stoic, Philo presents the souls of humans as proceeding directly from God, imparted into the human mind through a direct in-breathing by God himself.[205] Following themes found in Plato's *Timaeus,* Philo suggests that this implantation of the soul into the body was a positive event, performed out of God's goodness and necessity (cf. *Tim.* 42a; 69d), thereby enabling humans to become as much like god as possible (*Tim.* 29e),[206] rather than the result of something ugly or degenerate within the soul itself (*Phdr.* 246e; 248b-c).[207] To further reify this point, elsewhere Philo describes how the mind, or reasoning power, of humans "enters into (the body) from without, being something divine and eternal (θύραθεν αὐτὸν ἐπεισιέναι θεῖον καὶ ἀίδιον ὄντα)" (*Opif.* 67).[208] Philo thus understands the first earthly human, and by extension all

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[205] See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* 471–72.

[206] For the significance of Plato's *Timaeus,* especially vis-à-vis Philo's presentation of the soul's implantation into the human body*,* see David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," in *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, ed. G. Fine, Oxford Readings in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 309–28, esp. 316–24; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* 258–78.

[207] It is interesting to note that, despite Philo's frequent allusion to the winged chariot of the soul imagery employed in Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–247c), which I will describe at greater length below, Philo only utilizes this metaphor when describing the soul's ascent, and not the soul's descent into human bodies. This is because—unlike Plato's *Timaeus* and Genesis 2:7, which present the soul's entry into the human body as a positive occurrence (cf. *Tim.* 42a; 69d, Gen 2:7; as well as the commentary on this phenomenon in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* 258–78)—Plato's *Phaedrus* depicts the soul's descent into human bodies as a negative event, the result of the wicked steeds, which have lost their wings and who therefore drag human souls down into material bodies (*Phaed.* 246e; 248b-c.) Whereas the gods have a pair of good winged steeds, humans have one good steed and one of opposite character, making the task quite challenging for their charioteers (246a–b). The latter, especially when their wings are shed altogether, pull down to their charioteers, causing the souls of humans to descend into earthly bodies. For a lengthier discussion of this phenomenon, see Jason Zurawski, "Philo's Reading of the Phaedrus Myth: Breathing Genesis into the Platonic Text" (paper presented at the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies Conference, Haifa, Israel, March 2011).

[208] In citing *Opif.* 146, David Litwa levels a similar argument when he asserts: "simply by virtue of being human (i.e., having νοῦς)," persons already have "a share in divine reality." See David Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 9, although note that the word for "mind" in this passage is ἡ διάνοια and not ὁ νοῦς. Throughout this article Litwa suggests that humans, and Moses in particular, are able to participate in God's own divinity because their minds (νοῦς) are but a fragment of the λόγος (cf. *Opif.* 146). Thus, argues Litwa, "Philonic deification… is the process of becoming wholly and purely νοῦς," (9). While I do not dispute this claim, here I am attempting to draw more attention to the way in which the soul also plays an instrumental role in this process, especially since—in his exegesis of Genesis 2:7—Philo presents the

humans living on earth after him, to be a composite of two parts (cf. *Tim.* 90a–d).[209] On the one hand, they are "mortal with respect to [their] visible part[s] (*Opif.* 135).[210] Their bodies—being visible, are mortal and created. On the other hand, "with respect to [their] invisible part[s] they are rendered immortal" (*Opif.* 135). Humans stand on the boundaries of mortality and immortality (*Opif.* 135; cf. *Praem.* 13; *Abr.* 55). While their bodies ground them to the material world, their souls connect them directly to God. This bifurcation of earthly humans between their material, created bodies and their divine, not-created souls demonstrates Philo's version of God's embodiment on earth: A part of the uncreated God enters into created corporeality through the human soul.

In *Legum allegoriae* 1.33 in particular, which again is based on his exegesis of Gen 2:7, Philo works out the precise manner by which God's spirit becomes embodied through the souls of created humans. Here he raises the following hypothetical question: "Some one may ask . . . what is the meaning of [the expression] 'breathed into'?" He responds to his own inquiry by explaining,

> Now [the expression] "he breathed into (ἐνεφύσησεν)" is equal to "he inspired (ἐνέπνευσεν)," or "he gave life to (ἐψύχωσε)" things lifeless (τὰ ἄψυχα) . . . For there is need of three things, that which breathes in, that which receives [what is breathed in], and that which is breathed in. Now that which breathes in is God (ὁ θεός), that which receives [what is breathed in] is the mind (ὁ νοῦς), and that which is breathed in is the spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα). What then is inferred from these three things? A union of the three occurs, with God extending the power from himself through the mediant of the spirit as far as the subject. And why?—on account of, or in order that we may obtain a proper notion of him. (*Leg.* 1.36a, 37)

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soul as being connected directly to Israel's uncreated God, specifically through the direct inbreathing of the divine spirit [πνεῦμα θεῖον (*Opif.* 135; cf. *Plant.* 24)].

[209] See Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 319b–20.

[210] Note that in order for my translation to make grammatical sense within its context, I have changed the singular to the plural in this particular instance.

This excerpt underscores how, through his hermeneutical reappropriation of Gen 2:7, Philo effectively articulates how he envisions Israel's uncreated God becoming embodied through the souls of created humans: their not-created souls contain a spark—or the very breath—of God within them. Philo describes the process as involving three primary characters. The first is God, the second is God's spirit, and the third is the human mind. He then goes on to describe how God, the primary actor, takes his spirit, the secondary actor, and breathes it directly into the human mind, the third actor. In other words, God plants his spirit directly into the human mind, causing the very spirit of God to animate the souls of humanity. To further clarify this point, in *Opif.* 135, Philo asserts that the human soul is "nothing other than the divine spirit (πνεῦμα θεῖον)" and through the souls of humanity, God is "sent to settle here" from that "happy and blessed existence, for the advantage of our race." Like the earthly human before them, the progenitor of their race, they receive their souls by God breathing the breath of life directly into their faces (*QG* 1.4).[211] As a composite of material bodies and divinely inspired souls,[212] humans stand apart from the rest of God's creation. Their souls are neither created in the image of something else, nor are they the product or work of God's divine intermediaries. Rather, coming directly from Israel's uncreated God, they are also not-created.

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[211] Although my theory of the soul's divine origins may initially appear to contradict Philo's statements about the soul in *On the Giants*, closer examinations reveals that the two are in fact quite compatible with one another. According to *On the Giants*, all souls are "unadulterated and divine" in origin (*Gig.* 8), but some "have descended into bodies" (*Gig.* 12). Here Philo follows Plato's description of the soul's descent in *Phaedrus* 246e, 248b-c in that he does not depict this descent in positive terms, but suggests that these incarnated souls, having entered into bodies, become whipped about as in tempestuous water (*Gig.* 13; cf. *Somn.* 1.147; *Tim.* 43a). However, as in Philo's other treatises, their mechanism for salvation remains identical. If persons are "taught sublime philosophy" and thus learn how to die "to the life of the body," they are then able "to obtain incorporeal and imperishable life, enjoyed with the uncreated and everlasting God" (*Gig.* 14). Consequently, throughout all his treatises Philo presents a consistent picture regarding the soul. The divine-yet-embodied souls of humans are the instruments, or agents, by which humans are saved from the vicissitudes of this bodily and material life.

[212] Note that, at times, Philo describes the relationship between the body and the soul more negatively, suggesting that the former is a prison or tomb for the latter (Philo *Leg.* 1.108; *Somn.* 1.139; *QG* 2.69; cf. Plato *Phaed.* 82e; *Phdr.* 250c).

This statement in Philo about the nature of humanity's souls is surprising for two primary reasons. First, if God were to create the human soul, this act would necessarily cause God to change.[213] Yet because Philo's God is incorporeal and immutable, his God *cannot* change. Consequently, the human soul cannot be created. Second, if the human soul is not-created, then it is not a part of the created world. This is significant because it underscores how Philo envisions that Israel's uncreated God can become embodied in created humans through their souls. Since the souls of humans are constituted by a spark of the uncreated God, they also—like Israel's highest divinity—must be not-created because they partake directly in God's nature. The souls of humans embody a part of God within them, since human souls are themselves housed in material bodies.

Connected directly to the incorporeal creator God, while simultaneously placed within a created human body, Philo's human soul stands on the boundaries (μεθόριον) between that which is mortal and that which is immortal (θνητῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου) (*Opif.* 135; cf. Plato *Tim.* 90a–d).[214] For this reason Philo claims that through the soul, humans "receive a proper conception of [God]" and by extension of themselves (*Leg.* 1.37):

> For how could the soul (ψυχὴ) have perceived God if he had not inspired it, and touched it according to his power? For the human mind (νοῦς) would have never been so bold as to soar so high as to perceive the nature of God (ὡς ἀντιλαβέσθαι θεοῦ φύσεως), if God himself had not drawn it up to himself (εἰ μὴ αὐτος ὁ θεὸς ἀνέσπασεν αὐτὸν πρὸς ἑαυτόν), so far as it was possible for the human mind to be drawn up, and formed it with the perceptible powers. (*Leg.* 1.38)

In describing the mystical ascent of the mind (νοῦς) from the mundane realm to that of the noetic, Philo draws heavily upon the myth of the soul as found in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato's Socrates likens the human soul to a charioteer, driven by a pair of winged

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[213] For a discussion of how humanity's soul is not-created, see Segal, "The Incarnation," 126.

[214] See Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 319–20.

horses (*Phdr.* 246a–247c). If the wings of both of the horses are good, like those of the gods,

they lift the soul up through the heavens, enabling it to soar even to the place where true Being,

Socrates' highest deity, dwells (*Phdr.* 247c). But if the wings of one of the horses are bad, or

damaged—as is the case for humans—then their souls become dragged down into human bodies

(*Phdr.* 246b–c). When Philo employs this imagery from the *Phaedrus*, he focuses only on the

positive aspect of this myth, namely that of the soul's ascent towards God.[215] Because God, Philo

claims, infuses God's very spirit into humans, humans stand as a part of the creation, but they

also have the ability to transcend the limits of that creation as well. Through their inspired

intellects, which is inextricably linked to their souls, they can raise up to the heights of God,

perceiving the very nature of God precisely because God has previously infused a part of the

divine within them (*Leg.* 1.38). Certainly, this understanding of the soul's ascent to God is

critical to my argument about Philo's articulation of God's embodiment on earth because it

provides a pragmatic reason for why Philo presents a part of Israel's highest divinity entering

into corporeal creation: without a spark of God's divine spirit in humans at their creation,

humans would have no hope of reconnecting with God.

3.3 Philosophy's Role in the Epistemological Awakening of Humans

Philo's reliance on Greek philosophy has been underscored frequently[216]—less so,

however, the connection between philosophy and his description of God's embodiment through

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[215] For more information on how Philo describes the soul's descent into human bodies in a positive manner, see my discussion above.

[216] Examples abound, perhaps most notably that of Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* esp. 467–75, where he summarizes his findings on how a Platonic anthropological framework underlies Philo's doctrine of humanity. More recently Mackie has drawn attention to how—like Plato's Socrates (cf. *Phaed.* 66c-d, 67a, c)—Philo encourages his readers to detach their souls/minds from their bodies. See Scott D. Mackie, "The Passion of Eve and the Ecstasy of Hannah: Sense Perception, Passion, Mysticism, and Misogyny in Philo of Alexandria, *De ebrietate* 143–52," *JBL* 133.1 (2014): 141–163, esp. 147.

the human soul. Having surveyed the exegetical theory that underlies this phenomenon in the previous section, I turn now to the role that philosophy plays in awakening humans to this aspect of God within them.[217] Such an awakening enables them to move from the corporeal world to the incorporeal one, thereby becoming more fully God-like themselves (cf. Philo, *Opif.* 144; *Virt.* 8, 168; *Fug.* 63). Philo draws heavily upon another pivotal feature of Platonic thought here, namely the notion of *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton,* or "to become like god so far as possible."[218] Crystalized in texts such as Plato's *Theaetetus* 172b–77c, the concept reverberates throughout Plato's entire corpus of writings (*Sym.* 207c–209e; *Rep.* 10.613a–b; *Apol.* 41c–d; *Phdr.* 252c–53c; *Tim.* 90a–b).[219] In the *Theaetetus,* in particular, Plato's Socrates frames his discussion of *homoiōsis theōi* by drawing a distinction between two types of people. On the one hand, a man of the court must, by necessity of his profession, attend to mundane and material matters. On the other hand, the philosopher is "essentially unworldly, unconcerned with the here-and-now thanks to the breadth of his intellectual horizons and his preoccupations with universal, objective values in stead of localized ones."[220] While the former remains preoccupied with worldly matters, the

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[217] With respect to this point, it is important to keep in mind that for the ancients—particularly starting with Plato—philosophy was not merely a form of intellectual discourse or a means of acquiring knowledge, but equally, and perhaps more significantly, a way of life, or in Pierre Hadot's words "une manière de vivre." Plato's Socrates best exemplifies this view of philosophy, and the philosopher in particular, and this backdrop informs Philo's description of the patriarchs and Moses. Indeed, as one who was "never entirely within the world, yet never outside it" (36), Plato's Socrates acknowledges that the only thing he can truly know is that he knows nothing. Thus, the problem, for him, is not knowing one thing or another, but rather being a particular way or another. That is to say, for the practitioner philosophy cultivates a new type of being, a new way of life which positions one closer to wisdom and thus to god. See Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[218] For scholarly discussions of how Philo employs the Platonic notion of *homoiōsis theōi* in his writings, see Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309–28, esp. 309; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 172–73; Wendy E. Helleman, "Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God," *Studia Philonica Annual* 2 (1990): 51–71; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 474; Litwa, *We are Being Transformed*, 195–96.

[219] Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309–28.

[220] Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 312.

latter's love of contemplation enables his mind to fly off in all directions (173c), indeed, even managing—at times—to drag others upward as well (175c). The philosopher's ability to transcend the earthly realm is a positive event. Although this mortal realm contains, by necessity, evils that cannot be eliminated, such ills can never be found among the gods (176a). Accordingly, the goal of the philosophical life is to "try to escape from here to there as quickly as possible. And to escape is to become like god as far as possible," for god, and not man, is the ultimate paradigm (176a–b). This Platonic vision of divinization undergirds how Philo depicts the patriarchs and Moses in particular. Specifically, when one views Philo's descriptions of the patriarchs in light of the Platonic *telos* of becoming *homoiōsis theōi*, one can see how his hermeneutical re-appropriations of Gen 2:7 are directly linked to his descriptions of human attempts to become more fully like, or assimilated to, God.

At least in theory, Philo presents philosophy—combined with his insistence that God instilled a spark of God's own divine and uncreated essence within humans—as the means by which the souls of all created humans can undergo a mystical ascent into the heavens, and he depicts philosophy as the catalyst that initiates the process by which *all* persons can become more fully like God as well. For, as Philo quips, it is through "philosophy (φιλοσοφίας)" that a mortal human is made immortal (θνητὸς ὢν ἄνθρωπος ἀπαθανατίζεται)" (*Opif.* 77). Yet in practice this class of persons for Philo, "is few, indeed, in number," even if "in power it is many and very great, so that even the whole circle of the earth is not able to contain it" (*Praem.* 26). In fact, one might say that for Philo the ability to transcend the earthly, created, and bodily realm because of this prior implantation of God's spirit into the souls of humans is an achievement limited to men alone.[221] Philo consistently gives preference to all things male over those that are

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[221] A striking exception seems to arise in Philo's "allegorical interpretation" of Hannah (Ebr. 143–52), where, as Mackie points out, "we encounter the uncharacteristic approval and embrace of the

female, associating the former with things that he deems most worthy of praise, such as the "rational, the noetic-ideal and incorporeal, the heavenly, indivisible and unchanging, the active principle" and the latter with inferior qualities, such as "the irrational, the sense-perceptible and material, the earthly, divisible and changing, the passive principle" (cf. *QE* 1.7–8).[222] Though in theory Philo suggests that all humans can reconnect with Israel's highest divinity, in reality, with the possible exception of Hannah,[223] he limits this achievement to a small class of men (cf. *Praem.* 26) and, even in the case of his quintessential representative, Moses, there is some question whether even he accomplishes this end.

As for the specifics, Philo explains that because humans have a spark of God animating their souls, their ability to reconnect with that not-created essence of God embedded within them can always commence; yet it does so only when their curiosity of the physical, material world gets the upper hand. This explains why Philo assumes that most women never achieve this end. Their preoccupation with earthly, material, and mundane matters keep them firmly planted in the created realm. To further solidify this connection, Philo frequently associates women with

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sensuous and passionate mystical praxis of an adept female mystic." See Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," esp. 141.

[222] Mattila, "Wisdom," 106. For other scholars who have underscored the disparaging manner in which Philo describes all things female, or women, in particular, see Richard A. Baer Jr., *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), esp. 40–44, though this theme reverberates through his entire work; Mendelson, *Secular Education,* esp. 28; Dorothy Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women,* BJS 209 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Annewies van den Hoek, "Endowed with Reason or Glued to the Senses: Philo's Thoughts on Adam and Eve," in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian* Traditions, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), esp. 74; Colleen Conway, "Gender and Divine Relativity in Philo of Alexandria," *JSJ* 34.4 (2003): 471–491; Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Gender and Geopolitics in the Work of Philo of Alexandria: Jewish Piety and Imperial Family Values," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses,* ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, Biblical Interpretation Series 84 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 63–88, esp. 63–66, 81–82; Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," 141–144, 146.

[223] Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," 141–163.

material sense perception, whereas he associates men with the incorporeal mind.[224] For a select class of men alone (cf. *Praem.* 26), then, their initial inquiries of the material world, and of plants and animals in particular, quickly triggers their gaze to shift up at the stars and heavens above.[225] Studying the celestial bodies, in turn, initiates the observation of the "harmonious dances of all these bodies," and creates such a "delight and pleasure in the soul (τῇ ψυχῇ τέρψιν τε καὶ ἡδονήν)" that such men begin speculating about what great entity or entities might be beyond them (*Opif.* 54). Note how Philo underscores the soul's pivotal role in this process. It is the delight and pleasure of the soul, undoubtedly triggered by the fact that it is already connected to Israel's highest divinity, that fosters continued speculation. As the thoughts of these men move from the concrete to the conjectural, from the mundane to the otherworldly, a set of questions begins to emerge. Indeed, claims Philo, "with increased curiosity," (*Opif.* 54) they begin to ask:

> What is the essence of these visible entities? Did they come into being without creation? Or was their beginning by creation? What is the manner of their movement? What is the cause by which each is governed? From investigation into these things philosophy was established, which no more perfect good has come into human life. (*Opif.* 54)

Endowed with the very spirit of God at their creation (cf. Gen 2:7; Philo, *QG* 1.4; *Opif.* 134–35, 139, 146; *Leg.* 1.31, 1.36–37), certain select humans inevitably employ their sense of sight to inquire beyond the corporeal, created world about the possibility of an incorporeal, uncreated one. As these persons learn to delight in elementary forms of observation, their divinely inspired

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[224] The Garden of Eden account, and the figure of Eve in particular, form one of the primary backdrops behind Philo's equation of women with sense-perception and men with mind (*Opif.* 165; *Leg.* 3.50; *QG* 1.25, 37, 46). But the connection comes up elsewhere in Philo's thought (*Post.* 177; *Migr.* 100; *QG* 2.49). Indeed, at times Philo even equates key biblical women such as Hagar (*Post.* 137), Rachel (*Post.* 135), and Miriam (*Leg.* 2.66–67) with sense perception. See Mattila, "Wisdom," 106; D'Angelo, "Gender and Geopolitics," 81–82; Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," 141–143.

[225] Here Philo appears to draw upon themes found in Plato's *Timeaus* 47a–c (cf. *Rep.* 7.529–31), where the sense of sight is presented as the means by which humans "can contemplate the orderly and rational movements of the heavens and, by imitating them," can set their minds in order, and thus by extension—though this is not explicitly stated—can also move forward in their quests to become like God themselves. See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria,* 258–29, 270–78.

intellects draw them toward more esoteric matters and their curiosity thrusts them toward a journey of discovery. Their philosophical quest begins.

Because these men—like all humans perceptible to the senses—are a composite of divine (i.e., not-created) soul and material (i.e., created) body, they are pulled in two diametrically opposed directions.[226] Yet philosophical engagement remedies this tension.[227] On the one hand, with their minds or souls infused with God's very spirit—or that spark of the incorporeal and uncreated God latently present within them—they are drawn back toward God. On the other hand, shackled by the bonds of the body, material temptations lure them away from God. As "borderland creature(s)," says Runia, who are "related to God and the celestial bodies in virtue of [their] intellect" but "subject to the bodily necessities of the lower animals," these men, left to their own devices, would quickly become dragged down by the world's vices.[228] Allowing temptation after temptation—whether food or fame or wealth or sexuality—to entrap and seduce them, they would forever remain bound by their own materiality, never enabling their souls to ascend to the heights of the heavens, nor permitting their minds to achieve their intended apogee of reunification with God. Philosophy, then—as in Plato's works, so too in Philo's—emerges as the antidote for such struggles and the tool that equips them to turn in the opposite direction.[229]

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[226] Aspects of Plato's thought once again influence Philo's descriptions of humanity. Here Plato's myth of the soul from the Phaedrus is particularly relevant (*Phdr.* 246a–247c).

[227] A passage from Plato's *Phaedo* underlines Philo's descriptions (*Phaed.* 66b-d, 67a, c).

[228] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 474 (cf. 465). Note that I have slightly altered Runia's original sentences by making the singular man into a collective plural in order to align with the syntax and grammatical structures present in this paragraph.

[229] Here it is important to keep in mind that for Philo, as for many of the ancients starting particularly with Plato, that philosophy was not merely an intellectual activity, but rather it was the embrace of a radically different type of life, indeed, in Hadot's words "une manière de vivre," which involved the cultivation of specific spiritual practices that enabled persons to transform their very selves, and thus, by extension, to better approach God. For more information on the various spiritual practices employed, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* 179–220. For the various practices and exegetical engagement, which helped to "evoke the ascent" towards and "vision of God," see Scott D. Mackie,

The unifying factor that brings together this special class of men is that they have learned through their engagement with philosophy to reconnect with that part of Israel's uncreated God that was previously instilled within them. The process of engaging in philosophy is not easy: indeed, the "path [these souls] take… involves an arduous and long ascent, requiring self-denial, learning, and discipline," which only culminates after a lengthy struggle "in a state of independence from the physical realm."[230] Yet once they discover "according to the law of philosophy that [they] might be happy," they begin to desire virtue, not vice.[231] As a result, they are able to reach

> even to heaven. For having been possessed of a longing, or yearning after contemplation, and of always being among divine things, whenever it examines carefully and investigates the whole of visible nature, it immediately proceeds to the incorporeal and conceptual, not availing of any of the senses, indeed, even discarding the irrational part of the soul, and employs only that which is called mind and reason. (*Praem.* 26)

Through their engagement with philosophy, or as Philo puts it, their "longing, or yearning after contemplation" they have learned to shed their earthly bodies, thereby moving beyond corporeality in order to reconnect with that part of God deeply embedded within them (*Praem.* 26; cf. *Her.* 71). They even shed the "irrational part of the soul" to achieve this end (*Praem.* 26). As Mackie has noted: "Since the noetic ascent is a contemplative activity, occurring in mind alone, the ascender must 'come out' of his/her body and 'fly away' from the deceptive and enfeebling senses (*Her.* 71; *Gig.* 31)."[232] Such a move produces a profound effect. Being

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"Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: Means, Methods, and Mysticism," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 147–179, quoted here at 147.

[230] Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 176. Note how, like Socrates' Plato, Philo presents the patriarch's engagement with philosophy as not just an intellectual pursuit, but equally as a "way of life," which involves specific (spiritual) practices, intended to cultivate a new way of being. See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 22–51; Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria," 147–179.

[231] Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 176.

[232] Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," 145.

bodiless, or only mind (μόνος νοῦς), they connect with God, Israel's supreme and highest divinity, in a way that a solely corporeal existence would not permit. Prior to their deaths, they experience a foretaste of this union through their mystical ascents into the heavens, wherein they transcend their earthly limits, albeit temporarily, through the power of their minds. At the end of their lives, they connect with God more profoundly as the perfection of their souls reaches its intended conclusion. Yet the key to their respective unifications with God is that God had previously instilled a spark of God's very nature, or essence, within them.

For Philo the task of humans is clear: they need to become educated regarding their divinity. While the souls of some struggle in this direction for years, and others receive this gift almost innately at birth, when all is said and done, they achieve a similar end. Yet it is philosophical engagement that ultimately enables humans to ascend to the heavens, thereby reconnecting with the divinity latently present within them.

In what follows, I present particular examples where Philo makes this theory concrete.

3.4   The Mystical Ascent of the Patriarchs

While Philo's rhetoric frequently asserts that God is not like a human (*Dec.* 1.32; *Migr.* 113; cf. *Legat.* 118; *Det.* 162), his soteriology demands that God's spirit, or breath, become embodied in humans so they can ascend, through their mystical journeys into the heavens, to God. In particular, on account of their engagement with philosophy, certain persons are able to reconnect with that part of God previously embedded within them. As they start moving upward from corporeal world to the incorporeal one, they begin to take on more divine-like attributes, though they never achieve full synonymy with Philo's highest and ineffable divinity, the sole

uncreated one.[233] Several of the patriarchs function as tangible examples of this phenomenon within Philo's thought, yet Moses alone is his quintessential example.[234] The presence of these figures in Philo's corpus brings into sharp focus the ways in which Philo's official statements regarding the dividing line between the supreme God and corporeal humanity is not as straightforward as it might initially seem. In particular, Philo's descriptions of the mystical ascents of these figures complicates his rhetoric of a strict separation between Israel's creator God and the creation that God has made.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob represent Philo's first sustained presentation of how God's embodiment through the human soul is what ultimately enables humans to approach God.[235] All

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[233] M. David Litwa's work helps clarify how these "human" figures can also be considered "divine," yet not synonymous with Israel's highest divinity. "Deification," as Litwa defines it, "in its most basic sense means becoming god or godlike." The problem is that both "enemies and fans of deification assume that it means complete fusion with the godhead," but, for Philo, this is not the case. See "Becoming Gods: Deification and the Supernatural," in *Religion: Super Religion*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kripal (Farmington Hills: Macmillan Reference, 2017), 89–103, esp. 89. Rather, like "his philosophical contemporaries, Philo too recognized several different tiers of divinity" (6). Thus, in his "cosmology, divinity was not a quality of the Uncreated alone" (7). The key distinction for Litwa is between "primal deity" and "mediate deity" (7). Primal deity, for Litwa, consists *solely* of true Being (often called τὸ ὄν, the Existent one), or Philo's supreme deity. As such, this deity comprises the top of the divine hierarchy, and is "divine in an ultimate, unshareable sense" (cf. *Leg.* 2.1; *Sacr.* 91–92; *Mut.* 27; *Virt.* 65; *Legat.* 115) (6). By contrast mediate deity, for Litwa, is associated with the "realm of becoming" (7). Accordingly, it can be shared with lesser, even created, entities. Thus, according to Litwa, while Moses (and by extension the other patriarchs) "never becomes or threatens to become the primal God," (8). See David Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 5–8; idem, *We are Being Transformed*, 106–109.

[234] I discuss the figures of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at greater length above, but Enoch and Elijah represent a rudimentary outline of how these two aspects of Philo's thought, namely God's embodiment in human souls and humanity's ability to reconnect with God, can be brought together. Although neither one figures prominently in his works, because of the enigmatic way that the Torah describes the end of their lives (Gen 5:21–25; 2 Kgs 2:11, respectively), Philo interprets them as being able to mount up and follow higher things (*QG* 1.82–86), ostensibly because of the spark of divinity already present within them. See Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (Amsterdam: Philo Press Publishers, 1969), 120, 137–79; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 167–80.

[235] See Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 137–79; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 167–80.

three patriarchs come close to becoming fully divinized in Philo's thought,[236] but he differentiates between them through an elaborate allegory of their respective geographical whereabouts in the Torah.[237] Because the Torah presents Abraham and Jacob as living much of their lives in either Charran or Egypt (and Philo allegorizes these places to mean the land of the senses, passions, or the body [cf. *Abr.* 72; *Somn.* 45–46; *Conf.* 81]), Philo interprets these two as undergoing a long process to achieve perfection; that is, near-divinization.[238] With respect to Abraham, he notes that it is only when he has "quitted his abode" in Charran that his soul is able to soar "upward with its reason" and to behold "another nature better than that which is visible, that which is appreciable only by the intellect" (*Abr.* 77 and 88, respectively). Likewise, with respect to Jacob, Philo observes how he often has to flee from bodily places that "wound up [his] soul," and how he "bewails his being a sojourner in the body" (*Leg.* 3.15, *Conf.* 80, respectively; cf. *Somn.* 45–46). By contrast, since the Torah portrays Isaac as always being present in the land of Israel (cf. *Conf.* 81),[239] and the land of Israel for Philo represents that which is purer and thus closer to God, Philo allegorizes this to mean that Isaac was always "naked without a body" (*Leg.* 2.59). "Even before [Isaac's] creation," Philo claims, "God created and disposed him excellently" (*Leg.* 3.83). While Isaac, due to what Philo describes as his self-taught or natural

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[236] I describe the patriarchs as coming "close to becoming fully divinized" above to emphasize that, though they do manage to become like God, they never become fully fused with the godhead. To frame my argument in Litwa's terms, all of these biblical figures participate in God's "mediate deity," or in David Runia's terms, they share in a "derived divinity," but that does not make them synonymous with Philo's highest divinity—the supreme, ineffable, uncreated, incorporeal, and transcendent one. See Litwa, "The Deification of Moses," 5–8; Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," 60, 69.

[237] For another example of how Philo differentiates between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob see *Sacr.* 6 where he underscores Isaac's specialness based on how the Torah describes the three patriarchs' respective deaths (Gen 25:8, 35:29, and 49:33, respectively).

[238] Again, I employ the term "near-divination" to emphasize that these patriarchs never achieve full synonymy with Philo's supreme, ineffable deity.

[239] In *Conf.* 81, Philo employs Gen 27:9 to suggest that since Egypt is the land of the bodily passions, that is why God commands Isaac not to go down into it.

disposition, receives his bodiless nature almost innately at birth,[240] and while Abraham and Jacob respectively due to their educational efforts and sustained practice take much longer to achieve the same end,[241] in the end all three patriarchs leave behind their corporeal existence to become like God. All three become reawakened to that spark of God that had previously been instilled in them.

That Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become bodiless to reconnect with God might appear incongruous with assertions that Philo interprets Gen 2:7 to mean that a spark of God became embodied in humans—but it is not. As the figure of Moses further shows, in order for these patriarchs to undergo their mystical ascents into the heavens, and by extension to come closer to becoming fully divinized, they too, like Philo's God, become incorporeal ideas, entities without a body. The implantation of God's breath, or spirit, into humans at the creation of the world is only a temporary accommodation, a means by which humans can reconnect with the spark of the divine within them. A putative contradiction in Philo's writings is now cleared up, for though his God is "not susceptible to any subtraction or addition," a part of God's essence can exist within humans (*Sacr.* 9). And though this deity is "complete and entirely equal to himself," he does permit these divinely inspired souls to travel upwards, ascending more fully into the sacred space

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[240] Philo frequently depicts Isaac as representative of those who have self-taught, or natural virtue, a concept that he closely associates with perfection, or divinization (*Abr.* 52; *Det.* 29–32; *Deus* 4; *Ebr.* 60; *Sob.* 65; *Ebr.* 94; *Migr.* 29; *Congr.* 36; *Fug.* 167; *Mut.* 1; *Somn.* 168; *Praem* 31–36).

[241] Philo presents Abraham, for instance, as undergoing an intensive educational process to achieve this end (*Abr.* 52–53; *Somn.* 168; *Praem.* 27–36; *Mut.* 88), whereas he depicts Jacob laboring extensively to achieve the same. Indeed, the most frequent appellation that Philo gives to Jacob is "practicer of virtue" (*Sacr.* 5; *Plant.* 90; 110; *Ebr.* 82; *Sobr.* 65; *Conf.* 80; *Migr.* 5; 38; 153; *Congr.* 99; *Fug.* 4; 43; 67; *Mut.* 210). But Philo also calls him "practicer of wisdom" (*Det.* 45; *Fug.* 52), "practicer of contemplation" (*Sacr.* 64), "practicer of knowledge" (*Det.* 3), one "made perfect by practice" (*Agr.* 42), "symbol of labor and improvement" (*Sacr.* 120), "wrestler with God" (*Det.* 92), and the one who aims at virtue "by practice" (*Abr.* 52). All these titles indicate that Philo clearly allegorizes Genesis 32, the story in which Jacob wrestles with God, to represent how Jacob acquires virtue, again a concept that Philo inextricably links to a person's ability to reconnect with God through his labors with philosophical instruction.

where God ultimately dwells (*Sacr.* 9). Since the souls of humans proceed directly from God—as begotten or not-created things—they are not separate from God but constitute a part of the divine essence from their very inception. The problem for most humans, however, is that they never fully relinquish themselves from the trappings of their earthly bodies; even Abraham and Jacob do not ascend to the same level as Isaac in his thought.[242]

Of the three, Isaac comes closest to approximating Israel's highest divinity, but this is not to say that Philo suddenly considers him synonymous with his supreme, ineffable, and uncreated God. Although at times Philo intimates in this direction, claiming that Isaac belongs to "the new race, superior to reason and truly divine" (*Fug.* 168), elsewhere he notes that Isaac is "better than the former generations of created humans," but he is still, like them, a human (*Sacr.* 7; *cf. Praem.* 43–44). Isaac—like Abraham and Jacob before him—becomes bodiless, but he does not undergo the process of apotheosis so fully that he becomes synonymous with Israel's highest divinity. Rather, as one who can be considered both "human" and "divine," the extent of Isaac's reach is similar to that of Abraham's and Jacob's. All three raise themselves "from down to up, ascending as if by some ladder reaching to heaven…" (*Praem.* 43). Their ascents elevate their status above all others, but that does not make them identical with the highest divinity, the one uncreated God.

This observation reveals an inherent tension in Philo's thought. On the one hand, following Plato, Philo suggests that the goal of human existence is to become like God [*Opif.* 144; *Virt.* 8, 168; *Fug.* 63 (wherein Philo quotes from Plato, *Theat.* 176); cf. Plato, *Sym.* 207c–

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[242] Indeed, if we recognize the multiple tiers of divinity within Philo's thought, then we can see that Abraham and Jacob are at a lower level of "divinity" than Isaac, who likewise is at a lower level of "divinity" than Moses. See Litwa, "The Deification of Moses," 6.

209e; *Rep.* 10.613a–b; *Apol.* 41c–d; *Phdr.* 252c–53c; *Tim.* 90a–b].[243] Made aware through the philosophical life of the spark of God within them, humans learn to shed their earthly bodies. This act enables them to approximate God more closely as their souls ascend upward toward Israel's highest divinity. On the other hand, Philo's specific examples reveal that this feat is, in fact, not fully achievable.[244] Even with spark of God directly embodied within their souls, the divide between Philo's highest divinity and that of humanity remains, at least in part, impenetrable.

The more often that persons undergo their mystical ascents toward God, the better equipped they are to radiate the spark of God that is within them while on earth. Nearly a half century ago, Erwin Goodenough interpreted Philo's comments about the patriarchs within the broader context of his discussion about them being "living laws" (νόμοι ἔμψυχοι).[245] Since Philo, he claimed, did not think that the Jewish Law was a fully adequate means by which to "approach [the] Deity," God had provided the patriarchs as "living laws (νόμοι ἔμψυχοι)," namely "incarnations of the will of God and of the life and nature of God" who served as a "revelation of the higher and direct way to God by which they themselves had achieved union with God."[246] Thus, according to Goodenough's reading of Philo, because the patriarchs were able to ascend to God, even talking with God as a friend (*Abr.* 273; cf. *Mos.* 1.156, 158; *Ebr.* 94; *Migr.* 45; *Somn.* 1.193), through this process of becoming more divine-like they were better able to embody—or in Goodenough's terms, to incarnate—God's presence in the world for others.

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[243] See Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309–28; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 176–77; Helleman, "Philo of Alexandria, 70–71.

[244] Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 177; Litwa, "The Deification of Moses," 6; idem, *We are Being Transformed*, 106–09.

[245] Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 120.

[246] Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 120 (cf. *Abr.* 276, where Philo describes Abraham as an νόμος ἄγραφος).

With the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Philo inextricably links God's embodiment in humans and humans' ability to ascend to God. While all humans have ostensibly received the same gift, since their materiality tempts them in a different direction, their "passion for reflection" becomes "quickly satiated," causing them to "fly upwards" only "a short distance under divine inspiration" before "they immediately return" (*QE* 2.40 [Marcus, LCL]).[247] In the case of the patriarchs, however, God has appointed them to be living laws (νόμοι ἔμψυχοι).[248] As such, they are able to strip themselves of their earthly bodies in order to ascend toward heaven, reuniting with the divine aspect that is already present within them. "For," as Philo puts it, "it is not possible for one who dwells in the body and belongs to the race of mortals should be united with God; this is possible only for him whom God delivers from the prison (of the body)" (*Leg.* 3.42). Because Philo portrays the patriarchs as paradigms, or as νόμοι ἔμψυχοι, their lives serve as models for how others who derive "their names from virtue" can learn to do the same (*Mos.* 1.76). Having ascended toward God in the heavens, they more fully radiate the spark of God within them on earth. Yet Moses remains the quintessential representative of how Philo connects these two aspects within his thought.

3.5   Moses as Philo's Ultimate Paradigm

If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob establish the link between God's embodiment in human souls and human deification, Moses functions as Philo's ultimate paradigm.[249] Indeed, Philo's

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[247] Note that this excerpt and all others from *Quaestiones et solutions in Exodum* II are preserved in Armenian.

[248] Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 120.

[249] Past scholarship has been divided over the issue of whether Philo speaks of a real deification of Moses or not. On the one hand, several scholars suggest that Philo portrays Moses as fully divine. See Goodenough, *By Light, Light,* 199–234; Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 354–71; Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish*

descriptions of Moses often read like hagiography.[250] Yet they also depict a person for whom the spark of divinity, through the direct in-breathing of God's spirit, can be seen more clearly than the others. This is because Moses cultivates, through his engagement with philosophy, a particularly divine-like mind (*Mos.* 1.27). For example, Philo's remarks in *Mos.* 1.27 demonstrate that

> [q]uite reasonably, therefore, all those who spent time with him [i.e. Moses] and all the others were astonished, being amazed as at a novel spectacle, and examined what kind of mind (νοῦς) it was that dwelled in his body (σώματι) … whether it was a human mind or a divine intellect (πότερον ἀνθρώπειος ἢ θεῖος), or mixed from both (ἢ μικτὸς ἐξ ἀμφοῖν); because he had nothing resembling the many, but had stepped beyond them all and was elevated to a greater height. (*Mos.* 1.27)

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and Christian Apocalypses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 49; Peder Borgen, "Moses, Jesus, and the Roman Emperor. Observations in Philo's Writings and the Revelation of John," *Novum Testamentum* 38.2 (1996), 145–159, esp. 154; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), esp. 173; idem, "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3 (1996): 236–52, esp. 242–43; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic* Christology, 165; Conway, "Gender and Divine Relativity," 191.

On the other hand, several others are skeptical about this claim and want to nuance Philo's portrayal of Moses, suggesting that Philo's description of Moses as θεός was more figurative, metaphorical, or a direct derivative of his exegesis. See Carl Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 108–63; Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," 48–75; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 59–63; Louis Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), esp. 342 where he cites *Legat.* 118 to deny Moses' deification; Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*; Richard Bauckham, "Moses as 'God' in Philo of Alexandria: a Precedent for Christology?" in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, Volker Rabens, and Cornelis Bennema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 246–65.

M. David Litwa's recent work offers a third way between these two alternatives, suggesting that because Philo recognized different tiers of divinity, Moses can become deified in Philo's thought by participating in God's "mediate deity", but Moses never becomes fully fused with Philo's supreme deity. I discuss Litwa's work at greater length above.

[250] By way of example, Philo depicts Moses as the "greatest and most perfect" man that ever lived (*Mos.* 1.1), who was born to Hebrew parents who were "the most excellent of their contemporaries" (*Mos.* 1.7). He presents Moses as a paradigm of leadership, who governed "not only blamelessly, but also in an exceedingly praiseworthy manner" (*Mos.* 2.1). Moreover, as a practitioner of abstinence and self-denial, Moses is the ideal king (*Spec* 4.176; *Rewards* 53–55), lawgiver (*Mos* 2.8–64), priest (*Mos.* 2.66–186; *Praem.* 56; *Sacr.* 130 and *Her.* 182), and prophet (*Mos.* 2.187–291). Indeed, he is even God's friend (*Mos.* 1.156, 158; *Sacr.* 130; *Ebr.* 94; *Migr.* 45; *Her.* 21; *Somn.* 1.193). These glowing accolades present Moses in a positive light, but they represent only the beginnings of Philo's hagiography of him.

Initially, Philo presents Moses as the perfect holy man; here he intimates a new, more radical direction. Although Philo does not make an explicit connection to his exegesis of Gen 2:7, in which he presents the human soul, or mind, as the place where God settles on earth, for the advantage of our race (*Opif.* 135b), nor does he craft a specific reference to Moses's pursuit of philosophy, he clearly links both concepts to his descriptions of Moses.[251] With respect to the former, Philo intimates how, on account of Moses's mind, which others question as to its human or divine nature, Moses is able to go beyond all others and to become "elevated to a greater height" (*Mos.* 1.27). The spark of the divine—indeed, that part of God's own essence previously instilled in him—is more evident in Moses than other humans. With respect to the latter, Philo often presents Moses as surpassing all of his peers in terms of his intellectual acumen. Raised by Egyptian nobility, for instance, Philo presents him as one who received advanced education, acquiring proficiency in arithmetic, geometry, music, and even literature (*Mos.* 1.4–24). But what's more, Philo also depicts Moses as an ideal sage,[252] who not only sought after wisdom and knowledge with insatiable persistence (*Plant.* 23–27), but who also searched everywhere to see [God] clearly and plainly (*Mut.* 8–10; *Post.* 13),[253] attributes that undoubtedly would have been associated with a person who had extensive philosophical instruction. Philo thus presents Moses—like Plato's Socrates—as the ideal philosopher, "a being who," although not identical to the supreme god, "since he appears at first sight to be an ordinary man, is nevertheless superior

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[251] Litwa makes a similar observation when he notes that "Moses was one of these latter souls 'loaned' (χρήσας) to earth (*Sacr.* 9) to perform an appointed task: to model the ascent back to divinity. Thus incarnated, Moses's philosophical soul renounced bodily pleasures and desires." See Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 10.

[252] Examples include: *Leg.* 2.87, 93; 3.45, 131, 141, 144, 147; *Det.* 162; *Post.* 18; *Gig.* 47; *Ebr.* 1, 100; *Sobr.* 20; *Conf.* 30; *Migr* 113, 201; *Fug.* 165; *Mut.* 19; *Som.* 2.229; *Mos.* 2.67; *Spec.* 4.143; *Prob.* 29, 68.

[253] For the role of "human effort," "cooperation," and "human agency" in a person's ascent and quest to see God, see Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria," 152–58, quoted here at 152 and 153. For the various methods employed, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 158–69.

to men. He is a *daimōn*, or a mixture of divinity and humanity," because his engagement with philosophy has changed the very way he lives.[254] Putting this evidence together then, one can see how Philo presents Moses as reconnecting with the divine aspect within him, thereby enabling him to transcend the human race through the unique, divine-like qualities of his mind.

In *Mos*. 1.158, through a clear play upon themes from the Mosaic Torah and the Greek philosophical tradition, Philo suggests how Moses, through his mystical ascents, comes closer to Israel's highest divinity than all others, even sharing in the divine name.

> What then? Has not [Moses] enjoyed a greater fellowship with the Father and Creator of the universe, being thought worthy of the same appellation? For he was named god (θεός) and king (βασιλεύς) of the whole nation, and he is said to have entered into the darkness where God was; that is to say, into the formless, invisible, and incorporeal essence, the paradigm of all existing things, where he beheld things invisible to mortal nature. Indeed, having brought both himself and his life between, he set them before us, like a well-wrought picture, a beautiful and God-like work, a paradigm (παράδειγμα) for those who are willing to emulate. (*Mos*. 1.158)

Two interconnected themes in this excerpt bolster Moses's status. First, Philo presents Moses, through a mystical journey of ascent, as reaching the very place of darkness where God dwells. Second, through a subtle exegetical move, Philo interprets Exod 7:1, a passage that states that Moses is to be as a god to Pharaoh ('θεὸν Φαραώ'), to mean that Moses was not only God-like but that he was worthy of the appellation θεός as well (cf. *Leg*. 1.40; *Migr*. 84; *Somn*. 2.189). The combination of these two influences creates a dramatic effect. Through them, Philo asserts that Moses was not only an exemplary human being but, because of his unique communion with God, was worthy of sharing the name θεός as well. Moses, however, does not receive the name θεός while he remains with God; rather, he acquires it only after he returns to earth. This observation further reifies the link between Philo's descriptions of particular humans' ascent to God and God's embodiment in them. Without Moses's unprecedented ascent into the very

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254 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 49.

"darkness where God was" (*Mos.* 1.158), Moses could not function as an embodied form of θεός for the nation of Israel: only after he has achieved this feat could he become the ideal παράδειγμα for those after him who want to become divine-like as well.

Philo grants the name θεός to Moses in *Mos.* 1.158, but he ultimately views Israel's highest divinity as greater than any title that humans can give. With respect to the names that Philo offers for God, some scholars have noted Philo's proclivity to describe God in terms of what God is not, rather than in terms of what God is.[255] Moreover, based on his exegesis of Exodus 3:14–15 (*Mos.* 1.74–76; *Mut.* 11–24), where God refers to himself as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν, others have suggested that Philo introduces a hierarchy with respect to God's names, with τὸ ὄν standing at the top and names like κύριος and θεός as lesser.[256] But it is better to say that Philo views all names as but imperfect representations of that high divinity itself. As Philo explains, all names—unlike Israel's highest divinity—are part of the created order (*Mut.* 14). They exist as concrete symbols of more abstract principles. Yet they are not, like Israel's highest divinity, uncreated themselves. Accordingly, although Philo does present God as offering humans several different names by which they can come to know him (*Mut.* 11–12, 18–24), he considers these

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[255] Descriptors like *unnameable* (ἀκατονομάστου), *inexpressible* (ἀρρήτου), and *incomprehensible* (ἀκαταλήπτου) often appear (*Somn.* 1.67; *Mut.* 11–15). See Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo,* 56–57; Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," 55–56; Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road," 177–78; idem, *By The Same Word,* 94–95; Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 23.

[256] See Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 6. With respect to this point, I agree with Litwa that Philo conceives of the godhead in a hierarchical manner, comprised of different levels of divinity. For similar articulations, see Winston, "Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature," 21–23; Runia, "Beginnings of the End," 281–312, esp. 289–99; Cox, *By the Same Word,* 94–99.

What I am contesting is the suggestion that Philo's name for the supreme deity, ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν (based on his exegesis of Ex 3:14–15; cf. *Mos.* 1.74–76; *Mut.* 11–24) is synonymous with the ineffable entity it seeks to name.

The name τὸ ὄν, often translated as the Existent, performs a didactic function, teaching the Israelites about God's nature: God is simply the one who *is*, the one to whom all existence *belongs.* However, since Philo views all names as being a part of the created order, even when he employs this appellation for him it is not synonymous with Israel's highest divinity—the supreme, uncreated, ineffable, incorporeal, and transcendent one.

names mere concessions: they provide humans with a means to speak about God, but they are not synonymous with God's peculiar self (*Mut.* 14). Whether or not Philo talks about his supreme transcendent deity as θεός, κύριος, μονάδην, or τὸ ὄν, does not matter: all names merely point in the direction of Israel's highest divinity, the sole uncreated One.

Given these complexities about Philo's understanding of language, clearly he can use the name θεός to refer to the highest divinity without according that word the ineffable divinity of entity it names.[257] Though humans—even noteworthy ones like Moses—may attempt it, God ultimately can only be known to exist.[258] Any concrete representation of God, whether through a name or vision, is just a tool that the highest divinity has given humans to imagine and speak about him. God is ultimately beyond all human comprehension (cf. *Post.*15–16; 168–69). So although Philo presents Moses as reaching the unprecedented point of participating in the divine name θεός (*Mos.* 1.158, *Sacr.* 9), and although Moses even functions as the embodied form of θεός for his fellow Israelites on earth (*Mos.* 1.158, *Sacr.* 9), like the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before him, Moses never achieves full synonymy with Israel's highest God.

In *Sacr.* 8–10 (cf. *QE* 2.40), a passage about the events surrounding Moses's death, Philo further describes how the effects of Moses's mystical ascents enable him to undergo the process of apotheosis.

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[257] Though scriptural passages like Genesis 32 depict Jacob wrestling with God, even seeing God face to face, and texts like Exodus 3 present Moses encountering the Lord directly in the burning bush, through his sophisticated hermeneutical maneuvers Philo exegetes these passages differently. For Philo, visions, like Jacob's in Genesis 32, and names, like those given to Moses in Exodus 3, point in the direction of God. But Israel's highest divinity is ultimately greater than any concrete representation of him.

[258] There is a lack of agreement among scholars about whether Philo thinks that a *visio Dei* is possible. On the one hand, despite inconsistencies, Scott D. Mackie has argued that the vision of Philo's surpreme deity is possible, at least theoretically. See Scott D. Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, or the Existent One?" *Studia Philonica Annual* 21 (2009): 25–47. On the other hand, the earlier work of David Winston suggested that this vision only extends to that of the Logos. See David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 54–55.

There are some whom God prepared, having led [them] above—to fly beyond all races—and having settled [them] near himself. As he says to Moses: "Stand, you, here with me ('στῆθι μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ)'" (Deut 5:31). When, therefore, this one (i.e. Moses) is about to die, he is not added, being eclipsed, just as the former men, neither is room made for him with "addition", nor "subtraction," but… [God] appointed him as a god (θεὸν), declaring all things related to the body, and its ruler, the mind, subjects and slaves [to him]. "For I give you (δίδωμι γάρ σε)" he says, "as a god to Pharaoh (θεὸν Φαραώ)" (Ex 7:1). But God does not sustain himself by subtraction or addition, being complete and entirely equal to himself. For which reason [it is said]: "No one is said to know of his (i.e. Moses's) tomb (τὴν ταφὴν λέγεται μηδὲ εἷς εἰδέναι τούτου)" (Deut 34:6) for who could be able to observe the migration of a perfect soul to the living God (πρὸς τὸν ὄντα)? Nor do I suppose that the soul itself, while awaiting this, knew of its own improvement, inasmuch as it was becoming divine (ἐπιθειάζουσαν). (*Sacr.* 8–10)

To lay a foundation for his argument, in the middle of this excerpt Philo strings together several key passages from the Mosaic Torah. By quoting from Deut 5:31, where God states to Moses, "Stand, you, here with me," Philo suggests that Moses was superior to other humans because of his proximity to the divine. In citing Exod 7:1, "'For I give you;' he says, 'as a God ('θεὸν) to Pharaoh,'" Philo underscores the striking similarity between God and Moses, since the two even share the same divine appellation. In exegeting Deuteronomy 34:6, which states, "no one is said to know of his tomb," Philo suggests the pre-eminence of Moses among humans, since he—like Enoch and Elijah before him—does not die, but rather is whisked away into the heavens.

Yet the bookends of *Sacr.* 8–10 provide Philo's real rationale for why Moses is able "to fly beyond all races," so that his soul can become more fully divinized (ἐπιθειάζουσαν) (*Sacr.* 8–10). Though in this particular passage Philo does not provide all of the particulars of how this process occurs, an inference can be made from hints here as well as from his broader corpus that Moses, through his practice of philosophy,[259] has been able to reconnect with that spark of the divine within him. As a result, he has undergone various mystical ascents that have enabled him to leave behind the bodily, material world and to enter fully into the immaterial one instead.

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[259] On the notion of ancient philosophy being not only discourse, but also a way of life, informed by specific practices, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 23, 29, 55, 172–73, 220.

These ascents culminate in the final one that occurs, as described in this passage, at his purported death. Philo presents Moses not as dying but as leaving behind his material body so that his divinely inspired soul can simply migrate, or ascend, back to God. Once he reaches the apogee of this ascent, his soul becomes fully "divine (ἐπιθειάζουσαν)" (*Sacr.* 10). This process of Moses's divinization, however, does not alter God's identity. As Philo notes, since God is "complete and entirely equal to himself" (*Sacr.* 8; cf. *Leg.* 2.1; *Sacr.* 92), God cannot undergo any "subtraction or addition" (*Sacr.* 8). Thus, when Moses's soul becomes reconnected with God, it is not through "addition" or "subtraction," but rather because the word of God enables him to connect with the spark of divinity that God had previously imbued into his soul (*Sacr.* 8). For Philo, it is only Moses' soul, and not his body, that becomes divinized.

If the concept of only Moses's soul, and not his body, becoming divinized remains unclear, the way that Philo exegetes a text from Exodus 24, in which God commands Moses alone to go up to him on the mountain, makes Philo's logic even more explicit. Here Philo asserts:

> Why does He say, "Moses alone shall come near to God, and they shall not come near, and the people shall not go up with them?" O most excellent and God-worthy ordinance, that the prophetic mind alone should approach God and that those in second place should go up, making a path to heaven, while those in third place and the turbulent characters of the people should neither go up above nor go up with them but those worthy of beholding should be beholders of the blessed path above. But that "Moses alone shall go up" is said most naturally. For when the prophetic mind becomes divinely inspired and filled with God, it becomes like the monad, not being at all mixed with any of those things associated with duality. But he who is resolved into the nature of unity is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, for having given up and left behind all mortal kinds, *he is changed into the divine*, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine. (*QE* 2.29 [Marcus, LCL])

As the soul (i.e., mind) of Moses becomes more and more inspired and filled up with God, thereby reawakening that aspect of the divinity already present in him, the earthly entanglements that had gripped him slowly release their hold upon him until the point at which Moses is finally

able to leave behind any hint of his former corporeal existence. Rather than flying upwards for only a short distance like most men, Moses's soul ascends "not to the air or to the ether or to heaven (which is) higher than all," but to a place that is "beyond the world," where there is nothing "but God," in order that his "holy soul is divinized" (*QE* 2.40 [Marcus, LCL]). No longer a duality of body and soul, Moses becomes, like God himself, a unity, a monad, a singular entity comprised merely of pure mind or rationality. By leaving behind his mortal, bodily existence, Moses is instead changed into the divine (*QE* 2.29; cf. *QE* 2.27; 2.40).

Philo does not have a concept of God's body per se. In order for Moses to become divine, he—like Philo's God—needs to become an incorporeal idea, an entity without a body. The implantation of God's spirit or breath into humanity at the creation of the world is only a temporary accommodation, a means by which humans can reconnect with the spark of the divine within them. Since the souls of humans proceed directly from God, as begotten or not-created things, they are not separate from God but constitute a part of the divine essence from their very inception. The process by which Moses's soul becomes divinized merely enables him to reconnect with the divine essence that had always latently been present within him. Philo's soteriological vision inextricably links Moses' deification with his exegesis of Gen 2:7. God's embodiment, through the human soul, is what ultimately enables his salvation.

3.6 Conclusion

In the early centuries of the Common Era, members of the Jesus movement were not the only Jews who articulated a means by which Israel's God could become embodied on earth. Philo's notion of a divinely-inspired soul also provides a manner by which Israel's God could become embodied. For him the soul is a divine and not-created entity, which crosses over the

divide into the created world in order to reside directly within created humans. Accordingly, his divinely-inspired soul functions as the means by which the divine and human realms are connected; it also provides the manner by which humans, at least ostensibly, can be saved.

Now Philo, of course, does not assert precisely the same thing as did members of the Jesus movement when they claimed that the divine word became flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) (cf. John 1:14), but he certainly intimates as much. Connected directly to God while placed within a human body, Philo's human soul—like the incarnate word (λόγος)—stands on the boundaries (μεθόριον) between that which is mortal and that which is immortal (θνητῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου) (John 1:14 and Philo, *Opif.* 135, respectively). Because God infuses God's spirit into humans, humans are part of the creation but also have the ability to transcend the limits of that creation.[260] Consequently, Philo's soul performs a distinct soteriological purpose. Partaking directly in the divine essence, yet simultaneously placed within the dust and clay of human materiality, the soul functions as the instrument or agent by which humanity escapes, or is saved from, the material world.[261] In a manner that foreshadows the later movement of Jewish mysticism, Philo's divine-yet-embodied soul has the ability, through a mystical ascent, to transcend this world in order to participate in divinity instead.

Far from there being one monolithic way that ancient Jews imagined that God could become embodied, what my analysis reveals is that there were likely multiple ways that Jews in

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[260] Although, as I noted above, Philo—like Plato before him—does suggest that the goal of human existence is to become like, or to become assimilated to, God (ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἐξομοίωσις) (*Opif.* 144; *Virt.* 8, 168; *Fug.* 63; cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 176b), he differentiates himself from Plato because of the way he interprets the Torah. While Plato insists that humans need to become like God, Philo, based on his reading of Gen 2:7, suggests that humans need to become awakened to the divine aspect, namely their not-created souls, that is already present within them. Such an awakening allows them to "see" that God truly exists, thereby prompting them to shed their earthly bodies and to ascend more fully toward God in the heavens.

[261] As Ronald Cox has observed: "Philo's view of salvation, *in nuce,* is the soul's death to its material body and ascent back to its airy origins." See "Travelling the Royal Road," 172.

the first few centuries of the Common Era envisioned God in bodily form. By exploring a particular snapshot of Jewish history, instead of employing a teleological lens that works backward from a later known outcome in Christian theology, Philo's descriptions of humanity's divinely-inspired soul can be revealed for what they are: a competing model of divine embodiment. Whether Philo actually believed that the average Jew could learn to reconnect with his or her divinely appointed origins is much less clear. From the examples noted here, this feat proved difficult for the most notable patriarchs; even Moses, for example, only seems to have partially achieved this end. This exposes an inherent tension in Philo's thought: his theory of the soul's divine origins suggests that all humans could reconnect with God. Yet his particular examples illustrate that it was nearly impossible for any person actually to do so. Despite this observation, Philo of Alexandria's articulation of divine embodiment reveals that the incarnational language which emerges among members of the Jesus movement is not as innovative as has previously been assumed.[262] The notion of divine embodiment, as expressed in places like John 1:14, was not the only manner by which ancient Jews in the early Roman period conceived of God in bodily form.

This chapter has shown one side of the divine-embodied equation through a particular case study of how one Jew, in the early first century of the Common Era, understood that created humans could also be considered divine. In particular, it showed how when Philo interprets Genesis 2:7, he portrays the souls of humans as coming directly from God's breath. Accordingly for Philo, the human soul, much like the incarnate Jesus of Christianity, becomes immanent in the created world to function as the agent by which humans can partake in divinity. In the next

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[262] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* esp. xii–xxxix, 213; Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* esp. 9, 31–32, 35–36, 143, 156, 158, though his focus is more on when belief in Jesus's divinity first arose among Jesus-followers; Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 105.

chapter I will continue investigating how Jews, in the early century of the Common Era, understood that humans could also be considered divine by revealing how various Jewish authors viewed the high priest, like the emperor of the Greco-Roman world, as the visible representation of God on earth or as a person who could later become deified. Specifically, using examples from the *Melchizedek Scroll* (11Q13), Josephus' *Ant.* 11.302–345, and Philo's *On Dreams* 2.189, I argue that many Jews viewed the high priest as divine much as others did emperors of the Greco-Roman world.

CHAPTER 4: THE JEWISH HIGH PRIEST AS PRESENCE OF GOD

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I demonstrated one of the ways that a Jew living in the first century of the Common Era would have envisioned that a part of God could enter into human form. Specifically, I explored how the first-century Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo presents the breath of the God as entering the souls of created humans and functioning as the agent by which humans can partake in divinity. I then showed how Moses operates as Philo's primary example.

In this chapter, I shift my focus and posit different means by which ancient Jews envisioned God in corporeal form. In particular, I attend to how they present the Jewish high priest in their writings. To this end, I examine three Jewish authors who penned their works around the turn of the Common Era—Josephus, the author of 11QMelch, and Philo—and explore how their idealized depictions of the high priest, the actual historical figures who occupied this role, and the Greco-Roman views on divinity that affected how these ancient Jews presented their high priest all intersected.

I bring these examples related to the Jewish high priest to the fore because they complexify how ancient Jews envisioned that the God of Israel could become embodied. Their visions of divine embodiment are certainly not monolithic. In one instance, it is the high priest's garments, and not the person himself, that connects him to Israel's supreme deity. This is not a true form of divine embodiment because the human being who wears these high priestly

garments remains untouched. I include this example along with the others, though, because together they illumine how ancient Jews viewed the high priest as the locus where Israel's high God and humans could connect. The examples also reveal the reverence that these ancients Jews had for Israel's highest divinity. As I already mentioned in chapter 2, these Jews envisioned Israel's ineffable and high God as utterly distinct from all other reality.

The significance of these observations to my broader argument is that even in the case of the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented as the embodiment of the λόγος (i.e. ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, cf. John 1:14) and not of Israel's supreme deity (ὁ θεός, also referred to as ὁ πατὴρ). In this manner, the Johannine author, like other first-century Jews, shows the utmost reverence for Israel's highest divinity while simultaneously presenting a way in which this God could connect to, and ultimately become embodied within, human form.

I begin by exploring how recent Greco-Roman historians have overturned long-held assumptions regarding the divinity of the emperor. Then I map these notions onto ancient Jewish conceptions of the high priest. I subsequently investigate how around the turn of the Common Era many Jews underscored similar conceptions of divinity. In the first case study, I select a passage from Josephus' *Ant.* 11.302–345 to show how Josephus crafts an intentional polemic against Greco-Roman beliefs about the emperor's divinity to suggest instead that the Jewish high priest is the true embodiment of God on earth. In the second case study, I demonstrate with the *Melchizedek Scroll* (11Q13) how another Jewish author employs a series of pesher-like interpretations of scripture to conflate the high priest's actions with those of God. Finally, in the third case study, I explore a series of texts from Philo of Alexandria, in which Philo renders the position of the Jewish high priest in the divine hierarchy as closer to Israel's highest God. Together this evidence reveals how, for many Jewish authors around the first century CE, the

high priest's participation in God's own divinity rendered him both divine and a locus for God's presence on earth.

4.2   Mapping Greco-Roman Concepts of Divinity onto Judaism

In recent years, as Michael Peppard has noted, a number of specialists in Greco-Roman history have overturned long-held assumptions about how the ancient world viewed divinity, especially with respect to whether or not an emperor or a king could be divine.[263] In the old paradigm of divinity, scholars assumed that persons did not worship living emperors or kings because "there was an absolute dividing line between the realm of the divine and the realm of the human."[264] Dependent largely upon the writings of ancient intellectuals such as Cicero and Varro and a misguided interpretation of Platonic and Christian worldviews, these scholars assumed that God was "Wholly other" and thus had nothing to do with the human realm.[265] By extension, they also supposed that, for the ancients, the terms God and divine were synonymous, such that only the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon, and nothing that was created, could be labeled as "divine." This trend is particularly clear in the work of German scholar Otto Weinrich, who writes:

> If we speak of 'divine humanity,' then we bring together two concepts between which a world-wide distance seems to lie: God and Human. The more absolute the essence of God, the more frail the essence of the human is felt, so much deeper gapes the abyss, the larger is the tension between the two poles.[266]

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[263] Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31–44.

[264] Peppard, *The Son of God*, 34.

[265] Peppard, *The Son of God*, 35. Note that here Peppard quotes and translates from Rudolf Otto, who claimed that God was *das ganz Andere.*

[266] Otto Weinrich, "Antikes Gottmenschentum," in *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugenbildung* 2 (1926): 633; repr. In *Römischer Kaiserkult.* ed. Antoinie Wlosok; Wege der Forschung 372 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 55. For the translation from German into English, see Peppard, *Son of God,* 34–35.

By contrast, now—as Peppard has noted—many Greco-Roman scholars argue for a more scalar understanding of divinity, understood not in terms of absolute essence, but rather of degree and power (see also my discussions in chapter 2).[267] Drawing upon archeological evidence from ancient inscriptions on papyri, and from amulets and common oaths, these scholars demonstrate that even during the lifetime of the emperor, persons worshipped him, or at the very least they worshipped his *genius* or *numen.* For "the ancients," they say, "the line of demarcation between god and man was not as constant and sharp, or the interval as wide, as we naturally think."[268] Likewise, since the emperor was the *pontifex maximus*, the ostensible rift between God and humanity was "not [as] completely unbridgeable" as one might assume.[269] In light of this evidence, others have even gone so far as to abandon altogether the assumption of the fixed poles of humanity and divinity and have argued instead that divinity in the ancient world was a dynamic continuum, a cosmic gradient rather than an unbridgeable divide.[270]

In this chapter, I suggest that in various Jewish writings that were penned around the turn of the Common Era, the Jewish high priest—like the emperor of the Greco-Roman world—stood at a different spot on this dynamic continuum of divinity than has previously been assumed; and that by participating in the very actions of Israel's high God, he embodied corporeally something of the essence of Israel's supreme God. Of course, this is not to say that Jews thought that the

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[267] Indeed, Peppard explicit notes how many Greco-Roman historians now view "divinity in the Roman world," as not "an essence or a nature, but a concept of *status* and *power* in the cosmic spectrum that had no absolute dividing lines." See Peppard, *Son of God,* 31.

[268] Arthur Darby Nock, "Notes on Ruler Cult I-IV," *JHS* 48 (1928): 31; repr. in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 2 vols., ed. Zeph Stewart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 1:145

[269] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Die religiöse Umwelt des Urchristentums II: Herrscher- und Kaiserkult, Philosophie, Gnosis* (Kohlhammer-Studienbücher Theologie 9.2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996), 72.

[270] Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

high priest was God incarnate. To make such a claim, they would have had to believe that the high priest, like the supreme God, was an *uncreated being*, whereas all texts from this period clearly depict the high priest as being *within the created realm*.[271] Many of the authors of these texts even had direct contact with the current ruling high priests in Jerusalem. Knowing personally the shortcomings of these men, they likely would have categorically denied that the high priest was *the* high God of Israel. Indeed, such a statement would have been considered blasphemous.

Despite these qualifications, two thoughts lead me to suspect that first-century Jews, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, also began to accommodate the Jewish high priest into their definitions of divinity, seeing him at times as the specific locus in which God could become embodied on earth. First, though many Jews sought to differentiate themselves from others in the Greco-Roman world through their faith and their practices, it is difficult to minimize the effect that Hellenization had upon the Jewish population of the period. There was a time when, under the influence of scholars such as Bousset, many others assumed that there was a sharp dichotomy between the pure Palestinian Judaism, which remained unadulterated by the effects of Hellenism, and the Hellenistic Judaism of the diaspora, which succumbed to Greco-Roman allures.[272] But

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[271] Philo, *Somn.* 2.189, which I discuss below, presents a slightly modified picture of this statement, but the high priest's status as *neither created nor uncreated* occurs only on one particular day of the year, when the high priest enters the holy of holies to atone for the sins of the people.

[272] A case in point of this trend arises in the work of E. Badian, who claims, "No one would deny that for an ancient Greek the boundary between human and divine, between mortal and immortal, was not where it is for a believing Jew or Christian." See E. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in Charles Edson (ed.), *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1981), 27–71, quoted here at 31. Here Badian assumes that the while the pagan world entertained polytheistic notions of the divine, Judaism remained unequivocally monotheistic. My analysis of the various Jewish authors in this chapter, and of Josephus, in particular as will soon become clear, problematizes this assumption.

recent archaeological and material finds show that this false binary is no longer tenable.[273]

Instead, as Wendy North and Loren Stuckenbruck have pointed out, scholars such Bickerman, Hengel, and Tcherikover have decisively demonstrated how "since the conquests of Alexander the Great and their immediate aftermath, virtually all sections of Judaism either absorbed or reacted to Greek-speaking culture."[274] As such, as I argued for in chapter 2, ancient Jews, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, viewed the godhead in a hierarchical manner, with a supreme creator deity at the top on whom all else depends. Accordingly, if in the broader Greco-Roman world persons could venerate the emperor as a form of god on earth, is it not possible to imagine that the Jews could make a similar move with respect to the primary authoritative figure within their tradition? Since, especially in the period immediately preceding Roman occupation, the high priest had become the chief sacerdotal figure of the Jews and their de facto head of state, his presence loomed large in the imaginations of the people.[275] With so much power vested in a

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[273] See Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*. Through the employment of archeological and material remains, several scholars have contested this assumption and have demonstrated that the attendant assumptions are no longer tenable. For more information, see, in particular, Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*.

[274] Wendy North and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Introduction," in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 7.

[275] Already in the Davidic dynasty, Israel's high priest played an important role by offering atoning sacrifices on behalf of Israel's sins. Yet his prominence grew after the Judean exiles returned from Babylon. At first, as James C. VanderKam has noted, the high priest functioned alongside various Persian-appointed governors, but he "did not exercise supreme political control" [See VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas. High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), x.] For a similar perspective, see also Gabriele Boccaccini, *The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 43–72. Yet by the late Hellenistic Period, especially under the power of the Seleucids, his jurisdiction expanded beyond the religious sphere to encompass political power as well. In this period, he conducted state affairs; he contacted foreign monarchs; he forged political alliances; and thus by default he functioned as though he were the monarch of Judea himself. See Maria Brutti, *The Development of the High Priesthood during the pre-Hasmonean Period. History, Ideology, Theology*. SJSJ 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), esp. 302–305 (although note that Brutti considers the "moment in which the high priest acquires civil and military duties… [to be one of] decline, 304). Then, during the Hasmonean period, when the region came under direct Jewish control, the high priest's role in civic society only expanded, such that, as Chris Seeman has noted: "There was, in short, a broad consensus, shared by Judeans, their overlords and their neighbors, that custodianship of the body

single individual, it should come as no surprise that the high priest would take on a growing role in the minds of the people, even after some of his official jurisdiction had been compromised in the Herodian period.[276]

The second thought that leads me to think that first-century Jews, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, also began to accommodate the Jewish high priest into their definitions of divinity relates to emerging Jewish understandings of scripture. These notions of the high priest's divinity did not emerge solely out of a pagan religious milieu; rather, the developing traditions of the Jews further bolstered the status of the high priest by suggesting that God had appointed him.[277] Accordingly, even as some dissidents began to question the validity of the current ruling high priest, and even as they disapproved of his actions, the role of the high priest as a divinely appointed figure sanctioned by God to mediate between God and God's people became indelibly

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politic was an appropriate—even a natural—focus for high priestly energies," [see Chris Seeman, *Rome and Judea in Transition: Hasmonean Relations with the Roman Republic and the Evolution of the High Priest* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 367.] For a similar perspective, see also Vasile Babota, *The Institution of the Hasmonean High Priesthood* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Employing coins as a means of propaganda, some high priests, such as Alexander Jannaeus and Matthias Antigonus even had their names imprinted on their currency alongside the titles the priest-king (המלך כהן) and king (βασιλεύς) as a ubiquitous reminder of their new public role [see Ya'akov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins* (Jerusalem/Nyack: Yad Ben-Zvi/Amphora, 2001), 37–40.] Accordingly, first through manipulation, but then in practice, by the time of the Hasmoneans the civic and priestly offices of the high priest undoubtedly become under the aegis of a single person. No longer mere sacerdotal figures, several high priests became political powerhouses as well.

[276] During the Roman era, the pinnacle of power and authority that *had been achieved* in the Jewish priesthood during the time of the Hasmoneans was effectively compromised after Herod the Great began to function as the de-facto head of state in Judea. As Samuel Rocca has noted, "As a secular ruler, Herod was well aware that until he was proclaimed king in Rome, the real ruler of Judaea, and equally important, the only authority recognized by the Jews scattered in the Diaspora throughout the Roman Empire and Parthia, was the high priest" [See Samuel Rocca, *Herod's Judaea: A Mediterranean State in the Classical World.* TSAJ 122 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 282.] As a result of this awareness, part of Herod's political strategy was to dismantle the power of Israel's priesthood by controlling the process by which the high priests were nominated to their office. By appointing the high priests, himself, rather than relying on hereditary claims, Herod dominated both the temple complex and its priesthood.

[277] As Gabriele Boccaccini has noted: "The Priestly writing transfers back to Sinai the royal status of the priesthood: before and during the monarchy, the high priest was appointed not by human choice but by divine right (Exod 28:1)," (see Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 57).

marked upon the minds of many Jews. For in addition to the high priest's elevated political jurisdiction, he was the one who was supposed to make the divine immanent—and that meant being the one who could purify Israel from its sins. Perhaps this is why some people reacted so strongly when (certain) real-life high priests committed their indiscretions. Indeed, if in the imaginations of the people the high priest began to be seen as *more than* a mere human, thus as one who participated with God, sharing in the high God's divinity and implementing God's will on earth, then naturally this tainted human side would confound and dash expectations. As a divine-yet-human figure, the image of the Jewish high priest, like that of the Roman emperor for others, blurred the lines between the divine and human realms.

In recent years, as I demonstrated in chapter 2, intense scholarly debates have emerged over the question of whether or not the 'so-called' monotheistic belief system of the Jews could accommodate the worship of other beings beside Israel's supreme, uncreated God. What is at stake for most of these scholars is whether the early Christian worship of Jesus of Nazareth marked a significant deviation from prior Jewish practice, and whether this practice suggested that the earliest of Christians believed that Jesus, like God, was also divine. Though several studies have demonstrated that there were figures from this time in Jewish history that the literature presents as being worshipped (such as Moses, the Enochic Son of Man, and the Jewish high priest), few scholars have attempted to connect these depictions with the real historical figures that they discuss. Moreover, one significant difficulty with these studies is that they begin their investigations with the assumption that the world of God was, for the Jews, wholly other from that of humans. Yet ancients Jews positioned the high priest along the dynamic continuum of divinity, showing how he too participated in the very divinity of Israel's supreme God. Thus, though not synonymous with Israel's high God, they intimated that he, too, was divine. In the

next section, I analyze *Ant.* 11.302–45. By playing off the themes mentioned above, I will start to construct my theory of how some first-century Jews began to envision the Jewish high priest—like the emperor of the Greco-Roman world—as a form of God embodied on earth.

4.3   First Case Study: Josephus' *Ant.* 11.302–45

I have several reasons for selecting an excerpt from the Jewish historian Josephus's *Antiquities* 11.302–45 as my first case study of Jewish perceptions of the high priest. First, like many of the figures that I explore over the course of this dissertation, such as Philo and the Johannine author, Josephus wrote his works around the end of the first century CE.[278] How he envisions the high priest as an embodied form of God on earth can thus be compared constructively with these other first-century Jewish understandings of divine corporeality.

Second, Josephus's writings reveal that he both admired and critiqued Israel's priestly tradition.[279] On the one hand, he was of priestly descent. His identity as a priest seems to have informed his approach to many matters (cf. *War* 3; *Life* 1–2).[280] Furthermore, he writes about the various high priests who ruled in Judea throughout the Second Temple more than does any other extant Jewish source, often depicting those high priests in a positive light.[281] On the other hand,

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[278] For more information on Josephus's biography and impact, see Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers, eds. *A Companion to Josephus* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016); Seth Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983); Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Life and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

[279] James S. McLaren, "Josephus and the Priesthood," in *A Companion to Josephus*, ed. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 273–281.

[280] See McLaren, "Josephus and the Priesthood," 273–75; Clemens Thoma, "The High Priesthood in the Judgment of Josephus," in *Josephus, the Bible, and History*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 196–215, esp. 196.

[281] See McLaren, "Josephus and the Priesthood," 275–276.

born and raised in Jerusalem, he was well-acquainted with the real high priests in Jerusalem during the Roman period, and could be critical of their indiscretions.[282]

My third reason is that Josephus' relationship with Rome was also quite complicated. He initially fought against the Romans as the commander of the Jewish forces in the Galilee as a part of the Jewish revolt in the years leading up to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. But in 67 CE, when the then general—and later emperor of the Roman world—Vespasian entered into and conquered the Galilean region, Josephus defected to Rome, and became a Roman citizen and a close friend to the Roman imperial family, including a close friend to the Emperor Vespasian himself. Because these actions estranged Josephus from many of his fellow Judeans, Josephus's livelihood became dependent upon the good graces of the Roman Emperor and of the Flavian dynasty in particular, thereby entangling him in their affairs.

In light of these details, I find it intriguing that Josephus chose to transmit a story in which he presents the Jewish high priest as challenging the ostensible divinity of the emperor, suggesting that the Jewish high priest was the true "embodied" form of God instead.[283] But this is, indeed, what he does. This observation is striking for two main reasons. First, when Josephus composed this narrative, the Romans had already decimated the effective power of the high priesthood by destroying the Second Jewish Temple in 70 CE. Josephus's timing is thus remarkable in that, even at a time in history when the Jewish high priest could no longer function

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[282] In *Ant.* 3.214–217, for instance, after linking the presence of God and the clothing of the high priest, Joesphus points out that the brilliance of the gems on the high priest's clothes ceased to shine in his own day because God had become displeased with him.

[283] Crispin Fletcher-Louis employs similar language when he describes the Jewish high priest in this narrative as "the visible and an embodied form of Israel's god" and the "embodiment of the divine Name." [See Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great's Worship of the High Priest," in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 72–103, esp. 88.]

in his prior authoritative position as chief sacerdotal and civic leader over Israel,[284] he still presents the high priest in an elevated light. Second, at the time of the composition of this narrative, Josephus's Flavian patrons not only wielded control over the Roman Empire, they also presented themselves as gods. In his own day, for instance, Josephus's first benefactor, Vespasian, was depicted in a supernatural light (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4–5; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 66.1). Similar claims were made about Vespasian's son, Titus, and his grandson, Domitian, under whom Josephus spent most of his later life working. As one who defected to the Romans when times got tough, Josephus could not openly critique these men. Yet by carefully contrasting the figures of Alexander and Jaddua, he could craft a subtle polemic against them. By playing upon common themes from the broader religious milieu, Josephus suggested that his God was the only real God and only their high priest properly embodies him.[285]

In anticipation of this role reversal, Josephus introduces two main characters—the Jewish high priest, Jaddua, and Alexander the Great—fresh off another military victory and about to enter the land of Israel where Jaddua both resides and presides.

> When the high priest Jaddua heard this [i.e. of the approach of Alexander the Great], he was in agony (ἀγωνίᾳ), and in fear (δέει), being at a loss for how he would meet the Macedonians, whose king was angered by his former disobedience. (*Ant.* 11.326)[286]

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[284] For information on how the high priest's prominence increased from the time of the Davidic dynasty up until the Hasmonean Period, see Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 43–72; Brutti, *Development of the High Priesthood*, esp. 302–305 (although Brutti considers the high priest's increased participation in civic areas to cause a decline in the priesthood); Seeman, *Rome & Judea in Transition*; Babota, *Institution of the Hasmonean High Priesthood*. In particular, as James VanderKam has noted, by the time of the Hasmoneans, "the offices of high priest and head of state were undoubtedly unified in one person," (see VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, x). For details on how the effective power and authority of the high priest already started to be curtailed during the Roman Era, when Herod the Great began to dismantle the power of Israel's priesthood by controlling the process by which the high priest's were nominated into office, so that he (rather than they) could dominate the temple complex and its priesthood, see Rocca, *Herod's Judea*.

[285] Again, note the similar language, found in Flechter-Louis, "Alexander the Great," esp. 88–89.

[286] This excerpt from Josephus' *Antiquities* 11.326 derives from a larger narrative thread that spans from *Ant.* 11.302–45. Initially, this piece seems like a jumble of independent threads, each disconnected from the others. First, a Samaritan narrative emerges, which centers on Manasseh, Sanballat,

and their interactions with the Persian king Darius and the Macedonian leader Alexander the Great (11.302–3, 306–12, 315, 321–25). Second, a Jewish account arises, which focuses on the interactions between the high priest Jaddua and Alexander (11.317–19, 326–39). Third, a brief account appears, which chronicles the struggles between Darius and Alexander in the latter's quest for world domination (11.304–5, 313–14, 316, 320).

Because of these complexities, one main line of scholarship on this storyline has been confined to source critical questions. Adolf Büchler, for instance, suggested that Josephus' story was a composite of three independent strands—a Samaritan story, a Jewish tale, and a historical account of the military movements of both the Persian and Macedonian armies. See Adolf Büchler "La relation de Josèphe concernant Alexandre le grand," *Revue des études juives* 36 (1898): 1–26. For a concise summary of quotations from Büchler's argument, see Ralph Marcus, trans. *Jewish Antiquities*, by Josephus. Rev. ed. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 512–32, esp. 530–32. One slight amendment to Büchler's thesis argued that the story originially involved two, not three independent narratives, the former focused on "disputes between the Jews and Samaritans" and the latter on "Alexander's visit to Jerusalem." See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 42–44, quotations from 43–44.

Another popular line of inquiry is for scholars to deny any historicity to the narrative. See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization,* 44–45; Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition,* Hellenistic Culture and Society 30 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 189–202, esp. 189, 194, 244–245; Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 6–7; Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age,* 4–5. Two objections often noted are: First, that none of the Greco-Roman historians who chronicle the life of Alexander mention him visiting either the Jews or the Samaritans at this time (Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization,* 41–42; Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age,* 6). And second: it would have been difficult for Alexander to visit Jerusalem between his siege upon Tyre and Sidon and this campaign against Egypt, since Greco-Roman historians report that he undertook this trek in 332 BCE in just one week. See A. D. Momigliano, "Flavius Josephus and Alexander's Visit to Jerusalem," *Athenaeum* 57 (1979): 442–448; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization,* 45. Note that Richard Stoneman, "Jewish Traditions on Alexander the Great," *Studia Philonica Annual* 6 (1994): 37–53, also does not think the narrative reflects an actual historical occurrence when he remarks that "there is rather little reason to suppose that Alexander ever visited Judaea in person" (39). The resultant picture for many of these scholars is that Josephus' narrative is a literary fabrication. Its purpose may have been to "flatter Jewish self esteem," (see Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 5) or to speak of Alexander and the Jews "in laudatory terms," but in the end its value is for the "student of literature," not "the historian" (see Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 45).

More recently, however, scholars have employed new methodological approaches to the story. Shaye Cohen, for instance, has combined a comparative religions approach with an extensive literary analysis to demonstrate how Josephus borrows two common tropes from Greco-Roman religious literature. See Shaye Cohen "Alexander the Great and Jaddua the High Priest According to Josephus," in *The Significance of Yavneh and other essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 162–186. Likewise, Crispin Fletcher-Louis situates his literary analysis within broader debates about the worship of Jesus. See Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 71–102. Since I consider my research to benefit from and be in dialogue with their findings, I discuss their work at more length above. To their credit, both demonstrate how Josephus' narrative illumines the strong connections that were occurring between Judaism and the broader Greco-Roman world at the time. But my analysis takes their logic one step further. I find that Josephus does not merely borrow from literary tropes of the Greco-Roman world or write a polemic against them. Rather, the very fact that he presents the Jewish high priest

Here Josephus sets an unlikely stage between two characters that, at least by the standards of his day, could not have been more diametrically opposed to one another. On one side is Alexander the Great, the mighty Macedonian, who, on account of his brilliant military maneuvers, keen intellect, and savvy diplomacy had managed not only to conquer vast geographical regions stretching from Europe to Asia, but also to control entire native populations. As a result, he became a thing of legends. Indeed, by this time in history, many had begun to consider him as more than a mere human, a man who, in a certain sense, had become a form of God incarnate on earth. On the other side, there is Jaddua, an obscure high priest from the provincial region of Yehud, who, aside from Josephus' mention of him, appears only twice in the biblical record (Neh. 12:11 and 12:22, respectively).[287] Though coins dating to the Persian Period corroborate his existence, nothing else of note is known about him.[288] Like other high priests who operated during this time, he likely had some limited authority. But certainly no one, least of all, his fellow Judeans, would have considered him divine. With this striking juxtaposition in place, Josephus crafts a subtle, yet brilliant, role reversal between the two of them.

There are two main ways that Josephus crafts this role reversal between Alexander and Jaddua regarding who was the real embodied form of God on earth: first, with the underlying military connotations associated with the high priest's clothes; and second, with respect to the issue of *proskynesis*. Both issues come up in *Antiquities* 11.331–34, but I will take them in turn.

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as being worshipped by Alexander the Great demonstrates how deeply embedded his ideology was within the broader Greco-Roman world.

[287] VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiphas*, 63–85, esp. 63–64. Both passages suggest that Jaddua was the last high priest in his genealogical line and the latter implies that he reigned during the Persian Period.

[288] For the dating of this coin to "the first half of the fourth century B.C." that is, to the period of Jaddua I. See A. Spaer "Jaddua the High Priest? *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9 (1986–87): 1–3, esp. 3. For a more complicated dating for these coins, see Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 36.

[331] For Alexander, when he saw the multitude, still at a distance, in their white clothes, and the priests standing at the head in their fine linens, and the high priest in his hyacinth-blue robe, interwoven with gold, having on his head the mitre with the golden plate on it, on which the Name of God had been written. He approached alone and worshipped (προσεκύνησεν) the Name (τὸ ὄνομα) and hailed the high priest first...[333] But Parmenion [i.e. Alexander's second in command] alone approached him, and asked him why indeed, when all others worshipped (προσκυνούντων) him, he would worship (προσκυνήσειεν) the high priest of the Jews? He replied, 'I did not fall down in worship (προσεκύνησα) before him, but before the god of whom he has had the honour to be high priest. [334] For I saw this very one in my sleep, in the clothes he's in now, when I happened to be at Dium in Macedonia. And, as I was considering with myself how I might take hold of Asia, he encouraged me not to wait, but to cross over confidently, for he himself would lead my army and hand over the empire of the Persians. (*Ant.* 11.331–34)

The attire of the high priest plays a prominent role throughout Josephus' description of the encounter between Alexander the Great and Jaddua the high priest.[289] In particular, Josephus describes how once Alexander sees Jaddua "in the clothes he's in now," he recognizes that it is the high priest Jaddua who "would lead [his] army and give the empire of the Persians over to [him]" (*Ant.* 11.334). This is significant because a few lines before this excerpt, Josephus relays how "God spoke to [Jaddua] in his sleep" and instructed him that, when he went out to meet Alexander the Great, both he and the priests should wear "the robes prescribed by law (ταῖς νομίνοις στολαῖς)," and if they did so, they would not "suffer any harm, for God was watching over them" (*Ant.* 11.328). Already here, then, in 11.328, Josephus intimates how the high priest's clothing is divinely sanctioned. By wearing it, Alexander recognizes that the person who is ultimately responsible for his military success is none other than the high priest Jaddua himself (cf. *Ant.* 11.334).

Josephus sets the stage for this role reversal between his two primary characters by interlacing the entire story (cf. *Ant.* 11.302–45) with frequent references to the military campaign of Alexander the Great. For example, he specifically marks Alexander's military maneuvers with

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[289] For more information on the significance of the high priest's clothing in this narrative, see Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 86–87.

the phrase κατὰ τοῦτον δὴ καιρὸν (*Ant.* 11.304 and 313, respectively), which as Daniel Schwartz

has argued, suggests that there was a pre-existing story about Alexander's military conquest into

which Josephus intentionally wrote the Alexander-Jaddua encounter.[290] The precise moment at

which Josephus inserts the Alexander-Jaddua encounter into Alexander's pre-existing story is

also noteworthy: Josephus positions their encounter at the cusp of Alexander defeating Darius

and the Persians for control of all of Asia Minor. He relays, for instance, how Alexander crosses

the Hellespont, a narrow passageway between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Maritima, which

separates the territory of Alexander's father, Phillip, in Europe from Darius' sphere of influence

in Asia (*Ant.* 11.305 and 313, respectively). Then, he traces Alexander's movements around the

western provinces of Asia Minor, as he and his army march down and around the eastern shores

of the Mediterranean towards Darius and the Persians in anticipation of their upcoming battle

(*Ant.* 11.305 and 313, respectively). Because of the multitude of Persian forces, the assumption is

that Darius and his army will defeat Alexander and the Macedonians. "For," as Josephus puts it,

"not only he himself [i.e. Darius], but all those who were in Asia were convinced that the

Macedonians would not even come to grips with the Persians because of their great number"

(*Ant.* 11.315). But instead of Darius emerging victorious as expected (προσεδόκων), in the end it

is Alexander who defeats Darius (*Ant.* 11.316).

This unexpected outcome between Alexander and Darius reveals the first major moment

of literary irony embedded in the story, foreshadowing the climactic role reversal between

Alexander and Jaddua that occurs later on. At this point, Josephus introduces the Alexander-

Jaddua episode. Alexander, energized by his defeat of Darius, sends a letter to Jaddua, the high

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[290] As Daniel Schwartz has argued, this phrase "is a literary marker used by Josephus for a specific purpose. If the passage in question or the resumption based on the main source immediately thereafter is introduced by the words 'about this time,' it is probable that it was copied from an auxiliary source." See "Κατὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν": Josephus' Source on Agrippa II," *JQR* 72 (1982): 241–68.

priest of the Jews, requesting that he send to him the tribute that he had formerly sent to Darius. When Jaddua refuses, Alexander becomes enraged, threatening to march against him so that he can "teach all men what people it is to whom they must keep their oaths" (*Ant.* 11.318). The assumption here is that Alexander will defeat Jaddua and those in Jerusalem, as he has done in the nearby cities of Damascus, Tyre, Gaza, and Sidon (*Ant.* 11.317, 320). But the intrinsic irony embedded in the narrative underscores a critical point: In the end it will be the obscure high priest, Jaddua, and not the world-renowned Alexander the Great who deserves credit for Alexander's success in battle.

The connection between the clothing that the high priest, Jaddua, wears and his military acumen signals a key aspect of how Josephus subtly yet effectively reverses the roles between him and Alexander. From the pre-monarchic to post-exilic periods, ancient Israelite and then later Jewish writers perpetuated the notion of a militant priesthood. Some presented the high priest's clothes—particularly the "*ephod* and the sash"—as a sign of his role as the human "manifestation" of Israel's "divine warrior Yahweh" (Ex 29:5–21; cf. Lev 8:1–9, Ps 110:4–7).[291] Others foretold how the progeny of Levi will "die in wars visible and invisible" on behalf of their fellow Jews (*T. Reu.* 6.12). Others anticipated a "warrior priest, who had been enthroned in the holy of holies and appointed high priest" (cf. *Assum. Mos.* 10:1–3).[292] Still others presented the figure of Melchizedek as a militant royal priest who stands in God's place and enacts God's judgment (11Q13). This illumines how deeply embedded the connection between war and the priesthood was within the Jewish tradition. Josephus, too, underscores a connection between the

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[291] See Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 87.

[292] Margaret Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," in *Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93–111, esp. 101.

high priest's attire and the victory that God grants in battle (see below).[293] He describes, for

instance, not only how the stones on the high priest's breastplate indicate God's presence when

the high priest offers his sacrifices (*Ant.* 3.214–18; cf. Ex 28:2; *Sir.* 45.7; *Aris.* 1.98; and *Test.*

Lev. 8.5 and 8.11), he also connects the brilliance of these gems with the high priest's success in

battle:

> By means of the twelve stones, which the high priest wore upon his breast, sewn into the
> breast shield, God foreshadowed victory to those about to enter into battle. For so great a
> light (αὐγή) flashed forth from them, while the army was yet in motion, that the whole
> multitude recognized that God was present (εἶναι τὸ παρεῖναι τὸν θέον) for their aid. (*Ant.*
> 3.216b–217a)

The brilliance of these stones evokes God's own brilliance, intimating God's presence in

battle.[294] The militant garments of the high priest make Israel's supreme God material and

tangible by providing a specific locale for God's manifestation, or embodiment, on earth.

With this backdrop in mind, it should come as no surprise that the attire of the high priest

plays a prominent role throughout Josephus' description of the Alexander-Jaddua encounter. In

particular, Jaddua and the priests dress themselves "in the robes prescribed by law (ταῖς νομίμοις

στολαῖς)" (*Ant.* 11.327).[295] In doing so, the presence of God is with them and they do not suffer

harm. But what's more, the clothing of the high priest is how Alexander recognizes Jaddua.

Because Alexander was at the cusp of marching against Jerusalem and utterly destroying it in

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[293] Fletcher-Louis has also observed how: "A passage in Josephus (*Ant.* 3.154–6) suggests his sash was worn to evoke the image of the slain Leviathan hanging limp at its conqueror's side. The pomegranates and golden bells of the hem of his garments evoke the thunder and lightning of the divine warrior (*War* 5.231; *Ant.* 3.184)." See "Alexander the Great," 87.

[294] As Thoma has observed: "In Josephus' eyes, the garment and office of the high priest established a certain kind of earthly crystallike focus of the unobtainable, yet helpful God." See Thoma, "High Priesthood in the Judgment of Josephus," 198.

[295] This can be a reference to none other than Exodus 28–29 (cf. Lev 8) where God first provides Moses' brother Aaron, with specific instructions regarding the high priest's garments. For other descriptions of the high priest's attire, see Sir 45:7–12; *Let. Aris.* 1.96–99; *T. Lev.* 8.3–13; Wis 18:24; Philo, *Mos.* 2.117–26.

order to teach Jaddua a lesson, when Alexander sees "the multitude in white garments, the priests at their head clothed in linen, and the high priest in a robe (στολῇ) of hyacinth blue and gold," he radically changes course (*Ant.* 11.331). Instead of humbling Jaddua, Alexander humbles himself by worshipping Jaddua.

By linking Alexander's military victory with the high priest's clothing in this manner, Josephus effectively reverses the roles between his two primary characters. In particular, Josephus makes it so that it is Jaddua and not Alexander who is he one who is ultimately responsible for Alexander's military victory over the Persian king Darius. As Josephus explains, when asked by his general, Parmenion, why Alexander humbles himself before Jaddua and not the other way around as would be expected, Alexander relays that he had received a dream and in it he saw Jaddua

> in the clothes he's in now, when I happened to be at Dium in Macedonia. And, as I was considering with myself how I might take hold of Asia, he encouraged me not to wait, but to cross over confidently, for *he himself would lead my army and hand over the empire of the Persians*. (*Ant.* 11.334)

With this statement, Josephus makes the provocative claim that Alexander did not achieve his decisive victory over Darius and the Persians of his own accord, but that the outcome of the battle was dependent upon none other than Jaddua himself. Consequently, without Jaddua, Alexander would have never been perceived as a form of God incarnate, or a form of God on earth.

The military connotations associated with the high priest's clothing is significant because for many throughout the Greco-Roman world, it was Alexander the Great's military achievements that caused him to be seen as more than a mere human, as someone closer to—or

even actually a god.[296] That is, his military achievements led to the cult of Alexander,[297] which in turn led to him being perceived as an embodied form of God on earth. Thus, by linking Alexander's military victories with the high priest's clothing, Josephus reverses the roles of his two primary characters: it is Jaddua, and not Alexander, who is ultimately responsible for Alexander's military victory over the Persian King Darius. In short, here Josephus claims that without Jaddua, Alexander never would have conquered Asia. Consequently, without Jaddua, Alexander never would have been perceived as a form of God incarnate, or a form of God embodied on earth. This claim is provocative in and of itself. But with his second role reversal between these two characters, Josephus goes one step further.

The second way that Josephus crafts this role reversal between Alexander and Jaddua regarding who is truly a form of God embodied on earth is related to the issue of *proskynesis*, or worship. To get a better sense of how this word plays out in the narrative, I refer to the following excerpt.

> [331] For Alexander… approached alone and worshipped (προσκυνούντων) the Name (τὸ ὄνομα) and hailed the high priest first… [333] But Parmenion [i.e. Alexander's second in command] alone approached him [i.e. Alexander], and asked him why indeed, when all others worshipped (προσκυνούντων) him, he would worship (προσκυνήσειεν) the high priest of the Jews? He replied, 'I did not fall down in worship (προσεκύνησα) before him, but before the God of whom he has had the honor to be high priest. (*Ant.* 11.333–33)

Four times over in this brief excerpt the word *proskynesis* or a derivative of the word *proskynesis* arises. So what does this word mean, and why is it so significant for Josephus' narrative? In some parts of the ancient world, offering *proskynesis* to another was an act of worship, indicating that the recipient was divine. So when Josephus presents Alexander as offering *proskynesis* to

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[296] See E. Badian, "Alexander the Great between two thrones and Heaven: variations on an old theme," in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity. Papers Presented at a Conference Held in the University of Alberta on April 13–15, 1994, To Celebrate the 65th Anniversary of Duncan Fishwick,* ed. Alastair Small (Ann Arbor: Thomson-Shore, 1996), 11–26.

[297] Badian, "Alexander the Great," 24.

the Jewish high priest, not the other way around as would be expected, he suggests to his readers that it is the Jewish high priest, and not Alexander, who is ultimately the form of God embodied on earth.

Yet the issue of *prosyknesis* was not merely a theoretical issue that Josephus introduced into the narrative; it was something that had actual credence in history—at least where Alexander was involved. From the reports of his ancient biographers, it is clear that during Alexander's lifetime there was an active debate regarding whether he should be considered a god (Arrian IV 10, 5; Curtius VIII 5).[298] His mother Olympias, for instance, circulated an elaborate rumor in which she claimed that Alexander was the son of a god. Lightning and a serpent had impregnated her, she claimed, rather than Philip as others had assumed (Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.6). Whether Alexander initially saw himself in these terms is uncertain, but confirmation of his divine origins seem to have come to him later in life when he made a visit to Siwah in the Egyptian desert. Here, via a disclosure of one of Ammon's prophets, the deity suggested to him that he was his father (Plutarch, *Alex.* 27.3–6). Moreover, a divine oracle from a prophetess from Ionia gave Alexander additional reasons to accept his divine connections. Since Ammon and Zeus have long been connected, what the historical record makes clear is that at a certain point Alexander began calling himself the son of Zeus. Moreover, he actively attempted to get others to think of him as a form of God incarnate.

Questions about Alexander's deification, however, seem to have come to a head in Athens in the years 324–3 BCE in a vicious philosophical debate over the issue of *proskynesis*.[299] The primary issue at stake was the earlier attempts of Alexander to introduce *proskynesis,* a Persian court custom, which as Fletcher-Louis has noted, involved "full genuflection," or at the

[298] See E. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," 28.

[299] See Badian, "Deification of Alexander the Great," 27–71, esp. 30–31, 54–59.

very least "more minimal bowing and the blowing of a kiss" into the Greek court as well.[300] The

difficulty was that the deed carried different connotations within these two cultural contexts.[301]

For the Persians, the king demanded *proskynesis* from all his subjects, but the act conveyed no

implications of divinity. By contrast, the Greeks reserved *proskynesis* for the divine cult, and as

such, it was to be directed to the gods alone.[302] As a result, when Alexander introduced the

Persian practice of *proskynesis* into the Greek context, his intentions seem to have exceeded the

mere unification of divergent court customs. Rather, he was making an explicit claim about his

own divinity and was asking his Greek and Macedonian subjects to worship him as though he

were a god.

Since Alexander's demand for *proskynesis* sparked much of the controversy and later

acceptance of his deification, it only makes sense that Josephus would make *proskynesis* a

central issue in his description of the Alexander-Jaddua encounter. As Josephus describes it,

when Alexander saw Jaddua, dressed in his proper high priestly attire, adorned in the "robe of

hyacinth-blue and gold" and "wearing on his head the mitre with the golden plate on it on which

was inscribed the name of God," he approached and did *proskynesis* (προσεκύνησεν) before him

(*Ant.* 11.331). The act was so contrary to all expectation that Josephus needed to clarify the

point. Not only does Josephus suggest that the kings of Syria are so alarmed by this action that

they assume that Alexander's mind has become deranged (*Ant.* 11.332), but Josephus adds an

aside in which Parmenion, Alexander's general, asks for an explanation of what he has done. In

particular, Josephus has Parmenion inquire why, when all other men do *proskynesis* before

Alexander, Alexander does *proskynesis* (προσεκύνησεν) before the high priest of the Jews (*Ant.*

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[300] Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 84

[301] Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 84–86.

[302] Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 84.

11.333). Implicit in the question is the assumption that if others do *proskynesis* before Alexander because his military acts have warranted his veneration as a god, then the high priest of the Jews ought to be seen as divine as well. Why else would Alexander worship him?

In this version of the story (there are several others besides), Alexander does not worship the Jewish high priest Jaddua per se; rather, he prostrates himself before the Name (τὸ ὄνομα) of God (*Ant.* 11.331).[303] To Alexander, it is the *name of God*, inscribed upon the golden mitre on top of the high priest's head, that makes Jaddua worthy of worship, not the man in and of himself. To make this point more emphatic, when one of Alexander's men asks him *why* he fell prostrate before the high priest, he quickly clarifies by stating, "It was not before him that I prostrated myself but the god of whom he has the honor to be high priest" (*Ant.* 11.334). At first glance, this detail seems to contradict my argument: namely, that the high priest is worthy of worship because he embodies God's presence on earth for the people. But closer examination of the issue reveals that the story is more complicated.

Throughout the Greco-Roman world, many people bowed down to, or worshipped images of God,[304] because they believed that these idols were the visual—or embodied—forms

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[303] Parallel accounts include the Judaizing recension of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* (ii.24), *b. Yoma* 69a *par.* Scholion to *Megillath Ta'anith* ch. 9 for the 21st of Tislev, Josippon 10.3–51, and the Samaritan *Chronicle II* (Folio 129B–130B). These parallel versions reveal that the story struck a deep chord among many in antiquity. Scholarly treatments of these other accounts include, but are not limited to the following: Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization,* 46–49; Stoneman, "Jewish Traditions on Alexander the Great," 41–45; Fletcher-Louis, 74–79; Neis, *Sense of Sight.*

[304] Note also, for instance, that in his commentary on the Alexander-Jaddua encounter, Elias Bickerman draws attention to the way in which other parallel stories involve a person seeing the idol or icon of a Greco-Roman deity, much in the same manner that the high priest of the Jews, in Josephus's narrative, appears to function as the icon or idol of Israel's God. As Bickerman remarks: "This silly story judaizes Greek tales of a similar nature. It was told, for instance, that about 400 B.C.E. the Celtic king Catumundus besieged Marseilles. In his sleep he saw a goddess commanding him to raise the siege; he obeyed, made peace with the city, and recognized in the idol of Athena, which he saw in Marseilles, the woman of his vision." See Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age,* 5.

of a deity on earth.[305] Jews didn't have idols. Or at the very least, they weren't supposed to (cf.

Ex 20:2–3; Deut 5:6–8). This is because their high priest functioned as their icon, or idol.[306] In

other words, the high priest became, in bodily form, the God of Israel on earth. Because of this

close connection between the high priest and God himself, the high priest's "divinity" was seen

as an extension of God's "divinity."[307] As a result, the high priest could be the recipient of

proskynesis, or worship, that a Jew would typically reserve for Israel's high God alone (see

Chapter 2). In this manner, the Jewish high priest became the visible, embodied form of Israel's

God on earth, and in his high priestly role—as the one who offered atoning sacrifices to God on

behalf of the people—he too, like Philo's divinely-inspired soul (see Chapter 3), was how

persons connected with the God of Israel.

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[305] See Cohen, "Alexander the Great," 162–186. In this article, Cohen further illuminates how the Jewish high priest could function as the visible form of Israel's deity by mapping the Greco-Roman tropes of *adventus* and *epiphany* onto Josephus' story of Alexander's encounter with Jaddua (*Ant.* 11.302–45). As Cohen argues, for instance, like the typical tropes expected in a Greco-Roman *adventus* narrative, Josephus, in describing Alexander approaching the city depicts God speaking directly to Jaddua, telling him to adorn the city with wreaths, to have the people dressed in white garments, and to have the priests and himself clothed in the special robes prescribed by the Torah (cf. 11.327). However, the key difference between the typical *adventus* and the one Josephus describes is what the people bring. In other Greco-Roman cities, the citizens "would carry various insignia, especially the statues of the city gods" (Cohen, "Alexander," 166). But the Jews—on account of their commandments in the Torah—are not allowed to make an idol or image of their God. As a result, the high priest, Jaddua, plays this role. Rather than being led by a coterie of idols, Jaddua leads his fellow Jews out to greet Alexander. It is for this reason that Josephus can claim that the Jewish *adventus* is sacred in character, yet different from that of other nations (cf. 11.329). Here is where the second genre of literature, the *epiphany*, comes in. In an *epiphany*, Cohen argues, there is often: "A visible manifestation of a hidden divinity, either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power by which its presence is made known" (Cohen, "Alexander," 169). When the divinity appears, it changes the trajectory of the encounter. The "aggressor," in this case Alexander, "explicitly acknowledges the power of the god," because he encounters the visible manifestation of the hidden divinity in the person of the Jewish high priest (Cohen, "Alexander," 171). Thus, by drawing upon the Greco-Roman themes of both the *adventus* and the *epiphany*, Josephus suggests that the Jewish high priest functions as the manifestation, or image, of God among them.

[306] Indeed, as Fletcher-Louis has rightly argued: "Israel's high priest is the appropriate recipient of worship because he is to Israel's one god what a pagan idol or statue is to their God." See Fletcher-Louis, "Alexander the Great," 80.

[307] For the ability of lesser (including created) entities as being able to share in the divinity of Israel's supreme deity, see Litwa, "Deification of Moses," 5–8; idem, *We are Being Transformed,* 106–109, as well as my discussion in chapter 2.

Placed within this context, Josephus' narrative can be seen for what it is: an intentional polemic against the widespread Greco-Roman assumption that the emperor could be divine. In particular, by reversing the roles between Alexander and Jaddua, Josephus suggests that it is the Jewish high priest, and not Alexander, who functions as a form of God embodied, or God visible, on earth. Though everyone in the Greco-Roman world would have remembered Alexander for his military genius, Josephus instead portrays Jaddua as the one who leads Alexander's army to victory. Moreover, though his ancient biographers revealed that Alexander demanded *proskynesis* from all of his subjects, Josephus presents Jaddua as the one who is worshipped by Alexander, not the other way around. Thus, the irony of Josephus's story is revealed. While Alexander the Great *claimed* to be divine, through a subtle reworking of common themes from the broader religious milieu Josephus suggests instead that it is the Jewish high priest who occupies this position. The emperor is not an embodied form of God on earth; he is the representative of the wrong religion and the wrong god. The Jewish high priest performs this function instead, and by worshipping him persons come to know the one true God of Israel instead.

So Josephus too, as I pointed out with respect to Philo in chapter 3, offers another window into the complex ways that ancient Jews understood that God could be embodied on earth. Though not the same as the Gospel of John's articulation, which I discuss in chapter 6, Josephus—like John's Gospel—does reveal a way that an ancient Jews understood that God could take on bodily form. Moreover, though not the same as Philo's divinely-inspired soul, Josephus's high priest does perform a significant soteriological role as the instrument, or agent, by which humans can re-connect with God. In Josephus' case, though, the nexus of God's embodiment in the world is not in particularly righteous figures—like Moses, or Jesus—but none

other than the figure of the Jewish high priest himself. In what follows I turn to another Jewish author from this period who also presents the high priest as sharing in God's own divinity, albeit via a very different route.

4.4 Second Case Study: The Melchizedek Scroll (11QMelch)

I select a text found among the archeological discoveries of the Dead Sea Scroll, namely 11QMelch,[308] to serve as my second case study related to ancient Jewish perception of the high priest not only because it discusses the priestly figure of Melchizedek but also because—like the other Jewish texts that I investigate throughout this dissertation—it dates to around the turn of the Common Era.[309] Thus, the manner by which the author of 11Q13 depicts Melchizedek as embodying God can be compared constructively with other contemporaneous Jewish versions of this phenomenon. In contrast to Josephus' portrayal of Jaddua as a form of God embodied on earth, for instance, the author of the Melchizedek Scroll (11QMelch) complicates the status of his high priest via a series of biblical allusions that conflate Melchizedek's status with that of God.[310] Here, in a text about the tenth and final Jubilee, Melchizedek is not merely a human

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[308] The first publication of these fragments were provided by A. S. van der Woude, "Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefunden eschatologishen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI," *OTS* 14 (1965): 354–373. The most widely used edition has been published as a part of the *Discoveries of the Judean Desert* by Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, and van der Woude, eds. *Manuscripts from Qumran Cave 11 (11Q2-18, 11Q20-30).* DJDe XXII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). For biographical information on other editions that have been published, see Eric F. Mason, *'You Are a Priest Forever': Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, STDJ 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 138–190, esp. 169 note 79.

[309] Van der Woude, for instance, has argued that the text should be dated to the Herodian Period base on information gleaned from paleographic theory first developed by Frank Moore Cross. See "Melchisedek," 357; cf. Rick Van de Water, "Michael or Yhwh? Toward Identifying Melchizedek in 11Q13" *JSP* 16.1 (2006): 75–86, esp. 85–86. For arguments for an earlier date, see the debate recounted in Eric Mason, *'You Are a Priest Forever'*, 170, notes 85–87.

[310] Past scholarship has debated whether the figure of Melchizedek is an angel, YHWH (i.e. God), or both simultaneously. Significant proponents of the theory that Melchizedek functions as an angelic, intermediary figure, understood either as the angel Michael or in a similar role, include Van der Woude,

figure, but an entity that participates in God's own divinity in a war-like eschatological context. In his charge is an army, the nation of the holy ones of God. Together with the sons of light, he leads a cosmic battle against Belial and his forces. Within this bellicose eschatological context, Melchizedek's role is clear: he is to be the eschatological judge, the one who stands in God's place and who carries out God's vengeance.

This depiction of Melchizedek (מלכי צדק) differs from earlier portrayals found in the Hebrew Bible, which present him as an enigmatic priestly-yet-king-like human figure, always operating within the earthly realm.[311] Genesis 14:18, for instance, depicts him as a king and

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"Melchisedek," 369; Florentino García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 176; James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1994), 171. In a later publication, however, Florentino García Martínez notes that the author of 11QMelch never explicitly calls the protagonist an angel. See Florentino García Martínez, "Las tradiciones somber Melquisedec en los manuscriptos de Qumrán," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 70–80. See also David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes/Hebrew University, 1988), 188. F. Manzi is the most noteworthy advocate of identifying Melchisedek as YHWH, see F. Manzi, *Melchisedek e l'angelologia nell'epistola agli Ebrei e a Qumran* (AnBib, 136; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1997), esp. 65–96. Likewise, Van de Water has most recently sought to reconcile these two positions. See "Michael or Yhwh?" 75–86.

Although I agree with the impulse to reconcile these positions, in my estimation, either way that one looks at it, the author of 11QMelch intentionally presents his high priest as standing in the place of Israel's high God, participating in the acts that, in the Hebrew Bible, only Israel's supreme deity could do. Thus, via these participatory acts, he can be considered divine as well. Moreover, I disagree with the impulse in past scholarship to assume that divine intermediary figures *necessarily* needed to be angelic figures. As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, Second Temple Jewish literature often depicts particularly righteous *humans*—whether Moses or Enoch or the enigmatic 'Son of Man'—as embodying the divine on earth or as undergoing the process of apotheosis, so the move towards an angelic intermediary is not necessary. Moreover, with respect to the text at hand, though the author of 11Q13 clearly places his protagonist in an eschatological context, there is no explicit mention of him being an angel. Rather, in this text I think that the author intentionally draws upon the biblical references to the figure of Melchizedek, both of which present a human figure, and then, in pesher-like fashion, draws upon a number of other scriptural references to conflate his role and identity with that of God's.

[311] Outside of the Hebrew Bible other references or allusions to Melchizedek are found in 1QapGen[ar] 22.12–17; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.179–81; *J.W.* 6.438; Philo, *Abr.* 235; *Congr.* 99; *Leg.* 3.79–82; *2 En.* 69–73. See Mason, *'You Are a Priest Forever,'* 138–90; Eric F. Mason, "Melchizedek Traditions in Second Temple Judaism," in *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, eds. Andrei A. Orlov and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 343–368, esp. 343–453; Charles Gieschen, "Enoch and Melchizedek: The Concern for Supra-Human Priestly Mediators in 2 Enoch" in *Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, eds. Andrei A. Orlov and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 369–385; Harold W. Attridge, "Melchizedek in Some Early Christian Texts and 2 Enoch," in *New*

priest of God Most High (אל עליו) who blesses Abram after he defeats the king of Sodom. Though Genesis introduces Melchizedek as a Canaanite priest, he becomes connected to Israel's tradition when he becomes the beneficiary of tribute paid by Abram.[312] Likewise, Psalm 110:4 presents Melchizedek as the first, and primary example, of a militant, royal priesthood. Like many kings from antiquity, the psalmist portrays Melchizedek as commanding an army, but he depicts his soldiers as being arrayed in holy splendor (Ps 110.3). In particular, instead of being clothed in battle armor, they don priestly garb. Moreover, though the psalmist portrays God as the one who ultimately both crushes kings and judges the nations, he closely associates Melchizedek with these roles and places him at the Lord's right hand (Ps 110:5, 6, respectively). A militant priestly king may seem like an incongruous concept, but—as I have already pointed out with respect to the Josephus narrative—the image occurred regularly throughout ancient Israelite and early Jewish thought (cf. Ex 29:5–21; *T. Reu.* 6.12; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.215).

The author of 11QMelch does not quote directly from either Gen 14 or Ps 110, but both biblical images clearly undergird his portrayal of Melchizedek.[313] The author of 11QMelch, for instance, continues to depict Melchizedek as a human being, and not as an angelic figure as some past scholars have argued,[314] moreover a human being who enacts both kingly and priestly functions. With respect to his priestly functions, the text of 11QMelch makes an explicit connection between Melchizedek and the Day of Atonement (11QMelch 2.7–8; cf. Lev 23:27–

Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only, eds. Andrei A. Orlov and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2012), esp. 395–397, where he discusses the two recensions of this work at length; Daphna Arbel, "On Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, and Eve," in *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, eds. Andrei A. Orlov and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 432–453.

[312] Mason, "Melchizedek Traditions," 343.

[313] For the scholarly debate on whether a biblical portrayal of Melchizedek stands behind his presentation in 11QMelch, see Florentino García Martínez, "Las tradiciones," 70–80.

[314] Van der Woude, "Melchisedek," 369; Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 176; VanderKam, *Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 171.

28), the most solemn day of all Israelite feasts and festivals, on which the high priest atones for the sins of the people via elaborate rituals (cf. Lev 16:1–14). In this manner the author of 11QMelch presents Melchizedek in a position of sacerdotal leadership. A few lines later he cements this connection by intimating that Melchizedek wields control over armies (11QMelch 2.9), much like the militant priests found elsewhere in early Jewish tradition (cf. *T. Reu.* 6.12; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.215). With respect to his kingly function, by placing upon him the role of judgment, the author suggests that Melchizedek also has juridical power (11QMelch 2.9, 13). Thus, like the priest-kings who ruled over Jerusalem during the Hasmonean dynasty, Melchizedek here too occupies both kingly and priestly functions.[315] By depicting Melchizedek in these human roles, the author of 11QMelch harkens back to the manner by which the Hebrew Bible presents this figure. The author's choice of the name Melchizedek also evokes the biblical portrayal of Melchizedek, since none of the ruling high priests in Jerusalem ever went by this name. The name itself, from the Hebrew words מלך and צדק, simply means righteous king. Since the Hasmonean priest-kings who presided over Jerusalem were not always thought to be righteous, in employing this appellation the author may have been crafting a subtle polemic against this style of leadership quite intentionally. By employing the name Melchizedek, the author harkens back to a different, scripturally based priestly tradition that was not enmeshed in the current or recent Jerusalem scene.

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[315] When the region of today's Israel/Palestine came under direct Jewish control during the Hasmonean period, the High Priests in Israel were clearly no longer merely sacerdotal figures, but functioned as political powerhouses as well. See Seeman, *Rome & Judea in Transition*; Babota, *Institution of the Hasmonean High Priesthood*; VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*; Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 37–40.

Past scholarship often assumes that the author of 11QMelch draws primarily upon Ps 110,[316] but both biblical passages depict Melchizedek in civic and sacerdotal roles, enabling the author to craft an image of a priestly figure who functioned as an alternative to the real-life priest-kings who ruled over Jerusalem in the Hasmonean period. In Genesis 14, for instance, Melchizedek blesses Abram, as a priest would be expected to do, but the text also explicitly names him king (Gen 14:18). In Psalm 110, Melchizedek is associated with commanding armies, engaging in war, and ultimately having a hand in judging the nations—actions typically reserved for kings—but the psalm maintains his priestly status as well (Ps 110:4). These sacerdotal and civic roles place the biblical Melchizedek in continuity with the real-life priests ruling over Jerusalem. As Gieschen has pointed out, "Interest in finding a combination of political and priestly leadership within the Scriptures probably grew after the Hasmonean leader Jonathan co-opted the position of high priest (1 Macc 10:18–21)."[317] By drawing upon the biblical image of Melchizedek, the author of 11Q13 could focus on another *human* priestly tradition, in order to suggest that he—and not the current ruling high priests in Jerusalem—was the true embodiment of the divine.

The author of 11QMelch inextricably links the biblical image of the high priest, Melchizedek, with that of Israel's God through a series of pesher-like interpretations of scripture.[318] The first of these interpretative threads occurs when the author presents Melchizedek as the one who offers the liberating favor that is typically associated with the Lord

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[316] See Mason, "Melchizedek Traditions," 353; Gieschen, "Enoch and Melchizedek," 369.

[317] Gieschen, "Enoch and Melchizedek," 376.

[318] For a similar perspective, see Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds. Carey Newman, James Davila, and Gladys Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 129–147.

(יהוה). The most obvious example of this phenomenon arises in 11QMelch 2.9, where the author alludes to a passage from Isaiah 61.2.

Isa 61.2 (MT): לִקְרֹא שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָֹה[319]

To proclaim the year of favor of the Lord**.**

11QMelch 2.9: הואה הקץ לשנת הרצון למלכי צדק

This is the time of the year of favor of Melchizedek**.**

Here, though ostensibly quoting from the words of Isaiah, the author intentionally substitutes Melchizedek's name for that of YHWH (יהוה) so that instead of it being the year of favor of the Lord (יהוה), it is the year of favor of Melchizedek. In this manner the author conflates the Lord with that of Melchizedek, such that the latter becomes the visible manifestation of the former, the human counterpart to Israel's God.

The author of 11QMelch builds up to this point through a series of scriptural quotations in the preceding verses, which more subtly intimate the connection between Melchizedek and God. The first of these pesher-like interpretations arises in 11QMelch 2.2–4, where the author quotes from Lev 25:13, which refers to the liberation associated with the jubilee year, as well as from Deut 15:2, which refers to sabbatical year of debt remission. In the context of both of these passages, the original biblical text makes clear that these acts of liberation and debt remission are associated with God (יהוה). But in interpreting these texts, the author suggests that it is Melchizedek who will cause these acts of liberation to occur (11QMelch 2.4–9).[320] In the case of the former quotation, the author suggests that Melchizedek (and not Yhwh) both proclaims

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[319] Hebrew Text found in K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, ed. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967). All references to the Hebrew Bible throughout this dissertation derive from this source. The translation is my own.

[320] Note that 11QMelch 2.4 frames the interpretation of these two biblical texts with the words "its interpretation (פשרו)."

liberty for the captives and subsequently sets the captives free (cf. 11QMelch 2.4–6). The fact that the author places this mantel on Melchizedek is particularly striking because in the Hebrew Bible Yhwh is the one who frees the captives, ushering them back to their native land (cf. Deut. 30.3; Pss. 53.7; 126.1; 146.7; Jer. 23.3; Ezek. 34.13; 37.21; Tob. 13.10.) Second, in 11QMelch 2.8, the author intimates that it is Melchizedek, and not 'God', who atones for the people's sins. In order to make this point, the author first brings up the topic of atonement by stating that all those associated with the "lot of Melchizedek (גורל מלכי צדק)" will receive atonement for their sins (11QMelch 2.8). In this context it seems that Melchizedek is the subject of the subsequent verb "to atone (לכפר)" (11QMelch 2.8), suggesting that he acts here in the place of God. Consequently, in both acts of liberation and atonement, the author of 11QMelch conflates the status of Melchizedek with that of God by having Melchizedek actively participate in and enact deeds that typically would be reserved for Israel's God alone.

The second of these interpretive threads, which ties the figure of Melchizedek to Israel's God, occurs in the context of 11QMelch 2.9–14. In this text, the author draws quotes from Psalms 82.1; 7.8–9; 82:2 and makes an allusion to Isaiah 63.3 to portray Melchizedek as the eschatological judge, the one who stands in God's place and carries out God's judgments. In 11QMelch 2.10, for instance, the author draws upon a near direct quotation from Psalm 82.1. As can be seen, aside from the plene spelling of the word בקורב in 11QMelch 2.10, the two texts read identically.

Ps 82.1 (MT): אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט

Elohim will stand in the assembly of God (El);
in the midst of the gods (elohim) he shall judge

11QMelch 2.10: אלוהים נצב בעדת אל בקורב אלוהים שפוט

Elohim will stand in the assembly of God (El);

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in the midst of the gods (elohim) he shall judge

The key to the author's interpretation of this text, however, does not lie in the quotations provided above, but in the preceding prepositional phrase, "about him (עליו)" (11QMelch 2.10). In the context of the passage, this can be a reference to none other than the figure of Melchizedek. The key hermeneutical move that the author of the 11QMelch makes, then, is in how he frames his biblical quotation of Psalm 82.1. By setting up his quotation of the psalm in this manner, the author conflates the status of Melchizedek with that of God. It is the human priestly figure of Melchizedek, now described with the divine appellation God (אלהים), who will stand in the assembly and enact the judgment typically associated with the supreme deity alone. In this manner, he embodies, in corporeal form, Israel's high God.

A similar framing occurs in the subsequent verse, 11QMelchizedek 2.11, where the author quotes from Psalm 7.8–9 to present Melchizedek as the divine judge, the one who stands in God's place to carry out God's judgments.

Ps 7.8–9 (MT):   לַמָּרוֹם שׁוּבָה יְהוָה יָדִין עַמִּים

To the heights, return: God (YHWH) shall judge the nations

11QMelch: למרום שובה אל ידין עמים

To the heights, return: God (El) shall judge the nations

Though in this case the Masoretic Text (MT) of Psalm 7.8–9 differs slightly from that of 11QMelch 2.11 since the former refers to God as YHWH and the later refers to God as El, the author of 11QMelch makes the same hermeneutical moves that I pointed out in the preceding example. By framing the quotation in 11QMelch 2.11 with the prepositional phrase "about him (עליו)" (11QMelch 2.10), which can only refer to Melchizedek, the author of 11QMelch

underscores how the human priestly figure of Melchizedek participates in God's own divinity, by enacting judgment on other nations, an act that would typically be reserved for God alone.

As in the preceding example, so too in 11QMelch 2.15–25, through frequent allusions to Isaiah 52.7, the author has the figure of Melchizedek stand in for God. In 11QMelch 2.15–16, for instance, the author clearly cites portions of Isaiah 52:7, a verse which concludes with the phrase "your God is king" and he interprets that verse in the intervening verses. "Since both the name Melchizedek and the name "king" contain the Hebrew word מלך, and the former fits in the lacunae of 11QMelch 2.24–25, it seems that Melchizedek was likely the name that was originally present in the blank space."[321] If this is the case, then in the context of 11QMelch 2.15–25, Melchizedek could be seen as a divine appellation, merely another title for God. Yet, on the other hand, since 11QMelch 2.15–25 *also* alludes to Isaiah 61,[322] in which a messenger or servant of God plays the primary role, Melchizedek could also function in this context as a divine intermediary figure. Together, what the cumulative weight of this evidence suggests is that the author conflates the status of the priestly Melchizedek, who operates as a messenger, or servant of God (cf. Is 61:1–2), and that of God himself (Is 52:7). As one who has the "spirit of the Lord" upon him (Is 61:1), Melchizedek participates in the divinity of Israel's high God by announcing the peace and salvation of God, offering comfort to the afflicted, and freeing God's congregation from the forces of Belial.

Melchizedek was never an official ruling high priest in Jerusalem. He was a militant priestly figure who was of little consequence in the Hebrew Bible. Yet, as with his real-life counterparts, the author of 11QMelch drew upon his image, elevated his status above that of

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[321] Van de Water, "Michael or Yhwh?," 78

[322] See 11QMelch 2.18, which alludes to Is 61:1; 11QMelch 2.20, which alludes to Is 61:2; and 11QMelch 2.23, which alludes to Is 61:2.

other humans, and underscored that there was another line of priests within Israel's tradition who performed both civic and sacerdotal roles. Accordingly, though the author of the work may have disagreed with what was happening in Jerusalem, he quite ironically chose to depict his high priest in a similar manner. Like the other high priests in Jerusalem, Melchizedek was also to be the essential bridge between the divine and human realms.

I have brought to the fore this case study from 11QMelch because of the unique manner in which it presents the priestly figure of Melchizedek as embodying Israel's high God within the material realm. In particular, through a series of pesher-like interpretations from Israel's scriptures, the author of 11QMel depicts Melchizedek standing in the place that—at least in the Hebrew Bible—was reserved for Israel's supreme deity alone. In what follows, I will turn to a final case study in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, which also presents the Jewish high priest in an unexpected light.

4.5   Third Case Study: Philo's High Priestly Figure

For a couple of reasons, Philo of Alexandria's (20BCE–50CE) presentation of the Jewish high priest offers a good counterpoint to how the two previous authors depicted the figure of the high priest as embodying God's presence in the world of corporeality. First, as I underscored in chapter 3, he too composed his works around the turn of the Common Era. Thus, his reflections on the high priest can be constructively compared with the other two Jewish writers who composed their works at about the same time.[323] Second, like the other authors, Philo's personal biography provides definite evidence for the strong connections that were developing at the time between Judaism and the broader Greco-Roman world. For instance, he acquired an extensive

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[323] Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo,* 9; Sterling, "Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series," ix.

education in both Jewish law and Greek *paideia,* likely learning the latter in the context of the gymnasium,[324] thus bringing together these two influence in a manner that was unprecedented in his day (*Legat.* 183; *Anim.* 54).[325] Third, Philo's aristocratic upbringing implies that he would have had direct and positive exposure to the current ruling high priests in Jerusalem.[326] At one point in his writings, he even notes that he traveled to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple there (*Prov.* 2.64). This act suggests that he was a supporter of, or at the very least not in opposition to, the ruling temple aristocracy of that time. Despite Philo's affinity for the contemplative life, preferring intellectual pursuits over civic drama (*Migr.* 34–35; *Spec.* 3.1–6), he certainly would have had ample opportunity to see the humanity of Israel's high priests.

With these points in mind, I find it intriguing that Philo also chooses to depict the Jewish high priest in a manner that positioned him in a unique mediatorial role between Israel's high God and humans, although there is some question of whether this is a true example of "divine embodiment" or not. In what follows, I will highlight two main ways that Philo links Israel's high God and his people via the high priest*,* first via his clothing and second via his connection to the divine *logos*.

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[324] Scholars long assumed that Philo and other Alexandrian Jews received their education in exclusively Jewish institutions, but in recent years a growing consensus suggests that their education occurred alongside Greeks in the gymnasium. For the former, see Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 2 vols., rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1:78–81. For the latter, see Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 25–62; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 148–53; Friesen, "Hannah's 'Hard Day,'" 46–47.

[325] See Dillon, preface, xiii, and David Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 36.

[326] Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, for instance, was the procurator of Judea from 46 to 48 CE and the prefect of Egypt from 66 to 70 CE. See Josephus *Ant*. 20.100-103. Likewise, his brother, Julius Gaius Alexander, possessed great wealth and held an important position within Alexandria's city administration. For places where Josephus either discusses Philo's familial connection to Alexander, their broader family structure, or Alexander's great wealth, see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.159–60, 259; 19.276-77; 20.100.

The first way that Philo connects the high priest to Israel's God is through his allegorization of the high priest's clothes. For Philo, his clothing enables the high priest to mediate between earth and heaven. On the one hand, his tunic and the various parts attached to it, such as the "fringe of pomegranates round his ankles, and flowers, and bells, which reaches from the chest to the feet and is spread over his whole body," symbolizes the various parts of the earth and the water surrounding it, thereby linking him to *this* world (*Mos.* 2.118–19; cf. *Mos.* 2.109–135; *Spec.* 1.93–4; *Somn.* 1.214–19). On the other hand, the "mantle over his shoulders" is an "emblem of heaven", and the various gems on it—such as the "two round emeralds on the shoulder blades and the twelve stones on the breast"—represent the "celestial bodies, the sun and moon, and even the zodiac" (*Mos.* 2.118–19; cf. *Mos.* 2.109–135; *Spec.* 1.93–4; *Somn.* 1.214–19). Accordingly, when the high priest puts on his official garb, his clothing links him to both earth and heaven, enabling him to bridge their ostensible divide, while simultaneously moving him closer than his fellow Jews to Israel's God in the divine hierarchy.

Yet one particular garment that the high priest wears connects him to Israel's supreme deity more than any other. Though the high priest wears some of his garments at all times, when he enters into the "innermost parts of the holy place," he also puts on "another linen garment, made of the purest linen" (*Somn.* 1.216). Philo states of this robe that it "is a symbol of vigour, and incorruptibility, and the most brilliant light. For finen linen is hard to tear, and it is made of nothing mortal, and when carefully cleaned it has the clearest and most brilliant light" (*Somn.* 1.217). What Philo intimates here is that the material used to make this garment was not from the realm of humanity, but that it came from a different source altogether. As such, it was able to emit a brilliant light. Though about a different part of the high priest's attire altogether, the language employed here is reminiscent of Josephus' *Ant.* 3.214–18, which I referenced in the

previous section of this chapter. In that passage, something of the light or brilliance of God became reflected in the stones on the high priest's breastplate. As in Josephus, so too here Philo intimates that the light of God's presence resides within the high priest's linen robe, especially when he enters the innermost parts of the temple and comes closer to the presence of God.

Because the high priest's garments positioned him closer to God, it makes sense that elsewhere Philo claims that the high priest's attire warranted the attention of those outside the Jewish tradition as well. For instance, in his treatise on *The Special Laws*, Philo claims,

> This is the arrangement of the sacred dress (ἥδ᾽ ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐσθῆτος κατασκευή) [of the high priest], a copy of the universe, a marvelous work (θαυμάσιον ἔργον) to be beheld or contemplated (ὀφθῆναι καὶ νοηθῆναι). For it [i.e. the attire of the high priest] has a most-striking appearance, such as no woven robe conceived by us with respect to embroidery and extravagance; and the intellect, the philosopher, [it attracts to] its different parts. (*Spec.* 1.95–96)

Here Philo asserts that the high priest's attire fostered contemplative engagement, beckoning even the intellectual elites outside of the Jewish tradition to linger in unabashed amazement. Though not explicitly stated, the language employed here is reminiscent of what occurs in another piece of Jewish Hellenistic literature, the *Letter of Aristeas*, which also emerged out of the Alexandrian milieu. In the context of that piece, when the author describes the attire of the high priest, Eleazar, he notes that his "appearance created such awe and confusion of mind as to make one feel that one had come into the presence of a man who belonged to a different world" (*Aris.* 1.96; cf. 1.95–99).[327] These two threads of evidence imply that the uniqueness of the high priest's attire fostered a sense of curiosity within those who stood outside of Israel's tradition about whether there was something divine or other-worldly about him. Though still perceived as a human being, when the high priest put on his priestly garments, their brilliance alone enabled

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[327] The Greek text of the *Letter of Aristeas* can be found in Henry Barclay Swete, Henry St. J. Thackeray, eds. *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek; with an appendix containing the letter of Aristeas*, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: University Press, 1900).

him to participate in and to reflect the very brilliance of Israel's God. For Philo, wearing them allowed the high priest to reflect Israel's high God in a very concrete and evident manner.

If Philo presents the high priest's garments as inextricably linking him to God, then the high priest's entrance into the holies of holies transformed his person in an even more radical manner. On the most sacred moment of the Jewish year, when the High Priest "enters the holy of holies" to atone for the sins of the people, Philo—in an exegetical remark on Leviticus 16:17—depicts the High Priest as no longer a human (ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔσται), but a sort of intermediary being between the extremities of God and humanity (*Somn.* 2.189; cf. *Somn.* 2.231–32).

> For "when" [the scripture] says: "the high priest enters into the Holy of Holies he will not be a human." What, then, will he be if he is not a man (ἄνθρωπος)? Will he be God? I would not say that (for the chief prophet, Moses, did receive the inheritance of this name while was still in Egypt, being called 'the god of Pharoah') nor is he human, but he touches both of these extremities as the feet and the head (ἀλλ᾽ ἑκατέρων τῶν ἄκρων, ὡς ἂν βάσεως καὶ κεφαλῆς, ἐφ ἁπτόμενος). (*Somn.* 2.189; cf. *Somn.* 2.231–32)

Here Philo suggests that the efficacy of the high priest's mediatorial role depends upon his transformation into an entity that is neither fully human, nor fully God, but rather some class of person between these extremities. This hybridity elevates the high priest to a higher status in terms of the godhead's hierarchy. But it does not make the high priest synonymous with Israel's supreme and ineffable divinity. Note that even here Philo does not employ the term ὁ ὤν, or the Existent (cf. *Mos.* 1.75), but uses the divine appellation θεός instead. He further clarifies this point by stating that the high priest is neither θεός nor ἄνθρωπος. Instead of presenting a manner by which Israel's God could enter into human form, here Philo depicts the high priest as a hybrid entity, and his very hybridity is what enables him to serve as the bridge, or conduit, between God and humanity.

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This positioning of the high priest on a different level in terms of the divine hierarchy is, in my estimation, what causes Philo elsewhere to equate the high priest with the *logos* of God.[328] With respect to this point, it is important to note that the *logos* too, as I mentioned in chapter 2 and will further unpack in chapter 6, is not synonymous with Israel's highest divinity, that ineffable deity who is immutable, unknowable, and utterly removed from the material realm (*Leg.* 2.1; *Somn.* 91–92; *Mut.* 27; *Virt.* 65; *Legat.* 115). But the *logos* is the first of God's subordinate and yet constitutive powers. He is both a part of the oneness of Israel's uncreated God, yet also able to effect change in the material creation in a manner that this supreme, immaterial creator cannot. That is to say, the *logos* functions as the hands and feet by which God interacts with God's creation. Now to be clear, when Philo discusses the high priest, he does not always suggest that the high priest is synonymous with the *logos* of God. But there are specific instances where he does make this claim. In his treatise *On the Giants*, for instance, he describes how "the high priest (ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς), that is to say reason (logos)" is one "who might at all times remain and reside in the holy dwelling of God" (*Gig.* 52). Likewise, in his treatise *On the Migration of Abraham*, he states, "the great high priest (ἀρχιερέα), that is to say reason (*logos*)" is the one who entertains ideas in harmony with the universe (*Migr.* 102). Moreover, in *On Flight and Finding*, he even goes on to claim "*the high priest is not a human, but is the word (logos) of God*" (*Fug.* 108, emphasis mine). These passages illuminate how Philo connects the divine *logos* of God and the Jewish high priest. However, since elsewhere Philo clearly views the high priest as a human, these statements require additional explanation.

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[328] See John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 158–61.

One of the primary places Philo clarifies the relationship between the actual high priests operating out of Jerusalem and his allegorization of the high priest as *logos*, is in his treatise *On Dreams*.

> For [there are], it seems, two temples of God; one here in this world, in which there is also as high priest, his first-born, the divine word (*logos*), and the other the rational soul, whose priest is the true human, who is a copy of the one perceptible to the senses, offering the prayers and sacrifices from our fathers, to whom it has been committed to wear the aforesaid tunic, which is a copy and replica of the whole heaven, the intention of this being that the universe may join with humanity in the sacrifices and humanity with the universe. (*Somn.* 1.215; cf. *Somn.*1.213–18)

In this text Philo envisions two temples and two high priests. The first is this world, and its high priest is the *logos*. The second is the rational soul, and its high priest is the real true man, a copy of whom is perceptible to the senses. In other words, while the first high priest corresponds to the *logos*, the second corresponds with the actual high priest who operates in Jerusalem. For Philo, these two high priests are distinct from one another, but they are also interrelated.

Unlike many of his Jewish contemporaries, Philo viewed the role of the *real* high priest in Jerusalem in a more universalistic manner. For him, the high priest in Jerusalem was not an emissary for the Jewish people alone; rather, he represented *all* of humanity before God. As such, his garments were not mere articles of clothing; instead, in their whole they were "a copy and a representation of the world (ἀπεικόνισμα καὶ μίμημα τοῦ κόσμου)," and in their parts they were "a representation of the separate parts of the world" (*Mos.* 1.117; cf. *Spec.* 1.82–96). This perspective is significant for two primary reasons. First, when the real high priest in Jerusalem put on his official attire, Philo claimed that he *put on the entire world*. This is the same world that Philo claimed was God's temple, of which the high priest was the *logos*. By putting on his sacred robes, the real high priest in Jerusalem put on the world and thus, by default, he was inextricably linked to the *logos* of God. Second, if the raiment of the Jewish high priest signifies

the entire world, then when he enters the temple to atone for the people's sins, he does so not only for the Jewish people, but also for all of humanity.

> The high priest, then, being arrayed in this manner, is prepared for his holy duties, that, whenever he enters [the temple] to offer up the ancestral prayers and sacrifices, *all the world* may enter with him, by means of the imitations of it which he bears about him. (*Mos*. 2.133; cf. *Spec.* 1.82–96)

Since the high priest carries the entire world with him, he—like the *logos,* or perhaps even, allegorized *as the logos*—can function as the mediator between the divine and human realms. Moreover, he can do so not only for Israel, but also, and more significantly—for all of humanity. Accordingly, his jurisdiction is not only parochial but universal.

Now for the important question: Does Philo's equation of the high priest with the *logos* of God suggest that he thought that the Jewish high priest was actually an embodied form of God on earth? The answer is complicated. On the one hand, I could simply state "no, certainly not!" Here in Philo, as we see elsewhere in first-century Jewish literature, there is always a distancing, or a qualification, when the author elevates the status of the high priest in terms of the divine hierarchy. In Philo's case, in particular, the high priest is said to put on a garment that places him closer to Israel's high God or he is said to be a copy or image of the *logos*, which is already an image of God. In this way, Philo preserves the integrity of his high God. Though technically ineffable, Philo calls him ὁ ὤν, or the Existent one, distancing this supreme uncreated deity from all else. On the other hand, the very fact that Philo links the real high priest in Jerusalem with God's *logos*, even if it is via allegorization or intimation, suggests the radical extent to which Philo was willing to present the Jewish high priest as participating in this high God's own divinity. In this manner, but equating the high priest with the *logos*, he elevates the status of the high priest in his thought. On the day of Yom Kippur, for instance, when the high priest enters the holy of holies to atone for the sins of God's people, in his embodied state the high priest

actively facilitates God's own desire to atone for the sins of the people, functioning as the hands and feet of Israel's incorporeal God for those who dwell in corporeality. Note three key passages related to Philo's *logos*, first cited by L. K. K. Dey:[329]

> *Her* 2–5 - To his *logos*, his chief messenger, highest in age and honor, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to *stand on the border and separate the creature from the Creator*. This same Word both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as an ambassador of the ruler to the subject.
>
> *Qu. Ex.* II.94 - The incorporeal world is set off and separated from the visible one by the mediating *l*ogos as by a veil.
>
> *Qu. Gen* II.26 - Nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the most high One and Father of the universe, *but only in that of the second God, who is his logos*.

As these examples suggest, Philo's *logos* illumines the radical extent to which certain post-exilic Jewish texts could accommodate a bifurcation in their conception of God. Both a transcendent high God and an incarnate God (or at the very least a very imminent divine intermediary figure that could stand on the borders between God and humanity) are simultaneously subsumed under the broader rubric of God's *oneness*. The very fact that Philo associates the Jewish high priest with the divine *logos* indicates the unique position the high priest occupied in the hierarchy of the godhead in Philo's thought. Moreover, since Philo is often touted as the quintessential representative of a Jew who stressed the absolute 'oneness' of God, his portrayal of the high priest further problematizes the long-held notion of Philo's absolute monotheistic stance, since his allegorization of the high priest—and his connection to the *logos* in particular—also enabled the high priest to be conceived of as "divine" and thereby subsumed into Philo's notion of God's *oneness*.

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[329] L. K. K. Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBL Dissertation 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1975), 15. Here the translations of Philo are provided by Dey, but the emphasis is mine.

My close analysis of several passages from Philo has revealed that he too—like other Jewish authors around the turn of the Common Era—played with the status of the Jewish high priest, thereby expanding the notion of divinity within the Jewish tradition, much like emperors had done for the rest of the Greco-Roman world. Having established this point, I can now turn to reflect on the significance of this notion for what was happening around the turn of the Common Era, especially as regards the Jewish high priest.

4.6   Conclusion

This chapter has shown the complex ways that three Jewish authors—namely Josephus, the author of 11QMelch, and Philo of Alexandria—viewed the Jewish high priest as a locus in which their God could become embodied on earth. The three were certainly not monolithic in their understanding of how this could be accomplished. Josephus, for instance, creates a polemic against Greco-Roman beliefs in the emperor's divinity to suggest instead that the high priest is the true manifestation of God on earth. The author of 11QMelch plays on the biblical image of the priestly figure of Melchizedek and then through a series of pesher-like interpretations presents the high priest as conducting the actions that would typically be reserved for Israel's high God. And Philo both discusses the significance of the high priest's clothes and allegorizes the high priest to be the *logos* of God in order to render the high priest's status as closer to that of Israel's high God. Together this evidence demonstrates how the high priest's participation in God's own divinity rendered him both divine and one of the primary means by which other Jews could connect to God while still on earth. Though many throughout the Roman Empire worshipped the *genius* or *numen* of the emperor because they considered it to be the immanent

power of his divinity and the manner by which God became embodied among them, for these ancient Jews their high priest operated in this space instead.

So what are we to make of these various, or competing models of "Divine Embodiment," which existed in the Jewish imagination around the first century CE? As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, polemical rhetoric about whether God could become human, or whether God could enter into a human body, helped Jesus followers and other Jews to differentiate themselves. We saw this in the rhetoric of Justin Martyr. And we saw this in the rhetoric of Nahmanides. As a result, many people have gotten a false impression. In fact, they have assumed that *since* Jesus-followers adopted a theology in which God and man are one in the person of Jesus, other Jews reacted by moving in the opposite direction by making the absolute incorporeality of God essential.

Yet the evidence that I have brought forth in this chapter challenges this point. In all three Jewish figures we see evidence for how *other ancient* Jews conceived of ways that God could be embodied in human form—specifically in the figure of the Jewish high priest. Moreover, in their own day these alternative visions divine embodiment were equally viable paths by which humans could connect with God. Although it is safe to say that the particular instantiation of divine embodiment, as first expressed in the Gospel of John, that God had became incarnate in the specific person of Jesus, finds no direct parallel in either Second Temple or Rabbinic Judaism, the evidence from these three roughly contemporaneous Jewish authors demonstrates that there are examples, within the emergent Jewish tradition, of how God, or a part of God, became embodied on earth so that humans could be saved as well.

Together with chapter 3, these two chapters have explored ways in which Jews around the first century presented means by which humans, though created, could be understood as

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embodying the divine on earth. In the next chapter, I commence my investigation of the other side of the divine-embodied equation by looking at the manner in which one of the attributes of God, namely Sophia (who at times was conceived of as an extension of the oneness of Israel's supreme deity, and at other times an independent deity in her own right) was ultimately embodied in the created world. In particular, I attend to the gendered implications of this form of divine embodiment.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GENDERED IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE EMBODIMENT

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I posited different ways that ancient Jewish writers envisioned God in corporeal form, specifically through the figure of the Jewish high priest. Together with chapter 3, then, these two chapters investigated ways that Jews, living around the turn of the Common Era, viewed humanity as a locus for the embodiment of God (or a part of God) on earth. In this chapter I shift my focus to investigate how Jewish writers in this period of history viewed specific divine attributes of God as being a means by which God's presence could become manifest on earth.

Specifically, this chapter explores how and to what extent divine Wisdom (Σοφία), hereafter often described with her Greek epithet Sophia, may have functioned as an embodied representation of God for Jewish writers who were alive and active in the first century CE. Of particular interest to me are the gendered implications of Wisdom's embodiment. Until this point in history, Sophia had always been read in ways that would have been perceived as non-male within ancient Israel's tradition. Why then would these first-century Jewish writers present her in a more masculine manner? More often than not, the ancients conceived of the God of Israel as male,[330] and had employed masculine articles and pronouns to delimit who and what the God of

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[330] The vast majority of the time the Hebrew Bible presents the God of Israel as male. Notable exceptions, however, include Exod 19:4; 34:6; Num 11:12; Deut 32:11; Neh 9:20–21; Job 38:8, 29; Hos 11:3–4, 8–9; Isa 27:11; 42:14; 43:1: 45:10–11; 46:3–4; 49:15; 66:7–9, 12–13. See Carol Meyers, "Female

Israel was. So throughout this chapter I ask: How was it that by the first century CE some Jewish writers could suggest that *a figure who had previously been read as non-male* could embody the presence of a *male deity* in the created world? Was Sophia's femininity not an affront to Israel's masculine God?

Addressing this issue, Jane Webster has suggested that ancient Jewish authors distinguished between "the notions of God and Sophia," and that thus, the "feminization of wisdom" did "not interfere with the traditional notion of a male God of Israel."[331] However, this argument cannot hold for the two primary authors that I investigate in this chapter, namely the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo of Alexandria, because for both—despite Sophia's lesser status in the divine hierarchy (see chapter 2)—she constituted an essential component of the identity of Israel's God,[332] and they positioned her toward the masculine end of the gender

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Images of God in the Hebrew Bible," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 525–528. For exceptions from the Deuterocanonical books, see 2 Esd 1:15–30; 2:2–4; 8:8–12, as well as Walter J. Harrelson, "Female Images of God in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 524–525. For examples of early Christian texts that portray God as mother, or God as nursing her infant children, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.38.1, *Odes of Solomon* 19, Clement of Alexandria, *The Pedagogue* 1.6.43; 1.6.45, as well as the commentary on these texts in Patricia Cox Miller, ed. *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 307–315.

[331] Jane S. Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom in Proverbs, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon," *JSOT* 78 (1998): 63–79, esp. 78.

[332] I view Sophia as being an essential component of the God of Israel's identity, but this topic has been a subject of debate, particularly with respect to the *Wisdom of Solomon*. James Crenshaw, for instance, views Sophia in the *Wisdom of Solomon* as going "beyond personification to hypostasis; she becomes a manifestation of God to human beings, an emanation of divine attributes." See James Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 176. By contrast, Roland E. Murphy describes her as a personification, because, he argues, of the constraints of Jewish monotheism. See Roland E. Murphy *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature.* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 94, 133–34, 142–145.

spectrum. This made it easier for what had previously been presented as a female figure to embody the presence of Israel's masculine God within the material world that God had made.

To demonstrate these points, this chapter focuses primarily upon the two first-century Jewish authors that I mentioned above, but I place their conceptions of Wisdom (חכמה)/Sophia (σοφία) within the broader trajectory of how persons throughout Israel's tradition, from ancient times up until the first century CE, understood the relationship between Wisdom and Israel's God.[333] Philo and the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* were contemporaries. They not only both composed their works in Greek[334] but were also both active in the ancient city of Alexandria in Egypt in the middle of the first century CE.[335] The Alexandrian milieu, steeped in Greek philosophical trends, which privileged masculinity over femininity, proved instrumental in

[333] When Jews in the Second Temple period began to use Greek as their primary language, the Wisdom (חכמה) of the Hebrew Bible began to be described with the Greek epithet Sophia (σοφία). This is not to say that the two figures are synonymous. Rather, in this chapter I underscore the various diachronic changes that the figure of חכמה/σοφία undergoes over time. Thus, when describing this figure, I employ the epithets "Wisdom (חכמה)" and "Sophia (σοφία)."

[334] Philo composed his works in Greek and those selected for this study have all been preserved in this language. See Torrey Seland, "Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction" in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (ed. Torrey Seland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 3–16, esp. 3; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9–11. The *Wisdom of Solomon* has likewise been preserved in Greek and most scholars agree that Greek was the original language of composition. See Michael Kolarcik, *The Book of Wisdom: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, NIB, 5 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 435–600, esp. 437–38; Nancy J. Van Antwerp, "Sophia: The Wisdom of God," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 31.1 (2007): 19–32, esp. 20; Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 84.

[335] Scholars typically date Philo's lifetime from ca. 20 BCE to ca. 50 CE, but these dates are only estimates. See Seland, "Philo of Alexandria," 4–5; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9; Sterling, "Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series," ix; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 3 n. 3.

The dating of the Wisdom of Solomon is a bit more complicated. Deborah Dimant, "Pseudonymity in the Wisdom of Solomon," in N. Fernández Marcos, ed. *La Septuaignta en la Investigación Contemporánea* (V Congreso De la IOSCUS; Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano" C.S.I.C., 1985), 243–55, has proposed a date in the first century BCE. See also Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 174; Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 83. However, most scholars place the book's composition in the early Roman period, after Octavian had established Roman hegemony in Alexandria. Thus, a date between ca. 30 BCE to 70 CE is most likely. See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 179; Kolarcik, *Book of Wisdom*, 438–40; David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon.* AB 43 (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 20–25. Winston, in particular, makes a compelling argument based on thirty-five Greek words present in the text that do not occur until the first century CE.

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causing these two respective authors to present Sophia in more masculine ways. However, since other near contemporaneous Jewish writers, such as the author of the Gospel of John,[336] whom I investigate at greater length in chapter 6, also subsume Sophia's actions and attributes onto the male figure of Jesus, this phenomenon appears not to have been limited to Alexandria but also extended into other areas of the Jewish diaspora. [337]

To explore Wisdom's gendered portrayal from a diachronic perspective, in the first part of this chapter I take a step back and look at how Wisdom was presented in decidedly feminine ways throughout ancient Israel's tradition up until the first century CE. From there, in the second and third parts, I turn to how the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo each position Sophia further in the direction of masculinity. The two employ different strategies, but each effectively presents Sophia as embodying Israel's masculine deity, often within specific humans. While the former depicts Sophia in a variety of masculine, feminine, and other roles that suggest a dynamic continuum of gender with Sophia occupying the center of the spectrum, the latter fully masculinizes her so that she functions as humanity's pedagogue. As pedagogue, she instructs humans likewise to become more male-like themselves in order to more easily approach Israel's supreme (and male) God. The net effect achieved by both authors is that Wisdom—in her embodied state—is better able to function as Israel's male deity within the female world that God has made.

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[336] Following Raymond E. Brown S.S., I place the final form of the Gospel of John between 90–110 CE and assume its provenance was Asia Minor. See *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 199–215.

[337] For discussions of the relevance of Wisdom Christology for the Gospel of John, see Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 93–105; Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus, Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 131–139, 150–154; Ben Witherington, III, *Jesus the Sage. The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 368–380; Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 71 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

5.2   The Ancient Israelite Tradition Casts Wisdom in a Feminine Light

In the early stages of Israel's religious tradition, when both the Israelites and their

surrounding Canaanite neighbors believed in a pantheon of various deities, many conceived of

Wisdom (חכמה in Hebrew) as an independent goddess, completely separate from Israel's God.[338]

In this sense, the early tradition consistently, and without hesitation, presents Wisdom in a

female light. Both Proverbs and Job, for instance, present Wisdom as a female deity,[339]

independent from Israel's God.[340] The author of Proverbs states that the Lord (יהוה) does not

create Wisdom (חכמה), but rather "acquires (קנני)[her] first of his ways (ראשית דרכו)" (Prov

8:22).[341] Just as a person who obtains a commodity of great value, which is clearly distinct from,

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[338] Some have argued that Wisdom was an independent female goddess, separate from Israel's God. See Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs. A Hebrew Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986), 58–70; idem, "Lady Wisdom: A Polytheistic and Psychological Interpretation of a Biblical Goddess," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, and Strategies*, Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 400–423. In this manner, she would have been perceived in a similar way to other ancient Near Eastern Wisdom goddesses, such as Ma'at or Isis from Egypt, Inanna from Mesopotamia, Nisaba from Sumer, or even Athena from Greece. Others have proposed that wisdom's divine status originated out of ancient Israel's veneration of Asherah. See Judith M. Hadley, "From Goddess to Literary Construct: The Transformation of Asherah into Hokmah" in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, and Strategies*, Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine, eds. (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 360–399. Still others have suggested that because a "mother, as chief caretaker, is the original figure of wisdom to young children," this explains why ancient societies cast Wisdom in a feminine role. See Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (Toronto: The Free Press, 1992), 180.

[339] For other ways that Proverbs depicts Wisdom with feminine imagery, including as a hostess (Prov 9:1, 5), a "fertile woman" (Prov 3:18; 8:19), a "sister" (Prov 7:4), and with language that parallels that of the good "wife" (cf. Prov 31:10–31), see Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 65–69. For similar portrayals in the book of Job, see Katharine J. Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (Sheffield [UK]: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

[340] See Lang, *Wisdom,* esp. 3–7, 53–81, 113–131; Hadley, "From Goddess to Literary Construct," 393–399. Both argue that Proverb 8:1–36, in particular, as well as other portions of chapters 1 and 9, give divine status to Wisdom.

[341] With respect to this verse, it is important to note that there is a clear discrepancy between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). Through the use of the Hebrew root קנה, the MT describes God as "getting, acquiring, or possessing" Wisdom. A similar sentiment arises in Prov 4:7 (cf.

but valued by that person, so too this description suggests that the Lord and Sophia are two separate entities. Likewise, the author of Job relays that the God of Israel alone (אלהים), in contrast to the other deities from the ancient Near Eastern world, such as Tehom (תהום), Yam (ים), Abbadon (אבדון), and Mot (מות), is the only one who can find Wisdom (חכמה).[342] The gendered aspects of this chapter arise in the observation made by Dell that "the theme of this chapter [is] the quest."[343] "Verses 23-27," for instance, as Hadley has observed, "are perhaps the most instructive. Especially, the verbs יביט, 'looks to' and יראה, 'sees' in v. 24 may indicate that God is seeking for Wisdom, which has her own independent existence and origin."[344] This evidence implies that the God of Israel is superior to these other deities—since God, and God alone—can find Wisdom. Yet it also underscores how, from the perspective of the author, Israel's God and Wisdom are two separate entities. Obviously, these observations do not negate the real discrepancies between the worldviews of these two respective authors. While Proverbs presents Sophia as universally accessible (Prov 8:1–4; cf. 1:20–21, 2:4–5),[345] instrumental in

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Prov 4:5), where the author instructs his reader to "get Wisdom (קנה חכמה)!" In contrast, through the use of the verb κτίζω (κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτου), the LXX depicts God as creating Wisdom. Thus, although scholars such as Frymer-Kensky, *Goddesses,* 181 have suggested that the Hebrew version of Proverbs presents Wisdom "as a creature," this position cannot be supported.

[342] Wisdom, in Job, cannot be found by humanity because she is not found on earth (cf. Job 28:12–13, 21). Likewise, other gods such as Tehom, Yam, Abbadon, and Mot cannot find her (cf. Job 28:14 and 22, respectively). The only one that can find her is Elohim, the God of Israel (cf. Job 28:23–27).

[343] Dell, *Job*, 29.

[344] Hadley, "From Goddess to Literary Construct," 397. Although as Hadley points out a bit later down on the page, "most commentators are reluctant to attribute divine status to Lady Wisdom," (397) the evidence—in my opinion—points rather compellingly to a presentation of Wisdom, in both Proverbs and Job, as an independent goddess, separate from Israel's God.

[345] These texts depict Wisdom as a universal commodity. She is not the exclusive possession of a particular group from the ancient Israelites, or even of all of the ancient Israelites, but is universally accessible to all.

creation (Prov 8:30),[346] and present on earth (Prov 4:1–12), Job depicts her as remote and alone with God in the heavens (cf. Job 28:12–13, 20–21).[347] But what remains consistent is that both authors present Wisdom as a separate female deity, independent of Israel's male God.

A marked shift occurs within the Second Temple Period, when Wisdom (חכמה)—now known by her Greek epithet Sophia (σοφία)—becomes subordinated to the God of Israel for the very first time—though even here the author depicts Sophia as a female figure vis-à-vis Israel's male God. The most dramatic example of this trend occurs in the book of *Sirach*,[348] where Sophia becomes—for the first time in all of Second Temple Jewish literature—created by God (Sir 1:9; 24:9) and embodied in the Torah (Sir 24:23).[349] As such, Ben Sira presents her femininity differently than Proverbs and Job, using imagery, as Jane Webster has noted, to "inspire enthusiastic passion" and to evoke "female fertility" (cf. Sir 6:18–19). That imagery includes a chase scene (cf. Sir 14:23–27), which ends with "an acceptable, stable, familial setting," by which the author appears to suggest a marriage scene.[350] Thus, Sophia—now embodied in world and specifically in the Torah—is depicted as something to be pursued.

> All Wisdom (σοφία) is from the Lord (παρὰ κυρίου), and is with him forever. The sand of the sea, the drops of rain, and the days of eternity—who will count? The height of

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[346] In particular, this verse describes Wisdom as a "masterworker (אמון)" next to God as the rest of the creation is being made.

[347] In Job, for instance, Wisdom cannot be found by humanity because she is not found on earth.

[348] On the dating of *Sirach* to the beginning of the second century B.C.E., see Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 65; Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 78; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 23–24; Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature.* Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abington, 1998), 115–116.

[349] See Bar 3:9–4:44, esp. Bar 3:37–4:4 (See Deut 4:6 and Ezra 7:14 for earlier connections between wisdom and law.) However, in *I En.* 42:1 (See Job 28 and 2 Esd 5:9b-10a for a similar emphasis on the hiddenness of wisdom), a different Jewish author suggests that Israel had become so corrupt that "Wisdom found no place where she might dwell," thus "a dwelling-place was assigned her in the heavens" (*I En.* 42:1). With these lines, the author-redactor(s) of *I Enoch* likely created an intentional polemic against books such as *Sirach* and *Baruch*, wherein Wisdom was closely linked to Torah. See Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends*, 42–43; Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 102; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom,* 188.

[350] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 69–74, quoted at 69, 70, and 72, respectively.

heaven, the breadth of the earth, the abyss, and Wisdom—who will search out? Wisdom was acquired (ἔκτισται) before all things and insight of intelligence from eternity. The root of Wisdom—to whom has it been revealed? And her great deeds—who knows them? One is wise, exceedingly fearful, seated upon his throne. The Lord himself created (ἔκτισεν) her, saw her, counted her, and poured her out upon all his works (Sir 1:1–9).[351]

Unlike texts found in the Hebrew Bible, the author of the book of *Sirach,* Ben Sira,[352] no longer envisions Sophia as an independent deity, but presents her in a diminished role. In particular, though Sophia is connected to the Lord, she is also subordinate to him. As the author describes, Wisdom is not only "from the Lord" (παρὰ κυρίου) and is with him forever (Sir 1:1), but has also been "created (ἔκτισεν) by God" as the firstborn of all creation (Sir 1:9; cf. Sir 1:4).[353] Indeed, later in the book, Ben Sira reiterates this point by reminding his readers that "before he ages, in the beginning," God "created" (ἔκτισέν) Wisdom, leaving no room for equivocation on the matter" (Sir 24:9). By presenting Sophia as a created being, Ben Sira lessens her role. Instead of being an independent goddess on par with Israel's male God, the author of the book claims that Sophia has been created by the God of Israel.[354] Consequently, though the author consistently portrays Sophia in feminine roles, oftentimes even depicting her through erotic or

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[351] A critical edition of the Greek text of *Sirach* can be found in Robert Hanhart, ed. *Septuaiginta, rev. ed.* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 377–470. The translation here and throughout the dissertation of *Sirach* is mine.

[352] In Sir 50:27, the author of the work, Jeshua ben Elezar ben Sira, discloses his name. For discussions of how anomalous this phenomenon was among Jewish authors of wisdom literature, see, Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 23; Clifford, *Wisdom Literature,* 115–116; Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 65.

[353] Note, however, the different verbs employed in each case. In Sir 1:4, the author describes how "Wisdom was acquired (ἔκτισται) before all things," employing the verb κτάομαι. By contrast, in Sirach 1:9, the author asserts, "the Lord himself created (ἔκτισεν) Wisdom," employing the verb κτίζω. In the case of the former, the verb used (κτάομαι) does not necessarily indicate creation *per se*; it could be merely an example of divine possession much like what was presented above in Proverbs. In the case of the latter, the verb used (κτίζω) unequivocally indicates that Wisdom was created. I am grateful to my colleague, Jason Zurawski, for first pointing out this difference to me in a seminar that we took together on Jewish Messianism. Indeed, Jason's attention to Wisdom literature has greatly enhanced my ability to read these texts.

[354] See Boccacini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism,* 147.

explicitly sexualized imagery, Wisdom can no longer be considered an essential part of the identity of the creator God. The temporal distinction between God and Sophia further reifies this point. Although Sophia is both eternal (Sir 1:1b; 24:9b) and pre-existent (Sir 1:4a; 24:9a), it is God, and God alone who is exists before the ages and forever (42:21). As a created being, the author of *Sirach* views Wisdom as having a lesser degree of divinity.

Accordingly, when Ben Sira closely links Wisdom and Torah later on in the book of *Sirach*,[355] it is questionable whether this illustrates the phenomenon of divine embodiment. In the passage below, for instance, the author personifies Sophia to the extent that he presents her speaking in the first person. Sophia, though said to abide with God forever (Sir 1:1), now seeks a permanent place to reside elsewhere (Sir 24:7). In response, God instructs her to dwell with the people of Israel, specifically taking up residence in the Torah (νόμος), the book of the covenant (βίβλος διαθήκης) of the highest God.

> Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose property should I abide? Then the Creator of all things commanded me, and the One who created me brought my tent to a place of rest. He said, "Dwell in Jacob and receive inheritance in Israel!" Before the ages, in the beginning, he created (ἔκτισέν) me, and for all the ages I will not cease. In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so (οὕτως) I was established in Zion. So, in the beloved city he caused me to rest and in Jerusalem was my domain. I became rooted in the glorified people, in the portion of the Lord, his inheritance… All this is the book of the covenant (βίβλος διαθήκης) of the Most High God, the law (νόμον) that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the synagogues of Jacob. (Sir 24:7–12, 23)[356]

Again, the author places Sophia in an interesting paradoxical role. In vs. 10, through the use of

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[355] Though closely linked, the author of *Sirach* does not make an explicit identification between Wisdom (σοφία) and Torah. See Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 147; idem, *Middle Judaism,* 81–125, esp. 81, 88–90, 94, 99; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 54–61, esp. 61; Ronald E. Murphy, "The Personification of Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel,* ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon, and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 227.

[356] A similar perspective arises in Col 1:15, where the pre-existent Jesus is depicted as the "image (εἰκών) of the invisible God, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of all creation." Yet both in Sirach and in Colossians, Wisdom and Jesus are described as created. Thus, they are not equivalent to, or synonymous with, the uncreated God.

the word, οὕτως (and so), the author suggests a logical connection between Sophia's role as an attendant minister to the creator God and her establishment in Zion. *Because* Sophia attended to God in the heavens, she became established in Zion. This statement is paradoxical because Sophia is said to be both God's attendant *and* present in Zion among the people of Israel. There is mobility, or an intriguing ubiquity, to her nature such that she is able to be present in two locations, or at the very least, she can touch both the heavens and the earth. This unique status enables Sophia to mediate between these two realms. By describing Sophia in this manner, Ben Sira preserves the utter uniqueness of Israel's supreme God, since—for him—God alone is uncreated. Yet he simultaneously provides a way for the previously unattainable Wisdom (σοφία) of God to become accessible to the people of Israel through their connection to the Mosaic Torah.

This intermediary role foreshadows how the two Alexandrian writers, whom I will explore in the next section of this chapter, present Sophia as embodying Israel's uncreated, male God in the created, female world that God has made. But it also differs from them in one important aspect: Sophia, in *Sirach,* does not function as the embodiment of Israel's God. She acts as an intermediary or emissary for Israel's God. Yet because she was created by God (cf. Sir 1:9; 24:9), she can participate in God's divinity and thereby be considered "divine" (see my discussions of this term in chapters 1 and 2), but she does not constitute an essential component of God's very being. Rather, she stands as distinct from God. Indeed, in *Sirach,* God and Sophia are two separate beings. By contrast, for the two Alexandria writers that I will explore in the next section, namely the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo of Alexandria, Sophia functions as the means by which actual embodiment of Israel's supreme (and ostensibly male) God enters into the created, female world that God has made. This is because, for both authors, Sophia

constitutes an essential component of Israel's deity, who then enters into the created, corporeal world that God has made. This distinction between the author of *Sirach* and these two first-century Alexandrian Jewish writers thus reveals why the latter and not the former depicted Sophia in a more masculinized manner. So long as Sophia remains distinct from Israel's male deity, her femininity was not problematic. Thus, she could be depicted—indeed even be read as—female. Yet once she began to function as Israel's God in the created world, Jewish writers began to portray her in increasingly masculine ways.

Four primary themes, then, can be detected with respect to the role of Sophia in the book of *Sirach*. First, God has undeniably created her. This description subordinates Sophia to Israel's God in a way that prior writings from ancient Israel's tradition had not done, given that Wisdom had hitherto been conceived of as a female goddess in her own right. Second, the author inextricably links Sophia to the God of Israel. This occurs because all "Wisdom [i.e. Sophia]" is from God and is with him forever (cf. Sir 1:1). Third, Sophia resides uniquely among the people of Israel, specifically locating herself within the book of their law. This inherent tension in the author's thought—with Sophia being created by God, connected to God, and undeniably embedded among the people of Israel on earth—foreshadows the liminal space that Sophia will occupy in later Jewish texts from the first century CE, which I will explore in the subsequent two sections of this chapter. Fourth, like the earlier Israelite tradition, throughout the entirety of the work the author consistently portrays Sophia in a feminine manner.

Accordingly, the consistent theme that unites the ancient Israelite tradition, as demonstrated in Proverbs and Job, and developments that happen in the early Second Temple Period, as witnessed in *Sirach*, is that *all authors unequivocally envision Sophia as female.* Though the former tradition presents Wisdom as a separate goddess, distinct from and yet

subordinate to Israel's God, and though the latter depicts her as being created by Israel's God, all authors see her in a feminine light. This backdrop is important because, as I will demonstrate in the subsequent sections of this chapter, significant changes in this depiction began to occur in the first century CE, as demonstrated in the two main Alexandrian authors that I employ as evidence, who both—for various reasons—present Sophia as more male. These changes are not the result of Sophia's own volition. Rather, these authors choose to represent her in an increasingly masculine manner because once she transitioned from being an independent goddess, to being an essential component of the very identity of Israel's God, to embodying Israel's male God in the world that God had made, her female gender became problematic. In making this claim, I am not suggesting that Sophia's biological sex changed (if we could even determine what that was from the ancient evidence available to us), but rather that these first-century Jewish authors begin to present her in ways that could be read as male within their cultural setting. In particular, in the broader cultural milieu of first-century Alexandria, Egypt, these Jewish authors appear to have "embraced the Greek negative attitude toward females."[357] Consequently, envisioning the divine in female form would have seemed incomprehensible: only a masculine God would do.

5.3   Sophia's Gender Destabilization in the *Wisdom of Solomon*

Unlike the earlier tradition, which consistently depicts Sophia in a feminine manner, the first-century Alexandrian Jewish writer who penned the *Wisdom of Solomon* positions Sophia

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[357] Antwerp, "Sophia: The Wisdom of God," 21. Van Antwerp makes this comment about Philo of Alexandria, but the observation is equally applicable to the author of *Wisdom of Solomon.* Indeed, even Van Antwerp notes the many ways in which "Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism and Neo-Platonism, had a significant, recognizable influence on the author. See Van Anterwerp, "Sophia: The Wisdom of God," 22. For ways that the author's language reflects the religious writings, and worldview, of other Hellenistic authors, yet is absent from the Septuagint, see also James M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences*, Analecta Biblica 41 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 6–13.

further in the direction of masculinity by interchangeably portraying her in masculine, feminine, and neuter roles.[358] Jane Webster has noted this effect, suggesting that in *Wisdom of Solomon,* "Wisdom's gender becomes hazy, like her substance, in order to remain an unsolvable enigma."[359] Like Webster, I argue that the author intentionally presents Sophia in a wide variety of gender roles. However, *contra* Webster, I think that the rationale behind such a move was far more than simply to present her as an unsolvable enigma. For example, the author of *Wisdom* does not restrict these variegated gender portrayals to specific moments in the text, or specific locales that Sophia inhabits—whether with God in the heavens or among humans on earth—but deliberately intersperses them throughout the entirety of the work and interweaves them into every place that Sophia touches. The net effect is that, the author depicts a figure who disrupts the perceived stable binary between the categories of male and female. Since she cannot be easily read into either of these options, her portrayal illumines how even in the ancient world gender could be perceived as a spectrum. Moreover, by employing a figure who had previously been read as female and positioning her further in the direction of maleness, the author of *Wisdom* produces a figure who (at least in the context of first-century Alexandria, Egypt) could become a more suitable emissary by which Israel's deity could enter the created world.

To demonstrate this point, I first examine how the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* presents Sophia's gender in each of her respective roles in the text. First, in some places, the author depicts her as an essential component of the creator's God's very identity. Then, in other places, the author presents here as having entered directly into the created world—either specifically in the souls of created humans or in the broader realm of physical materality. Throughout, I emphasize the points at which the author underscores her mobility as she

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[358] For the dating of the *Wisdom of Solomon* to the first century CE, see my discussion above.

[359] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," quoted at 64, but see also 74–77 for context.

transitions from being a part of God to being embedded in the world of materiality. Note that, in this regard, the author of *Wisdom's* presentation of "divine embodiment" thus differs from other forms that I investigated in chapters 2 and 3, because here the locus of embodiment is not always within specific humans but can also more broadly within the created world. The inherent elusiveness of Sophia in this regard further complicates her gendered portrayal throughout the text, and, at times, her purported gender neutrality.

Far more than a mere heuristic device, the author's rhetorical representation of Sophia seems to reflect Hellenistic gender-norms, which privileged the male and masculine over that of the female and feminine. Understood like this, it is not Sophia the female deity who represents Israel's male God on earth; instead, it is Sophia whose complicated gendered portrayal better enables her to reflect Israel's supreme deity in the world that God had made. In other words, I am suggesting that the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* neutralizes Sophia's feminine gender in order for her to become a suitable emissary by which Israel's deity could enter the created world.

a) Sophia's Gendered Portrayal when Depicted as a Part of Israel's Creator God.

Sophia's new gender portrayal, at least in contrast to the ancient Israelite tradition, already begins in places where the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* presents her as an essential component of Israel's God. This is important to note because some scholars have assumed that Sophia was somehow separate from the creator God's identity.[360] However, throughout the

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[360] For examples of those who see Sophia as an independent hypostasis, "distinct from, yet closely related to, the being of God himself," closely related to, see Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), quoted here at 73. For a similar portrayal, see also Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 63–79, esp. 78.

entirety of the work, Sophia remains, unequivocally, a part of God's very identity.[361] Take, for instance, how the author describes Sophia in 7:25.

> For she (i.e. Sophia) is the breath (ἀτμὶς) of the power of God
> And an emanation of the pure glory of the Almighty;
> Therefore nothing defiled steals into her.
> For she is the radiance of eternal light (φωτὸς ἀιδίου)
> A spotless mirror (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον) of the working of God,
> And an image (εἰκὼν) of his goodness. (Wis 7:25–26)[362]

Within this excerpt, the author evokes imagery from Genesis 2:7. Just as the first man remained an inanimate object, not truly becoming a "living being" until God breathed the breath of life into him (cf. Gen 2:7),[363] so too God does not and cannot fully exist without Sophia, the very "breath of the power of God" (Wis 7:25).[364] Though the same Greek words are not used to describe God's breath in the two respective passages, with πνοή employed in Genesis and ἀτμὶς in Wisdom, the two clearly carry the same connotation. The breath of God is that which animates life itself; consequently, without it, any entity—even God himself—would cease to exist. In the subsequent lines of the excerpt, the close connection between God and Sophia is reiterated when the author asserts that she is "an emanation of the pure glory of the Almighty" (Wis 7:25), "a spotless mirror of the working of God," (Wis 7:25), and an "image of his goodness" (Wis 7:26).

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[361] My emphasis on Sophia being an essential part of God's very identity is stronger than suggesting that Sophia is a personified attribute of God. For scholars who advocate for this position, see Murphy, *The Tree of Life,* 94, 133–34, 142–145; Clifford, *Wisdom Literature,* 149–150 (though he, too, intimates that she is something more). By contrast, here I am suggesting that Sophia is an essential component of God's very identity; that God could not be God without Sophia's presence. Such a hard stance on this matter helps to explain why the author of *Wisdom* went to such great lengths to construct Sophia's gender in a new manner. If Sophia was either independent of God or a mere personified attribute of God, her female gender would not have posed such difficulty.

[362] The critical edition of the Greek text of the *Wisdom of Solomon* can be found in Robert Hanhart, ed. *Septuaginta: Editio altera* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 345–376. The translations throughout are my own.

[363] The LXX's version of Genesis 2:7 renders the phrase as "ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς."

[364] Wisd 7:25 offers the following description: "ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως."

Nancy Van Antwerp has suggested that these "images convey an intense intimacy with God,"[365] but to me they connote much more. The imagery underscores how Sophia constitutes an essential component of the very identity of God: only in this manner can she later effectively embody God's presence in the world that God has made.

Yet the striking description of Sophia as "breath (ἀτμὶς)" of God does more than cast a stark contrast between how Sophia was depicted in earlier writings from Israel's tradition (i.e. as an independent goddess who is now subsumed into and subordinated under Israel's God). Rather, it paints a new, albeit fairly elusive, picture of her. As Webster has noted, instead of eroticizing her, as the author of Sirach does, or presenting her as the ideal and faithful wife, as occurs in Proverbs, the author of *Wisdom* crafts a vivid image of Sophia that is defined largely by its opacity, a refusal to conform to prior established norms for either gender.[366]

Particularly striking in this regard is the ethereal language employed with respect to Sophia; as a result, she can be read as neither masculine, nor feminine, but rather as an entity between—or outside of—this insufficient binary structure. By way of example, at various points in the work the author describes Sophia in terms of "spirit" (Wisd 1:6, 7; 7:7, 22). The author's description of Sophia in 1:7, in particular, both underscores Sophia's inextricable connection to Israel's creator God and foreshadows her subsequent ability to become embodied in the world of materiality that God has made. By describing Sophia as the spirit *of the Lord*, the author establishes a direct relationship between God and Sophia. God seems to possess her. Thus, rather than portraying Sophia as an independent entity, the author describes her vis-à-vis her relationship with God.

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[365] Antwerp, "Sophia," 21. For a similar perspective, see Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 142–145.

[366] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 63–79.

This sentiment of Sophia's being directly connected to Israel's God is echoed elsewhere as well. In 9:2, for instance, the author describes Sophia as "[God's] wisdom," suggesting that she does not exist as an independent agent, but that her existence is linked to that of God's. God cannot be fully God without God's wisdom [i.e. Sophia] and wisdom would cease to exist if it were not for her unique positionality in terms of Israel's God. A similar description arises in Wisdom 9:6, where the author notes that Sophia comes from God. In this regard, Sophia is not separate from God, but constitutes an essential component of God's very identity. However, since in Wisdom 1:7 the author not only presents Sophia in relation to God, but also underscores how she "has filled the world (πεπλήρωκεν τὴν οἰκουμένην), and holds all things together (τὸ συνέχον πὰ πάντα)," the author alludes to her dual roles—as both a part of the creator God and also as able to become embedded in the material world that God has made.

Sophia's frequent association with light creates a similar impression of her gender-neutrality.[367] The author often describes her in terms of her brilliance.[368] In 6:12, for instance, the author describes her as "radiant and unfading (λαμπρὰ καὶ ἀμάραντος)," and in 7:10 as one whose "radiance never ceases (ἀκόμητον τὸ ταύτης φέγγος)." As one who both reflects divine light and mirrors the works of God, Sophia's connection to God and her ability to represent and present God to others is once again emphasized. Moreover, the author frequently compares her to light, underscoring how Sophia is superior to this entity, more beautiful even than the sun and moon (cf. Wisd 7:29). A similar image of Sophia occurs in 7:26, where the author presents her as

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[367] For a discussion of how light functioned as a common archetypal symbol often signifying the divine in both the Ancient Near East and the Hellenistic World, see Shayna Sheinfeld, "The Light Incarnate: An Exploration of Light in 2 Baruch and the Gospel of John," (paper presented at the sixth Nangeroni Meeting on John the Jew: Reading the Gospel of John's Christology as a Form of Jewish Messianism, Calmaldoli, Italy, June 19–24, 2016), 1–13, esp. 2–4. For connections between light, divine glory, and the Lord in texts like Isa 60:19–20, see Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 144.

[368] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 74–75.

a "radiance of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the workings of God." Since light is a common archetypal symbol, recognized throughout various human cultures as being an inherently ethereal entity,[369] by describing Sophia in terms of light, luster, splendor, and glow, the author further presents her in an ethereal, gender-neutral manner.

Yet, this positioning of Sophia in the middle of the gender spectrum does not stop here; rather, the author further complicates Sophia's gendered portrayal by depicting her alternately in both masculine and feminine ways. In describing Sophia as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, for instance, the author appears to masculinize her, or at the very least, he presents Sophia with attributes typically associated with Israel's (male) God.[370] At various instances he depicts Sophia as "all-powerful (πανοδύναμον), overseeing all (πανεπίσκπον), and penetrating all spirits (διὰ πάντων χωροῦν)," (Wis 7:23). He also presents her as the doer of "all things" (Wis 7:25) and the renewer of "all things" (Wis 7:27). In the Alexandrian milieu, in which the author of *Wisdom of Solomon* would have been influenced by Platonic and Neo-platonic philosophical modes of thought, these traits would have been associated with male or masculine entities. For according to this line of reasoning, only something male could ascend to such heights.

Elsewhere, however, the author presents Sophia in explicitly feminine roles.[371] Though the author does not employ the word "wife" to describe her, he hints in this direction when he suggests that the "Lord of all loves her (ὁ πάντων δεσπότης ἠγάπησεν αὐτήν)" (Wis 8:3). Likewise, by presenting Sophia as an active agent in the creation of the world, he harkens back to the maternal way that the earlier Israelite tradition presents Wisdom. The author, for instance,

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[369] Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 116.

[370] Antwerp, "Sophia," 21. For additional examples, see also Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 76.

[371] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 75; Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 144–145; Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom,* 178.

describes Sophia as the "designer of what exists" (Wis 8:6) and the one by whom God has "formed humanity" (Wis 9:2). He also describes how Sophia "was present when [God] made the world" (Wis 9:9).[372] Moreover, he states in 7:12 that Sophia is the "mother" of all good things, casting her in a role that—until quite recently—has often served as the hallmark of womanhood. All of these example present Sophia in a feminine light.

The net effect is that Sophia's gendered portrayal throughout the text is quite fluid. At times masculine, at times feminine, and at times presented in ways that disrupt this binary, Sophia's portrayal does not easily map onto, or conform to, norms that are associated with either gender.[373] This reveal that the author presents gender in terms of a dynamic continuum rather than two fixed realities. Sophia's portrayal does not easily conform to norms that are often associated with either gender. Thus, when presented as an essential part of the Creator God, it is difficult to pigeon-hole Sophia in either a male or a female role. Sophia's malleability in this respect, and the way that the author positions her toward the center of the gender spectrum, is critical to our understanding of how the author ultimately presents Sophia as a figure who renders an aspect of Israel's high God in corporeal form. Without the neutralization of her female side, she would not have been perceived as an effect agent by which a part of Israel's supreme deity could be embodied in the world that God had made.

c) Sophia's Gendered Portrayal Once She has Become Embodied in the World

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[372] Note that the Greek of Wis 9:9 is παροῦσα ὅτε ἐποίεις τὸν κόσμον, but I have slightly emended the text so that reads "when God made" rather than "when you made" so that it makes sense in the context of the above paragraph.

[373] Jane Webster makes a similar observation when she remarks how: "In the Wisdom of Solomon, wisdom is engendered as male, female and 'other' in order to retain its mystery," (see Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 78.)

This position of Sophia toward the middle of the gender spectrum is not limited to moments in the text where the author depicts her as a part of God; rather, the depiction persists when she transitions to embodying the presence of Israel's male God in the world of created corporeality. As I pointed out earlier in chapter 3 with respect to the divinely-inspired soul in Philo, so too here Sophia achieves this desired apogee by entering directly into the souls of certain righteous humans. Since these souls are housed in material bodies, Sophia thus becomes embodied in humans by entering into their souls. In 7:27, for instance, the author describes how in every "generation wisdom [i.e. Sophia] passes (μεταβαίνουσα) into holy souls (εἰς ψυχὰς ὁσίας)."[374] What is striking about this description is that Sophia's mobility actually enables her to enter directly into human beings. Sophia's mobility enables a part of God to take on, or enter into, a human body. God is thus embodied in the world, in specific humans, via Sophia. A bit later in the text, the author clarifies why such a move is essential. Without Sophia, humans cannot achieve perfection. "For even one who may be perfect among the children of humanity will be reckoned as nothing absent your [i.e. God's] wisdom" (Wis 9:6). Thus, Sophia plays a pivotal role in the perfection of humans. Without their re-unification with God in this manner, without allowing Sophia to enter into their souls, they remain as less than they were intended to be.

Yet upon Sophia entering into the created world like this, the author further complicates her gender by alternatively presenting her in feminine and masculine ways. In relation to the figure of Solomon, for instance, with whom Sophia interacts most frequently, she is typically presented in a subordinate, female role. Early interactions between the two of them conjure up

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[374] With respect to the context of this passage, Sharon Ringe has argued that "Wisdom's ability to permeate all things (7:22b–8:1) speaks of divine immanence without merging God into the creation itself." See Sharon Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends,* 41. But, as I argue above, 7:27 suggests that Wisdom does, at times, enter directly into creation itself.

images of courtship. Here, Solomon takes on the active role typically associated with men and pursues Sophia, chasing after her with unmitigated abandon. Blinded by the intensity of his love, or perhaps lust, Solomon finds no fault in her. Better is she, he claims, than wealth, dominion, power, authority, intellectual acumen, and even health itself, as nothing compares to her (Wis 7:8–11). Accordingly, like a young man on the prowl, Solomon describes how he "loved her and sought her from… [his] youth" (8:2), and even how he desired to take her for his "bride" (8:2). Lest this breathless chase-scene conjure up images of a happy ever-after between two equal partners, or an egalitarian matrimony between spouses, the text itself quickly tells a different story. As the author makes clear, Sophia—as the woman in this desired-for-relationship—will play the subordinate role. Rather than having her own autonomy, Solomon views Sophia as something to possess. As he describes: I went about "seeking how I might take her for myself… but I realized that I would not possess Sophia unless God might give her to me" (8:18 and 21, respectively). Solomon recognizes that he cannot obtain Sophia unless God gives her to him. Indeed, he implores God to "send forth Sophia from the holy heavens, and from the throne of [God's] glory [to] send her, that she may labor by [his] side" (9:10).[375] Imbued with more mobility than any motion (cf. 7:24), the author, quite ironically, limits Sophia's movements. Restricted by the men who possess her, she is sent from her place at the side of God's throne (9:4) to the home of Solomon, as he confesses: "I decided to take (ἀγαγέσθαι) her" to live with me (8:9). The word ἀγαγέσθαι is particularly striking. It renders Sophia as a commodity to be obtained rather than as an autonomous agent, further emphasizing her subordinate role.

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[375] Note that the Greek here reads: ἐξ ἀπόστειλον αὐτὴν ἐξ ἁγίων οὐρανῶν καὶ ἀπὸ θρόνου δόξης σου πέμψον αὐτήν, but I have switched the second person singular to third person singular to fit within the grammar of the sentence above.

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Despite these frequent depictions of a subordinate Sophia, elsewhere the author casts her in more active roles, particularly as humanity's pedagogue—a role which, at least in first-century Alexandria, would have been held by men, and would have been highly esteemed. As one who has come from God—indeed who is even an essential aspect of God's very identity—the author presents her as "a mystic in the knowledge of God, and an associate in his works" (Wis 8:4). That is, Sophia possesses the requisite knowledge to instruct humans. As for the subject matter she teaches, Crenshaw has suggested that she "was thought to have provided instruction in the fundamental subjects comprising the curriculum in a Greek school: philosophy, physics, history, astronomy, zoology, religion, botany, medicine" (cf. Wis 7:17–20).[376] Typically in a setting like first-century Alexandria, such erudition would be associated with knowledge gained over the course of years of instruction, and thus be limited to affluent men. Since the author presents Sophia as possessing this expertise by nature, and not through hours of copious study, he may be suggesting a different type of gendered story. On the one hand, since pedagogues—historically— were men, by depicting Sophia in this light, one could say that the author is masculinizing the figure of Sophia. On the other hand, since Sophia's knowledge is innate, and not acquired through years of study (and thus her means of acquisition would subvert—or at the very least not map well onto—the historical reality) by positing Sophia in this role, the author also may have been trying to feminize, or maternalize, the role of the teacher.[377]

The educational system in Egypt, as Raffaella Cribiore has observed, followed a strict three-tiered system, and only "privileged young men" could aspire to complete it in its

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[376] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom,* 177.

[377] I thank Ellen Muehlberger for opening my eyes to both possibilities.

entirety.[378] The "first stage" consisted of "basic reading, writing, and numeracy"; the second on developing literary fluency, particularly of poetic texts; and the third (namely the rhetorical school) sharpened students' "oral and written expression," ultimately preparing them for high level positions in "public and political life."[379] Although girls had "access" to the first two stages, by the second, boys far outnumbered girls—even among the highly affluent—and girls were denied entrance to the third altogether.[380] What this meant, practically speaking, is that: "Low-level teaching was not entirely in the hands of male teachers… [for] the papyri indicate the existence of a few" women.[381] But by the time one ascended to the upper echelons of the educational hierarchy, persons who had achieved the pinnacle of what the ancients called *encyklios paideia* (i.e. the complete education), such a position would have been held solely and exclusively by men. By extension, the great intellectuals in ancient Egypt, and her pedagogues and instructors, would have been men as well.

Accordingly, when Philo envisions Sophia as the principal expert who instructs humans in how they are to obtain closer access to God, he is either masculinizing the figure of Sophia or feminizing role of the pedagogue. If we follow historical reality, the former option seems more likely. The author's frequent emphasis on Sophia's expertise further substantiates this position. He depicts her as knowing things of old and refer[ring] to things to come (Wis 8:7), as understanding terms of speech and solutions of riddles (Wis 8:8), and even as understanding all things, so that she can guide Solomon, and others wisely in their actions (Wis 9:11). As a result

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[378] Raffaella Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," in *Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. Roger Bagnall (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 320–337, quoted here at 321.

[379] Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," 321 and 328, respectively.

[380] Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," 328. See also Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 25–46, esp. 28.

[381] Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," 328.

of this knowledge, the author presents Sophia as able to teach self-control, prudence, justice, and courage (Wis 8:7) so that persons may "learn wisdom [i.e. Sophia]" and in the process come to know God as well. Moreover, in this pedagogical role, Sophia is neither passive nor concealed. She can be found "sitting at the gate" by those who seek her (Wis 6:12). She "appears" to those who search for her "in paths," and "meets with them in every thought" (Wis 6:16). In this manner, the author portrays Sophia as a vital, active, and even human-like figure. Like a renowned philosopher, she exchanges with and instruct those who meet her in what they need to know.

Despite Sophia's portrayal as humanity's pedagogue, other passages subordinate her to Israel's God, further complexifying her gendered portrayal throughout the text. For instance, though the author presents wisdom as his teacher (Wis 7:12), God and God alone is considered "the guide even of Sophia and the corrector of the wise" (Wis 7:15). This statement suggests a hierarchy with respect to who is the ultimate pedagogue. While Sophia teaches the author of the text, it is Israel's supreme God—and this God alone—who instructs Sophia. A bit later in the same chapter, the author expresses a similar tension. For though he claims that "Sophia, the craftsman of all things, taught" him (Wis 7:21), he also expresses that he learned what is secret and manifest because God gave him "trustworthy knowledge of all things" (Wis 7:17). These examples illustrate that though the author seeks to keep Sophia's role prominent, Israel's supreme God remains the pinnacle of power and authority in his eyes. Likewise, though the author presents Sophia as linked to Israel's supreme God, he still simultaneously subordinates her to Israel's God. In this manner, though the role of pedagogue, in a highly Hellenized city like Alexandria, typically would be assigned to men, there is a fluidity in how the author constructs Sophia's gender, especially vis-à-vis her role as humanity's pedagogue. Though a masculine role

in first-century Alexandria, in the text itself that masculinity is tempered by Sophia's subordinate position to Israel's God.

Towards the end of the work, however, the author further complicates the relationship between Sophia and Israel's male deity, such that the division between the two becomes blurred and it becomes difficult to distinguish one from the other. As Webster has observed:

> masculine engendering occurs in a historical survey of the function of wisdom in Israel's history. This survey begins with Sophia as the active saving agent (last mentioned in 11.1) then it shifts to God who is described with masculine pronouns and such signifiers as father and king (11.10). Thus, Sophia fades into a male deity.[382]

Although correct in her observations about the masculinization of Sophia in historical survey, Webster assumes that Israel's God and Sophia are separate entities. So, for her, the conflation between the two here is mere rhetoric. I, however, see something more. The fact that Israel's male God and an ostensibly female Sophia can be described in interchangeable ways attests to how interconnected these two figures are in the mind of the author. Sophia does not merely recede into the male deity. Rather, the author refers to Sophia as either "she" or "you (i.e. God)" because Sophia becomes subsumed into the broader "oneness" of Israel's God (see my discussion of this phenomenon in chapter 2 of this dissertation). Indeed, starting in Wis 11.4, even as the author directly addresses in a prayer-like fashion the one who is ostensibly Israel's transcendent (male) God, he describes and praises the actions of God—in the embodied form of Sophia—on earth. Like the other first-century Jewish authors that I explored in chapter 2, the author upholds the idea of one deity over Israel, as can be seen in 12:13, when he asserts: "for neither is there any God except you who cares for all things." Thus, Sophia—though subordinate to God—is also part of God's oneness. The two simply perform different functions; one remains incorporeal and transcendent in the heavens, and the other becomes embodied and imminent on

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[382] Webster, "Sophia: Engendering Wisdom," 76.

earth. In the Hellenized milieu of first-century Alexandria, however, for a female to incarnate a deity would have been incomprehensible. Accordingly, by complicating Sophia's gender throughout the text, that author transforms Sophia's gender into something that would have been more palatable to his first-century readers in terms of representing an embodied form of Israel's supreme God on earth.

Now the question remains: For the author of Wisdom, is Sophia actually embodied in human materiality (i.e. does she actually enter into humans via their souls?) or is she merely working as an incorporeal entity (i.e. like a spirit) alongside humans, but not specifically present within them? Part of the difficulty in categorizing Sophia's identity is that the author keeps his audience guessing, presenting enough of her to tantalize his readers, but not enough to make her identity completely clear. Her ever-changing gendered roles factor into this phenomenon, as does the ethereal, or light-based imagery the author so often employs to describe her. More than any other factor that contributes to this confusion is the author's emphasis on her mobility itself. "For Sophia," he writes, "is more mobile than any motions, and on account of her purity she pervades and has room for all thing" (Wis 7:24).

It is on account of Sophia's spirit-like nature and the attendant mobility that this entails that she can be both the "breath of the power of God" and one who "passes into holy souls" (Wis 7:25 and Wis 7:27, respectively). Moreover, though "she is but one (μία δὲ οὖσα πάντα)," these unique qualities enable her to "do all things, while remaining in herself, and to renew all things" (Wis 7:27). That is to say, without her elusive-spirit-like presence throughout the text, without her uncanny mobility, she could not embody God's presence in the world, nor do so in a two-fold manner—from both the inside by directly entering into human souls and from the outside by working alongside them—as she does. In this regard, I do not think that the author was

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intentionally opaque when presenting Sophia as entering directly into human souls and as entering into the broader world of created materiality. Rather, as an entity that is more mobile than any motion (cf. Wis 7:29), we have yet another indication of her remarkable, yet ever-elusive portrayal throughout the text. By underscoring her mobility, both in terms of her physical locale and her gender, Sophia become a more suitable emissary to embody the presence of Israel's male God in the world that God has made.

5.4   Sophia in Philo of Alexandria

As for the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon,* so too for Philo Sophia's female gender proved particularly challenging. For, as a woman, Sophia represented the antithesis of all that Philo deemed most worthy of praise. Past scholarship has documented this phenomenon well.[383] Already in the 1970s, for instance, Richard Baer Jr. drew attention to Philo's "pejorative" descriptions of female figures, such as Sarah, Hagar, and Rebecca; he emphasized the "natural weakness and susceptibility of woman" (*QG* 1.37, 1.43, 1.45, 1.46, 3.3), associated biblical woman with particular evils and vices (*Det.* 50, *Post.* 34), and dwelled on the "inferiority of females compared to males" (*Leg.* 1.200–201; *QE* 1.7; *QG* 1.25, 27; *Fug.* 51).[384] More recently,

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[383] For other scholars, besides those highlighted above, who have underscored the negative manner in which Philo depicts entites which are female, or women in particular, see Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 25–46, esp. 28; Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child,* 137–139; Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends,* 43; Hoek, "Endowed with Reason," 74; Conway, "Gender and Divine Relativity," 471–491; D'Angelo, "Gender and Geopolitics," 63–88, esp. 63–66, 81–82.

A striking exception arises in Philo's "allegorical interpretation" of Hannah (Ebr. 143–52), in which, as Scott D. Mackie argues, "we encounter the uncharacteristic approval and embrace of the sensuous and passionate mystical praxis of an adept female mystic." See Mackie, "The Passion of Eve," 141–163, esp. 141.

[384] Baer Jr., *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female*, quotations from 40 and 41, respectively, but see also 40–44. Indeed, this is the topic of his entire work. Note that he also points out places where Philo employs "female terminology in close conjunction with such highly pejorative expressions as lifeless, diseased, enslaved; unmanly, nerveless (κατεαγώς), effeminate; mean, slavish; sluggish; accustomed to be deceived, akin to bestial passions; vice, passion; injustice of the multitudes;

Maren Niehoff argued that Philo presents feminine accretions in a person—whether they are a man or a woman—as needing to be excised so that said person can obtain a more pure (meaning masculine) form. In particular, she has demonstrated how Philo allegorizes Abraham's circumcision such that it becomes but "an excision of superfluous and by implication feminine accretions to the intellect."[385] But Sharon Lea Mattila has perhaps best articulated Philo's preference for the "male" over that which is "female" when she writes:

> But the "male" in Philo is not merely asexual. All the universal qualities which Philo considers most admirable are subsumed under the category of "male": the rational, the noetic-ideal and incorporeal, the heavenly, indivisible and unchanging, the active principle. Their opposites are categorized as "female": the irrational, the sense-perceptible and material, the earthly, divisible and changing, the passive principle. The superiority of that which is "male" over that which is "female" is one of the most consistently applied principles in Philo's thought.[386]

As Mattila's work demonstrates, Philo's preferential treatment of the male over the female creates a world in which gender norms are constructed in polemical opposites. Being "male," for Philo, "is not merely asexual," but a distinct privileging of that gender over that of the "female."[387] Like the author of *Wisdom of Solomon,* then, only to an even greater extent, the negative Hellenistic views on woman deeply affected Philo's perceptions of gender. Indeed, Philo's harsh and deprecatory statements about women in general, and the female gender in particular, constitute one of the most persistent categories that emerge throughout his extensive oeuvre.

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vain opinions; softness, death, everything vile, the more imperfect and ignoble element, transgressions and lawlessness, beginning of evil, depravity, night, darkness, a mixed mass, [and] takes pleasure in being a knave," 42, with notes 3–12 as references.

[385] Niehoff, "Circumcision as a Marker of Identity," 95–96.

[386] Mattila, "Wisdom," 106.

[387] Mattila, "Wisdom," 106.

Because of Philo's sustained preference for all things "male" and "masculine" over the "female" and "feminine," for him to present wisdom as an instrument by which the incorporeal and uncreated God can enter into created and corporeal existence, he portrays her in a masculine light. That is to say, unlike the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, who positions Sophia toward the center of a gendered spectrum, Philo moves her from one end to the other. In particular, as σοφία [Sophia] transitions from being part of the uncreated God to becoming embodied within the minds of created humans, Philo masculinizes her. Instead of being female, she becomes male. In this manner, she becomes the perfect intermediary, able to instruct created humans how they, too, can become more "male" in order to come closer to their masculine God.

Again, as we saw in *Wisdom of Solomon,* so too here, crucial to Sophia's gendered portrayal is her mobility. In order for her to embody God's presence in the world effectively so that she can assist others in their attempts to approach the living God, both the manner by which the author portrays her gender and her physical locale change. In particular, her journey of descent from the uncreated God to created corporeality, and the concomitant masculinity that Philo imposes on her as she travels from the two respective spheres, foreshadows in reverse the journey of ascent that created humans need to undertake in order to approach the uncreated God. By mimicking her maleness, created humans learn, through the instructions and example of Sophia, how to travel away from the "female" world of sense-perception and created corporeality in which they were born and move instead towards the rational "male" sphere of incorporeality in which God himself resides.

Philo does not impose a systematic rubric for how he presents Sophia moving from femaleness to maleness, but in what follows I identify three distinct stages for how he presents her embodying God's presence among humans. In this way humans are able to mimic this

process of becoming more male-like so that they can better approach Israel's high God. In the first stage, Philo depicts wisdom as part of the uncreated God. In these passages, wisdom is not synonymous with Philo's supreme creator God, but an essential component of God's very identity, since she functions as one of God's δύναμις (powers). In all instances that Sophia (σοφία) is presented as a part of the Godhead, she takes on a decidedly female role, typically as the mother of the universe, who acts in relation with God the Father to produce the created world, but occasionally as the daughter of God instead. In the second stage, Philo depicts divine Sophia as being poured out into the minds of created humans. Here, she is still feminine, often represented as the πήγη (fountain) of God, but her gender begins to shift as she transitions away from her position vis-à-vis Israel's God and towards her role as overseer, or pedagogue, of humanity. In particular, as I discuss in this section, there are times in which Philo depicts Sophia, like God or the Logos, in an active, or dominant role, in which she functions as the agent by which the divine becomes impregnated within the souls of created humans. In the third stage, once divine Sophia has entered into the created, corporeal world and resides among and at times within the minds of humans, Philo presents her in an active pedagogical role, educating humans—through their engagement with philosophy—away from the tainted feminine world and back toward the pure, masculine God. Since Philo depicts Sophia as already having moved from femaleness to maleness, he also portrays her as possessing the requisite knowledge to enable created humans to drink deeply of her waters of knowledge, thereby enabling them to learn how to undergo the process of becoming more masculine, and thus God-like, themselves. In this manner, Philo's gender cycle achieves its intended apogee as Sophia's masculinity offers a paradigm for how created humans can do the same in order to ascend and approach Israel's masculine God.

a) Stage One: A Feminine Wisdom Envisioned as a Part of the Identity of the Uncreated God

In the first stage, when Philo envisions Sophia as an essential component of the creator God's very identity, Philo casts her in a feminine role. That is, as Sharon Lea Mattila has previously pointed out, in all instances where Philo depicts Sophia in relation to God, he presents her as "'female'; she is his daughter, his wife, and the mother of his creation."[388] Philo even intimates at times that God and wisdom are engaged in a relationship with one another, a relationship that bears offspring. For instance, in *Somn.* 2.241, Philo depicts wisdom as "the delight of God," and God as "the delight of wisdom," underscoring their mutual affection for one another. Moreover, though not explicitly stated, a few lines later Philo insinuates that at least one of the products of their union is the "divine word,"[389] which "descends from the fount of Sophia (σοφία) like a river, much like a newborn child flows out of his mother after a period of intense labor, "in order that it might water and irrigate the godly and heavenlyshoots and plants of virtue-loving plants which are like a garden" (*Somn.* 2.242). Their union—though of an intellectual nature and restricted to the masculine, incorporeal realm—thus has a direct impact upon a particular subset of created humans. For those virtue-loving humans who currently reside in the female world of sense-perception, yet who seek to reconnect with Israel's God, this union

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[388] Mattila, "Wisdom," 108. See, for instance, *Ebr.* 30–31, *Cher.* 49, and *Det.* 54. See also *Her.* 199–200, where Philo describes Wisdom as the one who created the world, and *Fug.* 108–09, where she is described as the mother of Moses. Note that the translations from Philo in this section of chapter 5 derive from Younge's work.

[389] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza offers an interesting take on this point in Philo, suggesting that, on the one hand, "Whereas Divine Wisdom is in the heavenly world of G*d, her son, the Logos (the Word), lives in the historical world in order to clear a path for the soul to return to heaven. Insofar as Philo restricts the sphere of Divine Wisdom to the heavenly world, he vacates her place as mediator of salvation and as people's advocate in the historical world so that her son, the Logos, can take over her functions and titles." While, on the other hand, "Philo identifies the Logos with Divine Wisdom. The Logos, as the son of G*d and of Sophia (*De fuga* 109), is at the same time the *Eikon*, i.e., the image and essence of G*d. This identification opens the way for Philo to telescope Sophia-Eikon and the Logos-Eikon together." See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child,* 138.

helps bring to life their "sprouts" within the masculine world of incorporeality, thereby positioning them closer to God. The affection that God and Sophia share for one another thus creates a positive result: It irrigates the initial buds of life for the souls of virtue-loving humans within the celestial realms. Though Philo's male God and female wisdom remain in the incorporeal and masculine realm of ideas, here Philo suggests that their intellectual union has a direct effect upon the created and feminine world of sense perception.

Sophia's female role, however, especially vis-à-vis the God of Israel, is perhaps best exemplified in her instrumental role in creation (*Ebr.* 50–51; *Det.* 54; *Cher.* 49; *Her.* 199–200), in which she is often depicted as the mother of the world (*Ebr.* 50–51; *Det.* 54; *Fug.* 109). Philo, for instance, describes wisdom as the mother and nurse of the sense-perceptible world in *Ebr.* 30–31:

> But while the names, 'father [πατρὸς]' and 'mother [μητρὸς],' are common, their powers [αἱ δυνάμεις] are different. At any rate, we would speak correctly if we say that the demiurge who created the universe is also the father of that which has been created, and that the mother is the knowledge of the creation, with whom God [ὁ θεὸς] united—not as a man [ἄνθρωπος]—and thereby sowed creation. And this mother/knowledge, having received the seeds of God, at the fulfillment of her birth pangs, brought forth the only and beloved sense-perceptible son, this world [i.e. kosmos]. Therefore, Sophia is introduced by someone of the divine chorus as speaking about herself in this manner: 'God acquired [ἐκτήσατό] me as the first of his works, and before (this) age he established me.' For it was necessary that all such things that have come into existence be younger than the mother and nurse of the universe [μητρὸς καὶ τιθήνης τῶν ὅλων].' (*Ebr.* 30–31)[390]

Here, the gendered portrayal of wisdom becomes quite clear. While Philo depicts the God of Israel (ὁ θεὸς) as the father (πατρὸς) of the universe, he presents wisdom as its mother (μητρὸς). Thus, the two come together to produce real effects, creating, for example, the entire corporeal world of sense perception in which humans reside. Moreover, though Philo insists that the two unite at the intellectual level—with wisdom being portrayed as the knowledge of God, and

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[390] For a similar portrayal of Sophia as mother and God as Father, see *Det.* 54; *Fug.* 109. In the latter, Sophia is portrayed as the mother of Moses in particular.

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elsewhere as a perpetual "virgin, having received a nature which shall never be touched or defiled" (*Fug.* 50)[391]— the author still cannot avoid physical descriptions of their union and its concrete effects. Like a laboring mother, at the climax of her birthing process Philo presents Sophia writhing in pain, as the entire sense-perceptible world begins to crown its head. The seeds sown by God the father thus achieve their desired end and Sophia's work as mother and nurse of the universe begins (*Ebr.* 30). Not unlike other ancient philosophical texts from this time, Philo casts Sophia in a feminine light by presenting her as a passive recipient of God's seed. Moreover, through her act of nursing the universe, her body sustains the world. The net result is the production—and ultimately survival—of the universe.

In this gendered female role, Philo subordinates Sophia, like all female figures in his thought, to Israel's high God. To emphasize the hierarchical relationship between Israel's supreme deity and female Sophia, Philo employs the Septuagint's description of God *acquiring* (ἐκτήσατό) wisdom (i.e. Sophia) as the first of all of his works. The description derives directly from Philo's exegesis of the Greek text, but he employs the imagery to reinforce his negative portrayal of all things female throughout this work. Accordingly, Philo can present wisdom as subordinate to God—despite the fact that she remains an essential component of the Godhead itself—since a possessor is always, by definition, greater than the thing possessed. Though wisdom is pre-existent with God and older than all else (indeed, Philo never presents her as created) as a female figure, she still remains—at least in Philo's eyes—lesser than Israel's supreme God.

To present a feminine Sophia as an essential part of God, yet simultaneously subordinate to that God, Philo positions Sophia at a lesser spot in the divine hierarchy (see chapter 2). In the

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[391] See also *Cher.* 49, where Philo describes God as the husband of Sophia, sowing for the race of mankind the seed of happiness in good and *virgin* soil (emphasis mine).

specific case of Sophia, this hierarchy reifies his portrayal of the superiority of the male over that of the female. Philo, for example, does not present Sophia as synonymous with God, but rather as a power (δύναμις) of God. At times, Philo portrays God as the fountain of wisdom [i.e. Sophia] (ἡ πηγὴ τῆς σοφίας, ὁ θεός) (*Sacr.* 64.), and at other times, he more explicitly states that she is the first from his own powers (δυνάμεων) (*Leg.* 2:86; cf. *Leg.* 2:87). But in all instances, Philo encapsulates a female Sophia into his broader understanding of God's *oneness*.

The very fact that Sophia is female, though, and thus deemed lesser in terms of Philo's gender hierarchy, is also essential for her movement from being seen as an essential aspect of God's very identity to her embodied—or masculine—role within the female world of sense perception. If she, for instance, like God the Father, was purely male, and thus rational, incorporeal, heavenly, indivisible, and unchanged, she would remain the antithesis of all created things and thus would be unable to bridge the gap between the masculine realm of incorporeality and the feminine world which God has made. As a female figure, however, who becomes more male-like as she transitions from one world into the next, she becomes the perfect intermediary, able to embody the presence of Israel's male and uncreated God within the female world of sense perception that God has made. Philo thus presents Sophia as a power of God that, like a mother, plays a pivotal role in the creation of the world. Sophia is never created. Yet because she stands at the crossroads between the divine world and all that has been created, she presents a means by which persons—through their *nous*—can access the transcendent God. Certainly, further analyzing how Philo portrays Sophia undergoing this process demonstrates the central role that gender performs in these events.

b) Stage Two: Sophia's Shifting Gendered Portrayal from Female to Male

In the second stage, when Philo presents Sophia moving from her position with (and as a part of) God in the heavens, to her place within the created world, the manner in which Philo portrays her as becoming more male-like can be seen most clearly. At the onset of this stage she remains in a passive female role. Philo describes God (or, at times, the *logos*) as the fountain of wisdom, suggesting that it is God, and not Sophia, who remains in the active or masculine role (*Sacr.* 64; *Fug.* 97, 137; *Somn.* 2.245). In these cases, Philo presents Sophia as deriving from, or more specifically, as bubbling out of, God such that God remains her source and she remains God's derivative, rather than the other way around. At this part of her journey, God remains in the active masculine role and Sophia in the passive, feminine one.

Philo also interprets portions of scripture allegorically to depict God in an active, masculine manner—as he is one who rains wisdom down—while he presents wisdom in a passive, feminine role (*Mut.* 259; *Fug.* 137–38). One recurrent passage that Philo exegetes in this regard is Exod 16:4, in which God rains down manna from heaven for the Israelites as they wander throughout the desert for forty years *en route* from Egypt to the Promised Land. Philo, however, reinterprets the text to refer to Sophia:

> [B]ut God, the only cause and giver, rains down the food from heaven without the cooperation of any other being. And indeed, we read in the scriptures, "Behold, I rain upon you bread from heaven" [Exod 16:4]. Now what nourishment can the scriptures properly say is rained down, except heavenly Sophia (ὅτι μὴ τὴν οὐράνιον σοφίαν), which God sends from above upon those souls which have a longing for virtue? (Philo, *Mut.* 259).

Instead of viewing the manna from heaven as literal bread coming down, Philo allegorizes the text to suggest that God rained down Sophia. As is the case with Philo's imposition of Sophia's gender, so too here Philo presents God as the one who decides to "rain down" Sophia. Sophia herself does not choose to undergo this journey. Indeed, the text does not indicate whether Sophia consents to this role, or whether she fights it. Her voice, her agency, and her volition is

simply not present in the text. Only from her silence can we speculate about her loss of control. Philo usurps Sophia's agency, curtailing her ability to undergo the journey from heaven to earth on her own, and in so doing preserves the image of Israel's supreme deity as the who is ultimately in control.

Another passage that Philo interprets vis-à-vis Sophia is Exodus 14:9, where, in the biblical retelling, a pillar of cloud that once had gone ahead of the Israelites to guide them in their exodus from Egypt now moves behind them to create a barricade between the Israelites and their Egyptian pursuers. Instead of seeing it as a literal cloud, however, Philo interprets the passage allegorically. Rather than creating a division based on the Israelites versus the Egyptians, Philo has the cloud, now interpreted as an extension of God, divide between "the race, which is temperate and beloved by God," and "that which is devoted to the passions and a foe to God" (*Her* 203). Of particular note is what the cloud does. Philo suggests that the cloud, standing in for God, "gently showers down wisdom (i.e. Sophia) on the minds of those who study virtue," but to "those minds which are ill-disposed and unproductive of knowledge, it pours forth a whole body of punishment" (*Her*. 203–04). Though in the biblical retelling a literal cloud divides the Israelites from the Egyptians, Philo reinterprets the narrative to suggest that it is God who directs the cloud to shower down wisdom or vice on respective persons. Through this interpretation, Philo again takes away Sophia's volition and agency. She does not decide to make the journey from heaven to earth on her own accord. God, accordingly, remains the dominant, male figure, while Sophia acts in a subordinate role.

Once Sophia has entered the created, corporeal world of sense perception, however, Philo presents her in a more active role as humanity's educator. Helpful again, in this regard, is Raffaella Cribiore's research on education in the Egyptian context, which emphasizes that,

though women teachers could be found in the lower levels, the higher positions remained the exclusive domain of men.[392] When Philo envisions Sophia as a pedagogue, then, as I pointed out in the previous section on the *Wisdom of Solomon*, he could be making one of two moves. Either he is masculinizing Sophia or feminizing the role of the pedagogue. Yet since Philo himself (in contrast to an author like the one who penned the *Wisdom of Solomon* who seems to view gender in terms of a dynamic continuum) appears to envision gender in terms of two stable binary options, preferring the male over the female, it seems more likely that he is masculinizing the figure of Sophia.

Upon entering into the female world of sense perception, Sophia's active role further corroborates her masculinized role as humanity's pedagogue. Rather than being poured out or rained down, she becomes the one who "pours forth inexhaustible streams of unalloyed instruction" into her disciples (*Prob.* 13). Moreover, although she does not choose to become more male-like of her own volition, once masculinized—and thereby an active agent herself, at least insofar as Philo portrays her—she stands in the perfect position to serve as humanity's pedagogue, instructing them how they can emulate her masculinity and embark upon their own journey towards the presence of their God. At various times, for instance, Philo describes Sophia as "that most divine and communicative of all things," who "never closes [her] school" (*Prob.* 13); Or, as a vessel or pitcher of teaching that can be poured forth to those disciples of hers who are competent to receive it" (*Post.* 146). Moreover, Philo also depicts Sophia as pouring all that she knows into the minds of her pupils, as into a cistern, since it is she who represents and embodies the ever flowing wisdom of God to them. In each of these instances Sophia takes on the active, male role. Rather than being rained down by God, she becomes the one whose life-

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[392] Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," 320–337.

giving waters enables others to survive. Indeed, without her instruction and guidance, humans would remain entangled in the world of female sense perception themselves.

In *Det.* 117 and *Post.* 125, for example, Philo presents this masculinized version of wisdom as entering directly into the souls of those humans who seek after her, thereby instantiating the process by which the divine Sophia enters into the realm of materiality. By imbibing of her life-giving waters, initiates are instructed into the mysteries of God. In *Det.* 117, Philo describes how "the fountain of divine wisdom is borne along, at one time in a gentler and moderate stream, and at another with greater rapidity… but when it comes on swiftly, the whole material enters like oil into the light of the soul." Likewise, in *Post.* 125 Philo compares the irrigation of plants to that of the soul. Just as "seeds and plants which are put into the ground grow and blossom through being irrigated," so too "the soul … when it is watered with the wholesome stream of wisdom (ὅταν νάματι ποτίμῳ σοφίας ἄρδηται), shoots forth, and brings fruit to perfection." Although Philo does not present Sophia in explicitly gendered terms in either of these examples, the implication is still present. In the former, Sophia takes on a very active role as she enters swiftly, much like male seed into the womb of a woman*,* like oil into the light of the soul. In the latter, the souls of humans become watered, again, by what seems to be a very active and masculine wisdom. Yet, it is the effect of those life-giving waters that is most intriguing. As a result of wisdom's watering, these souls begin to produce fruit that is perfect, too. Accordingly, the end result of wisdom's nourishing waters is that they cause created humans to produce items that are perfect, thereby reflecting something of the perfect, supreme God themselves. So while Philo demonstrates sexism by resisting female power and authority, wisdom is still essential for creating and cultivating life—so there is still, quite ironically, a reliance on the feminine within his thought, even as he prioritizes the masculine. While Philo

cannot deny this reliance on the feminine, he certainly does not describe the feminine with the same strength and importance as the masculine.

A more explicit reference of Philo's masculinized version of Sophia arises in a passage where she interacts directly with the souls of created humans through their pursuit of knowledge:

> Therefore, the man who is fond of learning, seeing men imbibing the sciences like water, from wisdom [i.e. Sophia] that divine fountain (ἀπὸ σοφίας, τῆς θείας πηγῆς), runs up, and meeting them becomes a suppliant to them to know how he may allay his thirst for learning. And the soul which has received the best possible education, namely, the lesson not to envy, and to be liberal, immediately proffers to him the stream of wisdom (σοφίας νᾶμα), and invites him to drink abundantly. (*Post.* 138)

This passage demonstrates that Sophia functions as the male pedagogue of those men who are fond of learning. Considering the role of pederasty in pedagogical practices in ancient Greece, Philo may have been intentionally evoking such a scenario in his presentation of Sophia.[393] In her role as educator, wisdom takes on an active—or masculine—role. When men come to her divine fountain, like students flocking to an esteemed teacher, and imbibe of her knowledge, like those who soak up an excellent lecture, their souls receive the best possible education. Moreover, by drinking abundantly from her waters, they learn not to envy. Thus, they begin the process by which they start to move away from the enticements of the female, sense-perceptible world and back towards their male, or masculine God.

Of particular interest in this regard is the way in which Philo employs water imagery to depict Sophia's multifaceted existence. Water is a ubiquitous presence in daily life, possessing the unique trait of mobility, as it is poured out and flows from one location to another. Through its movement, water performs the necessary function of giving life to and nourishing those who are weary or dried up. These multifaceted roles serve Philo well in his descriptions of Sophia.

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[393] See William A. Percy, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

Not only is God depicted as the fountain of Sophia (*Sacr.* 64; cf. *Fug. 97* and *Fug.* 137), but her "inexhaustible stream" is often presented as being poured out to her disciples, or imbibed by them (*Prob.* 13; cf. *Post.* 146, 151). In other instances, Philo suggests that the desire for wisdom can cause the streams of pleasure for effeminate and earthly things to slacken, thereby contrasting the power of Sophia's male waters versus the female ones of earthly pleasure (*Somn.* 2.13). Moreover, Philo depicts the wisdom of God like a flowing river, suggesting that though perfect men may have their beginnings in the body, their end is in the wisdom of God instead (*Her.* 314–15).

Because Philo likens wisdom to water in this manner, he gives her an air of fluidity and mobility, which allows for the variegated manner by which he presents her gender, depending on if she is with God in the heavens or an actor in the created world. For example, although she is present with God in heaven and forms an essential element of God's very identity, she doesn't stay there. Moreover, in other places, Philo describes how the divine spirit of wisdom has been found abiding in the neighborhoods of men, as was with Moses (*Gig.* 47), or the king (*Her.* 314–15), and that wisdom can abide in such place for a long time, aiding those who seek after virtue in their journey to the incorporeal realm. She moves, like a river, flowing at times quickly and at other times slowly, from her position as a part of God to her embodied role within the created world. Like water, there is a fluidity to her character portrayal, most notably with respect to her gender, which enables her to perform these multifaceted roles. She is, then, not only God's spouse and the mother of creation, but also humanity's pedagogue, allowing them to imbibe in her life-giving and knowledge-filled waters so that they too, like her, can learn to become more masculine—and thus more God-like—as well.

c) Stage Three: Masculine Wisdom instructs Humans How to Become Masculinized.

By the third stage, once wisdom has entered into the corporeal world of sense perception among humans—often residing in or by their minds—Philo depicts her in a thoroughly masculine role. About this new male-like portrayal, Philo is explicit. In one of his treatises, for instance, in response to two hypothetical questions that he proposes— "How can the daughter of God, namely wisdom, be called a father?" and "Is it because the name indeed of wisdom is feminine, but the sex masculine?"— he responds:

> [A]ll the virtues bear the names of women, but have the powers and actions of most full grown men, since what whatever is subsequent to God, even if it be the most ancient of all other things, still has only the second place when compared to that omnipotent being, and appears not so much masculine but feminine, in accordance to its likeness to the other creatures, for as the male always has the precedence, the female falls short, and is inferior in rank. We say, therefore, that wisdom, the daughter of God, is both male and father, and that which sows the seeds of, and which begets learning in, souls and also education, and knowledge, and prudence, and all honorable and praiseworthy things. (*Fug.* 50–51)

Several themes that I have already underscored recur here. Philo's subordination of Sophia to Israel's high, omnipotent God, for instance, reappears. Though an essential part of God's very identity, Philo presents wisdom here as "subsequent to God," and thus deems her in "second place when compared to that omnipotent being" (*Fug.* 51). Moreover, to stress this hierarchy he reiterates that, in relation to God, she appears "not so much masculine as feminine… since the "male always has the precedent, the female falls short" (*Fug.* 51). Yet Philo also vividly describes how Sophia takes on a male role once she enters into created (and female) corporeality. Like the other virtues who bear female names, wisdom in fact has "the powers and actions of most full grown men" (*Fug.* 51). That is, her feminine garb serves only to mask her true potential and capability as a man. Moreover, once female wisdom enters into the female world of sense perception, she takes on an active role. Rather than being the recipient of God's seeds (*Ebr.* 50–

51), she becomes the one who "sows the seeds of, and who begets learning in souls" of others (*Fug.* 52). In this manner, Philo no longer casts Sophia in a feminine light, but a masculine one.

Masculinized in this way, indeed at times explicitly described as the "father of those who practice virtue (τῶν ἀσκητῶν πατρός)," Sophia guides humans through their educational endeavors away from the tainted female world of created materiality and back to Israel's unadulterated supreme God (*Migr.* 28). In *Immut.* 143, for instance, Philo explains how Sophia acts as humanity's pedagogue, guiding their minds in the process of acquiring the knowledge of God.

> And know that this way is Sophia (ταύτην ἴσθι σοφίαν). For the mind being guided by her Sophia, while the road is straight and level and easy, proceeds along it to the end; and the end of this road is the knowledge and understanding of God. But every companion of the flesh hates and repudiates, and endeavors to corrupt this way; for there is no one thing so much at variance with another, as knowledge is at variance with the pleasure of the flesh. Accordingly, the earthly Edom is always fighting with those who wish to proceed by this road. (*Immut.* 143)

Here, Philo underscores the inherent difficulties that humans encounter when proceeding on this journey toward God without Sophia's aid, but he also stresses the relative ease of the process—describing how the road becomes straight, level, and easy, at least for some—when she is involved. To further clarify this point, he also describes how when persons have an insatiable desire for Sophia, they are said to be called up (*Plant.* 22), indeed, even endowed with wings to take them up, which enables them to hasten toward their uncreated God (*Plant.* 23; see also my discussions of humanity's ascent toward God in chapter 3 of this dissertation). Sophia thus performs an instrumental role in the masculinization of particularly inquisitive persons.

For others, however, the process of reconnecting with God poses challenges, as Sophia is less accessible or her assistance is less desired by them. For instance, though Philo explains how some persons "continually thirst" after Sophia, drinking up her "sacred springs" (*Virt.* 79), others

"never taste of her sweet waters," or only do so "with the edges of their lips" (*Virt.* 188). This language implies that, although the waters of divine Sophia have become embodied in the world for humanity's employment, at times even taking up direct residence within the souls of certain humans, they are in reality only available to those who most desire them, or who are actively seeking to learn how to live the virtuous life. As such, though masculinized Sophia has become embodied in the world, her accessibility is still limited. Striking, then, is Philo's insistence in *Immut.* 160 that Sophia is the only way by which "suppliant souls… can find a way of escaping to the uncreated God (σοφία, δι᾽ ἧς μόνης ἱκέτισι ψυχαῖς ἡ ἐπὶ τὸν ἀγένητον καταφυγὴ γίνεται). Since Sophia has become masculinized herself, she possesses the requisite knowledge to teach others, particularly those who desire to learn, how to emulate her path. In this masculinized role, Sophia thus helps instruct those who are most eager to leave behind their effeminate bodies and the effeminate world in which they reside in order to ascend into the incorporeal masculine world of idea where their God resides.

To this point I have underscored places where Philo explicitly describes Sophia as a pedagogue, but elsewhere he more tacitly intimates in this direction by creating an inextricable link between the concepts of study, education, and Sophia herself. By way of example, Philo often associates those who are fond of learning with Sophia's divine waters (*Post.* 138). Once a person has received the best possible education by learning not to envy, they understand how to move away from their bodily needs and desires, thereby opening the way for them to imbibe from Sophia's divine streams, which thus positions them closer to the divine (*Post.* 138). That is to say, by engaging in the process of education itself, with Sophia's assistance along the way a person learns how to turn away from the pleasures of the female world of materiality and towards the masculine world of ideas (and ultimately God) instead.

A striking example of how Philo connects Sophia to the educational process arises in his allegorization of Genesis 24. Here, Rebecca draws water for a stranger and his camels, a stranger who unbeknownst to her is the manservant of Isaac whom she will later marry. Indeed, it is this selfless and seemingly unrequited act of drawing out water for this ostensible stranger that initiates the process of betrothal itself. According to Philo's allegorization of the story, however, instead of being literal water, Rebecca draws out divine Sophia instead. Philo then goes on to describe how Rebecca's act of acquiring this water links Sophia to the educational sciences themselves. Just as the water quenches the thirst of Isaac's manservant and that of the attendant camels who accompany him on his arduous and sun-scorched journey from Canaan to Mesopotamia, so too does Sophia nourish the educational sciences by irrigating them with her restorative waters. As a result of these actions, Sophia is instrumental in fostering a love that is most excellent within those who have engaged in the educational process, training them to bring nothing of the earth, with them as they seek to transcend the material realm (*Fug.* 195). As Philo describes:

> For Moses says, "And having gone down to the fountain, she [i.e. Rebecca] filled her ewer, and went up again." This is that divine wisdom [i.e. Sophia] from which all the particular sciences are irrigated, and all the souls which love contemplation and are filled with a love of what is most excellent; and to this fountain the sacred scripture most appropriately assigns a name, calling it "judgment" and "holy," bringing with it nothing of the earth, and that it is the judgment of the universe by which all contrarieties are separated from one another. (*Fug.* 195)

Through allegorizing Genesis 24 in this manner, Philo links Sophia, the sciences, and the process by which human souls are made more like God. As the one who fosters the process by which a person engages in education, which ultimately affects a change in these persons themselves, Philo thereby highlights (and praises) Sophia's masculine qualities.

Another way that Philo creates a connection between education and Sophia is by making

a rare yet effective reference to his own life. In *Somn.* 205, for instance, Philo compares his personal studies of the universe with that of the "lover of wisdom (i.e. Sophia)" who proceeds from the earlier stages of grammatical knowledge to that of the ancient poets to that of the final stages of rhetoric in order to make a beautiful work.

> Nevertheless I admire the lover of wisdom (τὸν σοφίας ἐραστήν) or having studied the same art, collecting and thinking fit to weave together many things, though different, and proceeding from different sources, into the same web; for taking the two first elements from the grammatical knowledge imparted to children, that is to say, reading and writing, and taking from the more perfect growth of knowledge the skill which is found among poets, and the comprehension of ancient history, and deriving certainty and freedom from deception from arithmetic and geometry, in which sciences there is need of proportions and calculations; and borrowing from music rhyme, and metre, and harmonies, and chromatics, and diatonics, and combined and disjoined melodies; and having derived from rhetoric invention, and language, and arrangement, and memory, and action; and from philosophy, whatever has been omitted in any of these separate branches, and all the other things of which human life consists, he has put together in one most admirably arranged work, combining great learning of one kind with great learning of another kind. (*Somn.* 205)

In this excerpt, Philo describes the "lover of wisdom (τὸν σοφίας ἐραστήν)," a collocation he frequently contrasts elsewhere with that of the sophist,[394] as a person who proceeds from the first two elements of grammatical knowledge to an advanced stage of education, which enables him to put together the most admirably arranged work (*Somn.* 205). In contrast to the sophist, then, who becomes enticed by the allures of the feminine world of materiality, the lover of Sophia engages his mind in educational endeavors, proceeding from the lower levels to the highest, a process which ultimately masculinizes them since it teaches them to reject the female world of the senses and to engage in the masculine world of ideas and incorporeality instead.

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[394] One frequent and repeated refrain throughout Philo's works is that true Wisdom (σοφία) is the opposite of false sophistry. A few prominent examples include, but are not limited to, the following. In *Migr.* 85, Philo argues that scripture asserts that sophistry is always subdued by Wisdom. In *Ling.* 159, he suggests that sober Wisdom is opposed to sophistry. In *Prob.* 4, he contrasts the beauty of wisdom to the unsightliness of sophistry. And in *Migr.* 177, he proposes that sophists look upon wisdom incorrectly (see also *Praem.* 8 and *Det.* 38).

Yet the whole point of associating with, or learning from Sophia is for a person to leave behind the allures of the female world of the body—of materiality and sensuality—and to connect with Israel's masculine. In *Spec.* 2.147, for instance, Philo describes how those who love Sophia never practice "anything else except a passing over from the body and the passions." That is to say, the "lover[s] of Sophia" are so preoccupied with leaving behind feminine materiality that they attend to nothing else. Love of wisdom, however, also accomplishes something else for the persons who pursue it. It provides them with a unique and unprecedented way of being able to speak directly with uncreated and immortal God. By way of example, in *Her. 14*, where Philo interprets Exodus 14:4, he suggests that lovers of wisdom not only believe in God, but they are able to communicate with God in a new and unprecedented way. In particular, their cries are "not indeed with the noise of the mouth and tongue, by means of which they say that the air is affected with a rotatory motion, and so is rendered capable of being perceived by the hearing, but by the all-instructed and very loudly speaking organ of that voice of which no mortal man is the hearer, but only the uncreated and immortal God" (*Her.* 14). These descriptions of the necessity of humans to become "lovers of Sophia" in order to come closer to God suggests the extent to which Philo has masculinized the figure of Sophia. In first-century Alexandria, where male pedagogues often became the lovers of the male students, Philo portrays both Sophia, as teacher, and her student, as needing to become more male-like in order to come to know better and ultimately understand Israel's supreme God.

Elsewhere Philo explicates why love of Sophia enables a person to connect so clearly with God. As he describes in *Virt.* 8, Sophia "furnishes by means of rational, and moral, and natural doctrines, and meditations from which the virtues are derived, which eradicate luxury from the soul, engendering in it a desire for temperance and frugality, in accordance with the

resemblance to God at which it aims." That is to say, Sophia causes the mind to focus, to study, and to mediate upon the virtues. In the process of this educational quest, which makes a person more rational, the souls of created humans become eradicated from earthy luxuries, engendering in them a desire for temperance and frugality, which resembles God, instead. In other words, they are no longer dragged down by the feminine allures and pleasures of this world—such as food and wine and sex, which fosters gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness—but instead they desire the "heavenly food, which wisdom (σοφία) offers to contemplative men by means of discourses and opinions" (*Opif.* 158). Accordingly, Sophia teaches persons to leave behind earthly, bodily, and feminine desires and instead to crave the rational, incorporeal, and masculine realm where God resides.

The net effect of this educational process, then, is that the soul, when nourished by Sophia, becomes firm and unshakeable (i.e. more masculine, more male-like) thereby enabling it to bring forth fruit to perfection and to become more like Philo's perfect male God. In *Post.* 122, for example, Philo makes a striking comparison between those who pursue an effeminate life of pleasure and those who, via Sophia, because firm and masculine instead.

> [B]ut those who pursue a life of pleasure have only a brief and fictitious want of opportunities: these men, therefore, having swollen extravagantly, and become enormously distended by their profuse fatness and luxury, have burst asunder. But the others, being made fat by that wisdom (σοφία) which nourishes the souls that love virtue, have a firm and unshaken power. (*Post.* 122)

A few lines later in the same text, Philo further emphasizes Sophia's instrumental role in this process. Just as "seeds and plants which are put into the ground grow and blossom through being irrigated, and are thus made fertile for the production of fruits," "so likewise the soul, as it appears when it is watered with the wholesome stream of wisdom (ὅταν νάματι ποτίμῳ σοφίας ἄρδηται), shoots forth, and brings fruit to perfection" (*Post.* 125). What both of these excerpts

reveal is that, for Philo, there is an inextricable link between the human soul and Sophia. When the soul is watered by the streams of Sophia, it brings forth fruit to perfection—a perfection, which for Philo, would always be unequivocally related to the male, the masculine, the pure. As a masculinized figure herself, Sophia thus has the requisite knowledge to enable effeminate humans—whether men or women—to become purer, more male, and more masculine themselves.

In this manner, by Philo portraying Sophia as moving from a feminine figure to a masculine one, he depicts Sophia as able to become Israel's male God within the female world that God has made. The purpose behind Philo's differing portrayals of Sophia's gender, then, is clear; it functions as a paradigm for created humans to emulate as they seek to approach Israel's living God. Since the male and masculine is always superior in Philo's thought, when created humans—like Sophia—learn to move away from the bodily enticements found in the female world of sense perception and towards the male world of incorporeality where God dwells, then they too, have made progress. As Philo puts it:

> For progress is indeed nothing less than the giving up of the female gender by changing into the male, since the female gender is material, corporeal, and sense-perceptible, while the male is active, rationale, and more akin to mind and thought. (*QE* 1.8, Marcus, LCL)

Though depicted as a woman in relation to God, once Sophia becomes the embodiment of Israel's supreme God in the female world that God has made—at times explicitly residing with the souls of specific created humans (cf. *Plant.* 144),[395] or within the neighborhood of select men

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[395] In this text Philo describes an active philosophical debate that was occurring in his day about whether a virtuous man would behave foolishly if he had too much wine in him or if the Wisdom (i.e. Sophia) present within him would overcome the attendant folly that often besets persons who are inebriated. What Philo's comments tacitly imply is that Sophia actually resides within certain persons.

(cf. *Gig.* 47),[396] such as Moses or the king (cf. *Her.* 314–15)—she functions as an aid for created humans as they seek to return to their God and as a paradigm for others to emulate.

5.5   Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the way in which two first-century Alexandrian Jewish writers, namely the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo of Alexandria, transformed Sophia's gendered portrayal so that she could more effectively embody the presence of Israel's male God within the female world of materiality that God had made. Although their strategies are different, with the former positioning Sophia in the middle of the gender continuum and the latter fully masculinizing her, the net effect is the same: Both sidestep the challenges that her former gender posed, at least within ancient Israel's tradition, and thus present her as an effective emissary, indeed even embodiment, of Israel's God in the created world. However, as I alluded to in the Introduction of this chapter, since we also see this phenomenon occurring in contemporaneous Jewish writers, such as the author of the Gospel of John, these new gendered portrayals appear not to be isolated to Alexandria, Egypt, but to be operative in other areas of the Jewish diaspora as well.[397] What unites these authors, then, is that they illumine how some Jews who wrote around the end of the first century CE thought that a female part of the uncreated God could enter into created corporeality in male form (whether within the souls of specific virtuous humans or in the specific person of Jesus of Nazareth). Moreover, such examples demonstrate how gender and gender norms factored into early Jewish understandings of how God could take

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[396] In *Gig.* 47, for instance, Philo clarifies how the divine spirit of Sophia has been found abiding in the neighborhoods of certain men, as had previously been with Moses, in order to aid those who were seeking after virtue in their journey to the incorporeal realm.

[397] It is important to note, however, as I will describe in the subsequent chapter that although the author of the Gospel of John employs *Sophia* imagery, particularly in the prologue, he does not explicit use this word, but prefers *logos* instead.

on bodily form. These ideas and analyses of gender in relation to divine corporeality are crucial, more broadly, to our understanding of how ancient Jews viewed the concept of divine embodiment itself. That is to say, they underscore the way in which ancient Jews envisioned a masculine God.

In the following chapter, I turn to explore how other Jewish writers from the same period thought that yet another part of the uncreated God, namely, the Logos, could enter into created corporeality. Like Sophia, the Logos too was at times conceived of as an essential component of the very identity of Israel's God, and at others embodied in the early Jewish (and later Christian) traditions. While this chapter centered on questions of how Jewish writers employed gender norms as they thought of how an aspect could take bodily form, in the next, I focus more explicitly on scholarship related to the Gospel of John's depiction of the Logos. I conclude by showing how the Gospel of John's articulation of divine embodiment stands both in continuity with and is distinctive from these other forms divine corporeality, since it represents the only instance of an entity that is both part of the uncreated God and the created world simultaneously.

CHAPTER SIX: THE DIVINE LOGOS INCARNATE

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I explored how one of the attributes of God, namely Sophia, was first personified and then ultimately embodied in the early Jewish tradition. In doing so, I specifically attended to the gendered implication of that embodiment, focusing on how two first-century Alexandrian Jewish writers portrayed the figure of Sophia in increasingly masculine ways in order for her to become a more suitable instrument by which a part of God could enter into the world that God had made. As I noted in that chapter, this form of divine embodiment is different from those I examined in chapters 3 and 4, not only because Sophia is an attribute of God (and thus not synonymous with Israel's supreme uncreated deity), but also because she does not enter exclusively into humans, but her ever fluid nature positions her to enter more broadly into the created realm. Thus, though significant to my broader discussion of this phenomenon, the manner by which Sophia operates as a form of divine embodiment is quite distinctive.

In this chapter, I posit a different means by which first-century Jews envisioned that a part of God could enter into corporeal form. In particular, I focus on the paradoxical ways that two first-century Jewish authors, namely Philo of Alexandria and the author of the Gospel of John, describe the enigmatic figure of the *logos*—variously translated as God's word, reason, rationality, or thought. I do so because, as I pointed out in the Introduction, for much of Christian history, scholars have assumed that the paradoxical notion of a divine-embodied figure was a problem to Christianity alone. Yet my analysis in this chapter complicates this assumption by

revealing that there are striking similarities in the language used by both Jewish authors—and I consider the Gospel of John to be a Jewish text—whether they describe the divine *logos* or the incarnate Christ. This is not to say that the two share the same theology. Each one delimits how the divine *logos* can become embodied, or enter into the created world, in his own unique way. And yet, the similarities are so striking that belief in a divine-embodied figure already appears to have had a pre-history in Hellenistic Judaism. In particular, by the time of Philo, if not before, a tradition existed that believed that a part of the creator God could become embodied in the created world through the specific medium of God's *logos*.

In making these claims, I situate the Gospel of John—and its description of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο)—within a particular moment of Jewish history. Although scholars have long pointed to John 1:14 as the point where "Christian narrative" differentiated itself from its Jewishness,[398] I argue that the verse, and the attendant resonances related to the concept of λόγος embedded throughout the Gospel, were just one of the many ways that Jews living around the first century CE understood that God could take on bodily form. Set within this historical context, the Gospel of John's articulation of Jesus as the divine "*logos* become flesh" takes on new meaning (John 1:14). That is, far from being antithetical to Judaism as scholars long assumed,[399] or from being the instance when John's Gospel differentiated itself from its "Jewish Koine" and instead started to articulate a distinctive "Christian kerygma,

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[398] Note that the quotation is from Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 105. A similar perspective, though, can be found in Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 213.

[399] Indeed, some scholars have assumed that Jews could never conceive of God in corporeal, human form. See, for instance, Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument*; Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation*.

proclamation,"[400] John's description of the divine "word become flesh" was actually a very Jewish way of conceiving of how the divine could become embodied on earth.

Now to be sure (as I point out in the second part of this chapter), though similar, there are clear differences between how Philo understands God's embodiment through the *logos* and how the Gospel of John conceives of the same idea. But part of what I am arguing here (and demonstrate in the first part of the chapter) is that just because John's version is distinctive does not mean that it is no longer Jewish. Rather, the two different descriptions of the *logos* simply reflect the diversity of Jewish thought with respect to these matters. Moreover, (as I further go on to suggest in the third part of this chapter) when the Johannine author's descriptions of Jesus as the *logos* are read in light of Philo's, one of the longstanding problems in Johannine scholarship regarding the relationship between the Gospel's prologue and the rest of the gospel can be read with fresh eyes. That is to say, I claim that the Johannine writer not only presents Jesus as the embodiment of God on earth through his description of Jesus as the "*logos* made flesh" (cf. John 1:14, 17–18), but also throughout the rest of the Gospel through the words, or *logoi*, that he speaks. What I hope this chapter will illumine, together with those that preceded it, is how our historical understanding of the notion of "divine embodiment," of which Philo's and the Gospel of John's *logos* are just two examples, has been more limited by how we have defined the term with respect to a particular theological end in Christian theology, namely the Incarnation, than by the paradoxical concept itself.

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[400] Quotations are from Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 105. See also Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 213; Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 23–40. Although Casey does not focus exclusively on this particular verse, he clearly sees the Gospel of John's prologue as presenting "an explicit declaration of the incarnation in the strong sense" (23) and views "the final redaction of John 1-20" (38) as providing "the first evidence of the deity and incarnation of Jesus," (38) a "development" which could not occur within the limitations of Jewish "monotheism" (37–38), so had to occur "in the latter part of the first century in a community which had Gentile self-identification" (38).

6.2   The Gospel of John's Complicated Relationship with Jewishness

I read the Gospel of John and its portrayal of Jesus as the divine word become flesh as being inextricably linked to the Jewish religious and cultural life of its day, but the Gospel itself does not present a straightforward picture of this matter.[401] On the one hand, at times the Gospel drives a wedge between Jesus and his Jewish opponents, the ᾽Ιουδαῖοι,[402] in that it contains many harsh and deprecatory descriptions of the latter. In John's[403] Gospel, they (i.e. the ᾽Ιουδαῖοι) interrogate those whom he has healed (John 5:9–16). They complain about his teaching (John 6:41, 52; 8:22, 57). They engage Jesus in acrimonious debates (John 2:18–22). Indeed, at one point John's Jesus even goes so far as to assert, to his Jewish interlocutors: "You are from your father, the devil (ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστὲ)" (John 8:44).[404] John's Gospel also presents his Jewish opponents in a negative light by depicting them as responsible for the violence perpetrated against Jesus. According to the Gospel, they harass Jesus (John 5:16). They want to arrest him (John 7:29, 32, 44, 45; 8:20). They look for ways to kill him (John 7:1, 19, 25;

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[401] See Adele Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Anti-Judaism: Reading John after *Nostra Aetate*." In *Nostra Aetate at 40: Achievements and Challenges in Christian-Jewish Relations*, ed. Jean Duhaime (Montreal: Novalis, 2007), 51–65, esp. 51–55; Adele Reinhartz, "The Gospel of John: How 'the Jews' Became Part of the Plot" in Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz, eds. *Jesus, Judaism and Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament After the Holocaust* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 99–116; Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 15, 33–34, 61–64.

[402] For a window into the varying scholarly opinions about the meaning of the term ᾽Ιουδαῖοι in John's Gospel, and how it is employed within the John's Gospel itself, see Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple,* 72–75; idem, "'Jews' and Anti-Judaism," 52–54.

[403] The authorship of the Gospel of John is unknown and has been the subject of extensive debate. In using the name "John," I am not claiming that one of Jesus's disciples, John, wrote the Gospel, but rather employ the name as a short-hand for the unknown author of this work.

[404] A critical edition of the Greek text of the Gospel of John can be found in Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament*. 4th rev. edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. United Bible Societies (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1983). The translations throughout this dissertation from this Gospel are my own.

8:37, 40; 11:53).[405] They raise up stones to murder him (John 8:59; 10:31; 11:8). Moreover, more than any other canonical gospel, the Gospel of John presents the Jewish opponents of Jesus as being the persons who are ultimately responsible for Jesus's death.[406]

On the other hand, the Gospel presents a thoroughly Jewish Jesus, deeply embedded in the Jewish religious and cultural life of his day. The Jesus of John's Gospel regularly participates in Jewish festivals (John 7:2; 10:22). He celebrates the Passover (John 2:13, 23; 4:43–45; 5:1; 6:1; 11:5; 12:1; 18:39). He teaches in Jewish synagogues (John 18:20). He travels to the Jewish city of Jerusalem (John 2:13; 5:1; 12:12). He preaches and teaches there in the Jewish temple (John 7:14, 26, 28; 8:2, 20). Others identify him as a Jew (Ἰουδαῖος) (John 4:9).[407] And the Gospel clearly depicts him as a Jewish messiah and the king of the Jews (John 1:41; 7:26, 31; 7:41–42; 10:24–25 and John 18:19, 21, 39, respectively). Moreover, throughout the Gospel many

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[405] See also John 12:9, where persons want to kill Jesus's friend, Lazarus, because of his association with Jesus.

[406] John 18:30–31, 35 presents the chief priests, and Pharisees, claiming that Jesus is a criminal. Thus, they hand Jesus over to Pilate. John 18:38–39; 19:12, 14–16 presents Pilate as finding no fault in Jesus, and thus, wanting to release him, but the Jews as condemning Jesus. However, note that John 18:12 claims, "the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him." In this instance, the soldiers and their officer are ostensibly not from the Jewish people, but are Roman officials. So John's Gospel depicts the arrest of Jesus as being a collaborative effort between the Romans and certain Jewish officials.

[407] In recent years, there has been a scholarly trend, precipitated in large part by the work of Mason in "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 457–512, which suggests that a better translation of the Greek term, Ἰουδαῖος is "Judean," rather than "Jew." This is because, Mason claims, the terms Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαῖοι were first conceived of as cultural and geographical terms (and not religious ones), describing a particular ethnic group that lived in Judea. In my work, however, (as I pointed out in the Introduction of this dissertation), I retain the use of the words "Jew/Jews." I do so, in large part, because I have been convinced by the arguments of Adele Reinhartz, who asserts that the "use of 'Judeans' to translate all occurrences of *ioudaioi* achieves neither the scholarly precision nor the ethical high ground that scholars claim. On the contrary, the proliferation of Judeans inadvertently creates confusion and misunderstanding and merely sidesteps the issue without addressing the anti-Jewish or even anti-Semitic potential of texts such as the Gospel of John." Moreover, also following Reinhartz, I believe that it is naive to boil down the idea of Jews to a "religious" phenomenon, when the word also connotes, as Reinhartz points out, rich and multidimensional aspects of "ethnic, political, cultural, genealogical, religious and other elements in proportions that vary among eras, regions of the world, and individuals." For more information, see Adele Reinhartz's rebuttal to Mason in *Marginalia* at http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/vanishing-jews-antiquity-adele-reinhartz/.

aspects of Jewish social, cultural, and religious life form a central aspect of his identity and mission. Several persons, for instance, including his disciples, address him with the Jewish title of rabbi (John 1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:23; 9:2; 11:8). All of his disciples are ostensibly Jewish (cf. John 1:47).[408] His most intimate friends—including Lazarus, Mary, and Martha—are all Jewish (cf. John 11:19, 31, 33).[409] Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews, is pivotal to his life and career (John 2:13; 4:45; 5:1; 7:14; 18:20). And he is buried according to Jewish ritual practices (John 19:40). Furthermore, in his exchange with the Samaritan woman, John's Jesus clearly presents the Jews, with whom he identifies, in a positive way (John 4:7–26). For in this encounter he tells his Samaritan interlocutor that "salvation is from the Jews (ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν)" (John 4:22). This evidence reveals that although internal tensions exist within the Gospel with respect to its portrayal of the Jews, a positive portrayal of Jewish social, cultural, and religious life, and Jesus's relationship to it, undergirds the entire work.

These palpable tensions present in the Gospel with respect to its portrayal of the Ἰουδαῖοι, and the broader Jewish culture of that time, help to explain why scholars have held such divergent positions with respect to the relationship between the Gospel and Jewishness over the years. Indeed, the scholarly pendulum has swung over the past century, especially in the wake of the Holocaust, with respect to these matters. Perceptions have come a long way, for instance, since C. H. Dodd first claimed in 1953: "The positive and significant elements in the Johannine Christology find little or no point of attachment to Jewish messianic ideas."[410] Or, as

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[408] In this verse, for instance, the gospel explicitly identifies Nathanael, as an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.

[409] Although these verses do not name these figures as Jews, they present the Jews as showing great emotion over the loss of their friend.

[410] Charles H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 92.

Maurice Casey suggested, in 1991, that the theology present in the Gospel of John could have occurred only when the Johannine community had made a radical break from Judaism and identified instead as a Gentile community.[411] Indeed, for Casey, belief in Jesus' divinity, could have occurred only relatively late in the development of Christianity, namely at the end of the first century CE and in a pagan context, because of the constraints of Jewish "monotheism."[412] Such a move could have occurred only after or in conjunction with the Johannine community's expulsion from the synagogue (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).[413] For both of these scholars, then, the Gospel of John—and its Christology it particular—only make sense within the religious backdrop of the broader pagan Greco-Roman world.

By contrast, my reading of the Gospel of John places me squarely within the growing consensus of scholars that conceive of the Gospel of John as a whole, and specifically the Christology present within it, as being deeply Jewish;[414] and yet, my claim that the Gospel's description of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (John 1:14) is also deeply Jewish marks a

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[411] Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 9, 31–32, 34–38.

[412] Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* 23, 34–38.

[413] Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* 31–32.

[414] Indeed, past scholars have shown how many aspects of the so-called "high Christology" present in John's Gospel that were once thought impossible within a Jewish context have come to be seen as part and parcel of the Jewish messianic expectations at that time. John Collins, for instance, has noted how the idea of a divine or pre-existent messiah was already found in various Jewish writings that dated to the Second Temple Period, such as the LXX's version of Psalms 72:17, 110, and Isaiah 7:14; portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as 4Q174, 4Q246, and *11QMelch*; and texts like as I Enoch 48:2 and 62:7, Proverbs 8:22–31, and 4 Ezra 13. See *King and Messiah*, 55–74 and 75–100, respectively. Likewise, Daniel Boyarin has shown how there was a divine Messiah tradition present within Jewish thought long before the rise Christianity. That is, there was what he labels as a "*Logos* theology," or what Alan Segal has characterized as a "two powers in heaven" theology, wherein God and another "helper" figure (see Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven,* 262) could also be seen as divine. See also Daniel Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology,'" 337–362; idem, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94.3 (2001): 243–284. This evidence reveals that Jewish messianic expectations in the late Second Temple Period were rather complex. Jews embraced a wide variety of ways by which the Messiah could share, to a lesser or greater extent, elements of God's own divine nature. Accordingly, like these scholars I think that the Gospel of John's Christology can be read as having emerged from within, and not separated from, the Jewishness of its day.

significant shift in the scholarly conversation related to these matters.[415] Most scholars today, even those who hold a more radical perspective regarding the Gospel's Jewishness, argue that something unique occurred in the Gospel's prologue which signaled the start of a split between what would later become the religions of Judaism and Christianity. James Dunn, for example, has proposed that "the central Christian thrust of the prologue ('the Word became flesh' – v. 14) injected a new and unique element into that dialogue,"[416] as persons began to conceive of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. Likewise, Daniel Boyarin has argued that: "When the text announces in verse 14 that the 'Word became flesh,' this advent of the Logos is an iconic representation of the moment that the Christian narrative begins to diverge from the Jewish Koine and form its own nascent Christian kerygma, proclamation."[417] For both of these scholars, then, John 1:14's claim marked a significant departure from contemporaneous Jewish thought and signaled the start of Christian teaching. Yet the difficulty with this perspective is that it can only be maintained when one knows the historical outcomes of theological developments that occurred much later on. By contrast, when John's Gospel is read at its own moment in history, namely at the end of the first century CE, then—despite its distinctiveness—it can still be appreciated for what it was and not what it would become. As a result, I read the Gospel of

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[415] As I pointed out in the Introduction, most scholars who have focused on this issue have raised questions about whether the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus as divine could fit within the constraints of Jewish monotheism. In particular, they have asked: If Jewish monotheism restricted belief to one and only one God, how could Jesus have been seen as divine alongside God the Father? See, for instance, Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 9, 34–38, 156–159; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 1–9, 11–15; 99–128; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 1–11; idem, *How on Earth*, 1–9; 42–53, 152–53, 177–78; Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, ix–59; Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*. But my questions and arguments are different. In contrast to these scholars, I am interested in the question of whether a divine-incarnate figure, or more broadly construed, a divine-embodied figure, was permissible within the confines of ancient Jewish thought. Did some Jews, for instance, believe that God could become embodied in the world, or in a particular human figure? Was the notion of divine embodiment *really* as divisive between what would later become Judaism and Christianity as the early—and even later—polemics made it seem to be?

[416] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 213.

[417] Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 105.

John's description of the divine *logos* made flesh—that actual incarnational language—as being just one of the many ways that Jews, around the turn of the Common Era, expressed God's embodiment in the world.

In what follows, I turn to a specific exploration of Philo and John. I do so not only because of their chronological proximity, enabling the two authors to be read constructively in comparison with one another. I do so also because Philo's descriptions of the *logos* bear the closest resemblance to what occurs in the Gospel of John, revealing that—though distinctive—the Gospel of John's form of divine embodiment was not as unique as some have suggested it to be.

6.3   A Brief Comparison of the *Logos* in Philo and the Gospel of John

The striking similarities between the descriptions of the *logos* in Philo and the Gospel of John complicate the traditional assumption, made by scholars such as Boyarin and Dunn, that John 1:14's description of the divine *logos* made flesh marked a significant rupture from the broader Jewishness of its day.[418] Indeed, as was the case for the other forms of divine corporeality that I investigated throughout this dissertation, albeit to a great extent, these similarities instead suggest that the paradoxical belief in a divine-yet-embodied figure previously arose within other forms of Hellenistic Judaism. That is to say, they show how even before the Gospel of John, Philo viewed the *logos* as a means by which the divine could become embodied on earth. In order to demonstrate these points, in what follows I underscore four primary ways that both authors present the *logos*—through inextricably linked to the identity of the creator God—as also being able to enter into the created, corporeal world that God has made. Thus, for

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[418] See Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 105; Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 213.

both authors the *logos* functions as the means by which the divine can enter into the created world: first, as a constituent element of the creator God's identity; second, as a personified attribute able to act independently of God; third, as subordinate to the creator God; and fourth as able to enter into the created, corporeal world that God has made.[419]

a) The Logos as Constitutive Element of the Creator God's Identity

First, for both Philo and John the *logos* is not separate from Israel's supreme God, but rather functions as an essential and constitutive element of that God's very identity. With respect to Philo, though (as I pointed out in chapter 2) he views Israel's supreme God as the sole uncreated entity and cause of all else (*Opif.* 170–2),[420] he depicts the *logos* as being inextricably linked to that divine identity. Just as a person cannot exist without his or her cognitive abilities, so too Philo claims that God cannot exist without God's *logos*. This is because, as the semantic range of the word *logos* implies, the *logos* functions as the very "thoughts," "rationality," "creative logic," and "mind" of Israel's supreme God.[421] By participating in the divinity of Israel's supreme God in this manner (see chapter 2), the *logos* too, like Israel's high God, is also

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[419] As David Winston has asserted, "the doctrine of the Logos" was "the linchpin of Philo's religious thought . . . something his readers" would "immediately recognize without any further explanation." See David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, 11. Reflecting on this insight by Winston, Daniel Boyarin observes: "The consequences of this point are formidable . . . If for these, the Logos theology was a virtual commonplace (which is not to say that there were not enormous variations in detail, of course), the implication is that this way of thinking about God was a vital inheritance of (at least) Alexandrian Jewish thought. It becomes apparent, therefore, that for one branch of pre-Christian Judaism, at least, there was nothing strange about a doctrine of a *deuteros theos*, and nothing in that doctrine that precluded monotheism," See "The Gospel of the Memra," 249.

[420] Indeed, for Philo, it is God alone who has veritable being (*Det.* 160), it is God alone who simply exists (*Det.* 160; *Leg.* 2.86).

[421] As Wolfson described over a half-century ago: "It is the mind of God, renamed Logos, in which the ideas and the intelligible world consisting of the ideas were conceived and of which they are an object of thought. Inasmuch as God is absolute simplicity, His mind and His thinking and the objects of His thought are all one and indentical [sic] with His essence. The Logos, therefore, as the mind of God and as the place of the ideas for eternity starts on its career as something identical with the essence of God," (see Wolfson, *Philo*, 231).

fully divine. Yet Philo further reifies the link between God and the *logos* by indiscriminately employing the same words to describe the two. As James Dunn has observed:

> Philo can identify Plato's artificer (τεχνίτης) as both as the Logos (*Heres* 119; *Qu. Ex.* II.53, 81) and, more regularly, as God himself (e.g. *Opif.* 20, 135; *Leg. All.* III.99; *Heres* 133; *Mut.* 31), because in each case he is saying the same thing … Similarly he can speak of God as charioteer or helmsman of creation (as in *Heres* 99, 228, 301; *Som.* I.157), but can readily use this metaphor for the Logos (*Migr.* 67; *Fuga* 101) for the same reason; or he can speak both of God and of the Logos as the supreme archetype.[422]

By employing the same titles to describe God and the *logos*, Philo underscores how the latter functions in roles typically occupied by the former, furthering underscoring how the *logos* participates in the divinity of Israel's supreme God.

Like Philo, John similarly presents the *logos* as being integral to the divine identity. In the opening verse of his Gospel, for instance, he is quick to make clear that the *logos* is divine (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος), just as God the Father is divine (John 1:1). But John elevates the status of the *logos* one step further when he claims that the *logos* was co-external with Israel's supreme God.[423] Whereas Philo establishes a temporal distinction between God and the *logos*, John makes no such differentiations between the two. Philo, for instance, describes the *logos* as God's "first born son" (*Agr.* 51), or the "firstborn word," (*Conf.* 146) or the "eldest (πρεσβύτατος) [and] most universal (γενικώτατος)" of all entities (*Leg. All.* 3.175), or even as the "model (παράδειγμα)," which God makes (ἐποίει) first (*Ebr.* 133), in order to establish a rhetorical (and temporal) separation between Israel's supreme God (to whom, as I pointed out in chapter 2, he often refers as the Existent One) and the *logos*. But John makes no such distinction. Instead, John presents the *logos* as being divine and co-eternal with the Israel's supreme God. A closer look at John 1:1–4 helps to illustrate this point.

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[422] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 227.

[423] cf. John 1:1–18

> In the beginning was the *logos* (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), and the *logos* was with God (καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν), and the *logos* was divine (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος). He was with God in the beginning (οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν). All things were made through him (πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο), and without him nothing was made, which has been made (καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν ὅ γέγονεν). In him was life (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν), and the life was the light of men (καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων).

Here, the author states that the *logos* exists "in the beginning (Ἐν ἀρχῇ)" like Israel's supreme God (John 1:1–1) and is present with God before the creation of the world (cf. I Cor. 8:5–6, Col 1:15–17, and Heb 1:1–3). These words echo the opening lines of the Septuagint's rendition of Genesis. There, the text declares that "in the beginning (Ἐν ἀρχῇ)" God created the heaven and the earth (Gen 1:1). In making this claim John places the *logos* in the exact position of Israel's supreme Creator God. Like Philo, then, albeit to a greater extent, John positions the *logos* in the very place of Israel's God, demonstrating how he views the *logos* as an essential and constitutive component of that high God's identity.

b) The Logos as personified, and thus (ostensibly) able to act independently of God

Second, though both Philo and John present the *logos* as being integral to the divine identity, both also personify the *logos* such that it seems to be able to act independently of God, functioning as an embodied form of God in the corporeal world in a manner that Israel's supreme God cannot. For Philo, for instance, in order to preserve the absolute transcendence and otherness of God, he depicts the *logos* in this intermediary role. Whereas his high God, whom he often refers to as ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν (see chapter 2), is immutable, the divine *logos* is mutable. Whereas the high God is unknowable, the divine *logos* is made known. Indeed, it is precisely because of these enigmatic features that the *logos,* though depicted as essential to the supreme God's identity, can also enter the corporeal realm. A particularly striking example of this trend occurs in Philo's treatise, *Who is the Heir of All Divine Things*. Here Philo asserts:

And the Father, who created the universe, has given a special gift to his chief messenger and most ancient *logos* (τῷ δὲ ἀρχαγγέλῳ καὶ πρεσβυτάτῳ λόγῳ), to stand on the border of both (μεθόριος στὰς) and separate the Creator from that which had been created (τὸ γενόμενον διακρίνῃ τοῦ πεποιηκότος). And this same Word continually pleads with the Immortal One (ἄφθαρτον) as a suppliant for the mortal race (θνητοῦ) and is an ambassador of the ruler to the subject. And the *logos* delights in the gift, and, exulting in it, announces it, saying, "And I stood in the midst, between the Lord and you (κἀγὼ εἱστήκειν ἀνὰ μέσον κυρίου καὶ ὑμῶν)" neither being uncreated as God (οὔτε ἀγένητος ὡς ὁ θεὸς ὢν), nor created as you (οὔτε γενητὸς ὡς ὑμεῖς), but being in the midst of the extremes (μέσος τῶν ἄκρων), like a hostage to both. (*Her.* 205–206)

Of particular note here is the manner by which Philo presents the *logos* as standing on the "border (μεθόριος)," between God and everything that God has made (*Her.* 205). By metaphorically describing the *logos* as being "neither uncreated as God nor created as you (οὔτε ἀγένητος ὡς ὁ θεὸς οὔτε γενητὸς ὡς ὑμεῖς)," he stresses how the *logos* exists "in the midst of the extremes (μέσος τῶν ἄκρων)" (*Her.* 205–206). Both designations reveal how—although the *logos* is technically a part of the creator God—its intended function is to stand in for God in the world that God has made.

Like Philo, the author of the Gospel of John similarly personifies the *logos* such that it appears to act in ways that had previously been reserved for Israel's God. In particular, the Gospel's prologue presents the *logos* such that it operates as the means by which the world comes into existence. In vs. 3, for instance, John describes how all things came into being through him (i.e. the *logos*), and without him not one thing came into being (πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν ὃ γέγονεν). This description draws upon Genesis 1's recurrent refrain, "And God said," which portrays creation coming into being by the word of God (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). Rather than creation coming into being through the high God himself, as the Septuaigint describes [Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς (in the beginning God created], John 1:1 suggests instead that the *logos,* now personified, performs this function [Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος (in the beginning was the *logos*)]. As I will discuss at further length below, once

John claims that the *logos* becomes flesh (1:14), in the specific person (1:18), he not only personifies the *logos* as occurs in Philo, but presents the *logos* as becoming embodied in a the specific historical person of Jesus, thereby further reiterating these claims.

c) Third, the Logos as Subordinate to Israel's supreme Creator God

Third, though both authors present the *logos* as being integral to the identity of Israel's supreme God, both also subordinate the *logos* to the creator God. This is significant to the broader claims that I make throughout this dissertation. Specifically, when I claim that the Gospel of John's descriptions of the "divine word made flesh" (John 1:14) was only one of the wide variety of ways that ancient Jews envisioned God in corporeal form, this point about the subordination of the *logos* demonstrates how—even in John's Gospel—Jesus is not presented as a form of Israel's high God embodied on earth. Rather, the *logos* is presented as an entity which is subordinate to that supreme being. With respect to Philo, evidence of this subordination can be observed in the metaphorical language he employs to describe the *logos*. When, for instance, Philo describes the *logos* as the "eldest" of all created things (*Leg.* 3, 61, 173; *Migr.* 6), or the "first-born son of God" (*Agr.* 12, 51), or the "man of God" (*Conf.* 11, 41; cf. 14, 62; 28, 146), or the "image of God" (*Conf.* 28), or "second to God" (*Leg All* II.21, 86), or a "second God" (*QE* II, 62, Marcus, LCL), these labels suggest that though the *logos* shares in the divine identity, the *logos* does not possess equal standing with Israel's God. A particularly striking example of this subordination arises in Philo's treatise, *De Agricultura*, when he writes:

> For God (ὁ θεός), like a shepherd and king, leads according to justice and law. But sets at the head his true *Logos* (τὸν ὀρθὸν αὐτοῦ λόγον) and first-born son (πρωτόγονον υἱόν), who takes upon Him the care of its sacred flock like a viceroy of a great king. For it is said, "Behold, I AM, I send my angel before your face to guard you in the way." (*Agr.* 51)

While Philo portrays his high God (to whom he refers here as ὁ θεός) as king, he depicts the *logos* as a superintendent. In this position the *logos* has some power; yet, he does not have supreme authority. *Thus, though the logos participates in God's divine activity, and therefore can also be said to be divine, that does not mean that the logos is synonymous with Philo's high God.* Rather, Philo positions the *logos* at a lesser position in his divine hierarchy. For all practical purposes, then, the *logos* operates as the subordinate of Israel's supreme God.

The author of the Gospel of John similarly emphasizes the unity between the divine *logos* and Israel's supreme God (to whom he often refers as the Father), but he also maintains that the former is subordinate to the latter. This link becomes particularly significant after the *logos* of John's prologue is explicitly identified with Jesus (cf. John 1:18), the Son of the Father. In John 3:35, for instance, the author stresses that the Son does not have his own authority, but that the Father "has given all things into his hand (πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ)." Likewise, in John 5:27, the author notes that the Father "has given to him [i.e. to the son] authority to do the judging (ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν)," but this implies that Jesus cannot act in this authoritative role without the permission of his Father (cf. John 10:29, 13:16, and 14:28). The author further underscores the hierarchy between these two figures through his frequent employment of familial language. Three times in the opening chapters, the author calls Jesus the "only begotten (μονογενοῦς)" one (John 1:14, 18, and 3:16–17), and over one hundred times in the latter part of the Gospel the author has Jesus call God, his "Father," or has Jesus assert that God is "the Father." These examples create a paradoxical image. Though the Son (also described as the *logos*) and the Father are a part of the same divine identity—a point which the Johannine Jesus emphatically stresses when he asserts: "I and the Father are one (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἕν ἐσμεν)" (John 10:31), the author portrays the Father as superior to the Son. Accordingly, both

Philo and John depict the *logos*—or, in the case of John's gospel, by extension God's son Jesus—as part of the divine identity yet simultaneously subordinate to Israel's supreme God.

d) Fourth, the Logos as Able to Enter into the Created, Corporeal World that God has Made

Fourth, for both Philo and John, the *logos* becomes immanent in the created, corporeal realm in order to act as God's agent within it. This is significant because it demonstrates how both authors present the *logos* as the means by which a part of God enters into creation. For Philo, for instance, though inextricably linked to Philo's high God, he describes the *logos* as "judge and mediator" of the human race (*QE* 2.13, Marcus, LCL), or as "suppliant" to God on behalf of it (*Sacr.* 119), or as the "ruler and steersman of all" (*Cher.* 36), or as the "interpreter" of God (*Deus.* 138), or even as the entity that separates the "incorporeal world… from the visible one like a veil" (*QE* 2.94, Marcus, LCL). Each of these descriptions presents the *logos* as able to interact with and act as an instrument of divine providence in the corporeal world in a manner that Philo's high God cannot. According to Philo's presentation, then, the *logos* thus functions as both a tool by which God creates the sense-perceptible world and as an intermediary figure whose immanence in that same realm enables him to exert God's divine providence in every aspect of it.

John asserts a similar claim when he insists that the *logos* not only has become embodied or implanted in the material world, but also has taken on human flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) in the specific person of Jesus of Nazareth in order to dwell among us (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν).[424] That is to say, though Philo presents the *logos* as embodying God's presence in the world by acting as

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[424] It is here with the claim of John's Gospel that the striking paradoxical similarities between John and Philo diverge. For though Philo claims that God implanted the *logos* within the created realm, John insists that the *logos* has actually become flesh, a part of the created realm itself.

an intermediary—functioning as the instrument by which God creates the world and the means by which God exerts God's providence in it—the Johannine author takes this logic one step further. For John, the divine *logos* does not merely become imminent in the corporeal creation, but actually becomes a created entity when the *logos* becomes flesh in the specific figure of Jesus. Indeed, out of all extent Jewish texts that date to around the first century CE, including the other New Testament Gospels, only in the Gospel of John do we encounter the striking affirmation that the divine *logos* became flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) (John 1:14).[425] Only in the Gospel of John do we hear someone affirm that Jesus is God (θεός) (20:28).[426] Consequently, though there are marked similarities between the presentations of divine embodiment in Philo and the Gospel of John, especially with respect to their use of similar paradoxical language, there are also noteworthy differences.

Because we know that these two authors operated at slightly different time periods (i.e. before and after the destruction of the Second Temple), and likely lived in slightly different geographical spheres (i.e. Alexandria and Asia Minor), the striking paradoxical similarities between them are all the more remarkable. And yet, since we know that new ideas, even novel theological ones, do not arise in a vacuum, but are predicted upon past insights and emerge only as an amalgamation of previous thoughts, what all of this suggests to me is that by the early first century CE, a larger discussion was occurring within Jewish circles, particularly around Alexandria, Egypt with respect to how the divine, especially the *logos*, could be embodied within

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[425] After the Gospel of John and before Nicaea, this emphasis on Jesus simultaneously being human and divine is also articulated in the letters of Ignatius and in the letter of Polycarp.

[426] The Johannine Epistles will go on to stress this perspective to such a great extent that they insist that "those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί)" are "deceivers (ὁ πλάνος) and antichrists (ὁ ἀντίχριστος)" (2 John 1:7). Shortly thereafter Polycarp will reiterate this assertion when he writes in his Epistle to the Philippians 7:1, "Anyone who does not confess (μὴ ὁμολογῇ) that Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν) has come in the flesh (ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι) is the antichrist (ἀντιχριστός)."

the material realm and that by the time of the early second century CE this idea had circulated or emerged in Asia Minor as well. Thus, strange as this might seem today, what emerges in later Christianity with respect to the Incarnation, started out as a Jewish thought.

Based on my above analysis, the question remains: Does the Gospel of John reflect the same ideology as that of Philo with respect to the *logos* and Jesus? Probably not. Yet the striking fact remains that in his presentation of the *logos*, Philo *does* provide a divine intermediary figure, much like the incarnate Jesus of John, who becomes imminent in the created world and thus can play a significant soteriological role. As Harry Austryn Wolfson pointed out nearly a century ago:

> Not exactly a departure from Philo but only an addition to him is the doctrine of the Incarnation, for in its ultimate formulation the Incarnation became a new stage in the history of the Philonic Logos—a Logos made immanent in a man after its having been immanent in the world.[427]

Consequently, as all these examples illustrate, Philo's *logos* illumines the radical extent to which certain first-century, and in this case Alexandrian, Jewish texts could accommodate a bifurcation in their conception of God—with a transcendent God and an incarnate God, or at the very least a very imminent divine intermediary figure standing on the border between these two realms— both of which were simultaneously subsumed under the broader rubric of God's *oneness*.[428]

This is significant because it marks the way that the Gospel of John's form of divine embodiment stands in continuity with and is distinct from the rest of similarly dated Jewish understandings of the same concept. The ways that Jews, around the turn of the Common Era,

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[427] Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers,* viii.

[428] It is important to note that Philo himself never uses the term "Incarnation," nor does he claim that the *logos* has become flesh. He does assert, however, that God has implanted the *logos* within the creation itself in order to act as the instrument of divine providence in every part of it (cf. *QE* 2.94). I take this to mean that God has embodied a part of the divine within the creation itself—so creation bears an aspect of God.

viewed the notion of God's embodiment differed from both their precursors in Israelite religion and what came after in the rabbinic period. For both the ancient Israelites and the rabbis, there was much more fascination with *God's own body*; with specific descriptions, for instance, of God's eyes, ears, mouth, noses, and other body parts. For Jews living around the first century CE, however, God's embodiment occurred through mediatorial figures—namely, humans like Moses and Enoch and the Jewish high priest—who represented the physical manifestation of God on earth or who could approach God in the heavens. Or God's embodiment happened through personified divine attributes—like *Sophia* and the *logos*—who could enter into the created realm, at times even entering into corporeal humans. But in all of these examples these other mediatorial figures never fully transverse the boundary between Israel's supreme, uncreated God and the creation that God had made. Even the Gospel of John does not do so, for it presents Jesus as the embodiment of the divine *logos* and not of Israel's high God himself.

Set within this historical context, the Gospel of John's articulation of Jesus as the divine *logos* become flesh takes on new meaning (John 1.14). That is to say—far from being antithetical to Judaism as scholars long assumed,[429] or from being the moment when John's Gospel differentiated itself from its "Jewish Koine" and instead started to articulate a distinctive "Christian kerygma," as Dunn and Boyarin have argued[430]—John's description of the divine world become flesh was actually a very Jewish way of conceiving of how God could become embodied on earth. Now to be sure, there were clear differences between how Philo understands God's embodiment through the *logos* and how the Gospel of John conceives of the same idea.

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[429] See Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument*; Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation*; Wyschogrod, "A Jewish Perspective," 195–209, although, as I pointed out in Chapter one, he does qualify this position.

[430] Quotations are from Boyarin, *Borderlines,* 105. For a similar perspective, see also Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* 213, 249.

For instance, while Philo suggests a temporal distinction between the different stages of the *logos,* John reiterates throughout his Gospel how Jesus as *logos* is both part of God's very identity and part of the creation, simultaneously. But part of what I am arguing here is that just because John's version is distinctive, that does not mean that it is no longer Jewish.[431] Rather, the two different descriptions of the *logos* simply reflect the diversity of Jewish thought with respect to these matters.

In this section, I sketched a broad-range view of the striking similarities between how Philo and the author of the Gospel of John portrayed the *logos.* In particular, I have shown how certainly by the time of Philo, if not before, the divine *logos* was able to become immanent in the created, corporeal world, both in terms of his instrumental role in enabling the creation to come into being and in terms of his ongoing acts of overseeing it after it had originated.

In what follows, I continue the comparative work between Philo and the Gospel of John, by reading the centrality of Jesus's words in the gospel in light of a particular allegorization that Philo makes related to the *logos.* I do so because here Philo presents a more nuanced picture of how he thought the *logos* could be both a part of Israel's supreme God and embodied in the created, corporeal world that God had made. Moreover, by extension, I can also provide a more nuanced reading of the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus as the *logos*, who is also able to bridge the gap between these two realms.

To be clear, I do this solely for heuristic purposes. In reading these two alongside one another, I am not suggesting that the author of the Gospel of John knew these particular allegorizations in Philo, nor am I suggesting that he knew any of Philo's extensive oeuvre. The

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[431] I thank my dissertation chair, Gabriele Boccaccini, in particular, for pushing me to think in this direction. For his scholarly articulation of this phenomenon, see "How Jesus Became Uncreated," 208; idem, "Jesus the Messiah," 207.

comparison does, however, enable me to do something more: It allows me to demonstrate how the Gospel of John's paradoxical portrayal of Jesus as the divine *logos* made flesh is not confined to the prologue, but rather, continues to recur—at regular intervals—throughout the entire body of the gospel; in particular, John's gospel does not merely present Jesus as the embodiment of God through his identification with the divine *logos,* but also through the corporal and created words, or *logoi,* that he speaks.

6.4 How the Johannine Jesus's *Logoi* Embody God's Presence on Earth

Scholars have long noted that Jesus's λόγοι (words) occupy a central role in the Gospel of John, rendering his portrayal as radically different from that of the Synoptics.[432] Rather than presenting Jesus as a miracle-working wonder-man, for instance, whose actions speak louder than words, in the fourth gospel Jesus's λόγοι become prominent.[433] Even when describing Jesus's miracles, which John refers to as σημείων (signs), he frames the narrative around Jesus's λόγοι, not his actions.[434] When Jesus turns water into wine (2:1–11), when he heals a royal official's son (John 4:46–54), when he heals a paralytic (John 5:1–14), when he feeds the five

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[432] For the prominence of Jesus's words throughout the Gospel of John, see, for instance, Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian: A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelism, especially its Elites, in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), esp. 3–50.

[433] For statistical comparisons between the Synoptics and John in terms of what percentage of each deals with miracles—which are typically described as σημείον but, at times, as ἔργον—see Gary M. Burge *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 74–80.

[434] Even Rudolf Bultman described these σημείων as "*verba visibilia,*" further describing how "the *works of Jesus* (or, seen collectively as a whole: his work) *are his words.*" See Bultman, *Theology of the New Testament.* trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1955), 2:60. Elsewhere, he makes a similar claim when he writes: "If in Jesus the λόγος became flesh, then God's action is carried out in Jesus' words." See Rudolf Bultman, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasely-Murray; ed. R.W.N. Hoare and J.K. Riches (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 163.

thousand (John 6:1–14), and even when he raises his friend, Lazarus, from the dead (John 11:1–45), the author describes these σημείων as being accomplished directly from what Jesus says.[435]

In the previous section, I compared Philo and John's descriptions of the *logos*. I did so in order to underscore how both authors inextricably link the *logos* to the identity of Israel's high God, yet also present the *logos* as able to enter the creation that God had made. This is significant to the overarching aims of my dissertation because it illustrates how both first-century Jewish authors envisioned the *logos* as an instrument by which the divine could become embodied on earth. Here I continue that comparative work by reading the Gospel of John alongside Philo of Alexandria in order to illumine the manner by which the Gospel writer *also* renders God in tangible form through the word, or *logoi,* that Jesus speaks. That is to say, I demonstrate how Jesus's λόγοι throughout the Gospel position him as both the long-awaited Messiah and point to his identity as being part of, yet simultaneously differentiated from, Israel's high God.

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[435] With respect to his σημείων, for instance, when Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding in Cana, he does not accomplish this feat through physical acts; he neither stirs up the water, nor does he apply magical potions (John 2:1–11). Rather, twice over, in John 2:7 and 2:8 respectively, Jesus instructs others—through his spoken words—to first "fill the jars with water," and then subsequently to "draw some out." The water is subsequently turned into wine because the servants listen to the words that Jesus says (λέγει) (John 2:7–8). This particular "sign" thus occurs because the servants present at the wedding follow Jesus's instructions; elsewhere in the gospel, similar "miracles" transpire directly after Jesus's proclamation of them. In the case of the healing of the royal official's son, the gospel writer stresses how it was at the very "hour at which Jesus said (εἶπεν) to [the royal office] 'thy son lives'" that, in fact, his son's resuscitation occurs (John 4:53). Similarly, in the case of the healing of the paralytic, the author emphasizes that immediately after "Jesus said (εἶπεν) to him, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk,'" that "straightaway the man was made whole" (John 5:8). In these last two examples, the author inextricably links Jesus's speech and the subsequent miracles that ensue; in both instances, not even a lapse of time occurs between Jesus's command and the desired result. Certainly, as I will argue for below, an insistence on Jesus's spoken words versus his physical actions is significant in that it signals how the Johannine author crafts his portrayal of Jesus in a manner that is distinct from that of the Synoptic authors. By subtly, yet recurrently, portraying Jesus as *the one who speaks,* he—like Philo of Alexandria—asserts how Jesus, as the *logos,* is both intrinsic to the identity of the incorporeal and uncreated creator God, but is also differentiated from that God, the Father, through the *logoi* (i.e. words) that he speaks.

In order to conduct this comparative work, here I focus on two main aspects of Philo's writings. First, I look at Philo of Alexandria's allegorization of Moses as the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος, or the *logos* that remains in the mind, and Aaron as the λόγος προφορικός, or the *logos* that is spoken, uttered, proclaimed, and embodied in the world (Philo, *Det.* 38–40; 126; cf. *Abr.* 83). I do so to show how John (like Philo with respect to the figure of Aaron) similarly presents Jesus as one who speaks God's *logoi* into existence. Second, I explore Philo's descriptions of Israel's God as ὁ ὤν, or τό ὄν, deriving from the Septuaigint's description of God ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (cf. LXX Ex 3:14) in order to suggest that the author of John intentionally presents Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν (John 4:26).

I argue that, as in Philo, so too in the Gospel of John, the *logos*-concept plays a two-fold role, which enables the Johannine author to cast Jesus, the Son, in the role of the mouthpiece of Israel's supreme God. Specifically, when the Word (λόγος) becomes flesh (σὰρξ) in the person of Jesus (John 1:14, 18), what had previously only been the thoughts of God could suddenly be spoken and heard. In this manner, Jesus functions like Philo's λόγος προφορικός. That is, through the words (λόγοι) that Jesus speaks, he becomes the thoughts of God uttered, the thoughts of God spoken, the thoughts of God perceptible to the auditory senses, the thoughts of God heard in the world. By attending to the words that Jesus speaks, then, readers are pointed back to the very thoughts of Israel's high God; Jesus's words render the ineffable, incorporeal, uncreated, and supreme Father God of John's Gospel both describable and known.

Moreover, as I also demonstrate, in casting Jesus in this role as God's mouthpiece, the Johanninne author also differentiates the divine identity of Jesus, the Son, from that of Israel's supreme Father God. In this manner, as I pointed out in chapter 2, John also—like other first-century Jewish authors—viewed God's oneness in a hierarchical manner, with his supreme

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Father God at the top of the divine hierarchy and Jesus, the Son, participating in the divinity of Israel's supreme God. In particular, while the Gospel's author presents God the Father as something akin to ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν [i.e. I AM, the Existent One (cf. LXX Ex 3:14)], revealing how he views the Father as Israel's supreme deity; he presents his messianic son, Jesus, as ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν [i.e. I AM, the Speaking One (cf. John 4:26)], thereby depicting Jesus in a lesser role in terms of the divine hierarchy (see chapter 2). Thus, while the two share the same divine identity, signaled by the use of the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι (I AM), they also have different roles. The former, like Philo's "Existent One," (see chapter 2), remains incorporeal and transcendent in the heavens, while the latter, or the "speaking one" becomes embodied and active in the created world, pointing others to both his divine identity and to his Father, Israel's supreme God, through the words that he speaks. This is significant because it renders to Jesus the power of both divine salvation and judgment; accordingly, through his words, then—more so than through his actions—the Johannine Jesus functions as the mouthpiece of Israel's incorporeal, uncreated, and supreme deity in the created and corporeal world that God has made.

In making these claims, I am not suggesting that either author knew of the existence of the other, or that the Gospel of John, since it post-dates Philo's corpus, exhibits any direct dependence upon Philo's writings.[436] Rather, by reading these two roughly contemporaneous first-century Jewish authors in light of one another, despite the fact that they composed their works on either side of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, I hope to offer a fresh perspective on the long-standing debate regarding the introduction of the *logos*-Christology in

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[436] Most scholars date Philo's lifetime between 20 BCE–50 CE, but a broader range of dates has also been proposed. See Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9; Sterling, "Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series," ix; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 3 note 3. But certainly all estimates place Philo's writings at least a half century before the dating of the final composition of the Gospel of John, with 90–110 CE being the most likely timeframe for the Gospel's final form. See Brown S.S., *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 199–215.

the prologue of the Gospel and its ostensible absence in the rest of the work. Like scholars such

as Robert Gundry, I argue that *logos*-Christology clearly continues throughout the Gospel

through the words that Jesus speaks.[437] However, *contra* Gundry, this does not suggest a strong

sectarianism on the part of the Johannine author and his community, or at the very least, one

cannot say that John made a radical separation from the broader "Jewishness" of its day.[438]

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[437] Gundry, *Jesus the Word*, 3–50.

[438] Gundry has claimed that "The Fourth Gospel is unalterably countercultural and sectarian, for 'a sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists.' See Gundry, *Jesus the Word,* 63–64, but 51–70 for context. My difficulty with his argument is two-fold:

First, following the model popularized by James Dunn in the 1990s of an early parting between Judaism and Christianity in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE (see Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*), Gundry assumes that by the time of the composition of the Gospel of John there was already a distinct group of "Christians" who had separated from the "Jews." See, for instance, his unqualified used of the word "Christians" (*Jesus the Word,* 58), or more generally, his lack of engagement with the question of "Jews" at all. However, more recent scholarship has challenged the assumption of an early parting. As Annette Yoshiko Reed has pointed out, these scholars have— employing her verb—eschewed "the sociological and methodological simplicity of the idea of a single, early separation," and instead have demonstrated that "Jewish and Christian efforts at self-definition remained intimately interconnected, charged with ambivalence, and surprisingly fluid, long after the so-called 'Parting of the Ways.'" See "Jewish Christianity," 225. As a result, many scholars—myself included—now recognize the undeniable complexity and fluidity within this shared religious tradition and argue that two religions did not formally separate, at least in some geographical locations, such as Roman Syria, until the fourth century CE if not beyond. See Forger, "Interpreting the Syrophoenician Woman," 132–166; Reed and Vuong, "Christianity in Antioch," 105–132; Reed and Becker, "Introduction," 1–33; Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 3–24; Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 1–21; idem, *Borderlines,* 17–33; idem, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity," 7–36; Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways', 189–232; idem, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-history?" 191–94; idem, "Parting Ways over Blood and Water? 227–59; idem, "Rethinking (Jewish-)Christian Evidence," 349–377; Zetterholm, "Alternative Visions of Judaism," 127–53; Fiano, "From 'Why' to 'Why Not'," 343–346; Fonrobert, "The *Didascalia Apostolorum*," 488–89.

Second, since Gundry tacitly operates under this assumption of an early separation between "Judaism" and "Christianity," he does not take into account evidence from other extant Jewish literature of the time, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, and the so-called Old Testament Apocryphya and Pseudepigrapha, which would complicate his argument. Instead he advances his thesis from internal evidence in the canonical gospels alone, oftentimes comparing the Fourth Gospel to that of the Synoptics. In doing so, he takes the *rhetoric* of the Johannine author as evidence of the *reality* of the situation on the ground. However, as Lieu has asserted, it is often in the moments that early "Jews" and "Christians" sought to draw boundaries between each other that one sees the intrinsic instability of those very definitions: "selectivity, fluidity, dynamism, permeability are all intrinsic to the construction of boundaries . . . Where rhetoric constructs the boundary as immutable and impenetrable, we may suspect actual invasion and penetration." See Judith Lieu, "'Impregnable Ramparts and Walls of Iron': Boundary and Identity in Early 'Judaism' and 'Christianity,'" *NTS* 48.3 (2002): 297–313, esp. 309; idem, *Image and*

Instead, at least in terms of ideology, the Gospel of John shares deep resonances with Philo, suggesting that the former was very much conversant with, and aware of, a broader Jewish theological discourse about how Israel's supreme (and incorporeal) creator God could connect with the corporeal creation that he had made. While the Johannine author maps these notions onto the figure of Jesus, there is no need to think that—at their inception—these ideas where non-Jewish. The subtle distinctions between God the Father and Jesus the Son, especially vis-à-vis the *logos,* were already present in the Jewish-Hellenistic world of John's day, indicating how, though distinctive, John's Gospel presents another means by which a later first-century Jew understood that a part of the God of Israel could become embodied on earth, albeit in this case, the nexus of that embodiment was none other than the figure of Jesus.

a) Reading John in Light of Philo: Jesus as both λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος and λόγος προφορικός

By reading the Gospel of John in light of Philo's two-fold allegorization of Moses and Aaron as the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος and λόγος προφορικός, what comes to the fore is a fresh reading of how John presents Jesus as an embodied form of God on earth, not only through his personhood (cf. John 1:14, 18), but also through his verbal utterances. In particular, when the prologue describes Jesus as the Word (λόγος) become flesh (σὰρξ) (John 1:14, 18), the ineffable thoughts of Israel's high God suddenly become heard through the λόγοι that Jesus speaks. Thus, the Gospel's *logos*-Christology is not confined to the prologue, but continues to play a pivotal role throughout the entirety of the work.

Reality: The Jews in the World of Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Only by reading the Gospel of John in the context of other extent literature and evidence can one assess the "sectarianism" present in the writings of the Johannine author and his community. Certainly, as I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, a reading of the Fourth Gospel in light of Philo complicates Gundry's strong claims.

Philo frequently discusses the λόγος throughout his works, but here I attend to the specific places in which he separates the λόγος into two parts such that it can function as both a part of his supreme God, operating as God's thoughts or rationality, and as a part of the created world, after being spoken into corporeal existence. To do so, Philo differentiates between what he describes as the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος and the λόγος προφορικός. Philo describes the former as the "thought [or: speech], which is conceived within (ὁ ἐνδιάθετος)" (*Abr.* 83). That is, the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος functions as the thoughts, or reason, which remain in the mind of God. Since Philo conceives of Israel's supreme God as incorporeal and uncreated (see chapter 2), the thoughts or reason of God must also, by definition, remain incorporeal and not-created. By contrast, Philo depicts the latter as the "uttered speech (προφορικὸν λόγον)," or words which God speaks into existence. Since Philo conceives of anything that is perceptible to the senses as being corporeal and created, by definition uttered speech—which can be perceived by the senses, and the sense of hearing in particular—must also be created and corporeal. When God's thoughts become uttered speech, the λόγος becomes transformed. The act of speaking itself renders God's incorporeal thoughts into tangible realities; through the medium of sound, an entity perceptible to the senses, they are experienced corporeally.

In *Abr.* 83, in particular, Philo offers a striking example of how this two-fold differentiation occurs by underscoring different temporal moments in the life of the λόγος.

> For the speech conceived within [i.e. the inward thought (γὰρ ὁ ἐνδιάθετος)] is by nature father of that which is uttered, being older and the secret better of the things said (τὰ λεκτέα). (*Abr.* 83)

In this analogy, Philo first conceives of the λόγος as an incorporeal idea, remaining in the mind of God, and then views it as entering into the corporeal world, which he often describes as the sense-perceptible world, where it takes on new life as a spoken utterance. Philo thus breaks down

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the role of the λόγος into two parts: first, it exists as an essential and constitutive part of Israel's high God; and second, it enters into the created world through the act of speech itself. A temporal division thus separates the two instantiations of the λόγος: The former functions as the parent of the latter.

Philo further explains the significance of these two forms of the λόγος when exegeting Exodus chapters 3–4. Indeed, Exodus 4:15–16, and its broader literary context of Exodus 3–4, performs an important role for Philo. In the original story line of these two chapters, after Moses encounters the living God in a burning bush that fails to be consumed by its flames (Ex 3:2–6, cf. Ex 3:13–18), God actively recruits Moses to be his emissary before Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelite people (Ex 3:7–10). Moses, however, expresses reluctance at this task, offering God a series of excuses for why he cannot approach the Egyptian Pharaoh in this manner (Ex 3:11, 13; Ex 4:1, 10). These excuses culminate when Moses declares to God that he cannot go because he lacks eloquence (Ex 4:10). In particular, he claims he is slow of speech and tongue and requests that God send someone in his stead (Ex 4:10, 13). In response, God becomes angry with Moses and suggests that his brother, Aaron, accompany him (Ex 4:14). Since Moses cannot go alone, the two can go together; Moses can inform Aaron of what he is to say, and Aaron can speak for him (Ex 4:15–16).

Instead of interpreting portions of Exodus 4 literally, Philo allegorizes the references to Moses and Aaron in this chapter to be examples of the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος and the λόγος προφορίκος, respectively. For instance, his comments in *Det.* 126, begin to hint in this direction.

> And this will be made clear by the oracle which had been given to the all-wise Moses, which comprises these [words]; "Behold, is not Aaron your brother, the Levite. I know that he will speak for you, and behold he will go out to meet you and when he sees you he will rejoice in himself." For the Creator says that he knows that uttered speech (τὸν προφορικὸν λόγον) is a brother of the mind, since it speaks; for he has made it, just as an organ of music, being an articulate sound (ἠχήν) of our whole being. (*Det.* 126)

In the first half of this excerpt, Philo references the biblical story that I have been describing above, citing Exodus 4:14 in particular. In the second half, however, he does something more. Here, Philo suggests that Moses, as λόγος, remains in the mind, but since his brother Aaron *will speak for him,* his words become a form of "uttered speech (τὸν γὰρ προφορικὸν λόγον)." Once this speech (λόγον) becomes articulate sound (ἠχήν), it enters it to the world of sense perception, entering into this concrete body, and thereby no longer remaining within the incorporeal realm.

In *Det.* 38–39, Philo makes the distinction between Moses and Aaron more explicit, by again referencing Exodus 4. After alluding briefly to Moses's lack of eloquence (Ex 4:10), Philo suggests that Moses's hesitation in speaking directly to Pharaoh, which he describes as a "lack of words (ἄλογός)" (cf. *Det.* 38), does not mean that Moses is akin to an animal who cannot speak at all. Instead, Philo argues that his lack of speech actually elevates Moses's status since he becomes one who "did not deem right to employ a sonorous word by means of his organs of speech, (ὁ μὴ δικαιῶν τῷ διὰ τοῦ φωνηρίου ὀργάνου γεγωνῷ λόγῳ χρῆσθαι)," but impresses and stamps the things of true wisdom upon his mind alone" (*Det.* 38). That is, Moses represents the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, or the *logos* which remain in the mind. By contrast, Philo depicts Aaron as the "mouthpiece and interpreter and prophet (στόμα καὶ ἑρμηνέα καὶ προφήτην)" of Moses (*Det.* 39). Aaron, then, allegorized as Philo's λόγος προφορικός, transmits God's thoughts into spoken utterances. Once spoken, they take on corporeal substance—being appreciable to the senses—and thus become embodied in the created world

In *Det.* 40, Philo further clarifies the relationship between these two, again linking Aaron to speech and Moses to the mind.

> For all these things fall to speech (λόγῳ), which is brother of mind (διανοίας); for the mind is the fountain of words (πηγὴ γὰρ λόγων διάνοια), and *speech is its mouthpiece*

(στόμιον αὐτῆς λόγος). For all thoughts, like streams from a spring, pour forth and flow, and speech is the interpreter of the plan deliberated in its own council-chamber. (*Det.* 40)

Like Moses and Aaron, who are brothers, Philo suggests that the mind and speech are also brothers. Moreover, he further describes a specific temporal relationship between the two. First, in the mind, there is thought. Second, from that thought flow words, or speech, which Philo describes as the mouthpiece of the mind. Thus, the one must, by definition, come before the other. Although Philo does not explicitly employ the words λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός in this specific excerpt, their presence is implied. By allegorizing Moses and Aaron in this manner, Philo further clarifies how the *logos* can operate in this two-fold manner. On the one hand, the *logos* is a part of Israel's supreme divinity, remaining in the realm of incorporeality as God's thoughts or rationality. On the other hand, when the *logos* becomes a spoken utterance, it enters into the created world, being appreciable to the senses, and thus it becomes a part of corporeality. If one wants to understand the mind, or thoughts of God, then, the way to do so, according to Philo—at least in this particular allegorization—is to attend to Aaron's words, because Aaron functions as the mouthpiece of God. That is, Aaron's words render Philo's ineffable, unknowable, creator God both describable and known.

By reading the Gospel of John alongside Philo's two-fold allegorization of the *logos,* the way that John views the *logos* in a similar two-fold manner becomes clear. That is, here I am building on my arguments in the previous section of this chapter by suggesting that John, like Philo, presents the *logos* as being both an essential and constitutive component of Israel's high God, functioning as the thoughts or rationality of Israel's supreme deity, and as embodied in the created world that God has made, through not just the person of Jesus (cf. John 1:14, 18), but also—and perhaps more significantly, through the words (*logoi*) that Jesus speaks. With respect to the former, while Jesus, as *logos* was still with the Israel's supreme God (to whom John often

refs as the Father) in heaven, he functioned like Philo's λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος, operatating as God's

thoughts and rationality. For this reason it makes sense that the Johnannine author claims that "in

the beginning was the λόγος and the λόγος was with God and the λόγος was divine" (John 1:1).

Since God's reason or thoughts are always with God, Jesus—as something akin to Philo's λόγος

ἐνδιαθέτος—was inextricably linked to God for all of eternity. When God was creating the

world, God solicited the aid of Jesus—his λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος, his reason—to think through how

the world was to be made. In this manner, John can claim that "through him (i.e. Jesus, the

λόγος) all things were made and without him not one thing was made that has been made" (John

1:4). With respect to the latter, when the Word (λόγος) became flesh (σάρξ) in the person of

Jesus (John 1:14, 18), what had had previously only been the thoughts or rationality of God

could be suddenly spoken and heard. In this manner, Jesus functions like Philo's λόγος

προφορικός. That is, through the words (λόγοι) that Jesus speaks throughout the gospel, he

enables his Father—the unknowable, ineffable, transcendent, and uncreated God—who exists in

the incorporeal realm, to be both heard and known in the world of created corporeality.[439]

In this section, I have demonstrated how the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus as an

embodied form of God is not only confined to the Gospel's prologue, but extends to the rest of

the work through the words that Jesus speaks. In particular, I have done so by reading the Gospel

in light of Philo's allegorization of Moses and Aaron as two different forms of the *logos*. Just as

Philo's *logos* does not remain with God in the incorporeal realm, but becomes embodied in the

corporeal world through the words that Aaron speaks, so too for John, when the Word (λόγος)

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[439] Indeed, even Jesus's words (here described as τὰ ῥήματα) are, at times, portrayed as the works (τὰ ἔργα) of the Father (cf. John 14:10). Thus, it would be intriguing to consider further how Jesus's works also connect him directly to the Father (cf. John 4:34; 5:17, 36; 9:3–4; 10:32, 37; 14:10; 17:4). For some initial thoughts about these potential connections, see Burge, *Anointed Community,* 79–80.

becomes flesh in the specific person of Jesus (cf. John 1:14, 18), God's incorporeal thoughts become embodied in the world through the words (λόγοι) that Jesus speaks.

In what follows, I turn again to Philo to unpack further how John's emphasis on the spoken words of Jesus helps him to present Jesus as a form of God embodied by specifically drawing a distinction between Jesus's identity vis-à-vis that of God the Father. In particular, by comparing the interpretations of Exodus 3:14–15 in both Philo and John, I argue that, while John presents God the Father as something akin to Philo's ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (i.e. the Existent one), thereby revealing how the Father stands at the top of his divine hierarchy; he portrays Jesus the Son as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ λάλων (i.e. the one who speaks God's ineffable thoughts into corporeal existence), thereby positioning him as lesser in the divine hierarchy, yet simultaneously subsumed into his broader understanding of God's *oneness* (see chapter 2). Thus, like other Jewish writers who composed their works around the turn of the Common Era, John here employs a divine intermediary figure, namely Jesus, to enable a part of Israel's incorporeal God to enter into created corporeality. Putting these two strands of evidence together, the Gospel of John's *logos*-Christology can be seen for what it is: not radically separate from the broader "Jewishness" of its day, but something that resonates deeply with other contemporaneous first-century Jewish forms of divine embodiment.

b) Reading John in light of Philo: Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν

Reading John in light of Philo also offers a fresh lens by which to view the Gospel's presentation of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (cf. John 1:14), by demonstrating how John presents Jesus as sharing in the divine identity, yet also differentiates Jesus from that of the Father God as well. In particular, here I argue that John, like Philo, alludes to the Septuagint's

version of God's name—ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν—as recorded in Exodus 3:14–15, but that he adapts it slightly to draw a distinction between Jesus the Son and God the Father. That is, while he suggests that Israel's supreme God, the Father, is something akin to Philo's ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν, *namely the one who exists,* he presents Jesus the Son as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ λάλων, *namely the one who speaks*. This is significant because it suggests that Jesus is both divine and a part of God's *oneness,* but it also presents him as the instrument by which Israel's supreme Father God can become embodied on earth.

In the original Hebrew version of Exodus 3:14–15, when Moses encounters God in a burning bush he asks God his name directly. In response, God provides the following description:

> I AM WHO I AM (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה). He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites: 'I AM (אֶהְיֶה), has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations." (Ex 3:14–15)

The language God employs here to describe himself provides insight into God's very nature. In particular, God states his name is אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, which many English translations render as "I AM WHO I AM" or "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE" (Ex 3:14). In the subsequent line the sentiment is echoed: "I AM(אֶהְיֶה) has sent me to you" (Ex 3:14). Both forms of the name reiterate the link between God's name and the Hebrew verb היה, which is the equivalent of the English verb "to be." The name אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, thus intimates the enigmatic nature of Israel's God. In contrast to the other deities of the surrounding nations, who were defined in terms of particular attributes or functions, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot be limited in this manner; only he decides what and who he will be.

When the editors of the Septuagint translated these Hebrew verses into Greek, however, they rendered God's name as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν, or in English, something akin to "I AM, the Existent One," thereby transforming the meaning of God's name. Like the Hebrew version, the Greek translation of God's name incorporates a two-fold repetition of the "to be" verb, but unlike the Hebrew, the Greek version conjugates this verb in different ways. The first half of God's newly rendered name contains the verb noun combination ἐγώ εἰμι (I AM), but the second half consisted of the present active participle ὁ ὤν (the Existent One).[440] Thus the Septuagint's rendition of Exodus 3:14, in contrast to that of the Hebrew's, creates a version of God's name that consists of two parts. Rather than reading God's name, as אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (I AM WHO I AM), the Septuagint's Greek translation renders God's name as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν (I AM the being one), thereby intimating towards Greek philosophical conceptions of God as a being who was uncreated, incorporeal, ineffable, and utterly removed from the human realm.

Since both Philo and the author of the Gospel of John compose their works in Greek, and not Hebrew, both clearly draw upon the Septuagint's version of God's name, but, at least initially, they seem to emphasize different aspects of it. Philo, for instance, underscores the second part of the nominal equation, namely the ὁ ὤν (the Existent One) part. Although, as I pointed out in chapter 2, Philo views all names as but imperfect representations of the ineffable entity of divinity they seek to name, the most frequent appellation Philo employs in reference to God is ὁ ὤν, or τό ὄν, (the Existent) rather than equally viable alternatives like θεός (God) or κύριος (Lord). In doing so, Philo presents Israel's God in a manner that accords well with the conception of god presented in Plato's *Timmaeus*. Like Plato's god, Philo's single high deity is

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[440] Both εἰμί and ὁ ὤν derive from the same Greek root, εἰμί, but they are conjugated differently. By contrast, while both אֶהְיֶה and אֶהְיֶה derive from the same root, היה, they are conjugated in precisely the same manner.

incorporeal, immutable, ineffable, and utterly removed from the created, material realm. Accordingly, as "the Existent One (ὁ ὤν)," Philo's God is simply the one who exists, the one to whom existence belongs.

By contrast, the author of the Gospel of John initially seems only to emphasize the former part of this equation, namely the ἐγώ εἰμι (I AM) part, in order to link Jesus's divine identity with that of Israel's supreme Father God. Specifically, the gospel writer has Jesus repeatedly identify himself with phrases that begin with these words.[441]

> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the bread of life" – John 6:48
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the light of the world" – John 8:12
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the gate" – John 10:9
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the good shepherd" – John 10:11
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the resurrection and the life" – John 11:25
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the way, the truth, and the life" – John 14:6
> "I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι) the vine" – John 15:5

In John 8 in particular, the author makes this point explicit when he has Jesus allude to Exodus 3:14 in the context of one of his disputes with the Jews over his identity.[442] Here, when the Jews question the knowledge that Jesus claims to have about Abraham, Jesus replies by provocatively asserting that "before Abraham was, I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι)" (John 8:58). By alluding to the first part of God's name as described in Exodus 3:14, the words intimate both Jesus's pre-existent *and* divine nature. This evidence illustrates how both Philo and John intentionally draw upon different

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[441] For various perspectives on the "I AM" statements, especially in relation to John 4:26, see Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 50, 72; David Mark Ball, *"I AM" in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background, and Theological Implications*. JSNTSup 124. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 60–67, 176, 178–181. Note that David Mark Ball, in particular, demonstrates how there is an explicit connection between John 4:26 and Isaiah 52:6. Since Isaiah 52:6 refers to Yahweh, Ball rightly notes: "When Jesus says 'I am he who speaks,' he thus takes the words of Yahweh and applies them to himself.... Jesus' identity as messiah is therefore an identity which includes an identification with Yahweh" (180).

[442] Cf. John 8:3, 13, 22, 46, although note that, in the final two instances the gospel refers to the "Jews" more generally and not to more specific sub-sections of the Jews, such as the "teachers of the law" and the "Pharisees."

aspects of God's name as presented in the Septuagint's rendition of Exodus 3:14, the former to emphasize the incorporeal and transcendent nature of God and the latter to link Jesus's divine identity with that of the Father God's.

By reading John alongside Philo, something that has not been emphasized in prior discussions of this topic becomes apparent: namely, that John also alludes to the second part of the Septuagint's version of Exodus 3:14—ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν—but then adapts it slightly to draw a distinction betwen Jesus and the Father.[443] While he suggests that God the Father is ἐγώ εἰμι **ὁ ὤν**, *I AM the one who exists*, he presents Jesus as the son as ἐγώ εἰμι **ὁ λάλων**, *I AM the one who speaks*, thereby articulating Jesus's role in relation to the Father. Though the two share the same divine identity, Jesus the Son is not identical to Israel's supreme God, the Father. While God the Father remains in the incorporeal realm, utterly removed from the material creation, Jesus the Son embodies the Father's presence in the world—not only through his identification with and as the λόγος (Word), as presented in the prologue (cf. John 1:14, 18), but also through the λόγοι (words) that he speaks throughout the body of the gospel itself.

John frames his portrayal of Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ λάλων (I AM, the speaking one) in John 4:24–26 at the end of a lengthy exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Indeed, this is the first time in the Gospel that Jesus utters the words ἐγώ εἰμι at all. After telling the woman that a time will soon come when all true worshippers of God will worship in spirit and truth,

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[443] A possible exception to this point can be found in the work of Francis Moloney, who also translates—as I do in the paragraph below—John 4:26 as "I AM the one speaking to you." See Francis Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel: John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 154–156. For similar perspectives, see David Mark Ball, who—as I noted above—suggests that John 4:26 operates on a two-fold level and harkens back to Isaiah 52:6, which describes how in *that day* the people will know that *the Lord* (i.e. Yahweh) speaks. See Ball, *"I AM,"* 179–180. See also Gundry, *Jesus the Word*, 18–20, who—in addition to his comments on John 4:26—points out that the author of John's Gospel creates an intentional parallelism in John 4:10 between Jesus's description of himself as "the gift of God," and his description as "the one speaking to you" (ὁ λέγων σοι), and argues that this reference, too, may have Christological significance.

Jesus provides the woman with more details about how he understands both God's identity and that of the Messiah's.

> [Jesus said to the woman], "*God is spirit (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός)*, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
>
> The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah (Μεσσίας) is coming [who is called the Christ (Χριστός)]. When this one comes *he will proclaim (ἀναγγελεῖ)* all things to us."
>
> Jesus said to her, *"I am he, the one speaking to you (Ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι)"* (John 4:24–26).

A few points regarding this excerpt are in order. First, at the onset, John has Jesus articulate how he envisions Israel's supreme God at the level of God's very being. "God is spirit (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός)," he claims (John 4:24). Like Philo's high God, to whom he often refers as ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν, the Johannine author describes his high Father God, to whom he often refers as ὁ θεός, as an incorporeal entity, not a corporeal one, who is both ineffable and unknowable. As a result, for both authors Israel's supreme deity needs someone or something else—a mediatorial type of figure—who is both connected to this high God and connected to the world that God has made in order to render God heard, embodied, corporeal, and known. Second, the Samaritan woman's response to Jesus suggests that both she and her fellow Samaritans anticipate a figure, a Messiah, who will serve as God's very mouthpiece. In particular, as the Samaritan woman articulates, it is the Messiah, or the Christ, who "will proclaim (ἀναγγελεῖ) all things to us" (John 4:25). Thus, the text presents the Messiah as the one who is able to make the ineffable thoughts of God known. Third, at a basic literary level, when Jesus replies to the woman, "I am he, the one speaking to you (ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι)," he suggests to the woman that he, in fact, is this messianic form of God embodied on earth that both the woman and her fellow Samaritans have

long anticipated.[444] Thus, as I pointed out with respect to the Jewish high priest in chapter 4, so too here John's Gospel presents the Samaritans as looking to a human, messianic figure, who will render God in corporeal form. Fourth and finally, a closer look at the Greek words that Jesus employs in John 4:26 to assert this status suggests something more profound. By describing Jesus as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ λάλων, the Johannine author intimates towards how Jesus both shares in the identity of God the I AM (ἐγω εἰμι), and renders that God corporeal, making Israel's supreme deity both heard and known by speaking (ὁ λάλῶν) to her.[445] Sharing in the divine identity, yet simultaneously able to speak God's ineffable thoughts into corporeal existence, Jesus's λόγοι thus point readers back to the very mind of God.

The Johannine author develops this point repeatedly throughout the Gospel by emphasizing how Jesus does not speak on his own, but rather serves as a mouthpiece of his Father who sent him.[446] In John 12, for instance, Jesus is represented as this mouthpiece when he claims:

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[444] See, for instance, John Painter, who emphasizes this point as well as the peculiarity of having a Samaritan women speak of the Μεσσίας, rather than of ὁ Χριστός. See John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 168, esp. note 117. Also note that, in contrast to Jesus's overt affirmation of this messianic role, the character of John the Baptist emphatically denies it (οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός, John 3:28; cf. 1:20).

[445] Note that Jesus provides a similar description of himself in John 9:37, when, after the man-born-blind has been healed, he tells him that "you have seen him [i.e. the Son of Man, cf. John 9:35], and he is the one speaking with you (ὁ λαλῶν μετὰ σοῦ)." For a discussion of its significance, see Gundry, *Jesus the Word,* 19–20.

[446] For other examples where the Johannine author suggests that since Jesus and the Father share the same divine identity, and since Jesus was sent by the Father down to earth, Jesus functions as the mouthpiece of God, see John 7:16–17, where Jesus claims: "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me (τοῦ πέμψαντός με). Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (ἐγὼ ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ λαλῶ)." See also John 14:10–11, where Jesus asks his disciples "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say (τὰ ῥήματα ἅ ἐγω λέγω) to you, I do not speak on my own (ἐαυτοῦ οὐ λαλῶ); but the Father who dwells in me does his works." Also John 14:24b, where Jesus states to his interlocutors: "the word that you hear is not mine (καὶ ὁ λόγος ὅν ἀκούετε οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμου), but is from the Father who sent me (ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με πατρός)." Also John 15:15, where Jesus insists to his followers: "I have made known to you everything that I have heard (ἤκουσα) from my Father." Finally,

The one who rejects me and does not receive my word (τὰ ῥήματα μου) has a judge; the word (ὁ λόγος) that I have spoken (ἐλάλησα), it will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken (οὐκ ἐλάλησα) from myself, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what I should say (τί εἴπω) and what I should speak (τί λαλήσω). And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak (λαλῶ), therefore, I speak (λαλῶ) just as the Father has spoken (εἴρηκέν) to me. (John 12:48–50)

The seven-fold repetition of various conjugations of the Greek verb λαλέω (to speak) in this brief excerpt underscores John's emphasis upon the spoken word. The author's employment of the words τὰ ῥήματα (words) and ὁ λόγος (word) in vs. 48 convey a similar effect. Twice over, however, in vss. 49 and 50, John makes an explicit link between Israel's supreme God, the Father, and the words that Jesus speaks. Jesus does not speak on his own, but conveys the message that the Father has given to him (cf. John 5:19–24). Accordingly, when people reject Jesus by failing to receive his message, they do not reject him *per se*, but rather Israel's highest divinity, God the Father, who sent him (John 12:49). By attending to the words that Jesus speaks, readers are drawn back to the very mind of Israel's high God.

Jesus's role as God's mouthpiece, however, renders to him something more: it grants him the authority to both judge and save, thereby revealing how he participates in the supreme God's divinity and enacts God's will in something akin to Philo's sense-perceptible world that God has made. With respect to the topic of judgment, although earlier in John's Gospel the Father is depicted as giving Jesus, the Son, authority to judge (cf. 5:22, 26–27), in the excerpt above, John clarifies this point by underscoring that it is actually "the word that [Jesus has] spoken (ὁ λόγος ὅν ἐλάλησα)" that will serve as judge (John 12:48). Since Jesus's words come directly from Israel's supreme God the Father, and the two share in the same divine identity, Jesus's judgment and that of Father's are not separated from one another. The former's corporeality enables the

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see also John 17:6, where Jesus claims that "the words that you [i.e. God] gave to me I have given to them (ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἅ ἔδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς), and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me." See also Gundry, *Jesus the Word,* 3–50.

incorporeal Father God's judgment to occur in the created world. With respect to the topic of salvation, as John 12:47 clarifies, Jesus's intent is not to judge the world, but to save it. Instead, through the "commandment" that he speaks, which is "eternal life," he directs others back to Israel's supreme God (cf. John 12:50). According to the author of the Gospel of John, then, by attending to the λόγοι (words) of Jesus, readers hear the message of Israel's supreme God regarding eternal life: only through Jesus, Son of the Father, the embodied form of God on earth, can they be saved.

The purpose of Jesus's role as mouthpiece of Israel's incorporeal high God thus becomes clear: It enables those who hear, attend to, and believe in his words to pass from death to life. A few excerpts from John 5 help clarify this point:

> Amen, amen, I say to you, that the one who hears (ὁ ἀκούων) my word (τὸν λόγον μου) and believes (πιστεύων) the who sent me *has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* (John 5:24)

> Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming, and is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God (οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), and *those who have heard will live (οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν).* (John 5:25)

> Do not marvel at this. For the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice (πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνηείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ) *and will come out— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.* (John 5:28–29)

In each of the above citations, the author couples a derivative of the verb "to hear (ἀκούω)" with an allusion to Jesus's spoken word to underscore the significance of listening to Jesus's words. Those who listen and believe will receive the promise of eternal life. Since Jesus as the divine word made flesh (cf. John 1:14, 18), comes from God (John 1:1), has heard directly from God, and even shares in his divine identity, through his spoken words he participates in God's own

divinity, granting the salvation only God can give, thereby making the heart of the ineffable and unknowable Father God both articulated and known.

In a direct exchange between Jesus and his disciple Philip, the author of the Gospel of John further reiterates how both through his personhood and his words, Jesus—being simultaneously a part of the incorporeal supreme God and present in the created world that God has made—is able to make the unknowable Father God known.

> Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "For all this time I have been with you, and still you do not know me, Phililp? *The one who has seen me has seen the Father.* How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say (τὰ ῥήματα ἅ ἐγω λέγω) to you, I do not speak on my own (ἐαυτοῦ οὐ λαλῶ); but the Father who remains in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me." (John 14:8–11)

Three times over within this short excerpt, the author underscores how the identity of Jesus and that of the Father are inextricably linked. In particular, when John has Jesus claim twice over that "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:10 and 11, respectively), or its close corollary, "the Father dwells in me" (John 14:10), he articulates how the two share an aspect of the same identity: there is no temporal separation. This is significant because it marks a difference from Philo's two-fold understanding of the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος, *namely the thoughts remaining in God's mind*, and his λόγος προφορικός, *namely the thoughts of God uttered*, and it reveals how, though for both authors the *logos* operates as a means by which the divine becomes embodied, they view these expressions of divine corporeality differently. For Philo, this two-fold differentiation of the *logos* involves a temporal separation. First, Philo conceives of the *logos* as being a part of the Creator God as God's thought. Then, Philo envisions the *logos* entering into created, corporeal reality by the act of speech itself. By contrast, for John this process is more dynamic. Though, like Philo, the "words that [Jesus] say[s] (τὰ ῥήματα ἅ ἐγω λέγω)" are not his

own, but come directly from the Father, John also claims that the Father concurrently "remains in [Jesus]," such that Jesus is actually in the Father and the Father is in him (John 14:10). It is for this reason that Jesus can assert to his disciple, Philip, that *the one who has seen me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9). For the Johannine author, then, Jesus is not first conceived of as part of Israel's supreme Creator God and then later portrayed as entering into the created world that God has made. Instead, the relationship between Jesus and the Father is more dynamic. Though Jesus operates throughout the body of the Gospel on earth (and thus within the created realm), there is always an element of the divine, of the Father, that continuously dwells in him. So when others hear Jesus speak, they are actually hearing Israel's high God, the Father, as well.

The dynamic relationship between Israel's supreme divinity, the Father, and Jesus, the divine Son on earth—especially vis-à-vis how Jesus's words can mediate between the earthly and heavenly realms—is particularly apparent in John 6 and suggests that the author of this Gospel may have been aware of other "competing" Jewish forms of divine embodiment that I have delimited throughout this dissertation. Moreover, it suggests that John may have been making claims intentionally about how Jesus uniquely embodied Israel's God on earth. That is to say, it suggests that John may have been trying intentionally to one-up these other forms of divine embodiment by claiming that *only* Jesus could occupy this role. Throughout the chapter, starting in vs. 25, readers learn both about the relationship between Jesus and the Father, and the manner in which John frames this relationship in exclusive terms. Only the Son, Jesus, has been with Israel's supreme God, the Father (John 6:36). Only the Son has heard directly from the Father (cf. John 6:45–46). Only the Son—like the bread from heaven—has come down to earth (John 6:41, 48–51, 58). In other words, here John goes to great pains to underscore the unique positionality of Jesus, God's incarnate Son. Since he alone has been with God, the Father, and he

alone has come down from the Father, he alone can make the Father known. That is to say, in contrast to suggesting that Moses (see chapter 3), or the Jewish high priest (see chapter 4), or other righteous figures in Israel's tradition can mediate God's presence, John claims that Jesus alone is a form of God embodied on earth. On account of this logic, the way that the Johannine Jesus interprets the Septuagint's version of Is 54:13 in vs. 45 of this chapter is significant.[447]

> It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who have heard (ὁ ἀκούσας) and learned (μάθὼν) from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I tell you, the one who believes has life eternal I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, in order that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh (ἡ σάρξ μού)." (John 6:45–51)

In the first half of vs. 45, the author reminds his readers of the LXX's teaching, that persons learn directly from God. But then in the second half of this verse and into vs. 46, he hints towards the dynamic way that he understands God's oneness in terms of a dynamic hierarchy, which encompasses both Israel's supreme deity, the Father, and his embodied form on earth, Jesus the Son. At first, in vs. 45, he seems to suggest that persons can hear directly from God the Father, but then in vs. 46 he qualifies this statement. Only he, "who is from God" (i.e. Jesus) has seen the Father and therefore, by extension, it is only *he* who will be able to make Israel's supreme God heard and known. Note the deep relationship between Jesus and the Father here. Jesus's pedagogy is not his own, but it is directly connected to that of the Father. Since they share in the same divine identity—and Jesus alone does so according to the Johannine author— Jesus alone can make the Father's teaching known.

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[447] The specific wording of Isa 54:14, according to the LXX's version is: "πάντας τοὺς υἱούς σου διδακτοὺς θεοῦ," so it carries the same connotations as John 6:45, but the wording is not identical. For a similar description of persons learning directly from God, see Jer 31:34.

A bit later in the text, in chapter 7, Jesus makes the connection between himself and the Father more explicit when, in the context of his teaching in the temple of Jerusalem, the Jews question where he has obtained his knowledge and on what authority he speaks. John records the incident in the following manner:

> Now in the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews marvelled at it, saying, "How does this one know letters, when he has not been taught?" Then Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching (ἡ ἐμή διδαχὴ) is not mine but the One who sent (τοῦ πέμψαντος) me. Anyone who wills to do his will, will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. The who speaks on his own seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and unrighteousness is not in him. (John 7:14–18)

The implication here is that Jesus does not speak on his own, but rather his words—indeed his entire pedagogy—is inextricably linked to that of the Israel's Supreme God, the Father, the one who has sent him to earth to embody God's presence in the world. Again, Jesus plays an important function by being both a part of God yet simultaneously the embodiment of that same God throughout his words. Here his teaching, in particular, functions as the very mouthpiece of God.

Before leaving this section, I attend to one final excerpt from John 16, because it reiterates both how Jesus's speech in the Gospel differentiates him from God the Father and also how it connects him to Israel's high God.

> "I have said these things to you in proverbs (Ταῦτα ἐν παροιμίαις λελάληκα ὑμῖν). The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in proverbs (ὅτε οὐκέτι ἐν παροιμίας λαλήσω), but will report boldly concerning the Father to you (ἀλλὰ παρρησία περὶ τοῦ παρτὸς ἀπαγγελῶ ὑμῖν). On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father concerning you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. *I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am giving up the world and am going to the Father.*" His disciples said, "Yes, now you are speaking boldly, not in any parable (Ἴδε νῦν ἐν παρρησίᾳ λαλεῖς καὶ παροιμίαν οὐδεμίαν λέγεις)! Now we know that you know all things, and you have no need that that one question you; *by this we believe that you came from God.*" (John 16:25–30)

Here, Jesus reiterates that he came from the Father (i.e. like the divine *logos* of the prologue, cf. John 1:14) and will return to the Father (cf. John 16:28). Of particular importance is how the disciples frame what Jesus says**.** Because Jesus is speaking plainly, not with figures of speech (16:29),[448] they know and believe that he came from God (16:30). That is, the words that Jesus has spoken reveals to his followers that he has come from God, indeed that he is God: It is just that Jesus is the God who speaks.

My aim in the final section of this chapter has been three-fold. First, by reading the Gospel of John through the lens of Philo, I have attempted to shed light on an old debate in Johannine scholarship in order to argue that the *logos*-Christology introduced in the prologue of John does indeed extend throughout the work through the words that Jesus speaks. Second, again by employing Philo, I have demonstrated how casting Jesus in this role as God's mouthpiece allows the author subtly, yet effectively, to differentiate the divine identity of God the Father from Jesus the Son. Though both are God, the I AM, only the latter is the God who speaks. Third, although past scholars, such as Gundry, have taken the former point as evidence of the Gospel's extreme sectarianism, the comparison with Philo complicates this tendency. These ideas, which John applies to his Christological discourse, were already present in Philo. Though the author of the Gospel of John maps them onto the figure of Jesus, and that has radical implications for the later development of Christianity, at the moment when the lines were penned or redacted, the ideology present within them already had a clear presence in first-century Jewish thought. Thus, the Christological ideas present in John are a part of the Jewish discourse of the time, not separate from it. Indeed, at their inception these Christological notions in John's Gospel related

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[448] See also John 18:20, in which Jesus informs the high priest that "I have spoken openly (ἐγὼ παρρησίᾳ λελάληκα) to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret." This marks a significant deviation from the other canonical Gospels, and Mark in particular, in which Jesus's messianic identity is kept a secret.

to how Jesus functions as a form of God embodied on earth were, in fact, Jewish, even if in retrospect that may seem counterintuitive today.

6.5   Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have contrasted the paradoxical manner by which two first-century Jewish authors, namely Philo and John, presented the enigmatic figure of the *logos*. I have done so in order to underscore how both envision the *logos* as a means by which a part of Israel's supreme God could enter into corporeal creation. Yet, in the process, my analysis has revealed something more: it has shown how the author of the Gospel of John, who writes after the time of Philo, may have been aware of the sorts of ideological moves that Philo makes with respect to the *logos* and that he sought to claim that Jesus was the exclusive means by which Israel's God could become embodied on earth (both via Jesus's personhood and via his words).

Indeed, by exploring a particular moment of Jewish history, instead of employing a lens that looks backwards in time from a later known outcome in Christian theology, these two authorial visions can be seen for what they were: competing models of divine embodiment. Although it is certainly too much of a stretch to suggest that John, who writes about a half century after Philo, was responding directly to Philo's claims vis-à-vis how Israel's God could become embodied via the *logos*—indeed, we do not even know whether John knew of Philo's writings at all—it is possible that John's ontological focus was intended to outdo other competing models of God's embodiment that were already in circulation. Since the Gospel of John unequivocally states that the divine word became flesh in the person of Jesus (cf. John 1:14), depicts Jesus as being one with God the Father, and suggests that others who come to believe in him can hope for the same (cf. John 17:11, 21-22), the author—through this

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ontological focus—presents a different, more universal, vision of why Israel's God took on bodily, human form. In particular, for John, belief in Jesus as the embodiment of God[449] is what ultimately leads to the salvation of his followers (John 1:12; 3:15–16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25–26).[450] Indeed, for John, belief in Jesus as Israel's divine Messiah can even lead to the divinization of Jesus's followers, so that they too can become a part of God's oneness (John 17:11, 21-22).[451]

Despite this difference, what Philo of Alexandria's articulation of divine embodiment through the *logos* reveals is that the incarnational language that emerges in the Gospel of John, despite its significance for later Christian theology, is not as innovative as has been assumed.[452] Rather, the Gospel of John's descriptions of the divine word made flesh, though conceived differently, stand in continuity with what is found in Philo. This brings to light a point of commonality between members of the Jesus-movement and another Jew, namely Philo, who lived in the early centuries of the Common Era. Moreover, it illumines how the notion of Incarnation, as expressed first in the Gospel of John, was not the only way that ancient Jews, in the early Roman period, conceived of God in bodily form.

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[449] The Johannine author's emphasis on the need "to believe" in Jesus is very strong, as various instantiations of the verb πιστεύω arise ninety-eight times in the Gospel, as compared to eleven, fourteen, and nine times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively.

[450] The Johannine author, for instance, suggests that those who believe in Jesus and/or God become children of God (John 1:12), have eternal life (3:15–16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47), do not receive condemnation (3:18, 5:24), and never experience death (5:24, 11:25–26).

[451] See also Andrew Byer, "The One Lord and One People of the One God: The Fourth Gospel's Vision of a Divine Messiah and a Divinized Israel" (paper presented at the sixth Nangeroni meeting on "John the Jew: Reading the Gospel of John's Christology as a Form of Jewish Messianism, Camaldoli, Italy, 20 June 2016), 1–18.

[452] Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* xii–xxxix, 213; Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 105; Casey, *Jewish Prophet,* esp. 9, 31–32, 35–36. Note that Casey, in particular, views the broader developments found in the Gospel of John, with respect to the "deity and incarnation of Jesus," as only possible "when the Johannine community… had Gentile self-identification" (9).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1   Concluding Remarks

> In a beginning was the Word (λόγος), and the Word (λόγος) was with God (θεὸν),
> and the Word (λόγος) was divine (θεὸς). He was with God (θεὸν) in the beginning.
> ... And the Word (λόγος) became flesh (σὰρξ) and dwelt among us. (John 1:1–2, 14)

Only a small number of remarks have been more instrumental upon the subsequent

development of religion than the opening lines of the Gospel of John. Never before had a Jewish

document made the striking claim that a divine being, who was not-created, namely the *logos*

(λόγος), had actually become flesh (σάρξ).[453] Never before had any Jewish document been so

bold as to assert that one particular human, namely Jesus of Nazareth, could be addressed as God

(θέος) (John 20:28). Indeed, as I discussed in the Introduction, even before the formal inception

of the doctrine of the Incarnation, the putative contradictions implicit in its teaching stimulated

intense theological debates. For how can a being—or Jesus in particular for that matter—be both

created and not-created, historical and eternal, finite and immeasurable, particular and universal?

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[453] By making these claims I am not suggesting that the prologue of the Gospel of John presents Jesus as something akin to the second person of the trinity (indeed far from it!); rather, I am merely pointing out that the Johannine writer does something new. In particular, John claims that Jesus is the exclusive means by which a part of God could become embodied on earth. For another scholar who complicates the assumption, made by Maurice Casey, that in John's Gospel "the deity and incarnation of Jesus are unequivocally proclaimed," (see *Jewish Prophet,* 23) see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man in the Gospel and Revelation of John," in *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature.* eds. Adela Yarbro Collins and John Collins (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 175–203, esp. 175–76.

Because these questions have been so central to Christian theology, scholarship on this issue and its origins, in particular, have traditionally been confined to narrow debates regarding when and how the first persons started to believe in Jesus as God.[454] Scholarship, however, particularly from specialists in Jewish studies, has challenged these assumptions. These scholars have done so by not only claiming that a "divine Messiah" tradition was already present within Jewish thought during the Second Temple Period.[455] They have also underscored the multifaceted ways that both the ancient Israelite and rabbinic traditions have depicted God in bodily form.[456] To date, however, scholars have not sufficiently explored how other Jews, who stood outside the Jesus movement, in the early centuries of the Common Era, conceived of God's embodiment on earth. This oversight has caused specialists of the New Testament, early Judaism, and early Christianity alike to read the Gospel of John's description of Jesus as the divine word made flesh (John 1:14) as standing outside of Jewish conceptions of the divine. It has also contributed to a lack of awareness of Judaism and Christianity's shared religious heritage on issues related to these matters in the current day.

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[454] This trajectory of scholarly thought originated in the work of Wilhelm Bousset, and has continued, largely unabated, ever since. For my discussion of the various scholars who have subscribed to this approach and the implicit teleological and diachronic focus that undergirds their scholarship, see chapter One.

[455] The quotation is from Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels,* 2. Indeed, this is the topic of Boyarin's entire monograph. To garner support for his position, he investigates the enigmatic figure of the "Son of Man" found in Daniel 7, the Enochic literature, and the Gospel of Mark. He concludes that by the early first century CE some Jewish circles had formulated a high Christology. Boyarin's thesis is controversial, yet with his work he has unquestionably made a contribution to the field by challenging scholars to rethink (once again!) the moment at which Jews, and by extension that specific group of Jesus-following Jews, started to believe in a "divine Messiah". See also Boyarin, "Enoch, Ezra, and the Jewishness of 'High Christology'," 337–361, where he identifies a similar "divine human figure in both the *Similitudes of Enoch* as well as *4 Ezra* 13" and suggests that "[a]ccording to all of these traditions the Messiah is a kind of divine man or man-God" (337). See also Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah.*

[456] Neusner, *Incarnation of God*, 1–7, 201–230, although this is the topic of Neusner's entire book; Wolfson, "Judaism and Incarnation," 239–54; Loberbaum, *Image of God*; Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men*,*"*; idem, "Divine Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible," 161–183; Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 1–11, 38–57, 124–143; Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 15–17, 41–81, 82–112; Knafl, *Forming* God, 72–157; Smith, "Three Bodies of God," 471–488.

In this dissertation I have sought to bridge these different disciplines—often compartmentalized into distinctive, theologically driven sub-fields—in order to examine the early understanding of divine embodiment in the writings of primary first- and second-century Jewish authors. I have gone beyond the aims of recent New Testament specialists by looking not only at the divine aspects of this equation, as most past scholars have done,[457] but I have also attended to, and stressed, the bodily aspects of it. My work has focused on the corporeal, or created, aspects of this question. Rather than asking, for instance, at what point did the earliest followers of Jesus start to think of Jesus as divine, I have asked instead: Are there other places, outside of the Gospel of John, where early Jewish writers envisioned that God could become embodied? Or are there other places where contemporaneous Jewish writers intimate that a part of Israel's supreme and uncreated deity could enter into the created realm?

Throughout this dissertation, I have posited the various types of divine embodiment that ancient Jews imagined in the early centuries of the Common Era. Part one set the stage for this exploration by re-conceptualizing two pivotal terms, incarnation and monotheism. Chapter 1, "Divine Embodiment in Jewish Antiquity," demonstrated how—when viewed through a synchronic rather than a diachronic lens—the way that many Jews, around the turn of the Common Era, understood divine corporeality actually encompasses the notion of incarnation as well, while chapter 2, "Re-conceptualizing Ancient Jewish Monotheism," complicated how ancient Jews viewed God. On the one hand, like their Greco-Roman counterparts they envisioned a world with many degrees of divinity, muddying modern definitions of monotheism. On the other hand, they articulated a clear separation between the creator God and all other

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[457] Casey, *Jewish Prophet*; 9, 34–38, 156–159; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 1–9, 11–15; 99–128; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 1–11; idem, *How on Earth*, 1–9; 42–53, 152–53, 177–78; Bauckham, *God Crucified*, vii–x; idem, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, ix–59; 182–85; Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*; Bird, *How God became Jesus*.

reality, a separation that served as the backdrop to the rest of my study. Part two, then, examined one side of this divine-embodied equation by exploring a series of case study examples in which Jews thought that created humans could also be divine. Chapter 3, "A Jewish Philosopher's Take on Divine Corporeality," exhibited how Philo of Alexandria thought a spark of divinity could be implanted into the souls of created humans so that they could later ascend back to God. Then chapter 4, "The High Priest: Mediator of the Divine," revealed how various Jewish authors viewed the high priest, like the emperor of the Greco-Roman world, as the visible representation of God on earth. Finally, part three investigated the other side of this divine-embodied equation by illuminating how other Jews thought that the uncreated God could enter into created corporeality. Chapter 5, "Gendered Implications of Divine Corporeality," revealed how two first-century Jewish Alexandrian authors masculinized Sophia's female gender so that she could better embody the presence of Israel's masculine God within the female world of sense-perception that God had made. Chapter 6, "The Divine Logos Incarnate," then elucidated how the figure of the *logos* was at times conceived of as a part of the Israel's supreme God, but at others personified and or even embodied in created world.

So what are we to make of these various, or competing, models of "Divine Embodiment," which existed in the Jewish imagination around the first century CE? As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, polemical rhetoric about whether God could become human, or whether God could enter into a human body, helped Jesus-followers and other Jews to differentiate themselves. We saw this in the rhetoric of Justin Martyr. We saw this in the rhetoric of Nahmanides. And we saw this in the rhetoric of Maimonides. As a result, many have gotten a false impression. In particular, they have assumed that since many Jesus-following Jews adopted

a theology in which God and humans are one in the specific person of Jesus of Nazareth, other Jews reacted by moving in the opposition direction by making God's incorporeality fundamental.

The evidence that I have brought forth in this dissertation challenges this point. In particular, I have demonstrated how *other ancient* Jews, who stood outside of the Jesus-movement, conceived of ways that God could be embodied in human form—whether through specific figures, such as Moses or the Jewish high priest, or through specific divine attributes of Israel's supreme God, such as Sophia and the Logos. In their own day, these alternative visions divine embodiment were equally viable paths for humans to connect with God. Although it is safe to say that the particular instantiation of divine embodiment, as first expressed in the Gospel of John—that God had became incarnate in the specific person of Jesus—finds no direct parallel in either Second Temple or Rabbinic Judaism, the evidence from these contemporaneous authors demonstrates that there are examples, within the emergent Jewish tradition, where God, or a part of God, became embodied on earth so that humans could be saved, or could achieve a state of apotheosis as well.

My research demonstrates that notions of divine embodiment were not antithetical to Jewish understandings of God, as past scholars long assumed, but rather a real part of the tradition. By focusing on Jewish texts and authors that date to around the turn of the Common Era, instead of employing a lens that works backwards from a later known theological outcome, my work thus demonstrates the complex ways that Jewish literature from this period in history depicts the divine in corporeal form. I bring together recent developments regarding the importance of God's body from Jewish studies into the conversation of New Testament studies, and open up an important point of contact for Jewish-Christian dialogue in the current day.

The presentation of "Jews" and "Christians" as polarized in their opinion regarding the concept of God's embodiment was long considered axiomatic for religious historians of this period. My research allows for a snapshot in the early history of these religions, before polemics ossified into later dogmatic positions. By revealing the complex ways that early Jewish literature depicts divine embodiment, my work illumines a theological connection between the modern religions of Judaism and Christianity. By bringing to light an unexpected point of continuity between these two traditions, my research has the potential not only to challenge previous divisions that have stymied progress in the secular study of two major world religions; it can also help to create an intellectual space that is conditioned not by fear of difference, but by as spirit of cooperation, thereby fostering more charitable exchanges surrounding religious differences in the public sphere today.

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