

The Divine Logos: The Gender of the Divine Jesus Christ in the Prologue to the Gospel of John

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I will investigate the gender of the divine Jesus Christ, with reference to the prologue of John's gospel, John 1.1-18. The main focus of this work will be on the use of the term Logos (Λόγος), a masculine term, to describe Christ, as well as the notion of pre-existence explored by the Johannine writer, and the implications of this for the gender of Christ.

The corporeal Jesus was incarnated in the form of a human male, but I am exploring whether Jesus was fully male in divine self as well as in his human self, which involves considering what this key text tells us about the divine Christ, and whether it points to any divine significance of Jesus' male gender. Although I will explore the nature of Christ's divinity, my dissertation is in the context of the Johannine prologue, a text overtly establishing the divinity of Christ 'Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος' (John 1.1). I am subsequently not investigating whether Jesus was divine, as it is based on the assumption of Jesus' divinity, as transcribed in this text. I therefore take Jesus Christ to be fully human and fully divine, in line with the later doctrine of the hypostatic union,¹ which though is not a doctrine from the gospel of John, arguably has its theological backing in the high Christology of the Johannine Gospel.

My hypothesis is that the text points to the divine Christ as genderless. This means that Jesus was genderless in divine aspect, but male in his humanity, making Jesus fully genderless and fully male in the same sense that Christ is fully divine and fully human. I will henceforth make the argument in this dissertation that the divine Jesus is genderless.

The sections of my dissertation will be focused around Logos and Sophia, the pre-existence of Christ and the concept of a communal existence through Christ. I will begin by introducing the concept of

¹ R. Norris, "Hypostasis," in *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 551-553.

gender, and my definition of this, before introducing the prologue of John's gospel as a text, exploring the structure, function and content.

The first and main section of my dissertation will examine Sophia, the Greek personified feminine wisdom principle, featured throughout the Septuagint, exploring the parallels between Logos and Sophia, to determine if Sophia and Logos are synonymous. I will make the claim that both are aspects of the second person of the trinity, Jesus Christ, but exploring the differences in the way that they function, using Philo's conception of spoken and unspoken word, such that Sophia is the unspoken word, whereas the Logos is the external spoken word, manifesting in the world incarnate as Jesus Christ. This will involve interacting with the use of the term 'Logos' throughout the prologue, as well as some more specific verses, such as verses 16-17 which describe the relationship between Christ the Logos and the law. I will move on to explore the pre-existence of the Logos, as laid out from verse 1 of the prologue, and the implications of this for the separation of the physical male gender of Christ, and the eternal divine Logos form. The final section will explore the meaning of verse 3 of the prologue, 'all things came into being through him', determining the implications of this for the relationship between Jesus Christ and gender.

2. GENDER

2.1 DEFINING GENDER

To discuss the gender of the divine Christ, I must first define what it means to have a gender, and whether gender is distinct from biological sex. In Matthew 19.4, Jesus declares that God made humans male and female, echoing Genesis 1.27, asserting that the two sexes are part of God's creation. It must be questioned whether this extends to gender, as linked to sex, or whether gender is a social construct. In recent years, scholars and researchers have understood gender to be more of a social construction or 'label' rather than a real existent thing. Butler questions the belief that certain gendered behaviours are natural, and instead understands gender to be 'performative,' in

the sense that gender entails from certain behaviours, constructed over time,² rather than being an identity behind oneself. She rather defines our identity as the very act of these 'performances', relying upon post-modernist thought to define someone as a 'subject' rather than an individual, as our position within the social world of ideological conventions determines our perception of reality. For Butler, gender does not therefore 'exist', as its performative nature means that it is only real in the sense that it is performed. This social constructionist theory is therefore a definition of gender that is not dependent on biological sex, but rather the construction of society.

However, this is not a definition of gender that seems compatible with the context of the New Testament that I am working within. Whilst the Bible is clear in differentiating males and females as the two created biological sexes, such as in Genesis and Matthew as mentioned, it seems that this is not only correspondent to the sex of a person, as the Bible appears to also present a conception of created gender. The two sexes do not only mean physical differences that have no bearing upon non-physical gender, but rather are a part of God's design and intention for human beings. Whilst I would argue that the Bible assumed no difference in value between males and females, such as the assertion that 'there is neither... male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28), the Bible appears to differentiate between males and females beyond physical differences. These include differing roles for men and women in some contexts, which involves an appreciation of both genders, for example the nurturing and caring qualities of motherhood, particularly highlighted in Mary's role as the mother of Jesus. Gender in the Bible is therefore a real existent thing, which is both linked to biological sex, but also different from biological sex, meaning that gender exists outside of sex. Therefore, though this sense of gender may not apply to divine beings, Gender is considered a reflection of God's creative work rather than a human invention, which means that a social constructionist definition of gender is not applicable to this theological study, which operates within the context of the New Testament. Further to this, whilst there are some aspects of gender, and gender roles, which societies are responsible for constructing, it is important to consider that whilst gender definitions can vary across different societies, the basic definitions remain much unchanged, suggesting they have basis in physical sex, as created, rather than solely social

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), 34.

construction. This further demonstrates that the social constructionist definition of gender is not an adequate definition to use when dealing with Biblical texts that refer to sex and gender as created. I am therefore using a naturalistic definition, which views gender as a created entity rather than just a label. I am taking gender to be separate from physical sex, as it can be affected by societal factors, but is primarily linked to created physical sex as the non-physical expression of these sex characteristics, which has created and intended elements.

However, this sense of 'being of' a certain gender would make less sense for the divine, as in the beginning, before the creation of anything else, existence was of a singularity, with just God. Therefore, there would have been no need for a distinction or a binary of gender. If God were one gender, there would be no need for a distinction between this and another gender, so gender would not exist in the sense that this one gender would be the only gender. Similarly, if God were neither gender nor both genders, there would still be no need for any distinction based on gender. Therefore, 'being of' a gender only would have come into existence at the point of creation, in which humans, creatures and a multiplicity of other things came into being, transforming the original existence of singularity into an existence of multiplicity, at which point gender distinction would become possible. As well as this, I have made the claim that gender is created, also meaning that it would have come into existence at creation, pointing to God existing outside of gender, as God pre-existed creation. Divine beings cannot therefore be described as being of a certain gender, so I must subsequently explore the way in which gender could relate to divine beings.

Whilst I have disregarded Butler's claim that gender does not exist, but is rather learned and 'performative' behaviours, this notion that there is a sense of gender behaviour, which is identified as masculinity or femininity, is an interesting concept. Differentiated from being of a certain gender, there is a sense in which one can be either masculine or feminine. One could be of the male biological gender, and yet have feminine aspects or be feminine, and likewise one could be of the female biological gender and yet have masculine aspects or be masculine. Being masculine or feminine is therefore not linked to biological gender.

It is in this sense that the divine could relate to gender. Though God, or more specifically the divine Christ, cannot be of a gender, so is not male, as traditionally assumed, it is possible that they may have feminine or masculine aspects or attributes. For example, whilst God is not male, God may possess masculinity in the sense of being a father and having fatherly attributes. Similarly, whilst God is not female, God may possess feminine attributes, such as having motherly characteristics. Therefore, my argument is that there is a difference between being of a gender, and possessing certain attributes attributed to that gender, namely being 'masculine' or 'feminine'. I will therefore use this conception of gender when exploring gender with regard to the divine in this dissertation. Subsequently, I am operating within a dual level system of gender, as there is a way in which both one can 'be of' a gender, and a way in one which can be masculine or feminine.

According to the contemporary thinking of today's society, gender, and in some cases sex, are accepted to mean more than just a binary, but rather more of a spectrum. However, since the New Testament deals with sex and gender in a binary sense, this is the sense in which I will deal with gender, since it is a New Testament text that I am exploring with regard to gender. I am therefore taking gender as a binary measure that accepts males and females as the two biological sexes and genders, aligned with masculinity and femininity as the two aspects of gender. Whilst this may not be a definition that adequately labels all people in today's society, it is an appropriate definition in the context of the New Testament for discussing the gender of Jesus and of divine beings.

2.2 RECENT GENDER THEOLOGY

Following on from my established definition of gender, I will use this to engage in current scholarly debates surrounding gender and theology, particularly focusing on the gender of Jesus Christ. It is important to consider the context into which my research will sit.

A notable text on the topic of God and Gender is Peeler's *Women and the Gender of God*. Peeler argues for a reconsideration of the gendered language used to describe God within theological

discourse, challenging the traditional portrayal of God as exclusively male and suggests that God's nature transcends gender.³ Further to this, she argues that while Jesus was historically male, his significance transcends gender, and emphasises that Jesus' humanity and divinity are not limited by gender, as his identity as the Son of God encompasses qualities beyond masculinity. Peeler suggests that focusing solely on Jesus' maleness can reinforce patriarchal structures within Christianity and limit the theological imagination. She therefore advocates for a broader understanding of Jesus that acknowledges his universal relevance and accessibility to all individuals, regardless of gender. The work of Peeler therefore supports my hypothesis that the divine Christ is genderless, as she similarly makes the claim that Jesus' gender identity goes beyond the masculine, whilst also highlighting the importance of challenging this solely masculine understanding of Jesus, for a theology of equality.

Susan Haddox's *Is There a Biblical Masculinity?* explores the concept of masculinity as portrayed in the Bible. The main conclusion surrounding Biblical masculinity is that it is multifaceted and diverse, with no single definition, but rather a range of identities and behaviours.⁴ Whilst Haddox does not comment directly on the gender of the divine Christ, her exploration of biblical masculinity may indirectly touch upon the genderless aspects of Jesus Christ's identity, as his significance transcends traditional gender categories. Haddox's work is useful in highlighting the range of gender portrayal in the Bible, as whilst I maintain that masculinity is a real existent thing, this can be presented in differing ways.

A further text is Myers' *Gender, Rhetoric and Recognition: Characterizing Jesus and (Re)defining Masculinity in the Gospel of John*, which explores the depiction of Jesus and the construction of masculinity in John, focusing on the themes of rhetoric and recognition.⁵ Myers examines the rhetorical strategies employed in the Gospel of John to characterise Jesus and construct masculinity. She highlights the use of persuasive language and symbolic imagery to shape the audience's perception of Jesus' identity and masculinity. She also asserts how the Gospel of John presents

³ Amy Peeler, *Women and the Gender of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2022).

⁴ Susan Haddox, "Is There a 'Biblical Masculinity'? Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible," *Word & World* 36 (2016): 5-14.

⁵ Alicia Myers, "Gender, Rhetoric and Recognition: Characterizing Jesus and (Re)defining Masculinity in the Gospel of John," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38, no. 2 (2015): 191-218.

alternative models of masculinity that challenge traditional norms and expectations, for example the way in which Jesus embodies characteristics such as vulnerability, empathy, and relationality, which expand the definition of masculinity beyond dominant cultural ideals. She explores the theme of recognition in the Gospel of John, focusing on moments where characters acknowledge Jesus' true identity. Myers suggests that these instances of recognition are linked to the (re)definition of masculinity, as they affirm Jesus' unique identity and challenge conventional understandings of power and authority.

Myers' analysis subsequently contributes to broader discussions within gender studies by highlighting the ways in which religious texts can shape and challenge cultural constructions of gender. She suggests that the Gospel of John offers valuable insights into alternative models of masculinity that embrace vulnerability, empathy, and relationality, and invites readers to critically reflect on the intersections of gender, rhetoric, and recognition. The text therefore offers a nuanced examination of masculinity in the Gospel of John, with a major theme being the redefining of the gender identity of Jesus to something other than fully masculine, which links strongly to the research focus of my project, meaning that it acts in support of my hypothesis of a genderless divine Jesus Christ. However, it must be remembered that Myer's work focuses predominantly on the actions of the person of Christ with regard to Jesus' character and masculinity throughout the whole gospel, whereas my dissertation is focused predominantly on the divine aspect of Christ, as unveiled in the prologue. Subsequently, whilst my dissertation has strong links to the work of Myers surrounding Jesus' gender identity in John, I will present a unique argument for a genderless nature of the divine Christ from an angle focusing specifically on the prologue.

Another key text, Ruether's *Sexism and God-talk*, addresses the use of Logos in the Johannine prologue directly. Ruether argues that the use of the masculine term Logos by the Johannine writer and its subsequent adoption by the early Church as the understanding of the divine aspect of Christ was unnecessary, as this is only used three times, and only by the Johannine writer.⁶ She purports that the feminine wisdom concept, Sophia should have been used instead, as this was alluded to by

⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 117.

both Jesus and Paul. Ruether puts this down to the patriarchisation of Judaism and early Christianity, involving a repression of the female symbol. She argues that it is only due to Christianity's adoption of the male symbol for this concept, that there is an unwarranted necessary ontological connection made between the maleness of the historical person of Jesus, and the maleness of the Logos, as part of a male God. This viewpoint therefore purports that the connection between the biological maleness of Christ and a masculine divinity of Jesus as Logos is only assumed due to patriarchal context. However, a feminine divinity could have been assumed, meaning that the divine Christ, the word, is not necessarily male.

Ruether is likely correct in claiming that the Logos was adopted by the Church as the conception of the divine Christ due to the patriarchal nature of the early Church, and the accompanying rejection of any female divine sense as part of this desire to maintain a fully masculine divinity. However, I would argue that the Johannine use of the Logos term was not a decision based on gender, but is based on the complex theology of Sophia and Logos, and was the appropriate term based on this theology.

Therefore, whilst Ruether and other feminist Theologians would argue that the Logos term was adopted because of patriarchy and on the other hand, the patriarchal strain of the Church would argue that a masculine term is required because Christ is fully masculine, I would argue that both these viewpoints are flawed. I will make the case that both of these lines of thinking overlook the real reason for the Johannine writer's decision to use the Logos terminology for the divine Christ in the prologue, which is the differing states of existence that Sophia and Logos exist within. I will explore my reasoning for this conception in great detail in this dissertation.

3. THE PROLOGUE

3.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE PROLOGUE

The Prologue to John's Gospel is the opening eighteen verses to the book of John, the fourth canonical gospel in the Bible. This gospel is distinguished from the three synoptic gospels by its more theological nature, marked by a different chronology, an elevated poetic style of writing, greater emphasis on the overt divinity of Jesus Christ and some unique miracles. The prologue makes this difference apparent from the very beginning of the gospel, as instead of tracing Jesus' ancestry back to Adam or Abraham or beginning with Jesus' birth or baptism narrative, as in the synoptics, the Johannine writer traces Jesus back to the very beginning, before the creation of the world in verse 1, where he reveals Jesus was with God, as the co-creator of the universe. As Lightfoot points out, the thought of the prologue starts with eternity, the being of divine life, before progressing to the passing of time.⁷ The reasons for these differences are likely due to a different author perspective, different sources, of which the synoptic writers did not have access to, different contexts, with John's gospel being most likely written for a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles for the purpose of establishing Jesus as the divine Son of God,⁸ and different theologies, with the Johannine writer having a higher Christology than the other New Testament writers.

Lightfoot points to the purpose of the prologue as to give the key to the understanding of the gospel, making clear how the Johannine writer wishes their readers to approach this presentation of the Lord's work and person.⁹ The reader should therefore consider the key elements of the prologue when in course of the rest of the gospel. The purpose of the prologue is subsequently revealed to be the introduction of central themes of the gospel, as well as the presentation of a theological reflection on the identity and significance of Jesus Christ. It establishes Jesus' divine nature from the very start of the book, as well as his role in creation and incarnation as the word became flesh.

Stibbe splits the intratextual function of the prologue into three key functions, introducing the protagonist, the plot, and the key themes of the gospel.¹⁰ The protagonist here is Jesus, depicted as the word of God. Stibbe points out that the first verse uses 'ἦν' (was) 3 times to focus on three

⁷ R. H. Lightfoot, *St John's Gospel: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 78.

⁸ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 25-28.

⁹ Lightfoot, *John*, 78.

¹⁰ Mark G. W. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 24.

different dimensions of Christ, that 'In the beginning was the word'¹¹ to depict his existence, 'was with God' to imply relationship with God, and 'was god' to assert Christ's divinity.¹² The prologue therefore introduces the key aspects of Christ within the first verse. The Johannine writer also presents Christ as elusive, by not referring to him as Jesus Christ until verse 17, only using 'the word', an enigmatic personification, up until this point. This contrasts the overt naming of John the Baptist in verse 6, as soon as this character is introduced. His elusiveness is alluded to in other ways, such as by the association of Jesus with the light 'The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome (or understood) it' (John 1.5), a symbol for Jesus, which alludes to the incomprehensibility of Christ both by the declaration that the darkness cannot understand the light, and by that this symbol is required to recognise the nature of Christ.

The Plot is introduced by the exploration of Jesus' relationships, which are the object of the Johannine writer's focus through the prologue. The first of these is the relationship between Jesus the Word and God, first introduced in verse 1, in which Christ is described to be both separate from and the same as God, as through the use of the 'ἦν' (was), Christ is described to be both with God and God. The second relationship is that between Jesus the Word and creation. Jesus is depicted to be the creator of all things, the life-giving principle of the universe 'all things were made through him' (1.3), but does not stand away from creation, rather exists in it, as he 'became flesh and dwelt among us' (1.14), living within the world and humanity that he was the agent in creating. A further relationship between Jesus the Word and John the Baptist is introduced in verse 6, a figure who declares his own subordinate position to Jesus in verse 18 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'. John the Baptist is used as a figure to distinguish Jesus against other Church figures, by asserting Jesus to be the 'true light' (1.9) as opposed to John being witness to the light. It also asserts Jesus to be 'God' (1.1) as opposed to John being 'sent from God' (1.6). The final relationships are those between Jesus the Word and his enemies, contrasted with the relationship of Jesus the Word with the community of faith. The enemies of Christ are depicted to 'not know him' (1.10) and as whom 'did not receive him' (1.11), the ironic nature of this rejection being that it was by the world which was 'made through him' (1.10) and was 'his own' (1.11). A group is separated

¹¹ All biblical references are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*

¹² Stibbe, *John*, 24.

from the enemies, highlighted as those who accept Jesus, characterised by that they did 'receive him,' 'believed in his name' and became 'children of God' (1.12) such that they would receive grace (1.16).

The third part of the intratextual function of the prologue identified by Stibbe is the introduction of key themes that span the whole gospel of John, which Stibbe defines as 'recurrent ideas in John's narrative which give unity, coherence and depth to the story'.¹³ The first of these themes is the theme of Jesus' origins, with the opening words of the gospel depicting Jesus' origins as both being God and being with God in the beginning, which set the scene for some of the critical questions in John's gospel: Who is Jesus, and where did he come from? Another key theme introduced is life, as the Johannine writer calls Jesus the life in verse 4. The word used is *ζωή*, which in John's gospel does not mean natural life (*ψυχή* is used for this, as in John 13.37, 15.13), but rather supernatural life of the age that is to come. This is a word that occurs 36 times in John, compared to only 16 times in the synoptic gospels, highlighting the particularly frequent nature of this concept within the book of John.

Light and darkness is also an important theme introduced in the prologue, with Jesus the Word being introduced as the 'light of the men' (1.4) as well as 'the true light' (1.9). This light is contrasted with the darkness, a hostile entity, which though stands against Jesus, does not here in the prologue, nor in the rest of the gospel overcome Jesus the light. The darkness does not understand nor grasp the light, so cannot intellectually nor physically overcome it. Jesus is therefore portrayed as the light, which is stronger than his opposition, the darkness. Linked to this, the *κόσμος* (world) is a further theme introduced in the prologue. The world is notably personified in verse 10, when it is declared that the world itself did not know Jesus. This links to the way in which the world is portrayed as an active entity in the rest of the gospel, which can choose to accept or reject its creator, the Word. The world in the Johannine story is actively hostile to the protagonist, Jesus, which is why the Johannine writer does not use pathetic fallacy, as in Mark's Gospel where the dark clouds form at Golgotha

¹³ Stibbe, *John*, 26.

(Mark 15.23). The world is therefore in opposition to Jesus in the same way that the darkness is, Jesus is established as an opponent of both these entities.

There are further key words introduced in the Prologue to John that become key words within the Gospel. The first of these is δόξα (glory), introduced in verse 14 to assert glory from the Father belonging to the son, Jesus, which is used throughout the gospel for both the glory that can be attained and given to God. The second is ἀληθεία (truth), also introduced in verse 14, which Jesus is described to be full of. This becomes a leading concept within the gospel, often denoting a divine reality. The third of these is μαρτυρία (witness), with John the Baptist being introduced as the first witness to Jesus in verse 7, initiating a tradition of witness and judgement throughout the gospel, which places Jesus on trial for his messiahship, leading up to his trial before the Jews at the end of the gospel.

The function of the prologue is therefore a text to introduce the main protagonist of the Gospel, Jesus the Word, the plot of the gospel, through way of Jesus' relationships, and the key themes that recur throughout the gospel. All of these three things tell us about the nature of Christ, setting up a complex picture of Jesus, touching on all the key aspects of his person, in both his character and his mission. The key points here are Jesus' divinity, expressed through the direct utterance of this, his elusive nature and his relationship with God, his role as the light of all people, the embodiment of grace and through whom the world came into being, who stands in opposition to the darkness, and the personified world who rejected him. This demonstrates the nature of Jesus the Word that is depicted in the prologue, and it is subsequently this divine aspect of Jesus Christ, the Word, that I will explore the gender of in this dissertation.

3.2 INTERTEXTUAL FUNCTION OF THE PROLOGUE

Stibbe points out a further intertextual function of the prologue as to provide insights concerning the literary traditions that influenced the Johannine writer's storytelling.¹⁴ Stibbe points out three key intertextual backgrounds to the prologue. The first of these is the wisdom literature, as the protagonist of the prologue, Jesus Christ, is referred to as Logos or Word up until verse 17, of which the most likely intertextual background, according to Stibbe, is the Jewish mythology of personified Wisdom, as much of what is said about the word is previously said of Wisdom. This sets up an intertextual relationship between the protagonist and the figure of wisdom.

The narrator also sets up the intertextual relationship between the story of Jesus and the story of Moses, foreshadowing the comparisons between Jesus and Moses, including between Jesus' death and Exodus, that recur throughout the book of John.¹⁵ This network of symbolism of Moses begins in the prologue, with verse 14 using the verb ἐσκήνωσεν, from σκηνώνω, meaning to dwell as in a tent, linking to the tenting of Moses in Exodus 25.8-9. Verse 14 also includes the phrase 'we have seen his glory', paralleling the divine presence associated with Mount Sinai where Moses saw the kebōd Yahweh, 'the glory of the Lord' (Exodus 24.15-16). The significance of this relationship is revealed in verse 17 at which point it is declared that though the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. This means that though God gave the people grace and truth through the Mosaic law, the fullness of these things came through Christ, a key point of the prologue and subsequent gospel.

The third intertextual relationship Stibbe identifies is that between the prologue and Genesis, using the phrasing 'In the Beginning', which echoes those of the very first words of the Bible, Genesis 1.1.¹⁶ The use of 'the word' also links to Genesis 1, as the description of Jesus as the word echoes 'God said' in the creation narrative. The prologue therefore introduces three key intertextual relationships with other parts of scripture, those being with the wisdom literature, the story of Moses, and the opening to Genesis, all of which are significant to the topic of my dissertation and will be discussed in due course.

¹⁴ Stibbe, *John*, 23.

¹⁵ Stibbe, *John*, 23.

¹⁶ Stibbe, *John*, 24.

3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROLOGUE

The structure of the prologue has been much disputed over the centuries, with some commentators arguing that not all the prologue is authentic. A popular hypothesis is that the prologue came from an original pre-Christian or Christian hymn, of which sections were later added to. This is the view of Brown, who lays out the structure of the Prologue as follows:

Verses 1-5: First Strophe

Verses 10-12a: Second Strophe

Verse 14: Third Strophe

Verse 16: Fourth Strophe

He deems verses 6-9, 12b-13, 15 and 17-18 additions to the original hymn.¹⁷

Barret lays out a converse structure, arguing that the prologue falls into four natural divisions, as follows:

Verses 1-5: Cosmology

Verses 6-8: The Witness of John

Verses 9-13: The Coming of the Light

Verses 14-18: The Economy of Salvation

He points out that these sections are roughly equal in length, with the passage showed both a marked internal unity, as well as a unity of subject matter with the rest of the gospel, introducing

¹⁷ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (London: G Chapman, 1978), 4-5.

some key themes that are continued through the book of John. He therefore maintains that all verses are part of the original Johannine material.

Stibbe also points to the potential use of a Chiastic structure throughout the prologue,¹⁸ laid out by Staley as follows:¹⁹

A: 1-5

B: 6-8

C: 9-11

D: 12-13

C: 14

B: 15

A: 16-18

This chiasmus links together pairs of verses, A focusing on the nature of the word, B on John the Baptist, C on the word in the world and D on relationship with Christ Jesus. This places additional emphasis on relationship with Christ as the most important part of the prologue, and therefore gospel, which aligns with the overarching purpose of the gospel, as the proclamation of the good news, quite literally the definition of gospel, that eternal salvation came through Christ Jesus.

Therefore, since the structure of the prologue appears to be divisible into both themed sections as well as a chiasmus, it is likely that all material was intended by the original Johannine writer, with the presence of such structures being intentional. I will therefore take the entirety of the prologue as authentic Johannine material and base my conclusions around the passage on the entirety of the material.

¹⁸ Stibbe, *John*, 30.

¹⁹ J. Staley, 'The Structure of John's Prologue,' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 249.

4. LOGOS AND SOPHIA

4.1 LOGOS

The term Logos (λόγος) is introduced in the very first verse of the prologue to John, being the fifth word of the entire gospel. Logos is a masculine Greek noun, and the use of this term to describe Christ will therefore be one of the main focuses of this dissertation.

The term Logos is a principle originating in classical Greek philosophy, referring to reason or rationality, often in the context of divinity, or an unchanging truth present from creation. The term is widely considered to have originated in the works of Heraclitus, who used it to describe the underlying principle and order that governs the universe,²⁰ believing that Logos represented the rational structure and reason inherent in all things, emphasising the ever-changing nature of reality,²¹ a key component of Heraclitus' philosophy. The term was developed by the stoics, who viewed Logos as the rationality which organises and sustains the cosmos, providing a framework for understanding natural ethics and natural order. Plato also used the term in his works, *Phaedrus*²² and *Timaeus*,²³ in which Logos refers to reason, discourse and the intelligible structure of the world. He associated Logos with the highest form of knowledge, in the realm of ideas, as part of his dualistic understanding of reality, with a higher and lower realm. In the Hellenistic period, Philo of Alexandria wrote extensively on the Logos, most notably exploring the concept of Logos as bridging the gap between a transcendent God and the material world.²⁴ Philo therefore saw Logos as an intermediary divine entity, through which God both created and governs the universe.

²⁰ G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57-70.

²¹ Heraclitus, "Fragments," translated by T. M. Robinson, in *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 27-58.

²² Plato, "Phaedrus" in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1, trans. by Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925).

²³ Plato, "Timaeus" in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, trans. by Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925).

²⁴ Philo of Alexandria, "On the Creation," in *Philo: Complete Works*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker (London: William Heinemann, 1929-62).

The Johannine writer would have most likely adopted this term from Greek philosophy, a philosophy which appears to have influenced the Johannine writer's key revelations about Logos in the prologue. It is however important to note that whilst the Johannine writer would have almost certainly taken influence from the Greek philosophical tradition on Sophia, leading from Philo and particularly characterised by the work of Philo, any direct influence of Philo on Johannine Christology is unsubstantiated.²⁵

Both the Greek philosophical and Johannine Logos have links to the divine, with Greek philosophy often equating the Logos to divine rationality, such as in existing in Plato's concept of a divine realm of ideas. The Johannine writer takes this a step further to equate the Logos to the divine son of God himself, Jesus Christ, building upon this existing link to divinity. Both also associate Logos with the creative power of God, as an active principle. The stoic concept of the Logos sustaining all things, as well as Philo's later conception of the Logos being the agent of creation appear to have inspired verses 3 and 10 of the prologue, which respectively highlight how all things were made through the Logos, and that the world was made through him. The intermediary function explored by Philo similarly appears to point to the understanding of the Logos figure as a mediator in verses 12-13 of the prologue, in which the Logos is portrayed as that by which people are given right to become children of God, such that they may be born of God rather than of flesh or will of man, as well as verse 14, which highlights the Logos as the revelation of glory from God the father. This concept of mediator further ties into the exploration of grace in verse 16-17, as it is here that Jesus is described to be the embodiment of the grace of God, received from his fullness, such that the grace of God is received through Christ. This theme continues into the conclusion of the prologue, in which it is declared that Christ is the only way in which God is made known, as no one can see God literally, except through Jesus. The Johannine writer therefore portrays Jesus Christ to be the ultimate mediator between God and humanity, such that Christ is the only way humanity can become children of God, receive God's grace, and know God.

²⁵ Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 58.

There are however some key differences between the Logos of Greek Philosophy, and the Johannine writer's Christian understanding of the Logos, as Jesus Christ. The main one of these is the difference in personality, as the Logos of Greek philosophy is commonly understood to be an impersonal principle, as an abstract or rational structure underlying the cosmos. By contrast, the Logos of the Johannine writer is personified and incarnated in Jesus Christ, with the prologue largely emphasising a personal relationship between humanity and God, through the Logos, as part of one of the primary functions of the prologue, to reconcile humanity to God by revelation of salvation through Jesus Christ, as the Logos. Further to this, the Logos is portrayed as incarnate, expressed definitively in verse 14, with the entirety of the prologue functioning as a pointer to the incarnation.

A further difference is that whilst both the Greek philosophical Logos and the Johannine Logos act as mediator between God and humanity, the Logos of Greek philosophy is considered a subordinate intermediary, operating between a transcendent deity and the material realm. The Johannine Logos conversely is considered to be divine, identified with God's divine nature in itself, such that this Logos is presented to both be fully God and exist eternally with God.

It would therefore seem that whilst the Johannine writer adopted this Logos term from Greek philosophy, and was influenced by this philosophy for elements of the Logos character, explored within the prologue, the writer had other ideas and influences around the key figure that they wanted to portray as the Christ. The differences between the Greek philosophical and Johannine Logos also highlight the question of why it was this term that the Johannine writer chose to adopt and develop for the prologue, which I will explore in this dissertation, with regard to the implications for gender.

The grammatical gender of the term Logos in the Greek language is masculine. This does not necessarily determine a biological or social gender, as grammatically male words do not imply an exclusive representation of a male concept. However, whilst more generally in Greek philosophy the logos was perceived to be an abstract principle, in the philosophy of Philo, the masculinity of the logos was significant, with a distinct role based on this. Since the particular parallels between the Johannine Logos and the Logos of Greek philosophy appear to be focused on Philo's more advanced

conception of the Logos and the tradition leading from this, it is possible that this gender philosophy surrounding the Logos may also have influenced the Johannine writer.

In summary, it seems that whilst the Greek philosophical tradition influenced the Johannine writer, and the gender aspect may have played into the decision to use this term, the differences point to that the Johannine writer had a further inspiration for the Logos figure of the prologue. It points to the existence of other sources, from which the personified and personal elements were adopted. I subsequently look to the Hebrew Bible.

4.2 SOPHIA

Now that I have introduced the Logos in my primary text, John 1.1-18, I will introduce Sophia (σοφία), the wisdom figure of the Old Testament. Sophia is the personified female wisdom figure featured throughout the Septuagint,²⁶ some of which books make up the Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament. Sophia (σοφία) originates from the abstract noun σοφός and means wisdom or intelligence. References to Sophia are found in the Wisdom literature, made up of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Book of Wisdom, Song of Songs and Sirach.

The most notable mentions of Sophia are in Proverbs 8, a wisdom hymn in which verses 1-21 detail the gifts of wisdom and verses 22-35 detail wisdom's part in creation, and Sirach 24, a speech from the wisdom principle, entitled the Wisdom of Sirach (Σοφία Σιράχ). These key verses on Sophia enlighten us to the characteristics of her person. One of the most notable of these is the revelation that Sophia, the personified wisdom, was existent from the beginning, or before the beginning of time, establishing her co-eternality with God. Proverbs 8.22-23 denotes Sophia's declaration that the Lord created her at the beginning (ἀρχήν), as the first act before the creation of the world (πρὸ τοῦ

²⁶ References to Sophia in the Hebrew Bible are here made to the *Septuagint*, as this is likely the version that the Greek speaking Johannine New Testament writer would have used, though there is some evidence that the writer may have had some Hebrew understanding

αἰῶνος). Sirach 24.9 reveals Sophia's declaration that she was created by the creator in the beginning before the ages (πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος).

Sophia also deems her authority with God in Proverbs 1, as after establishing YHWH as the ultimate authority in verse 7,²⁷ she tells of her ability to pronounce judgment with equanimity on those who do not respond to her word, and in turn remains ignorant to them,²⁸ revealing her shared authority with YHWH. Interestingly, what Sophia puts into first person here with her monologue reflects the message of the prophets. Micah 3.4 claims that the Lord will not answer those who have been wicked, Isaiah 1.15 claims, in the voice of YHWH that that the lord will hide his eyes and not listen to the sinful nation that the monologue is addressed to, and Jeremiah 11.11 and 11.14 claim similarly in the voice of YHWH that he will not listen to them. Sophia is therefore taking on the fulfilment of prophecy made about YHWH, establishing her divinity with the Lord, and demonstrating herself as God.

Further to Sophia's revelation that she was in the beginning with God, Proverbs 8.22-36 reveals Sophia to be the intimate to YHWH, who was his agent in creation. The wisdom monologue details her presence as he established the heavens, the skies, the fountains of the deep, the seas and the foundations of the earth. She claims to have been the Lord's delight, rejoicing with him in the delight of the world. This puts Sophia not only present at creation, but also as an active agent in creation.

Similarly, Sirach 24.13-14 tell of the way in which Sophia was present in various locations, listing Lebanon, Hermon, En-Gedi and Jericho. This suggests the omni-present nature of Sophia, required to be present in all these places, denoted by way of metaphor which attributes Sophia to be a cedar, cypress, palm tree and rosebush. This theme of nature continues throughout the Wisdom of Sirach, which goes on to attribute Sophia also to an Olive tree, Camel's thorn, terebinth and vine, establishing a further connection between Sophia and creation.

²⁷ William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

²⁸ Scott, *Sophia and Jesus*, 50.

Sophia is also identified with the Law of Moses in Sirach 24, such that after recounting the way in which she will save, she claims that all of this is the book of the covenant of the most high God, the law that Moses commanded. The ineffable nature of the wisdom is touched upon in verse 28, in which it is declared that neither the first nor the last man will know wisdom fully, just as YHWH is also transcribed to be ineffable within the Hebrew Bible.

Sophia is the most obvious trace of a feminine dimension of the divine in both Jewish thought and the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. Scott argues that the need for Sophia most likely arose out of the religious consciousness of the Eastern world, which held that the feminine is an indispensable principle and component of the self, such that an isolated male YHWH God is foreign.²⁹ Scott identifies the links between Sophia and the female Goddesses of the Eastern world, such as Ishar, MAAT and Isis, claiming that such an influence must have been at work to create a figure who reaches the stature of Sophia in the Wisdom of Solomon.³⁰ Isis claims that 'I divided the earth from the heaven. I showed the path of the stars. I ordered the course of the sun and the moon,'³¹ paralleling Sophia's wisdom hymn from Proverbs in which she claims that she was present before and throughout creation, acting beside God, as his delight.

Scott points out that though there is this influence of Eastern Goddesses on Sophia, Sophia is still firmly rooted within the tradition of Israel, and it is important to assert that Sophia's existence is not in opposition to YHWH. She should not be seen as a Goddess who rivals YHWH, and there is no evidence of any Wisdom cults in Israel, as pointed out by Dunn, who highlights that 'No worship is offered to Wisdom; Wisdom has no priests in Israel.'³² Scott argues that instead, the intention was entirely the opposite, to protect monotheistic Judaism from the temptation of the Goddess cults, by catering to the need for a female divine figure, that was encapsulated within YHWH.³³

²⁹ Scott, *Sophia and Jesus*, 47.

³⁰ Scott, *Sophia and Jesus*, 64.

³¹ From the 'Aretalogy from Cyme,' reproduced in J. C. Engelsmann, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 64-66.

³² James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 170.

³³ Scott, *Sophia and Jesus*, 47-51.

4.3 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SOPHIA AND LOGOS

Sophia appears to have many parallels to the Logos, such that as in the intertextual relationship pointed out by Stibbe, the Johannine literature was likely inspired by the wisdom literature. The parallels between Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24, and the prologue to John are striking, emphasising the argument that some Johannine material was drawn from the Wisdom literature. The most notable of these is the comparison between the eternality of Sophia and the eternality of the Logos laid out in the Johannine prologue. Sophia is declared to be in the beginning in Sirach 24.9, with the 'ἄπ ἀρχῆς' paralleling 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ' in John 1.1, in which the Johannine writer declares the logos to be in the beginning with God. Proverbs 8 also contains the monologue from Wisdom, in which she declares her everlasting nature, established in the beginning. As such, it is likely that the Johannine description of the Logos in the beginning was inspired by the wisdom hymn from proverbs.

The logos is also revealed to be God (Θεός) in John 1.1 (Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος) mirroring the authority of God claimed by Sophia in Proverbs 8, shortly after declaring YHWH the ultimate authority, such that Sophia claims all that listen to her will dwell with hope without fear of evil.

Further parallels to the Logos are found in the wisdom speech of Sirach 24. The voice of Sophia declares in Sirach 24.8 that her creator pitched her tent, using the verb translated as κατασκήνωσον in the Septuagint, from the root verb σκηνόω. This mirrors verse 14 of the prologue to John in which the Johannine writer transcribes that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, using the verb ἐσκήνωσεν, also from σκηνόω, meaning to dwell as in a tent. This similarity demonstrates that both Sophia and the Logos dwelt on earth im-permanently, as in a tent, highlighting this shared nature.

A key parallel drawn between the wisdom literature and the Johannine prologue is the link between Sophia or Logos and creation. Sophia is denoted to be the active agent in creation in Proverbs 1, who was both present for the creation of the world and who delighted in creation with God the creator. Similarly, the Johannine prologue emphasises that all things came into being (ἐγένετο) through the

Logos, that without the Logos not one thing came into being (1.3), and that the world came into being through him (1.10).

These parallels point to two potential scenarios, which are not mutually exclusive. Firstly, that the Johannine writer was inspired by the wisdom literature, and used both the Logos of Greek philosophy as well as the Sophia figure of the Old Testament as inspiration for the Christ-Logos of the prologue. The second is that the Johannine writer saw the Logos and Sophia as of the same, both being the divine aspect of Jesus Christ. My argument is that both of these things are true, that the Johannine writer was inspired by the wisdom literature in writing the prologue, but also that this was intentional, as they viewed Sophia and Logos as parts of the same entity, Jesus Christ.

Both of these scenarios have important implications for the gender of the divine aspect of Jesus Christ. Firstly, if the Johannine writer used both the Logos of Greek Philosophy and Sophia of the Wisdom literature for the Christ-Logos of the prologue, why was the masculine term Logos used? Did this relate to the male Jesus Christ figure, since the piece focuses on the incarnation of the Logos into Jesus? Secondly, if both Logos and Sophia are parts of Jesus Christ, is the divine Christ necessarily genderless, by the incorporation of both the masculine and the feminine?

It must be mentioned that understanding of both gender and divinity would likely have been very different 2000 years ago to what it is today. The Johannine writer would not have had access to the same advanced theological texts that we do, which enable us to understand the divine Christ and human Christ as separate but of the same, linked in hypostatic union.³⁴ Therefore, to understand Christ as simultaneously both male and genderless would have been very difficult for someone that did not understand Christ as simultaneously both human and divine in the sense of two separate parts of one whole. Therefore, though the prologue uses the male term Logos to speak of the divine Christ, this should not be taken as a definitive indicator that the divine Christ is male, or even that the Johannine writer was making a conscious attempt to assert the male nature of the divine Christ. However, my argument is that the use of the Logos term was intentional by the Johannine writer,

³⁴ Norris, "Hypostasis," 551-553.

though not because of the gender significance, but rather the nature of the divine Christ in question, which is what I will explore in this dissertation.

4.4 SOPHIA AS CHRIST IN THE BIBLE

Evidence for Sophia as Christ can be found elsewhere in the New Testament, such as in 1 Corinthians 1.24, which declares Christ to be the wisdom of God, with 1 Corinthians 1.30 stating Christ became for us wisdom from God, the 'Θεοῦ σοφίαν'. Barrett argues that wisdom appears here in verse 30 with a new meaning, as it relates to the personified figure of wisdom, which occupies the place of importance as a mediator between God and men, in creation and salvation. But further to this, it reveals the meaning of true wisdom, which is not speculation of the being of God, but rather is God's tangible plan for the redemption of the world. Barrett argues that this means it is Christ crucified that becomes the personal figure of wisdom, God's agent in creation.³⁵ Barrett further notes the significance of the way that verse 30 states that Christ became wisdom (ἐγενήθη σοφία). He compares the use of 'wisdom' to the use of 'righteousness', as it outlines that Christ 'became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. In other places Paul talks of Christ as God's gift of righteousness, such as in Romans 3.21 and 10.4, as well as 2 Corinthians 5.21, which claims that we can become righteousness through Christ. Barrett points out that this means though we are not morally righteousness, we rather become righteous because Christ becomes this righteousness for us. This means that Christ is righteousness in the literal sense, which Barrett argues, has the connotation that we should subsequently understand all the words in 1 Corinthians 1.30 in this rightful context, such that just as Christ is literally the righteousness of God, he is also literally the wisdom of God,³⁶ deeming Christ to be the full embodiment of the wisdom principle. This view is supported by other commenters, including Thistleton, who points out the meaning of this verse as that God's wisdom becomes actualised not only through Christ, but as

³⁵ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1968), 59-60.

³⁶ Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 60-61.

Christ.³⁷ This analysis of these verse subsequently places Christ not just as an element of wisdom, but rather a literal personification of wisdom, or σοφία.

4.5 CHURCH FATHERS ON SOPHIA AS CHRIST

The majority of the Church fathers also named Christ as Sophia, who saw Christ as the personification of divine wisdom, eternal and uncreated. This is particularly apparent in the thought of Origen, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Origen wrote in the first section of Book 2, Chapter 1 of his *De Principiis* that there are many names for the Son of God, one of which is wisdom. This is according to the expression of Solomon, in which he quotes wisdom's monologue from Proverbs 8,³⁸ that recounts her presence in the beginning before creation. He affirms Christ as Sophia by claiming that Christ is not a different nature to Wisdom, but rather 'one and the same.' Origen subsequently references Paul, the previously mentioned 1 Corinthians 1.24, which claims that Christ is the wisdom of God. This discussion of Christ as wisdom continues into section 2, with Origen examining the nature of wisdom, asserting that it is not an impersonal wisdom, but rather a living form of wisdom, such that this wisdom is the thing that makes humans wise.³⁹ Origen asserts the non-corporeal nature of wisdom, and subsequently argues that the son is the hypostatic existence of wisdom with the human flesh.

Origen makes the argument that wisdom was generated before any beginning that can be comprehended or expressed, as it is not possible that God existed without wisdom in a state of inability. He goes on to make the claim that the creative power of the coming creation was included in this existence of wisdom, linking to the sense in which the prologue states that all things came into being through the word. In section 3, Origen affirms the understanding of Wisdom as the word

³⁷ Anthony C. Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 172.

³⁸ Origen of Alexandria, "De Principiis," trans. Frederick Crombie, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885), Book 1, chapter 2, section 1.

³⁹ Origen, "De Principiis," 1.2.2

of God, due to 'her disclosing to all other beings', the sense in which she is the 'interpreter of the secrets of the mind'.⁴⁰ It is notable that Origen uses 'her' in this section, as opposed to using 'he' when talking of Christ as the word in sections 1 and 2.

Justin Martyr, in his discussion of wisdom as begotten of the father, claims that there is a rational power proceeding from himself, who is called both the son and wisdom.⁴¹ He goes on to call Wisdom 'the Word of Wisdom', relating the aspect of the Logos as the word and expression of God, to Sophia as the wisdom of God, through their eternally begotten nature, by the 'Father of all things'. Justin similarly quotes Proverbs 8, declaring Wisdom to speak by Solomon, in which the eternal beginning of Wisdom is relayed, just as the Logos' eternal beginning is recounted.

Clement of Alexandria, in his *Exhortation to the Heathen*, references Jeremiah 10.12, which states that the world has been raised up by the Lord's wisdom, and claims that it is wisdom, which is his word, that raises up the truth.⁴² Clement is therefore referencing the word, which is Christ, as the wisdom of God, alluding to Christ as Sophia.

Gregory of Nazianzus built upon the concept of Christ as Wisdom in his fifth Theological Oration, writing that it is because Jesus is the divine Wisdom that made the world, that Jesus must be omniscient, having perfect knowledge that is not ignorant of anything.⁴³

Subsequently, there is an almost unanimous consensus of the Patristic age, that Sophia is Christ and Christ is Sophia, as well as the evidence to support this in Biblical scriptures. If Christ the Logos is synonymous with Sophia, both being the second person of the trinity, this has important consequences for the gender of Jesus Christ in the Johannine prologue, as it would mean that the

⁴⁰ Origen, "De Principiis," 1.2.3

⁴¹ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho," trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885), chapter 61.

⁴² Clement of Alexandria, "Exhortation to the Heathen," trans. William Wilson, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885), chapter 8, 195.

⁴³ Gregory of Nazianzus, "Oration 30," trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1894), 15.

Johannine writer chose to use the masculine Logos (Λόγος) rather than the feminine Sophia (Σοφία) as in the Septuagint. The use of the term Logos therefore seems a deliberate use of a masculine synonym, to avoid the use of the feminine Sophia. This suggests that the Johannine writer was conscious of the gender of the divine aspect of Jesus Christ, the aspect written about in the prologue, and perceived the divine Christ to be male, just as the physical Jesus Christ is male. On the other hand, it conversely points to a feminine dimension of the divine Christ.

However, there has been some alternative interpretations of the nature of Sophia, as other than Christ, which I will now examine.

4.6 SOPHIA AS SPIRIT

As well as some links to the Logos, there are also some links between Sophia and the Holy Spirit, which has led to some arguments that Sophia is synonymous with the Spirit rather than with Christ the son. It must be noted that this argument operates within the context of the trinity, which is a doctrine later than the New Testament, as it was adopted as part of the Nicene Creed by the first council of Nicaea in 325.⁴⁴ However, this came before or around the time in which the Church Fathers were writing, meaning that their arguments can be examined within a Trinitarian context. If Sophia were the Spirit rather than the Logos, this would remove the gendered implication in which the Johannine writer chose to switch from a feminine to a masculine divine figure when writing the prologue, whilst at the same time removing the feminine aspect of Christ.

In Genesis 1.2, the writer reveals that when the earth was unseen and unformed (ἀόρατος και ἀκατασκεύαστος), the spirit of God was above the waters. This mirrors the wisdom monologue in Proverbs 8, in which Sophia details her presence in the creation of the world, including before the water and when God established the water. The monologue focuses particularly on the water,

⁴⁴ "The Nicene Creed," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, trans. E. R. Hardy (London: SCM Press, 1954), 337-340.

detailing how God assigned a limit to the sea, such that water should not transgress his command, which links to the revelation in Genesis that the spirit hovered above the waters.

This further relates to the Baptism of Jesus, in which the spirit of God (Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ) descends upon Jesus when he is in the water, receiving his baptism (Matthew 3.16, Mark 1.10, Luke 3.22). This could be seen as the spirit that hovered over the waters at creation finally descending into the water at the Baptism, a symbol of the completion of creation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This link between Sophia's monologue in Proverbs 8 to Genesis 1 and the Baptism of Jesus points to Sophia as the Holy spirit, rather than Christ. This alludes to the three persons of the trinity co-existing at creation, which would be coherent as the three persons of the eternal God. Such instances referring to Sophia in the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint would therefore refer to the Holy Spirit rather than to the divine Christ.

A further similarity between Sophia and the spirit is the highlighted omnipotent nature of Sophia in Sirach 24.10-14, which appears more consistent with the work of the Holy Spirit than of Christ. Sophia recounts the way in which she was in Zion, Jerusalem, Lebanon, Hermon, En-gedi and Jericho, suggesting that similar to the omnipresent nature of God in the Hebrew Bible, Sophia is always present in all places. However, an explanation for this could be a recounting of the work of creation, in which both the Logos, the Spirit and Sophia are all declared to be an agent in and present for such. The Logos is declared to be the agent by which all things came into being 'πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο', in John 1.3, hinting to an omnipresent sense in which all things came into being through him, such that the Logos is present in all things.

This view of Sophia as the spirit is supported by Irenaeus of Lyons, whose Trinitarian theology understands Christ the son to be the Logos, and the Holy Spirit to be the Wisdom of Sophia. He argued this because of the close connection between the two in the Bible. He relates wisdom to the spirit by recounting Proverbs 3 and 8, which tell of how wisdom was present with God before creation, and it is through whom that God created the heavens and the earth.⁴⁵ Irenaeus draws upon

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885), Book 4, chapter 20, section 3.

the way in which wisdom is personified here as feminine, closely associated with God's creative power, which he then links to the way the Holy Spirit is described in the New Testament, as a source of wisdom, and an utterance of wisdom, as in 1 Corinthians 12.8. Irenaeus also interpreted Proverbs 33.6 to denote a dual agent creation, 'τῷ λόγῳ' and 'τῷ πνεύματι', in which the λόγῳ is Christ the son and πνεύματι is the spirit, Sophia.⁴⁶ He therefore took Sophia, the feminine wisdom principle to be synonymous with the Holy Spirit, as the source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding of God, through whom believers can know and understand the truth of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

If Sophia, the feminine wisdom principle, is consistent with the Holy Spirit, this would mean that the Johannine writer subsequently did not take a feminine image of the divine Christ and translate this into a masculine concept when writing of the Logos in the prologue, but rather took the masculine Logos idea because he saw it as an appropriate characterisation of the divine aspect of Christ.

However, the view of Sophia as the Holy Spirit is not one of mainstream Christian Theology, with the majority of the Church fathers attributing Sophia to the Logos, the son, as discussed previously. Further to this, there is stronger Biblical evidence pointing to Sophia as Christ than as the spirit, as although the wisdom monologue places Sophia before Creation just as the spirit is placed before creation, Christ is also placed before creation in the Johannine prologue. Subsequently, this characteristic of being eternally begotten before creation is common of the trinity rather than just of the aspect of the trinity synonymous with Sophia. The previously mentioned verses from 1 Corinthians, verses 24 and 30, have been used to argue against the relation of Sophia with the spirit, as they appear to overtly declare Christ to be the wisdom of God.

Interestingly, although Justin Martyr attributes Wisdom to be Christ, he does discuss the same power, proceeding from God to be called the Holy Spirit, the Son and Wisdom, suggesting these three to be of the same.⁴⁷ However, this 'power' is also said to include the glory of God and God

⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. J. Armitage Robinson (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), section 5.

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho," trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1885), chapter 61.

himself, suggesting that Justin is here referring to the entirety of the trinitarian God, which is the sense in which Wisdom and Christ are of the same, rather than declaring them to be the same aspect of the trinity.

Therefore, in conclusion, whilst Sophia shares similarities and common properties with the spirit, the more logical and evidential inference is that Christ is Sophia, the personified divine wisdom principle of the Hebrew Scriptures and subsequent Septuagint. I must therefore question why, if Jesus Christ, though incarnated as a human male, was the incarnation of a feminine divine principle, did the Johannine writer depict the divine aspect of Christ as the masculine Logos in the prologue. There are various explanations for this, which I will now explore.

5. SPOKEN AND UNSPOKEN WORD

5.1 PHILO

Philo was a Hellenised Jew, writing in the years before and around the time of Jesus, who attempted to harmonise Greek Platonic philosophy with the Jewish scriptures. It was Philo who used the term Logos for the role and function of wisdom, which, as previously mentioned, is likely where the inspiration for this phrase came from for the Johannine writer, though it may not have been a direct adoption. Philo wrote extensively on the concept of the Logos, whom he saw as the bridge between the divine and the human,⁴⁸ a mediator who was both an attribute of God, as well as a separate entity. According to Philo, Logos was responsible for the creation of the universe, and is the source for all wisdom and virtue. He argues that the Logos is present in the scriptures, and can be discerned through study of the scriptures, to develop a deeper understanding of the divine.

⁴⁸ Philo of Alexandria, "On the Creation," in *Philo: Complete Works*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker (London: William Heinemann, 1929-62).

Philo also wrote on the concept of wisdom, using the Greek term Sophia (Σοφία) for personified wisdom, as in the Old Testament. Philo similarly portrayed Sophia as a divine mediator between God and humanity, deeming her to be the means by which God created and sustained the world, and the bridge that connects the material and spiritual realms.⁴⁹ Philo viewed Sophia as the mother of virtue, the source of moral guidance for humanity by which one could lead a virtuous life and achieve spiritual growth.⁵⁰

It is notable that Philo assigns very similar roles to Logos and Sophia, often using these two terms interchangeably. Scott points out their interchangeability⁵¹ in that, Sophia is described as the mother of the Logos,⁵² but the Logos is described as the fountain of Sophia in another section.⁵³

Philo also followed Platonic thought in differentiating between two realms, the divine upper realm, the κόσμος νόητος (world of ideas) and the lower realm, the κόσμος αἰσθητός (world of perception). Both Sophia and Logos belong to the upper realm of ideas, mediating what is knowable about God. However, Philo had a very negative view of females and the feminine, equating the feminine to the lower realm of the created world, of which he depreciates, seeing the female sense-perceptive created world as a threat to the male nature. He in turn equated the masculine to the realm of the divine, the intrinsically asexual realm, to which God himself belongs.⁵⁴ Philo however saw Sophia as belonging to the upper realm of the divine, with the Logos replacing her role as God active, within the sensory realm of perception. This was because he considered that a female divine entity could not exist within the sensory κόσμος αἰσθητός without being corrupted by the immoral female nature of this lower realm. The mediatory function, performed by Sophia in the wisdom tradition is therefore replaced by Logos in the lower realm, alluding to a more complex philosophy of Sophia and Logos in which they are not interchangeable, but rather Sophia is withdrawn to remain in the

⁴⁹ Philo, "On the Creation".

⁵⁰ Philo of Alexandria, "Allegorical Interpretation" in *Philo: Complete Works*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker (London: William Heinemann, 1929-62).

⁵¹ Scott, *Sophia*, 91.

⁵² Philo of Alexandria, "Fugitives," in *Philo: Complete Works*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker (London: William Heinemann, 1929-62), 19.

⁵³ Philo, "Fugitives," 97.

⁵⁴ R.A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories of Male and Female* (Lieden: Brill, 1970), 48-49.

κόσμος νόητος, unattainable to human knowledge,⁵⁵ whilst the Logos is within the κόσμος αἰσθητός, as the aspect of God that can be known and experienced.

Scott argues that Sophia's replacement in the divine realm is in line with Philo's assertion that God is fully masculine, and henceforth Sophia is actually masculine, as it would not be possible to have a feminine deity in the female material realm without this deity being corrupted by the evil of the feminine realm. Engelsmann makes the argument that, according to Philo, a feminine 'dainty' Sophia could only exist in the 'rarefied' air of heaven, needing protection from the contamination of the female flesh.⁵⁶ This means that a feminine deity would only be possible in the perfection of the divine male realm, so would in this sense be truly masculine. However, this, as Engelsmann points out, is a far cry from the Sophia of Proverbs who roams the streets of Israel and calls out to men who forsake her.⁵⁷ Sophia is described to be in the world through the description of her omnipresence in the various locations in Proverbs and her attribution to nature in Wisdom of Sirach, as well as being described as in the world by her offering of herself to men in Proverbs 9. It is therefore not logical to make the argument that Sophia is a dainty feminine deity existing only in this realm. Whilst such descriptions of Sophia are metaphorical, they allude to a nature that is not 'dainty' and weak, but rather of a strong and independent feminine nature. I would therefore argue that Philo is not correct in insisting that the feminine Sophia must be confined to the divine realm because of her feminine nature, and therefore asserting the actual masculinity of Sophia by confining her to the truly male realm.

Philo also was one of the earliest authors to provide testimony on the doctrine of the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (internal word) and the λόγος προφορικός (spoken word), which Kamesar purports is probably a concept originating from the Stoics.⁵⁸ The original form of the doctrine distinguished between the two kinds of Logos or reason within humans, the thoughts in the mind and the expression of these thoughts in uttered speech. Philo uses the term λόγος ἐνδιάθετος to refer to the

⁵⁵ Scott, *Sophia*, 92.

⁵⁶ J. C. Engelsmann, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 102.

⁵⁷ Engelsmann, *Feminine Dimension*, 102.

⁵⁸ Adam Kamesar, "The Logos Endiathetos and the Logos Prophorikos in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the Iliad, Greek," *Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 (2004): 163-181.

internal aspect of the Logos, present within the mind and soul of human beings, the contemplation of divine things that one could come to know and experience the Logos through. Philo uses the term λόγος προφορικός to refer to the external aspect of the Logos, manifested in the world through its creative and sustaining power, present in the natural order of the world as a bridge connecting the material to the divine. An interesting parallel to Philo's conception of Sophia and Logos can be seen in this conception of the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and the λόγος προφορικός, as he saw Sophia and Logos similarly existing in two different realms, the κόσμος νόητος and the κόσμος αἰσθητός, paralleling the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός existing on two separate levels of reality.

Philo found these two logoi represented by a number of Biblical images and allegories, particularly in the Pentateuch, the most notable of these the symbolisation in Moses and Aaron. Philo saw Moses as the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, as God communicated directly within Moses in a non-verbal way, and Aaron as the λόγος προφορικός, as the services of Aaron were required to transmit Moses' revelation to the people.⁵⁹ Philo therefore saw the concept of a λόγος προφορικός and a λόγος ἐνδιάθετος rooted within scripture, with this key dualism prevalent in the Pentateuch and Jewish Scriptures.

5.2 INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL

Whilst Philo's concept of restraining Sophia to the divine realm due to her gender, and his own depreciation of the feminine is shown to be flawed, the concept of a differing existence of Sophia and Logos, as linked to different realms or as internal and spoken aspects of the same Logos, is of use in this study. Philo is not correct in saying that Sophia only exists in the κόσμος νόητος because of her femininity and her subsequent ability to be corrupted, however, the concept of differing existences in which differing aspects of the divine Christ exist within is of use.

⁵⁹ Philo, *Quod deterius* 38–40, 126, f L. (Berlin: Cohn and P. Wendland, 1896-1915).

Although Sophia is in the world and therefore cannot be boxed as a 'dainty' feminine deity as Philo suggests, this imagery of Sophia within the world is metaphorical in a way that imagery of the Logos as Christ within the world is not, as Sophia does not exist as a literal person on earth as Jesus Christ the incarnated Logos. Imagery of Logos in the world is literal, as in the prologue to John, verse 10 tells of how the Logos was in the world, with verse 14 literalising this to depict how the Logos 'became flesh and lived among us.' Further to this, verse 18 claims that it is the Son who has made God known, in contrast to how no one has ever seen God, alluding to Jesus as the presence of God seen literally within the world. Therefore, though both Logos and Sophia are described in their respective parts of the Bible to be in the world, the descriptions of Sophia allude metaphorically to an immaterial existence, conversely to material revelations of the Logos as the son within the world.

Sophia is subsequently revealed to be a divine aspect of the Christ, present from creation who exists in eternity with God, but who does not exist within the material realm, rather only the divine realm. The Logos is also a divine aspect of the Christ, present from creation, but by contrast exists within the world, through the Logos' incarnation as Jesus Christ. This is supported by Barrett's reading of the prologue to John, in which he draws a distinction between Logos and Sophia in that whilst they share a similar cosmological function, the Johannine Logos was the part that became flesh.⁶⁰ The two concepts explored by Philo of an internal and an external spoken word can therefore be applied to these conceptions of Sophia and Logos, such that Sophia is the internal unspoken word who is not incarnated, whereas Christ the Logos is the external spoken word, spoken through the incarnation of Christ. Both Logos and Sophia are therefore aspects of Christ, or in later terminology, constitute the second person of the trinity, the son, but it is the Logos that was the part incarnated in Christ, as this was the spoken word, always pre-destined to be Christ.

This would explain why the Johannine writer speaks of the Logos rather than Sophia in the Prologue, as the purpose of the text is shown to be the introduction of the person of Jesus Christ, which though starts with Christ in his eternal being, focuses on the incarnation and incarnate Christ. The argument subsequently cannot be made that this is a text asserting the male nature of the divine

⁶⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (London: SPCK, 1995), 129.

Jesus Christ, as the use of the masculine term Logos, rather than the feminine term Sophia, refers not to the gender of the divine Christ, but rather to the state of being and nature of the aspect of Christ in question.

The argument I am therefore proposing in this dissertation is that Sophia and Logos are both aspects of the divine Christ, but Sophia is the internal, unspoken aspect, whereas the Logos, as in the prologue to John's gospel is the external spoken aspect, realised in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This conception of Sophia and Logos as differing internal and external aspects of Jesus Christ as the Word is further supported by other parts of the Johannine prologue, which I will now explore.

5.3 LAW AND GRACE

Verses 16-17 of the prologue focus upon grace with regard to Jesus, as contrasted with the grace of the Old Testament, the law. The Hebrew Bible presents a picture of the function of purpose of the Mosaic Law, the key points of these being the following. Instruction and Guidance for Righteous Living, serving as a comprehensive set of instructions and guidance for the Israelites to live a righteous and just life (Deuteronomy 4.1-2, Proverbs 6.23, Psalm 19.7-8). It outlines moral, ethical, and religious principles that govern various aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships, worship, justice, and societal conduct.

It establishes and governs the covenant relationship between God and his people, as by obeying the Law, the Israelites demonstrate their commitment to God, and in return, God promises blessings for obedience and consequences for disobedience (Exodus 19.5-6, Deuteronomy 26.17-18). Further to this, the Mosaic Law provides a system of sacrifices, rituals, and purification rites through which the Israelites can seek forgiveness for sins and maintain ritual purity, essential for maintaining a proper relationship with God and ensuring the sanctity of the covenant (Leviticus 16.30, Numbers 19.9).

The coming of Christ instead instilled a system of grace, in which Christ became the perfect sacrifice, such that all humans could be sin-free in the eyes of God. Jesus himself declared that he did not

come to abolish the law, but rather to fulfil it (Matthew 5.17), such that Christ's arrival fulfilled the prophetic promises and intentions of the Law, bringing its ultimate purpose to fruition. While the Mosaic Law provided means for atonement through sacrifices and rituals, Christ's sacrifice provided the ultimate atonement for sin and offered forgiveness and redemption to humanity, surpassing the temporary measures of the Law.⁶¹ The Law highlighted humanity's inability to perfectly fulfil God's standards and henceforth its need for grace. Christ's coming opened the way for humanity to access God's grace freely, based on faith in Christ, rather than strict adherence to legalistic requirements.

Benson highlights that whilst the preposition διὰ (through) is used of both Jesus and Moses in verse 17, it is in a very different dispensation that it functions. Moses was only the messenger of the law, whereas Christ is the 'original' of the grace and truth, that was brought into the world by the gospel.⁶² Therefore, though both are represented as messengers, Moses is a messenger of a law belonging to God, whereas Christ is literally the full embodiment of the grace and truth he represents.

Verse 16 claims that it is through Christ we have received grace upon grace. However, the meaning of 'ἀντὶ' in 'χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος' is disputed, of which the meaning of 16b is dependent on, as grace upon grace, or grace instead of grace. Carson takes this presupposition to mean 'instead of', its most common lexical form, as opposed to 'corresponds to' or 'upon',⁶³ which would indicate that grace is received from Jesus Christ instead of the earlier display of grace, the law. However, this should not be understood as simply as this, an exchange of one grace for another, but rather an accumulation, as Christ does not negate the law, but rather is the fulfilment of the law. Though one form of grace is used instead of another form, as Ridderbos identifies, this grace is added to the previous display of grace, explaining this 'fullness' (πληρώματος αὐτοῦ) of his grace.⁶⁴ From a salvation-based viewpoint, it makes more sense to understand this in terms of one system of salvation exchanged for

⁶¹ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1995).

⁶² Joseph Benson, *Joseph Benson's Commentary of the Old and New Testaments: The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, vol. 1: Matthew to the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1846-1854).

⁶³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 131-132.

⁶⁴ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 56.

another one, but for grace, it is a further abundance of God's grace, such that an even more abundant blessing of grace is given, rather than an earlier display of grace in the law. As Keener summarises, even if the specific construction is ambiguous, the general point is clear, it denotes an 'inexhaustible supply of blessing.'

Verse 17 declares that the law was given through Moses, but grace (χάρις) and truth (ἀλήθεια) came through Christ. Keener points out that the Johannine writer does not oppose the Torah Law of the Old Testament, but rather identifies it to Jesus, as the actual lived out model of these commandments.⁶⁵ A distinction is though made here between God's word revealed through Moses' writings, and 'the revelation of grace and truth incarnate'.⁶⁶ Jesus is unveiled to be the true gift to which Moses' original gift of the Torah points to.⁶⁷ The prologue therefore reveals a dual levelled system of salvation, Moses' Torah law, and the embodiment of grace, Jesus Christ, with the latter being the fulfilment of the former.

I turn now to the link between the law and grace to Logos and Sophia. As the incarnation, the completion of the word, Christ does not only represent, but is quite literally the embodiment of Grace. Keener points out that scholars have long acknowledged that Judaism identified divine wisdom with the Torah.⁶⁸ Early wisdom literature, such as the Wisdom of Ben Sira acknowledged the Torah as the source of personified wisdom, Sirach 24.23 claiming that 'all this' is the book of the covenant with the most high, the law that Moses commanded. Keener explains that this comes in the context of Wisdom's monologue (Sirach 24), with 'all this' denoting the book of the covenant,⁶⁹ which is therefore intended to be understood as identified with personified wisdom. He claims that this identification, under more influence from Hellenistic Philosophical language, grew with the Pharisaic movement, flowering in the Rabbinic literature, with the depiction of personified Wisdom, particularly in Proverbs 8, becoming common in the Tannaitic and Amoraic literature. This view of the relationship between personified wisdom and Torah is further supported by Barrett, who

⁶⁵ Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 421.

⁶⁶ Carson, D. A., *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Evangelical Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1980), 28.

⁶⁷ Keener, *John*, 422.

⁶⁸ Keener, *John*, 354.

⁶⁹ Keener, *John*, 354.

suggests that the Torah could be described in personal terms and thought of in cosmological and soteriological roles.⁷⁰ He points to The Sanhedrin, which refers to the Torah as the daughter of God.⁷¹

Some have argued that Sophia is not synonymous with the wisdom of the Torah in the Hebrew Bible, Chochmah (חכמה), suggesting that personified wisdom is a distinct type of Wisdom, originating from the Hellenistic and Greek philosophical thought. However, key verses personifying Sophia in the Septuagint, use the term Chochmah (חכמה) in the Hebrew Bible, linking the two Wisdom concepts together, despite advanced thought on Sophia being a product of later Hellenistic and Greek thought.

My argument is therefore that in the same way the Logos-Christ represents and embodies the grace-based salvation that the Johannine writer touches upon in the prologue, Sophia is the representation and personification of the Hebrew Torah-Law, the law-based salvation referenced in the prologue. Barrett's commentary of the prologue supports this, suggesting that in John 1.1 the Logos parallels the Sophia-Torah figure of Judaism, but in 1.17 it is declared that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, which is the fulfilment of the law personified in Sophia.⁷² This unveils another distinction between Sophia and Logos, with Sophia representing the wisdom-Torah act-based salvation of the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament, and the Logos representing the grace-based salvation of the New Testament, after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore, both represent salvation, but in different aspects.

Although some specific rituals and practices of the Mosaic Law may no longer be required, the law is in no way abolished, with Jesus declaring no part of the law will disappear until all is accomplished (Matthew 5.18-19, 23.23). The principles of the Law illustrate the gospel principles that Jesus later lays out, for example in the beatitudes, where Jesus declares the greatest commandment to be 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22.38)

⁷⁰ Barrett, *John*, 128.

⁷¹ "Sanhedrin 101a," in *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: Tract Sanhedrin*, trans. Michael L. Rodkinson (New York: New Talmud Publishing Company, 2012).

⁷² Barrett, *John*, 129.

with the second to be 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (22.39). He claims that it is on these commandments which all the law and prophets hang. Christ is henceforth not the abolishment of the law, but the completion of the law. This further points to the conception of Logos and Sophia that I have laid out, with the Christ-Logos being the spoken word, functioning here as the completion of the Sophia-Torah law. The speaking of the word is therefore, in this context, the completion of the Law in the transition from act-based to grace-based salvation, accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ.

Clarke points out that verses 16-17 hint at the foreshadowing in the Mosaic ritual of what was to come with Christ, referencing Christ's accomplishment of everything that was prophesied.⁷³ As Keener highlights, the gift of grace that is Jesus Christ, is the ultimate gift to which Moses points.⁷⁴ For example, where in the Old Testament animal sacrifices are made, further sacrifices are not needed after the time of Christ, as Christ was the ultimate sacrifice. However, this is not an abolishment, as Jesus' sacrifice was the fulfilment of blood sacrifice practice, such that instead of animal tokens being offered on the altar, tokens of bread and wine, to represent the body and the blood of Christ are now placed on the altar. Therefore, the eternal principle remains, such that it is only through partaking of the Lamb's sacrifice that we are able to overcome and receive forgiveness for our sins. Further to this, the Passover, a celebration of the Israelites liberation from slavery in Egypt, foreshadowed the redemption that was to come through Christ, such that humans would be liberated from sin, demonstrating another way in which the Mosaic ritual foreshadowed Christ. The Old Testament and Mosaic law involve a high priest, serving in the role of mediator between God and humanity, offering sacrifice on their behalf. The prior existence of this role foreshadows the role of Christ as the ultimate high priest, who would be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all. The Mosaic law is subsequently shown to be a foreshadowing of what Christ would accomplish.

The Mosaic law demanded a standard which no human could fulfil. However, Jesus was the perfect human who lived a sin-free life, making him the only one who could be seen as perfect in the eyes of this law. Therefore, the law was, in this sense, necessary for the sacrificial redemption bought by Christ, as it was this law which deemed Christ perfectly sinless, and subsequently worthy to sacrifice

⁷³ Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible: A Commentary and Critical Notes* (Baltimore: J. Harrod, 1834), vol. 3, 518.

⁷⁴ Keener, *John*, 422.

himself for all. This is a further way in which Christ was the fulfilment of the law, as he was the only one that ever lived who could fulfil it, which was the precise reason he could become the perfect sacrifice for all.

Jesus is sometimes referred to as the 'second Moses' within Christian Theology, due to the similarities between the two figures, and the subsequent roles they fulfilled. Both acted as a lawgiver, a miracle worker, a deliverer of people, a mediator between God and humanity, a prophet, and a facilitator of sacrifice.

However, Jesus surpassed and fulfilled the role of Moses in various ways. Moses gave the Israelite law, made up of moral laws such as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20.2-17), civil laws and ceremonial laws. Moses is the personification of this law, which is unbending and demands righteousness. Jesus could be described as the antithesis of this, as though whilst he himself was perfection, he did not demand perfection for salvation. Hebrews 4.14-16 acknowledges the difference in Jesus as the 'great high priest', compared to priests before him by claiming that 'we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses' (4.15) such that 'we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need' (4.16). Subsequently, Jesus is the personification of grace, meaning that he mediated a new covenant between humanity and God, which is based on faith and grace, showing mercy such that all people might be saved, in replacement of the covenant Moses mediated which was based on the law.

Moses performed miracles, such as turning the river Nile into blood (Exodus 7.20) and parting the Red Sea (Exodus 14.21), demonstrating the divinity of God. Jesus by contrast performed miracles to demonstrate his own divinity, which linked to his redeeming mission for humanity and also demonstrated his divinity to show that he was the Messiah who would bring salvation, confirming the truth of his proclamation. The miracles were part of Jesus' plan for salvation, such as healing the sick (Matthew 9.35, Mark 5.21, Luke 8.48), foreshadowing the way in which he would heal humanity of their sins.

Whilst Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, giving them physical freedom, Jesus delivered humanity from sin and death, offering spiritual liberation, in the form of eternal life. Moses mediated between the Israelites and God, a specific group of people, constrained to a geographical location, but Jesus mediated between all of humanity and God, reconciling all people to God, regardless of location, identity or any other factor (Romans 8.37-39). Moses was a prophet who spoke God's words to the people, but Jesus was the ultimate prophet who revealed the fullness of God's plan for salvation, leading people to eternal life. Moses instituted a sacrificial system to atone for sin, receiving detailed instructions from God in the book of Leviticus (1.2-3, 2.1-2, 3.1-3, 4.4), appointing priests responsible for carrying out sacrifice, teaching on the significance of sacrifice and preserving the sacrificial system throughout the Israelites journey into wilderness and the promised land, keeping it central to their worship. Jesus by contrast offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice, reconciling humanity to God once and for all in doing so.

All these things demonstrate Jesus Christ to be the fulfilment of Moses. This is a further parallel of the Logos and Sophia, with Moses representing Sophia as the Torah-Law, the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, and Jesus Christ being the embodiment of Grace, the grace-based salvation of the New Testament, the λόγος προφορικός. In conclusion of this concept, Jesus is highlighted to be the fulfilment of Moses, paralleling the spoken word of the Logos being the fulfilment of the unspoken word of Sophia. Interestingly, Moses was not chosen as the high priest, but rather his brother Aaron was (Numbers 17), the figure who Philo saw as representing his form of the λόγος προφορικός. In this sense, this links to the relationship between Aaron and Moses foreshadowing the relationship between Christ and Moses, representative of Logos and Sophia, such that Aaron would fulfil what Moses could not, in becoming the high priest and facilitating God's word as revealed to Moses to be communicated to the people in a way that Moses could not. This was a foreshadowing of Christ, as this was something that Christ would eventually do himself by becoming the fulfilment of Moses' law to bring salvation to people in the way that they could not achieve for themselves through the law.

This theme of Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Testament Law can be found elsewhere in the Johannine literature. Revelation 19.10 refers to the testimony of Jesus as the 'spirit of prophecy', pointing to the law of Moses as understood through the spirit of prophecy, as a testament to Christ.

In this sense Jesus is the fulfilment of the wisdom-Torah, as though the law in the Torah was given by Moses, it is through Christ that this law is fulfilled.

Therefore, to conclude this section, Christ is revealed to be the fulfilment of the Torah-Law, as the second Moses, a further sense in which Christ, the Logos, is the spoken word, and Sophia, the personification of God's Mosaic law in the Old Testament is the unspoken word. This unveils a deeper understanding of the nature of Logos and Sophia, as it demonstrates that the Logos-Sophia relationship is not just one of an internal and external word, but also one of completion, in which the Logos is the fulfilment of Sophia. The completion, the speaking of the word, involves the coming of Christ into the world, and the subsequent fulfilment of the law being completed by this. This further solidifies this key distinction between Logos and Sophia and gives insight into the Logos-Sophia relationship. Since the prologue focuses on the coming of Christ into the world, this explains why such Logos terminology is used. Furthermore, in my introduction to the prologue, I uncovered one of the purposes to be the introduction of Christ, such that the reader might be brought to salvation, a concept that is particularly apparent in these verses (John 1.16-17), which declare that grace is received through Christ. Since it is through the Logos, the gift of grace and completion of the law, that this salvation is received, this explains why the Johannine writer would have used Logos terminology in this text, rather than as a gendered terminology to point to the maleness of the divine Christ.

5.4 PROBLEMS WITH INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

I have explored the nature of Logos and Sophia in detail, and come to the conclusion that whilst both are aspects of the Christ, Sophia is the internal part of this, with the Logos the active external aspect, fulfilling and completing Sophia as the incarnate and present word within the world. I have subsequently argued that the major distinction between Logos and Sophia is not one of gender. However, there are some potential flaws with this take on the Logos-Sophia relationship.

The potential problem with this viewpoint is that whilst Christ the Logos exists within the world, or Philo's sense of the κόσμος αἰσθητός, the Logos should also exist within the divine realm, what Philo called the κόσμος νόητος. Furthermore, the prologue begins with the description of the Logos in divine absolute eternal being (John 1.1), and yet still refers to Christ as the Logos. This could suggest that the distinction between the two is not as I have argued, and rather that there may be some other significance, such as a gendered significance between Sophia and Logos.

However, the distinction between Sophia and Logos may be less of a question of two distinct realms as Philo formulated, but rather the nature of the divine Christ in the specific form. This would entail a system in which there is not one entity in one realm and one in another, as both Sophia and Logos are divine and eternal, so should belong to the divine realm. Rather, this important distinction is the difference in the nature between the two. As the prologue is a text dealing primarily with the incarnation of the word, though it begins with a description of the Logos in eternal form, it is focusing on the becoming of Jesus Christ as the embodiment of the Logos, commonly titled as 'the word became flesh', with the purpose of introducing Jesus Christ and the salvation role he would fulfil as the Logos completion. Subsequently, the text is about the spoken external word, as the speaking of this word is the becoming and the incarnation of Christ. Christ is therefore spoken of in external form here, as this is the purpose of the text, but this does not limit the Logos to existing only within the material realm, as the Logos is shown also to have an eternally existent divine nature, before incarnation. Therefore, where the prologue denotes the Logos being in the beginning 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ' (1.1) and the Logos becoming flesh 'σὰρξ ἐγένετο' (1.14), this refers to the Logos in eternal being in the divine realm, before incarnation. The two realms are therefore not a binary, with one entity existing in each, but rather both are from the divine realm, it is only Christ the Logos that enters literally into the material through incarnation, which was necessary as part of his nature as the fulfilment.

This leads on to the pre-existent nature of Christ. Though both Logos and Sophia are of the same, they are separate aspects of this, with Logos being the fulfilment of Sophia with the coming of Christ. It was this separate Logos aspect that was pre-determined to be Christ. Macquarrie identifies that according to Acts, the primitive preaching of the apostles told of the 'definite plan and

foreknowledge of God' (2.23) in Jesus Christ.⁷⁵ This provides biblical evidence for the concept that the Logos was not an entity which God decided to incarnate as Jesus, as the Logos was always consistent with Jesus Christ, so Jesus was existent from the beginning in the sense that the Logos was eternally determined to be Christ. Therefore, the Logos can still be spoken of in its eternal being, as Christ was pre-existent, consistent with the Logos, so to speak of the Logos is to speak of Christ. This subsequently means that there were no before and after, with the unspoken and then the spoken word, rather both are simultaneously co-existent. This means that the speaking of the word was not a change, or an occurrence within the human constraint of time, as both Sophia and Logos are equally and eternally co-existent.

This criticism of the distinction between Logos and Sophia is therefore shown to be flawed, as this problem would only occur if the Logos and Sophia were thought to exist in two separate realms, or they were thought of as mutually exclusive, such that only one could exist, rather than both existing eternally and simultaneously.

This concept of a dualistic divine Christ has big implications for the gender of the divine Christ. Firstly, it means that the Johannine reference to Christ as the 'Logos', as opposed to the feminine 'Sophia' as in the Old Testament, if deliberate, was not a reference to the male gender of the divine Christ, due to the male gender of the human Jesus. Secondly, it means that there is both a feminine and a masculine aspect to Christ, as the embodiment of the feminine wisdom principle, Sophia, and the masculine Logos.

In conclusion, linking this overarching concept of an unspoken Sophia and spoken Logos back to gender, I argue that this further points to the genderlessness of the divine Christ, as it highlights the distinction between Sophia and Logos as not one of gender differentiation, but rather a difference of the state in which they function. This is such that the Logos is the completion and the fulfilment of Sophia, illustrated by the way in which the Logos is incarnated as Christ, differentiated from Sophia

⁷⁵ John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 390.

who did not become flesh, with Logos as the fulfilment and completion of the Mosaic Torah-Law, represented by personified Wisdom, fulfilling the prophecy of the Hebrew Bible.

Therefore, the prologue points to the divine Christ as genderless in two main ways. Firstly, the term Λόγος, used from verse 1, is demonstrated to have the meaning of the spoken completed nature, rather than a gendered meaning, meaning that the use of the masculine term does not deem the divine Christ masculine. Secondly, verses 16-17 back this up, claiming that grace and truth came through Christ, as opposed to the law which came through Moses, pointing to Christ as the fulfilment of the Wisdom Torah-Law.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER

I have made the argument that the divine Christ is made up of the aspects of both Logos and Sophia, and that the difference between these is demonstrated to be about the relationship between them, as the unspoken and spoken word, the latter being the fulfilment of the former. This firstly means that when the Johannine writer used the term 'Logos' in the prologue, this was not an important gender distinction, as the main differences between Sophia and Logos lie in the nature of their state of existence, Sophia as the Torah-wisdom, and the Logos as the fulfilment that came with Christ.

However, it can be questioned whether the feminine gender of Sophia has any particular significance, which determines whether Christ has a truly feminine aspect. I will therefore investigate whether there is any significance to the gender of Sophia.

Kitzberger points to these similarities between Sophia and Jesus, concluding also that the Johannine Jesus is modelled after Sophia, and argues that Johannine readers who are familiar with the wisdom traditions are encouraged to establish these interfigural links.⁷⁶ She suggests that whilst it has been

⁷⁶ Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, "Transcending Gender Boundaries in John," in *A Feminist Companion to John*, Vol. I, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Sheffield: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002), 173-207.

argued that the Johannine Jesus, the Logos, replaced Sophia⁷⁷, she advocates for a different reading, rather that because Jesus is linked to this female character, he is characterised as both male and female, being male in gender and enriched with female traits originating from Sophia. This interfigural is therefore realised, changing the characterisation of Jesus to one which remains within the confines of John's gospel. It is in this way which she argues that gender boundaries are overcome in his person. Kitzberger's reading of the Johannine prologue therefore supports my own interpretation, which presents Jesus as Sophia. Whilst she uses different gender definitions for Sophia and Logos of male and female than my use of masculine and feminine, the same principles apply, that Jesus is represented by both the masculine and the feminine. Jesus does therefore overcome gender boundaries, deeming him genderless in the sense that he incorporates both a masculine and a feminine identity.

Proverbs 9 is the first instance in which we see the importance of the feminine gender of Sophia, as this chapter lays stress upon her gender as an important factor in the relationship between Sophia and her followers.⁷⁸ In this passage, she is depicted in public places, offering herself to men and inviting them to eat at her table. Here, her femininity is important, as she offers something that YHWH cannot, feminine attractiveness to men over the Folly woman who is later revealed to be a prostitute.

Sophia is the most obvious trace of a feminine dimension of the divine in Jewish thought or the Old Testament.⁷⁹ This presence of Sophia means that we cannot speak of an exclusively masculine YHWH, as for a male YHWH to exist in a female guise, this would require some form of transsexuality or transgenderism.⁸⁰ We must therefore move away from a male oriented theology, and instead

⁷⁷ Alison Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John's Prologue* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 65.

⁷⁸ Scott, *Sophia*, 51.

⁷⁹ Scott, *Sophia*, 36.

⁸⁰ Scott, *Sophia*, 56.

accept the feminine Sophia and masculine Logos or Father as the one true God, YHWH, such that Sophia is God imaged as the feminine acting symbol.⁸¹

Bird identifies that in the patriarchal Jewish society of Israel, discrimination against women was part of the socio-religious organisation, which saw a woman's status as related to her fulfilment of the role of wife and mother.⁸² Further to this, motherhood was almost a universal role for women in Israel, with this functioning as their only source of authority. Camp points out that it is interesting that there is a distinct lack of this motherhood imagery applied to the feminine personified wisdom figure, which though gives women authority, also makes her subordinate by the requirement to have children to attain this authority.⁸³ Wisdom therefore has her own authority, as such imagery is not required for her to have authority, or to enter into the public realm.⁸⁴ Camp therefore argues that woman is imaged here as Eve was at creation, the virtual equal of a man. This suggests that Sophia embodies the created femininity, as the equal counterpart to masculinity, pure from the socially constructed gender inequality and discrimination that assigns a lower worth to females than to males.

Camp makes the argument that the feminine imagery of divine wisdom is also analysed for its potential to mediate the human and divine realms in a way that assumes the symbolic role of a king. As a counsellor, a lover and an administrator of divine justice, feminine wisdom assumes these images traditionally assigned to a male king,⁸⁵ therefore not only overcoming the void between the human and the divine, but also between male and female. This demonstrates that roles traditionally assigned to men in the Hebrew Bible, particularly pre-exile, are not only open to males, but can also be assigned to females and the feminine.

⁸¹ E. A. Johnson, 'Jesus, the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology' *ETL* 61, (1985): 267.

⁸² Phyllis Bird, "Images of Woman in the Old Testament," in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), 41-88.

⁸³ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 133-134.

⁸⁴ Claudia V Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 82.

⁸⁵ Camp, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, 291.

As well as this, there are further significances to Sophia's femininity. The concept of femininity, in the context of wisdom personified holds several symbolic and metaphorical meanings. In many cultures and belief systems, including Judeo-Christian tradition, femininity is associated with qualities such as intuition, nurturing and empathy, which counter-balance qualities typically associated with masculinity. Therefore, a feminine aspect to the divine means that there can be a full sense of wholeness and harmony, maintaining balance. Linked to this is the sense in which associating wisdom with femininity underscores the idea that wisdom is a transcendent principle, nurturing, guiding and sustaining creation. This way in which a feminine wisdom principle nurtures creation therefore mirrors the feminine nature by which a mother cares for and nurtures her children. On a cosmic level, the femininity is subsequently important for the sustaining of the cosmos, as well as the balance of the divine. Henceforth, the presence of the feminine within the divine allows for a complete wholeness, of both femininity and masculinity, within the divine. Sophia is consequently revealed to be a figure of feminine authority, in which both her femininity is significant and not an attribute of oppression or inferiority. This unveils a system in which there is perfect created femininity, existing as an equal to masculinity.

My argument therefore maintains that the feminine gender of Sophia is significant, for varying reasons, such as that she constitutes the feminine aspect of the divine, necessary for a complete wholeness of the divine, a true genderless nature, and for offering what a solely masculine God could not, whilst also demonstrating the continued existence of pure created femininity, uncorrupted by creation and society.

This has further important conclusions for the gender of the divine Jesus Christ, in the context of the Johannine prologue. Since I have demonstrated Sophia to be synonymous with Christ, the divine Christ constituted of both masculine Logos and feminine Sophia, the femininity of Sophia does not only point to my conclusion that the divine Christ is not entirely male or masculine, as the physical Jesus is, but also that there is a feminine aspect to the divine Christ. This is represented in the distinctly feminine attributes of Sophia. In this sense, the divine Christ is fully genderless, as Christ subsequently incorporates both the masculine Logos and the feminine Sophia.

5.6 AGAINST CHRIST AS THE FEMININE

An argument used against the existence of Jesus Christ as the divine feminine wisdom principle is the concept of female inferiority. If femininity is inferior to masculinity, it would not be possible for the perfect divine aspect of Christ to be feminine, as this would entail an imperfection. This argument has been used to explain the Johannine choice of the term 'Logos' in the prologue to John, to link Christ with the masculine Logos rather than the feminine Sophia, to avoid the association of Christ with the inferior.

In the Greco-Roman world, the two sexes were not understood equally, but rather as a scale of perfection of the male form, in which females were perceived as imperfect or defective males.⁸⁶ This stems from the Aristotelian view which maintains that females are anomalous males,⁸⁷ involving a frustration of the intention of a male child. In the context of this view, it would appear that males are the superior gender, in which case the divine Christ would be necessarily masculine, as it is superior to be male and a perfect divine being should not be inferior in any way.

However, such arguments on sex and gender have no backing, with modern science and embryology having disproved the concept of females as defective or unintended males. Further to this, Aquinas pointed out that women should not have been a part of the original creation if they are occasioned and deficient, as such creatures should not form part of God's initial creation.⁸⁸ Whilst his attempts to prove the intention of females have also been disproved by modern science, his highlighting of the presence of a female in God's perfect creation is an important point in the argument that

⁸⁶ Will Moore, "A Godly Man and a Manly God: Resolving the Tension of Divine Masculinities in the Bible," *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2021): 72-94.

⁸⁷ Michael Nolan, "The Defective Male: What Aquinas Really Said," *New Blackfriars* 75, no. 880 (1994): 156-166.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), I, q. 92, a. 1.

females are an intended, and equal, sex. This also links to my previous argument that Sophia exists in the state of perfect created femininity, demonstrating the existence of such.

There is however some Biblical evidence in the New Testament that points to the potential superiority of males. The author of Ephesians writes that wives should 'be subject' to their husbands as 'the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church' (5.22-23), echoing 1 Corinthians that 'Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ' (11.3). In some translations, this verse reads 'the head of the woman is man'. Some Biblical commentators, such as Barclay, suggest that this entails an order in which woman is subject to man, pointing to a hierarchical system of gender in which the male is superior.⁸⁹

However, the meaning of Ephesians 5.22 is dependent upon how this subjection is understood. It is important to note that the preceding verse, 5.21, claims that all should be subject to one another in reverence for Christ. Whilst in modern translations this verse is placed in the previous section, Muddiman argues that the natural break should be after the doxological phrase of verse 20,⁹⁰ with verses 21 and 22 linked. Muddiman's translation of 5.21-22 reads 'Submit to each other out of reverence for Christ: Wives to your husbands as to the Lord'.⁹¹ It is notable that there is no verb present in 5.22 in the Greek, meaning that the verb ὑποτασσόμενοι is carried forward from 5.21, which as Muddiman points out, acknowledges some degree of mutual submission.⁹² It is also notable that whilst Paul may establish differing roles for men and women, no difference in worth is established here, as in the analogy for men and women, Christ deemed the Church worth enough to sacrifice his life for. Therefore, Ephesians 5.22-23 does not establish males as superior to women, as all people are included in the command to subjection, and no difference in worth is suggested.

This can be echoed when dealing with 1 Corinthians 11.3, as the relationship between man and woman is paralleled to that of God and Christ, of whom Paul, who holds a high Christology,

⁸⁹ John Barclay, "1 Corinthians," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1108-1134.

⁹⁰ John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001), 256.

⁹¹ Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 256.

⁹² Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 257.

maintains equal worth between. This subsequently suggests that whilst there may be some differences in roles, there is no difference in worth between men and women. Thistleton points out that κεφαλή in 11.3 could be understood as either a 'headship', 'source' or representative role, concluding that Paul plays into multiple meanings here that insist upon gender distinctiveness,⁹³ but points to Martin's argument that in the discussion of hierarchy, Paul renounces any status-questioning stance, suggesting that this is merely a physiological difference in the female and male natures.⁹⁴ These Biblical verses do not therefore demonstrate males to be superior to females, but rather maintain that they are equal in worth. It is also important to interpret the Pauline epistles in the patriarchal context of the society in which they were written, which may explain the differences in the roles established for men and women.

It must be noted that I am here dealing with two different conceptions of gender, the human sense in which one can be of a gender, such as being a female, and the second sense in which something or someone can have feminine attributes, the sense in which gender can apply to the divine. My argument here that females are not inferior encapsulates both these definitions, as both stem from one another, and are interlinked.

Therefore, arguments such as these that claim Biblical backing for male superiority are flawed, as their basis lies in the patriarchal nature of society, rather than in the genuine word of scripture. Whilst the Bible acknowledges a difference between men and women, and in places assigns them differing roles, it does not assign a difference in worth. Subsequently, the sense in which Sophia may be perceived to be of a lower status or value than the masculine divinity is merely a product of the patriarchal society which places a higher value on males than females. It is therefore entirely plausible for Christ to be the incarnated form of the feminine wisdom principle, as there is no inferiority associated with this. Further to this, the feminine conception of gender that I have laid out, consisting of Sophia as the feminine entity that entails her own authority, demonstrates that

⁹³ Anthony Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 811-823.

⁹⁴ D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 248.

there is no female inferiority or subordination of the feminine wisdom principle. Sophia instead exists in the perfect created form of femininity, entirely equal to masculinity.

The argument that masculinity is superior to femininity, and the Johannine writer subsequently used the masculine Logos rather than the feminine Sophia to reflect the perfect nature of the divine Christ is consequently redundant here, as I have demonstrated that being female or feminine is not an inferiority, as well as that Sophia exists in the pure form of femininity, intended at creation. Any argument that the feminine is inferior and Christ cannot be constituted of any feminine element is subsequently also incoherent, meaning that my argument for a genderless Christ, constituted of both feminine and masculine, upholds.

6. PRE-EXISTENCE

6.1 PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

Now that I have laid down my argument purporting the genderlessness of Christ through exploration of Logos and Sophia, I turn to the second part of my argument for a genderless Christ in the Johannine prologue, pre-existence. The pre-existence of the Logos is overtly declared in the prologue, both by the declaration of the Logos' existence in the beginning with God in verses 1 and 2, and the declaration that the word became flesh in verse 14, confirming that the word existed before the incarnation. These are the two strongest Biblical indicators of the pre-existence of the Logos, both transcribed by the Johannine writer in this text, pointing to the importance that the prologue placed on this aspect of the Logos. This aspect of pre-existence also has important connotations for the gender of the divine Christ.

John 1.1-2 declares that Jesus, the Logos, was in the beginning with God. Brown notes that this 'beginning' is before creation, as creation is not mentioned until verse 3, pointing to the pre-

existence of the Logos before creation and time.⁹⁵ Barrett identifies that the Johannine writer intended the whole gospel to be read in light of this prologue,⁹⁶ alluding to one of the purposes of these verses as to establish the vision of Jesus as the pre-existent son of God. This pre-existence has become a central aspect of mainstream Christianity, with the Nicene Creed affirming that Christ ‘came down from heaven and was incarnate’.⁹⁷ Keener lays stress on the use of the verb ἦν (was), in both its occurrences in John 1.1, the first stressing that the Logos was not only from the beginning (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς), but in the beginning (Ἐν ἀρχῇ), and the second asserting that the Logos merely ‘was’, omitting any creation, contrasted with the use of the verb ἐγένετο to denote his becoming flesh.⁹⁸ He therefore maintains that these verses point to a full pre-existence of the Logos.

It is this notion of pre-existence that further differentiates Jesus Christ from all other humans, as like other humans Christ did not exist from the point of conception, but rather preceded his immaculate conception. The declaration in verse 14 that the word became flesh (σὰρξ ἐγένετο), is especially important in the study of the gender of the divine Christ, as this confirms that not only was Jesus pre-existent, but that Jesus existed first without a body, before being incarnated into this flesh body. This distinguishes that the divine Christ is pre-existent of the incarnated physical Jesus, separating the male gender of the physical Jesus, as an expression of his male body, from the gender of the divine Christ. The physical sex and gender of the human Jesus subsequently have no bearing on the divine Christ’s gender. This demonstrates the existence of the divine Christ without a sexed body and the correspondent gender to this body, prior to the incarnation, alluding to the divine aspect of Jesus as genderless.

However, although I take Jesus Christ to be consistent with the Logos, it is important to question whether Jesus was pre-existent, or whether it was only the concept of Christ that pre-existed, as the

⁹⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (London: G. Chapman, 1971), vol. I, 23.

⁹⁶ Barrett, *John*, 130.

⁹⁷ “Nicene Creed,” trans. Hardy.

⁹⁸ Keener, *John*, 369.

Logos. Macquarrie points out that Jesus Christ is the word incarnate, so it is possible that the word pre-existed Jesus,⁹⁹ meaning that Christ was not pre-existent, but rather the Logos was.

Macquarrie makes the case that Jesus himself was not pre-existent, as this would be a denial of his true humanity since it is a mode of divine being, and whilst some divine hypostasis dwelt in the human Jesus, this does not make Jesus pre-existent. However, Macquarrie is careful to assert that Jesus should not be separated from the Logos, as he did not come along by accident and turn out to be a suitable candidate for the Logos incarnate. Macquarrie therefore proposes two further senses in which Jesus is consistent with the Logos, but not pre-existent. The first of these is the pre-election of Christ, of which Macquarrie uses Acts 2.23, the primitive preaching which speaks of the 'definite plan and foreknowledge of God' in the event of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus is pre-existent not in the literal sense, but rather in the sense of a purpose or intention of God. He purports that whilst this might not seem like a real existence, we should not view this through simple human terms as existence in the mind of God is an existence in the highest degree of reality, though it is different from an existence in space and time.¹⁰⁰

However, whilst Macquarrie is correct in saying that this form of pre-existence is indeed a high form of existent, this could be said of all humans in history and future, not just Jesus Christ, as the Bible elsewhere claims that all people were pre-determined before they existed, or before the world existed (Jeremiah 1.5, Ephesians 1.4). This does not therefore assign Christ any further form of pre-existence than the one that all humanity shares by pre-existing in the mind of God as part of a plan.

The second way that Macquarrie proposes is the pre-existence of Christ is by the material aspect of Christ, in the context of a modern cosmological understanding of the world. Macquarrie relays that, according to modern science, the universe had its origin in a burst of energy, from which the world as we know it took shape. The form of which the universe would take was determined within minutes of this beginning, as the 'fine tuning' of natural constants meant that the present universe would not have come about, had one of these constants varied slightly.¹⁰¹ Whilst design argument

⁹⁹ Macquarrie, *Modern Thought*, 389.

¹⁰⁰ Macquarrie, *Modern Thought*, 391.

¹⁰¹ Macquarrie, *Modern Thought*, 391-392.

theories outdate modern cosmology, Macquarrie's point is that the universe, the human race and Jesus Christ were all pre-destined in the primeval state of the universe. The incarnation was not such a one-time event that took place at Jesus' immaculate conception, but rather a process that began at creation. It is in this sense which Macquarrie understands the pre-existence of Christ, which he refers to as the 'mystery of pre-existence'.¹⁰²

However, this is not a full pre-existence, as it neither makes the claim that Jesus Christ pre-exists time and space as the Logos does, which separates Christ from the Logos, nor allows for pre-existence to mean anything more than pre-destination. I would therefore argue that this is not a way in which Jesus Christ was pre-existent, as this is merely a redefining of the term 'pre-existent' to be synonymous with pre-destination, something that could again be said of all humans, not just Jesus Christ.

Macquarrie's reasoning for a non-pre-existent Christ also appears flawed, as his argument is that Jesus Christ cannot be pre-existent to preserve his humanity, but Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human, as in the theory of the hypostatic union. Therefore, Jesus Christ can possess both human and divine attributes simultaneously, such as both pre-existence and having a point at which he came into being, as he has both a human and a divine nature. I conclude that Macquarrie's proposed forms of the pre-existence of Christ are flawed, and we should subsequently look to a proper pre-existence of Christ, as consistent with the Logos.

Significant pointers to the full pre-existence of Christ as the Logos can be found elsewhere in the book of John, in which the Johannine writer transcribes Jesus declaring his own pre-existence on multiple occasions, firstly that he had glory in the presence of God before the world existed (17.5), and secondly that 'before Abraham was, I am' (πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί) (8.58). John 17.5 is a pivotal verse in the study of Christ's pre-existence as it overtly puts Christ's existence outside of creation. John 8.58 goes a step further, as not only does it say that Jesus was outside of creation, but

¹⁰² Macquarrie, *Modern Thought*, 392.

rather tells us that Christ himself declared his own pre-existence in his own words, pointing to a personal dimension of Christ in his pre-existence.

John 17.5 comes in the context of Jesus' prayer to heaven before his crucifixion, in which Christ speaks to his father, praying for glorification, as well as the preservation, sanctification, and eventual eternal glorification of his disciples,¹⁰³ a prayer which spans the entirety of Chapter 17. On verse 5, Clarke writes that 'before the world existed' refers to eternity, so therefore puts this phrase in with the sacred writings that declare the eternality of God. He claims that Jesus is, in this verse, asking for the glory of his eternal divinity to penetrate his humanity.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, as well as asserting the eternality, and therefore the pre-existence of Christ, this demonstrates the link between Jesus' eternal being and his redeeming mission on earth to the cross. It also alludes to a conscious memory or recollection of Christ to the beginning of time, suggesting that Christ was fully pre-existent in his eternal existence before the incarnation.

Further to this, also from Chapter 17 of John's Gospel, verse 17.24 tells us that Christ was loved before the foundation of the world, as in this part of Jesus' prayer, Jesus asks the father that the saved will see his glory, because the father loved him before the foundation of the world. This adds another personal dimension to the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, as it suggests that the pre-existent part of Christ, who existed before creation, was the son of God, who God loved. This contests the potential for the pre-existence of just the Logos, whom God later decided to incarnate into Jesus, as an existent abstract entity at the beginning, but rather supports the personal pre-existence of the divine Christ, whom God loves personally.

Furthermore, my dissertation has argued for two aspects of the divine Christ, Sophia and Logos, which function as the internal and external aspects of Jesus Christ as the Word. Of these, it is the Logos that is synonymous with the incarnated Christ, as the spoken completed word, further pointing to the relation of Logos with Christ, suggesting that these are pre-existent in the same

¹⁰³ Clarke, *John*, vol. 3, 642.

¹⁰⁴ Clarke, *John*, vol. 3, 643.

sense, and that the Logos did not pre-exist Christ, as the Logos' entire being and function is the incarnated Christ.

Therefore, to conclude this discussion of the pre-existence of Christ, I argue for a fully pre-existent Christ, as synonymous with the Logos. This is in line with the Johannine prologue, which asserts the pre-existence of the Logos, as well as further Biblical verses from John, which strongly point to the personal aspect of Jesus pre-existing, such that Jesus is described to have used 'I' and 'me' when speaking of his pre-existent nature by the Johannine writer, meaning that the personal aspect of Jesus is also consistent with the Logos. Subsequently, where the prologue tells us of the pre-existent Logos, it is speaking of the pre-existent Jesus Christ.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF PRE-EXISTENCE FOR GENDER

I have demonstrated that the full aspect of the divine Jesus Christ, rather than just the Logos, was fully pre-existent, which has important implications for the gender of the divine Christ, as if Jesus pre-existed both his physical body and creation, this further points to his divine genderless nature. I have explored that almost all theories of gender define gender as somewhere in the spectrum of entirely biological to entirely societally constructed. I take a view of gender that is somewhere in the middle of these two polar options, that it is linked to biological sex, but manifests in more social characteristics, which are affected by societal roles. If Christ pre-existed his physical body, then he pre-existed any biological sex characteristics that would have been tied to him as a result of this biologically male body. Similarly, if Christ pre-existed creation, then Christ pre-existed any societal construction of gender, so could not have been defined or affected by any expression of gender characteristics.

Further to this, there was no requirement or reason for this gender to exist, in the sense of 'being of' a gender in the beginning, so there were no male or female. This sense of gender would not be necessary from eternity in the divine realm, as the only existent thing was the trinitarian God. This

would have been only an existence of singularity, a perfect oneness, with no such need for a binary division into males and females. If this Trinitarian God were marked as a 'male', the only existent gender would be male, and this would therefore be the norm, so would in a sense not be an actual gender, but just a necessary part of existence.

This ties into the question of whether God the Father (Θεόν in the prologue), what we now understand as the first person of the trinity, had any gender, as God does not exist in the material realm as Christ does. Male nouns and pronouns are predominantly used when speaking of God, Jesus himself referring to God as 'father' or 'my father', which could be seen as an acknowledgement of the maleness of God, especially in the case that Jesus saw God in male terms. However, Aquinas points out that such language is not used in an equivocal way, but rather in an analogical sense, in which case God is not a literal father or a literal male, but rather we understand this meaning of the term father as applied to God by considering what it means to speak of our own father, so it is only in an analogical sense that God is a male father.¹⁰⁵ This again shows that this description of gender, 'being of' a certain gender, is through a human lens, which views gender in very human terms and projects such onto divinity, as because we exist within the binary realm of gender, we cannot think outside of it.

Aquinas argues that God is necessarily genderless, due to being wholly simple. Aquinas claims that God is not a physical body, as a body is potentiality, divisible to infinity, when God is full actuality, entirely indivisible.¹⁰⁶ God consequently cannot have a body, and since a body is a pre-requisite for sex, God can have no biological sex. God is therefore not of a certain gender, so does not have a gender in the human sense. This demonstrates that fundamental divine existence in eternity is an existence in which no being is of a certain gender, so all beings are therefore genderless.

This argument demonstrates that the divine Christ subsequently, not only is not necessarily male, as the male gender of Jesus' physical body has no bearing on Christ's divine nature, but also that Christ

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 13, a. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 3, a. 1.

is necessarily genderless, as Christ's pre-existence from the beginning places Christ in a realm of which 'being of' a gender did not exist.

However, there is another sense of gender, of which I have explored in this dissertation, with regard to the masculine nature of Logos and the feminine nature of Sophia. This is not a sense of gender which constitutes 'being of' a gender, as the human sense of gender does, but rather act as attributes, such that one can possess both masculine and feminine attributes, both of which are attributed to the divine Christ, with the feminine person of Sophia, as well as the masculine Logos. Therefore, though I have demonstrated the prologue to point to both feminine and masculine aspects of Christ, these are in an entirely different sense of 'being of' a gender, such as how the physical person of Christ was fully male. This means that the feminine and masculine aspects of Christ are equally significant in the aspects of the divine Christ, as Christ the divine Logos-Sophia pre-exists the biologically male body of the physical Jesus, meaning that this biologically male gender has no bearing upon the gender of the divine Christ.

In conclusion, the prologue asserts the genderless nature of Christ, by detachment of the physical Jesus' biologically male incarnated body from the divine pre-existent Christ, and therefore distances Christ from having a gender in the sense of constituting 'being of' that gender. This means that Jesus' pre-existence asserts the genderless nature of Christ, deeming Christ genderless in the same sense that God is genderless. However, this still leaves room for an existence of both masculine and feminine aspects of Christ, as I have explored this as a different gender concept, one that does not entail having a gender but rather possessing either masculine or feminine attributes. Henceforth, though I have previously referred to the feminine nature of Sophia and the masculine gender of the Logos, having certain attributes or characteristics that are ascribed to a certain gender does not make one intrinsically of that gender. This means that though God or Christ, may have masculine or feminine aspects, this does not necessitate them being of this gender identity. Therefore, God and Christ remain necessarily genderless, as though feminine and masculine are concepts that can be applied to God, they do not affect the fundamental eternal genderless nature of the divine. The divine Christ is therefore genderless, whilst incorporating both masculine and feminine attributes.

7. EXISTENCE THROUGH CHRIST

7.1 THROUGH HIM

The third strain of my argument for a genderless divine Christ, as laid out in the Johannine prologue, comes from verse 3, which tells us that all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. However, it has been disputed whether the phrase ‘ὁ γέγονεν’ is attached to verse 3, to assert that not one thing which has come into being, came into being without him, or verse 4, to assert that what has come into being in him was life. Traditionally it was thought to be attached to verse 4, to form two balanced appositional clauses, typical of John’s style. This understanding has been criticised for leaving it open to heretical interpretations of verse 3 that all things came into being through him, including the holy spirit. More recently, the understanding of this phrase as attached to verse 3 has become more popular. The purpose of the phrase may instead be to demonstrate that verse 3 only applies to what has come into being, rather than that which is uncreated, such that ‘without him not one thing came into being that has come into being’, which is likely the intended meaning, especially since appositional clauses serve no particular purpose here.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, this verse reveals that all created things came into being through Christ.

The term δι’ appears in John 1.3, from the Greek preposition, δια, which when used in the genitive, means through. This preposition is the relation between creation and Christ the Logos, which is commonly expressed in the Bible, with 1 Corinthians 8.6, Colossians 1.16 and Hebrews 1.2 all referencing creation through Christ. This asserts that the key relationship between Christ and creation is that creation exists through him. However, we must question what existing ‘through’ Christ means. If all created things came into being through him, Christ is in a sense a part of all created things, as Christ is the means by which they exist, so a part of their existence.

¹⁰⁷ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 84-85.

7.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER

It can be questioned whether Christ being a part of all created things means that created things are a part of Christ. Ruether's sense of a dynamic relationship between Christ the liberator and the liberated would suggest that this is the case. In her *Sexism and God Talk*, Ruether identifies that Jesus calls for a the dissolution of hierarchies and statuses, protesting against the relation of such systems to favour with God.¹⁰⁸ An example of this is Jesus' relationship with women, including from otherwise oppressed groups, who carry the double burden of low class and low gender status, such as poor widows, outcast prostitutes and the unclean woman with the flow of blood. Where a man, particularly a Church leader would never usually have associated with such groups, Jesus forms relationships with these people, valuing them the same as males of a higher social status. She points out that this destruction of social structures leads to a dynamic relationship between previous power relationships, including that of the redeemer and the redeemed, such as the way in which Jesus himself was baptised by John the Baptist. Ruether's argument is backed up by Moxnes, who argues that Jesus is not identified with men in a dominant position, but rather identifies with victims, the oppressed and even the crucified.¹⁰⁹ The earthly mission of Christ therefore involves a reversal of previous power relationships, such that his own relationship with creation and the people of the church is not defined by creator and created, or liberator and liberated, but rather a dynamic relationship which works both ways. Therefore, the way in which all things exist through Christ, as denoted in verse 3 of the prologue, and Christ therefore is a part of all things, should also be reversed, to form a dynamic relationship between Christ and creation in which all things are also therefore a part of Christ. This links to the concept of all people being one in Christ, as revealed elsewhere in the New Testament, that 'you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28), so is Biblically supported.

¹⁰⁸ Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, 135-138.

¹⁰⁹ Halvor Moxnes, "Jesus in Gender Trouble," *CrossCurrents* 54, no. 3 (2004): 31-46.

Further to this, the concept of Christ existing through creation and subsequently in a living sense through the Church, links to the idea of a 'corporate Christ'. This is a concept laid out by Moule, who argues that there is a further phenomenon of Christological significance than just the traditional Christological roles of Jesus, in the concept of Christ's continuing existence through the Church, further support for which can be found in the authentic Pauline Epistles. The Pauline epistles often refer to the Church, or those who are saved as the 'body of Christ', in which Christ is the head of this body (Romans 12.5, Corinthians 12.27, Ephesians 4.12, Colossians 1.24). Moule highlights that there is something of special status about the relationship between Christ and the believer, more than just the relationship of a rabbi and disciples.¹¹⁰ This links to Dunn's argument that right from the beginning, Jesus features as a source and object of Christian's religious experiences, with all such experiences both dependent upon and derived from Jesus.¹¹¹ It can therefore be argued that Jesus Christ exists in a further sense than the physical embodiment of the divine God, in this corporate sense, through the Church.

This notion of a corporate Christ, as Christ existing through creation and the Church, as well as Jesus existing through the Church in the reversed sense to which the Church exists through him, also points to a further sense of the genderlessness of the divine Jesus Christ. Moule's concept of a corporate Christ can be tied together with Ruether's argument that Jesus' earthy mission is one of reversing hierarchies. She lays out the interesting parallels between Jesus' criticism of hierarchy in the synoptic gospels to feminist criticism.¹¹² She identifies that women play an important aspect in the gospel's vision of vindication of the lowly, as women of oppressed groups often form representatives of the lowly, such as the women carrying the double burden of low social and gender status that Jesus forms relationships with. Jesus' power to act as this liberator does not lie in his maleness, as he involves women in his earthly mission, who represent those with the least benefit of the hierarchical system's perpetuation. Ruether argues that the maleness of the physical Jesus subsequently has no theological significance, but a social symbolic significance in the liberation of such social structures, manifesting the 'kenosis of patriarchy' through a new humanity that

¹¹⁰ C. F. D. Moule, *The Origins of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 47.

¹¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 194.

¹¹² Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, 135-138.

discards social structures. Ruether concludes that Christ is therefore not encapsulated entirely in the historical Jesus, but rather that Christ's identity continues in the Christian community through this new dynamic relationship, as the liberated can become liberators, just as the liberator of Jesus becomes the liberated in humanity.¹¹³ Ruether points out that this identity of Christ, one of the destruction of social orders such as patriarchy, is one of the senses in which the identity of Christ continues through the Church. The further sense in which dynamic relationship between previous hierarchical relationships mean that Christ symbolises the creation of a fluid relationship between male and female. The male gender of Jesus' physical person is therefore not theologically significant, as Jesus becomes not only genderless, but also a symbol of genderlessness as a corporate Christ who exists through the Church by the dynamic relationship of liberation that Jesus instated, with all people becoming one in Christ. This means that the sense by which creation exists 'through' Christ and Christ exists through creation means that a further phenomenon of the divine Christ's genderlessness is uncovered, as the symbolism of the breaking down of gender barriers to create a genderless identity.

Therefore, the prologue's admission that all things came into being through him leads us to the revelation that Christ is in all people, but also that all people and all created things are a part of Christ. Since this involvement as part of Christ involves the reversal and overcoming of traditional hierarchies, Christ is not only revealed to be genderless, as in the previous arguments I have made, but moreover a living symbol of genderlessness.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my dissertation has explored in depth the usage of the term 'Logos' in the Johannine prologue, with regard to the gender of the divine Jesus Christ. My findings point to a genderless nature of the divine Christ for various reasons. I have demonstrated that whilst Logos and Sophia are

¹¹³ Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, 135-138.

both representative of Jesus Christ, the Johannine writer did not use the masculine term Logos to point to an exclusively male Jesus Christ in the divine sense, in line with his male gender. This term rather points to the incarnated and immanent nature of the Logos as Jesus Christ, compared to the internal aspect of the word, Sophia.

I have explored various parts of the prologue, which ultimately point to this conclusion, in which the divine Christ is made up of two parts, the external or spoken 'Logos' and the internal or unspoken 'Sophia'. Following on from Philo's concept of the Logos, as existing in two parts, the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (internal word) and the λόγος προφορικός (spoken word), I have proposed this bipartite Logos, in which the main differences between Logos and Sophia are not gender differences. Both aspects are divine, meaning that neither can be 'of' a certain gender, though they possess masculinity and femininity in pure forms. The differences are rather the state in which they exist. This links to the prologue's admission that the Logos as the incarnated Jesus is the grace that acts as the fulfilment of the Sophia-Torah law of the Old Testament. The prologue talks of the role of Christ being a display of God's grace, which is grace upon grace, upon or instead of the previous display of grace, the law, tying into the two forms of Logos, the previous Sophia, as the Torah law of the Old Testament, represented by Moses, and the fulfilment of the law, the Logos, incarnated and represented by Jesus Christ.

Further to this, the existence of Sophia as the divine Christ, but in a different aspect, points to a genderless nature of Christ, as it demonstrates that there are both feminine and masculine aspects to Christ. However, as highlighted in my exploration of gender, this is the gender sense of being either masculine or feminine, which is different from the sense in which one can be of a certain gender, something that only applies to earthly beings, not the divine.

I have made the case for the genderless nature of the divine Christ through other admissions of the prologue, such as that it points to the pre-existent nature of Christ, which detaches the biologically male gender of Jesus' human body to the divine Logos-Sophia Christ. This means that the divine Christ is not of a certain gender, as I have demonstrated why such gender definitions cannot apply to the divine, but that the divine Christ possesses both masculine and feminine qualities, through Logos

and Sophia respectively, which due to the detachment of the male biological gender from the divine Christ, are equally significant.

I have also demonstrated Christ's genderless nature further through the prologue's assertion that all things exist through Christ, which in the light of his both heavenly mission of redemption and earthly mission of social justice that purport a destruction of hierarchies and social categories, deem Christ the ultimate symbol of genderlessness, whom through all exist. Therefore, the prologue to John's Gospel depicts a fully genderless divine Jesus Christ.

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