

TIME AND EVERLASTING LIFE IN *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN*
An Alternative to Nicea's Doctrine of the Trinity

John 1:1-2 “In the beginning was the *Logos* (Word), and the *Logos* was *toward the God* (pros ton theon), and God was the *Logos*. This one was in the beginning *toward the God* (pros ton theon).

The opening verse of the Fourth Gospel enunciates three distinguishing realities that define the *Logos*. The initial prepositional phrase, *en archē* (in [the] beginning) establishes a deliberate correspondence with the creation account of Genesis¹ and implies that the *Logos* served as God's agent of creation. Consequently, by acting as an agent the *Logos* already was prior to creation, and as such it was an independent being, an hypostasis uniting God's universals and God's speech activity.

The second statement, “... and the *Logos* was *pros ton theon* (toward the God),” conveys its relationship to *the God* (ton theon) God the Creator, that is primordial. The Greek preposition, *pros*, in as far as it governs the accusative case, denotes motion, and therefore the meaning “toward” conveys a more accurate sense of the original Greek.¹ The preposition, “with,” that is usually employed in the English translations of *pros*, signifies an “alongside of” presence, and in that sense it unfortunately supports Philo's conception of an immobile, static and hierarchically-oriented *Logos*. In Greek the prepositions *syn*, governing the dative case, and *meta* governing the genitive case, express a relationship of “with” or “alongside of.” Before the *Logos* engages in any kind of activity, its ontological and prehistoric relationship to the Creator is prioritized, “And the *Logos* was *toward the God*.” Primordially the *Logos* moves toward God in order to unite with its Originator, so that it may affirm the ontological unity out of which it originated and in which it continually wills to participate.

As its movement of *pros ton theon* is completed in its union with the Creator, it participates in the being of the Creator, and its own being as *God* (theos) is validated. That is the third distinguished reality that v. 1 ascribes to the *Logos*, “and *God* (theos) was the *Logos*.” Not “the God” but “God”! No definite article is placed before *theos* in this final phrase. In this union the *Logos* does not disappear by being fused or merged into God the Creator. The *Logos* does not become identical to God the Creator. It continues to remain itself and retain its independent

¹ Philo also employs the preposition *pros*, as the quote from *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 206 indicates. But it is the movement of communication *towards* the creator from a stationary location between the Creator and the creature. See Bo Reicke, “pros,” *TDNT*, VI, 721, who states that *pros* denotes movement “towards” and is almost parallel to *eis* (into). Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. By G.R. Beasley Murray et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971) 32-33, does not comment on the preposition, but he rightly contends that no sense of subordination is implicit in the second and third clauses of verse 1. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John. The Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1966) I, 4-5, justifies the translation of *pros* as “with” in the sense of “communion” and as “towards” in the sense of “relationship” – yet without any clear preference other than opting for “a nuance of relationship”. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd ed. 1978) 155, acknowledges that *pros* with the accusative can hardly mean ‘in the presence of’ in classical Greek, but this meaning is unquestionable in New Testament Greek...” The preposition is employed 95 times in the first edition of the Gospel, and at least 29 occurrences intimate movement towards union.

identity, but in its primordial relationship to the Self-existent God, it is always directed toward “the God” from whom it originated. In this aporetic relationship of union and differentiation, the independent being of the Logos is engaged in an interdependent relationship with “the God.” In this interdependent union with *the God* (ton theon) as the bearer of God's universals and speech activity, the Logos is directed toward the fulfillment of God’s activities of creation, revelation, communication, and ultimately incarnation. The dynamic movement toward union that the preposition *pros* denotes in this context is so pivotal that the phrase *pros ton theon* is repeated in v. 2, “This one was in the beginning *toward the God*.”

It is noteworthy that the first of the three statements of v. 1, “In the beginning was the Logos,” bears a resemblance to the primordial status and capacity that Philo assigned to the Logos: a substantive being co-existing with God the Creator, and, in its origination, bearing the image and likeness of God. For Philo, the Logos is God’s consummate hypostasis because it is a divine union of the Platonic universals and God’s speech activity, and he distinguishes it as a second deity. The Logos is God! Not *the* God, but God! Interpreting the words that God spoke to Jacob in LXX Gen 31:13, “I am the God who was seen by you in place of God!” he asks the question whether there are two Gods.²

“What, therefore, are we to say? On the one hand, he who in truth is God is One, but those in an analogical application are called more in number. Wherefore also the holy word in the present instance has indicated the one who is truly God through the [definite] article saying, *ego eimi ho theos* (I am *the* God), but in an analogical application the one without a [definite] article, affirming, ‘the one appearing to you in the place’ not ‘of *the* God’ but only ‘of God’. Now he calls his eldest Logos God.”³

In his treatise, “Who is the Heir” Philo offers a characterization of the divine activities of the Logos:

“To the Logos, chief messenger and most elderly, the Father, who generated all things, gave the special prerogative, so that *standing [as] a border he separates* the creature from the Creator. He is the suppliant of sick-at-heart mortality *toward* (pros) the immortal and ambassador of the ruler *toward* (pros) the subject. Now this one is always suppliant of sick-at-heart mortality towards the immortal, and ambassador of the ruler to the subject. And he exults in this estate and magnifying it describes it saying, ‘And I stood between the Lord and you,’ neither uncreated as God, nor created as you, but [in the] middle of extreme limits, between the two extremes, having shares in both sides; on the one hand, to the parent (the one planting) towards assurance that the creature never altogether rebels against the rein and revolts, winning disorder rather than order; to the child (the one planted), towards confidence that the merciful God will never overlook his

² Philo misinterpreted the phrase, “in place of God” (en topō theou) somehow unaware that it refers to Bethel, the place where God met Jacob in a dream.

³ Philo, *de Somniis*, I, 229-230. Elated at having found this text, I quickly learned that C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960) 72, 276, had already appropriated it in his interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.

own work. For I am the one sending messages of peace to creation from God, the one always determining to put down wars, always a guardian of peace.”⁴

The Logos, in its fixed and static relationship to the Creator, is essentially a differentiating entity, located in a hierarchically structured order that *separates the creature from the Creator*. Serving as the intermediary of communication in this condition of *apartheid*, the Logos transmits messages from “the immortal” to “afflicted mortality” and from “afflicted mortality” to “the immortal”. In this stationary mode the Logos is also the personification of cosmic law, and therefore it is analogous to the reins that guide a horse, not to the reign of God into which human beings may enter and participate. Consequently, human beings are prevented from completely rebelling against God and choosing disorder rather than order. This legislative capacity enables the Logos to function as a divine sentinel of peace in the world.

The opening verse of the Fourth Gospel, specifically the second sentence of the verse, enunciates a significantly different perspective of the Logos than that of Philo. The former is dynamically related to God the Creator, so that even before it engages in any activity, it expresses the primordial nature of its independent being by uniting with “the God” to signify its ontological origin and coincidentally to affirm its interdependent relationship. The latter, Philo's Logos, co-exists alongside God the Creator as an independent being, indeed, a second God who, as the bearer of God's universals and speech activity – and therefore identifiable with Genesis 1 the Creator's archetype – calls the material world of Genesis 2 into existence.

As the initiator of God's creative act, the Logos is God's formative power of possibility by which the non-being of chaos is actualized into a world. As verse 3 asserts, “All things happened through him, and without him there happened nothing that has happened.” The Logos calls into being a world of binary differentiations, all of which reflect the goodness of its Originator. No oppositions emerge from this process. Light and darkness, sky and earth, land and sea, women and men are equally good. For if the Logos is primordially oriented in its movement *pros ton theon*, (toward the God), its participation in the divine essence, resulting in its identity as *God* (theos), bears immediate consequences for the character of the work it performs. Arising out of its union with God, the Logos as God's agent must convey something of the divine essence into the world it constitutes.⁵

This must include all the happenings that follow the primordial event of creation. For, as 1:3 also indicates, “... and without him there happened nothing which has happened.” The use of the perfect tense, *gegonen* (has happened), at the end of this verse extends the involvement of the Logos to include all the historical revelations through subsequent history into the time of the origin of the Fourth Gospel, wherever and whenever the divinely originated light of the Logos was manifested. For the life that the Logos has in itself – *independently of the Creator* – is communicated to human beings in their historical existence as primordial light, that first

⁴ *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 206. My translation.

⁵ See Robert John Russell, *Time in Eternity: Pannenberg, Physics, and Eschatology in Creative Mutual Interaction* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012) 3. on “natural evil,” such as suffering, disease, death and extinction, when natural evil is constitutive of evolutionary biology and not a consequence of an historical Fall? Could this so-called “natural evil,” constitutive of evolutionary biology be related to the “darkness” of the first day of creation?

production of its creative activity.⁶ As verse 4 states, “In him was *zōē* (life) and the *zōē* was the *phōs* (light) of human beings.”

In view of the Jewish Hellenistic identification of the Logos with the pervasive Scriptural reference, *logos kyriou* (word of the Lord) it seems valid to assume that this “light of human beings” is to be associated above all with the ongoing speech activity of the Logos in the history of Israel.⁷ The Psalmist acknowledges this in LXX Psa 118: 105 (119:105), “Your *word* (logos) is a lamp to my feet and light to my path.” And again in LXX Psa 42:3 (43:3), “O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me.” The formulations of the covenantal law and their contextual interpretations by the prophets are therefore attributable to the revelatory activity of the Logos.⁸

But there is “the darkness” that is also present and active in the context of the historical activity of the Logos. It is not the darkness of the original creative act of the Logos; it is the darkness resulting from the Fall, and therefore the darkness that is the fundamental condition of human existence in society. In verse 5a it appears to be a state or a condition, in 5b a power. Both, of course, oppose the light that the Logos generates. If that light is identifiable with the truth that the keenness of mental intuition and the clarity of understanding that human beings acquire through the Logos to interpret the world, what does “the darkness” represent? The manipulations of language in society that suppress the truth, distort reality, foster false consciousness and constitute the powers of evil in human society? And therefore also the effects of the resulting social, cultural, economic and religious structures on the natural environment in which we live?

Nevertheless, “... the light shines in the darkness.” It is a continuous actuality, as the present tense of the verb *phainei* (it shines) conveys. But it is not a timeless presence that can be experienced only by those who transcend the dreams and phantoms of physical reality and in and through their intuitive intellect perceive the revelatory light of the eternal Logos. That would be Philo’s understanding!⁹ On the contrary, the light of the Logos is an illumination that manifests itself in the material realities of historical existence and exposes the distortions and corruptions of human communication that conceal the ongoing pursuit of power, domination and violence.

At the same time the force and vitality of the light that *shines* (*phainei*) in the darkness is dramatically intensified by the contrast that the following verb *katelaben* (overcame), poses. The juxtaposition of the two verb tenses, the present *phainei* and the aorist *katelaben* is perplexing.

⁶ Philo, in *de Opificio Mundi* 30, also connects *zōē* and *fw*” but prioritizes the latter: “Privilege is accorded both to *spirit/breath* (pneuma) and *light* (*phōs*), for he [Moses] names the one spirit/breath of God because spirit/breath is most life giving, and God is the reason of *life* (*zōē*) but of *light* (*phōs*) he says that it is beautiful surpassingly, for the mentally perceived of the invisible in brilliancy and radiance.”

⁷ To Philo, God is the archetype of every other light, older and higher than every other archetype, and the Logos contains the fullness of God’s light. See *de Somniis*, 75; and *de Confusione Linguarum*, 60-63.

⁸ Contrary to Bultmann, *John*, 34-36, who contends that the authentic function of the Logos is that of Revealer. There are other functions equally authentic: the Logos is the Creator’s formative power of possibility by which the non-being of chaos will be actualized into a world, and the Logos is also the agent that draws human beings into union with God.

⁹ As Philo says in *de Opificio Mundi*, 31, “Now that invisible and mentally perceived light has become an image of the divine Logos.” Also *de Josepho*, 146, “And indeed, if one be willing to look into the inner realities he will find that heaven is an eternal day, wherein there is no night or any shadow, because around it shine without ceasing unquenchable and undefiled beams of light.” See also 143-145.

What is the connection between *phainei* expressing the ongoing reality of light shining in the darkness and the aorist sense of “the darkness *did not overcome* (katelaben) it”? The use of the conjunction *kai* (and), which links the two statements of verse 5 to each other, suggests that the sense of the aorist *katelaben* is constative, that is, “a line reduced to a point by perspective.” In other words, the statement, “and the darkness did not overcome it,” views both the prolonged struggle between the darkness and the light and the continuous victory of the light over the darkness as “constituting a single fact.” Although the darkness is the prevailing condition of human existence, the pronouncement of verse 5a, “and the light shines in the darkness,” may be considered the prior and dominant reality.

Unexpectedly and arbitrarily, it would seem, John, known in the Synoptic Gospels as “the Baptizer,” is introduced in 1:6-7.

“There happened a human being, sent from God, his name John. This one came for a witness, so that he might bear witness about the light, so that all might believe through it.”

The introduction of John into this unusual context of the Prologue does not presuppose that the preceding verses should be interpreted as cosmological speculations. This is not the stage at which history is reached. While verse 3a, “all things happened through him,” is cosmologically oriented toward the instrumentality of the Logos in creation, verses 3b-5 refer to the continuous involvement of the Logos in human history into the very time of the Fourth Gospel.

It would seem natural, therefore, to present John as a witness to that light. For the activity of the Logos has continued into his time, and through his ministry he demonstrates that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” John is a representative of the hermeneutical disclosure of the Logos, and the objective of his witness is to evoke a commitment to the Logos and the light that it generates in the world. It should not go unnoticed that the Greek prepositional phrase *di' autou* at the end of verse 7 is ambiguous. Since the pronoun *autou* is both masculine and neuter in the genitive case, it can be rendered both *through him* and *through it*. The nearest antecedent is the neuter noun *phōs* (light), and therefore, grammatically speaking, the pronoun should refer back to *phōs*. It is specifically the light that is generated by John’s witness that in turn engenders faith. John testifies about the light, but it is through that very light, the light that the Logos – not John – generates, that all will come to faith.¹⁰

John will reappear before the Prologue is concluded, and once again he will serve as a witness, but in the new context of the incarnation of the Logos. His direct link to the light of the Logos in verses 6-7 serves to establish his subsequent testimony to the incarnation with greater authority. His role in the Prologue, therefore, is formidable, for he stands at the crossroads of history, on the one hand bearing witness to the light and, on the other hand, testifying to the enfleshment of the source of that light, the Logos.

Nevertheless, although he was “sent from God” and serves as the paramount witness to the light, “he was not the light.” Could this negation intimate at least a hint at the possibility of

¹⁰ Some commentators interpret the ambiguous pronoun *autou* (him/it) as a reference to John. So Barrett, *John*, 160; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972) 88.

incarnation? For if John is “not the light,” who then is? Can there be a human being who is more than John, more than a witness to the light?

The narrator proceeds as if the question that has been begged will receive an immediate answer in 1:9-10.

“The authentic light, which illumines every human being, was coming into the *world* (*kosmos*). He was in the *world* (*kosmos*), and the *world* (*kosmos*) happened through him, and the *world* (*kosmos*) did not know him.”

This is not a reference to Jesus and his subsequent rejection! Verse 9 marks a return to verses 3-5 but offers a significant elaboration of the historical activity that has been ascribed to the Logos. “The authentic light” is the subject of verse 9, and its continuous activity in the *world* (*kosmos*) is expressed by a periphrastic, the present participle *erxomenon* (coming), combined with the past tense of the verb to be *ēn* (was). The durative nature of the light’s activity is being emphasized, corresponding to the durative sense of verse 5a, “and the light shines in the darkness.” Because the light is identifiable with its divine source, it is interchangeable with the Logos. Verse 10, therefore, undergoes a shift from the neuter noun *phōs* (light) to the masculine noun *logos* (Word) in the employment of the personal pronoun *auton* (him).

This linear movement of the Logos in history is not what is implicit in the witness of John. A new dimension of the activity of the Logos is being introduced, although it extends all the way back to the beginnings of the creation. The Logos not only serves as the agent of creation and the source of hermeneutical illumination; it is also the intermediary of world construction: “... and the *kosmos* (world) happened through him.” The word *kosmos* is used seventy-six times in the Fourth Gospel, and it includes all that “culture” comprehends.¹¹ *Kosmos* is “the social construction of reality.” If a world is constituted by the Logos, it must be the result of the linguistic activity of differentiation. Word builds world! *Logos* constitutes *kosmos*! Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in their analysis of the social construction of reality, state, “Put simply, through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment.”¹² The Logos, as the bearer of God’s universals and speech activity engenders a world.

As the divine agent of creation and world construction, the Logos was coming into its own sphere of operations: “He was in the world.” But his objective in the world is to draw the world into his own primordial gravitational movement *pros ton theon* (toward the God) in order to unite it with its Originator. Up to this point the Prologue’s account of the activity of the Logos has emphasized revelatory disclosure and world construction by linguistic differentiation. Now the Logos will engage in a new mode of activity, but one that, according to the Wisdom of Solomon, is more characteristic of Sophia than the Logos.

“She is the artisan of all things. For she is a breath of God’s power and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. On account of this nothing impure intrudes into her, for she is a radiance of eternal light, a spotless mirror of God’s action and an image of his

¹¹ The word *oikoumenē* (the inhabited earth) does not occur in the Fourth Gospel.

¹² Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966) 39. See also pp. 34-46 on “Language and Knowledge in Everyday Life.”

goodness. Being but one she can do all things, and remaining in herself she renews all things, and *moving into holy souls in every generation she constitutes friends of God and prophets.*” (Wis Sol 7:22, 25-27)

It is in terms of the being and function of Sophia that the Logos fulfills its divine purpose of being in the world. Because the Logos is not a fixed, static emanation of God but a divine being that primordially gravitates “toward God the Creator,” it can undertake this activity. In view of this unity of bipolar modes of movement and activity, differentiation and unification, in the divine being of the Logos, it seems appropriate to attribute an androgynous identity to the Logos. As Dodd has recognized, “... it is impossible to confine the term Logos to the meaning ‘word’. It is also the divine Wisdom...”¹³ Although there is a shift into a feminine mode of activity, that of Sophia, the language remains masculine. For although the term Logos does not appear in verses 9-13, the use of the masculine personal pronoun *auton* (him) indicates that it is the Logos through its linguistic and hermeneutical activity that is operative in the ongoing effort to unite the world with God.

The response that the Logos in its Sophia nature and activity encounters in the world is rejection. Here again a constative aorist is employed, *egnō* (knew), which reduces this ongoing response of denial and rejection to a single fact. If the world does not know the Logos, it is not because the world is inferior as a copy of the Logos that must be kept separated from the Creator, as Philo would maintain. It is because, as Jesus will assert in 3:19, human beings love darkness rather than light.¹⁴ Verse 9 as well as vs. 1-13 refer to the history of the Logos-Sophia *prior* to the time of Jesus. The Prologue, let it be stated very clearly, is an account of the being and activity of the Logos-Sophia, both in its relationship to the Creator and its performance from creation to incarnation. “Jesus Christ” appears only incidentally in the culminating witness of John in verse 17. It is the narrative that follows the Prologue that will unfold his career as the enfleshment of the Logos.

Repudiated by the world and its social construction of reality, the Logos-Sophia “came to its own possessions”. That would signify an entry into its rightful dwelling place or home among the people of Israel who in their covenantal relationship with God had inherited the material manifestations of the Logos-Sophia, the gifts of the Torah of Moses, the writings of the Prophets and the literature of Wisdom. Speaking for herself in the Wisdom of Sirach, Sophia acknowledges this residency in 24:6-12.

“... in the whole earth, and in every people and nation I acquired a possession. Among all these I sought a resting-place. I sought in whose territory I might lodge. Then the Creator of all things charged me, and the One who created me caused my tent to come to rest. And he said, ‘Put your tent down in Jacob and let your inheritance be in Israel.’ Before the present age, from the beginning, he created me; and until the present age

¹³ Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 295.

¹⁴ A noteworthy contrast is the apocalyptic orientation of 1 Enoch 42:1-2, “Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell; but a place was found (for her) in the heavens. Then wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people, but she found no dwelling place. So wisdom returned to her place and settled permanently among the angels.”

[ends] I shall never cease. In the tabernacle I ministered before him, and so in Zion I was established. Likewise in the beloved city he caused me to come to rest, and in Jerusalem was my authority. And I took up root among a glorified people, in the Lord's portion, his inheritance."

The Prologue, however, contradicts Sophia's testimony in Sirach. Even those who had received so much through the benevolence of the Logos and who could have acquired even more through its Sophia nature, even they did not embrace this divine personification of God's Wisdom.

And yet some did, as verse 12 acknowledges and as the Hebrew Scriptures testify. There was always a remnant! "For as many as received him, he gave them authority to be children of God." Not merely friends, but God's offspring! By their entitlement as God's offspring, they received the right and privilege to exercise authority on God's behalf. Receiving the Logos-Sophia signified "believing into his name." This phrase, consisting of the participle *pisteuousin* (believing) and the preposition *eis* (into) is a distinctive code employed consistently throughout the Gospel and denotes the reality of a dynamic relationship with the one who is believed and trusted. Its force is more adequately rendered as "to make a commitment to," a commitment that involves the whole person.

Such respondents, who have been entitled "children of God," naturally can claim a divine origin. For, as "children of God," they "were not generated from bloods, nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of a male, but from God." These three possible origins of human reproduction may have accounted for the physical origin of human beings in antiquity, but none of them can generate "children of God". Neither by the mixing of female and male bloods!¹⁵ Nor by the efforts of the flesh and blood power of the human will! Nor by the design and intention of the male whose seed without its fertilization of the female ovum was considered by many to be a self-contained homunculus or tiny human being! On the contrary, those who received and committed themselves to the Logos-Sophia became God's offspring because God gave birth to them.

This entitlement, "children of God," is limited to the Prologue and may therefore designate those Israelites and Jews of the Hebrew Scriptures who embraced the Logos prior to its incarnation. It is not carried over into the narrative world of the Gospel to identify those who follow Jesus and "believe into the Son". Jesus himself will charge his disciples to "believe into the light so that you may be *huiioi*, (generically sons and daughters) of light."¹⁶ Although androcentric, this generic term *huiioi*, should not be equated with "children of God". For when Jesus eventually identifies his disciples as "my friends," echoing Sophia's activity, as stated in the Wisdom of Solomon 7:27, and thereby establishes a horizontal relationship with them, their rank must be equivalent to the sonship that Jesus claims for himself. Consequently they are no longer "children of God," but, like Jesus, they have become adult daughters and sons of God

¹⁵ The unusual use of the plural *haimatōn* (bloods) is generally interpreted as an ancient understanding of human conception that involves the commingling of the woman's blood and the male seed. So J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, ICC 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) I, 18. Barrett, *John*, 164, attributes the plural to the Hebrew *damim*. See also Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 40.

¹⁶ John 12:36.

with all the rights and privileges of this new status.¹⁷

In John 1:9-13 the Prologue has reviewed and illuminated the entire pre-Christ history of humankind.¹⁸ This synopsis of the cosmological and historical activities of God's androgynous Logos in 1:9-13 reaches its culmination in verse 14, and at this point it also transcends the paradigms that dominate the Hebrew Scriptures. As Dodd observed, "... it takes us beyond the range of Jewish ideas, and we shall not expect anything in the way of Old Testament documentation."¹⁹ Generally the Logos, as the personification of God's speech activity, presupposes one organ of sense, the ear. It is by hearing that the hermeneutical discrimination of truth is determined.

Unprecedented and unexpectedly "the Logos happened flesh". For the first time since the opening verse of the Prologue the Logos is cited by name. The momentous event that is being announced dictates its reintroduction, underlining verse 14 as the culmination of the operations of the Logos. For in contrast to its primordial movement of *pros ton theon* (toward the God), that united it with its Originator and resulted in its reaffirmation as *theos* (God), the Logos has now united with flesh. In this movement it is in terms of the being and function of Sophia that the Logos continues to fulfill its divine purpose in the world. Previously the Logos had served as the agent of various cosmological and hermeneutical activities: engendering a creation, constituting a cosmos, illuminating human beings, utilizing John as a witness to the light, and generating "children of God". Now the Logos, in terms of its Sophia nature, has become an historical actuality by uniting itself in an indissoluble relationship with a flesh and blood human being and consequently also with its frailty, limitations and temporality. The syntactical juxtaposition of the two words, *logos* (Word) and *sarx* (flesh) accentuates the unimaginable relationship between the two. Moreover, the verb *egeneto* (happened) that expressed John's appearance on the stage of history is used to unite subject and predicate, "And the Word *happened* flesh."²⁰

Jesus, as the incarnation of the Logos-Sophia, will be the recipient of God's Spirit, as John the Witness testifies in 1:32,

"I have ascertained the Spirit descending, as a dove from heaven, and remaining on him. And I did not know him, but the One sending me to baptize *in/with* (en) water, that One said to me, "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is the one who baptizes *in/with* (en) the holy Spirit."

Rudolf Bultmann claimed, "The Evangelist has clearly not thought out the relation between the Spirit Jesus receives in baptism and his character as the Logos: in the rest of the Gospel Jesus

¹⁷ Jesus will acknowledge that to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection in 20:17.

¹⁸ Walter Eltester, "Der Logos und sein Prophet," *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1964) 131.

¹⁹ Contrary to Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 283, it needs to be stressed that John 1:9-13 does not presuppose the incarnation. Nor do these verses pleonastically refer to the career of Jesus that is elaborated in the Gospel.

²⁰ It is noteworthy that the aorist *egeneto* and the related forms of *ginomai* are used throughout the creation myth of Gen 1 and may have influenced the author in the formulation of the Prologue. Philo also makes extensive use of this verb.

appears not as the bearer but as the giver of the Spirit.”²¹ However, two essentially different origins of Jesus' singular relationship to God converge here in John's witness: incarnation and the gift of the Spirit. According to 1:14, “the Logos happened flesh;” this is the event of incarnation. A few verses later, in 1:15, John the Witness identifies the incarnate Logos-Sophia, *the only one of its kind from [the] Father* (monogenous para patros) as the one who “has happened before me because he was my first.”²² Subsequently at Jesus' baptism, when John ascertains the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the Spirit is breathing into him the Logos-Sophia and transforming him into the prototypical Human Being, the authentic human being that will be eschatologically manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. Philo's interpretation of Genesis 2:7 combines both events in the creation of Adam.

For Moses says, “God in-breathed into his face a breath of life,” so that by necessity the one receiving is made in the image of the one who sends forth the breath (pneuma).²³

Jesus' baptism, therefore, is to be construed as the occasion of his divine re-creation at which the event of the enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia (1:14) and the event of the Spirit descending and remaining on him (1:32-33) are united.²⁴

The Logos unites with flesh so indissolubly that it can no longer be differentiated from flesh, drawing flesh into its deity by uniting it with its own Originating God in its primordial movement of *pros ton theon* (toward the God). Accordingly, Jesus can say to the Pharisees, “Amen, amen I say to you, “Before Abraham happened I AM.” Moreover, through enfleshment the Logos-Sophia is objectified. God can now be seen, not in metaphysical visions which autonomous reason contemplates, but in the physical life of a human being. Later, in the narrative world of the Gospel, when Philip asks Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us;” Jesus will reply, “Am I with you for such a long time and you have not known me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father.”²⁵ Ears, however, have not simply been converted into eyes, as in Philo's metaphysics, and the works that are intellectually contemplated have not superseded words. Rather the eye has been integrated with the ear, and together these two physical organs of sense constitute the epistemological foundation of the knowledge of God. Consequently, the words and works of the incarnate Logos-Sophia should be interchangeable, manifesting the integrity of the Logos' speech activity, whose words are deeds and whose deeds are words. But that integration and the integrity it discloses will be manifested in the unfolding of the narrative world of the Gospel. Jesus himself will claim that integrity in 10:37-38.

If I don't do the works of my Father, don't believe me. But if I do, even if you don't believe me, believe the works, so that *you know once for all* (gnōte) and *continue to know*

²¹ Bultmann, *John*, 92, n. 4.

²² “... because he was my First” is the literal translation of *hoti prōtos mou ēn*.

²³ Philo, *de Plantatione*, 18-19.

²⁴ See Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005) 99-101.

²⁵ John 14:8-9.

(ginōskēte) that *the Father is in me and I in the Father*.

Through the enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia, Jesus has been drawn into the Logos-Sophia's primordial movement *pros ton theon*, and therefore, like the Logos-Sophia of 1:1c, he is *theos*. He is all that the Logos-Sophia is in terms of its aporetic relationship of differentiation and union with God, and he acknowledges that in 10:33-36. But at the same time, he also acknowledges that “the Father is greater than I.”

You heard that I said to you, “I am going away, and I am coming *towards* (pros) you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going *pros ton patera* (towards the Father) for *the Father is greater than I.*” (14:28)

Consequently, there is no basis here for a Nicene doctrine of the Trinity. The philosophical language of that creed, of course, would not be present in the Johannine text: “the only begotten *from the being of the Father* (ek tēs ousias tou patros), God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of *one substance with the Father* (homoousion tō patri) etc. But there is nothing in the Fourth Gospel that could substantiate the language that the Nicene fathers utilized in formulating their creed.

Nevertheless, in his union with *the God*, God the Creator, he, as the enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia, is, as 1:18 states, the *only one of a kind God* (monogenēs theos) and *the one being in the bosom of the Father* (ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros). As such, he, by his ministry, as narrated in the Fourth Gospel, will *interpret* (exegēsato) God, whom no one has seen, by making him visible to the world (1:18).

The enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia is directed universally to the transformation of the cosmos. Jesus, in his dialogue with Nicodemus states, “For God so loved the cosmos that he gave the Son, *the only one of its kind* (ton monogenē), in order that everyone who *believes into him* (ho pisteuōn eis auton) does not perish but has life everlasting.” Kosmos is not *oikoumenē* (the inhabited earth); kosmos, as already stated, is the social construction of reality that language constitutes. God so loved the social construction of reality that God gave the Son, the only one of its kind. Jesus is the Son, the only one of its kind, but not as the second person of the Trinity! This Son is the prototypical human being who is both masculine and feminine. This is the Son/Daughter of the enfleshed Logos-Sophia, the one who participates in God's *I AM* (ego eimi), the one whom God gives to the cosmos in love; and everyone who makes a commitment to the incarnate Son/Daughter, pioneered by Jesus of Nazareth, has everlasting life. And, as Jesus continues in 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the *kosmos* to condemn the *kosmos*, but in order that the *kosmos* is saved.” All who follow Jesus into the incarnation of the Logos-Sophia, are personifications of God's prototypical Son/Daughter, and God gives them to the social construction of reality in order to save it.

The episode in the Fourth Gospel that exemplifies this is the restoration of sight to a male born blind, an episode that has implications of Plato's allegory of the cave. When Jesus encounters this male blind from birth, who, because of his blindness, engages in begging, his disciples want to analyze the origin of his condition. Jesus, however, considers it to be an opportunity “to do the works of the One who sent me.” He spits on the ground and makes a

spittle of clay, engaging in the act of mixing and therefore, since it was sabbath, transgressing the law. He rubs the clay into the man's eyes and charges him to wash "into the pool of Siloam." He is to baptize himself by immersion. When he returns, his neighbors and those who knew him as a beggar, are uncertain of his identity; and they engage in discussion about him. Some recognize him as the beggar, others maintain that it is not he at all but someone else. In other words, changes have occurred in his life, and he has begun to manifest difference. He identifies himself to them as "ego eimi." All the English versions translate it as "It is I," or "I am he." But this is the form of divine self-identification that Jesus employed walking on the Sea of Galilee in 6:20. It is the form Jesus uses in the garden in the context of his arrest. When he asks the *cohort* (*speira*) of 600 soldiers coming to take him captive, "Whom do you seek," and they respond, "Jesus the Nazōraios," he identifies himself to them as *ego eimi*, and they fall backwards to the ground helpless. Here also the English versions render the *ego eimi* as "I am he." A male blind from birth has baptized himself by immersion, and, because he now is able to see; that is, because he is now able to see the light of truth, the light of the first day of creation, he is a new human being. He has lost all his previous predicates; he is simply a naked "I AM," and as such he has become a participant in the incarnation of the Logos-Sophia. As a personification of God's prototypical Son, he is now ready to be given by God to the cosmos that God loves. And the question that the readers of the Fourth Gospel might be inclined to ask: what are the new predicates that he will attach to his *ego eimi*? Perhaps: "I am the Light of the World." Or perhaps, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Or possibly, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

What the narrative world of the Fourth Gospel is communicating is the divine will of universal incarnation that will transform the *world* (*kosmos*) and draw the *world* into the primordial movement of the Logos-Sophia's *pros ton theon* (towards the God). This has nothing to do with "believing in Jesus as your personal Savior;" a travesty of biblical interpretation since the Reformation, and even earlier. Those who participate in this enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia are drawn into the same relationship of interdependence with God, and they bear the same heavenly origin as the incarnate Jesus claims for himself: "No one has ascended into heaven, except the one who descended, the Son of Man."

In the Fourth Gospel, as well as in the other gospels, the christological title, "the Son of Man" is corporate; it is the community of the One and the Many. Jesus, the Pioneer of incarnation, is, of course, the One, and his disciples who follow him into incarnation are the Many. The corporate character of "the Son of Man" is supported by the figure of "one like a human being" (*bar enosh*) in the apocalyptic text of Daniel 7:13-14 and 27, who ascends into heaven to receive sovereignty, glory and rule, but who is also the representative of those who belong to his prophetic fellowship. Its corporate nature is also in evidence within the Fourth Gospel. Jesus responds to Nathanael's confession, "You are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel," by promising him and his fellow disciples in 1:51, "Amen, amen I say to you, 'You will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'" That union of heaven and earth has been represented by the stone building of the *sanctuary* (*naos*) that houses the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple as the architectonic center of the world. In 1:51, however, Jesus is announcing eschatologically that the Community of the Son of Man, that he is constituting, will supersede that stone building by becoming the living Temple of

God. First, however, he must pioneer that reality by becoming the embodiment of God's presence himself. After he has driven the animals of sacrifice from the sacred precinct of the Temple and turned over the tables of the money changers, he proceeds to substitute himself in place of the *naos* (sanctuary) and become “the Father's house throughout the narrative world of the Fourth Gospel. And in that context of replacing the *sanctuary* (naos) in 2:16-21, his disciples remember Psalm 69:10, “The zeal of your house consumes me.” That is the original text of Psalm 69:10. The tense of the verb in the citation, however, has been altered: “The zeal of your house *will consume* me.” Indeed, the zeal of God's house will consume Jesus by his entering into death and resurrection in order to reconstitute the Temple as the Community of the Son of Man.

At the beginning of his Farewell Speech in 14:1-3, Jesus will refer back to 2:19-21:

“Let not your hearts be troubled! Believe into God and believe into me! In *my father's house* are many rooms. If not, I would tell you. I'm going to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again to receive you *towards* (pros) myself, so that where I AM (eimi ego) you are also.”

As the embodiment of “the Father's house,” he is informing his disciples that the living Temple that he has embodied, will be enlarged. This is not a projection of heavenly activity that he will engage in after his ascension.²⁶ This is a reality that he will actualize through his death and resurrection. On Easter evening, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus will appear to his disciples who are locked up in a room in fear, and he will breathe the holy Spirit on them (20:22). At that moment, they will become enfleshments of the Logos-Sophia and bearers of God's Spirit and therefore also “rooms in the Father's house.” A corporate living Temple of God is constituted, and Jesus' words of 1:51 are fulfilled, “You will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” The Community of the Son of Man, God's New Humanity, has become the architectonic center of the world, uniting heaven and earth.

In its union with flesh the Logos-Sophia will continue to be primordially drawn *pros ton theon* (towards the God), but in its enfleshment its activity will be directed toward drawing all humanity into the same relationship that it enjoys with its Originator. The goal, as Jesus verbalizes it in his Prayer of Consecration, is no longer generating “children of God” but constituting a living Temple that, like the Logos-Sophia itself, is united with the being of God.

“Not only for these do I ask, but also for those committing themselves to me through their [his apostles] *word* (logou), so that they may be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so that they may also be in us... *I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to completion into one.*” (17:20-21, 23)

²⁶ An apparent contradiction is manifest between 13:36, when Simon Peter asks Jesus, “Where are you going?” and 16:5, when Jesus states, “But now I am going *toward* (pros) the one who sent me, and none of you asks, ‘Where are you going?’” The verse of 14:2, “I am going to prepare a place for you” refers to his forthcoming death and resurrection; while 16:5 refers to his ascension.

Jesus, the incarnate Logos-Sophia, and, therefore, the *only one of a kind God* (monogenēs theos), *the one being in the bosom of the Father* (ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros), will communicate the intimacy of this relationship to his disciples in different contexts of the gospel. It is above all at the meal Jesus shares with his disciples prior to his Farewell Address that the narrator observes, “One of his disciples was reclining *in the bosom* (en tō kolpō) of Jesus, the one whom Jesus loved.” Even as he, the only one of a kind God (monogenēs theos), *the one being in the bosom of the Father* (ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros) interprets (exēgēsato) the invisible God to the world, the Beloved Disciple, who reclines in his bosom and therefore participates in Jesus' corporate *monogenēs theos* (only one of a kind God), will follow Jesus in interpreting God to the world.

The heavenly origin that he predicates to himself during his confrontation with the Pharisees in 8:22-23 proves to be corporate, “You are from below, *I AM from above* (egō ek tōn anō eimi); you are from this *kosmou*, *I AM not from this cosmos* (egō ouk eimi ek tou kosmou toutou).” He will attribute the same heavenly origin to his disciples in his so-called “high priestly prayer.

I have given them your *logon*, and the *kosmos* hated them, because they are not *from the kosmou* (ek tou kosmou) even as *I AM not from the cosmos* (egō ouk eimi ek tou kosmou). I do not ask that you remove them from the cosmos, but that you keep them from the wicked one; they are not *from the cosmos* (ek tou kosmou) even as *I AM not from the cosmos* (egō ouk eimi ek tou kosmou). (17:14-16)

As the Logos-Sophia *happened flesh* in Jesus, and as it happened when the resurrected Jesus inbreathed the holy Spirit to his disciples, it will continue to happen in those who follow Jesus into baptism, become enfleshments of the Logos-Sophia and receive the same Spirit that descended and remained on Jesus. Drawn into the world-saving activity of the Logos-Sophia, they, as participants in the Community of the Son of Man, the New Humanity, will be a room in “the Father's House,” the living Temple of God, empowered by the holy Spirit that dwells within them.

The Logos-Sophia does not draw its enfleshed Community of the One and the Many into the being of God, but into union with the being of God. The enfleshed Community of the Logos-Sophia is not absorbed into God the Creator and therefore does not become *ho theos* (the God). It retains its own independent identity, but, in its interdependent union with God, it will fulfill its divinely appointed commission: the transformation of the kosmos into the *monogenēs theos* (only one of a kind God), *the one being in the bosom of the Father* (ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros). If some form of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity is to be retained, it must, in view of the theology of the Gospel according to John, identify the Son, the so-called second person of the Trinity, as the corporate reality of the Community of the Son of Man and therefore include all those who participate in its being.

Finally, then, what is *life everlasting* (zōē aiōnion), the life that every human being is drawn into by making a commitment to this *monogenēs theos* (only one of a kind God), *the one being in the bosom of the Father* (ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros) and becoming a participant in it? Is it “a form of true temporality, a structured duration of diversity in unity?” Is it “an eternity that holds all the events of creation in an over-arching and differentiated unity, a unity that brings

together our lived experience of the flow of fragmentary present moments without subsuming their distinctions or separations into one timeless moment?” Is it “an eternity in which we will experience everlasting life with all of our present life available to enjoy endlessly in an ever-widening and deepening experience?”²⁷ If God's objective is the enfleshment of the Logos-Sophia in all of humanity, and the flesh is sanctified by the holiness and wholeness of God that the Logos-Sophia bears in itself, there can be only one inference of finality. It is that God's love, communicated through the incarnation of the Logos-Sophia in all humanity, is so absolute that God wills to keep forever all the goodness of the historical life of human beings in their flesh and blood existence.

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²⁷ These questions are based on Russell's views of eternity to be “a lavishly rich “supra-temporality” that is both the source and fulfillment of the temporality of creation: the temporality we experience in nature, in our lives, and in history.” See Russell, *Time in Eternity*, 5-6.